

**ISIS RECRUITMENT FROM THE SOUTH CAUCASUS:
The Case of Georgia**

Capstone Essay

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Abstract

The Islamic State of Iraq and Levant is the most discussed terrorist organization of our days and has reached new levels recently. With the evolution of the organization many foreign fighters have been attracted to join the ranks of ISIS. This research concentrates on the case of recruitment of new fighters from Georgia and tries to give answers to how and why some Georgian citizens from some regions are becoming part of the Islamic State. The sources covered have showed that the recruitment processes taking place in the region of Pankisi Gorge carry both online and face-to-face characters. The population of the Pankisi Gorge is an easy target for the ISIS; Chechen fighters, Kists (Muslim Georgians) and young men from poor families are included in the targeted population of the IS. The analyses made show that there are both religious and socio-economic reasons for the Georgian citizens from this region to decide in favor of joining ISIS: feeling vulnerable as religious minorities under Orthodox church, eliminations of justice, earning money and becoming a hero. Considering the importance of the issue of terrorism, the research also includes a chapter on how the Georgian government deals with the external and internal threats of terrorism.

Introduction

Terrorism has reached new levels since the eruption of Syrian war in 2011. This event lead to the development of a new terrorist organization – the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (Syria) (ISIS/ISIL), or Daesh (داعش) in Arabic, fighters of which have been carrying out terrorist attacks all over the world. The organization is actively popularizing the ideas of the recreation of the Caliphate. With these ideas of propaganda, the Islamic State started its recruitment process from around the world. Up to this day the literature and media suggest different numbers of different nationalities that are present among the ranks of the Islamic State.

Taking into consideration how rapid the ISIS has been developing in its numbers, the importance of studying such a topic is indisputable in today's reality. The world community today faces numerous challenges in the face of terrorism and uprising of the Islamic State. Since the ranks of ISIS have been covering even more diverse nationalities, it is now important to determine how exactly the members of ISIS join the organization, how the propaganda is run and which are the main locations that are under the attention of ISIS recruitment.

The topic is not of a less importance for Armenia as well. For the Republic of Armenia it is important to understand how active the recruitment processes in South Caucasus are to determine the level of threat for the country. Since Armenia is in the position of geographical and geopolitical blockade, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, her only way or “window” to Europe has been neighboring Georgia. However, recent news, statements by world officials and the IS members themselves and official and unofficial statistics have shown that the Islamic State has been finding new potential members to recruit from Georgia, mainly speaking about the region of Pankisi Gorge, on the North-East of Georgia, bordering with Russia. The issue of existing terrorist threat has also been covered

multiple times by the RA government officials. Moreover, the president of the Republic of Armenia Serj Sargsyan has many times addressed the uprising issue of terrorism worldwide, also implying the enlargement of the Islamic State. Likewise, at the 69th Session of UN General Assembly he has addressed the issue of uprising terrorism worldwide, also addressing the atrocities carried out by the Islamic State in Syria (gov.am).

Russian authorities, on their turn, have addressed the “expansion” of ISIS on the post-soviet territory as their own concern. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov has come up with announcements that they have had proofs that Georgia is serving as a platform for ISIS to recruit new people to their ranks, “train and test” them (rt.com, 2016). This, in his words, would affect the decision of re-establishing diplomatic relations between Russia and Georgia, since normalizing the relations in such circumstances is at risk.

Considering these and further discussed facts one comes to a conclusion that studying the tendencies of recruitment and enlargement of members of ISIS in the South Caucasus, and especially in the states, bordering Armenia is of utmost importance. As stated above, Georgia is the country through which Armenia somewhat keeps its ties with European states, hence studying this issue of ISIS recruitment on the example of Georgia carries big importance for Armenia as a matter of security, and it will raise awareness and help get prepared for the possible upcoming risks.

