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# **CENTRAL ASIA AMID GLOBAL THREATS**

**UDC 327**  
**BBC 66.4**  
**C 38**

Compendium of analytical studies “Central Asia in the context of global threats” is the product of teamwork elaborated by leading experts from Central Asian States - Republic of Kazakhstan, Republic of Tajikistan and Republic of Uzbekistan.

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General editorship by: I.Mirsayitov, Representative Office of SFCG in Kyrgyzstan.

**C 38. Central Asia against the backdrop of global threats. - B.: 2016. – P. 153.**

**ISBN 978-9967-04-690-0**

The authors of these analytical studies explore in detail nature of violent extremism and its manifestations in their own countries.

The Kazakh experts analyze how extremism influences the process nation-building in Kazakhstan. The leading analytical center of the Republic of Tajikistan has conducted a research on women radicalization and an impact of violent extremism on women’s behavior and vision. Scientists from the Republic of Uzbekistan have carried out their research as islamization process effects social, political and economic spheres of Uzbekistan.

C 0802000000-16 UDC 327

ISBN 978-9967-04-690-0 BBK 66.4

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**Dear Reader,**

We are pleased to present to your attention the Compendium drafted by the leading experts from the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Tajikistan. This Collection was elaborated within the Project “Strengthening capacity for Preventing violent extremism in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia” implemented by Representative Office of the international non-profit organization Search for Common Ground (SFCG) with the financial support of the British Embassy in Kyrgyzstan.

The Project “Capacity Building for Preventing Violent Extremism in the Kyrgyz Republic and Central Asia” contains a component “Dialog in Central Asia”, which is attended by the eminent scientists, experts and diplomats. The objective of this Project component is to bridge a dialogue between the States of Central Asia by means of the expert communications on the most burning issues of the region.

SFCG, from February 2015 to present, along with its country partners has organized a series of events intended to build a dialogue at another level.

A forum of anti – terrorist structures and expert communities from Central Asian States was held on March 2-4 March 2015 in Bishkek. The forum was attended by officers of anti – terrorist centers of Central Asia together with researchers from analytical institutions, both governmental and public.

On 11 March 2015, through the efforts by Independent Analytical Center “Religion, Law and Politics” and Research and Scientific Institute “Islamic Studies” a Forum of Ulemas took place encouraging improved collaboration between all Muslim communities in preventing violent extremism.

On 30 March 2015 took place another forum for law enforcement agencies (police) in countering extremism and terrorism. The forum was attended not only by law enforcement agencies of Central Asia but also regional organizations such as ATC CIS.

In August 2015, for the first time in the history of Central Asia the SFCG– Kyrgyzstan Team and Public Association of Progressive Women «Mutakallim» (PAPW) organized a forum of Muslim women of Central Asia. The Forum was met with great interest among international and regional organizations. The Forum passed recommendations and proposals to improve collaboration between women civil community organizations with state agencies to prevent women participation in extremist and terrorist organizations.

In September 2015 a forum for state agencies and expert community was organized with assistance of the Office of Prosecutor General of Republic of Kazakhstan, Center of Associations of Religious Studies under the Government of Republic of Kazakhstan and SFCG – Kyrgyzstan.

In October 2015, the youth organizations from Central Asia had a chance to get together at Issyk-Kul Lake and build up a platform for dialog and communications. The youth came up with a number of project proposals, which SFCG may consider to provide funds for. The voiced proposals aimed at reducing the levels of radicalization among young people of Central Asia.

In general, the efforts of SFCG team and its partners inchoated the grounds for a broader dialogue of participants from Central Asia. This dialog reached out to both state agencies and civil society including Muslim communities. The dialog participants managed to find grounds of common interest. These are prevention of the ideology of violent extremism among young people and women reduction of the number of those departing to the conflict zones.

At present, a process to shape up new format of a dialogue between the thought experts and prominent public figures in Central Asia is in progress. We hope that this new format will contribute to a continued and sustainable dialog in Central Asia on the most urgent issues of security and peace – building.

**Yours Respectfully,**

**Director  
Saynazarov K.B.  
SFCG – Kyrgyzstan**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Saynazarov', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the left.

## AF “Global Monitor” / “Exclusive” (Kazakhstan)

### “Role of religious factor in nation-building in the Republic of Kazakhstan: constructive and destructive aspects”

**Aidar Amrebaev**  
Independent expert

#### **Introduction**

*The practical outcome of this paper is to formulate expert conclusions and recommendations towards harmonizing ethnic and confessional developments in modern statehood of Kazakhstan.*

**T**his issue is a part of the larger Research Program targeted at understanding and reconstructing modern Kazakhstan modern nation – building. It is a multidimensional process, which includes various aspects having political, socio – economic, cultural and ideological nature. A particular emphasis is attached to examining the “challenges” and opportunities in terms of ensuring security and social stability as well as shaping political identity of multiethnic and polyconfessional society of Kazakhstan. This present research highlights an aspect influencing the country’s nation – building process in the search of its modern religiously identity. The Research objects are the Muslim identity of modern Kazakhstan as one of the systemic factors that constitute the national identity of the people of Kazakhstan. This process has both consolidating, constructive and disintegrating, destructive functions during nation – building of the country. The latter, according to our view, is connected with radicalization of non-critically accepted Islam canons by the society within the Kazakhstan modern and sovereign statehood. This research presents the role of Government and public institutions in the processes of country’s ethnic and religious development. Particular emphasis is placed on overcoming the violent extremism on ethnopolitical and religious basis. The sovereignty process of the Kazakhstan new national statehood built on the “fragments” of the Soviet colonial empire is actually followed by both appealing to the age-old historical traditions, including religious ones, on the part of the Kazakhs as the country’s systemic constituting ethnicity, and the need to rethink and develop “spiritual tablets” of modern multi-ethnic and multi-religious people, who had chosen a strategy of openness and to adapt values of the modern civilized world community. Authorized Government Body as well as analytical centers may use the materials of this analytical research while making decisions in order to learn from the experiences of nation – building in Kazakhstan.

#### **Research Methodology**

**C**hoice of general methodology and applied approach depends on specific tasks of the research. General scientific methods can be applied for any analytical research and represents the traditional methods of systematic analysis, structural and functional analysis, and specific

historical approach, the method of ascent from the abstract to the concrete and coincidences of logical and historical facts. Different applied approaches can be used in regards various research components, for instance, methods of comparative analysis, which allows to measure various data related to focus groups and to conduct qualitative comparison. As for content or event analysis, it provides prospects to review a phenomenon in a broader social, cultural and historical context, allowing us to see the “picture” as a whole process – in both objectively and subjectively axiological way – relying on objectives set forth in our research. Integrated hermeneutic method allows revealing the original epistemological conditions that determine the direction of research and provide for the objective interpretation of the data under review.

The objective of this applied research is to analyze the institutional component, in present case, the activities of Government and public institutions involving in the process of nation - building as well as an assessment of their functional efficiency and methods to improve them.

The research is expected to combine explication of the obtained quantitative (formal) data within empirical (statistical, legal and sociological) researches through data collection its classification and systematization and analytical results of the qualitative analysis and data interpretation, constructing and rebuttal of hypothesis as well as designing the future based on identified trends. It is important, as far as possible, to track the dynamics of nation – building process and reveal the factor of religious identity at certain perspective. This can be achieved in case the present research is continued on periodical basis. In connection with above it is assumed that the difference of this research is not to demonstrate statistical breakdown for a certain period of time; however to reveal current development trends of a problem that may be done through regular sociometric research application within a certain time frame or use of Delphi method through the expert’s review, who have for a long periods of time been specializing in analysis of religion related issues and ethnic and religious collaboration in the Republic of Kazakhstan as well as elaborating government policy in the area.

This research carried out within a very limited period of time is based on empirical materials relevant for time study e.g. the events of the recent past (2007- 2012) were reviewed under the present work, which linked to the factor of intensifying extremism and terrorism on religious grounds. In parallel, there were used the methods of qualitative analysis and projecting aimed at complex study of issues through interviewing special expert focus groups, drafting the targeted analytical review with specific recommendations for changes of the environment and existing policies of State Agencies. That has particularly covered the diagnosis of regional peculiarities of the ethno-confessional process and social development in general.

Describing the features of the methodological techniques used, we can briefly highlight them in the following order:

1. **The desk-research envisages:** collection and classification of data, review of analytical materials, interpretation of statistics, review of official documents of Government Authorities, legal and archival documents, publications in media;
2. **The applied research represents:**
  - a. In – depth interviews with respondents (public authorities, leaders of religious communities etc.);
  - b. Discussions in focus groups (experts, journalists, public activists);

- c. Involved observation (visits to the regions, religious institutions, participation in religious rituals).

As stated above, a specific feature of this Research is to use the Delphi method, which combines desk researches and panel discussions regarding evolving hypotheses and forecasts' approbation among the "dedicated" experts.

It needs to be emphasized that such multidimensional phenomenon assumes applying the entire set of methodological approaches and specific research methods. This should include the systematic and complex inter – disciplinary approach. Here we talk about using both general scientific methods, which, for instance, includes a systematic review and also approaches of specific historical and structure - functional analysis, comparative researches and data interpretation methods, axiological reconstruction, forecasting and project modeling. Theory can be structured based on specific and target – oriented analysis of empirical data e.g. classification and systematization of statistical data and materials related to applied sociological surveys, their interpretations and articulating the theoretical assumptions. Further, this can be tested and applied within political practices. One peculiarity of this research is to conduct interviews with expert within specialized focus groups in the regions under the review of national identity, study of public authorities' effective performances, their cooperation with the civil society institutions, and level of vulnerability of numerous community groups to destructive deviant behaviors. The present research was based on already established social networks consisting from involved organizations into the research and in cooperation with local government authorities. Therefore, in the course of research the recommendations by both responsible regional government officials and experts specializing in analysis on a certain region of Kazakhstan were taken into consideration.

## **Nation – building process in Kazakhstan and factor of religious identity: cultural and philosophical aspects**

*So, this research actualizes the method of specific historical analysis and substantial reconstruction of the existing conceptual approaches. For the ethnic and cultural reality of Kazakhstan, as multinational society, one of the fundamental problems is seeking to choose the path towards national consolidation in our society.*

**T**he introduced problem has been pressing not only since the independence of Kazakhstan; however, it has yet become important much earlier, in fact, since the appearing of the Kazakh ethnos and consolidation process of diverse ethnic and cultural substrates which have formed the modern nation of Kazakhstan.

Simultaneously, as it is known, known, there is a certain spiritual evolution related to social space of the Great Steppe which retained its own peculiar features of historical development of religious commitment. This mutually conditioned process of ethnic and religious identification requires the development of an adequate theoretical hypotheses reflecting the real historical process of nation – building in Kazakhstan.

As is known, within multicultural society practices, there are two unique models of nation building: (1) the first model includes the format as melting pot, in which the ethnic group determines the basic paradigm of social development, interaction of different ethno-cultural substrates and their incorporation (dissolution) in the framework of this paradigm; (2) the second model represents “mosaic”, in which every ethnical “social ingredient” possesses and maintains its cultural exclusiveness thereby appropriately contributing to the complex multicultural system, that constitutes a single national “fabric” having common values, ideological priorities, presence of shared destiny, sensible objectives and format of equitable social interaction between actors. It is necessary to highlight some characteristics, when we talk about the specifics of the Kazakhstan ethno – cultural development during hundreds of years of its history. The distinctive feature of the Kazakh nation’s formation during the long period of time there has been a multicastr and dynamic nature of social development. Particularly, here we talk about a combination of nomadic and sedentary factors of the Kazakhs’ economic life and the adaptation ability among the Aboriginal population to various world civilizations and value orientations. Thereby the dynamic nature of nomads’ worldview in a sense was not assuming the conservation of accepted social life patterns in any closed forms, but on the contrary, they had been constantly updated by adopting them in the most pragmatic way. Such structure of ethno – cultural formation allowed the Eurasian Kazakh nomads to absorb various ethnic groups and their cultural patterns by adopting them to the needs of nomad life. In its turn, the tribal substrates of the nomad Kazakhs have become basic constituted element of numerous national and state formations on the continent. Therefore, we can easily detect “ethnogenetic traces” of Proto – Kazakhs within national histories of many peoples. This adaptive ability of the Kazakh ethnicity beginning allowed to conquer and retain its large territories in the center of Eurasia, and even during colonial dependence, not to lose control over the developed geographical landscape, preserve their own language, mentality, values, passionarity and ethnic social capital that formed the basis of ethnic and multi - religious nature of the arising Kazakh States from the nomadic Khanates period up to the present Republic of Kazakhstan, which celebrates its 550th

anniversary this year, its first historical representation as an indigenous statehood of the Kazakhs.

It is noteworthy that the attempts taken by foreign invaders to eradicate Kazakh statehood through assimilating and imposing their social patterns had met with strong public resistance and this is the very ability of the Kazakh ethnicity to absorb the proposed systems of values, while maintaining their own ethnic and cultural foundations despite quite tragic periods of its national history, when the ethnos stood on the brink of physical destruction of its own gene pool.

Modern statehood of Kazakhstan relies on the Kazakh ethnicity as a core structure of their identity. Factors of their recognition are the Kazakh National Language, historical consistency of the Kazakh statehood that existed for centuries and their perception within the national philosophy of history, national ideals and values that have the Kazakh ethnic and cultural roots, as well as an energetic social capital that can unite and absorb different cultural and social groups and ethnicities under unified national paradigm. These characteristics of the Kazakh ethnicity enabled reproducing various adapted forms of statehood within historical timeframe due and sometimes in spite of external and internal conditions of development. Thus, despite the intentions by the Russian and then the Soviet colonial administration to break down and dissolve the national statehood in the “Laboratory of Peoples' Friendship”, all these efforts were in vain owing to factors stressed above. As the Kazakh poet Zhuban Moldagaliev succinctly declared, the Kazakhs appeared to be the people “who died a thousand times and resurrected a thousand times”. The acquisition of today’s national sovereignty by the Republic of Kazakhstan is the result of heroic struggle and tragic historical destiny of the Kazakh people, their aspirations for freedom and for the full realization of the ethnic and social energy within an independent statehood format. To a certain extent, the prevailing historical fact of the sovereign Kazakhstan is a tribute to the historical justice, which has been recognized by the international community and enshrined in the norms of international law. Present – day stage of the Kazakhstan statehood is connected with the multicultural pattern of its social development. At the same time, the strategy chosen by the country’s leadership in regards to inter-ethnic tolerance and social harmony, satisfying the cultural needs of various ethnic groups in the country, respect for individual human rights, stability and non-confrontational interaction between the society and the State, have demonstrated the sustainability of the established Government system.

During nation – building process, the choice of spiritual identity had played a special role, in which the religion became particularly important at different times of country’s history. It is well known that nomadic people lives were full of superstitions, sacred meanings and moral codes that made their lives a truly human. The need to humanize their immediate life along with opportunities in ontological and epistemological understanding the world, creating a sense of local ownership of the world beyond, were imparting to a person with traditional Kazakh culture, the values and meaning of the world's religious canons, which Kazakh – nomads regularly faced in their history. Many examples of our cultural history eloquently demonstrate the ability of our people to an attentive, interested and simultaneously to an equal dialogue with any religious tradition. Perhaps, hence the lack of bigotry and unconscious fear of steppe people about the authority of religious canons, the ability to independently evaluate and select the format of their sincere faith. Such manner of practicing religion among steppe nomads had provided grounds to numerous travelers-ethnographers who visited the Kazakh steppe, to talk about the local population as “bad Muslims”, who poorly versed in the intricacies of Islamic theology. However,

this stereotype does not absolutely consider particularities of our national worldview, the mentality of free steppe people living outside “the walls of consciousness”. To a large extent, since the adoption of Islam by steppe nomads as their basic vector of spiritual identification, that choice did not change their souls of nomadic consciousness, but on the contrary, it directed it towards root, integrated and rationally institutionalized sense in accordance with the global civilized canons. It seems that intellectual tradition in our country lacks an in-depth research of an issue related to significance of the Muslim religious consciousness in qualitative spiritual development of culture among steppe people, possibilities of their socialization and the depths of their self - consciousness. The natural and spontaneous character of nomadic self-reflection was quite limited with the scope of an individual, non-systemic worldview subject to excessive emotionality and intuitive perception of the world; however since the advent of Islam in the steppe as social and philosophical conception that allowed to structure, rationalize and even to a certain extent, “humanize” and spiritualize their world through making it nicer and more elegant, and harmonizing it with the surrounding settled peoples’ lifestyles, who were worshipping “the book of faith”. This enabled the nomads to talk with their neighbors not only from a position of strength, as they used to do before within their previous traditional heroic history, but also to step forward into the next phase of intellectual and moral dialogue based on the principles of monotheism and universally shared, civilized and moral canons and laws of human community. Pantheistic nature of nomadic consciousness and self-consciousness gave the way to an orderly and refined law of Islam monotheistic belief system, which offered the nomadic “steppe chivalry”, an ideology of conscious, philosophically deep, morally codified and shaped worldview that can efficiently answer all the questions and mysteries of the universe. Orally expressed mythological and poetic surmises of nomadic identity had reached their peak and owing to written culture of canonical Arabic language, it proposed a new educational paradigm of nomadic society development. In the steppe, there was a break from the original shamanic and mystical tradition of receiving knowledge from one generation to another.

The Muslim intellectual tradition of teaching from teachers to students has reached maturity. In fact, within the social structure of nomadic community a new “cultural niche” has been created, which was successfully occupied not only by the align missionaries “Kozha”, who incidentally had never been a part of tribal structure of Kazakh traditional society, but also by previous authentic nomadic knowledge – holders “Bies”, the connoisseurs of Traditional Law of Kazakhs, as well as poets - improvisers, Zhyrau and Akyns. The Sufi flow of Muslim tradition with its ascetic and cosmocentric mystical breakthrough has also emerged in the steppe. The Central Asian “borderlands” of the steppe and city became one of the hubs of Sufism, where Boguk Tengri a mystical tradition of individual worship and rule – based refined Abrahamic customs of nomadic Arab Muslims converged. Such ethno-religious symbiosis had a beneficial effect on further ethno - cultural development of the Kazakhs because, in many cases, the social structure of the traditional Kazakh society became more complex and a new trajectory of socialization had emerged. There appeared Gulama and later Ziyaly Kauym, which already had claimed to formation of new values and spiritual goals of national development. Therefore, choosing the Muslim faith and in general, the social paradigm of religiously – grounded society, it gave the Kazakh people an opportunity on “narrow curves of its history”, associated with the colonization claims by neighbors, to stand not only military – politically or administratively, but mainly at the level of competitive values, which served as the key factor in preserving their national identity. Even during the state militant atheism period and cruel social experiments

ubiquitously promoted by the Soviet authorities, everyday Islam and religious, by its nature, moral, axiological and ethical orientation in Kazakh living environment, helped the Nation to preserve its human face and avoid the dehumanization of consciousness and high ethical, social behavior. Religion, contrary to popular opinion, was not expelled from the national consciousness, but rather strengthened its spirit and ability to survive the brutal and inhumane Soviet regime. The opinion that the radical social experiments of the Soviet era gave rise to radical religious consciousness in the post-Soviet period does not stand up to any scrutiny. On the other hand, the preservation of national spiritual traditions and presence of profound semantic orientations enabled society to largely maintain the stability and resilience to radical and extremist slogans at early periods of national sovereignty. This is also not quite correct judgment that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, an ideological vacuum has emerged, which was filled out by religious ideology. This ideological vacuum was filled out by the values of the consumer society and political Machiavellianism, connected to a choice of social and liberal market perspectives and new political planning. The Muslim worldview and social and living doctrine of an indigenous “ancestral faith” was as a peculiar safety valve in the private life of a post-Soviet Kazakh man. The truth is that the private life of a person was revised under competitive conditions of new ideologies. This was due to the ideologies of political Islam that emerged from outside along with social ambitions and dissatisfaction with existing then the “social lifts” among the younger generation from intellectual and spiritual living environment, who received religious education abroad, especially in the centers of Muslim theology different from the national traditions of Islam and in this connection they were seeking to change the socio-political setting of the new Kazakhstan statehood. The political ambitions of the so-called “pure Islam” in Kazakhstan have been fuelled by the ideas of a mono-ethnic state development. An emerged ideologeme in the early 2000s among the national-patriotic forces – “one nation - one religion”, to a certain extent it had driven to an increased confrontation not only in inter-ethnic relationships, but also in choosing spiritual, ideological and religious foundations towards building a new national identity. But then the recognition of the need to preserve harmonized ethnic multicultural environment, legality of multi-confessional development for different ethnic and cultural groups had become an important ideological construct in regards sustainability of State system. Meanwhile, however, the external “spiritual intervention” was very persistent and aggressive and associated with willingness to impose its own political agenda for choosing the model of Muslim identity under secular state environment. As a result, the Senior Leadership of the county had chosen the strategy to create nationally oriented, unified Muslim Ummah meeting the objectives of moderate secularism and the consolidated religious domain loyal to the State. Consequently, the nation-building process was carried out according to the concept of multiculturalism based on systemic Kazakh ethnicity, preserving the official status of Russian language and even expanding its range up to three languages – Kazakh, Russian and English; ensuring the right of ethnic minorities for their own cultural and spiritual identity. It was anticipated that the objective process of Islamisation under secular State conditions, would be unified and grounded on already established and time-proven formats and canons of Kazakhstan Islam structured by Hanafi Madhab and Maturidi Aqeedah of religious teaching.

## **Socio - political context of ethnic and religious harmonization in Kazakhstan**

*And we should note that the Government institutions were reasonably well managed and guided the social processes towards creation of multicultural "mosaic" model, although from time to time there have been arising various forms of limited social protests in regards the pressing issues of public life.*

Initially emerged deideologization process after the collapse of the USSR and appearance of political and ideological vacuum, was filled out by a variety of pseudo - ideologemes of consumerism and quasi-religious formats that have had spread into all areas of public consciousness under the fairly active development of cultural communications, television, internet and social networking. Different models of state-religious and inter-confessional relationships, were also considered in the area of religion based international practices and national experience of spiritual development. Thus, at the early stages of independence, the State was entirely separated from religious organizations in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan. However, later under increasing dissemination of religious organizations in the country and strengthening their roles on the "ideological domain" there was an urgent need to establish relationship balance between religious organizations and the State and to promote a dialogue between members of different confessions. As appropriate "tension zones" and "ideological polyphony" appeared, the society began attracting quite repetitive attention not only by the traditional confessions representing Sunni Islam and Orthodox Christianity, but also religious traditions and worldview systems, such as various branches of Islam, Protestant and sectarian flows of Christianity as well as other non - traditional religions, which were new to Kazakhstan. Under the guise of charitable foundations and advocacy organizations, various organizations from foreign countries had started flowing into the country with the aim to engage our citizens in the activities of international "pseudo-religious" structures, which were mainly seeking to exert political on foreign policy vectors and appropriate models of national identity in general. For example, the Turkish educational and training structures widespread in the country promoting the teachings of Gulen Fetullah or Protestant churches and Sunday schools from the USA and South Korea, Arab Islamic Waqfs, underground religious cells from Northern Caucasus and Middle Asia (Imarat Ichkeria, "Hizb ut-Tahrir", IMU etc.), which were recruiting combatants as well as network groups comprising from "Tablighi Jamaat" "Dawatists" and other similar groups. Among the believers of themselves and their organizations, the elements of competition appeared leading up to violent clashes. In the conditions of decreased role of State authorities in settling relationships, a threat of ideological cleavage of the national consciousness and its subordination to radical ideologemes with appropriate prospects of political influence.

During that time, the Senior Leadership of Kazakhstan was mainly puzzled by an issue of maintaining social stability and preventing uncontrolled public process in searching alternative State formats of the secular identity. Public authorities at the time were mainly focused on deterring activities of the opposition political forces based on liberal-democratic ideas and mono-ethnic consolidation. Thus, from an ideological perspective, the principles of social consensus and constructive interaction between representatives of different ethnic groups were formulated. The country's Leadership had been proclaiming the values of social stability and secularism in all public areas. Different formats of dialogue between the Government and arising civil society

were initiated, among which we need to mention the repeatedly convened National Commissions on democratization, including special institution – the Assembly of the Kazakhstan People intended to become an ideological guide of complementarity in regards the prevailing regime and constructive society and inter – ethnic dialogue within the unique Unitarian State. A number of everyday and labor disputes had driven to violent tensions between local ethnic groups; however, they did not succeed in shaking the environment of social consensus in general. The 2011 Zhanaozen events became one of the most violent social protests...

The conclusive position of Kazakhstan national – patriotic movement leaders in issues of nation – building forced the authorities to make the compromises and, as result, there was created the Public Commission to develop National Unity Doctrine, which reflected the principles of national identity formation of the Kazakh and other peoples in the State.

## **Analysis of National Unity Doctrine**

The first principle of the Doctrine was to recognize the idea of common homeland and fate, which states “One country – one fate”. This means that every citizen, society and State must realize its responsibility to the people and future generations as well as to take all the necessary active measures in accordance with the Doctrine to ensure:

- Understating by all the country’s citizens of their unity and in-depth relations with Homeland – the Republic of Kazakhstan;
- Actively confronting any influence that disconnects us and destroys our cohesion;
- The inviolability of the Constitutional order, territorial integrity and unitary structure of the Republic;
- Further strengthening economic, political, security and spiritual sovereignty of the country, prevent information dependence of Kazakhstan, information expansion or blockade from other states;
- Further consolidating all the citizens of the Republic around the Kazakh people around, aimed at strengthening the state independence;
- Priority of national interests in the sphere of international cooperation based on inviolability of national sovereignty;
- Respect for our main wealth, which are Independence, land, unity and spirituality;
- Assistance by citizens and society to strengthen the State, protection of independence and territorial integrity of Kazakhstan.

The second principle proposed the principle “Different birth – equal in opportunities”, which includes:

- Equality of rights and freedoms of a person and a citizen, regardless of race, ethnic origin, language, religion and membership in social groups or social organizations and political parties;
- Preventing and combating inter - ethnic and religious hatred in the society;
- The legal prohibition of political organizations formed on ethnic or religious grounds;

- Objective coverage in the media of issues related to inter - ethnic relationships, in compliance with generally accepted ethical standards and principles;
- Further improving the mechanisms of implementation of civil equality;
- Accelerating the formation of the middle class as the social basis in strengthening national unity;
- Respect for civil rights of everyone and equal accountability of all citizens to the law;
- Socio - economic and cultural development of rural areas and regulation of migration and urbanization processes.

The third underlining principle envisages “Developing the national spirit”, which is intended to:

- Developing and strengthening the national spirit, its impact on life reference- points of every citizen of the country;
- Prioritizing the development and dissemination of the State language, as the key factor in consolidating national unity;
- Ensuring appropriate conditions to develop culture, traditions, customs and languages of other ethnic groups in Kazakhstan;
- Preserving and strengthening the traditions, spiritual and moral values and philosophical principles, aimed at uniting the Nation, the State, the society and the family;
- Preserving national values and heritage;
- Raising and educating the younger generation in a spirit of mutual respect, patriotism, serving Motherland and its people with faith;
- Ensuring everyone with continuous improvement of his / her knowledge, skills, abilities, professionalism and competitiveness;
- Ensuring joint consecutive work on further modernization of all spheres of social life;
- Establishing an intellectual nation, as a pledge of successful competitiveness of Kazakhstan.

The National Unity Doctrine was approved on 29 April 2010 at the meeting of the Council of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan. On 25 May 2010, the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan had approved the Decree No.468 “Action Plan to implement the National Unity Doctrine of Kazakhstan for 2010”. It should be noted that despite the adoption of the Doctrine’s compromise version by the State Agencies agreed with members of national - patriotic movement of Kazakhstan, its provisions subsequently never became a guide for actions. For example, continuous national monitoring of ethnic and religious situations provided by the Action Plan was not adequately implemented, which has led to quite some crisis periods in this “sensitive” area. This was evidenced by the 2011 Janyozen events and a series of terrorist attacks on religious grounds that occurred in different regions of the country in 2011-2012. In fact, the State had refused to engage into dialogue with the civil society within the National Unity Doctrine framework on issues related to nation - building, while preferring methods of unilateral administrative decisions.

## **Establishing the regulatory framework for national-confessional relations in the Republic of Kazakhstan**

*For the State, it was obviously benefiting that because of introducing the new Law and re-registering the religious organizations, in generally, it could streamline the procedures and obtain an objective status data on religious domain in Kazakhstan.*

**C**onsequently, following public battles of 2010 - 2011, the State then faced a problem on other ideological front, associated with tensions in the religious sphere. The situation was particularly acute in finding an adequate national development paradigm of Muslim doctrine with the need to clearly determine the features of the Kazakh Islam, national spiritual traditions and practices, their adaptation to the current public needs. According to the 2009 census, more than 70% of the population considered themselves Muslims. However, the formation of the Kazakh Muslim identity was challenging and after gaining national sovereignty, it had passed several phases.

Modern institutionalization of religious activity in the country was marked, first of all, by the adoption of Law on “Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations” dated 15 January 1992 (Resolution of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated 15 January 1992 No.1128A-HP promulgating the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Freedom of Conscience and religious associations), which was subsequently amended and accepted as Law on “Religious activity and religious associations” dated 11 October 2011 No. 483-IV.

Many experts believed that originally, the Law on “Religion” (Dated 15.01.1992) was too liberal and permitted many destructive sects and nontraditional denominations openly pursue an aggressive expansion policy of religious ideas that undermine the secular foundations of the constitutional order of Kazakhstan.

For most experts, the current Law has more completed frames rather than previous one; however, it needed amendments, in particular, there were hot debates and public rejection on the part of believers related to provisions set forth in Article 7 of the Law concerning “Religious rites and ceremonies”, which refers to prohibition of worships within premises of Government institutions. Reduction and quite strict regulation of national religious domain by the State had caused confrontations by both extreme religious radicalists, whose actions resulted in open protests with initiated bombings at public places, as well as direct-armed resistance and silent protests on the part of moderate believers. Radicals also exposed the National Law Enforcement Agencies to attacks.

For the State, it was obviously benefiting that because of introducing the new Law and re-registering the religious organizations, in generally, it could streamline the procedures and obtain an objective status data on religious domain in Kazakhstan.

On 25 October 2011, a new Law on “Religious activity and religious associations” No. 483-IV ZRK dated 11 October 2011 was adopted. In accordance with Article 24 Chapter 6 of the Law, the main outcomes of re-registration, as Kairat Lama Sharif, the then Agency Head for Religious Affairs said, was the renovation and receiving of transparent data on actual religious situation in the country.

Subsequently, the classification of existing confessions in Kazakhstan was improved, according to which the religious associations were separated into local, regional and national

ones based on their status and number of adherents. This allowed determining the exact number of National religious associations, which totaled 17 and that showed severe decrease in previous indicators within 46 denominations.

Two dominant religions in Kazakhstan continued maintaining their leading positions on the national religious domain, which are Islam and Orthodox Christianity. Therefore, Islam in Kazakhstan is represented by Spiritual Administration of Muslims and 2 228 Mosques were re-registered as its affiliates in every region of the country. According to the Head of the Agency for Religious Affairs, a single monolithic Islamic organization of the Republic of Kazakhstan has been largely established. This National Islamic religious association preaches Sunni Islam according to the teachings of Abu Hanifa Madhab and religious creeds of Imam Maturidi, given the historical features of Islam in the Republic.

Christianity was represented by Orthodox Church in Kazakhstan, which had faced changes connected to alignment of its structure. The National Religious Association Metropolitan district has received a certificate, which unites 9 Dioceses and 261 Parishes. In addition, the Armenian Apostolic Church and 8 Old Believer's churches have started working within the Orthodoxy domain and under the new Law. Moreover, a total of 79 entities of the Roman Catholic Church have received the legal status in Kazakhstan with 4 registered Jewish communities and 2 Buddhist associations. Out of earlier functioning 666 Protestant religious groups, 462 or 69% of their total number have been re-registered. The situation with respect to re-registration of nontraditional religious groups was particularly complex, since most of them had not submitted their documents for re-registration. From 48 nontraditional organizations, 16 associations have been registered. The remaining 32 associations, in accordance with Law and as per the appeal of judicial authorities were liquidated by the courts. This situation has attracted high public attention, as believers from these associations, who were displaced from legal religious domain, likely would join illegally acting extremist groups.

As of 1 January 2011, all in all, from existing 4 551 religious associations and small religious groups, which had no legal entity status, representing 46 religions and denominations, only 3 088 religious associations and their subsidiaries, representing 17 confessions have remained in the religious domain of Kazakhstan. Thus, the number of religious groups had dropped by 32% or one third.

However, according to some experts, religious organizations and their adherents displaced from the legal domain have not disappeared, but joined the various public charitable, educational and treatment organizations, continuing their practices now under another banner and recruiting new supporters. That "shadow" activities of religious and pseudo-religious organizations fell outside the existing Law and in such situations, public authorities were powerless to resist them, because these illegal structures had been constantly changing their "shells", depending on prevailing circumstances and activities by the authorities. Interestingly, which is typical, the more repressive were the activities by the State authorities, the more that pushing and aggressive were the activities of the organizations displaced from the legal legal domain. Therefore, the religious organizations even initially loyal to the State, in such circumstances they were acting as opponents of the Government and becoming an easy prey for truly destructive extremist organizations of the so-called fishers of men that have been drawing people into their own networks structures, people who were seeking for spiritual salvation. During discussions with prisoners at the Committee of Criminal and Executive System of Kazakhstan (CCES), who were convicted under so-called religious Articles, it showed that the

number of those in conflict with law, had often been represented by quite wealthy young people with high moral demands; however, at certain period, they were excluded from the official religious organizations and failed to adapt to the changing environment of state - confessional relationships. State authorities having entirely relied only on their strength and capabilities of repressive apparatus and having denied the capacity of civil society as well as its role within the processes of rehabilitation and new socialization of individuals, who were engaged into illegal religious organizations, which forcibly withdrew into shadow, having not realized it themselves, they provoked the influx of new enemies into the establishing model of state - confessional relationships. Thus, despite the generally positive regulatory role of the authorized state bodies, it should be noted that while regulating this process, the State must constantly listen to the voices of broader layers of civil society, since we talk about the fates of specific people, who have often fallen into the traps of extremist organizations against their will.

Yet an important positive aspect in adopting the new Law was not only its preamble, which clearly prioritizes the development of religious culture in the Kazakh society, but differentiates the approaches in regards to larger and smaller, foreign and domestic denominations; however, it also lifts the restrictions associated with the capabilities of the State to provide financial assistance to any religious organizations, while protecting interests of its culture and traditions and structuring its own priorities in spiritual development. For instance, the preamble of the Law states that "This Law is based on the fact that the Republic of Kazakhstan proclaims itself as democratic and secular State, confirms the right of everyone to freedom of conscience and guarantees equal rights for everyone, regardless of their religious convictions, recognizes the historical role of Islam Hanafiya school and Orthodox Christianity in developing the culture and spiritual life of the people, respects other religions, combined with the spiritual heritage of the people of Kazakhstan, recognizes the importance of interfaith harmony, religious tolerance and respect for religious beliefs of citizens.

**State Authorities performance towards harmonization  
of ethnic and religious sphere in Kazakhstan  
Agency for Religious Affairs**

*In our view, such an institutional instability of that State Agency negatively impacts on sustainability of overall system of state – confessional relationships, on structuring constructive, partnership and confidence in relations between the State and religious organizations.*

To introduce the legal frameworks and implement the state control in the sphere of religious activities by NGOs, on 30 December 2005, in accordance with the Decree of the Kazakhstan Government under No.1319, there was established the State Agency represented by the Committee for Religious Affairs under the Ministry of Justice, which was then subordinated to the Ministry of Culture. In 18 May 2011, the Committee has been taken out of the Ministry of Culture and the Agency for Religious Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan was established. The Agency for Religious Affairs managed to take strict control of the religious sphere and to clearly articulate State policies in this area. It had adopted major regulations, created necessary organizational and analytical structures, systematized activities of responsible regional structures, ensured a close interaction with Law Enforcement involved in taking preventive measures to mitigate the acts of violent extremism on religious grounds. Due to disputes with the representatives from formal Muslim clergy, the organizational changes within the structure of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan (SAMK) had also taken place. Therefore, Absattar Hajji Derbisali, who was elected as Leader during the III SAMK Kurultai in 2000, and in 19 February 2013, during the extraordinary VII SAMK Kurultai, he has been replaced by a newly elected Mufti Erzhan Mayamerov.

Then, however, since the drop in religious activities among the citizens and actual defeat of extremist groups, and displacing of former adherents into the illegal legal domain, after the so-called raid, in October 2014, the Agency was transformed into the Committee for Religious Affairs under the Ministry of Culture and Sport of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Henceforward, the judicial status of the Agency has been slightly decreased. As mentioned above, this was due to the fact that since the adoption of the new Law, followed by decrease in religious extremist activities and taking strict actions by the State, the tensions within religious issues have been resolved and the situation stabilized. the Ministry of Culture and Sport of the Republic of Kazakhstan by its Order dated 7 October 2014 with No. 30, had adopted the new Regulation in regards the State Agency – Committee for Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Culture and Sport of the Republic of Kazakhstan, in accordance to which the Committee's main activities of the are the regulation of the religious sphere. The key task of the Committee is to develop recommendations towards formation and realization of State policy in the area of religious activities and collaboration with religious associations. Functionally, the Committee shall:

- 1) Participate in implementing the major thrusts of State policy in the area of religious activities and interacts with religious associations;
- 2) Review and analyze religious situation, activities of religious associations created in the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as well as activities of missionaries and spiritual (religious) educational organizations;

- 3) Ensure public awareness activities on issues within its competence;
- 4) Conduct advocacy campaigns on issues within its competence;
- 5) Ensure implementation of religious expertise;
- 6) Approve activities of foreign religious associations on the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan and appointments of the Heads of religious associations by their foreign religious centers in the Republic of Kazakhstan;
- 7) Organize and cooperate with competent authorities of foreign States in the sphere of religious activities;
- 8) Carry out international cooperation on issues related to religious activities and cooperation with religious associations, as well as develop agreements, memoranda and contracts, including international ones, in the area of religious activities;
- 9) Coordinate activities of local executive state bodies of Oblasts, cities having national status and the capital city on issues related to religious activity and interaction with religious associations;
- 10) Provide methodological guidance to local executive state bodies in the sphere of religious activity;
- 11) Draft and participate in developing regulatory legal acts in the sphere of religious activity within its competence;
- 12) Participate in developing strategic and policy related documents on issues related to religious activity and interaction with religious associations;
- 13) Examine complaints by natural persons and legal entities concerning violations of the Republic of Kazakhstan legislation on religious activity and religious associations;
- 14) Make proposals to ban the activities by natural persons and legal entities, who violate the legislation in the sphere of religious activity of the Republic of Kazakhstan;
- 15) Prepare incident reports on administrative violations in accordance with cases and procedures established by the legislation;
- 16) Within its competence, implement preventive measures aimed at preventing extremism and countering terrorism;
- 17) Within its competence, make proposals to improve the national security system, as well as ensure compliance with Laws and other regulations in the area of national security;
- 18) Protect the rights of consumers in providing public services by the Committee, within its competence;
- 19) Ensure compliance with gender equality principles in Human Resources Management Policy of the Committee
- 20) Conduct judicial monitoring of regulatory legal acts in the sphere of religious activity in the manner prescribed by the legislation
- 21) Coordinate activities of:
  - National public institution “The International Center of Cultures and Religions” under the Ministry of Culture and Sports of the Republic of Kazakhstan;
  - National public institution “Research and Analytical Center on Religious issues” under the Ministry of Culture and Sports of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

The Committee for Religious Affairs has its branches in every region of the country, which conduct their regular activities on monitoring the religious sphere and ensure synergies between

regional and religious organizations, and provide support to implement preventive actions by responsible Law Enforcement Agencies on countering violent extremism on religious grounds.

