Political Mobilization of Georgian IDPs

Thea Røkke

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European and American Studies
Faculty of Humanities

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Abstract

After the secession from the Soviet Union, Georgia found itself independent, but at war with two of its regions: Abkhazia and South Ossetia. As a consequence of the war between Abkhazia and Georgia nearly all ethnic Georgians residing within the territory of Abkhazia were displaced, and thus went on to become Internally Displaced People (IDPs). Since their displacement nineteen years ago, Georgian authorities have largely pursued a policy of temporary integration, with an ultimate goal of the return of the IDPs to their homes in the breakaway regions. By conducting an explorative case study, based on thirty in-depth interviews with Georgian IDPs and experts on IDP issues, I have researched whether or not the Georgian IDPs have mobilized politically and what form their mobilization has assumed. I have also looked at whether or not their mobilization has been successful, determined by the government's response to the IDPs demands. I have used theories on Relative Deprivation, Resource Mobilization and Political Opportunity Structure to shed light on my empirical data, and concluded that the Georgian IDPs have mobilized politically. Their mobilization manifests itself in two separate channels: institutionalized organizations and informal groups conducting episodes of contentious politics. The two channels of mobilization utilize different Repertoires of Contention to put forth their claims to the Georgian government, and have both been successful in their efforts. The Georgian government has largely accommodated the claims put forth by the Georgian IDPs, however this can't be attributed to the efforts of the IDPs alone, the IDPs have an influential ally in the international community present in Georgia, which advocates for IDP interests and puts pressure on the government.

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

ASSR: Abkhaz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic

CC: Collective Center

CHCA: Charity Humanitarian Centre Abkhazeti

CIS: Commonwealth of Independent Countries

DRC: Danish Refugee Council

EU: European Union

EUMM: European Union Monitoring Mission

GEL: Georgian Lari

IDP: Internally Displaced People

MRA: Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

OSCE: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

NRC: Norwegian Refugee Council

PA: Private Accommodation

SO: South Ossetia

SOPs: Standard Operating Procedures

UN: United Nations

UNDP: United Nations Development Program

UNHCR: The United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees

Map of Georgia [1]

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[1] Available at
http://unitedcats.files.wordpress.com/2008/08/georgia_map_overview.png accessed
06.11.2012

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"მომავალ წელს სოხუმში - Next year in Sukhumi"

President Mikhail Saakashvili – Quote from his speech New Years eve 2011 [2]

[2] Civil.ge's website, available at http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24327 accessed 06.11.2012

1 Introduction

Georgia's secession from the Soviet Union in 1991 represented a turning point in the country's history: having been subject to Moscow's rule since 1801[3] the country now found itself independent, but in utter political turmoil. Twenty-one years, four wars[4], one coup d'état and a revolution later the territorial stability is not yet consolidated. The source of this uncertainty is the conflict between Georgia and the breakaway regions Abkhazia and South Ossetia[5], which have managed to establish themselves as separate states *de facto, de iure* they still form a part of Georgia proper.

The persistent volatility that has characterized the relationship between Georgia and its breakaway regions since the three wars in the early 1990s was further entrenched in 2008, when a fourth war broke out. This time Russia and Georgia went to war over the independence of the breakaway regions. As an aspiring member of both NATO and EU, Georgia looked to the West for assistance, and a peace agreement was brokered with the aid of the European Union. The introduction of such large-scale international stakeholders to the conflict lent it a symbolic meaning that further complicated finding a solution. The conflict was no longer confined to independency for the breakaway regions; it now came to epitomize the deteriorating relationship between Russia and the West (Trier et al, 2010:1). Since 2008 the war rhetoric has been mitigated, and the situation is less acute, but the core issue remains unresolved; what will happen to Abkhazia and South Ossetia with regards to their independence? The answer to this question largely determines the faith of those most affected by the war; the Internally Displaced People (IDPs). If Abkhazia and South Ossetia are reintegrated to Georgia proper, the IDPs might be able to return to their homes in the breakaway regions, but as long as the republics remain autonomous, the IDPs are left to lead their lives in displacement.

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3 With the exception of the years 1918 to 1921, when Georgia formed a democratic state. Georgia was independent from the Russian Empire until it was annexed by the Red Army in 1921, and became part of the Soviet Union.
4 Between 1989 and 1993, three wars took place in Georgia: the first one over the breakaway region of South Ossetia, the second one was fought between rival Georgian groups trying to establish their political power, and the third war was fought over the breakaway region of Abkhazia. A fourth war took place much later, in 2008, between Georgia and Russia and was fought primarily in and around South Ossetia.
5 Adjara also forms a separate republic, but was peacefully reintegrated into Georgia in April 2004 under the Saakashvili administration.

The IDPs are Georgian civilians who were forced to flee their homes in the breakaway regions during the wars. There have been several waves of displacement parallel to the waves of hostilities: the first main influx of IDPs to Georgia took place between 1989 and 1993 and the majority of the displaced were primarily fleeing from Abkhazia. The second main influx occurred in August 2008, this time the majority of IDPs came from South Ossetia. However, both waves contained IDPs from both regions. Today Georgia has a total population of 258,599 IDPs [6] according to the main authority on IDP issues in Georgia: the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia (MRA).

Due to the lack of an extensive peace agreement the IDPs have not yet been able to return to their homes. The majority of the Georgian IDPs has been displaced for almost two decades, but they are still struggling to obtain access to fundamental resources such as housing and livelihood. This is largely because the Georgian authorities have attempted a political balancing act by pursuing two policies simultaneously: return and integration. Return of the IDPs to their homes in the breakaway regions has to be a goal for the Georgian authorities, as giving up on it would mean giving up on reuniting the breakaway regions with Georgia proper. At the same time, ensuring a decent living standard, livelihoods and future prospects is the responsibility of any state hosting IDPs, hence the policy of integration. Being kept in suspense, what have the IDPs themselves fought for, if anything? Do they wish to return or to integrate in displacement? The general public discourse has led to the politicization of both the existence of IDPs and their options for the future.

1.1 Main Topic for Thesis

There exists little research on the political mobilization of IDPs, I have therefore chosen to put together a framework of established theories on political mobilization, and used this as a starting point for developing an explorative case study. By using the theoretical framework and empirical data dialectically throughout the thesis, I will determine the following:

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[6] MRA's website, available at http://mra.gov.ge/main/ENG#section/50 accessed 06.11.2012. There is a variety of numbers in circulation, but the MRA is the only actor who comprehensively registers and collects data on citizens with IDP status. See IDMC's website for more information: http://www.internal-displacement.org

I will establish (i) if the Georgian IDPs have mobilized politically, and (ii) examine which form the mobilization has assumed, and (iii) find out whether or not the mobilization has been successful by examining the government's response to the IDPs demands.

1.2 Operationalization of the Main Terms

In order to identify political mobilization and obtain an understanding of the mechanisms creating and sustaining political mobilization, it is necessary to operationalize and define the key terms. The term mobilization is according to the Oxford dictionary defined as: "to organize and encourage (a group of people) to take collective action in pursuit of a particular objective".[7] This presupposes an inherent plurality to the act of mobilization, meaning that for action to be considered mobilization it has to be organized and implemented by a group of people. An individual is linked to a group by a shared social reality, forming a collective identity. According to Polletta and Jasper, collective identity is defined as:

> […] an individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution. It is a perception of a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly, and it is distinct from personal identities, although it may form part of a personal identity (2001:298).

Although collective and personal identities are not two sides of the same coin, collective identity can form a part of a personal identity. Identifying with a group can be an important factor when deciding whether or not one should participate in collective action. Not all groups with a collective identity mobilize politically: this depends on the nature of the shared trait that brought the group together in the first place. But for those who do aim to mobilize, the collective identity facilitates the pursuit of the shared objective. With a collective identity it is easier to put forth claims on behalf of the entire group. This in turn enables a dialogue with different audiences, such as state authorities (Polletta and Jasper, 2001:285).

For the mobilization to be considered political it has to be directed towards the government. Any interaction between citizens and authorities is in a sense political, but political mobilization entails collective action directed specifically towards the authorities. When a movement puts forth claims that are directed towards the state authorities, the authorities have the option of either facilitating the claims or repressing them. If the

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[7]Oxford Dictionary's website, available at
http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/mobilize?q=mobilization#mobilize_8 accessed 06.11.2012

mobilization is successful, the government will comply with the claims (Tilly, 2003:32). By struggling for the recognition of their claims the group enters political life and becomes a part of the struggle for political power. When examining which form the mobilization has assumed, I will look at which tools the IDPs have utilized to reach their goals, and how they have conducted their acts of mobilization.

1.3 Demarcations in Time and Space.

As mentioned the Georgian IDPs come both from Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The political mobilization of IDPs from South Ossetia will be excluded from this thesis. There are several reasons for this decision[8]: the two groups were displaced under different political regimes, which has had a profound effect on the treatment and quality of the aid the IDPs received directly after displacement. Where the IDPs from South Ossetia were allotted housing in the vicinity of the *de facto* border shortly after the war ended, many of the IDPs from Abkhazia are still squatting public houses twenty years after the conflict that displaced them. This is partly due to the fact that the first IDPs were displaced within a context of chaos and turmoil, while the second displacement happened within a more unified political system. This creates two different starting points for political mobilization. Additionally, the extended period of displacement of the IDPs from Abkhazia leaves room for a more fertile analysis. According to political mobilization theory, openings in the Political Opportunity Structures provide ample grounds for mobilization (Tarrow, 2011:160). Studying the group that has been displaced for the longest period of time is therefore more interesting simply because there is more data to look at. The natural timeframe for this thesis therefore becomes the time from displacement and up until today (1993 to 2012).

1.4 Relevance of the Topic of Research

When I began writing this thesis, I had already lived and worked six months in Georgia as an intern for the Danish Refugee Council. The experience of and understanding for Georgian culture I had acquired during this period proved to be an advantage as I tried to determine what the main research question for this thesis would be. I had already read a lot of the existing literature on Georgian IDPs, and I noticed that little had been written on their

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[8] Even though the IDPs from South Ossetia are excluded from this thesis, I will still analyze the 2008 war and its impact on IDP mobilization.

political views. The question of their return and the treatment they have received in displacement has been debated and politicized, but there were few, if any, studies that examined what the IDPs wanted for their future, and whether or not they had mobilized to reach their goals.

Researching political mobilization among Georgian IDPs is important on several levels: Nationally, the Georgian government faces a substantial challenge trying to accommodate the large population of IDPs, finding out what the IDP community identifies as their primary needs could help clarify what areas the Georgian government should focus on first. More knowledge on the internal mechanisms and diversity within the IDP community might challenge the humanitarian tradition of treating all as a homogeneous group when providing protection, the help given could be improved and tailored to the needs of the IDPs. The political life of IDPs is also interesting because they form such a large part of the electorate in Georgia. Their sheer numbers provide this group with a massive potential to influence national politics.

In a regional perspective, the mobilization of the displaced is interesting as it could influence the outcome of the conflict: if there is a strong will and preference among the IDPs to return to the breakaway regions, and a strong mobilization towards this goal, it could be a step on the way to returning the breakaway regions to Georgia proper. If they have a strong preference to stay in Georgia proper and integrate in displacement, the government will have lost the argument of return of the IDPs as leverage towards the breakaway regions and the reintegration of the breakaway regions into Georgia proper will be even less likely.

There are currently an estimated 25 million IDPs residing in 52 countries across the world[9]. As a consequence of increased levels of globalization and thereby state inter-dependency, the nature of warfare has changed. From being an event primarily taking place between two states, there has been a shift towards an increased frequency of civil wars (Wallensteen and Sollenberg, 1996). This has led to a decline in the number of refugees, and an increase in the number of IDPs (Weiss, 1999:363). Thus, understanding the political mobilization of IDPs is important in an international context as well. Georgia is one of the more experienced countries in dealing with IDPs, and although the findings from this study are not valid for the international IDP population in general, it is still possible to draw on the

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[9] IDMC's website, available at http://www.internal-displacement.org/ accessed 06.11.2012

experiences that the Georgian IDPs have made. Studying the political mobilization of IDPs can also add to our knowledge on how IDPs act during, and after conflict, and it can contribute to our understanding of the mechanisms of conflict and why they persist.

1.5 Theoretical Framework for the Thesis

Social movement theory is a diverse, interdisciplinary field. Recognizing that several of the tools developed by different theorists are valuable to the analysis of the data collected in this thesis, I have chosen to create a theoretical synthesis consisting of the main elements from three different theoretical directions; Resource Mobilization theory, Collective Behavior theory and Relative Deprivation theory.

1.6 Methodology

This is a qualitative case study, based primarily on 30 in depth interviews with IDPs and experts on IDP issues in Georgia. Informants for this thesis were, in the case of IDPs, selected by the "snowball-method", and in the case of expert informants, selected on the grounds of their role, work or expertise. Secondary sources are used throughout the thesis to contextualize and verify my own findings. A lot of the available literature on Georgian IDPs is produced by NGOs that operate in Georgia. These documents are mostly available online, since I refer to these reports quite a lot, I have chosen to do so in the footnotes so as not to break up the text. All other references will be given in parenthesis.

1.7 Structure of Thesis

The thesis is organized in two main parts: the theoretical framework used to analyze the empirical data will be presented in the following chapter, after which I will give an account of the methodological choices made while preparing and conducting this study. I will then give a historical account of the events that led up to the displacement, and events that have taken place in the aftermath of war. The second section is devoted to the analysis of the data collected, followed by a concluding discussion where the theoretical framework will be used to shed light on the findings from the analysis.

2   Theoretical Framework

2.1 Studying Political Mobilization

Social Movement theory is a broad, interdisciplinary field often used to analyze contentious politics. Common to all Social Movement theorists is their goal to explain how social movements arise and what factors compel people to participate and mobilize politically. The three primary directions within social movement theory are; (a) Relative Deprivation Theory, which views the collective experience of grievances and a strong group identity as potent agents in motivating mobilization (Gurr: 1970); (b) Resource Mobilization theory, which focuses on the social movement's ability to organize, obtain and distribute resources as crucial when trying to sustain social movements (Tilly, 1978a); and (c) Political Opportunity Structure theory, which sees openings in the political opportunity structure as one of the primary reasons for political mobilization (Tarrow, 2011). The different theories diverge primarily in what they identify as the key variable to inspire and instigate political mobilization, they are also separated by their emphasis on the importance of organization to sustain social movements (Flikke, 2006). Efforts have been made to merge the existing theories into one comprehensive theoretical framework, although unsuccessfully.

In my research of social movements in a post-conflict setting, among an understudied demographical group, I have found it best to create a broad theoretical synthesis, composed by the main elements of the predominant theoretical directions.[10] This allows for the inclusion of important variables, and potential incidents of political mobilization can be more easily intercepted.

2.2 Relative Deprivation Theory

The philosophers Karl Marx and Frederick Engels saw mobilization as an inevitable event that would occur when the proletariat's deep discontent with capitalism erupted into a full-

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[10] I have chosen to employ general theories on social movements rather than theories on refugee mobilization (see for example Zolberg et al. 1986, Adelman 1998), these tend to focus on refugees as warriors and participants in conflicts, an aspect not relevant while trying to identify political mobilization.

blown confrontation between the two.[11] When the predicted conflict failed to materialize, it might have been because Marx and Engels underestimated the significance of common identity and overestimated the importance of shared economic interests (Tarrow, 2011:18). Gurr and Moore have elaborated on Marxist theory and identified the experience of relative deprivation and grievances as powerful motivators for mobilization. According to his theory, a group of people who shares a collective experience of deprivation can funnel the shared anger into collective action (1997:1097-1103). Relative deprivation is a subjective, perceived phenomenon, meaning that the actors might feel deprived, even though objectively they are not (Runciman, 1966:9). It is the disparity between what the actors envision for themselves, and their actual reality, that creates a sense of dissatisfaction. Gurr defines relative deprivation as an:

> […] actors' perception of discrepancy between their value expectations and their value capabilities. Value expectations are the goods and conditions of life to which people believe they are rightfully entitled. Value capabilities are the goods and conditions they think they are capable of getting and keeping (1970:24).

Values are in turn defined as "the desired events, objects, and conditions for which men strive"(Gurr, 1970:26). The more important these values are to a person, the greater discontent their absence creates. If there are few alternative ways available to the actors to achieve their value expectations, anger and desperation might increase. If actors experience relative deprivation over a long period of time, and they are denied the opportunity to express their anger towards the situation, the resentment they harbor will increase, and subsequently be carried on to the next generation (Gurr, 1970:59).

Gurr's theory has been criticized for the failure to explain why not all groups that have experienced deprivation mobilize. In an essay from 2011, Gurr maintains his belief in grievances as a source of discontent and as an explanatory model for mobilization[12]. Central to Gurr's theory is the individual. He claims that should be "the prism through which to examine the effects of social structures, beliefs, and the possibilities for mobilization and political action"(Gurr, 1970:68). In order to understand why people mobilize, it is necessary to examine how they understand themselves in relation to their reference group and it's

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[11]Communist Manifesto's website, available at https://webspace.utexas.edu/hcleaver/www/368/368CommunistManifestoPtItable.pdf accessed 06.11.2012

[12] e-International Relations' website, available at http://www.e-ir.info/2011/11/17/why-men-rebel-redux-how-valid-are-its-arguments-40-years-on/ accessed 09.11.2012

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identity. To understand where grievances come from, it is necessary to examine people's beliefs about their own situation, and look at how they interpret their lives. The key to understanding these beliefs does not lie in abstract ideologies, but rather in the study of group identity.

2.2.1 Group Identity

In "*People Vs. State*", Gurr stipulates that one of the factors determining the shape, intensity and persistence of collective action is the salience of group identity (2000:66). Gurr defines identity as "…enduring social constructions that matter to the people who share them. How much they matter depend on people's social and political circumstances"(2000:8)*.* Group identity is essentially based on shared traits; the group creates a space within which people who have something in common can come together and cultivate their shared interests. It is possible to be a member of a group without it being a defining aspect of one's life. If, however, something should threaten the existence of the group, or the members experience relative deprivation, group identity can be a potent agent in mobilizing the members. If the identity is based on durable traits, rather than interests, it is likely to be more resilient and thus more apt as a starting point for mobilization.

> The salient bases of collective identity include a common language, religion, or national or racial origin, shared cultural practices, and attachment to a particular territory. Most […] groups also have a common history or myths of shared experience, often of conquest and victimization by others (Gurr, 2000:8).

It is not necessarily one specific trait that creates group identity, but rather a belief that the shared trait sets the group apart from the general population (Ibid). Gurr also argues that the greater the dissimilarity from the general population, with which the group interacts regularly, the more salient their identity is likely to be. Conflicts, with rival groups and/or the state, past or ongoing, might also aid the formation of collective identity (Gurr, 2000:68).

2.2.2 Beyond Identity

Brubaker and Cooper also see identity as a social construction, but they are skeptical about employing the term uncritically. If the researcher uses the term both as a *category of practice* and as a *category of analysis*, there is a risk of reproducing reifications, meaning that by emphasizing and focusing on identity, one might overestimate the importance of the phenomenon and see group identity where in reality there is none (Brubaker and Cooper,

2000:4). As a category of practice, the term serves the function of allowing people to make sense of their world, by creating categories that allows them to separate themselves from others. This is unproblematic, however it becomes problematic when the use of the term is directly transferred as a category of analysis. If one does not account for how the term will be used as an analytical category, one accepts the practical use at face value, thus making it a real category (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000:6). By uncritically using the term identity as a category of analysis, one presupposes the existence of identity, and thus reinforces it. Brubaker and Cooper are especially critical towards employing the term when studying social movements, as the term is often used both to explain the basis for collective action, and as a contingent product of political actions (2000:8). Thus a need for a more precise vocabulary presents itself.

Verba, Nie and Kim have presented an alternative term: *social category*. A social category is based on shared status, either by gender or other social properties, although this term does not necessarily imply the same level of identification between the members, meaning that some of them might belong to a social category without identifying with it. If they do, however, define their membership of the social category as important to their identity, they might have a preference for policies relevant to the social category (Verba, Nie and Kim: 1978:12). Political mobilization based on membership in a social category might still be potent as group-based mobilization. The difference is that the level of solidarity among the members might not be as latent, and mobilization thereby requires a higher level of organization. If a high level of organization is attained, the social category has a better chance of accessing the political arena (Ibid). Verba, Nie and Kim also emphasize that a group-based approach is especially suited for a lower-status group, as they rely on it to participate and compete with higher-status groups. If the two are polarized in society, they become social categories, as they are inclined to favor policies directed towards their social stratum (Verba, Nie & Kim, 1978:14).

Tilly sees identity as

[…]an actor's experience of a category, tie, role, network, group or organization, coupled with a public representation of that experience; the public representation often takes the form of a shared story, a narrative (1996: 7).

This definition, a reflection of identity used as a category of practice, allows for the actors to define the existence and importance of group identity. Pairing the personal experience of the respondents with the public representations of group identity allows the researcher to look at

identity as both an internal and external factor for mobilization. Even though the members of the group do not perceive their group identity as important, external actors such as the government or the public might still categorize people into groups, which in turn can affect the treatment the group receives. As this definition allows for both an internal and external definition of group identity, I have chosen to employ it in this study.

2.3 New Social Movement Theory

2.3.1 Resource Mobilization Theory

Where Gurr sees relative deprivation and group identity as essential factors for political mobilization, resource mobilization theorist Tilly emphasizes interest, organization, opportunity and mobilization as basic prerequisites for social movements. Interests are defined as goals that are shared by the group, and that are shaped by gains and losses the group has experienced when dealing with other groups. They can be inferred either by questioning members of the group, or by examining the actions of the group (Tilly, 1978b: 54). Organization is seen as the structure of the group "that most directly affects its capacity to act on its interests*" (Ibid: 7). Underlying structures, such as common identity shared by the individuals in the population, is important for a higher level of organization. Mobilization is the process "by which a group acquires collective control over the resources needed for action*"(Tilly, 1978b: 7). Resources are defined as anything that allows for the group to act on its interests; coercion, capital and commitment. Coercions is defined as "means such as weapons, armed forces…and organized routines for imposing sanctions"(Tilly, 2006:19)*, i.e. allowing the actor to cause loss or damage to opposing actors. Capital refers to concrete resources which when employed can lead to an increase in value and claims. Commitment refers to relation among the actors, bonds that further empower the relations within the group, for example a collective identity (Tilly, 2006:20). The ability to organize and attain a higher level of organization is also seen as a resource, as is making resources available, not only to an individual, but to the group as a whole. It is important to note that mobilization involves collective control over resources, not just accretion of resources:

> An increase of resources within a unit normally facilitates its mobilization, simply by permitting subunits to keep receiving resources while the larger unit gains control over more than it had before (Tilly, 2006:78).