Limitations

Due to being a relatively new issue and due to the secret nature of this topic, there have been some limitations and difficulties in finding relevant data for further research. The sources used include literature, media, ISIS press and analyses of documents and these secondary sources have served as a basis for constructing the research. The limitations of the study are the time limitations, secret nature of the topic and some information possibly lost in

translations, i.e. even though the materials were used in four languages, which are English, Russian, Armenian and Arabic, some sources were actually translated into these languages from others, e.g. Georgian.

Literature Review

The Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL/ISIS) is a relatively new terrorist organization but there have been many studies done regarding the issues connected to the organization, however there have been not so many researches conducted on issues connected with the recruitment of ISIS, especially in Georgia. Still, some scholars have addressed the issue of foreign fighters in this terrorist organization in their studies, through analyses of motives, incentives, tactics and the life after being recruited. By synthesizing the research done in regards to this topic, one can underline many similarities in the findings, regarding the tactics of the Islamic State in recruiting new members. The majority of the scholars come to the conclusions that the main ways of luring foreigners to becoming an ISIS fighter lies in their online propaganda and “attraction” through social media. Some scholars, on the other hand, try to explain the attraction of foreigners to fight for ISIS through their personal characteristics, that is education, socio-economic position, welfare, etc.

The number of foreign fighters in ISIS varies in every study. In fact, these numbers vary from 10,000 to, in some cases, 60,000 people. This difference in data can be explained by the fact that the actual numbers are kept in secrecy and knowing the exact number of fighters on the whole is a nearly impossible task. In other issues, discussed in the literature, there can be found many similarities in the works of different authors.

Online Recruitment

Scholars Charlie Winter and Tiffany Tse underline the importance of online recruitment and propaganda in getting foreigners to become IS fighters. Winter builds his

study around the “three mechanisms of recruitment: echo chamber, propaganda and enlister” (Winter, 2016). He gives explanations of each phase, thus making the procedure of ISIS recruitment look smooth and organized. According to the author, the last step (“the enlister”) requires a one-to-one advice, what eventually has strong influence in mind-making process of the recruit. Tse as well emphasizes the importance of the role that social media plays in the recruitment process in Daesh (Tse, 2016).

Characteristics of the potential recruits

Tiffany Tse’s work also includes a research on the main characteristics, based on which the potential ISIS fighters are being chosen by the ISIS itself.. She includes such points as gender (10% of fighters are women (Tse, 2016)), geography, religion, and socioeconomic status of the person. The last determinant is also addressed to in the works of Leggiro, Basit, Gogvadze & Kapanadze. All these authors claim that severe socio-economic situations in the countries of origin play a determining role in deciding whether to join ISIS or not. According to the author, the Islamic State lur the foreigners that are in bad economic or social conditions with the attraction of salaries, healthcare system, well being and, even, marriage (Leggiro, 2015). Katherine Leggiro also claims that the target population for the recruitment is the “estranged and dissatisfied youth” (Leggiro, 2015). However, on the contrary he also claims that as a whole “there is no common background among the recruits” (Basit, 2014). Abdul Basit, in addition to talking about the common background of the recruits (poor socio-economic conditions), also addresses the issue of social media involvement in the recruitment process. Gogvadze and Kapanadze on their turn add to the importance of bad socio-economic factor, by saying that “lack of proper education allows spread of fundamentalist-radical ideas (Gogvadze & Kapanadze, 2015). They bring the example of Georgian families in the region of Pankisi Gorge, that are in a better economic conditions because of having a family member fighting in the ranks of ISIS. They also argue that having poor economy and high

rates of unemployment serves as a weighty reason to flee the country to find better conditions, which the Islamic State actually offers. Benmelech & Klor, on the other hand, argue that these foreigners, that join ISIS because of poor economic or social conditions, usually come from “prosperous and homogenous countries” (Benmelech & Klor, 2016).

