

Vakhtang Maisaia,*
Professor, Caucasus International University
(CIU), Doctor of Political Science¹

Eteri Khanjaliashvili,**
Postgraduate student of International
Relations and International Security,
Caucasus International University (CIU)²

* e-mail: vakhtang.maisaia@ciu.edu.ge

** e-mail: eteri_khanjaliashvili@ciu.edu.ge

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GEORGIA'S SECURITY ENVIRONMENT AND COMBATING TERRORISM - NEW CHALLENGES AND THREATS IN 21ST CENTURY

Abstract: *The article discusses Georgia's security environment in the lens of terrorism. Taking into account that 21st century took the importance of terrorism on a global scale it became not only concern of world politics but domestic politics as well. It is the act of violence initiated by humans and are often of a malicious nature. That is a reason for increased attention toward it. Although Georgia is not among the countries with high risk of terrorist attack, there are some challenges in this respect. However, before estimating the threats coming from terrorism, first we need to clarify conceptual meaning of security for Georgia and what are the main threats for it. Security environment in Georgia is linked with Russian occupation and terrorism, especially with Chechen fighters in Syria and Iraq who sometimes are associated with Pankisi gorge (east Georgia). Returning back these fighters in Georgia may cause some danger for its security. But Georgia has close ties with international society and it cooperates with different organizations with this respect.*

Keywords: *Security, Asymmetric Threat, Pankisi Gorge, Counterterrorism, International Coalition.*

1 Head of the Postgraduate Program on International Relations and International Security at Caucasus International University, Adjunct Professor of UKSW

2 Caucasus International University, Eteri_khanjaliashvili@ciu.edu.ge

Conceptual Meaning of Security in View of Georgia's Policy

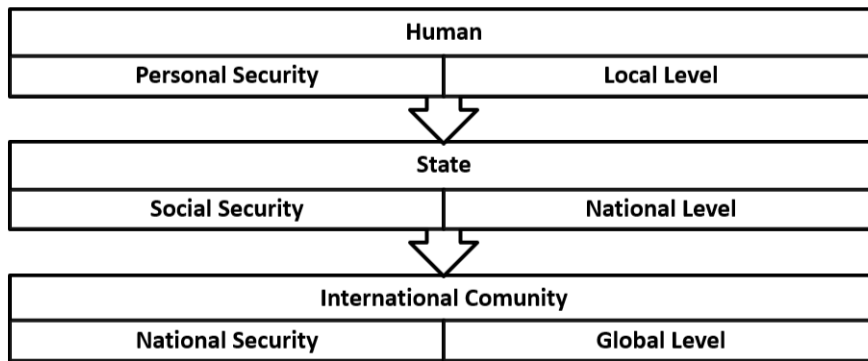
According to the realistic school of international relations, an international system is considered as the anarchic system. This theory is reinforced by the fact that all the actors of international system have their own interests which are absolutely or at least partially different from other actor's interests. But all of them have an aspiration for security.

As scientists highlight security became a complex term in 21st century because of variety of threats imposed by the non-state actors. Despite the diversification of security definitions, we will draw the two most sophisticated definitions:

1. **Security** – defense capabilities from risks, dangers, provocations, threats.
2. **Security** – such a condition of a country where the physical existence, identity and development of the nation (population) is ensured, and this represents the supreme interest of the state. (Chitadze, 2016:436)

Furthermore, Scientists use a so-called classification model to make the accents of security more visible in various spheres and levels.

Classification of security in different levels:



For this reason, we need to clarify what are the main risks, threats and provocations for country in order to understand its counterterrorism actions.

From our point of view, discussion on terrorism should necessarily start with the conceptual definition of it and the underlying factors that cause its interest in scientific perspective. First of all, we want to express the distinction between

the term terrorism and terror, as the society often misleads and identifies these two terms together.

Terror initially as a method of political action emerged during the Great Revolution of France and was used for the repression of political opponents by radical revolutionaries. We all agree that terms Terror and Terrorism both involve solving political problems with forceful methods. There are many examples of the use of forceful methods in world history as a state against political opponents, as well as various underground groups against the ruling class and state institutions. So, the term terror means repressions implemented by a state against its state citizens and political oppositions and the term terrorism is considered as an activity implemented by opposition political groups against state institutions and the ruling class.