The element of opportunity deals with the relationship between the population's interests and the external world within which they attempt to mobilize (Tilly, 1978b:55). For many of the groups attempting to mobilize there might be other groups with similar goals. By including the element of opportunity, Tilly takes the interplay between competing movements into account. If one movement is successful in its mobilization, at the expense of another movement, it will assume more power. An increase in a movement's political power would in this context, mean a favorable outcome when interacting with the government. Similarly, any costs to the movement derived from interaction with other groups, leads to a repression of the movement (Tilly, 1978:55).

All these elements stand in a relationship with each other. For example, the likelihood of the group being subjected to repression depends on what sort of interests it represents. Also, the likelihood of the group succeeding with collective action is dependent on its power, its mobilization, and the current opportunities and threats confronting its interests (Tilly, 1978b: 55). Actors are likely to develop new interests as they gain complex and effective forms of organization. The new interests can come into conflict with the interests around which the group organized and mobilized in the first place (Tilly, 1978b: 57). Mobilization, according to Tilly, "identifies the process by which a group goes from being a passive collection of individuals to an active participant in public life"(1978b: 69). Groups will mobilize if and when they gain control over resources. If there are multiple groups competing over the same pool of resources, the group with the highest level of organization, where the members are coherent in what they define as their goals and share a cohesive collective identity, will most likely acquire the resources (Tilly, 1978b: 71).

Mobilization thereby becomes a quest to eliminate, or reduce, competing claims on resources, develop an extensive program of interests and solidifying the loyalty and group structure among the members (Tilly, 1978b: 73). To mobilize successfully it is necessary to execute all these activities at once. Only then can the group"[...] go from being a passive collection of individuals to an active participant in public life"(Tilly, 1978b: 69). Making the acquired resources available to the members for collective action is highly dependent on whether or not the group manages to institutionalize its organization, making it capable to connect with other actors and position itself towards its surroundings (Tilly, 1978b: 9). Tilly calls this process *framing of the social movement* (1978b).

2.3.2 Repertoire of Contention

Once organized, the movement employs its *Repertoire of Contention,* meaning essentially all tools available to the group when trying to accomplish a goal, or *"the ways that people act together in pursuit of shared interests"*(Tilly, 1995:41). All political mobilization involves two actors, one actor presenting a claim, the claimant, and the actor the claims are directed towards, the object of the claims. For example by participating in demonstrations, the claimant is presenting its claims in a performance; these types of performances come together and form a repertoire of contention (Tilly, 2006:36). This involves all actions available to the group, the political maneuvers they know how to conduct, and the actions their circumstances might expect them to take (Ibid). The repertoire of contention accessible to any population is largely dependent on their history and culture. It is learned behavior that varies with time, place and regime. Repertoires draw on the collective identities, social networks and organizational forms from everyday life. They are an extension of a shared experience, when claimants see what has worked for other claimants previously and then emulate them (Tilly, 2006:42).

The type of regime also has an effect on the type of repertoire available to the public,

> By controlling what actions are tolerated in the public sphere[…] by constituting potential claimants and potential objects of claims[...]by producing streams of issues, events, and governmental actions around which social movements rise and fall (Tilly, 2006:186).

Similarly, contentious episodes and social movements affect the regime, both gradually and spontaneously. If the type of government changes, the movement will acquire new tools adjusted to the new form of government. Even though changes occur and new tools are added to the repertoire, the old tools and the old repertoire of contention coexists with the new one, leading to an enhanced capacity for collective action (Ibid).

2.3.3 Political Opportunity Structure

Tarrow, representing the political opportunity structure theorists, argues that social movements are created as a response to external influences and incentives (Tarrow, 2011:9). According to him, social movements, defined as "collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities" (Tarrow, 2011:9), arise when an opening in the political opportunity structure is created. He defines a political opportunity as "a formal, permanent, or national set of clues

that encourage people to engage in contentious politics" (Tarrow, 2011:32). Where Tilly focuses on the internal structure and resources available to the movement, Tarrow sees mobilization mostly as a product of external factors, primarily on the political arena. Movements increase their activity level in response to openings in the political opportunity structure, and use these to gain access to the political arena in general. What constitutes an opportunity is not defined objectively, but rather by the actors themselves, meaning that it is essential that the actors themselves believe that it is possible for them to succeed. Active and emotionally engaged individuals who identify an opportunity and are willing to take the risk to seize it, inspire others and prove that it is possible to achieve the desired goals by mobilizing. This helps the movement to spread and grow.

Even though collective action can be presented in many forms and shapes; institutionalized, disruptive, sustained or brief, most of it occurs outside the framework of established institutions. People who lack access to representative institutions often use collective action as a tool. They set forth claims that are either new or unaccepted, usually targeting the authorities (Tarrow, 2011:7). Contentious politics is at the roots of social movements, because they are often the only resource that ordinary people that are contesting government policies have access to. Even the apolitical movements might find themselves in conflict with the government, since the authorities are responsible for maintaining law and order (Calhoun, 1994:21). Contentious collective action is conflicting, because it brings the ordinary layman into confrontations with the authorities (Tarrow, 2011:8). This gives social movements a very potent element, in that they empower ordinary people to challenge the societal norm, produce solidarities and assert themselves outside the fortified arena of general politics.

2.4 Sustaining Mobilization

The three approaches differ mainly in their view on what it takes to sustain mobilization over time, and thereby to become a social movement. Tarrow defines incidents of mobilization as contentious episodes, defined as the use of disruptive techniques to prove a political point and/or change government policies. To qualify as a social movement, it is necessary to be able to sustain a high activity level while confronting a powerful contender[13]. The key to maintaining a high activity level under pressure is social solidarity; the participants must have

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[13] For more on this argument, see McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001.

acknowledged their common purpose and goal, and identify with the objectives of the movement (Tarrow, 2011:11). If the movement is able to tap into a shared identity, preferably based on nation, ethnicity or religion as these have been proven to be more reliable than for example class, they are better suited to face their contenders. If they are unable to sustain their claim, the movement will evaporate and the members will become isolated.

Resource Mobilization theorists focus on organization as a key to maintaining social movements over time. As one social movement can be represented by more than one social movement organization, they compete for resources (Flikke, 2006:15). Political Opportunity Structure theorists sees all interaction within the movement as positive; if one organization is active, it lowers the costs of participation for other organizations and inspires further action. This in turn increases the resources available to all movements (Flikke, 2006). When an organization becomes successful, i.e. affecting the policies and achieving their goals, it often becomes a more exclusive organization, because the goal of institutionalizing its power becomes more important than being all-encompassing with regards to membership (Flikke, 2006:16). This may cause friction to erupt among the organizations.

Where Political Opportunity Structure focuses on factors external to the social movement, Resource Mobilization theory emphasizes the internal processes and the movement's relationship with its members. So where Political Opportunity Structure describes the movement's relations to its surroundings and its position in an institutional sphere, the Resource Mobilization theory and Relative Deprivation theory provide a better understanding of the internal processes and the societal and cultural aspects of mobilization. The theoretical traditions are divided by their focus on internal and external factors that influence mobilization (Polletta and Jasper, 2001:283). Including all three traditions allows for a more exhaustive and meticulous analysis of political mobilization.

2.5 Accommodation or Repression

As the activities and responsibilities of the nation state expanded and comprised increasingly larger parts of society in the 19th century, social movements have directed their attention towards the governments, "centralizing the targets of collective action" (Tarrow, 2011:85). This has also had an integrating effect on social movements, making their demands broader and more elaborate, as they were able to hold the government accountable for their welfare. The type of regime, autocratic or democratic, has an effect on mobilization in two ways; it

determines what type of mobilization that is likely to occur, what repertoire of contention the population can employ, and it determines the type of response the movements are likely to receive from the government.

Democratic institutions affect both the diffusion and level of political conflict (Zimmermann, 2010). The more advanced and progressive they are, the smaller the chance is of a rebellion (Gurr, 2000). Solid and durable democratic states will experience less violent political mobilization than autocratic and undemocratic states. States in democratic transition often experience a significant increase in political activity and rebellions (Gurr, 2000), and this corresponds with Tarrow's theory on political opportunity structure. When a state is under such a fundamental change as a transition to democracy, the political arena is open to new actors who will take advantage of this. How the government responds to the mobilization will also affect how it develops further.

2.5.1 Government Responses to Mobilization

Gurr defines the government's response as decisive, determining whether or not the mobilization becomes violent or turns to more productive ways of mobilization. He claims that the governments that meet mobilization with reform rarely get targeted for rebellion. However, government-imposed inequalities are often a source of anger and deprivation among the public, especially in less democratic states. If ruled by repression and denied the right to protest and use democratic ways to let their opinion be heard, people are more likely to go underground and employ more unconventional tactics (Gurr, 2011).

Tilly has developed a dichotomy of political repression and political accommodation/facilitation to determine the outcomes of the efforts of social movements. If the movement is met with a governmental response of accommodation, it might either be institutionalized as part of the political structure, or the movement might dissolve, having achieved what it set out to. If the movement is repressed, it might grow stronger in its intent to succeed, take even more drastic measures, or dissolve (Tilly, 1978a: 100).

Tarrow has developed this dichotomy further and established three sets of potential outcomes: he has categorized the potential outcomes of political mobilization into three categories: exhaustion and polarization, facilitation and institutionalization, or violence and repression (Tarrow, 2011:147-149). Exhaustion and polarization often occur when the movement has been unable to achieve results for a longer period of time. The members in the

periphery of the movement will most likely be the first to stop participating. As social movements are often dependent on a substantial number of members to be powerful, the individuals at the core of the movement might panic at the loss of members and radicalize the contention in response (Tarrow, 2011). This leads to a polarization between the members who are willing to compromise and seek a peaceful resolution with the government on the one hand, and those who seek conflict with the government on the other.

Facilitation and institutionalization occur when the movement moves away from radical and disruptive forms of contention, and seeks to compromise with the government, maybe to retain the support of their members. Institutionalization might also involve the movement taking on a more official form, for example as a political party. Facilitation from the government might come in the shape of a political reform; however, reforms seldom satisfy all the demands of the social movements, as these tend to be too radical to accommodate (Tarrow, 2011).

Repression is traditionally used by authoritarian regimes in response to contentious politics. They can use violence and imprisonment to confine the movements and effectively put a stop to their activities. If the acts of repression are arbitrary, it is likely that the movement will become radicalized, angered by the unjust acts of repression. In democratic societies selective facilitation and selective repression is more common. These governments can encourage moderation, and is able to fend off the most radical segments of the social movements (Tarrow, 2011).

2.5.2 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has outlined three theoretical directions that all relate to the phenomenon of political mobilization. By utilizing aspects from several theories I have created an analytical toolbox with the necessary tools to analyze political mobilization amongst Georgian IDPs. I have included Gurr's theory on Relative Deprivation as it is highly relevant for the analysis of political mobilization amongst Georgian IDPs. The IDPs are united by their shared experience of deprivation, meaning that the reason they form a group is based on their experience of displacement. Whether or not they are able to use the deprivation as motivation to mobilize depends on the level of collective identity. A strong collective identity provides fertile grounds for mobilization, as it produces solidarity and loyalty between the members. If they do not share a collective identity, but rather are defined as a social category, the IDPs will

need a higher level of organization to be able to sustain mobilization over time. I have included both Resource Mobilization theory and the theory of Political Opportunity Structure because it is important to examine both the internal and external factors that influence political mobilization. By taking a look at the inner dynamics of the IDP movement as well as how they relate to and are influenced by, their surroundings, I am able to present the reader with a more comprehensive insight into the dynamics of political mobilization of Georgian IDPs.

3 Methodology

In the following chapter I will present the methodological framework used to gather data for this thesis.

3.1 Research Design

Even though I had insight into the current situation for Georgian IDPs with regards to housing and employment, I knew very little about their role in Georgian politics. As there was little available research on the subject, this thesis had to be exploratory and inductive in its nature. Knowing little of what I could expect in the field I needed a methodological framework that allowed for changes to be made along the way. The flexibility offered by qualitative methodology made it the better choice. I then decided to do a case study, since my primary goal was for the thesis to present the reader with a hermeneutical understanding of the subject, meaning that the rationality and reality of the respondents is conveyed without any cultural biases interfering on my behalf.

The choice of doing a case study allowed me to gather information from several different types of respondents through in-depth interviews, which in turn allowed me to see the subject at hand from different points of view. I have primarily based this thesis on data gathered through these in-depth qualitative interviews. To contextualize my own findings, and to verify some of the information given by my informants, I have used secondary sources. Some of these were written with a political or humanitarian agenda. I have chosen to disregard the lack of objectivity, because they serve as an excellent illustration of the sentiments and animosities that have been part of the conflict from the beginning. When such sources are used I have listed it in the footnotes.

Robert Yin defines case studies as the best choice when the goal of the study is to conduct:

> […] an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 2009:18).

The negative aspect of conducting a case study is the lack of opportunity to generalize the results back to a larger universe of units. It should therefore be mentioned that I do not claim these findings to be valid or applicable to all IDP populations. The findings of this exploratory

study might still offer some valuable insights into the specific context at hand, and they might say something about the general situation for Georgian IDPs today. Even though I started with a clear perception of what I wanted to research, I gained a lot of knowledge while preparing for my fieldwork, and thus the idea has developed through all stages of the research process (Thagaard, 2009). I did a review of relevant literature, developed the research question, familiarized myself with existing theories on political mobilization and social movements, and used the operationalization of the central terms and concepts as a reference for developing my interview guide.

Conducting a case study requires a high level of thoroughness and stringent analysis on behalf of the researcher, and it is important not to mix ones own cultural bias and preconceived notions into the analysis. Upon arrival in Georgia I conducted a short group interview with Georgians employed in the NGO sector. During these interviews I went over the operationalizations of the main terms, and the interview guide. This was done to give me an impression of what content of meaning the respondents would ascribe the different terms, and to ensure the validity of the terms used, and to correct for any preconceived notions on my behalf. I also checked to see if any of the questions could be perceived as offensive or intrusive. It proved to be very useful, as some of the operationalizations had to be elaborated on and clarified.

I then proceeded to alter my interview guide so that it corresponded with the new information. While working on the interview guide I systematized the questions in categories connected to mobilization. This made it easier to ensure that all topics were touched upon during the interviews (Repstad, 2007:78). This alteration of the interview guide also provided me with a second chance to correct my own preconceived notions of political mobilization.

3.2 Qualitative Interviews

Interviewing is one of the most frequently used approaches in qualitative methods (Thagaard, 2009), and it is also the approach I have chosen to use for my fieldwork. I conducted in-depth interviews with both IDPs and experts on IDP issues, and this was done so as to balance out any potential interests the respondents might have in altering their answers to influence the results (Repstad, 2007:81). A complete list of respondents is given in the appendix. I employed two different principles of selection when choosing informants. To find IDPs willing to be interviewed I used the snowball-principle (Repstad, 2007:57). By identifying

one informant and letting her guide me to the next, I was able to reach people I would otherwise not have found. This method of selecting informants also ensures a very central principle; participation based on voluntary and informed consent (Dalland, 2000:223). The drawback of interviewing people from the same network is that it might involve a loss of diversity in the answers given. I have corrected for this by interviewing respondents from different locations. I conducted interviews in the cities of Poti, Zugdidi and Tbilisi. Since the IDPs live mainly in Tbilisi and in the Samegrelo region it was necessary to conduct interviews in both places. My former experience dictated that the living conditions and level of employment could be very different from region to region, so it was therefore important to conduct interviews in both a rural and an urban setting. I did ten interviews with IDPs in Poti, and ten interviews with IDPs living in Tbilisi.

Selecting expert respondents for this research was a challenge because there are many actors operating in Georgia who claim to represent or work with IDP issues. I therefore contacted the institutionalized, formal organizations representing IDPs first, such as the exile government and the MRA. Respondents from these organizations needed to be interviewed because they represent IDP interests in the governmental structure of Georgia. To access experts on IDP issues that were not part of the formal structure, I asked the IDPs who they felt best represented their interests, and then contacted these persons for interviews. The IDPs led me to NGO representatives, community leaders (Mama Saxlisis), and academics who have participated in the public debate on IDP issues.

I also made sure the respondents knew what the information would be used for and that they could withdraw from the interview at any time (Repstad, 2007). Many of the IDPs avoided or refused to answer some questions that they felt were too sensitive. This made gathering information on those topics difficult. I therefore included some IDPs who worked in the NGO sector. These persons are listed as IDPs in the overview of respondents, but could comment on the issues both as IDPs and as professionals. This made it easier to talk about sensitive issues in a less personal way, and I felt that the information given was both accurate and sincere.

The interviews with the IDPs were conducted in their homes, and I conducted some of them during the day and some in the evening. This was done purposely because the women are often at home with the children during the day, and I wanted to make sure that I had access to their point of view as well. It proved beneficial to conduct interviews in the homes

of the respondents, as I got the impression that they were not afraid to be outspoken about their opinions in this setting. The downside of conducting interviews in their homes was that as many of the interviews with IDPs were not scheduled beforehand, they might have felt my presence to be a bit intrusive, and some might have been eager to end the interview. Interviews with experts were either conducted in their office or at a café. As these respondents had training in dealing with the media and are accustomed to speaking in public, they were often longer and more elaborate than the interviews conducted with the IDPs. Some of the expert respondents were also quite skilled in avoiding uncomfortable subjects, which oftentimes led to me having to ask the same questions more than once. Altogether I interviewed thirty respondents, twenty IDPs and ten experts. I decided on the number of interviews by using the principle of saturation, meaning that when I started to get the same information from different respondents I decided to stop interviewing (Thagaard, 2009).

I prepared only one interview guide, but tailored it to the respondent when I was interviewing experts such as government officials or NGO representatives. Some of the interviews were conducted in English, some in Russian and some in Georgian using a certified interpreter. The interviews conducted with an interpreter were a bit difficult because I had no way of knowing for sure that the interpreter was translating my exact questions. I was accustomed to talking to people via an interpreter during my internship in DRC, and I felt I had control over the potential pitfalls. Using an interpreter challenges the linguistic equivalence, but I tried to prevent misunderstandings by explaining and giving examples of what I meant by the different terms before the interview started or as we went along.

Group discussion in Abasha. The people in the picture were not interviewed for this thesis.

The information gathered during the interviews will primarily be presented in the analysis as quotes, and I have juxtaposed quotes from different respondents to illustrate the variety of perceptions and opinions of the respondents. It is important to underline that the information gathered from the IDPs is not representative for all IDPs, but that it serves as indications of prevalent sentiments among the IDP population. The expert respondents' statements reflect the opinions of the person interviewed, and some of them are anonymous because they specifically asked to be. This applies to the representative from the exile government, the representatives from the MRA and some of the NGO representatives.

3.3 Recording and Transcribing

I recorded the interviews where permission was given to do so. The informants were assured that the information gathered would not be used for any other purpose than this thesis, and they were also informed that the recordings would be deleted when the thesis had been completed. I have only used the recordings while transcribing the interviews. The benefits of using a tape recorder are that it strengthens the reliability of the data and that all the quotes are *ad verbum* the words of the respondents.

3.4 Positionality

The researcher's position has the potential to affect the results of the analysis. External characteristics and associations might be crucial to how the respondent perceives the interviewer. I tried to be careful not to be associated with DRC when I was in the field, but at times it was not possible because I used an interpreter from this organization. This might have led to the respondent thinking that they might gain something from being interviewed, as DRC is a powerful NGO in Georgia, especially in the Samegrelo region. However, I carefully explained that this was not the case and that I just represented myself.

Finally, I strived to create a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere, especially while interviewing IDPs. I was acutely aware that I as the interviewer defined and controlled the situation in that I introduced the topic of conversation and asked, sometimes critical, follow-up questions. I therefore began each interview with the IDPs with questions about their personal history and their daily lives in displacement. I found that this initial conversation proved that I took them seriously and that I was interested in creating attention towards their situation. Being able to convey that I had their best interest at heart was important both for me personally, as I felt it made the situation less intrusive, and it helped kick start the interview. Already having spent a considerable amount of time in Georgia I was already familiar with the culture and was able to navigate the social norms with ease, this proved to be of value as I think it made both me and the respondents more comfortable with the situation.

4 Historical Background

The aim of this chapter is to highlight important political and historical events that might have had an influence on the political lives of IDPs in Georgia. Events that have altered the political system and situation in Georgia will also be included to provide a better understanding of the present situation. An historical account of the last twenty years necessarily implies some simplification, but I have tried to focus on those events that are most important to the subject at hand. Completely neutral and objective literature is difficult to come by when researching the history of the Georgian/Abkhaz conflict, but by presenting sources from both camps a balanced overview can be achieved.

4.1 Geography and Ethnic Diversity in Abkhazia

It is important to understand the geographical context, because in "the Caucasus, history starts with geography" (Zürcher, 2007:12). Abkhazia is situated northwest in Georgia, on the coast of the Black Sea south of the Russian border. The Ingur/Enguri River[14] separates Abkhazia from Georgia proper, coinciding roughly with the *de facto* border. The capital of Abkhazia is Sukhum/Sokhumi, situated 73 km north of the *de facto* border. Since the war in 2008, when the Abkhaz annexed the Kodor/i Gorge, the territory of Abkhazia has largely coincided with the territory of the former Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Abkhazia (ASSR) (Trier, Lohm and Szakonyi, 2010:7). The Abkhaz republic is named after the Abkhaz people, but has been, and still is, populated by several different nationalities. A Soviet census, conducted in 1989, showed that out of Abkhazia's 525,000 inhabitants 45,7% were Georgians [15], 14,3% Russians, 17,3% Abkhaz and 14,6% Armenians (Zürcher, 2007:117)[16]. The number of Georgians residing in Abkhazia has varied throughout the twentieth century, but was significantly reduced during the 1990s as a consequence of the war.