In this connection, the official State Institution in charge for religious situation underwent its certain organizational evolution. Seemingly, under the circumstances of possible extremism intensification on religious grounds, reduced State's attention to this sphere may lead to a disservice and to significant State failures in religious policy.

## Dialogue Platform Initiative in the field of international religious activities

### Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions

*Those Congresses demonstrate openness by forum participants, where the parties can actively discuss problems of modern society, where religion must become a gateway to ensure cooperation and prosperity for the States.*

In order to expand the international coordination activities in the area of ensuring harmonious interfaith dialogue, the Senior Leadership of Kazakhstan has initiated convening regular Congresses in Kazakhstan represented by Leaders of World and Traditional Religions to discuss topical issues of religious sphere. The President of Kazakhstan has introduced this initiative as his willingness to ensure dialogue between civilizations and religions after the known events of September 11, 2001, happened in the US, when terrorists attacked the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York, and it brought the world to the brink of civilizational cleavage. From the perspective of the President of Kazakhstan, the dialogue between the Leaders of world and traditional religions, built on the grounds of unique aspects and accurate information about each other, opens broader perspectives for mutual cooperation and contributes towards overcoming such negative manifestations, as violence, fanaticism, extremism and terrorism.

The First Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions took place in Astana on 23-24 September 2003. The I Congress had taken a decisive step towards strengthening cohesion and establishing constructive dialogue between civilizations, religions, nations and peoples. It was noted that inter - religious dialogue served as one of the key methods to ensure social development and improve welfare of all peoples. Following up to the Congress, the delegates agreed that the dialogue between religions should be more in-depth and constructed on ability to hold discussions. Other issues were raised with regard to identifying the causes of religious conflicts, necessity to improve inter - religious harmony, mutual respect for each other, ability to learn from traditions of other nations.<sup>1</sup> The outcome of the first forum was the signing of Declaration, where different confessions' representatives have announced about their joint efforts to ensure peace and stability for the whole of humanity, as well as actions have been taken aimed at developing constructive dialogue between members of different nationalities and religions. During the Forum, the parties concluded by agreeing that there was a need for mutual respect and the ability to learn from traditions of different nations.

On 12-13 September 2006, the Second Congress of World and Traditional Religions took place in Astana. The overall topic of the Congress was "Religion, society and international security" in two subjects: "Religious freedom and respect to followers of other religions" and "The role of religious leaders in the strengthening of international security".<sup>2</sup>

As an outcome of the Forum, "The Principles of interreligious dialogue" were accepted, a Declaration that called to prevent conflicts based on the grounds of religious and cultural differences.

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<sup>1</sup> About Congress of World and Traditional Religions. URL: <http://www.religions-congress.org/content/view/15/32/lang.russian/>, available: 20.08.2015

<sup>2</sup> About Congress of World and Traditional Religions. URL: <http://www.religions-congress.org/content/view/15/32/lang.russian/>, available: 20.08.2015

The topic of the third Forum, held on 1-2 July 2009, was “The Role of religious leaders in building a world of tolerance, mutual respect and cooperation” also took place in Astana. Appropriate changes were made into the format of the Congress by including sessional meetings into its work. This was an innovation of the inter-confessional Summit. Therefore, the Secretariat of the Congress thoroughly worked – out the subject of three sessional meetings, which topics were dedicated to such important issues as “Moral and spiritual values, world ethics”, “Dialogue and cooperation”, “Solidarity especially in crises periods”.<sup>3</sup>

There was also adopted another Declaration “calling on the international community to constantly support and contribute to the efforts of religious leaders and organizations towards creating the genuine interfaith dialogue and facilitating a continuous dialogue between religions and civilizations to improve mutual understanding and respect in the States and societies”.

The Fourth Congress of Leaders was held in Astana on 30-31 May 2013 with its main topic “Peace and harmony as the choice of mankind”. Within the framework of the fourth Forum, a meeting of the Council of Religious Leaders took place for the first time and was created on the proposal of the President of Kazakhstan and unanimously supported by the leaders of world and traditional religions. The Council consisted of 15 prominent world religious leaders. Establishment of the Council of religious leaders marked a new milestone in the history of Astana Interfaith Summit of religious leaders as an important international institution.

The goal of the Council of religious leaders is to determine the priorities and mechanisms ensuring dialogue and cooperation with other forums and international organizations focused on enhancing dialogue of cultures and economic cooperation.<sup>4</sup>

The Fifth Congress was held on 10-11 June 2005, which underlined the “responsibility of political and religious leaders to humankind”.<sup>5</sup> During the Congress, the President of Kazakhstan stated that these Congresses represent an important part of global “spiritual diplomacy”. He also expressed his hope that such work would enrich the practice of dialogue between cultures and religions.

Interestingly, with growing international confrontation related to Syrian crisis, the Kazakhstan Leader offered to organize the International Forum on fighting extremism, during the Astana meeting with Vladimir Putin on 14-15 October 2015.

In accordance with above, it can be concluded that the Republic of Kazakhstan is actively involved in developing inter-religious and inter-ethnic harmony in order to achieve stability in society. Those Congresses demonstrates openness by forum participants, where the parties can actively discuss problems of modern society, where religion must become a gateway to ensure cooperation and prosperity for the States.

On the other hand, a number of interviewed experts believe that the global international initiatives of Kazakhstan do not always seem to accomplish its targeted goals, turning into a costly PR-activity at the international level, not aimed at addressing the specific challenges, but to promote a positive image of the country. Obviously, proposing such initiatives, there is a need to more specifically clarify the desired goals and subsequently carry out an independent assessment of such progress made.

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<sup>3</sup> Chronicle of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions. 5 September 2013. URL: <http://www.inform.kz/rus/article/2586990>, available: 20.08.2015

<sup>4</sup> Chronicle of the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions. 5 September 2013. URL: <http://www.inform.kz/rus/article/2586990>, available: 20.08.2015

<sup>5</sup> On 10-11 June 2015, the fifth Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions took place in Astana. URL: <http://dinvko.gov.kz/rus/press-sluzhba/v-sezd-liderov-mirovyh-i-traditsionnyh-religij/sezd.html>, available: 20.08.2015

## **Actions to prevent violent extremism**

### **Religious extremism in Kazakhstan**

*Therefore, relying on such definitions, we may conclude that religious extremism is an activity, which represents a danger to society due to intolerant attitudes to dissenters aimed at becoming the dominant in society, and denies traditional human values.*

In our times, the role of religious revival in society has demonstrated that concurrently with the revival of spirituality, extremist and terrorist groups exploit the religion as a tool, which allows them to control the masses by manipulating people's protest sentiments in order to achieve their own radical, political and self-serving economic purposes.

At present, the world faced such challenges for the humanity, as extremism, terrorism and religious extremism, the magnitude of which is a serious concern in most countries of the world.

The Republic of Kazakhstan before its independence, while being a secular state, adhering to the norms of traditional Sunni Islam of Hanafiya School, had never encountered with religious extremism.

In 2011, the country officially recognized the existence of extremism and terrorism that has forced the Government and the country's population to reflect on the reasons for the emergence of religious extremism in the peace-loving State and the ways to address that issue.

Before we start reviewing that problem, it must understand the sense of those definitions and essence of that phenomenon in modern society.

### **Theoretical aspects of definitions: "religious extremism", "extremism" and "terrorism"**

According to some scholars, the terms "extremism" in a broader context means a commitment to extreme views and actions. The notion "extreme" has an evaluative nature, and in fact, its evaluative content has a concrete historical character and depends on the socio-political situation in one country or another. In this connection, it is important to emphasize that the decision on recognizing any ideas and actions as extreme and extremist, will be taken by the society and the State. In particular, during the Soviet Union any expressed disagreement with the Communist ideology were considered as extremist, as well as any forms of religious propaganda, especially of the religious education for children in Church Sunday schools, which are now a common practice for national religious associations.<sup>6</sup>

It is noteworthy that "supporters of extremism are seeking through demagoguery, organizing riots and acts of civil unrest to destabilize and destroy the existing social structures in achieving their goals. Thereby, use of force such as terrorist attacks and guerrilla warfare are

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<sup>6</sup> Kanaev S.Z., Trofimov Y.F., Lakbaev K.S., Jundybaeva N.K. Jumanova G.J. Features of religious extremism manifestation in Kazakhstan and countering mechanisms / Monograph: Karaganda Bolashak -Baspa 2014 P.11

widely used, and in fact they deny any negotiations, agreements, compromises based on mutual concessions”.<sup>7</sup>

With regard to extremism, another important point that terrorism is its extreme form.

According to the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan date 13 July 1999 No. 416-I on “Combating Terrorism”, the “Terrorism is an ideology of violence and the practice of impact on decision making by state bodies, local government bodies or the international organizations by making or threat of making violent and (or) other criminal acts connected with intimidation of the population and aimed at damnification against the person, society and the State”.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, extremism closely linked to terrorism, since their common goal is to destabilize the situation in the country through the use of aggressive force against society.

As for the term “religious extremism”, according Nurtazina R.A., “religious extremism is a religiously motivated or religiously camouflaged activity aimed at violent change of the State order or violent seizure of power, violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the State, excitation of religious enmity and hatred for these purposes”.

Religion based extremism in the religion is the commitment to extreme views and actions. Such extremist approach constitutes violence, extreme violence and aggressiveness combined with demagoguery.<sup>9</sup>

However, according to other scientists, “religious extremism is the intolerance towards dissenter members of the same or of other religions, and intolerance towards atheists as well. Religious extremism finds its manifestation in all major religions: Islam, Hinduism and partly in Christianity, and Buddhism. It is characteristic that in present conditions, members of any sects mainly act as its preachers, who in their ideology went far enough away from traditional religious dogmas.

Religious extremism is usually includes not only the distribution of any particular religion, but also the creation of public or administrative entities, in which that religion could become the formal and dominant. It often becomes that purely economic and political goals are pursued”.<sup>10</sup>

Tadzhibaev S. presents another definition, where “religious extremism is the negation of a system of traditional religious values and dogmatic foundations for the society, as well as aggressive promotion of “ideas” that contradict them.”<sup>11</sup>

Also while examining the issue of religious extremism; we should talk about religious and political extremism, which is one of the forms of political extremism.

Religious and political extremism represents an illegal political activity, which is being motivated or camouflaged by religious precepts or slogans. On that criterion, it differs from ethno-nationalist, environmental and other kinds of extremism, which have other motivations.

Religious and political extremism rejects the possibility of negotiated, compromised and consensual solutions of socio-political problems. Supporters of religious and political extremism are characterized by their extreme intolerance towards everyone, who do not share their political views, including co-religionists. For them, there are no “rules of political game” same as permitted and non-permitted boundaries. The confrontation with the state institutions is their behavioral style. The principles of “golden mean” and rule “What you do not want others to do to

<sup>7</sup> Nurtazina R.A. National security of the Republic of Kazakhstan. - Almaty: 2014.- P.352 P.231

<sup>8</sup> Law of RK on “Countering terrorism” as of 13 July 1999. No.416-I [http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc\\_id=1013957](http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=1013957), available:17.07.2015.

<sup>9</sup> Nurtazina R.A. National security of the Republic of Kazakhstan. - Almaty: 2014.- P.352 P.231

<sup>10</sup> Kanaev S.Z., Trofimov Y.F., Lakbaev K.S., Jundybaeva N.K. Jumanova G.J. Features of religious extremism manifestation in Kazakhstan and countering mechanisms / Monograph: Karaganda Bolashak -Baspa 2014 P.6

<sup>11</sup> Serik Tadjibaev. Religious extremism – the cause altering the integrity of religion and the beginning of national hatred. 17.11.2014. <http://muftyat.kz/ru/article/view?id=602>

you, do not do unto others”, which are fundamental for any world religion and rejected by them. In their arsenal, the major elements are the violence, extreme violence and aggressiveness combined with demagoguery”.<sup>12</sup>

### **Legal provisions and regulations aimed at fighting religious extremism and terrorism**

**S**ince the independence, the Republic of Kazakhstan guaranteed the freedom of religion to every citizen of the country by having formalized those provisions in the Constitution and Laws of the country.

In accordance with the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan date 11 October 2011 No.483-IV concerning “Religious Activity and Religious Associations”, “Kazakhstan declares itself to be a democratic, secular state, confirms the right of everyone to the freedom of conscience, guarantees equal rights of every person regardless his/her religious opinion, recognizes historical role of Islam Hanafiyah school and Orthodox Christianity in development of culture and spiritual life of people, respects other religions that are in harmony with spiritual heritage of the people of Kazakhstan, recognizes significance of inter-confessional concord, religious tolerance and respect of people’s religious convictions”.<sup>13</sup>

However, it should be noted that the State is separated from religion and religious associations. Education in the country is also separated from religion.

At the time of independence, the “religious extremism” and “terrorism” were not posing a direct threat to the State, although the Government had already realized the importance of the religious sphere and created favorable conditions for inter-religious and inter-ethnic harmony in multinational country of Kazakhstan.

Given the international situation, the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan has decided to improve its legislative framework. For example, in 1999, the Government had adopted the Law concerning “National Security”, and in July of the same year the Law concerning “Combating Terrorism” was adopted.

These regulatory documents have identified the organizational and legal foundations of fight against terrorism, duties and guarantees of the citizens of the Republic, procedures for action among State agencies to cope with modern challenges.

We should also pay attention to adopted on 8 July 2005, the Kazakhstan Law on “Introduction of amendments and additions to certain legislative acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan concerning Issues of Ensuring National Security”, which has already provided more specific list of criminal actions that were with signs of extremism.

Later, in 2005, there was adopted a Law on “Countering Extremism”, which prohibited the activities of the organizations in the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan that had extremist nature.

Moreover, mention should be made on adopted in August 2009, the Law on “Counteraction to legalization (laundering) of ill-gotten proceeds and terrorism financing.”

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<sup>12</sup> Nurtazina R.A. National security of the Republic of Kazakhstan. - Almaty: 2014.- P.352 P.233

<sup>13</sup> Law of RK on “Religious activity and religious associations” dated 11 October 2011 No. 483-IV. [http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc\\_id=31067690](http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=31067690)

The Law concerning “Introduction of amendments and additions to some legislative acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on information-communication networks” was signed in July 2009. This law had regulated the norms to prevent the spread of extremist programs via the Internet.

Then in 2010, there was signed the Law concerning “Amendments and addenda to some legislative acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on combating terrorism”. It resulted in the changing of rules related to activities by religious organizations, their financing etc.

The adopted amendment to the Law of RK concerning “Religious activity and religious associations” in October 2011, has played a notable role. That Law have replaced the Law of RK on “Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations”, which was adopted in the early years of independence.

The new Law states “Holding (performance) worship services, religious rites, ceremonies and (or) meetings as well as missionary activity shall not be allowed on the territory and in the premises:

- 1) of public bodies and organizations except for the cases stipulated by paragraph 2 and 4 of the this Article;
- 2) within Military Forces, other troops and military units, judicial and law enforcement agencies in charge of ensuring public security, life protection and health of natural persons;
- 3) within educational institutions with the exception of spiritual (religious) educational organizations.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, considering the above legal documents, we may concluded that the Republic of Kazakhstan before any signs of extremism, terrorism and religious extremism appeared on its territory, the country at that time has signed all available legal acts, which were protecting the interests of the population and the Government from above – mentioned challenges of modern humankind.

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<sup>14</sup> Same

## List of banned terrorist organizations

*However, it should be noted, there are some common misconceptions that extremism and terrorism is an “alien phenomenon” for stable Kazakhstan, which has wide reverberations in domestic official media. As noted by some experts, presently there is a tendency related to emergence of local “homegrown” organizations having signs of “extremism”.*

Today, by addressing the extremism and terrorism in the Republic of Kazakhstan, due inspections carried out by State Agencies, there have been restrictions imposed against some organizations, which activities were aimed at undermining stability in the country.

According to the Committee for legal statistics and special accounting of the Office of the Procurator-General of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the extremist organizations are:

- 1) Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami (*Astana City Court Decision as of 28.03.2005*);
- 2) National Public Association “Senim. Bilim. Omir” (“Сенім. Білім. Өмір”) (*Specialized Inter-district Economic Court Decision of Eastern Kazakhstan Oblast as of 07.06.2012*);
- 3) Tablighi Jamaat (*Saryarkinsky Court Decision of Astana City as of 26.02.2013*);
- 4) Unregistered public association - Public movement “Halyk Maydany” – “Narodny Front” (*Decision of Court No. 2, Almalinsky Rayon, Almaty City as of 07.12.2012*);
- 5) Unregistered public association “Narodnaya Partiya Alga” (*Decision of Court No. 2, Almalinsky Rayon, Almaty City as of 21.12.2012*);
- 6) International Organization “At-Tkafir wal-Hijra” (*Saryarkinsky Court Decision of Astana City as of 18.08.2014*);<sup>15</sup>

As for the international terrorist organizations, according to the Committee for legal statistics and special accounting of the Office of the Procurator-General of the Republic of Kazakhstan, these organizations are:

- 1) Al-Qaeda (*Decision of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan (SC RK) as of 15.10.2004*);
- 2) The East Turkistan Islamic Party;
- 3) Kurdistan People's Congress;
- 4) Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan;
- 5) Asbat al-Ansar (*Decision of SC RK as of 15.03.2005*);
- 6) Muslim Brotherhood;
- 7) Taliban Movement;
- 8) Boz Gurd;
- 9) Jamaat of Central Asian Mujahedeen;
- 10) Lashkar-e-Taiba;
- 11) The Social Reforms Society;
- 12) East Turkestan Liberation Organization (*Astana City Court Decision as of 17.11.2006*);
- 13) AUM Shinrikyo;
- 14) Islamic Party of Turkestan (*Astana City Court Decision as of 05.03.2008*);

<sup>15</sup> List of extremist organizations. <http://pravstat.prokuror.kz/rus/o-kpsisu/spisok-ekstremistskih-organizaciy>.

15) Jund al-Khalifah (Soldiers of Caliphate) – (*Atyrausky City Court Decision as of 25.11.2011*);<sup>16</sup>

According to the National Security Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the terrorist and extremist organizations, which pose a threat to the security of the Collective Security Treaty Organization Member – States, are included as follows:

**Table of banned organizations** <sup>17</sup>

No	Name of the Organization	Reasons for inclusion into the general list
1	“Al-Qaeda”	On 15 October 2004, Decision of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan had recognized it as a terroristic organization and prohibited its activities on the territory of Kazakhstan.
2	“Asbat al-Ansar”	On 15 March 2005, Decision of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan had recognized it as a terroristic organization and prohibited its activities on the territory of Kazakhstan.
3	“AUM Shinrikyo”	On 17 November 2006, Decision of Astana City Court had recognized it as a terroristic organization and prohibited its activities on the territory of Kazakhstan.
4	“Boz Gurd”	On 15 March 2005, Decision of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan had recognized it as a terroristic organization and prohibited its activities on the territory of Kazakhstan.
5	“Muslim Brotherhood”	On 15 March 2005, Decision of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan had recognized it as a terroristic organization and prohibited its activities on the territory of Kazakhstan.
6	“Taliban Movement”	On 15 March 2005, Decision of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan had recognized it as a terroristic organization and prohibited its activities on the territory of Kazakhstan.
7	“Jamaat of Central Asian Mujahedeen”	On 15 March 2005, Decision of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan had recognized it as a terroristic organization and prohibited its activities on the territory of Kazakhstan.
8	“The East Turkistan Islamic Party”	On 15 October 2004, Decision of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan had recognized it as a terroristic organization and prohibited its activities on the territory of

<sup>16</sup>List of international terrorist organizations. <http://pravstat.prokuror.kz/rus/o-kpsisu/spisok-terroristicheskikh-mezhdunarodnyh-organizacij>, доступно 17.07.2015

<sup>17</sup>Anti-Terrorist Center HQ, RK. <http://knb.kz/ru/antiterror/atc/article.htm?id=10321708@cmsArticle>, доступно 17.07.2015

		Kazakhstan.
9	“Islamic Party of Turkestan” (IPT)	On 5 March 2008, Decision of Astana City Court had recognized it as a terroristic organization and prohibited its activities on the territory of Kazakhstan.
10	“Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan” (IDU)	On 15 October 2004, Decision of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan had recognized it as a terroristic organization and prohibited its activities on the territory of Kazakhstan.
11	“Kurdistan People's Congress” (“Kongra-Gel”)	On 15 October 2004, Decision of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan had recognized it as a terroristic organization and prohibited its activities on the territory of Kazakhstan.
12	“Lashkar-e-Taiba”	On 15 March 2005, Decision of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan had recognized it as a terroristic organization and prohibited its activities on the territory of Kazakhstan.
13	“The Social Reforms Society”	On 15 March 2005, Decision of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan had recognized it as a terroristic organization and prohibited its activities on the territory of Kazakhstan.
14	“East Turkestan Liberation Organization” (ETLO)	On 17 November 2006, Decision of Astana City Court had recognized it as a terroristic organization and prohibited its activities on the territory of Kazakhstan.
15	“Jund al-Khalifah”	On 25 November 2011, Decision of Atyrau City Court had recognized it as a terroristic organization and prohibited its activities on the territory of Kazakhstan.
16	“Hizb ut-Tahrir”	On 28 March 2005, Decision of Astana City Court had recognized it as a terroristic organization and prohibited its activities on the territory of Kazakhstan.
17	National Public Association “Senim. Bilim. Omir”.	On 7 June 2012, Decision of the Specialized Inter-district Economic Court of Eastern Kazakhstan Oblast had recognized it as a terroristic organization and prohibited the activities of the organization and its affiliates on the territory of Kazakhstan through liquidation. The Decision became res judicata on 13 July 2012. On 19 October 2011, the Specialized Inter-district Criminal Court of Almaty City had handed down a verdict against extremist activities of that association and its active members, headed by Abdugappar I., their spiritual mentor.
18	“Tablighi Jamaat”	On 26 February 2013, Decision of Saryarkinsky Court of Astana City had recognized it as extremist organization and prohibited its activities on the territory of Kazakhstan.
19	“At-Tkafir wal-Hijra” or “At-Takfirwal-Hijra”	On 18 August 2014, Decision of Saryarkinsky Court of Astana City had recognized it as extremist organization and prohibited its activities on the territory of Kazakhstan.

As we can obviously see from the list above, the majority of organizations have eastern names, hiding behind Islam while performing their activities with a view to effectively involve people and implement their own plans in destabilizing the situation in the region and in the country.

Moreover, the number of their members causes concern that presently the Republic of Kazakhstan and its citizens are in danger due to tasks and objectives of these groups.

Summing up above, we can note that on Kazakhstan's territory there is an ongoing work to detect and suppress the activities of extremist and terrorist groups, which aimed at changing the stable situation inside the State. However, we should stress that there are common misconceptions, according to which extremism and terrorism is an "alien phenomenon" for a stable country as Kazakhstan that has wide reverberations in domestic official mass media. As some experts highlight, presently there is trend related to emergence of local "homegrown" organizations having signs of "extremism". Thereby, the stricter becomes the activities by the State authorities, which use repressive methods of fight against "dissenters", the more radical becomes the methods of resistance on the part of civil activists. Recent examples are the actions of popular movements such as "Protection of the Independence", which stood against entering Kazakhstan into the Custom Union; "Antigeptil", which was demanding to prohibit the launch of spaceship "Proton" from Baikonur Cosmodrome due the environmental impact on the country; "Uly dala" / the Great Steppe, which stood for preserving and developing the Kazakh culture, language, history and traditions; Public initiative "Ya Otvechau" (*trans. I responsible*), which was demanding to form national standards of business quality and others. It is noteworthy that these public movements in their nature were mainly representing non-political movements, conversely important civil projects concerning hot issues of public life. Nevertheless, the actions taken by the authorities were quite strict and absolutely inadequate aimed at nipping it in the bud of any civic initiatives and endeavors to independently see the social processes of Kazakhstan and upholding basic civil rights and criticizing the actions of local and central authorities. Often those actions of Government Agencies were of extremist or radical i.e. in some cases the State itself provokes extremist behavior among citizens instead of creating an effective social dialogue and promoting civic participation. The absence and closure of dialogue platforms, exacerbates the problems and "drives them into the shade", which subsequently may become a social fertile ground for radical manifestations in the state under the influence of destructive ideas, including those of a religious nature.

## Chronology of terrorism and extremism in Kazakhstan at the peak

*Therefore, the above examples illustrate that acts of terrorism and extremism are not ephemeral and far-fetched risks, however, pose a serious threat to social stability and well-being of citizens. Actions of the specialized state bodies in this connection are aimed at preventing and eliminating the hotbeds of radicalization in Kazakhstan.*

In spite of existing laws on terrorism and extremism adopted in Kazakhstan, according to the opinions of Officials from responsible government agencies, the religious extremism in the country “has proved itself mainly through the dissemination of leaflets and extremist religious literature, the activities of religious organizations unregistered with the authorities, the excessive missionary work, youth recruitment for educational purposes in the Universities of the Islamic Countries etc.”<sup>18</sup>

An example in point was the 2007 incident, when according to the information provided by the Press – office, Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) of the district, “Almaty”, on 31 March, the Department for combating extremism, separatism and terrorism (DCEST) of DIA had received an operational information that religious and extremist organization Hizb ut-Tahrir was planning to massively distribute the leaflets at the Central Universal Clothing Market “Alatau”. As a result, more than 700 leaflets belonging to religious and extremist organization HT were seized.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, Nazarbayev N.A., the President of Kazakhstan has noted as early as 2003 about the existence of the threat of religious extremism in our country: “Religious extremism in Kazakhstan is a phenomenon that have yet to largely emerge with us, but at the same time there is a danger the process of confessional destabilization, after all, can happen in our country. Unless, if we can realize and prevent this threat in a timely manner.

The chances that religious extremism can emerge in our territory have long ceased to be mythical threat with regard to our national and state security as a secular state on the path of democracy and civil society”.<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, in 2003, the Government have already been stating about the possible manifestation of terrorism and extremism on the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan, taking into account the international situation in the Middle and Far East.

Before we start reviewing acts of terrorism and extremism, it is noteworthy that in 2006, according to Kenzhebulat Beknazarov, the National Security Committee Spokesperson “NSC of RK conducted an operation to curb activities of the network comprising from cells of the religious - extremist Party Hizb ut-Tahrir, which is banned in Kazakhstan. Special Services had arrested 10 members of the armed extremist criminal group”.<sup>21</sup>

In the Republic of Kazakhstan, the first officially recognized terrorist acts were the two explosions that happened not far from the buildings of the Atyrau Oblast Administration and the

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<sup>18</sup> Kanaev S.Z., Trofimov Y.F., Lakbaev K.S., Jundybaeva N.K. Jumanova G.J. Features of religious extremism manifestation in Kazakhstan and countering mechanisms / Monograph: Karaganda Bolashak -Baspa 2014 P.6

<sup>19</sup> Daniyar Sikhimbayev. In Almaty, 700 leaflets of religious-extremist party "Hizb ut-Tahrir" were seized. 3 April 2007 <http://www.zakon.kz/85040-v-almaty-izjato-700-listovok-religiozno.html>, доступно 2.07.2015

<sup>20</sup> Kanaev S.Z., Trofimov Y.F., Lakbaev K.S., Jundybaeva N.K. Jumanova G.J. Features of religious extremism manifestation in Kazakhstan and countering mechanisms / Monograph: Karaganda Bolashak -Baspa 2014 P.20

<sup>21</sup> Security Services of RK arrested 10 members of criminal armed extremist group. 22 December 2006. <http://www.zakon.kz/80140-specsluzhbami-rk-arestovanno-10-chlenov.html>, available 1.07.2015

City Prosecutor's Office on 31 October 2011. The Soldiers of the Caliphate group claimed responsibility for the bombings.<sup>22</sup>

On 12 September, a special operation was carried out in the Town of Kyl'sary, Atyrau Oblast of Kazakhstan, which resulted in liquidation of extremist group. On 5 September, in a private house located on Moldagulova Street in Atyrau, an improvised explosive device blasted and killed one local man, who was born in 1991.

Three more of the same devices were found in his house; it was established that he was planning terrorist attacks against the security forces. Four accomplices involved in planning their terrorist attack were arrested as well. After a week, the security forces could find some members of the same group in an apartment house located in the 1<sup>st</sup> micro-district of Kul'sary Town.<sup>23</sup>

Another example, on 17 August, a group of extremists was liquidated in a holiday village near Almaty. The Kazakh security forces could track down the group because of the explosion happened in the village of Tausamaly, Almaty Oblast on 11 July 2012. In a private house in the village, there was found eight dead bodies, weapons, components for improvised explosive devices, religious literature, money and fragments of police uniform. All died because of an accidental explosion of a pipe bomb. It soon became apparent that other members of the same group were hiding in a holiday village of "Tan", Bol'shealmatynsky Rural District, Karasaysky Rayon, Alma-Atynskaya Oblast, where subsequently were surrounded. Combatants refused to surrender and opened fire on law enforcers and as a result they were all liquidated. Firstly, the Office of the Procurator-General of Kazakhstan reported that nine bodies were found in the burnt house. Then, the number of deaths increased up to 13. At the operation site, there were found and seized several firearms, ammunition, military equipment and religious literature".<sup>24</sup>

On 12 November 2011, in a city of Taraz, Maksat Kariyev, according to the Prosecutor General's Office he was among the "supporters of Jihadism", had shot two national security agents spying after him, then he had stolen a car "Mazda", arrived to the gun store, shot the guard and a bystander, and then killed two police officers attempted to arrest him. After that, he went home, took a grenade launcher with Kalashnikov assault rifle, opened fire on Regional NSC Office building, where killed two more mounted policemen. In the end, he was wounded and blew himself up with a hand grenade. It resulted in killing the platoon commander with three police officers injured. The final outcome of an individual terrorist in Taraz – seven killed and three wounded. The same day, an attempt to bomb the center of Taraz was repulsed with another attack at the checkpoint, which resulted in killing two more police officers. The "Soldiers of the Caliphate" did not claim the responsibility for the attacks, however having noted that the Taraz events demonstrated "what a single man can do". That group again opposed the new law on religion, condemned the "wave of arrests taken against the Muslims", having stated "we were prepared to act and by Allah' blessings, ready to continue the fight towards eradicating oppression against Muslims".<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Kanaev S.Z., Trofimov Y.F., Lakbaev K.S., Jundybaeva N.K. Jumanova G.J. Features of religious extremism manifestation in Kazakhstan and countering mechanisms / Monograph: Karaganda Bolashak -Baspa 2014 P.7

<sup>23</sup> Shustov A. Kazakhstan – anti-terror everyday work. Front in struggle against extremism expands in the country. 02.10.2012. <http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1349181360>. available 7.07.2015

<sup>24</sup> Shustov A. Kazakhstan-anti-terror everyday work. Front in struggle against extremism expands in the country. 02.10.2012. <http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1349181360>. available 7.07.2015

<sup>25</sup> Shustov A. Kazakhstan-anti-terror everyday work. Front in struggle against extremism expands in the country. 02.10.2012. <http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1349181360>. available 7.07.2015

In June and September 2013, Department of NSC and DI Atyrau Oblast jointly had repulsed the activity of Salafiya group, which was involved in spreading the ideology of “Jihadism”.

In June 2013, Department of NSC and DIA of Kyzylordynskaya Oblast jointly had revealed the acts of financing extremist and terrorist activities by a group of persons. Criminal proceedings were instituted in Article 233-3 part 1 cases under the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

In July 2013, Department of NSC and DIA of Pavlodarskaya Oblast in the course of search operations detected a group of persons involved in providing financial support in an amount equaling KZT 225,000 and USD 1,700\$, which were designed to citizens engaged in the fighting in Syria alongside terrorist organization “Al-Qaeda”.<sup>26</sup>

Besides, in August 2013, Department of NSC and DIA of Kyzylordynskaya Oblast jointly had arrested the members of radical groups in Kyzyl – Orda City, the supporters of “Jihadism”, who in 2012-2013, were promoting the ideology of terrorism and extremism, as well as disseminating the same terrorism and extremism related materials in hard copies and audio files calling for armed Jihad. Department of NSC had opened a criminal case under Article 164, 233-1 of the Criminal Code of RK. On 12 September 2013, a group leader was arrested in the course of search operation. During a search at the place of residency, numerous religious literature, computers, CD-DVD flash cards containing extremist materials were confiscated.<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, the above examples illustrate that acts of terrorism and extremism are not ephemeral and far-fetched risks, however, pose a serious threat to social stability and well-being of citizens. Actions of the specialized state bodies in this connection are aimed at preventing and eliminating the hotbeds of radicalization in Kazakhstan. This is an extremely important part of a holistic, integrated action in preventing acts of terror in the country.

### **Statistical data on extremism and terrorism in Kazakhstan at the peak**

It should be noted that the statistical data on terrorism and extremism in Kazakhstan are partially available public information and therefore, the present research covers only open and accessible statistical data on terrorism and extremism in the Republic of Kazakhstan, used in different years, particularly those associated with intensifying phenomena in the country. For example, according to the report drafted by Marat Shibutov and Vyacheslav Abramov “Terrorism in Kazakhstan in 2011-2012 (report based on materials of Roundtable “Security 2013: trends, risks, scenarios), the number of convicted for terrorist activities was as follows: “in 2003 - 16, 2004 - 20, 2005 - 6, 2006 - 33 and 2007 - 14.”<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, a team of researchers has analyzed the data as per the events, occurred in 2011-2012.

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<sup>26</sup> Kanaev S.Z., Trofimov Y.F., Lakbaev K.S., Jundybaeva N.K. Jumanova G.J. Features of religious extremism manifestation in Kazakhstan and countering mechanisms / Monograph: Karaganda Bolashak -Baspa 2014 P.23

<sup>27</sup> Kanaev S.Z., Trofimov Y.F., Lakbaev K.S., Jundybaeva N.K. Jumanova G.J. Features of religious extremism manifestation in Kazakhstan and countering mechanisms / Monograph: Karaganda Bolashak -Baspa 2014 P.23

<sup>28</sup> Marat Shibutov, Vyacheslav Abramov. Terrorism in Kazakhstan 2011-2012. <http://www.counter-terror.kz/ru/article/view?id=118>, available 5.07.2015

## Analysis of terrorist acts for 2011-2012<sup>29</sup>

No.	Description	Number
	Total number of terrorist acts	14
1	<i>Analysis in scheme of a terrorist act</i>	
1.1	Terrorists attack purposefully	5
1.2	Arrest of terrorists	4
1.3	Suicide bombing by terrorists (may be combined with other types)	6
2	<i>Human losses</i>	70
2.1	Among civilians	6
2.2	Among security forces	13
2.3	Among terrorists	51
3	<i>Use of weapons by terrorists</i>	
3.1	Fire gun	6
3.2	Explosive devices	6
3.3	Fire gun and Explosive devices	1
3.4	Was not used	1
4	<i>Battleground</i>	
4.1	Outside built-up areas	1
4.2	Within built-up areas	2
4.3	Within cities	11
5	<i>Objects of terrorist acts</i>	
5.1	Civilian population	0
5.2	Crowded places	0
5.3	Administrative buildings	0
5.4	Buildings in possession of Law Enforcement	4
5.5	Accidental suicide bombing and violation of safety rules	3
5.6	Law Enforcement Officers while in the street	3
6	<i>Executors of terrorist acts</i>	
6.1	Individual terrorist	1
6.2	Groups	13
7	<i>Use of tactical means to combat terrorists*</i>	
7.1	Sniper	1
7.2	Storming the building	7
7.3	Street seizure	1

<sup>29</sup> Marat Shibutov, Vyacheslav Abramov. Terrorism in Kazakhstan 2011-2012. <http://www.counter-terror.kz/ru/article/view?id=118>, available 5.07.2015

\* - use of gas or stun grenades against terrorists often useless.

The table shows that the terrorists' actions are mainly directed against the Law Enforcement and symbolize confrontation against state policy, which also followed by victims among the civilian population with an ultimate goal to "scare" the largest possible number of people. Terrorists act both in groups and individually by exploiting weapons and explosives mainly in the cities, although there are cases of terrorist attacks in the countryside.

Further, Marat Shibutov, referring to "data of Committee for legal statistics and special accounting of the Procurator - General's Office" have provided statistics of terrorism in Kazakhstan since 2008-2012.

### The total number of people detained for crimes related to terrorism <sup>30</sup>

	2008	2009	2010	2011	6 month of 2012
Total number of persons, who convicted crimes	9	24	8	44	81
From those prosecuted	9	19	8	33	79
From those released from criminal liability	0	5	0	11	2

### Individuals prosecuted for committing specific crimes against public safety and public order<sup>31</sup>

	2008	2009	2010	2011	6 month of 2012
Terrorism*	1	0	2	11	15
Promotion of terrorism or public incitements to commit a terrorist act	2	3	1	3	2
Establishing, leading a terrorist group and participating in its activities **	6	21	5	19	58

<sup>30</sup> Marat Shibutov "Kazakhstan Terrorism Statistics" [http://vlast.kz/obsshestvo/statistika\\_kazahstanskogo\\_terrorizma-747.html](http://vlast.kz/obsshestvo/statistika_kazahstanskogo_terrorizma-747.html), available 4.07.2015

<sup>31</sup> Marat Shibutov "Kazakhstan Terrorism Statistics" [http://vlast.kz/obsshestvo/statistika\\_kazahstanskogo\\_terrorizma-747.html](http://vlast.kz/obsshestvo/statistika_kazahstanskogo_terrorizma-747.html), available 4.07.2015

Financing of extremist or terrorist activity	0	0	0	0	1
Recruitment or training or arming the individuals to organize a terrorist or extremist activity	0	0	0	0	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>79</b>

\* - commit a terrorist attack;

\*\* - participation in a terrorist group with no direct involvement into the terrorist act.

Based on these data, he concluded that the dynamics of growth in the number of terrorist acts were, at the time, observed on the territory of RK during 2008 – 2012, which had evidenced that Special Forces were not appropriately prepared to fight against extremism and terrorism, that there was no national holistic system of effective mechanisms not only to directly prevent the terrorist attacks themselves, but also to detect the sources of financing of terrorist activities, as well as to track persons engaged in recruiting for the purposes of an extremist activity.

According to NSC of RK, in 2011-2012, an activity of 42 extremist groups was neutralized with prevented 35 violent acts having extremist nature. They failed to prevent 18 cases (including seven cases with the use of explosive devices).<sup>32</sup> However, the respectful authorized “quasi-analytical agencies” (horoscopes) had managed to reverse the situation in the end. According to the Prosecutor General’s Office of Kazakhstan “in 2013 more than 50 people were convicted in Kazakhstan for committing terrorism related crimes”. Of those convicted 51 individuals committed the terrorist offences and 32 people extremist crimes. The largest number of cases was reviewed in Atyrauskaya, Almatynskaya, Aktubinskaya, South Kazakhstan, Pavlodarskaya Oblasts and Almaty City.<sup>33</sup>

Consequently, according to Yerlan Karin, now Director of the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of Kazakhstan “the number of convicted of committing terrorism related in 2012, amounted to 105 people and in 2008 - 27 people. Number of persons convicted for crimes containing elements of extremism in 2012 it was 20 and in 2008, it equaled to 56 people. The number of extremist materials seized during 9 months of 2012 equaled to 595, in 2008 - 3900 units.<sup>34</sup>

According to the Prosecutor General’s Office of Kazakhstan “in just three months of 2014, the number of registered crimes related to terrorist activities reached 50 cases, from which 15 have already been investigated and completed, and 9 people were brought to responsibility. Most of the terrorist and extremist crimes were associated with ethnic incitement of racial or

<sup>32</sup> Dosym Satpayev. Terrorism in Kazakhstan: it’s time to gather stones in the pockets. 20 June 2013, [http://forbes.kz/process/expertise/terrorizm\\_v\\_kazahstane\\_vremya\\_sobirat\\_kamni\\_za\\_pazuhoj](http://forbes.kz/process/expertise/terrorizm_v_kazahstane_vremya_sobirat_kamni_za_pazuhoj), доступно 6.07.2015

<sup>33</sup> Kazakhstan-News. “More then 50 people arrested on terrorism in Kazakhstan in 2013”. 09.04.2014, <http://newskaz.ru/society/20140409/6348619.html>, available 5.07.2015

<sup>34</sup> Aigerim Tukusheva. “In Kazakhstan over the past year 105 people convicted on terrorism”. 20 February 2013, <http://meta.kz/novosti/kazakhstan/777277-v-kazahstane-za-proshlyy-god-osuzhdeny-105-chelovek-po-state-terrorizm.html>, available 1.07.2015

religious hatred.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, the extremist activities were mainly directed to the situation within the ethnic and religious relationships.

