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Defusing Conflict in Tsalka District of Georgia: Migration, International Intervention and the Role of the State

Jonathan Wheatley

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Table of Contents

I. INTRODUCTION 4

II. TSALKA DISTRICT: AN OVERVIEW 5

ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE 5
DEMOGRAPHY AND MIGRATION 8
POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND THE ROLE OF THE STATE 11

III. MAIN ARENAS OF CONFLICT IN TSALKA DISTRICT 14

INTER-COMMUNAL CONFLICT AT LOCAL LEVEL 15
CONFLICT BETWEEN COMMUNITIES AND THE STATE 21
INTERNATIONAL ACTORS: TWO INTERVENTIONS 23

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 29

APPENDIX 1: OVERVIEW OF MIGRATION IN THE VILLAGES 33

I. INTRODUCTION

The Tsalka district of Georgia, situated in the west of the province of Kvemo Kartli, is home to a highly diverse population and has, since Georgia gained independence, been affected by three interconnected and potentially destabilising trends. First, after the collapse of the USSR, the local economy disintegrated. During the Soviet era, Tsalka had been a highly productive agricultural region, but after the Soviet internal market broke down and the roads and railway links fell into disrepair, most inhabitants of Tsalka district were forced to eke out a subsistence living from what they could grow and raise on their own parcels of land. Secondly, the state-society relationship in Tsalka district has changed radically over the last twenty years; from a highly regulating state in the Soviet period, to its virtual withdrawal in the 1990s and early 2000s, to a re-establishment of state authority in the aftermath of the November 2003 'Rose Revolution'. Finally, Tsalka has been the epicentre of successive waves of in-migration and out-migration; from a large-scale exodus of Greeks that began in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union and continues unabated today to the rapid in-migration of Georgians from Adjara and Svaneti that began to gain pace in the late 1990s and reached its peak during the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline in 2003-2004.

Some observers have used the term 'ethnic conflict' to describe the sporadic incidents of inter-communal violence that have occurred in Tsalka district in the last few years (for details see below). Such a categorisation does little to help us understand the causes of tension in this hitherto forgotten corner of Georgia. In this paper, I will show how conflicts in the region are the combined result of a) changing and dysfunctional patterns of state penetration, b) an unregulated influx of newcomers into the villages of Tsalka district, and c) poor mechanisms of communication between the different communities that inhabit the district and a consequent lack of any effective mechanisms to defuse conflict. The conflicts are not so much ethnic conflicts *per se* but rather the result of a struggle for scarce resources between communities that are isolated from one another against a backdrop of weak and unpredictable state regulation.

This paper is divided into three parts. The first section is mainly descriptive; its goal is to provide a general overview of the main economic, demographic, and political trends in Tsalka district from the late Soviet period until the present day. The second section is more analytical; it analyses the real and potential arenas of conflict in the district, namely conflicts between

communities and conflicts between communities and the state. It also looks at the impact of international organisations on the conflict dynamic by focusing first on the construction of the BTC pipeline by a consortium led by BP (British Petroleum) and then on the initiative of the Greek government to reduce conflict by supporting local law enforcement bodies and helping to regulate migration. The third and final part will summarise the main causes of conflict in Tsalka district and will provide recommendations for the Georgian government and for the international donor community.

II. TSALKA DISTRICT: AN OVERVIEW

Economy and Infrastructure

During the late Soviet period, Tsalka *rayon* (district) was one of the most productive agricultural regions of Georgia with a high standard of living. As well as producing a large potato crop, Tsalka was famous for its dairy products and it was even said that cheese from Tsalka was especially favoured in the Kremlin.[1] There were also factories producing dairy products and lemonade.

The collapse of the internal Soviet market and the civil conflict and warlordism that prevailed in Georgia during the early 1990s meant that the district became isolated and there was no longer any market for agricultural produce. Due to state neglect, transport links with the rest of Georgia became degraded, adding to the sense of isolation. Living standards plummeted and much of the population was forced to live on a low cash economy and to rely either on barter or small-scale sale of agricultural products to neighbouring towns and villages.

Today, as previously, the staple crop is potatoes. Most arable land is given over either to potato fields or to hay for animal feed. Cabbages, barley, wheat, oats and maize are also grown. In terms of rearing livestock, cattle-breeding is most prevalent, although some households also keep goats and sheep. Cheese is still produced, although it is mainly sold to the local market. Finally, many families keep hives of bees and sell the honey to local markets or to Tbilisi. There are two markets in Tsalka district where agricultural and other products are sold: one in Tsalka town (on Sundays) and one in the village of Kushchi (on Saturdays).

Although precise data on living standards for Tsalka district are not available, according to a Household Food Survey funded by USAID and carried out in 2004 by Save the Children and the Institute for Polling and Marketing, the three neighbouring districts of Tsalka, Tetritskaro and

[1] Natalia Antelava and Dima bit-Suleiman "Notes from Tsalka: The Vanishing Greeks of Tsalka" in *Transitions Online* (13 August 2003) at www.tol.cz

Dmanisi (the upland areas of Kvemo Kartli) experienced rather high levels of poverty compared with other parts of Georgia. The survey showed that 62.8% of the population of these districts were living on less than 50% of the official poverty line in terms of monetised income and 51.7% were living below this level in terms of total income. The average figures for all of Georgia were 44.1% and 33.4% respectively. According to the same survey, 81.1% of households in the three districts used land to produce food.[2] The local economic situation is therefore highly unsatisfactory.

Land redistribution in Tsalka district was carried out in much the same way as in most other rural districts of Georgia. Although a resolution was passed in January 1992 allowing for the privatisation of land and the maximum amount of privatised land each household could receive was set at 1.25 hectares, it was only in March 1996, when the Law on the Ownership of Agricultural Land was passed, that the right of private ownership of agricultural land was finally defined. Most households in Tsalka district received between 0.5 and 1.25 hectares of land from the former collective farms, and following a decree passed by President Shevardnadze in May 1999 land could be officially registered. However, most recent settlers from Adjara and Svaneti simply occupied houses that had been abandoned by Greeks, had no legal rights to the property and therefore received no land (see below).

The infrastructure in Tsalka district is particularly degraded; the main road from Tbilisi to Tsalka via Manglisi (approximately 95 km) is in such a poor state that it is only negotiable by a four-wheel drive vehicle. The minor roads between the villages are in an even worse state of dilapidation and some upland villages are often totally isolated during the winter months. There is a new stretch of road that was built by British Petroleum (BP) during the construction of the BTC oil pipeline connecting Tetritsqaro and Tsalka, which is of better quality, but, following the completion of the pipeline, by mid-2006 the quality of this road was also beginning to deteriorate. In total, the journey time by car from Tbilisi to Tsalka is approximately two and a half hours. At the time of writing there were plans to rehabilitate the Tbilisi-Manglisi-Tsalka road with funds from the *US Millennium Challenge*; work is due to begin in 2007 and a feasibility study is currently being conducted. There is also a railway line from Tbilisi to Tsalka via Tetritskaro; although trains to Tsalka have generally been infrequent and unreliable, from August 2006 a train service from Akhalkalaki via Tsalka to Tbilisi began to run every two days. The lack of an effective transport infrastructure has a negative effect on the local economy; for most small producers the cost of petrol

[2] Larry Dershem and Tea Khoperia, *The Status of Households in Georgia – 2004: Final Report* (December 2004) at http://www.assistancegeorgia.org.ge/AGNGO/AGNGOFiles/4bb74469-15ac-4d29-b7bc-968438a23bfe/88cd0852-1eef-4c34-9f76-c3983912e1ea/Status%20of%20Households%20in%20Georgia%202004%20Eng.pdf.

and of wear and tear on vehicles makes it uneconomical to travel to Marneuli or Tbilisi in order to sell agricultural products.

Another major infrastructural problem relates to the supply of water. Most households do not have running water, even in the town of Tsalka, and have to collect water from communal water pipes in the towns and villages. In some villages, this may mean walking some distance; in the village of Kvemo Kharaba, villagers complained that the only source of water was a spring 1km from the village, but that the water was contaminated and there had been cases of people becoming ill as a result of drinking it.[3]

In recent years electricity has been a major problem too. Throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s, much of the population of Tsalka district went for days on end without electricity. However, in 2005-2006 the situation improved markedly and in some settlements there is now 24-hour electricity for most of the time. However, there are frequent breakdowns and accidents that lead to power outages and electricity is frequently cut off as a result of non-payment of bills.

As to education and healthcare, there are major deficiencies in these areas too. Most of the larger villages (i.e. the principal villages of communities or *temis*) have schools, but many are in urgent need of repair and often only teach children up to Grade 9 (i.e. age 15). Older pupils frequently have to travel large distances if they wish to continue their education. Medical facilities are also a problem; although some of the larger villages have a doctor, the more isolated villages do not. As they are often cut off by snow in winter, they do not always have access to medical care.

[3] Interviews in Tsalka district, September 2004.

Demography and Migration

Figure 1: Population of Tsalka District by Nationality 1989-2006

Nationality	**1979***	**2002****	**2006*****
Georgian	1,710	2,510	8,000
Armenian	13,996	11,484	11,000
Greek	30,811	4,589	1,500******
Azeri	2,231	1,992	1,800
Others	592	313	300
Total	49,340	20,888	22,600

* Source: The 1979 Population Census of the Georgian SSR. Tsenral'noie Statistichieskoi Upravlieniie Gruzinskoi SSR, *Itogi Bciesoyuznoi Perepisi Nacielieniia 1979 Goda po Gruzinskoi SSR* (Tbilisi, 1980).

** Source: Population Census of Georgia taken in January 2002. Sakartvelos Statistikis Sakhelmts'ipo Departamenti, *Sakartvelos Mosakhleobis 2002 Ts'lis Pireveli Erovnuli Saqoveltao Aghts'eris Shedegebi* (Tbilisi: 2003).

*** Estimate from Tsalka district *gamgeoba*, June 2006.

**** The Public Defender estimates that there were 1,684 Greeks remaining in Tsalka district in 2005. See the Report of the Public Defender of Georgia, presented to Parliament on 23 December 2005, available at www.regnum.ru/news/569444.html.

