



# Trends of Radicalization

Georgia/3.2 Research Report

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## List of Abbreviations

GM Georgian March

GOC Georgian Orthodox Church

GRASS Georgia's Reforms Associates

UOP Union of Orthodox Parents

## About the Project

D.Rad is a comparative study of radicalization and polarization in Europe and beyond. It aims to identify the actors, networks, and wider social contexts driving radicalization, particularly among young people in urban and peri-urban areas. D.Rad conceptualises this through the I-GAP spectrum (injustice-grievance-alienation-polarization) with the goal of moving towards measurable evaluations of de-radicalization programmes. Our intention is to identify the building blocks of radicalization, which include a sense of being victimised; a sense of being thwarted or lacking agency in established legal and political structures; and the influence of “us vs them” identity formulations.

D.Rad benefits from an exceptionally broad research background. The project spans national contexts including the UK, France, Italy, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Finland, Slovenia, Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo, Israel, Iraq, Jordan, Turkey, Georgia, Austria, and several smaller countries. It bridges academic disciplines ranging from political science and cultural studies to social psychology and artificial intelligence. Dissemination methods include D.Rad labs, D.Rad hubs, policy papers, academic workshops, visual outputs and digital galleries. As such, D.Rad establishes a rigorous foundation to test practical interventions geared to prevention, inclusion and de-radicalization.

With the possibility of capturing the trajectories of seventeen nations and several smaller ones, the project will provide a unique evidence base for the comparative analysis of law and policy as nation states adapt to new security challenges. The process of mapping these varieties and their links to national contexts will be crucial in uncovering strengths and weaknesses in existing interventions. Furthermore, D.Rad accounts for the problem that the processes of radicalization often occur in circumstances that escape the control and scrutiny of traditional national frameworks of justice. The participation of AI professionals in modelling, analysing and devising solutions to online radicalization will be central to the project’s aims.

## Executive Summary/Abstract

The following document, a report on radicalization and de-radicalization, was produced for the D.Rad project with the objectives of exposing the main trends of radicalization in Georgia: namely, identifying the actors and individuals who feature in radicalization events and examine the various factors on micro, meso and macro levels that facilitate such developments.

For this purpose, this report identifies two hotspots of radicalization and engages in their analysis. These are the attack on the LGBTQI community on May 17, 2013, and the violent attempt to storm a movie theatre on November 8, 2019. Actors and organisations have been identified as the main drivers of radicalization include alt-right groups, the Union of Orthodox Parents, and clergymen.

This report engages not only with the analysis of factors on a variety of levels, but also codes the discourse articulated by these actors behind the violent attacks, placing them on the I-GAP spectrum (injustice which lead to grievance, alienation, and polarisation). This questionnaire quantifies those narratives and helps with the measurement of (de)radicalization trends.

The main findings of this report suggest that in the case of alt-right and Orthodox Christian fundamentalists, key micro level factors include “defence of traditional values” and “family purity”, while meso factors are the network of different alt-right actors and unions. As for macro level factors, they include events on the world stage: the collapse of the USSR, the high level of economic inequality, the War in the Middle East, and the Second Chechen War.

## Introduction

The aim of this report is to identify the hotspots of radicalization central to the history of radicalization in Georgia, as well as to provide a multilevel analysis of the forces of radicalization and compile a list of facilitating factors behind these hotspots. Last but not least, this report will identify the causes and quantify them by placing them on the I-GAP spectrum.

Yet, before moving to these particular hotspots and the reason for their choice, a general contextual background needs to be provided in order to illustrate the general trends that provided a breeding ground for hotspots of radicalization. The prime event that needs to be mentioned is the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent hard years. Some economists estimate that in the early 1990s the Georgian economy contracted to the same level as that of Germany after its defeat in World War II. To be more exact, according to the International Monetary Fund, from 1991 to 1994 Georgia's Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) per head shrank by 61% from 5,550 USD to 2,466 USD (Forbes, 2018). The possible implications of such economic collapse cannot be disregarded, considering that it also led to a series of military conflicts, lawlessness, political instability, and poverty – breeding grounds for youth radicalization.

Similarly, another major contextual event that contributed to the radicalization that needs to be mentioned is the 2003 Rose Revolution - a key turning point in Georgian state building. Although rapid reforms by the post-revolution government addressed major shortcomings in the state's efficiency, corruption and criminality, the neoliberal agenda with mass privatization and layoffs from the public sector, disfranchised a large part of the population. Then the resulting non-inclusive economic boom triggered one of the highest income inequalities in the region (Kincha, 2018) and created fertile conditions for radicalization of certain groups in society.

When examining the contextual background of radicalization in Georgia, the role of the Orthodox Christian Church (GOC) cannot be avoided. Groups closely associated with the Georgian Orthodox Church have been behind most hotspots identified in this report and orthodox Christianity has been the main driving ideological force behind the violent attacks on ethnic, religious or sexual minorities. In the instances of hotspots chosen and discussed in the next sections of this report, orthodox Christian clergymen worked aligned with each other in their attempts to act as “moral police” in society, with their violent attacks on LGBTQI activists and supporters.