According to the statement made by Boranbai Galiev, Spokesperson of the Oblast court “In 2015, the Specialized Inter-district Juvenile Court of Atyrau sentenced a 16-year-old boy and his 19-year-old accomplice to five years in prison, who were accused of promoting terrorism, extremism or of public calls to commit an act of terrorism involving media.”<sup>36</sup>

Thus, the above statistical data indicate the negative dynamics of growth in extremist activities on the grounds of interethnic enmity, the cleavage of the national religious legal domain and rigid confrontation between different groups of believers. At the same time, the Kazakhs are susceptible to sufficiently intensive influence of radical ideas, which aimed at recruiting and training to oppose State Authorities and prevailing political regime in the country. Further analysis shows the increasing spectrum of causes for extremism, particularly on religious grounds.

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<sup>35</sup> In Kazakhstan, the number of terrorist crimes has increased dramatically. 5 May 2014, <http://mygorod.kz/?p=2907>, available 6.07.2015

<sup>36</sup> In Atyrau, two young men were convicted on terrorism. 23 February 2015. [http://forbes.kz/news/2015/02/23/newsid\\_80543](http://forbes.kz/news/2015/02/23/newsid_80543), available 2.07.2015

## Causes of religious extremism

*There is no doubt, that the main cause of religious fanaticism is the absence of comprehensive knowledge on purposes and essence of the religion itself. Even if a complete lack of religious knowledge and practices drive to a form of extremism - selfishness and immorality – then incomplete, fragmented knowledge leads to contradictory outcome – to an aggressive radicalism.*

Presently, there are different opinions among the scientists about causes of the emergence of radical trends in the social environment. For example, according to Nurtazina R.A., the main causes for such extremism in the society are:

- socio-economic crises;
- deformation of the State political structures (high levels of corruption and inefficiencies in state government agencies);
- drop in the living standards of much of the population;
- suppression of dissent and opposition by the State authorities;
- National oppression, the ambitions of political party leaders and religious groups, seeking to speed up the implementation of tasks, which they push forward;

Extremism foundation consists of marginalized population, members of nationalistic, religious movements and part of Intelligentsia, students, some groups of militaries, who are dissatisfied with the existing order.<sup>37</sup>

Additionally, there are two groups of factors, which may affect the spread of religious extremism and terrorism in Kazakhstan.

One is linked with possible aggravation of the situation within the Kazakhstan Muslim community itself.

The other is due to geopolitical influence from the outside, developments occurring in the Central Asian region.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to it, Nurtazina R.A. says that religious extremism is not only a product of early Islamic ideals. It is generated by some modern stereotypes as well.

Firstly, the individual's alienation from the state, which is perceived as a deep spiritual and ideological crisis.

The Authorities have lost their former credibility and did not justify the hopes and expectations. Within today's advanced information systems, by attacking the current Government, someone can become a famous during a short period of time.

Secondly, the rejection of NGOs by authorities, lack of social dialogue, the real checks and balances opposite to destructive forces all these creates favorable conditions for the radicalization of non-governmental civil sector and infiltration of extremist ideas and methods.

Thirdly, there is a growing "profitability" of this sector. Religious extremism is becoming a part of "profitable import business of ideas", and then of drugs and weapons.

The key factor that contributes to growing extremism is the long – lasting economic and socio – political crisis, the crisis of spiritual and ideological spheres in transition countries.

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<sup>37</sup> Nurtazina R.A. National security of the Republic of Kazakhstan. - Almaty: 2014.- P.352 P.231

<sup>38</sup> Nurtazina R.A. National security of the Republic of Kazakhstan. - Almaty: 2014 P.238

Nevertheless, extremism poses not only the terror on the state level, but extremism equally drives to the absence of result – oriented actions by the State itself.<sup>39</sup>

Examining the reasons of religious extremism, it is paramount to refer to a psychologist Olshansky D., his opinion extremism, who notes that psychologically this is the continuation and further progressing of radicalism”. The following factors lead to extremism: socio – economic crisis, sever drop of living standards among the larger population, deformation of political institutions and Government structures, their inability to address the significant challenges of the social development, authoritarian nature of the political regime, suppression of the opposition by authorities, persecution of dissent, national oppression, efforts by certain groups to speed up achieving their lucrative goals, political ambitions of the leaders etc. In spite of factors generating them, different types of extremism have common psychological grounds.<sup>40</sup>

In addition to it, the psychologist Olshansky D. says that terrorism has five principles “external” roots – ideological, religious, social, political and geopolitical roots.<sup>41</sup>

Dotsenko M.D. has a different view, who considers that combination of quick social changes and crisis socialization enable creating the ideal conditions conducive to extremism.<sup>42</sup>

According to Marat Azilhanov, ex-Heads of the Agency for Religious Affairs of Kazakhstan: “There are certain political interests of different States. Interests leading to intolerance are not the religion anymore, but ideas, which under the guise of religion, in my point of view, have always been a policy. The radicalism it is always a politicization and always some political interests. One of the factors of religious extremism growth in world today, is the religious illiteracy”.<sup>43</sup>

According to the opinion of Asylbek Musin, “Causes of religious extremism may be of religious, social, economic, political, psychological and intellectual. The root of the problem may lie with an individual himself, in his relationships with family members, relatives – while conducting in-depth analysis – it can be found within the contradictions between the inner world of extremists and surrounding society, between faith and behavior, ideals and reality, religion and politics, words and deeds, dreams and actual achievements, the secular and the divine. Naturally, such an antagonism may cause some intolerance and aggression among the youth.

No doubt, the main reason of religious fanaticism is the lack of comprehensive knowledge about the purposes and essence of the religion. Although a complete absence of religious knowledge and practice leads to one form of extremism - selfishness and immorality, then imperfect, fragmented knowledge leads to the contradictory outcome – to an aggressive radicalism. A human may sincerely believe that has in-depth knowledge, when in reality his/her understanding can be superficial and unsystematic. Such “pseudo – knowledge” does not provide a clear and complete picture of the reality and retains from making effective judgments on emerging issues. Such a “scientist” focuses on things of secondary significance and pays no reasonable attention to the basics. Because of the shortcomings of his vision, he is unable to recognize the logical links between particulars, can perceive an opinion of another person (alive or long passed) as religious truth, misinterprets categorical texts of the Holy Quran with

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<sup>39</sup> Nurtazina R.A. National security of the Republic of Kazakhstan. - Almaty: 2014.- P.234

<sup>40</sup> D. Olshansky. “Psychology of Terrorism”. SPB: Peter, 2002.P.173

<sup>41</sup> D. Olshansky. “Psychology of Terrorism”. SPB: Peter, 2002.P.210

<sup>42</sup> MD Dotsenko. The organization of work to prevent the spread of religious extremism among youth: a teaching material.- Petropavlovsk: NKSU named after Kozybayev, 2013. c.15

<sup>43</sup> The main reason for religious extremism was announced in Kazakhstan. 21 October 2011, <http://www.nur.kz/198803.html>

metaphors and allegories as well as incapable to separate the hard facts from simple assumptions.<sup>44</sup>

According to Murat Telibekov, "The reason is that a huge lump of socio-economic problems continue to mount. The State is unable to offer an effective solution to address them. All this creates a fertile ground for religious extremism. The trends in the Arab world, to a certain extent catalyze the radical actions. People have seen for themselves how easy it is to overtake the odious regimes."<sup>45</sup>

According to experts, while studying the causes of extremism and terrorism, the important fact is that the activities of extremist groups linked with criminal offenses, as evidenced by thoughts of Yerlan Karin, the leading Kazakh political scientist.

"We have analyzed the materials of criminal cases under article "Terrorism" dated from 2004 to 2013. Then, we have interviewed the people convicted under article "Terrorism" and with their relatives and friends. We have reviewed the data of 227 people, from which 150 were convicts and 77 individuals were those who, in one way or another, had been mentioned in criminal cases and materials, and in varying degrees, engaged into terrorism and extremism. The majority of participants involved in terrorism and extremism – related activities, 73% of the respondents, were unemployed. The share of those who had a regular job, stood at 26%. More than 55 individuals involved in criminal cases, are young people aged 17-29 years, from which 36% are under 25 years of age. About 35% of the participants are the individuals aged 30-39 years. The youngest participant at the time of committing an offense was 17 years of his age, and the oldest was 48.

About 56 members of the radical groups had a high school diploma only. For example, one of those convicted under "Terrorism" had completed four classes of the secondary school. Over a third of terrorist groups members obtained special secondary and HIGHER education, from which 17% with Higher Education and 16% with Secondary. Only a small part of the team members (about 6%) attended special religious institutions. This suggests that people, who were mainly involved in radical activities, had no proper religious education.<sup>46</sup>

Based on these studies carried out by Yerlan Karin, we can conclude that alongside with the low level of religious and secular education, the economic problems such as unemployment, significantly impact the level of extremism and terrorism, as people, who had never found opportunities to become socialized, fulfill their capacities and were experiencing economic challenges, are the most susceptible to extremist movements that exploit discontent of people in achieving their own plans.

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<sup>44</sup> Aslbek Musin. "Religious extremism: causes, consequences and healing". 28 June 2008. [https://zonakz.net/blogs/user/izgi\\_amal/1938.html](https://zonakz.net/blogs/user/izgi_amal/1938.html), available 12.07.2015

<sup>45</sup> Rovshan Dovlatov. Murat Telibekov: "Religious extremism in Kazakhstan had long become a reality" 20.05.2013. [http://news.headline.kz/politics/murat\\_telibekov\\_religioznyiy\\_ekstremizm\\_v\\_kazahstane\\_davno\\_stal\\_realnostyu.html](http://news.headline.kz/politics/murat_telibekov_religioznyiy_ekstremizm_v_kazahstane_davno_stal_realnostyu.html), available 12.07.2015

<sup>46</sup> More than 70% involved in terrorist activities in Kazakhstan were unemployed – study. 01.04.2014. <http://newskaz.ru/society/20140401/6314301.html>, available 14.07.2015

## **Issues of radicalization in the Kazakh society on the example of “ISIS/DAESH Project” actualization and the Kazakhstan Special Agencies performance on preventing religious extremism**

*The Republic of Kazakhstan does not accept ISIS as an equal partner-state, as a phenomenon of contemporary international relations and most importantly does not approve the actions of the said organization. Speaking of DAISH, it should be noted that DAISH is a terrorist organization naming itself the “Islamic State”, and in fact, it turned into a religious-extremist International, which consists of tens of thousands of members from different countries.*

**T**oday, many experts in the area of terrorism and religious extremism are wondering what caused the dramatic emergence of terrorist and extremist acts on the territory of Kazakhstan. Very indicative in this context is the growth in the popularity of an idea to build the so-called “Islamic State”, as the project of a desirable “State of social justice”. The number of those Kazakhstan citizens dissatisfied with the status quo is increasing, and therefore they are seeking, if not to changes in the country itself, however then to “escape reality” by familiarizing with an activity of the “State of justice and spirituality”.

According to NSC of RK, 400 Kazakhstan citizens have departed to the ISIS controlled Syrian and Iraqi combat zone to participate in hostilities.<sup>47</sup>

NSC of RK believes that they are attracted, due to the lack of religious literacy, difficult life situations and confusions in the spiritual and moral reference points. The number people became susceptible to radical ideas cannot be counted.<sup>48</sup>

The radicalization in the Kazakh society has appeared long before ISIS. In the late 90s, the national experts excitedly have had been talking about the facts that radical Islamic ideas were being actively propagated in our country. The war in the North Caucasus had (quite significantly) contributed to that process, where combatants were actively using Wahhabi slogans. And also, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) that was promoting to establish “Islamic Caliphate” in the region based on slogans to violently overthrow the existing Government. Moreover, Wahhabi communities at times were virtually openly existed in the cities of Kazakhstan and radical literature was sold at mosques.

The efforts to fight by repressive methods with supporters of radical forms of Islam have only led to the spread of radicalism. Once located at common places of detention, Wahhabists had started to preach and by that gradually recruiting more and more new supporters. Over time, the officials have recognized that prisons became “a hotbed” of this infection. Consequently, it was decided to differentiate the prisoners depending on their levels of ideological danger - the supporters of radical movements were detained at special zones.<sup>49</sup>

Radical sects attempting to realize their intended targets, have started to actively intervene in the lives of innocent citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan. As evidenced by the fact that during only the last three years about 8,000 people, facing problems due to the intervention of pseudo-religious groups in their lives, have applied to 21 NGOs, members of the

<sup>47</sup> 400 Kazakhs are fighting for ISIS 18.06.2015, <http://www.zakon.kz/4721547-400-kazakhstancev-vojujut-za-igil.html>, available 5.07.2015

<sup>48</sup> Kanaev S.Z., Trofimov Y.F., Lakbaev K.S., Jundybaeva N.K. Jumanova G.J. Features of religious extremism manifestation in Kazakhstan and countering mechanisms / Monograph: Karaganda Bolashak -Baspa 2014 P.28

<sup>49</sup> Юлиана Жихорь. Казахстанский легион. <http://www.np.kz/hotnews/17867-kazahstanskiy-legion.html>, доступно 4.07.2015

Association of centers for religious studies. The most of the applications were associated with extremist organizations.<sup>50</sup>

In his statement of 29 June 2015, Nurtai Abykaev, the Chairman of National Security Committee of RK, had informed the public about the key issues of Kazakhstan in this area, adding, "We are facing a mass recruitment, propaganda of extremism and terrorism ideology through the Internet, an illegal infiltration of extremist literature and arrival of various missionaries to the country. Due to lacking of a reasonable religious literacy, those ideas are facilitating radicalizations of the part of believers, especially of those, who recently joined Islam. Some of them, in particularly, in a difficult situation, mistakenly believe that have realized the underlying causes of injustice in the world, and started to consider joining the so-called Jihad."<sup>51</sup>

Abykaev N. stressed also, "Sometimes journalists ask me - why we need to prevent their departure of such people? They choose their own path, and if they want to die same as many Kazakh people already died in Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq, that is their right to do so. However, we are not tend to consider it as normal, when our citizens become war criminals, terrorists and die away from their home.

Moreover, it is probable that some of those people, having confused in their spiritual and moral reference points, having gained professional skills in terrorism and killing of their fellow human beings, may thoroughly return with their minds injured and far from the best intensions.<sup>52</sup>

Based on the statement of the NSC Chairman Nurtai Abykaev, we can conclude that the Government of Kazakhstan have chosen a strategy "Struggle for every citizen", an active struggle for its citizens in the context of religious extremism and terrorism, and therefore, takes possible measures in fighting extremist organizations and movements that aimed to destabilize the public order.

Karim Massimov, the Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, talking about the actions of terrorists, he noted that in 24 hours more than two million people have seen a publication calling for an armed jihad, which was uploaded by terrorists in the popular social networks from Facebook to WhatsApp.<sup>53</sup>

That statement made by the Prime Minister proves yet again that extremist organizations quite actively appeal to the Internet and social networks to disseminate their extremist goals and to recruit the peaceful people of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

As for the commonly used acronym "ISIS", the NSC Chairman stated that in our case choosing the term "State" voluntarily or not it provides the organization with a veil of legitimacy, which at least is incorrect. We, the Security Agencies, use the term "DAISH (IS in Arabic). Today, DAISH is actively promoting the idea to establish Caliphate, which supposedly must cover the territories from North Africa to China, including Central Asia.<sup>54</sup>

The Republic of Kazakhstan does not accept ISIS as an equal partner-state, as a phenomenon of contemporary international relations and most importantly does not approve the actions of the said organization. Speaking of DAISH, it should be noted that DAISH is a terrorist

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<sup>50</sup> Kanaev S.Z., Trofimov Y.F., Lakbaev K.S., Jundybaeva N.K. Jumanova G.J. Features of religious extremism manifestation in Kazakhstan and countering mechanisms / Monograph: Karaganda Bolashak -Baspa 2014 P.28

<sup>51</sup> Kanaev S.Z., Trofimov Y.F., Lakbaev K.S., Jundybaeva N.K. Jumanova G.J. Features of religious extremism manifestation in Kazakhstan and countering mechanisms / Monograph: Karaganda Bolashak -Baspa 2014 P.29

<sup>52</sup> "Terrorists are massively recruit RK citizens" 29.06.2015. <http://eurazis.kz/?p=7934>. available 3.07.2015

<sup>53</sup> Materials of Central and South Asia Regional Conference on Countering Violent Extremism (Astana, 29 June 2015). <http://pravo.zakon.kz/4724903-materialy-po-regionalnoj-konferencii.html>. available 12.07.2015

<sup>54</sup> Materials of Central and South Asia Regional Conference on Countering Violent Extremism (Astana, 29 June 2015). <http://pravo.zakon.kz/4724903-materialy-po-regionalnoj-konferencii.html>. available 12.07.2015

organization naming itself the “Islamic State”, and in fact, it turned into a religious-extremist International, which consists of tens of thousands of members from different countries.<sup>55</sup>

According to various estimates, the territory controlled by IS reaches up to 90 thousand square kilometers, where terrorists have announced the creation of the so-called “Caliphate” with its own laws and authorities. According to various estimates, the number of extremist organization members ranges from 50 to 200 thousand people.<sup>56</sup>

Now, due to the increased attention by the international community ISIS / DAISH, there are series of issues both related to Kazakhstan “horoscopes” and its public. First and foremost, that concerns, of course, debunking the myth of the so-called “Islamic State”, which lives under the laws of justice. In fact, the terrorist group has quite “mundane” political goals to seize power and expand its influence-controlled territories. Moreover, ISIS / DAISH has ambitious plans to export its ideas and projects far beyond the Middle East in order to destabilize the situation especially in the developing world. An active involvement of people from Post-Soviet countries into that process, shows the attention vector by extremists. Moreover, despite the conspiratorial nature of these statements, it can be argued that the project “Islamic State” is a political technique used in a competitive geopolitical struggle between World Centers of Power. Therefore, this project has a strong political, military and financial support from outside. On the other hand, it is hardly possible to fight against that project only by means of military actions, for example, as now Russia does within its “Syrian action”. It requires a comprehensive approach by the States and societies, which extremists focus their attention on them, in order to eradicate the causes of radicalism in their own countries. For example, this can be reducing the threshold of violence, replicated in media and social networks, lack of efficiency in the work of state agencies, lack of Government’s attention to the social sphere, the absence of dialogue with the society etc. Therefore, it is absolutely insufficient to limit the activities on combatting extremism with only Authorized Law Enforcement Agencies. There is a need to develop a holistic state program to eliminate that phenomenon and to overcome the causes that lead to its spread in different areas, and not only associated with a religious worldview. However, our Government so far intently considers extremism through the prism of the fight against destructive religious concepts.

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<sup>55</sup> The Head of the NSC of RK proposed to name IS as an acronym DAISH. 29.06.2015.  
<http://ria.ru/world/20150629/1100066122.html>. available 12.07.2015

<sup>56</sup> The Head of the NSC of RK proposed to name IS as an acronym DAISH. 29.06.2015.  
<http://ria.ru/world/20150629/1100066122.html>. available 12.07.2015

## Measures taken by the State

*Extremism and terrorism in Kazakhstan has no ideological grounds, but criminal. Pseudo-religious rhetoric masks criminal activity that undermines the foundations of society.*

**K**azakhstan President's Strategy "Kazakhstan-2050" highlights that Kazakhstan had become a home for 140 ethnic groups and 17 denominations. Civil peace and interethnic cohesion is our main value. Peace and harmony, dialogue of cultures and religions in our multinational country was rightly recognized as the global benchmarks.

Assembly of People of Kazakhstan became a Eurasian unique model of dialogue between cultures. Kazakhstan has become a center for global interfaith dialogue.

We play an important role in strengthening the global security and supporting the international community in fighting international terrorism, extremism and drug trafficking.<sup>57</sup>

Consequently, the President emphasized that Kazakhstan has all conditions ensuring equal rights to every all ethnic group and religion in Kazakhstan.

However, the President noted, "Today, an issue of non-traditional religious and pseudo-religious movements is of particular concern to our people. Some young people blindly perceive that strange views of life as the part of our society has weak immunity to an alien pseudo-religious impact... The state and its citizens must speak with one voice against all forms and manifestations of radicalism, extremism and terrorism. Of particular concern is the threat of the so-called religious extremism ... We should not allow that a sincere belief in Almighty was replaced by aggressive and destructive bigotry. Blind fanaticism is completely alien to the psychology and mentality of our peace-loving people. It contradicts Hanafiya School, which is adhered by true believers of Kazakhstan.

Extremism and terrorism in Kazakhstan has no ideological grounds, but criminal. Pseudo-religious rhetoric masks criminal activity that undermines the foundations of society.<sup>58</sup>

Therefore, the President of Kazakhstan indicated that religious extremism is criminal in its nature, which has nothing to do with traditional Islam preached in Kazakhstan.

At the same time, the Senior Leadership of the State provides concrete directions to combat religious extremism. The strategy underlines the need to improve anti-terror legislation in order to neutralize the manifestations of religious radicalism and extremism.

Moreover, the strategy points to the need to curb the activities of non-traditional sects and doubtful pseudo – teachings.

The Decree of the President of RK dated 24 June 2013 to establish Anti-Terrorist Center deserves special attention.

The main tasks of the ATC:

- To draft recommendations to the President in developing State Policy and improving legislation in countering terrorism;

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<sup>57</sup> The President of Kazakhstan Strategy "Strategy 2050". <http://strategy2050.kz/ru/president/9/>

<sup>58</sup> The President of Kazakhstan Strategy "Strategy 2050". <http://strategy2050.kz/ru/president/9/>

- To develop conceptual approaches, to determine key priorities, to identify practical measures to be taken by Government Agencies and local self-government authorities in countering terrorism;
- To coordinate activities of Government Agencies and local self-government authorities on prevention of terrorism, detection, suppression of terrorist activity, detection and investigation of terrorist offenses;
- Monitoring, evaluation and forecasting of terrorist threats and its manifestations;
- To organize the work of the National Operations Headquarters in fight against terrorism.

On 10 July 2013, under the chair of Nurtai Abykayev, the Head National Security Committee, the first enlarged meeting of the Anti-Terrorism Centre (ATC) of the Republic of Kazakhstan had taken place. The ATC meeting was attended by Senior representative from Kazakhstan Ministries and Agencies as well as Akyms (Heads) of Oblasts and the cities of Astana and Almaty participated via VTC.

The attendees of the meeting had worked out the measures aimed at further strengthening inter-agency cooperation and entire national system of combating terrorism and religious extremism.<sup>59</sup>

In addition to it, the Government Decree of the Republic of Kazakhstan, an Action Plan to implement the State program on combating religious extremism and terrorism in the Republic of Kazakhstan was approved referring to period 2013-2017... It is envisaged that by 2017 the population of the country, including 100% of young people and individuals, who are prone and susceptible to radical ideology on religious grounds, shall be included into a comprehensive preventive action aimed at shaping consciousness rejecting the ideas of extremism and terrorism.<sup>60</sup>

Based on above, we may conclude that the State in general, takes special efforts to combating religious extremism in the country. The Government has allocated the financial resources to implement the Program on fighting religious extremism, has founded the Anti-Terrorist Center, which demonstrates the dynamics of combating efforts against religious extremism by Kazakhstan.

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<sup>59</sup> ATC HQ RK. <http://knb.kz/ru/antiterror/atc/article.htm?id=10324443@cmsArticle>, available 17.07.2015

<sup>60</sup> Baubek Konyrov. More than 24 bln. KZT will be allocated to struggle against religious extremism in Kazakhstan in 2014. 24 June 2014. <http://www.zakon.kz/4634590-bolee-24-mlrd-tenge-napravjat-na-borbu.html>. available 13.07.2015

## **Recommendations by Authorized State Bodies on preventing the cases of violent extremism**

In overall, while interacting with the State authorities, experts have revealed the particularities of the state approach in this area. Thus, officials were offered the following recommendations, which according to their points of views can change the situation in struggling with the emergence of violent extremism on religious grounds:

1. To continuously and deliberately work towards blocking the Internet resources and social networks, which call for religious extremism and terrorism;
2. By involving authorized bodies, to regularly check the members of country's clergy subject to extremist ideas within the course of their activities;
3. To prohibit the departure of Kazakh students in the field of religion to receive education in the countries actively advocating radical ideas;
4. To conduct a complete scan of religious literature in Russian, Kazak and Arabic Language on the territory of Kazakhstan in order to identify literature of extremist content;
5. To carry out systematic actions aimed at improving quality of the national education with a focus on developing skills of critical thinking among trainees;
6. To ensure implementation of regional programs aimed at reducing the levels of unemployment through creating new jobs in accordance with the "Road Maps on Employment";
7. To increase the number of grants based on needed and identified professions by the State, considering that they will be specifically prepared to their future work and at the same time to increase the education fee for professions not in demand;
8. To facilitate the establishment of new enterprises to produce competitive goods, where graduates, studying as per Goszakaz (*Government contractual work*), can obtain employment there;
9. To invest in science programs aimed at developing innovative technologies in Kazakhstan;
10. To recommend the State-owned enterprises to carry out indexations of an average monthly salary in connection with floating exchange rate of the national currency and changes in market conditions;
11. Favorable conditions for business development should be created in the country especially for the start-ups implemented by young people. For example, to provide interest-free or low-interest business loans for beginners;
12. To improve social conditions for citizens close to retirement age;
13. To increase the number of sports clubs in all regions of Kazakhstan, creating favorable opportunities for young people to realize their potential;
14. To develop a selection system for leisure activities so that people can realize their abilities, which will positively impact on their harmonious personal development;
15. As a priority, to develop agricultural areas for the employment of rural citizens and to promote entrepreneurship in that environment;
16. To provide paid work for persons held in detention facilities, where they can realize their potential and bring benefits to the country's economy, which can contribute to positive social rehabilitation of citizens in the future;

17. In prisons, to recommend organizing awareness-raising lectures on traditional beliefs of the country;
18. To take measures in preventing religious terrorism, revealing the recruitment methods of terrorists, purposes of their activities by showing final outcomes, which Kazakh citizens, who travel abroad to join the extremist organizations, can face;
19. To control the state and public funds, designed for construction of mosques in Kazakhstan, by harmoniously distributing them for building of other public social facilities under the auspices of charitable, including religious organizations as well;
20. To monitor groups that organize expeditions to "Holy sights" of Kazakhstan, as these visitings and gatherings of people can be of great opportunity for many religious radicals to recruit people, laundry the money and spread extremist ideas;
21. To control quantity and quality of foreign workers arriving in Kazakhstan in order to determine their religious beliefs and prevent illegal extremist propaganda;
22. To recommend all educational institutions of Kazakhstan to develop and teach the subject, "Religious extremism, methods of recruitment and at groups at risk";
23. To increase salaries for Army officers in ensuring their better performance;
24. To allocate funds for strengthening and modernization of border control, which can be used for trafficking illegal goods and groups of religious extremists and terrorists.

Studying the above recommendations, drafted by the staff of State apparatus, experts have concluded that despite Government Agencies understand the seriousness of radicalization of society, we still observe the narrowly ideological, "blinkerred" approaches to address the problem of overcoming extremism in their work. Officials believe it possible to address social problems by efficient technocratic methods in a repressive and manipulative way without responding to the in-depth social imbalances at the current stage of national statehood development. According to experts, religious extremism is the part, the tip of the iceberg that constitutes the vast complex of unsettled political, social and economic issues in searching and implementing an up-to-date model of national cultural and ideological identity of the people, and in addressing challenges linked with social and psychological alienation of people from a directly important and shared decision-making process. Therefore, more attention should be paid to the process of national dialogue, to greater involvement of public institutions in discussing the current agenda as well as drafting and applying public policies. The alienation of wider society from Government decisions creates conditions for the emergence of mistrust and further leads to confrontation between state of and society.

## **Civil Society Institutions in harmonizing ethno -confessional sphere in the Republic of Kazakhstan**

### **The Assembly of People of Kazakhstan**

One of the main civil society institutions called for promoting the process of harmonious national identity formation of Kazakhstan, interethnic consent and social stability is the Kazakhstan People's Assembly initiated by the Senior Leadership of the country.

The Assembly of People of Kazakhstan is the consultative and advisory body under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Its first meeting took place in 2005 and initially was called as the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan, but then was renamed in 2007. On 20 October 2008, the Law on "Assembly of People of Kazakhstan" was adopted. Presently, there is an approved "Concept of development of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan till 2020".

According to Article 3 of Law concerning "Assembly of People of Kazakhstan", the Assembly aims to provide the interethnic consent in the Republic of Kazakhstan in shaping Kazakhstan civil identity and competitive nation based on Kazakhstan patriotism, civil and spiritual and cultural unity of Kazakhstan under the consolidating role of Kazakh people.

According to Article 4 of Law, the key tasks of the Assembly are:

- 1) ensuring effective interaction between State bodies and civil society institutions in the sphere of interethnic relationships, creating favorable conditions for the further consolidation of interethnic consent and tolerance in the society;
- 2) consolidating the unity of the people, supporting and developing social consensus according to the basic values of the Kazakhstan society;
- 3) assisting the State bodies in counteracting extremism and radicalism manifestations in the society and attempts that aimed to restrict the human rights of a person and citizen;
- 4) shaping politico-legal culture among citizens based on democratic norms;
- 5) ensuring integrity of efforts taken by ethnic and cultural and other public formations in achieving the Assembly's goals and tasks;
- 6) revival, preservation and development of national cultures, languages and traditions of the people of Kazakhstan.

The Assembly's key activities are associated with the implementation of the Seventh Priority of Strategy Kazakhstan – 2050, which states "New Kazakhstan patriotism is the core of the success in our multinational and multi-confessional society" that includes the following priorities:

- formation of new Kazakhstan patriotism;
- ensuring equal rights for all citizens regardless of their ethnicity and religious believe;
- development of culture, preservation of traditions and identity of all ethnic groups in Kazakhstan;
- development of the Kazakh language as a factor of national unity and the spiritual core of its society, the "Trinity of languages";
- enhancing the role of the national Intelligentsia in strengthening overall national values, in shaping the historical consciousness of the nation based on All-Kazakh identity;
- rejection of all forms and manifestations of radicalism, extremism and terrorism.

## **Assembly activities aimed at achieving the following objectives:**

- to contribute to the preservation of interethnic and inter-confessional consent, stability in society;
- to develop proposals for public policies conducive to the development of friendly relations between the nationalities living on the territory of Kazakhstan, promoting their spiritual and cultural revival and development based on respect for the principle of equality;
- formation of political culture of citizens, basing on civilized and democratic norms;
- supporting the integration of varied national interests in the government's national policy;
- search for compromises to resolve the emerging social contradictions in society.

## **Organizational structure**

The Chairman of the Assembly is the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The Chairman has two Deputies and prioritizes and approves the key activities of the Assembly, convenes its sessions, which should gather at least once a year.

Presently, the Assembly consists from 394 members.

The quantitative composition of the Assembly is formed by its Chairman from the representatives of national cultural centers and other public associations, and other persons with regard to their standing among the population and socio-political performance.

Every Oblast in Kazakhstan has its small Assembly of People of Kazakhstan and acts as a consultative and advisory body under Akims (Mayors) without establishing a legal entity. Candidates to the Assembly are nominated by Decisions taken during the sessions of small assemblies on national-cultural centers' proposals, and candidates from republic associations and government bodies are nominated according to decisions by their governing bodies. There are more than 100 national schools and 170 Sunday schools in the country, where 23 native languages are studied. There are 29 sections to learn 12 native languages at three schools of national revival. Annually, the Government allocates 12 million Tenge (KZT) as financial support for these schools. In addition, they are supported by local budgets. The Assembly is funded via three operating public funds:

- 1) Corporate fund "National Foundation of APK";
- 2) Public Foundation "Social Consortium of APK";
- 3) Public Foundation "APK Fund".

Palace of Peace and Reconciliation hosts the APK events. Every Oblast has Houses of Friendship. The 22<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan took place in April 2015. This year marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of APK.

The APK has its own information resources. Among them, the magazine "Dostyk – Friendship" (2000 copies), "Menin elim" (2000 copies). The national TV Station "Kazakhstan" broadcast the special TV-program "Menin Kazakhstanym".

The work of APK is widely covered by various media in possession of Kazakhstan ethnic groups: "Ahyska", "Davr", "Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung", the Newspaper "TÜRKEKEL", "Intizar", "Nairi", the National newspaper "Kore Il'bo", "УКРАЇНСЬКІ НОВИНИ" (*Ukrainski novini*),

Newspaper “Uighur avazi”, the Newspaper “VƏTƏN”, “Jarshy Assembly – Bullet of Assembly”, “Jamiyat & Ma’rifat”, Eurasian magazine “ALTIN KÖPRÜ”.

The format and activities of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan are unique and highly recognized by various international organizations as a model of political tolerance among the people of Kazakhstan, which has practically proven its viability. That was particularly recognized at the OSCE Summit in Astana in 2010.

During the nation-building process, the issue of harmonizing civil and national identity is actively discussed in public debate and among the analysts of Kazakhstan. In particular, that issue became the main agenda in forming the National Unity Doctrine, initiated by the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan. The APK also focuses its attention on issues related to interfaith harmony and development of preventive measures to counter violent extremism. In accordance to expert opinions, the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan is a unique tool to consolidate citizens representing different ethnic groups in implementing the tasks to strength the State authority, stability of the political system.

It is no accident in this regard that the political know-how was an initiative of the state. It should be noted that the social and political innovation in general, was consistent with the socio-cultural expectations of the multinational Kazakhstan society. This is one of the few cases of establishing the real, functioning mechanism of interaction between multicultural society and the State. Some Kazakh experts believe that a number of initiatives proposed by the Assembly are dominated by opportunistic considerations aimed at not quite constitutional methods to legitimize the present authorities. These are some of the Assembly’s initiatives to extend the terms of presidential power, promote ideas to hold a referendum in this relation and so on. However, despite existing criticism, we should note the overall constructive and mobilizing role of the Assembly in ensuing tolerant relationships in Kazakhstan.

## **Spiritual Administrations of Muslims of Kazakhstan (SAMK)**

*The peculiarity of the present SAMK establishment is to implement the coordinated policy with the State on creed related issues that prevent or restrict infiltration of alien Islamic and pseudo-Islamic concepts to the territory of the country.*

SAMK is the biggest and the most influential religious non-governmental organization in the country, which unites the significant part of Kazakhstan Muslims. The Leader of SAMK is the Supreme Mufti elected during general meetings. Whereas, the candidacy should be agreed with Ak-Ordo.

The establishment history of that public organization starts from the beginning of 1943, when it was the part of Central – Asian Spiritual Admiration of USSR.

During the Soviet period, there were 4 acting Muslim centralized structures, Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Central Asia (SADUM) coordinating the activities of the Muslim communities in Central Asia and Kazakhstan; Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Caucasus (DUMZAK), which united the Muslims from Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia; Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the North Caucasus (DUMSK), which was acting within the national entities of the region; and the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the European part of the USSR and Siberia (DUMES), under which area of responsibility were all the remaining Muslim communities.

In the USSR, the most influential and authoritative from Mufti administrations was SADUM, which was traditionally playing a role of “showcase” of the Soviet Islam. SADUM was controlling the only institutions of the USSR Muslims - Bukhara Madrassas “Mir-Arab” and the Tashkent Islamic Institute.

In 1990, SADUM collapsed and instead there was established SAMK as an independent association, which the first and second elected Leader was Ratbek Nysanbaev.

At the third (24 June 2000) and the fourth (4 June 2005) Kurultai of the Muslims of Kazakhstan, Absattar Derbisali was elected as Supreme Mufti and Leader of SAMK. Since 19 February 2013, the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan is headed by Supreme Mufti Yerzhan Mayamerov.

The role of such centralized non-governmental organizations, as SAMK, loyal to the authorities, is extremely important in regulating the religious activities of Muslim believers of Kazakhstan and in supporting nationwide stability. Therefore, according to the new Law on Religious Associations, the Muslim Ummah of Kazakhstan is now officially represented by the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan, in which a total of 2 228 mosques were registered as its branches in all the regions countrywide. As it is known, one of the key challenges before the new Law adoption was the presence of various Muslim organizations adhering Islamic faith without coordinating it with the SAMK. Such situation had contributed to the emergence of non-traditional and even destructive Muslim organizations in Kazakhstan, which were adhering Salafi elements and opposing the national model of Islam, and subsequently undermining the foundations of the developing unified national spiritual identity on the part of the Islamic faith. In the opinion of Kairat Lama Sharif, the former Head of the Agency for Religious Affairs, nowadays, a single monolithic Islamic organization of the Republic of Kazakhstan has been largely established. This National Islamic religious association preaches

Sunni Islam according to the teachings of Abu Hanifa Madhab and religious creeds of Imam Maturidi, given the historical features of Islam in the Republic.

The peculiarity of the present SAMK establishment is to implement the coordinated policy with the State on creed related issues that prevent or restrict infiltration of alien Islamic and pseudo-Islamic concepts to the territory of the country. Such strategy became necessary in reaction to the weakening of the Kazakhstan Islamic legal domain and to the attempts of destructive forces outside Kazakhstan to engage its citizens into orbit of an alien spiritual and then geopolitical influence. This policy affected not only the religious organizations of Islamic flow, which were qualified as destructive, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, Tablighi Jamaat, but also, for instance Sufi organizations, "Bilim. Senim. Omir." subjected to criminal prosecution for its preaching and other religious activities.

Currently SAMK perform an equilibrating civil religious institution, countervailing the interests of the State and the needs of Muslim believers. In course of its work, this organization adheres to the strategy aimed at unifying the Islamic field of the country and encouraging constructive interaction between Islam and secular state, despite the potential for an alternative Muslim identity that may occur in Kazakhstan and active attempts by foreign Islamist and pseudo-religious political groups with Islamic elements to involve the citizens of Kazakhstan in their ideology and activities.

One of the principle substantive priorities of SAMK is to develop nationally oriented religious identity. Among the specific activities in this regard, are the substantive streamlining of the work of Kazakhstan Muslim Ummah, and particularly the "Platform for the Muslims of Kazakhstan", "Ethics of an employee of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan", Teachings (*Handbook*) "Personal image of a Muslim", "Personal image of an Imam", which were adopted at the First Forum of Kazakhstan Imams on 19 February 2015.