During the Soviet period, the majority of the population of Tsalka district was Greek by nationality; according to the 1979 census, Greeks made up 62.4% of the population (see Fig. 1). Most Greeks had arrived in the region during the first half of the nineteenth century as refugees from the Ottoman Empire. Due to their place of origin, most spoke Turkish rather than Greek; their self-identification as Greeks was based not on language, but on their adherence to the Greek Orthodox Church. In four villages (Santa, Kvemo Kharaba, Gumbati and Tarson), a dialect of Greek was also spoken by some villagers. The second largest national grouping were the Armenians who lived (and still live) in a number of mainly monoethnic villages across the district, while the third most populous nationality were the Azeris, concentrated in a few villages in the north of the district. There were very few Georgians in Tsalka district; only Rekha was historically a mainly Georgian village.

Following the collapse of the USSR and the subsequent political instability, the Greek population of Tsalka began to leave for Greece. It was relatively easy for them to enter Greece and emigration proved a popular option for the economically active population, who wished to live and work in an EU country amongst people whom they considered co-ethnics. Moreover, Greek immigration law was poorly enforced and those claiming Greek ethnicity were able to enter Greece

with relative ease.[4] Between 1979 and 2002, the population of Tsalka district fell from 49,340 to 20,888, a reduction of 58%. This fall was entirely the result of out-migration of Greeks; the number of ethnic Greeks fell from 30,811 in 1979 to 4,589 in 2002 (see above). According to unofficial figures provided by the *gamgebeli* (district administrator) of Tsalka, by 2006 the number of Greeks had fallen to around 1,500. Thus, the process of emigration of Greeks that began in the early 1990s was still continuing at the time of writing.

Once the exodus of Greeks was well underway, a major process of in-migration began from other parts of Georgia. According to figures provided by Tsalka district *gamgeoba* (administration), by 2006 around 6,500 ethnic Georgian migrants had settled in the district. By far the greatest number of these (approximately 70%) came from the Autonomous Republic of Adjara and most of these came from Khulo district, which is notorious for landslides and a shortage of land.[5] Mass migration from Adjara began in 1998, when a number of families began settling in the villages of Gumbati, Kvemo Kharaba, Karakomi and Khando. Most of these were eco-migrants who had fled their homes in Adjara as a result of landslides. Their arrival in Tsalka district occurred after a presidential decree was passed allocating around USD 3 million for the purchase of abandoned houses in Gumbati, Kvemo Kharaba and Khando. Houses were identified and priced and plans were made to trace the original owners. However, although a very small number of houses were bought and a handful of eco-migrants gained legal rights to their property, almost all of the allocated funds simply disappeared.

Despite the unwillingness and/or incapacity of the state to buy houses for the newcomers and the failure of Shevardnadze's government to regulate or even register internal migration, the influx of Georgians from Adjara gathered pace in 2002. During the next couple of years, the newcomers occupied houses abandoned by Greeks in almost all the former Greek villages of Tsalka district; the largest numbers moved into the towns of Tsalka and Trialeti and the villages of Tikilisa, Avranlo, Guniakala and Karakomi. It is estimated that in the three years from 2002 to 2004 the number of migrants settling in Tsalka district amounted to between 15% and 20% of the registered population of the district in 2002.[6] This wave of migration was almost entirely spontaneous as those who had already settled invited their relatives. It was also partly motivated by the construction of

[4] Ruby Gropas and Anna Triandafyllidou, 'Migration in Greece at a Glance' (Paper for the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy, October 2005) at http://www.eliamep.gr/eliamep/files/Migration%20in%20Greece_Oct%202005%20(2).pdf.
[5] Most migrants from Adjara came directly, although some Georgians from Adjara who had been resettled to Adigeni district during the Soviet period also arrived.
[6] Source: Data from Tsalka district *gamgeoba*.

the BTC pipeline, which held out the promise of (generally unskilled) work for the newcomers, and many migrants indeed found work on the pipeline. Until 2004 the flow of migrants was totally unregulated; many of the newcomers were not even registered with their local councils (*sakrebulos*) and their names did not appear in any local census. Typically they rented (or even 'bought') houses on an informal basis from the relatives and neighbours of the departed (Greek) owners and, having no legal status, they had no rights to land. From 2005-2006, the flow of migrants slowed somewhat, although even at the time of writing migrants were still arriving in the villages of Jinisi, Guniakala and Kiriaki, and in 2005 a number of families were resettled to Olianka as part of a state programme to resettle eco-migrants following landslides in mountainous regions of Adjara. Generally speaking, during 2005-06 the migration process was better regulated; money was allocated to over 200 families that had been forced to leave their homes as a result of landslides or avalanches in Adjara and Svaneti in order that they could buy the houses in Tsalka district where they had settled. Moreover, beginning in 2004, the district administration (*gamgeoba*) carried out six-monthly censuses of all those arriving in Tsalka district (see below).

In addition to the 4,500 or so Georgians who arrived from Adjara, more than 1,000 Georgians also arrived from the mountainous region of Svaneti in north-western Georgia. Most were eco-migrants, having fled from landslides and avalanches in their home villages, and their arrival occurred more or less simultaneously with the arrival of Georgians from Adjara. Most settled in Tsalka town and in the villages of Kiriaki, Guniakala and Bashkoi. Finally, migrants from other regions of Georgia have arrived in Tsalka district too. Some arrived as internally displaced persons from Abkhazia, while others arrived as economic migrants from regions such as Guria, Samegrelo, Samtskhe-Javakheti and even Tbilisi.

The Armenian and Azeri populations of Tsalka district have remained much more stable than either the Greek or Georgian populations. Both groups have experienced a modest reduction in their numbers since the end of the communist period (see Figure 1). This is mainly due to emigration to Russia or Turkey. A very significant part of the male Armenian population travels to Russia each year for seasonal work and a small minority remain there. Young men from the Azeri community also leave the district for seasonal work, both to Russia and to Turkey. Once again, some remain.

Political Developments and the Role of the State

The main feature of Tsalka district since Georgia attained its independence in 1991 has been its isolation from the political processes going on elsewhere in the country. During the early 1990s, it was mainly cut off from the rest of the country by banditry. Kvemo Kartli was particularly prone to bandit activity as it was a major route for the trafficking of drugs and other contraband goods between Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. The region was therefore largely in the hands of paramilitary groups such as the *Mkhedrioni* (Cavalry) and smaller criminal brotherhoods. In comparison with the rest of Kvemo Kartli, however, Tsalka was relatively unaffected by paramilitary activity because it had no major transport routes crossing into neighbouring republics and was therefore not a principal route for smugglers. Moreover, because it was an agricultural region and contained few entities of strategic economic importance it was not a prime target for marauders. The main effect of bandit activity on Tsalka was to isolate the district from other parts of the country, most notably from Tbilisi. This isolation was all the more severe because of the linguistic differences between the minorities living there and the majority Georgian population.

From 1995, the government consolidated its authority over most of the country – at least partially – and incidents of banditry declined sharply. Political life in Kvemo Kartli was determined to a large extent by Levan Mamaladze, an ambitious young politician whom Shevardnadze appointed governor of the province. Although the responsibilities associated with this post were still not clearly defined by law, Mamaladze was granted considerable leeway in governing Kvemo Kartli and was informally responsible for appointing the district administrators or *gamgebelis* (even though officially these individuals were appointed by the president). He was also increasingly involved in ensuring that the Azeri population of Kvemo Kartli voted for Shevardnadze during presidential elections and for his party, the Citizens' Union of Georgia, during parliamentary elections. He achieved this in part by co-opting prominent Azeris both at village level and in Marneuli, the most important Azeri town in the province, and in part by blatantly falsifying the elections. Informally he allowed local elites to participate in corruption in return for their political support.

However, the focus of Mamaladze's attention was on the more populous Gardabani, Marneuli and Bolnisi districts of Georgia, where the large Azeri population was concentrated, rather than on more mountainous districts such as Dmanisi and Tsalka. He gave support to the resettlement of Georgians from Adjara and Svaneti to Tsalka following Shevardnadze's decree

authorising the state purchase of abandoned houses (see above), and accused 'provocateurs' of attempting to thwart the migration process.[7] At the same time he did very little to ensure that this decree was implemented and did virtually nothing to regulate or monitor the resettlement of migrants, even when the process gathered pace in 2002. Local observers also claimed that the *gamgebeli* of the district, Eldar Khvistani, a Svan, gave informal support to the settlement of Georgians in Tsalka.[8] This brought him into conflict with the Armenian and Greek population of the district and his term as *gamgebeli* ended in rather dramatic fashion in the beginning of 2004, when he was beaten up by a group of Armenian and Greek inhabitants who had broken into his office.

Mamaladze had far less control over the election process in Tsalka and Dmanisi districts than in other parts of Kvemo Kartli. In the contentious November 2003 parliamentary elections, in which serious voting irregularities brought about the downfall of Eduard Shevardnadze, ethnic Armenian Aik Meltonian, a staunch opponent of Khvistiani, was elected as single-mandate Member of Parliament, gaining almost twice the number of votes of his nearest rival, thanks to the overwhelming support of Armenian and Greek voters. This demonstrates that Mamaladze had little influence with the Armenian and Greek population of Tsalka.

As the lack of control in the resettlement process demonstrates, the state's capacity to monitor and regulate social processes in Tsalka district during the late 1990s and early 2000s was minimal. The various communities that lived there were more or less allowed to set their own rules providing they did not challenge the nominal sovereignty of the state. Law enforcement was both ineffective and selective; although traffic police would frequently harass drivers taking their goods from Tsalka to markets in Marneuli and Tbilisi, law enforcement bodies failed to combat crime. Although in July 2002 Shevardnadze pledged to send interior ministry troops to Tsalka in 2003, he failed to honour his promise.[9] The main feature of this district right up until 2004 was therefore the effective absence of the state in community life.

