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THE CONCEPT, ESSENCE AND PURPOSE OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

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Abstract:

This article provides scientific and practical information about the concept, essence and purpose of religious extremism. It analyzes different approaches to the interpretation of religious extremism and explains its main ideological, social and legal characteristics. The article also discusses the relationship between religious extremism, fanaticism, fundamentalism, dogmatism and radicalization. Special attention is paid to the fact that extremist forces often misuse religious ideas, distort the essence of religion and attempt to influence people's consciousness through destructive propaganda.

The article emphasizes that religious extremism poses a serious threat to state security, constitutional order, public stability and the future of young people. In the context of globalization, the rapid development of the internet and digital technologies has created new opportunities for the spread of extremist ideas. Therefore, it is important to strengthen legal awareness, ideological immunity and religious enlightenment among young people. The article concludes that the main purpose of religious extremism is to use religion as a political and ideological tool, undermine social stability, create hostility among people and attempt to change the existing state system by unlawful means.

Keywords:

religious extremism, fanaticism, fundamentalism, dogmatism, Islam, extremism, extremist group, extremist organization, religious fundamentalism, fanatical person, radicalization, ideological immunity.

Introduction

In the modern era of globalization, the rapid development of the internet and digital technologies has had a deep impact on all layers of society. These opportunities, unfortunately, are used not only for positive purposes, but also for destructive and harmful aims. In particular, the spread of extremist ideas through the internet, the recruitment of individuals into radical groups and mass manipulation through social networks have become serious threats not only to the security of a single country, but also to the safety of humanity as a whole.

Since the first years of independence, the Republic of Uzbekistan has clearly defined its attitude toward religion. The state's policy toward religion is based on the principles that "a person cannot live without faith" and "secularism does not mean atheism." These principles are legally reflected in the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan and in the Law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations." Today, 2,238 religious organizations belonging to 16 religious confessions operate in Uzbekistan. Of these, 2,064 are Islamic organizations, 157 are Christian organizations, 8 are Jewish communities, 6 are Baha'i communities, and there is also one Krishna Consciousness Society and one Buddhist temple. In addition, the Interconfessional Bible Society also operates in the country.

At the same time, it should be remembered that destructive forces may exist under the guise of any religion. Such forces try to mislead people by distorting religious teachings and manipulating religious feelings. Religious extremism is one of the clearest examples of such destructive activity. It

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threatens the constitutional order, public security and human life by promoting destructive ideas and attempting to achieve unlawful political and ideological goals.

Methodology

The term "methodology" originates from Latin and refers to a system of principles and methods used to organize theoretical and practical activity. In scientific research, methodology determines the way a topic is studied, interpreted and analyzed.

Crimes related to extremism are understood as socially dangerous acts aimed at destabilizing the socio-political situation in a country, forcibly changing the constitutional order, damaging the state's position in the international arena and undermining public security. The definition of extremism is provided in Article 3 of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Combating Extremism." According to this approach, the main purposes of extremism may be divided into four directions: destabilizing the socio-political situation; forcibly changing the constitutional order; seizing power or appropriating state authority by force; and inciting national, religious or ethnic hatred.

Extremism may generally be divided into religious extremism and secular extremism. Religious extremism is connected with the misuse of religious ideas, while secular extremism may appear in political, economic or ideological forms. At present, the concept of religious extremism is not defined in detail in a single legal norm, although there are different scientific and practical views on this issue.

The word "extremism" comes from the Latin word extremum, meaning "the farthest" or "the extreme." Religious extremism appears under the influence of social processes and has deep historical roots. It can be said that religious extremism emerged together with the appearance of religious worldviews as a social phenomenon. However, in different historical periods it has appeared in different forms, contents and manifestations.

Religious extremism is closely related to such concepts as fanaticism, dogmatism and fundamentalism. These concepts help to understand the internal nature of extremist thinking and behavior.

Fanaticism is one of the main sources of religious extremism. It is expressed in blind devotion to a certain ideology, belief or worldview, especially in religious, philosophical, national or political spheres. Fanaticism means excessive confidence in the absolute correctness of one's own views and intolerance toward other religious beliefs or opinions. A fanatical person does not accept alternative viewpoints and often rejects dialogue, compromise and critical thinking.