The Platform determines the key religious beliefs among Muslims and the required volume of knowledge in religion related aspects as well as attitudes towards secular society and national legislation, established order in the society, education, medical assistance, protection of the Motherland, environment, labor and towards respect of family values, traditions and the specificities of the nations living on the territory of our country. ("Platform for the Muslims of Kazakhstan"- P.17). This is some sort of social concept for Kazakhstan Muslim community. The elaboration of such document was necessitated with the need to adopt religious doctrine of Islam to modern secular State environment. As it is known, there are various models of interaction and adaptation of religious canons to the needs of the secular state that exist in many secular countries of the world. For instance, a number of European States has adopted the so-called concordat agreements, which stipulate peculiar "zones of responsibility" between religious organizations and secular state. Russia has adopted the Social Program for Russian Muslims that determines specifics of relationships between the State and secular society with Muslim confession. Respective state events had been carried out in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to identify the specific content of national religious doctrine of Islam. Considering that among Kazakhstan Muslims there were also certain doctrinal discrepancies at early independence periods, the Platform clearly articulates that SAMK adheres Sunni Islam and observes Abu Hanifa' Madhab. It preaches religious beliefs and Sharia Laws that are common to most of the Muslim Ummah followers. In terms of religious creeds it maintains Maturidi School of Dogmatic Theology ("Platform for the Muslims of Kazakhstan"- P.17). Adding clarity and certainty in intricacies of Islamic theology, it finally enabled ordinary believers, not versed in matters of

Muslim theology, to clearly find the canons of faith based on primordial national traditions of worship. The Platform provides answers to key topical issues of social life of Muslims of Kazakhstan. Thus, the Chapter II “Islam, secular state and secular society” identifies the position of Muslims in this regard as follows: “Secular State does not mean the State without religion”. No secular state rejects the religion. On the contrary, the state ensures freedom of worship to its citizens. In the state, it does not impinge the right to freedom of worship. The religious belonging of citizens is protected by the national law. The secular society does not permit separation of nations and nationalities on the grounds of religion (“Platform for the Muslims of Kazakhstan”- P.25). It also articulates the areas of responsibilities of Muslims in relation to the secular state, “Our religion calls upon us to take the following obligations to the State – tax payment, respect for laws, observing rules and regulations adopted in the country and aimed at preserving the peaceful coexistence of the people, fulfillment of his/her military duty to the Fatherland, receiving compulsory secular secondary education, saving public property and honest servicing for the benefit of the State (“Platform for the Muslims of Kazakhstan”- P. 26). In dealing with members of other religions, Islam encourages to respect the members of the secular society professing other religions (“Platform for the Muslims of Kazakhstan”- P. 26). Chapter IV “Islam and ethnicities” highlights that Islam respects the members of any ethnic group and does not divide people on the basis of ethnicity, race and sex. Islam encourages love for someone’s nationality and prevents extreme nationalism. Since people are living in the same society, they should live in peace and harmony with each other and respect each other's rights (“Platform for the Muslims of Kazakhstan”- P. 26). Chapter V “Islam and interfaith relationships, tolerance” states that Muslims have been in good relations not only with their religious brothers, but also with followers of other religions. Therefore, they must be tolerant to people of other religious beliefs (“Platform for the Muslims of Kazakhstan”- P. 27). Chapter VI “Islam, traditions and customs” reveals the attitude of Muslims regarding traditions and customs of the people. It says, “Sharia respects the originality of different ethnic groups. Islam aims at developing national culture, national traditions, but not forgetting them (“Platform for the Muslims of Kazakhstan”- P. 27). The Chapter XI is particularly important for our research, “SAMK relations with radical and pseudo – religious organizations. It stresses that SAMK formally rejects the activities of different radical and pseudo – religious, destructive organizations. For the benefits of unity among Muslims in the country, it calls to adhere Hanafiya Madhab, which from time immemorial had rooted in the mentality of the Kazakhs. In terms of religious creeds, it calls to use a base, the principals formulated by the Al-Maturidi School (“Platform for the Muslims of Kazakhstan”- P. 29). The Chapter XII “Islam and Jihad” focuses on determining the notions “Jihad” as “effort, assiduity, commitment, endeavor and struggle to achieve a result or goal. In Islam, the religious notion of that word means the opening of the path to cognize Allah (“Platform for the Muslims of Kazakhstan”- P. 29).

An obstacle on the path of "Jihad" are illiteracy, poverty, restrictions on the freedom of action and thought. In this regard, a group of extremist jihadists completely distorts that concept, defining it as a struggle against unbelievers and the secular state.

In general, the platform of Muslims of Kazakhstan aims at preventing division of Muslim community due to different religious views (“Platform for the Muslims of Kazakhstan”- P.31).

Importantly with respect to moral education of people was the Forum adopted Teachings namely “Personal image of a Muslim”. They define the following characteristics of a Kazakhstan Muslim personality:

1. Choosing the right faith;
2. Obtaining knowledge;
3. Patriotism;
4. Obeying the law, obedience to a manager;
5. Preservation of religious harmony;
6. To be useful to society;
7. Diligence;
8. Avoid waste and beware of stinginess;
9. The best temper and character;
10. Be humble and polite;
11. Friendliness;
12. Greeting;
13. Pay attention to cleanliness and neatness of appearance;
14. Obey and show kindness to parents;
15. Family care.

Of interest is the Forum adopted “Personal Image of an Imam” that includes the following personal traits of an Imam:

1. Religiosity;
2. Sincerity, honesty, fairness;
3. Erudition, intelligence;
4. Patience;
5. Kindness, gentleness of character;
6. Humility (politeness, modesty);
7. Patriotism;
8. Oratory skills;
9. Neatness of appearance;
10. Versatility.

In general, assessing the SAMK performance, Kazakhstan experts supported its activities, having noted the positive tendencies on coordinating the efforts of religious community and the State in the area of building constructive dialogue. Moreover, the greater role of the organization in raising religious awareness as well as preserving and further creating religion – oriented spiritual elite capable to ideologically withstand external pressure by destructive worldview systems and organizations, and to develop canons of national Muslim beliefs based on its traditional grounds and samples, has been recognized. As we know, during Soviet period, the Kazakh spiritual elite had been suffering repressions and at the time of its independence, the national religious elite was unable to withstand external influence. Today, the situation is changing alongside with the emergence of new generation of Kazakhstan Scholars, organization of national system of Islamic education and wider public awareness that may become a key to spiritual immunity against different radical ideas on religious grounds.

## **Constructive and destructive trends of modern State - formation in the Republic of Kazakhstan**

The process of independence gaining by Kazakhstan de jure and de facto assumes harmonization of the most various factors related to social development. In our research, the key areas of focus are the harmonization of ethnical and religious factors of societal development. Thereby, certainly, the issues of social stability and sustainability under the process of politico-economic transition in the Republic of Kazakhstan are also important.

Expert discussions about prevailing imperative trends have demonstrated the existence of a number of various tendencies in fostering social consciousness in the Republic at the present stage. The experts highlighted the cross-cutting nature of social development, where the separation of a single factor seems quite arbitrary and necessary only for specific professional analysis. The present research, which focused on the problems of countering violent extremism, had talked only about individual existing trends of state building.

The constructive trends in building the Nation State in the Republic of Kazakhstan were categorized as follows:

- 1) After independence, the country de jure managed to establish competent government institutions, power hierarchy that met public expectations of the transition period and preserved social stability out of large-scale social upheavals and violent confrontation, even though there were negative objective prerequisites.
- 2) Despite the multi-ethnicity and multi-religious composition of the society in the Republic of Kazakhstan, a model of tolerant social communication has been established.
- 3) The process of gaining new independent national identity in Kazakhstan passes in an evolutionary and generally constructive way, despite the fact that over a long historical period, the Kazakh people were under colonization and virtually detached from their national tradition, their national language, religion and their own spiritual culture being.
- 4) Presently, Kazakhstan implements its potential of sovereignty within relatively complementary external environment beyond international disputes and conflicts, both along its borders and in the country.
- 5) The Kazakh society has sufficiently developed and qualified human resources capable to transit to a new socio-economic system that meets the best international standards of social and socio-cultural tradition of its own.
- 6) Modern communication technologies and cultural environment enable Kazakhstan based on openness of its informational, educational and spiritual space to establish a dialogue with various centers of world civilization in a high-speed mode, which leads mainly to the spiritual enrichment of the national cultural traditions and improve the quality of human capital.
- 7) Modern global and world social environment possesses a wide choice of models of state-building and practical historical experience of societal development and social innovation for undertaking the required transformations in Kazakhstan with a minimum of human and other resources, costs and losses and with effective public administration and social planning.
- 8) The Republic of Kazakhstan has quite a vast territory, favorable geopolitical location and necessary resources for problem-free and conflict-free social development.
- 9) The Republic of Kazakhstan, from the day of gaining its national sovereignty, has been de facto recognized by the world community as an independent subject of international relations

within its national jurisdiction and in its international activities, is guided by all rights and duties before the law.

10) The global multicultural environment of the international community creates opportunities for a more flexible model of national identity, including the choice of a spiritual perspective for the majority of the population, for example, through implementing the human right to freedom of religion.

Thus, we can state that the Republic of Kazakhstan has all the institutional foundations and positive international conditions to establish harmonious, progressive, modern national statehood consistent with values, ideals and spiritual cultural and historical experience of its people.

Though, currently there are a number of negative trends in development, but while overcoming them, modern independent Kazakhstan model of politico-legal and socio-economic system with its own spiritual and cultural traditions are being formed. We may categorize these negative, destructive trends and “risks” as follows:

- 1) During transition, a new quality of societal development in the Republic of Kazakhstan along with the advanced state-legal projecting, in general is supplemented by remaining outdated autocratic governance mechanisms, which adversely affect the process of nation-building and when choosing the model of national spiritual identity.
- 2) Establishment of multicultural model at the national level is connected with some crises, recognized by the international community, and the presence of certain ethnic and religious potential for conflicts and social risks of the transition period.
- 3) The process of reviving the national values and identity reference points is fairly slow-progressing, and often in spite of, not because of the state created institutional and functional conditions. In particular, this can be illustrated by widespread introduction of the national language Countrywide
- 4) The international situation, especially in recent times is replete with conflicts and dividing lines between parties to conflict associated with the transformation of the international order, which requires Kazakhstan to choose with a high degree of risk in a number of topical international issues. Such as the situation concerning the Ukrainian crisis and the positioning of the Republic of Kazakhstan amid Syrian crisis, which may lead to negative consequences for positive national development.
- 5) Under conditions of transition to a new technological order and within the process of social modernization, it often leads to a loss of socio-cultural traditions and national ethical codes that undermines the qualitative bases of the nation, national value systems, leveling their content and reducing the opportunities for a national social capital
- 6) The new generation of the Kazakhs in an open global world communication environment is effected by an intense informational influence including destructive social projects. For example, this applies to the values of mass consumer-led society or negationist extremist flows on religious and pseudo-religious bases that changes the axiological vector of younger generation formation by reducing the quality of new human resources and opportunities towards advanced civilized development of the State.
- 7) To date, despite the efforts in reforming the public administration set forth in the National Program of five institutional reforms (100 concrete steps), the inertia of an old state Soviet

bureaucracy still remains in the Republic of Kazakhstan, the adaptation of best international governance practices and politico-legal regulations are implemented slowly and incorrectly. For example, there is a significant gap in political modernization comparing with social and economic transformation, which makes the process of nation-building rather disharmonious and prone to systemic risks and crises.

8) Presence of a significant resource base and undeveloped territories in Kazakhstan with a relatively small population makes the country a desirable object of aggressive external attention and politico-economic manipulations on the part of main power centers. For example, the Kazakh society is in the zone of destructive influences by centers of religious radicalism and terrorism that aimed at extensive social destabilization and creating space of “uncontrolled chaos”.

9) Reformatting of contemporary international order creates high risks towards the progressive and evolutionary accession of Kazakhstan to the strategic format of the best international social projects, forcing it to react and adapt to all constantly new tactical challenges of transformation. For example, in modern conditions, Kazakhstan as an ally of the Russian Federation has to adapt to challenges connected with confrontation between Russia and the West that harms the national interests narrowing the opportunities for foreign policy maneuvering.

10) Establishment of the national religious tradition occurs under the collisions and competition with a variety of alien religious and ideological systems, which possess all modern tools of influence and even often supported from outside by major international “players” and that makes the situation extremely vulnerable and may lead to the loss of own national identity and spiritual sovereignty.

The consultations and expert surveys held within the framework of this research in the regions of Kazakhstan, have also revealed a number of regional scale problems that can jeopardize the stable and harmonious development of the Kazakhstan society and that they can represent a serious potential for acts of violent extremism. In accordance with problems identified, there were proposed specific recommendations to overcome the negative trends and to address challenges of harmonious social development in the regions of Kazakhstan.

### **Expert recommendations on preventing violent extremism**

1. In order to eradicate the causes of extremism in the social environment, it requires taking wider comprehensive measures that include not only preventive measures by National Law Enforcement Agencies, as at first glance it may seem, but also active popular participation in changing the type of political and legal culture both by the population and State authorities. Preserving repressive and authoritarian nature by most of the government agencies in the social environment creates ideas aimed at radically reconstructing the state, which can serve as a fertile ground for planning extremist actions under the limited legitimate means of influence by the civil society concerning the transformation of state institutions. The Soviet totalitarian political history had left its footprint on the ability of people to claim their rights and interests within legitimate legal frameworks. Legal nihilism generates an atmosphere of mistrust to public authorities and disbelief in fairness on legal grounds. The lack of positive precedents in addressing

social problems by the society itself through appealing to formal, legal and transparent mechanisms of interaction with the state exacerbates distrust among citizens - social pessimism. "Civil victories" over the state bureaucratic machinery are being presented as an exception rather than the rule in the public consciousness. Therefore, it is recommended to wider practice the implementation of open public platforms, analytical and media formats to discuss the socially important issues involving experts, civil society activists and government officials.

2. Irremovable state political institutions isolated from public attention, flourishing backroom decisions that concern socially crucial issues, ignoring the interests of ordinary citizens by state authorities, all these contributes to social apathy and marginalization of the majority of society, especially young people with a potential to become a fertile ground in transiting from passive to active resistance to authorities' authoritarian decisions by exploiting extremist ways. Lack of transparency and government corruption creates challenging conditions for the population deprived from opportunities to comprehensive social integration in various areas: economic, political, cultural, ideological and spiritual. It must ensure a counter movement by both state authorities and general public based on political will and desire to promote positive evolutionary changes. In the context of economic crisis and limited state involvement into social problems, non-governmental sector and local business organizations of SMEs (small and medium-sized businesses) could initiate civil guardianship programs to address current macroeconomic difficulties of certain groups, families and people with the purpose of their rehabilitation and social support that may divert these people from extremism. These "out of politics" low-cost but very important humanitarian actions would allow specialized NGOs to positively impact on the formation of tolerant social environment.
3. Existence of a target – oriented activity by external actors aimed at social destabilization on any grounds, whether it be training of religious radicalists for an illegal action or motivating acts of political resistance by opposition groups pushed into shadow of political space of the country, raiding economically successful business groups by clan, financial and oligarchic groups represented at all levels of Governments, all these contributes to a situation of "war of all against all", without possibilities for an open dialogue and to legally resolve the problems arising therefrom, and that force people to acts of counter-violence. Thereafter, it is extremely important not to initiate any external civil activity without involving local population, which naturally causes resistance by government officials who fear the scenarios of their removal through the so-called "Color revolutions", and however, to involve government agencies into joint improvements and optimization of daily activities performed by authorities, to facilitate their transparency and efficiency, to share constructive international experiences in public administration (good governance), to adapt and introduce advanced social standards of life. Such positive attitudes and step-by-step improvements of living standards will contribute towards establishing trust and dialogue between government agencies and the public.
4. The resulting collapse of the Soviet State and crisis periods of economic development in new sovereign states, ideological vacuum alongside with an adoption of new pluralistic ideological mosaic of mass culture had started to be filled up by various destructive ideological systems as well. These trends are undermining the centuries-old national mentality and ethical foundations of the society by destroying existing social ties and

social capital as a whole. This situation of social marginalization and cleavage of an “ideological fabric” of the Nation makes individual social groups, especially in terms of an emerging worldview among youth who easily prone to destructive ideological influence from outside. That what is often used by adherents of extremist religious movements. In this regard, it is necessary to cultivate and promote traditional, popular, cultural, religious and other social initiatives aimed at preserving the national identity and ethno-cultural and traditional family values, which can become a strong foundation in ensuring social stability and rejection of violent extremism.

5. Researches and expert consultations carried in Kazakhstan regions have found disparities in relevance manifestations of religious revival within some specific ethno-cultural realities, and therefore, it requires different recommendations to be provided in order to harmonize them. Presently, the most challenging situation is related to the process of an adequate national identification and selection of spiritual and religious reference points in the north and east of Kazakhstan, traditionally, the most Russified areas. Experts believe that these processes are caused due the proximity to Russia and intensive information ideological pressure of the “Russian world” concept actively infiltrated into the territory of the Republic, and creates “dual loyalty” among citizens in regards the processes of national and spiritual identity, particularly among Russian and Russia - oriented part of the population. Such a divided consciousness of the population forms precedents for denying national values of the Republic of Kazakhstan, orientation of the share of the population towards priorities of a foreign state (the Russian Federation), manifestations of separatism in modern conditions when Russian political elite implements a strategy to revive exclusive dominance in all post-Soviet space. An eloquent example of such serious intents are the military actions on the territories of a number of post-Soviet states such as Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova and ongoing projects of territorial claims and that gives hope to some Kazakhstan citizens to become reunited with “Big virtual homeland”, while ignoring the values of the their actual Motherland – the Republic of Kazakhstan. These nostalgic dreams of a "bygone power" within the empire, give rise to separatist aspirations and extremist actions aimed at overcoming the so-called “Historical misunderstanding” expressed in the form of emerging self-reliant independent state - Kazakhstan. These acts are evidenced by such symbolic manifestations as attempts to build a monument to Russian Emperor at a public place in Petropavlovsk City by local activists from Russian Movement or repeated defiant social actions by Cossacks community of Eastern Kazakhstan and the so-called “Ural Cossack troops”, which focused less at “cultural renaissance” then at inciting ethnic conflict and social strife. It is indicative that religious revival of spirituality among some Russian-Orthodox communities of believers has nostalgic chauvinistic shade and may be exploited as an ideological motive in case of separatist political movements’ emergence, as it was in the south-east of Ukraine. This is in spite of the fact that the new Law’s preamble on “Religious organizations and associations” clearly identifies a special historical role of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Hanafi Islam of Sunni School in shaping the national spiritual identity of the people of Kazakhstan. It is also noteworthy that such separatist mentality is promoted by speeches made by various policymakers from neighboring state, which throw different ideologemes such as: “that the Kazakhs had no their own statehood before” (Putin V.) or “ungratefulness of foreigners and the

need to restore the historical justice, by uniting the Republics of the region into one Central Asian County as a part of Russia” (Vladimir Zhirinovskiy) and that “all post-Soviet space as an ancestral part of the Russian world” (the Patriarch Kirill). Thus, mainstreaming the traditional religious creeds among multi-ethnic people of Kazakhstan may pose a risk of political extremism on ethnic and religious basis under certain geopolitical changes in external environment. This risk can preventively be eliminated by putting forward the principled position of the state through diplomatic channels and the state implemented sound cultural policy in terms of limiting destructive information and analytical content of Russian media, which, especially in recent years contributes to excitation of nationalistic views among Russian and Russia-oriented population.

6. With regards to the western regions of Kazakhstan, the expert analysis have revealed that social protests taken place in the recent past, during Janyozen events of 2011 and violent acts of religious radicalists in 2011-2012 affected the level of public perception of extremism. From one side, the authorities quite closely monitor the possible outbursts of political and popular religious activity, especially intelligence services. In addition, the state authorities make special efforts towards social rehabilitation of victims and increase of social support to various “risk groups”: unemployed, the youth and Oralmans (returnees). However, these measures are not sufficient to eliminate the manifestations of violent extremism motivated by dissatisfaction with the process of religious identity, social justice and inter-ethnic harmony. In this case, according to experts, there is a need to develop target-oriented social Oralmans programs aimed at enhancing civil harmony and tolerance involving a wide range of community activists and non-governmental sector, representatives from official clergy and regional small Assembly of People of Kazakhstan. It would also be important, if the international non-governmental organizations could contribute in harmonizing the social relationships and social, cultural and informational rehabilitation of citizens who suffered during the events in Zhanaozen, and increasing the level of confidence in public institutions of the state and the official clergy by the population.
7. In some analytical studies and during interviews with experts there were made judgments regarding the potential of violent extremism in the south of Kazakhstan. According to Law Enforcement Agencies, these are very regions, where they expect the peak of religious extremism’s manifestations as a result of illegal actions by banned terrorist organizations, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, IMU, Dawatist – preachers from “Tablighi Jamaat” and the latter-day emissaries – members of DAISH (i.e. “Islamic State”). There is also a high risk potential connected with “Taliban” groups, particularly those ones formed on ethnic basis from Kazakh nationals, similarly to a group that came first in 2011-2012, the group “Jund al-Khalifa” (“Soldiers of the Caliphate”). Without excluding the need for preventive work in this direction on the part of authorized state bodies, it should however be separately noted the potential of ethnic conflicts and social protests, which were highlighted by a number of experts. In particular, we are talking about the demographically oversaturated areas of southern Kazakhstan and diverse ethno-political mosaic of the region's population. In terms of national policy harmonization, the region is quite complicated and presently experiencing a certain pressure by Oralmans from the south and intense waves of labor migrants from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, who in a certain way have shifted their orientation towards Kazakhstan labor market due

to stricter immigration rules in Russia and Ruble's devaluation that constrain work conditions making them ineffective. This may cause more competition and a variety of social controversy that can lead to manifestations of violent extremism, if there is an ideological component, for instance destructive religious doctrines. Moreover, the presence of a broader opposition domain, which is typical for the main city of the South – Almaty, and also under uncontrolled devaluation and high gasoline prices, significant increase in unemployment and existence of a peculiar “zone of instability” around Almaty, all these can contribute to social glow and become a weird “petrol bomb” to incite violent extremism. As it is known, the main national-patriotic forces of modern Kazakhstan are also in the south, and their activation and criticism of authorities can detonate the social instability. Thereby, inadequate actions by authorities to restrict the activities of independent media, failures in the area of currency regulation, corruption scandals of recent times, a number of environmental disasters in the country have yet to meet an adequate response from the state, deterioration of the social situation of a large number of citizens, all these creates socio-political turbulence, which might entail actions of resistance against authorities, including violence. However, the stricter the Law Enforcement reacts, the more fierce opposition from various social groups would be. For example, it regularly appears among the vulnerable groups of the “new generation” – the so-called “Self-employed”, whose survival capabilities are becoming more and more limited, as well as “mortgage holders”, caught in a speculative credit “trap”. At present, very often we can observe the events associated with radicalized deviant behavior, which is the symptom of social addiction to acts of violent extremism, both by government agencies and society. Under these conditions, the mediation activities by leading public institutions contributing to overcome the conflict potentials of existing social disparities and facilitation of dialogue are the appropriate steps to reduce the potential for violent extremism. One of the effective methods to address the social contradictions is to establish different public platforms and discussion formats in the media by ensuring independent expert evaluation and develop optimum trade-offs. With regard to emerging religious differences, we do not consider it as possible to “displace” the unwanted religious movements, but instead to seek dialogue at a high professional theological level on issues of concern to the believers.

## Conclusion

In this 2015, Kazakhstan celebrates the anniversary of two important platforms for dialogue: Kazakhstan People's Assembly and the Congress of World and Traditional Religions. This suggests target-oriented and successful work towards harmonization of ethno-confessional development of Kazakhstan.

Our State same as many countries in Western and Eastern Europe, has signed the “Pact on Civil and Political Rights”, thereby taking on the responsibility to ensure respect for freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and recognition of the right to express, alone or together with others, in public or in private, their religion or belief, with the only restriction established by law and are necessary to protect such fundamental values as public order, health or morals, rights and freedoms of others.

In 2014, the Agency for Religious Affairs and the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan, as well as the Orthodox Church of Kazakhstan have signed the Agreement on cooperation in the sphere of preservation of harmony and tolerance in the society, the implementation of which will be a unique experience of joint work of the state and religious organizations for the benefit of the people of Kazakhstan.

All these measures are aimed at improving the state-confessional and inter-confessional relations in the country and abroad, overcoming the spiritual vacuum and the threat of a crisis of moral values of the society, preventing conflicts, intolerance and radicalism in all its forms. Today, the social stability of Kazakhstan demonstrates a vivid example of national consensus and consolidation of society for the sake of peace and the achievement of overall national goals. Due to tolerance and this experience now there are more than 120 nations representing 18 religious groups live in Kazakhstan in peace and harmony. Today, most believing citizens are comprehensively covered by necessary number of religious organizations and they are given an opportunity to fully participate in public life, to meet their religious needs, and work for the good of creation and development of their country.

The Republic has accumulated vast wealth of experience in preservation of interethnic and inter-religious peace and harmony, and is ready for broader and effective cooperation with many countries and international organizations in the world.

## Islamisation of social and political spaces in Uzbekistan: content, forms and prospects

**Professor B.Babajanov, Doctor of History  
and Professor F.Talipov, Doctor of Political Science**

### INTRODUCTION

*In present work, we will try to approach to this issue, focusing on such realities as religious environment, religious identity, religious situation, methods of its evaluation and analysis, religious ideology, religious (de)-modernization by revealing them in specific contexts. All these are the components of that comprehensive process, which we call "Islamisation of social and cultural spaces" of Uzbekistan.*

In Islam, as in most monotheistic religions, theological, juridical, social and political components have evolved in close connection with each other. The whole history of Islam had represented and represents a clash of interests and ideologies between different religious and political groups, parties and countries that had generated and generates random interpretations of sacred texts, Prophetic prescriptions (*Sunna*), dogmas, precepts. Thereby parties involved in interfaith conflicts tend to defend their own interpretations of Islam as the only true that bear benefits of the community in this life and promise "paradise of pleasure" in the afterlife. Power-holders' massive interventions into that collision by exploiting repressive institutions or bureaucratic instruments have complicated the scene of confrontations and forced scholars to seek a compromise with the government or to directly move under its protection serving the interests of the legitimate authorities. At the same time, there were those who were arguing against the Government opposing it openly.

To ensure an adequate assessment and understanding of diverse phenomena in modern "Islamic life" of the region it is important to comprehend clearly the sort and long-term historical perspectives in order to sufficiently measure the possible shapes and intensity of the post-Soviet re-Islamisation. Retrospective will provide an opportunity to assess correctly the circumstances and consequences related to invasion of the community of imposed religious and political ideologies from outside that gave rise to conflicts and divisions, and which ultimately have created favorable conditions for the emergence of extremists and radicalists with religious motivation. It is equally important to demonstrate the positions and ultimate goals of parties to conflict within a community of believers, status of eminent Scholars, state actions in this collision, content of the published and illegal religious literature, etc.

In the past quarter century, in other words, before and right after the collapse of the USSR such clashes and attempts towards new interpretations of "right Islam" (sometimes extremist) had taken place in the Central Asian region. What are the consequences it leads to? What is the essence of different forms of religious identities? Which forms of religious or social reformation do new "flows" and groups offer in local environment, and what is the reflection of local Scholars and ordinary believers? Is it possible to identify the causes and nature of radicalization and violent extremism preferences? What forms do the relations take between the state and religion

in Uzbekistan? How does Islam coexist with other ideologies? What the religious environment is filled with? These and similar issues will be briefly analyzed in this part of the research.

However, while studying such a vast and complex topic, certainly, it cannot be limited within the present analysis framework and requires constant monitoring and scientific attention to the processes and phenomena in this area.

Here we would like to note few words, which explain some concepts and definitions in the course of our research. The concept “religious environment” means the following: a set of psychological factors, life circumstances and socialization features of an individual, which give rise to conditions (ether) for permeating, taking root and spreading religious identity, religious knowledge and religious activities.

Self-evident by its definition, the term “religious identity” (means an element of individual’s self-consciousness, self-determination and self-concept who has faith in God, in our case, a Muslim), we will analyze it through the prism of actual, but not the claims-based identity.

Under the religious situation, we mean the mutual influence between social, political and economic relations and ethical standards - on the one hand, religion and perceptions about it - on the other. Here we classify the relationship between religion and the state, including the issue of a balance between secularism and religiosity.

“Religious ideology” is understood in the sense of the religion itself, as the ideology itself and as referring to it within the national (or state) ideology.

Finally, the term “religious (de)-modernization” derives from a comparison of above religious identity, environment and situation with dynamics and patterns of the modern country’s development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There is widespread stereotype (however, not shared by us) that religious revival takes us back to the past, and modernization, which is also frequently perceived as “moving forward” “towards progress”, contradicts (or not in harmony, contrasts) with religious life. This results in an eclectic confusion in both public mind and political choice, which also requires conducting a research.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Paragraphs 1-6 were drafted by Babajanov B. and other paragraphs by Talipov F. “Introduction” and “Conclusion” jointly.

## Brief historical perspective

*The life of most Muslim community members of the late 80's and especially since the early 90s of the last century (in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and southern Kyrgyzstan) was going under the banner of stormy debates and clashes between Conservatives and the latter-day reformers. The religious arguments were shaped in various forms of moralism supplemented by accusing their vis-à-vis of ignorance, greed, hypocrisy, insults and personal anger. Parties were defending their understanding of the "Right Islam".*

**D**uring the three centuries (XVIII-XX centuries) Islam in Central Asia had experienced a whole series of challenges. Among them, the most significant event was the anti-religious policy of the Soviet period. State measures to control Islam and reduce its influence among the population are well known and sufficiently studied. The enormous resources invested in ambitious projects of Soviet-style modernization (irrespective of their relevance), were assuming, among other things, the secularization of religious consciousness. This includes large-scale projects in the field of education, formation of Soviet-type "national cultures", Film industry, emancipation of women, etc. Entire institutions were created to serve these projects, which could not fail to leave an imprint on the conscience, the image of indigenous population's behavior, part of which, incidentally, was not only the object, but also the subject (i.e. an active initiator) of enormous transformations. It was expected that major changes and industrialization would make the local population to "throw the religion into the historical dustbin" (Sukhareva, Bikdzhanova *Past and present of the village Aykyran* P.7 and further). Though, people were understanding and differently perceiving the national and religious traditions and were not rushing to abandon the customs associated with their understanding of "religion and customs of their fathers". The Researchers of Sovietology School used to call Muslims of former USSR as "the most colonized group", whose actions were believed to attract serious resistance to the Soviet regime (Bennigsen & Wimbush. *Muslim Religious Dissidents*). Later, such characteristics and aprioristic assumptions have been criticized by modern scholars, who preferred saying about peaceful coexistence of Islam with official ideology, rightly seeing in it a peculiar survival strategy and the ability of Muslims to adapt (Ro'i Yaacov. *Islam* P. 7 and further; Ro'i & Wainer. *Muslim Identity*; DeWeese *Islam and the Legacy*). The specialists called the residual configurations of religious behavior, social ethics and rituals as "religious minimalism" (Privratsky. *Muslim Turkistan*. P. 174-5), which became a successful niche in preserving the part of Islamic precepts, which were easily combining with national, cultural, regional, and even the Soviet traditions. At the very least, "the Soviet challenge" of religion, Muslims were able to overcome by replying to it in different forms of adaptation.

Meanwhile, Islam as a theological and legal system in Central Asia (CA), had been developing over many centuries.<sup>62</sup> Its features were largely determined by interaction and mutual interference of the local community with traditions of nomads living in the Central Asian region, or who were permanently entering there. The subsequent Islamisation of nomadic tribes (in a very specific form) has affected many aspects of domestic forms of Islam's existence. They have been manifested, for example in various practices, in cult of the "saints", were associated

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<sup>62</sup> The most complete substantiation this Theory of interaction between general Islamic principles and their regional forms was reflected in works of Russian Islamic Scholar Prozorov S.M. (Islam as an ideological system P.78-88, 375-380).

with strong components of local customs among ethnic groups (e.g., special configurations of funeral or wedding ceremonies).

Promptly changing ethnic map of the region encouraged the Scholars to seek for arguments in order to legitimize the existence of Ummah in non-Islamic (secular) state, for a fair share of confessional ethnic and religious tolerance, etc.

In Soviet times, it is this form of Islam's existence was the most tenacious showing its abilities to be socially and politically adapted, because historically it had sufficiently strong roots among the local people, especially in the provinces.

Many purist-minded Scholars were opposing this "pure Islam", or, appealing to definitions of some researchers, against its domestic forms, mostly by new generation often called "Yosh mullavachalar" (young mullahs). Conventionally, we name them the "reformers", although they have to propose clear and complete forms of Reformation. In the dogmatic sense, they were insisting on removal of contradictions between rigorist prescriptions of the Quran and the Sunna, and tendency among older generation of Scholars ("Conservatives") to seek out compromises and adaptations, and they never had consented to their quietism and openness to external influences. The customs, which, however, Muslims themselves were perceiving and are perceiving as Islamic, had been particularly criticized (Disputes of Muslim Authority, P. 4-12; Hilgers, Irene. Why Do Uzbeks Have to be Muslims?).

The younger generation of Soviet-era Scholars began its activities with the criticism of this very "impure Islam", largely repeating the Scholars' arguments from the most puristic Madhhab – Hanbali School, which sublimation, Ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1702 -1798) at his time were advocating for, the supporter of returning to "pure Islam". His name has become an eponym and a symbol of the movement that included the supporters of returning to "original Islam" at the times of the Prophet. That is right, in other words, "Vakhobii / Wahhabis" that was how their vis-à-vis from conservatives called the members of this new movement. However, the very young mullahs called themselves "Mudzhaddidiya" i.e. "Renewers" (which meant "renewal of Islam"). They direct their criticism against the prejudices, traditional (national) customs and rituals having infiltrated with domestic form of Islam's existence that destroyed, as they thinking, the "purity of religion". Such Islam, as young mullah were considering, have had accepted the Soviet regime and ceased to resist the secularization of Muslims (Babajanov, Kamilov. *Domulla Hindustani*).

Since the inception of Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan (November 17, 1943; more known according to acronym as SADUM), the formal religious institutions that came under government control. Creating SADUM meant that authorities partially allowed Islam to be in the social domain, however, they sought to include the scholars in the structures of official bureaucracy, although several religious institutions were greatly reduced and the scope of their competences in the social domain limited. At the same time, Soviet projects - education for all – had created conditions for a more secularized worldview of existing and future religious leaders.

Despite the fairly extensive international connections of SADUM, that structure was considered only as a tools of international diplomacy for authorities, and therefore the relationships between local Muslims and the rest of the Islamic World was under control and limited. The Isolation had resulted in marginalization of local Scholars who preferred to stick to

their own traditions<sup>63</sup> negatively perceiving any reforms in the Islamic world (for example, attempts to initiate the creation of “secular Islam” in Egypt, Syria and others Arab countries in 1960-70s.).

Restrictions, isolation and, as a consequence, marginalization led to the fact that most conservatives Scholars were not ready (either qualitatively or quantitatively) to rapid paces of re-Islamisation that have been gaining momentum since the time of Gorbachev's Perestroika. As a result, Scholars have failed to respond to the challenges of “revisionists” who were rejecting domestic forms of Islam's existence, its dogmatic and social flexibility; tolerance and political conformism of Scholars were criticized.

In Soviet times, proponents of modernization of domestic Islamic forms were in the same situation as Conservatives in the sense of access to new ideas behind reformers from Islamic world. And only the influx of mass print products alongside with students from Muslim countries studying in the universities of Uzbekistan, had a clear meaning (both dogmatic and social) in their claims for destroying the conservatives' hegemony in religious and social spaces (Disputes of Muslim Authority in Central Asia, P. 14-17).

Young mullahs, who were calling for the “reforms / purification” of Islam preferred to borrow teachings and ideology of different Muslim fundamentalists from Egypt, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia<sup>64</sup>. However, new interpretation of the religion and its functions had doubted the customary spiritual values, threatening to destroy the social, domestic or family hierarchies, which were the very fortunate niche that preserved “Muslimity” with significant part of the region's communities during the Soviet era, simultaneously and without having any specific obstacles and mixing up with other forms of identity (national, domestic, family and even Soviet).

The new wave of reformers attempted to and are attempting to impose mono-identity (exceptionally as a Muslim), offering religious, identified and then political return into orbit of Islamic States (the idea is closely linked with political interpretation of Caliphate).

One of the first young Scholars in Uzbekistan, who took a critical look at “domestic Islam”, was the well-known leader of the so-called “Wahhabis” in Fergana Valley Abduvali - Kory (Babajanov, Kamilov. *Domulla Hindustani*). His public appearances, were recorded on tapes then replicated in tens of thousands copies and freely sold until 1995 (before his arrest). According to our information, those preaches have become initial and symbolic source of religious and especially political nihilism and maximalism that set the tone for subsequent rifts within communities. However, “Renewers” did not propose their own political doctrines, forms of economic development, and their attitudes concerning scientific and technological progress. This was subject to criticism by conservatives, who were reasonably noting that the proposed “reforms” deny Muslims to benefit from technological advancement, and that public administration in modern world requires special educational training and experience, which

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<sup>63</sup> Soviet-type societal modernization and dynamic nation building undoubtedly fuelled the believers and their leaders, although their majority did not accept the secularity in form imposed.

<sup>64</sup> In one of the “Prescripts” to a new generation of Muslims translated into the Uzbek language and widely distributed in Uzbekistan and neighboring countries, it states that every Muslim is committing acts of worship (prayer, fasting, sacrifice and prayer for salvation in *mazars* / tombs of saints or relatives requesting for support), by doing that he accepts polytheism (*shirk*), and can be considered as polytheist, which is one of the most terrible sin for a Muslim. Such person is said to be killed and his property confiscated. The same severe punishment imposed to those Muslims, who try to defend “national traditions”, as opposed to the Sunna, women not wearing Hijabs (headscarves) and others. See.: Abdullah bin Ahmad Al-Zaid. *Namozni yrganamiz* (Will learn to pray), P.12-14, 16. (The original edition was issued in the Ministry of Awqaf, *da'wa* and guidance in cooperation with the Charitable Organization of Ibrahim ibn 'Abd al-'Azeez al-Barahimi. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Year Unknown). On the influence of literature of Scholars from Pakistan and the Arab world on the local “renewers”, See also.: Disputes of Muslim Authority, P.14-15.

religious leaders never had. (Babajanov, Kamilov. *Domulla Hindustani*; Khalid. *A Secular Islam*). By the early 1990s, the antagonism between conservatives and letter-day reformers has reached its highest peak. "Renewers" had started to violently takeover the mosques, open their associations and their supporters were even hitting Imams from among their counterparts etc. (Disputes of Muslim Authority in Central Asia, P. 56-59). The activities of young Mullavacha's had peaked with the spontaneous emergence of "Sharia police" groups (end of 1990-1991s), especially in Namangan, where they managed to severely rollback the Law Enforcement and maintain a parallel authority. The followers of Abduvali – Kory were among the "Ideologists" of those armed actions (Babajanov. *Le Jihad – ideologie "l'Autre"*; Ibid. *The Economic and Religion History*).

In parallel, there had developed a rift between the parties to the conflict (especially among the "Renewers"), which became an omen of the communities' religious life of that time. Those divisions resulted in direct clashes and scandals between parties within premises of mosques; the ordinary believers were seriously disoriented.

Against this background, the form of Islam habitually confessed by local Muslims was then challenged by new religious and political ideologies set in motion by transnational *Hizb at-Tahrir al-Islami* / Islamic Renaissance Party (local name: Hizb ut-Tahrir; hereinafter as HT), founded in 1952-53s by Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani (1909-1977). Fueled by struggle against Israel, lacking tangible assistance from Muslim countries to support Palestinians (as was considered by Party members), it seriously affected the ideas of its founders having supplemented by religious and confessional intolerance (Farouqi A., *Fundamental Quest: Hizb al-Tahrir* P. 6-12. Mirsayitov I. *Peculiarities of political Islam in Fergana valley*"; Babajanov O. *The activities of Hizb ut-Tahrir*).

As we could found, an emissary, resident of Andijon, Abdurashid Kasymov (involved into HT in 1989 during Hajj) had founded its first regional group in early 1990s. According to him (interviews held in 2006 and 2010), the ordinary believers, especially young people, were greatly disappointed seeing controversies and scandals among Scholars, which in fact resulted in developing a rift within communities. The emerged borders, breakdown of habitual relations within the region and beyond its boundaries were limiting previously existed free movement of people especially while finding jobs or markets for small-scale trading. This was compounded by serious economic challenges, lack of integration between the states of the region and other issues, against which an idea of "Worldwide Caliphate" with "unique Islam and single Islamic Ruler", "without borders and customs posts" had turned to be fortune replacement of an ideological emptiness at times of early independence.