Recruitment of women and children

Many authors, while studying the main reasons and procedures of ISIS recruitment, have concentrated also on the issue of recruiting women and children to the ranks of IS fighters. The above-mentioned author Katherine Leggiero has also touched upon this issue in her work “Countering ISIS Recruitment in Western Nations”. Along with Leggiero, such authors as Anderson, Azzam, Stern & Berger and an article published by the General Intelligence and Security Service of the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations, also address the importance of studying the issue of women and children recruitment in Daesh and underline some ideas they have come across during the research. Likewise, Stern & Berger and Leggiero argue that the idea of “marriage with other jihadists” and “happy life” (Stern & Berger, 2015) have been attracting young women from many countries to join ISIS. Moreover, the report by the General Intelligence and Security Service elaborates on the several duties that a woman or a child should carry out while being an ISIS fighter. So, women should “recruit new women, bear many children to populate the organization, carry out punishments and get trained to use weaponry (limited use)” (“Life with ISIS”, 2016). Children, on the other hand, should “witness atrocities, take regular jihad lessons along with regular education; boys should get trained from the age of nine, while at this same age girls should start wearing veils” (“Life with ISIS”, 2016). The same report also includes claims that women do not undergo the same procedures of being chosen as the men usually do, and they are expected to give birth to as many children as possible, hence enlarging the number of ISIS fighters. Anderson on her turn, while talking about children recruitment, claims that

there are two ways of recruiting children: voluntarily and involuntarily. The former is being carried out through propaganda in public places or luring with toys, while the latter includes such atrocities as kidnapping children to forcefully make fighters out of them. The author also states that the recruitment of children, like the adult recruitment, is not solely from the Middle East: many children are being brought to ISIS from Western countries as well (Anderson, 2016).

On ground/face-to-face recruitment

In addition to luring or attracting fighters through propaganda, some authors address another aspect of this phenomenon, which is the psychological pressure and working with the potential recruit face to face. Anaya, Azzam and a Final Report of The Task Force on Combating Terrorist And Foreign Fighter Travel address the issue of psychological influence on the foreigners in recruiting. The Final Report addresses the issue of face-to-face recruitment, which affects the mental condition of the recruit and makes him believe that the recruiter standing in front of him is talking about justice and peace. It is also claimed that the majority of the recruits are being affected by the idea of “living in a Caliphate” and how prestigious and prosperous the life in that case would be (Final Report of The Task Force on Combating Terrorist And Foreign Fighter Travel, 2015). Kala Kristina Hartman Anaya in her “Persuasion Strategies in Terrorist Recruitment: The Case of ISIS” argues that the IS recruiters use the “shaming tactics” to affect the minds of future recruits (Anaya, 2015). This “shaming tactic” plays on the ideas that “their brother Muslims are fighting for justice, it is everyone’s duty to help them in their fight (Anaya, 2015). They serve their ideas as “enlightenment, inner peace and spiritual awareness” (Anaya, 2015). Azzam, addressing the recruitment of Australians, claims that the active Syrian mobilization is so much distributed around the globe that it serves as a strong starting point for shaping jihadist radical activity even in such remote countries as Australia (Azzam, 2014).

Recruitment from Georgia

A few authors have also conducted research on the issue of ISIS recruitment from Georgia. They all have one strong similarity: all of the authors think of the region of Pankisi Gorge with its locals as of the biggest threat in the region, since exactly these people are more likely to leave for ISIS in large numbers. A report by Soufan Group even calls Pankisi Gorge a “well-established incubator for ISIS fighters” (Soufan Group, 2015). Articles by Cecire, Goguadze & Kapanadze, Lang & Al Wari, an article by the Soufan Group, - all these works cover the issue of foreign fighters’ outflow from Georgia. All authors claim that the outflow of young people from Georgia is easier than from any other remote countries, due to the fact that Turkey (through where they actually travel to Syria or Iraq) is weakly controlled in that sense. All four pieces of work also underline the importance of addressing the threat of returning fighters. Here they connect this with Chechens, Russia and the intensity that can occur in this fragile region because of the above-mentioned. According to Hardin Lang and Al Wari there are three groups of Chechen fighters: the ones that follow the Islamic State, the ones who follow the Caucasus Emirate and the ones that do not associate themselves with either of these (Lang & Al Wari, 2016). The above-mentioned scholars also underline the importance of Russian involvement in regards to this issue, saying that nowadays, the Russian presence has risen so much that “Russian has become the third language of Daesh” (Lang & Al Wari, 2016). Michael Cecire in his “How Extreme Are The Extremists? Pankisi Gorge As a Case Study” piece focuses on the ISIS group leaders that have come from the region of Pankisi Gorge. He also claims that the recruitment process here is a little different than in any other region – ground-level recruitment (Cecire, 2015). What differs the article by Goguadze and Kapanadze in this sense is their address towards the dissemination of Wahabbist thinking among youth. They bring the example of a website that was created to attract youth (xaliphati.wordpress.com) (Goguadze and Kapanadze, 2015). They also