In comparison to the tandem of orthodox Christian fundamentalists and radical right-wing groups, domestic-grown Muslim radicalization has not yet expressed itself in Georgian society, meaning there have not been any attacks by Islamic groups. Thus, although the war in Syria and the emergence of the Islamic State have had a serious impact on Georgian Muslim youth, creating the right conditions for potential radicalization, these are not examined in this report as one of the hotspots. To begin with, this report will provide an overview of chosen hotspots and the reasoning behind their selection. Then it will move to the micro, meso and macro factors linked with those hotspots and facilitating and motivational factors before summing up

with a brief conclusion. For the empirics, the report will rely mainly on secondary sources: the media, several international think tanks, NGO reports and academic research,

## Hotspots of Radicalization

### Overview of chosen hotspots

As mentioned in the introduction of the report, the major source of radicalization in contemporary Georgian society can be traced to the tandem of orthodox Christian fundamentalists and alt-right groups. Thus, the two hotspots selected for the analysis involve radicalization driven by those groups. More specifically, violent attacks on LGBTQI groups and their supporters led by priests and far-right representatives, encapsulated in the language of “moral policing.” Selection of these hotspots for analysis cannot be understood without taking into consideration the consequences of the extreme neoliberal reform agenda and income inequality shown in youth radicalization. More specifically, although those violent attacks against minorities (especially based on their sexual and gender identities) are driven by religious justifications, they constitute manifestation of much broader tendencies as a result of being disfranchised by the neoliberal reform agenda.

Two specific events from this particular outcome of radicalization that are examined in detail within this report are: the violent attack on the LGBTQI community and their supporters on 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2013 and the attempt to storm into a movie theatre and stop the screening of a movie about a gay folk dancer in Georgia in the autumn of 2019.

### Method and reasons for choice of hotspots.

There is no comprehensive database of violent incidents and attacks in Georgia which groups have combined to create, nor does a search in the Global Terrorism Database yield any results for Georgia in the years 2000-2019. Thus, the method for the selection and identification of hotspots is mostly desk research. Violent acts that were conceptualized as hotspots are the ones which are committed by radicalized individuals linked to a radicalized milieu. Hence, the events identified as hotspots are premediated, potentially scalable acts of extremist violence which fall within the larger pattern of similar acts committed by the interlinked individuals, groups and networks of radical actors.

Two hotspots of radicalization (of Christian fundamentalists) were selected due to the importance of orthodox Christianity and its impact on youth radicalization, and especially as it is the key driving ideology behind the violent mob attacks and network of actors and groups organizing such incidents. It should be mentioned that Georgian society considers itself religious with the majority (up to 85%) belonging to the Georgian Orthodox Church (Caucasus Barometer, 2020), which highlights the potential influence of the GOC on radicalization. There were several instances of violent attacks on religious minorities, especially Jehovah Witnesses in the early 2000s, as well as attacks on sexual minorities, inspired and guided by orthodox clergymen. Alt-right groups in Georgia are in many cases interlinked and aligned with actors closely associated with, or even acting on behalf of, the Georgian Orthodox Church.



To summarize, as there is no comprehensive database that keeps track of all ideologically, politically or religiously motivated violent incidents in Georgia, selection of hotspots for this report was guided by desk research on cases that became notorious in the media. These were attacks on sexual minorities by the Orthodox Christian fundamentalists and alt-right groups and in another instance an attempt to disrupt the screening of the movie exploring issues of heteronormativity in Georgian folk dance culture.

## Micro, meso and macro factors

As already stated, this report identifies as hotspots events that are typically premeditated, potentially scalable acts of extremist violence within a larger pattern of similar acts that are linked or influenced by a radicalized group, network or organization. Thus, it is important to discuss the main *micro, meso, and macro* factors that are facilitating and motivating such trends.

## Violent attacks on LGBTQI community and its supporters on May 17 2013

Clergymen and conservative groups within the Georgian Orthodox Church had been preparing for 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2013 for couple of days in advance. Exactly a year before there had been an attempt by a smaller group of conservatives to stop LGBTQI activists from marching in the street on the International Day Against Homophobia celebrated on May 17<sup>th</sup>. This time, human right activists planned a silent flash mob in the city centre. However, clergymen and various alt-right groups were more organized and prepared to prevent this from happening, gathering thousands of people from parishes across the country.

Although a police cordon had been set up between the two parties, it could not contain the mass of people that broke through the barrier and chased LGBTQI activists who were on the other side. The police were forced to evacuate flash mob participants with buses at which stones were thrown and even attacked physically by the mob. By the end of the day, 28 people were in need of some kind of medical assistance (Tcheishvili, 2013). Soon afterwards, the Georgian Orthodox Church declared 17<sup>th</sup> of May a Day of Family Purity and it has since then been celebrating this as a holiday every year.

### Micro level factors

The conditions ripe for the flash mob organized by the LGBTQI community to develop into violent outbreaks had already appeared the day before, when the head of the Georgian Orthodox Church called on the authorities not to let this event take place and described it as a rally which was “an insult” to the majority of Georgians (Civil.ge, 2013). He compared the planned flash mob to drug addicts making a public display of drug addiction and argued that by “universal values, which are common across time and space”, homosexuality was considered to be an “anomaly and disease” (ibid). Encouraged by this statement, thousands of people, led by clergymen, gathered on the main avenue of Tbilisi to stop the “propaganda

of homosexuality” and prevent Georgia from sharing the fate of Sodom and Gomorra<sup>1</sup> (Civil.ge, 2013b).