Despite obvious abstractness and utopianism, this ideology had appeared at the right time and the right place. Moreover, neither Scholars nor the Governments of the region have failed to offer any clear political or economic alternatives at that time, in contrast, becoming more and more isolated and limiting the integration (Khalid "A Secular Islam; Eisentadt S. *Multiple Modernities*"). However, HT demonstrated some of its abilities to adapt to local conditions. So, given the strong national components within the hybrid identity, Kasimov A. has initiated a "special phase" (*khos bosqich*) towards the establishment of a worldwide caliphate. Initially, he proposed begin with creation of a regional caliphate, which would consist of "Islamic states".

Extremist groups (Akromiya, Ma'rifatchilar, the so-called "Jamaats" and others had adopted exactly the same utopian and abstract ideas (with its essential slogan – "to establish

fair Islamic state". However, their quasi-ideology became to be a marginal one (in domestic and social senses).

Referring back to HT, due to an exceptional attention by politicians, mass media, Scholars, it immediately became a heinous organization. Since the beginning of their activities, the representatives of Party had not have taken any legal or other attempts to become legalized in any of the country of the region. Judging the leaflets of those years, most local regimes (first of all in Uzbekistan) were declared as "henchmen of Jews and Communists" (versions provided by "Americans", "Russians") and they called "Muslims serving the regimes" "to turn away from such Rulers and choose the true Khalifa among their own".<sup>65</sup> Such point was not accepted by overwhelming majority of local Scholars, what is more, they have made their choice without direct influence by the State and even before the government authorities had begun to massively pressure HT (February, 1999). The outcome of our researches (from 1996 until recent time) discloses that their religious and political nihilism was first of all rejected by majority of believers. Moreover, as it is noted by majority of Uzbekistan Scholars (and the so-called "official" and "non-official" Scholars), all the ideas of that Party were formulated on absolutely align and severely vulnerable dogmatic slogans to domestic forms of Islam (preliminary political ones), (*Mirsayitov I. "In regards to preventing the spread of Hizb ut-Tahrir ideas in Kyrgyzstan // Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies "Kazakhstan – spektr". Kazakhstan. Almaty. Part 2. No.2.2006; Babajanov O. "Who is on the other side of barricade?" P. 58-59).*

Ideas concerning "nonviolent struggle", "bloodless revolution" at the third stage of struggle for the Caliphate in fact became same elusive as HT ideology itself. They raise, to say the least, doubts, if we recall the well-known episodes of their activities in Jordan, where in 1968, 1969 and 1971, under the leadership of the Party there were failed military coups; an attempted military coup organized by HT in 1972 in southern Iraq had also failed (Taji-Farouqi. A Fundamental Quest. P. 27-28). These attempts are not denied by prominent members of the Party (ICG, Women and Radicalization. p.10). As al-Nabhani and his followers were explaining at their time: "... if the society rebels against the regime, its elimination, even by military force, is not an act of violence. Violence was considered to be a case, when it would have been necessary to eliminate opponents in order to gain power" (Babajanov, Olcott. *Hizb ut-Tahrir in Uzbekistan* P. 23-24).

As for the local cell of HT in CA, such a dual ideology of maternal branch of the Party mostly affect the elite of local groups, who have full access to publications of the HTI "parent Party", especially those who are able to adequately perceive them because religious literacy and general erudition of local HT members leaves much to be desired. Nevertheless, there are no proven facts of their direct participation in violent actions of the region. At the same time, the majority of researchers do not reject their status aimed at "ideological incitement" (*Mirsayitov "On ideological counteraction to illegal extremist of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Kyrgyzstan // Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Institute of Central Asia. Urumqi. 2007).*

Other organizations such as "Adolat" (January 1990; from May 1991 – "Islom Adolati"/ Islamic justice", "Sharia militia") in Namangan were more bellicose and belligerent. They had created special patrol groups (mostly from young people), which began to show up at bazaars and were catching petty pickpockets and punishing them with strokes of whipping, closing shops selling alcohol, pogroming discos in old part of Namangan, were appearing at weddings

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<sup>65</sup> Undated but signed on behalf of HT, the leaflets of that time (from archive of the author).

forcing the organizers to throw the alcohol away from the table etc. Consequently, there was formed an Islamic police of Sharia Morality in Namangan. Its leader was Tahir Yuldashev (killed in Afghanistan in 2011). The organization was already representing a formidable force and actually became a “parallel state” in Namangan having created its branches in many cities of the Fergana Valley. Attempts taken by local authorities to stop the activity of actually illegal organization were unsuccessful. However, after the mass arrests (taken place from March 1992 until 1994), the leaders and active members of these organizations then had moved to Tajikistan, where they fought with religious opposition. There, Tahir Yuldash created the notorious organization “Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan” (IDU/IMU), from which the so-called “Jihadchilar” (Mujahedeens) had separated in 2001<sup>6</sup> and its members organized several armed attacks in Uzbekistan and in the south of Kyrgyzstan (Babajanov B. *Le Jihad – ideologie ‘l’Autre*). However, these acts were of a local nature and they failed to organize larger military operations in the region.

In Uzbekistan, a number of HT members had significantly decreased due to persecutions. Some researchers believe, presently the local branch of HT located in the south of Kyrgyzstan is also quite marginal, few in number and poorly connected with the “parent Party’s” ideology. They moved away from an old extremism (non-violent) and now can hardly represent a threat as a force capable for radical actions (Heathershaw & Montgomery. *The Myth of Post-Soviet Muslim Radicalization*. P. 12).

Due to mass arrests, immigration from countries of the region (mainly from Uzbekistan) as well as withdrawal of financial support from abroad have resulted in a serious weakening of potential among some extremist and terrorist groups (*Jihadchilar, Jundulloh / Warriors of Allah*). IMU can also be considered as an organization having minimum influence, at least in Uzbekistan, as it has become a part of the “worldwide jihad”.

However, we cannot assume that an issue of violent extremism is withdrawn from the CA agenda. Its latest resurgence (after years of silence) has been observed in Fergana city of Rishton (22 August 2015) and connected with the liquidation of a group of recruiters, who were operating in the Fergana Valley and engaging volunteers into ISIS (mainly young girls for Mujahedeens). This is the only example that we know, at least, an act that was disclosed by Law Enforcement, which, however, shows that ISIS has some popularity in countries far from battlefields, and it reveals that there are some believers sympathizing with “Jihad”.

Therefore, internal discussions concerning a variety of assessments of the “right Islam” is the common phenomenon in the history of Islam and particularly in the modern life of Muslims. The Islam’s return to societal life since the early days of independence was also followed by heated debates and clashes, instead of expected revival of spirituality. The same traditional arguments, and even standardized and emotional templates are used in religious moralism of parties to conflict, including empathy with Ummah, which “slides into the abyss”, because supposedly loses its “Islamity”.

The post-Soviet religious situation in Central Asia with an endless series of internal divisions, have naturally created a field for transnational Islamic ideologies brought by emissaries of various latter-day groups (including extremist ones), which proved to be more consistent in expressing the idea to return political status to Islam. The allegations levelled by leaders and protagonists of imported ideologies against local Muslims in dividing and refusing all-Islamic integration had fully coincided with interests of those people who were weighed down by emerged borders between neighbors, dissociation, lost transregional markets in their trade.

Moreover, local leaders of latter-day religious and political groups are also assuming the right to certify “right” and “wrong” Islam (often in extremely maximalist and radical forms), developing a rift and destroying traditional interpretations. Their actions have put into motion the “sectarian period” of “re-Islamisation”, reaffirming the rule: number of sects increase at times of crises concerning domestic forms of Islam. Accordingly, the natural post-Soviet spiritual nihilism and maximalism among certain Muslims have escalated into extreme forms of aggression that directly resulted in transiting the conflict into political realm.

## Traditions and mechanisms within domestic forms of Islamic existence as factors against extremism and political radicalism

*Consequently, the religious opposition (including the extremist one) is trying to use all the shortcomings in the work of regional Governments and they proposed political or social orientations compensate (in the form of abstract ideas) the deficit of freedoms of expressions, social justice, etc.*

**AS** mentioned above, Islam “Renewers” and extremist ideology holders were seriously criticizing the political conformism of local Scholars representing the older generation (conservatives). The latter were recognizing that Muslims could preserve their “Islamity” within a secular state. This tradition, among other things, based on precept “Ita'at” – obeying worldly power - holders, prohibition of attacks on their lives and dominion, which provisions are legitimized in the Quran (4: 59) and in some hadith (al-Imam al-Bukhari, Al-Sahih numbers of hadith: 7142-43, 7199, etc.). Local Scholars and even historians have acknowledged that the precept also applies to secular rulers. Any deviation from such political conformism was condemned and named with such concepts as *fitna or bāgi* – Distemper in the broadest sense (Babajanov B.M. “Kokand Khanate” P. 506-511). This tradition was supported by most modern regional scholars, because it has strong historical roots and had repeatedly contributed to the survival of the believers’ communities under the most adverse conditions, including, after repeated nomadic invasions into the region, or during the reign of atheism policy.

Conservative opponents argue that the above requirements can only apply to those rulers, who themselves comply with Islamic precepts. These ideas that were voiced, for example in comments of the Quran of the referred Scholar from “Wahhabis”, Abduvali – Kory (Tafseer al-Furkan<sup>66</sup>) and then began were included into the films of IMU movie studio – “جند الله/Jundullāh” (Warriors of Allah), which significantly influenced the subsequent formation of the IMU ideology.

“Renewers of Islam”, and then sectarians had entered into a religious and dogmatic debate with Ulema – conservatives principally on issues concerning the status of political Islam, attempting to destroy the old traditions, which have ceased to be a comprehensive framework of that multilateral discourse. Instead, the very tradition of political conformism became the subject of dispute, which leads to further religious and social conflicts and transformations.

Conservatives rely on their own written tradition i.e. on a number of theological and historical tractates that have emerged from the pen of local authors in medieval and modern times, who were complying with above mentioned ideas of conformity, relying on rational methods of decision-making, while considering ethno-cultural and local Scholars features of Muslims from different countries and regions. Relevant provisions of “domestic Islam” in one form or another had been formulated in medieval tractates mostly by local authors, whom the domestic confessional education was based on. Traditions (عرف و عادت/ rites and customs) in the interpretation of conservatives are directly associated with markers of “Muslimity” as well, at least in the eyes of the main part of the local community. They are deeply incorporated into the local concepts on foundations of religion, piety, morality, tolerance and personal ethics of individuals.

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<sup>66</sup> Were published in Osh in 2000-2001, although the place of publication was mentioned Mecca.

An idea of hierarchical identity among all the believers – members of the community has stronger presence in the same tradition i.e. a concept regarding the position of every individual in different networks of the society and respective functions, norms of behavior. Mobility of the positions of believers in social or age hierarchies, is not denied and based on a precept “sa'yy-Harakat”, “hulk-atvor” i.e. personal piety and involvement of every member of the community, which provides an opportunity to change his/her social status. It is this idea of “predetermined hierarchy” of society, which the rejection of radical actions and violence is based on.<sup>67</sup>

Another important argument to which conservatives appeal to is that this ideology of conformism and cultural features that our ancestors were adhering to (ajdod, ota-bobolar / Father and sons). It was traditional and, perhaps, the most significant argument based on well-established custom to attribute a fair share of piety, wisdom and purity to ancestors. Deeds of ancestors (despite frequent mythological contexts), same as old-aged contemporaries as carriers of piety and interpreters of customs, generally regarded as a value in itself. The ancestors and their understanding of the norms of the stability is the important paradigm in the social fabric of macro and micro-communities that enhance social networks, give meaning to the traditional hierarchies, which perceived as the basis of stability.

Described paradigms do not necessarily mean that said no to society in various forms of modernization. On the contrary, they showed and show remarkable ability to adaptations and combinations of different forms of modernization and customary traditions. According to Talal Asad, Islamic practice should be regarded as the result of non-monotonous Islamic traditions that are open to the changes and temporary transformations (Talal. “The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam P. 15).

We can extend this observation, interpolating the concept on “non-monotonous tradition” against any country in Central Asia, referring to the forms of Islam’s existence in specific historical-geographical regions (areas) of each country. For example, it is appropriate to say that Karakalpakstan and Fergana seriously differ in forms of perception and interpretation of religious precepts, due to historical and ethnic characteristics of these regions. In this sense, Fergana rightly perceived as a kind of outpost in the commitment to predominantly Islamic ethical norms, everyday rituals, the Muslim dress code, etc.

This tradition has rooted into the days of colonization, when the only form of resistance to various forms of assimilation was a commitment to Islamic norms and even their known enhancement. Exceptional (for CA) population density and, consequently, more frequent social communication within the Fergana valley have contributed to preserve and even strengthen the norms of Sharia prescriptions. This commitment to religious traditions (under known their transformation) people of Fergana had preserve it in the Soviet period.

If we talk about Khorezm people, here, the long-standing traditions had also proved to be resilient that associated with mu'tazilitskoy (rationalist) ideology, which in one form or another lived until the beginning of the twentieth century. This ideology has passed a century of recessions and crises and entrenched in a pragmatic and rational way of life of the inhabitants of Khorezm, as well as in their ritual traditions, which, as noted by ethnologists, strikingly differ from the same traditions and ritual structures of other regions of Uzbekistan.

With regard to the Karakalpakstan, which constituted a political union with Khorezm, the region was strongly influenced by “Khorezm” Islam. In addition, the Karakalpaks became

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<sup>67</sup> From interview with Deputy Mufti, AMU Uzbekistan, Abdulaziz Mansur (August 2015).

Islamized late enough (it must be said, in very specific ways) and therefore have kept a mass of their own national traditions.

In any case, we do not need to say that the form of Islam's existence in Uzbekistan is monotonous, that as mentioned, it was due to the unequal historical or ethno-cultural traditions. However, it would be wrong to consider this kind of customs as an expression of "pre-Islamic rituals". It is too simplistic assessment of complex manifestations of worships and everyday ritual practice, often related, as it was said, to the features that form the local forms of Islam. The problem of evaluating the "true Islam" is much wider and it is impossible to limit it with the opinion (criticism) of only one group of Scholars (one madhhab, etc.). Islam is perceived and exists within a certain ethno-cultural space, and then it becomes an organic part.

It is these and similar beliefs, traditions, rituals and customs related to non-monotonous historical-geographic or ethnic characteristics, which entrenched the different forms of religious adaptation, displease the supporters of "purification of Islam", and the latter action they perceive it as a deliverance of the community from unacceptable, according to their point, "innovations" (*bid'at*). At the same time, they perceive "innovation" as the willingness of the community to adaptations and political conformism; "Reformers" regard these qualities as "a step back from Sunna", realizing them too narrowly and literally, denying to use the centuries-old tools to streamline and adapt dogmatic precepts to the situation and conditions of the time. Moreover, domestic (local) forms of Islam, as well as cultural characteristics of Muslim nations are not recognized (for other approaches and details see section: *Religious and secular way of life (the influence of the post-Soviet modernization)*).

So, in the new ideological wave of "reformers" (sectarians), in Central Asia there prevails literalism (while interpreting and using sacred texts), contradiction to common sense and rational methods, rejection of traditional Islamic philosophy and culture, refusal from traditions, intolerance and often ignorance (Muhammad Hassan, "The source of terror". P. 60-61). It may be added that traditions themselves and socio-cultural norms are not the invariant substances to be blindly denied, as a phenomenon alien to Islam; It is not superfluous to recall that boundaries and forms of traditions are mobile, and they have always been volatile, including under the influence of religion (in our case, Islam).

Denial of age-old traditions and internal tools towards adaptations within the sects (both local and imported) had driven to the fact that the former system of checks and balances in more tolerant methods of dogmas' interpretation was on the verge of destruction, particularly while interpreting the terms of Jihad, which in radicalists' interpretation was mainly perceived as radical and militaristic. They question the forms of coexistence with non-Islamic countries, or existence of an Islamic community in it, etc.

As evidenced by the events of the last two or three decades, the majority of Muslims in the region, despite the extremely unfavorable conditions of the Soviet regime, was able to maintain the commitment to traditions mentioned above. Probably, that is why the enthusiasm among local Muslims concerning "purification of Islam" or, let us say, the creation of an "Islamic state" (alternatively "Caliphate") is little. At least, this idea does not meet support among the majority of the faithful neither in Uzbekistan, nor in the whole region. As stated, the latter-day ideologies are not perceived by the majority of the faithful of the region, without any pressure from the local regimes. The reason, in our view, is that the historical immunity among majority part of the community of believers, despite the negative impact of rifts, proved to be strong enough, because it was based on a clearer and more familiar tradition. How long the immunity will last –

time will tell. However, it is this that serves as a quite effective counterweight to radicalization among large part of the local Muslims and levels not always effective steps taken by States of the region in the area of religious policy.

On the other hand, there are no grounds to support the frequently announced idea that the “Reformation breakthrough” of the latter-day religious groups is the solely result of “external conspiracies”. As said, declarative statements of “Islamic opposition” leaders include, typically, a commitment to highly abstracted concepts of “just Islamic state / governance” that exclude corruption in the government bodies, and to the equitable sharing and wise use of natural resources, etc. These provisions reflect precisely the problems prevailing in societies and countries of the region. Consequently, the religious opposition (including the extremist one) is trying to use all the shortcomings in the work of regional Governments and they proposed political or social orientations compensate (in the form of abstract ideas) the deficit of freedoms of expressions, social justice, etc.

## Scholars of Uzbekistan: who and how interprets Islam?

*While analyzing the remaining (mentioned below) religious literature, it is tempting to conclude that intellectual potential among most Scholars is still weak (both in Uzbekistan and in the region), and only few can draft various and serious publications.*

**A**lmost all the leading Scholars of modern Uzbekistan had received their education during Soviet period and therefore more prone to adaptations and political conformity. Most work at Administrations of Muslims or at mosques (Abdulaziz Mansur, Salohiddin Sharipov, Usmonhon Alimov, Abdugofur Razzokov, Mas'udhon – Kory, Abdullaev and others.). They are well known among Muslims in Uzbekistan and the region. Their public speeches, fatwas or publications imbued with a traditional spirit of tolerance, conformity, focused on matters related to rituals, everyday ethics and social order. In fact, they have supported the policy of the state to expand the “Islam authority” in the community, and they pay for it with their exclusive loyalty. Their attitude toward manifestations of any forms of religious opposition, especially to different forms of extremism and radicalism is extremely adverse.

It would be a mistake if we consider this kind of social and political adaptation of Scholars as “servility”, as they follow the above-mentioned tradition of direct cooperation with the legitimate state and see it as a pledge of mutual compromises, community prosperity and social stability.

The most eminent Scholar of this medium, who had started his work since the times of SADUM Mufti, Zievuddin (Ziya ad-Din) Babakhanov (was Mufti in 1957-1983), is the Sheikh / Shaikh Abdulaziz (Abd al-'Azeez) Mansurov. As of today, he is a Deputy Mufti at Administration of Muslims of Uzbekistan (UMU). He is known for his vast theological erudition, commitment to domestic forms of Hanafi Law School, he is well aware of medieval tractates in the field of Fiqh, Kalam and history.

Accustomed since the Soviet era to the political conformism, he is particularly loyal to the established order of existing realities, in other words, he recognizes the natural dominance of the state in its complex relationships with “religious class”. Among the latter environment, there is a delicate balance of personal and group interests, hierarchies and characters (See also the section: *“The forms of state control over religious situation and their effects”*).

The authority of Abdulaziz Mansurov among believers of the Republic and in the region is quite high. Sheikh makes no secret of his sympathy for the ideas of the late Syrian Scholar, Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Buti (killed in 2014), who, as we know, was adhering the political ideology of conformity with the legitimate authorities. Mansurov A. is an author of several tractates and a number of articles (were published during Soviet period). His most significant work is the annotated translation of the Quran (the first edition: Tashkent, 2001; the second - revised and amended - Tashkent 2007). This work had seriously ennobled the authority of its author in the region, and was recognized as a revival of “Hanafi *Tafsir*” / commentary on the Quran.

Articles, pamphlets and public speeches of the Sheikh are dedicated to ethics of Muslims, issues of family relationships and others. Based on his public speeches and private conversations, it follows that he consistently advocates the position of theological and legal School of Hanafi and sincerely believes in them as main guarantor to preserve “purity of faith

and welfare of the community". He also trusts that Hanafism for many centuries of its existence, it has developed a natural instruments of confrontation against fundamentalism and extremism. Despite a certain conservatism, Sheikh believes that Hanafism is open toward adaptation and adjustment to realities of the modern world. For example, there is his well-known fatwa, which provides that wearing Hijabs is not mandatory in modern society.<sup>68</sup>

There are other Scholars having an authority among Muslims of Uzbekistan, those who traditionally prefer to cooperate with the state and recognize its dominance. Above of all, these are disciples and followers of one of the most eminent scholars of the Soviet period Muhammajan Rustamov, aka "Domullo Hindustani" (died in 1989).<sup>69</sup> During Soviet period (from 1948 until his death) Domullo Hindustani was the Imam of Yakub Charkhi Mosque (near Dushanbe) and managed to illegally educate at least a hundred students. Before that (in 1932 and 1940), he repeatedly found himself in exile for ideological accusations. Nevertheless, he was a supporter of compromises with the Government, was calling "not to interfere in politics", believing that political loyalty could become a guarantor of security for Scholars, for those who bear knowledge about Islam.

Among his well-known disciples, there are Abdullatif – Kory and Muhammad-Sodik the Kasimovs (Andijon), Ismail – Kory Saliev, Ibrokhim – Kory Saidov (both from Kokand) and many others. During turbulent years of the so-called "Wahhabi-Hanafi" confrontation, they were consistently upholding the position of their Teacher, which in dogmatic perspective, as mentioned above, prescribed to be more tolerant to domestic forms of Islam and adhere to political conformity. All their brochures designed for ordinary believers were published in that spirit. While global issues are not raised in their works.

At the same time, there are numerous well known Scholars who were positioning and are positioning themselves as independent theologians. The famous and most eminent among them is Muhammad-Sodiq Muhammad-Yusuf (Mamasodik Mamayusupov; died in 10.03.2015), who raised and educated a number of his followers, however, they did not prove themselves to be widely famous as their Guru, first of all, as the authors of several works ( Babajanov B. "Muhammad-Sadiq Muhammad-Yusuf P.54-55).

He is the undisputed leader by the number of publications concerning the most challenging topics for the Muslims. His numerous works have symbolized the special status of an independent Scholar and allowed him to publish without regard to censorship, even in cases when his opuses were permitted to be published by authorities responsible for controlling religious situation.

Like any strong figure, who deserves serious credibility among the faithful, he was a contradictory person and often denied compromises with authorities. Being nominated as an independent candidate (for the first time since 1943) during protests of believers in 1989, from that moment Muhammad Sodiq became not only and not so much a religious figure, but mainly as a politician. A major share of the political capital he had gained, when was elected as a Deputy to the USSR Supreme Soviet [Parliament] (1989-1991). He had established personal contacts with the President of the USSR Mikhail Gorbachev and had the number of meetings with him, which he sued to mitigate the policy and reduce control in religion.

After the collapse of the USSR and amid flaring up conflicts and divisions between conservatives and "Wahhabis", Sheikh Muhammad Sodiq was trying to have a centrist position,

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<sup>68</sup> From our e-archive.

<sup>69</sup> The nickname relates to that in 1928-1932, he studied in Lahore (the then territory of India / Hindustani).

while attempting to fulfill the role of mediator between the parties to the conflict. In one of his brochures (“Ihtiloflar hakida / About controversies”, 1997), he analyzes the arguments of the parties, tries to prove their equal legitimacy and concludes that these arguments and positions have ancient roots and should not be the subject of disagreements and divisions. On the other hand, he refers to the commitment of “conservatives” to ritual and dogmatic attitudes, which are accepted in the Hanafi School, as “a certain fanaticism” (“Conservatism”) (Disputes of Muslim Authority, P.127-129). According to Sheikh Muhammad Sadiq, conservative theologians of Central Asia lived during other times and adapted to the complex realities in the era of constructing socialism. In these circumstances, in his opinion, absolutization of *Madhhab* provisions had fulfilled all expectations. However, as Sheikh believed, the time has changed since the independence, and in today's world, there is more and more pressure against Muslims. Therefore, Muslims should not argue between each other, get involved into debates on whose *Madhhab* is more correct, and who's Scholars more strictly obey canons of al-Quran and Sunna. Those disputes repeatedly contributes to developing a rift between Muslims and make them weaker before the entire world, and the “Infidels” take advantage of such situation.<sup>70</sup> In his tractates, he noted that the previous generation of Scholars, who had experienced all the horrors of atheistic policies and repressions, feared prosecutions by authorities and therefore they do not fight for real independence from the government controlling.

It is in this regard, he continued demanding real independence for the Administration of Muslims of Uzbekistan from the state authorities, which had resulted in a number of hidden and public conflicts with the Uzbek authorities. As a consequence, he was forced to terminate his assignment as Mufti of Administration of Muslims and leave the country (early 1993). Until 2001 (i.e. before his return to Uzbekistan), he lived in Libya, UAE and Saudi Arabia and became a member of various Muslim organizations, including as a member of the Executive Board of the International Union of Muslim Scholars and the Constituent Council of the Muslim World League.

During his immigration period, Muhammad Sadiq preferred to change the strategy in accumulating the symbolic capital and religious authority. He wrote a number of essays on issues of concern to Muslims of the country and the region. For example, topics related to dogmatic and social causes of conflicts between Muslims of Uzbekistan and the region, about Sufism, democracy and Islam, etc. His most capital work was the commentary to Quran - “*Tafseer Hilol*”.

During his long stay in several Arab States and his communications with different Scholars, it had influenced Muhammad Sadiq, who peculiarly perceived the various forms of contemporary Muslim reform movements. Therefore, most of his tractates were written under the strong influence and even in the form of compilations of works by contemporary Arab thinkers and theologians – adherents of Salafi ideology, in particular, those who supporter the unification of *Madhhabs* in order to facilitate the integration between Muslims. However, realizing a certain conservatism among most local Muslim communities, he wrote his works with some adaptation elements to local environment, that is, keeping in mind the interfaith orientations of Muslim audience, who prefer to adhere to domestic forms of Hanafism. In this context, he was trying to refer to the ideas of such ambivalent theologians of the Arab world as the Egyptian Scholar, Yusuf al-Qardawi (was born on 1926), who takes a strong stand against

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<sup>70</sup> Please see his comments on Surah “al-Baqarah”, ayahs 118, 120, 147-148 and others (*Tafsiri Hilol. Birinchi juz*).

power – holders and insists on increasing the influence of Sharia within activities of public institutions.

Under the influence of al-Qardawi and other Scholars of the Arab World (including Saeed Khutba, the Ideologist of “Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin”) he wrote his comments to al-Quran.<sup>71</sup> That influence presents, for example in his comments to ayah 120, the second Surah “Al-Baqarah”, in which Sheikh Muhammad – Sodiq explains the notion, “Enemies of Muslims” as follows: “...As this ayah shows that both Christians and Jews cannot calmly look at us, as we Muslims confess our religion and live according to its precepts. ... And it has long been clear that if Muslims comply fully with the requirements of their religion, they will conquer the whole world. ... And as soon as they realized that truth, they held their envy. .... They try, by any means, to take Muslims away from their religion and make them infidels. ... All infidels of the world came together to alienate Muslims from their religion, while having involved all their strength and capabilities. ... After all, the main purpose of Jews and Christians is not the mutual understanding. ... However, Allah in this ayah showed us the only right path: the path of Allah - the only correct way. ... there is no need to mutually understand them. It is known that the search for mutual understanding and attempts to please strangers will lead (us) to a disaster. And there is no greater catastrophe (for us), than the search for a compromise with others, when we have the Quran - our true path ...”.

During the last 2-3 years in Uzbekistan, there were a lot debates concerning his ideas to publish some books with translations of hadiths, which series was named “*Oltin silsila*” (The Golden Chain). Moreover, there were made translations and publications on that mentioned Sheikh’s website, in fact, which remained without any comments and untouched, including hadiths prescribing certain rules of Jihad (during Jihad, or ritual and other obligations imposed on Mujahedeens, rules relating to share the loot during a military jihad and so on). Such hadiths have created an effect of “repeating refrains” and young people, having accepted them in their own way, were writing very aggressive comments and particularly with regard to such hadiths covering the regulatory requirements to the rules of jihad and Mujahedeens’ obligations. However, this kind of comments were periodically removed from the server.

Despite these phenomena and objections made by experts, those collections of hadiths were admitted to the press under pressure of the then State Advisor for Interethnic and Religious Affairs (now, the Chief Specialist at the Organizational Department under the Presidential Council) Ahmadjanov M.

However, Sheikh Muhammad Sodiq in his last interview harshly condemned terrorism, considering it as phenomenon that “contradicts the provisions of Islam” and discredits all Muslims (Most important challenges. P. 36-41).

Among Muslim Scholars, Sheikh Muhammad Sodiq is still undoubted and the only leader in almost all CIS space by number of his publications on various topics. However, truly saying, there are ongoing disputes (often non-public) among theologians, Islamic scholars and officials representing various Government structures of Uzbekistan with respect to his intellectual heritage mainly related to strong influence of modern “Arabic Islamic” ideas, and more specifically - Salafi ideology.

Publications of other national Scholars fall far short by quantity and quality of what Sheikh Muhammad-Sodiq or Abdulaziz Mansur published. It turned out that an interrupted tradition of

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<sup>71</sup> The first edition in brochures published in Osh, 1995-96. Reprint – Tashkent: *Movarounnakh* 2005-2007.

writing theological works since the Soviet period has actually been restored, but on a quite limited scale. Although, there are rather acceptable conditions (despite the natural censorship) to publish theological works in the country.

## Modern Religious Educational Institutions

*The inclusion of several short-term courses in Madrasa educational programs for craft professions (carpenters, carvers, masters of repair work, cooks, cutters, etc.) was a positive innovation. It enabled to address the issue of graduates' employment, whose majority are unable to find work in the mosques or other religious institutions in view of the fact that appropriate positions or "jobs" have already been held by.*

In today's Uzbekistan, there are ten operating Madrasas (one for females, named after Hadichai Kubro in Tashkent) and the Tashkent Islamic Institute (*Olyi Mahad / TII*). All of them are operated by the Administration of Muslims of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The specialists from the Committee for religious affairs according to the standards of the Ministry of Higher and Secondary-Specialized Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Since the beginning of Madrasas (1990s.), admissions were made without considering the real needs of mosques or other religious institutions. In late 1990s, the Administration of Muslims of the Republic had started regulating the number of applicants based on actual needs in the mosques or in madrasas themselves, especially in light of replacing old Imams or instructors to younger ones. Therefore, at the beginning of 2000 the number of applicants was quite large (up to 30 and up to 60 people at each madrasah), and sometimes reaching up to 17 applicants. Later several madrasas were merged and enlarged (in Namangan, Andijon, and others).

Then, when they fulfilled the need in Imams and other employees of religious institutions, the number of entering students to madrasas was cut. As an outcome, presently, the number of entrants applying to every madrasa ranges from 35 to 60 people. There are approximately 400-440 people (including expelled students) graduate from madrasas every year. Expulsions are connected with systematic academic under-achievement of some students due to the complexity of learning content (primarily curriculums on religion) and the apparent inability of expelled students to sufficiently master the necessary classes, Arabic and others.

In some cases (for example, in Madras Urgench - Khorezm), the number of expulsions reaches up to 30% from total entrants by 4<sup>th</sup> year of study. According to some madrasahs Provosts (*Bosh mudarris*), many students were only expecting to master their basic knowledge related to rules of ritual ceremonies. Such education is perceived to be sufficient to guide some simple, but pretty well paid ceremonies (Salatul Janaza, wedding sanctification of marriage - *nikah*, etc.). This group of students considers more complex theoretical knowledge as (about them see. Below) superfluous, and as a result, they do not show their eagerness to learn.

Madrasahs and the Administration do not monitor the future fate of the graduates. According to our information, not all the students keen to work at the Institutions under the Administration of Muslims, and are quite satisfied with acquired knowledge, which in one way or another become demanded, especially in towns and *kishlaks* (villages). Sometimes this cohort of graduates become certified consultants on religious issues within local cells, or at the workplaces, and therefore involuntary become as "leaders" in the process of "creeping re-Islamisation" in the field. Their participation in normal religious ceremonies also becomes as an additional source of income. According to our surveys and research held in 2010-2012, the spiritual aspirations among the majority madrasah students fully coexist with desire for material

reward from their work as an Imam or from an informal status as “spiritual pastor”. That area of “spiritual feeding” is commonly referred to as the conventional term “*tirikchilik*” (earning a living).

Graduates from female madrassa are roughly in the same situation, especially with regard to capitalization (earnings) of their status and knowledge. Over the past 3-4 years, about 10-12% of female graduates (with a total of 35-40 people per year) have found jobs within servicing departments of the Administration of Muslims. The majority of them is granted a certificate (after the certification by Administration) for legal activity as an “*otin / otincha*”, that is, the spiritual female “Leader” for all sort of female ritual assemblies, such as the Prophet's birthday (*Maulud*), funeral ceremonies, women’s club meetings (*Gap*), etc. Thought, there are many cases when “otin-oyi” work without certificates issued by the Administration or Oblast Kaziyat (*regional Muslim religious board*). Some graduates work according to specializations obtained during study at madrassa (such as cutters, cashiers, etc.). They also enjoy special status at workplaces or in their mahallas (*communities*) as educated competent women in terms of religion. They also try to use their educational status to explain religious norms among other females.

The Tashkent Islamic University (TIU, Tashkent, was founded in 1999) as its Charter states, is the secular institution and functions under the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan. Although, the students are the graduates from TII, however, most entrants perceive TIU as religious University.

As for female graduates of TII (from female courses), most of them are employed at Oblast, Municipal or Rayon Kaziyat under UMU, in mahallas. In both cases, they work at Female Desks, participate and correlate ceremonial meetings and rituals. Some of them (between 7 and 10%) goes to the Tashkent Islamic University (TIU) and then after graduation, they teach basics of religion in the Universities.

In addition, during a religious learning process, more precisely Foundation of Imam al-Bukhari (Samarkand, Hartang village, the complex of Imam Bukhari) gets involved during internship for Imams. Over the past 5 years, the Foundation runs the courses designed for complete and mandatory internship for Imams of the Republic (from 2 and up to 4 months).

As for the classification of ranks at the Administration of Muslims of Uzbekistan, madrassas prepare Imams and Imams - Khatib issuing certificates of the first or second categories (depending on the accumulated points during the study), without the right to read Khutbas. This and other types of public speaking (*Amri ma'ruf, ma'ruza*) are permitted to read to those Imams who have been working for at least five years, or the graduates of TII.

Curriculums of madrassas have undergone principle changes over the past 10-12 years. A special place is dedicated for courses to develop reading skills and recitation of the Quran (*Tajwid, kiroat, etc.*). Courses on religious sciences (e.g., Bases of Fiqh and its practical application - *furu'*) are provided based on works of Hanafi authors, mostly of local origin. These are compendiums such as “*Muhtasarlar ul-vikaya*” author Ubaydallah Bukhari (XV century) and others. The composition of the subjects under study is not fully adapted to the conditions of modernity. The key issues under review from the so-called “*Practical*” area (*amalia*) i.e. related to ritual purification before prayers (*tahara*), the ritual itself (*ibodat*), family and social ethics, marriage and divorce, matters of inheritance, etc. Most often, the study of appropriate medieval writings on *fiqh* or their compendiums reduced to memorizing the large chunks of texts, as it has been traditionally practiced since long time ago. These clichés prepare students in the spirit of Hanafi Madhhab so that they can give definite answers to questions of the faithful concerning

everyday practices or general prescriptions. Some madrasas have introduced elective courses on Basics of Arabic Calligraphy, classical Uzbek poetry and others.

A special place in Madrasa program has the courses on Basics of Introduction to Quran and Basics of Hadiths (*Hadithology*), which are launched on the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> year of study, when students in varying degrees, master Arabic language. Range of studied topics in this course (excepting skills of primary exploration and understanding of the original texts), mainly limited to matters of ritual prescriptions (*'Ibodat*), ethics (*odob*) relationships within the community, the Imam's status as a head of part of community (*kavm*), etc.

In all madrassas during the classes on religious sciences themselves, the instructors attempt to adapt them to modern realities, for instance when difficult original texts are explained using modern paradigms, such as modern medicine prescriptions for personal hygiene, etc. Nevertheless, in fact, methods, curriculums and textbooks within courses on religious sciences provided at madrasas remain very conservative, which is obviously due to the peculiarities of the subjects. Theologians, as it is said above, have not even tried to write relevant textbooks, in which medieval paradigms would be adapted to the realities of modern life of Muslims.

The inclusion of several short-term courses in Madrasa educational programs for craft professions (carpenters, carvers, masters of repair work, cooks, cutters, etc.) was a positive innovation. It enabled to address the issue of graduates' employment, whose majority are unable to find work in the mosques or other religious institutions in view of the fact that appropriate positions or "jobs" have already been held by. Madrasas and the Administration do not monitor the future fate of the graduates.

At female Madrassa Hadichai Kubro, the curriculum is almost the same as above. However, the training style is simplified. Once diploma and certificate obtained, it grants graduates the right to recite Quranic texts and read improvised Khutbas on the given topics during various rituals (during and after the funeral rites, traditional gatherings of women, etc.). Truly, some girls get married and not always complete their education. About 20-25% of female graduates of madrasas enter the TII (Female Department).

The educational program at the Tashkent Islamic Institute (TII) is more complex and more qualitative. Language training (meaning the Arabic and partially Persian) is much higher and even surpasses the level of training at such special educational institutions as TIU, Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Studies. Learning Arabic has been particularly enhanced over the last 5-6 years and graduates can quite fluently speak Arabic, even being deprived of fellowships in Arab or other countries.

Courses on Religious Sciences at TII require mandatory recourse to the original writings on *fiqh* (for example, a classic work on the Hanafi jurisprudence – "*al-Hidaya fi-l-furu'*", Burhan al-Din Marghani). The Qor'an and Hadiths are more deeply studied here. As the basis of education, they also prefer the method of memorizing the original texts, while instructors require that students should not simply rote learning, but to be able to interpret the meanings of the material studied, to use it while drafting improvised *Khutbas* and so on. Such approaches also input some conservatism in the teaching methods, however, greatly increase the qualification of graduates as future Imams.

Besides, the classes on Logic (*Mantiq*), Theology / Theosophy (*aqidah*, *Kalam* – from the third year) and other traditional sciences for madrasas are introduced into TII courses (from the first year of study). They are taught in the form of short-term courses, but forming a known part of the religious erudition in students' consciousness, and according to our observations, it

contributes to develop intellectual immunity to extremist ideologies. In general, with regard to theological training, the Institute completely maintains a high level within the old traditions.

The madrasa and TII curriculums, except for the religious sciences, are introduced with the so-called “Secular sciences” (*“dunyevi ilmlar”*), for instance the history of Uzbekistan, Uzbek classical literature, “Fundamentals of spirituality and enlightenment”, geography, mathematics, etc.<sup>72</sup>

Those courses (the so-called “First block”) correspond to the program of the Ministry of Higher and Secondary-Specialized Education, and wherever possibly, was adapted for the audience. However, sometimes these courses (especially in madrasas) considered as having “secondary” importance (almost as optional) and, according to our observations, poorly mastered by students.

Even less attention under these courses is paid to such disciplines as the History of Islam in the Middle Ages or in the Modern and Contemporary Times (e.g., during the Russian colonization. the Soviet period, or during the first years of independence). The history of local reformism (the so-called Jadidism) is not studied at all.

For that reason, the visions on different perspectives of Islamic reformism (both violent and declared its peaceful forms) among students of Madrasa, and partially at TIU is extremely limited or do not exist at all. Based on Soviet tradition, they do not separate these ideologies and link not with renovation or renaissance, but preferring violent and revolutionary forms of changes, using typical clichés of “fundamentalism” (*akidaparastlik*), “extremism”, etc. Therefore, the information about them is artificially narrowed until the assessment with conventional dichotomous clichés such as “bad Islam”, “enemies of Hanafism” etc. However, inept and unprofessional interpretation of the information in curriculums on the so-called “Secular orientations” creates a special interest effect to “reformers”, including to those who secretly (although limited) act in the country and in varying degrees are associated with the ideology of extremism. Apparently, for these reasons, the intellectual elite of extremist groups were at times replenishing on the account of graduates from official madrasas and some Liberal Arts College.

