



БОЛЬШИЕ АМБИЦИИ РЕГИОНАЛЬНЫХ ЛИДЕРОВ

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PREREQUISITES FOR THE SPREAD OF ISLAMIST TERRORISM IN CENTRAL ASIA AT THE TURN OF THE 20th – 21st CENTURIES

Denis N. Gergilev

Siberian Federal University, Krasnoyarsk, Russian Federation;
Krasnoyarsk Scientific Center of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences,
Krasnoyarsk, Russian Federation

Tatyana V. Izluchenko

Siberian Federal University, Krasnoyarsk, Russian Federation;
Krasnoyarsk Scientific Center of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences,
Krasnoyarsk, Russian Federation

Abstract. *Introduction.* The Central Asian region has attracted the attention of international terrorist organizations since the end of the 20th century. These organizations gain the support of the local population, increase the number of participants, and put pressure on legitimate political institutions. The radical changes they propose are supported by the youth community. *Methods and materials.* The methodological basis of the study is the theory of social constructivism and the theory of securitization, which ensured the consideration of Islamist terrorism as a socio-political construct that poses a threat to destabilize the region. The political-historical approach and the theory of R. Putnam contributed to consideration of the geopolitical situation in the analysis of the growing influence of terrorist organizations. *Analysis and results.* The authors note the following as factors of sustainability of the ideology of terrorism: religious and educational conditions contribute to increasing incompetence in matters of religion and belief in the words of spiritual leaders without sufficient grounds and, as a consequence, receptiveness to radical ideas. Nation-building processes based on cultural revival reinforce the secular nature of religious-state relations and freedom of conscience. This leads to the growth of diverse religious organizations and public dissatisfaction with the declining influence of Islam, the traditional religion in the region. The quest for control over religious organizations leads to contradictory and unconstructive political decisions. The misalignment of geographic and state borders contributes to the emergence of ethnic enclaves and ethno-religious conflicts. The results of this investigation will allow optimizing counterterrorism measures and developing effective management solutions in the state-religious sphere. *Authors' contribution.* D.N. Gergilev developed the theoretical and methodological framework for the study and interpreted the data obtained on the activities of international terrorist organizations. T.V. Izluchenko analyzed the dominant trends in ensuring the security of states of Central Asia, revealed the established approaches in scientific discourse, and identified factors of sustainability of the spread of Islamist ideas.

Key words: Islamist terrorism, Central Asia, ethno-religious conflicts, religious education, propaganda, Islamism.

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**ПРЕДПОСЫЛКИ РАСПРОСТРАНЕНИЯ ИСЛАМИСТСКОГО ТЕРРОРИЗМА
В ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ АЗИИ НА РУБЕЖЕ XX–XXI ВЕКОВ****Денис Николаевич Гергилев**Сибирский федеральный университет, г. Красноярск, Российская Федерация;
Красноярский научный центр Сибирского отделения РАН, г. Красноярск, Российская Федерация**Татьяна Владимировна Излученко**Сибирский федеральный университет, г. Красноярск, Российская Федерация;
Красноярский научный центр Сибирского отделения РАН, г. Красноярск, Российская Федерация

Аннотация. *Введение.* С конца XX в. Центрально-Азиатский регион привлекает внимание международных террористических организаций. Они получают поддержку населения, увеличивают количество участников и оказывают давление на легитимные политические институты. Предлагаемые ими радикальные изменения находят содействие в молодежной среде. *Методы и материалы.* Методологической основой исследования стали социальный конструктивизм и теория секьюритизации. Исламистский терроризм рассматривается социально-политическим конструктом, который позиционируется угрозой безопасности региона. Политико-исторический подход и теория Р. Патнэма способствовали учету геополитического положения при анализе непрекращающегося влияния террористических организаций. *Анализ и результаты.* В качестве факторов устойчивости идеологии терроризма авторами отмечается следующее. Первое, религиозно-образовательные условия способствуют усилению некомпетентности в вопросах вероисповедания и убежденности в словах духовных лидеров без достаточного основания и, как следствие, восприимчивости к радикальным идеям. Процессы национального строительства на основе культурного возрождения закрепляют светский характер религиозно-государственных отношений и свободу совести. Это приводит к росту разнообразных религиозных организаций и недовольству населения снижением влияния традиционной для региона религии ислам. Стремление к контролю над религиозными организациями приводит к противоречивым и малоконструктивным политическим решениям. Несовпадение географических и государственных границ способствует возникновению этнических анклавов и этнорелигиозных конфликтов. Полученные результаты позволяют оптимизировать антитеррористические меры и разработать эффективные управленческие решения в государственно-религиозной сфере. *Вклад авторов.* Д.Н. Гергилев разработал теоретико-методологическую базу исследования, интерпретировал полученные данные по деятельности международных террористических организаций. Т.В. Излученко проанализировала доминирующие тенденции в обеспечении безопасности государств Центральной Азии, выявила сложившиеся в научном дискурсе подходы и определила факторы устойчивости распространения исламистских идей.