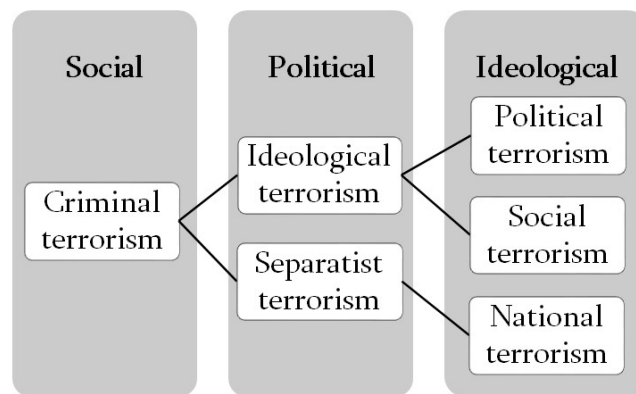
Depending on the specifics of terrorism, the following main types of manifestations are defined as:

- **Political Terrorism** - in a broad sense, actions aimed at altering a whole or part of the socio-political establishment.
- **National terrorism** – is characterized by ethnicity. It is carried out by national-political groups of national minorities which are struggling to acquire their historic territories, sovereignty or expansion of autonomy.
- **Social terrorism** - arises from deep socio-political conflicts and is revealed in two major forms: right and left-wing terrorism.
- **Religious terrorism** – is characterized by religious beliefs, it is carried out by religious groups and is distinguished by religious fundamentalism (Al Qaeda). (Magradze, Maisaia, 2017:83)

If we look at history, we can say that terrorism has been developing for a long time, that's to say for nineteenth century, changing the form and ideology. But modern terrorism appeared in Europe during the epoch of the enlightenment, to say that more precisely, in the nineteenth century. It is noteworthy that in the second half of the last century when terrorism and international terrorism began to be explored intensively, political and other qualified scientists were not able to formulate only one definition of the term terrorism which would be acceptable for everyone. However, this problem remains a problem in the 21st century too. For example, International law considers terrorist act as “killing of a head of government or a member of diplomatic missions and any other interference with the intention to influence the politics of a particular state” (Urushadze,

2007:14). But today terrorism and the terrorist act are so broad spectrum that this explanation does not fully reflect the essence of terrorism.

Three forms of terrorism have been named at the Trans-American Conference (1970) dedicated to its problems and the protection of population from terrorism, which can be found in the chart below (Chigitashvili, 2010:53).



After that, terrorism still remains one of the major problems in the modern world and the most important challenge of international security. But the terrorist attack on the US on September 11, 2001 took the importance of terrorism on a global scale. The terrorist acting around the world has led to a clearer perception of the threat of terrorism and the world's policy against it. Obviously, the September 11 attacks elevated terrorism as a national security concern. It took Georgia's attention from the beginning.

As the asymmetric threats became one of the main problems for the world security, Georgia is not an exception and terrorism is one of the attentive issues among other threats to its security. Although Chief of the State Security Service of Georgia, Grigol Liluashvili considers Russian occupation as the biggest challenge for the country taking into account that 20% of Georgia is under the Russian occupation that obstructs its integration into European community and "regrettably, by stressing that the dividing line has been moved further into Georgian territory by two meters, we even legitimize that this dividing line should exist at all"(Civil.ge, 2019), Liluashvili also mentions that combat against terrorism is also priority in Georgia's policy. Thus, Georgia's security dilemma is

not only dealing with occupation and terrorism but also with inculcated views among society regarding to these issues.

In accordance with Russian occupation the developments in Syria represent a potential threat to Georgia's national security. In this context, firstly, if western states impose economic sanctions on Turkey, Georgian economy will also face certain problems, as Georgia's foreign trade and accordingly the Georgian national currency rate are closely tied to the Turkish economy and, secondly, there are robust concerns about Georgian fighters in Syria. According to a recent paper by Bennett Clifford, one of the top experts on Georgian jihadists in Syria, a handful of mid-level commanders remain active in northwest Syria with independent groups, as well as several with ISIS. Of these groups, Ajnad al-Kavkaz is the largest and most active, with likely around 200 total fighters (Civil.ge 2018). But what if these fighters return to Georgia? Neil Hauer, independent analyst focused on North Caucasian fighters in Syria, highlights-” A few will likely come back to Georgia, but probably would attempt to return to civilian life and not continue militant activities”. But the first question for society would be why they are going there at all?