Following the 'Rose Revolution' of 2003, the new government rapidly gained popularity amongst the population of Tsalka district. In the repeat parliamentary elections held in March 2004, the pro-government electoral bloc *National Movement Democrats* won 86.8% of the vote, compared with a nationwide average of 66.2%. In particular, the ruling bloc received the overwhelming

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[7] Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, *Caucasus Report*, Vol.3, No. 25 (June 2000) at http://www.rferl.org/reports/caucasus-report/2000/06/25-230600.asp.
[8] Interviews in Tsalka, September 2004.
[9] *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newsline*, 25 July 2002, available at www.rferl.org.

support of national minorities in Tsalka; only in the Armenian villages of Khachkoy and Nardevani (where Meltonian had previously been community *gamgebeli*) did the bloc receive less than the national average in terms of votes.[10]

Beginning in 2004, the state endeavoured to re-establish its authority in Tsalka. Of particular importance in the beginning of this process was the need to obtain accurate information about what was going on in the district, especially with regard to migration: in short there was a need to make society 'readable' to the state. It was with this end in mind that the new acting *gamgebeli* of Tsalka district, Mikheil Tskitishvili, began carrying out six-monthly censuses in mid-2004 in order to monitor those who were arriving in the district. Another way in which the state sought to re-establish its authority was to strengthen the role of law enforcement bodies. This occurred against the backdrop of a number of instances of inter-communal violence that occurred during 2004 and early 2005. I will examine these incidents in more detail in the following section; what is important here is the role of the government in regulating them. Probably in terms of law enforcement, the crucial moment was March 2005 when a special purpose unit of the Ministry of Internal Affairs was dispatched to Tsalka on a permanent basis following a series of incidents including one in which a Greek man was murdered (allegedly by a Georgian from Svaneti) and another in which an elderly Greek couple were beaten up and robbed in the village of Avranlo (allegedly by migrants from Adjara). These incidents led to the involvement of the Greek government and the *World Council for Hellenes Abroad* (see below) and prompted the Georgian government to make the issue of law enforcement in Tsalka a priority. According to most local observers, the criminal situation has improved significantly since early 2005.

Finally, the Georgian government has begun taking active steps to regulate the flow of migrants. During 2004 and 2005, the government allocated money to over two hundred families of eco-migrants to buy the houses they had occupied (see above). This compares to the seventy or so families that had been housed following Shevardnadze's decree in the late 1990s. In 2006, the state budget allotted around a million Lari (a little under half a million Euros) to buy up abandoned homes throughout Georgia for the resettlement of refugees and displaced persons.[11] In order to put this plan into action, during the summer of 2006 a special working group from the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation travelled to Tsalka with representatives of the Greek community to record all abandoned Greek property. Through close co-operation with the Greek government and

[10] Data from the Central Election Commission of Georgia, www.cec.gov.ge .
[11] Sophia Mizante, "Georgia's Greeks: Trying To Come Home", *EurasiaNet* (21 July 2006) at http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/civilsociety/articles/eav072106.shtml.

the Greek Embassy in Georgia it was hoped that the former owners of the property would be identified and the abandoned houses could then be bought by the Georgian government for the purpose of housing eco-migrants from Adjara and Svaneti. Thus, at the time of writing, the Georgian government was taking a pro-active stance in bringing order to a previously uncontrolled process.

III. MAIN ARENAS OF CONFLICT IN TSALKA DISTRICT

Since 2003, there have been a number of incidents of criminal activity that have involved clashes between members of different ethnic communities. The frequency of such incidents reached a peak in early 2005. A report by the Public Defender of Georgia (Ombudsman) gives details of eight such cases in the first three months of 2005, including three acts of vandalism, two cases of serious injury (including one involving torture), one case of breaking and entering, one case of robbery and one case of murder. In at least seven of these cases the victims were Greek and the perpetrators were Georgians from Svaneti or Adjara. In the most serious incident, a Greek resident was tortured to death by a gang of Svans. Moreover, according to an article published in April 2005 for the online journal for the Greek diaspora abroad, *Greek News*, eight ethnic Greeks had been murdered in Tsalka district in the two years before the article was published.[12] As the Ombudsman's report makes clear, 'the Greek population … is the most undefended, since in Tsalka district there remain those mainly of advanced age … Criminal groups exploit this situation and mainly rob the Greek population.' Fundamentally this is a problem of criminality, rather than ethnic conflict *per se*. The Ombudsman's report points out that '[t]he reasons for the complications that have arisen in Tsalka are not of an ethnic character [but] social disintegration, economic problems and a severe criminal situation are factors that give rise to conflict' but goes on to warn that 'in the region the impunity enjoyed by criminals in the recent past has become the main reason why the criminal situation could take on the character of an ethnic conflict.'[13] Since the police operation began in March 2005, crime rates have fallen, although in March 2006 a young Armenian man was murdered following a drunken brawl in the town of Tsalka between a group of Svans and a group of young Armenians from the village of Kushchi.

[12] "Georgian Prime Minister Reassures Andrew Athens on the Safety of the Greeks", *Greek News* (Greek-American Weekly Newspaper), 25 April 2005 at www.greeknewsonline.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=3101.
[13] Report of the Public Defender of Georgia, presented to Parliament on 23 December 2005, available at www.regnum.ru/news/569444.html.

Using the ethnic prism to understand these conflicts is unhelpful. The conflicts are not about seething resentment between different ethnic groups. Instead they are a struggle between established residents and recent newcomers for vital resources against the backdrop of an absence of institutionalised mechanisms for conflict resolution and, often, a lack of a common language with which to communicate. Until very recently, the state has been unable to act as an impartial referee to the various parties to the conflict and has failed to provide effective law enforcement. Moreover, as the state began to re-establish its authority it itself provoked the resistance of the members of some communities, who accused state bodies of discrimination against them. Finally, the situation was complicated still further by the construction of the BTC pipeline, which raised expectations of economic gain amongst local residents and further encouraged the flood of migrants that the government was unable to control.

Given the nature of the conflicts outlined in the above paragraphs, it is necessary to deal with the various strands of the conflict process separately. This section is therefore structured in the following way. First, I look at the conflicts that exist between communities, most notably between the original inhabitants (mainly Armenians and Greeks) and the newcomers (mainly Georgians from Adjara and Svaneti). I then turn to the conflicts between local communities and the state, in particular focusing on the resistance on the part of certain communities to the increased activity of the law enforcement agencies and to plans by the state to buy up the abandoned houses and to settle eco-migrants. Finally I consider international influence on the conflict dynamic by looking at the construction by a BP-led consortium of the BTC oil pipeline and then turning to the assistance provided by the Greek government to help in the fight against crime and to assist in the sale of houses abandoned by Greeks.

Inter-communal Conflict at Local Level

The new arrivals in Tsalka district, whether they were genuine eco-migrants who had left their homes as a result of landslides or avalanches, or whether they were instead economic migrants who had followed their relatives there in search of work, were generally living in dire economic circumstances. One of the main problems they faced was a shortage of land. As mentioned above, as they did not own the houses that they moved into, most of the newcomers had no rights to the land parcels that had been redistributed from the former collective farms. Thus, while the original inhabitants typically had around 1.25 hectares of land to tend, the new arrivals could only tend their small household plots that amounted to around 0.2 hectares or even less. Very often the abandoned

houses they settled in were being looked after by the neighbours or relatives of the original Greek inhabitants, and these neighbours or relatives would rent out the houses and land on an unofficial basis. On occasions, they 'sold' the houses to migrant families for around USD 500, but the 'sale' was not registered and therefore had no legal force. In some villages there were very few Greek families remaining, but these individuals would control all the former collective farm land in the village, either owning by it themselves or tending it on behalf of their departed relatives. In order to grow crops or rear livestock the newcomers would then have to pay rent to their Greek 'landowners'. Sometimes Greek farmers also rented government land and then sub-let it to migrants for a profit. The inequality inherent in this kind of relationship caused resentment and on occasions led to conflict as the newcomers became more assertive.

According to the Public Defender's report, of the 1,684 Greeks living in Tsalka district in 2005, around 1,200 were elderly or disabled.[14] They did not therefore have a body of young men who were able to physically defend the interests of the community and for this reason they were particularly vulnerable to crime. To a certain extent local Armenians acted as their defenders, particularly in the circle of villages around Avranlo and Kizilkilisa in the west of the district (see map in Appendix 1), where large Armenian villages exist in very close proximity with the depopulated Greek villages that were subject to rapid and uncontrolled resettlement. Particularly illustrative in this respect were the events of March 2005 that provided the final pretext for the deployment of special police units from Tbilisi. At around dawn on 17 March, three robbers – allegedly Georgians from Adjara – broke into the house of an elderly Greek couple in the village of Avranlo, savagely beat them and stole around 850 US dollars. The same afternoon, a group of around 50 young Armenians from the neighbouring village of Kizilkilisa entered Avranlo armed with wooden clubs, beat up around ten local Georgians and later broke into the village school.

Here it is worth noting briefly the social, demographic and economic circumstances in which these two villages find themselves. They are extremely close to one another geographically, and a small part of Avranlo that is separated from the rest of the village by a river is sometimes considered by inhabitants of Kizilkilisa to be a part of their village. Over time a close relationship developed between the Greeks of Avranlo and the Armenians of Kizilkilisa. However, many Greeks left Avranlo during the 1990s and early 2000s to be replaced by a large number of migrants, mainly Georgians from Adjara, who began arriving in 1998. Most new migrants arrived in 2003 and 2004, and by 2005 there were over a hundred migrant families from Adjara living alongside a dwindling

[14] Ibid..

number of mainly elderly Greeks. The new families had little land at their disposal; most had to make do with household plots of between 0.1 and 0.2 hectares, while the original inhabitants had 1.25 hectares of land per household that came from the former collective farm. Around five migrant families (those that had arrived rather earlier) owned their houses because the government had helped them to buy them, but the rest had no legal rights to either house or land.[15] Over time, the newcomers began experiencing increasing discontent towards their Greek neighbours.

