

# *Study of Vulnerability towards Violent Extremism in Youth of Georgia*

Synthesis Report

Institute of Social Studies and  
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Hedayah  
countering violent extremism



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## Glossary of terms and acronyms

- Akhmeta - One of the urban district centers of the Kakheti region in the eastern part of Georgia;
- Batumi – Regional city center of Adjara Autonomous Republic, located in the western part of Georgia;
- CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis;
- Faith based boarding schools – Non-state childcare institutions operating without any statutory gate-keeping and regulation. These are financed and managed by various religious denominations (Georgian Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, etc.);
- HH - Household;
- Karajala - Village settled by Muslims in Telavi municipality, which belongs to the Kakheti region in the eastern part of Georgia;
- Khulo - One of the urban district centers of Adjara Autonomous Republic in the western part of Georgia;
- The Kists - Chechen subethnicity, primarily living in the Pankisi Gorge, which is located in the eastern Georgian region of Kakheti (approximately 5,500 Kist people live in Georgia nowadays);
- Pankisi Gorge - Rural valley part of Akhmeta municipality of the Kakheti region in the eastern part of Georgia;
- RF - Religious Fundamentalism;
- RWA - Right-wing Authoritarianism;
- VE – Violent Extremism.

## Executive Summary

The main research question of the study was: What are the risk factors of vulnerability towards violent extremism amongst youth of Georgia and which sub-group is most vulnerable?

This study examined the following key drivers of vulnerability (USAID, 2009) towards violent extremism in the context of Georgia:

- Social exclusion, which generally refers to the limitations experienced by individuals participating in various activities: production, consumption, civic engagement, political participation, etc.
- Social isolation and alienation, which attract angry youth to risky behaviour that provides an escape from routine lives.
- Insufficient governance (both at central and local levels) to address the social problems, especially, poverty and unemployment; low trust towards political institutions and authorities.
- Suppression of human rights to be involved in nonmainstream practices attached to religious minorities; stigmatization of those who have different markers of behaviour and even physical appearance.
- Role of religion in facilitating mobilization, offering a compelling narrative, providing a justification, and sanctifying violent extremism acts.
- Lack of viable alternative viewpoints or teachings other than religious, nationalistic meta-narratives, which are transparently or latently delivered in schools.

The research consisted of two methodological approaches:

1. Qualitative study, which covered 13 focus groups with different youth groups and 5 in-depth interviews with experts, as well as critical discourse analysis of school textbooks;
2. Quantitative study (survey), with nation-wide representative sampling, within which face to face interviews were conducted with different youth target groups.

This research resulted in several key findings that are described in more detail below. First, this study revealed that the majority (more than 65%) of households that the youth in Georgia belong to, experience poverty or have a hard time in escaping from it. In addition to poverty, there is a large problem with youth unemployment in Georgia; the majority (57.3%) of youth of employable age (18-29 age group) are unemployed, and those that do work mostly have jobs that require no qualification or hold low positions in the public sector. Thus, their contribution to household income does not combat poverty or economic deprivation. Furthermore, employed youngsters experience discriminatory work settings and think that their jobs do not give them opportunities to fully realize their potential. Unemployed youngsters talk about nepotism and an unfair job market, which reduces their career opportunities even further. The current state of the labour market in Georgia is one characterized by adverse conditions for self-realization of young individuals.

Second, youth groups have low trust towards state decision-making institutions, especially local and central governments. They talk about non-targeted use of financial resources allocated for the local communities. The large majority of young people (88.9%) was almost never involved in social and political activities, such as raising issues with different institutions, taking part in political meetings or demonstrations, etc.

Third, young people report the lack of public recreational, cultural and sports centres in their places of residence. For youth in rural communities, these places are even more valuable infrastructural elements for active engagement in social life, where there are far less spaces for positive social interaction; the lack or the absence of these recreational and cultural spaces greatly reduces the opportunities for social engagement.

Poor social and economic conditions make youth in Georgia vulnerable towards violent extremism (VE). The risk of vulnerability rises when the young person belongs to Muslim, rural and non-ethnic Georgian communities, and especially when they are women. Amongst women, both Christian and Muslim respondents that participated in the survey conducted, report religious, ethnic and gender discrimination, although it is perceived more painfully among Muslim respondents.

Value orientations of youth, namely towards Religious Fundamentalism (RF) and Right-wing Authoritarianism (RWA), do not increase vulnerability towards VE, since these orientations are not strongly expressed; however, there is a tendency from the midpoint on the scale towards both: the RF and RWA. This tendency becomes more powerful among Muslims, which means that they give rise, on the one hand to sovereignty of religious rules and norms, and on the other hand, to a submission to the authorities that are perceived as established and legitimate in society. Both, RF and RWA imply the existence of primary bearers of truth. This 'monopolization' of truth and exclusion of alternatives can ultimately lead to acceptance of extremist ideologies.

The discourse analysis reveals that the nationalistic and orthodox Christian meta-narratives provide the dominant background to Georgian literature and history textbooks. As the analysis of the texts show, the discourses that are produced by the textbooks are highly influenced by Christian Orthodox worldviews. This is the case for both History and Literature courses. The Christian Orthodox paradigms in many cases are a prism through which some issues are refracted. These paradigms are the implicit elements of the texts and are taken as *a priori*. This approach implies that this 'prism' is the only right way of interpretation, as it excludes any other religious (or non-religious) point of view and puts the non-Christian Orthodox students (or generally, non-Christian Orthodox groups) in a position where their truth has lesser value.

Another discourse that promotes this type of positioning between Christian Orthodox and non-Christian Orthodox is the construction of national identity, which is mostly built around the Orthodox faith. This narrative of the construction of identity uses exclusively *faith* and *ethnicity* to identify who are Georgians. This makes the other members of society (who are not Christian Orthodox or ethnically Georgians) 'lesser Georgians'.

And finally, the contribution of certain groups to the history and culture of Georgia is mostly ignored; the history textbook produces mostly Eurocentric and pro-Western narratives (in the narrow sense of 'Western' used to define political order in the West in general). This means that on the one hand, the representation of the history of Western culture is much broader than that of Eastern culture, even though in most cases the latter had a serious and direct influence on Georgian culture, while many elements of the former had no effect on it whatsoever.

Even though in many cases the literature textbooks take the Christian Orthodox point of view as the only point of view, they leave much more space for critical assertions than the history textbooks, which are much more saturated ideologically.

These meta-narratives play a negative indirect role when speaking of social integration of youth from different cultural groups in Georgia. They function as knowledge with ultimate truth and actively exclude other points of view which are or can be the cornerstones for other cultural groups' world views. This process is an active part of the production of common knowledge by the educational system, which hinders the process of social integration of cultural groups other than ethnically Georgian Orthodox Christians. Alternative viewpoints are *a priori* delegitimized as untrue or as much less valuable compared to the 'ultimate truth' integrated in common knowledge.

As a final sum-up of the study, we can state that due to the following *push factors* non-Georgian Muslim youth, living in rural settlements, become the most vulnerable to VE in Georgia:

- (a) living in HHs with poor economic status;
- (b) facing significantly limited employment opportunities;
- (c) feeling distrust towards local government institutions while recognizing the value of the state authorities;
- (d) having limited involvement in public civic activities and an inclination to religious fundamentalism;
- (e) experiencing ethnic and religious discriminatory practices; and
- (f) feeling oppressed by mainstream Georgian nationalistic narratives at schools.

In addition to the factors mentioned above, there are additional *pull factors* that can be named in the case of Pankisi Gorge youth:

- (g) Strong social bonds inside the small community, which is both an ethnic and religious minority in Georgia, that leaves space for empathy in youth towards their radicalized peers.
- (h) Complex perception of the decision of the radicalized peers to leave the Gorge for Syria, which is related to: (1) strong social bonds that prevent unambiguously denouncing the radicalized peers; and (2) the lack of self-realization opportunities that lead to a perception that success in bad deeds still counts as success.
- (i) Successful attempts from the widespread VE propaganda in the Gorge to spread their image as liberators of Muslims.

## Introduction

This is a synthesis report for a research project implemented by the Institute of Social Studies and Analysis (ISSA) in the framework of Hedayah's "Strive Global Program" funded by the EU. The research project consisted of three methodological approaches:

- Qualitative research (focus group discussions), which studied the topics of social integration and alienation amongst Muslim youth, as well as the main social issues amongst youth in general;
- Quantitative survey, which was focused on the value orientation, social mobility and elements of everyday life of youth groups;
- Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which studied the discourses produced by school textbooks and the production of social order by these discourses.

These topics were analysed in connection with vulnerability towards violent extremism and the potential (negative or positive) influence they have on the latter.

### General context

There have been several infamous individuals from the Georgian Muslim community recruited by ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) and involved in their terrorist activities. Abu Omar al-Shishani, Ahmad al-Gurji, and Hamzat Borchashvili are a few examples of Georgian-born ISIS members who were covered by Georgian and foreign media on several occasions. In addition, there were figures like Akhmed Chatayev (alleged mastermind of Ataturk airport bombing, killed during a counterterrorist operation in Tbilisi) that were closely related to Georgian Muslim communities (Democracy and Freedom Watch, 2017).

The annual report of State Security Service of Georgia (SSG) counted nine cases of investigation into terrorist activities in 2016. Those cases include charges against several citizens of Georgia for attempts to recruit individuals to ISIS; charges (also against citizens of Georgia) for being a member of terrorist group; charges against both Georgian and foreign citizens for propagating violent extremism; and "ideological support of terrorism" both offline or online. In addition, SSG reported 20 foreign citizens identified in "dubious financial activities" and ultimately supporting the financial interests of terrorist organizations. One citizen of Georgia was also arrested and charged for financing terrorism. (State Security Service of Georgia, 2016).

The US Department of State's Country Report on Terrorism reports about 50 to 100 Georgian nationals fighting in terrorist groups: "The Georgian government estimates 50 to 100 Georgian nationals from the Muslim-majority regions of Adjara and the Pankisi Gorge are fighting in Syria and Iraq for either al-Qa'ida affiliates or ISIL." (U.S. Department of State, 2015).



According to the national census of 2014, 10.7% of Georgia's population is Muslim. (GEOSTAT, 2016). This broad community comprises both ethnic Georgians and non-Georgians<sup>1</sup>. Geographical location puts Georgia not far from the Middle East and the influence of ongoing crises and political cataclysms in Syria and Iraq on the Georgian Muslim community is noticeable. In addition, Georgia is sometimes used as a transit hub for terrorists travelling from the Muslim republics of the Russian Federation to Turkey and/or Syria. SSG reported that 750 foreign citizens were denied entry on the basis of suspicion of terrorist affiliations and 1,500 monitored for the same reason in 2016. The Security Service monitored 1,286 persons according to the 2015 annual report, 1,014 were denied entry into the country and 40 were stopped from leaving it. (State Security Service of Georgia, 2016).

Both the Department of State and the SSG reported the use of online platforms for spreading ISIS propaganda. As an example, in 2015 a Georgian Word Press blog was created, which was actively publishing ISIS propaganda materials. The blog was later taken down by the Georgian intelligence services. (Democracy and Freedom Watch, 2015). Another example was a video message of four Georgian ISIS members to Georgians, in which they were calling for Georgian Muslims to join "the Caliphate". (Civil.ge, 2015).

The influence of extremist propaganda is also revealed by data from the Institute of Social Studies and Analysis (ISSA) collected in September 2016 while conducting a survey of needs and preferences of young people living in Pankisi Gorge, a region mostly populated with Kists. (ISSA, 2016)<sup>2</sup>. The results showed that only 40% of youth in Pankisi Gorge considered their peers' decision to go to Syria (to join the 'Jihad') unambiguously negative. 13.8% judged it as more negative than positive; 4.9% as more positive than negative; 5.9% as unambiguously positive. 26% were neutral about the topic and 9.4% stated that they did not have an answer.

Even though external extremist propaganda from ISIS in Georgia is recognized by both state and society, there has not been research commissioned to study Georgian youth's vulnerability towards violent extremism, and no research-based strategies have been planned to reduce vulnerability and the influence of extremist propaganda on certain groups. In terms of decreasing vulnerability towards VE, the proposed study will help make the first step in developing new intervention strategies in local Muslim communities (for example, the Pankisi valley and mountainous regions of Adjara), members of which are targeted by recruiters from extremist organizations. In addition to the topics directly linked to VE, the study provides valuable insight on the social context these communities and their young members are surrounded – how social exclusion, alienation and cases of discrimination push away the young Muslims desiring to integrate into the Georgian society. In this way, the study helps to put in contexts the issue of vulnerability towards VE and outline various social barriers met in society by youth in Georgia.

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<sup>1</sup>The major non-Georgian Muslim ethnic group in Georgia is Azeri, 233 thousand (6.3% of Georgia's population) live in Georgia according to attest census of National Statistics Office of Georgia. Another generally Muslim ethnic group are Kists, community of 5,7 thousand people.

<sup>2</sup>Client of this study was former Ministry of Sports and Youth in Georgia.

## Research Methodology for Qualitative Study

The aim of the qualitative study was to identify causes of vulnerability towards violent extremism amongst youth by providing empirical evidence. The particular issues of interest for the qualitative study were the following:

1. What influence do informal religious institutions and traditions have in establishing social and cultural barriers of socialization for some youth groups?
2. Is there a lack of common means of communication (including language), which is needed for social interaction in Georgia, and if so, how does this lack affect the level of social integration amongst youth?
3. What are the reasons and effects of economic instability of Georgian youth?
4. How does unemployment shape the lifestyle of young people who are affected by this instability?
5. What is young individuals' assessment of their self-realization in the Georgian economic system and what are the effects of frustration in those young people who have low expectations/negative experience?
6. What are the biggest causes of inflexibility in the labor market from the viewpoint of youth?

The qualitative methods used comprised of 5 expert interviews and 13 focus groups. In-depth expert interviews were used to gather all important information to determine the contexts (political, cultural, historical, etc.) of the main issues from individuals with high levels of competence. The duration of the in-depth interviews was approximately 60 minutes. Focus groups were conducted with representatives of youth (15-29 age groups) and teachers of secondary and boarding schools. They were held in different parts of Georgia. In total, 13 focus groups were conducted in four regions of Georgia: Tbilisi (Capital), Kakheti (East Georgia), Adjara (South-West Georgia), Kvemo Kartli (South-East Georgia). The selection of these regions was based on the fact that Adjara is highly populated with ethnically Georgian Muslims, whereas Kakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions are represented by ethnically non-Georgian Muslims (Kists and Azeri). As for the capital, Tbilisi, ethnic Georgians and non-Muslim students of the Christian boarding school were involved. Each focus group consisted on average of 6-8 members. The average duration of each focus group was 1.5 hours. For discussions with youth (15-29 age group), representatives of three target groups were invited to participate:

1. Ethnically non-Georgian Muslim Youth;
2. Ethnically Georgian non-Muslim (Christian) Youth;
3. Students of Faith-based Boarding Schools (Mainly Muslims though Christians as well).

**Table #1:** Distribution of focus groups by regions, target group types and participants' sex

Region	Boarding School Students (15-18)	Youth (18-29)	Teachers
Kakheti		5 focus groups (2 male, 2 female, one mixed)	1
Kvemo Kartli	2 focus groups (both male)		
Tbilisi	1 focus group (mixed)		
Adjara	2 focus groups (1 female, 1 male)	1 focus group (mixed)	1

The selection of participants for in-depth interviews and focus groups took place through the application of various techniques: certain criteria have been used for choosing focus group participants – these criteria were based on different socio-demographic characteristics (sex, age, religion, education, etc.). As to the selection of experts for in-depth interviews, the snowballing method, scientific literature, desk-review, etc. were used.

