

INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM: CAUSES AND CHALLENGES A GEORGIAN CASE STUDY

EKATERINE GAKHOKIDZE

Ministry of Defense, Georgia

The purpose of this research topic is to analyze the global challenges of terrorism that pose a threat to national security, identify the interaction between the globalization process and terrorism whether globalization is a major contributing factor to the spread of terrorism or it is caused by the weakening of state security institutions and the domestic challenges.

In the framework of this study, we will discuss the Islamic State's policy regarding Georgia. Special attention will be paid to the causes that facilitate the recruitment and radicalization of Georgian citizens to join ISIS, and describe the region in Georgia which is the most vulnerable to radicalization. The article provides also some statistics and main tendencies about the spread of terrorism all over the world.

Key words: Georgia, terrorism, "Islamic State", security system, fighters.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, international terrorism remains one of the major challenges in the world. According to some scholars the particularly acute forms of terrorism have taken place under globalization, liberal border policies, access to information, the global economy and other factors have contributed to the spread of terrorism. Even though terrorism has its effect on developing countries, especially on the continent of Asia and Africa, recent developments have shown that terrorism has no borders and that the security systems of developed countries such as the United States, Great Britain, Germany and France may face the real challenges.

The threat of international terrorism is rapidly changing, growing, and unpredictable. The recent conflicts in the Middle East - the collapse of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, have significantly changed Georgia's security environment. At present, the threats and challenges facing the country are significantly linked to the spread of international terrorism in the region, and in particular in Georgia. Nowadays, the main threat, along with other terrorist organizations, is the defeated "Islamic

State" in Syria and Iraq and its fighters scattered in various countries.

For years, Georgia remains one of the secure countries regarding the terrorism even though it was observed an outflow of some Georgian citizens from one of the regions of Georgia, namely the Pankisi Gorge to different kind of terrorist organizations. The emergence of the "Islamic State" and the intensification of their organization's activities are linked to the largest outflow of youth from the Pankisi Gorge to Syria and Iraq.

In this regard, it is important to identify and analyze exactly the reasons and conditions which contribute to the recruitment of Georgian citizens from these region by ISIS.

In the scientific literature, there is no common understanding related to this topic. Some researchers believe that the globalization process is driving the spread of terrorism but there are also different approaches, according to which main factors are not globalization and its impact, but existing challenges inside the country, such as: the weak state institutions, internal conflicts, and poor economic situation, social and ethnic problems.

Identifying the treats and analyzing the conditions contributing to the Georgian citizens'

recruitment to ISIS, we came to the conclusion that globalization is not a major factor for spreading terrorism in Georgia, and this is mainly due to the domestic challenges: politics, economic and socio-ethnic problems. However, it is also no debatable that globalization creates certain conditions facilitating the spread of terrorism.

2. CURRENT TERRORISM DYNAMICS AND ISIS

Today, international terrorism is one of the global problems. In recent years it has increased and spread over the world. As a result of the ongoing globalization, it has become easier than before for terrorist organizations operating in different countries to share information, cooperate with other organizations and conduct terrorist attacks. It is almost impossible to find state, government and population, which can consider itself immune to terrorist acts.

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon, and has a long history. As a weapon of politics the use of terrorism by group can be traced back to ancient time and as noted by Falk *“in various forms terrorism is as old as government and armed struggle and pervasive”*. [1]

What is terrorism? And why is so difficult to come up with a single common definition? There is often a definition overlap between terrorism and other forms of crime and political violence. Its subjective nature and constant evolution makes it difficult to develop one single understanding of the term. It should be noted that there are different kinds of factors that characterized the process by evolution of terrorism such as: historical events, socio-political evolutions and movements as well as technological developments.

