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FACTORS IN THE FORMATION OF EXTREMIST GROUPS

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A B S T R A C T

The article analyzes the roots of religious extremism, one of the pressing issues in the modern world, and examines the socio-economic, political, and cultural factors influencing its formation. It highlights the internal hierarchy of religious extremist organizations, their methods of recruiting members, and their main operational strategies that pose a threat to society. The study also explores the activities of these groups in virtual spaces, their propaganda techniques, and the mechanisms they use to encourage youth radicalization. The article concludes with a discussion of comprehensive measures to prevent and combat religious extremism.

A R T I C L E I N F O

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction. Extremism, which threatens the development of the world community today, is a complex socio-political phenomenon that poses a serious threat not only to individual societies or states but also to the entire world. It manifests itself as one of the factors endangering human progress, security, and stability. The formation of extremist groups is associated with various social, economic, political, and cultural factors, which in most cases arise as a result of social injustice, economic inequality, religious illiteracy, and ideological manipulation. Historical experiences show that extremist groups use various strategies and methods to spread their ideologies, attract supporters, and gain political influence. They attempt to destabilize society through powerful ideological propaganda, the radicalization of youth, the establishment of clandestine networks, and sometimes through violent actions. Their main goal is to change the existing political and social system and establish a new order based on their ideology.

Extremism (from the Latin "extremus" meaning "utmost" or "extreme") is a viewpoint that advocates for extremely radical measures, actions, and ideas in solving socio-political problems, and acting based on these principles. Religious extremism is an illegal religious movement that pursues political goals and strives to forcefully spread ideas that do not comply with and contradict the laws and norms accepted in society.

Religious extremism is not exclusive to the Islamic world, but pertains to all religions worldwide. Particularly in the Middle Ages, Christian clergy insisted that opposing any doctrine established in "sacred" books was a violation of God's will. Any dissent was considered "insolence" or an "expression of arrogance," and was declared the most heinous sin[1]. However, despite the church's strength, the number of opponents to church doctrine increased among urban dwellers and peasants.

Literature review on the topic. One of the main reasons for the emergence of Islamic extremists is the invasion and plundering of Asia and Africa by European states, their policy of aggression. It should not be forgotten that later this movement was directed against secular states. Islamic extremists particularly intensified their activities in Egypt. Islamic extremism is not organized into a single party, but consists of various groups operating among different strata of the population. One of the most influential extremist groups is the Muslim Brotherhood (Al-ikhwan al-muslimin). The Muslim Brotherhood is a religious-political organization founded in 1928 at the initiative of Sheikh Hasan al-Banna in Ismailia, Egypt. This organization has a complex structure, combining elements of Sufi brotherhoods and modern European parties. The doctrine promoted by the founder of the association was later developed by several other Islamic ideologists, such as Sayyid Qutb, Mustafa al-Sibai, and others[2].

Hizb ut-Tahrir - a Sunni religious-political party founded in 1953 in Jerusalem by the Palestinian Taqi al-Din an-Nabahani (1909 - 1979) [3]. He was born and raised in Haifa. He studied at Al-Azhar University in Cairo. He served as a member of the Sharia Complaints Court in Jerusalem. He was one of the leaders of the religious extremist organization "Muslim Brotherhood" in Jordan. The main goal of the organization is to restore the Islamic state on a global scale in the form of a caliphate. The program of the religious-political party "Hizb ut-Tahrir" consists of 187 points, with its primary objective being the acquisition of power. The religious organization "Hizb ut-Tahrir," like the Wahhabis, seeks to interfere in state political governance by overthrowing the government and establishing an Islamic state. It calls for the restoration of the caliphate: "Not striving to elect a single caliph for Muslims is one of the major sins. Because this is refraining from fulfilling one of the most important obligations of Islam"[4].

The "Nur" group was founded by Said Nursi from Turkey, whose primary goal was to educate highly religious and fanatical individuals who opposed the existing government. Badiuzzamon Said Nursi's famous lessons given to his disciples were published as treatises, some of which are directly named after the lesson number - for example, "The Twenty-Fifth Lesson"[5]. The infiltration of this movement's ideas into our country began in 1992. Initially, the movement's ideas were spread with the material and spiritual support of Turkish extremists. The movement became especially widespread in the cities of Termiz and Denov. Specifically, the location where the "Nur" members gathered in Termiz was identified, and necessary measures were taken. At that time, they were operating in secrecy.