The research instruments for focus groups and in-depth interviews were the guidelines, composed of around 15-20 questions. Guidelines were used by a moderator/interviewer as a guiding prompt. It meant that the moderator/interviewer had the possibility to be flexible in leading the discussion/in-depth interview, taking into consideration some developing trends and modifying the guideline in terms of the context. Interviewers (for in-depth interviews) and moderators (for group discussions) were selected using the criterion: 'Interviewer/moderator as co-expert'. In-depth interviews were audio recorded and group discussions were video recorded. The transcripts of the audio and video material were formalized through labeling and ordering procedures. The formalized material was analyzed through thematic narrative analysis.

## Research Methodology for Quantitative Study

A survey was used for two purposes. First, to measure socio-economic parameters and obtain more general data on aspects of young people's everyday life: the primary social groups they belong to and receive social and emotional support; the most popular information sources used by the target groups; their places of religious practice; and specifics of daily routine. Secondly - to analyze social inclusion and young people's involvement in different social and political practices, their value orientations, their stances on different types of discrimination and their experience of it.

The survey was large-scale, based on a detailed survey questionnaire and it involved standardized face-to-face interviews with a stratified-clustered probability sample of **1,055 respondents**.

Target groups of the survey were: a) youth in general (18-29 age group, n=430); b) public school students (15-17 age group, n=430); and c) faith-based boarding school students (15-17 age group, n=196).

The sample design was a multi-stage cluster sampling with preliminary stratification. Sample sizes for youth of the 18-29 age group plus the public school students (15-17 age group) were defined according to the data from National Statistics Office of Georgia. Namely, the sample of the 15-17 age group students was based on the distribution of the total number of public school students (IX-XII grades) among the regions of Georgia. As to the sample of youth of 18-29 age group, its basis was a distribution of this category of youth among regions within the general population of Georgia. Sample sizes of each mentioned group are given in Table #2:

**Table #2**

Target groups	N. of interviews	Margins of error, with 95% of reliability
<i>Disaggregated by age groups:</i>		
18-29 age group	430	4.7%
Students of public schools (15-17 age group)	430	4.7%
<i>Disaggregated by sex:</i>		
Male	430	4.7%
Female	430	4.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>860</b>	<b>3.3%</b>

To develop the sample of students of faith-based schools, the database provided by NGO 'Partnership for Children' was used. Distribution of the faith-based boarding school students by regions is given below:

**Table #3**

Region	Male	Female	Total
Adjara	103	13	116
Tbilisi	26	16	42
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	11	2	13
Samegrelo	8	2	10
Samtskhe-Javakheti	6	0	6
Kvemo Kartli	8	0	8
Total	162	33	195

As for the data analysis, for the first stage, open-ended questions were coded and inserted into the data framework. Then electronic data were cleaned, weighted and processed using SPSS software. Data cleaning comprised three processes: data checking and error detection; data validation; and error correction.

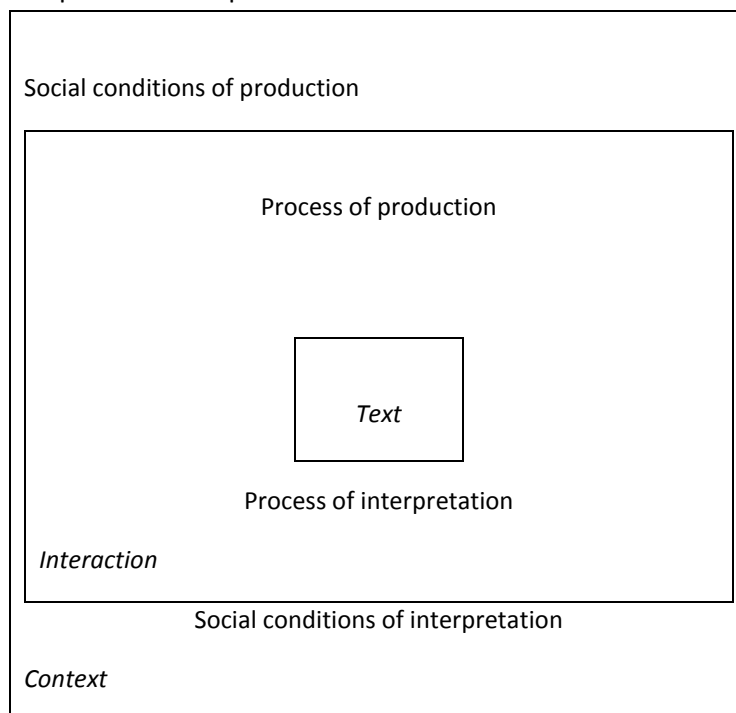
Survey data were processed and analyzed through SPSS application, on the basis of proven methods of data interpretation: distribution of frequencies, central tendencies, cross-tabulations and correlation analysis.

## Methodological Framework for Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was the approach used in the analysis of the discourse of school textbooks. As one of its founders, Teun Van Dijk notes, CDA differs from other studies of discourse in its orientation/focus on the abuse of social power and on how domination and inequality are implemented and reproduced in social and political contexts via text and speech. In such conditions, CDA takes a clear position and attempts to contribute to the eradication of inequality by studying it (Dijk, 2008).

CDA methodology is based on two principles: the social nature of language; and social order, which has an impact on discursive practices. Another founder and theoretician of CDA, Norman Fairclough, notes that discourse is a language seen in a particular way. This peculiarity is its engagement and participation in social processes and social life - discourse is a relational part of language. The social nature of language implies that when people speak, write or read they do so in socially determined ways and all of this has a social effect. Fairclough notes that even when a person is in a situation where s/he regards him/herself as 'excluded' as possible, s/he still uses language (for both thinking and speaking) as per the social conventions (Fairclough, 2015).

The main goal of our analysis is to reveal and analyse various types of "discursive order" in school textbooks; in other words, to reveal what kind of social order or dominant consensus it facilitates and, in particular, to what extent it supports equality and a means to integration in the social space or whether it excludes various groups. In order to accomplish the above, the analysis refers to Fairclough's methodological framework, which includes three major processes – descriptive, interpretative and explanatory. These three processes are presented below:



The three boxes are a representation of three levels of analysis – the smallest box represents the descriptive process/stage, the box it is enclosed by is the representation of interpretative process and the largest box denotes the explanatory process:

**Descriptive process** implies acting only within the frames of the text as well as formally analysing the text.

**Interpretative process:** As Fairclough notes, the relationship between text and social structure is an indirect, mediated one. *“It is mediated first of all by the discourse which the text is part of, because the values of textual features only become real, socially operative, if they are embedded in social interaction, where texts are produced and interpreted against a background of common-sense assumptions, which give textual features their values.”* (Fairclough, 2015: pp.154-155). Both the production and interpretation of texts are influenced by the resources that the members of these processes possess (Members’ Resources - MR). These resources unite linguistic capacities, self-expression, beliefs, values and knowledge of the members in the interaction. These are used in the production and interpretation of texts. MR and its components are, on the one hand, cognitive as they are all in the mind, but on the other hand, social too, as they are socially generated – their formation is influenced by social relationships.

**Explanatory process** explores the relation between interaction and context – social determinants and conditions for producing and interpreting text as well as the social effect of the interpretation.

Based on Fairclough’s approach, the analysis of the discourse in school textbooks used the following working framework: discourse analysis revealed the transparent or latent meanings of ideological schemes. Hence, the analysis used two approaches towards the texts – the first one concentrated on the possible presence of ideology in the texts. The main scheme of the formal part of the analysis is:

Is an ideology present in the text?  
↓  
How is it expressed?  
↓  
Are the means of the ideology transparent or latent?  
↓  
How do these means modify the structure of the text?

The second approach is concentrated on the content of the text and its main analytical scheme is the following:

What are the main narratives of the text?  
(main discursive practices)  
↓  
What phenomena do these narratives describe?  
↓  
What meaning do the described phenomena have for the ideology?



How are the narratives' interpretations of the phenomena influenced by the presence of the ideology? (Contextualization/textualization)

In addition to the authors already mentioned, our work was guided by Teun Van Dijk's analysis of ideology, Stuart Hall's cultural identity paradigm and Ruth Wodak's national identity discourse construct.

Van Dijk (1998) describes ideological discourse structures in his book "Ideology and Discourse" where he analyses discursive dimensions of ideology and how ideology is expressed in discourse. He outlines 8 structures for this purpose – semantic structure, propositional structure, formal structure, sentence syntax, discourse forms, argumentation, rhetoric and action and interaction. These structures and their elements are useful "variables" for discourse analysis.

One of the key topics of CDA is the construction of national identity and Stuart Hall's paradigm of cultural identity plays a supplemental role for the analysis in this case. Hall himself approaches the issue of identity in a way that adheres to CDA methodology and to the study of discourse in general. Hall notes that the question of *agency* is one of the central questions to shape the concept of identity and "by 'agency' I express no desire whatsoever to return to an unmediated and transparent notion of the subject or identity as the centered author of social practice... I agree with Foucault that what we require here is 'not a theory of the knowing subject, but rather a theory of discursive practice' (Hall, 1996). Ruth Wodak et al. (2009) implements this discursive approach towards the concept of identity in her book "The Discursive Construction of National Identity" where she integrates Hall's conceptual scheme into the CDA framework.

## Main Findings of the Study

### 1. Georgian Youth: Economic Parameters and Employment

The economic situation of the majority of respondents' families in the quantitative survey, according to their self-evaluation, is average ('enough to satisfy basic requirements of the family' - 72.1%). More than a fifth of the respondents' families, according to their subjective perception, live in a worse economic situation, one which is below average. The respondents were asked about the total monthly income of their families. More than a third lived in a family with a monthly income of 501-1000 GEL (about 170-345 EURO), while approximately one third lived in families with an income of less than 500 GEL (about 170 EURO). Taking into consideration that monthly subsistence minimum for households in Georgia is approximately 400 GEL (about 135 EURO),<sup>3</sup> the majority (more than 65%) of interviewed families either live in poverty or slightly above the poverty line. It should be noted that families of boarding school students are more vulnerable in terms of economic conditions than the other two groups (families of

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<sup>3</sup>Data from National Statistics Office of Georgia. [www.geostat.ge](http://www.geostat.ge)

public school students; families of youth over 18): almost half of the families of boarding school students have monthly income of less than 500 GEL (about 170 EURO).

In this particular study, only 42.7% of the youth in the 18-29 age group were employed (including self-employed). The largest sector is the private sector, where almost a fifth of the youth are employed (19.8%). Almost half of the employed youth (49%) work more than the norm established by the Labour Code of Georgia, which is 8 hours daily. 77.7% of the respondents in employment think that they deserve a better job than what they have at the moment; 58.8% of them think that their job does not give them an opportunity to fully realize their potential. In total, 83.6% of the respondents think that the labour market in Georgia is unfair.

According to both the Census of Georgia 2014 and the survey data, more than a half of the youth between ages 18 and 29 are unemployed<sup>4</sup>. The main problem with the labor market as seen from the point of view of young people is unfair hiring practices - most vacancies have unrealistic demands and connections and 'knowing important people' is given more of a priority in hiring decisions than the qualifications of a candidate. There is also a serious lack of vocational education opportunities to receive some practical skills and increase chances for employment.

**Table #1.1: Statements about labor market**

#	Statement:	Disagree	Agree	N
1	If you want to be successful, then you need to know important people	31.6%	68.4%	1049
2	It is impossible to have a good job if you do not know important people	46.7%	53.3%	1049
3	It is impossible to have a good job if you have no economic resources	51.5%	48.5%	1035

As noted above, these problems are universal across various youth groups, but there are additional obstacles for employment which are significant amongst the youth from Muslim communities:

First, there are cultural norms that try to suppress women's career interests and employment opportunities and stand in the way of female Muslim youth. Secondly, in some Muslim communities, there is a strong feeling that they are socially isolated and different forms of alienation make it more difficult to succeed in the labor market. Thirdly, one of the most important qualitative study findings is that perception of employment is somewhat different in urban areas (Batumi and Akhmeta) than in rural settlements (Karajala and Pankisi Gorge). In Akhmeta and Batumi participants of the study had higher expectations with regard to employment – salary, field of work, working conditions, etc. They wanted to have successful careers. However, there was a lack of such vision in Karajala and Pankisi Gorge. They perceived becoming employed a success in itself. This indicates that there are much lower expectations in terms of career opportunities in these communities.

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<sup>4</sup>There are only 47.6% of youth in 20-29 age group who are employed per 2014 census data <http://census.ge/ge/results/census1/economic>



## 2. Social Environment of Young People

The analysis of social environmental issues shows that generally, emotional relationships between young people and their family members are strong and even though some may feel detached from their family, there is an emotional exchange for the majority of them.

Other areas examined within the quantitative survey were the physical and infrastructural components of the social environment in which the youth live. The boarding school students were more likely to assess these components positively compared to the other target groups. The majority of the components (neighborhood, infrastructure, safety etc.) were assessed more positively on a 5-point scale. One component that stands out is public recreational, cultural and sports centers, with a mean score of 3.2. This component concerns the idea of positive social spaces, which emerged in the qualitative study.

One of the biggest issues that the Muslim youth themselves indicated was the lack of social spaces in Muslim communities living in rural settlements; a lack of spaces that can be used for social interaction, sports activities and cultural or educational events. For example, Keto<sup>5</sup> (aged 28, married, unemployed) said that there are no recreational or entertainment places for her child in Pankisi. *'When I took her/him to Akhmeta he/she was so excited. We have nothing here.'* Other respondents noted that the only exciting activities were excursions around Georgia. It became evident at the male focus group in Pankisi that what they needed most is a gym and social spaces.

Most young people in the village are unemployed. They do physical exercises, because there is no other entertainment there. [...] It would be possible to do something for young people's entertainment. . . like having coffee together. Unfortunately, there are no things like this. We, friends, just stroll in the street and stand there doing nothing.

*Nika, aged 20, single, unemployed.*

The point that these participants outlined in the discussions is that the poorly developed (or underdeveloped) physical space and absence of basic infrastructure in their settlements limits their opportunity to engage in different social activities or to organize them. Availability of such spaces is a precondition for the population's full integration into the community, whereas their nonexistence may create additional obstacles. "Strolling in the street and doing nothing" as Nika expressed it, can be a factor for increasing vulnerability towards VE as "marginality also translates into restless young people having too much time on their hands, and the resulting boredom can benefit VE organizations. Global Jihadist movements have shown themselves able to exploit the attraction of angry youth to risky behavior that provide an escape from dreary lives." (Development Assistance and Counter-Extremism: A Guide to Programming, 2009).

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<sup>5</sup> All names of focus group participants in the report are fictional in order to keep confidentiality.

### 3. Role of Religion

As has already been mentioned, religion can appear as a potential driver of violent extremism since the role and the function of religious institutions and leaders can be seen in sanctifying violent acts and providing the justification for mobilization in extremist groups. However, religion usually interacts with a wide range of different factors and causality is not linear.

The quantitative study of the role of religion in everyday life of youth shows that an overwhelming majority believe in God (93.8%) and on a 10-point scale, the importance of God in their life is assessed with a Mean of 9.15. However, the main religious activities like praying, attending religious ceremonies, confessions and Lent are not practiced regularly by the majority of young people.