emphasize that while some young Muslims from either the region of Pankisi Gorge or Adjara travel to other Muslim countries to “broaden their religious knowledge” they become “easy target to be easily radicalized” (Gogvadze and Kapanadze, 2015). These authors emphasize the region of Adjara as well, taking into consideration the Muslim population of Adjara and their recruitment, too. All research articles that are done in the direction of studying the issue of recruitment on the example of Pankisi Gorge, express the concern regarding the rapid evolvement of this phenomenon and call Pankisi Gorge one of the most dangerous regions.

Nearly all authors have stressed out the importance of the threat of returnees. According to the studies examined, the threat of returning fighters is an actual issue nowadays, since the foreign fighters are being lured by the ideas of Caliphate, are being taught the tactics and then, after returning to their countries of origin they represent a threat of carrying out terrorist attacks in those remote territories (Europe, Australia, Asia). Moreover, in addition to talking about the online propaganda, nearly all authors claim that the brutal videos posted by the organization online are a special force for affecting the minds of future recruits. The academicians mentioned above also describe how important the idea of uniting under one caliphate is for some of the Muslim youth worldwide.

The common grounds that the scholars have agreed upon include the strength of ISIS online propaganda, which is the most efficient tool for recruiting new fighters, the dissemination of the propaganda and the threat of returning fighters. The articles studied also focus on the threats caused by such worldwide recruitment, especially when new fighters are being picked from women or children from different countries of the world.

Methodology

This research paper mainly uses qualitative approach, focusing on literature review and analysis of press and articles regarding the issue of ISIS recruitment from Georgia. A part of this work examines the main tendencies of ISIS recruitment as a whole, covered by

literature and scholarly articles, while the other half is concentrated on the issue of the recruitment from Georgian regions. International and ISIS press and media articles, as well as some documents that tackle the issue of Georgian IS fighters and steps against this threat have been used as sources to base the analyses on. During the research, ISIS press and videos were studied and examined in the scope of the topic of the research. Having tried to analyze the processes of recruitment of young Georgian citizens to ISIS, and in order to have an accurate portrait of the Georgian recruitment process one should also address the issue of how the local government deals or tries to deal with the problem. For this aim, Georgian National Security Strategy and media were examined, as well as Georgia's annual reports on terrorism to the Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism of the years of 2014 and 2015, based on which some conclusions have been made on the Georgian Government's steps towards fighting against terrorism. The report of 2015 is the latest one, i.e. no report for the year 2016 is yet available.

The main purpose of this study is to analyze both the reasons for Georgian citizens to join ISIS and the methods of the recruitment; hence the paper will try to give answers to the following questions:

RQ 1: What are the peculiarities of the ISIS recruitment process in Georgia?

RQ 2: Why do Georgian citizens choose to join the Islamic State?

Based on the covered literature and documents, the following hypothesis have been formulated:

Hypotheses:

H1: Numerous Georgian citizens are leaving Georgia to fight in the ranks of ISIS.

H2: Georgian citizens from Pankisi Gorge are driven by both economic, social and psychological motives to join ISIS.