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The refresher courses for Imams organized at the Center of Imam al-Bukhari provide results that are more positive. The authoritative scientists and instructors (lawyers, political scientists, philosophers, and others) from secular Universities and well-known Scholars are invited as lecturers to participate in these courses. Lecture courses, areas and their composition are changed every two years. In our interviews (held in August 2015), we found that Imams were very keen to register for these courses, as in general, the teaching style and interactive learning methods (when there is an opportunity to debate and discuss freely on some sensitive issues) are of considerable interest to the audience. The especially popular lectures are concerning political science, history (particularly the history of Islam), jurisprudence that makes up the deficit in knowledge among Imams and demonstrates their willingness to adapt to existing realities in the country.

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<sup>72</sup> This based on Special Resolution by the Cabinet of Ministers, Uzbekistan (No.364 as of 22 August 2003), which permitted the involvement of Professors from secular Universities into the educational process as the assistance to AMU RUz. The main goal - to help the Administration of Muslims of RUz to broaden students' knowledge on the world at madrasa and TII.

<sup>73</sup> These data are classified and were revealed by us during our investigations. However, to collect the data from the absolute figures was impossible.

Field research revealed that the imams from some cities of the Fergana Valley and Tashkent Oblast (more than 90% of the total interviewed) have positively assessed their participation in training courses organized by Imam al-Bukhari Foundation.

While concluding this paragraph, we would like to note that in general the religious education system in the country needs some proofreading and amendments. It is primarily a question of drawing up specific, tailored to the audience textbooks, expansion and improvement of subjects studied within the so-called secular courses, ensuring more harmonious combination with the available subjects of theological orientation. Spiritual Administration can hardly address these challenges on their own. It is necessary to involve specialists from other Universities of the country, for which it is advisable to carry out monitoring and special working meetings between multidisciplinary specialists and teaching staff.

In our views, one more omission is linked with almost sweeping restrictions that were imposed against instructors and students in establishing contacts and communications with their foreign counterparts. Instructors and students are completely deprived of the possibility for internships in well-known educational and scientific centers of the Muslim World, or, say, Europe. Such a situation is the result of state's deliberate policy, which fears a negative impact of all kinds of radical ideologies on instructors and students (especially after a series of color revolutions, associated with the so-called "Arab spring"). It is difficult to argue the need in implementing any effective forms of control. However, this kind of artificial isolation and marginalization of graduates and instructors from religious institutions severely limits their religious erudition and general outlook. Moreover, this, according to our observations, leads to stagnation of consciousness and serves as a breeding ground to root the most secure forms of bone conservatism, which, in turn, paves the way for phenomenological forms of fundamentalism, known as a marker of "total Hanafism".

Moreover, the opportunities of today's Internet and related software make available many websites of extremist groups with an aggressive ideology, despite the limitations and barriers. It is in this case, the marginalized and unprepared consciousness becomes open for negative impacts.

On the other hand, there is a problem of limited resources to arrange such internships abroad and exchange students and teachers. In such case, it would be necessary to start monitoring of well-known educational and research centers (e.g., the University of al-Azhar), which are fairly neutral and willing to provide scholarships from their own funds, or have contacts with other international funds.

## Training Status of Islamic Scholars: challenges and their contexts

*In summary, we can state that Theological and especially Islamic Studies in Post-Soviet Central Asia were progressing and continue being in effect concurrently with evolution of the actual process of re-Islamisation, and more likely they are catching it up rather than anticipating or forecasting its possible development scenarios.*

Events of the past 20-25 years have turned Islamic Studies into the most sought-after areas of Humanities. The Central Asian countries (Middle East) were not exemption. Simultaneously, it revealed sufficient skill gaps among specialists in this and related fields, capable to assess adequately the challenges of religiously motivated extremism. Such state of affairs can be seen as a legacy of the Soviet era, when struggling against religion, they had limited Theology within the frameworks of different atheistic forms. Centers for Islamic Studies as an academic discipline, remained in Leningrad (St. Petersburg) and partially in Moscow (often as science research results by anthropologists). However, efforts at laying the foundations for academic Islamic studies in Uzbekistan, as well as in neighboring Republics have yet to be met mainly due to lack of specialists trained in academic traditions.

Meanwhile, an important part in adequately assessing and analyzing the causes of different forms of violent extremism is to train specialists in Islamic Studies, sociologists, political scientists and other professionals. The post-Soviet vacuum in availability of professionals in these areas are still filled with people without basic and target-oriented education, often lacking analytical skills, and therefore producing an outcome (including researches) mainly at amateur level. The same can be said with respect to consultants working at official and special agencies involved in religious or social policymaking.

Concurrently, the realities of the first two decades of independence had also complicated the process in training religion scientists and especially Islamic religion scholars and political scientists. Firstly, an excessive politicization and ideologization in evaluating the threats arising from all kinds of religious groups does **not** serve as a “barrier to extremism”, but rather an obstacle in adequately assessing the religiously motivated threats as it was suggested by initiators of such policy. The same approach impacts on the training of specialists, which results in replacing the methods of academic researches to “ideological answers”, to political bias, as well dominating in the training of specialists and in their individual scientific work. At the same time, the subject-matter and specialization on political science cancelled in Uzbekistan starting from August 2015, further narrowed the space for an objective and fundamental study of this issue and particularly has deteriorated the already weak school of strategic analysis, which is so vital to an adequate assessment and prediction of security threats.

Secondly, during independence, ordinary secular knowledge about Islam devaluated and instead the space of Islamic Studies, as well as Islamic expertise **was being filled by religion-holders**. Without contesting the right to existence of such approaches in assessing the status of Islam and Muslims, we would like to note that they **give rise to exceptionally apologetic evaluations of Islam** (furthermore adapted to ideological clichés) and phenomena within it. Under such approaches in Central Asian States, the Islamic Studies often grow **exclusively on religious paradigms, thereby limiting academicism and impartiality**. Hence the absence or extreme shortage of experts on Islam, educated in the academic traditions. Religiously educated people are replacing them. It results in reducing the quality of expertise. In neighbor countries

(for instance, in Kyrgyzstan or Kazakhstan) that kind of peer reviews and other forms of publications most often bear the form of **protecting the rights of believers and biased assessment of the likely challenges**.

Most theses defended in Uzbekistan, were prepared almost in the total absence of comprehensive analysis (or quite poorly substantiated) within the context of Islamic Studies, anthropological and sociological branches of science, in the absence of knowledge among dissertators on real history of Islamic reformism (including the ideas of violent or “natural” coup). A cause of such situation should be sought in an unsatisfactory level of training (or retraining) of respective specialists and this challenge, which exists both in Uzbekistan and almost in all the countries of the region, is being addressed slowly and not kept pace with rapid evolution of the situation.

At early independence, the accents on rethinking (“developing”) the past was filled with new ideologemes, although, in fact, embodied by a well “shaped” scenarios during Soviet times, i.e. with the support of large-scale and public rituals (e.g., wider celebration of “round anniversary dates – birthday, death – of famous religious figures of the past, etc.). The term “great scientists” was replaced and being much more widely interpreted (For more details see below). Only over the past two years, the emphasis in evaluating the “spiritual heritage” began to shift toward a more rational approach in assessing the historical and spiritual heritage.

We believe that currently there is a need to strengthen the training of professionals, in particular, request the International Foundations to support our specialists from Departments of Religious Studies in organizing the internship programs (including PhD students and postdoctoral fellows) preferably in Europe or the US, where apologetic approaches in researches are excluded.

In summary, we can state that Theological and especially Islamic Studies in Post-Soviet Central Asia were progressing and continue being in effect concurrently with evolution of the actual process of re-Islamisation, and more likely they are catching it up rather than anticipating or forecasting its possible development scenarios. At the same time, it clearly distinguishes the varying research priorities (primarily political science, ethnological or Islamic Studies), which are actually implemented in isolation from each other. And this becomes a serious challenge, impacting the quality of publications and level of expert notes. In addition, the scientific analysis is often replaced by ideologized clichés or by completely biased reconstructions of the “great past”, etc. As a result, we often see quite incorrect assessment of the events, and sometimes, absolutely useless and abstract theoretical constructions far from the reality, both in articles and expert notes published in the country.

Training of specialists (religious and Islamic scholars) is focused at Tashkent Islamic University (TIU). Since the establishment of this institution, it actually began the training “from scratch” and has now achieved some success. However, there are still many problems and their solution depends on the mass of mentioned above factors, the foremost of which is the greater openness of TIU to establish contacts with international centers for religious studies and especially in Islamic studies.

## Religious literature as indicator of post-Soviet re – Islamisation forms

*Consequently, the types and scale of popularity of religious literature is directly related to hierarchy in Muslim communities and forms of re-Islamisation at different society levels. The above types of literature also reflect the forms of perceiving spiritual traditions and understanding the “right” rituals by different strata of society.*

The revival of religious life, which has begun in the late 1980s and especially in the early 1990s in Uzbekistan and in neighbor Republics was followed by a massive release of religious literature, and these processes with varying degrees of intensity continue to this day. It is not monotonous in both genres and content. Thereby, its diversity (in terms of levels, compliance with some rules of the so-called “theory of Islam”) is so tremendous that most of the books published seriously contradict the other corpus of published literature within the same conventional “religious space”. This phenomenon should be seen as a natural consequence of these ambiguous processes and contradictions of the post-Soviet re-Islamisation.

The religious literature that was published and is publishing in Uzbekistan can be divided into the following groups (types and genres):

**A).** Translations and comments of the Quran and Hadiths (Prophetic prescriptions); **B).** Texts and translations of tractates or their fragments that came from the pen of renowned Scholars; **C).** Biographies and lives of famous scholars and Sufis; **D).** The so-called cheap popular religious literature (explanations of different types of ritual practice, the brochures with prayers and a description of the female ritual gatherings such as “Bibi Mushkil – kushod”, etc.).

Special attention is paid to illegally published literature, about which we will discuss separately.

In this section we offer a brief overview and general analysis of each type of literature, trying to determine its potential audience and forms of influence on readers and those forms of perception of Islam (as a ritual or social paradigms) that they reflect.

**Group “A”).** The most challenging, in your opinion, was and remains to be is the publication of translations and commentaries of the Quran and Hadiths in all the countries of the region. We would like to recall that this corpus contains the extremely complex (both historically and semantically) texts. It is known that in the Quran there are Ayahs, which concurrently call for mercy, tolerant attitude to the so-called “Infidels” and at the same time, they legitimize the permanent Jihad (in terms of armed Jihad) against the same “Infidels”, political and religious alienation from them and others. The same applies to the Hadiths, which are found not only as prescriptions having ethical content or having relation to the rituals. Here we can see the conditions of “war against the infidels”, how to share their seized property (plunder), conditions, when “Infidels” can be slaved. Killed, etc.

In traditional education system, we can see that cognition<sup>74</sup> and especially the interpretation of sacred texts was postponed for the sixth and later stages (courses) of educational program in madrasas. Furthermore, the interpretation of the content itself and explanations of sensitive moments in the Quran or Hadiths was destined exclusively for theological elite, which had the right to “conceal” (*sukut*) such kind of radical texts, resorting to

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<sup>74</sup> It does not mean verbal rote learning of texts (*qira’at, tajwid, etc.*).

the methods of interpretation that have been worked out during centuries - historical, casual, etc. (*asbab an-nuzul* – i.e. a particular case and a precedent that has arisen in a particular place, which conditions<sup>75</sup> should not be applied to other situations).

Such interpretations had been considering the specific context of every fragment of the Quran and Prophetic traditions, and Scholars preferred appealing to ordinary believers primarily referring to those texts, which were useful in matters related to legal practice at that specific time, conditions, or in everyday ethics, issues of ritual practice, etc. Thereby, the ordinary believers had to “follow” (*taqlid*) the opinions and interpretations of theologians.

From the moment when these texts were dynamically translated into local languages (without semantic adaptations and comments<sup>76</sup>) and became accessible to a wide audience, the traditional system of elitist theological education and the right to comment sacred texts had devalued. Due to lack of theological interpretations of their historical and casual context, and most importantly, due to broader accessibility to people far from the traditional religious education, such kind of texts can be easily converted into various forms of legitimation of extremist and radical ideologies, and even in very primitive forms, contrary to the established traditions and theological hierarchies that grant the right to comment.<sup>77</sup>

The same can be applied to the corpus of Hadiths (Prophetic prescriptions), where the publication of its translations had caused the same consequences, i.e. using it to justify the most radical ideas, without taking into account the concrete historical and casual context. Members of various extremist groups were willingly acquiring and using these translations, which can be seen from copies seized during arrests of the so-called "Jamaat" (armed groups).

So our experience with the materials seized during arrests among majority of those arrested (or sometimes killed in shoot-outs) members of extremist and radical groups shows that their independent reading and interpretations (based on comments they made on the margins of the translated Quran or Hadith books) are very primitive and aggressive. Comments made by young people were focused not on Ayahs with prescriptions, say, related to ethics, but on those ones that contained the mentioned calls for Jihad (or “war” in a broader sense) against the polytheists and others “Infidels”, to a dramatic estrangement from them (The Quran, 2: 120, 154; 8,9; 22: 39; 41: 30; 61: 5-6, etc.). Exactly the same conclusions (and with about the same outcomes) we made during the study of the IMU archives (the Carnegie Foundation, Washington).

In the same vein, there is a radicalization within the published materials on some Internet websites related to Islam. Relevant publications of the Quran, its comments and Hadiths on those websites are not always followed by comments relevant to traditional theological literature (some examples are given above).

Consequently, good intentions of initiators to have so many translations, make those texts available to ordinary believers, however, they did not take into account the possible

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<sup>75</sup> These conditions are determined, for example, with such concepts as *zaman* (time when Ayah, saying or hadith was bestowed), *asbab en-nuzul* (cause or casus, according to which an Ayah was bestowed or hadith was formulated), etc.

<sup>76</sup> The first translation Quran in the region was done Alouddin Mansur (Imam of the main mosque in Karasu, South Kyrgyzstan) and published in the Magazine “Star of the East” in parts (*Uzbek. “Shark Yulduzi”*) since 1989. The original translation was done in Uzbek and a Missionary translation of Quran done by Sablukov was used in Russian translation (Kazan, 1860). This translation, due to lacking appropriate comments, had been assessed by most scholars as a “Wahhabi”.

<sup>77</sup> The most significant examples, when the leaders of extremist terrorist groups without special religious education, were publishing their own comments (*tafsir*) to the Quran or its individual Surah, see the article: Babadjanov B. Who is on the other side of barricades?

consequences of such a step, i.e. the direct impact on unprepared consciousness of young people, which often takes the form for their fair extremalization. It necessitates more attention to the published religious literature. This is not about censorship. However, it is needed to develop mechanisms, which must increase responsibility among publishers of religious texts.

**Group “B”**). This group includes the translations and original tractates of famous theologians (mostly regional) pertaining to issues of Muslim jurisprudence and legal practice (*fiqh*), of such famous authors as Burhan al-Din Marginani, al-Ustrushani and others. The original texts and translations are prepared by Orientalists, theologians or Islamic Scholars. They are designed primarily for professionals (including scholars and well-trained Imams), although, many involved Muslims read and use the adapted translations.

It should be noted that such literature translations stimulate the consolidation of Hanafi paradigms representing theological and legal school among the country's Muslims. However, very few experts are able to work with such kind of texts or can adequately translate them. There are even fewer specialists among Islamic Scholars, who can prepare the publications of the relevant religious texts (based on *Fiqh* and / or particularly *Qalam*) up to the appropriate international level, observing the generally accepted academic standards required to that type of editions. This tradition is slowly getting better, but does not keep pace with the growing interest in this literature.

**Group “C”**). From published in Uzbekistan (and perhaps in the neighboring Republics), this corpus of religious literature is the most massive one. It includes biographies and lives of famous Scholars and Sufis of CA, and sometimes beyond the region. Now and then, heroes of this genre of literature are ordinary rulers and the aristocracy of medieval times; however, the plot of the stories and parables is religious and didactic.

The authors of such pamphlets and books are from various hierarchies and networks with different occupations and social status, which also reflects the characteristics of re-Islamisation process. Those religious activists (Imams, mullahs), orientalists, writers, teachers of history in schools, and sometimes representatives of other professions. The same can be said with regards the readers.

This literature has badly pressed the edition of regular secular literature or secular forms of presenting biographies of famous scientists, such as al-Biruni and Ibn Sina both by number of issued units (titles) and by actual (physical) number of publications.

Publications of orientalists, writers and even lawyers are the notable precedents of their involvement into the publication of such kind of religious literature. The most noteworthy example that we can refer to is a number of publications with the biographies of the Sufis and theologians, which have come from the pen of the staff from the Institute of Languages and Literature and the Institute of Oriental Studies. In fact, these publications entitled “*Manaviyat Ildizlari*” (Roots of spirituality), are presenting glorification and re-mythologization of some characters, who had contributed to Islamisation of CA, renowned Sufis and other religious pillars of the past. This phenomenon can also be reviewed through the prism of ongoing social re-Islamisation.

Another interesting example: the book published by an MP “Oliy Majlis” (*National Parliament*), the country known lawyer, Akmal Saidov “*Hazrat Zangi ota*”, Tashkent, 2015.<sup>78</sup> The

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<sup>78</sup> Prior to this, he was publishing some articles and books related to Islamic jurisprudence and Sufism. However, the lack of special training weakens his works, turning them into a strange eclectic mix, followed by not always successful compilations from works of other authors.

author has proposed a biography of his “main character” - Sheikh of Yasaviy Brotherhood, “Hodja Zayn al-Din” and a brief history of constructing the architectural complex around his mausoleum (*mazar*) near Tashkent. However, being neither an Islamic expert, nor an expert on Sufism, the author obtained information from translations of hagiographic works. As a result, his work has actually become as a modern kind of religious apocrypha and modern hagiography.

Thus, the involvement of specialists into such publications, who present secular humanitarian professions and far from modern academic Islamic studies and in fact, lacking knowledge in history and dogmatic part of Islam, contributes to the intellectual re-Islamisation by making its remarkable touches, reflecting the general (and not always conscious) trends in joining the Intelligentsia to religious values. That was due in part that such kind of phenomenon could be regarded as a response to the intellectual needs of the reading public.

**Group “D”**). This group includes the religious genre and the same mass literature (mostly in the form of brochures), which experts usually call as “cheap popular”. These are books that explain different types of ritual practices (daily prayers, ritual ablution, pronounced formulas, etc.), as well as brochures with formulas for prayers on a variety of occasions, description of female ritual gatherings and performed ceremonies. Based on our multiyear observations, we found that readers of that type of religious literature are mostly women (mainly homemakers), or people who have no religious education, as well as those who have decided to join practicing the prescribed rituals (prayers, fasting, etc.). Such publications are relatively cheap and are very popular. Minimum print run of up to 10 thousand copies. For private printing houses, such literature becomes as a good source of income.

A special place among the religious literature in the country, as it said above, is occupied by illegal publications. These are translated books from Arabic, leaflets and proclamations. According to our approximate estimates for 2001, the Party HT had published the highest number of illegal literature. On the second place were brochures and leaflets of IMU. Much less leaflets were published by the so-called “Jamaats”, “Tabligh”, “Akramiya” and other smaller local groups. Currently, the publication and distribution of illegal leaflets and literature has dropped dramatically. “Paper propaganda” was replaced by propaganda through Internet.

Consequently, the types and scale of popularity of religious literature is directly related to hierarchy in Muslim communities and forms of re-Islamisation at different society levels. The above types of literature also reflect the forms of perceiving spiritual traditions and understanding the “right” rituals by different strata of society.

In a sense, different genres of literature of such kind becomes an indicator of unequal understanding of the “correct” Islam among the faithful. For example, the so-called “everyday Islam holders”, having not satisfied with the regulatory ritual prescriptions, they include many different rituals into the tradition of their “spiritual feeding”, which description and peculiar legitimacy we find, for example in the cheap popular literature, or in the lives of the “saints” (rules of pilgrimage rites, rituals during birth and death, weddings, etc.). These ritual constructions have centuries-old traditions and, as shown above, were forming the basis for domestic (local) forms of existence of Islam.

In the literature, designed for religious intellectuals, we can see an open criticism against such kind of supplementary (non-prescribed / *nafla*) rituals, and concurrently against the literature that promote them. The same criticism of these actions (as a manifestation of the “wrong Islam”) we can find in illegal literature. Meanwhile, from the point of Islamic Scholars view, the rejection of that kind of additional ritual structures (having local or national roots) leads

to fundamentalization of religion, narrowing the perception of cultural and spiritual functions of Islam by limiting the religion within vain ideologies of “pure” ( “Sunni”, “Quranic “) Islam and denying it in multiculturalism and civilizational diversity. Such an ideology of fundamentalism becomes a fertile ground for various forms of extremist ideologies.

Separately, we should talk about the researches related to the history of Islam. In modern Uzbekistan, the focus in historical researches have changed reflecting the rapid and ambiguous process of national revival, as well as the re-Islamisation process (in conservative forms). Now Islamic Studies (often having apologetic forms) are somehow compensate a perennial lasting silence of the atheistic past; however, the subject of numerous publications of local Islamic Scholars are now mainly focused on biographies of scientists – scholiasts and their works. At early independence, the accents on rethinking (“developing”) the past was filled with new ideologemes. The term “great scientists” was now being much more widely interpreted and local Muslim Theologians took their special place in it having significantly overshadowed the previous pillars, which image were nominally “secular” (al-Fergani, al-Farabi, al-Biruni, and others), at least, connected with their rationalist (mu'tazilit) ideology.

## Significance of Mosques and Islamic shrines in establishing religious environment

*In short, institution of mosque has become an important subject, or else, an actor of religious domain. Despite the mosques accountability before the state, they are still deliberately creating a strong religious atmosphere by contributing to an increase, so to say, in weight towards peaceful understanding of the essence of Islam against radical perception.*

**AS** shown above, after the collapse of the former Soviet state and substantially the official atheistic system, the process of re-Islamisation has reached out to almost all the aspects of social life and obtained typical mandatory external and internal attributes of that process. The mosques are the important attribute and one of the clearest and strongest indicators characterizing the dynamics and dimensions of (re-) Islamisation of social space.

According to the Committee on Religious Affairs, from 2006 to 2010, the number of worshipers in mosques has increased to 2.5 times; according to rough estimates, the total number of parishioners visiting the mosques across the country is about 350,000 people. Although it should be noted that the number of mosques has fallen markedly from 7000 to 2000 since the late 1990s.<sup>79</sup>

The construction of new mosques is still needed, especially in the capital and major cities; however, we cannot say that all existing mosques are always equally crowded during Friday prayers. Analysis and discussions with worshipers revealed that there is a peculiar invisible gradation between mosques in popularity among parishioners depending on the degree of clarity and rhetorical talents of Imams. The current construction booming that touched the entire country, has covered the religious infrastructure as well. There are new buildings under construction and old mosques under refurbishment. Many mahallas and villages have already their own local mosques.

In 2014, the new building and the largest mosque in the center of Tashkent has come into operatio. The President himself was inquiring about the construction that gave special importance to the domestic political effect. The main and central mosque of Tashkent namely *Hasti Imam* houses one of the first seven original manuscripts of the Quran, which attaches grate image to the city as the center of Islamic culture. According to legend, when the third Caliph Uthman ordered to rewrite the text of the Holy Quran, they made seven copies and disseminated them among the most important centers of the then Islamic World. That the Quran, which is in Tashkent, according to legend, used to belong to Uthman.

He was executed at the time of prayers and reading the Holy Book in the mosque, and, according to legend, the traces of his blood still remained on some pages of his Quran, which in the perception of Uzbekistan Muslims attaches even greater sanctity and symbolic ownership of the country to the far Islamic history.

Alongside with the large urban mosques there are everywhere, so to speak, the local (Rayon, mahalla, quarterly) mosque are built. Certainly, all of them are being visited not only on Fridays (when they are really crowded), but also on a daily basis, five times a day.

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<sup>79</sup> At present, there are 2287 registered mosques. About 1 thousand ones are unregistered (they are mostly small to 100 parishioners and are predominantly located in the villages, but they listed in Mosques registry and in principle attitudes towards them are of tolerance).

The value of the mosque is steadily increasing in our days. Today more than ever before this institution, so to say, performs a functional in four manifestations: prayer, cognition, acculturation, and, oddly enough, secularization. Firstly, this is the place, where people come to pray. The age-contingent of parishioners is ranged quite widely from schoolchildren to elderlies. Secondly, the mosques have become a library where parishioners can read the Quran and other religious publications. Thirdly, visiting the mosque constitutes an important element of the culture, traditions and rituals. Fourthly, they have become a government policy tool and instrument of secular authorities.

During sermons, Imams explain the content of Surah and Ayahs of the Quran and Hadiths, narrate historical stories (*rivoyats*) of the Prophet's life, and constantly respond to various questions raised parishioners, who ask their questions by sending short written notes during a sermon hearing. The spectrum of questions asked ranges widely, from everyday life situations to rules of prayer. Imams urge Muslims, who visit mosques, to freely use the books and pamphlets placed in cabinets and on shelves in the halls of mosques. They also announce the delivery of the latest editions of the Magazine "*Hidoyat*" and the Newspaper "*Islom Nuri*".

The topics Imams raise are also different, for instance, the latest areas were related to:

- 09/18/2015, "Hajj is the physical, financial and moral piety";
- 11/09/2015, "Calling a Muslim as Kafir (unbeliever) is a grave sin";
- 04/09/2015, "Attention to the language is the attention to the people";
- 28/08/2015, "The independence is the Gift of God";
- 21/08/2015, "But thanks be to God (to Allah) for peace and tranquility";
- 08/14/2015, "Let us be vigilant to turmoil";
- 07/08/2015, "Keep your tongue away from slanders and desire for the forbidden!";
- 31/07/2015, "Duties and responsibilities of a husband and wife in the family";
- 24/07/2015, "Hanafiya is a moderate Madhhab";
- 18/07/2015, "Happy Ramadan - Eid Mubarak!".

In recent years, there more and more Friday sermons – with references to the Quran and Hadiths – dedicated to religious extremism, violence and terrorism, while condemning acts of terrorism in Afghanistan and the Middle East. Therefore, the lacking discourse on religious extremism and violence within a broader public information field has partially moved to the mosques. During the last Friday sermons, there is a growing number of discussions on ISIL: they say that this terrorist organization, under the guise of Islam, commits atrocities and massively kills even their Muslim coreligionists.

Thus, the Friday prayer as of September 11, 2015, it was for instance dedicated to topic "Calling a Muslim as Kafir (unbeliever) is a grave sin". The sermon texts were referring to Ayahs from the Quran and the thoughts of theologians on that matter. In particular, having referred to religious philosophers of the past, it was emphasized that according to the Hanafi School, "If a person sincerely and wholeheartedly said, "*Kalimai shahada*" (i.e. the recognition of "There is no god save Allah and Muhammad is His prophet"), then he is considered as Muslim. He should be treated like all other Muslims. Even after committing a sin, he will not cease to be a Muslim. A saying from Hadith was referred as an example that if someone calls another *Kafir*, one for sure

would become an infidel, i.e. the one who called another unbeliever, he risks to become *Kafir* himself, if he was mistaken in assessing the other.<sup>80</sup>

During that Friday sermon, there were much talked about those radical Islamists and terrorists (ISIS and others), who in the name of Islam commit atrocities in the Middle East, killing their coreligionists. By the end of preaching, Imams were certainly pointing to the need for every Muslim to be vigilant and protect their children from the impact of flows alien to Islam and other extremist religious streams.

Each time after the Friday prayer, Imams, as per the request of attendees, continuously read out “*Doowa*” (invocation) for all the needy, the sick, those who are abroad, for students entering the Universities, for those who seek for success at work, for the faith, for peace and prosperity in our families and in the country as whole.

In the courtyard of mosques, there are small boxes for those parishioners, who would like to make donations (*Ehson*). Some Muslims make *Ehson* in secrecy (i.e. without showing to anyone) in the form of different tangible assets in favor of a mosque (carpets, chandeliers, air conditioners, etc.). During Ramadan, it became a tradition to bring water and food to the mosque in order to end the daily Ramadan fast together with coreligionists. The mosques, as always, serve Muslim funeral processions (i.e. praying - Janaza). It also formalizes “*nikah*”, i.e. religious consecration of marriage between newlyweds – Muslims.

In brief, institution of mosque has become an important subject, or else, an actor of religious domain. Despite the mosques accountability before the state, they are still deliberately creating a strong religious atmosphere contributing to an increase, so to say, in weight towards peaceful understanding of the essence of Islam against radical perception.

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<sup>80</sup> <http://muslim.uz/uz/topic/musulmonni-kofir-dejish-kechirilmas-guno->

## Hajj (Pilgrimage) influence on Muslims and evolution of their religious identity

*Therefore, institution of Hajj contributes to expanding and strengthening the space of moderate and peaceful Islam in the country.*

**M**aking, wherever possible, a pilgrimage to holy Mecca and Medina at least once in a lifetime – the Hajj – is a *Fard* (i.e., one of the five mandatory Islamic requirements) for a Muslim, depending on relevant (especially physical) circumstances. Since independence, making Hajj, its organization and arrangements have become a mass phenomenon, as an element of religious environment and identity.

When during the Soviet times, the number of Uzbek citizens involved in Hajj was less than 50 people in a year; however today, the annual number of pilgrims reaches up to 4,000-5,000 people. Some of them make Hajj twice. Age category of Hajj makers ranges from young people to elderlies. Presently, there are about 45,000 people, who have made Hajj. This season, the Uzbek Muslims were able to make Hajj flying from Tashkent the capital of Uzbekistan, as well as from the cities of Samarkand, Bukhara, Namangan, Karshi and Urgench.

The State organized Hajj is of particular attention as it became a part of an internal government policy and instrument to reproduce the legitimacy of the political regime, which constantly demonstrates its support to Hajj makers. Given the significant number of people willing to make Hajj, the Administration of Muslims of Uzbekistan (AMU) obviously implements the travel schedule and as a result, a future pilgrim starts preparations in advance by queue booking. Although, this area has not been without sinful cases, “mundane deviations”. There were reported cases of corruption among those responsible for the organization of Hajj.

During Hajj, pilgrims are provided with medical support, medical doctor and a paramedic. Before travel and during stay in Saudi Arabia, the pilgrims are continuously given medical consultations and advices on proper nutrition and healthcare considering hot climatic environment in the host country. During the course of travel, each group of pilgrims has its Leader responsible for accommodation, transport, catering, leisure and resolving personal problems of pilgrims. Pilgrims bring with them a variety of souvenirs and gifts for their friends and relatives, including its indispensable attribute - *tasbeeh* (rosary).

On the final day of pilgrimage, they celebrate the Sacrifice Feast – Kurban Hait. On that day very early in the morning, they pray *Kurbon Hait – namaz* (Eid-prayers), after which most of the believers proceed to sacrificial rite. On this day, there are many merchants on most of the city streets, who bring small herds of sheep and sale them; this was indeed a mass phenomenon in Uzbekistan.

Post-Hajj life of pilgrims deserves special attention, so to say, as they return from Mecca and Medina with high and the honorary title “Hojji”, which to some extent raises their social status in the society. Their lifestyle significantly changes as well relevant to the acquired title; however, there are many of those, who never changed their old way of life and never paid much attention to an important event in his life as a believer – making a pilgrimage and fulfilling the fifth main *Fard* for any Muslim. It is interesting to note, as Muslims increasingly begin to highly appreciate for themselves the moral and religious value of the Hajj.

For example, in conversations between ordinary people, you can often hear as they recognize the high value of death that suddenly befell a pilgrim, for whatever reason, during the Hajj. According to the Hadith, such a death makes a Muslim shaheed (martyr), and that it is the

greatest testimony of the grace of the Almighty, who called a Muslim to Himself during the pilgrimage. Therefore, many Muslims in Uzbekistan even regard the possibility of sudden death during the Hajj as a desired outcome, and before the travel they even say goodbye to their families and relatives asking not to think ill of them in case they will not return home because of death.

Many Haji title-holders, who were together in Mecca and Medina, and got to know each other there and became close, then they establish fraternal societies – *Gaps* – for periodical meetings and enjoying their friendly gatherings. Interestingly, unlike *Gaps* between classmates or co-workers, i.e. peers, *Gaps* between Hajj-people unite mixed-age categories of people, brought together by a common experience of joint pilgrimage. Some believe their duty is to practice *Amri ma'ruf* (about this ritual see below) at various events, and give example of piety to others in everyday life.

Hajj period among Muslims is filled with a special atmosphere. In the mosques, they devote special sermons and “*doowa*”, and special reports on TV.

## Forms of State controlling religious situation and its impact

*The dialogue is limited to the frameworks of ideological sphere, but the question is how to make it socially relevant and practically oriented, aimed at engaging the religion to some form of addressing multiple challenges facing society.*

The Soviet system was not able to completely, so to say, make the society atheistic; it only established political and ideological gateways before the religious streams. This is particularly noticeable in the case of Uzbekistan. When these gateways were destroyed with the collapse of the Soviet state and the Soviet system, with new pressures these flows captured society and new independent state. This process, unlike the past, is slowly but visibly takes forms of interpenetration of religion and the State. As an evidence of State supporting Islam and secularization of its religious identity, the President of Uzbekistan during his first inauguration on the Constitution and the Quran. Though, during last inauguration he took an oath on the Constitution only.

State control of the religious situation in Uzbekistan is manifested in two points of view by expressing them in modern political language (political science language) as “hard power” and “soft power”. The main parameters of the policy “control and isolation” of Islam in Central Asia are as follows: control over the quantity of functioning religious institutions; control over the attitudes of religious leaders; to prevent increase in the level of societal religiosity; to impose restrictions so that Muslim leaders through direct access to the public could shape public opinion within the framework of Islamic thinking and behavior, and so that Islam could become a basis of social thinking and behavior, etc.<sup>81</sup>

From 1990 to 2005, there were 16 Decrees of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted and with 48 Resolutions adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers, aimed at improving performance in the religious sphere. If in 1990, the number of religious organizations stood at 119, however in 2005, their number has reached up to 2200. Before independence there were only two Islamic religious educational institutions, but presently there are 11.<sup>82</sup> Under the first introduced norm, the students from religious educational institutions were paid scholarships. In 1997, only 4% of Imams had higher and secondary special religious education, but today the figure represents almost 100%.

The State regularly hosts competitions between “Kory”, i.e. Quran readers for both males and females. Winners are nominated to participate in international competitions.

It is noteworthy that in Tashkent there are two mosques for the deaf people, which provide sign language for congregation. In addition, in 2004, first time in Uzbekistan there was published the 8-volume translated Quran using Braille language, i.e. adopted to blind or visually impaired Muslims. All these positives are not just a part of the state policy with regard to religion, but are in line with state control over religious life and activities as well.

Controlling (or coordinating the work of state bodies) the religious sphere is primarily carried out by three instances, which are Service of the State Advisor to the President for Religious and Interethnic Affairs, State Committee for Religious Affairs under the Cabinet of Ministers and the Administration of Muslims of Uzbekistan. For example, the Friday sermons’

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<sup>81</sup> From interview of the Article’s Authors with an Uzbek Expert, Kamoliddin Rabbimov.

<sup>82</sup> For more information regarding institutions for religious education, see. Under special Section dedicated to this topic.

texts designed for Imams working in mosques are drafted by AMU agreed with the Committee for Religious Affairs. Interestingly, among religious leaders, especially Imams of mosques, they held their regular usually horizontal rotations of personnel, which sometimes reminds staff turnover at government institutions without explaining the reasons for such rotation.

The government partially funds the religious organizations from the national budget; in this regard, they are partially self-sustainable. Until 2006, the Government was allocating budget funds for the construction of all madrassas, mosques for their regular refurbishments, in supporting Hajj (charter flights and so on.). To this end, there was an annually issued special Presidential Decree and from 2014, this is the responsibility of the Cabinet of Ministers. Currently, government funding is mainly designed for construction of new mosques, refurbishment / restoration of those, which considered as architectural monuments, but owned by AMU. Donations made by Muslims are the main source of funding for religious organizations. At the same time, an issue of financing the religious organizations is still very sensitive for them, their financial activities entirely lack transparency, and besides the state has almost no leverages to inspect the financial activities of those organizations due to the absence of an appropriate regulatory framework for that purpose and uncertainty in their legal status.

During Friday and morning prayers of Ramadan and Kurban Hayit, there are Law Enforcement officers who maintain the order and Imams in honoring them also pronounce individual "Doowa". This somehow symbolizes, to some extent, the interpenetration of religion and the state in the form that demonstrates mutual support.

Previously, every mosque had the speakers installed on the roofs, which were sounding "azan" (i.e., the call to prayers) five times a day and notifying Muslims about prayers times. However, more recently, the government banned using loudspeakers for "azan" on the pretext that early morning loud sound disturbs unbelievers.

State appealing to religious values takes place not only to demonstrate how it protects the "peaceful Islam" and its cultural and moral heritage, but also to address the very specific issues of internal and external policy. In particular, before cotton-harvesting period in mosques there are voiced endorsement and calls for participation in cotton harvesting, saying it is a holy deed. Consequently, the clergy representatives somehow legitimize the mobilization of citizens to harvest cotton.

Some Viloyats (Oblasts) have started practicing such a form of interaction between government and religion as the visits of Rayon Hokims (Mayors) to celebrations during Hayit prayers in order to congratulate the Muslims on behalf of local government, but this precedent has yet to become widespread. This is another example of how the Institution of mosque becomes a tool for maintaining the legitimacy of the current government.

Caring for restorations of once abandoned holy places and historical religious monuments as well as names and heritage of great religious thinkers has become an element of the State's "soft power". That policy is conditionally can be divided into two phases: the first phase is connected with the restoration of the most famous holy places and names. The second phase, currently we can observe an amazing discovery of new little known holy places and names, and as it is turned out that Uzbekistan has them in abundance. The National Television and other mass media repeatedly report about the remained and restored religious monuments from time immemorial as well as about lives and work of little known saints, who was living in a particular province or *Kishlak* (village) of Uzbekistan.

The state policy in the religious sphere, same as in other areas, of course, is not free from problems and abuses by authorities. This happens mostly in cases when the state appeals to its main attribute – hard power. A subtle issue currently being discussed by the international community of experts is the so-called profiling, i.e. selective attention to those who by their appearance, speeches or behavior, as if they give reasons to be associated with those who can arouse suspicion in an unhealthy or illegal activity. Such “suspicious people” automatically, wantonly, overtly or covertly are hanged the stigma “Wahhabi”, extremists, sectarians (*birodarlar*) or even fanatics. There are quite sufficient number of such cases in Uzbekistan.

Here is the absolutely ridiculous case that has happened recently: a woman wearing Hijab (headscarf), arrived to the high school her daughter was studying in to attend the parents' meeting. However, she was refused to enter the territory of the Lyceum on the grounds that she had been wearing religious clothing. Another example was witnessed by the Author of these lines, a girl who wore a headscarf, was deprived of a place as an applicant in the university, where she worked on her PhD. Sometimes there are cases of suspicious attention to those who wear a long beard. Unlike many Muslim countries, in Uzbekistan someone can rarely find young people wearing a beard in public places. It is noteworthy, the profiling of such practice as a “hujra”, i.e. informal (unregistered) the fraternal Muslim societies, which were practicing joint prayers, study and read the Quran, having religious talks in a small group of *confederates* and friends.

The government treated these groups with suspicion, and in the end, it has banned them. Finally, another example, it is worth mentioning profiling of religious education abroad in the leading religious centers and universities, such as Al-Azhar University, and others. At present, Uzbekistan has almost suspended any religious education abroad.