Thus, what constitutes micro factors is usually a feeling of “defending traditional values” and saving society from perversions and degradation. As one of the participants of an anti-LGBTQI rally, whose identity is not mentioned in a video interview, remarked - homosexuality was a sin that was worse than committing a murder (“17 Maisi...”, 2013). She argued that the government needed to take more action, otherwise country was doomed due to these sins.

Similarly, ten days after the incident the late clergyman David Kvlividze, a proto-priest closely associated with the Union of Orthodox Parents (discussed in detail in the following section), and involved in several such incidents of violent attacks not only on minorities but even those who celebrated Halloween in 2008, argued, while addressing his parish that there was a global conspiracy of homosexuals to “cancel” traditional family institutions. He further claimed that it was a “propaganda of perversion” and it went against children’s’ rights. So, anyone with a “normal mind” would have acted as he did (“Homophobia, Teokratia da Demokratia ...”, 2013).

He had been notorious for his radical discourse and the spreading of conspiracy theories. For instance, in one interview with the local newspaper “Sakartvelo da Msoflio”, known for sharing pro-Kremlin sentiments, Kvlividze argued that the American political elite was conspiring to “erase from the memory of the nation everything that is Georgian” (Sakartvelo da Msoflio, 2017). On another occasion, he claimed that the rainbow flag was an “offence” to Christians (News.on.ge, 2017). The organization he belonged to, and for which he was the one of the main speakers until the end of his life, has been involved in protests against the Harry Potter series, Dan Brown’s “Da Vinci Code”, the Soros Foundation, various TV shows and other religious minorities, just to mention the few. His argument was always the same - that they went “against Georgian traditions”, or that those books, shows, organizations, etc. “impose” / “propagate” to Georgian society values that are “alien”, (Netgazeti, 2011). Recently he was actively involved in anti-vaxxer propaganda and in spreading a conspiracy theory that COVID-19 virus was not real and that a PCR test was actually a process of putting a microchip in one’s brain (FactCheck, 2020). However, Kvlividze died from the Coronavirus related complications very soon afterwards.

Thus, to conclude, micro factors behind such incidents mostly include a feeling that one is defending society and saving it from “all the perversions”. Attackers and organizers behind violence are motivated by radical conservative interpretation of what constitutes “family”, what is moral etc. The discourse articulated by proto-priest Kvlividze coded for this report, illustrates a Manichean construction of the world - “perverted”, “degraded” global elites that are “conspiring” against Orthodox Christian countries and their traditions.

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<sup>1</sup> Settlement mentioned in Bible, which allegedly was punished by the God for the sins of local population

## Meso level factors

When examining meso level factors behind this incident, one needs to take into consideration the network of fundamentalist religious groups and alt-right actors that were involved. For this particular hotspot, this report identified the Union of the Orthodox Parents (UOP) (Martmadidebel Mshobelta Kavshiri in Georgian), which has been vocal and, in many instances, physically assaulted various minority groups. It is an NGO which has been operating in Georgia since 1995. The organization does not maintain a list of members but welcomes anyone who shares its ideas and goals (Netgazeti, 2011). The Facebook page of the UOP lists the main goals of the organization and it includes the support of moral upbringing of youth. It vows to fight against “degrading elements”: drugs, prostitution, or legislation that enhances or promotes such “degradations”. Additionally, the union supports family protection and is against any attempts to “destroying traditional ways of life”. Last but not least, the organization aims to encourage the military spirit of Georgia through promoting the image of Georgia’s heroic history.

The need for the “defence of traditional values” against “global conspiracies” reproduced by actors like the UOP has been a key driving force behind the violent attacks on minorities. The Union of Orthodox Parents has also been involved in the spread of conspiracy theories on several occasions. Even during the Corona virus pandemic, members of this organisation claimed that collecting samples for PCR testing was actually a process of putting a microchip developed by Bill Gates into the brain (FactCheck, 2020). Thus, this network of institutions is meso level factors that help communities to organize for violence against minorities.

## Macro level factors

Macro level factors that are responsible for radicalization trends discussed in this report are grand events that had effects on all the sectors of society. Hence, all major factors examined in this part of the report are common for all the hotspots and had, to a certain degree, influenced trends of radicalization. These are the collapse of the Soviet Union, Rose Revolution, The Second Chechen War, and war in the Middle East. In the case of this specific hotspot one needs to point out:

1. The breakdown of the USSR has to be included in this list as it had a paramount impact on Georgian society and statehood. According to several estimates, the Georgian economy at the start of the 1990s shrank more than that of Germany after the defeat in World War II (Forbes, 2018). To be more precise, in just four years after the collapse of the Soviet Union the Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) of the population in Georgia fell by 61% (ibid). Therefore, it is not surprising that in the first years after the restoration of independence Georgia went through economic hardship, experiencing several military conflicts and armed rebellion and ending with the overthrow of the president. This period of the collapse of state institutions, and thus their failure to provide basic services to its citizens (paying salaries, pensions, dealing with high level of crimes or providing electricity and gas) became known in Georgian popular history as “the dark 90s”.