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14 Almost all names have a Georgian and an Abkhaz equivalent. As the spelling is very important to the protagonists and signifies a political standpoint, I will write both forms.
15 The percentage of Georgians living in Abkhazia was not always high; from 1914 to 1989 the number of Georgians went from 28% to 45.5%. The increase was caused by Stalin's policy of resettling Georgians to the southern part of Georgia.
This heightened the competition over scarce land and increased the animosity felt by the different groups. After 1978 reverse Soviet policy strengthened the rights of the Abkhaz and reversed many of the discriminatory practices.
16 The numbers might not be 100% accurate, as the data could have been manipulated. The figures therefore need to be treated with caution.

The Georgians who were displaced belong to the ethnic group Megrelians. This ethnic group is differentiated from the general population primarily by their language, Megrelian, a language without a literary standard, used largely as a vernacular within families and between friends (Trier, Lohm and Szakonyi, 2010:52). It is not common in Georgia to look at Megrelian as a separate ethnic identity, and it is often underlined that the Megrelians are Georgian, their regional identity is thus inextricably related to the national identity (Ibid: 53). Megrelians primarily live in the western part of Georgia, more specifically in the district of Zemo Svaneti-Samegrelo, south of the *de facto* border. The IDPs are now spread all over the country, but the majority resides in the capital and in the Samegrelo region[17].

The Abkhaz form an ethnic group on the territory of Abkhazia ,with a population of around 216,000 according to a census conducted in 2003[18]. The Abkhaz language is a Northwest Caucasian tongue, and they use the Cyrillic alphabet. Russian and Abkhazian are the two official languages of Abkhazia, but recent laws have mandated an increase in the usage of Abkhaz in public and governmental documents[19]. About 75% of the Abkhaz population is Orthodox Christians, and the Orthodox Church of Abkhazia is administered by the Eparchy of Abkhazia. Around 10% are Sunni Muslim[20].

4.2 Foundations for Conflict

A renaissance of national projects occurred in the member states of the Soviet Union when the policies of glasnost' and perestroika were launched in 1985 and 1987. Reestablishing a national identity and consolidating territorial integrity became a top priority for several of the member states when these issues were allowed to resurface in the increasingly open political climate. However, the member states were not the only ones trying to reestablish themselves;

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[17] Master Thesis by Bobby Svitzer at Malmö university, available at http://dspace.mah.se:8080/bitstream/handle/2043/14250/Thesis%20final%20version.pdf?sequence=2 accessed 09.11.2012

[18] The Republic of Abkhazia's website, available at http://www.therepublicofabkhazia.org/pages/who-we-are/population.shtml accessed 09.11.2012

[19] The Republic of Abkhazia's website, available at http://www.therepublicofabkhazia.org/pages/who-we-are/population.shtml accessed 09.11.2012

[20]The Republic of Abkhazia's website, available at http://www.therepublicofabkhazia.org/pages/who-we-are/religions.shtml accessed 09.11.2012

the Soviet policy of national delimitation, developed by Lenin, had created several sub-state level entities that were given different levels of autonomy in the Soviet hierarchy.

> The right of all the nations forming part of Russia freely to secede and form independent states must be recognised. To deny them this right, or to fail to take measures guaranteeing its practical realisation, is equivalent to supporting a policy of seizure or annexation[21].

The Soviet ideology viewed ethnic groups as nations with a right to an autonomous separate political unit within a Soviet republic. This primordial view, regarding nations as nascent, also implied that the nations could demise and die without the security that autonomy represented (Zürcher, 2007:37). This constituted a threat that in turn lent urgency to the claims of independence set forth by the different sub-state entities. Delegating autonomy to these entities worked well within the framework of the Soviet Union, as the sub-state entities were able to co-exist with the Republics through treaty-based relations. When the Soviet Union fell it became clear that the Soviet policy of national delimitation had created fertile soil for conflict between the autonomous regions and the republics.

This was also true for Abkhazia, the region had been granted status as a separate Soviet republic in 1922, but was reduced to an Autonomous Republic within Georgia (the ASSR) in 1931[22]. The ethnic Abkhaz were regarded as the titular nationality of Abkhazia, even though they were not in majority. Relevant to the notion of homeland was the understanding that the local *nomenklatura* should somehow represent the titular nationality of the "homeland (Trier, Lohm and Szakonyi, 2010:21). The status of titular nationality implied that the majority of members in the party apparatus in Abkhazia were Abkhaz. When the Union fell the Abkhaz found themselves outnumbered by Georgians, partly because the Soviet authorities from 1937 to 1953, had resettled Georgians to the southernmost region of Abkhazia, Gal/i, oftentimes against their will[23]. The Soviet understanding of the nation, instilled in both Abkhaz and Georgians, implied that the loss of autonomy would essentially mean the demise of their nation (Tishkov, 1999). This underlying threat led to the domination of ethno-nationalist sentiments in the Abkhazian state building project (Trier, Lohm and

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[21] Marxist's website, available at
http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/7thconf/29e.htm accessed 09.11.2012
[22] The Republic of Abkhazia's website, available at
http://www.therepublicofabkhazia.org/pages/road-to-independence/timeline.shtml accessed 09.11.2012
[23] The Republic of Abkhazia's website, available at
http://www.therepublicofabkhazia.org/pages/road-to-independence/timeline.shtml accessed 09.11.2012

Szakonyi, 2010). The fear of losing their autonomy, culture, and language convinced the Abkhaz that they needed to keep the demographical balance in their favor, as and maintain control politically.

The discourse in the early 1990s revolved primarily around each side trying to establish their ethno-genesis on the lands of Abkhazia, under the assumption that the side that could prove that they were the true heir to Abkhazia should control the political destiny of the region (Trier, Lohm & Szakonyi, 2010:19).

> The escalation of tension between Georgians and Abkhaz in the 1980s, the outbreak of war with the Georgians, and the experiences of the post-war years have all served to exacerbate Abkhaz fears- already nurtured at the beginning of the twentieth century and intensified during the Stalin period-of what many Abkhazians perceive as a concerted policy by Georgians to assimilate them and make them a minority in their homeland (Trier, Lohm and Szakonyi, 2010:9).

The Abkhaz were not alone in employing nationalistic rhetoric to corroborate their goals. Zviad Gamsakhurdia, a Megrelian writer, was elected Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Georgia in 1990 under the slogan "Georgia for Georgians". He had played a central role in organizing demonstrations for the secession from the Soviet Union, one of which came to play an important part in the secession as Georgia's "selected trauma": on April 9th, 1989, a peaceful demonstration against the Soviet rule was held in Tbilisi, leading to the Soviet forces brutally breaking up the event. Many were injured and some 20 people killed[24]. The consequences were an increase in anti-Soviet sentiments in the Georgian population and an increase in the tensions between Abkhazia and Georgia. On April 9th, 1991, exactly two years after the Soviet massacre, the Georgian parliament passed a declaration of independence. Zviad Gamsakhurdia was elected president in May of the same year.

4.3 Three Wars

The now independent state and aspiring democracy of Georgia experienced severe problems after the secession. The nationalistic sentiment present both in Georgia proper and in the breakaway regions manifested itself in hostile incidents, eventually leading to a full-scale war. In a four-year period three separate wars took place, overlapping each other in time. The first war started in South Ossetia in November 1989, escalated in January 1991 and reached its

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[24] Alexander Mikaberidze's website, available at http://rustaveli.tripod.com/9aprili.html accessed 09.11.2012

most hostile phase in June 1992. The second war started in December 1991 and was fought between rivaling Georgian groups trying to establish their political power in Tbilisi. It culminated in the ousting of President Zviad Gamsakhurdia in a coup d'état in 1992, leaving the country to be ruled by a military council consisting of leaders from the opposition, defectors from the Gamsakhurdia camp and various paramilitary forces. The third war was fought over Abkhazia's independence; it started in August 1992 and ended in September 1993 with the withdrawal of Georgian forces. Together the three wars cost up to 13,000 lives, wounded 8,000 and uprooted as many as 300,000 and left the country in a state of utter chaos (Zürcher, 2007:116). Almost the entire Georgian population of Abkhazia, approximately 240,000 persons, was displaced (Trier, Lohm and Szakonyi, 2010:17).

The Abkhaz victory was largely made possible by the fact that they already had their own autonomy and that they were equipped with political institutions and national symbols that facilitated mobilization and secession. As the Abkhaz were considered to be the titular nationality of Abkhazia, they were overrepresented in the political elite and had access to economic resources that could fuel into the fight for independence (Zürcher, 2007).

4.4 Post Conflict Georgia

The three wars devastated those affected, but the war in Abkhazia had one particular consequence; it forced 240,000 ethnic Georgians (mostly Megrelians) to flee from Abkhazia to Georgia proper. After the war the fragile peace was partially maintained by the Russian presence. Russia brokered a cease-fire agreement, also known as the Moscow agreement, between Abkhazia and Georgia in 1994, where the two parties agreed to cease the use of force. UN observers were placed on both sides of the *de facto* border, and Georgia agreed to join the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (Zürcher, 2007). Russian forces were deployed as peacekeeping forces with a mandate from the CIS to four military bases in Georgia.

Georgian statehood was largely unconsolidated after the three wars. The anti-Soviet movement, run by Zviad Gamsakhurdia, had demolished what was left of the Soviet institutions, and the political transition from communism was quickly turning Georgia into a failed state. The new Georgian elite was not powerful enough to consolidate statehood or to unite the national movement, and as a result paramilitary forces emerged (Zürcher, 2007:148). Two of these groups dominated Georgia until 1993; The National Guard and the Mkhedrioni

(Zürcher, 2007: 226). Together these two criminal groupings formed a Military Council. In December 1991 they cooperated to oust Gamsakhurdia from power, forcing him to flee the country in January 1992[25].

4.5 Shevardnadze Becomes President

The Military Council invited former Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union, Eduard Shevardnadze, back from Moscow to chair the State Council in March 1992. Elections were held shortly thereafter and Shevardnadze was elected, as the only candidate, to the position of Chairman of Parliament[26]. He established a firm rule and managed to consolidate his power and marginalize the military council. By the time of the second election in 1995 his party "The Citizens' Union of Georgia" (CUG) had become the ruling party.

Economic clans and elite groups created political parties to work for their own goals. The fact that the various parties did not reflect any real currents in the population meant that control over the administrative resources such as the bureaucracy became extremely important, as they represented the only guarantee to maintain power. In 1999 new parliamentary elections were held. CUG won again with 41.47% of the votes[27]. In the presidential elections in 2000, Shevardnadze won with 79% of the votes[28].

The Shevardnadze administration strongly supported the Abkhaz Government-in-Exile, which had been transferred to Georgia after the conflict, as the primary representative for IDP issues.

> The Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia aka the Abkhaz Government-in-Exile was established after the 1993 expulsion of Georgians from Abkhazia. Initially it was made up largely of ethnic Georgian government officials, who had fled from Sukhum/Sokhumi (Trier, Lohm and Szakonyi, 2010: 31).

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[25] The National Encyclopedia's website, available at http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Europe/Georgia-HISTORY.html#b accessed 09.11.2012

[26] The National Encyclopedia's website, available at http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Europe/Georgia-HISTORY.html#b accessed 09.11.2012

[27] OSCE's website, available at http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/georgia/15612 accessed 09.11.2012

[28] OSCE's website, available at http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/georgia/15579 accessed 09.11.2012

Their vocal leadership was used by Shevardnadze to put pressure on the Abkhaz *de facto* authorities. Many of the IDPs rejected the military stance taken by the Government-in-Exile, but they had few other organizations representing them in the public discourse. Shevardnadze's strategy towards the IDP issue was to maintain *status quo*, keeping the IDPs under the illusion that return to Abkhazia was right around the corner, and constantly pushing the deadline. But there was taken little concrete action to keep this promise[29].

In 1999 Shevardnadze moved to reduce the importance of the role of the Government-in-Exile by cutting down the number of employees and funding to the organ. He then initiated a policy of temporary integration, meaning that the NGOs working within Georgia were allowed to help the IDPs, but not to give aid that could be considered permanent, such as durable housing solutions. Temporary integration, an oxymoron, was executed as a compromise between the government and the NGOs. The Shevardnadze administration was afraid that pursuing integration would be perceived as moving away from the goal of return (Matveeva, 2005:17). Deputies of the Supreme Council of Abkhazia represented the IDPs in Parliament under the Shevardnadze administration. They were elected before the secession from the Soviet Union and remained in parliament as new elections could not take place. Known for being a vocal and radical group, they focused specifically on return (Ibid: 19). The Saakashvili administration removed the MPs who represented IDPs, and the interests of IDPs are now represented through the majoritarian system. This led to the loss of representation of IDP interests in parliament (Ibid).

4.5.1 Fighting Erupts Anew

Fighting erupted again in the Gal/i region in May 1998, Georgian paramilitary groups attacked the Abkhaz army, which in turn lost control of the Gal/i region. The hostilities lasted for six days and resulted in Abkhaz victory over the Georgian guerillas. President Shevardnadze did not deploy Georgian military forces[30]. 35-40,000 Georgians were forced to flee their homes in Gal/i; the majority of them displaced for the second time in five years (Matveeva, 2005:35). The short war also led to the destruction of 1,500 houses, set on fire by

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[29] Dr. Anna Matveeva, 2005 "New Approach to IDP assistance", IDMC's website, available at http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BC2FE/postSearch?createdocument accessed 09.11.2012 Page 14-15

[30] Le Monde Diplomatique's website, available at http://mondediplo.com/1998/12/10georgia accessed 09.11.2012

the Abkhaz. Many of the IDPs who were displaced from the Gal/i region were allowed to return soon after the incident, but those displaced from other parts of Abkhazia were not able to go back[31].

4.6 The Rose Revolution

Even though the Presidential committee under Shevardnadze had control over the administrative resources, it did not impose any restrictions on the media. This led to the emergence of many free media channels and NGOs. The TV channel Rustavi-2 became especially influential as they gave voice to the opposition, led by Mikheil Saakashvili. He was born in Tbilisi and got his law degree in the US, and at the time of the parliamentary elections in 2003 he had become the young energetic face of the opposition[32]. As Minister of Justice under the Shevardnadze administration from 2000, he implemented strong reforms against corruption in Georgia. When the parliamentary elections of 2003 were deemed to be; *characterized by a clear lack of political will by the governmental authorities to organize a genuine democratic election process, resulting in widespread and systematic election fraud[33]* by OSCE, Saakashvili and a united opposition rejected the results of the election and demanded Shevardnadze's resignation from the presidential office[34]. The opposition was strong, united and well organized, and as they now could reach people via television, they were also popular in many areas of the country. Shevardnadze still had control over the administrative resources, but he did not enjoy the same level of popularity as before. The day before the election, Rustavi-2 published a poll where the majority of the votes would go to the opposition. The discrepancy between the poll and the official election results made it clear that Shevardnadze had opted for fraud and that the numbers in his favor were inflated. This led to mass protests in Tbilisi, and to the oppositions' occupation of Parliament. Shevardnadze was forced to resign. The absence of violence and the symbolic use of roses throughout the revolution led it to be called "The Rose Revolution".

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[31] Le Monde Diplomatique's website, available at http://mondediplo.com/1998/12/10georgia accessed 09.11.2012

[32] Official website of Georgian President, available at http://www.president.gov.ge/en/President/Biography accessed 09.11.2012

[33] OSCE's website, available at http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/georgia/17822 accessed 09.11.2012

[34] Official website of Georgian President, available at http://www.president.gov.ge/en/President/Biography accessed 09.11.2012

New Presidential elections were held in January 2004, and Mikheil Saakashvili, from the National Movement, won with 96 percent of the votes. His charter focused primarily on reuniting the breakaway regions with Georgia proper, fighting for the return of the IDPs, and abolishing corruption. In addition to this he took a clear stand against Russia, and wanted Georgia to move to the West by gaining membership in NATO and the EU[35].

In Abkhazia the new Georgian leadership has been perceived as erratic. The expressed wish to join NATO has reinforced the Abkhaz perception that Georgia is preparing to invade Abkhazia (Trier, Lohm and Szakonyi, 2010:9). The military resources available to the Abkhaz are insignificant compared to what Georgia has control over, which might have contributed to Abkhazia establishing closer ties to Russia (Trier, Lohm and Szakonyi, 2010:10). Russia considers Abkhazia to be part of its "near-abroad" territory, and it is perceived to be of vital importance for the Russian Federation ((Trier, Lohm and Szakonyi, 2010: 14). This does not necessarily mean that the Abkhaz are comfortable with the Russian embrace, as it might represent a risk of assimilation and annexation; their tolerance of Russia is more based on their isolation and their economic and military dependency on Russia (Trier, Lohm and Szakonyi, 2010:14).

After the hostilities in the early 1990s the relationship between Georgia and its break-away regions were characterized by the lack of explicit hostilities, apart from the six days of war in May 1998, but also by an absence of peace. In 1996 the CIS imposed sanctions on Abkhazia, including a full trade embargo, making it difficult for the people remaining in Abkhazia to survive (Zürcher, 2007:8). Illegal trade with agricultural goods became the primary income for many Abkhaz people. When Vladimir Putin became president of Russia in 2000, he lifted the policies of isolation towards both Abkhazia and South Ossetia. By 2002 investments began flowing into Abkhazia from Russia (Trier, Lohm and Szakonyi, 2010:8). In July 2002 Russian passports were offered to 150,000 residents of Abkhazia, (Ibid). In 2006 Russia initiated an economic embargo against Georgia, stopping all imports of Georgian wine and other merchandises (Königs, 2007).

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[35] Jim Nichol, 2009, "Georgia and NATO enlargement: Issues and Implications" available at http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/124930.pdf accessed 09.11.2012
see also Marietta S.Konigs article available at http://www.core-hamburg.de/documents/yearbook/english/06/Koenig-en.pdf accessed 09.11.2012

4.7 Five Days in August

A number of events lead to an increase in tension between Russia and Georgia and culminated in the 2008 war. A natural starting point is February 2008, when Kosovo declared its independence. In response, President Putin stated that the western states' recognition of Kosovo set precedence for the recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In March Russia announced its withdrawal from the 1996 CIS treaty that banned economic, financial and other links with Abkhazia. In continuation of this, in a presidential decree from April 16th instructed the Russian government and regions to open political, social and economic ties to Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This was interpreted in Tbilisi as a move from Russia to annex the two regions. On June 7th Georgia reported that Russian aircrafts were observed in Georgian airspace over South Ossetia. The tension increased in South Ossetia on August 1st and 2nd, when there were reported casualties on both sides as a consequence of shelling and sniper attacks[36].

In the evening of August 7th the hostilities escalated into full-blown war as Russian forces invaded Georgia. Georgian forces entered South Ossetia, but were on forced out by Russian forces on August 8th. On August 9th Russian forces bombed the Black Sea port in Poti and the towns of Senaki and Gori. In the evening a second front was opened in Abkhazia by the Abkhaz, they attacked the Georgian controlled Kodor/i Gorge. Russia employed 10,000 new troops in both Gori and Zugdidi, and on August 10th the Russian military was able to take control over the highway that connects east and west Georgia. However, on August 12th the two parties agreed to sign a peace treaty that involved the withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgian soil[37]. The 2008 war led to an increase in Georgia's IDP population, as 26,000 people were displaced from South Ossetia. With the aid of western donors the Georgian government was able to accommodate these IDPs in a speedy manner by building cottages for them close to the *de facto* border to South Ossetia[38].

Even though the focal point of the war was South Ossetia, it still had a spillover effect on Abkhazia. Abkhazia declared a military mobilization on the 10th of August 2008 to drive back the 1,000 Georgian troops that were situated in the Kodor/i Valley. Clashes then

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[36] From Central Asia-Caucasus Institute's website, available at http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/silkroadpapers/0808Georgia-PP.pdf accessed 09.11.2012

[37] Ibid

[38] MRA's website, available at http://mra.gov.ge/main/ENG#section/33 accessed 09.11.2012

continued to occur in this area until the 13th of August, when Georgian troops withdrew, along with around 1,500 civilians[39]. This time around, the number of casualties was low, but the renewed conflict forced many of the IDPs who had already returned into renewed displacement. The war also effectively stopped any new large-scale return of the displaced (Tarkhan-Mouravi, 2009).

4.8 Georgia's Way Forward

Georgia faces challenges, not only with regards to Russia and the breakaway regions, but also domestically. The Rose Revolution sprang out of a wish for a democratic Georgia, but has the Saakashvili administration been able to create it? According to Freedom House, Georgia ranked as Partly Free in 2012, and was given a score of 4 on a scale from 1-7 where 7 is the least free. It became less democratic in 2008 than it was in 1999-2000[40]. Regardless of the reduction in democracy level, the Saakashvili administration has certainly managed to reduce levels of corruption, primarily by conducting a large-scale police reform. The majority of the police force in Georgia was replaced, resulting in a visible reduction of street crime[41]. Massive popular support in the years immediately following the Rose Revolution enabled the reform, but as the years have passed the population of Georgia is no longer unequivocally supporting the energetic reformer. The parliamentary elections in 2012 were characterized by OSCE as marking a significant step towards consolidating democracy in Georgia[42]. They also marked the first democratic transition of power in Georgia, as Bidzina Ivanishvili, representing the coalition of the "Georgian Dream", was elected Prime Minister. That said there are still structural problems that lead to an unbalanced system of governance. This system is characterized by the dominance of the executive branch, which in turn is dangerous when paired with the restricted freedom of the media[43].

With regards to the IDPs the Saakashvili administration has implemented several reforms. The Georgian government succumbed to the pressure from the international

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[39] BBC's website available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7551576.stm accessed 09.11.2012

[40] http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2012/georgia - ikke I zotero

[41]Princeton University's website, available at http://www.princeton.edu/successfulsocieties/content/data/policy_note/PN_id126/Policy_Note_ID126.pdf accessed 09.11.2012

[42]OSCE's website, available at http://www.osce.org/odihr/94593 accessed 09.11.2012

[43] Istituto Affari Internazionali's website, available at http://www.iai.it/pdf/DocIAI/iai0901.pdf accessed 09.11.2012

community present in Georgia, largely represented by NGOs, and moved away from the policy of temporary integration and thereby focusing on the permanent integration of Georgian IDPs. A detailed account of the measures taken to this end will be presented in chapter 5.