From foreign factors huge number of refugees are worth mentioning. After arriving a thousand Chechens in this region, Georgia somehow lost its control over it and started radicalization.

On the other hand, domestic factors also promoted outflow of this people from country. For instance, its isolated policy determined by geographical determinism and cultural differences caused unequal development of this region. Therefore, there is the lowest rate of unemployment compared to other regions of Georgia. According to this fact, people often point out poverty and money for the reason of outflow of this people. The father of famous Tarkhan Bati-rashvili, known as Omar al-Shishani (Georgian Chechen jihadist who served as a commander for the Islamic State in Syria) declared in his interview that unemployment and economic ill-being became the salient point for his son for departing to Syria. However, willingness to become more integrated into rest of the society is neglected because of different traditions, culture and even religion. For this reason, Georgia often cooperates with other organizations such as NATO and OSCE for defusing the tension in this region.

However, John Grennan of the Caspian Studies Program questioned whether there was a risk that the Georgian government would exaggerate the threat of terrorism within its borders in order to obtain more aid from the United States. However, as Dr. Pavel Baev, head of the Foreign and Security Policy Program at the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo, responded: “it is not so much

a case of Georgia inventing terrorism where it does not exist,... It is more the case that Georgia will suddenly become much more focused on the question of terrorism in the Pankisi Gorge, when it has not really paid much attention to the region for the last several years” (Pavel, 2002).

To clarify, I would like to mention that Pankisi gorge is eastern part of Georgia, with inhabitants of Kists. It became notorious in recent years because of close ties with terrorists who went to Syria. It is true that the region took attention recently, but the problem started not now, but from the first Russian-Chechen war. After I and II Chechen wars many refugees arrived in Pankisi and established there. That is why Russia was accusing Georgia for giving shelters to Chechens. The situation became so tense that as U.S ambassador to Georgia at that time, Kenneth Spencer Yalowitzone, mentioned Georgia and Russia were at the edge of the war but after the U.S interference everything got under control.

From that period on, media often writes about Pankisi gorge and sometimes it creates the stereotype that all the Chechen fighters for ISIS are from this valley. In order to understand the reality, we should ask” Cui bono?” in another words who gets the benefit for spreading this information or for what reason?

We should take into account the fact that Pankisi area has long been a source of tension in Georgian-Russian relations. Moscow wants Georgia to step up security in the border area. On the other hand, Officials in Tbilisi have repeatedly accused Russia of carrying out military provocations along the Georgian border. So, it seems that these notorious stereotypes give excuse to Russia to do such actions. However, we have to be careful with the information we perceive or actions we see.

As a result, Georgia’s security environment is complicated caused by Geographic determinism or domestic policy, but its afford to combat against terrorism is vital for peace building actions in Caucasus region.

2. Georgia as a longstanding member of the Global Coalition against terrorism

Living in a state of war and persistent terrorist attacks is tragically characteristic of the world today. In contrast with natural disasters, war and terrorism are acts of violence initiated by humans and are often of a malicious nature. The state of warfare has changed in the past years, shifting to episodic states of conflict involving guerilla armies and more casualties for civilians. Similarly, terrorism has been described as “a form of undeclared war”, which differs from a state of war in its unpredictability and focus on harming civilians.

Today scientists are trying to explore modern terrorism, or to say that more precisely to analyze problems related to terrorism from the Islamic world. Therefore, they focus on the psychological aspects of terrorism Jihad culture, the source of terrorism and the target of terrorism, the deliberate impact of print and electronic media on public consciousness and psychics. “Terrorism is not only an action ending in an act of violence. It is primarily a mode of thinking leading to an activity of antisocial character” (Zurabishvili, 2002:53).