The impact of those years is evidenced in various ways up to this day. However, due to the specific focus of this report, it concentrates on the emergence of the Georgian Orthodox

Church as the dominant institution that has maintained stability and continuity in the chaos. Therefore, the influence of the GOC has grown substantially and it has become an inseparable part of Georgian national identity discourse. Studies show that the share of respondents who believe that to be considered Georgian it was either important or very important to possess faith in Orthodox Christianity is 44% and 44,2% respectively (Gugushvili et al. 2015, 16). Additionally, examining time-series dataset on trust in various institutions illustrates that if trust in the courts for years remained consistently around 20-25%, falling to 13% in the last couple of years, trust in Parliament has varied between 15-44% over the years, trust in the religious institutions has been consistently above 80% (Caucasus Barometer 2019b, 2019c, 2019d). To put it differently, the stable and rigid Orthodox Church provided shelter for many in the time of an ideological vacuum caused by the fall of the Communist state accompanied by years of economic downturn and political instabilities. Thus, it is logical that level of wealth, education, settlement type, age, and ethnicity play a role in whether one views the collapse of the USSR positively. Younger, ethnic Georgians, with higher education and living in urban areas are more likely to agree that it was a good thing (Future of Georgia 2021, 32).

2. At the turn of the century another major event took place in Georgian politics that can be considered as one of the macro factors behind radicalization. Namely, the Rose Revolution in November 2003, when days of peaceful protests ended with the resignation of the president. The new government, consisting of people in their late 20s and early 30s, embarked upon radical reforms of the country. Literally under a new flag, new coat of arms and new national anthem, Georgia went through rapid mass privatisation and layoffs in the public sector, resulting in non-inclusive economic growth and one of the highest income inequalities in the region (Kinchia, 2018). This “top-down liberalism” left masses disfranchised and pushed them towards conservative groups, while minority rights became “fully embedded into their liberal agenda ... where income redistribution and social protections are not only redundant but seen as hostile to freedom” (ibid). Minority groups and activists were expected to keep challenging conservative society, yet without opposing the neo-liberal agenda coming from the post-Rose Revolution government. Ultra conservative groups and alt-right actors, that are usually behind most violent incidents and are labelled by the main civil society actors as “pro-Russians”, draw support from such disenfranchised sectors of the Georgian society.

## Attempt to violently storm in the cinema and disrupt movie screening on November 8 2019

In the beginning of November 2019, there was a showing of the Swedish-Georgian movie, “And Then We Danced” featuring a story of a gay dancer in a conservative Georgian folk dance ensemble. This news, although they had not watched the movie or found out what exactly was the plot, was presented by the alt-right and Orthodox Christian fundamentalist groups as “an offence to Georgian traditions” (Civil.ge, 2019). Radical groups and religious fundamentalist mobilized in front of the cinema house where the screening was supposed to take place and tried to break into the building, despite the erection of a police cordon. The crowd also threw firecrackers and different objects at the police. Despite several hours of “wrestling” with the police, the movie screening still took place and the radical groups failed to achieve their goal of violently breaking into the cinema.

### Micro level factors

In order to uncover micro level factors behind this hotspot, it is important to examine the discourse and language articulated by the organisers and participants of the protest. Closer analysis reveal that it was no different from the hotspot discussed before. Namely, the “defence of traditional values”, that the institution of the family is allegedly under attack, etc.

The leader of the Georgian March, Sandro Bregadze, said that they were against the screening of the “gay propaganda” movie, suggesting that it served some grand purpose or conspiracy (ibid). While another leader of the movement, Margoshia, argued that the purpose of the protests was to show that “100-200 bastards” did not represent Georgia (ibid). Another organizer of the protests, Guram Palavandishvili, also remarked that if the police resisted their attempts, it would mean that law enforcement would be protecting “perversion of our kids” (Publika, 2019).

One of the key spokespersons for these groups is a self-proclaimed knight and a businessman, Levan Vasadze. He is considered by some scholars to be the main ideologue of Georgian nativism (Nodia, 2018) and received higher education in the United States, as well as from Saint Tikhon's Orthodox University of Humanities in Moscow (NPLG, n.d.). He is also known as chairman of the Demographic Renaissance Foundation of Georgia since 2013. Recently, he has founded a political party “Ertoba, Raoba, Imedi” which roughly translates from Georgian as “Unity, Essene, and Hope”. The abbreviation ERI in Georgian could also be read as *eri* - a Georgian word for nation. Vasadze is known to be close to Alexander Dugin (Civil.ge, 2021), a notorious ideologue of Russian Eurasianism and controversial for his fascist views.

In summary, micro level factors in case of this hotspot are very similar to those of the 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2013 developments as the participants were motivated to defend traditional values, which were allegedly under attack from some global forces. Vasadze's personal motivation also included, at least on a discursive level, disappointment with the current Georgian political elites and latter's “liberal” policy agenda.

### Meso level factors

As is the case with the hotspot discussed in the previous section, for the analysis of meso level factors one needs to study the network of institutions in place that were behind this incident. One such organization, whose leaders and members were actually involved in the attempt to storm the cinema, was The Georgian March (GM) (Kartuli Marshi in Georgian).

The Georgian March was established in 2017 by the uniting of various ultraconservative and nationalists' groups, after the so-called “March of the Georgians” was held in downtown Tbilisi, where they demanded tough immigration laws and the deportation of illegal immigrants (Civil.ge, 2020). On one occasion, the leaders of Georgian March announced their plans (albeit these never materialized) to patrol streets downtown and to document and report illegal activities by immigrants (Democracy and Freedom Watch, 2018). It was officially turned into a political party in April 2019. The Georgian March's key promise was to reinstate the specification “ethnicity” in Georgian passports and ID cards (which had been removed from

personal documents in the late 1990's following the Council Europe recommendations.) This has been a key talking point for conservatives ever since (Reisner, 2010, Democracy and Freedom Watch, 2019)). The party ran in the 2020 parliamentary elections, albeit with no success as its level of votes did not even pass the 1% threshold.

