

FEATURES OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND SPREAD OF ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM IN THE STATES OF CENTRAL ASIA

ОСОБЛИВОСТІ РОЗВИТКУ ТА ПОШИРЕННЯ ІСЛАМСЬКОГО ФУНДАМЕНТАЛІЗМУ В ДЕРЖАВАХ ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЇ АЗІЇ

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The article analyzes the influence of Islamic fundamentalism on socio-political processes in Central Asia. The key factors that contributed to the development of this phenomenon, including economic, political and cultural changes, have been identified. In particular, it is noted that the collapse of the Soviet Union created new political and economic conditions faced by the countries of Central Asia, which contributed to the emergence of radical sentiments among the population.

One of the important events that influenced the development of Islamic fundamentalism was the Afghan war, which served as a catalyst for the radicalization of Islamic groups in the region. As many young people from Central Asia joined the Afghan mujahideen, returning home with new, radical beliefs. This was one of the reasons for the spread of Islamic fundamentalism, in particular in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan, which was perceived as a form of protest against authoritarian regimes and social injustice. The article also discusses the activities of organizations such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, the Islamic Jihad Union and other Islamic movements that actively promote the ideas of Islamic governance.

It is noted that these organizations use religious narratives to attract supporters, often in the context of repressive regimes that restrict freedom of speech and political rights. This pushes certain segments of society to search for alternative forms of self-expression, including religious fundamentalism. The geopolitical context of Islamic fundamentalism, in particular its influence on the foreign policy of Central Asian countries, is also studied. It is emphasized that effective counteraction to this phenomenon requires joint efforts, both on the part of governments, civil society and the international community.

Key words: Islam, radicalism, ideology, Central Asia, regional policy.

У статті проаналізовано вплив ісламського фундаменталізму на соціально-політичні процеси в Центральній Азії. Визначено ключові фактори, що сприяли розвитку цього явища, серед яких економічні, політичні та культурні зміни. Зокрема, відзначається, що розпад Радянського Союзу створив нові політичні та економічні умови з якими зіткнулись країни Центральної Азії, що сприяло виникненню радикальних настроїв серед населення.

Однією з важливих подій, що вплинули на розвиток ісламського фундаменталізму, стала афганська війна, яка послужила каталізатором радикалізації ісламських груп у регіоні. Оскільки, багато молодих людей з Центральної Азії приєдналися до афганських муджахедів, повернувшись додому з новими, радикальними переконаннями. Це стало однією з причин поширення ісламського фундаменталізму, зокрема в Таджикистані, Узбекистані, Туркменістані, Киргизістані, Казахстані, що сприймалось, як певна форма протесту проти авторитарних режимів і соціальної несправедливості. У статті також розглянуто діяльність таких організацій, як Хізб ут-Тахрір, Союзу Ісламського Джихаду та інших ісламських рухів, які активно пропагують ідеї ісламського управління.

Зазначається, що ці організації використовують релігійні наративи для залучення прихильників, часто в умовах репресивних режимів, що обмежують свободу слова та політичні права. Це підштовхує певні верстви суспільства до пошуку альтернативних форм самовираження, включаючи релігійний фундаменталізм. Досліджено, також геополітичний контекст ісламського фундаменталізму, зокрема його вплив на зовнішню політику країн Центральної Азії. Наголошується, що ефективна протидія цьому явищу вимагає спільних зусиль, як з боку урядів, громадянського суспільства так і міжнародної спільноти.

Ключові слова: іслам, радикалізм, ідеологія, Центральна Азія, регіональна політика.

Statement of the problem. Central Asia is a region that brings together different cultures, religions, and ethnic groups, contributing to the spread of Islamic fundamentalism. Particular attention should be paid to states such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan, which, since declaring independence in the 1990s, have faced challenges related to national identity building, economic transformation, and the fight against political instability,

and have become a hotbed of the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in recent decades. In this context, religious and ideological movements, especially Islamic fundamentalism, have become an important factor in determining the internal political situation and foreign relations of the states of the region. Thus, the study of the spread of Islamic fundamentalism in the Central Asian states is important for understanding the current challenges in the region.

Analysis of the latest research and publications.

The article is based on studies of Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia, in particular the works of authors such as Pikulicka A., Olcott M., Allison R. These studies are devoted to the analysis of the impact of the Islamic revival on the socio-political processes in the region after the collapse of the USSR, as well as the relationship between Islam and politics. Among the domestic researchers, it is worth noting Oleksandr Kozhukhar and his works that explore the influence of Islam on the formation of new identities in post-Soviet countries. Anastasia Brailo's work highlights the ideological foundations of Islamic fundamentalism and its implications for society.