International human rights organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and others have for y years been criticizing Uzbekistan for violating freedom of conscience and religion. According to some sources now in Uzbekistan, there are about 15,000 religious prisoners. The US State Department considers Uzbekistan among those countries whose policies cause for concern in the sphere of freedom of conscience.<sup>83</sup> American experts have noticed that Central Asian leaders are trying to convince the United States that their secular, albeit authoritarian governance is the only alternative to radical Islam in the region, thereby putting the United States in front of two undesirable choices. (Petros, T. Islam in Central Asia).

In general, as we see the combination of “soft” and “hard” power in the state policy towards religion leads to the fact that religious situation in Uzbekistan develops in the atmosphere of capabilities and limitations. Nevertheless, it is also progressing within the global historical context. Under these circumstances, the state cannot mechanically relegate the religion to a peculiar niche in society, however should find ways to organic and comprehensive integration of religion into the vital functioning of the state.

French Scholar Habiba Fathi perhaps has correctly noted that CA Islam is not only a “folklore substrate” (i.e. an isolated, purely local and unchanging datum), but represents a global phenomenon associated with globalization. Once again, it links in a new form of reconfiguration of relationships between religion and the state, which means it is not just a religion, but in

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<sup>83</sup> <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010/148810.htm>

parallel can be combined with identity, culture and politics. (Fathi H. "Transformation processes in Islam of modern states of Central Asia").

From this point of view, inevitably, this raises question of organic incorporation of Islam into the vital functioning of the state; this is what as we called above, the interpenetration of religion and the state. This may be achieved at a conceptual level, particularly, if not antagonize secularity and religiosity, since they are not comparable in order to choose between them; they are versatile, have split-level features. Muslimity (*musulmonchilik*) is the philosophy of life, ideology, faith, morality, worldview and values. And secularism this a way of life and activities, a form and methods of management, a model of social, legal and political relations. It is therefore proposed principle, "Secular in form, Islamic in content". Secular does not mean atheist and Islamic does not mean theocratic.

In the end, re-Islamisation of social and political space of Uzbekistan will only continue to grow. Just as we criticize and reject religious fundamentalism, we cannot blindly accept secular fundamentalism as well (or vulgar secularism). Establishing a broader public dialogue concerning the relationship between the state and religion in Uzbekistan, same as in all CA countries, it has every chance of success. It is appropriate to note one important difference between Uzbekistan and neighboring Central Asian countries and the Arab and Middle Eastern countries, where these relationships are built under war and conflict or instability and the threats of terrorism or under the various social and political turbulence. In CA countries and especially in Uzbekistan, such a dialogue is possible in conditions of peace, stability and harmony in society. The initiative in this matter belongs to the state, and it does not have the right to miss it.

Although it is recognized that such a dialogue is already taking place, but it is carried out with the apparent dominance of the state. Perhaps, renounce domination and achieve complete symmetry participation of the parties in dialogue is impossible (and perhaps in this sense it should be secularism), but the dominance of the power subject should not be limited to the superiority and claims of omniscience in governing the country, however to be genuine leadership. The dialogue is limited to the frameworks of ideological sphere, but the question is how to make it socially relevant and practically oriented, aimed at engaging the religion to some form of addressing multiple challenges facing society.

## Islam as part of post-Soviet ideological constructs

*While constant threat of radicalization among CA population were existing, to a certain extent it had increased since these states became independent. However, vulnerability of these societies has never reached dramatic proportions so often predicted by Western analysts.*

**I**N Uzbekistan, like in other former Soviet Republics, the Soviet ideological syndrome and the new post-Soviet ideological, including primarily religious constructs are being observed in an eclectic set. Accordingly, within a wide range of ideological constructs, liberalism, paternalism, socialism, nationalism, democracy, modernism, traditionalism, secularism, Islamism, etc. are visibly presented in different proportions. All these, in one way or another and with varying force, shape a person's worldview and behavioral patterns

In terms of ideological content, the Islamic religion in Uzbekistan is increasingly seen as the antinomy of secularism. The reference to Islam, for instance during the speeches and statements of the President Islam Karimov, is made only in the context of national values, spiritual heritage, traditions, culture, etc. Thus, there has been established and implemented, so to say, an unwritten rule, according to which the religion is given exclusively cultural and spiritual niche, and its political functioning or presence within public affairs is denied. It is not, so to speak, a matter of political empowerment of religion, but rather to achieve a new, more adequate level of mutual cooperation not confined to sphere of culture and spirituality.

The Uzbek clergy, for instance by referring to the following simple and standard formula, somehow confirms the principle of secularism, as a denial of theocracy: "Islamic theocratic state was founded only one time in the history and its existence was closely linked to the personality and activity of the Prophet Muhammad. At the same time, one of the Hadiths of the Prophet has been strongly stating that the religious (Islamic) state - the caliphate - will never rise again (from time to time, this thought is talked about during Friday sermons as well).

However, in the middle ages, and even recently, to give an example of "Taliban", which under the guise of Islamic doctrines were unsuccessfully attempting to establish a theocratic state on several occasions (Hasanov A. "The first Muslim community"). There is such a term as "Islamic Enlightenment" that mainly refers to writings and activities of great religious thinkers of whom people are proud, and whereby proof and justification of the current secularism policy and in general the attitude towards religion is somehow taken from, and that performs a task aimed at educating the masses to oppose religious extremism and radicalism.

However, the principle / policy / ideology of secularism, and the term "Islamic Enlightenment", by performing, like any ideology, the function in shaping high life directions for community members and establishing basis of harmonious relations between state and society, but it still contains an element of misconception as well. The latter is associated with unintentional (?) risk of releasing the state from "shackles" of religion through its "repulsion" and "locking" into the cultural and spiritual sphere, like this area itself has nothing to do with the state. As a result, the government officials and senior individual as if they exempt themselves from culture, values, ethics, norms prescribed by religion. Thereby, I repeat again, they intentionally "clean up" the field for unlawful actions by state apparatus and public officials and this phenomenon has been known since the Soviet era. This does not mean that government officials do not consider them as unbelievers; however, they deal with religion same as with

other aspects of society. They are quite easily perform all religious ceremonies and rituals, i.e., somehow they move into the domain of religion. However, the reverse transition of the religion itself into the political domain is the question has yet to be addressed. For example, if religious leaders, the Ulemas can contribute to the adoption of certain government decisions, if they, from the Islamic point of view, can critically judge various aspects of domestic and foreign policy, as do secular critics, etc. ? Another example: it is forbidden to pray *Namaz* within the premises of state institutions and there are no designated rooms – and why? Even in Western countries and even within NATO HQ offices, according to author's observations, there have been crated conditions for Muslim to perform *Namaz*.

An important ideological function is being carried out by the Youth Movement “Kamolot”, which was reminiscent of Soviet-era “Komsomol”. Given that youth makes up 60% of the population, a comprehensive conceptual and ideological coverage of young people has become a strategic objective for the state. That is the consciousness of young people most receptive to liberal, religious, secular, and any other indoctrination, and therefore it became as principle object for ideological work.

The content of the speeches and statements of the Uzbek President – the chief ideologist – also reflects an awareness of the importance of philosophical foundations of the Nation, especially the younger generation. This understanding was succinctly expressed in his thesis that the ideological site polygons are even worse than the nuclear test sites (Karimov I.A. “Zhamiyatimiz mafkurasi ...”).

Meanwhile, so far invisible ideological front exists between the so-called independent Muslim activists / theologians and traditional Islam in almost all the countries of CA. In fact, the emergence of independent Muslim thinkers is as natural as the appearance of independent ideas and visions alternative from those of official ones in all historical epochs and in all countries of the world. The question remains as to where the scales will tilt on the religious, political and ideological market, so to say, with the introduction of independent Muslim leaders – towards radical and violent wing or moderate and peaceful Muslim community.<sup>84</sup>

The ideological eclecticism in Uzbekistan has become part of the growing global and normative moral crisis in the world. Recent cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad published by Charly Hebdo in Paris and flashed angry reactions among Muslims inside and outside Europe or recently adopted laws on gay rights in France and Ireland, have resulted not only in creating of some amoral image of Europe in the eyes of Central Asians, but slightly damaged their foreign policies as well. The President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov and Sheikh Mansour A. had openly condemned the publication of these cartoons.

Indeed, many people in Uzbekistan, for instance think that Europe today have failed to demonstrate the best example of conformity to the norms and values, which it seeks to advance in other parts of the world. They believe that freedom of speech, given that only one such norm does not mean freedom of any word, especially if it offends the big community of believers.

One of the most popular messages that authoritarian Uzbek propaganda often sends to public today and the most favorite one, are that freedom and democracy in the West have, so to say, its “inverse side”. The regime “inspired” with what it presents as a moral crisis of the West, by that it points to it as “the Decline of Europe” (using the expression of Oswald Spengler) as justification for its non-European model of development and non-European system of values.

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<sup>84</sup> About independent scholars, please see above Paragraph concerning “Uzbekistan Scholars”.

Axiomatic proposal “freedom has its limits”, which presumably has relativistic sense in Europe, was enhanced by an absolute connotation in Uzbekistan. Therefore, the Uzbek regime propaganda may say, “before teaching us what democracy and human rights are, Europeans should demonstrate them in their region”.

At the same time, these events (terrorist attacks against authors of cartoons) have revealed the other aspect of religious situation. Some observers note that among CA authoritarian regimes there are strong doubts on the ways how they control Islam in their countries and have concerns on how to manage possible disturbances and associated risks of social mobilization, and consequently, and on how these regimes rapidly losing their legitimacy can survive. Citing an example of Kyrgyzstan, where indignations concerning cartoons publication was the strongest in the region and was close to civil unrests, it is argued that the rest of the region, particularly Uzbekistan, sought to avoid such a situation. “In these countries, which faces growing discontent with the regime, the protests against Charlie Hebdo, no doubt had significant risk, and the authorities succeeded in preventing them in the bud” (Peyrouse S. “How to cope with the growing religious and social tensions?”).

Partly agreeing with that point, we would like to note that it is doubtful to make direct dependency between naturally arising condemnation and indignation with any Muslim because of cartoons of the Prophet and possible escalation of those attitudes into social unrests in the country. This is indirectly confirmed by an example, which we provided in our Baseline assessment, related to March 2015 funeral of Sheikh Muhammad-Sodyq Muhammad-Yusuf, when Tashkent downtown gathered hundreds of thousands of Muslims from all provinces of Uzbekistan and the entire ceremony was held in a peaceful environment.

In this regard, it seems that many experts are often extrapolating stereotypes on Central Asian (the Uzbekistan) context; perhaps they are relevant in other regions and conditions, on immanence latent of challenge to present authorities by religious extremist wing of the political opposition, which may take the form of active explicit anti-Government protest. It seems that such assumptions and their interpretations of the situation and developments in the region, on the one hand, seem simplistic and straightforward (though not without a certain logic and reasonableness), and on the other –ignore the particular context in which the problem is analyzed.

In particular, in the Uzbekistan context, among other things, it is important to consider such things as ideological eclecticism (cultivated by global communication), political conformism (cultivated by the state) and Madhab features (cultivated by official clergy). In this context, there is little space for radical Islamism as an ideology and a social phenomenon, unless, of course, if we consider it, so to speak, in its pure form, i.e., without external nutritional basis, distorting reality and creating a “statistical error” in comparative measuring the weight of radical Islamism and local forms of Islam’s existence.

However, it should be noted that more accurate measurements are behind the speculative assessments. For example, an American analyst Paul Goble sates that Islamist threat is of ideological, but not primary military one; the success of these groups is in their values, but not in military power. According to him, the Governments in CA have often acted in ways that have promoted the spread of Islamist values rather than effectively countered them. Paul Goble says that Islamist groups are increasingly perceived as the most consistent expressions of the aspiration for justice, which animates many of the people there. Finally, he concludes that CA

Governments risk losing war with Islamists, who gain ground throughout the region as opponents of authoritarian rule. (Goble P. "Threatened From Afghanistan ...").

In such set of judgments by typical Western observers, there is a notable share of controversial moments. At first, an ideological basis of Islamist threat throughout the Islamic world, including the Islamic Cooperation Organization (OIC), is subjected to fundamental criticism as illusive and far from Islam, thereby values of Islamists are unlikely to have greater chances of success. At second, their military capabilities are limited to the potential of sporadic attacks, which can hardly destabilize an order in a State that has its own military forces more powerful than terrorist forces. Third, the expressions of ideas for justice are not the only Islamists, but also secular opposition members and independent-minded Muslims capable to criticize authoritarian power, but adhering peaceful, rather than the radical and violent views. It is therefore incorrect to attribute the title "fighters for justice" to radicals alone.

It is therefore no coincidence that there is an alternative parallel school of thought. For example, Umida Hashimova have rightly noted that the relative levels of radicalization within these societies had never been significantly high, and there is little evidence that the recent trend regarding Islamic State is much different. Numerous studies of labor migration have steadily revealed that CA migrants go to Russia mainly to work and earn money in order to support their dependents. Guest workers understand that joining extremist groups means a radical change in their life style and even a death and harassment of their family members; therefore, it generally holds little appeal.

The constant threat of radicalization among Central Asian populations has existed before, and has grown somewhat after these countries became independent. But these societies' vulnerabilities have never reached the dramatic scale so often predicted by Western analysts. (Hashimova U. "Reports of Radicalization of Central Asian Migrants...").

## Religious and secular lifestyle (impact of post – Soviet modernization)

*Similar to civil society institutions, the religious organizations could be actively involved into general civil affairs without being consumed exclusively by performing religious functions. They could participate in training and education, socially important projects such as assistance to families in need and individual citizens, construction of separate facilities and even doing business.*

The level of mutual rejection or harmony (one might say, parallel observance) between religious and the secular way of life – this is a fundamental question, which reveals complexity, contradictions and dramatic process of re-Islamisation of the social and political domains in Uzbekistan. There are some social and provincial segments, in which this rejection / harmony had manifested in a specific way: town, village, capital, workers, Intelligentsia, students, youth, the poor people, public servants, elderlies, etc. It cannot be univocally claimed, the higher the level of education, urbanization and modernism, the lower the degree of religiosity, though a definite correlation between the two, of course, presents. On the other hand, it cannot be claimed that the lower the level of development and education of people, the poorer their life, the more susceptible they are to religiosity in general and in particular to religious extremism, though there is a certain correlation.

In Uzbekistan, it is considered that religious feelings are much stronger among the population in Fergana valley and Tashkent and much weaker in Karakalpakstan Autonomous Republic and Khorezm Oblast. Perhaps this is due to the difference between the oasis and steppe living environment of the local population and, accordingly, its density. It comes to our mind that it was in Fergana Valley and the capital city, where main protests of Islamists had taken place in the 1990s and early 2000s. Nevertheless, we believe that demographic factor creates only an impression of comparative ratios, but not the level of religiosity of the population and vulnerability of particular groups to extremism. Moreover, we also should consider the differences in the very form of Islam's existence in these two habitats.<sup>85</sup>

Monitoring the phenomenon of re-Islamisation in Uzbekistan and “relatedness” of religious identity, environment and situation with dynamics and patterns of the country's modern development in the 21st century lead us to think about autonomous drivers of religion and sometimes artificiality of the reinforced dividing lines between secular and religious life styles. Secular does not mean atheistic and religious does not mean a backward and archaic. The subject should not be about separation or parallel existence of these two worlds. Rather, the matter about the style, content, nature, regulatory frameworks of the livelihood and the country's development, and public relationships.

With regard to CA, we could refer to an idea expressed by Volodin A.G. about India: “India had entered a stage of modernization at a time when economic and political trends in developed countries were already prioritized, to an increasing extent, by STR, which made the strategy of “catch-up growth” as only mean of survival in modern conditions”. (Volodin A.G. India. “Formation of institutions”).

Catching up with the democratic and industrialized countries, “Central Asians” will overcome many challenges of modern times. As an outcome of such complex evolution in

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<sup>85</sup> On this, see in Section regarding traditions and mechanisms within domestic forms of Islam's existence.

societies and countries of the region there will be a synthesis of traditional and modern. This will be a paternalism synthesis / statism and democratism, adapted forms of social organization, political behavior and relict (preserved from long and recent history), existing stereotypes, preconceived conceptions about politics and the new knowledge about democratic order and the spiritual synthesis of transcendent and mundane. Uzbekistan differs from neighboring regional countries in that process, and apparently, it would be subject to typical demographic parameters for the country that considering its mass character will strengthen both effects of progress and effects of regress.

Following the definition of modernization given by an American political scientist David Apter, we can assume the following: "If a clear moral rationale for modernizing society is the development, it usually expressed in terminologies to implement capabilities - both human and social". (Apter D. "The Politics of Modernization". P.13) According to Apter, modernization is "the process of conscious direction and control of social consequences of growing differentiation and organizational complexity in society." (Ibidem. P.56) He also defined the concept of traditionalism as "validation (or fixation) of existing behavioral standards by reference to the ancient prescriptive rules. This does not mean that traditionalist systems do not change, but rather that innovation – i.e. extrasystematic actions – should be linked within social system with preceding values" (Ibidem p.83.).

How it happens in each individual country and to what extent religious (de-) modernization leads to social stagnation or development is of particular question. Renowned Islamic scholar Bernard Lewis, exploring the tendency to social and economic decline in majority of Muslim countries, he analyzes such data as the number of scientists, scientific publications, translations and book sold, economic statistics, he showed increasing contrast not only between the Muslim world and the West, but also between this world and the East and South-East Asia in terms of modern progressive development. He notes that in the light of this, it is not surprising that many Muslims say about the collapse of modernization and respond to different diagnoses for a disease of their society by various prescriptions designed for its treatment. "For some – as Lyuis writes – the answer lies in the need for greater and effective modernization ... For others, the modernization is itself a problem and the source of all ills» (Lewis B. "The Crisis of Islam" P.97-102).

Based on examples on Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and other countries we can state that religion is capable to harmoniously coexist and even complement the modern society with its technologies, rationalism, flourishing of science and pluralization of life styles and worldviews. However, at the same time, religion with specific regard to it can serve as a breeding ground for de-modernization and re-traditionalization. Indeed, sometimes faith and superstition, religious and esoteric world go hand in hand, and the transitions from one to another cannot be excluded, since the boundary between them is not such a clear and transparent enough.

For instance, what relation to modernization and de-modernization do have such widespread religious practices in Uzbekistan as "Otyñ Oyi", "Mavlud" "mushkul kushot" wearing of the veil, and so on? The most interesting thing here is that these practices are preserved with the atheistic Soviet times. Moreover, the Institute of Otyñ Oyi had served as a peculiar tool of passive resistance not only to assimilation, but also to the Soviet atheistic ideology (Fathi H. "Transformation processes in Islam ... " P.142).

Otyñ Oyi – this is usually a spiritual person, a middle-aged and old woman, who due to good knowledge of the Quran and the ability to read the Surah by singsong, enjoys high

prestige among Muslim women. She is invited to female part in the house to perform basic rituals that match life cycle (birth, marriage, death, funeral, *Mavlud*). She can also teach children to read the Quran, adolescent girls, girls and women. (Fathi H. "Transformation processes in Islam" P.140.)

Ritual "*Mavlud*" is also a constant attribute of the Muslim lifestyle. It is held in the form of females gathering who come to a house as guests from among the relatives, friends and neighbors for a spiritual communion in the form of reading the Quran, hymns in praising the Prophet, followed by refreshments. It is believed that *Mavlud* is very pleasing to God action, for which Allah will certainly reward.

"*Mushkul kushod*" is a very peculiar rite of Uzbek Muslims, which people were able to preserve it from the Soviet times. Its purpose – is to break a course, the evil eye, the break life concerns and failures at work, etc. It is being carried out mainly by *Otyñ Oyi* by reading special Quranic suras and Ayahs and blessing some food products, which the person involved in the ritual of *mushkul kushot* should eat them later.

A subject of particular attention is an interesting trend, which reflects the Islamic socialization of people: "More and more Muslims, especially the youth, can read the Surah and Ayahs by themselves during religious rituals and ceremonies. For example, before when friends, relatives and loved ones used to come to a house of deceased for funeral, then either an elderly, or invited Kory or Imam was reading few Surah and Ayahs. Nowadays, there are many more Muslims at such kind of events, who can read Ayahs by themselves without recourse to elderly guests or the Kory, or Imams. It is believed that it can serve as a barometer of Islamisation of the Uzbekistan social space.

In 1920s of XX Century, there was founded a Movement "*Hujum*" in Soviet Uzbekistan, through which thousands of female Muslims threw *Paranjas* away and opened their face. This was considered as progressive achievement of the young Soviet authorities in the traditional and backward Turkestan. Today, it is obviously impossible to return to wearing *Paranjas*. However, wearing a headscarf, wearing a cloth, in accordance with the exigencies of religion, coupled with holding *Mavlud* (i.e. as many people think it as archaic) and other practices they are quite compatibly co-exist with attributes of modern life in technological era. (In Bukhara, for example, it became fashionable to video some rituals on CDs or memory sticks to watch them at home with family).

To resolve a latent and overt conflict between de-modernistic or even non-modernistic Islam and modern Islam, seems to be sought based on rejection of conservatism and medieval backwardness of this religion and recognition of the opportunities and, so to say, initially "preprogrammed" on to "cover" the Muslims of the future. This is two-way street, and in its turn, it requires two mutually conditioned processes of emancipation from the bonds of vulgarly interpreted secularism and from the bonds of vulgarly understood religious fundamentalism. In other words, it requires, as aptly put it - E. Usubaliev, the Kyrgyz expert, "transformation of secular consciousness for authorities and modernization of religious thinking for Muslims. (Usubaliev E. "Features of political Islam" P.37.)

Meanwhile, it is probably advantageous for the political regime in Uzbekistan to maintain a dual social situation - between *maishat* (having fun drinking alcoholic beverages) and *ibodat* (pious behavior and prayers). This dualism however having revealed vulnerability of a sinner before *Shaitan* (Devil) by its symbolism, we can say, it is a convenient tool to quench excessive, as it might appear to the authorities, religious fervor. This quenching can be somehow carried

out using the well-known classical method of “carrot and stick” and providing with “bread and circuses” to masses.

According to our observations, discos and other clubs – places of entertainment and relaxation mostly for students and youth – by numbers and even by “quality” they look marginal, even in Tashkent. There no such places left in Andijon, Margilan, and Kokand and Namangan cities. There are increased number of weddings celebrated without alcohol. At the same time, it can be seen as “club boys” quite competently pray either during Janaza on Khayit Namoz and so on. They themselves, noticing the contradictions in this combination or when they are told of such matter, they recognize their sinful weaknesses and in such situations, they even often say “*Hudo Ozi kechirsin*” (May God forgive me). We would like to point out the fact that we do not separate Muslims to those who enjoy their lives having fun (*maishat*) and those who live a pious life (*lbodat*). There is no bipolarization in assessing religiosity of people; however, there is an obvious symbiotic picture of co-existence of Islam and other cultural beginning.

In Paragraph above concerning historical perspective, we already have talked about “religious minimalism”, that allowed to combine Islamic prescriptions with national, cultural, regional, and even Soviet traditions. Perhaps the current, so to speak, fluctuations between *Maishat* and *lbodat* are also the reflection of minimalism.

Mass media, the clergy and educational institutions are increasingly talking about alarming trends of destructive impact of Internet, social networks, computer games and mobile phones. For example, an Imam from one of the Mosques in Tashkent during his Friday sermon on 19 August 2015, highlighting this issue, had categorically stated that today more than 60% of all Internet sites are harmful and they spread immorality and false information, which growingly attract the youth, capturing most of the human life and having a domino effect. As a result, people are distracted from performing prayers; they start forgetting their faith and Muslim identity.<sup>86</sup>

Labor migration from Uzbekistan to foreign countries is also making its own corrections to the religious situation. In fact, this part of the Muslims can be divided into three categories: those who are trying to save their pious lives; those for whom faith is *Adat*, perceiving it not as religious, but rather as national identity, that is not followed by strict piety; finally, those who became susceptible to radicalization and rushed to join extremist organizations through the recruitment system. According to inaccurate estimates, about 500 citizens of Uzbekistan have joined ISIS; most of them as labor migrants were in Russian at that time. Regarding the latter, the intensity analysis and scope of recruitment into extremist and terrorist organizations leads us to the hypothesis that this phenomenon has reached its natural limits to growth, after which the Islamist threat cannot endlessly increase.

Indeed, when we talk about recruitment to join the terrorists, we have to have an idea on how it works i.e. the methods of persuasion, deception, recruitment, ideological influence, etc. However, the same work is being held (albeit with their, so to say, technological costs) by those against whom they fight i.e. the Government. Moreover, if emissaries of terrorist organizations clandestine and work illegally among Muslims, therefore, it means that they are obviously limited in their expansionist capabilities; however the State and the clergy are carrying out an open, large-scale and more intensive work. This work is “supported” by demonstrating the coercive

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<sup>86</sup> <http://ummat.uz/index.php/media-m/video-lavhalar/item/302-internet-va-telefon-fitnasi>

power against potential offenders. The complex of all these actions is called as de-radicalization in the language of the experts. Let's have an example.

The tradition *Amri ma'ruf* (from Quranic "Amr al-ma'ruf va nahyi 'ani-l-munkar" – "Bidding the Fair and forbidding the Unfair") has been increasingly introduced and spread in everyday life as part of the religious dimension of human life, which is observed not only during religious rituals and secular holidays (wedding pilaf). It means a call to commit an action permitted and required in Islam, to abstain from forbidden behavior; it is held in the form of short speech by a cleric invited to the ceremony (in most cases, an imam of a mosque), who speaks to the guests before catering the wedding pilaf. This speech reminds a short version of the Friday sermon.

However, *Amri ma'ruf* means not only the solemn and public event; being as a call to commit good deeds, it should be applied, as clerics say, often and in everyday life, even in interpersonal relationships. The practice *Amri ma'ruf*, along with making the Hajj, praying in mosques, receiving religious education, etc., probably brings its own significant contribution to the religious environment and religious situation in the country, more and more narrowing, thereby the niche that is taken by radical wing of the domestic existence of Islam.

Talking about harmonization of secular and religious way of life, and the prevention of de-modernization and archaism of the latter seemingly can be achieved by enhancing the social role of religious organizations - both government and non-government. Similar to civil society institutions, the religious organizations could be actively involved into general civil affairs without being consumed exclusively by performing religious functions. They could participate in training and education, socially important projects such as assistance to families in need and individual citizens, construction of separate facilities and even doing business. Clergy should not shy away (or should not be hold aside) from social activities and daily life.

Here we have to agree with the statement that theologian Kadyr Malikov made with respect to the situation in Kyrgyzstan, which we can refer to the situation in Uzbekistan, namely: "It becomes clear that purely spiritual and traditional Islamic functions artificially divided and predefined through well-known principle of separation of religion and State in Soviet era, could no longer exist outside the general concept of Islam, predetermining social, economic, legal norms" ( Malikov K. "Social Activity of the Muslim community". P.89).

Analogous conclusions were made by other experts, such as Uzbek analyst Kamoliddin Rabbimov, who believes that immersion into Islam and coming to it as an instance to address various challenges society facing will only be increasing. Therefore, the Government actions should adequately response to local and occasional threats; they should refrain from **hyper-excessive forced reaction (forced reaction that exceed necessary level /гипер-форсированного реагирования)**, and efforts should be focused on transforming religious institutions and leaders into independent and socio-politically responsible actors of society.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> From interview of the Article's Authors with an Uzbek Expert, Kamoliddin Rabbimov.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

Over the past decades, religious domain in Uzbekistan is still remains as more and more disputed area of collisions between different (sometimes mutually exclusive) conceptions in regards present “Muslimity”, and various interpretations of the same religious texts and regulations. In fact, these discussions can be seen as a struggle between the involved parties for religious dominance in a community and in the public sphere.

The “perestroika” and “post-perestroika” re-Islamisation in the region and other former USSR States is still continuing in a highly conservative form. These and other similar circumstances seemingly will long determine the “face of Islam” in the region. It is obvious that it will take a long time for the transformation and evolution of believers themselves. However, the same transformations (in favor of greater tolerance with regard to unusual manifestations of religious self-expression) should be implemented by relevant government authorities as well.

Nevertheless, given its conservatism and non-uniformity, the proponents of traditional forms of Islam have demonstrated their greater capacities to absorb changes and adaptations, managing to respond to a series of challenges. At the same time, their positions are based on the fact that new forms of “zealous religiosity” cause threat to social balance, may destroy the commonly accepted hierarchy and elitism in interpreting dogmas, may deprive local practices of century-old traditionalism, may no longer be projected on characteristics of national cultures. In terms ethical and social aspects, from conservatives point of view – Islam imposed by fundamentalists contradicts with tolerance, compassion and charity i.e. with qualities, which, as the events over the past years have shown, globalized and purist Islam is lacking, particularly in its extreme forms. Conservatives believe the threat of such an Islam exists not only because its supporters and interpreters are extremely limited, intolerant, act against culture and “national” forms of spirituality or religiosity, cultural heritage, etc. They pose a danger because they can easily become as ideological ground for the most intolerant ways of religious interpretation and therefore they are open to violent extremism.

However, so far no one has yet to prove that dogmatic or logical argumentation vis-à-vis conservatives is weak or has no right to exist. Sometimes parties use the same symbols and arguments, though interpreting them differently. Religious purists and their supporters are also accusing the conservatives of being isolated, limited and divorced from the rest of the Muslim world. In fact, the proponents of “General Islamic integrism” are the faithful of various flows of reform ideologies in the Islamic World and, depending on their forms, these supporters attempt to fit into the global Islamic interpretation (often non-uniform), urge Muslims not to focus attention on features of their Madhhabs or “national / regional” forms of Islam.

That is not to say that external influence on Muslims of the Republic had completely stopped (at least part of them) along with closing borders and restricting foreign internship programs for theologians and students from religious institutions. This influence (via internet-networks, migrant workers, publication of the same Sheikh Muhammad-Sodiq) still exists, although it have been severely limited in recent years. No any foreign trip is permitted for students from religious educational institutions, and those few foreign travels for teachers and students from TIU are strictly controlled. Nevertheless, there is no direct, or, at least, the mass and indirect influence on Muslims of Uzbekistan from those centers of countries mentioned above. At the same time, there are strict restrictions in regards internships at Islamic educational centers for students from religious educational institutions (same as TIU) is severely limited. The

same restrictions apply to even secular scientists travelling abroad (including conferences, or internships, etc.). Most often, there are no explicable logics of banning scientists and religious leaders to travel abroad. Here is the old Soviet inertia that the stability can be achieved through insularity. Meanwhile, according to our observations, such senseless restrictions reinforce a very negative perception of such government actions and become a fertile ground for covert opposition, which can turn into open clashes at every opportunity.

In parallel, the domestic non-formal groups became deprived from their “parent parties” and “movements” (let us say, HT, *Nurchiler* or *Tablig*), both physically and ideologically. It was mainly due to mutual geographical distance, existing visa regulations, etc. Moreover, most members of those groups are arrested in Uzbekistan, few majority has gone underground and it is hard to say that they have significantly increased in their activities. (Balci B. “The Rise of the Jama’at al-Tabligh; Heathershaw & Montgomery. *The Myth of Post-Soviet Muslim Radicalization*, P. 12-13).

Some exceptions may relate to the situation in Kyrgyzstan, for example “Tabligh” followers, who have strong presence in the Republic. However, some researchers conclude that most of the HT groups in southern Kyrgyzstan have become marginalized and have quite vague idea about contemporary activities of their “parent Party”. (Heathershaw & Montgomery “*The Myth of Post-Soviet Muslim Radicalization*”, P. 12). This is obvious as that ideology reflects different realities and other situations and goals.

An idyll in relations both within and between these groups has yet to be observed, they often share “lectures” in public accusing each other in misconceptions, moving from Islamic values and even in sectarianism (*shirk*).

The State holds controversial positions in this conflict. It also acts against commitment of everyday Islamic faithful (within its conservative forms) to the complex, and sometimes luxuriant rituals, and especially against inherently expensive rituals during weddings, birthdays, funerals and others. However, the irony is that it is the supporters of “puristic Islam” become protagonists of the state in such a “struggle against remnants”.

However, we would like to remind that ritual constructions in community’s life do not always come from prescriptions of the religion, especially in its purist interpretation. These rituals are associated with ethnic, cultural traditions or other preferences of a community. Perseverance of a community to perform wrong practices also serves the goal to present themselves as good or sincere Muslims. The faithful and interpreters of such kind of “national traditions and customs” as a rule, are provincial imams and religious leaders and particularly female religious leaders (mentioned above “*otyn / otincha*”).

State intervention into such manifestations of daily religious practices (through the State controlled religious and state institutions) should be considered as unsuccessful, especially without having expert analysis of possible consequences. Notably, that struggle against such kind of rituals contributes to demolishing traditions, cultural and conformist codes, which serve as a natural counterweight to fundamentalization and radicalization.

In this respect, challenges to radically improve the professional assessment and analysis of the ongoing processes in the country and region remain as highly relevant, particularly with regard to dynamics of the religious situation. The same serious approaches and analyzes are needed to monitor and study religious literature by making them accountable to regular norms and regulations in the legislative sphere.

Imams act as the principal voice of “religious policy” on the ground (Rayon, towns, mahallas). The role of an Imam within networks of local authorities is noticeable, however truly, depends also on his individual performance. Mahalla always engages Imams if there is a risk of brake-up of families, to conduct religious consecration of marriage ceremonies (*nikah*), to act often as a mediator in domestic scandals, quarrels between children and parents, to attend the ritual part of gatherings during collective meal eating (*ehson*), during other forms of collective feedings (*osh – pilaf*), for example, at weddings, anniversaries of the death of an immediate family member. Imam is also invited to the festivities, where elderlies are going to celebrate holidays on the occasion of an event (such as Navruz, 9<sup>th</sup> of May, etc.). In all these cases, Imam nearly becomes as the most important figure and has the right (issued in the form of Certificate from AMU) to publicly preach (*ma’ruza, amri ma’ruf*) outside the mosque. Imams are actively engaged by authorities to attend wider platforms at Rayon or City levels as well (see. above).

Disciplines related to Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), or traditions (*hadith*), as well as associated with rules aimed at regulating social and political relationships in society are dominating in the religious education system. There is still a question on local (“border”) conflict of different concepts related to legislative and regulatory systems. By this, we mean the existence and entire judicial legitimation of acts, codes and sets of secular legal system that regulate the vast majority of mutual relationships in the field of social or family relationships (civil, criminal and other codes). Meanwhile, the religious education system studies medieval writings, in which the same rules of relations are considered from the perspectives of different predeterminations and precedents in Islamic jurisprudence.<sup>88</sup> In any case, the Sharia as a legal institution has yet to receive an approval by the States of the region, while continuing to function at the level of everyday practices. The theologians have learned to overcome these contradictions and latent conflicts since the Soviet times through deliberately limiting Islamic norms by sphere of personal and social ethics of conduct, ritual matters, regulation of ethics in family relations, etc.

Betting on use of force to address the challenges of radicalization and various manifestations of terrorism may be assessed in different ways. This is no denying that Government actions by using force against violent extremists had produced results, and their further progressing in the country was seriously weakened. However, existing issues related to the economy, social justice, lack of effective reforms, minimum freedoms and real secular opposition continue to be a ground for spontaneous interest to lumpen quasi-ideologies by the part of the community that in our environment takes different forms of religiously motivated extremism.

At the same time, of course, it is still an open question whether two parties – the Government and Clergy – ready to cooperate not only in the field of spirituality and culture, but also in politics. Nevertheless, there are ordinary Muslim people, relatively speaking, between Clergy and State, for whom democratization and liberalization of the country and generally introducing political, social and economic reforms will be associated and followed by mutual influence of the State and religion. Perhaps this is the most complex issue in Islamisation of social and political spaces for any country.

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<sup>88</sup> Russian Islamic Scholar Sukiyanen L.R. believes that the introduction of some Sharia norms into the legislation of certain entities of the Russian Federation will destroy de facto existing balance of religious and secular norms in the legal field (Sukiyanen L.R. Sharia, P. 6-7 and further).



## POSTSCRIPTUM<sup>89</sup>

1) Whether there is in the end a threat posed by extremists and radicals? Is there natural limit to growth (for recruitment) among terrorist groups?

**B.B.** I believe that the growth in popularity of an ISIS ideology has been generally exhausted in the region. The flashes may depend on many factors, in particular on stability of religious situation, constructs within global policy, ways of negotiation between major powers, etc. So far, we can observe mutual clashes in the Middle East as per principle “all against all”. External actors are achieving consensus with difficulties due to mismatched strategic interests.

An ISIS ideology also refers to principle “against all”. Though, maybe it is this fact has resulted in limited popularity of their quasi-ideology due to obvious systemic crisis in the Islamic World as well as in most of the countries countering ISIS (I mean the crisis of the so-called imposed democracy and liberalism, a series of political crises in the Muslim countries, inability to build a civil society, etc.). As a consequence, (secondly) a significant part of volunteers representing the intellectuals have joined ISIS, not by persuasion and efforts by “abstract recruiters”, but quite consciously, to “defend Islam” (as it was once in 1938-39, when volunteers from dozens of countries rushed to an abstract Spanish Grenada). Hence, the question concerning apparent passionarity of their motivations (“self-recruited”) remains open and it should not be excluded from the agenda.

**F.T.** I agree with the argument that the growth in popularity of an ISIS ideology has been generally exhausted in the region. Simply by definition, the process of recruitment and people movement towards joining extremist organizations cannot be infinite. Firstly, only a small part of society could be vulnerable to radicalization and in exceptional cases, i.e. it cannot have massive forms. Secondly, extremist and terrorist groups had never and nowhere been able to win and establish the order and steady state system. (Example: Taliban in Afghanistan or ISIS in the Middle East are the exceptions that proves the rule). Thirdly, they will always be marginalized and illegitimated in global public opinion and international system and from this point of view, the scope of their activities cannot go beyond certain limits.

However, there is a sub-question that still remains open and fundamental. What damage such groups and organizations can cause in the end to both their countries and international community? How soon and what price we should pay to victoriously win the war against religious extremism and international terrorism?

**B.B.** It is scarcely sensible to try to find answers to these questions. The situation is rapidly changing and invasion of Russia has completed the globalization process of the conflict. Another aspect is that the physical destruction of ISIS does not mean that such a quasi-ideology or even the State will not emerge in other part of the world again. It is obviously reaffirms the axiom: “It must find root causes vs. just dealing with effects”.

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<sup>89</sup> While developing the present work, it revealed a different in approaches between Authors concerning various issues and processes. This “Appendix” shows the diversity in assessments. However, the scope of such issues, of course, is wider. Here, we have identified only some of them. Abbreviation: BB. - Bakhtiyar Babajanov; FT. - Farhod Talipov.

**F.T.** Probably, one of the reasons for the protracted nature of the threat – despite the limited nature of recruitment scope to join terrorists – is the lack of commonly accepted definition of terrorism and extremism on the global level, embodied in relevant convention. For example, initially “Taliban” movement was called as terroristic and included into the international list of terrorist organizations. Today, the Afghan Government – on the one hand, and the Americans – on the other, lead negotiations encouraging them to return to peaceful life, and now they are not called terroristic, but insurgents.

2) What can you say about devaluation of extremism and marginalization of extremist in Uzbekistan? Could we argue (hope) that by using force and the State ideological policy we can root out the breeding ground for religious radicals?

**B.B.** And yes and no. But first, I would like to say that there is no any “ideological politics”, however we have the Soviet surrogated embodiment appealing to Title Nationalities, inept “religious policy” without any tactics, coherent and long-term strategy, and so on. The relative devaluation of extremism and some stability today – is not only and not so much the success of the Government policy, but merit of traditional theologians with their “parishioners”, though choosing State as a partner. This, alas, is a vicious circle. Denial of power politics is the problem without use of force this is also a challenge. Still, much depends on the general culture (traditions, discussions, the level of education and intelligence and other qualities) of all partners in both social and political domains, including the bulk of the faithful.