Georgian March and other groups or individuals associated with the alt-right used to run several pages on social media. In January 2021, after being banned from Facebook, Alt Info started broadcasting a TV channel whose message is '*Stay tuned. Don't switch to the liberast<sup>2</sup> channels*' and is available to 340 000 subscribers on the internet television provider Magticom (Kinch, 2021). The TV channel reports on news from across Europe and the US, framing it in Manichean language (the "true people" vs. "corrupt" elites, "traditional values" vs. "perverted liberals," "Christian Europe" vs. "Muslim immigrants" etc.)

### Macro level factors

Macro level factors in this case are the same as in the hotspot discussed previously -this is due to the fact that the actors behind this trend are closely related or the same as in the 2013 attack. However, between 2013-2019, one important event happened that had a direct influence and gave a considerable boost to the Georgian alt-right. That was the victory of Donald J. Trump in the US Presidential race in 2016. Success of a western counterparty allowed Georgian alt-right actors to escape the "pro-Russian" label and argue for their cause from the (very popular in Georgia) pro-Western foreign policy prism.

To conclude this part, there are several meso and micro factors behind this network of actors, especially Orthodox fundamentalists and alt-right. According to the survey "Future of Georgia" published in 2021, ethnic minorities, people from rural settlements and the unemployed are less likely to say that the Georgians need to be more tolerant (Future of Georgia 2021, 15). Furthermore, the survey suggests that along the ethnic minorities, those with higher education, living in the capital as well as being under 34 years of age are less likely to agree with the statement that ethnic and linguistic minorities pose a potential security threat for Georgia (ibid, 16). Similar factors influence the willingness to support court hearings being held in minority languages (ibid, 17). Thus age, education, and settlement type can be considered the main factors behind the level of tolerance, and therefore the extent to which people could relate to the causes of groups involved in the hotspots, as discussed above. As for macro level factors that need to be taken into consideration when examining radicalization trends in Georgia, they are the dissolution of the USSR and its economic consequences on Georgia, the Rose Revolution and the Trump victory in 2016 that gave a boost to the Georgian alt-right.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Liberast' is a term made up of combining words 'liberal' and 'paedarast' (slur word used for gay men) and is often encountered in Russian anti-liberal discourse.

## Facilitating factors

The study of facilitating factors behind the hotspots of radicalization discussed in this report requires detailed analysis of several trends: a) general low trust in the institutions b) the role of Orthodox Christianity and the Orthodox Christian Church's positioning as a "defender of traditional values" in Georgian society, and c) liberal legislation on the freedom of expression which allows TV channels, namely, Alt-Info, to broadcast legally extreme ideological views to wide audiences.

The first two factors (a and b) are interrelated as the high level of trust in the Church and in the Patriarch in person stand in a stark contrast with the executive or legislative government, for which there is a low level of trust. Analysis of the time-series dataset for Georgia produced by the Caucasus Barometer (2019b, 2019c, 2019d) shows that trust in the executive government stood at 21%, the number for Parliament was 15%, but for political parties just 8% and trust in the courts was only 17%, in contrast to religious institutions for which trust was at a level of 71%. Another opinion poll suggests that 89% of people found the Patriarch the most acceptable public figure. In comparison, the runner-up, PM at the time, Giorgi Gakharia got 65 % of acceptance (Radio Liberty. "IRI's study...", 2021). Such low trust in the state institutions and especially the courts, facilitates radicalization since the feeling of not obtaining justice or that there is no state institution you could turn to, alienates and pushes people towards non-state actors (the Church in this case).

Radical actions are further facilitated by the fact that clergymen, or people associated with the Georgian Orthodox Church, are never adequately prosecuted or punished for their violent actions. For instance, although violent acts by clergymen had been documented and proved by the witnesses, none of them were persecuted and the court argued there was not enough evidence (Ghavitadze et al., 2020, 32). Formally, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia is obliged to issue statements about opening investigations into cases of calls for violence or similar acts by these actors, however it rarely produces any concrete result or proper prosecution of individuals. This *de facto* immunity facilitates violent attacks against minorities, as with the backing of the Georgian Orthodox Church. those who are responsible never get arrested and prosecuted.

Access to information needs to be included among the facilitating factors as well. Overall, Georgian legislation regulating freedom of expression is very liberal and it follows the American model rather than the European. This laxity permits radical groups to spread their ideas more easily and to get large masses mobilised. As recently as in January 2021, a TV channel Alt Info, started broadcasting in Georgia while it was banned by Facebook (Kincha, 2021). Frequent guests appearing on this channel include Levan Vasadze, an ultraconservative campaigner and businessman often seen among the leaders of violent attacks against sexual minorities. During one of such interviews he told Alt Info that the storming of the Capitol in Washington was orchestrated by Trump's 'globalist' enemies (ibid), according to the TV channel reports on news from across Europe and the US, framing it in Manichean language. Homophobia continues to be especially problematic, as against a background of declining xenophobia and racism in speech, it is on the rise (Civil.ge, 2019c),

indicating potential sources that the alt-right and populist groups could draw on for radicalization.