5   Preconditions for Mobilization

This chapter presents an account of the Georgian IDPs' present situation. The policies on IDP issues developed by the Georgian authorities will be presented, and contrasted to an empirical description of the factors the policies aim to improve. Together with the previous chapter it aims to provide the reader with a broad understanding of the IDPs' basis for political mobilization, and a nuanced insight into the political landscape in which the IDPs are navigating. I will use the three main documents developed by Georgian authorities on the rights of IDPs together with the guiding principles on IDPs developed by the UN as framework for presenting the main challenges and goals of Georgian IDPs.

5.1 The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement

The most significant document developed for the Internally Displaced is the Guiding Principles adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1998[44]. They describe what the IDPs are entitled to immediately after displacement, their rights while in displacement and how the host state can arrange a dignified return, if possible. The principles were developed by Francis Deng for the UN, in recognition of the lack of international framework regarding IDPs. They assume that the national authorities cooperate with the IDPs with the aim of incorporating IDP rights into the national legalization. As IDPs, by definition, still remain within their state, the existing laws of the country hosting them cover their rights. In addition, a separate legal framework concerning IDPs is often needed, since internal conflicts and civil wars tend to occur within weak states that have no formalized structures to cope with the emergency of mass displacement (Zürcher, 2007). This was the situation also in Georgia when the first influx of IDPs arrived. Since then Georgian authorities have worked to establish a judicial framework, loosely based on the Guiding Principles, beginning with the Law on Internally Displaced Persons.

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[44] Oslo conference on internal displacement in 2008, available at http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025747B0037BAC5/(httpPages)/27358963822E83E4C12574E200482E9C?OpenDocument&parentunid=2A570681A06405728025747B003B5D4A
Accessed 02.11.2012

5.2 Law on Internally Displaced Persons

Georgia is one of the few countries hosting IDPs that has ratified a law outlining the responsibilities of the state authorities towards the IDPs. The Georgian Law on Internally Displaced Persons – Persecuted [45] was adopted in 1996, and since its ratification the law has formed the basis for all government actions towards IDPs.

> The law defines an IDP as:

> […] a citizen of Georgia or stateless person permanently residing in Georgia, who was forced to leave his place of permanent residency and seek asylum within the territory of Georgia due to the threat to his life, health and freedom or life, health and freedom of his family members, as a result of aggression of a foreign state, internal conflict of mass violation of human rights or as a result of events determined by the paragraph 11[…][46]

This definition is slightly narrower than that of the Guiding Principles, which is:

> […] person or groups of persons who have been forced to or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border [47]

The definition given in Georgian law does not include displacement caused by natural disasters, but deals exclusively with displacement as a consequence of internal conflict or aggression from a foreign state [48]. There is a large group (116,173 people in 2011) of "eco-migrants" displaced by natural disasters such as landslides [49]. These people are IDPs

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[45] MRA's website, available at http://mra.gov.ge/files/01-IDPs_kanoni_devnilTa_Sesaxeb.pdf Georgian version http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/Projects/idp/Georgia_IDPLaw_2006.PDF English version accessed 09.11.2012

[46] UNHCR's website, available at http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/44ab85324.pdf accessed 09.11.2012

[47] Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, Introduction Paragraph 2, available at http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/Projects/idp/GPEnglish.pdf, accessed 09.11.2012

[48] UNHCR's website, available at http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/44ab85324.pdf accessed 09.11.2012 See Article 1

[49] IDMC's website, available at http://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/(httpEnvelopes)/7545332F22D04C81C12579C600432965?OpenDocument accessed 09.11.2012

according to the definition given in the Guiding Principles, but Georgian authorities do not recognize them as such[50].

Being a person who is displaced by war or internal conflict one is, according to the law, given status as an IDP. An IDP status entitles the person to: a) Reside at a temporary place of residence, b) enjoy free utilities at a place of compact settlement, c) receive other types of assistance" Article 3, Paragraph 3 51. The governmental body responsible for ensuring the rights of IDPs is in the law identified as the MRA. The ministry is, as of October 2002 situated in Tbilisi, but has local departments all over Georgia[52]. Their main responsibilities are: keeping a complete and comprehensive register over all the IDPs with updated information on their housing situation, issuing a monthly IDP allowance and ensuring that all IDPs reside in proper accommodation. They are also obliged to help IDPs find employment [53].

5.3 State Strategy on IDPs

The second key document, ratified by the parliament in 2007, is the State Strategy on IDPs. This document is based on the Law on IDPs, but is much more specific with regards to the responsibilities of the government in creating a viable plan for the future of the Georgian IDPs. It states two equal goals: to create conditions for a dignified and safe return to the breakaway regions, and to integrate the displaced population into Georgian society[54]. Even though the two goals are mentioned as equal, the latter is the only one elaborated upon. On the government's list of seven key issues that need attention, only one deals with the issue of return. It can therefore be said that the State Strategy represents a shift towards a more active approach towards integration. When return is mentioned it is stated that: "upon resolution of the conflict, governmental agencies should be ready to support the dignified return of IDPs in

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[50]For more information visit Human Rights Georgia's website, available at http://www.humanrights.ge/index.php?a=main&pid=15163&lang=eng accessed 09.11.2012

[51]UNHCR's website, available at http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/44ab85324.pdf accessed 09.11.2012

[52] The headquarters of MRA is planned to move to Gori by January 2013

[53] UNHCR's website available at http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/44ab85324.pdf accessed 09.11.2012

[54] IDMC's website, available at http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpDocuments)/CC4E01DED8D97366C12575A60031A7B5/$file/State+Strategy+for+IDP+-+ENG.pdf%20page%202 accessed 09.11.2012

a safe environment"[55]. The goal of return can therefore not be realized before the conflict has ended, and it is not mentioned how the government works to make this happen.

The seven main issues identified are: lack of material resources (such as land), unemployment, housing conditions, health and education (quality of social services), representation of IDP interests, dependence on assistance and difficulties related to return [56]. It is not explained in detail how these issues shall be addressed, but it is a clear commitment to a more intense focus on integrating the IDPs. The State Strategy also lists a number of principles that government officials shall adhere to when implementing the strategy. Giving the ability a choice between for example different housing solutions is emphasized, and it is stated that they shall be part of all decisions that can affect their future. The involvement of IDPs in decisions concerning them is in accordance with the Guiding Principles.

5.4 The State Action Plan

The Action Plan is a decree of the Georgian government, and its implementation started in May 2010. It was originally going to be completed in 2012, but the deadline has been extended to 2014. It was made as a result of the 2008 war, and the caseload from South Ossetia is therefore included in the plan. The IDPs from South Ossetia were given durable housing solutions close to the *de facto* border shortly after being displaced. The housing was provided in a joint effort between the Georgian government and international NGOs present in Georgia at the time. The speedy accommodation of the new caseload led to dissatisfaction among the IDPs from Abkhazia, who had been displaced for two decades without receiving a durable housing solution. The Action plan's main goal is therefore to provide all IDPs with a durable housing solution and to focus more on socio-economic measures, meaning reducing IDP dependency on the state, giving the IDPs access to health care and to focus on infrastructure and livelihood. However, it is only the goal of accommodation that is elaborated upon with a concrete plan.

With the Action plan, the Georgian authorities have committed themselves to a policy of integration. By presenting, and executing, a detailed and elaborate plan to provide all IDPs

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[55] IDMC's website, available at http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpDocuments)/CC4E01DED8D97366C12575A60031A7B5/$file/State+Strategy+for+IDP+-+ENG.pdf accessed 09.11.2012
[56] IDMC's website, available at http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/(httpDocuments)/CC4E01DED8D97366C12575A60031A7B5/$file/State+Strategy+for+IDP+-+ENG.pdf accessed 09.11.2012

with adequate housing the Georgian authorities have committed themselves to the policy of integration, but only "until return becomes possible"[57]. They have in other words not completely given up on the possibility of the return of the IDPs to the breakaway regions. The focus on return induces an element of temporality to the integration of Georgian IDPs, and it is unclear if and how the two goals will be pursued simultaneously.

5.5 Political Rights of IDPs

All three legal documents issued by the Georgian government give special political rights to IDPs. Article 9 Paragraph 1 of the Law on Internally Displaced persons states that all rights of IDPs are to be protected by the state, and that "Any illegal action of the authorities may be appealed to the higher authorities or to the court according to the legislation" [58]. With this paragraph the Georgian government grants the IDPs the same rights as ordinary citizens, and the same right to appeal to the courts if their rights are violated. This also includes the right to vote and to participate in politics on all levels. This is in compliance with the guiding principles stating that:

> Internally displaced persons shall enjoy, in full equality, the same rights and freedoms under international and domestic law as do other persons in their country. They shall not be discriminated against in the enjoyment of any rights and freedoms on the ground that they are internally displaced[59].

The IDPs interviewed for this thesis stated that they had not experienced being denied the right to vote, they had however encountered problems while voting in terms of not being registered in the correct constituency (IDP, Poti, 12.02.12). The "propiska" system, residency permits given to all citizens, was abolished in Georgia in 1996, but it has *de facto* been in use in some areas of governance and more actively in some regions. This has created problems for IDPs, as many were registered in the constituency in which they resided immediately after displacement, but have since moved to other parts of the country. This has affected their

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[57] Reliefweb's website, available at http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/6F3B94146742AF284925775B0024D687-Full_Report.pdf accessed 09.11.2012
[58]UNHCR's website, available at http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/44ab85324.pdf accessed 09.11.2012 See Article 9, paragraph 2
[59] Guiding Principles' website, available at http://www.idpguidingprinciples.org/ accessed 09.11.2012. See section 1, principle 1

ability to vote in elections, to obtaine correct documentation and registration, and ultimately to secure proper living conditions and employment[60].

5.6 Allocation and Number of IDPs

This map [61] illustrates the IDP distribution of the IDP population across the country[62]. As seen on the map, the two regions that host the most IDPs are the capital Tbilisi and the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region. According to the MRA, in total 258,599 people displaced from Abkhazia have been granted IDP status[63]. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, the number of displaced people from Abkhazia was in 2011 236,000, out of which

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[60] Council of Europe's website available at http://assembly.coe.int/documents/workingdocs/doc01/edoc9262.htm accessed 09.11.2012 See article 58

[61] IDMC's website, available at http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/5941AB6D2EC196FFC125795F0030FBCA/$file/georgia-idmc-dec2011.pdf accessed 09.11.2012 2

[62] The IDPs from South Ossetia are included in this map

[63] MRA's website, available at http://mra.gov.ge/main/ENG#section/33 accessed 09.11.2012

3,000 had been displaced twice[64]. There are several other numbers in circulation, but the government's statistics seem to be the most reliable source as they are continuously updating the number according to how many people receive IDP allowance, and thus are granted status as IDPs.

5.7 Accommodation and Durable Housing Solutions

The Law on IDPs states "The State shall secure space of temporary residence for IDPs. The Ministry shall accommodate IDPs through State bodies and bodies of local self-government [...]"[65]. It is thereby the states, or more specifically the MRA's, responsibility to ensure that all IDPs enjoy proper accommodation. This is in accordance with the Guiding Principles on displacement. Immediately after displacement the majority of the IDPs received temporary shelter in public and private buildings such as hotels, schools and kindergartens. Two decades later, these housing arrangements still prevail. Forty percent of all IDPs are still residing in Collective Centers (CCs)[66], and 40,000 IDP households do not have ownership to their living arrangements (MRA Central Representative, 07.03.12). The rest have either managed to acquire better housing on their own, moved in with family and relatives (privately accommodated) or returned to their homes in the breakaway regions.

Durable housing solutions have been a central goal in all three key documents, but nothing substantial happened in this field until 2010, when the Action Plan was approved. The first stage of the plan targets the IDPs still living in CCs. According to the plan, the CCs owned by the government should be rehabilitated, and the ownership of the CC should be transferred to the IDPs for a symbolic price of 1 Lari (0.60 USD)[67]. Those who do not wish to privatize, live in collapsing CCs, or who lived in CCs that were privately owned should be offered alternative housing, primarily newly built apartments in the regions, or rehabilitated apartments in buildings owned by the government. New apartments have been built in Poti and Batumi, and there are plans to build apartment blocks in Tbilisi and Zugdidi in 2013. The

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[64] IDMC's website, available at http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/georgia accessed 09.11.2012

[65] UNHCR's website, available at http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/44ab85324.pdf accessed 09.11.2012

[66] MRA's website, available at http://mra.gov.ge/main/ENG#section/50 accessed 09.11.2012

[67] Reliefweb's webiste, available athttp://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/6F3B94146742AF284925775B0024D687-Full_Report.pdf accessed 09.11.2012

new apartments are given to the most vulnerable IDPS first, meaning those who reside in collapsing CCs.

> We try to resettle people where they have already lived. We try to offer them a housing solution that they are happy with. Often this means resettling them close to where they have lived before. The IDPs who have lived in Tbilisi should get an apartment close to Tbilisi. And those who receive an apartment in Poti are all from the Samegrelo region (Interview with Representative from MRA Central, 07.03.12).

The second stage of the Action Plan targets IDPs living in private accommodation. The IDPs who own their housing will be offered to rehabilitate it, and those who rent or stay with relatives will be offered monetary compensation to acquire housing on their own[68]. It is unclear how much of the Action Plan has been implemented, but by March 2012 the IDPs residing in collapsing CCs had been identified, interviewed and offered a new housing solution. The construction of new apartments is completed in Poti, Potskhoeetseri and Batumi, and there exist plans to start building apartments in Zugdidi.

Picture of a collapsing CC in Abasha. Apartment was without electricity, gas or water.

Dissatisfaction with the housing solutions offered by the Georgian government is common among the IDPs, regardless of what type of solution they have received. Those who reside in

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[68] Reliefweb's website, available at http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/6F3B94146742AF284925775B0024D687-Full_Report.pdf accessed 09.11.2012

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CCs are dissatisfied with the lack of space and insufficient access to infrastructure such as gas, water and electricity[69]. Arguing that it is difficult for them to achieve any real and substantial integration while residing in CCs, they feel isolated and secluded in their settlements. IDPs who reside in rehabilitated CCs are also dissatisfied with the quality of the rehabilitations, claiming that the space is insufficient for their families and that the quality of the apartments is substandard.

> Six people live in this apartment, it is 16 square meters and built underneath a staircase. I have to raise my children underneath a staircase. I used to have an apartment with 13 rooms in Abkhazia. And now I live here, in this hellhole (IDP, Tbilisi, 13.03.12).

Also privatizing the housing they have accepted is an important priority for the IDPs. Transferring ownership of the housing from the government to the IDPs is an extensive process that is currently taking place. The IDPs interviewed for this thesis express that they would feel safer if they had ownership of their apartments. That ownership could protect them against evictions and new resettlement.

> The IDPs have not been provided with ownership of the apartments they have been resettled into. This will not happen before a year has passed. The government wants to make sure that the IDPs will settle before they transfer ownership to them, but why would the IDPs settle in if they do not have ownership? The policy is contradictory. The IDPs do not have a reason to stay (Gvalia, 21.02.12).

The policy of extending the process and not transferring ownership to the IDPs immediately has been implemented because the government wants to ensure that the IDPs do not move back to the capital, but stay in the regions. The perception that this is a trick by the government adds to the feelings of insecurity on the part of the IDPs. They are reluctant to accept housing in the regions because they are not ensured ownership of their apartments. They are also skeptical about moving to the regions because they are afraid there will be a lack of available jobs there.

5.7.1 Evictions

Many of the IDPs occupy buildings that before the conflict functioned as something other than apartments. In recent years, both private owners and the authorities have initiated a number of evictions, seeking to return the buildings to their original purpose. This has first and foremost taken place in Tbilisi, where some IDPs have occupied apartments in desirable neighborhoods. In the summer of 2010, several evictions were carried out in and around

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[69] The IDPs residing in PA have been less vocal about their goals, and they are not a part of this study as they are difficult to target. This is a weakness of the study.

Tbilisi. According to Georgian law, the occupants should have been notified five days in advance, but some were only given a seven hour notice[70]. The IDPs were not offered alternative housing, and no monetary compensation was given in advance of the evictions. The government faces severe criticism for these actions (Tarkhan-Mouravi, 2009:24). The same vulnerability applies to the privately accommodated IDPs who are staying at the goodwill of family and friends, without any secure and permanent living arrangements.

5.7.2 My House vs. Abkhaz Policy on Ownership

When the IDPs fled, they left their homes and most of their belongings behind. Many left without their documents, and can therefore not prove ownership of their former homes. In February 2006, Saakashvili launched a project called " My house". This was as an attempt to establish legal rights for IDPs to their properties in Abkhazia. By using satellite images and maps to identify the buildings, they gave the IDPs deeds to their houses in the breakaway regions. As of October 2008, the MRA has received and registered 67,000 ownership declarations from IDPs[71]. However, in April 2006 the Abkhaz People's Assembly set new conditions for privatizing property within Abkhazia which determined that people who had not claimed their property in an Abkhaz court before 2003 had forfeited all their rights to that property. This means that only persons residing within Abkhazia can claim ownership to their property. In practice the *de facto* authorities are trying to turn all real estate formerly owned by the displaced or emigrated persons into state property (Trier, Lohm and Szakonyi, 2010: 98).

5.7.3 Lazika, City of Dreams

As of August 2012, the latest development with regards to IDP accommodation was that a new city is to be built, south of the *de facto* border, by the name Lazika. The roads to this new city are already under construction, and the idea is that the IDPs living in private accommodation shall move there. The Georgian government will build new housing for the privately accommodated IDPs. "Building completely new buildings is a very visible form of aid, you get a lot of cred for it, but it hinders social integration" (Kostohryz, 16.03.12).

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[70] Eurasianet's website, available at http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61754 accessed 09.11.2012
[71] Chemi Sakhli's website, available at http://www.chemisakhli.gov.ge/ accessed 09.11.2012

Georgian authorities have adopted a plan to industrialize the west coast of Georgia and turning it into a centre of commerce and industry. As part of this plan, the Azerbaijani company SOKAR has invested in a factory in Kulevi outside Poti. This will bring employment to the region and improve the livelihood situation, primarily by creating employment for IDPs[72]. Over the next four years, 1 billion USD will be invested in the region, turning it into a free trade zone there and making it an industrial center. The port will also be expanded, and an airport will be built outside the city. Lazika is to be populated by 1.5 million citizens, making it one of the largest cities in Georgia. The plan came to the president while he was in China[73]. He has also called on IDPs and emigrants to come home and populate the city of Lazika[74].

5.8 Employment and Livelihood Opportunities

All IDPs who have received status as IDPs are entitled to an IDP allowance, disbursed every month. The current amount is 24/28 GEL (15/17 USD) per person, depending on what type of accommodation they are settled in [75]. Those who live in CCs receive 24 GEL because they do not have to pay for electricity and water. Children born into IDP families where either one or both of the parents, are IDPs automatically receive IDP status[76]. The allowance can be collected in any state owned bank and is also available to IDPs who have returned to their homes in the breakaway regions, provided that they travel across the *de facto* border to collect it.

Many rely solely on the IDP allowance for their survival, especially those who do not have access to land. Those who do have access to land usually sell some of their produce in the market to provide their household with some extra income. There are currently not statistics available on percentage of unemployment specifically among the IDPs, but the

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[72] Commercial.ge's website, available at http://commercial.ge/09/socar-georgia-investment-to-invest-usd-100-million-in-the-construction-of-a-new-factory-in-kulevi-georgia/ accessed 09.11.2012

[73] Archdaily's website, available at http://www.archdaily.com/228980/instant-city-new-city-lazika-anaklia-region-georgia/ accessed 09.11.2012

[74] Georgia Today's website, available at http://www.georgiatoday.ge/article_details.php?id=9706 accessed 09.11.2012

[75] UNHCR's website, available at http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/44ab85324.pdf accessed 09.11.2012 See Article 5 Paragraph 1

[76] UNHCR's website, available at http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/44ab85324.pdf accessed 09.11.2012 See Article 2 Paragraph 11

general unemployment rate in Georgia in 2011 was 15.1%[77]. The Georgian statistics department counts subsistence farming as employment, if one deducts those only "employed" as subsistence farmers then the realistic unemployment rate is believed to be higher[78]. Unemployment levels among IDPs are the same as for the general population, but the incomes earned and positions held by IDPs are generally lower (Tarkhan-Mouravi, 2009).

The main cause of poverty among Georgians in general is the lack of employment. IDPs tend to have more difficulties securing a permanent job because they lack social networks and social capital. CRRC conducted a study in 2011, asking Georgians what the main factors for attaining a job were. Connections and education came out with equal results at 25% [79]. Many IDPs reside in remote areas, and are therefore physically barred from attaining work. Even if they have access to land, they often do not have the equipment to produce food. They lack fertilizers, transport and fuel to be able to sell their produce on the market. Many therefore rely on small-scale trade, remittances and assistance from family and friends, and most importantly on the IDP allowance (Tarkhan-Mouravi, 2009).

Poverty is very common both among the IDPs and in the general population. But poverty in the IDP population can be considered as more severe because they are more insecure in other respects, such as housing and access to land. While the general population usually has ownership to their houses and land, IDPs have spent the last two decades not knowing if they will stay in their current location, return to Abkhazia, or relocate within Georgia proper. The execution of the Action plan might provide the IDPs with a more predictable living situation, and they will thus be able to secure land and plan for their future. Access to land is an important safety net for many Georgians. If they lack monetary income they can always survive on subsistence farming. Since many IDPs do not have access to such resources, they have become heavily dependent on the IDP allowance. In recent years there has been a trend among the IDPs to relocate to Tbilisi, where there are more opportunities to find employment, or to the Gal/i region, where there are more opportunities to farm the land left behind by other IDPs (Tarkhan-Mouravi, 2009:19).

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[77] Geostat's website, available at
http://geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&p_id=146&lang=eng accessed 09.11.2012
[78] CRRC found in their analysis that 61% were unemployed. See:
http://www.crrc.ge/oda/?dataset=15&row=263 for more information
[79] CRRC's website, available at http://www.crrc.ge/oda/?dataset=15&row=273 accessed 09.11.2012

The IDPs interviewed put a strong emphasis on employment, explaining that if they had an income they could free themselves from their dependency on the state. Unemployed, they are left without a possibility to provide for themselves and better their own situation. When asked to identify the main obstacle for employment, five out of the twenty IDP respondents mentioned discrimination towards IDPs. They claim that they are unable to find work because locals would rather hire other locals before they would consider hiring IDPs. They connect the unwillingness to hire IDPs to two factors; firstly there is a rumor that IDPs are untrustworthy, and secondly the locals believe that the IDPs will return to Abkhazia if the chance arises, and that they therefore are not reliable employees.