There are numerous variations of definitions so we tried to single out some of them that are more or less accepted in scientific literature. According to the definition given by Sandler *“Terrorism is the premeditated use or threat to*

use violence by individuals or subnational groups to obtain a political or social objective through the intimidation of a large audience beyond that of the immediate victims” [2]. It is also interesting how GTD defines terrorism – *“act of violence by non-state actors, perpetrated against civilian population, intended to cause fear, in order to achieve a political objective”* [3]. It should be noted that violence is not as important for terrorism as feeling of horror and helplessness that appear in society after another terrorist attack. And in this context, terrorism may be considered a blackmail aimed at the government of democratic countries. [4]

Terrorism has its great impact on developing countries, and especially on the continent of Asia and Africa. Terrorist organizations are conducting acts of terrorism mainly in countries and regions where the political situation is unstable and governance is weak. However, recent developments have shown that terrorism has no borders and that the security systems of developed countries such as the United States, Great Britain, Germany and France may face the real challenges. It is said also that the objective of activities and the capabilities differ from organization to organization

According to The Global Terrorism Index 2018 (GTI- a comprehensive study analyzing the impact of terrorism in 163 countries and covers 997% of the world’s population) worldwide, some positive trends have been identified - terrorism-related deaths in Iran and Syria dropped by 22 % compared to 2016, and overall - by 44%.

The prevalence of terrorist acts has also decreased compared to 2016, when the peak of the spread of terrorist activities was recorded. In 2017, the number of countries where the terrorist attacks were carried out dropped from 79 to 67. [5]

According to the number of deaths and the number of terrorist acts carried out among the various terrorist organizations operating in the

region, so-called Islamic State has been distinguished.

From the 18,814 deaths caused by terrorists around the world in 2017 over half were due to actions of just four groups: Islamic state, the

Taliban, Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram. From these organizations Islamic state was responsible of 4,350 deaths in that year [6]. So, Islamic state has been the deadliest group in the world for several years.

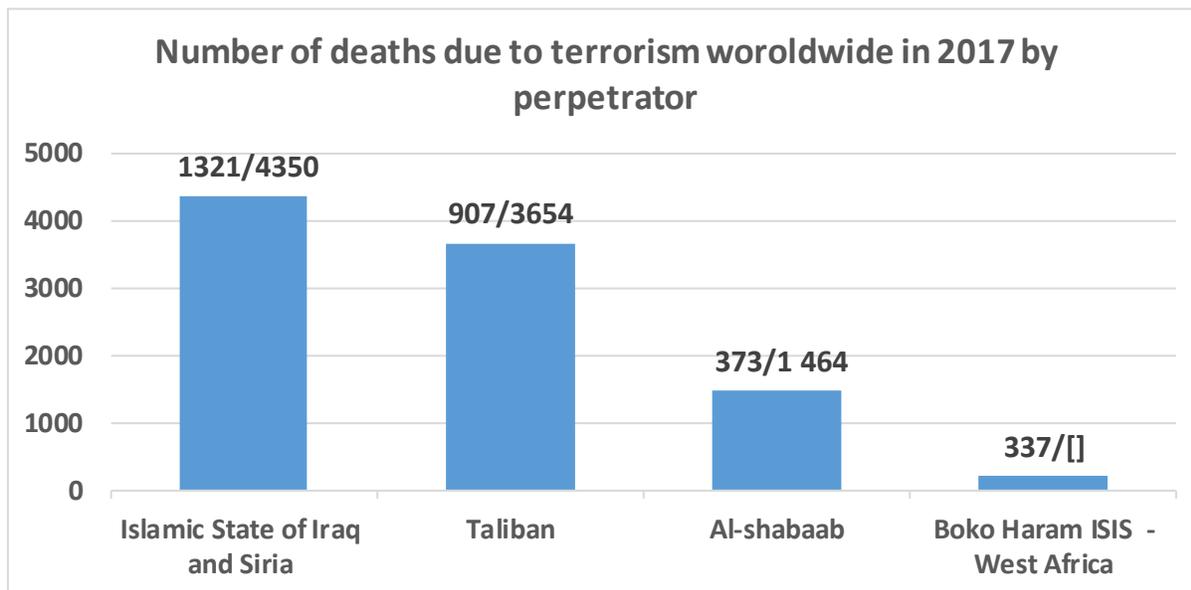


Fig. 1 Number of attacks and deaths due to terrorism worldwide in 2017 by perpetrator (Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/937553/terrorism-most-active-perpetrator-groups-worldwide>)

