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TERRORISM IN POST-SOVIET SPACE. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PHENOMENON IN THE FORMER SOVIET REPUBLICS AFTER 2014

ABSTRACT: The post-Soviet states are also known as the former Soviet Republics (FSR). With the collapse of the USSR in 1991, Moscow lost almost a quarter of its territory and nearly 150,000,000 people. As a result of this process, 15 sovereign states emerged or reemerged. The post-Soviet states are very diverse in terms of culture, economy, and politics. Moreover, the phenomenon of terrorism varies in the indicated area. The research goal of this study is to identify trends related to terrorism taking place in the post-Soviet space in the years 2014-2020 (in some cases, the analysis covers the years 2015-2019, due to data availability). The research area covers the former Soviet republics, which are further divided by the authors into four subregions (Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Transcaucasia, and Baltic states) that are linked by cultural and geopolitical factors. Therefore, the research object covers 15 states and 4 subregions.

KEYWORDS: Post-Soviet Space, Russian Federation, former Soviet republics, terrorism

Introduction. The post-Soviet FSRs characteristic

The post-Soviet states are also known as the former Soviet Republics (FSR). In the Russian Federation (RF), they are called 'near abroad' (*blizhneye zarubezhye*). With the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1991, Moscow lost almost a quarter of its territory and nearly 150,000,000 people. For comparison, the territory of the European Union is more than 4,000,000 km², and the number of inhabitants is 508,000,000. As a result of this process, 15 sovereign states emerged or reemerged from the USSR: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan.

The post-Soviet states are very diverse in terms of culture, economy, and socio-politics. The largest state in the area and an indisputable regional power

is the Russian Federation. Ukraine is, in turn, one of the largest post-Soviet states with over 42 million inhabitants, of which more than 8 million are ethnic Russians. It is located in a strategic subregion. Its immediate neighbor is Moldova, a country with a population of 4 million. Among the independent states established after the collapse of the USSR, located in Central Asia, Kazakhstan is the richest, with a population of approximately 17.544 million. Due to the vastness of the territory, it is characterized by a low population density. The neighboring Uzbekistan is the most populous country with around 31.299 million people. The rest of Central Asian states are much smaller: Tajikistan – 8.48 million inhabitants, Kyrgyzstan – almost 5.95 million, Turkmenistan – 5.37 million. The other states: Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia are located in the South Caucasus. Armenia, with a population of around 3 million, is the smallest in this group of countries. The second position belongs to Georgia – 3.72 million inhabitants. Azerbaijan is definitely ahead of both Armenia and Georgia in this regard, as its population is just over 10 million. The last three states that were part of the USSR: Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia are collectively referred to as the Baltic States. The most northerly Estonia is located on the Gulf of Finland and the Baltic Sea; with a population of 1.3 million, with cultural and linguistic ties to Finland. Latvia, with a population of less than 2 million, is located between the Gulf of Riga and the Baltic Sea. The southernmost Lithuania is inhabited by almost 3 million people. This short description shows the vast diversity of the region. Therefore, the study has been divided into 4 analytical subregions to test this hypothesis.

1. Methodological remarks

Despite numerous studies on this phenomenon, the creation of a universal definition of the concept poses problems not only at the state level, but also at the United Nations forum. Despite many years of attempts to conceptualize the concept of terrorism, the UN has not reached a consensus on this matter. The analysis of almost 200 different definitions conducted by two teams (see: Schmid | Jongman 1988; Weinberg | Pedahzur | Hirsch-Hoefler 2002) shows that the lack of an unambiguous definition does not result from the lack of common elements appearing in these descriptions, but largely depends on the interpretation of the sources and effects of terrorist attacks. Therefore, it is possible that terrorist organizations, in pursuit of a specific goal, may engage in both attacks and political activity, sometimes even simultaneously, as exemplified by Hamas, and some state entities, under certain circumstances, are able to use or support terrorist activities to implement the assumed goals.

Scientific research on terrorism problems is extensive. Some refer holistically to the problem and the other to its certain aspects: emphasizing the genesis of this phenomenon, definitional issues, methods of operation, or recruitment techniques

(see: Frank | Gruber 2012; Laqueur 2017; Hoffman 2018; Townshend 2018; Chenoweth | English | Gofas et al. 2019; Lutz | Lutz 2019; Stohl 2020). The rich literature on terrorism indicates the need for research on this phenomenon. However, it is not easy to find publications on terrorism in post-Soviet space. In fact, the only holistic publication of this type is the article by Dennis A. Pluchinsky entitled *Terrorism in the former Soviet Union: A primer, a puzzle, a prognosis* published in 1998. Another article on *Suicide terrorism in the former USSR* concerning the chosen method of terrorists' operations also dates back to the 1990s (Bowers | Derrick | Mousafar 2004, 261-279). Therefore, the reason for research is the lack of publications in this area.

