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VALERIA DYACHENKO. THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE RADICAL ISLAMIST MOVEMENT IN CENTRAL ASIA: CAUSES, INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS OF FEEDING

Keywords: Islam; radical Islam; Central Asia; international security; terrorist threat extremism.

Valeria Dyachenko,

Expert of Center of Regional Studies,
Institute of Sociology and Regional Studies,
Southern Federal University, Rostov-on-Don
e-mail: maxwellamanda@mail.ru

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Abstract. The article concentrates on the conditions and causes of the emergence of the radical Islamist movement in Central Asia. A historical digression with statistical data allows you to track the trajectory of the ideology of radical Islam development on the territory of the states of the region. The increasing activity of radical organizations, movements and groupings is proved on the basis of the information provided. The article also describes a number of external and internal factors fueling the radical Islamist movement in Central Asia; special attention is paid to its subjects and instruments of their influence. The impact of feeding factors on the religious and political situation in the countries of the region continues to be relevant to the present.

During the last third of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century the countries of Central Asia were faced with the destabilizing activities of radical Islamic organizations, movements, groups and regimes, which collectively form a radical Islamic movement.

One can find various interpretations of the concept of 'Islamic radicalism' in modern scientific literature devoted to the issues of terrorism and extremism. In this article, as a basic definition, the following interpretation will be used: Islamic radicalism is an ideological doctrine, as well as a political practice based on it; they are characterized by the normative-value consolidation of the ideological, political-ideological and even armed conflict of the world of 'true Islam' with the outside world of 'infidels' and the world of 'untrue faith' inside Islam; Islamic radicalism requires ultimate social control and mobilization (devotion to the idea) of its proponents. [1, p. 29]

At the same time, it should be noted that 'radical Islam' cannot be equated with Islam in general or the branches of Islam (Shia Islam or Sunni Islam). Islamic radicalism is only a part of a much broader trend of "re-Islamization" of the society and

politicization of the Muslim religious system; it is the most extreme and politicized segment in all the branches, currents and interpretations of Islam. Considering this, the study of "Islamic radicalism" and its extreme manifestations plays a significant role in understanding the situation in Muslim regions, the reasons for it, as well as fuelling factors.

The modern radical Islamic movement has its origins in Egypt during the first half of the 19th century. Initially, in 1929, Sheikh Hassan al-Banna founded the Muslim Brotherhood as an opposition to the strong trends of secularization that emerged after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Later, it branched out in many other regions; also, other organizations of the same kind started to appear. [1, p. 37–60] In the second half of the 20th century, particularly in the 1970–90s, religious and political radical movements became simultaneously active in the Muslim countries. Today, the radical Islamist movement has become a reality in most Muslim countries to a certain extent.

When studying the current religious situation, it becomes apparent that radical Islam (religious and political extremism) originates in the Central Asian region in the early 1990s. Initially, it spread from the southern cities of Kyrgyzstan (Osh and Fergana region) under the influence of social and geographical factors, affecting the neighbouring republics of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. [2]

Since the mid-1990s, the Islamic Liberation Party (Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami) has been operating in the region. The party's objective was to change the constitutional order and the secular character of the states of Central Asia; it primarily worked to establish the Caliphate and Sharia ruling, which was supposed to take control over spiritual, economic, political and other spheres of society.

To this end, the party conducted active recruiting work among employees of the legislative and executive authorities (including law enforcement officers), representatives of the Islamic clergy, as well as public opinion makers (writers,

journalists, prominent public and political figures, leaders of political parties, etc.) [3]

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), founded in the 1990s and responsible for terrorist attacks in this republic, is still active throughout Kyrgyzstan. [4] Despite the fact that in 2001 the organization was practically liquidated during the US-led invasion of Afghanistan, some researchers and experts believe that it has the potential to build up power again and pose a real threat to the region.