In 2014, the leader of the Islamic State, (also known in Arab world Daesh, by the acronyms ISIS and ISIL) Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, announced the establishment of world jihad and Khalifa. According to the leaders of the organization, the invasion of Iraq by George W. Bush in 2003 led them to jihad against the Americans and pushed them to regain control over the Arab states. The Islamic State controlled the territories of Iraq and Syria, part of Lebanon, as well as certain areas in Libya, Nigeria, Afghanistan and North Africa.

As of 2014, the largest terrorist casualties in the Daesh terrorist organization were in 2016 (9557 people), most of them were killed in their areas of control - Iraq and Syria. Daesh also increased the number of countries with terrorist activities from 11 to 29.

In 2017 the number of deaths caused by the Islamic State were reduced in Syria and Iraq by

52% and overall 22%. However, it should be noted that the "Islamic State" was not only responsible for terrorist acts, but was also involved in armed conflicts and civil wars with the governments of various countries (Afghanistan, Lebanon, Yemen) and non-state groups, so the total number of casualties are much higher as a result of terrorist attacks. During 2017, Islamic State carried out terrorist attacks in 286 cities in four different regions. [7] The declining tendency of ISIS was remaining the same way in the following years: in 2018 Daesh was responsible for 465 attacks and 3218 fatalities and in 2019 - 23 attacks and 603 fatalities. [8]

There are different factors that contribute to strengthen security and peace in the world. Firstly, as a result of anti-terrorist operations carried out by international coalition troops, ISIS was defeated and members of the

organization were forced to migrate into various countries, especially in Southeast Asia and North Africa. So, they no longer have the resources and capacity to plan large-scale successful terrorist attacks. Another reason that have actually narrowed their scope could be the tightening of border policies and security measures around the world, as well as the cooperation between different countries in this regard.

Despite the positive trends identified by "Global Terrorism Index 2018", there are still serious challenges in the direction of peace and security. Even though Islamic State lost military power, finances, and the state has literally fallen apart, it still remains as a real threat to the world. Now, the main challenge for Western countries is about up to 30,000 foreigners who travelled to the "caliphate" to fight. *"Their future prospects will be of international concern - Some may join al-Qaida or other terrorist organizations that may emerge. Some will become leaders or radicalizers and some will return back home"*. [9]

"Islamic State" may have been destroyed and territories have been lost, but the ideology is not destroyed. Their fighters are now focused not only on ideology but also on revenge. Despite the destruction of the Islamic State's physical stronghold ISIS wants to show that they are still in the fight, and their followers remain as fanatic as ever. Therefore, most of the researchers suggest that due to the lack of resources, they will be less able to carry out well-organized operations, but the frequency of terrorist attacks will likely to increase.

Some experts believe that the fighters of "Islamic State" may have joined any more radical movement for instance Al-Qaeda terrorist organization and continue to carry out terrorist attacks with more atrocities in order to demonstrate strength and spread terror. There is also another viewpoint according to which "now it's time to forget the Middle East and to prepare for attacks from the former Soviet Union. By

2017, at least 8,500 fighters from former Soviet republics had flocked to Syria and Iraq to join the Islamic State. In the coming years, the terrorist threat from Russia and beyond will only increase. With the fall of the Islamic State, Russian-speaking terrorists were mostly able to flee Iraq and Syria with more ease than Middle Eastern foreign fighters and are now back in hiding in the former Soviet sphere or in Europe.