The following article has the form of a comparative study. The research goal is to identify trends related to terrorism that take place in the post-Soviet space in the years 2014-2020 (in some cases, the analysis covers the years 2015-2019, due to data availability). The research area covers the former Soviet republics, which are further divided by the author into four subregions (Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Transcaucasia, and Baltic States) that are linked by cultural and geopolitical factors. Therefore, 15 states and 4 subregions comprise the research objects. Considering that the security of each regional entity is linked to the security of other entities, security threats can also be related. One of these threats is terrorism.

Terrorism in post-Soviet space is not a fully explored phenomenon. First, there is a general factor that causes this condition. The reason is the dynamics of change that takes place in international relations. The second reason is the concentration of research on other regions: MENA, Africa, Western Europe, and Southern Asia. It is not surprising, since in the years 2014-2019, Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria were among the five states with the highest impact of terrorism¹. In 2019, Somalia replaced Pakistan in this ranking. The FSR countries discussed in the article ranked lower in this list. Only Ukraine and Russia have been getting closer to the 'leaders' in some years. However, regions and countries less threatened by terrorism should not be forgotten. A good example is Syria, which in 2003 was in the 105th position and in the 2007 the 57th position in Global Terrorism Index; and a few years later, in 2012, it entered the top 10 on the 6th position. Therefore, it is necessary to enhance this area of research.

Research methods include both theoretical and empirical methods: scientific literature analysis, comparative data analysis, systemic analysis, statistical data analysis, classification, and generalization. For quantitative data, the author used primarily the data collected in the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) and the Global Terrorism Database (GTD). A measurable result of the research is the identification of trends in the terrorist threat in the FSR. It may, in subsequent analyzes, allow for

¹ https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/resources/docs/EUISS-Alert_4_Terrorism_in_Europe.pdf (access 20.06.2021).

recommendations of political actions of the national and regional decision-making bodies to strengthen anti- and counterterrorist activities. However, the authors emphasize that further research is needed due to the large area of research and to the restrictions of space of the article.

2. Eastern European Former Soviet Republics (Belarus, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine)

In the past, after the dissolution of the USSR, terrorism in the Eastern European Former Soviet Republics was commonly associated with Russia, especially with the Caucasian republics (Pokalova 2015). Few studies analyze this entire region in the context of a terrorist threat. Researchers usually focus on individual countries. It is related to a separate specificity of threats. There is a lot of research on terrorism in the Russian Federation. This is due to the long ‘tradition’ of this phenomenon in Russia. As mentioned, it was commonly associated with the North Caucasus, which in 2014 gained more attention when insurgents pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, as there were no viable disengagement opportunities at the time and their only route of survival was to join a global insurgency (Pokalova 2017, 609628; Youngman 2016, 194-217).

In 2014-2019, of all FSRs, the highest number of deaths occurred in Ukraine – 2275. There were 73 terrorist attacks in Ukraine with more than 5 deaths. Two attacks were recorded in which more than 200 people were killed. Before the start of the armed conflict in Donbass in 2014, Ukraine had a low level of terrorism. There were only three deaths related to terrorism between 2000 and 2013. Now, most of the deaths are attributed to the Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR) and the Luhansk People’s Republic (LPR)². These two represent the two quasi-states between Ukraine and Russia that declared independence in April 2014. The table below shows that these two entities carried out the most lethal attacks. The DPR carried out 15 of 18 attacks, and the LPR conducted two, which in total represents approximately 94.4 percent.

In 2014, Ukraine was ranked 12th in the GTI³. The attack of 17 July 2014 on Malaysia Airlines aircraft near the village of Hrabove carried out by the Donetsk People’s Republic, in which 298 people were killed, was the fifth most lethal attack

² The Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR; Russian: Donetskaya Narodnaya Respublika – DNR) is a self-proclaimed quasi-state in the oblast of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine. The Luhansk People’s Republic (LPR; Russian: Luganskaya Narodnaya Respublika – LNR) is a quasi-state located in Luhansk Oblast in the Donbas region in Ukraine, a territory internationally recognized to be a part of Ukraine. DPR and LPR are not recognized by any UN member state. They have been recognized by South Ossetia and by each other. Ukraine regards both quasi-states as terrorist organizations.

³ <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/2015-Global-Terrorism-Index-Report.pdf> (access 20.06.2021).

Table 1. Terrorist incidents in Ukraine, with at least 20 fatalities (2014-2019)