Ключевые слова: исламистский терроризм, Центральная Азия, этнорелигиозные конфликты, религиозное образование, пропаганда, исламизм.

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Introduction. International terrorism is a key issue addressed in contemporary research on societal and state security. It poses a threat to socio-political stability, civil liberties, and ethno-religious identity [21]. Various international agreements (Shanghai Cooperation Organization Convention against Terrorism, 2009; Decision of the Committee of Secretaries of the Security Councils of the Collective Security Treaty

Organization, 2016) and national legislative acts (National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation, 2021; Law of Republic of Tajikistan on Combating Terrorism, 1999) are devoted to countering it. International terrorist organizations are particularly active in Central Asia. Radical ideas and terrorist ideology have remained persistently widespread among Central Asian youth for three decades.

The geographical location of Central Asia determines its strategic importance as a space where global players implement their geopolitical and geocultural projects. By launching relevant socio-political initiatives, it is possible to influence the nature of interactions between Central Asian countries and their neighbors in the international arena. Thus, some states vying for political control in the region (the United States, Great Britain, and France) are using Islam, the traditional religion of the local population, as a tool of political pressure: exacerbating political crises, growing cultural nationalism, and fueling ethnoreligious conflicts. This has resulted in the emergence of Islamist terrorist organizations and their attempts to establish quasi-religious states with medieval customs.

Many researchers identify factors that are generally associated with the collapse of the USSR and the emergence of new independent states in the region as the basis for the ongoing growth of terrorist tensions in Central Asia [6, pp. 86-87]. First, the socioeconomic situation of the population, characterized by a low standard of living, economic stagnation, unemployment, and, consequently, social tension. Second, the ideological vacuum that arose after the rejection of Soviet ideology and atheistic positions. Third, the proximity of states such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Syria, where various Islamist terrorist organizations operate, makes Central Asia a transit territory for the spread of terrorist ideology to Russia, Europe, and the Middle East. However, the sustainability of Islamist terrorist ideas as a tool of political intervention and control remains poorly understood. The need for constructive proposals has been emphasized by the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (Ashgabat). The goal of our study is to identify the factors that ensure the persistence of the perception and dissemination of Islamist terrorist ideas among the local population. The findings will contribute to the development of optimal management solutions in countering terrorism at the international and national levels, taking into account regional specifics.

Methods and materials. Within the framework of social constructivism, Islamist terrorism is viewed as a phenomenon of social reality, jointly constructed by the international community, experts and researchers, the general public, religious organizations, and the participants themselves. Perceptions of this phenomenon are

historically shaped by the communications system and reflect the needs and interests of specific social groups in Central Asia. Barry Buzan's securitization theory contributed to the understanding of Islamist terrorist organizations as a security threat, designated as such by the states of the region but insufficiently perceived by the population. The influence of geopolitical factors on the spread of Islamist sentiments among regional communities, influenced by global economic processes and globalization trends, was examined through a political-historical approach. Robert D. Putnam's political theory allowed for an analysis of the socio-religious dynamics of the region, identifying structural and functional changes and the political transformation of state institutions.

Analysis. After the collapse of the USSR, the territory of Central Asia became accessible to international research. Western specialists are particularly interested not so much in economic factors as in cultural specifics and the relationship between religious tradition and contemporary social trends. Liu Y. Morgan demonstrates the formation of ideological principles (idioms) and ethnic identity under the influence of urban space. This is manifested in architecture, language, communications, and behavioral patterns. Islamic revival is positioned as a restoration of pre-Soviet ancestral values in the process of nation-building. This results in the creation of communities of trust between people of different social statuses united by their affiliation with a common faith. Relationships between government and citizens are based on trust and symbolic capital [22, p. 267]. Martha B. Olcott emphasizes the role of Islam as a key factor that allows states in the region to structure domestic policies, organize international cooperation, and strengthen public authority. Containing an Islamic revival among young people is more difficult than combating the secular opposition [23, p. 63].

Western researchers' focus on cultural specifics stems from their intention to identify conflict zones and established patterns of ethnoreligious interaction. This data is necessary to enhance the effectiveness of international institutions and the nonviolent promotion of the political interests of third countries in the region. These initiatives are being implemented in a practice-oriented manner through the establishment

of educational institutions specializing in the social sciences and humanities and the training of local intellectual elites. For example, the mission of the American University of Central Asia (Bishkek) is to promote critical thinking and education in the traditions of the humanities and civic engagement with the goal of educating a new generation of citizens [2]. Westminster International University (Tashkent) publishes the journal "Silk Road: A Journal of Eurasian Development." It advances research in the fields of social science and public policy, making the countries of the Great Silk Road an area of particular interest.