The village of Kizilkilisa is one of the largest villages in the district, with 1,848 inhabitants, according to the 2002 census, of whom 98% are Armenian. The inhabitants of the village have been particularly active in defending their rights and have increasingly perceived themselves as victims of discrimination. In particular, they claim that the authorities deliberately ignore them and fail to provide basic infrastructure repairs such as restoring the electricity supply after an accident. They also say that they are discriminated against in the job market and that very few Armenians were able to work on the BTC project (see below), in contrast to the newcomers from Adjara who found it quite easy to obtain work on the pipeline. As a result of the lack of employment opportunities, most young men go to Russia for seasonal work. The village was first involved in a conflict with Georgians from Adjara in May 2004, when a children's football match in the village of Kvemo Kharaba between Adjaran Georgians in Kvemo Kharaba and Armenians from Kizilkilisa turned violent. As a result of fighting between residents of the two villages around ten people were injured. In March 2005, the pent up frustration felt by the Armenian community over what they perceived as favoured treatment enjoyed by the newcomers provided the backdrop to the strong reaction by a part of Kizilkilisa's population to reports of aggression by Georgians against their Greek neighbours.[16]

The reaction in Kizilkilisa is symptomatic of a general perception amongst Armenians in Tsalka that they are being discriminated against. In particular, they feel that the local authorities are encouraging Georgian migrants to illegally occupy the houses that Greeks had abandoned. Although more will be said about the reaction of the Armenian population to state policy in the following section, what is relevant here is that many local Armenians believe that the newcomers are given special privileges. At the same time, they complain that they are underrepresented in official structures such as the district administration (*gamgeoba*) due to discrimination on linguistic

[15] Interviews carried out in Tsalka district, 25-26 July 2006.
[16] According to one report, the elderly Greeks who were injured were relatives of Armenian villagers in Kizilkilisa. See Zaza Baazov, 'Georgian Resettlement Scheme Blamed for Tension', *Caucasus Reporting Service*, No. 280, 01 April, 2005, at www.iwpr.net.

grounds.[17] Finally, they believe that the authorities fail to protect them against ethnically-motivated violence. Following the latest incident, the murder on 9 March 2006 in Tsalka of Gevork Gevorkyan, a young Armenian from the village of Kushchi, during a drunken brawl with a group of Svans, local Armenians held a protest rally outside Tsalka police station and demanded the lynching of the suspects. Some protestors also broke into the *gamgeoba* building, smashing windows and destroying documentation.[18] Gevorkyan's murder provoked concern amongst Armenians in other parts of Georgia and even in Armenia; organizations representing Armenians in Georgia, such as the *New Generation (Nor Serund) Union of Georgian Armenians* and the Akhalkalaki-based *United Javakh* movement, sought to attribute an ethnic element to the murder.[19] Moreover, the funeral of the victim, held in the village of Kushchi was attended by Vardan Vartapetyan, the leader of the Armenian political party Mighty Homeland (Hzor Hayrenik), which is based in Yerevan but was established mainly by Armenians originally from the Javakheti region of Georgia.[20] While, in essence, the murder was no more than the tragic result of male aggression and drunkenness, many Armenians both from within Tsalka district and from outside saw it as a manifestation of ethnic hatred towards Armenians.

Compounding the problem of the divergent interests and perceptions of the different communities in Tsalka is the language barrier that exists between these communities and the consequent lack of reliable community-based mechanisms for conflict resolution. Previously the original Greek, Armenian and Azeri inhabitants were able to communicate in Russian, or even in Ottoman Turkish (originally the Armenians, like the Greeks, came from the Ottoman Empire and many could still speak Turkish). However, many of the newcomers came from rural areas of Adjara (especially Khulo district) and therefore had a poor knowledge of Russian. This applied particularly to young people. As a result there was little or no communication between original inhabitants and newcomers and few means of addressing common problems and potential sources of resentment. Residents of villages from all communities in which migrants from Adjara and Svaneti have recently arrived report that there was mutual suspicion and even hostility during the period

[17] Of thirty-four members of staff at the *gamgeoba*, at the time of writing (August 2006), twenty-four were Georgian, nine were Greek and just one was Armenian.
[18] Statement by the Ombudsman of Georgia Concerning Events in Tsalka (11 March 2006), available at www.ombudsman.ge/eng/press_center/hot_news_archive.html?id=71&detail=1; Regnum News Agency, 'Georgian Interior Ministry: Events in Tsalka are a Common Bar Fight' (10 March 2006), available at www.regnum.ru/english/603572.html .
[19] Zaal Anjaparidze, 'Karabakh Conflict Hangs Over Georgia's Armenian-Populated Regions', *Eurasia Daily Monitor* (15 March 2006) at http://hyelog.blogspot.com/2006_03_01_hyelog_archive.html.
[20] Koba Liklikadze, 'Tsalka District Again Wracked by Ethnic Violence', Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty at http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/03/2f11fd61-8f65-49b9-9833-350b5d8daf60.html.

immediately following the newcomers' arrival, but most also state that over time the relationship between the settlers and the original inhabitants has become more normal.[21] Due to the language barrier, this process may take a little longer than it would if a common language had existed from the outset.

There was also a lack of capacity for self-regulation *within* migrant communities. The new village communities that were formed by migrants from Adjara and Svaneti consisted of a collection of extended family units from different villages in these two mountainous regions. As such the new communities were yet to consolidate and there were no regulatory mechanisms within them to control the behaviour of their young men. If a criminal incident occurred for which a member of the migrant community was responsible, village members could meet and discuss the matter, but little would be done about it. The young male population, free from the 'eye of the village'[22] whence they came and untroubled by state law enforcement, were subject neither to social constraints nor to a threat of legal sanctions for antisocial behaviour. For this reason some young men would cross the threshold into criminality.

If the communications barrier and the social problems brought about by the migration process itself mean that there have been few community-based mechanisms for resolving conflict, clearly the onus falls on the state's law enforcement agencies to provide such a framework. Unfortunately, until recently law enforcement bodies have been unequal to the task. At the time of the incident in March 2005 when the elderly couple were attacked in Avranlo (see above), there were only ten police officers in Tsalka, who had at their disposal two police cars.[23] This was clearly inadequate in a region in which rapid migration and the consequent struggle for resources had led to increased inter-communal tension. Moreover, according to the deputy head of the Greek diaspora in Tsalka, Emanuel Pivalov, out of forty crimes that were committed against Greeks in Tsalka district from 1997 to 2005, in not one case was the guilty party punished.[24] This led to a perception amongst criminal groups that it was possible to attack and rob elderly and vulnerable inhabitants with impunity. The ineffectiveness of the local police force was also compounded by a lack of professionalism and even criminality amongst top officers; in March 2005, the Public Defender of Georgia, Sozar Subari, called for the sacking and prosecution of Tsalka district's chief

[21] Interviews carried out in Tsalka district, 25-26 July 2006.
[22] Here, the 'eye of the village' refers to social control exercised by traditional authorities within the village. See Jan Koehler, 'Assessing Peace and Conflict Potentials in the Target Region of the GTZ Central Asia and Northern Afghanistan Programme to Foster Food Security, Regional Cooperation and Stability (Report for GTZ, April 2004) at http://www.wraf.ca/documents/arc%20gtz-integrated%20report.pdf.
[23] Report of the Public Defender of Georgia, presented to Parliament on 23 December 2005.
[24] Ibid..

of police, Zurab Keshelashvili, on the grounds that he had allegedly fired at a farmer driving a tractor because he had scared a deer Keshelashvili was trying to hunt.[25]

In March 2005, it was decided to station special police units in the town of Tsalka and in the villages of Avranlo and Olianka.[26] Although the relationship between the police units and the local community was not always smooth (see below), the number of incidents of criminality declined rapidly. In comparison with the eight incidents of serious criminal activity noted by the Public Defender during the first three months of 2005, only one robbery was registered during the second three-month period. Despite the murder in March 2006, at the time of writing the situation was relatively calm. The capacity of the police local police force was further boosted in July 2006 by the gift of sixteen police cars from the Greek government to carry out patrols in the district (see below). Moreover, following the events in early 2005 and the Public Defender's criticisms, Keshelashvili was relieved of his post as district chief of police.

The fact that inter-communal tensions are fuelled more by rapid migration and a struggle for vital resources than by 'ethnic hatred' *per se* is illustrated by the fact that the Azeri population, despite the history of conflict between Azeris and Armenians over Nagorno-Karabakh, is not involved in communal conflict in Tsalka district. The Azeris, concentrated in the villages of Arjevan-Sarvani, Tejisi, Cholmani and Gedaklari in the north of the district, enjoy good relations with their Armenian and Georgian neighbours. For example, according to the secretary of Tejisi community *sakrebulo*, villagers in Tejisi have established godparent-godchild type relations with the Armenian inhabitants of the neighbouring village of Chivtkilisa.[27] Moreover, although there is a mosque in the neighbouring Azeri village of Arjevan-Sarvani, few inhabitants from Tejisi attend it. Instead Muslim Georgians from Adjara who have settled in the previously Greek villages nearby attend the mosque together with their Azeri neighbours.[28] This shows that the reality of inter-ethnic relations in Tsalka district is far too complex to be defined by the rather simplistic label of 'ethnic conflict'.

[25] Regnum News Agency, 'Ombudsmien Gruzii Triebuiet Osvobodit' ot Dolzhnosti Nachal'nika Politsii Tsalskogo Rayona' (18 March 2005) at www.regnum.ru/news/423473.html; Liberty Institute 'Tensions in Tsalka Could Become Ethnic' (Press Release, 18 March 2005), at www.liberty.ge/eng/print.php?table=active&id_name=id&id=247.
[26] Report of the Public Defender of Georgia, presented to Parliament on 23 December 2005.
[27] Interviews carried out in Tsalka district, 25-26 July 2006.
[28] Baazov, 'Georgian Resettlement Scheme Blamed for Tension'; interviews carried out in Tsalka district, 25-26 July 2006.

Conflict between Communities and the State

Another arena of conflict is that between the state and the local communities living in Tsalka district. Although such conflicts were not particularly relevant before 2004, when the state was virtually absent in terms of regulating communal life, they began to arise in 2005 as the state began to play a more active role in providing law enforcement and managing the migration process. Then the new, more proactive stance taken by the state as it attempted to re-establish its authority provoked resistance from certain quarters.

