

# The Central Asian countries at the modern stage: main factors of the extremism distribution in the youth environment

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**Keywords:** Central Asia, extremism, fundamentalism, youth environment, distribution factors

**Կենտրոնական Ասիայի երկրները ներկայիս փուլում. երիտասարդական միջավայրում ծայրահեղականության տարածման հիմնական գործոնները**

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**Անփոփում:** Խորհրդային Միության փլուզումից հետո ֆունդամենտալիզմի և ծայրահեղականության մարտահրավերները լայն տարածում ունեցան Կենտրոնական Ասիայի երկրներում: Բնարկե, նման մարտահրավերներն իրական սպառնալիք են ներկայացնում ոչ միայն տարածաշրջանային, այլև միջազգային անվտանգության համար: Սույն հոդվածում հեղինակը անդրադառնում է Կենտրոնական Ասիայի պետությունների երիտասարդական միջավայրում ծայրահեղականության տարածման հիմնախնդրին:

**Վճռորոշ բառեր՝** Կենտրոնական Ասիա, ծայրահեղականություն, ֆունդամենտալիզմ, երիտասարդական միջավայր, տարածման գործոններ

**Страны Центральной Азии на современном этапе: основные факторы распространения экстремизма в молодёжной среде**

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**Резюме:** после коллапса Советского Союза в странах Центральной Азии широкое распространение получили вызовы фундаментализма и экстремизма. Безусловно, такие вызовы создают реальную угрозу не только региональной, но и международной безопасности. В работе автором рассматривается проблематика распространения экстремизма среди молодёжной среды стран Центральной Азии.

**Ключевые слова:** Центральная Азия, экстремизм, фундаментализм, молодёжная среда, факторы распространения

In recent decades, humanity has increasingly confronted with the problems of radicalism, an integral part of which is the spread of extremist views among young people, which leads to an increase in acts of violence in almost all countries of the world. Of course, such types of violence are global challenges to humanity and pose a real threat to the public not only of a particular state or region, but also of International Security in general. The World experience has clearly showed that the authorities of world's many countries are simply not able to demonstration a worthy reaction to such actions. Moreover, some of political powers directly or indirectly support this process and even conspire with extremists in order to gain or maintain their power.

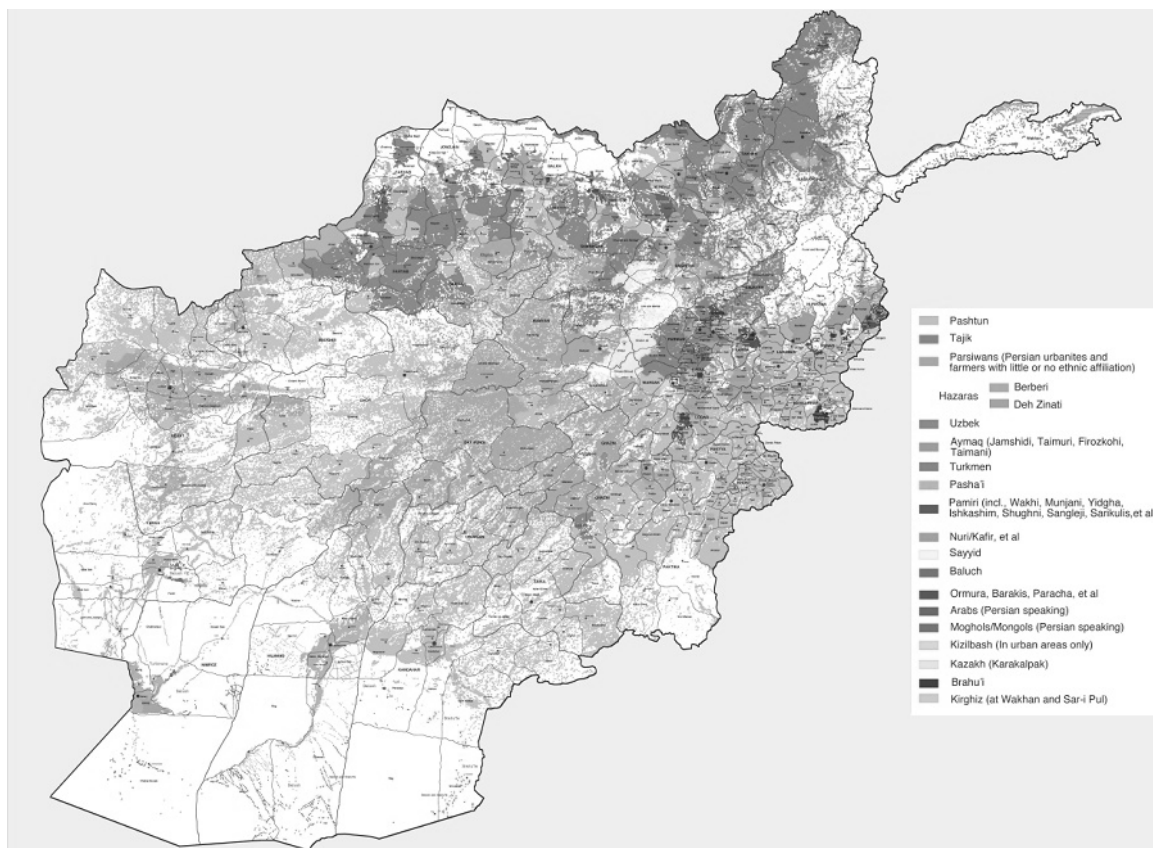
Extremism has no specific boundaries and its distribution range covers almost the entire modern

ecumenical world. Some socio-political figures are diligently trying to connect extremism with a particular denomination, but such a categorical conclusion has only a destructive effect. Therefore, we are inclined to believe that extremism does not have an ethno-religious components, however, it can use these factors and values to build a paradigm of commitment to extreme views and actions, which are based on violence, cruelty and aggression. The main goal of extremism is the incitement of interethnic or interfaith hostility and hatred in society. Such activities are aimed at dramatic changes in the existing socio-political order within the country, creating a threat to the security of the state and the foundations of stable development of society.