Date	State/ City	Group	Fatalities/ injuries	Target type
2015-12-04	Ukraine/ Maiorska	DPR	20/30	Military
2015-08-10	Ukraine/ Starohnativka	DPR	143/30	Military, Terrorists/ Non-state Militia
2015-06-03	Ukraine/ Marinka	DPR	85/140	Military
2015-02-13	Ukraine/ Debaltseve	DPR	25/Unknown	Private Citizens & Property
2015-02-01	Ukraine/ Debaltseve	DPR	20/53	Military
2015-02-13	Ukraine/ Debaltseve	DPR	25/Unknown	Private Citizens & Property
2015-02-01	Ukraine/ Debaltseve	DPR	20/53	Military
2015-01-24	Ukraine/ Mariupol	DPR (suspected)	30/95	Military, Private Citizens & Property
2014-11-13	Ukraine/ Horlivka	DPR	20/ Unknown	Military
2014-11-06	Ukraine/ Donetsk	DPR	201/ Unknown	Military
2014-08-31	Ukraine/ Ilovaisk	DPR	87/ Unknown	Military
2014-07-17	Ukraine/ Hrabove	DPR (suspected)	298/0	Airports and Aircraft
2014-06-14	Ukraine/ Luhansk	Luhansk People's Republic	49/0	Military
2014-06-10	Ukraine/ Kramatorsk	DPR	40/ Unknown	Military
2014-05-26	Ukraine/ Donetsk	DPR	40/ Unknown	Airports and Aircraft
2014-05-23	Ukraine/ Rubizhne	Luhansk People's Republic	20/ Unknown	Military
2014-05-05	Ukraine/ Slovyansk	DPR	35/33	Military, Private Citizens & Property
2014-05-02	Ukraine/ Odessa	Right Sector	42/ Unknown	Private Citizens & Property

Source: Self-reported data based on the Global Terrorism Database 2015-2020

of 2014. The assailants launched a surface-to-air missile at the civil plane that was travelling from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur. In that year, Ukraine experienced the largest proportional change. In 2013, this country did not report deaths from terrorism (see diagram 1). In 2013, Ukraine was ranked 51st in the GTI, behind European countries such as Russia, the United Kingdom, Greece, Norway, and Ireland⁴. In 2015, the position of Ukraine increased even more. This country ranked 11th. It was the country most prone to terrorist attacks in Europe, ranked 11th after Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Pakistan, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, India, Egypt, and Libya. Despite this increase, the death toll was lower. Also in the 11th position, among the most lethal attacks, was the attack of 10 August carried out by the Donetsk People's Republic. Assailants attacked Ukrainian soldiers with artillery

⁴ <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Global-Terrorism-Index-Report-2014.pdf> (access 20.06.2021).

and tanks near Starohtivka; 143 people were killed. In the years 2016-2019, as the number of victims and attacks decreased, the position of Ukraine in the GTI began to decline. In 2019, it was ranked 36th⁵.

The decline in terrorism-related deaths in Ukraine reflects the decreasing intensity of the armed conflict. In 2016, according to GTD, there were 48 fatalities, and according to GTI only 11 fatalities, and in 2019, respectively 18 and 4⁶. Most of these deaths were caused by DPR. In 2017, Ukraine dropped out of the GTI's list of the 20 most threatened countries by terrorism and has not yet returned to it. However, for four consecutive years, Ukraine has been the state most affected by terrorism in the entire region, although deaths have decreased by more than 90% since its peak in 2014, which was the consequence of the increase in separatist activity in the eastern part of the country⁷.

In the period analyzed, there were definitely fewer terrorist attacks on the territory of Russia, the number of deaths was higher by 5 people than in Ukraine – 12 (Table 1 and Table 2). Attacks in which at least 20 people died were not recorded. In the period analyzed, the largest attack was that of April 3, 2017. The 2001 report states that “As a generator of violence and terrorism in post-Soviet Russia, ideologically and socially motivated activism has played a marginal role, contrary to what many expected in the early 1990s. The violent acts of political extremists in Russia have been limited in scope, and have often had little more than symbolic significance”⁸.

Analyzing terrorism incidents in Russia with at least one fatality shows that the greatest threat is posed by Islamists and jihadists, who have perpetrated 40 out of 95 attacks (42 percent). However, it should be noted that the perpetrators of more than 53 percent of the attacks (51/95) could not be identified, and therefore only 4 attacks were made by other perpetrators. In other cases, the perpetration is not fully confirmed. For example, on 21 April 2017, an assailant opened fire at the Federal Security Service (FSB) office in Khabarovsk. Three people were killed, including the assailant. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) claimed responsibility; however, sources indicated that the assailant was a Neo-Nazi extremist⁹.

⁵ <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2020-web-1.pdf> (access 20.06.2021).

⁶ <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Global%20Terrorism%20Index%202017%20%284%29.pdf> (access 20.06.2021).

⁷ <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2018/12/Global-Terrorism-Index-2018-1.pdf> (access 20.06.2021).

⁸ <https://ffi-publikasjoner.archive.knowledgearc.net/bitstream/handle/20.500.12242/2452/01-03417.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> (access 20.06.2021).

⁹ <https://www.financialexpress.com/world-news/is-claims-deadly-attack-on-fsb-office-in-russia/637601> (access 20 IV 2021); <https://www.dw.com/en/alleged-neo-nazi-gunman-attacks-russian-intelligence-office/a-38541221> (access 20.06.2021).