Following the introduction of special police units into the district in March 2005, several incidents of conflict between police officers and villagers were observed. The most serious of these occurred in the village of Olianka on 25 June 2005, when a young Armenian man was shot and seriously injured by members of one of the special units. According to police sources, the man and his accomplices attempted to buy bullets from the policemen. The police claimed they opened fire only after the men tried to prevent them from searching their car and attempted to flee. As a result of the shooting around seventy residents of the neighbouring village of Kizilkilisa (see above) went to Tsalka the following day to protest. They called for the withdrawal of the special forces from the district and accused the police of attacking them on ethnic grounds and of patrolling the streets while drunk. In order to defuse the situation, the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee for Human Rights and Civil Integration, Elene Tevdoradze, and the deputy Public Defender, Bacho Akhalaia, met with the population of Kizilkilisa and managed to calm the tensions somewhat.[29] Nevertheless, the perception remained amongst some Armenian communities that the police were somehow deliberately acting against their interests. This perception was further accentuated following the murder of Gevork Gevorkyan, when Armenian protestors accused law enforcement agents of collaborating with those who perpetrated the murder.[30] One of the reasons for the suspicion shown by some sectors of the Armenian community towards the police is the fact that the police are predominantly Georgian by nationality and come from other parts of the country. This has been especially the case since the March 2005 deployment.

The following incident is an illustration of the reluctance on the part of some Armenian communities to accept police authority, rather than rely on self-policing. In late 2003, there was a clash between an Armenian village (Ashkala) and a previously Greek village (Gumbati) recently settled by Georgians from Adjara. The conflict arose as a result of a misunderstanding at a wedding

[29] Report of the Public Defender of Georgia, presented to Parliament on 23 December 2005.
[30] Anjaparidze, 'Karabakh Conflict Hangs Over Georgia's Armenian-Populated Regions'.

and as a result around twenty people suffered minor injuries. Following the incident, the organisation CARE International, which was supervising BP's community mobilisation programme (see below), arranged a meeting between representatives of the two villages to facilitate conflict resolution. Five representatives came from Ashkala and three from Gumbati. The two sides immediately began to trade mutual accusations that the other side had stolen their livestock. After CARE's mediation both sides eventually agreed that most of these incidents were based more on misunderstanding than anything else and agreed to hold joint meetings to smooth tensions. Both sides admitted that they had some hooligans in their midst and agreed to 'manage their young people'. However, they disagreed on how to do this. The Georgian side declared themselves quite willing to hand their unruly youngsters over to the police. The Armenian side, however, insisted that they should deal with their hooligans themselves since they feared that if they fell into the hands of the police, they would be ill-treated.[31]

To a certain extent, it would seem that some communities that have been more or less allowed to run their own affairs over the past fifteen years are reluctant to cede their capacity for self-regulation to the state, especially to a police force they do not trust. It is believed that some villages are armed, although opinions differ as to how widespread the possession of arms actually is.[32] Whatever the case, the transition process in some communities from isolation, self-defence and self-regulation to integration and participation in the civic affairs of the state is likely to be difficult.

Another big issue is the resettlement of eco-migrants. The stated intention of the government and of local authorities to buy up the houses of Greeks who have left the country and to continue the resettlement process of eco-migrants has aroused suspicions amongst local Armenians and Greeks. The Federation of Greek Communities of Georgia has called for a moratorium on further migration from other regions of Georgia, although they do not oppose the purchase of former Greek houses *per se*. Within the Armenian population there is rather greater resistance as the perception persists that the earlier uncontrolled resettlement of migrants from Svaneti and Adjara was somehow organized by the authorities in order to make the district more 'Georgian'. Frequently complaints are voiced by local Armenians that the national and local authorities are engaged in 'social engineering' to create a predominantly Georgian region and to prevent Tsalka from becoming the third district in Georgia (after Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda) with an Armenian

[31] Interview with representatives of CARE International, September 2004.
[32] Vladimir Socor, 'Georgian Troops Introduced in Tsalka', *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol.1, Issue 13 (May 19 2004) at http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=401&issue_id=2957&article_id=236724; 'Armenian Ethnic Leader Blames Georgia for Misreporting Soccer Incident' *BBC Monitoring Service* (21 May 2004), from *Yerkir*, Yerevan, 21 May 2004.

majority. Following the murder of Gevorkyan, some members of the Armenian community appealed to the authorities to 'stop the policy of pressure by fueling interethnic tensions' and 'stop the settlement of other nationalities in Armenian-populated regions'.[33] However, this opinion is not shared by all of Tsalka's Armenians, and some believe that the introduction of Georgians into the region – providing it occurs in a controlled manner – will benefit the local Armenian population by giving them an opportunity to speak Georgian and thereby integrate into the civic life of the country.[34]

International Actors: Two Interventions

Over the last few years it has not only been domestic actors that have influenced the social, economic and political situation in Tsalka district but also actors from beyond Georgia's borders. The first international actor to enter the scene was British Petroleum (BP), which laid down the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline that passes through the district (see the map in Appendix 1). The next was the Greek government, which, following the upsurge in violence that occurred in Tsalka during the first quarter of 2005, began to assist the Georgian government in locating the owners of the abandoned Greek properties and provided material help to law enforcement agencies (see above). Below, I shall argue that whereas BP's intervention unintentionally increased the potential for conflict, the Greek intervention has – so far at least – had a positive impact on the situation in Tsalka as regards actual or potential conflicts.

BP is the major shareholder in the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline Company (BTC Co), owning 30.1% of shares in the company. BTC Co began digging the track for the pipeline in the spring of 2003. The oil began flowing through the Georgian part of the pipe in August 2005 and the first cargo ship carrying oil disembarked from the Turkish port of Ceyhan in June 2006. All work associated with the project other than basic maintenance is due to come to an end in late 2006. Obviously the project caused disruption, but many hoped that the negative consequences would be offset by the benefits the construction of the pipeline could bring to local communities.

BP sought to offset the potential negative impact of its activities in the following ways. First, it purchased a 44-metre corridor of land from villagers whose land plots lie along the pipeline's path (with full compensation to the affected households) and also paid compensation to villages in which

[33] Anjaparidze, 'Karabakh Conflict Hangs Over Georgia's Armenian-Populated Regions'
[34] Baazov, 'Georgian Resettlement Scheme Blamed for Tension'; interviews carried out in Tsalka district, 25-26 July 2006.

the pipeline route crossed common land, mainly pasture, that was the communal property of the village. Secondly, BTC Co earmarked some funds for community development through a project called Community Investment Project – West (CIP-W), implemented by CARE International. This project carried out community mobilisation and infrastructure rehabilitation in *sakrebulos* that included villages within 2 km of the pipeline in Tsalka district.

Despite these apparent good works, in some parts of Tsalka district the indirect result of the project has actually been to increase the likelihood of conflict. The first problem was that expectations were raised unrealistically high by the Georgian government and by the state-owned Georgian International Oil Company (GIOC). The project was a big one for a small and newly-independent country such as Georgia and the Georgian side clearly overstated the benefits it would bring in terms of prosperity and employment. Thus, the President of GIOC, Gia Chanturia, promised that 70,000 new jobs would be created as a result of the pipeline – a wild exaggeration.[35] While the construction of the pipeline did provide employment to around six thousand residents (mainly unskilled manual work) living in the vicinity of the pipeline and provided rather generous compensation to those directly affected, this was not sufficient to revitalise a stagnant local economy.

Secondly, although the BP-led consortium was committed to employing local people in the construction of the pipeline, with priority given to those living within 2km of the pipeline or within 5km of Above Ground Installations, in Tsalka district it was unclear what 'local' meant, given the ongoing influx of migrants from other parts of the country. For whatever reason, it turned out that the local staff employed on the pipeline were mainly ethnic Georgians, most of them recent migrants from Adjara and Svaneti. In contrast, relatively few members of the Armenian community found work on the project and young Armenian men continued to travel to Russia for seasonal labour. According to one source, 90% of those employed along the pipeline were Georgians.[36] Villagers from Kizilkilisa (see above), with a population of 1,848 and located right next to the pipeline, claimed that only four or five inhabitants from the village found work there. The reason for this is somewhat unclear; in part it was probably the higher motivation of the newcomers, many of whom had travelled from other parts of Georgia in search of work, partly it may have been the result of economic imperative as, unlike their Armenian neighbours, the newcomers had little or no land to tend, partly it could also have been due to the fact that when the vacancies were announced much of the economically active Armenian population was either already engaged in seasonal work

[35] *Georgian Times*, 12 February 2001.
[36] Interviews carried out by Levon Zurabyan (International Crisis Group) in Tsalka district, June 2006.

in Russia or preparing to leave. Although almost certainly unintentional, the ethnic imbalance in terms of who was employed in the project certainly added to the sense of grievance felt by some Armenians that they were somehow discriminated against in their 'own' land.

This leads to the third, and probably most crucial destabilising factor. The high expectations raised in terms of employment prospects in Tsalka lured many migrants to come to the district in search of work. In particular, this applied to Georgians from Adjara and Svaneti whose friends and relatives had already began to settle there as ecological migrants. As mentioned earlier in the paper, the volume of migrants arriving in Tsalka reached a peak in the years 2002-2004, precisely the same time as BP were hiring casual labour to dig the trenches and lay the pipes. Although the increase in the number of migrants during this period cannot, in its totality, be attributed to the construction of the pipeline as a number of landslides also occurred in Adjara and Svaneti at the same time, the BTC project certainly encouraged the process, especially in those villages that were located close to the pipeline. As we have already observed, the sheer speed of the migratory process in 2002-2004, as well as the fact that the process was entirely unregulated, was a key factor that led to the sometimes violent conflicts described above. The intervention of the BP-led consortium clearly played a role in bringing about a potentially destabilising demographic shift.

Fourthly, the BTC project led to conflicts over who was entitled to compensation. Compensation for land traversed by the pipeline was only paid to inhabitants who officially owned the land. This excluded most of Tsalka's newly-arrived migrants from Adjara and Svaneti, as in most cases these new arrivals simply occupied the abandoned Greek houses and had no legal claim to them. The fact that the new arrivals were not entitled to compensation for private land reinforced the already existing inequalities, which were not conducive to peaceful cohabitation.

The situation was even more complicated when it came to paying compensation for communal land. Unfortunately, Georgian law did not make it clear who owned communal pasture land, stating instead that it belonged to the 'village' (*sopheli*) – which was not defined by law and the borders of which were often unclear. In order to overcome this legal loophole, BP hired a non-governmental organisation, the *Association for the Protection of Landowners Rights*, to establish community-based organisations (CBOs) at village level, the chairmen and five-member committee of which were elected by all adult villagers. The CBO represented the village, its chairman could be removed by popular vote and it had the legal right to disburse compensation for communal land that belonged to the village.