Hizb ut-Tahrir is the most popular Islamist organization in Kyrgyzstan. [4] Like the IMU, Hizb ut-Tahrir's aim is to create an Islamic system of governance throughout the region. Despite the group's official statement of non-violence, many regional experts believe that Hizb ut-Tahrir uses violence in order to bring about political change. This is especially troubling for Kyrgyzstan, since ethnic Uzbeks are the core of Hizb cells. It is known that along with the poorest members of society, some Uzbek entrepreneurs, businessmen, professionals, university students and NGO activists are part of this organization. [5]

There is also so-called evolution of Islamic organizations, parties and associations. As the well-known Russian orientalist I. Zvyagelskaya notes, "in the early 1990s, they were only emerging and tried their hand; later they established themselves as part of the political landscape in the states of Central Asia – illegal part, with rare exceptions". [6] There are multiple such organizations in the region. Among the main are: the abovementioned Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Islamic Liberation Party (Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami; HT), the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT), the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), and more recently the Islamic State (IS). There is also such an extensive structure as the Muslim Brotherhood, which is basically a network of independent cells that operates in the countries of Central Asia under various names (the Society for Social Reforms, the Islamic Appeal Committee, etc.) These organizations are mainly active in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and

Tajikistan. [7] Moreover, there are such groups as the Center for Islamic Development, Islom Lashkarlari (Warriors of Islam), etc. [8]

According to current statistics, the rate of criminal offences of the religious extremist character is increasing each year in the countries of Central Asia. For instance, in the first half of 2013, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kyrgyzstan registered 160 such crimes; a year earlier, during the same period, 140 crimes were committed, and approximately 130 people were detained. It should be noted that 99 per cent of those detained were young people. [9] In 2012, 150 people were prosecuted for religious extremism in Tajikistan. [10] Speaking at a press conference in 2021 in Dushanbe, Attorney General of Tajikistan Yusuf Rahmon reported the increase in extremist and terrorist crimes. In 2020, 1118 extremist and terrorist crimes were registered, while in 2019 this number was 1063. [11] According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Uzbekistan, between January and June 2022, the authorities managed to put an end to the activities of four groups associated with such organizations as the Islamic State and Katibat al Tawhid wal Jihad (Jihad & Tawhid Battalion). Over ten 'virtual gangs' were uncovered and about 250 alleged independent online recruiters were detained. Viktor Mikhailov, head of the Tashkent Center for the Study of Regional Threats, notes that 250 detainees since the beginning of 2022 is a rather big figure, considering that 400 radicals were identified during the whole of 2021.

In Kyrgyzstan, between 2010 and 2017, the number of those convicted of terrorism and religious extremism increased by more than fivefold – from 79 to 422 people. As of 2018, in Kyrgyzstan, 558 people were serving sentences for crimes of the religious extremist nature. Out of these convicts, 16 were sentenced to life imprisonment, 96 were kept in pre-trial detention centers, 164 – in colonies of strict and special regime, 206 – in settlement colonies, and 92 were registered with the penitentiary inspection.

In January-July 2021, there were 139 offenses related to extremism and terrorism in Kazakhstan, which is 19.8 per cent more than a year earlier. For comparison, during the same period

of 2020, only 116 such offenses were registered in the country, which is less by 41.1 per cent than in 2019. [12] As law enforcement authorities note, the most frequently committed offenses are related to propaganda of terrorism or public calls to commit acts of terrorism, including “organizing or participating in the activity of a social or religious association or other organization after a court decision banning their activity or their liquidation in connection with extremism or terrorism they have carried out.”

The Ministry of Internal Affairs of Turkmenistan does not disclose statistics on registered offenses. [13]

If we consider these statistics for the countries of Central Asia, it seems appropriate to carefully examine what causes and fuels Islamist radicalism, which directly affected the presented regional statistics.