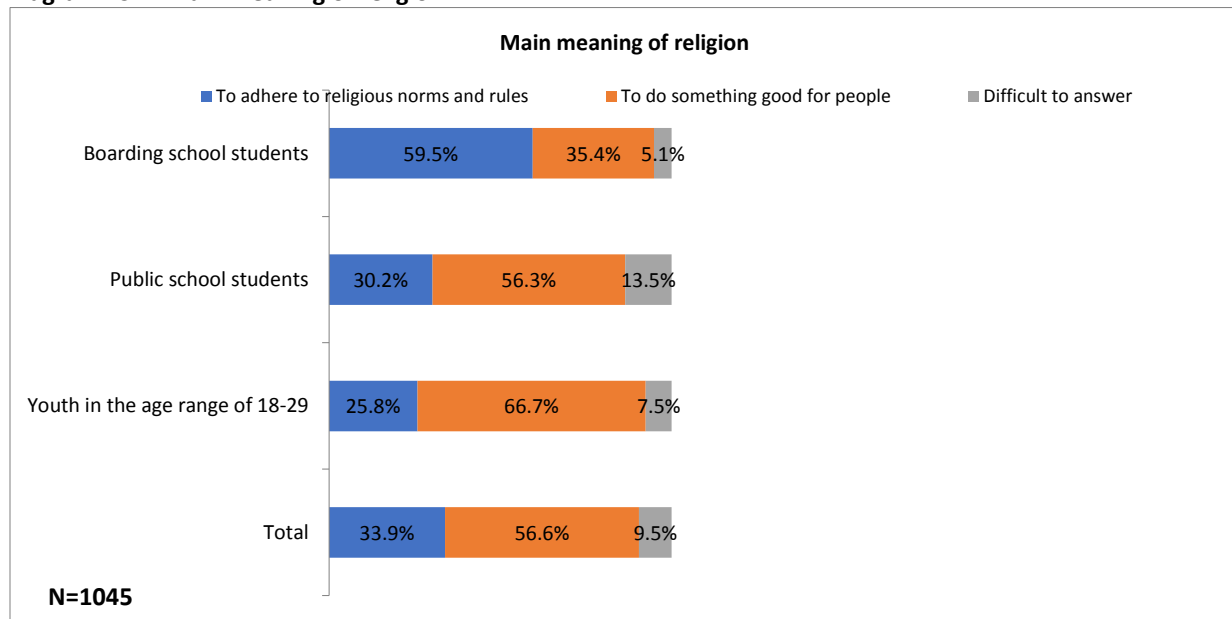
In addition, the survey measured respondents' attitudes towards the meaning and function of religion. In this regard, certain questions from the World Value Survey instrument were used. (World Value Survey, 1981-84). Namely, the meaning of religion has had two alternatives (a. *"To adhere the religious norms and rules"* and b. *"To do something good for people"*); On the other hand, the function of religion also implies two statements (a. *"To grant meaning to the otherworldly life"* and b. *"To grant meaning to the worldly life"*).

Survey results showed that religiousness is seen more as a moral "tool" for good deeds for others than following certain rules, and religion's main function is worldly rather than otherworldly.

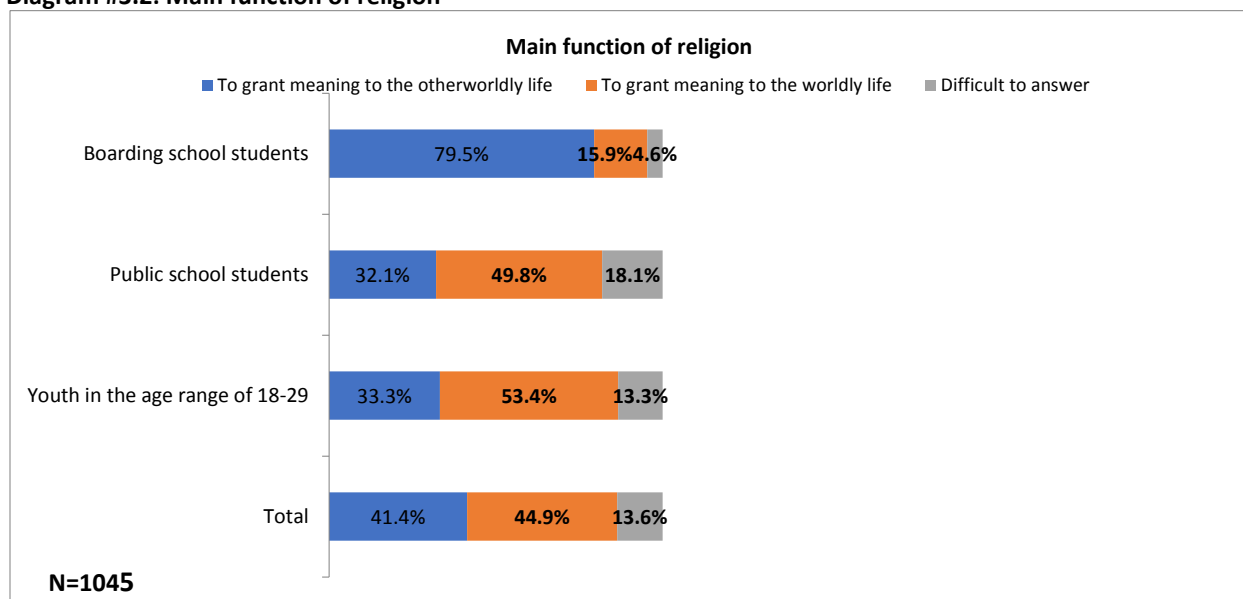
As for the boarding school students, both the frequency of religious practice and the view about its role are different from the other target groups. For religious boarding school students, religion plays a much more important role in their everyday lives. The majority of them practice religion on a daily basis by praying and attending religious ceremonies and the percentage of boarding school students who have a religious leader and interact with the latter is ten times higher (68%) than other target groups (6%).

The meaning of religion is also different for boarding school students: they see it as adhering to religious rules and the main function of religion as giving a meaning to the afterlife. It is interesting that it was more difficult for the other two target group members to choose between dichotomous statements that were given to them about the function of religion (giving a meaning to otherworldly life versus worldly life). More than 18% of the public-school students and more than 13% of youth over 18 had difficulty in choosing between these statements. This figure was less than 5% in the case of boarding school students.

**Diagram #3.1: Main meaning of religion**



**Diagram #3.2: Main function of religion**



#### 4. Engagement in Social and Political Life

The quantitative study was oriented towards social and political activities when discussing social inclusion and the engagement of young people. The data show that almost 9 out of 10 respondents were not involved in activities such as raising issues with different institutions, taking part in political meetings or demonstrations, and the like. This data does not significantly differ in terms of groups with different levels of education and gender.

**Table #4.1: Activities undertaken during the last 12 months**

Activities undertaken during the last 12 months	Positive response	Negative response	N*
Attended public meetings/discussions on various topics	20.9%	79.1%	432
Participated in political meetings/demonstrations	9.3%	90.7%	432
Participated in protest demonstration (strike, peaceful protest, boycott, etc.)	11.1%	88.9%	433
Addressed local government with regard to a specific topic	11.6%	88.4%	432
Addressed central government with regard to a specific topic	8.1%	91.9%	432
Addressed local community leaders with regard to a specific topic	8.9%	91.1%	432
Addressed non-governmental (local or international) organizations with regard to a specific topic	7.7%	92.3%	432

\* The questions regarding activities undertaken during the last 12 months were asked only to the respondents over 18 years of age.

However, when comparing Muslim youth to Orthodox Christians, it turns out that Muslims are more likely to appeal to local government on different issues.

**Table #4.2: Addressed local government regarding a specific topic**

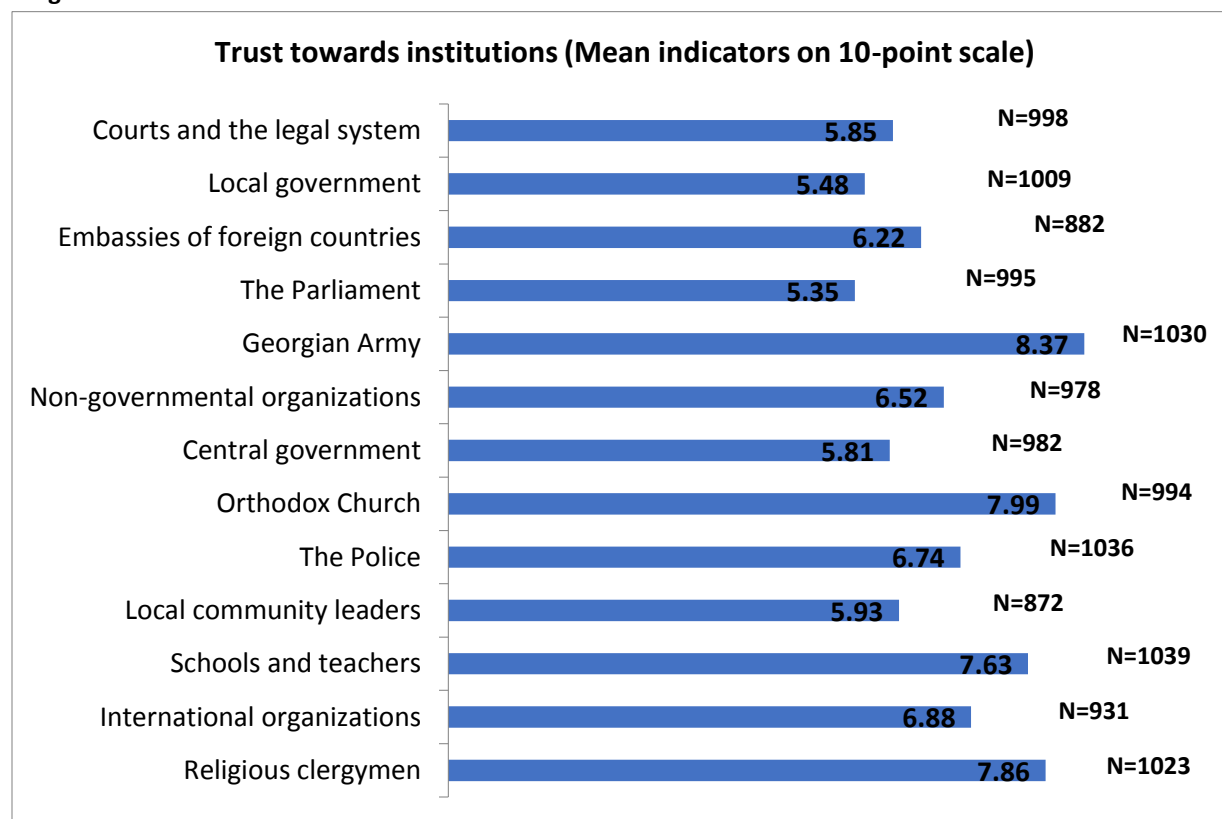
Addressed local government regarding a specific topic	Orthodox		Muslim	
	N	%	N	%
Positive response	40	10.4%	10	23.1%
Negative response	341	89.6%	32	76.9%
$\chi^2(1)=6.431, p<0.01$ ( $\varphi=-.123$ )				

Muslim youth see local government as the most relevant institution with whom to raise their concerns.

## 5. Trust towards Institutions

In the quantitative study, respondents assessed the level of trust they have towards various institutions. According to the Mean data, out of the proposed institutions the respondents trust most the Georgian Army (Mean = 8.37, on a 10-point scale; standard deviation – 2.01), the Georgian Orthodox Church (Mean = 7.99; standard deviation – 2.399), and the clergy (Mean = 7.86; standard deviation – 2.4). The least trust is expressed by the respondents towards the Parliament of Georgia (Mean = 5.35; standard variation – 2.415) and the local government (Mean = 5.48; standard deviation – 2.326).

**Diagram #5.1: Trust towards institutions**



It was revealed that the Georgian Army is most trusted by the boarding school students (91.3%); the second largest group in terms of trusting the Army is the group of public school students (73.3%) and the last group is the group of youth in the age range of 18–29 (68.4%). (*The correlation is reliable:  $\chi^2(4) = 40.510$ ,  $p < 0.01$* )

Trust towards clergy also differs according to the groups of respondents. It should be noted that a significantly higher percentage of the boarding school students trust clergy (87.2%) as compared to the public school students (61.9%) and youth in the age range of 18–29 (55.5%). (*The correlation is reliable:  $\chi^2(4) = 66.145$ ,  $p < 0.01$* )

Comparison of the data according to the two biggest religious affiliations (represented in the sample) shows that, on average, Muslims, when compared to the Orthodox Christians, have more trust towards absolutely all institutions except for the Orthodox Church. The biggest difference is in the case of central government and the police – Muslims youths’ trust towards central government has a score of 7.07, compared to 5.47 in Orthodox Christian respondents (1.6 points differential). As for trust towards the police, there is a 1.58 points differential (8.03 – Muslims, 6.45 – Orthodox Christians).

**Table #5.1: Trust towards institutions (10-point scale)**

		Courts and the legal system	Local government	Embassies of foreign countries	The Parliament	Georgian Army	NGOs’	Central government	Georgian Orthodox Church	The police	Local community leaders	Schools and teachers	International organizations	Clergy
<b>Orthodox Christian</b>	Mean	5.63	5.19	6.13	5.07	8.18	6.38	5.47	8.27	6.45	5.6	7.3	6.65	7.65
	N	777	779	689	773	797	756	757	803	801	654	803	722	792
	Std. Deviation	2.262	2.255	2.199	2.347	2.052	2.368	2.313	2.222	2.495	2.359	2.254	2.152	2.375
<b>Muslim</b>	Mean	6.76	6.66	6.56	6.62	9.13	7.1	7.07	6.82	8.03	7.18	8.91	7.71	8.85
	N	195	203	170	196	206	195	199	165	208	194	208	185	206
	Std. Deviation	2.286	2.128	2.222	2.26	1.563	2.119	2.105	2.655	2.213	2.285	1.565	2.138	2.02
<b>Total</b>	Mean	5.86	5.49	6.22	5.38	8.38	6.52	5.81	8.02	6.78	5.96	7.63	6.87	7.9
	N	972	982	858	969	1003	951	955	968	1009	847	1011	907	997
	Std. Deviation	2.31	2.307	2.209	2.41	1.998	2.336	2.361	2.363	2.522	2.434	2.228	2.19	2.356

\*Independent samples tests show that the difference between groups is significant in case of every item

## 6. Passive Engagement of the Local and Central Governments

In the qualitative study, respondents talked about the role of authorities in finding solutions to the regions’ and communities’ problems. According to the participants of the focus groups, local government becomes active right before elections in order to recruit more votes and stay in power. Local government’s passiveness was especially emphasized by respondents from the village of Karajala, populated by non-Georgian Muslim population. They said that no one thinks about their village and expressed their disappointment with the government. Respondents additionally recalled the problems with the so-called targeted social assistance program (poverty-based cash allowance), which also emphasized neglect on the part of the government since really vulnerable HHs are left without assistance. According to the Karajala focus group members the situation in their village had not changed and all the longstanding problems remained in place. Despite being less prominent compared to Karajala, similar perceptions of stagnation were also observed in other non-Muslim communities (e.g. Akhmeta).