Government neglect and outright repression have made religious Muslims in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan attractive targets for radicals looking for new recruits. [10]

3. MAIN REASONS FOR GEORGIAN CITIZENS' TO JOIN-ISIS

Over the years, Georgia does not belong to the high-risk countries in terms of terrorism and has never faced the real threat from Islamic State, but the recent conflicts in the Middle East - the collapse of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, their scattered fighters around the world caused serious problems for the country security.

The defeated "Islamic State" may not be a direct threat to Georgia, but the country has been faced the real threat of terrorism as a result of counterterrorist operations in Syria and Iraq in 2017. For the Islamic State has become clear that the defeat was inevitable and began to scatter their fighters into different countries. To restore their reputation, they planned to carry out terrorist acts and import new radical ideas. Presumably, this was the purpose of Akhmed Chataev's, (Russia citizen of Chechen origin), one of the leaders of "Islamic State", and his comrade's arrival in Georgia, especially to consider the quantity and variety of weapons taken as a result of counter-terrorist operations on November 22, in 2017.

After almost a day-long fire fight, one member of the terrorist group was detained, two were killed, and a fourth suspect detonated an explosive, killing himself. The Georgian

government later identified one of the dead as international terrorist Akhmet Chataev, fighting in the ISIS. [11] (Turkish authorities have suspected him of masterminding the June 2016 terrorist attack on Istanbul's Ataturk Airport which saw the death of 45 people.) According to the investigatory body's official version, Chatayev returned to Georgia from Syria, having illegally crossed over the Georgian-Turkish border via forest footpaths in the Ajara mountains.

Follow-up was another operation which took place in December. There were identified some residents of Pankisi Gorge that were suspected to support Ahmad Chatayev and his friends. During the operation, Pankisi resident Temirlan Machalikashvili was shot by a special taskforce officer in his house and did not recovered. [12] Five more residents of the Pankisi Gorge were arrested at the time on the suspicion of aiding terrorists.

As a result of the counter-terrorist operations conducted by the State Security Service, the threat was avoided, but the country's security system faced a real challenge.

The existence of such facts negatively affects not only the security of the country, but also damages the image that directly reflects the development of the economy. Additionally, the feeling of panic and fear among the citizens itself worsens the image of the government.

Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the threats facing the country and to develop preventive measures in order to mitigate challenges associated with terrorism.

One of the main problems is the existence of a certain number of supporters of the idea of Daesh in the country. Nobody can tell for sure the precise number of young people who left the region to fight in Syria. Their number ranges from several dozens to 150. According to the report of the Georgian State Security Service (2015), up to 50 Georgian citizens were fighting for "Islamic State" from certain regions,

with predominantly Muslim population, such as Pankisi Gorge (located in the north-east of Georgia, border with Russia), Adjara (an autonomous republic located in south-west of Georgia, near Turkey) and Curia region. [13]

The report of the United States Department on Terrorism says a relatively increased number of Georgian nationals, around 50-100, who were fighting in Syria and Iraq. [14] Most of them are Muslims from Pankisi and Adjara regions. They used to travel in Syria and Iraq through Turkey. Today, most of them are on the list of Most Wanted Terrorists worldwide. Nowadays, based on Georgian State Security Service annual report (2018) number of people fighting for ISIS decreased up to 20. (According to reliable sources so far there are - 26 casualties, which is a striking figure for such a small community). [15]



Fig. 2: Map of Georgia.
(Source: news.bbc.co.uk)

In order to go deeper to the root of the problem we should have clear picture of the Pankisi Gorge, where ISIS had most of their supporters. It is one of the most northern regions of Georgia. An ethnic group called Kists of Chechen root (75%). The Kist community remains quite small but in the past decade the number of residents in the Pankisi area has at least doubled due to migration of refugees (1200) during the second Chechen war.