> If I had money and a job I would look after myself. I know where to go and what to buy. I would not be dependent on the government, I do not want to be dependent on the government. Getting a job would be the best way out of this situation (IDP, Tbilisi, 13.03.12).

This particular respondent used to work as an electrical engineer in Abkhazia, but has been unemployed since displacement. Displacement rendered many IDPs without the possibility to practice their profession with time they have not been able to keep up their level of expertise and their competence has become outdated. The lack of available employment has turned many IDPs into vendors, dealing in petty trades. In the regions, many IDPs sell produce in the markets if they can attain a booth, and in Tbilisi IDPs have become infamous for selling and buying gold. Petty trade does not represent a stable income, and resorting to selling your belongings can also not be said to be a reliable source of income.

5.9 The Right to Return

The Georgian government advocates the IDPs right of return as a part of their struggle to re-establish control over the breakaway regions. As such, the whereabouts of the IDPs have therefore to a great extent become politicized. The principle of a right to a dignified return is mentioned in the Guiding Principles and in all the three key documents authored by Georgian authorities. The government's emphasis on return has created a strong belief among the IDPs that this option will in fact materialize. This has prevented many from trying to create more permanent lives in displacement. The strong wish to go back has put their lives on halt, and they are reluctant to give up on the almost mythical idea of Abkhazia, which is portrayed as a paradise in stark contrast to their current reality. The consequence of longing for an unattainable *Heimat* is that the IDPs are still to some extent "sitting on their suitcases". This has affected their ability to adapt and take control over their lives in displacement.

The Georgian government's emphasis on the IDPs right to return has also probably contributed to their impression that return is in fact attainable in the near future. Since the government has communicated so clearly over the years that return of the IDPs is their first goal and preferred outcome of the situation, many did not see any point in bettering their lives in displacement. Conducting improvements to their housing seemed pointless as they were expected to pick up and leave at any time. In this respect, the 2008 war forms a turning point in IDP policy; the "old" IDPs saw the war as a sign that they would never be able to return. Since 2008 the implementation of the action plan and the resettlement of Georgian IDPs have in some ways shifted the focus from return to durable housing solutions. It has also weakened many IDPs' faith in that they will ever be able to go back to their former homes.

A representative from the NGO Atinati expressed concern that the IDPs expect to return to the past.

> Even if return to Abkhazia becomes possible for the IDPs, they can't travel in time, they will not move back to the past. If they go back they will have to start again, rebuild their lives there. The IDPs do not understand this, they seem to think that by returning to Abkhazia everything will be solved (Atinati, 23.03.12).

Even though Abkhazia has become the focal point for the IDPs' longing and their primary goal is to return, they are not oblivious to the changes that have taken place there over the years, and many have a realistic understanding of the current situation. "Whenever I close my eyes, I can see Abkhazia. I see my town where 1,600 families used to live, now there are only 25 left. Trees are growing inside our house. It is a ghost town" (IDP, Poti, 11.02.12). They understand that the situation is complicated and that by the passing of time, return has become increasingly unattainable. Still return remains their main goal. Giving up on returning to Abkhazia is difficult as long as the Georgian government continues to emphasize their goal of reuniting Abkhazia with Georgia proper.

5.9.1 The Returnees

At least 45,000 IDPs have returned to the Gal/i district in the course of the last nineteen years. The number might be even higher, as some live in Gal/i seasonally, staying in Georgia proper during the winter and in Gal/i during the summer. After renewed hostilities in May 1998, almost all of the returnees were displaced again. The *de facto* authorities have acknowledged the return of the IDPs living in Gal/i. They do however keep a register of people who fought

in the war, and these people are not allowed to return. If they do so, they run the risk of being arrested (Trier, Lohm and Szakonyi, 2010: 128).

Using the Georgian language in schools or in public has caused some tension, and the returnees are not allowed to use textbooks that depict the history of the region in any way unfavorable to Abkhazia. When Abkhaz authorities started issuing passports. this became a problem for the Georgians residing in Gal/i. They could not hold two passports at the same time, so they were required to give up their Georgian one when applying for an Abkhaz passport. Applying for an Abkhaz passport became mandatory, and it is not possible to vote without being an Abkhaz citizen. This created difficulties for the returnees upon entering Georgia proper, as the Abkhaz passport is not valid in Georgia. If Georgians still living in Abkhazia accept Abkhaz citizenship, they might in fact become stateless as they can not travel abroad with an Abkhaz passport, and it is difficult for Georgians to obtain Russian passports. Finally, they could be refused entrance to Georgia and they can be drafted into the Abkhaz army (Trier, Lohm and Szakonyi, 2010:85).

5.10 General Economic Situation in Georgia

Understanding the general situation in Georgia is important, as it can shed light on the relative poverty of IDPs. In 2010, the Caucasus Research and Resource Centre (CRRC) conducted a large analysis interviewing 1,991 respondents about their economic situation, including both IDPs and locals. They found that a high percentage of households struggle with covering basic expenses. The majority of the population state that they own a color television, refrigerators and cell phones, but lack items such as washing machines, cars and computers. Thirty three percent of the households interviewed said that they do not have money to buy enough food, while 40% said they can afford food, but not clothes. Less than 1% felt they could afford to buy anything they need[80]. A large divide between households in the capital or urban environments versus those in rural areas was revealed. Twenty eight percent of people living in the capital and 30% of those living in urban areas say that their income is not sufficient for food, while 40% of the respondents in rural areas state the same. The more

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[80] CRRC's website, available athttp://crrccenters.org/store/files/February_11_The_Economic_Condition_of_Households_in_Georgia%20(1).pdf accessed 09.11.2012

favorable conditions for those living in the capital are attributed to the increased possibility for employment.[81]

5.11 Education

The government of Abkhazia was moved to Georgia proper shortly after displacement, where it started functioning as an Exile government. This entailed that all ministries and public offices were functioning in displacement after Abkhazia declared itself independent. They continued to work as before, but without elections or land to govern. Between 1995 and 2005 the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia (parallel to the Georgian Ministry of Education) established 45 public "Abkhaz" schools for the IDP children, providing both primary and secondary education. This was done to reinforce the IDP identity and prepare the IDPs for their return[82]. The principle of adequate and free education for IDPs is asserted in the law on IDPs. It states that it is the responsibility of Georgian authorities:" […] to guarantee a constitutional right of IDPs to education and free study in the public secondary educational institutions"[83]. In contravention of this, the IDPs were often asked to pay unofficial fees to the school, in addition to books and school material for the kids.

In the State Strategy of 2007, Georgian authorities express an aim to close down the segregated schools and integrate the IDP children into the mainstream educational system, this was in line with the general shift in policies from return to integration [84]. This happened simultaneously with a general reform in the Georgian education system, making each school financially autonomous and run by a board of trustees, and allowing the parents to choose which school to send their children to[85].

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[81] Ibid

[82] IDMC's website, available at http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/F0200A8B4CE7DEACC1257904002B0D6E/$file/moving-towards-integration-web.pdf accessed 09.11.2012

[83] UNHCR's website, available at http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/44ab85324.pdf accessed 09.11.2012 see Article 5 Paragraph 2d article 5 paragraph 2 d

[84] MRA's website, available at http://mra.gov.ge/main/ENG#section/45 accessed 09.11.2012

[85] IDMC's website, available at http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/F0200A8B4CE7DEACC1257904002B0D6E/$file/moving-towards-integration-web.pdf accessed 09.11.2012

The Action Plan of 2009 elaborates on the social integration of IDPs by declaring that IDPs shall be fully mainstreamed into the general educational program. This is to be ensured by appointing a steering committee that will oversee the process and identify any potential barriers to the integration of IDPs[86]. Even though the IDP children are now enrolled in and attend mainstream Georgian schools, there is one element that separates them. Being tutored after school is a widespread practice in Georgia. Since IDP families have limited resources, they can't always afford tutors for their children, and as most students believe they need a tutor to be successful on their exams, this might represent a handicap for the IDP children, and could also affect their opportunities to be admitted to a university[87].

> I think there will definitely be fewer children with higher education among the IDPs compared to the general population. They can't afford tutoring and they compete with children who have been tutored, so their chances are smaller (Gvalia, 21.02.12).

5.12 Collective Identity or Social Category?

As established in 2.2.1, a collective identity can create favorable preconditions for mobilization within a group. The common denominator uniting the members of the group is the foundation of collective identity. It serves as a hallmark, separating the group from the general population, and simultaneously bringing them closer together in their sameness. However, for a collective identity to become a starting point for mobilization, the shared characteristic has to be cultivated by the members of the group, making their membership in the group an integral part of who they are (Gurr, 2000). If their membership in the group is devoid of any meaning to the members, implying that they do not consider sharing the particular trait with others as important, the formation of a collective identity is impossible. However, if membership to the group is important to the actors, but not prioritized and valued as a central part of their lives, there is no foundation for collective identity. If they are considered by external actors to be a cohesive unit, they form a social category.

Applying the theoretical framework of collective identity to the case of Georgian IDPs is challenging, partly because their common denominator is not defined by the IDPs themselves. Their shared trait, their status as IDPs, and thus their basis for collective identity,

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[86] IDMC's website, available at http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/F0200A8B4CE7DEACC1257904002B0D6E/$file/moving-towards-integration-web.pdf accessed 09.11.2012
[87] IDMC's website, available at http://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/%28httpEnvelopes%29/103D2515A42702DFC12579C700614A36?OpenDocument accessed 09.11.2012

is derived from two separate factors; first and foremost they share their displacement. All IDPs have at some point fled their homes in Abkhazia and resettled in Georgia proper. The experience of being displaced and living in displacement for almost two decades is here defined as "*the IDP narrative*". The Georgian IDPs share a history that the general population is not part of, a trauma that has largely defined their lives since displacement.

The second factor that defines the IDPs as a group is their status as IDPs, which is given to them by the Georgian government. Georgian authorities decide who qualifies for IDP status based on certain criteria (elaborated on in 5.2). It is plausible that having an external actor defining who qualifies for membership in the group has affected the level of solidarity between the IDPs. Additionally, the governmental policy entitles all IDPs to the same benefits. Treating them as a homogenous group presupposes that they have similar needs, which might reinforce the view that all IDPs belong to the same societal stratum[88]. Since the IDPs do not share any other traits that set them apart from the local population, such as a separate ethnicity, race or religion[89], the IDP status and the IDP narrative represent the primary foundation for a collective identity. Is this enough to inspire political mobilization?

5.12.1   IDP Narrative

The first and most obvious, common denominator for Georgian IDPs is their common misfortune. Even though substandard housing is also found among the poorer segment of the local population, the IDPs perceive themselves (and to some extent are perceived) as significantly underprivileged and destitute, more so than the local population. This can be attributed to the large discrepancy between the living standard they were accustomed to prior to displacement, and the conditions they have had to familiarize themselves with as IDPs. The feeling of being deprived of not only material goods, but also their future and the future of their children, is common among the IDPs.

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[88] Georgian authorities differentiate between IDPs accommodated in PA and CCs in the Action plan. Besides this exception, IDPs are largely eligible for the same rights and aid.
[89] The IDPs are not bound together by race, ethnicity or religion. Even though ethnicity was the primary criteria for their displacement during the wars in the early 90s, it can't be said to be an active component in the IDP identity as they share their ethnicity with the general population. The IDP identity does however include a regional aspect as most IDPs displaced form Abkhazia are Megrelian. This has contributed to the establishment of an IDP identity, event though there are many local Georgians who are also Megrelian, the language and culture has become increasingly associated with IDPs. As the Megrelians primarily live in western Georgia, the IDPs who settled there have had less of a struggle integrating into society at large. In eastern Georgia it has hindered integration.

" I feel like we are a black spot in Georgia. There is no pride in being an IDP, we do not even like the word IDP" (IDP, Poti, 11.02.12). Experiencing their IDP status as a shameful aspect of their lives might hinder the establishment of a collective identity. Many feel victimized twice over, firstly by the Abkhaz who forced them into displacement, and secondly by the Georgian authorities that the IDPs feel have largely neglected them since they were displaced. To uncover whether or not the IDPs were ashamed to the extent of trying to hide their status, I asked them if their IDP status was something they mentioned when introducing themselves to new people. One woman replied:

I don't say that I am an IDP. It is not necessary; people know it just by looking at me. It is my dialect and my clothes and the poverty (IDP, Poti, 11.02.12).

There are several programs for IDPs at the university, my daughter could have applied to these, but she refused because she did not want people to know that she was an IDP. For her it is shameful (IDP, Poti, 12.02.12).

This was a recurring answer with several of the respondents. They said that their chances of attaining their goals, for example employment, were much higher if they did not include information about their IDP status. Others said that they would only mention their IDP status when they were in contact with Georgian authorities. Thus, on one hand the IDPs may experience a level of skepticism and discrimination from the general population if they mention their IDP status. On the other hand they have a chance of being prioritized by the authorities if they invoke their status as IDPs.

Some of the respondents took issue with the premise of the question: "Why would I mention that I am an IDP? I am Georgian. All IDPs are Georgians. It is society that sees us as IDPs first, then as Georgians"(IDP, Poti, 12.02.12). The unwillingness to be even associated with their IDP status could hinder the formation of an IDP identity. They do not want their IDP status to matter when it comes to how they are treated. They feel that there is a discrepancy between the way that society views them and how they see themselves. Seeing the IDP status as a hindrance that prevents them from becoming regular citizens is common. They wish to rid themselves of the unpleasantness and feeling of being unworthy that they associate with the IDP status.

Even though they take no pride in their status as IDPs, several of the respondents took pride in the hardship they have endured. They see themselves as survivors rather than victims, which perhaps serves as a more comfortable starting point for a collective identity. The IDP narrative is largely connected to what they have gone through, but it also has a component of

pride in that they have persevered. The duality between identifying with both the victim and the survivor complicates the IDP narrative, creating an ambiguity that several of the respondents have had difficulty coming to terms with.

5.12.2   External Actors' Perspectives on IDP Identity

"The IDPs are divided as a social category, only a few are completely integrated" (Davitaia, 09.03.12).

Paata Davitaia, MP for the European Democrats – a party of and for IDPs, expressed himself in no uncertain terms about the IDP identity. He connected the IDPs exclusion from society in general to their lack of integration and the high levels of poverty among IDPs. Focusing especially on the IDPs who are forced to reside in CCs, he claimed that living secluded and grouped together has isolated the IDPs and contributed to the formation of an IDP community. Irrespective of whether or not the IDPs have internalized a collective identity, he claimed that Georgian society at large has assigned the IDPs to a social category, separated from the general population.

Head of the Norwegian Refugee Council in Georgia, Petr Kostohryz, also points to poverty as the factor that separates the IDPs from the general population. This leads to the IDPs being perceived, and perceiving themselves, as a group existing on the outside of general society.

> They feel marginalized because they don't have access to the same standard of living as the rest of the population, not because they are IDPs. This is where the main difference lies; their poverty is what separates them from society in general, not their status as IDPs. They are a class that has not been socialized into society (Kostohryz, 11.03.12).

Both these actors focus on poverty as a uniting factor for Georgian IDPs; it is assumed that they are poor because they are IDPs. Poverty thereby functions as a shared trait, in addition to, and not instead of, their IDP status.

5.12.3   Collective Identity or Social Category?

As the IDPs themselves do not identify with a separate IDP identity, it would be contradictory to say that there is one, since it is first and foremost the reflections of the actors themselves that should be taken into account when deciding whether or not there is in fact an IDP identity. Even so, the society surrounding the IDPs clearly views them as one group. The

government has designed a law and a policy specifically concerning IDPs, and the population at large clearly defines them as a social category within Georgia. Whether or not the IDPs have internalized this separation from general society, they are in fact singled out as a group and target of a set of all encompassing policies solely designed to fit their needs.

They take pride in their shared trauma and of having survived their ordeal, but this does not necessarily indicate that there is a large amount of solidarity among the IDPs. Seeing that the IDP status is connected more to shame and a sense of powerlessness, it might be more precise to classify the IDPs as a social category, meaning that they do not share a collective identity, but a set of common characteristics that groups them together. A social category is still a potent starting point for mobilization, but the lack of collective identity entails a lack of solidarity that could potentially glue the members together. A high level of organization can compensate for the lack of collective identity.

5.13 Integration

Integration can be measured in several different ways; one can look at factors such as level of income, employment, representation in the political system, and intermarriage between the two different groups. Philipp Ther presents a definition based on the Latin roots of the word integration: "[…] it is the penetration of a smaller group into a larger group that results in the whole group being reformed"(Ther, 1996). This means that the IDPs, if integrated, would not form a visible minority in Georgia proper today, but rather a natural part of Georgian society at large.

When asked, the IDPs state that they do not feel integrated du to the fact that they do not own their own houses, they emphasize ownership as an important criteria for them to feel at home (IDP, Tbilisi, 13.03.12). The government is working on providing the IDPs with housing solutions, but is ownership of a house sufficient to be integrated? Leder of NRC, Petr Kostohryc differentiated between infrastructural integration and social integration;

> Integration is not housing, Integration is feeling comfortable where you are. Social integration is as important as infrastructural integration. The consistent response from the MRA is that social integration is taken care of by the NGOs. But the NGOs can't create employment for all IDPs, creating employment possibilities can only be done by the government (Kostohryz, 16.03.12).

He connects social integration to employment, the thought being that by becoming less dependent on government aid, the IDPs will become empowered and part of the societal structure. As we have seen, the IDPs are differentiated from the general population by

government policies and to some extent, by their own perception of themselves. Does the Georgian population regard the IDPs as different? CRRC conducted a survey in 2011, where one of the questions was whether IDPs were different from Georgian citizens at large. Thirty five percent of the local population completely disagreed, whereas only 2% completely agreed[90].

Agree or disagree that IDPs – are different from Georgia's society. (%)
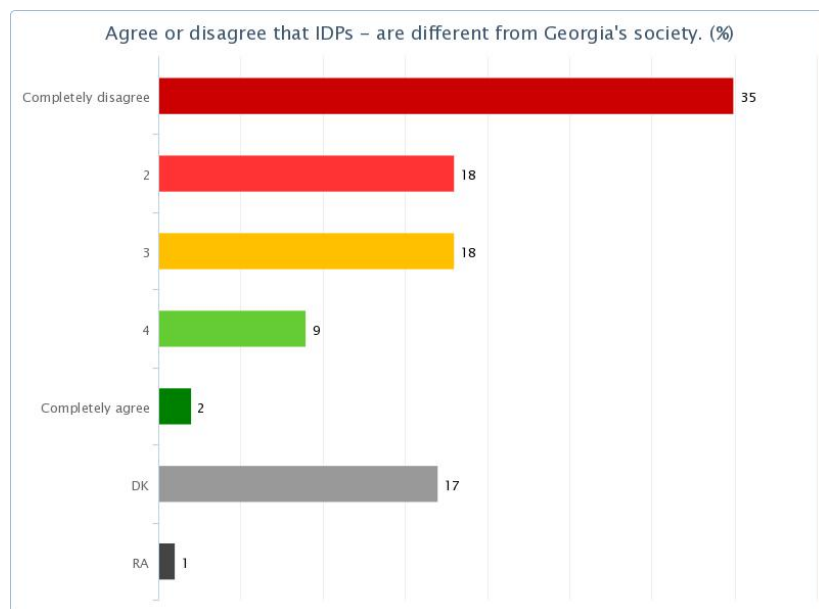
According to this data, the general population does not necessarily view the IDPs as noticeably different from themselves. The exclusion the IDPs feel might come as a result of their shared narrative that the general population does not partake in, and by their physical isolation, residing in settlements and CCs makes it difficult for IDPs to interact with neighbors that are locals, leaving them to socialize with eachother.

The majority of the IDPs interviewed for this study stated that they felt better and more at home in Abkhazia, and that they do not feel integrated in the local community in displacement. The ones who had recently resettled feel even less integrated. They see resettlement as a second displacement, and they feel like they are going through many of the same difficulties as they did when they first arrived.

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[90]CRRC's website, available at http://www.crrc.ge/oda/?dataset=16&row=159 accessed 09.11.2012

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"There are only a few IDPs who are completely integrated, but they are not many. This is not only dependent on their finances; some might have good finances, but still not be integrated" (Davitaia, 09.03.12). The leader of the IDP party European Democrats, Mr. Davitaia, notes that the chance of integrating is higher if the IDPs have a solid economy. He connects integration to poverty; the IDPs are denied the opportunity to participate in society at large because they are poor. They spend all their energy on putting food on the table, and are therefore deprived of the opportunity to participate in society as equals.

> The policy of return is still a state doctrine, the right to return is unquestionable and it is not laughable, and you don't speculate about that. Even if everyone is speculating. Integration is just a word, it is driven forward by the international community. You can't keep people hostage…. When people are supposed to return, you need them to be strong, powerful and educated. We need to offer it to them here, so that they are the best people they can be when they go back (Kostohryz, 16.03.12).

The state policies developed by the Georgian government focus more on the infrastructural side of integration than the social. Their first priority is to secure the IDPs' access to housing and employment. This relatively unilateral focus on infrastructure is deliberate, as there is a fear that if the government focuses too extensively on integration. The goal of return will disappear and the government will indirectly have admitted defeat in winning back Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Tarkhan-Mouravi, 24.02.12). By riding two horses and pursuing both return and integration simultaneously the government has kept the IDPs waiting and prevented either goal from being realized. They have also been criticized for recreating the CCs by building large settlements for the IDPs, creating a stigma around the IDPs and preventing them from integrating into their local community (Sumbadze, 27.02.12).

5.14 Discrimination Against Georgian IDPs

Discrimination against IDPs affects both the level of integration and the level of solidarity among the IDPs and thus their ability to mobilize. When asked if they felt equal to, better than or less worthy than the general population, the majority of the respondents, especially in the regions, answered that they felt they were less worthy than the general population. " We are second class citizens. If we were equal why would they neglect us for so long?"(IDP, Poti, 12.02.12). When asked if they can identify an aspect of their lives where they feel especially discriminated against, the respondents answer livelihood. This might be connected to social networks; acquiring a job in Georgia could be easier with a solid social network, as it is everywhere. However, the IDPs lost their networks when they were displaced. As they have

lived together with IDPs in CCs, it has been difficult for them to rebuild and make new connections to locals.