However, in mixed Greek-Georgian villages, the main question was who belonged to the village. BP generally took the attitude that all those who were registered with the community *sakrebulo* (council) were residents, even if they were recent arrivals and did not yet own their properties, although generally the onus was placed on the communities to decide for themselves who belonged. In several villages, confrontations occurred between Greeks and Georgians over who were members of the village community and who was therefore entitled to compensation for common land. On occasions this meant that the Greek residents attempted to exclude the newcomers from their CBOs. In the village of Avranlo such a dispute ended up in the district court when the Greek-dominated CBO decided not to award compensation to seven resettled families from Adjara. The families from Adjara then went to the district court to appeal and won.[37] Generally, the government and local authorities kept a very low profile in these disputes and did not intervene. Once again, this is a sign of how the state was unable to regulate society.

Fifthly, the project produced winners and losers, at least in relative terms. Within each village those few families whose land was directly traversed by the pipeline received quite high levels of compensation of between 2 Lari and 5 Lari (USD 1-3) per square metre depending on the quality of the land, while others – the majority with land the pipeline did not cross – received little or nothing. In villages in which, for one reason or another, few individuals were able to find employment on the project, there was therefore a body of discontents who saw the pipeline project in an entirely negative light. This particularly applied to Armenian villages, where many felt excluded from the project from the outset. Here public sentiment was often focused was on the damage caused by the pipeline in terms of dust and other undesirable environmental consequences, rather than on the benefits. Some resentment was also focused towards villages inhabited by new migrants as it appeared that they had benefited disproportionately in terms of employment opportunities.

Finally, the jobs that were made available to the communities in Tsalka district were short term. During the time in which the project was operating and employing staff many migrants came to the region and some of them obtained employment. However, when the project sheds its workforce in late 2006, it will leave these individuals unemployed. Unless other economic opportunities arise to offset the loss of jobs, the net effect will be higher unemployment, a worsened social situation and therefore a higher potential for conflict.

[37] Georgia SRAP Expert Panel Review (February 2004), available at http://www.caspiandevelopmentandexport.com/Downloads/MediaLibrary/Download/79/Social%20and%20Resettlement%20Action%20Plan%20Review%20Part%20A.pdf.

Despite the fact that the BTC project brought significant economic benefits to the district, the rapid in-migration it unintentionally contributed to meant that these benefits had to be spread rather more thinly in Tsalka than in other districts. In terms of conflict, the consequences of the BP-led intervention were negative rather than positive in terms of social stability and peaceful cohabitation at community level. In particular, it tended to create winners and losers and the distribution of winners and losers was sometimes seen in ethnic terms. However, it was not the BTC project per se that increased the conflict potential, but rather the context in which it occurred. This context was one of state weakness and economic collapse. If the state had been more able to control the flow of migrants, if the local economy had been more diverse and if 'civil society' had been more active in terms of bridging the divide between isolated communities, the economic benefits of the project may have ameliorated rather than accentuated the conflict potential.

In contrast, the intervention by the Greek government and the *World Council for Hellenes Abroad* that began in the spring of 2005 has had a largely positive impact on community relations in Tsalka. Following the brutal murder of a Greek man in February 2005 and the violent robbery of an elderly Greek couple in the village of Avranlo the following month (see above), the Greek government and the Greek diaspora became deeply concerned about the situation there. It was partly as a result of their pressure that the Georgian government agreed to send a special police unit to Tsalka. In April 2005, the president of *World Council for Hellenes Abroad*, Andrew Athens, visited Georgia and met with Prime Minister Zurab Noghaideli in Tbilisi to discuss the issue. He also met the police chief of Tsalka district together with the Greek ambassador to Georgia in order to consider the question of law and order.[38] In fact, the *World Council for Hellenes Abroad* was involved in intensive lobbying by sending letters to top Georgian officials on the one hand, and by persuading the Greek government to sit up and take notice of the problem on the other. The organisation's lobbing bore fruit; in September 2005, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Greece, Panagiotis Skandalakis, visited Georgia and announced the intention of the Greek government to help law enforcement in the region by providing police cars and by training police officers. He also pledged to support local entrepreneurs in the processing of dairy products.[39] Finally, the Greek

[38] 'The Greek Government on the Ethnic Greeks in Tsalka', *Macedonian Press Agency: News in English*, 22 April 2005 at http://www.hri.org/news/greek/mpab/2005/05-04-22.mpab.html; 'SAE president Athens addresses new letter to Georgia president on violation of human rights of Greeks in Tsalka', *Athens News Agency: Daily News Bulletin in English* (16 May 2005) at http://www.hri.org/news/greek/ana/2005/05-05-16.ana.html; 'Georgian Prime Minister Reassures Andrew Athens on the Safety of the Greeks'.

[39] Briefing from the Information Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece, 27 September 2005 at www.mfa.gr.

government sent a delegation from the Greek Ministry of Agriculture and the University of Athens to Tsalka to look into the possibility of implementing a potato seed-growing program.[40]

This intervention has had a generally positive impact. In July 2006, Tsalka district received sixteen police patrol cars as a gift from the Greek government to the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs, which provided a much-needed boost to law enforcement in the district.[41] The government of Greece is now also collaborating closely with the Georgian government on locating the owners of the abandoned Greek houses in Tsalka district (see above). This measure should allow the Georgian government to buy the houses and help it to control and regulate the migration process. The main virtue of the Greek intervention is firstly that it is multi-directional, as by supporting the local economy, bolstering law enforcement and helping with the migration process it aims to address several aspects of the situation at the same time, and secondly it is ongoing, in other words it is an open-ended process of collaboration between two governments, rather than a short-term development programme. Once again, however, a crucial factor is the *context* in which it has occurred; whereas during the BTC project the government was passive and allowed the international organisations and the communities to work things out by themselves, since 2005 the government has become an active partner in the intervention process. Conflict resolution has a far greater chance of success when all interested parties are involved, including the state.

[40] World Council of Hellenes Abroad, 'Ethnic Tensions Ease as a Result of World President's Intervention' (President's Office Press Release, 9 January 2006), at http://www.sae.gr/EN/Nea_Eidiseis/default.asp?cmd=show&id=794.
[41] *Rustavi-2* television news, 18 July 2006.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the above analysis we can draw the following conclusions as to the main causes of inter-communal conflict in Tsalka district. First of all, the difficult economic circumstances mean that there is greater competition for scarce resources such as high-quality land, water and employment opportunities. This situation is exacerbated by the degraded infrastructure which has virtually isolated Tsalka from the rest of Georgia. Probably the most serious infrastructural weakness is the poor state of the roads, which makes it uneconomical for local smallholders to take their agricultural products (mainly potatoes and meat) to the market. This has meant that most communities in Tsalka live on a low cash economy and are unable to invest in agricultural machinery to improve the productivity of their land. Another effect of the economic crisis has been to encourage the local Greek population (who made up over 60% of those living in Tsalka district in 1979) to take advantage of the option to resettle in Greece. This led to an unstable demographic situation that was more prone to conflict.

The second major factor was the dysfunctional nature of the state. During most of the 1990s and the first half of 2000s, the state was unable to fulfil its traditional role of regulating intra-societal relations. This deficit allowed for the development of a situation that was conducive to inter-communal conflict both because of the near total failure of the state to provide law enforcement for all citizens equally and because of the state's inability to monitor and regulate the flow of ecological and economic migrants. On this last shortcoming, the government's poorly-implemented decree in the late 1990s to provide for the resettlement of migrants merely compounded the problem by encouraging them to settle in Tsalka but at the same time providing absolutely no mechanism to accommodate them. As the state began to reassert its authority in 2005, another set of problems arose as certain communities that had become used to regulating their own affairs for nearly a decade and a half began to resent the imposition of order by a police force that they perceived did not have their interests at heart.

The third destabilising factor was the construction of the BTC pipeline. This further encouraged the inflow of migrants from other parts of Georgia that the government was unable to control. In addition, it gave rise to perceptions of discrimination because it appeared that disproportionately more Georgians were employed on the project than other nationalities.

Fourthly, the migration process itself brought together communities that were unfamiliar with one another and often could not speak a common language. This led to the mutual isolation of

communities and meant that community-based mechanisms for conflict resolution were unable to function. It also led to the development of an 'us' versus 'them' mentality in which in-groups and out-groups were defined not so much in terms of ethnicity but in terms of original inhabitants versus newcomers. That this division partly coincided with an ethnic cleavage between Greeks and Armenians on the one hand, and Georgians on the other, gave room for certain 'ethnic entrepreneurs' from inside and outside Georgia to portray it as an ethnic conflict. However, this understanding of the conflict fails to capture the complexities of the various interconnected processes and was not shared by most of those involved.

Given all the conflict-facilitating factors enumerated above, it is legitimate to ask why the conflicts that did occur remained relatively sporadic and isolated and failed to escalate into a wider conflagration. The main reason for this, I believe, is that the above-mentioned 'ethnic entrepreneurs' failed to convince members of the various communities living in Tsalka district that it was an ethnic conflict between different national groups with different national projects. Thus, the conflicts that occurred remained isolated struggles between individuals at village level, or, at the most, conflicts between two villages.

Despite the reduction in tension that has been observed since 2005, risk factors still remain. In particular, the risk of violent conflict increases over the winter months as those engaged in seasonal labour in Russia – mainly young men – return to their homes. It is also likely that the second part of 2006 will see an increase in unemployment as most remaining jobs on the BTC pipeline are shed. At the same time migration, especially from Adjara, is continuing, albeit at a somewhat slower pace, and it will take time for the Georgian government to put mechanisms in place to decide who can legally settle and to help provide accommodation for those who can.

Even though law enforcement has improved significantly, the murder that occurred in March 2006 demonstrates clearly that a single incident can inflame the situation once again, especially given that law enforcement agencies are not trusted by a significant part of the Armenian population. Such incidents can easily be exploited by those who seek to portray them as manifestations of ethnic conflict and could potentially lead to confrontation along ethnic lines. The risk is all the greater because there is a perception of discrimination amongst some Armenian communities of Tsalka district.