The terms "fanaticism" and "fanatic" originate from the Latin words fanatice and fanaticus, which express meanings such as anger, excessive enthusiasm, excitement and religious obsession. Historically, these words were associated with sacred places and religious worship. In modern usage, fanaticism is understood as excessive and irrational devotion to an idea, belief or movement.

Today, examples of religious fanaticism can be found in different religious contexts. Its influence may be destructive even when it does not directly involve violence. For example, fanatical parents may raise their children in ways that contradict the laws of modern human development and socialization. In some families, girls may be denied education because of fanatical interpretations of religion, which may result in illiteracy and social isolation.

It should also be noted that excessive fanaticism can harm not only society but also the individual. For example, some people may isolate themselves from social life in the name of religious devotion and harm their psychological or physical well-being. Therefore, fanaticism should be analyzed not only as a religious issue, but also as a psychological and social problem.

Different scholars and public figures have defined fanaticism in various ways. Winston Churchill described a fanatic as a person who cannot change his mind and will not change the subject. The psychologist of religion Tõnu Lehtsaar defined fanaticism as an excessive and passionate pursuit or

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defense of something beyond normal limits. The English philosopher John Locke understood a fanatic as a person who is intolerant toward others, and this meaning remains one of the central interpretations of the term today.

Dogmatism is also closely connected with religious extremism. The word “aqida” means belief or doctrine. Dogmatism refers to the blind application of certain rules, ideas or principles without considering time, place, circumstances or social reality. It appears when a person absolutizes a particular doctrine and artificially expands its sphere of influence. Dogmatism is imposed on the consciousness of people through ideological pressure and may be raised to the level of unquestionable belief.

Dogmatism may appear in two forms: secular and religious. Secular dogmatism may be expressed in egoism, chauvinism, communism, Bolshevism, atheism, nationalism and similar ideological forms. Religious dogmatism may appear in extremist movements that interpret religious teachings narrowly and reject other interpretations. Representatives of dogmatic movements consider their views to be absolute and unchangeable truths and do not accept alternative opinions.

Fundamentalism is another concept connected with religious extremism. It refers to a set of social, ideological and religious views that strongly defend the preservation of the original and literal meaning of certain teachings or sacred texts and reject figurative or contextual interpretation. In science, the term was first used in the works of philosophers of the modern period, such as Francis Bacon, René Descartes and John Locke.

The above analysis shows that it is necessary to develop legal consciousness and legal culture among young people, while also forming ideological immunity on the basis of the principle “enlightenment against ignorance.” In addition, young people should be taught to use social networks correctly and rationally in order to prevent them from becoming victims of extremist propaganda.

Research Results

In recent years, the activities of many terrorist and extremist organizations have been restricted in different countries. According to available data, the activities of 68 terrorist organizations in the United States, 47 in Russia, 78 in Great Britain, 15 in Turkey and 22 in Uzbekistan have been stopped. In addition, thousands of radical materials have been banned by court decisions in countries such as Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

In Uzbekistan, the number of materials prepared by prohibited organizations and distributed through digital platforms has been increasing. Such materials have been identified on Facebook, Telegram, Instagram, YouTube, Odnoklassniki, TikTok, websites and other sources. This situation requires improvement of the theory of combating extremism-related crimes and strengthening investigative and preventive practice.

According to collected data, about 500 terrorist and religious extremist organizations currently operate in the world. A significant part of them acts under the guise of Islam. Among such organizations are “al-Qaeda,” “Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami,” “al-Jihad,” “at-Takfir wal-Hijra,” “Turkistan Islamic Movement,” “Islamic Jihad Union,” “Katibat al-Imam al-Bukhari,” “Jamaat Ansarullah,” “Jabhat al-Nusra” and “Islamic State.” These organizations misuse religious concepts and attempt to justify violence, hostility and political destruction through distorted interpretations of religion.