Case of Georgia

Radical Islam in Georgia

Even though Islam in Georgia dates back to the early history, the year 2011 can be considered as a year of change in the history of Islam in Georgia. That year the state adopted a “new legislative amendment into the country’s civil code stating that religious minority groups with “historic ties to Georgia” or those defined as religions by members of the Council of Europe can register as legal entities of public law” (CRRC report, 2011). Whether coincidental or not, this is the year of the start of the Arab Spring and drastic enlargement of the Daesh. With its development, the Islamic State started its active propaganda to lure as many new members from around the world as possible. It is noteworthy that in 2011 Georgia was still reviving after the 2008 war with Russia, and the anti-Russian attitudes were quite dramatic in the country. Furthermore, the Northern regions of Georgia were also being supported by the Chechen fighters, which, actually, are now also among the ISIS fighters. The geographical position of Georgia and the country’s role in the region have multiply been touched upon by different research articles as the most suitable to get members from in the Caucasus Willayet (Wilayat Qawqaz) (Gogvadze & Kapanadze, 2015).

Until the time that the Georgian government started to assess the Muslim communities of the country as a state-level issue, these minorities had been being supported from Turkish side, and, evidently, did not enjoy freedom of expression much (Baramidze, 2015). Despite the existence of some mosques in Georgia, the minority group felt “vulnerable” and “unconsidered” (Baramidze, 2015). Even though the law adopted in 2011 changed the situation with the perception and attitudes towards the Georgian government and Christian majority, scholars and politicians still argue whether the adoption of the law was the right step to take.

Some parts of the Muslim minorities of Georgia have supported one of the main goals of the Islamic State that is changing the world order in its structure. Hence, in a short term, many representatives of Georgian youth from some regions started to feel the need to stand among the Jihadi fighters. Muslim youth of Georgia, unsatisfied with the social and legal condition they have been put in the state, “dissatisfied with existing traditional norms, viewing various threats and searching for various methods for eliminating injustice, including radical ones” (Baramidze, 2015) started to adjoin the Islamic State finding responses to their concerns. The claims of Baramidze were later proved to be true based on the interviews conducted with the citizens living in Pankisi Gorge. The above-mentioned factors contributed to the evolvement of the ISIS recruitment processes from Georgia.

Reasons to become an IS fighter for Georgians

As the literature studied suggests there are several motives that young men use while making a decision in favor of joining ISIS. Some claim, that the socio-economic background of a person plays a big role, some connect it with education, others with the perception of Islam as a whole. The case of Georgians is not an exception, too. The young men, who flee their country in order to fight in Syria, also have their personal motives to act so. However, while the majority of the literature covered proposed that mostly young men from poor families choose to join ISIS in order to financially help their families, case studies in Georgia show that this is not necessarily true. Even though the whole region of Pankisi Gorge is considered a rather poor territory, and families of the region do not prosper economically, facing financial and social issues, some old residents of the region claim that money was actually not the primary reason for their young men to join the organization.. As they have claimed during different interviews given to international press like BBC or CNN the two main driving forces are “desire to become a hero” and “radical islamization”.

As mentioned earlier the rising interest in joining ISIS can be also explained by rising dissatisfaction of being a minority and being a part of Christian Orthodox society. Since Daesh is actively promoting Islam and urging the Muslims to stop living under the rule of “infidels”, they become the ray of hope for Georgian Muslims to fight for their religion and get rid of the Christian governance. ISIS Georgian members themselves underlined the importance of following the organization and urged young men of Pankisi Gorge to join them: “Oh, my Muslim brothers, know that you are forbidden to live with the kafirs [infidels],” (Lomsadze, 2015).

Today the data on the size of the ISIS fighters from Georgia varies. The official position of Georgia is that only approximately 100 Georgians are fighting in the ranks of ISIS. However, the videos by ISIS fighters try to show that the number is much larger. In this case it is difficult to determine which number is more accurate since the both parties have their incentives of announcing their own, differing from one another numbers. Likewise, it is the interest of Georgian government to announce as small number of Georgians as possible, whereas the ISIS understand the importance of announcing bigger numbers for increasing their own interest.

Recruitment processes in Georgia

The sources and literature so far has shown, through collected data and evidence, that Georgia has served as an active platform to recruit members for ISIS. Researchers and scholars have addressed this issue through the prisms of online and on-the-ground recruitment. Local and international press has covered these ways of recruitment, as well as the numbers, and more information on Georgian fighters’ flows to ISIS.