Table 2. Terrorist incidents in RF, with at least 5 fatalities (2014-2019)

Date	State/ City	Group	Fatalities/ Injuries	Target type
2018-05-19	Russia/ Grozny	Caucasus Province of the Islamic State (suspected)	7/3	Police, Religious Figures/ Institutions
2018-02-18	Russia/ Kizlyar	Caucasus Province of the Islamic State	5/6	Religious Figures/Institutions
2017-04-03	Russia/ Saint Petersburg	Imam Shamil Battalion, Katibat al Tawhid wal Jihad (KTJ)	16/63	Transportation
2017-03-24	Russia/ Naurskaya	Caucasus Province of the Islamic State, or Separatists	12/3	Military
2017-01-29	Russia/ Shali	Caucasus Province of the Islamic State	5/2	Police
2016-10-09	Russia/ Gudermesskiy	Unknown	8/4	Police
2016-06-16	Russia/ Suleyman- Stalsky district	Unknown	5/2	Military
2014-12-04	Russia/ Grozny	Caucasus Emirate	9/9	Educational Institution
2014-12-04	Russia/ Grozny	Caucasus Emirate	9/9	Journalists & Media
2014-12-04	Russia/ Grozny	Caucasus Emirate	10/9	Police
2014-10-05	Russia/ Grozny	Muslim extremists	6/12	Private Citizens & Property
2014-09-03	Russia/ Makhachkala	Unknown	5/0	Private Citizens & Property

Source: Self-reported data based on the Global Terrorism Database

In 2014, Russia was ranked 23rd in the GTI (Global Terrorism Index 2015, 10), thus being the second most threatened by terrorism in Europe, right after Ukraine. Despite this, in 2014, Russia recorded a decrease in the number of deaths caused by terrorism. Deaths decreased by more than 50%. Russia reached the lowest level of terrorist activity since 2007¹⁰ (see diagram 1). In 2015, Russia's position in GTI began to decline. In the years 2015-2019, it was lower every year, successively 30th, 33rd, 34th, 37th, and 39th¹¹. However, this does not mean that the Russians were not among the victims of the terrorists. In 2015, the deadliest attack was the one conducted by the Sinai Province of the Islamic State that killed 224 people. An explosive device placed on a passenger plane flying from Egypt to Russia caused the flight to crash in the North Sinai. The Russian embassy confirmed that most of the passengers were Russians, mostly tourists returning from the Red Sea resorts¹². There was

¹⁰ <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/2015-Global-Terrorism-Index-Report.pdf> (access 20.06.2021).

¹¹ <http://economicsandpeace.org/wpcontent/uploads/2016/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2016.2.pdf> (access 20.06.2021).

¹² <https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2015/oct/31/russian-passenger-plane-crashes-in-egypts-sinai-live> (access 14.05.2021).

a slight increase in the number of fatalities in 2016, but in 2017 the situation improved. Every country in Eurasia recorded an improvement that year¹³. In 2017, the two deadliest groups in Russia were the Caucasus Province of the Islamic State and the Imam Shamil Battalion, indicating a still growing presence of Islamist-related terrorism in Russia. In 2018, the situation improved further. The number of attacks declined by a third and fatalities fell by 51%¹⁴. In 2019, although Russia had the second highest score in the region, the impact of terrorism continued to improve. The number of attacks decreased by 52% and deaths by 30%. Sixteen people were killed in attacks in Russia in 2019, the lowest number in any year between 1994 and 2019 (see diagram 1). Deaths caused by the Caucasus Province of the IS fell for the first time since it became active in Russia¹⁵.

Most deaths caused by identified terrorist groups in Russia are attributed to the Caucasus Province of the Islamic State and the Caucasus Emirate. However, the table above shows that the biggest attack was carried out by the Imam Shamil Battalion, the Caucasian/Russian branch of Al-Qaeda. Therefore, terrorist activity continues to be largely driven by jihadists.

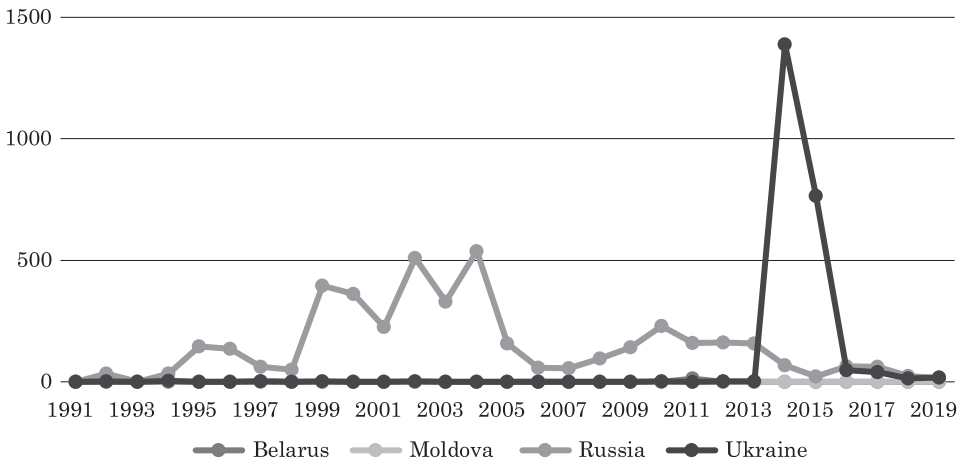


Diagram 1. Terrorist incidents in Eastern European Former Soviet Republics (1991-2019)
Source: Self-reported data based on the Global Terrorism Database

Russia and Ukraine have dominated the region in the number of terrorist attacks and fatalities in the last 15 years. The rest of the region accounted for only 4% of attacks and 7% of fatalities. We should remember that since 2002, Russia has accounted for

¹³ <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2018/12/Global-Terrorism-Index-2018-1.pdf> (access 20.06.2021).

