

HYBRID WARFARE: A GEOSTRATEGIC CHALLENGE TO GEORGIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY, ETHNICALLY AND RELIGIOUSLY DIVERSE LOCATIONS AS SOFT POWER TARGETS

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Georgia is distinguished by its multi-religious and multi-ethnic diversity. There are a sufficient number of representatives of ethnic and religious minorities in the country. It is also worth noting the locations distinguished by their ethnic and religious diversity, especially in the eastern and southern parts of the country, in the Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti regions. The ethnic or religious minorities living there have been living together under the jurisdiction of our country for many centuries.

They are worthy citizens of our country. The state actively cares about their so-called reintegration and repatriation. However, this process is not in the interests of hostile countries, and in the context of hybrid warfare, foreign special services, using soft power in the context of destructive subversive activities, are actively trying to incite so-called ethnic and religious strife, artificially inspiring it among our local population and ethnic minorities. Among minorities, a classic example of this process was the anti-Georgian campaign that began in the early 1980s, which the Politburo of the Soviet Union actively used against Georgians and Abkhazians. Signs of so-called controlled separatism were revealed, and Abkhazian separatist activities against Georgia were encouraged.

Several members of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR often uttered threatening words in private conversations with the political leaders of allied Georgia, "If you don't behave wisely, we will crush you Abkhazians." The first outlines of controlled separatist movements began in the early days of the Soviet Union, when the USSR included Georgia as an allied republic. Abkhazia was an autonomous region with its own central committee, the first secretary of which actually obeyed Moscow directly, and not the first secretary of the Central Committee of Georgia, as had been the case during the Tsarist Empire in 1801. Soon after the de facto annexation of Georgia in 1893 and its formation as a Russian province, the Sokhumi district was abolished and renamed the Sokhumi Okrug. From the second half of the 20th century, especially during the so-called Soviet period of inactivity towards the end of the 1970s, the artificial incitement of ethnic strife between Georgians and Abkhazians began. The previously established controlled Abkhaz separatism was activated, and as a result, the processes led to the 1992-1993 war, which resulted in the fall of Sokhumi on September 27, 1993, which led to the violation of Georgia's territorial integrity and the collapse of constitutional order in Abkhazia.

Abkhazia is still ruled by a local self-proclaimed unrecognized puppet regime. In terms of conflict resolution and restoration of territorial integrity, the UN General Assembly resolution and record are of paramount importance, where the events of 1992-1993 are assessed not as an ethnic conflict between Georgians and Abkhazians, which is a damaging narrative against our country, but as a military-political conflict, which excludes the possibility of any ethnic conflict. Another record of the United Nations is also important, where the events of 1992-1993 are assessed as a conflict in Abkhazia and not as an imposed Georgian-Abkhazian conflict.

The Pankisi Gorge of the Akhmeta Municipality of the Kakheti Region is distinguished by both ethnic and religious characteristics. This high-mountainous location is bordered to the north by two North Caucasus provinces, Chechnya and Ingushetia. In the past centuries, during the "Mahajiroba" (artificial migration), the Pankisi Gorge was settled by ethnic Kists of Chechen origin. To this day, 40%-45% of the population in the gorge is made up of local Kists, who are citizens of Georgia. Religious diversity prevails in the area, with North Caucasian Wahhabism being the predominant religion. The mentioned location, due to its ethnic and religious diversity, is a vulnerable direction in terms of terrorist threats, in terms of the so-called "recruitment" of the local Wahhabi Kist population by international transnational terrorist organizations, however, it is noteworthy that in recent years, not a single fact of the outflow of local citizens of our country for recruitment has been recorded, and the centers of dissemination of terrorist and extremist content have been minimized, which is the result of a correct counter-terrorism strategy aimed at carrying out preventive and proactive measures.

It is also noteworthy that the process of coexistence between local authorities and ethnic minorities in the Pankisi Gorge is ideal, while the widespread disinformation that there are tense relations between Georgians and ethnic Kists on the ground is untrue and aims to artificially incite ethnic and religious strife.

An attempt to incite ethnic strife most likely took place in Dmanisi in May 2021, when local residents and ethnic Azerbaijanis in the village of Dmanisi, Kvemo Kartli, confronted each other as a result of a conflict that began on a communal basis. The confrontation began on May 16 and lasted for two days. According to available information, a domestic conflict began over the removal of the so-called "Nisiad" product from the store.

The owner of the store was a local resident of Svan origin, and ethnic Azerbaijanis requested to borrow the product from the store. As a result of the refusal, a confrontation began. Several dozen ethnic Azerbaijanis and local Georgians confronted each other using various objects. After the mobilization of police forces on the spot, the confrontation had already escalated into a confrontation between the population and the police. The population threw various types of illegal objects at the police. The situation calmed down the next day after the arrival of the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Head of the State Security Service at the spot. The opposing parties reconciled.

Several facts indicated signs of escalation and artificial incitement of ethnic hatred and inspiration for confrontation. The first was the circumstance that the illegal objects were several dozen so-called iron batons and The dense-shaped belts were mobilized on the spot in a very quick time of about half an hour and ended up in the hands of the opposing parties. In the event of further tension in the situation, it was not ruled out that there would be casualties on the spot, which could have resulted in damage to relations with our strategic partner country. The effective action of the police and state security forces on the spot in the so-called response part prevented a similar scenario of development of events. Based on all of the above, there were high probability that there were signs of artificial inspiration behind the events that developed in Dmanisi, and the destructive activities that developed contained signs of action in the context of soft power using hybrid warfare against our state.

In the event of further escalation of the processes, it was possible that there would be casualties on the spot, which would have had a damaging effect on relations with one of the neighboring states. The events that developed in Dmanisi, through the artificial inspiration of ethnic strife, high probability contained signs of damaging and subversive activities against our state, and Ultimately, the goal was to spoil relations with one of our neighboring strategic partner countries and to undermine the strategic partnership between the two countries. Foreign special services will most likely continue to try to artificially incite ethnic and religious strife in vulnerable areas of our country in the future. I believe that in this direction, it is necessary to take more proactive measures to prevent the need to react to a post-facto outcome.

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