Extremism is a product of multilateral crisis (political, economic, moral, values, and so on). If the accumulation of these and similar problems will “tip the scales” (and it is not excluded), then we should expect the growth of extremism, but not necessarily dressed in religious clothing.

**F.T.** Still, we are to speak about the success of the state policy in devaluating extremism and maintaining the stability. The current state of affairs – it is not only the merit of traditional theologians, but first it is the State – rigidly authoritarian, merciless to radicals and extremists, or simply powerful facing the challenge they are dared to. Wherein, I would like to clarify my idea: a conception that, due to Government policy (supported by traditional theologians) it succeeded to “root out the breeding ground for radical extremist”, apparently is not quite true. Rather, we may argue not about the rooted out ground, but so far, an initiative in struggling with opponents (including religious) belongs to the State. In other words, it had won on the tactical level. It is now important to wisely and skillfully use the obtained prize to achieve strategic victory.

**B.B.** It is not necessary to refer the habitual and rigid reflection of the State to threats solely by a desire to defend the interests of the regime or unwillingness to find other ways in regulating the religious policy, etc. In this regard, as appropriate, suggest reminding the following circumstances:

1. The form of government in any country is a reflection of societal situation in the broadest sense of that definition. In this regard, the evolution is needed not only for the State with its institutions, but also for the society, its institutions, including Muslims themselves.
2. The rigid policy of the State at all levels of Government structures, non-governmental organizations (e.g. mahalla) and others, is not implemented by aliens. AMU, Imams and a significant part of the faithful do not just tolerate such a policy, but most of them do support the Government, at least, recognizing its right for strict control in religious policy. Thus, it should be acknowledged that most of them are direct participants of this policy.
3. It is noteworthy that use of force in addressing concerns in the religious domain, have destroyed the networks of violent extremism supporters, but yet to resolve all the problems. The success in struggling extremism is not only and not so much the merit of the National Security Agencies. Most believers did not support extremist and they turned out to be a minority, and marginalized in all respects.
4. Currently most believers have adopted the rules to separate spheres of influence, which recognizes the State as dominant (with all the contradictions in interpreting security), including control in religion. The State has kept the space for Islam in the social field, official ideology (as a spiritual and cultural heritage), having recognized Islamic norms in the area of family and social ethics, etc. Time and circumstances will reveal sustainability of these rules, particularly amid continuing “creeping re-Islamisation”. However, mutual prosperity and status of both the State and Muslims are interdependent.

3) Special issue – Islam among CA migrants, who have found jobs especially in the Russian Federation. Can we propose that re-Islamisation among that category of our citizens differs from the same process at their home?

**B.B.** Most young people - “Gasterbaityery” (labor migrants) have faced with new interpretations of Islam during their stay abroad looking for a job. In the Russian Federation, where most migrants work, they experience with uncomfortable working conditions, xenophobia, corruption and related bureaucratic obstacles directly stimulate their interest in an ideology that is more understandable and adapted to their challenges. It is most often based on globalized interpretation of Islam, which was a key factor in recruiting adherents among migrant workers. This social environment has become the most convenient platform for spreading extremist versions of Islam.

**F.T.** I agree that in more severe conditions on foreign land, they are more susceptible to be infected by an alien ideological (including religious extremist) infection. However, if we believe that recruitment limits to join extremists and terrorists, a priori, restricted, and that the Muslim population itself have never expressed public support to their ideas, seemingly, the same conception applies in relation to our migrant workers. Simultaneously, the policy of the State (in our case it is Russia) that receives migrants will play a crucial role in restricting radicalization of Muslims and their recruiting by extremist organizations – on the one hand, and on the whole the State religious policy – from other hand, as we can see in Uzbekistan.

4) How can we address an issue of vulgar secularism, which is automatically interpreted as the separation of religion from the State? Is it possible and how to incorporate Islam into the state in terms of overcoming the mutual alienation of religion and the secular State?

**F.T.** I think the concept of secularism is not just vulgarized by politicians, ideologists, and researchers; however, generally it is a pseudo-concept as well. It is impossible to separate religion from the state justly providing it a niche of culture, education, worship, etc. And it's not that the principle "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's" is relevant in Christianity, and Islam somehow lacks such principle, thereby Islam underpins State functioning – from politics and private life. This is a more complex question and linked to an individual, that if he has a belief, somehow he cannot just leave his faith aside (so to speak, temporary), after having come into power or worked as civil servant. His faith (his religion) is always with him, and therefore, it cannot be detached from the state.

**B.B.** Yes indeed, the nowadays-imposed secularism is vulgar same as many other forms of religiosity (in the broadest sense). The notion that Islam "has underpinned entire State functioning" is too speculative and not based on historical facts. In the history of Muslim countries, theoretical prescriptions had always been far from the real situation. The principle "Render unto God the things that are God's" de facto was also applicable in Islam and especially in our region. Since the Mongol invasion until the early XX century, political ethics and function among majority institutions of the local countries was based not so much on Islamic principles, but rather on the transformed forms of the steppe Law Yasy (Yasak), mixing both with Islamic norms. Muslim identity went quite well with other forms of identity (ethnic, tribal and local). In this sense, the transition of individuals from conventionally public profane or political "space" to sacred had caused no any inconsistencies neither in their self-feelings, nor in theologians' estimates. Why it must now cause contradictions especially if it is a tradition? Why we should put a question concerning a civil servant, who is going to work, but having his religion with him" based on an abstract proposition about Islam, which allegedly "underpins the entire state functioning – from politics to private life"? What if a person is unbeliever or an adherent to ordinary religious minimalism, who according to tradition can easily combine sacred rules of conduct with every day conditionally secular ones? If the problem is one-sided too much? Alternatively, are we talking about that public institutions should become Islamized in order to make working more comfortable for Muslims "carrying their religion with them?"

In this context and according to my view, it is more appropriate to say, firstly, about real embodiment of mutual tolerance among all these categories of people to each other, and Government's tolerance towards these people. In the post-Soviet States, such tolerance is being achieved with constraints; however, it would be absolutely relevant to underline its positive evolution. Secondly, we are to point out the inappropriateness of certain Articles set forth in most regional Constitutions, which formulate it as "separation of religion and State" instead of "separation of activities of religious institutions from the State". It is equally essential to meet the State's duty of care to social and political comfort of both believers and non-believers, or those who prefer a "border status", **maintaining sufficient religiosity (обходясь достаточной религиозностью)** – and they are the majority.

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**“Prevalence rates of violent extremism among women  
in the Republic of Tajikistan”**

*The practical significance of this survey is that based on factual data collected we can quite specifically explore the situation related to violent extremism among women in Tajikistan.*

## **I**ntroduction

Today, the Republic of Tajikistan is experiencing a new historical stage in its development; we are witnessing the transformation process from a socio-historical formation to another followed by deep socio-economic, political and ideological processes in society, which in its turn coincided with moral and spiritual values reassessment, including religious ones.

Centuries-old national traditions and customs, including religious ones, which had established at one time, were being rejected by certain part of the population. Moreover, they do fight hardly and mercilessly with the purpose of their total elimination. As a result, now the people of Tajikistan face a critical challenge with violent extremism.

The current state of affairs in society is a clear testimony that activities of radical and extremist groups pose direct threat to national security of the Republic because it leads to national, social, religious and other hatred resulting in societal divisiveness.

The problem is aggravated by the geographical location of the Republic itself, existence of the Fergana Valley and Afghanistan having a direct adverse impact on situation with radicalism and extremism, that is unfortunately, an issue of radicalism and extremism goes beyond the country and is already becoming more regional challenge.

It is well-known that issues relating to the spread of violent extremism in Tajikistan, including among women and girls is subject to close attention and continuous control by official authorities and special security services, and it requires serious consideration on the part of consultative and analytical institutions of the Republic of Tajikistan.

The last trends, including involvement of women and girls into the activities of extremist, radical and terrorist organizations, as well as strengthening of violent extremism among women can hardly leave supporters of building a civilized, democratic and secular society indifferent. The Tajik women and girls engagement with their families into the so-called “Jihad” in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan necessitates critical and in-depth analysis of that challenge.

No doubts that relevant executive state bodies, special services and law enforcement agencies, consultative and analytical and other similar institutions perform certain activities in this direction, however, in our views, they clearly fell short of prevailing situation. Thereby, the situation in this area requires an in-depth study and understanding of these adverse events. This situation in the society clearly demonstrates that activities of radical and extremist groups pose direct threat to national security of the State and lead to national, social, religious and other hatred resulting in societal divisiveness.

This report is based on sociological survey prepared by the Centre for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, in which we attempted to assess the situation related to women involved into violent extremism. Within the framework of this survey, the field studies have been carried out in selected key cities and rayons on August - September 2015.

The practical significance of this survey is that based on factual data collected we can quite specifically explore the situation related to violent extremism among women in Tajikistan.

The recommendations made during this survey are focused on the structures, operating at decision-making level.

## SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The present survey aims at revealing the level of violent extremism among women in the Republic of Tajikistan.

In the course of the survey, the following techniques and tool were applied:

- *Data collection method* – mainly based on quantitative data collection method (male and female interviews using a standardized questionnaire (See attachment)), under which a total of 1500 respondents were interviewed. The sampling by age and regional breakdown generally corresponds to the composition of the adult population (over 18 years) in Tajikistan;
- *Choosing targeted areas* – the survey has covered all Oblasts of the country through direct interviews in cities and rayons considering the level of population density in settlements. The households located both in city and rayon centers and in remote settlements / micro-districts were covered under this survey;
- *Target group* – households.

**Table 1.**

### Sampling distribution of the interviews by regions

No.	Regions	Number of questioners	Percentage distribution of main target group
1.	Dushanbe	230	15
2.	<i>Cities and rayons of the Republican subordination, among which - Vahdat, Gissar, Jirgital, Rasht, Rudaki, Tursunzade</i>	250	17
3.	<i>Cities and rayons of Khatlon Oblast - Kurgan-Tube, Kulyab, Bohtar, Vakhsh, Vose, Dangara, Jomi, Muminobod, Temurmalik,</i>	490	32

	Hamadoni, Khuroson, Yavan		
4.	<i>Cities and rayons of Sughd Oblast - Khujand, Ayni, Gonchi, Isfara, Istaravshan, Kanibadam, B. Gafurov, Chkalovsk, Panjakent</i>	379	25
5.	<i>Cities and rayons of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast - Khorog, Vanj, Ishkashim, Roshtkala, Rushan</i>	160	11
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1509</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

Analysis of empirical data was performed using software packages for data analysis, particularly a package SPSS.

## RESULTS OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL SURVEY

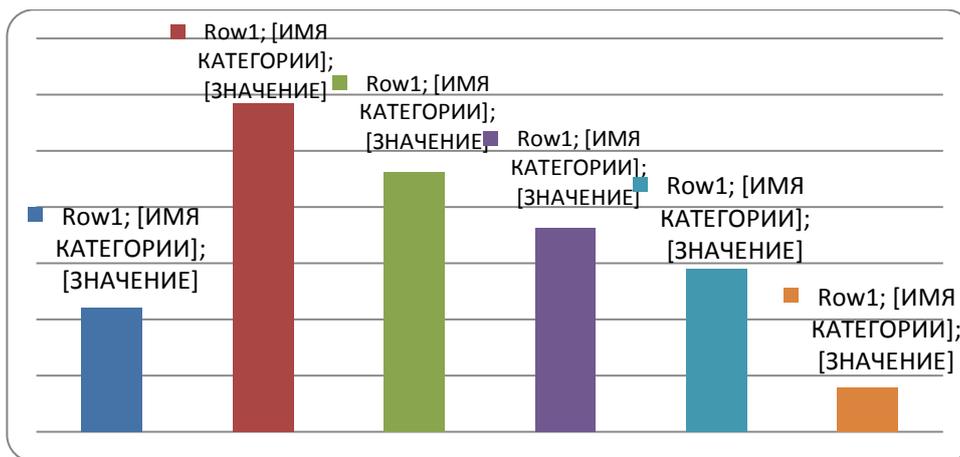
### Brief socio-demographics of respondents

*Gender of respondents.* The survey involved both men and women, which enabled highlighting gender differences in assessing the situation and identifying barriers that women face in order to realize their rights and interests. At the same time, the majority of respondents consisted of women (over 78%).

*Age of respondents.* As per age criteria, most of respondents were young and middle-aged people (52.4%). The smallest group consisted from elderlies (about 4%). The dominating number of young respondents in the total sample was due to willingness to assess the “vision” of the situation by people who are most promising, but already have had some life experiences, and are of potential “interest” in terms of involvement and countering violent extremism. Accordingly, it was important to know their view / understanding of the issues under review.

Diagram 1

Age distribution of respondents (%)

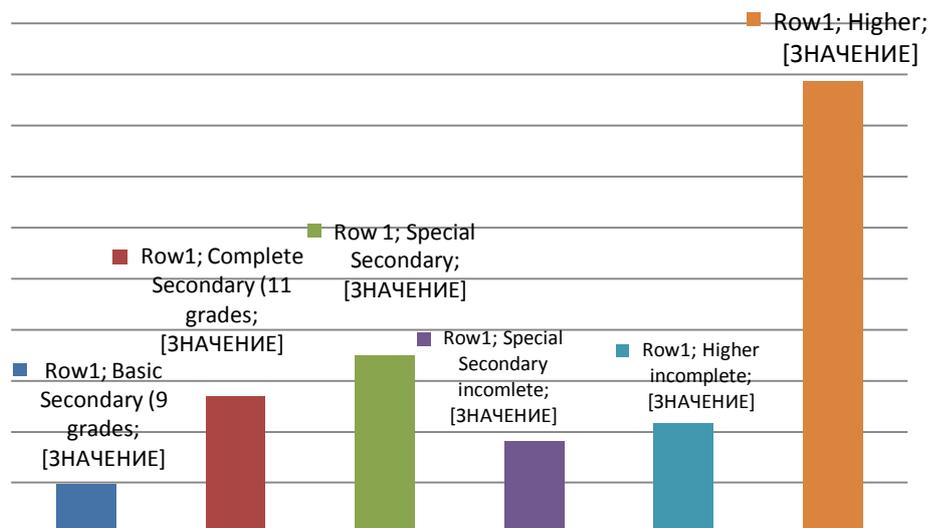


*Marital status of respondents.* As per marital status, at the time of survey 69% of respondents from the total sample, were married or they were considering themselves as married. Regional distribution of respondents by marital status is almost evenly represented – with dominance of married respondents.

*The educational level of respondents.* Among respondents most represented are people with higher education (over 44%).

Diagram 2

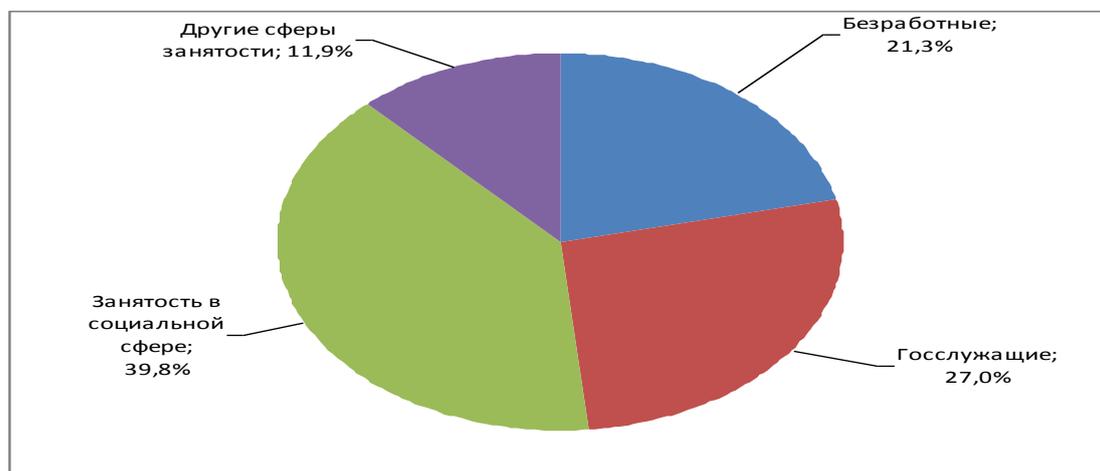
Distribution structure of respondents by level of education (%)



Area of occupation of respondents. As per occupation breakdown, the largest group of respondents are involved in social sphere (almost 40%).

Diagram 3

Distribution structure of respondents by area of occupation (%)



- 11,9% - Other areas of occupation
- 39,8% - Employed in social sphere
- 21,3% - Unemployed
- 27,0% - Public servants

**S**ummative assessment of socio-economic development issues in the regions, overcoming gender disproportions.

**Key development issues.** Most respondents answered that unemployment and domestic violence are the most pressing challenges.

**Table 1**

**“Rating” of issues prepared according to respondents’ answers.**

No.	<i>Issue</i>	<i>Percentage of respondents who highlighted that issue</i>
1	Unemployment	58,4
2	Domestic violence	45,8
3	Environmental contamination	42,7
4	Extremism	41,5
5	Criminality	41,4
6	Corruption	41,4
7	Drug abuse	41,3

Not less than 40% of respondents consider the problem of extremism as very acute and its solution will depend on cohesion of actions both at the state level and at the family level. At the same time, in the view of the regional representation, answers are very similar with no principal distinctions. The problem of extremism in GBAO has received a larger share of the answers rather than in other regions of the country.

**Table 2**

**The five keys issues pointed out by respondents in the regions under survey (Oblast representation)**

No.	<b>Sughd Oblast</b>	<b>Khatlon Oblast</b>	<b>GBAO</b>
1.	Unemployment	Unemployment	Unemployment
2	Corruption	Criminality	Domestic violence
3	Environmental contamination	Domestic violence	Extremism
4	Criminality	Environmental contamination	Drug abuse
5	Domestic violence	Extremism	Environmental contamination
Check marks on every issue – not less than 40% of respondents			

**Women’s place in society.** Majority of respondents believe that position of women in society is strengthening, including due to the state policy aimed at providing equal opportunities

for women and men (at least 69% of respondents). Regarding the attitudes towards women in society, answers in regional breakdown are almost identical.

**Table 3**

**Percentage distribution of respondents' answers to the question "What is the attitude towards women in your area?" (by Oblast breakdown)**

No.		Sughd Oblast	Khatlon Oblast	GBAO
1.	Men and women enjoy equal rights	43,3	42,4	57,5
2.	Women have special status	26,9	32,0	28,8
3.	Women have inferior position	24,5	12,4	6,3
	Total	94,7	86,8	92,6

Most of the interviewees believe that women play more active role in society (75.1% of respondents). However, in Sughd Oblast the percentage of respondents who believe that women not so active is relatively high, since they are very dependent on views / provided opportunities by their husbands if compared with other regions.

**Table 4.**

**Percentage distribution of respondents' answers to the question "How actively women participate in the public life in your community?" (by Oblast breakdown)**

No		Sughd Oblast	Khatlon Oblast	GBAO
1.	Actively participate	59,6	78,2	87,5
2.	Participate, but not so actively as the final decision is after their husbands	20,6	13,7	3,8
3.	Do not participate at all, as very busy with household responsibilities and child-rearing	10,3	5,3	3,8
	<b>Total</b>	90,5	97,2	95,1

Enhancing the status of women in society can contribute to improving their educational level. However, the work in this direction should be complex (starting at improving education coverage, advocacy and selecting and appointing to managerial positions) - not less than 83% of respondents.

## **T**erms and prevalence factors of violent extremism among women

According to relatively high number of respondents, the main causes of women's involvement into criminal activity are – the low educational level, weakening of parental control,

unhealthy family and negative consequences of labor migration. By regional breakdown, opinions of the respondents differ insignificantly.

**Table 5**

The five key factors of involvement of women / girls into criminal activity **(by Oblast breakdown), % of respondents**

No		Sughd Oblast	Khatlon Oblast	GBAO
1. 1	Low educational level among girls / women	38,0	21,0	25,0
2. 2	Single-parent families	23,7	16,7	12,5
3. 3	Weakening of parental control	30,3	17,6	16,3
4.	Estrangement from parents, husbands / brothers connected to labor migration	18,2	6,5	9,4
5.	Low level of knowledge and religious culture	9,8	0,8	6,3

**Regarding** the girls / women's involvement into criminal activity, the opinions of respondents by region over the last years have differed - in Sughd Oblast people believe that there is an upward trend, while in GBAO and Khatlon Oblast – a downward trend. In addition, in GBAO almost 48% were undecided.

Table 6

**Percentage distribution of respondents' answers to the question "How does trends relating to the involvement of girls / women into criminal activity change in the last five years?" (by Oblast breakdown)**

<b>№</b>		<b>Sughd Oblast</b>	<b>Khatlon Oblast</b>	<b>GBAO</b>
1.	There is a significant increase in involvement	20,3	14,5	5,6
2.	There is an increase in involvement	22,7	11,4	6,9
3.	Involvement remains at the same level	11,3	6,5	5,6
4.	Involvement decreases	21,9	45,7	34,4
5.	Were undecided	23,8	28,4	47,5

At the same time, majority of respondents found it difficult to estimate the trends on participation of girls / women in extremist groups / organizations. This was particularly observed among respondents

Table 7

**Percentage distribution of respondents' answers to the question "How does trends relating to the involvement of girls / women into extremist activity change in the last five years?" (by Oblast breakdown)**

<b>№</b>		<b>Sughd Oblast</b>	<b>Khatlon Oblast</b>	<b>GBAO</b>
1. 1	There is a significant increase in involvement	15,6	7,1	2,5
2. 2	There is an increase in involvement	23,7	9,0	6,9
3. 3	Involvement remains at the same level	8,7	8,4	4,4
4. 4	Involvement decreases	17,9	40,6	13,8
5. 5	Were undecided	34,1	34,9	72,4

Opinions of respondents by regions have also divided as to refer to extremist organizations, which often involve girls / women. At the same time, most respondents from Sughd Oblast and GBAO barely noted the involvement of girls / women in specific extremist organizations.

**Table 8**

**Percentage distribution of respondents' answers to the question "In which extremist organizations, girls / women are increasingly involved in your region?" (by Oblast breakdown)**

No.		Sughd Oblast	Khatlon Oblast	GBAO
1	Hizb ut-Tahrir	6,1	23,3	0
2	Ansarullah	0,3	1,7	0
3	Jundullah	0,5	0	0,6
4	IMU	2,1	0	0
5	Salafiya	4,2	30,0	0,6
6	ISIS	3,7	23,3	
7	Other extremist organizations	3,6	3,4	6,3
	Were undecided	79,5	18,3	92,5

However, those respondents who answered the previous question, as the main sources of information relating to girls / women's involvement into extremist organizations have stated - TV and radio.

**Table 9**

**The five key sources of information concerning girls / women's involvement into extremist organizations (by Oblast breakdown)**

No.		Sughd Oblast	Khatlon Oblast	GBAO
1. 1	TV	42,7	60,6	50,0
2. 2	Radio	16,9	25,9	14,4
3. 3	Newspapers	17,4	17,8	27,5
4. 4	Internet and social networks	16,1	19,4	23,2
5. 5	Rumors	17,4	33,3	6,9

The vast majority of respondents gave a negative answer concerning the participation of girls / women from their areas in extremist organizations in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan (at least 65% of respondents).

Table 10

**Percentage distribution of respondents' answers to the question "Are there any cases of participation of girls / women from your area in extremist organizations in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan?" (by Oblast breakdown)**

No		Sughd Oblast	Khatlon Oblast	GBAO
1.	Yes	14,5	9,2	1,9
2.	No	65,2	66,9	88,8
3.	Were undecided	20,3	23,9	9,3

According to respondents from Khatlon Oblast, the main channel of girls / women' involvement into extremist organizations of Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan is the invitation sent by her husband, who stays abroad. Respondents of **Sughd Oblast** and GBAO did not indicate the primary involvement channel.

Table 11

**Percentage distribution of respondents' answers to the question "What are the channels that enable involvement of girls / women from your area into extremist organizations of Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan?" (by Oblast breakdown)**

No		Sughd Oblast	Khatlon Oblast	GBAO
1.	Husband's invitation	8,4	64,4	5,0
2.	Through Russia	7,7	13,3	8,1
3.	Through social networks	2,9	2,2	0,6
4.	Through familiars/friends	2,4	2,2	1,3
5.	Other channels	0,3	0	1,9
	Were undecided	78,3	17,9	83,1

According to interviewees, in order to prevent the cases of girls /women's involvement into extremist organizations it is necessary to strengthen the activities aimed at creating favorable socio-economic conditions.

Table 12

**The five key focus areas in preventing involvement of girls / women into extremist organizations (by Oblast breakdown)**

No.		Sughd Oblast	Khatlon Oblast	GBAO
1.	Create sustainable jobs	74,1	78,2	82,5
2.	Strengthening policy to support the role of women in society	24,0	34,3	29,4
3.	State support for the institution of the family	25,6	23,1	28,1
4.	Enhancing ideological work	23,5	21,2	10,0
5.	Increase in the system of professional education coverage to girls	17,2	20,4	9,4

## KEY FINDINGS

Thereby, as researchers have noted, in today's Tajikistan there is a social environment favorable to the emergence and spread of radical, extremist and terrorist ideologies in society.

In our opinion, an important outcome of the survey is that violent extremism among women in Tajikistan has increased over the past five years in the Sughd Oblast. Women are more concerned with the challenges relating to domestic violence in other Oblasts and rayons of Tajikistan.

Unemployment, poverty and corruption may be also mentioned among other socio-economic factors that impact the level of violent extremism among women. Other reasons, adversely affecting the problem under review include uncontrolled labor migration to the Russian Federation, where young people and women as well are involved into extremist groups to participate in Jihad in Syria and other countries.

Such a situation in the country, preliminary has internal and external, objective and subjective factors. One of the foremost and decisive factors is the external labor migration to Russia and Kazakhstan, which increases on the account of women, girls and adolescents. As experts predict this process of external labor migration will be accelerating and increasing in the future due to lack of respective jobs, demographic situation in the Republic, growth of surplus labor resources, backlog in offering new jobs proportionally to continuous growth of the working age population.

Accordingly, labor migrants, including women and adolescents under the influence of external negative factors such as targeted propaganda in social networks, activities of foreign emissaries from extremist organizations and movements being cunningly entrapped, joining the "Jihadists", then they become a "cannon fodder", and women even forced to "sex-Jihad".

If we immediately proceed to explore the growth of violent extremism and radicalization among women, as well as the major causes of attracting women from Tajikistan cities and rayons to join extremist organizations, we should note that during the Survey, the violent extremism among women was revealed only in the north of the country, Sughd Oblast, where traditionally and historically the People's Institute as "Bibiotun" - the so-called "spiritual mentors" have had been established. The negativity in our case is that if extremists could succeed in attracting at least one "Bibiotun", then she in her turn will automatically contribute to recruiting many other women. The recruitment of women is very beneficial for extremists because of the following:

- 1) Are easily susceptible to physiological pressure;
- 2) Accordingly it is easier to control and coordinate their activities;
- 3) Attract less attention both from society and competent structures;
- 4) Better suited to participate in "peaceful" pickets or demonstrations and the other socio-political protests and actions;
- 5) Cause less suspicion to delivery or transport various types of cargo, including religious extremist literature, anti-government leaflets, or weapons.

Historically, in most larger cities of northern Tajikistan, including Khujand, Kanibadam, Isfara, Istaravshan, in bigger Jamoats (*communities*) of Bobojon Ghafurov Rayon – Undji

(villages Undji, Arbob, Kishlokijon), in a community named after Haidar Usmonov (villages Rumon, Kulangir, Shayhburhon), in towns of Histevarz (Kistakuz), Yova, Gozien alongside with an elementary boys' school designed for studying basis of Islam, in which mullahs were providing classes after graduation from madrassas (e.g. in Bukhara), there existed a particular phenomenon such as an institution of "Bibiotun" or as in northern dialect "biëtun" (spiritual mentors). Most of those Bibiotun were children of mullahs, who had completed madrassa and belonged to ancestral Ishans and mullahs; in some areas, they had successively and several generations been engaged in this métier transferring it to their children along with knowledge. In spiritual and religious life of the population in that region along with specifically male evening traditions such as reading Surah from Quran and collective feedings on Thursdays and Sundays, there were only female gatherings, such as "Bibishesanbegi" (Holy Tuesday) held during a day on Tuesdays and "Chorshanbei mushkilkusho" (Miraculous Wednesday) held on Wednesdays, attended by respectful women from the neighborhood followed by modest feedings and mandatory reading of Quranic Surah and this had been practicin for centuries.

Many vital issues such as courtship, marriage, circumcision ceremonies, etc. were discussed during those gatherings. There is an obvious impact of that traditional Islamic environment i.e. studying literature based on the Arabic scripts and memorizing the texts from Quran, which are traditionally practiced by Bibiotuns; for many reasons and in many life situations, a Bibiotuns' word is binding for all their followers in other words for their disciples. If these Bibiotuns have been influenced by propaganda of "paid" foreign emissaries, then the involvement of certain disciples educated by such mentors into illegal radical groups and movements will be of natural.

*The impact and influence of "Bibiotuns" on minds of women.* After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the ideological work among women had almost been eroded. Within a market economy, the social situation of these women has worsened and their societal status has declined. Unemployment and inability to ensure material support have worsened the situation of families. Considering that majority of the male population are engaged in labor migration abroad, many families have left without the head of households. Such challenges are further exacerbated by the tragedy of Civil War. Many families left homeless, thousands of people became refugees. Of course, all this had impacted on consciousness and psychology of women.

However, it would be incorrect to link the authority, influence and performance of Bibiotuns with only these arisen circumstances and low levels of awareness among women, because not all women had low levels of consciousness. Bibiotuns' propaganda have also affected the educated women with higher consciousness, because there were social prerequisites for that.

Poor economic conditions, being far from labor collectives and without engaging into public activities, existence of spiritual vacuum all these contributed that women found solace and relief in religion. Their participation in religious ceremonies, traditional and family activities served as the major tool in having necessary communication with others and raising religious awareness. Although these communications and sermons were concerning the religious teachings, they have had contained the elements of superstitions, traditions, legends and modern challenges that women face.

Certainly, the level of women's awareness participating in those events differs, as there are also more educated and intelligent women, however they usually lack sufficient religious knowledge. Therefore, the religious and secular elements same as legends and traditions have

mixed up in their subconscious that created fertile ground enhancing the impact of any propaganda.

The consciousness among majority of women-housewives is more focused on daily worries and they can hardly understand the essence of social processes and societal transformations. Their religious knowledge level remains low as well. In addition, after the collapse of the communist worldview and loss of targets, hopes and desires related to this worldview, it has intensified the atmosphere of religiosity among women.

Since the independence, the Tajik society, same as in other former Soviet Republics, had turned to the restoration of national, traditional and religious values. Religious (Islam) and national (Tajik nation) values in society have acquired a new status and position. In such circumstances, the population, especially women, had started devoting an increased attention to religion. It enabled creating a favorable environment for religious ministers and especially for Bibiotuns, who consider themselves as ministers, their influence and authority in the society has increased.

It should be noted that such state of affairs depends on many factors, particularly on both external and internal environment. The complex of internal and external conditions driven by conscious and unconscious actions, determines human behavior.

To better understand the impact and influence of Bibiotuns' propaganda, it is necessary to take into account the structure of their consciousness, which consists of two parts: the sensitively intellectual and emotionally valuable. The first part concerns the cognitive process – knowledge and information is acquired in this way. The second part concerns human attitudes, love, hate, sadness and other emotional affects. The second part identifies the causes of human action, its purposes, will, interests and desires. In particular, this applies to Bibiotuns. Both include inner world manifested in various forms and concepts, expressed in both worldview and conceptions of spiritual and ethical values of the society, in the content of public opinion and in human behavior...

Bibiotuns as members of society quite fairly feel the challenges, pains that public face and they construct their conversations particularly in regards those issues. Daily worries are not the priority for housewives. Lack of basic necessities is not the only challenge for them; however, they do concern about relations between family members, family problems and conflicts, diseases, carrying out familial ceremonies, which necessitate large expenditures and other everyday routines.

Bibiotuns influence the formation of public opinion in regards to rites and customs, the state attitude to religion and rituals, families, activities of the state and public structures. Bibiotuns' outreach activities can inspire confidence and respect to Commission's performance in holding celebrations, ceremonies and rituals, or conversely, could cause a feeling of distrust and hostility against it. If Bibiotuns are working together with the Commission, no doubts that the work of the Commission and its influence will be more effective in those areas. Here we mean the rites and customs relating to families and private life of a person. Bibiotuns have more Influence on citizens in one place and less in another.

If such holidays as "Navruz" are held with active participation of Bibiotuns along with other civil society organizations, girls and women will devote more attention to that Holiday. During family celebrations - wedding, birthday and other family activities, the influence of Bibiotuns is more noticeable. However, it depends on religious atmosphere in a mahalla and the activities of mosques, clergy and Bibiotuns. It should be noted that family rituals, when they particularly

relate to women, serve as an important tool for Bibiotuns to influence on women's minds. Depending on type and nature of a woman's mind, such influence can be more or less. The higher the level of religiosity of a woman, the more she is into superstitious, and respectively Bibiotuns will have more influence and impact on her and vice versa. It is necessary to say a few words about the educated women, women with higher education and high scientific and secular consciousness. Usually, they adapt themselves to the atmosphere of mahalla and to the public opinion of certain female groups.

The content of conversations with Bibiotuns, apart from religious propaganda, cover very sensitive the problems for mahalla women, such as marriage, divorce, place of women in the family, housekeeping, relationship between children and parents, education of girls, religious education in the family and so on. The analysis of responses to survey has revealed that the content of conversations with Bibiotuns is different. According to Bibiotuns' answers, more than 90% of communications were having religious character, but 61.3% of Bibiotuns indicated that they mainly talk about family issues.

As for public opinion, it defines a common view and psychology of mahalla. It can be expressed emphatically, instructively or observationally. Public opinion regulates the behavior of an individual and creates certain norms and behavior criteria. The activities of Bibiotuns may affect those norms. Naturally, there other factors that shape the public opinion apart from Bibiotuns performance. However, one can hardly ignore the impact that Bibiotuns have on women in mahallas and on forming the codes of their conducts.

The content of conversations with Bibiotuns corresponds to particulars of the public opinion, especially at the grassroots level, as public opinion, same as Bibiotuns' propaganda covers both true reflection of reality, and erroneous interpretation of phenomena. In other words, the public opinion consists of complex elements, of both correct and incorrect ideas, true and false values having the nature of legends and fantasies, and there is a share of Bibiotuns as well.

The survey found that Bibiotuns' view of their life is full of contradictions, which being spread in such a form and can adversely influence the public opinion. At the same time, there are other scientific-theoretical and political ideas in the society that particularly emerge during political events. However, this is not the subject of our survey.

We must also take into consideration the other very important point that today Bibiotuns are replenished with women having middle, secondary vocational and even higher education, which can, however, influence the method and content of their propaganda. Indeed, their advocacy to date have more scientific elements and common sense. Thus, along with increasing level of education, the content of their outreach activities, methods and techniques of influence on women will be changed and advanced as well.

Another important issue is the development of moral consciousness and behavior of women, who can be affected by Bibiotuns' awareness. During the interview, Bibiotuns themselves have indicated that their mission is the moral upbringing of women and girls, promotion of moral values, and ethics of family life and housekeeping. Speaking about the actions of modern women, Bibiotuns have talked more about the way of life, about how women dress, their ability to show respect in communications and so on. The main topics of discussions and Bibiotuns' advocacy among women are the relationships with their husbands, parents, upbringing of children, different kinds of precepts, etc. This is how they attract women.

In general, activities performed by Bibiotuns have certain impact on minds of women and on forming the elements of their consciousness. Certainly, not in all cases it influences similarly, monotonously and not always contributes to raising awareness among women, but in anyways, such influence and impact exists and we cannot ignore its role in shaping female consciousness.

## RECOMMENDATION

Improving the socio-economic situation of rural women – one of the challenges to achieving de facto gender equality, prevent the spread of extremism. Meanwhile, this problem cannot be addressed without taking into account many other problems (economic, social and cultural) that are equally applicable to all socio-demographic groups and regions in the whole country. It is important to:

- Promote the professional education coverage for women;
- Promote the development of institutional capacity to improve economic activity in the regions, based on the functional analysis outcomes of business support centers, Jamoats, crisis centers, legal clinics. The expected outcome should trigger mechanisms for functioning of informational and educational activities in the region on a permanent, systematic basis.

### **Practical recommendations and proposals to prevent adverse events (especially extremism and radicalization) among women:**

Based on information received from the respondents, it is necessary to adopt the following measures to prevent negative factors that directly affect the growth of radicalism and extremism among women in the country:

- Create new jobs;
- Further strengthen common state ideology;
- Construct modern infrastructure in the field;
- Successful implementation of the state policy on the role of women in society;
- The State support for family institution;
- Publication of analytical and educational materials in media;
- Appropriate and successful use of social networks;
- Production of qualitative feature films and TV series;
- Develop traditional handicrafts;
- Promote women for leadership;
- Gradual complete education coverage for young girls;
- Organization of short-term language courses, different professions and learning contemporary skills;
- Streamlining activities of executive state bodies in the field, i.e. strengthen municipal authorities in Jamoats, mahalla and guzars (*community*), and in the cities by increasing their staffing on the account of downsizing the staffing of higher authorities;
- Strengthen the effective communication between executive state bodies, law enforcement agencies and the population, particularly with members of “Bibiotun” (spiritual mentors);
- In the keeping with the times, improve professional training of law enforcement personnel, relevant services, employees of public institutions dealing with women

- and families, youth, servants of official clergy through competitive selection while hiring and possible increase in their wages;
- Support the initiative of Khujand City Administration leadership to carrying out target-oriented work with “Bibiotuns” (spiritual mentors), in order to control their activities;
  - Analysis of Social Survey outcomes found that the majority of migrants, mainly young girls and boys are recruited by illegal radical groups during labor migration outside the country and this is one of the negative aspects of migration, thereby representatives of executive state authorities responsible for labor migration issues must purposefully and systematically address that challenge;
  - Low level of awareness among state authorities, first of all among those authorities that responsible for labor migration issues and to work with migrants in airports, railway stations, bus terminals, who travel to and return from migration;
  - Strengthen advocacy in public areas - large markets, where most of the population spend their time;
  - In promoting the worthy representatives from female entrepreneurs to introduce the practice of providing benefits and privileges such as reducing rent prices for facilities, allocation of land, allocation of quotas for their children education, concessional loans and grants;
  - State radio and television has yet to become reliable source in shaping public opinion in most regions of the Republic on recognition of the ideas of extremism, radicalism and terrorism. It is needed to produce a standing TV Program to explain pernicious ideas and views of extremism and radicalism through radio and TV involving leading experts and specialists in this field;
  - This Survey revealed that up to date, public sports and entertainment programs, and concerts of Russian and Uzbekistan TV are still popular and most watched at public places - markets, public catering;
  - One of the most powerful source in shaping public opinion is the global Internet and social networks so popular among young people, who connect using their mobile phones, tablets and laptops, however extremist and radical elements take an advantage of this situation for their mercenary motives. In this regard, it is necessary to strengthen the counter-propaganda within the Tajik segment of the Internet jointly with relevant state services;
  - In order to strengthen the impact of public policies on the ground and to enhance the role of state authorities it must introduce the position - Deputy Chairmen of Jamoats to work with women and youth on migration issues;
  - Where possible, it is necessary to establish Councils of spiritual mentors (Bibiotuns) in Jamoats engaging Heads of Mahallas and Guzars, and respected women;
  - Taking into account a large number of major markets in the Sughd Oblast, the existence of a huge number of foreign citizens, merchants and entrepreneurs, it is necessary to strengthen and expand the work of state authorities and law enforcement agencies aimed at controlling over their activities;
  - To improve the poor standard of education among Imam Khatibs working at mosques it is necessary reactivate the earlier existed official religious madrassas, where girls could be trained on basics of Islamic education along with the young boys.