The security of the Central Asian region is threatened by radical Islamism due to negative internal factors that put most of the countries in the region in the category of ‘fragile states’. ‘Fragility’ creates potential for collapse and moving into the category of ‘failed states’ that are unable to control their territory. It is these states that supply a suitable breeding ground for radical terrorist groups like the Islamic State to take root. Expert assessments of the situation in the countries of Central Asia in The Fragile States Index, 2015 are listed below. [14]

Table 1

Central Asian countries in The Fragile States Index, 2015 [15]

Country	Uzbekistan	Tajikistan	Kyrgyzstan	Turkmenistan	Kazakhstan
Place in the world out of 178 countries (the lower the place, the bigger the threat)	51/178	57/178	62/178	78/178	110/178
Points (the higher the point, the larger the threat)	85.4	83.4	82.2	77.5	68.3
Category	High Warning	High Warning	High Warning	Warning	Low Warning

The presented figures show that, according to experts, there is truly a threat of destabilization in many countries of the Central Asian region. Also, these statistics indicate that there are some variations between the countries of the region – note the special position of Kazakhstan.

There are several primary factors contributing to the ‘fragility’ of the states in the region. Firstly, that is large-scale drug traffic along the northern route from Afghanistan to Russia. The latter is the world’s largest consumer of Afghan heroin. In addition, security experts are well aware that drug proceeds are often used to fund terrorism and religious and political extremism. [16] For example, this connection is known from the Batken conflict, since the IMU invasion of Kyrgyzstan was associated, among other things, with establishing the trade routes for heroin.

Secondly, the high rate of corruption in the Central Asian region is also an important factor contributing to the ‘fragility’ of these states and the growing threat of radical Islam. According to Transparency International, all countries in the region are at the very bottom of its Corruption Perceptions Index.

Table 2

Central Asian countries in The Corruption Perceptions Index [17]

Country	The Corruption Perceptions Index		
	2012	2013	2014
Kazakhstan	133/174	140/177	126/175
Kyrgyzstan	154/174	150/177	136/175
Tajikistan	157/174	154/177	152/175
Turkmenistan	170/174	168/177	169/175
Uzbekistan	170/174	168/177	166/175

Thirdly, poverty is another factor contributing to ‘fragility’ of the states in Central Asia. The countries in the region (especially parts of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan located in the Fergana Valley) are characterized by a significant degree of rural overpopulation exacerbated by the shortage of

water and fertile land. This inevitably leads to unemployment, creating masses of marginalized young people that are extremely susceptible to brainwashing by radicals. The issue is aggravated by the regression of the Soviet-era social welfare, education and healthcare systems. Labour migration to Russia was one of the important checks that prevented social explosions. However, devaluation of the rouble in 2014–2015, as well as decline in demand for labour in the Russian Federation, sharply depleted this source of income for the population. Naturally, the situation in the states of Central Asia dangerously deteriorated, especially in Tajikistan.

Poverty grows against the backdrop of a trend towards social and economic ‘de-modernization’. For instance, by 2010, due to the civil war and economic challenges, the share of urban residents in Tajikistan had decreased to 26 per cent of the total population, [18] which is comparable to the most backward countries in the world. Other manifestations of ‘de-modernization’ are: departure of highly qualified specialists and intellectuals (both Russian-speaking and ethnic); and the collapse of the Soviet-era technical and social infrastructure, even in relatively resource-rich countries like Turkmenistan.

Fourthly, the existence of so-called personalized sultanistic regimes is threatening the statehood of regional countries [19]; these regimes are integral part of the clan systems that determine intra-elite network configurations. [20]

To all of the above, fifthly, we can add the existence of major interstate conflicts over water resources between the upstream countries (Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan) and the downstream countries (Uzbekistan and to a lesser extent – Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan). These conflicts hamper the cooperation between the countries in Central Asia, particularly interfering with countering security threats.

At the same time, influential Great Powers (Russia, the US, China, the EU, Islamic countries) are involved in the “New Great Game” [21] for influence in the region. Clashes of interest

between them can cause a rise in security threats or undo their efforts to help the regional countries address all sorts of challenges.

The states of Central Asia are currently experiencing a certain crisis, which is indicated by the above-mentioned external threats from Afghanistan and the Middle East that are associated with radical Islam and severely aggravate the internal problems in a number of regional countries. The prospects of ending this crisis differ by the countries and are largely determined by the specifics of interaction between state structures and Islam.