¹⁴ <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/GTI-2019web.pdf> (access 20.06.2021).

¹⁵ <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2020-web-1.pdf> (access 20.06.2021).

68 percent of deaths in Eurasia and Ukraine for only 28% (Diagram 1). The deadliest terrorist organization in this region over the past 16 years was the Chechen rebels. The second most active group has been the Donetsk People’s Republic (DNR), which was also the deadliest terrorist group in the region in 2017¹⁶. In Ukraine, it has been responsible for the highest number of attacks and deaths. Between 2002 and 2016, every country in the region has experienced at least one terrorist attack since 2002, and every country has suffered fatalities. Russia’s most lethal period occurred between 2002 and 2004 (Global Terrorism Index 2015, 48). In the period analyzed in this study, fatal attacks occurred only in Ukraine and Russia. There have been no attacks in Belarus, while in Moldova there has been one, with no casualties. Unknown assailants threw a grenade at the house of Dorin Dragutanu in Chisinau, the governor of the National Bank of Moldova¹⁷.

3. Central Asia Former Soviet Republics (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan)

Since the dissolution of the USSR, Central Asia has experienced an overflow of religious activity. In addition to the moderate and traditional forms of Islam, radical and militant trends have also reemerged in parts of the region. In the 1990s, Islamist groups engaged in low-scale insurgency and periodic terrorist violence. After the 9/11 attacks and the military campaign against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan, the strategic importance of the region has been noted, in the context of radicalization. Today, Central Asia is home to several native and foreign Islamist and jihadist groups, some with a history of violence and terrorist operations within and outside the region. Although terrorism does not constitute a vital threat, due to radicalization tendencies rooted in these societies, it is worth monitoring the situation (Omelicheva 2013, 1).

Table 3. Terrorist incidents in Central Asia FSR with at least 5 fatalities (2014-2019)

Date	State/ City	Group	Fatalities/ injuries	Target type
2019-11-06	Tajikistan/ Ishkobod	Islamic State	17/0	Military, Police
2019-05-19	Tajikistan/ Kirpichny	Islamic State	32/ Unknown	Police, Private Citizens & Property
2018-11-07	Tajikistan/ Khujand	Islamic State	27/5	Police
2015-09-04	Tajikistan/ Vahdat	Unknown	5/4	Police
2015-09-04	Tajikistan/ Dushanbe	Unknown	5/4	Police

Source: Self-reported data based on the Global Terrorism Database

¹⁶ <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Global%20Terrorism%20Index%202017%20%284%29.pdf> (access 20.06.2021).

¹⁷ <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-moldova-cenbank-attacks-idUKKCN0VA2DA> (access 15.05.2021).

In the years 2014-2019, terrorist attacks in Central Asia Former Soviet Republics with at least 5 fatalities were not significant in number – 5. All were committed in Tajikistan. 3 out of 5 were carried out by the Islamic State, and the perpetrators of the other 2 have not been identified. Of the 13 attacks carried out, 8 were committed by jihadists; the perpetrators of the other 5 have not been identified. The two largest attacks were carried out in 2018 and 2019. In November 2018, in a riot in the Khujand's prison, Islamic State-associated prisoners seized a guard's weapon, killing 27 and wounding five prisoners and guards¹⁸. An even more bloody attack occurred in 2019. The attack that took place on May 19th, similar to the previous case, prisoners associated with IS instigated a riot in a prison in Kirpichny, stabbing both guards and inmates. Of 32 victims, 24 were suspected members of IS¹⁹.

To learn more about the region, all terrorist attacks must be analyzed (not only those shown in the table above). During the research period, the lowest level of threat occurred in Uzbekistan, where no one was killed, and only one terrorist attack attempt was made. On 28 September 2015, an assailant threw two incendiary devices at the United States Department of State embassy in Tashkent. Casualties were not reported and no group claimed responsibility²⁰. Turkmenistan turned out to be the second in terms of the lowest terrorism threat. There was only one attack. On 26 February 2014, unidentified perpetrators attacked border police guards in Mary province. Three security officers were killed and two injured. Sources attributed the incident to Taliban who crossed the border from Afghanistan. However, the Taliban denied responsibility for the incident²¹. In Kyrgyzstan, the number of incidents was higher. In 13 attacks carried out in the years 2014-2019, 4 people were killed. 5 out of 13 incidents were committed by the Islamists and jihadists, and the perpetrators of the remaining 8 could not be identified. In turn, in Kazakhstan, during the analyzed period, there were 4 incidents, of which 3 turned out to be fatal. They were assigned to the Kazakhstan Liberation Army. It was a series of three coordinated attacks in Aktobe, conducted on 5 June 2016. Attackers killed a guard and a clerk at the Pallada arms shop, one civilian at the Panther arms shop, hijacked a bus, and attacked a National Guard base, where they killed three servicemen. The Kazakhstan Liberation Army claimed responsibility for the incident and stated that the attack is an expression of opposition to President Nursultan Nazarbayev and support for democratization²².