"Marriages between IDPs and locals are frowned upon, we are not good enough for the locals because we are so poor"(IDP, Poti, 11.02.12).

"It used to be that IDPs and locals did not marry, but now it is different. IDPs and locals can be together. It is not shameful anymore"(IDP, Tbilisi, 13.02.12).

These two quotes illustrate a difference between the regions and an urban setting. The IDPs in Poti still did not consider it as "normal" to be married to locals. But in Tbilisi this was no longer considered to be abnormal. There is a difference in the level of discrimination and integration between the two settings; the IDPs in Tbilisi are more integrated and less discriminated against. This is probably because the IDPs in Tbilisi are less visible and part of a larger, urban scene. The IDPs settled in rural areas are often very visible, as they live in large settlements and more isolated than what is possible in the capital.

This chapter has presented an overview of the existing preconditions for political mobilization among Georgian IDPs. We have seen that their main goals are return, durable housing solutions and employment, which corresponds to the goals the Georgian government has on behalf of the IDPs. They form a social category with an IDP narrative largely constructed around their suffering in displacement. They are victimized and ostracized from society at large, they are not integrated socially, but they have gained access to basic infrastructure through the governments efforts to provide them with durable housing solutions. They feel discriminated against in that they perceive themselves as second-class citizens, but the discrimination is not coming from the authorities as they have largely granted IDPs the same political rights as the local population enjoy. Rather it is the skepticism towards employing IDPs and towards marriages between IDPs and locals that serve as the basis for this conclusion.

6 Political Mobilization

The aim of this chapter is to establish how and to what degree the Georgian IDPs have mobilized collectively and individually to further their interest and defend their rights. In order to do that we will begin by taking a closer look at the resources available to Georgian IDPs, before we see how they have employed these resources and organized their efforts towards political mobilization.

6.1 Resources Available to the IDPs

In 5.11 we saw that the Georgian IDPs do not share a strong collective identity. However, the general population and the Georgian authorities view them as one homogenous group, which has led to the formation of IDPs as a social category. Their separation from society at large is not lost on the IDPs; the lack of integration has added to their common narrative of deprivation and suffering, and they regard themselves as underprivileged and isolated. The objective truth as to whether or not IDPs are in fact excluded is not of significance, because it is the IDPs' *perception* of their own situation that fuels their will and motivation to mobilize.

The high level of impatience and frustration within the IDP community, created by almost two decades of not knowing whether or not they would return to Abkhazia, has formed a spark that is easily ignited. In accordance with Gurr's theory on deprivation as motivation (2011), the Georgian IDPs are motivated to mobilize by the high level of discomfort that has characterized their lives since displacement. Seeing as deprivation creates motivation it becomes a resource the IDPs use to mobilize politically. The Georgian IDPs have extensive experience with being deprived of their lives in Abkhazia; the misfortune of being displaced has served as a backdrop to their lives for the last nineteen years. And even though it might have motivated their mobilization immediately after displacement, they are now accustomed to a certain level of discomfort. Thus, for deprivation to function as a resource used towards mobilization, they have to experience an additional trauma or burden, for example being evicted.

The low level of solidarity within the IDP community has created a situation where the IDPs are not easily mobilized by grievances experienced by *other IDPs*. They do not experience other IDPs' misfortune as their own, and they do not mobilize out of sympathy. The lack of solidarity prevents the creation of a broader social movement, and creates a

pattern where the political mobilization consists of contentious episodes that are isolated from each other.

Perhaps the most important resource available to the Georgian IDPs is the sympathy they enjoy from external sponsors, i.e. the international community present in Georgia. Both the international and the local NGOs have a strong focus on IDP issues and support the IDPs in their claims towards the government. Reports on different aspects of the lives of IDPs are produced continually and made available both to the public and to the government. Several of the NGOs conduct trainings with IDPs, teaching them what they are entitled to according to the Action Plan and the State Strategy.

> We conduct advocacy trainings in IDP settlements. We ask the IDPs what problems they have and then we discuss with them as a group how they can go about solving their problems. If they need the government's support to fix their issues, we put them in touch with the correct representative from either MRA or the local municipality. We have also taken IDPs directly to the MRA so that they can see how to file complaints and establish direct links of communication (CHCA,13.02.12).

Training IDPs on their rights and giving them the opportunity to voice their complaints directly to government officials are two examples of how the NGOs work as mediators between the IDPs and the government. They also empower the IDPs in that the NGOs help the IDPs become more competent in dealing with the Georgian bureaucracy. Knowing what they are entitled to can help the IDPs be more assertive in their claims towards the government.

A multitude of international donors fund both the local and international NGOs' operating in Georgia. The European Union is by far the largest contributor, donating 500 million Euro over three years after the 2008 war[91]. 120 million Euros were earmarked IDP welfare, available shortly after the war. The money was used to provide all IDPs displaced from South Ossetia with a durable housing solution. The Saakashvili administration has had a strong ambition to integrate Georgia into Europe, and eventually become part of the European Union; an ambition that might influence their IDP policies, seeing as the EU is their largest donor. The concurrence between the strong political ambition of the Georgian government to become part of the EU, and the fact that the EU, being the largest donor of aid to Georgia, has a clear preference for policies beneficial to the IDP population, creates a situation that is very fortunate for Georgian IDPs. The government is interested in appearing in a favorable light,

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[91] EU's website, available at http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/neighbourhood/country-cooperation/georgia/georgia_en.htm accessed 07.11.2012

and is thereby inclined to comply with the demands of the EU. This represents an opening in the Political Opportunity Structure that the IDP can utilize to their benefit. Have they?

6.2 Organizing to Mobilize

Looking at how the IDPs have utilized the resources available to them towards political mobilization, it is possible to differentiate between two channels of mobilization; first we find formal, institutionalized organizations representing IDP interests. By institutionalized organizations I mean that they have become an integral part of the state structure. The main tool that these organizations employ towards the interests of IDPs is continually putting pressure on the Georgian government to maintain focus on IDP issues. Together they resemble an IDP lobby. The second channel of mobilization is more informal in that it exists outside of the official governmental structure. It consists of smaller groups of IDPs that initiate contentious episodes *ad hoc,* conducting demonstrations or protests.

The two channels work towards the same goals shared by all IDPs; return, housing and employment. They both target the government as recipient of their claims, but they use different tools in their efforts to achieve the shared goals, i.e. they draw on different Repertoires of Contention when mobilizing. They also have a different starting point with regards to responding to openings in the Political Opportunity Structure, even though the two channels share the same ultimate goals, they might not share the same perception of how these goals are to be achieved, and thus respond differently to opportunities presenting themselves along the way. On the grounds of these differences the two channels of mobilization will be presented separately in the following section.

6.2.1 IDP Organizations

Mama Saxlisis – Community Leaders

At the bottom of the organizational ladder, meaning the level in most direct contact with IDPs, we find the Mama Saxlisis, meaning community leaders. Each IDP settlement or CC usually has its own Mama Saxlisi. They are either elected by the IDPs living in the CC, or appointed by the MRA. Their primary function is to act as a link of communication between the IDPs and the local municipality, more specifically the local MRA-department. The IDPs in Poti who were interviewed for this thesis reported that they had elected their Mama Saxlisi,

on the grounds of who were more active and articulate. Each building in the settlement chose one person to run for the role as Mama Saxlisi, and then they held an election, choosing one leader of the entire community.

The Mama Saxlisis are considered to be spokespersons for IDP issues, but their loyalty has sometimes been questioned by the IDPs. The Mama Saxlisis appointed by the MRA receive a small salary for their services, creating confusion among the IDPs as to whether their leader represents their interests, or the interests of the government.

> Sometimes when we organize group discussions in settlements and the Mama Saxlisis are present, we experience that the IDPs are hesitant to express their views in front of the Mama Saxlisis. They don't raise their concerns because the Mama Saxlisis have told them beforehand what to say and what not to say. The Mama Saxlisis direct the situation and instruct the IDPs (Gvalia, 21.02.12).

It seems peculiar that the Mama Saxlisis would instruct the IDPs to keep quiet about their grievances in the presence of representatives from NGOs that can accommodate the IDPs and help them with their problems, if the Mama Saxlisis in fact genuinely represented the interests of the IDPs. The respondents claimed that as long as the Mama Saxlisis continue to receive a salary from the MRA, the IDPs could not expect a fair representation of their interests, but a continued bias towards the interests of the government.

> We arranged a meeting in a settlement the same day that Sarkozy was in Tbilisi, the government had arranged a big meeting on Liberty square. When we arrived to the settlement there were no IDPs there because the Mama Saxlisis had been told to send the IDPs in buses to Tbilisi to attend the meeting on Liberty Square. The IDPs went to this meeting because they were afraid that if they did not they would get problems with their Mama Saxlisi (Gvalia, 21.02.12).

The Mama Saxlisis that are appointed by the government might work more towards the interests of the MRA, than the IDPs themselves. In these cases they do not work as mediators, but rather as government agents. The respondent from central MRA confirmed that some of the Mama Saxlisis are appointed, and that they receive a salary for their efforts. He claimed that their only function is to provide information to the MRA about the general state of the settlement and any grievances the inhabitants might have. He rejected the notion that the Mama Saxlisis are hired to manipulate the IDPs into presenting their situation as more favorable to external donors.

The appointment of Mama Saxlisis by the MRA seemed more prevalent in and around Tbilisi. Respondents from this area expressed confusion as to whether or not their community leaders received salary. The IDPs interviewed who had elected their community leader were considerably more satisfied with the situation. They reported all their grievances to the Mama

Saxlisi, who in turn communicated these to the local government. In these settlements the Mama Saxlisis form an important and valuable asset in helping the IDPs voicing their grievances towards both local municipalities and MRA. Thus functioning as spokespersons for the IDPs in the local community, and organizing their collective efforts towards reaching their goals. Consequently, the CCs with an appointed community leader lose an important link to the local municipality, and thus the ability to get their opinions across.

The Abkhaz Government-in-Exile

The second example of an organization working for IDP interests is the Abkhaz Government-in-exile. As mentioned in Chapter 4 they were quite vocal on behalf of IDP rights directly after their displacement. However, the Shevardnadze administration downsized the Government-in-exile substantially in 1999, both by reducing their funding and by cutting the number of employees. As a result the Government-in-exile has lost its role as mouthpiece for IDP issues. The representative from Government-in-exile interviewed for this study, underlined that the exile government still has a potential for acting on behalf of the IDPs from Abkhazia, but admits that their role is primarily symbolic. "We should be a spokesperson, but we are not. In reality we are a marionette government that only hands out small-scale things such as TVs etc. It is only for show, we are not making any decisions"(Representative from Government-in-Exile, 27.02.12). The willingness of the respondent from the Government-in-Exile to express his profound disillusionment so openly is surprising. According to him, the Government-in-exile receives detailed directions from the Georgian authorities, outlining and limiting their role.

> Ideally, the exile government would work for the welfare of Georgian IDPs, putting pressure on the government towards the goal of return…instead we come to work everyday and just sit there. There is no work to be done! The only function of the exile government is employment for those who work there. We have a ministry of forestry, but no forests, we have a ministry of transport, but no trains. It is all just pretense (Representative from Government-in-Exile, 27.02.12).

The majority of the IDPs interviewed express little or no trust in the Government-in-exile's ability to represent their interests. "The Government-in-Exile is a knight without a head" (Imedi, 14.02.12). Some highlighted its inherent potential, concluding that with the right leadership it could in fact be a powerful actor.

The representative from the Government-in-Exile identified return as the main interest of IDPs, however the Government-in-Exile was, in his view, powerless in affecting the

current situation and in helping IDPs towards their goal of going back. "We used to distribute IDP allowances, we were in charge of educating all IDP children and helping those who have returned to Gal/i. The MRA has taken over all of our functions" (Representative from Government-in-Exile, 27.02.12). The MRA taking over all functions of the Government-in-Exile has, according to the respondent, led to the Government-in-Exile losing all possibilities to influence the future of Georgian IDPs. He interpreted the focus on building durable housing solutions for IDPs in the Action Plan as a sign that the central government has given up on return as a possibility for Georgian IDPs. This has created a lot of disillusionment among the IDPs and it also created a discrepancy between the government's goals on behalf of Georgian IDPs and the goals of the IDPs, "Georgian IDPs will never give up the hope of return, our government might give up, but we will never do so"(Representative from Government-in-Exile, 27.02.12). He admitted paradoxically that the number of IDPs who want to go back is declining. He attributed this to the fact that as more and more children are born in displacement, moving to Abkhazia would be a displacement for them, and thus their families wish to stay where their children have grown up. Also, as IDPs are dying in displacement, their families are reluctant to move away from their dead relatives' graves. The representative claimed that the central government is just waiting for people to forget about Abkhazia and slowly integrate into the general population.

IDP Party- European Democrats of Georgia

Paata Davitaia, former Minister of Justice in the Government-in-Exile and IDP from Abkhazia, has formed a separate political party working exclusively for the rights of Georgian IDPs. He began, in 2005, by establishing an NGO called "Chven Tviton" (We, Ourselves). In 2006 the NGO was re-established as a political party called the European Democrats of Georgia. The party has participated in two elections, and has managed to get one MP in the Parliament. Even though the NGO transformed into a political party, the charter remained the same, focusing primarily on the rights of IDPs.

> 60 percent of our members are IDPs, and our main priority is to facilitate and promote the issues of IDPs. We are trying to criticize the government and direct their focus to the fact that 90 percent of all IDPs are unemployed. We also focus on the lack of healthcare available to IDPs and their right to return to Abkhazia (Davitaia, 09.03.12).

Mr. Davitaia identified pressure on central government as his party's main tool in trying to accomplish its goals. He said that the work of the European Democrats of Georgia consist primarily of putting IDP issues on the agenda in Parliament. When the IDP respondents were

asked whether they had faith in Mr. Davitaia's political party and if they voted for him, some said that they did not recognize their own goals in the charter of the European Democrats of Georgia. Some even said that they thought the party was created only to benefit the personal interests of Mr. Davitaia, and that as he had never lived in a CC he was in fact not an IDP (IDP, Poti, 12.02.12).

6.2.2 Evaluation of the Organizations Representing IDPs

The three organizations representing IDPs do so on different levels. The Mama Saxlisis mobilize primarily towards the local municipalities, the Government-in-Exile mobilizes primarily towards the executive branch of the central government, and the European Democrats of Georgia mobilize towards the Parliament. Together they form a public lobby representing IDP interests. They attempt to influence different power-holders in the Georgian governmental structure to focus and accommodate IDP interests. The three organizations are all part of the formal state structure; the European Democrats are represented in Parliament, the Government-in-exile is paid by and receive directions from the government, and the Mama Saxlisis, with the exception of those who have been elected, are paid and report back to the MRA.

Their integration into the state structure gives them the opportunity to influence the power-holders more directly. Seeing as the opportunity to influence IDP policy is their main asset, their Repertoire of Contention consists primarily of methods of persuasion. Mr. Davitaia exemplifies this in the following quote:

> I asked the Speaker of the Georgian parliament, David Bakradze, to support me in trying to include a clause about the evictions of Georgian IDPs in the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly's resolution on Georgia. He agreed, and a clause was included, stating that the Assembly was concerned about the evictions and that they encouraged the Georgian authorities to ensure that all future evictions will comply with international standards (Davitaia, 09.03.12).

By using their personal networks representatives from these organizations they can get direct access to the arena where decisions are made, representing an opportunity to influence policy made on IDP issues.

Even though few decisions are made on IDP policy in the local municipalities, the Mama Saxlisis have the opportunity to communicate the needs and goals of the IDPs directly to the correct authority, the MRA. If their goals are communicated from the local MRA to

central MRA, it might affect the policy made on IDP issues. However, it is difficult to obtain information on the inner workings of the ministry. Furthermore, the IDPs can't be sure that their efforts lead to results. Even if their opinions are not taken into account, the communication link might be ideal for solving local issues or problems. In the settlements where the IDPs have elected their Mama Saxlisi, the IDPs receive a fair representation of their interests. The IDPs who have an appointed Mama Saxlisi might not be guaranteed the same unbiased representation. In these cases it seems that the Mama Saxlisis function more as a tool for the government to impose their directions on the IDPs, than the other way around.

The organization with the least amount of power to influence is the Government-in-exile, formerly a powerful representative for IDP issues, they are now without trust in the IDP community and, it seems, without faith in itself. Regardless, the Government-in-Exile has been preserved all these years, and still remains an important symbol of the IDPs right. And it still hopes one day to return to Abkhazia. The Government-in-Exile's role should not be disregarded completely, as it might regain its influence and become an even more potent symbol of IDP unity, should the situation change with regards to the conflict between Abkhazia and Georgia.

The European Democrats of Georgia, even though they enjoy little confidence among the IDPs interviewed for this thesis, is a potent actor with a lot of potential to influence and create attention to IDP issues. The mere fact that there exists a separate political party devoted to the interests of IDPs proves that they have substantial support among the IDP population in general. They have managed to secure enough votes to pass the election threshold, and thereby gained an important seat in Parliament. The representation of IDP interests in Parliament allows for their perspectives to be presented and taken into account.

Gaining access to power often involves a struggle to stay in power. Fearing the complete dissolution of their organization if they rattle the chains too loud might be reason enough to keep quiet. Thus, the organizations might end up moderating their claims to stay in position. This fear also involves a reduced ability to act on opportunities that present themselves in the Political Opportunity Structure. Opportunities are often used to gain access to the political arena in general (Tarrow, 2011), these organizations have already gained access to the arena, and can thus become more concerned with staying in it, rather than risking being excluded if they fail in pursuing their goals. The organizations representing IDPs seek to pursue their goals within the framework of established institutions, making them less apt to challenge the societal norm, and more inclined to follow the general rules of

conduct. Failure to seize opportunities when they present themselves leads to a perception among the IDPs of these organizations as hamstrung and inefficient, creating a lack of trust and suspicions of corruption.

6.3 Contentious Episodes

The second channel of IDP mobilization is carried out by smaller, informal groups of IDPs. These groups tend to be established *ad hoc* as a response to specific changes in IDP policy, thus they do not consist of the same actors from episode to episode, but rather of many different informal groups within the IDP community. More often than not, the IDPs participating in these groups have been afflicted by a specific change in policy that has affected their lives in a negative way and added to their already existing feeling of deprivation, motivating them to mobilize. The change of participants from episode to episode makes it hard to identify leaders or initiators, so we will therefore take a look at how their mobilization manifests itself, i.e. the Repertoire of Contention of ordinary IDPs.

Demonstrations

The most common form of contention among Georgian IDPs is demonstrations. Usually they are held in places that are connected to the subject of the demonstration, or outside the office of the governmental agency that the demonstration is directed towards, most often outside the MRA office in Tbilisi. There have been large demonstrations in the regions as well, either in connection to the local MRA office, or within the IDP settlements. Demonstrations are characterized by being a low cost type of mobilization, meaning that they do not require much more than attendance from those participating. They have therefore become a popular form of mobilization among IDPs. Additionally, it is difficult to identify the initiators and participants, allowing for IDPs who fear repercussions from the government to participate.

As the level of grievance is always quite high among the Georgian IDPs it is not difficult for the initiators to gather people. That being said, the IDPs participating in demonstrations are often those who can identify with the slogans of the demonstrations. It is rare that IDPs from the regions travel to Tbilisi to participate in demonstrations if they themselves have not been affected by a recent change in policy. This might indicate a lack of solidarity within the IDP community, but it can also be symptomatic of their general economic situation, in that they simply can't afford the travel fee to go to the capital.

The majority of the demonstrations organized by IDPs are in one way or the other connected to housing issues. There has not been held very many demonstrations under the slogan of return to the breakaway regions, most likely because this goal is more complex, and not dependent on government efforts alone. The housing issues have more direct and feasible solutions, and the Georgian government is clearly responsible for any issues related to housing.

IDPs set up a camp outside the local MRA office in Batumi protesting against thirty-five local families having received new apartments in the blocks build specifically for IDPs[92]. In 2009 IDPs protested against the government's refusal to let them privatize their apartments, this demonstration continued for several days[93]. In August 2010 ten IDPs conducted a hunger strike outside the MRA, and four of the participants sewed their mouths shut as part of a protest against being resettled to the faraway provincial town of Potskhoetseri[94]. The resettlement of IDPs to Potskhoetseri has been widely criticized by the IDPs resettled there as a failed project.

> The government has not recognized that Potskhoe has failed, but it is perhaps the most prominent example of failed IDP policy in Georgia so far. Almost all the IDPs who were resettled there have ended up moving back into their old CCs in Tbilisi. They did not stay in Potskhoetseri because there is nothing there, no market, no possibilities for employment It is just a desolate place in the woods (Davitaia, 09.03.12).

As the IDPs who were resettled to Potskhoe initially accepted this housing solution, they do not qualify for additional help with regards to housing. They will however need to move out of the CCs; the buildings were emptied by the government because they are either collapsing, or the government has other plans for the buildings. They are now at the risk of being evicted.

Literally Burning for the Cause

In October 2010, as part of the demonstrations against resettlement to Potskhoetseri, Nana Pipia, a 46 year old IDP woman, set fire to herself outside the MRA. She subsequently died of

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[92] Human Rights' website, available at
http://www.humanrights.ge/index.php?a=main&pid=14689&lang=eng accessed
04.10.12 15.20
[93] Human Rights' website, available at
http://www.humanrights.ge/index.php?a=main&pid=10827&lang=eng accessed
09.11.2012
[94] Radio Free Liberty´s website, available at
http://www.rferl.org/content/Georgian_IDPs_Sew_Mouths_Shut_In_Eviction_Protest_/2
137496.html accessed 09.11.2012

the injuries[95]. The demonstrations had then been going on for 18 days, drawing a large crowd of IDPs every day[96]. Mrs. Pipia had been offered alternative housing in Potskhoetseri. She refused the offer on the grounds that she did not know how to make a living in the regions. The MRA official she had spoken to had apparently answered her that she could eat grass, which infuriated her and she had declared that if IDPs "are seen as cattle by the government, the only thing she could do was set fire to herself"[97]. The response from the MRA at the time was that such extreme measures would not resolve anything. Her case was later brought before the Parliament, by the European Democrats among others, in an effort to replace Koba Subeliani as minister of the MRA. The minister had then replied that the case was a personal tragedy and that it should not be exploited for political purposes. The proposition to have him replaced was voted down and he remained in his position[98].