As a Georgian newspaper “Rezonansi” reports, Georgia today plays a role of a “transit country for ISIS militants, and terrorist attacks are not ruled out on the territory of the country” (Mardasov, 2016). The valley of Pankisi Gorge is most frequently seen in any news

piece or articles that concern IS fighters of Georgia. Located in the Northern part of Georgia, Pankisi is close to Chechnya, what plays a major role. The population of Pankisi Gorge, along with the so-called Kists (Muslim Georgians), is also comprised of Chechen fighters who fought against Russia in Chechen wars (Georgian Journal, June, 2015). Having such backgrounds, the militants are an easy target to be recruited to fight for the Islamic State. Some scholars have expressed their ideas of the correlation between anti-Russian attitudes and recruitment. In their understanding, the recruiters often use Russia as a leverage for waking up the spirit of revenge.

Press at times publishes news about detainment or sentencing of ISIS fighters, and sometimes these fighters turn out to be of Georgian origin. So, on June 2015 a piece of news was spread all over Georgia that four people have been detained because of being related to the Islamic State. Soon, this was officially confirmed and covered by all the press. News like this only proves that the recruitment process of new young fighters from Georgia is in an active stage. Recently, ISIS even uploaded and spread a video message, in which four jihadi fighters with the ISIS black flag were addressing their fellow Muslim brothers to join them in their “fight for justice”. As it turns out from their speech, all four of them are Kists and have left Pankisi to start fighting in Syria.

In 2015 Huffington Post published an article, with pictures and short biographies on world’s five most wanted Jihadists. These fighters included one of Georgian origin – Tarkhan Batirashvili. He is also known as Omar the Chechen or Abu Omar al-Shishani (Huffington Post, 2015). Omar the Chechen was a former officer at the Georgian Army and he also fought during the Chechen war against Russia. He is believed to have recruited tens of young Georgians from Pankisi Gorge. The influence and the position of Omar the Chechen within the ISIS only proves that the Muslim Georgian population of Pankisi Gorge play important role in the formation of ISIS foreign fighters.

However, not only Omar the Chechen was responsible for the outflows of young Georgians to the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant. Some recruiters were actually based in the region and were recruiting on ground through using their power. For example, during some interviews conducted in the region, the locals have been talking about mosques that were being opened rapidly all over the region and the propaganda of Arabic language in these mosques – all the attendants could study Arabic without any fees. The mosques and the language classes are of a concern for local people, who are unaware of where the funding of such endeavors comes from (Demytrie, 2016). The issue of funding is deeper than it may seem from the first sight, since if considered that the funding goes from the Islamic State itself, it becomes clear that the whole activities carried out under this funding are exceptionally aimed at recruiting and luring more and more perspective young fighters to their ranks. If so, by funding construction of mosques or Arabic language lessons, the ISIS leaders not only assure successful recruitment process here, but also secure that the new members of the organization are well educated in the religious sense.

While talking about the mosques and propaganda, one name should not be escaped mentioning - Aiuf Borchashvili. Borchashvili is an imam in the village of Jokolo of Pankisi region. He, using his privileges as the imam, has been helping young men from Pankisi to join fight in Syria (Demytrie, 2016). He was sentenced to 14 years for this in 2015 (Machaidze, 2015).

Today, the region of Pankisi Gorge is still serving as a platform for the ISIS to recruit new young and fresh forces and minds. However, Georgian Government is today taking steps in order to at least lessen the numbers of its citizens that fight for ISIS, to not let more outflows from its regions. Thus, no study on recruitment from Georgia can be considered complete without looking at the ways Georgian Government is fighting against the rise of terrorism.

Steps against terrorism

Having such outflows of young Georgian citizens to terrorist organizations could not but be a concern for the local government. For many past years, terrorism has been considered a big issue and a matter of concern for Georgia. Latest two versions of National Security Strategy documents of Georgia have always included special points that were dedicated to underlining the importance of the issue of terrorism and of the fight against it.