Respondents talked about the patrol police and safety in their communities. Although the patrol police work to ensure security, respondents believed that they treated the population in a discriminatory

manner. One of the examples is unequal treatments from the police in similar situations, that some respondents believe is explained by social and economic status:

You know what? They discriminate people. Those who are closer [to them], those who have 'money' are better respected. Those who are poor [...] are told 'Why are you like this? Have you smoked something? Are you drunk?' Such things also happen. Not everyone is equally treated. Those who have more, have no problems. Some people are not told anything, but someone not using a safety belt is immediately fined. [...] The law should be the same for everyone, right? This is what I am telling you. You can't do like that. Neither patrol police nor others, who are the haves, never get into trouble, but those who are poor, who are the 'have nots' are stopped [...] and fined.

Tengo, aged 21, unemployed, single.

Another issue discussed was unequal treatment of the population by central and local governments. Respondents from Karajala said that the local government used the financial resources allocated for the district/village in an inefficient way. The same topic was discussed in Akhmeta. However, what the Akhmeta respondents considered unfair was the authorities' preferential treatment of the Pankisi Gorge compared to their own region. Eteri (23-year-old student, single and unemployed) noted that Pankisi enjoyed free services, like healthcare, education, English and computer classes *'[which] is unusual for us*. They also emphasized that the authorities visited Pankisi more often, whereas no such activities were available in Akhmeta. Another focus group member Koba (aged 25, single and unemployed) added the following: *There are 'many families who are deprived of what they [Pankisi George population] have.'*

Group discussions showed that the interviewees feel more or less safe and secure; however, they have a feeling that justice is not guaranteed. For example, respondents said that the patrol police treat community members in a different way, they are especially hostile to those who they do not know (have no connections) or who have no social and/or economic capital.

Attitudes to the authorities show, to a certain extent, that the Muslim population in Karajala believes that the village has been "abandoned" by the authorities. The most interesting finding is that the focus group members associated "abandonment" with their ethnic origin. This can be illustrated by a focus group member's words: *"Our village is a poor village. Everyone lives well in other regions except us. There are Georgians all around us."* (Kakha, aged 25, single, employed). Kakha links "living well" with the regions populated with ethnic Georgians. This means that the young people interviewed in Karajala perceive ethnic discrimination beyond the economic situation in the village/community.

## Discussion

The analysis of the data gathered by both quantitative and qualitative surveys comes to an interesting conclusion that even though generally Muslim youth have a higher trust towards the main state institutions, the qualitative study shows that they are dissatisfied with the involvement of the representatives of the central and local governments in the development of their communities. The qualitative study participants see themselves as ignored by the state, despite the data indicating that they are more active in terms of raising specific issues with local government. So, perversely, local government

is perceived as the relevant institution for solving the problems that the Muslim youth face (an indication that there is no general distrust towards government bodies *per se*), but a lack of trust that government will actually deliver what is expected of it). This leads to a suggestion that even though there is willingness from the Muslim youth to engage in social and political life, there may be a certain frustration in terms of their expectations of both the local and state government bodies.

The USAID guide, “Development Assistance and Counter-Extremism” (2009) sees poor governance as one of the push factors for violent extremism (VE): *“Poorly governed spaces also may create passive or active support for violent extremists (VEs) among communities that feel ignored by the government. Where no government agency is able to provide for security and the rule of law, VEs may be able to impose their own order, and they may be able to extract money, provisions or recruits from the population. From Colombia to Afghanistan, the lack of an effective government presence has allowed insurgents to establish bases”*. (Guilain Denoeux, 2009).

In this case, the USAID guide uses term “poor governance” to describe a situation where there is a serious issue of establishing the law or providing basic government services. The same term cannot be used to interpret the narratives from the current qualitative study, as it shows that the conditions in these communities are not that severe. However, judging by the discussions about the lack of employment opportunities and positive social spaces on the local level and unwillingness from the government to engage more actively in addressing the most important issues, youth in Muslim communities assess their local governments as ineffective.

The perception of governance as ineffective does not mean the same level of risk (as in the case of “poor governance”) of violent extremist groups filling the voids in social and political life, but it still negatively affects the resistance against it.

## 7. The Issue of Social Isolation of Muslim Youth

In addition to analysing the issues related to local Muslim communities’ affection by and struggle against VE groups and their influence, it is also important to study the social environment that surrounds these communities. This approach is relevant not merely to outline the distinctions based on the cultural identities (basis of in-group and out-group perspectives) present in these communities, but because of these differences being geographical as well, a condition adding a new dimension to the subject – Muslim communities in general (as well as those affected by the VE propaganda) are rural settlements mostly located remotely from biggest Urban centres of Georgia. Because of low infrastructural development and absence of solid economic relations with other geographical regions, these rural areas become remote and isolated not only in a geographical sense, but economically and culturally as well, sustaining themselves with almost solely agricultural production. This isolation on the other hand, eventually translates into absence from public space, economic and cultural interactions and reinforces the cultural alienation process that is demonstrated in the narratives of the study participants about their experience of being discriminated outside their communities based on their religious or ethnic identity.



On the other hand, these narratives also outline the suppression of youth's agency over their everyday life and their aspirations by the predominant cultural norms, gender inequality being the biggest issue in this term.

The next three sections analyse the cases of ethnic, religious and gender discriminations accordingly, three main topics related to the alienation process based on the focus group discussion results. They give valuable insight about the perception of youth both inside and outside their own communities and how it affects their lives. It also shows that there is a cultural gap between the society that is predominantly Orthodox Christian and the Muslim minorities inside this society. This gap isolates Muslim youth, physical and social detaching from the rest of the society, the condition exploited by the VE groups: Social exclusion, isolation and stigmatization/false perceptions are all important push factors for VE recruitment outlined in the socioeconomic drivers and societal discrimination by USAID (Development Assistance and Counter-Extremism: A Guide to Programming, 2009). Individuals who feel marginalized, discriminated against, or alienated from the rest of the society are easier targets for the VE groups, who promise new group identities, empowerment of individuals and opportunities to fulfill their aspirations.

## 7.1 Ethnic Discrimination

As the quantitative study has revealed, almost one third of the respondents thought that ethnic discrimination is not an issue in Georgia at all and the majority stated that there are no negative stereotypes present in relation to Kists (62.1% of the respondents), Azeri (61.3%), Armenians (60.6%) and other ethnic minorities (55.3%) living in Georgia.

On the other hand, ethnic minority focus group participants talked about ethnic and cultural differences between themselves and Georgians that provide examples of ethnic discrimination. Georgian participants revealed a negative attitude towards Turks. The majority noted that *"Turks had more rights in Georgia"* (Gega, aged 21, unemployed, single).

Kutaisi Street has already become Turkey Street. Turks have more rights than Georgian children. When they hit a Georgian person and the police arrives, they just neutralize the situation. They say nothing to the Turk. They are more privileged and have more defenders than Georgians [...] The Georgian police often beats Georgians, but they have never beaten a single Turk.

Irakli, single, employed  
Batumi

A group of ethnic Georgian participants in Akhmeta identified the same problem in relation to Kists. Focus group participants talked about a preferential treatment of the Pankisi Gorge by the local and central government and that Kists enjoy certain privileges and are in a better condition than the ethnic Georgians living in Akhmeta. *"They use free hospital services, but we don't. Education is also free. They get everything free. The ministers visit Pankisi more often. We only learn about that after we watch reports."* (Eteri, aged 23, unemployed, single).

The participants also said that the Kist population is not tolerant towards ethnic Georgians. Gvantsa (aged 25, unemployed, single) said that Kists *“are somewhat insolent”* and she had a negative attitude to marriages between Kists and Georgians. Overall, Georgian youngsters in Akhmeta did not show a positive attitude to the Pankisi population.

As for the young people and teachers interviewed in the Pankisi Gorge, they said that the relationship between the Akhmeta and Pankisi populations is traditionally tense and misbalanced. For example, Eka, teacher, ethnic Georgian said that *“The barriers still exist. They are genetic, imbedded in the genetic code.”* Eka’s comment showed that ethnic difference is a barrier for a certain part of the population.

Pankisi focus group members (Muslims) talked about linguistic barriers. For Kist schoolchildren and applicants to the institutions of higher education, Georgian is a second language. According to Mariam (teacher) the most difficult point is that their Georgian language school program is focused on spoken language, but national entrance exams are held in Georgian and the school program does not provide enough academic knowledge for that purpose. For this reason, Kists are not able to enter institutions for higher education. This means that the educational system creates barriers for their integration.

Focus group participants from Pankisi Gorge (i.e. ethnic Kists) facing barriers to full inclusion into social and economic processes, emphasized the strength of their community. Soso (single, aged 22, unemployed) said that friendship, loyalty and mutual support are stronger in Pankisi Gorge. Other participants emphasized the importance of family relationships (relationship between mother and children, seniors and juniors). By doing so, they pointed to their priority position which is a kind of strategy to compensate for discrimination, social and economic problems, etc. Another strategy is putting an emphasis on their citizenship. This means that citizenship and identity are important for the young people in the Pankisi Gorge. This could serve as a basis for integration and can be regarded as a kind of evidence of their willingness to participate in social life despite the lack of opportunity to do so.

As for Azeri youngsters from Karajala village, they spoke more often about ethnic than religious discrimination. The participants mostly focused on the fact that ethnic Georgians call them *“Tatars”*, which is a humiliating stigma producing alienation between them and ethnic Georgians:

I, personally, don’t know what *“Tatar”* is. Do you? If someone tells me that I am ‘Tatar’ I will go mad. I have no idea what *“Tatar”* means. If you know, teach me so that we know what *“Tatar”* is. It is not only me. Everyone will go mad if they hear this word. [...] If I am scolded, I won’t get nervous as much as when I hear that someone calls me *“Tatar”*.

Kakha, aged 25, employed, single  
Karajala

The Azeri women interviewed in Karajala spoke relatively less about the barriers and inequality between them and ethnic Georgians. They said that they had not heard about or experienced such problems. However, several participants recalled that they have not been let into the store or have been mistreated (e.g. at a hospital) due to their ethnic origin.

According to the young people of Azeri minorities interviewed in Karajala, the biggest problem is that ethnic Georgians “look down on them” and that they are not perceived as equals. They use several strategies to ‘cope’ with the problem. First of all, similarly to the population in the Pankisi Gorge, they emphasized the characteristics of their own community:

We are not the people who let others oppress us. We are consistent in everything [...] We are good to those who are good to us. If you do something good to me, I will do twice as good to you, but if you do something bad, I will do even worse to you [...] We do what our seniors, mothers and fathers tell us to do. It is our rule and it does not matter whether it is right or wrong.

Tengo, aged 21, unemployed, single  
Karajala

At the same time, Azeri youngsters from the village of Karajala constantly repeated that they are citizens of Georgia and want to live in Georgia, which is their homeland. By doing so, they follow the patriotic narrative, especially when talking about military service. They also said that equality has to be ensured between ethnic Georgians and Azeri and thought of self-isolation from Georgian neighbours as the relevant strategy: Another reason why they needed stadiums and gyms in their village is that they will not have to go to other villages and will avoid conflicts. Otar (aged 28, employed, married): “*We prefer to have a place in our village, like a stadium or gym in order not to have problems.*”

This information provides evidence that young people of Azeri and Chechen ethnic minorities in Pankisi and Karajala experience ethnic discrimination. Sometimes they were victims of negative stereotypes and stigmatization. It has to be noted that the youth in Karajala emphasized only ethnic discrimination, whereas young people in the Pankisi Gorge spoke about both ethnic and religious discrimination.

Evidence of alienation between ethnic Georgians and non-Georgians can be drawn from the quantitative survey as well. The survey instrument asked the youth to assess (on a 5-point scale) these statements: “*Me and x ethnic group have more in common than differences*”. The ethnic groups used in these statements were Georgians, Armenians, Azeri, Turks and Kists:

**Table #8.1: Comparing one-self to different ethnic groups (cross-sectional data of ethnic Georgians and non-Georgians)**

‘Me and ____ have more in common than differences’		Me and Georgians	Me and Armenians	Me and Azeri	Me and Kists	Me and Turks
Ethnic Georgians	Mean	4.71	1.77	1.67	1.54	1.72
	N	924	947	938	907	922
	Std. Deviation	.747	1.103	1.052	.954	1.116
Ethnic non-Georgians	Mean	4.25	2.75	3.79	2.19	2.81
	N	36	36	35	32	35
	Std. Deviation	.929	1.661	1.654	1.632	1.694

The results are statistically significant per independent samples test. As the results illustrate, ethnic non-Georgians find it easier to associate themselves with Georgians, than ethnic Georgians do with other

ethnic groups. Ethnic Georgians find it hard to find similarities with the other ethnic groups in any other cases as well.

## 7.2 Religious Discrimination

Similar to the issues of ethnic discrimination in the quantitative survey, a third of the respondents disregard religious discrimination as a serious issue in Georgia and 46.1% think that there are minor problems regarding religious discrimination. When talking about specific religious groups, it turns out that Jehovah's Witnesses are seen as a religious group with the most negative prejudices against them (42.1%). Second in this list are Muslims, with 34%.

The focus group participants from Adjara region (from the city of Batumi and the Khulo district) who are Muslim Georgians spoke about cases of discrimination by religion in everyday life in public spaces and even in state institutions. Respondents from Khulo noted that high positions in Georgia are never held by Muslims. The teachers said that Georgians and Muslims are differentiated: *"you can often hear the question: Are you Georgian or Muslim?"* (Goderdzi, teacher). Teachers also thought that Muslim students are oppressed in schools, often by teachers who do not grade them fairly, ridicule the students and treat them too harshly. Nugzar (teacher, Khulo) said that they are discriminated against by several teachers, not only in Khulo.

The same views were emphasized by the Muslim students interviewed in Khulo. They said that the oppression of Muslims is clearly seen when the girls are not allowed to wear head scarves at school. When the Muslim community built a minaret in Chela village, it was removed by the Georgian community. *"There are many Christian churches and many clergy in the region, but they can't stand even seeing a Jami there and forbid Muslims to pray loudly. It disturbs Christians, they say."* (Shalva, student, religious boarding school, Khulo). The scarcity of mosques was also noted by Mamuka who said that there are many churches in Batumi, yet there is not enough space for people in the only mosque that is there and the State forbids the construction of another mosque:

*Why are Muslims discriminated from Christians in the country? None of the religions is the state religion in a democratic country. Why shouldn't the Muslim community have a Jami with enough space for praying? And why should financing not be allocated for this purpose?*

*David, student at the religious boarding school  
Khulo*

As for religious discrimination in the Pankisi Gorge, it is mostly related to external symbols which have a religious connotation (like clothes or the beard style of Muslims). Non-acceptance of Muslim external symbols leads to social stigmatization. Discussion about clothes in each given context revealed the existence of negative stereotypes in relation to members of that community.

### 7.3 Gender Inequality Issues

The quantitative study revealed that male respondents were open to the idea of increasing women's participation in the social realm; however, they were less open to the idea of improving women's role in a family. As it turns out, women spend much more time in their families caring about their households, when men spend much more time socializing.

26.3% of the respondents think that gender discrimination is a problem in Georgia. There is an important difference between the data from female and male respondents: 35.2% of women and only 19.2% of men think that gender discrimination is problematic in Georgia. However, only 9.4% of female respondents state that they personally have experienced gender discrimination.