At the end of 1990s and into the 2000s, the region was virtually beyond the Georgian government's control and it was notorious for being a major hub for crime, drug trafficking

and human kidnapping. It was associated with a potential threat at a global scale. It was then that Russia blamed Georgia for supporting Chechen insurgents, and even bombed Pankisi region on a number of occasions.

After the change of power in Georgia in 2003, the government managed to stabilize the situation and establish control over the Gorge without using any force. For a long period of time the situation has remained the same but from 2014 when the idea of ISIS has become popular in Pankisi it has changed. Khaso Khangoshvili, a member of the Pankisi Council of Elders believes that the main reason young Kists started leaving for Syria was the ‘euphoria’ from the ‘Caliphate’s first victories as well as the campaigns carried out by ISIS supporters, which the young people easily succumbed to. In addition, the Kists are Vainakhs, and the fighting spirit is in their blood. Russia’s interference in the

conflict in Syria also played its part, because many Kists were willing to fight against Russia. [15]

In this regard, it is important to identify and analyze exactly what are the reasons and conditions which encourage the spread of terrorism and facilitate recruitment of Georgian citizens from these region to ISIS.

It should be analyzed whether globalization is a major contributing factor for this or it is caused by the weakening of state security institutions and the domestic challenges. No doubt, that liberal border policy, access to information, the global economy and other factors have affected the spread of terrorism but from my point of view, based on the analysis of scientific literature and revealed tendency, it is caused mainly due to the domestic challenges, internal political, economic and socio-ethnical problems.

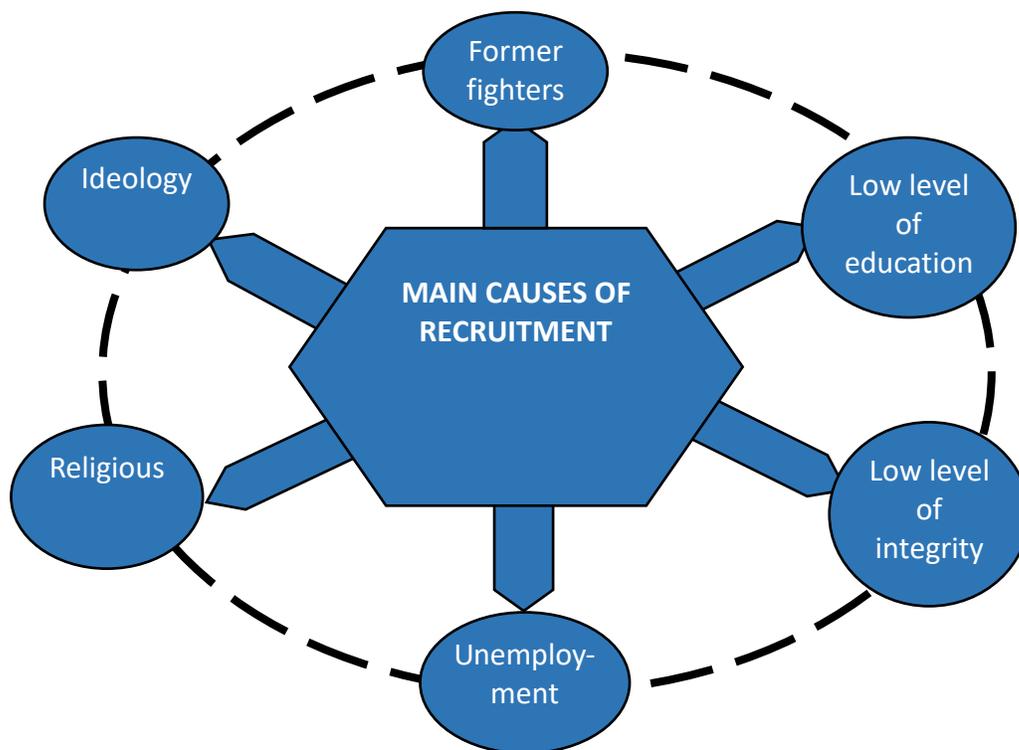


Fig. 3. Problems inside Pankisi Gorge.