In order to minimise the potential for further tension, it is necessary for both the Georgian government and for international organisations to understand the factors that may give rise to inter-communal tension and act accordingly. Most pressingly, more should be done to reduce the mutual

isolation of local communities in Tsalka. As mentioned above, the rapid influx of migrants from elsewhere in Georgia and the existence of a language barrier between the communities mean that inter-community dialogue has yet to develop. It is therefore necessary to provide an arena for such a dialogue by being as inclusive as possible and by bringing together members of all four national groups (Georgians, Armenians, Greeks and Azeris).

For the government, there is a need to receive accurate information about the situation in Tsalka district as it develops. This will promote a better understanding of the tensions that exist and of the need to act with sensitivity. It is especially important that the government exercises restraint when dealing with inter-community tensions. While the decision to bring law and order to the district is welcome and long overdue, there is a danger of overreaction. The government rightly opposes the existence of 'havens of lawlessness' where state authority does not apply. However, there is a danger that in its zeal to eliminate such lawless zones, it could take actions that would only destabilise the situation further. The tension that followed the shooting by police of an Armenian man in Olianka in June 2005 is an illustration of this danger. Here international organisations could play a role by working with the government in developing a strategy on how to integrate isolated non-Georgian communities into the civic life of the country without resorting to force.

There is also a need for the government to elaborate effective legislation on the problem of internal migration and on the related issue of land use. The *gamgebeli* of Tsalka district has already proposed legislation to define the status of eco-migrants and to develop mechanisms that will allow migrants to buy and rent land. International organisations could work with the local authorities of Tsalka district, the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation and Resettlement, the Ministry of Agriculture and the relevant parliamentary committees to help elaborate and perfect this legislation. If required, they could also play a co-ordinating role between the Ministry of Refugees and Accommodation and the Greek government in order to better regulate the purchase of houses from those who have already resettled in Greece.

Finally, there is a need for the government to develop a clear policy strategy on the issue of internal migration. There is an urgent need for strategic planning on how to accommodate migrants, where to place them and how to integrate them into the host community. Although eco-migration has been occurring for many decades, so far each ecological catastrophe has been dealt with on a case-by-case basis and no long-term perspective on the problem has been elaborated. Here the

international community could also assist the Georgian government in developing a clear strategy to deal with this problem.

The migration process itself need not have detrimental consequences for the stability of the district. On the contrary, Georgians living in close proximity with other nationalities can have a positive impact on the integration process by providing opportunities, especially for young people, to use conversational Georgian. Moreover, there are plenty of abandoned properties in Tsalka which are gradually falling into disrepair and will soon no longer be habitable if they are not lived in. What is detrimental, however, is uncontrolled migration. The challenge is therefore to manage migration and to provide legal clarity in defining who precisely is entitled to be resettled and who is entitled to land.

APPENDIX 1: OVERVIEW OF MIGRATION IN THE VILLAGES

Below is a brief overview of all inhabited settlements in Tsalka district including, where available, figures from Tsalka district *gamgeoba* on the number of migrants from other parts of the country to have settled in the district. This number includes those who are not registered and have no legal documents to prove they reside in Tsalka district. I have also provided an estimate of the population of each village, together with an indication of the proportion of the different nationalities living there. These figures are approximations only and, due to the rapidly changing demographic circumstances, will soon be out of date. The Greek population in particular is continuing to shrink and the figures given below may already be an over-estimate. I have derived the approximations from data from the 2002 population census of Georgia, from data on migration provided by Tsalka district *gamgeoba*, from interviews carried out in the villages in 2004 and 2006, and from figures provided by the union 'Agroservice' as a result of research they carried out in Tsalka in January and February 2006.[42]

Tsalka town. District centre. A previously Greek city, as a result of a massive out-migration of Greeks its population fell from 7,971 in 1989 to 1,741 in 2002.[43] In recent years, there has been significant in-migration by Georgians; the largest number of migrants have come from Adjara (especially from Khulo district), slightly fewer have arrived from Svaneti (mainly Mestia district) and a very small number are refugees from Abkhazia. Migrants began to settle in the town in the early 1990s, but the rate of migration gathered pace in the late 1990s and accelerated further in the early 2000s to reach a peak in 2002-2003. By 2004, Tsalka was a mainly Georgian town. *Estimate for the population, 2006*: total population 1,800 (70% Georgians, 15% Greeks, 10% Azeris, 5% Armenians).

Khadiki in Tsalka town community. As it is considered to be administratively a part of Tsalka, no population figures are available from the 2002 census. Since 1999, Khadiki has been affected by a process of rapid in-migration, especially from Khulo district of Adjara, although a few migrants

[42] Union 'Agroservice', *Final report: Results Of Investigation Held In Tsalka And Dmanisi Regions* (Unpublished document, January - February 2006)
[43] These figures include the nearby village of Khadiki (see below) which belongs to Tsalka town administration.

(approximately an eighth of the total) have arrived from Svaneti (Mestia district). Migration rates reached a peak in 2003. *Estimate for the population, 2006*: 300 (75% Georgians, 25% Greeks).

Trialeti town in Trialeti town community. Trialeti was previously overwhelmingly Greek, but as a result of a massive out-migration of Greeks, its population fell from 1,245 in 1989 to 326 in 2002. However, since 2000 there has been rapid in-migration of Georgians from Khulo district, which accelerated in 2002 and 2003, and these migrants now constitute a majority of the population in the village. *Estimate for the population, 2006*: 400 (65% Georgians, 25% Armenians, 10% Greeks).

Chapaevka in Trialeti town community. According to the 2002 census, there were 88 inhabitants, 93% (i.e 82) Georgians. According to data from the *gamgeoba*, most Georgians are new arrivals from Khulo district. Most migrants arrived during the period 2000-2002. *Estimate for the population, 2006*: 100 (100% Georgians).

Bediani town in Bediani town community. As a result of a massive out-migration of Greeks, Bediani's population fell from 1,246 in 1989 to 344 in 2002 according to census figures. There is no documentation about any migrants entering the town. *Estimate for the population, 2006*: 150 (50% Georgians, 30% Armenians, 20% Greeks).

Khramhesi in Bediani town community. In 2002, there were 118 villagers, 39% Armenian, 34% Greek, 20% Georgian. Khramhesi received relatively few migrants, some of whom were refugees from Abkhazia. *Estimate for the population, 2006*: 80 (30% Georgians, 60% Armenians, 10% Greeks).

Avranlo in Avranlo community (*temi*). According to the 2002 census, there were 717 individuals, 81% (i.e. approx 580) of whom were Greek. Until 1998, Avranlo was virtually entirely Greek and at one time was heavily-populated. However, in recent years there has been a very high level of Greek emigration that has continued right up until the present day, and Avranlo is now a mainly Georgian village. According to data from the *gamgeoba*, almost all Georgians are new arrivals Adjara (mainly Khulo district), with a small number from Svaneti. The migration process accelerated in 2003 and continues unabated today. *Estimate for the population, 2006*: 750 (85% Georgian, 15% Greek).

Ashkala in Ashkalis community. According to the 2002 census, there were 2,043 inhabitants, of which 99% were Armenian. The population is stable and is unlikely to have changed significantly since 2002.

Burnasheti in Burnasheti community. According to the 2002 census, there were 468 inhabitants, of whom 97% were Armenian. There are few, if any migrants in the village. The population is stable and is unlikely to have changed significantly since 2002.

Gumbati in Gumbati community. According to the 2002 census, there were 471 inhabitants of this previously Greek village, of whom 82% (approximately 386 individuals) were Georgian. Most of the Georgians were migrants from Adjara (mainly Khulo district), who began to arrive en masse in 1998, although subsequently the numbers of those arriving began to dwindle. By 2001, Gumbati had been almost totally repopulated by Georgians from Adjara. There are now virtually no Greeks left in the village. *Estimate for the population, 2006*: 500 (100% Georgian).

Kushchi in Kushchi community. According to the 2002 census, there were 893 inhabitants, of whom 98% were Armenian. There are few, if any migrants in the village. The population is stable and is unlikely to have changed significantly since 2002.

Ozni in Ozni community. According to the 2002 census, there were 754 inhabitants of whom 99% were Armenian. There are few, if any migrants in the village. The population is stable and is unlikely to have changed significantly since 2002.

Olianka in Olianka community. According to the 2002 census, there were 405 inhabitants of whom 94% (approximately 381 individuals) were Greek. However, most Greeks have now deserted the village. In April 2005, following landslides in Adjara, the acting *gamgebeli* of Tsalka district announced that over 49 families who had suffered as a result of these landslides would be resettled in Olianka.[44] In the end, 21 of these families were actually resettled there.[45] *Estimate for the population, 2006*: 125 (90% Georgian, 10% Greek).

[44] *Rustavi-2* website, www.rustavi2.com , 7 April 2005.
[45] Interviews carried out in Tsalka district, 25-26 July 2006.

Rekha in Rekha community. According to the 2002 census, there were 525 inhabitants of whom 79% (approximately 415 individuals) were Georgian and 20% (105) Greek. It is the only village in Tsalka district that was historically predominantly Georgian. The population has been relatively stable and is unlikely to have changed significantly since 2002.

Kizilkilisa in Kizilkilisi community. According to the 2002 census, there were 1,848 inhabitants of whom 98% were Armenian. There is no documentation about any migrants entering the village either before or after that date. There are few, if any migrants in the village. The population is stable and is unlikely to have changed significantly since 2002.

Khando in Khando community. According to the 2002 census, there were 187 inhabitants of whom 98% were Georgian. Originally, however, Khando was a Greek village. From 1998, migrants, almost exclusively from Khulo district, began to arrive. *Estimate for the population, 2006*: 200 (almost exclusively Georgian).

Jinisi in Jinisi community. According to the 2002 census, there were 304 inhabitants, of whom 92% (approximately 280) were Greek. 2003 marked the start of an influx of migrants from Adjara, mainly from Khulo district, which has continued unabated until the present day. Jinisi is now a mainly Georgian village. *Estimate for the population, 2006*: 350 (85% Georgians, 15% Greeks).