The participants of the group discussions were more explicit about gender discrimination in Georgia. In the target regions, a hierarchical relationship between men and women was evident. This was manifested in some women's accounts that stated that in public spaces they behaved according to their husbands' (or other male members of the family) wills. This is especially the case in Pankisi Gorge and Karajala, both populated by Muslim communities. Women living in villages of Karajala stated that no-one is interested in their future.

According to focus group participants in Muslim communities, it is required for women to be married. Moreover, there are some occasions when women face the problem of early marriage or marriage without the woman's consent/against the woman's will. Quite a lot of participants of the study said that one of the stated problems had happened to them personally. They said that nothing had changed in their communities in terms of early/arranged/forced marriages.

Family is one of the main values and a stable structure for male participants of the study, especially in rural Muslim communities (in the Pankisi Gorge and Karajala), whereas it is a space of hierarchical relationship, repression and unmet needs for women. Therefore, women cannot actualize themselves, neither in the family nor in the public space.

The girls' focus group members from Khulo discussed gender inequality as well. They said that *"Boys and girls are different . . . [...] The man holds a higher position"* (Kato), but the participants did not agree with this condition. *"There are many issues which women are not allowed to discuss and there are always older people or men in front"* (Nino). Nino also said that girls are engaged to be married at an early age, which means inequality, because she is not asked what she thinks. She also recalled the case of her acquaintance, where the daughter was made to leave school, whilst the son was sent abroad to study. Several focus group participants said that men and women are equal today. Some of them thought that the situation had changed in Georgia, which is tangible: Girls are given a chance to pursue education more often, and they are no longer engaged to be married at an early age. Focus group participants held different opinions on the subject. Many still experienced gender inequality and brought relevant examples.

## 8. Social conditions for youth in Pankisi Gorge and discussions about peers who left for Syria

In order to illustrate how the factors and issues discussed above might interplay with radicalization, we will highlight the case study of Pankisi Gorge. Pankisi is a gorge located in Eastern Georgia, in the periphery of Kakheti region. It is mostly inhabited by Kists, an ethnic and religious minority group. The valley is mostly known for the infamous individuals connected to violent extremist groups in Syria. Institute of Social Studies and Analysis (ISSA) conducted 3 focus group discussions (FGDs) with the residents in the scope of the research project.

The total number of fighters who have left Pankisi Gorge for Syria in recent years is a subject of speculation. Some media reports suggest up to 100 individuals, another “several hundred.” (Paposhvili, 2016). The most reliable number though is the report of local community radio, “Radio way”, which reported 26 individuals who have died in the Syrian war. The radio’s website has special reports on each case of death. (Radio Way - Pankisi Community Radio, 2017). 26 people is a significant number considering the fact that there are total of 5,200 Kists left in Georgia (compared to 12,000 reported in earlier years), according to the latest General Population Census of Georgia, 2014. However, media reports suggest that “the count of radicalized Georgian citizens leaving to join foreign terrorist groups continues to decline.” (Dumbadze, 2017). The Pankisi residents also stressed that the frequent “disappearance”<sup>6</sup> of their peers was in the past.

The communities of the four villages of the Pankisi Gorge – Duisi, Jokholi, Birkiani and Jibakhevi – are closely connected to each other. Because of that, the focus group participants knew some of the departed youth in person. When talking about them, many respondents stressed that these individuals were distinguished youngsters. For example, Tamar (aged 28, married, unemployed) said that “*many of them were distinguished boys due to their life, appearance and education.*” Many other participants had the same opinion about the departed. When talking about motivation of departure, Tamar said that the reason was unemployment, poverty and isolation:

When you work and bring in income it is more stimulating. You are more motivated; want more for your family. When you are unemployed, you have to borrow money and this is tiring [...] They would have at least entertained themselves with work.

Tamar, aged 28, married, unemployed  
Pankisi Gorge

However, some of the focus group participants thought differently. They believed that the departed youth did not have issues of material deprivation and named other reasons: “*I am hundred percent sure that it was a matter of faith. Most of them did not go because of money, otherwise it would have shown. Those who left were driven by the idea of “holy war.”* (Mariam, school teacher). Another participant, Irakli (University student, aged 22) also stressed that these people did not face poor economic conditions and many of them had financially strong families compared to other households in Pankisi. Irakli also spoke

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<sup>6</sup>Usually, when the youth from Pankisi left for Syria, they went secretly without notifying anyone. Only after several days they would inform their family that they had already arrived in Syria, or were crossing the Turkish-Syrian border.

about the perception the departed youth had about the Syrian crisis. However, he said that the individuals who went to Syria (many of whom Irakli was familiar with) saw the ongoing process not as a “*holy war*”, but as a “*war against tyranny*”.

### **The VE recruitment network and its propaganda in Pankisi Gorge**

When asked about his peers who left for ISIS, even after international organizations and many states declared it a terrorist organization, Irakli (University student, aged 22) said that ISIS propaganda was still spreading the narrative of war against injustice and tyranny and it was still experiencing success in its radicalization attempts.

As the other study participants noted, the propaganda during that period was strong and convincing:

I have thought many times, that if I were a boy, I would have also gone to Syria. We had “Odnoklasniki” [social network] in those days and they posted 20 videos for our people, that they had to go and it was everyone’s responsibility. There was propaganda [also] in mosques [...] Parents had taken the travel documents away from those individuals. Someone had the documents prepared for them and transferred them [abroad] like this. It would have been impossible to do it otherwise.

Mariam, teacher  
Pankisi Gorge

Others also emphasized the issue that Mariam mentioned – they believed that the recruiting network that actively worked in Pankisi both in virtual and real spaces, propagating ISIS and trying to recruit young men, was helped by some other force, one that mainly took care of the travel documents. For example, they talked about the case of two schoolboys who went to Syria during a school day and crossed the border without having their parents’ consents and passports:

*“We remember students departed to Syria directly from the classroom, as they managed to “sneak” through the border without any documents.”* (Irakli, aged 22, University student)

Marekhi, another teacher from the Pankisi Gorge, claimed that “*a special clan acted in a planned way. It suited someone. [...] Let’s tell the truth: they [the departed] were used for their own purposes.*”

It is important to note that Aiyup Bochorishvili, a former Jokholi Imam, was arrested in 2016 “for swearing an oath of bayat (allegiance) to the Caliphate”. (Dumbadze, 2017). Bochorishvili, one of the most influential personas in the Gorge (because of his clerical status), was identified as an ISIS facilitator, which is an indication of the scale of the infiltration of the facilitating network in Pankisi. The general understanding of study participants was that the ISIS facilitators were backed by an influential force, or “third actor” as some of them named it. This “third actor” is mostly visible to them only in the cases of the departed Pankisi residents’ border crossings (for example, the schoolboys, who were mentioned most).

When speaking about the propaganda, the respondents pointed out how this network used the internet to their advantage, aggressively spreading their propaganda and fully covering any relevant social media for Muslim youth in Georgia.

We live in a period, where there is too much information for us to comprehend everything and we tend to be attracted to the type of information that fits our dispositions. The propaganda was basically saying 'we're telling you the truth and they're lying. Come and fight with us, save Islam, save your Muslim brothers and sisters.

*Temo, aged 22, Duisi resident*

### **Aftermath of departures and the limited social environment**

The study participants from Pankisi said that the radicalization of their peers in the Gorge is not that frequent anymore. Teachers believe that things have changed since the period when many youngsters from their community left for Syria. First of all, the state and NGOs got interested in the young people's lives in the Pankisi Gorge:

*I think that after the Syrian events a breach appeared in the border between us and the State. It was after this that they did those football things. They are integrating our children with Georgian children.*

*Khatuna, aged 29, married, unemployed  
Pankisi Gorge*

In addition to potential reasons, the participants talked about the results that followed Georgian citizens' involvement in terrorist groups. They said that it brought stigma to the population in the Pankisi Gorge. According to Nika (aged 20, single, unmarried) *"Everyone looks at the Pankisi Gorge with fear [...] It is perceived as a nest of terrorists [...] It is not the only place from where people leave for Syria; the whole world is the place of departure and it is not our fault"*.

Two other participants, Irakli and Temo believed that the Kist youth must take an initiative and act against this stigma. As both pointed out, the whole population of the Gorge is being stigmatized by the media and public as either terrorists, or terrorist sympathizers, which added to the infamous image of Pankisi as a dangerous place, to be isolated and tightly controlled.

The major issue in the Gorge together with the high unemployment is migration which is directly connected to the lack of employment opportunities. As study participants pointed out, many of Pankisi residents leave Georgia for either Europe or Russia for employment opportunities. Most of the participants had at least one person in their primary social group, who migrated to one of the named directions. Some of the study participants thought that the collective stigmatization should also be considered as a factor in migration. *"When you constantly hear that you are a 'terrorist, terrorist, terrorist', you get tired of all that",* says Temo.



Despite the fact that the radicalization crisis was considered by the Pankisi settlers to be eased, there were still some major issues that leave the topic of vulnerability towards VE open. The social problems that the youth outlined indicate a limited social environment, aspects of which are:

- **The lack of career opportunities and undeveloped local labor market** – There are no employment opportunities or vacancies in Pankisi, barring the public services and NGO sector, which employ just a fraction of young individuals in the Gorge.
- **Isolation and stigmatization from outside, a collective perception of Pankisi youth as dangerous and inclined to criminal behavior** – Almost every male Kist study participant had an experience of police officers stopping them in public spaces because they “looked suspicious”, proceeding to detailed examination. In addition, the Kists feel themselves alienated, noting that many with whom they interact have no information about them except knowing that they are Muslims and come from a place with a history of criminal activities and radicalized individuals. Hence, the view of them as “dangerous” individuals is easily conceived.
- **Lack of youth involvement in the social life of the community** – The youth see themselves as ignored by the governmental bodies, as these institutions show no effort to establish communication with them. As study participants pointed out, both central and local governments reach out to elders and ask them for feedback on issues, but mostly ignore the youths’ positions. The elders are both a cultural and formal institution in Pankisi<sup>7</sup>, which is a predominant force in Pankisi’s social life.

This limited social environment is connected to the complicated nature of the attitudes Pankisi youth express towards their departed peers. Study participants’ perception of departed citizens is complex. They unambiguously disapprove terrorism and the ideas of ISIS propaganda; however, they more or less understand what mainly drove departed individuals to their decisions – the total lack of opportunities for any realization of their potential. This is the biggest reason why the narrative around the likes of Tarkhan Batirashvili (mostly known as Abu Omar Al Shishani outside Georgia) is positive, built around the image of a highly successful military person who could not fulfill his potential in Georgia for various reasons. Because of the limited social environment, the fulfillment of potential in the Syrian war still counts as fulfillment. This is also evident in one of the participant’s answers when asked if he was familiar with the departed peers: “Not only us, but many in Georgia and generally in the World know about the local Kists who had a success in Syria and made a name for themselves”.

Pankisi Gorge has a strongly bonded community. This is not surprising if we consider the fact that they are both an ethnic and a religious minority with a small population. The strong social bonds between Pankisi settlers can help explain the complex and contradictory perception in the Gorge towards the departed in Syria. Even though Pankisi youth denounce the abstract idea of violent extremism, there is no condemnation of the departed community members. The narratives around the departed are still built around positive characteristics – “well educated and/or distinct youngsters”, “successful/brave fighters”,

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<sup>7</sup>The Gorge has an elder union, which has its own organizational structure.

etc. This approach to the issue can be regarded as an individual incentive for radicalization, as it leaves a lot of space for empathy towards the departed peers.

Another important individual factor is related to the strong social bonds and group dynamics: “The desire to follow in the footsteps of a friend or relative, too, has proven to be a powerful force in drawing alienated youth into the global jihad”(Development Assistance and Counter-Extremism: A Guide to Programming, 2009, p.12). The focus group discussions showed that there were mainly two different ways of recruiting individuals from the Pankisi Gorge into extremist groups – one was through the VE network (online media propaganda and several individuals related/connected to the Gorge) and another was via the already departed Pankisi residents, who contacted their family members and close relatives and persuaded them to join them.

## 9. Value Orientation Scales

The Religious Fundamentalism (RF) and Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) scales were used to measure the orientation of youth towards specific sets of values.

The RF is a well-known scale for measurement of religious fundamentalism using a Likert-type scale. For the quantitative survey, we used a revised 12-statement RF scale, which, according to the authors, is “more internally consistent” compared to the old 20-statement scale (Altemeyer, 2004). Because of the complexity of the issues covered by the statements, the RF scale was not used when interviewing respondents under age of 18.

Religious Fundamentalism” is “the belief that there is one set of religious teachings that clearly contains the fundamental, basic, intrinsic, essential, inerrant truth about humanity and deity; that this essential truth is fundamentally opposed by the forces of evil which must be vigorously fought; that this truth must be followed today according to the fundamental, unchangeable practices of the past; and that those who believe and follow these fundamental teachings have a special relationship with the deity. (Altemeyer, 1992; p. 118).

As for the RWA scale, it is also Altemeyer’s well-established instrument which is used to study political preferences. The author himself defines right-wing authoritarianism in the following way:

*“By right-wing authoritarianism, I mean the co-variation of three attitudinal clusters in a person:*

- 1. Authoritarian submission - a high degree of submission to the authorities who are perceived to be established and legitimate in the society in which one lives.*
- 2. Authoritarian aggression - a general aggressiveness, directed against various persons that is perceived to be sanctioned by established authorities.*
- 3. Conventionalism - a high degree of adherence to the social conventions that are perceived to be endorsed by society and its established authorities” (Altemeyer, 1996; p. 6).*

A 20-piece scale was also used by the survey in the case of the 18 and older youth target group (but not the other groups); it was used to measure the group's level of orientation towards RWA.

### The results of RF and RWA scales

The maximum-recorded score for the RF scale was 105 out of possible 108 and the minimum was 9 (out of possible 9):

**Table#12.1: RF scale central tendencies and dispersion**

N		Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Variance	Range	Minimum	Maximum
Valid	Missing								
411	644	60.8	62	55	19.50698	380.522	96	9	105

The Mean score on the RF scale in the 18-29 age group is almost 61 which is slightly above the mid-point of the scale, which is 54.5.

RF scores reveal the ways in which the meaning of religion is seen differently (Altemeyer and Hunsberger, 1992). Two sets of dichotomous statements proposed different types of perception of religion. The first was how individuals see religiousness – “*the main meaning of religion is to do something good for people*”/ “*the main meaning of religion is to adhere to religious norms and rules*”. The second set of statements was about the major function of religion – “*to grant meaning to the worldly life*”/“*to grant meaning to the otherworldly life*”.

As the comparison of Mean scores shows, those who see religiousness as *mostly following the rules*, have a Mean score of 67.4 on the RF scale, which is on average 8.1 points higher compared to the other group, whose members see religion as an *instrument for good deeds*. The t-test shows that the difference between these two groups is significant:

**Table #12.2: RF scale – Independent samples test**

Independent Samples Test									
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
									Lower Upper
RF	Equal variances assumed	.003	.954	3.811	381	.000	8.10751	2.12737	3.92464 12.29038
	Equal variances not assumed			3.776	192.143	.000	8.10751	2.14684	3.87311 12.34190

The results are similar when we consider views on the function of religion – those who see religion as a *grantor of meaning to otherworldly life* had a Mean score of 65.5 on RF scale, which was 4.8 points higher than the group of respondents, who saw *religion as a grantor of meaning to worldly life*. The t-test showed significance of the difference here as well:

**Table #12.3: RF scale – Independent samples test**

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
RF	Equal variances assumed	1.605	.206	2.469	362	.014	4.85205	1.96502	.98776	8.71634
	Equal variances not assumed			2.436	289.103	.015	4.85205	1.99197	.93144	8.77265

It must be noted, that the relationship between views of religiousness and functions of religion are closely related to each other; the  $\phi$  coefficient, which is used to analyse correlation between two variables, is .575 ( $p=.000$ ). The RF Mean score in the pool of those respondents who see religiousness as mainly following the rules and the function of religion as granting meaning to otherworldly life is 68.7 (with standard deviation of 18.24), which is almost 8 points higher towards religious fundamentalism than the Mean score of the total subsample of youth under 18-29 age group (Mean score in this group is almost 61 as mentioned above).