Issue of Terrorism In NSS documents of Georgia

Matter of Security for Georgia is multiple times being touched upon in the NSS documents from the perspective of the security of its borders and of terrorist threat. The national security strategy documents of Georgia tackled the matter of terrorism many times. The last amendments of national security document of Georgia were made in 2011, which explains why these amendments did not cover the matter of threat from the Islamic state and its recruitment, however the document covers the matters of regional security. And even though the importance of fight against external forces in occupied territories is mentioned several times throughout the document, it here does not refer to the territories of Pankisi or Adjara, but the ones there were “occupied” by Russia in the August War of 2008. The document mentions that the regions, which were occupied during the August war, now serve as a convenient platform for transnational organized crime and transfer of terrorists.

On the other hand the phenomenon of terrorism has been of a big concern for the Georgian Government and was in any case included in the points of NSS document, that were covering issues of regional and international peace, and the safety of Georgian citizens. Likewise the word terrorism occurs in the document for 29 times, the phrase “regional security” appears 13 times in a context that speaks about stability, security and counterterrorism in the region and among its bordering countries. Considering that the document is 27 pages long, having 29 times mentioned terrorism, even in the case where the ISIS issue was not yet raised much, is

quite much too claim that even in the days when ISIS was not yet recruiting for Georgia, the issue of terrorism is still of a concern for Georgian government. This leads to a thought that not having such a threat imposed by a terrorist organization, the Georgian government still carried about fighting against terrorism and securing its country and people from any external threat in the face of terrorism.

The document also mentions that the government of Georgia "actively cooperates with the UN counterterrorism committee and strengthens the means to fight terrorism including the Armed Forces and the special forces of the law enforcement agencies" (NSC of Georgia, 2011). This is also a weighty fact in defense to the Georgian Government's activeness towards solving or trying to solve the problem of uprising terrorism.

However the national security document is not the only official document that tackles the issue of the security of the state. The annual reports of countries to the Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism also include reports sent out from Georgia. These documents cover amendments and enforcements or other changes in the legislation or other steps that can in the future help in their collective fight against terrorism.

Since the years 2014 and 2015 were harsh in the sense of the activities carried out by ISIS and the widespread terrorist acts, the Georgian annual reports were concentrated on ISIS, its enlargements and steps to be taken to fight the Islamic State.

Georgia's Country report of 2014

International media had many times touched upon the Georgian citizens being recruited by the Islamic State, when Georgian government started its way towards fighting the spread of international terrorism in Georgia in 2014. One of the most prominent steps that Georgian government announced to be taking was "committed to provide humanitarian support as part of Georgia's contribution to and membership of the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL (US Country Reports, 2014).

According to the report, not only did the Georgian Government take steps on the international arena, but also steps were undertaken on the level of legislature of the country. The amendments in laws were addressed towards strengthening the counterterrorism fight in Georgia and to ban, on a state level, any propaganda or recruitment of ISIS (US Country Reports, 2014). Moreover, since the threat posed by the regions of Pankisi Gorge and Adjara was big and was continuing to grow, the Georgian Bureau of Investigation established the Counter Terrorism Task force, which was aimed at creating “a state-level protective-security/rapid-reaction task force” (investigative-gbi.georgia.gov). This body is supposed to rapidly react to any kind of threat or supposed threat of terrorist act, as well as to prevent further development of the recruitment from the regions of Georgia.

However, leaving alone the intelligence agencies and actions, an important part is also given to the financing of the terrorist organization, which, according to the report, Georgian government counts as equal of a crime as being an actual member of an organization. That is why, during these years the state joined international organizations that concentrate on fighting against financing terrorist organizations. These organizations include the Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL) and Financial Action Task Force (FATF) (US Country Reports, 2014).

Since terrorism is a matter of concern for many countries of the world, there have been some regional counterterrorism organizations created, a member of which Georgia also is. This was reported by the state officials in the framework of their annual reports to the US.