To summarize this section, there are three major trends that could be identified as facilitating factors of radicalization: trust in the law as enacted by the state institutions, positioning of the Georgian Orthodox Church and liberal interpretation of the freedom of expression.

## Motivational factors to be quantified in the IGAP questionnaire

This part of the report focuses on the discourse of the actors involved in the hotspots and examines motivational factors behind their actions. In order to achieve that, this section will analyse textual data that consists of interviews, speeches and addresses delivered by the representatives of religious fundamentalist groups, certain political parties, and alt-right entities<sup>3</sup>.

Analysis and coding of the texts revealed that in case of Orthodox Christian fundamentalists and alt-right actors, most prevalent was the sense of grievance against the LGBTQI community - that is blaming it for deliberately “attacking” and “perverting” the institution of the family. This leads to polarisation and the emergence of an us/them dichotomy where “us” is defined as heterosexual which is “getting discriminated against” by them (sexual minorities).

One of the actors whose discourse was coded is Levan Vasadze, who had just announced that he was going into politics (Civil.ge, 2021). He is known as a businessman closely associated with Russia, and has been described by some scholars as one of the chief ideologues of Georgian nativism (Nodia, 2018). Vasadze has been personally involved in the attempts to disrupt Tbilisi Pride and is closely associated with the groups behind the hotspots discussed in this report. Thus, the analysis of discourse will provide a good overview of the motivational factors for the Orthodox Christian fundamentalists and alt-right actors.

These actors are mostly motivated by the defence of traditional values and morality and they understand their actions as a fight against “propaganda of homosexuality” and “threats” to family purity (Civil.ge, 2020b). Levan Vasadze, in an interview with an American conservative media outlet, spoke of the “*selective westernization*” which he defined as taking all the productive and progressive things from the West and throwing away all the garbage. “*In this particular case, your current pseudo-moral standards need to stay outside of Georgia if we want to maintain the family institute as it always has been in Georgia*” Vasadze told to the American media (Thomas, 2016).

Motivational factors are very similar and, in several instances, replicate justifications of their actions offered by far-right and populist political entities in Europe and the USA. For example, an online media platform in 2017 published three short series titled “Clash of Narratives: A

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<sup>3</sup> Quantified in the IGAP questionnaire attached to this report



Tale of Georgias”, which juxtaposed two women: leader of the Alliance of Patriots of Georgia, Irma Inashvili and the editor in chief of liberal magazine Tabula. In the first episode ‘Freedom’ vs. ‘Tradition’, Inashvili says the following: *“the contemporary world is throwing away what I call pseudo-liberal values. It got tired, threw it away and it’s moving toward something new. And what is this new? In reality, it is a return to the past”* (“Clash of Narratives”, 2017). She argues that there are certain values that are “being imposed” by the West and they go against Georgian “traditions”. In the second episode of the series, she further elaborates her stand and argues that there used to be a time *“when the French were proud to be French! ... That is not the case anymore. Now everybody is saying I am a European and that is all.”* (“Clash of Narratives”, 2017b). In the final episode of the series the leader of the Alliance of the Patriots mentions that she was 21 when she visited Brussels for the first time and the door to NATO was opening to Georgia. *“But today I am 46 years old and NATO is still telling us that it will not accept us”* (“Clash of Narratives”, 2017c). In other words, disappointment that the Euro-Atlantic integration process has been stalled for years provides justification and motivation for challenging liberal-democratic principles and pursuing alternative means of doing politics.

These comments indicate that the key motivational factors behind the hotspots are the fear of minorities, especially sexual minorities who are perceived as a threat to the Georgian national identity, as understood through the prism of Orthodox Christianity, and conservative values. Additionally, the government is seen as being an ally of those “global forces” who are “conspiring” against traditional family values, which is very similar to the concept of the “deep state” gaining popularity among the alt-right in the West. Hence, an alternative means of operating politically is sought and is manifesting itself in violence against minorities. For instance, during his attempts to obstruct Tbilisi Pride, Vasadze remarked: *“We know that this is a direct and rough interference into our internal affairs (...) [The West] tries to impose on us non-traditional, anti-Christian, anti-Caucasian, anti-Georgian norms, (...) I am inviting mainly men. What needs to be done, needs to be done by men”* (Civil.ge, 2019c). Whether these attacks on LGBTQI minorities are indeed motivated by the fear and distrust in the state, or simply guided and funded by the third party (Russian Federation in this case) is beyond the scope of this study. The discourse which is quantified in the IGAP questionnaire attached to this report, provides an outline of motivational factors that are publicly visible.

## Conclusions

This purpose of this report was to identify two hotspots of radicalization in Georgia, discuss major macro, meso and micro factors behind these trends and examine motivational factors of the key players, which are later quantified in the IGAP questionnaire attached to this report.

Hotspots which are analysed within this report are: the 2013 attack on LGBTQ activists and the 2019 attempt to disrupt a movie screening.

The main macro factors behind the hotspots of radicalization include the collapse of the USSR, the Rose Revolution, high income inequality, and the victory of Donald Trump in the American presidential race in 2016. Micro and meso factors are the dominant role of Orthodox Christianity in national identity discourses and the role of the Georgian Orthodox Church,

along with that of alt-right groups in positioning themselves as the “defender of traditional values”.

Among facilitating factors of radicalization, this report identified low trust in state institutions, especially the judiciary system, groups associated with the Georgian Orthodox Church getting away with violence, and liberal legislation on freedom of expression.