The outflow of young people from Georgia to "Islamic State" is mainly related to the ideological factor. The main task of the "Islamic state" was restoration of old caliphate with the composition of Georgia on the ideological and nostalgic level and their activity was aimed at disseminating these ideas. Ideology is particularly easy to use among young population in the 14-25 age group characterized by special radicalism and aggression. If we look at the statistics, the most of the fighters left Georgia are the representatives of this age group.

The formation and dissemination of this ideology is generally associated with ideology of Wahhabism (Salafi). The activity of ISIS is based on Wahhabism one of the directions of Islam, which emerged in Saudi Arabia in the 18th century and confronts traditional Islam. Their main idea is the islamization of the world. Jihad holds a leading place in the doctrine of Wahhabism and the main requirements from practitioners of Wahhabism is obedience of faith and military readiness.

In Georgia and particularly in Pankisi, the Wahhabism movement has been established in the 1990s and now plays an important role in the ideological formation of young population. The majority of the Pankisi youth are adherents of the Salafi movement. Nearly all Pankisi natives fighting for ISIS in Syria are Salafis. There is a new Salafi mosque being built in the center of Duisi village. [15]

This factor plays significant role in splitting local population and also causes confrontation between generations. There is a big disagreement between the traditional and radical-fundamental Islamists. It should be noted that the attitude of young and elderly people is radically different in connection with joining population of Pankisi Gorge to terrorist organizations.

Talking about the factors, from my point of view, main attention should be paid to socio-economic situation of the region. One of the most significant factors in the outflow of Pankisi

youth is the high rate of unemployment and the low level of integration of young population to society. Luisa Mutoshvili, a teacher and a civil activist believes that this situation was triggered by the lack of a clear-cut national policy aimed at engaging the local youth at least in some activities. There is practically nothing the young people can do here. [15] Most of the young people do not manage to get job after their secondary education (even earlier), so they are not involved in the community life.

That's why they use to move to "Islamic state" in order to find "proper" job. According to various reports, there are dozens of cases when young Muslims from Adjara and Pankisi Gorge travelled to various Muslim educational institutions in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, or Syria, for the purpose of broadening their religious knowledge. As usual they are easily to radicalize.

The low level of education of some local populations contributes to the dissemination of radical-fundamental ideas. Wahhabis use these factors and their economic interest in their favor. The locals that don't pay attention to school and have no bright prospects are easily influenced by radical ideas. There are frequent cases when Arabic states finance various programs in the regions of Georgia (Pankisi, Adjara, Guria) to spread the Koran and Wahhabis' ideas. Most of supporters of the terrorist organization had illusions that if they joined the "Islamic State" in Syria and Iraq, they would have a successful social and economic welfare that was not real.

After the defeat of the Islamic State, one of the most important issues in terms of security of the country is represented by the fighters who left Syria and returned back to their homeland. They are the source of dissemination of radical ideology and serve as a "role model" for Pankisi youth and thus, in some ways facilitate young people to be recruited in terrorist organizations.

It is known that Tarkhan Batirashvili resident of Pankisi was very popular in the Pankisi

Gorge, known as the "Islamic State" "Defense Minister".[16] His name is linked to the massive membership of the Pankisi community in the terrorist organization (Tarkhan Batirashvili died in July of 2016).

Considering all the above mentioned, it is important to identify what is exactly the "Islamic state" policy in Georgia and how we can address these challenges.

It should be noted that former fighters create a real possibility of terrorist acts inside the country. They may not be themselves participants of terrorist attacks, but they can create the ideology and based on this terrorist attacks it might be conducted, not directly toward Georgian citizens, but, in this case, the most vulnerable target groups may be diplomats and embassies of partner countries in the territory of Georgia or even tourists. [17] They will try to intimidate the public, cause panic and chaos among people.