Statement of the task. To carry out a comprehensive analysis of the peculiarities of the development and spread of Islamic fundamentalism in the states of Central Asia.

Presentation of the main material of the research. The beginning of the development of Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia can be traced through the prism of various socio-economic, political and cultural factors that have influenced the development of the region in recent decades. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 created new political and economic conditions in the region, with Central Asian states declaring independence, including Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, and facing significant challenges, such as economic reforms, corruption, and ethnic conflicts. This period was a transitional period for political transformations in the region and contributed to the growth of Islamic activity [7, p.252-253].

Historical factors that also contributed to the emergence and spread of Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia were the events of the 1980s and 1990s. During this period, the region experienced significant changes that affected the political, economic and sociocultural situation. One of the key events of this period was the Afghan War (1979-1989), which involved Afghan mujahideen, supported by Western countries, including the United States. This war served as a catalyst for the radicalization of Islamic groups in the region, as well as contributed to the spread of Islamic fundamentalism. Many young people from Central Asia joined the Afghan mujahideen in the fight against the Soviet occupation and then returned home with radical beliefs. These difficulties contributed to the spread of Islamic fundamentalism, which often acted as a means of protesting against authoritarian regimes and socio-economic injustices [6, p.28-29]. A civil war between religious and non-religious groups in the 1990s in Tajikistan weakened the central government. President Emomali Rahmon as a leader established an authoritarian regime, thereby imposing strict rules and controls, namely restricting the activities of Islamic organizations and mosques.

This helped to build support for radical Islamist movements, such as the Islamic Renaissance Party.

During the reign of President Saparmurat Niyazov, an extremely authoritarian regime was established in Turkmenistan. S. Niyazov pursued a policy of brutal suppression of any alternative centers of power and civil society. This also applied to Islamic organizations and mosques. S. Niyazov saw any manifestations of Islamic activity as a threat to his sole power. He tried in every possible way to limit and control the practice of Islam in the country, encouraging the cult of his own personality and Soviet secular traditions. Such a policy of harsh suppression of Islam in Turkmenistan created conditions for the gradual radicalization of part of the Muslim population. After Niyazov's death in 2006, the situation in Turkmenistan changed somewhat. The new president, Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov, has begun a certain liberalization of the regime, including in the religious sphere. There is a gradual easing of restrictions on the activities of mosques and Islamic organizations.

It is worth emphasizing that in the 1990s, Islamic organizations and parties became more active in the Central Asian region, in particular Hizb ut-Tahrir, which promoted the idea of restoring the Islamic caliphate. It is worth noting that Hizb ut-Tahrir is one of the most well-known and influential organizations. Founded in 1953 in Jerusalem, the party quickly expanded its activities beyond the Middle East, particularly to Central Asian countries, where it advocated the restoration of Islamic governance through the establishment of a caliphate. Hizb ut-Tahrir promotes an ideology based on the restoration of the Islamic caliphate and the use of Sharia as the basis of legislation. Their rhetoric often includes criticism of modern authoritarian regimes in Central Asian countries, which members of the movement believe have betrayed Islamic values and are pursuing policies contrary to Islamic law. This movement not only opposes the existing governments, but also actively agitates for a revolutionary coup and the establishment of an Islamic state with the centralized power of the caliph. The activity of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Central Asia is characterized by the creation of a network of local centers that conducted active propaganda among the population, organized seminars, lectures and published literature, which contributed to the dissemination of their ideas. The movement has a significant impact among youth and students, which may indicate their high level of organizational capacity and strategic planning. The religious fundamentalism promoted by Hizb ut-Tahrir is a major concern in both regional and international authorities due to the potential threat of radicalization and terrorism. This calls into question stability and security in the region, emphasizing the need for effective measures to control and prevent extremism [8, p.28-30].

This period was also important for the formation of the Islamic Jihad Union and other Islamic movements.

The Islamic Jihad Union in the Central Asian region has actively promoted the ideas of Islamic fundamentalism among young people and advocates the establishment of an Islamic state. This movement is campaigning among young people and trying to attract new adherents to its ideology. Political parties and movements in Central Asia may be different in their ideology and approaches, but some of them, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir and Islamic Jihad in Kazakhstan, act as carriers of the ideas of Islamic fundamentalism [5, p.10].