Last but not least, there were motivational factors deduced from analysis of discourses by these players which were: believing that traditional family values are under threat, that there is “gay propaganda” going on and the distrust of the “deep state”. However, it should be noted that there was visible dissonance between the micro-meso-macro level factors and the motivational factors in the first two hotspots (attack on LGBTQI community in 2013 and the attempt to storm the movie theatre in 2019). Usually actors responsible for violence have not been prosecuted, yet the discourse outlined their key justification for violent actions as being that the political elite is “corrupted” and allegedly “serves the interests” of some “globalist forces.”

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[4sV1cGokwSNrffgVKal&index=5](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38eoVbxErQI&list=PL0w0DC8uARXy1_4sV1cGokwSNrffgVKal&index=5) Last accessed 12.05.2021

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## Annex: I-GAP Coding

### Violent attacks on LGBTQI community and its supporters on May 17 2013

Actor 1: Levan Vasadze

#### *Injustice Coding*

<b>Q1. To what extent the hotspot is a response to injustice?</b>	2
<b>Comments to Q1</b>	In case of this hotspot, anti-LGBTQI violence is motivated as a response to "propaganda" of the sin, or what is considered as immoral by the Orthodox Christianity
<b>Q2. To what extent was the actor motivated by a real or perceived systemic bias or prejudice which leads to consistently unfair treatment?</b>	2
<b>Comments to Q2</b>	For instance in an interview with CBN News Vasadze argued ""The frontline of that war is no longer found on the geographic map of this planet," he warned. "The frontline of this war is in every living room and in every bedroom where your wife and my wife and our children sleep." - indicating that "traditional" families are under attack from LGBTQI activists
<b>Q3. To what extent the injustice is linked to issues of redistribution?</b>	1
<b>Comments to Q3</b>	
<b>Q4. To what extent the injustice is linked to issues of recognition?</b>	1
<b>Comments to Q4</b>	
<b>Q5. To what extent the injustice is linked to issues of representation?</b>	4
<b>Comments to Q5</b>	In several instances the government is accused of "conspiring" against Orthodox Christians and of "being an ally" of the "Globalists". Thus, alt-right actors are longing for a considerable representation in the parliament, yet, so far unsuccessfully.

#### *Grievance Coding*

<b>Q1. How specific is the experienced grievance?</b>	2
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<b>Comments to Q1</b>	
<b>Q2. How extensive and diverse is the list of grievances?</b>	3
<b>Comments to Q2</b>	2013 attack on LGBTQI activists was preceded by smaller scale of violence in 2012. One year later, the Church and far-right groups organized massive gathering to disrupt the gathering.
<b>Q3. How personal is the grievance?</b>	3
<b>Comments to Q3</b>	
<b>Q4. How formalized is the demand to address the grievance?</b>	1
<b>Comments to Q4</b>	In the case of this hotspot, the government is accused of protecting sexual minorities and was called to introduce certain regulations. For instance marriage definition in the constitution or removing word gender from antidiscrimination bill.
<b>Q5. How realistic are the prospects to address the grievance?</b>	3
<b>Comments to Q5</b>	So far alt-right has not been in the ruling coalition or any considerable force in the parliament. However, number of actors positioning as conservative/populist in politics is growing.

*Alienation Coding*

<b>Q1. How specific and central is the sense of alienation?</b>	5
<b>Comments to Q1</b>	Orthodox Christians are being discriminated by sexual minorities is how actors perceive current states of affair
<b>Q2. How voluntary is the process of alienation?</b>	
<b>Comments to Q2</b>	
<b>Q3. How complete is the alienation?</b>	4
<b>Comments to Q3</b>	Alt-right is seeking to "take actions in their own hand" as according to them the government doesn't do anything to defend traditional values
<b>Q4. How entrenched is the alienation?</b>	2
<b>Comments to Q4</b>	
<b>Q5. How reversible is the sense of alienation?</b>	2
<b>Comments to Q5</b>	



*Polarisation Coding*

<b>Q1. To what extent does the actor consider the political field to be polarized?</b>	4
<b>Comments to Q1</b>	There is general distrusts in the political parties and institutions
<b>Q2. How high is the perceived level of the polarization?</b>	4
<b>Comments to Q2</b>	
<b>Q3. To what extent do the actor's opinions radically contrast with the institutions (political, religious, cultural) and policies that are currently in place?</b>	3
<b>Comments to Q3</b>	Although the Georgian Orthodox Church publicly condemned violence, attack on LGBTQI supporters in 2013 was led by priests and even encouraged by the Patriarch's statement from a day before <a href="https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=26062">https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=26062</a>
<b>Q4. To what extent does the actor consider the political field to be polarized as compared with the social sphere?</b>	2
<b>Comments to Q4</b>	
<b>Q5. Did the actor consider their radical positions to have a clear outlet on the institutional, cultural, or political spectrum prior to the hotspot?</b>	2
<b>Comments to Q5</b>	

*Actor 2: David Kvlividze*

*Injustice Coding*

<b>Q1. To what extent the hotspot is a response to injustice?</b>	1
<b>Comments to Q1</b>	
<b>Q2. To what extent was the actor motivated by a real or perceived systemic bias or prejudice which leads to consistently unfair treatment?</b>	2
<b>Comments to Q2</b>	The message is that heterosexual majority is getting discriminated against homosexual minority