Symptomatic to the case of Mrs. Pipia, as well as other IDPs demonstrating against resettlement to Potskhoetseri, is that she was not offered a choice, if she refused the housing solution offered in Potskhoetseri, she would not receive a solution at all. Either way she would face eviction from the CC she was residing in, creating a deadlocked situation where she in fact had no other way out than accepting the solution offered to her by the MRA. The Action Plan states the right of IDPs to a free choice between housing solutions, this has for many not been a reality, and the IDPs are left with the choice of being homeless or accepting housing in the regions, resulting in a radicalization of the tools the IDPs are willing to use, and increased desperation among the IDPs. Similarly, there have been cases where IDPs have threatened to commit suicide if evicted or not otherwise helped by the government. The representative from the local MRA office in Poti told this story:

> We had a woman who asked us for help with her electricity bill. She could not afford the
> electricity because she had a very sick child, and therefore large hospital bills. When she

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[95] Civil.ge's website, available at http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22861 accessed 09.11.2012

[96] Civil.ge's website, available at http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22788 accessed 09.10.2012

[97] Human Rights Georgia's website, available at http://www.humanrightsge.org/index.php?a=main&pid=12458&lang=eng accessed 09.11.2012

[98] Civil.ge's website, available at http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=23277 For more information see http://www.rferl.org/content/SelfImmolation_Incident_Highlights_Desperation_Of_Georgian_IDPs/2204833.html or http://www.parliament.ge/site2/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=1363&info_id=29506 all accessed 09.11.2012

returned from the hospital the electricity was shut off and the cold environment was not helpful to her child, still recovering from illness. She was desperate and threatened to commit suicide in the MRA office if we did not help. The MRA ended up paying for her electricity (Chachkhiani, 12.02.12).

Left without a choice and no means to better their own situation, the IDPs are left with no other choices than to threaten the MRA with extreme measures. This tactic works to the extent that the MRA is perhaps afraid of the negative media attention these situations might elicit if they do not comply with the demands of the IDPs.

The most elaborate protests organized by IDPs so far occurred in June 2010 when the authorities evicted several thousand IDPs from government owned CCs. Most of the evicted IDPs were offered alternative housing in the regions, but some were evicted without an alternative, essentially putting them on the streets and making them homeless[99]. The IDPs did not protest against being evicted there is an understanding in the IDP community that they can't occupy government buildings forever, and they don't want to stay in these CCs themselves, but they protested against the lack of an alternative offered to them prior to being evicted. The government received massive criticism from the international community present in Georgia for the way these evictions were conducted. The government responded to the criticism and demonstrations by adopting a set of guidelines outlining how evictions should be conducted in the future. The guidelines did not put the IDPs at ease because the guidelines were not retroactive, and the IDPs who had already been evicted carried on with massive demonstrations in front of the MRA[100].

> The Georgian IDPs usually demonstrate after a decision that affects their future has been made. If they had participated, demonstrated and asked questions earlier in the process it would have been easier for them. But they do not have the right information and they don't know where to get the information about when and where decisions affecting them are made because it is not available to the public (Tarkhan-Mouravi, 24.02.12).

Tarkhan-Mouravi points out an essential aspect that greatly affects the IDPs ability to mobilize: the lack of transparency that characterizes the Georgian government's decision-making process. The IDPs do not have access or insight into how and when governmental policy on IDP issues is developed, thus they are not able to influence the policy while it is under development. They learn about changes in IDP policy only when it is implemented.

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[99] Human Rights Watch's website, available at http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2012/world-report-2012-georgia, accessed 09.11.2012
[100] Central Asia-Caucasus Institutes's website, available at http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5500 accessed 09.11.2012

Mobilizing against adopted policy is considerably more difficult than affecting it when it is underway. This creates frustration and desperation, and the IDPs are forced to use more extreme measures to be heard.

Letters to the Government

> The IDPs send a lot of letters to the government, this is a tradition that is part of the Soviet Legacy. They have no real experience of working with the government, other than demanding and requesting small favors either trough demonstrations or letters (Tarkhan-Mouravi, 24.02.11).

Writing letters to governmental agencies is widespread practice among IDPs, they write to ask about the government plans for their housing solution, to file complaints or to ask for small remittances and additional aid. These letters are sent to both local and central MRA, but very often also to the executive branch of government, addressed directly to the president. The IDPs expressed that; "If Saakashvili knew about our situation, he would be appalled. We need to talk to him directly, and explain our problems to him, then he will fix everything"(IDP, Poti, 13.02.12). This quote illustrates an opinion shared by many of the respondents to this thesis. Saakashvili is depicted as the uninformed leader and the truth about the dire situation of Georgian IDPs is being kept from him. He is presented with false information that if it were to be corrected, would change the Georgian government's policy towards IDPs. They believe in him as their benefactor, and attribute the lack of aid simply to him not knowing how much they need it. In an effort to correct this they send letters addressed directly to him, describing their situation and their demands. One of the respondents in Poti had even written a statement that she handed directly to Saakashvili when he visited their settlement, but had not heard back from him afterwards (IDP, Poti, 13.02.12).

Writing letters and filing more formal complaints also extends to the MRA. This is in some ways a more legitimate course of action than sending letters directly to the President since one of the tasks of the MRA is precisely to receive complaints from the IDPs. However, it is problematic that the MRA does not answer all the complaints, and that they do not grant the same type of aid to similar cases. Complicating matters further, a lot of the IDPs send in complaints to the MRA about issues that are outside the ministry's legal framework, and that might have been better suited as a slogan in a demonstration. The government representatives from the MRA confirmed that they receive a lot of letters, often five letters from the same person or household. In an attempt to relieve the situation the MRA has established an IDP

hotline, open all days of the week. The MRA office in Tbilisi has also opened a reception that receives IDPs twelve hours a day with consultants ready to answer questions from the IDPs.

Sending letters to the government is a form of mobilization primarily conducted by individuals, and not collectively. However, the respondents in Poti had made this a joint activity by sending letters signed by all residents in the settlement. Their particular issue of concern was their electricity bills. By accepting a durable housing solution in the form of a new apartment in the regions the IDPs are, according to the Action Plan, transferred from CC to PA. The move into private accommodation means that they have to pay for the utilities themselves, but in return they receive a slightly higher IDP allowance (6 GEL, 3.6 USD). Since the only functioning heating system is electric, and since the relocation took place during winter, the IDPs have received electricity bills three times the amount of their IDP allowance. Many were unable to pay and as a result the power company cut their access. Some IDPs chose to turn off all heating, resulting in below zero temperatures inside. While I was in the settlement conducting interviews, people were gathered outside to attend the funeral of an elderly lady who had frozen to death in her apartment. This version of the story was later disputed, as some IDPs claimed she had already been ill with cancer resulting and it was her illness that led to her death. However, the IDPs were in no doubt that cold temperatures worsened her existing health conditions.

With the benefit of hindsight, the IDPs in Poti say that they would never have agreed to the resettlement if they had known it would put them in such an unfortunate situation (IDP, Poti, 13.02.12). The IDPs have spoken to their Mama Saxlisis, who have organized a petition, getting signatures from 150 households and sent it to the minister of MRA, Mr. Sobeliani. According to the representative from the local MRA, the Mayor of Poti had decided to support the IDPs with money to pay for their electricity, but only one time. The representative form the local MRA said:

> When the IDPs mobilize towards the local MRA, they almost always get what they want. We will check that they in fact do need money for electricity, by looking at their meters, because some IDps know that they can apply for money even though they strictly don't need it. Some IDPs write statements that they need money for the bill, but when we check, the electricity has never been used, meaning that they don't live there (Chachkhiani, 12.02.2012). [101]

In the case of the IDPs in Poti, their mobilization both through letters and through their Mama Saxlisi led to success; they received help with their electricity bill, but only one time, so this

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[101]See Humanrights.ge's websitew for more information, available at http://www.humanrights.ge/index.php?a=main&pid=14213&lang=eng. Accessed 04.10.2012

is not a long-term solution to their problem. For them to be able to pay their own bills now that they are privately accommodated, they need employment.

The IDPs address their letters to the central and local MRA offices, the local municipality, the Mayor and the President's office. As we saw with the demonstrations, the lack of transparency in the governmental structure hinders the IDP mobilization, in that it is difficult to identify the governmental organ that is responsible for designing IDP policy and making decisions on the future of Georgian IDPs. The IDPs are not wrong in mobilizing broadly towards several governmental agencies, because they sometimes receive positive responses from all of them. It became relatively clear with the implementation of the Action Plan that the MRA is responsible for the implementation of housing solutions. But who decides where the housing solutions should be built? And who decides which CCs should be emptied and which IDPs should be evicted? These decisions are not necessarily made in the MRA, and they are not made in the local MRA offices or by the local municipalities, so the only explanation is that they are made within the executive branch of government.

As we saw in chapter five, the government has decided to build a new city named Lazika, on the West-coast of Georgia. It is meant to accommodate many of the IDPs in PA, and this decision was made in the executive branch of government. So the IDPs are in fact correct in mobilizing towards the president. The most important decisions are often made at the highest level of government. The IDPs know this and thus they mobilize towards this branch as well. However, the confusion as to who decides what and when creates a responsibility vacuum where it is difficult to identify the actors that are in fact behind the decisions. This complicates IDP mobilization further. Such a vacuum of responsibility makes it difficult for the IDPs to hold the government accountable for their actions.

Contacting Media

Getting the media's attention is often incorporated as part of the strategy when IDP groups mobilize. They try to get the media to cover their demonstrations by sending letters to newspapers and TV-stations notifying them about the demonstration. Some also write letters to different media channels to tell their stories and create attention around IDP issues in general. Even though reports about IDP issues are common in Georgian media, they are often about government efforts to improve the lives of Georgian IDPs, such as the building of new apartments and rehabilitation of CCs. The bias in the Georgian media makes it difficult for the

IDPs to achieve a balanced and fair portrait of their situation that reflects their opinions. This bias is created by the lack of free press. Among 173 countries Georgia ranked at the 105th place in 2012, down from 99th place since 2010, according to Reporters without Borders[102]. Their poor placement on this scale is connected to their lack of free press;

> We used to have national and local channels that were not controlled by the authorities, today I would say that we have three major channels that are all under the control of the government. Their news-reports are identical. Information is simply not available, especially not in the regions where they don't have access to TV channels from other countries (Kuparadze, 13.03.12).
>
> The main media is under control of the government. The opposition has a hard time making their agenda visible on TV in the regions because there are no independent channels available, we have one in Tbilisi that broadcasts independent of the government. That is also how the government is able to control how people in the region think. The current administration has more support in the regions than in Tbilisi simply because people can't get any other information there (Gvalia, 21.02.12).

With the exception of the independent TV channel created by the NGO Studio Re, available in Tbilisi, most TV channels are owned and controlled by the government. When the independent TV channel Imedi (hope) was shut down in 2007, it was portrayed by international media as a crisis for freedom of speech in Georgia, because it was the only independent TV channel that broadcasted to the entire country[103].

The lack of independent media is especially prevalent in the regions, as there are no available independent TV channels. This creates a discrepancy between the capital and the regions in what information is available and how the IDPs are portrayed in general. This can contribute to the general population's understanding of IDP issues, which might explain the difference in the level of integration and discrimination between the capital and the regions. As seen in chapter 5, the IDPs in the regions feel less integrated and more discriminated against. It would, however, require a separate study to establish whether or not there is a causal relationship between the media coverage and the level of integration/discrimination, but for now it suffices to say that the lack of unbiased coverage of IDP issues in the regions might be a contributing factor.

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[102] See Reporters Without Borders' website, available at http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2011-2012,1043.html accessed 04.10.2012
[103] See Centre for Foreign Policy's website, available at http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/1079.pdf accessed 04.10.2012

6.3.1 Evaluation of the Contentious Episodes

The informal groups of IDPs conducting contentious episodes as a channel of mobilization differ from the institutionalized organizations in that they do not have direct access to power-holders, and they lack insight into how and when decisions are made due to the lack of transparency in the Georgian government. This affects their mobilization: continuously being one step behind the policy makers forces the informal groups to always mobilize retroactively, meaning that their mobilization primarily consists of contesting decisions and policies that are already enacted. Their ability to change the decisions made depend on the visibility of their mobilization. They have to create a lot of public attention to their claims to get the message across to Georgian authorities. However, the bias of the Georgian media makes it very hard for the IDPs to present their claims, without interference or an angle from the media, in the public discourse. Thus, many IDPs try to get through to the Georgian authorities directly by sending letters to governmental agencies, but the lack of transparency in the Georgian government makes it almost impossible for the IDPs to direct their letters to the correct institution.

The need to make their demands visible in the public discourse has affected their mobilization towards the direction of radicalization, the IDPs are constantly forced to up the ante to make themselves heard; self-immolation, threatening suicide and sewing their mouths shut might indicate that it is difficult for them to get their messages across. Their Repertoire of Contention consists primarily of conducting contentious episodes that draws attention to their situation, which in turn puts pressure on the government to resolve the situation. This method has gained precedence, meaning that IDPs have seen other IDPs use these methods and they try to emulate them to win forth with their own claims. The lack of solidarity and the absence of a strong collective identity have created a very fragmented movement. The IDPs affected by a certain political decision will mobilize to change it, but they do not receive support from other groups of IDPs. The incidents are isolated from each other, and the participants vary from time to time. This makes them unable to utilize the potential that lies in their number. If they were to mobilize together towards their ultimate shared goals they might be more successful in influencing the IDP policy before it is made, rather than after.

The institutionalized organizations fear their own demise if they are to adamant in their claims towards the government, making it difficult for them to respond to openings in the Political Opportunity Structure. The IDPs behind the contentious episodes often have nothing to lose, and are more apt to respond to openings in the Political Opportunity

Structure. They are motivated to mobilize by the level of grievances they have experienced, and they are more unafraid and direct in their encounters with the government. However, their lack of insight into the political decision-making process leads to a lack of knowledge in the IDP community about these opportunities. They are unable to respond to these opportunities because they simply do not know about them. The design and implementation of the Action Plan represented an enormous opportunity for the IDPs to influence and affect the decisions made for their future. The institutionalized organizations had insight into the process and some were invited to take part in formulating the plan, for example the Government-in-Exile (Respondent from Government-in-Exile, 27.02.12). The informal groups of IDPs did not know that the Action Plan was developed until the government began implementing it, there were rumors, but no substantial and trustworthy information was made available to the public until it; was finished and adopted (IDP, Tbilisi, 14.03.12). Thus, the IDPs were consequently one step behind in the process, and they were not able to make their opinions heard until after the Action Plan was adopted.

6.4 The International Community – an Influential Ally

As seen in 6.1, one of the most important resources available to IDPs is the support they enjoy from the international community present in Georgia. The international community consists mainly of UNDP, UNHCR, EUMM, and larger international NGOs such as NRC and DRC. The NGOs that operate in Georgia have the primary function of dispersing large amounts of money from international donors, the main donor being the European Union. The money that comes into Georgia via these NGOs is often earmarked for IDP issues; more specifically the funding is intended to be used for projects that focus on housing solutions and employment of IDPs. The NGOs have also initiated capacity building projects within the Georgian government to increase their capacity to deal with IDP issues. By earmarking money specifically towards IDP welfare, rather than giving money to improve the situation of the poor segment of the Georgian population in general, the donors and NGOs have created a strong focus on IDP issues.

The funding from the EU has made the implementation of the Action Plan possible, as the Georgian government could not afford to build and offer durable housing solutions to IDPs without the donations from the EU (Tarkhan-Mouravi, 24.02.12). The international

community in Georgia, specifically the NGOs that control the funding from the donors, has thus come to represent a significant independent power with an enormous influence on Georgian IDP policy. Because the NGOs control the money, the Georgian government has to listen to the directions and demands presented to them from the NGOs.

Let us look at an example of how this manifests itself: DRC has implemented a capacity building project targeting the MRA. This project is funded by the EU, and deals exclusively with IDP policy development and implementation of the Action Plan. Initially, the project was run from the DRC headquarters in Tbilisi, but as it required a close cooperation with the MRA, the DRC staff working on the project was moved to the MRA and began working side by side with the MRA staff. The DRC staff receives a salary from DRC, but they work within the MRA structure on specific issues related to the implementation of the Action Plan. This gives the DRC staff direct influence on the implementation of the Action Plan, but it also exemplifies to what great lengths the Georgian government is willing to go to please the international community present in Georgia today (Representative from MRA central, 07.03.12, Piranishvili 05.03.12).

> The NGOs function as a mediator between the government and the IDPs. The NGOs speak on behalf of IDPs. The problem is that there are too many NGOs trying to influence the government, and their efforts are not coordinated. The NGOs focus a lot on integration and better welfare in displacement, but not so much on return. This has contributed to shift the government's policies from return to integration (Imedi, 14.02.12).

The law on IDPs was ratified in 1996, and the state strategy on IDPs was adopted in 2007. However, the real work of resettling and accommodating IDPs first began in 2010 with the implementation of the Action Plan. So why did the Georgian government wait seventeen years before they started accommodating IDPs? The long wait can be explained by three separate factors; both the IDPs and the government hoped for a long time that the IDPs would be able to return to Abkhazia, and it took time before they were willing to accept the need to create a more viable solution for them in displacement. Second, the war in 2008 created a renewed feeling of urgency, both among the IDPs and the government. The war created an additional caseload of IDPs, and this led to more attention being paid from the government to the old caseload of IDPs as well. Third, the war in 2008 came to epitomize the deteriorating relationship between Russia and the West, and the increased interest in the region from international stakeholders led to an influx of donor money and attention to the consequences of the war.

> The government is considering the opinions of NGOs and they try to make key decisions in consultation with NGOs. When the IDPs demonstrated against being evicted, the government

went back on its decision to evict them and tried to accommodate the IDPs who were affected, partly because there were reactions from the NGO community (Piranishvili, 05.03.12).

Even though there is not an established causation between the increase in donor money specifically towards IDP issues after the war in 2008, and the increased focus on IDPs from the Georgian government within the same timeframe, it is a probable connection. The Saakashvili administration received a lot of support from the Georgian population on account of its expressed goals of becoming a member of the EU and NATO. Compliance with the demands of western donors and implementation of the Action Plan became possible first of all because of the donor money, but also because it was in the Georgian governments self-interest to comply with the demands of the West, as part of its plan to become part of the EU and NATO. The IDPs and the international community both seek to influence the Georgian government in focusing on IDP issues, and the next chapter will elaborate on the government's response to these demands.

6.5 Government Responses to IDP Mobilization

We have seen that the three main claims set forth by the IDPs are housing, livelihood and return. We will now take a look at how the government has received these claims, and whether or not they have chosen to accommodate or repress them. Historically, the Georgian government has not gone to great lengths to accommodate the IDPs in displacement. The Shevardnadze administration kept the IDPs "sitting on their suitcases" by implementing a policy of temporary integration.

> There was a policy of temporary integration under Shevardnadze. When I interviewed government officials back then, they were open about not wanting the IDPs to integrate, because then they would not want to return. I think we still see much of the same policy towards IDPs, but the government officials today are told not to talk about this too loud (Sumbadze, 27.02.12)
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> When Shevardnadze was president, the IDPs were hostages. The government deliberately avoided investing in housing for IDPs because they wanted them to be unhappy so that they would return if possible. Now the government tries to pursue both integration and return at the same time (Piranishvili, 05.03.12).

These quotes exemplify how the Georgian government has used IDPs as leverage in their attempts to reintegrate the breakaway regions. The logic behind deliberately keeping the IDPs unhappy and denying them the chance to integrate into society at large, is connected to the IDPs' will to return. If the IDPs were unhappy with their lives in displacement, they would be more inclined to return if the opportunity presented itself. By pursuing this policy, the government could use the deprivation of the IDPs as a pressure point towards Abkhazia.

Granted, the law on IDPs rights was adopted under the Shevardnadze administration, but it did not represent a significant improvement for the IDPs.

The Rose Revolution and the new administration did not immediately diverge from the policy of temporary integration, and the policy was pursued up until the development of the State Strategy and the adoption of the Action Plan. These documents represented a significant shift in government policy towards IDPS because they presented the IDPs with a concrete plan of action with regards to housing solutions and integration (Sumbadze, 27.02.12). The MRA was tasked with the implementation of the action plan, which led to an increase in the responsibilities of the ministry, and turned them into a focal point for IDP issues.

The remarkable aspect of the relationship between IDPs and government is that their goals are identical; the IDPs primarily want better housing solutions, employment and return to Abkhazia, and all these goals can be found in the Action Plan. This creates an odd dynamic where the two actors are in agreement with what they want to achieve on behalf of IDPs, but disagree on how these goals are to be achieved. The Georgian government has met the claim of housing with accommodation, rather than repression. The Action Plan describes in detail how the government plans to provide all Georgian IDPs with a durable housing solution. The initial phases of the plan has already been implemented, and some of the most vulnerable IDPS, residing in CCs, have already received a housing solution. Whether or not the government is able to complete the plan and provide all IDPs with housing depends largely on the continued support from international donors. If they do not receive funding in the future, it is not likely that the government will be able to resettle the IDPs accommodated in PA. Even though the IDPs are happy that the government is offering durable housing solutions, they do not agree with how the government has gone about the process, and they do not agree with the resettlement to the regions. Most IDPs would prefer to be resettled close to where they have lived while in displacement, they have established connections there and some have employment. Moving to a different city is perceived by many IDPs as a second displacement (IDP, Tbilisi, 13.03.2012).

The Georgian government has not yet implemented a policy with regards to employment for IDPs. However, this is according to the Action Plan, the livelihood component envisioned in the Action Plan is scheduled to be implemented after the resettlement process is completed. Furthermore, the resettlement of IDPs to western Georgia can be seen as part of the government's vision of turning this region into a center for

commerce. The government has been criticized by the NGO community for not implementing the employment and housing components of the Action Plan simultaneously. If the IDPs are resettled and then have to wait for a long time before the livelihood component is in place, they might move back to their CCs (Kostohryz, 16.03.12). This has to some extent already taken place in the case of Potskhoetseri, as many of the IDPs resettled there had no means of making a living beyond the IDP allowance, they have moved back to their former housing arrangements.