In addition, after the collapse of Islamic State, major challenge for Georgia is using the countries territory as transit by terrorists in general. ISIS fighters were scattered all over the world. Because of territorial proximity, they easily access the Turkish territory and then they are moving in different countries. One of the most accessible directions is Georgia, especially for those citizens who do not need a visa. There is a high possibility that Georgia to be used as a transit country. Especially considering the existence of a corridor through Turkey, where terrorists used to move in Syria and Iraq. On the same route these people will try to get back with another name or with much more organized documents.

Using the territory of Georgia as a transit and a temporary shelter by terrorists is a main threat not only in terms of mass rioting and terror acts inside the country but this factor may also be used by the neighboring countries, namely, the Russian Federation. Especially after the ongoing conflict in the Middle East where Russia's foreign policy was directed to creating an image

of a state fighting against terrorists. Russia's declared policy of fighting terrorists at their creation, makes Pankisi and the entire Georgia vulnerable to an intervention. This may seem like an exaggeration, but the Russian Federation will undoubtedly use this in order to intervene in Pankisi whenever it feels suitable.

So, from the security perspective, it is important to analyze all abovementioned factors and threat facing the country in order to mitigate these problems. Not only The State Security Service but also central and local authorities are working in close cooperation with each other in order to develop the holistic approach on that.

Georgian government made several initiatives in education, civil and political participation, and conducted different kind of trainings in order to raise awareness among vulnerable population on terrorism-related topics. It has been developed several initiatives aimed at implementation of small grants program, under which Georgia issued seven grants in Pankisi.

Another direction are the effective measures carried out by the State Security Service in 2018. The Service has been actively conducting its activities in the direction of detection of terrorism-related threats in Georgia. Some individuals who have been disseminating ideas of terrorist organizations via internet, including the social media have been detected.

The Service also continues to work on the threat of the possible return of the individuals and their family members to the country, and will carry out activities prescribed by the legislation.

As a result of relevant measures carried out by the Service, facts of attempted transit movement through the territory of Georgia by terrorism-affiliated individuals have been considerably reduced. Movements at the state customs and border-crossing points are strictly controlled, as well as constant monitoring of crossings at the state borders is carried out.

It is worth noting, that as a result of effort taken by the State Security Service and other relevant state authorities, not a single fact of travel to Syria and Iraq by the citizens of Georgia has been observed in 2018. [18]

In 2018, as a result of effective measures carried out by the government threats stemming from terrorism have been considerably reduced in the country. This is positively reflected in the report of "GTI 2018" which is measuring the impact of terrorism on different countries. According to the report Georgia took 89th place to compare with 2017 (77th place), the situation has been improved and Georgia moved into a very low impacted group of countries in terms of terrorism.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Over the years Georgia has maintained the image of a safe country in terms of terrorism. Even though several dozen fighters from some regions of the country joined the "Islamic State" and their ideology was spread within the country, Georgia has never faced the real threat of terrorism. However, after the emergence of the "Islamic State" and the intensification of their activities Georgia is facing serious challenges for the security perspective.

Identifying the treats and analyzing the conditions contributing to the Georgian citizens' recruitment to ISIS, we came to the conclusion that globalization is not a major factor for spreading terrorism in Georgia, and this is mainly due to the domestic challenges: internal politics, economic and socio-ethnic problems. However, it is also no debatable that globalization creates certain conditions facilitating the spread of terrorism.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Accordingly, we believe that it is important to study and analyze the problems facing Pankisi Gorge, in order to develop and implement a state

policy focusing on the elimination of problems. Implementation of these measures will help integrate Pankisi's Muslim community into Georgian society and mitigate the key factors that promotes their recruitment into various terrorist organizations.

On top of that, it is vital to involve actively law enforcement agencies in this process, also to strengthen the control and prevention mechanisms at the borders of Georgia in order to overcome the challenges facing the country.

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