<b>Q3. To what extent the injustice is linked to issues of redistribution?</b>	1
<b>Comments to Q3</b>	
<b>Q4. To what extent the injustice is linked to issues of recognition?</b>	2
<b>Comments to Q4</b>	
<b>Q5. To what extent the injustice is linked to issues of representation?</b>	4
<b>Comments to Q5</b>	There are calls that people need to take more actions, since government does nothing to "stop propaganda of homosexuality"

*Grievance Coding*

<b>Q1. How specific is the experienced grievance?</b>	1
<b>Comments to Q1</b>	
<b>Q2. How extensive and diverse is the list of grievances?</b>	3
<b>Comments to Q2</b>	
<b>Q3. How personal is the grievance?</b>	4
<b>Comments to Q3</b>	"there is global conspiracy" of LGBTQI community against traditional family institution
<b>Q4. How formalized is the demand to address the grievance?</b>	3
<b>Comments to Q4</b>	
<b>Q5. How realistic are the prospects to address the grievance?</b>	4
<b>Comments to Q5</b>	

*Alienation Coding*

<b>Q1. How specific and central is the sense of alienation?</b>	4
<b>Comments to Q1</b>	
<b>Q2. How voluntary is the process of alienation?</b>	3
<b>Comments to Q2</b>	
<b>Q3. How complete is the alienation?</b>	1
<b>Comments to Q3</b>	
<b>Q4. How entrenched is the alienation?</b>	1
<b>Comments to Q4</b>	
<b>Q5. How reversible is the sense of alienation?</b>	2
<b>Comments to Q5</b>	

*Polarisation Coding*

<b>Q1. To what extent does the actor consider the political field to be polarized?</b>	5
<b>Comments to Q1</b>	Political elite is accused of being corrupted
<b>Q2. How high is the perceived level of the polarization?</b>	4
<b>Comments to Q2</b>	
<b>Q3. To what extent do the actor's opinions radically contrast with the institutions (political, religious, cultural) and policies that are currently in place?</b>	4
<b>Comments to Q3</b>	
<b>Q4. To what extent does the actor consider the political field to be polarized as compared with the social sphere?</b>	2
<b>Comments to Q4</b>	
<b>Q5. Did the actor consider their radical positions to have a clear outlet on the institutional, cultural, or political spectrum prior to the hotspot?</b>	1
<b>Comments to Q5</b>	

*Attempt to violently storm in the cinema and disrupt movie screening on November 8 2019*

*Injustice Coding*

<b>Q1. To what extent the hotspot is a response to injustice?</b>	1
<b>Comments to Q1</b>	Movie is exploring issues of heteronormativity and a struggle of a gay dancer in Georgian folk dance ensemble and was perceived as an offence to traditional values
<b>Q2. To what extent was the actor motivated by a real or perceived systemic bias or prejudice which leads to consistently unfair treatment?</b>	2
<b>Comments to Q2</b>	"traditional values" are under attack
<b>Q3. To what extent the injustice is linked to issues of redistribution?</b>	1
<b>Comments to Q3</b>	
<b>Q4. To what extent the injustice is linked to issues of recognition?</b>	4

<b>Comments to Q4</b>	He says that nobody has ever helped him in this country, only being laughed at and discredited
<b>Q5. To what extent the injustice is linked to issues of representation?</b>	5
<b>Comments to Q5</b>	

### Grievance Coding

<b>Q1. How specific is the experienced grievance?</b>	3
<b>Comments to Q1</b>	
<b>Q2. How extensive and diverse is the list of grievances?</b>	4
<b>Comments to Q2</b>	
<b>Q3. How personal is the grievance?</b>	4
<b>Comments to Q3</b>	More like "global forces" are conspiring against traditional family values
<b>Q4. How formalized is the demand to address the grievance?</b>	2
<b>Comments to Q4</b>	Calling for regulations on "gay propaganda"
<b>Q5. How realistic are the prospects to address the grievance?</b>	
<b>Comments to Q5</b>	

### Alienation Coding

<b>Q1. How specific and central is the sense of alienation?</b>	1
<b>Comments to Q1</b>	All the state institutions are perceived to be on the side of the sexual minorities
<b>Q2. How voluntary is the process of alienation?</b>	1
<b>Comments to Q2</b>	
<b>Q3. How complete is the alienation?</b>	3
<b>Comments to Q3</b>	
<b>Q4. How entrenched is the alienation?</b>	2
<b>Comments to Q4</b>	
<b>Q5. How reversible is the sense of alienation?</b>	2
<b>Comments to Q5</b>	

### Polarisation Coding

<b>Q1. To what extent does the actor consider the political field to be polarized?</b>	4
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<b>Comments to Q1</b>	general distrust towards the state and political parties
<b>Q2. How high is the perceived level of the polarization?</b>	5
<b>Comments to Q2</b>	
<b>Q3. To what extent do the actor's opinions radically contrast with the institutions (political, religious, cultural) and policies that are currently in place?</b>	3
<b>Comments to Q3</b>	The Georgian Orthodox Church is considered the only ally
<b>Q4. To what extent does the actor consider the political field to be polarized as compared with the social sphere?</b>	2
<b>Comments to Q4</b>	
<b>Q5. Did the actor consider their radical positions to have a clear outlet on the institutional, cultural, or political spectrum prior to the hotspot?</b>	4
<b>Comments to Q5</b>	