The religious-extremist organization "AKROMIYLAR" was founded in 1996 in the city of Andijan. Representatives of this religious-political movement believe only in Allah and do not believe in the Prophet. The "Akromiylar" do not recognize any existing systems, believing that one should obey only the leader of the movement, not the state, laws, or parents. Its founder, Yuldoshev Akram Sotvoldiyevich, born in 1960 in

Andijan, was a devotee of "Hizb ut-Tahrir" ideas and developed a 12-lesson program called "Path to Faith" based on the teachings of Taqiuddin an-Nabhani. This program emphasizes that the ultimate goal of the movement is to establish an Islamic state. The Andijan events led to the unjust bloodshed of many of our compatriots, the untimely death of more than ten people, and the destruction of several buildings. The malicious intentions of these evil people were once again manifested in the spring and summer of 2004 and on May 13, 2005, in Andijan[6].

The unofficial religious community "BAXSHILLOCHILAR" is one of such groups that have strayed from the true faith. Due to its non-Islamic nature, the "Baxshillochilar" group was founded in 1997 by Baxshillo Aliyev, who was born in the Bukhara region. Most of the group's members reside in the city of Bukhara and Kogon district.

In addition to these, extremist groups such as "Al-Qaeda" (The Foundation), Taliban, Wahhabism, "al-Jihad," "at-Takfir wal-Hijra," "Islamic Jihad Union," "Katibatul Imam al-Bukhari," "Jamaat Ansorullah," and others have been operating worldwide under the guise of Islam.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology. In this study, a comprehensive approach was employed to uncover the factors contributing to the formation of religious extremist groups, their organizational structure, and operational strategies. In Uzbekistan, numerous researchers have explored the historical, cultural, and educational roots of extremism and terrorism. Specifically, M. Lafasov studied the history of extremism and terrorism and the essence of its emergence, while S. Nasri examined the foundations of religious movements and their influence. Researchers at the Tashkent Islamic University developed the spiritual and educational foundations for combating extremism and terrorism. Additionally, foreign scholars have investigated the sociology, psychological mechanisms, and network structure of extremist groups. The study drew upon the Relative Deprivation theory, particularly T.R. Gurr's perspectives, to examine how feelings of economic inequality and injustice in society can trigger radicalization. The "cellular" operational mechanisms of covert groups, proposed by M. Sageman, M. Taylor, and J. Horgan, were analyzed. Based on the psychological identification theories of C. McCauley and S. Moskalenko, an individual's search for their group and the sense of "family" within extremist communities were considered as psychological factors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis and results. To understand the social origins of religious extremist groups, it is necessary to examine a number of complex factors influencing their formation. These factors manifest themselves at several levels and in various directions, each exerting its own distinct influence and collectively leading to the formation of extremist ideas.

On one hand, socio-economic conditions, particularly poverty, unemployment, and a sense of injustice prevalent in society, lead many people to feel dissatisfied and, consequently, develop an interest in radical ideas. Groups that promise to solve these problems quickly and easily attract people to their side by presenting

themselves as the only correct solution in this situation. For such groups, it is primarily important to offer simple and quick solutions to people's personal problems.

Political instability, authoritarian regimes, and the persistent violation of human rights should be considered as another crucial factor. Limited opportunities for political activity and the absence of democratic freedoms lead some groups to use religious ideas as a facade to achieve their goals. Religious extremism, thus, develops under the influence of political and economic restrictions, and such groups sometimes aim to develop their actions on a religious foundation.

Cultural and spiritual factors also play a significant role in the spread of extremist ideas. When national and religious identities are denied, traditional values are violated, and cultural conflicts exist, some people begin to adopt a defensive stance. These feelings can motivate individuals who wish to preserve their authentic values to join religious extremist groups. Simultaneously, such groups often appeal to people in their propaganda to maintain their uniqueness and protect national or religious values.

External influences, particularly the ability of foreign extremist groups to provide ideological and financial support, as well as conduct propaganda through social networks, can lead to the radicalization of individuals. The interconnectedness of the Internet and global networks allows groups to quickly and widely disseminate their ideologies, serving as an effective tool for recruiting new members.

Considering psychological factors is also crucial. Feelings such as personal trauma, depression, the search for meaning in life, and low self-esteem make many people susceptible to joining extremist groups. Such groups provide their members with a sense of "family" and "purpose," offering psychological support, thereby making them more vulnerable to their influence.

Religious extremist groups often conduct their organizational structures and activities in a covert manner. Their leaders are typically charismatic individuals who lead the group and encourage members to firmly believe in their ideology. While members engage in active propaganda work, those who are ready to support ordinary members play a crucial role in each group. Clandestine groups carry out their activities as secretly as possible, which helps ensure the group's security.

The operational methods of religious extremist groups manifest in various forms. They utilize widespread propaganda and agitation tools to spread their ideologies and influence society. Through mass events, lectures, and seminars, they attempt to capture the minds of the population, especially the youth. These groups do not hesitate to employ violence and terrorism to achieve their goals; sometimes they conduct covert activities through social organizations, charities, and religious centers. Additionally, one of their widely used methods is the dissemination of false information and disinformation to create distrust within society.