Georgia’s Country Report of 2015

The following year’s report also included the new steps that Georgia had been taking during the previous year. As the government of Georgia claims in this report, there had been

taken many steps in the direction of securing Georgia's borders from not only any foreign threat, but for eliminating the chance of illegal transfer of people or future terrorists.

Some points of the 2015 report correspond to the report of the previous year. These points include the fight against Money Laundering and Financing Terrorism, as well as international and regional regulations.

However in the period that lay between these two years the media had covered even more cases of Georgian citizen fighters in ISIS. The news about the sentenced imam was also widely spread. Hence, the rising attention around the Georgian regions of Pankisi Gorge, and for time to time Adjara, made the Government of the Republic of Georgia to deepen their concerns regarding their citizens being terrorist fighters and undertake new steps that would if not stop then reduce the outflow of Georgian young men to the terroristic organization as ISIS is. In this sense, Georgia started to concentrate more on the document security, especially on borders with Turkey, to ensure that travelling with fake documents was not possible, since before that the majority of the recruited terrorists had used fake passports and names to cross the border with Turkey and join the ranks of Georgia. Considering the geographic position of Georgia and Turkey, the threat of the movement of terrorists could also be posed from the side of the sea (water transportation). This is why, as the report claims, "with significant U.S. support, the Georgian Coast Guard is better equipped to patrol the country's maritime borders" (US Country Report, 2015).

While looking at both documents and trying to compare them, one can come to a conclusion that in the years of the apogee of the ISIS violent activities and active recruitment, Georgian government undertook some major steps in order to ensure security for its country and citizens on some level. The Georgian Government underlined several times in its document that the steps undertaken by them do not only concern the security of their own state but the whole region with its neighboring countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey).

The counterterrorist steps that the State of Georgia undertook in 2015 show that even in one-year period the Government had come up with new steps to strengthen the fight not only against the terrorist organizations themselves, but also against the recruitment of young Georgian citizens. The media has multiple times covered the arrests of ISIL fighters of Georgian origin, however this does not ease the concern of the large numbers of Georgian youth, mainly from Pankisi Gorge and Adjara, being recruited to fight as a terrorist, just the opposite it only proves that the problem is real and relevant till now and the government forces should continue to fight against this phenomenon.

Conclusion

The study tried to analyze the special features of the ISIS recruitment processes that have been taking place in Georgia. The research included literature, press and media, and official documents. As the literature suggests there are two major ways to recruit: online and on ground. The process in Georgia includes both ways described in the literature. The online recruitment is considered to be the most effective in the matter numbers (numbers of people recruited), whereas the on ground recruitment, though being harder, is considered to be more efficient, since it leaves its effect in the roots. The latter is proved by an example brought in the essay of constructing mosques in the region of Pankisi Gorge, through which it becomes easier to recruit. But mosques are a permanent value and they will continue to serve their aim for the generations to come.

Main incentives of the young Georgian citizens from the region of Pankisi Gorge to join the ranks of ISIS are the following: feeling vulnerable as a minority under the rule of orthodox church, past experiences of fighting in the Chechen war, desire to become a hero and fight for justice, financial motives. These conclusions were made, based on both on the press covered and the interviews that have been conducted by world's prominent news agencies with the locals. The majority of the young men either start their "journey" from

travelling to Turkey to work and gain money or through Turkey directly to Syria to start fighting for the establishment of Caliphate.

Realizing the threat that the ISIS and its recruitment from Georgia represents, the Georgian government have been taking steps in order to at least reduce the number of people in the outflow towards the Daesh. In its annual reports to the US Department of State, Georgia is wider and wider including the steps that the government has been taking for the past year. These steps include participation in counterterrorism organizations, signing of treaties, etc. The issue of terrorism and security are also raised in the National Security Strategy document of the Republic of Georgia.

The paper tried to answer to the research questions that initially were put forward. Conclusively, both hypotheses of the paper (Numerous Georgian citizens are leaving Georgia to fight in the ranks of ISIS; Georgian citizens from Pankisi Gorge are driven by both economic, social and psychological motives to join ISIS) are proved and accepted.

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