Although Georgia is not among the countries with high risk of terrorist attack, there are some challenges in this respect. For instance: Particular attention has been paid by the State Security Service of Georgia (SSSG) towards prevention of using cyberspace for purposes of dissemination of radical ideology. In November 2015, access to the websites diffusing radical ideology and groups registered in social media were restricted. In order to prevent entering or leaving the country for terrorist activities, border (so-called “green border”, as well as border crossing points) is properly controlled in cooperation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia. Visitors are interviewed. All border crossing points are equipped with detectors of nuclear and radioactive materials/substances. Employees of border management authorities are regularly trained, inter alia, in detection of forged travel documents.

Considerable attention is paid to enhancing the capabilities of readiness and responses to terrorist threats. National strategic objects and their subsidiary premises that might be the potential targets of terrorist attacks were officially documented and are analyzed in the light of possible risks. In addition, security measures on the places of public assembly bearing high risk (known as easy targets) have been assessed. Special units responsible for counterterrorism activities are regularly trained/retrained in the field of tactical activities (sniper courses, counterterrorist actions in the urban conditions, operations on destruction of terrorists’ camps, mountainous training courses, etc.) and demining issues, as well as detection and suppression of means of mass destruction. Support of international partners should be noted in this respect. Material-technical base of tactical units for fight against terrorism has been improved.

In addition to this, annual Country Reports on Terrorism by U.S state department is also noteworthy from the perspective of Georgia’s counterterrorism actions. The document refers to Georgia as “a longstanding member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS,” which has “continued its robust engagement with the United States across a range of counterterrorism-related issues.”

“Georgia is generally capable of detecting, deterring, and responding to terrorism incidents,” the report says, adding that the SSS, which “has the lead

in handling terrorism-related incidents and investigations,” is “generally well equipped and well trained.”

The report also mentions that number of supporters to ISIS who are Georgian citizens decreased in 2018. Supposedly because Georgia increased control over borders.

Furthermore, Georgia “cooperates closely” with NATO, the Council of Europe, the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation, and the Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova (GUAM) Organization for Democracy and Economic Development (Civil.ge, 2019).

In conclusion, we can say that 21st century led all the countries to the unpredictable world full of transnational and asymmetric threats. Among these threats terrorism became the concern not only to a particular country or region, but for whole world. According to Richard Cohen, after the recognition of common threats, the countries, even those which have different ideological principles and interests, can be united with cooperative alliances. This is caused by the country’s inability to hamper its risks. Maybe in the alliances like this some countries spend a lot of money and some of them win some more, but they all agree that they cannot endure a common threat without each other. Therefore, perception of common threats and summarizing common values led Georgia to become a longstanding member of global coalition against terrorism and it is important precondition for further development of cooperation in the future.

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Vakhtang Maisaia,

Profesor, Internacionalni Univerzitet Kavkaz, Gruzija, doktor političkih nauka

Eteri Khanjaliashvili,

Student doktorskih studija na smeru Međunarodni odnosi i sigurnost, Internacionalni Univerzitet Kavkaz, Gruzija

BEZBEDNOSNO OKRUŽENJE I BORBA PROTIV TERORIZMA U GRUZIJI – NOVI IZAZOVI I PRETNJE U 21. VEKU

Rezime

U članku se govori o bezbednosnom okruženju Gruzije u svetlu terorizma. Uzimajući u obzir da je u 21. vek dat značaj terorizmu na globalnom nivou, i to ne samo na svetskom, već i na nivou unutrašnjih politika. To je nasilje koje vrše ljudi, i često je zlonamerne prirode. U tome je razlog za povećanu pažnju prema njemu.

Iako Gruzija nije među zemljama sa visokim rizikom terorističkih napada, u tom pogledu postoje određeni izazovi. Međutim, pre nego što procenimo pretnje koje dolaze od terorizma, prvo moramo razjasniti konceptualno značenje bezbednosti za Gruziju i koje su glavne pretnje po nju. Sigurnosno okruženje u Gruziji povezano je sa ruskom okupacijom i terorizmom, posebno sa čečenskim borcima u Siriji i Iraku koji su ponekad povezani sa klisurama Pankisija (istočna Džordžija). Povratak ovih boraca u Gruziju može prouzrokovati određenu opasnost po sigurnost. Ali Gruzija ima bliske veze sa međunarodnim zajednicom i s tim u vezi saraduje sa različitim organizacijama.

Ključne reči: Bezbednost, asimetrična pretnja, Pankisijeva klisura, protivterorizam, međunarodna koalicija.