The minimum possible score for the RWA scale is 20 and the maximum possible is 180. The Mean score on the RWA scale is 100.5 which is above the midpoint of the scale (90.5 score). This can be interpreted as a representation of slight deviation towards right-wing authoritarianism.

**Table #12.4: RWA scale central tendencies and dispersion**

N		Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Variance	Range	Minimum	Maximum
Valid	Missing								
426	630	100.5	103	100	28.62090	819.156	148	20	168

The results show that the both religious fundamentalism and right-wing authoritarianism are present to a certain extent. The study in no way suggests that these two sets of values are equal to sympathy towards violent extremism, but it must be noted that there are key connections in the perceptions that they influence and/or produce. For example, religious fundamentalism can be related to radicalization, which (in our case) is defined as the process of developing extremist ideologies and beliefs (Borum, 2011).

Religious fundamentalism and extremist ideologies seek to monopolize “truth”, excluding access to alternative truths.

“Authoritarian aggression” is another key connection that helps to link the RF and RWA scales to the process of radicalization and to violent extremism. Altemeyer defines this concept in the following way: *“Aggression is authoritarian when it is accompanied by the belief that proper authority approves it or that it will help preserve such authority”* (Altemeyer, 1996). This means that aggression as a means for attaining something becomes legitimized. The same can be said when we are speaking about violent radicalization - a process in which radical ideas are accompanied by the development of a willingness to directly support or engage in violent acts (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010). Some definitions of radicalization even suggest that acceptance of violence is part of the process *per se*: *“Radicalization can be understood as a process through which individuals are persuaded that violent activity is justified and eventually become determined to engage in violence”* (Dandurand, 2014; p.24). The notion of violent extremism in our study also implies the justification of violence; because of that, we see “approved aggression” and “justified violence” as closely related terms.

## 10. Discourse Analysis of School Textbooks

### Introduction

The main reason for including Critical Discourse Analysis of school textbooks in the research framework is that the study touches the topics of social dynamics – the issues of integration of certain groups or individuals in social, economic or cultural systems and its’ effect on vulnerability towards VE. These specific social dynamics shown in previous sections establish a certain social order, a concept defined by Fairclough as interdependent networks and sets of rules that structure social space in a certain way<sup>8</sup>. Social order is both a product of social dynamics and necessary precondition for their reproduction. For Fairclough, social order operates in the discourse in the same manner as in the social space and structures it per its own rules. For Fairclough, structuring of discourse by social order is discursive order (Fairclough, 2015). The main goal of our analysis is to reveal and analyse various types of discursive order in school textbooks; reproduction of what kind of social order or dominant consensus it facilitates – in particular, to what extent it supports equality and means of integration in the social space and whether it has the function of excluding various groups. This, on the other hand, will enable us to analyse the ideological basis of the social dynamics with practices of religious and ethnic discrimination and social exclusion.

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<sup>8</sup> We can refer to the quote from Fairclough’s *Language and Power* to elaborate more on the use of this term: “We always experience the society and the various social institutions within which we operate as divided up and demarcated, structured into different spheres of action, different types of situation, each of which has its associated type of practice. I will use the term social order to refer to such a structuring of a particular social ‘space’ into various domains associated with various types of practices.” (Fairclough, 2015, p. 61)

The material for the discourse analysis was comprised of the textbooks of two obligatory school subjects – History and Georgian Language and Literature – from 7th to 12th grades at Georgian-language schools<sup>9</sup>. The goal of this part of the research was to conduct a critical analysis of how historical events were presented and assessed in textbooks; on the one hand, what kind of discourse takes place in the textbooks, and on the other hand, what ideological trends (transparent and latent) this discourse reveals, and how it modifies knowledge in terms of content or structure.

For Van Dijk, power has various dimensions (court, jurisdiction, political parties, state institutions, etc.). He regards educational literature and in particular, textbooks as an important dimension of this power. Textbooks have one significant characteristic for Van Dijk – they are obligatory (Dijk, 2008). In order for citizens to pass the stages of formal education, they should accept the knowledge provided by the textbooks as it is given – they cannot actively control the content of textbooks. However, for Van Dijk, the knowledge and attitudes which are presented via textbooks make up the dominant consensus, which is close to Fairclough’s use of the term “order” – i.e. powerful networks that constrain and confine discourse.

The process of producing knowledge in an obligatory school subject is not just about developing a textbook; these courses are a product of institutionalized processes rather than a mere creative work. These courses go through a distinct standardized process: first, the Ministry of Education defines their concept and the study programs; then, the content is created by the textbook authors; the textbooks are reviewed; and finally, the process of their acceptance is completed. During the process of acceptance, the textbooks undergo assessment based on the criteria defined by the Ministry of Education. (Legislative Herald of Georgia, 2011). The criteria of assessment ensure that a textbook supports the development of the values and skills presented in the General Education National Goals (criterion 1.4); the content of the textbook corresponds with the current scientific achievements (criterion 2.8); the textbook does not impose the author’s attitudes on students (criterion 2.14), etc. Meeting these criteria implies that the textbook corresponds with the policy, objectives and declared positions of the Ministry. In addition, a classified textbook becomes a part of the educational system - it becomes an instrument to transmit the knowledge produced within the system. Thus, the knowledge produced by the course is highly mediated and the discourse practices provided by this knowledge can become regarded as “common sense”.

The Georgian Language and Literature course differs qualitatively from the History Course in terms of its form and production. If the History course textbooks contain texts which are developed by the authors precisely for this particular course, the works of fiction within the Georgian Language and Literature course are not the creative works by the course authors, but are selected for their themes; moreover, their primary purpose is not the transmission of knowledge. It is also notable that such works of fiction are part of a different unity (collection, anthology, literary periodicals, etc.) These works have a different context compared to the original unity they are included in, as well as different inter-textual relations with other texts in the new assemblage. Within the Literature course, these original works are separated from their original context and are brought together into a new one. This, in its turn, changes both the contexts

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<sup>9</sup>Bakur Sulakauri Publishing House, 2012, first edition (History textbooks), “Meridiani” Publishing, 2012 (Literature textbooks).

of these particular works and their relationship to one another. The current unity creates a new context for these texts and this context carries a different objective.

However, in order for such assemblage to form into a unity, it is not enough to simply gather thematically selected works of fiction within various topics; the unity needs to have coherence. The Georgian Language and Literature course material is divided into several topics which unite several works of fiction and lessons built around these works<sup>10</sup>. In order to achieve the coherence of the unity, the inter-textual relations should be based on some sort of logic. This logic is achieved within the Georgian Language and Literature course with the help of the structural elements around the work of fiction comprising the lesson – these elements may be additional topics to “think about”, topics for discussion or comparisons between cases from the current works – the content of all of these elements relates to the topic which unites several lessons.

With these ideas in mind, two different approaches were used to analyse the History and the Literature courses. As the History course is more diverse thematically than the Literature Course, we used thematic analysis<sup>11</sup>. The major part of the content of the Literature course is not developed by the Ministry of Education, but by the authors of the works of fiction (the literary writers), so there is a different initial purpose. Thus, we focused more on the applied logic which establishes the coherence of the course, as well as on the structural unity which creates some kind of a relation between the texts. This is a more holistic approach, as it implies reviewing the given material in total and not dividing it up thematically.

### 10.1. Major Elements of the History Textbooks’ Discourse

A detailed review of the texts in History textbooks has revealed several discursive practices which are relevant to the study objectives and which create the discourse of the school History course and which ensure its coherence:

#### Implicit presence of “the Lord”

*“Constantine prayed to the Lord to provide a sign from the sky which would encourage his supporters before the battle.” (p.61, VII grade)*

The implicit presence of “the Lord” implies, first of all, that texts are written from the perspective of a believer in Orthodox Christianity. The authors of the texts do not distance themselves from their own beliefs when describing various events. This becomes evident when the text refers to sacral figures or events for Orthodox Christians. In the History course (as well as in the Georgian language), “Lord” (უფალი - \**upali*) and “God” (ღმერთი - \**ghmert*) have different connotations: God has a plural form –

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<sup>10</sup> In some cases, one piece of fiction is part of one lesson, while in other cases it may be part of several lessons.

<sup>11</sup> Thematic analysis implies categorization of the existing data according to the themes within the interest of a particular study. In this case, the content of the material is discussed as per these themes and the structure of the analysis also corresponds to the thematic division.

Gods, which implies that it can be used to denote more than one idea of a supernatural, transcendent force (Christian God, pagan Gods, notions “monotheism/polytheism” which are produced in Georgian within the term “God”<sup>12</sup>). However, “Lord” is always only one – the Georgian language does not use a plural form of this word. “Lord” also means “senior”; therefore, use of “Lord” by a subject implies, on the one hand, referring to a transcendent force, and on the other, to the sole God who rules over the subject.

The citation below speaks about the principle by which Judaism differed from polytheism:

*“In many religions of the old world, humans were created by God (or Gods) as their assistants and servants.” (p.11, VIII grade)*

The belief that they were the “chosen nation” supported religious intolerance among Jews which is unfamiliar among the people believing in polytheism<sup>13</sup>. On the other hand, Torah itself says that the one and only God is not the protector of only Jewish people – He is the creator of the whole world and all humans. (p.261, VIII grade).

As we can see, these citations refer to God in both singular and plural forms; however, the Jewish God is specified as “one and only”, because he is a monotheistic idea of God.

Unlike the word “God”, the word “Lord” does not need any type of reference. It appears in texts together with the introduction of the paradigm of Christianity not as an ordinary deity/God, but as a self-sufficient, recognized notion. In some cases (as above), “Lord” is referred to not in a citation, paraphrase or third person, but as a self-sufficient, transcendent force. His presence in the texts is not a topic of discussion – it is implicitly included.

For example, let’s discuss the narrative about Constantine defeating the uprising of aristocrats:

Pagan noble men hated the Emperor and organized an uprising against him. There is a legend about how the Emperor came to worship the cross. Constantine prayed to the Lord to provide a sign from the sky which would encourage his supporters before the battle. And the cross appeared in the sky with the words: “You will win with this”. After this revelation, the Emperor asked artisans to cut out the cross from wood and the painters to paint it on the shields of warriors. Constantine defeated his opponents with the cross in his hands. (p.61, VII grade).

This story tells how Constantine the Second was able to win the battle at the Milvian Bridge (after which he finally established his authority in Rome) with the help of the cross. Constantine and his warriors needed “encouragement” and they received a certain instruction from the Christian God with the help of which Constantine “defeated his opponents with the cross in his hands”. In this text, as in other places, “the Lord” does not need an adjective which would refer to it and give specifications about which of the notions of “God” it signifies. “The Lord” is self-sufficient. It does not require additional terms like “Christian Lord”. It presupposes the acknowledgment (by the reader) of its sole nature and transcendental power.

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<sup>12</sup> Literal translation of the Georgian word for polytheism will be “many godness”.

<sup>13</sup> The original Georgian text uses the Georgian equivalent.



In other words, this presupposition encompasses the belief in “the one and only true God” (sole nature) and in the “Almighty God” (transcendental power).

The implicit presence of the Lord is what Fairclough refers to as the member resource (MR)<sup>14</sup>. The member resources are present in the subject “preliminarily” – common-sense assumptions and expectations which people have in their heads and draw upon when they produce or interpret texts – including their knowledge of language, representations of the natural and social worlds they inhabit, values, beliefs, assumptions and so on.... They are cognitive in the sense that they are in people’s heads, but they are social in the sense that they have social origins – they are socially generated. (Fairclough, 2015).

In this case, for the authors of the texts in History course textbooks, member resources include the sole nature and authenticity of the Christian God which, like the above example, has implicit assumptions. Fairclough discusses an example which is very close to our analysis – it is from a magazine article about birthstones: “For many centuries, the opal was reputed to be an unfortunate stone, bringing the wearer bad luck” (Fairclough, 2015). As in this example, in the history of Constantine’s victory as well, in order for the narrative to make sense, the reader should share the assumption made by the author. In our case, such an assumption is the acceptance/recognition of the supernatural power of the cross and the Christian God.

In addition to the “Lord” being implicitly meant, the narrative does not assess the “legend’s” credibility. “There is a legend” – this is the only reference to the source, which remains unknown. The degree of detail for Van Dijk is the structure of the discourse which includes revealing a certain amount of information and neglecting what may weaken the assertion in the text – the events described in the text are derived from the panegyric dedicated to the Emperor by his contemporary Greek historian, Eusebius of Caesarea called “The Life of Constantine”. Eusebius of Caesarea, as well as his panegyric, is mentioned in the tenth-grade history textbook:

*“This work is rather in the panegyric (having the goal of praising and glorifying) than historical genre and it became exemplary for the literature in this genre.” (p.110, X grade).*

The same lesson provides a definition of panegyric – “1. Praise by an orator in order to express respect towards somebody; 2. (Figuratively) Exaggerated praise of somebody.” (p.109, X grade).

This lesson shows that “The Life of Constantine” is a biased source for the History course which is not distinguished by its credibility. The origin of the story of Constantine’s victory is not revealed in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade textbook.

The assumption that a “legend” may present events in a mythological light weakens the assertion of the text that Constantine won the battle with the help of the cross. Therefore, the text does not reveal the

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<sup>14</sup> Van Dijk also has a similar notion which calls such discourse elements mental models that are in the subject’s head and that are involved in cognitive processes.

origin of the source as well as its credibility which is a structural strategy of the discourse to exclude an alternative interpretation in order to more easily establish the assertion it makes.

This story appears again in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook in the lesson about Christianity in one of the subchapters named “The phenomenon of “miracles” when turning to Christianity (the Franks, Kartli<sup>15</sup>, Armenia)”, where various legends about the spread of Christianity are critically assessed. In this text, the episode of the Milvian Bridge battle is told in a radically different manner and provides much more detail (including the source and the author). The function attributed to these miracles by the History course is the following: “A new religion was usually looked at by people with suspicion until they became witnesses of a miracle. The pagan deities had to be replaced by the appearance of a stronger deity. And miracles soon appeared. All Christian people/nations have their own phenomena of “miracles” when turning to Christianity.” (p. 149, XI grade). The fact that the “miracle” is not questioned in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade textbook, but is questioned in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook has the same function, as the Course itself assesses as a certain way to establish/reinforce faith (“All Christian people/nations have their own phenomena of “miracles” when turning to Christianity”), dissolve scepticism (“A new religion was usually looked at by people with suspicion”) and show superiority (“The pagan deities had to be replaced by the appearance of a stronger deity”). In order not to break the discursive order established for the seventh grader where Christianity is a true religion, the possibility of developing a sceptical attitude in the interpretation of the text is minimized at this stage. For relatively younger students, a “miracle” is a miracle without quotation marks in order to “reinforce their faith” as they are at a lower level of socialization; they are given an opportunity to critically assess the same phenomenon only 3 grades later when the phenomenon of a “miracle” will have already carried out its function.