Among such movements, “Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami” is often described as one of the most radical political-religious movements. It was founded in Lebanon between 1950 and 1953 by Taqiuddin al-Nabhani as an Islamic political party. Its declared aim is to restore the caliphate, reject the foundations of modern secular statehood, deny democratic principles, replace the rule of law with its own interpretation of Sharia and reject the electoral system.

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The ideology of religious extremism often accuses modern Muslim societies of returning to the period of "jahiliyyah," or pre-Islamic ignorance, and claims the need to overthrow existing governments in order to establish a so-called "true Islamic order." Today, religious extremist organizations seek to create national and religious divisions among states, peoples and religious communities. They aim to provoke conflict, hostility and discord among representatives of different nations living in one country. The most regrettable aspect is that such groups use the name of Islam, which is a religion of peace and goodness, to achieve their destructive aims.

It should be emphasized that religion has several important social functions, one of which is to unite people around noble goals. The main idea of Islam is peace, enlightenment and goodness. Islam opposes actions directed against human beings and society. In the Qur'an, believers are called to enter into peace and unity. Islam also calls people not to divide into hostile groups, but to remain united around moral and spiritual values.

The Prophet Muhammad also emphasized two great blessings for humanity: health and peace. In a hadith narrated by Imam Bukhari from Abdullah ibn Abbas, it is stated that many people do not fully appreciate two blessings: health and tranquility. This idea clearly shows that Islam values peace, stability and human well-being.

As a result of the distorted interpretation of Islamic teachings, the words "extremism" and "terrorism" have sometimes been incorrectly associated with religion. In fact, Islam strongly condemns unjust bloodshed, actions that cause disorder in society and any acts that threaten human life. Islam is a religion of purity, goodness and enlightenment, and it has no connection with religious extremism or terrorism.

Unfortunately, throughout history and in later periods, various false movements have emerged under the name of Islam. The continuation of such views today requires deep reflection. Faith is a delicate matter. Scholars have always warned people not to follow anyone who speaks about religion without knowledge and responsibility. Ibn Sirin stated that religious knowledge is part of one's religion, and therefore one must carefully consider from whom religious knowledge is taken. This means that religious information must be verified and correctly interpreted. Otherwise, the incorrect interpretation of religious knowledge may lead to serious negative consequences.

The analysis shows that religious extremism is not a genuine religious phenomenon, but a destructive ideological and political phenomenon that uses religion as a mask. Its real purpose is to influence people's minds, subordinate society to its own ideology, overthrow the existing constitutional order and use religion as a dangerous political weapon against the future of humanity.

President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has emphasized that the countries of the region face threats such as terrorism, religious extremism, transnational crime and drug trafficking. To effectively counter these threats, it is necessary to unite efforts and implement practical mechanisms of cooperation among the countries of the region. The principle of "integrated security" is especially important in this regard, because security threats cannot be divided into "ours" and "others." They require common action and coordinated cooperation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, religious extremism is a complex social, ideological, legal and psychological phenomenon. It appears when religious ideas are distorted and used for destructive political purposes. Its essence lies in intolerance, fanaticism, dogmatism, rejection of pluralism, hostility toward other views and attempts to change the social and political order by unlawful means.

The main purpose of religious extremism is to hide behind religion, distort its peaceful essence, forcibly subordinate people to extremist ideology, overthrow the existing state system and establish its own ideological order. Religious extremism turns religion from a source of peace, morality and

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enlightenment into a dangerous political instrument. Therefore, the fight against religious extremism should be based not only on legal measures, but also on education, enlightenment, ideological immunity, social prevention and proper religious knowledge.

It is necessary to develop legal awareness and legal culture among young people, teach them to use the internet and social networks responsibly, strengthen their ability to distinguish reliable religious information from destructive propaganda and form critical thinking. The principle "enlightenment against ignorance" should become one of the main directions in preventing religious extremism.

Religious extremism threatens peace, stability, interethnic harmony and the future of young generations. Therefore, the state, family, educational institutions, civil society, religious scholars and law enforcement bodies must act together in preventing this threat. Only through integrated security, practical cooperation, correct religious education and strong ideological immunity can society effectively resist religious extremism and protect the future of the country.

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