Thus, the formation and operational methods of religious extremist groups depend on a number of complex factors, posing a significant threat to individuals and societies.

The structure of religious extremist groups varies depending on their goals and activities. Each structural model has its own characteristics and determines the internal organization and operational methods of the groups. Below are some of the most common structural models:

In a hierarchical structure, all group members operate based on a clearly defined order. In this model,

activities are carried out according to orders and instructions issued by senior leadership. Such a structure often ensures strict control, and each group member has specific roles in performing their duties. The hierarchical model is typical of many terrorist organizations, which operate under a centralized management system, allowing them to function effectively and systematically[7].

In the cellular model, groups are divided into small, independent cells, each of which carries out its activities separately. Although cells function independently, they remain committed to a common goal and ideology. This structure is particularly advantageous for groups operating clandestinely, as the independent functioning of cells makes it difficult for security services to target them. In the cellular model, groups have minimal connections to each other and often strive to maintain secrecy.

The network model is characteristic of groups that attract supporters through the Internet and social networks. These groups consist of independent units, each striving to achieve its own goal, but all units are united based on a common idea and ideology. The network model enables groups to effectively utilize digital technologies and social networks. It facilitates information exchange, recruitment of new members, and coordination of activities through the Internet.

The hybrid model is characteristic of groups incorporating several structural elements. This type of group lacks a specific structure and operates using various methods and techniques. The hybrid model is often associated with religious, ideological, or other doctrinal foundations, but such groups conduct their activities in flexible and adaptive ways. These groups combine different models, making their operations more complex while simultaneously increasing their ability to adapt to any situation[8].

Each structural model allows religious extremist groups to develop different strategies. These groups constantly adapt their internal structure and operational methods to achieve their goals.

Extremist groups employ various methods to achieve their goals and attract new supporters. These methods are applied in a complementary manner, helping to make the group's activities more effective.

To widely disseminate radical ideas, extremist groups effectively utilize various channels, including the internet and social networks. Simultaneously, they propagate their ideology through literature, videos, and articles. The primary objective of such activities is to recruit new members and strengthen belief in their ideas. Personal meetings, seminars, and other organizational events also play a crucial role in the promotion process[9].

Extremist groups often target youth and socially vulnerable individuals to expand their influence. By offering moral and material support, they draw these people to their ideas. In this process, the groups introduce new members to radical ideologies and incorporate them into their ranks. Individuals who find a safe and supportive environment within these groups often fall under their influence and become radicalized[10].

Extremist groups divide into cells to conduct their activities covertly. Although each cell operates independently, they are united in achieving a common goal. This method makes it difficult for security services to detect the group, as the cells are isolated from one another and maintain only limited communication. In this manner, the groups continue their activities effectively[11].

Groups seek various financial sources to sustain their activities. For this purpose, they employ illegal methods

such as drug trafficking, smuggling, or fraudulent fundraising under the guise of charity. Furthermore, they receive support from foreign sponsors, enabling them to expand their operations. Such financial resources are deemed necessary to maintain and expand the group's organization[12].

Extremist groups utilize terrorism and violence to implement their ideas. Through bombings, attacks, and other violent acts, they attempt to instill fear in society. This method is, in turn, used to convey the group's demands to society and demonstrate its power. Through terror and violence, groups aim to achieve their objectives swiftly, allowing them to broaden their sphere of influence[13].

Each extremist group employs its own specialized methods to achieve its goals. Their common objective is to adapt society to their ideology and expand their influence. These methods complement each other, making the activities of such groups more effective.

Conclusions and recommendations. Extremism poses a grave threat to the development of human society, as well as to the peace and stability of nations. To combat this threat, it is necessary to develop targeted strategies and methods, and conduct awareness campaigns about the negative consequences of extremism in society. Particular attention should be paid to the education and upbringing of young people, with all members of society equally responsible for their spiritual development. Furthermore, a comprehensive analysis of social, political, economic, and cultural factors, coupled with united efforts against religious extremism, will help mitigate existing risks.

CONCLUSION

To prevent extremism, it is essential to improve the socio-economic conditions of the population, reduce poverty, focus on enhancing the education system, and protect young people from negative influences. It is crucial to provide young people with accurate religious knowledge and encourage their aspirations for mutual solidarity, tolerance, and social progress. In combating religious extremism, it is necessary to educate about the dangers of religious extremism at all levels of the education system, promote social culture and tolerance, ensure justice, equality, and stability in society through government, social, and political structures, develop international cooperation in the fight against religious extremism, implement new methods in countering transnational terrorist organizations, and conduct preventive work such as reintegrating individuals prone to joining extremist groups into social norms through psychological assistance and rehabilitation.

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