The History Course uses the same strategy in terms of the degree of detail of description when speaking about the events described as per the New Testament. However, unlike the miracles in Christianity, historical authenticity of the gospel is present in the textbook of each grade where it is discussed:

According to the four gospels of the New Testament, Jesus was the Son of God and the Messiah. In Galilee and Jerusalem, he preached about being kind and forgiving, called on purifying the faith and performed miracles... Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem, but he resurrected 3 days later, appeared in a vision to his Apostles and later, ascended to the heaven. The belief in the resurrection of Jesus is the most important tenet/dogma of Christianity. (p.262, VIII grade).

Despite the fact that gospels are religious texts and, because of the lack of historical sources, it is difficult to confirm all the historical events described there, these events are *topoi*, certain ready-made information for the text. Such information, according to Van Dijk, is preliminarily defined and is later standardized and spread. (Van Dijk, 2003). The History course names the New Testament as an “invaluable source”, which is an example of *topos*:

*“The New Testament” is an invaluable source about the life and the deeds of... Jesus”. This is the second part of the Bible which was written in Greek within the first 100 years of the existence of Christianity.” (p.262, VIII grade).*

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<sup>15</sup> Kartli refers to the name of Georgian medieval kingdom

The following paragraph is written based on the “New Testament”<sup>16</sup>, but the source of information is not revealed at all:

Apostles of Jesus, in particular, Peter and Paul (the latter had never met Jesus in person and was rather an enemy against his teaching from the beginning until resurrected Christ came to him in a vision) established a new religion which was called “Christianity” in the years 40-44 A.D. in the city of Antioch. (p.262 VIII grade).

The structure of the given paragraph implies presentation of absolute truth – the story of Paul’s turn to Christianity by seeing Christ in his vision as an authentic event. Such formulation of the information has a goal of excluding critical interpretation or analysis of the dogmas provided by Christianity and the canonical texts. “The invaluable nature” of gospels is common sense for the History course – it should be *a priori* shared and agreed upon by both the author and the reader. This is a fact that does not come into discussion, as there already is a general agreement about it.

However, we encounter a contrary narrative in relation to the Koran:

*“In reality the text of the Koran (as well as other “Sacred Books”) are written by humans. Many years after Mohammad’s death his followers wrote the Koran, added parts to it and adjusted it to their current situation.” (p.263, VIII grade).*

While in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook we can read the following about the Koran:

*“The canonical text of the Koran was established after Muhammad’s death; however, some representatives of the Muslim religion doubt the authenticity of several of its parts.” (p.239, XI grade).*

If “The New Testament” was written “within the first 100 years” of the existence of Christianity, the Koran was written “many years” after Muhammad’s death by his followers. Despite the fact that the texts of the New Testament and the Koran were written after the passage of approximately the same amount of time after each relevant Prophet’s death, the wording in each case is different. The narrative about the Koran has a goal to show its ideological function and role – it is written many years after the death of the prophet (therefore, the fact that it is the authentic original source of Muhammad’s teachings may be questioned) and is adjusted to the then current situation (i.e. used as a political and ideological tool).

For comparison, the 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook provides information on the New Testament in the following manner:

*“Later, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John described the life and the deeds of Christ in separate books. These books together made up the Four Gospels.” (p.145, XI grade).*

The History course discusses the Koran (in a different manner when compared to the New Testament) through a distanced, non-Muslim perspective and emphasizes the problem of interpreting the

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<sup>16</sup>Namely, on the basis of “Deeds of the Apostles” where, among others, the story of Paul is also told.

information provided in it. The structure of the sentence below clearly shows the distanced position of the text in relation to the Muslim faith:

*“From the Muslim perspective, the Koran is eternal and not creatable. No one can alter it and the Muslim community should be guided by it.” (p.239, XI grade).*

As Fairclough notes, common sense may have an ideological function, while ideology works most efficiently when it is integrated into the discourse not as explicit elements, but as background assumptions which, on the one hand, lead the creator of the text to “textualize” the world in a specific way, while on the other hand, they also lead the interpreter of the text to interpret it in a specific way (Fairclough, 2015).

The comparison of the passages about Koran and the “New Testament” is a demonstration of how this function is implemented – The History course accepts the textualization of the world presented by the Christian paradigm, but distances from the textualization by Muslim paradigm by outlining that the offered textualization is a “Muslim perspective”.

The implicit presence of the Lord is part of the function of such latent ideology<sup>17</sup> which implies textualization of certain events by the influence of the Christian Paradigm. It reveals the inclination of texts to provide interpretations from the Christian position in some instances or to accept the assertions and assumptions of the Christian religion (and church) and present them as absolute truth:

*“Gaining of independence by the Georgian Church was derived from the canonical basis related to the fact that Christianity was preached in Georgia by the Apostles of the Lord – Andrew the First-Called, Simon Cananeus and Matatha...” (p.75, IX grade).*

In addition to the Christian faith textualizing the discourse, in-group / out-group relations are also established in some places in the texts:

*“Saint George was also from Cappadocia – He is one of our greatest and we can say, most respected Saints.” (p.61, IX grade).*

“We” and “our” in this case imply Christians, i.e. those for whom the torture of Saint George has religious meaning. “We”, that is those who are Christians (and this is implicitly meant), regard Saint George as the most respected Saint, while those for whom Saint George does not signify a Saint, are left beyond “we/us” and “our”. Such practice brings difference into the discourse. “We” and “others” are differentiated according to the status assigned to Saint George. For Stuart Hall, difference and distinction are the central acts with which the construction of identity starts. Hall, based on Derrida, Laclau and Butler, defines the meaning of difference in the following manner: “Above all, and directly contrary to the form in which they are constantly invoked, identities are constructed through, not outside, difference. This entails the radically disturbing recognition that it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its constitutive outside that the “positive”

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<sup>17</sup> Fairclough calls this function mechanical, as it implies that in the process of interpretation the subject mechanically fills in “the blank fields”.

meaning of any term – and thus its “identity” – can be constructed” (Hall, 1996a, pp: 4-5). The definition of “us” as Christians is part of the process which Hall calls the construction of national identity.

### **Construction of national identity**

According to Stuart Hall, national culture is created by symbols and representations – national culture is a discourse, the way to construct meanings which impacts and organizes both our actions and self-perception. A nation’s culture creates identities by creating meaning for the “nation”, with which we will be able to identify ourselves (Hall, 1996).

The major issue in the process of analysing History textbooks is what form the “national narrative”, as Hall refers to it, takes in the textbooks. This narrative is constantly told in History, Literature, Media and the popular culture. It provides stories, images, scenarios, historical events, symbols and rituals which signify shared experience, grief, victories or defeats which provide meaning and significance to the nation (Hall, 1996). The major goal of the analysis in this section is to study this narrative and define what meaning/significance it assigns to the identity of a Georgian.

The History course itself does not use the notion of “identity”; however, the texts often use the notion of “national self-awareness” which we find in various contexts. The text itself defines it in the following manner when speaking about the period of the national movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century:

This new unity of the Georgian nation was of course much stronger and more complete as compared to the feudal era. The conditions necessary for the existence of the nation shifted to a higher level of development; these conditions are: language, territory, and unity of economic and cultural life, as well as the national self-awareness which is a concentrated representation of these necessary conditions. (*p.337, IX grade*).

This paragraph names the necessary components for the nation’s existence: language, territory, as well as unity of economic and cultural life, and a clear unity of these elements called national self-awareness. Functionally, the latter denotes the national identity – i.e. what unites the nation and its socio-cultural life. For Hall, the understanding of “identity” implies the function of such a unifier which includes not only unification, but also assigning a certain place.

In the same text, we find the following:

Unfortunately, unlike the people who were formed into particular nations in the form of independent states from the very beginning (the French, the English and others), the final consolidation of the Georgian nation took place within the vast and varied Russian Empire. (*p.337, IX grade*).

As we can see, the process of “forming a nation” is not foreign to the History course; however, when referring to the “Georgian nation”, the text does not use the same notion, but uses the notion of “the final consolidation”. This two-fold wording has significant importance. On the one hand, “formation of the nation” denotes a process which includes a starting point where the nation as such does not exist and the

point where the nation is the final product; however, on the other hand, “the final consolidation” does not reveal such a starting point. This choice of words is connected to the five fundamental aspects of a narration of national culture (Hall, 1996)<sup>18</sup>, precisely, emphasis on timelessness of the nation.

In addition to “self-awareness”, the course also uses the notion of “national authenticity”:

*“Despite difficult political conditions, in the VIII-IX centuries the Georgian culture retains national authenticity and absorbs the achievements of the Christian world, and in particular, those of the Byzantine culture.” (p. 262, XI grade).*

*“The place of Byzantium was taken by Russia and the major idea behind this was to be protected from the Muslim environment and to protect the national authenticity by preserving Christianity.” (p.62, XI grade).*

“The national authenticity” is used in texts to denote a certain autonomy of culture. “Authenticity” is a trait which, according to the discourse within the History course, refers to the capacity to retain and reproduce certain rules and practices which exist within its frames. “Authenticity” is what opposes the change of fundamental elements of culture from external impact. This notion is important within the process of constructing identity, as the major objective in this process is to show that the identity is natural and essential; and in order to do this, it should show that the characteristics that it assigns to the national identity were always present:

*After the Greek newly built towns appeared on the Eastern bank of the Black Sea, especially in the Hellenic era, and also, after the Roman political influence was established in Georgia, the Greek and Roman cults were widely spread, whereas in Eastern Georgia Persian fire-worshipping and Mithraism were popular; however, a large part of the population strongly preserved their ancestral religion relics, which are still present today. (p.53, IX grade).*

This excerpt from the text can be divided into two parts – the first part of the narrative refers to cultural communication in ancient Georgia – the influence of Greek and Roman, on the one hand, and Persian religions, on the other. Second part the text strengthens its logical structure by using the conjunction “however”. This logical structure denotes the following – there were religious influences from various sides in ancient Georgia, but the local population, for the most part, preserved its own religion. The text uses elements of syntax such as “large part” and “strongly” in the last sentence, thereby emphasizing that the trait of loyalty (which is quite strong) is relevant to the majority of the population. In addition, their religion is referred to as “ancestral” i.e. continuous in time – this is what connects them to the previous generations, their ancestors, in addition to genetic ties. The strength of this loyalty is further stressed by the fact that the relics of this faith/religion are still present today.

Establishing such logic through the text, first of all implies an emphasis on the fact that the identity of a Georgian is itself trans-historical and not constructed in time, and that its major characteristics also possess the same qualities. Loyalty towards one’s own faith/religion is part of Georgian identity from the very beginning. This is what Hall calls the discourse strategy of “forming a tradition” (Hall, 1996). The

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<sup>18</sup>These aspects are narrative of the nation, emphasis on origin, continuity, tradition and timelessness, invention of tradition, foundational myth and pure, original people or “folk”

process of constructing national identity through one historical episode faces a serious dilemma – on the one hand, it shows that the authenticities characteristic of Georgian identity are present in antiquity as well (when Georgian culture was a pagan culture); and on the other hand, one of the unifying elements of this identity is Christianity. The narrative according to which Christianity replaces paganism in Georgia is as follows:

Although Christianity fought against the old pagan beliefs and it is clear that important monuments of the Georgian pagan culture were destroyed at this time (probably, the samples of the old alphabet as well), it needs to be noted that the Christian faith absorbed significant elements from the old Georgian faith/religions, collated them with the Christian rules and reshaped them which, in its turn, has determined some peculiarities of Georgian Christianity and its national characteristics. (p.123, IX grade).

As we can see, the History course chooses a strategy to present turning to Christianity as a dialectical process – Christianity in Georgia did not monopolize the culture, but rather established a dialectical relationship with it (“collated them with Christian rules”), the result of which is “Georgian Christianity”. In this way the construction of identity retains the sequence it creates/produces.

One of the central strategies of the process to construct a national identity is the “myth of origin”. The History course tells lots of myths related to significant historical events. Let’s, for example, take a myth on Pharnavaz<sup>19</sup>:

He was a great archer and hunter. Once when he was hunting and he killed a deer, but the night fell and he dropped the deer. He took shelter in a cave where he found lots of riches. It took 5 nights for Pharnavaz and his family members to bring all these riches out of the cave. (p.40, IX grade).

Pharnavaz’s gaining power in Kartli is one of the most significant historical events in Georgian history as it ultimately led to the first unification of Iberia/Kartli and Colchis, two early Georgian kingdoms. Despite the fact that the text used for the lesson about Pharnavaz uses both real and fantastic elements for narration, it does not include other sources, neither in the text nor in sources, for diversity or assessment of given information. This means that certain information in the legend is approved, such as the date of establishing a new state on the territory of Georgia as well as its administrative form. In addition, there is no information in the text which refutes anything in the legend and students are given an exercise to work in class and reach a conclusion through their own interpretations:

*“Pay attention to what can be part of the legend and what can be part of the reality in the legend on Pharnavaz.” (p.44, XI grade)*

The student has insufficient information to make such a clear distinction; in addition, the exercise provided to him/her asks him/her to “pay attention” and not discuss the topic based on additional information. The History course chooses such a manner of telling the story where it is difficult to clearly identify what status the course itself assigns to the mythical elements of narratives – be they “part of the

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<sup>19</sup>Pharnavaz was a king of Kartli, an ancient Georgian kingdom known as Iberia to the Classical sources. Most scholars place Pharnavaz’s govern in the 3rd century BC.

legend” or “part of the reality”. In such circumstances, because of the lack of alternative sources and also because of the manner of telling the story, it is easy to assume that in the process of interpretation, the “legend” and the “reality” may get mixed up.

The History course also tells in detail the story of how Saint Nino turned Kartli to Christianity, which is provided in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbooks; however, here we encounter the same strategy as in the case of the “miracles” – the 9<sup>th</sup> grade textbook tells all the miracles related to Saint Nino: *“Afterwards Nino settled in Mtskheta at the house of the guard of the King’s garden and started to cure people... When Mirian<sup>20</sup> was hunting, the sun eclipsed and shone again only when the King asked “Nino’s God” for help. After this, Mirian also believed in Christ... The process of building [a church] was actively progressing, but one pillar which was to be erected in the middle of the church could not be relocated. Saint Nino prayed all the night and, in the morning, when the King returned the pillar was in its designated place and the church was built and called by the name of “Sveti Tskhoveli” – in Georgian, “the life giving pillar”.* (p.61, IX grade).

As has already been noted, there is a subchapter in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade textbook where the function of “miracles” is discussed in the period of turning to Christianity. It is interesting to note that this subchapter also includes the “miracle” related to the spread of Christianity in Georgia; not the miracles performed by Saint Nino herself, but only Mirian’s story about the eclipse of the sun where Saint Nino is not presented as the direct actor.

The story about Saint Nino in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade textbook does not describe miracles. This textbook only notes that she cured Queen Nana and also mentions the miracle which happened to King Mirian. In this way, the History course avoids the necessity to assign the same function to Saint Nino’s miracles as the function assigned to the “miracles” in the process of establishing Christianity; by doing so it would abolish the function of the mythical narrative which is to approve faith.