The IDPs' right to return to their homes in the breakaway region is mentioned both in the State Strategy and in the Action Plan. However, it is difficult to create a specific policy regarding the return of the IDPs, as this depends not only on the policy of the Georgian government. Working towards the reintegration of the breakaway regions is also not solely an IDP issue, and thus not a responsibility taken on by the MRA, rather it is The Ministry of Foreign Affairs that works towards reintegration.

Georgian authorities have, after 2008, been very susceptible to the needs and claims of the IDPs. The Rose Revolution led to a reinforcement of basic democratic principles such as freedom of speech, the right of association and the right to assemble, and the Saakashvili administration has shown tolerance for public display of political opinions. The IDPs have been able to demonstrate without risking ramifications such as imprisonment, and they have been able to form organizations that are part of the formal structure of Georgian politics. As we have seen, Georgian authorities have tolerated a range of political activities from the IDPs, rarely, if ever, suppressing performances of contentious politics.

The Representative from the MRA indicated that the next step in IDP policy is to shift from a status-based approach to a needs-based approach this means that only the IDPs who, by definition of the government, need aid will receive it (07.03.12). This change in policy, although not yet implemented might be a welcomed change, as it allows for the government to focus their efforts on the IDPs that are most vulnerable.

7 Concluding Remarks

In this last chapter I present my main findings in a final discussion on political mobilization of Georgian IDPs. I will return to the main topic of research as it was presented in chapter one, and examine it in light of the theoretical framework and empirical data.

The Shevardnadze administration, with its policy on temporary integration, led the IDPs to believe that return to the breakaway regions was right around the corner. Thinking that they would return within a relatively short timeframe they did not mentally prepare to integrate and settle down in Georgia proper. The mentality of continuously postponing their return preserved for several years, and the IDPs were kept "sitting on their suitcases". Growing increasingly impatient with their housing arrangements and inability to go on with their lives, the IDPs were more than ready to believe Saakashvili when he declared that he would reunite Georgia with its breakaway regions under the Rose Revolution. The Saakashvili administration enjoyed massive support among the IDP community, and once again, they believed that the option to return to their homes in Abkhazia would manifest itself. The State Strategy and the Action Plan were welcomed within the IDP community, even though the documents did not imply a step further towards return. The Action Plan also signified that the new administration took the needs of the IDPs seriously and intended to provide them with a viable alternative as long as they were still in displacement.

Five years after the revolution, the Saakashvili administration had not yet implemented the Action Plan, and the IDPs were still waiting for something to happen, when suddenly, everything happened at once. The war in 2008 between Russia and Georgia led to the displacement of Georgians from South Ossetia. The new caseload of IDPs received durable housing solutions from the international community and donors, within three months of the war. The IDPs displaced from Abkhazia had been displaced for fifteen years at the time, and were still waiting for proper housing. This discriminatory treatment was not necessarily conducted with malicious intent from the government, it happened as a result of several factors. First of all, Georgia became interesting to the western world as a result of the war with Russia. Russia's first invasion since the fall of the Soviet Union[104] was not received

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[104] CACI's website, available at
http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/silkroadpapers/0808Georgia-PP.pdf
[Accessed 09.11.2012]

lightly in Western Europe, and the EU mobilized their support to help Georgia. This support largely came in the form of monetary aid, specifically earmarked IDPs, and as the money was available almost immediately after the war, it enabled the building of durable housing solutions for the new caseload of IDPs in a short amount of time. The Georgian government, with its Western-oriented policies, has had an explicit desire to become part of the European Union and NATO since it came into power. This made the government very susceptible to the demands of the western NGOs operating within Georgia, and to the demands of the EU as their primary donor. The focus of the NGOs and the EU has been IDPs and state building in Georgia since they became involved in the country. The funding from the EU is primarily managed by the NGOs, but a substantial amount is given directly to the Georgian government. It is not possible to state that there is a causal relationship between the increase in funding after the 2008 war and the increased focus from the government on IDP issues, but it is a reasonable assumption considering that the focus on IDPs took place subsequently after the increase in funding.

The implementation of the Action Plan began in May 2010. The government began by building apartment blocks in the regions of western Georgia, intended for the IDPs that were identified as the most vulnerable. This was determined by looking at the quality of their housing arrangements. The resettlement process began spring 2011, and the government simultaneously initiated large-scale rehabilitations of old CCs and evictions of IDPs who resided in CCs illegally or who had offered a housing solution elsewhere, but not yet moved. The implementation of the Action Plan led to two things; first it created a realization within the IDP community that the Georgian government had shifted their focus from return to integration, secondly it led to an increase in the political mobilization of the Georgian IDPs displaced from Abkhazia.

The Georgian IDPs have been a part of the political scene in Georgia since they were displaced, represented primarily by the Government-in-Exile, Mama Saxlisis and later the political party the European Democrats of Georgia. These institutionalized organizations communicated with different levels of Georgian authorities and lobbied for IDP interests. The increase in political mobilization came primarily from informal groups of Georgian IDPs gathering around certain events or changes in IDP policy. The implementation of the Action Plan represented a significant opening in the Political Opportunity Structure, and the informal groups of IDPs utilized this opening to state their claims and make themselves heard,

primarily through demonstrations and letters to governmental officials. The IDPs managed to utilize the opportunity presented to them, primarily through employing their most important resource; their support in the international community. The war in 2008 had as mentioned created a large interest from the international community, and the IDPs now found that they had an influential ally that was putting pressure on the Georgian government towards focusing on IDP issues.

The Action Plan contains an extensive, detailed outline of how the government plans to provide the IDPs with durable housing solutions and employment, so what were the IDPs mobilizing towards? The fact that the government and the IDPs are in agreement of what they want for the future of Georgian IDPs complicates matters further. What we see here is a trifecta of actors; the international community, the IDPs and the Georgian government all working for the welfare of the IDPs, so wherein lies the conflict? What is there to mobilize towards when they are in agreement with the authorities? The Georgian government has implemented the Action Plan largely without consulting with the IDPs. The plan states that the IDPs should be given a choice when deciding upon their durable housing solution. In reality, the IDPs have been presented with the choice of accepting the housing solution offered by the government or becoming homeless. Therein lies the main point of contention between the IDPs and the government. Both actors have the same ultimate goals on behalf of the Georgian IDPs, but it is the road towards these goals that they disagree upon. The IDPs have utilized the international community as a support system, by creating awareness around wrongfully implemented policy through demonstrations and media attention, the international community has become aware of the problem and put pressure on the Georgian government to correct this. Afraid to upset their main donor and their chances of becoming part of the European Union, the government largely complies with the objections of the international community.

The NGOs have acquired a powerful position and become an authority on IDP issues that the government actively uses as a consultant. This has led to some IDPs feeling overlooked by the government, and that the NGOs do not necessarily manage to give an accurate representation of IDP interests. However, IDP interests are also represented through the institutionalized organizations that they have managed to establish, and the Mama Saxlisis are a good example of how IDP interests are communicated to the government on a local level. The organizations have the opportunity to lobby directly towards power-holders and have, for example with the case of the European Democrats, been effective in putting IDP

issues on the agenda. These organizations main quality in terms of mobilization is that the representatives have an extensive network that allows them to access important information on IDP issues. This enables them to influence decisions on IDP issues before they are made. The informal groups do not have access to the same information, which, as we have seen earlier, is due to the lack of transparency in the Georgian government. Acquiring information on governmental policies is not easy for the informal groups, which puts them in the unfortunate position of having to mobilize largely retroactively. They find out about changes in government policies only after they are made, changing these decisions requires a higher amount of visibility and public attention. If they manage to achieve that, like they did when they demonstrated against the evictions, they often get the international community on their side and thus they are able to more effectively put pressure on the Georgian government.

The first topic of this thesis was to establish whether or not the Georgian IDPs displaced from Abkhazia have mobilized politically, in short: yes, they have! As we have seen, the Georgian IDPs identified three main goals for themselves; housing, employment and return. The Implementation of the Action Plan led to an increase in IDP mobilization towards the goal of housing specifically. This is related to the fact that the Georgian government is currently implementing the housing policy outlined in the Action Plan. The next component of the Action Plan is employment. When this component is to be implemented we might see an increase in IDP mobilization towards this goal. As they do not have access to information beforehand, it is likely that the mobilization of Georgian IDPs will follow the implementation of the Action Plan.

The second topic of research outlined was to identify the form that the mobilization has assumed. As we have seen above, the IDPs have mobilized primarily through two channels; formal and institutionalized organizations and informal groups of IDPs conducting contentious episodes in relation to specific events or changes in policy. The main difference between these two channels, both working towards the same goal; the welfare of Georgian IDPs, is their Repertoires of Contention. In the theoretical framework we saw that movements employ their Repertoire of Contention when mobilizing, meaning that they have a toolbox of different expressions of contention that they use according to the situation and the context. Tilly differentiates between an old and a new Repertoire of Contention. He defines the old Repertoire as what was in use before 1700, and the new Repertoire as everything that has been in use since (Tilly, 2006:51). Even though the timeline is different for this thesis, the theoretical concept works as parable to this situation. The informal organizations conducting

contentious episodes largely draw on a Repertoire of Contention formed under the Soviet Union. Sending letters to governmental officials is the best example of this. They are accustomed to Soviet Style mobilization, and have not yet developed a new Repertoire of Contention suited for the democratic state that Georgia aspires to become. The institutionalized organizations, on the other hand, have adopted a new Repertoire of Contention more in line with what is used in Western democracies. They lobby and put pressure on government officials in an attempt to put IDP issues on the agenda. Repertoires of Contention are malleable, and change according to the type of regime they are used within. Thus, it is likely that if the new generation of IDPs were to mobilize some time from now, one might find that the mobilization is expressed using different tools. The two Repertoires of Contention coexist within the framework of the same state, and are thus a good example of how the mobilizing actors are susceptible to changes in governance.

The Repertoires of Contention is an example of an internal resource available to the group, the second internal resource described in this thesis is their motivation to mobilize; their deprivation. Gurr's theory on Relative Deprivation stipulates that if a group experiences severe grievances, they will become motivated to correct the situation, especially if there is a large discrepancy between what the actors have envisioned for themselves, their value expectancy, and what they receive, their value capabilities (Gurr, 1970). The IDPs were accustomed to a different life than what they have now, and by comparing their lives in Abkhazia and their lives in displacement, they feel deprived of the future they could have had if they had not been displaced. Seeing as they have been displaced for nineteen years, many have accustomed themselves somewhat to the current level of discomfort, even though they are living from day to day with regards to income. They do not mobilize because they are displaced, they mobilize when there is an *added grievance* to their situation. This means that if something happens that skews the fragile balance they have achieved for the worse, they are very easily mobilized. This can be exemplified by the IDPs in Poti who, by accepting a housing solution, were moved to private sector and thereby had to pay their own utility bills. The increase in their expenses completely ruined their personal economy, resulting in the mobilization of the entire settlement, and their success in having the local municipality paying for their bills. Additionally, many of the IDPs value expectancies were raised with the implementation of the Action Plan. They thought that they would finally be able to begin a new life in displacement, settle down properly and find employment. Thus their

disappointment became immense when they were offered apartments in Potskhoetseri, far away from everything and without possibilities.

A third internal resource mentioned in the theoretical framework was that of group identity. The formation of a strong and cohesive group identity can lead to solidarity and loyalty among the members of a movement. The IDPs do not share a strong collective identity, most likely because they are not that different from the local population in terms of ethnicity, religion or language. They do not wish to define themselves out of the Georgian national community, rather they are offended at the notion of being classified as IDPs, and thus as a separate group from the population at large. The strong wish to integrate themselves into the local community has led them to downplay their IDP status, while at the same time highlighting it when they interact with government officials. They are ambiguous to the IDP status, partly because it is connected to poverty and thus to shame, and partly because they are proud to be from Abkhazia and to have survived the war and the following displacement. This duality is difficult to merge into one comprehensive framework for collective identity that can serve as a basis for solidarity and loyalty between the IDPs. The term internally displaced carries connotations that the IDPs do not want to be associated with. The lack of employment, dependency on the state, lack of education and general discrimination towards the IDPs is a dangerous tendency that if not corrected, might lead to the creation not only of the IDPs as a social category, but as a lower class ostracized from society at large.

A fourth internal resource available to the IDPs is their ability to organize and thus maintain a high level of contention while facing a powerful contender (Tilly, 1978). The Georgian IDPs have not managed to establish one organization that unites the movement and acts as a spokesperson for all of them, but they have nevertheless managed to sustain their mobilization over a longer period of time. Through the institutionalized organizations the IDPs are guaranteed a continuous representation in Parliament and in the local municipalities. These organizations might not be willing to take the same amount of risks as the informal groups are because they are afraid that if they do they might lose their influence, but their moderation ensures the continued representation of IDPs, thereby becoming a tradeoff between political gain and representation. Tilly describes a situation where several organizations compete over the same resources, thus eliminating or reducing claims made by competing organizations (Tilly, 1978). As the IDP organizations represent IDPs in different levels of government, there is little if any competition between the three. However, as the MRA has gained influence and responsibilities for IDP issues, it is possible to imagine a

scenario where they gradually become a mouthpiece for IDP needs and issues in Georgia society. This is especially expected to happen when the international community withdraws from Georgia, which is to be expected to happen in the near future. As the funding that goes into creating durable housing solutions for IDPs are earmarked by the international donors, the IDPs do not really have to compete with other groups in the Georgian society at large for monetary resources. This might change when the donors stop prioritizing Georgia as a recipient, at which point it would be interesting to conduct a similar study to see if the political mobilization of Georgian IDPs becomes stronger.

We have now seen how the IDPs have employed their internal resources; let us take a look at the external. The main external resource available to the IDP movement is the support they enjoy from the international community present in Georgia. The dynamics between the international community, the government and the IDPs have already been discussed to some extent, but it should be mentioned that when the international community pulls out of Georgia the IDPs will have to fend for themselves. There have been NGOs present in Georgia since the wars in the early 1990s, and the IDPs are therefore accustomed to having a powerfully ally that comes to their rescue when needed. The absence of the NGOs will create a responsibility vacuum, and the government will become freer in its policies towards the IDPs, without the corrective that the international community has represented. One possibility is that new local NGOs will emerge and take over the role that the international community has had, but without the monetary support from the donors it is difficult to imagine that they would become equally as powerful with regards to making the government listen.

A second external factor, which is presented in the theoretical framework by Tarrow and that affects mobilization, is the movement's ability to respond and utilize openings in the Political Opportunity Structure to gain access to the political arena (2011:9). The mobilizing actors define what constitutes a political opportunity it is not defined objectively. The theory is that movements respond to their surroundings and use changes that occur in the political structure to their advantage. The two channels for political mobilization among the Georgian IDPs utilize opportunities differently. We have seen that the organizations representing IDPs are not able to take risks because they are concerned with keeping their position and ensuring the continued representation of IDP interests. The informal groups are more apt to take advantage of these opportunities, as they have no power to lose. However, as there is little transparency in the Georgian government, it is difficult for the informal groups to identify openings in the Political Opportunity Structure. As we have seen, they mobilize mostly

retroactively due to the lack of information. Political Opportunities do present themselves to both channels of mobilization, but neither channel has the appropriate tools to seize these opportunities. Mobilizing actors who wish to gain access to the political arena often seize openings in the Political Opportunity Structure to gain a seat at the table (Tarrow, 2011). The Georgian IDPs are already represented in the political arena by several organizations within the governmental structure.

The last topic of research was to determine whether or not the IDPs have been successful in achieving their goals, determined by the government response to their mobilization. As we saw above, the goals of the IDPs overlap with the goals the government has on behalf of IDPs. Thus, they work towards the same ultimate goal, which is in itself beneficial for the IDPs, even though the government's goals did not come about as a result of IDP mobilization. We have seen that the Georgian IDPs mobilize primarily towards housing and employment, and not equally as much towards return. This is probably connected to their lack of ability to influence the realization of this goal, as it is not only dependent on the policies of the Georgian state. They remain ambiguous towards stating that integration is their primary goal, and they always include return, even if it is just symbolically. The Georgian IDPs have been successful in their mobilization by utilizing their resources, particularly the support they enjoy from the international community. By putting pressure on the government to provide them with a durable housing solution, they have managed to instigate the implementation of the Action Plan, with a lot of help from international donors and the strong will in the Georgia government to appease these donors. They continue to mobilize towards improving the quality of aid that they receive from the government, and when they manage to create enough attention towards their goals they are successful.

According to Tarrow, a movement is likely to either become institutionalized or dissolve when met with accommodation from the government (Tarrow, 2011). The Georgian IDPs have to some extent already been institutionalized, in the form of the organizations representing them within the governmental structure. Whether or not they will continue to mobilize once the Action Plan has been implemented, or if the movement will dissolve when their official goals of housing and employment are met, depends largely on whether or not the infrastructural integration of housing and livelihood is paired with social integration. Social integration entails that the IDPs form an integral part of the Georgian society, and feel that they are part of the national community. Without becoming socially integrated, the IDPs are at risk of becoming ostracized and excluded in their settlements.

This thesis has examined the political mobilization of Georgian IDPs, showing that the IDPs have in fact mobilized and to a great extent succeeded with the help of the international community. The implementation of the Action Plan has led to a shift in government policies from temporary integration, to permanent integration, however with a continued emphasis on the IDPs' right to return. Whether or not the option of return presents itself in the future, it is an important and valuable step forward that they are now presented with viable and adequate housing solutions.

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Maps

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Statistics

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Pictures
All pictures are my own, taken in Georgia Spring 2011.

Appendix

1. Interview format for interviews with IDPs

1. Government policies:

1.1 Do you agree with the current government policies to IDPs?

1.2 Some of the Collective Centers in Tbilisi were emptied and the IDPs living there were evicted. What do you think about that?

1.3 What is the most important goal for IDPs today?

1.4 Who decides what happens to/the future of Georgian IDPs?

1.5 Do you think the IDP community has power in political life in Georgia? Do you think the Georgian exile government from Abkhazia has political power?

1.6 How do you think IDPs can make their own situation better? What can the IDP community do to change their situation?

1.7 Where would you go to get more information about your rights? If there were any changes in your rights as an IDP would you get information about it?

1.8 Since you have lived in displacement, have you received any help from the government or NGOs?

1.9 If the IDP allowance would be taken away tomorrow, would you do something to get it back?

1.10 Do you think the government is aware of the IDPs situation? Do you think they know about your problems/difficulties?

1.11 If you had a serious problem, would you actively tell the local governments/NGOs or would you wait for them to help you?

2. Political participation:

2.1 Do you vote in all/any of the presidential/parliamentary elections? If yes, do you vote for a candidate that you feel will help IDPs specifically? Have you ever participated in any demonstrations? Are you a member of any political parties? Do you participate in any organizations working to bettering the situations of IDPS? When you vote, which politicians/party do you feel best represent your political opinions? Do they speak specifically to IDPs? If so, how?

2.2 Was there ever a time when you felt it especially important to participate politically?

2.3 If yes, how did you participate/express yourself?

3. Discrimination:

3.1 Do you feel that your IDP status is in any way hindering you? Are there any activities that you can't be a part of because you are an IDP?

4. Social networks:

4.1 Who/where would you ask for help if you found yourself in a troublesome situation?

4.2 If you wanted to change something in your local community, how would you go about changing it?

5. Integration:

5.1 Do you feel yourself integrated in the local community? Do you feel the same level of integration in Georgia as you did in Abkhazia?

5.2 Are there any ways that you feel you are left out of the local community?

5.3 How do you see the relationship between IDPs and the local community at large?

6. Identity:

6.1 What topics are you interested in? What engages you and what makes you aggravated?

6.2 Is there a sense of community among the IDPs?

6.3 When you meet new people, do you mention that your are an IDP?

Category:	Name:	Representing:	Place:	Date :
NGO	Anonymous	Georgian Young Lawyers (GYLA)	Tbilisi	01.03.2012
NGO	Eka Gvalia	Head of Charity Humanitarian Centre Abkhazeti (CHACA)	Tbilisi	21.02.2012
NGO	Mamuka Kuparadze	Studio Re (Independent TV Channel)	Tbilisi	13.03.2012
NGO	Petr Kostohryz	Head of Norwegian Refugee Council(NRC), Georgia	Tbilisi	16.03.2012
NGO	Vakhtang Piranishvili	Representative from CARE, Georgia	Tbilisi	05.03.2012
NGO	Anonymous	Representative from CHCA	Zugdidi	13.02.2012
NGO	Anonymous	Representative from Atinati	Zugdidi	13.02.2012
NGO	Anonymous	Representatives from Imedi	Zugdidi	14.02.2012
European Democrats	Paata Davitaia	MP in Parliament	Tbilisi	09.03.2012
MRA	Anonymous	Head of IDP Department Central MRA	Tbilisi	07.03.2012
Local MRA	Roman Chachkiani	Representative from local IDP department in Poti	Poti	12.02.2012
Abkhaz Government-in-Exile	Anonymous	Representative from Abkhaz Government-in-Exile, Education Department	Tbilisi	27.02.2012
Institute for Policy Studies	George Tarkhan-Mouravi	Academic and Researcher	Tbilisi	24.02.2012
Institute for Policy Studies	Nana Sumbadze	Psychologist and Academic	Tbilisi	27.02.2012

A) Expert Respondents

Gender:	Age:	From:	Date:	Place:
Woman	37	Sukhumi	13.03.2012	Tbilisi
Woman	34	Sukhumi	13.03.2012	Tbilisi
Man	39	Sukhumi	14.03.2012	Tbilisi
Man	47	Sukhumi	14.03.2012	Tbilisi
Woman	46	Sukhumi	13.03.2012	Tbilisi
Man	67	Sukhumi	13.03.2012	Tbilisi
Man	50	Gali	14.03.2012	Tbilisi
Woman	28	Gali	13.03.2012	Tbilisi
Woman	78	Gali	14.03.2012	Tbilisi
Woman	83	Gali	14.03.2012	Tbilisi
Woman	34	Gali	10.02.2012	Poti
Man	63	Gali	11.02.2012	Poti
Man & Woman	53, 54	Gudauta	11.02.2012	Poti
Woman	53	Gagra	12.02.2012	Poti
Woman	45	Ochamchire	11.02.2012	Poti

B) IDP Respondents

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