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**RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM IN CENTRAL ASIA: REASONABLE
SECURITY PERSPECTIVE**

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Annotation: This article describes a phased mechanism for the emergence of religious extremism, with its breakdown into simplified and cardinal implementation schemes, the influence of objective and subjective intrastate and global factors on the subsequent eventualities. The article gives an excursion into the difficulties of transition experienced by the states of Central Asia, which contributed to an easy perception by the population of exported radical ideas. Understanding that it is impossible to consider Central Asia divorced from world processes, reference is made to its geopolitical subjectivity and the place of the region in the neighborhood of unstable Afghanistan.

Keywords: terrorism, radicalism, religious extremism, Central Asia, Islamic State (ISIS).

The very topic of extremism and terrorism is quite delicate. Do not step on the pride of believers, do not insult their religious beliefs through unlawful accusations of being at risk or being close to extremism and terrorism - is the main task of society and its representatives of power structures. Mistakes in labeling can provoke any peacefully coexisting habitat. That is why it is necessary to approach the issue of both expanding the horizons of the religious idea of world creation, and the correct building of relations between confessions, the state and society.

Over the years of independence issues related to the growing Islamization of the population have been strongly included in the security agenda of the states of Central Asia. This process in the region, populated mainly by ethnic Muslims, is called the Islamic revival, or re-Islamization. Its driving force, in the first place, was the growth of national self-awareness, in which belonging to the Islamic Ummah is an important part of the cultural code. So, these ideological postulates can stimulate the development of religious extremism and terrorism [1].

With all the positive results of the communion with the Muslim world, this process can lead - and in some regions already leads - to an increase in religious radicalization and an increase in inter-religious and inter-ethnic contradictions.

Terrorism and religious extremism are called the “plague of the 21st century”. Every year around the world, the number of terrorist attacks and, consequently, human casualties is increasing. Despite the fact that the states of the region have one of the lowest indicators in the Global Terrorism Index [2], the problems of terrorism and religious extremism are actualized at all levels of government and society of the Central Asian republics.

Under separate media links, 2,500 citizens of Central Asian countries joined the ranks of “Islamic State” militants [3].

First of all, it is important to compose a phased mechanism for the emergence of extremism, including simplified - according to the results of recruiters and financing schemes, and fundamentally - due to objective and subjective domestic and global factors of influence.

Before turning to the other countries of Central Asia, it is important to dwell separately on Kazakhstan, as one of the most developed countries in the region. Until recently, situation in Kazakhstan was considered the most prosperous in terms of the spread of religious extremism. Economic stability, a high degree of literacy of the population, the efforts of the first President of the Republic of Kazakhstan - Elbasy and Government to modernize sectors of the economy, reducing unemployment, the growth of material well-being and historical traditions did not allow creating fertile ground for the development of terrorist ideas.

At the foreign policy level, Kazakhstan has been positioning itself as the initiator of peaceful movements and undertakings for more than a decade. It is necessary to mention the Congress of World Religions, initiated by N.A.Nazarbayev, held in Astana. This event, gathering at the same table representatives of various world religions, was created for dialogue and increasing tolerance between traditional religions. In the domestic policy course, active work is carried out within the framework of antiterrorist structures, the UN Security Council, the OSCE, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) [4].

Key political positions encompass the need for a preventive fight against terrorism, extremism and radicalism at all levels, the improvement of intra-Kazakhstan instruments to counter these threats, as well as international cooperation aimed at achieving a higher level of collective security. Therefore, cooperation between Kazakhstan within the framework of these organizations

is very important. So, from the first days of independence, Kazakhstan is not just one of the active participants in the fight against international terrorism, but also the initiator of the unification of countries in this counteraction.

In his book "The Critical Decade" N.A. Nazarbayev stresses that in fact no other Central Asian state has escaped the tendency to politicize religion. Therefore, in a fairly stable in this regard Kazakhstan, which is not an importer of destructive ideas, other countries of the region see the greatest danger to interfaith harmony primarily in the export of religious extremism [5, p. 97-101], considering the possibility of becoming an attractive place for participants in extremist movements, in the light of recent events.

The collapse of the last stronghold of the ISIS caliphate in Syria sends shock waves around the world and it turns out that the Central Asian region is also no exception. The fate of civilians, mainly women and children displaced from areas previously controlled by ISIS, where many were detained against their will, is of direct concern. An independent International Rescue Committee reports that up to 4,000 people are fleeing from Syria [6].

Also an urgent problem is what will be done with the captured jihadists - members of ISIS. The so-called "foreign fighters" and their supporters may try to return to their countries of origin. But fears are growing that a large number of Syrian fighters may also move to the territory of the countries of Central Asia.

Against this background, in recent years, Kazakhstan's legislation on punitive measures for citizens who participated in hostilities abroad and trained militants and extremists has been tightened. In connection with the growing trends of terrorist threats, Kazakhstan is actively preventing and combating terrorism at the: state level - an emphasis on improving legislation; among the regions - tightening control of the Western and Southern regions of the country; at the local level - emphasis on enhancing protection; at the regional - bilateral and multilateral agreements, cooperation in the framework of the ATC, SCO, CSTO; and at the international level - Kazakhstan's support for the UN counter-terrorism strategy [7].