Bashkoi in Bashkoi community. According to the 2002 census, there were 207 inhabitants, of whom 66% (approximately 138 individuals) were Greek and 29% (approximately 61) Georgians. The majority of migrants are Georgians from Svaneti (Mestia district) although some have also arrived from Adjara (typically Khulo district). These migrants began arriving en masse in 1999 although the number of new arrivals began to decrease as of 2004.[46] *Estimate for the population, 2006*: 300 (80% Georgians, 20% Greeks).

Livadi in Bashkoi community. According to the 2002 census, there were 134 inhabitants of whom 62% (95 individuals) were Greek and 25% (34) Azeri. The number of migrants entering the village is fairly small; those who have arrived are mainly from Mestia district. Today, according to an

[46] Interviews carried out in Tsalka district, September 2004.

interview, a very small number of Greek families (less than 10) remain in the village.[47] *Estimate for the population 2006*: 100 (30% Georgian, 35% Azeri, 35% Greek).

Imera in Bashkoi community. According to the 2002 census, there were 74 inhabitants, of whom 84% (62 individuals) were Greek. Recently there has been an influx of Adjarans who have arrived mainly from Khulo district. The migration began in 1999, accelerated in 2002 and has continued to the present day. According to interview data, by September 2004, there were just seventeen Greek families remaining in Imera.[48] *Estimate for the population, 2006*: 200 (85% Georgians, 15% Greeks).

Karakomi in Bashkoi community. According to the 2002 census, there were 177 inhabitants in Karakomi, of whom 73% (approximately 129) were Georgian and 19% (34) were Greek. Originally a Greek village, the first few Georgian migrants arrived in 1988, although the vast majority did not arrive until 1999 at the earliest. The migratory trend accelerated in 2002, although few migrants arrived after 2004. At the same time, virtually all Greeks left the village. According to an interview taken in September 2004, there are only four Greek families remaining in the village as well as two or three Azeri families.[49] Thus this formerly Greek village has been repopulated and is now overwhelmingly Georgian. *Estimate for the population, 2006*: 350 (95% Georgian).

Tsintskaro in Tsintskaro community. According to the 2002 census, there were 168 inhabitants of whom 67% (approximately 113 individuals) were Greek, 20% (34) were Georgians and 10% (17) Azeri. However, the balance has since shifted towards the Georgian population following the in-migration of Georgians mainly from various parts of Adjara and (in smaller numbers) from Svaneti and Abkhazia that reached a peak in 2003. *Estimate for the population, 2006*: 200 (55% Georgians, 5% Greeks).

Santa in Tsintskaro community. According to the 2002 census, there were 84 inhabitants of whom 83% were Georgian. Very few migrants have arrived in Santa; according to figures provided by Tsalka district *gamgeoba*, six IDPs from Abkhazia have arrived. However, as Santa was originally a

[47] Interviews carried out in Tsalka district, 30 June 2006.
[48] Interviews carried out in Tsalka district, September 2004.
[49] Ibid..

Greek village further migration must have occurred at some time during the recent past. *Estimate for the population, 2006*: 80 (mainly Georgian).

Beshtasheni in Beshtasheni community. According to the 2002 census, there were 373 inhabitants, of whom 87% (approximately 325 individuals) were Greek. Migration here has been relatively small, although a large number of Greeks have left their homes. According to data provided by the *gamgeoba*, just forty-six individuals have moved into the village since 1998. Around half of these came Khulo district in Adjara, around 30% from Adjara, while eight came from various parts of Abkhazia. Despite the continuing out-migration of Greeks, Beshtasheni remains a predominantly Greek village. *Estimate for the population, 2006*: 300 (85% Greek, 15% Georgian).

Kiriaki in Beshtasheni community. According to the 2002 census, there were 152 inhabitants, of whom 74% (approximately 116) were Greek and 17% (26) were Georgians. Previously the village had been mainly Greek. Migration began in the mid 1990s, accelerated in 2001–2003 and has continued to the present day. Most migrants were from Mestia district of Svaneti or were IDPs from Abkhazia. According to data provided by the *gamgeoba*, migrants are made up relatively equally of those arriving from Adjara, Svaneti and Abkhazia. *Estimate for the population, 2006*: 350 (75% Georgian, 25% Greek).

Shua Kharaba in Beshtashenis Temis sakrebulo. According to the 2002 census, there were 54 inhabitants 87% of whom (47 individuals) were Greek. There is no documentation about any migrants entering the village either before or after that date. The population is stable and is unlikely to have changed significantly since 2002.

Akhaliki in Akhaliki community. According to the 2002 census, there were 112 inhabitants, of whom 71% (i.e. approx 80 individuals) were Greek and 14% (16) were Armenian. According to an interview taken in September 2004, the local Greeks refused to let migrants from Adjara settle, although data from Tsalka district *gamgeoba* suggests that nine Georgians have arrived as migrants.[50] According to an interview conducted in June 2006, there were still no migrants.[51] *Estimate for the population, 2006*: 100 (75% Greek, 15% Armenian, 10% Georgian).

[50] Interviews carried out in Tsalka district, September 2004.
[51] Interviews carried out in Tsalka district, 30 June 2006.

Kvemo Kharaba in Akhaliki community. According to the 2002 census, there were 303 inhabitants of whom 91% (i.e. approximately 276 inhabitants) were Georgians. However, Kvemo Kharaba was originally a Greek village, although almost all Greeks left in the early to mid-1990s. By the end of 2004, local residents reported that there were only around seven Greek families left.[52] They were replaced by migrants mainly from Adjara (predominantly from Khulo district). Mass migration into Kvemo Kharaba began in 1998, but then began to slow. *Estimate for the population, 2006*: 350 (97% Georgian).

Shipiaki in Akhaliki community. According to the 2002 census, there were 35 inhabitants, of whom 89% (31 individuals) were Greek. This nearly-deserted Greek village quickly became populated by migrants from Khulo district in Adjara, the overwhelming majority of whom arrived in 2002. *Estimate for the population, 2006*: 150 (85% Georgian, 15% Greek).

Dashbashi in Dashbashi community. According to the 2002 census, there were 367 inhabitants of whom 96% were Armenian. There are few, if any migrants in the village. The population is stable and is unlikely to have changed significantly since 2002.

Guniakala in Guniakala community. According to the 2002 census, there were 236 inhabitants, of whom 72% (approximately 170 individuals) were Greek and 18% (42) were Georgian. However, recently there has been a massive wave of migration by Georgians from Adjara (especially from Khulo district), and (in smaller numbers) from Mestia district of Svaneti, which began in 2000, accelerated in 2002-2003 and continues (albeit at a somewhat slower pace) today. The exodus of Greeks has also continued unabated. According to an interview conducted in June 2006, only around 30 Greek families remained in the village.[53] *Estimate for the population, 2006*: 500 (90% Georgian, 10% Greek).

Darakoi in Darakoi community. According to the 2002 census, there were 814 inhabitants of whom 98% were Armenian. There are few, if any migrants in the village. The population is stable and is unlikely to have changed significantly since 2002.

[52] Interviews carried out in Tsalka district, September 2004.
[53] Interviews carried out in Tsalka district, 30 June 2006.

Edikilisa in Edikilisa community. According to the 2002 census, there were 351 inhabitants of whom 96% were Greek. However, from 2002, there was a large scale migration of Georgians into the village, mainly from Khulo and (in smaller numbers) from the Keda district of Adjara, which reached a peak in 2004. At the same time, most Greeks left the village; according to an interview conducted in June 2006, only around 10 Greek families remain there today.[54] *Estimate for the population, 2006*: 300 (90% Georgian, 10% Greek).

Aiazmi in Edikilisa community. According to the 2002 census, there were 595 inhabitants of whom 99% were Armenian. There are few, if any migrants in the village. The population is stable and is unlikely to have changed significantly since 2002.

Tikilisa in Tikilisa community. According to the 2002 census, there were 167 inhabitants, 77% Greek (approximately 129 individuals) and 17% Georgian (28). Originally a Greek village, migrants from Adjara (predominantly Khulo district) began to arrive there in 1999. The arrival of migrants reached a peak in 2002-2003, although they have continued arriving, albeit in smaller numbers, until the present day. Today Greeks therefore make up only a small minority of the population and, according to an interview conducted in June 2006, only around 25-30 Greek families remain there today.[55] *Estimate for the population, 2006*: 500 (95% Georgian, 5% Greek).

Nardevani in Nardevani community. According to the 2002 census, there were 1,516 inhabitants of whom 99% were Armenian. There are few, if any migrants in the village. The population is stable and is unlikely to have changed significantly since 2002.

Arjevan-Sarvani in Arjevan-Sarvani community. According to the 2002 census, there were 794 inhabitants of which 99% were Azeri. There are few, if any migrants in the village. The population is stable and is unlikely to have changed significantly since 2002.

Cholmani in Arjevan-Sarvani community. According to the 2002 census, there were 295 inhabitants, of which 99% were Azeri. There are few, if any migrants in the village. The population is stable and is unlikely to have changed significantly since 2002.

[54] Ibid..
[55] Ibid..

Gedaklari in Arjevan-Sarvani community. According to the 2002 census, there were 74 inhabitants, all Azeri. There are few, if any migrants in the village. The population is stable and is unlikely to have changed significantly since 2002.

Tejisi in Tejisi community. According to the 2002 census, there were 607 inhabitants, all Azeri. There are few, if any migrants in the village. The population is stable and is unlikely to have changed significantly since 2002.

Kaburi in Kaburi community. According to the 2002 census, there were 491 inhabitants, all Armenian. There are few, if any migrants in the village. The population is stable and is unlikely to have changed significantly since 2002.

Chivtkilisa in Chivtkilisi community. According to the 2002 census, there were 468 inhabitants of whom 99% were Armenian. There are few, if any migrants in the village. The population is stable and is unlikely to have changed significantly since 2002.

Khachkoy in Khachkoy community. According to the 2002 census, there were 863 inhabitants of whom 98% were Armenian. There are few, if any migrants in the village. The population is stable and is unlikely to have changed significantly since 2002.

Tazakharaba in Khachkoys Temis sakrebulo. According to the 2002 census, there were 137 inhabitants of whom 99% were Armenian. There are few, if any migrants in the village. The population is stable and is unlikely to have changed significantly since 2002.