## 10.2. Literature Course Analysis

Each lesson in the Literature course textbooks is comprised of the work of fiction (when it is too big for one lesson it is distributed over several lessons) followed by summarizing questions or questions to stress certain topics, interpretations (“opinions”) of other representatives of Literature regarding this specific text, as well as language and grammar material, tasks/activities of various types and in some cases, discussion topics as well.

Our analysis concentrated on these components following the works of fiction, as it is here that the contextualization of fiction texts (or text of journalism of current affairs) in the books takes place. Contextualization allows the texts to unite into a certain thematic unity and establish inter-textual

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<sup>20</sup>Mirian III was a first Christian king of the Georgian kingdom known as Iberia or Kartli in the 4th century AC.



connections with other texts via common themes. A good illustration of how the contextualization strategy operates is the narrative about Romanticism in Georgia:

In Georgia, all of this was complemented with the loss of independence and freedom of the country... All attempts to gain independence were defeated. This created hopelessness and scepticism in the nation. The melancholy which permeates the work of Georgian Romantic writers derives from the national tragedy. In the Georgian Romanticism the personal “self” is blended with the national “self”. Therefore, we can conclude that the specific nature of Georgian Romanticism is determined by the national pain and sorrow. (p.6, XI grade)

This passage does a good job of describing the universal strategy of contextualization in the Literature course in general. It establishes links between the Romantic movement in Georgia and Patriotism and struggle related to national identity, as its primary inspirational source (A linkage that is strengthened in a conclusive manner in the last sentence of the quote). In this way, the literature course excludes whole psychological and philosophical dimensions of poetic inspirations and reduces them to the historic and political dimensions. The contextualization strategy attempts to interpret the work of fiction in a way that presents what is described in the text as a product of collective life – the major source of the creative energy in the individual is this very collective life which is defined by the Orthodox Christian religion on the one hand, and the cultural elements forming the national identity, on the other.

There is a topic in the VII grade textbook with the heading “Who Is a Patriot?” This topic aims at answering the question it asks and creating a certain archetypal patriot through the works of fiction within this topic, as well as their interpretation. This chapter contains Akaki Tsereteli’s poem “Dawn”<sup>21</sup> which is preceded by Ilia Chavchavadze’s poem “Bazaleti Lake”<sup>22</sup>, while a textual relationship is built between the two with a question after “Dawn”: “How does this poem relate to Ilia’s “Bazaleti Lake”? What do these poems have in common?” (p.89, VII grade).

As for the question itself, “Who Is a Patriot”, the course regards the main characteristics of a patriot to be self-sacrificing and dedicated towards his or her homeland. By establishing certain intertextual links, the course builds the archetype of a patriot arriving to Tsotne Dadiani (there are two different texts in the book about him within the same topic) as an ultimate image of a patriot<sup>23</sup>.

Another topic in the XI grade textbook, “Who Should We Call a Courageous Man?”, also attempts to produce an archetype. The answer to this question is provided in the same way as above – the archetype of a courageous man is produced through the analysis of Vazha-Pshavela’s “Courageous Man” and his poetry from Pshavi (“An Ideal Hero Represented in the Poetry from Pshavi”). First feature of such a

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<sup>21</sup>Akaki Tsereteli - a famous Georgian writer of the end of 19th and beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Tsereteli’s poem is dedicated to the death in exile of Dimitri Kipiani, a prominent figure for the Georgian nationalist movement in 19<sup>th</sup> century. The poem describes how Kipiani unites with the motherland after death.

<sup>22</sup>Ilia Chavchavadze - a famous Georgian writer and publicist of the end of 19th and beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, leader of the national identity movement against the Russian empire. Chavchavadze’s poem is a narration about the myth of a golden cradle that lies on the bottom of the lake and in which the ultimate hero/liberator will be raised.

<sup>23</sup>Tsotne Dadiani is a 13<sup>th</sup> century Georgian nobleman who was charged with conspiracy against the Mongolian regime in Georgia. According to the story, he was tortured for the purpose of disclosing other conspirators’ names, but he refused and was eventually killed. He was later canonized by the Georgian orthodox church and became a prominent part of Georgian folklore.

hero/courageous man is his masculine looks opposed to “pretty or pale-skinned, [looking] like a woman”; This man also is serious and balanced and has dignity and courage.

Within this topic of the “Courageous Man”, there are further texts about literary figures, which are used as prototypes for “courageous man”. These include: “Are Ravens Startled at the Shot of a Pistol?” – this is a work of fiction in which a Georgian nobleman cannot tolerate the vulgar conduct of the Russian General, challenges him to a duel and dies in it; and “Men Wearing White and Black “Chokhas”<sup>24</sup> – where the main hero wearing white “chokha” flees from the men wearing black “chokhas”, but finally turns himself in, because a swallow builds its nest on his gun and he decides not to destroy the nest. In both cases, despite the fact that the main heroes know what to expect, they purposefully do what is more proper to do.

The production of such archetypes by a Literature course is an attempt to establish certain moral norms and criteria. The discourse which it produces provides a detailed definition of “a patriot”, on the one hand, and of “a hero”, on the other hand.

It is notable that unlike the VII-IX grade textbooks, there are fewer interpretations in the text books of advanced grades which would contain any types of ideological elements. This is especially notable with regards to the XI and XII grade textbooks where a major focus is popular fiction in Georgian Literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### **Christian Faith as the hollowness of the discourse**

Michel Foucault, when discussing the formation of discourse in his “Archaeology of Knowledge”, notes that the discourse is based on what is “not said” and what Foucault calls “hollow”. What is later formulated in the discourse has already been articulated in this “not-said” hollowness (Foucault, 1972 p. 25). Such “hollowness” in the case of the Georgian Language course is the Orthodox Christian faith.

The topic of religion and works of fiction that are of a religious nature occupy a considerable part of the VII-X grade textbooks. This fact alone does not mean anything; however, it is complemented with an observation which reveals that:

1. When discussing these works of fiction, the major focus is made not on their literary value, but their function to “strengthen the faith”. This is a clearly ideological element.

This statement is substantiated by the tasks and activities provided at the end of hagiographic works:

Provide arguments to your peers as to the importance of studying “The Passion of Saint Shushanik”<sup>25</sup>, e.g., as (a) the earliest literary work which survived till our times; (b) a historical

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<sup>24</sup> “Chokha” - Georgian national dress of men.

<sup>25</sup> “The Passion of Saint Shushanik” is the earliest surviving manuscript of Georgian literature, written between 476 and 483 AD. It describes the martyrdom of Saint Shushanik, an Armenian noblewoman, at the hand of her spouse, highprince Varsken, who had rejected Christianity and embraced Zoroastrianism. Shushanik, whose father was Vardan Mamikonyan, the military leader of the Christians in Armenia, refused to follow him, and died as a martyr after years of imprisonment and torture.

monument which provides very important information about the past history of our country;  
(c) a text of national importance which is also crucial to faith and the purpose of which is to set an example for the society and to support strengthening of the faith of the society. (p.57, X grade)

*“Discuss what hagiographers consider as a way of salvation for the nation. Please, provide arguments for your opinions from the text.” (p.185, X grade)*

As we can see, the original function of the hagiographic works is still extremely important for the Literature course – this function is noted by the Literature course itself as “strengthening the faith”, in which hagiographers saw the way of salvation for the nation. It should be noted here that the above question about hagiographers does not have a time dimension – “Discuss what hagiographers consider...” and not – “what hagiographers considered...” – this latter formulation would indicate that the solution is less relevant to modern times. Here is one of the opinions pieces on a hagiographic work:

*“The hagiographic ideal of a person has no past; it has a new present in each epoch; this ideal is always current and it connects the present with the eternal future” (p.193, X grade).*

Introducing this opinion into the discourse underlines that these texts still have the “function of strengthening the faith” today.

## 2. Works of fiction are interpreted from an Orthodox position<sup>26</sup>.

One of the topics of the XI grade textbook is “Turning Kartli to Christianity” which unites the texts about Saint Nino. Within this topic, Leonti Mroveli’s<sup>27</sup> work on the life of Saint Nino is followed by a vast theological interpretation of a range of symbols (vine cross, destruction of idols, Nino’s settlement in Makvlovani, etc.). The text also talks about the meaning of a mountain in Christianity:

*“Tkhoti Mountain where King Mirian saw the eclipse is not a usual mountain. This is Georgians’ Sinai where God comes to Mirian in a vision, Mirian comprehends His life-giving force, the King is transformed spiritually and he recognizes the true faith.” (p.29, IX grade).*

Such interpretation, of course, transcends an explanation of the religious functions of various symbols and the symbol itself becomes something that bears religious importance for the author.

Hagiographic works occupy the most part of the X grade textbook. Among these works is Ioane Sabanisdze’s “Torture of Abo”<sup>28</sup> which depicts the life and death of an Arab martyr turned to Christianity. At the end of this work, the following “opinion” is provided:

Abo leaves his country; he rejects his homeland and follows a stranger to a foreign country. In different circumstances, his conduct would definitely be condemned, but he left his country

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<sup>26</sup>Both theological and moral positions are included here with the latter based on the theological position.

<sup>27</sup>Leonti Mroveli was the 11th-century Georgian chronicler, presumably member of the clergy. He is an author of several novels, which are included in the book “Life of Kartli”.

<sup>28</sup>Abo Tbileli, an Arabian servant in Kartli (Georgian Kingdom) noble family, accepted Christianity and was tortured to death in 786 by Arabians who concurred Kartli. This story was described by Ioane Sabanisdze, a Georgian writer of 8th century.

like Abraham did. This was not only his will. He followed the will of God. He felt that there is something which is more precious than the homeland and, as it turned out in the end, more precious than his life as well. He heard the voice of truth and he left his country for this truth and followed Christ's calling till the end – "He who loves his father or mother more than me does not deserve me." Abo preferred this truth – a higher value – to his earthly homeland... He rejected the faith "which was brought upon with the use of arrows" and admitted the "true faith. (pp.87-88, X grade)

This opinion, first of all, asserts the true nature of the Christian faith which is above all other values, while juxtaposing "true faith", i.e. Christianity, with "the faith which was brought upon with the use of arrows", i.e. Islam. For the author, Abo's act of betraying his country ("rejects his homeland") is not important, as he was pushed ("called") by something which the author has also "heard" – "the voice of truth". The main phrase here is "in different circumstances", which underlines that Abo's act is distinguished (because it is an act that resembles the act of Abraham - "like Abraham did" - and it is based on the calling from God), meaning that in general betraying one's country is unacceptable to the author, but not in this case. It should be noted here that it is quite disputable whether Islam would be a "faith which was brought upon with the use of arrows" for an ethnic Arab who socialized in the Islamic culture. Based on the above, it is evident that this opinion is absolutely subjective in assessing these events – they are assessed not from Abo's perspective, but from the perspective of an Orthodox Christian for whom Arab Abo's perspective, homeland or truth do not exist and are altogether rejected.

It is interesting that the Literature course does not fully embrace an enthusiasm for "opinion" - it questions the "opinion" which says that Abo betrayed his country for a higher goal. The Literature course asks the following question which allows space to the possibility that Abo's actions might not necessarily mean that he betrayed his country:

*"In your opinion, would Abo consider his act as betrayal of his country? Do you consider his choice as betrayal of his homeland? Please, have a discussion." (p. 88, X grade)*

As we can see, the first question attempts to give space to a certain doubt that Abo's actions might not necessarily mean he betrayed his country. Afterwards, students are asked whether they consider Abo's actions as betrayal. In this indirect way, the Literature course encourages students to consider Abo's actions as not a "betrayal of his country". The Literature course presents a paradigm of patriotism as a universal and not a specifically Georgian phenomenon – patriotism is constructed as the same for representatives of all nations. Therefore, assuming that Abo betrayed his country, means that either Abo's actions should be assessed negatively (which would diminish his importance) or a new assumption has to come into play – that patriotism is not a necessary precondition in order to be a decent person. Of course, both of these assumptions are unacceptable for the discourse and thus, this part of the author's opinion is presented as disputable.

Thus, as discourse analysis reveals, vulnerability towards VE of Muslim non-Georgian youth community is pushed by overwhelming meta-narratives, which are the dominant background of Georgian literature and history textbooks. These meta-narratives imply that "true" Georgians are those who are ethnic Georgians and Orthodox Christians; they also ignore or diminish contribution of Eastern narratives in the history and

culture of Georgia, etc. These meta-narratives operate as knowledge with ultimate truth and actively exclude other viewpoints which are or can be the cornerstones for other cultural groups' world views. Alternative viewpoints are a priori delegitimized as untrue or less valuable.

## Recommendations

1. Taking into consideration that youth unemployment in rural settings is a pressing social problem (especially in Muslim and non-Georgian ethnic groups), the development of vocational training and professional re-training courses should be considered. This would create and support the development of proper incentives for seeking employment.
2. Development of sports and recreational facilities and hubs in municipal centers and rural areas should be considered, given that youth living in rural areas are concerned with the non-existence of such facilities.
3. Considering that Muslims, as well as other youth groups, have low trust to state decision making institutions, especially to local and central government, it is crucial to encourage, foster and facilitate spaces of dialogue between young people, representing different ethnic groups and religions, and key government actors (with power of taking decisions), in order to raise voices of youngsters.
4. Given that inclination in favor of RF and RWA becomes more powerful among Muslim youth groups, it is important to encourage dialogue between religious (especially, Muslim) leaders and institutions and civil society organizations, in order to ensure the shared values and practices for safety of coexistence of different ethnic and religious groups (including youth groups).
5. Since religious (Muslim oriented) boarding schools are places for young people to become deeply involved in religion practices, which themselves might lead to extremist attitudes, it is important that state institutions (especially Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports) monitor the compliance of boarding school curricula to the National Curriculum.
6. Assuming that young people of Azeri minority report about linguistic barriers to apply for high education academic programs, it is crucial to reinforce teaching of state (Georgian) language in curricula of Azeri public schools; also, provide cost-free (or low price) preparatory modules for national university entrance exams. The latter would be productive also for Kist youngsters since they talk about structural (social, economic, etc.) barriers to access to universities.
7. Taking into consideration that ethnically Georgians (especially in regions densely populated by non-ethnic Georgians) find it more difficult to associate themselves with other ethnic groups (ethnic minorities), it would be reasonable to initiate various youth programs, both by state and by civil society organizations, which promote collaborative practices in different domains of social life (education, culture, sports, politics, etc.).

8. Given that there is a positive attitude amongst some rural Muslim youth to travel and emigrate to Syria (to join “Jihad”), it becomes essential that preventive communication and education interventions are undertaken to counter such attitudes. By using local media outlets (community radio, newspapers, etc.) or organizing information sharing and discussion meetings with members of these communities, the destructive agenda of terrorist organizations can be revealed.
9. The school textbooks of Georgian Literature and History of Georgia should be free from the mainstream ethnocentric, holistic ideology and meta-narrative. The Georgian Literature curriculum should be revised with a view to enriching it with other significant (non-Georgian) literary artifacts; also, the History of Religion classes at public schools should offer the history of all the world’s major religions, not just the teachings of Orthodox Christianity.
10. Public school teachers need to be trained in areas such as managing diversity. Teachers should be qualified and able to teach and manage classes consisting of students from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds.
11. Programs facilitating exchange, such as those enabling placement of students from other regions into families, need to be put in place and increased. This would promote participating young people to adapt to living in settings and surroundings where views and opinions are different from theirs.
12. Increase availability and access to summer camps, in which the participation of youth with diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, special needs, physical or intellectual disabilities would be ensured.

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