Nevertheless, the recruiters managed to persuade a part of Kazakhstanis from among the religiously uneducated and unprepared segments of society. The older generation acknowledges that they have missed the moment when recruiters began to work with the citizens of Kazakhstan at the beginning of the two thousandth. The number of local residents prosecuted for terrorism and extremism has begun to grow since 2005, and with the fall in oil prices, this process has accelerated. Among the reasons pushing citizens of Kazakhstan to unlawful activities in extremist and terrorist organizations, officials refer to a dysfunctional socio-economic environment, insufficient religious literacy and destructive activities of pseudo-religious groups [8].

Any business is impossible without human resources, which in this case are replenished by misguided unstable elements, members of ethnic minorities or religious minorities who are deprived of their rights, or those who pursue their own far-reaching goals. At the same time, the focus is on massive propaganda work on the public sphere, Internet, close cooperation between foreign and local regional sympathizers. Financial issues are resolved through radical funds from the Middle East, international terrorist organizations, voluntary donations from individuals, and proceeds from criminal activities.

Therefore, for the rest of Central Asia, one of the main causes of terrorism remains the social dissatisfaction of the majority of the population, which contributes to a broad perception in the society of radical ideas exported from outside. These reasons turned out to be one of the main factors for the emergence on the territory of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan of such well-known Islamist movements and associations as "Hizbut-Tahrir al-Islam", the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). According to experts, formally falling under the definition of a terrorist, the activities of the radical Islamic opposition in Central Asia are largely of a protest nature that has accumulated in the region over the past decades [9]. The inability to adapt to new conditions has led a part of the population to the arms of the most radical Islamic groups and international terrorist structures that are secretly operating in the countries of Central Asia.

It should be noted that it is almost impossible to predict where and when terrorist acts will occur, relying only on the analysis of statistical data. The indicated stability and security between different countries of the region is conditional. The risk of the spread of the threat of extremism, carrying out of terrorist acts is, in fact, quite high in the entire region, and for a number of Central Asian states there is an objective likelihood of being involved in the orbit of international terrorism. In addition, it is absolutely clear that the prospects for the development of the ideology of terrorism in the region largely depend on a number of factors, both external and internal.

The internal causes of terrorism and extremism are associated with the complex socio-political and economic situation in which a number of Central Asian countries can found themselves. The external factors of international terrorism in Central Asia are mostly neighborhood with existing and potential “hot spots” that form the so-called “Islamic arc” of instability: The Caucasus, XUAR (Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region) of China, Kashmir, Afghanistan, and worldwide flight of defeated ISIS or Daesh gangs from the Syria [10].

The region is located in close proximity to Afghanistan, where large-scale military operations have been conducted for several decades. Accordingly, a lot depends on how the situation will develop in this country and beyond its borders. In 1991, when the countries of Central Asia gained independence, they faced a lot of problems, and one of such problems was Afghanistan - high levels of opium and heroin production, as well as high level of terrorism. So, one of the factors for the manifestation of international terrorism in the countries of Central Asia is drug trafficking from Afghanistan. Recently, an increase in the use of drugs of Afghan origin has been noticeably observed in all post-Soviet republics. In this regard, the fact of the revival of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, which is closely connected not only with officially registered United Tajik Opposition and the Islamic Revival Party, but also with the prohibited in many states "Taliban", "Al Qaeda", "Hizbut-Tahrir" and Islamic East Turkestan movement very closely related to the unrest in the Afghan territory. The smuggling of drugs, the crossing of militants across the border, the intensification of terrorist and extremist movements and organizations, instability in the northern regions of Afghanistan - all this, under certain conditions, threatens the states of the Central Asian region [11].

The densely populated region of Central Asia - the Fergana Valley has long been experiencing serious difficulties in providing the population with land, water and jobs. All this created favorable conditions for the penetration of the ideas of radical Islam. At the same time, the American Researcher D.Schoeberlein notes, the Fergana Valley is distinguished by its ethnic diversity, which in certain conditions can become an additional source of concern [12].

This question is also more relevant than ever in Kyrgyzstan. Only according to official data, 571 citizens left the country to Syria to take part in hostilities. Everyone has different goals: for someone, this is a way to make money, while others are driven by the idea that they are going to the “holy war”. According to experts, as in the rest of Central Asia, the situation in the Middle East, the recruitment of citizens in combat zones, the difficult situation in Afghanistan and the growth of religious extremism are the main factors affecting the manifestation of terrorism in the Kyrgyz Republic. The main functioning terrorist organizations in Kyrgyzstan are: the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami (Islamic Liberation Party) [13].

The most important internal factor contributing to the spread of the ideas of radical Islam, which is the ideological base of international terrorist organizations that have manifested themselves on the territory of Kyrgyzstan and other Central Asian states, is considered by political scientists to be a complex socio-political situation. Unemployment, the low standard of living of the overwhelming majority of the population, social and legal insecurity led to an increase in mistrust towards state power, unable to ensure the constitutional rights and freedoms of its citizens [14].