¹⁸ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/11/8/at-least-27-killed-in-tajikistan-prison-riot-report> (access 21.06.2021).

¹⁹ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-tajikistan-prison-riot-idUSKCN1S0QAW> (access 21.06.2021).

²⁰ <https://uz.usembassy.gov/incendiary-device-thrown-u-s-embassy-tashkent/> (access 11.07.2021).

²¹ <https://www.rferl.org/a/turkmenistan-afghanistan-taliban-attack/25280134.html> (access 20.06.2021).

²² <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/6/6/gunmen-launch-series-of-deadly-kazakhstan-attacks> (access 21.06.2021).

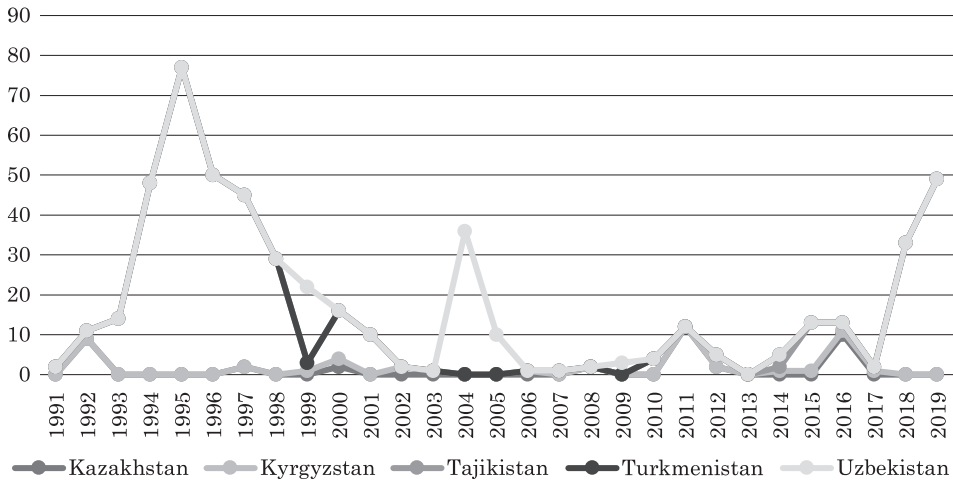


Diagram 2. Terrorist incidents in Central Asia Former Soviet Republics (1991-2019)

Source: Self-reported data based on the Global Terrorism Database

In 2014-2019, there were only five terrorist attacks in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, in which more than 5 people were killed (Table 3). However, two cases in which at least 20 people were killed were recorded. The table above shows that terrorism in Central Asia Former Soviet Republics does not pose a significant threat. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are the safest states of the region. Analyzing terrorism incidents in Central Asia FSR with at least one fatality, shows that the threat is posed by the Islamists and jihadists, who have perpetrated 11 out of 20 attacks (55 percent). However, it should be noted that the perpetrators of 30% of attacks (6/20) could not be identified. The most disturbing situation is in Tajikistan. This country, ranked 84 in the 2014 Global Terrorism Index, increased its position to 34 in 2019. The increase in the number of victims in the attacks carried out is also alarming. Between 1991 and 2013, there were only two incidents in which at least 20 people were killed (in 1997 and 1998). In the years 2014-2019, the death toll was close to 100²³ (see Diagram 2).

4. Transcaucasia (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia)

Transcaucasia (*Zakavkazye*), also known as the South Caucasus, is a geographical region associated with modern Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. In 1918, after the fall of the Russian Empire, the region was unified into a single political entity,

²³ https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?expanded=no&casualties_type=&casualties_max=&success=yes&country=202&ob=GTDID&od=desc&page=1&count=100#results-table (access 26.06.2021).

as the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic (April 1918 to May 1918) and as the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (March 1922 to December 1936). These ethnically, culturally, and religiously diverse countries regained independence in 1991.

Table 4. Terrorist incidents in the Transcaucasia FSR with at least 5 fatalities (2014-2019)

Date	State/ City	Group	Fatalities/Injuries	Target type
2017-02-25	Azerbaijan/ Khojavend district	Separatists (suspected)	5/0	Military
2016-07-17	Armenia/ Yerevan	Sasna Tsrer	6/1	Police