In the context of the influence of religious leaders on the spread of radical interpretations of Islam, imams and other religious leaders have played a significant role in the formation of fundamentalist views. For example, in the 1990s in Sudan, leaders such as Hassan al-Turabi actively promoted political Islam, which led to the introduction of Sharia law at the state level. Also, in the 2000s in Pakistan, some imams used mosques to promote jihad against Western interference, fueling anti-Western sentiment among the population. These religious leaders used their authority and access to large audiences to spread conservative and radical interpretations of Islam, which included supporting extremist movements and justifying violence. Such influence of religious leaders underscores the need for religious and government institutions to monitor and regulate their activities to ensure stability and prevent radicalization.

The next decade, the 2000s, saw further expansion and influence from Islamic political organizations. For example, in 2005, Hizb ut-Tahrir and other Islamic groups were banned in Uzbekistan, which in turn led to explosions of violence and confrontation with the government [9].

In the 2010s, Islamic movements continued to actively influence the political situation in the region. For example, Islamic Jihad in Kazakhstan remains active, trying to attract young people and new adherents to its ideology [5, p. 7-8]. Thus, the above-mentioned organizations continue to influence the political situation in the region and play an important role in shaping socio-political processes in Central Asia during various historical periods. That is why an effective fight against Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia requires a combination of various measures at the political, economic, social and cultural levels, as well as joint action by governments and civil society, both at the domestic and international levels.

One of the main geopolitical consequences of the spread of Islamic fundamentalism is a change in the political landscape in the region itself. Movements and parties that support Islamic fundamentalism can gain significant political power and influence, leading to changes in government structures and the adoption of Islamic principles in law. For example, in Uzbekistan, the government views Islamic fundamentalism as a threat to its power and takes firm measures to suppress

it, while in Tajikistan, Islamic parties have some support in society and parliament [4, p 187-188].

In addition, the spread of Islamic fundamentalism affects the foreign policy of Central Asian countries and their relations with their neighbors. On the one hand, this could lead to tensions with neighboring countries that are experiencing their own problems with Islamic fundamentalism [1, p. 99]. For example, Afghanistan, which borders Central Asia, is a hotspot for Islamic extremism, and the spread of fundamentalist ideas poses a threat to stability in the region. On the other hand, the spread of Islamic fundamentalism may also affect cooperation between Central Asian countries and their neighbors in the fight against terrorism and extremism. Strengthening cooperation and data exchange between developed countries and regional partners can help reduce the threat posed by Islamic fundamentalism, as well as contribute to the creation of common strategies to counter it [3, p. 122].

External factors such as geopolitical transformations, interference by other states, and the activities of international terrorist organizations also play a role in the spread of Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia. The involvement of the local population in conflicts in neighboring countries and the interference of other states can lead to radicalization and the strengthening of Islamic fundamentalism in the region [2, p. 36-37].

Thus, Islamic fundamentalism in the region affects states in several key ways. First, movements like Hizb ut-Tahrir pose serious challenges to national security through their radical actions and attempts to destabilize existing government structures. Second, they contribute to rising social tensions by using religious divisions to foment sectarian conflicts. Third, Islamic fundamentalism influences political discourse, shifting it towards more radical and conservative interpretations of Islam, which complicates the process of democratization and modernization. Effectively countering Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia requires a comprehensive approach that combines the efforts of national governments, civil society and the international community. Measures should include not only the fight against terrorism and radicalization, but also educational and social programs aimed at reducing the attractiveness of radical ideas. It is also important to work with young people and religious leaders to raise awareness of the dangers posed by radical Islamism. Only through joint efforts and a comprehensive approach can stability, development and peace be achieved in the region. Such measures can not only strengthen the state system, but also ensure a safer and more prosperous future for all the peoples of Central Asia.

Conclusions. In summary, we can see that Islamic fundamentalism has a significant impact on the socio-political life of Central Asian countries. Its presence is evident in various areas, including politics, culture, social order, and economics. This phenomenon

is driven by complex historical, economic, and sociocultural factors, including deep religious and ethnic traditions, as well as the influence of external forces. Islamic fundamentalism is reflected in the formation of political movements and parties, in the creation of the legal system, in social norms and values, and in the development of the economy. At the same time, it can cause conflicts and instability in the region, which threatens the peaceful coexistence of different ethnic and religious groups. Through the analysis of this phenomenon, it is possible to understand its complexity and depth, as well as to identify strategies

to overcome the problems associated with the spread of Islamic fundamentalism. Joint action of governments and civil society, as well as international cooperation aimed at supporting democratic processes, developing civil society and ensuring peace and stability in the region, is important. In this context, attention should be paid to the importance of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, which can help reduce tensions and strengthen mutual understanding. The implementation of educational programs that promote tolerance and respect for diversity will be an important step in strengthening social cohesion in the region.

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