The emergence and development of Islamic extremism in Central Asia was largely facilitated by a whole range of external factors, which still influence the religious and political situation in the regional countries. [22]

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the ideological vacuum in the states of Central Asia began to be filled with the ideological influence of Iran, Turkey, the states of the Persian Gulf, as well as Afghanistan, Pakistan and other Muslim countries that sought to occupy political and economic positions in the new independent states. In those circumstances, foreign influence on the religion of the newly formed states matched economic and political interests of the local elites and sentiments of the Muslim population.

Foreign influence mainly came through funding the construction and equipping of places of Muslim worship, teaching religious doctrine, distributing religious literature and direct preaching of foreign emissaries.

The number of religious Islamic institutions, including the so-called 'private' mosques, madrasahs and other Islamic cultural and educational centers in the regional countries was growing uncontrollably. There faithful preached and taught in accordance with the religious and political preferences of foreign and local sponsors. The number of religious buildings exceeded the number of educated Islamic clerics rather quickly. In many cases, the services were held by people lacking deep knowledge of

Islam. They were often unable to understand the intricacies of Islamic theology.

The number of young people who studied Islam abroad – in religious institutions in Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Egypt, etc. – started to grow. In some of these educational centers educational programmes were based on the ideas of radical Islam. [23] During their studies, students adopted religious views and values that were different from Islam traditional for the countries of Central Asia. They were often falling under the influence of emissaries and missionaries from foreign radical Islamic organizations. In the last decade of the last century, the Islamist ideology (politicized Islam), mostly extremist, began to infiltrate the Central Asian countries from abroad. The activities of propagandists of international Islamic extremist organizations were facilitated by porous state borders and close geographic proximity to unstable countries and regions, where radical Islam is quite strong – in Afghanistan, Pakistan, etc.

At that time, members of such international Islamic organizations as Taiba, the Committee of Muslims of Asia and others began actively operating in Central Asia. Most of them spread the ideas of radical Islam under the guise of missionary work. At this point, propagandists of international and regional Islamic extremist and terrorist organizations (Al-Qaeda, Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami, the IMU, etc.) stepped up their organizational and propaganda activities. Also, a large number of radical groups, including those of the Salafi (Wahhabi) orientation, became active in the region.

From 2000, the situation became urgent. Central Asian law enforcement agencies seized huge amounts of extremist literature: mainly the works of Sayyid Qutb, the leading ideologist of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood; copies of the Arabic magazine Al-Wai; works of Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani, the founder of Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami, which were translated into local languages; as well as brochures and leaflets of this party.

Around that time, extremists began to veer from propaganda to dedicated organizational work, mainly supported by international Islamic extremist organizations. Using miscalculations of the leaders of the Central Asian countries regarding the policy of Islamization to their advantage, extremists put direct moral and psychological pressure on the authorities, despite being banned in many countries.

During this period, certain Islamist organizations in Central Asia, primarily Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami, enjoyed open political support from the EU countries and covert backing of the US. It should be noted that the US provided tacit support to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and some other Islamic opposition. [24]

To sum up, over the years of independence, the states of Central Asia have faced and are still confronting – to varying degrees – the activities of Islamic radicals, fuelled by corruption, poverty and drug trafficking from within, as well as foreign influence from outside. Statistics over the past decade call for a close study of the causes and factors fuelling the radical Islamist movement in order to more effectively combat extremists both within and outside the region.

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GOZAL SHARIPOVA. COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE POLICY OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN THE STATE SYSTEMS OF MALAYSIA AND UZBEKISTAN

Keywords: Malaysia; Uzbekistan; ethno-confessional harmony; Rukun Negara; tolerance; Islam; assimilation; culture.

Gozal Sharipova,

DSc(Philosophy), PhD in Religious Studies and
UNESCO on the Comparative Study of World Religions,
Research Associate,

International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan,

e-mail: guzal.sharipova@yandex.ru

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Abstract. This article presents a comparative analysis of the policy of religious tolerance in the state systems of Malaysia and Uzbekistan, specifically examining history, law and culture of the