Source: Self-reported data based on the Global Terrorism Database

There were 6 attacks in Armenia during the period under study; 5 in Yerevan. Only one of them was lethal. It was also the bloodiest attack in Transcaucasia. On 17 July 2016, assailants attacked the police station, taking seven police officers as hostages. Furthermore, on 27 July 2016, two medical workers were abducted. The standoff ended with the surrender of 20 aggressors on 31 July 2016 and all hostages were released. At least three police officers and three assailants were killed. Sasna Tsrer Pan-Armenian Party claimed responsibility for the incident and demanded the release of the jailed opposition leader Jirair Simoni Sefilian and the resignation of President Serzh Sargsyan²⁴. In Azerbaijan, during the period discussed, there were 7 attacks (two were lethal), in which 6 people were killed. The bloodiest was carried out on 25 February 2017. Assailants attacked soldiers in the Nagorno-Karabakh region in Khojavend district. Five Azerbaijani soldiers were killed. The incident has been attributed to the Armenian separatists; however, the Armenian fighters' spokesperson claimed that Azeri forces launched the attack and that they were acting in self-defense²⁵. The largest number of attacks occurred in Georgia. However, in 9 attacks, 2 of which were lethal, the fewest people died – 2. One attack was carried out by separatists, one by IS, and the perpetrators of the remaining attacks could not be identified²⁶.

In 2014-2019, in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, only 8 people were killed due to terrorism. There were only two terrorist attacks in which more than 5 people died. The table above shows that terrorism in Transcaucasia has been a marginal threat in recent years. When analyzing terrorism incidents in this region with at least one fatality, it is difficult to determine the entity or group of entities that

²⁴ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-armenia-violence-idUSKCN1030W2> (access 30.07.2021).

²⁵ <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?country=16> (access 30.07.2021).

²⁶ https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?expanded=no&casualties_type=&casualties_max=&success=yes&country=74&ob=GTDID&od=desc&page=1&count=100#results-table (access 30.07.2021).

represent the greatest potential threat. The attacks were carried out by separatists (40%), nationalists (20%), and jihadists (20%). However, it should be noted that the perpetrators of one of the five attacks could not be identified and the perpetration of the separatists in one of the attacks is being questioned. Although the threat in Transcaucasia is not significant, we should remember that Armenian terrorists in the past have carried out hundreds of attacks in more than two dozen states around the world (Hyland, 1991). On the other hand, in Azerbaijan and Georgia, some analyses indicate the intensification of the tendency of radicalization, which, despite the current situation, may increase the threat of terrorists in the future. Already the involvement in international terrorism is visible in the case of Azerbaijan and Georgia (Margaryan 2018, 146-166). In 2013, international news started to talk about Georgian Tarkhan Batirashvili, called Omar ash-Shishani, “as a rising star among foreign fighters in the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)”. However, following Ash-Shishani, about 200 other residents of the Georgia Pankisi Gorge travelled to Syria and Iraq. The trend raised numerous questions about radicalization in this country with very limited experience with terrorism. (Pokalova | Karosanidze 2021, 242-256).

5. Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania)

The Baltic states differ from the previous states of the analyzed region, due to the fact that these countries took earlier their independence from the former USSR. They also belong to the structures of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU). Does it mean that the sources and scale of terrorism are also different in this fourth subregion of the FSR?

In the group of Baltic states, there were only four non-lethal incidents in the analyzed period. The perpetrators of two of them could not be identified (Estonia, Latvia), and the other two were made by far-right actors (Lithuania). In Estonia, there was only one attack in the years 2014-2020. On 3 September 2015, unknown assailants set fire to an asylum seeker center in Vao village, Laane-Viru county. There were no reported casualties in the attack, but the center was damaged in the incident²⁷. It was similar in Latvia. On 15 December 2017, unknown assailants set fire to a church in Smiltene, Vidzeme. No one died or was injured in the incident²⁸. In Lithuania, on the other hand, there were two attacks, in which no one was hurt. Both took place in Vilnius. The first was conducted on 10 August 2018. The attackers set fire to the Lithuanian Gay League (LGL) office. No organization

²⁷ https://www.baltictimes.com/immigration_center_in_estonia_set_ablaze_on_thursday_morning (access 17.06.2021).

²⁸ <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Global%20Terrorism%20Index%202017%20%284%29.pdf> (access 20.06.2021).

claimed responsibility; however, sources posited that the attack was motivated by homophobia²⁹. The second took place on 6 October 2019. An explosive device was discovered outside a Western Union office on Juozo Balcikonio Street. Gediminas Berzinskas, a member of the Feuerkrieg Division (FKD), confessed to preparing the attack and stated that he intended to cause financial and infrastructure damage. He spray-painted the words 'FK Division', 'Siege', and a swastika at the scene. Authorities assumed that the attack was a protest against the system, global order, and globalism³⁰. In both attacks, no casualties were reported.