The emergence of extremist ideas in all of the Central Asian states, as considered by many researchers, is a response of the poor segments of society to the socio-economic conditions, as we mentioned above, that led to their massive impoverishment. At the same time, it is important to understand that “religious extremism” is not endogenous in any of its trends or ideological course. The researchers note that "the main sources of terrorism were and remain socio-economic reasons,

expressed in the views of large masses of the population about the greatest social injustice of their own position" [15] These difficulties contribute to a fairly broad perception in the society of radical ideas exported from outside.

For Uzbekistan, the fight against terrorism is one of the most important tasks since it is one of the main supporters of the United States of America in anti-terrorism measures. Among the modern terrorist groups operating in Central Asia are the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). This organization was created in 1996. and is still the largest terrorist group in the region. The main objectives can be identified as: the fight against the regime of Islam Karimov and the creation in all five Central Asian states - an Islamic State. In Tajikistan, a large number of terrorist attacks were accidents, which occurred during the civil war. After the end of the civil war, the level of terrorist attacks in Tajikistan dropped significantly. According to the last year, on July 29, 2018, in the Dangar district of the Khatlon region, a car drove onto foreign cyclists who traveled in Tajikistan. Responsibility for this attack was claimed by the extremist Islamic State (ISIS) group. So, on August 4, 2018, the President of Tajikistan, Emomali Rakhmon, signed a draft amendment to the country's Criminal Code, tightening the punishment for a public call for terrorism on the Internet and a public justification for terrorist activities on social networks [16]. Terrorists in Turkmenistan may unleash a "massacre" on the Afghan-Turkmen border. In this connection, it is logical to say that the situation in the border area is not stable and this is the "Achilles heel" of Turkmenistan as one of the most vulnerable state in the region of Central Asia [17].

Thus, Turkmenistan, as well as Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, continues to eliminate shortcomings in the system of combating terrorism, to increase the powers of law enforcement agencies in combating terrorism and expand counterterrorism operations. But for today they are still not ready to repel threats of possible aggression. Weak armed forces and inaction of power structures can lead not only to undermining the national security but also to the loss of the main conquest – the recognized neutrality.

It is known that the geopolitical position of Central Asia has both positive and negative sides. On the one hand, the Central Asian states are located at the crossroads of global trade routes, which is very beneficial from an economic point of view, but on the other hand, the territory of these states lies between the strong powers, Russia and China, on which the situation in the region largely depends, also we can't exclude the neighborhood with such problem Islamic countries as Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. With the acquisition of independence by the Central Asian states, previously not so noticeable geostrategic problem — the geographical isolation of Central Asia — became more pronounced. The region is located away from world political and economic flows, and has no direct access to international waters.

So, Central Asia today is of particular interest to many players in the international political arena and acts both as an object and as a subject of global politics in all its main manifestations. Back in the early 90s, 20th century the region became a crossroads for the interests of the world powers, which sought to strengthen their presence in Central Asia. The special interest of the leading countries of the world, transnational corporations, various financial and economic institutions to the region is explained by its geopolitical position, communication capabilities, and the presence of significant reserves of natural resources [18].

In this regard, today it is necessary to identify the true essence of the threats behind the concept of "international terrorism", and also to have a clear idea of who directs them, otherwise the struggle against these threats and all activities to neutralize them will not be sufficiently substantive and effective. The fact that under the cover of the fight against terrorism, a number of strong players in the international arena continue to pursue their own geopolitical interests, which is not conducive to eradicating the terrorist threat.

The activities of terrorist and other extremist organizations in the Central Asian region are transboundary in nature, covering the territories of almost all its member states. International terrorist organizations are particularly active, whose main goal is to destabilize the general situation in the region in order to create conditions for seizing power in its states and introducing Sharia

forms of government into them with the subsequent possible merging them into a single Islamic caliphate.

The above factors are not equal in their influence on the processes of manifestation of international terrorism in Central Asia. At the same time, the expert community basically holds the opinion that the primary causes are of an internal nature, and external factors in many ways are complementary to the impact.

Thus, it can be stated that the basis of an adequate and correct perception of reality by society as a whole, as well as the spiritual wealth of each individual, is considered to be the level of economic development and social satisfaction of citizens, allowing to maintain internal and external political stability, and hence the integrity of the state. Different degree of economic status of neighboring countries give rise to corresponding political superstructures, and the forced needs for integration and cooperation which contribute to the overflow of religious risks that create spatial ideological instability of the Central Asian region.

One of the main postulate in the article highlighted the statement of scientists that world practice proved the impossibility of unambiguously defining any single cause or group of reasons of an external or internal nature as the most influential component. Moreover, despite the similar conditions for the manifestation of terrorism in the world, the causes themselves turn out to have significant differences. And for each state, due to certain factors, a different course of development and spread of terrorism is possible at a particular stage of its historical formation.

Considering the prospects of Central Asian states, it can be concluded that concern for the moral health of the people should become a priority regional task, by addressing the positive principles of Islam - allowing the integration of popular attitudes into the official ideology, as well as rehabilitating Islam, saving it from many unreasonable attacks, generated as a response to the actions of followers of its radical sense.

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