**Appendix 1. The Central Asia region on the world's map (according to ISIS, 2014) (ISIS' five-year expansion plan map branded a fake, <https://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/analysis/2014/07/02/Expert-claims-ISIS-five-year-expansion-plan-map-is-fake.html>, 24.05.2019.).**



**Appendix 2. Ethnic map of Afghanistan (2018) (A survey of the Afghan people, [https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/2018\\_Afghan-Survey\\_fullReport-12.4.18.pdf](https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/2018_Afghan-Survey_fullReport-12.4.18.pdf), 26.07.2019.).**



After a sudden collapse (for ordinary Soviet citizens) [5], the collapse of a once united world power, within the decline of almost a century of history (which was based on Soviet ideology) [8], the “dark decade” reigned in the independent post-Soviet republics, bringing with it cold, hunger, darkness and war. In the 1990s, radical and extremist ideologies penetrated into many post-Soviet countries on a large scale, which simply took advantage of the created ideological vacuum, the transformation of the worldview of society and the large-scale spiritual and ideological crisis in the young republics. A particular interest to external powers have the countries of Central Asia region, because of their natural resources and cheap labor [2].

Ethno-religious extremism is currently one of the main challenges and threats to stability in Central Asia. The high importance of studying the phenomenon of extremism in the countries of Central Asia is due to the fact that it is rapidly spreading among young people. Practical evidence for the implementation of this process was the latest reports of foreign fighters fighting in the ranks of the “daish” terrorist formation (ISIS).

According to the Soufan Group (SG) analytical company, a large number of Central Asian people are fighting among the “daish” terrorists. Of course, there is no exact data on the number of militants fighting in the Middle East from Central Asia, but an approximate number is known - from 3 to 5 thousand people [10]. It should be noted that in the process of spreading extremist ideas in the Central Asia region, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has a special role, because of its common border (almost 2300 km) with three (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) of five Central Asian republics [3]. Moreover, ethnic Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kyrgyz, Turkmen and Qazaqs traditionally make up a significant part of the population of Afghanistan (40-45%) [4], which only contribute to the spread of ideological influence in direct contacts of the ethnic minorities of Afghanistan with their fellow tribesmen on the other side of the border.

At the present stage, the problems of ethno-religious extremism in the world are studied by many experts and researchers, however, a consensus has not yet been developed regarding this phenomenon. In our opinion, in order to successfully counter extremism in the youth environment, it is necessary to build a clear causal relationship through the conceptual understanding of this phenomenon, the study of the methodological base and methods of its manifestation and existence. The effectiveness of the fight against extremism will depend on this. However, not everything is so simple, because depending on historical, political,

socio-economic, regional and other factors, extremism has its own specifics [1].

We will try to consider the main factors in the spread of extremism among the youth of Central Asian countries. According to the results of our research, the main reason for young people to turn to extremism is general discontent, which for decades has been formed from a complex of factors of an internal and external nature.

**Internal factors:**

- *a significant income gap between different population groups;*
- *high unemployment rate;*
- *high level of corruption;*
- *low living standards;*
- *contradictions between the ruling elites.*

**External factors:**

- *the modern processes of global confrontation;*
- *geopolitical influence from outside;*
- *the interest of global network extremist organizations in expanding their social base;*
- *the activities of recruiters disguised as missionaries arriving in Central Asia, conspiring to provide charity in the form of cultural and humanitarian initiatives.*

Sure, this division is conditional, because there are no rigid frames between them, moreover, they are interdependence and interweaving. For example, by analyzing the internal factors affecting the manifestation and spread of extremism among young people, using the deductive method, we can draw the following conclusion: **the average young man is not satisfied with his personal social position in the country.** And such socio-psychological dissatisfaction is relevant for the entire region. If we adding here the external factors of influence, we will get a real picture of rapidly growing extremism in all countries of Central Asia, including in the most prosperous in the socio-economic sense of the region’s state - Qazaqstan, and in the most closed state of the region - Turkmenistan. And, despite the abundance of “combustible material” in the region, in order to destabilize situations in the region, an external impetus is needed that will produce the effect of a “lighter” in fueling the conflict.

*Appendix 3. The population of Central Asia by 2050 (in millions) [7].*

Country	2018 population	2050 population
Afghanistan	38	64.7
Qazaqstan	17.5	23
Kyrgyzstan	5.8	8.1
Tajikistan	8.5	14.5
Turkmenistan	5.5	7.8
Uzbekistan	31	41

### Conclusion

Thus, today the situation in the region can be described as moderately stable, but requiring overcoming the underlying causes that contribute to the growth of extremism in the youth environment. In the short term, it is hardly worth fearing an Islamic revolution in any republic of the region, but a possible synthesis of socio-economic problems with ethno-religious extremist ideologies in the long term can create a significant threat to the existing order in the region. At the moment, the countries of Central Asia are demonstrating an example of persistent opposition to internal and external extremism, where the CSTO and the SCO play a special role. The key to safe development of the Central Asia region is the preservation of the foreign policy balance, which allows you to use the influence and opportunities of external International actors: in particular, Russia and China. These countries, as the republics of the Central Asia region, are interested in minimizing the scale of activity of religious radicals in the region, since they have a common border with the countries of the region, as well as they themselves face domestic issues. Sure, such International structures are not a panacea for the threat of extremism and the expansion of its influence on the socio-political situation in the region, but they remain one of the significant factors in maintaining stability in the region.

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