Table 5. Terrorist incidents in post-Soviet space by perpetrators, with at least one fatality (2014-2019)

	Jihadists/Islamists	Far-right militants	Separatists	Unidentified	Other
Russia	≈ 42.10%	0	≈ 1.05%	≈ 53.7%	≈ 3.15%
Ukraine	0	≈ 1.78%	≈ 57,2%	≈ 41.03%	0
Eastern Europe	≈ 6.64%	≈ 1,5%	≈ 48.34%	≈ 43.02%	≈ 0.5%
Kazakhstan	0	0	0	0	100%
Kyrgyzstan	75%	0	0	25%	0
Tajikistan	≈ 58.33%	0	0	≈ 41.67%	0
Turkmenistan	100%	0	0	0	0
Central Asia	55%	0	0	30%	15%
Armenia	0	100%	0	0	0
Azerbaijan	0	0	50%	50%	0
Georgia	50%	0	50%	0	0
Transcaucasia	20%	20%	40%	20%	0
Baltic States	0	0	0	0	0
Post-Soviet FSRs	≈ 8.29%	≈ 1.6%	≈ 46.73%	≈ 42.42%	≈ 0.96%

Source: Self-reported data based on basis of the Global Terrorism Database

Conclusions. Similarities and difference in the subregions

In the FSR, in the period discussed, the greatest terrorist threat was recorded in Ukraine. This differs from the perspective of early 21st century analyses, which assumed that Caucasus may generate an even larger part of terrorism, especially in

²⁹ <https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2018/08/10/lithuanian-gay-league-arson-vilnius-lgbt/> (access 20.06.2021).

³⁰ <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1235208/lithuanian-neo-nazi-receives-28-month-sentence-for-attempting-terror-attack> (access 20.06.2021).

Russia³¹. However, it should be remembered that several years have passed from these publications to the research period (2014-2019), and the international reality is something elusive and dynamic. In the research period, Ukraine and Russia have dominated the region in the number of terrorist attacks and fatalities. In the Eastern European FSRs, fatal attacks occurred only in these states. There have been no attacks in Belarus, while in Moldova there has been one in which there have been no casualties. In Ukraine, most of the deaths related to terrorism were caused by the DPR and thus were of separatist origin. All separatist groups were responsible for more than 57% of lethal attacks, although over 41.03% of the perpetrators were not identified (see table 5). The perpetrators mainly attacked military facilities. In the group of attacks with at least 5 fatalities, they accounted for over 58.9%. In Russia, the case is a bit more complicated, as the perpetrators of nearly 53.7% of the attacks (with at least one fatality) have not been identified. Most of the deaths caused by identified terrorists in Russia are attributed to the Caucasus Province of the IS, the Caucasus Emirate and other jihadi groups (42.1%); therefore, terrorist activity continues to be largely driven by jihadism (see table 5). The targets of the perpetrators were also different; most of them were the police facilities and forces (nearly 51.6% of the attacks with at least one fatality). Analyzing terrorism incidents in Central Asia FSR (with at least one fatality), shows that, similarly to Russia, the threat is posed by the Islamists and jihadists (55%). However, it should be noted that the perpetrators of 30% of attacks could not be identified (see table 5). The targets of the attacks were more diverse, 25% were the police forces and facilities, 25% constituted private citizens and property, and 10% respectively military, business, and the government. In the case of Transcaucasia, it is difficult to determine regularities. There were only two terrorist attacks in which more than five people were killed. It is also problematic to determine the main entity or group of entities that represent the greatest potential threat in Transcaucasian FSRs. The attacks were carried out by separatists (40%), nationalists (20%), and jihadists (20%) (see table 5). There were no lethal attacks in the Baltic states. In this group of FSRs, there were only four nonfatal incidents in the period analyzed. Taking into consideration the entire region, the greatest threat to security have been separatists (46.73%). If, however, Ukraine was excluded from this analysis, it would turn out that the largest group of identified entities were the jihadists (see table 5).

The hypothesis on diversity of the phenomenon of terrorism in post-Soviet space has been confirmed. This applies to the scale of the phenomenon, its genesis, perpetrators, aims, and methods of action. However, excluding the phenomenon of separatist terrorism in Ukraine from the analysis, it turns out that the greatest threat may be Islamist radicalization. In some subregions, the tendency of increasing

³¹ <https://ffi-publikasjoner.archive.knowledgegearc.net/bitstream/handle/20.500.12242/2452/01-03417.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> (access 20 IV 2021).

religiosity, the growing number of imprisonments for religious beliefs, and expanded religious influence of other entities are becoming visible (Margaryan 2018, 146-166; Pokalova | Karosanidze 2021, 242-256). In fact, there are prospects for an increasing tendency of radicalization, which may cause the intensification and proliferation of terrorist threats. It is indirectly related to armed conflicts. “Armed conflicts that break out across the border bring many problems to the neighboring countries. Often, insurgencies export violence and spread to other geographies in a spillover effect. When insurgents share common ethnic roots or the same religion with their neighbors, conflicts tend to be even more contagious” (Pokalova | Karosanidze 2021, 253). In the post-Soviet space, this is the case of Central Asia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. The qualitative and quantitative evaluation of terrorism incidents in FSRs in the investigated period was carried out with the intention of shedding new light on critical issues of security that cause concern for the future of democracy and development in the former Soviet empire, and may affect international security and cooperation. Governments should pay close attention to insurgent activities close to their borders, even when they do not pose a direct terrorist threat to their own populations. They can spread their ideology and radicalism to other, even very remote regions (Mahalik 2020, 133-147).

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