The activities of international terrorist organizations are studied in the context of the interrelationships between violence and religion. Mark Jurgensmeyer notes the absence of precedents free from violence of religious traditions. He argues that violence is not directly generated by religion but is used as a performative event, carrying the perpetrators' symbolic statement. Religious tradition, in turn, provides the ideology of terrorism with the meaning of cosmic warfare, incorporating violence into a system of rules and sacred history. Thus, a "culture of violence" is formed, which is based on alternative interpretations of religious concepts, in particular jihad [17, p. 35]. Earthly conflicts are interpreted as a reflection of the confrontation between good and evil, truth and lies, and the struggle of supernatural actors – God (Allah) and the devil (Dajjal). Shukhrat G. Gaiibnazarov emphasizes the artificiality of the term "Islamist terrorism," created by Western researchers. They note that this phenomenon is an essential distortion of the tenets of Islam, "so that while maintaining external similarities... the internal meaning is changed beyond recognition" [11, p. 420].

In connection with the above and the references to sacred texts, as well as the justification by religious doctrine, it is correct to speak of the phenomenon of religious terrorism, specifically Islamist or Islamic terrorism. Jacob Rogozinsky advocates the use of the latter term. Noting the artificiality of the term "Islamism" in the West, he argues that "the tiny '-ism' supposedly allows us to separate the wheat from the chaff and distinguish Islam from this horrific Islamism... Alas, in the Muslim world such a distinction is hardly applicable" [26, pp. 24-26]. Leonid R. Syukiyaynen also justifies the use of

the term "Islamic extremism." He emphasizes that Islamic concepts form the core of the ideological justification and that members of Islamist terrorist organizations are guided by Islamic tenets and legal concepts [27, p. 477].

Igor P. Dobaev takes the opposite position regarding references to Islamic tradition. He defines Islamism as a political phenomenon that includes an ideological doctrine and socio-political practice. In this context, "true Islam" is contrasted with the so-called "infidels," both external and internal. As a result, systems of values and principles are formed that become the basis for ideological, political, and military confrontation [7, p. 132]. Noa Gur-Arie points out that in Russia the term "Islamism" is used primarily for political movements based on the principles of Islamic fundamentalism, and the term "Wahhabism" is used for ideas that are not of the Hanafi madhhab [13, p. 178]. Leonid E. Grinin and Andrei Korotaev propose a definition of Islamism as a political trend and ideology based on the superiority of Islam and the need to apply its principles in everyday life. "Islamism is not something superficial, but the deepest and most comprehensive substance of Islamic societies" [12, pp. 84-85, 91].

Among Western researchers, the term "jihadism" predominates to describe radical manifestations and the ideology of terrorism that refers to Islam. It emphasizes an extremely radical interpretation of Islamic tenets, which is embodied in acts of violence around the world. According to Colin Clark and Assaf Moghadam, jihadism has a common narrative for all participants. It shapes the perception of an ongoing clash between Islamic society and military, political, cultural, and religious attacks by numerous usurpers (crusaders, Zionists, and apostates). The ideology of jihad enjoins every "true Muslim" to defend Islam within the framework of armed jihad, which in the modern era has acquired an offensive, preemptive character [5, p. 348]. Tor Benjaminsen and Ba Boubacar point out the importance of taking into account local political and environmental contexts, which determine the basis for popular support for the idea of social justice promoted by terrorists [4].

In our view, identifying the religious affiliation of members of terrorist organizations seems to be a feasible and methodologically effective action for the researcher. First, it emphasizes the intrinsic

side of expressing the interests and needs of religious terrorists. Second, it points out Islam as a religion whose doctrine is “debased” through a return to archaism and violence. Third, it reveals the desacralization of sacrifice and how terrorists frame themselves as victims. Fourth, it exposes the manipulation of religious concepts to justify violence. Islam, like other religions, has the resources to justify deeds, bolster the moral convictions of followers, and legitimize their actions. Terrorist organizations are taking advantage of these resources. They motivate and integrate the participants by exercising social control over them, as well as performing behavioral acts, positioning their activities as part of sacred historical narrative.

The selection of appropriate terminology to describe this phenomenon (Islamist, Islamism, Islamic, jihadist, fundamentalist) should be context-dependent. The chosen term must accurately reflect the researcher’s conceptual understanding of the relationship between political and religious factors and align with their academic tradition. Thus, in our research, the term “Islamist” highlights two key aspects: a) the political dimension of religious movements in the Central Asian region; b) the transformation of Islamic tradition in accordance with promoted sociopolitical projects, such as the establishment of a global caliphate. When examining the religious foundations of terrorism, one should not overlook nonreligious factors, whose significant influence is particularly evident at the regional level.

One particular topic in discussing Islamist terrorism in Central Asia is the causes of its spread. Albert Beloglazov identifies the following factors:

first, political conditions that include, on the one hand, the exploitation of Islam as a policy instrument to create a new national identity and build sovereign states, and, on the other hand, Islam serving as the basis for opposition activities, with governments accused of departing from established traditions; second, socioeconomic conditions determined by oppositional attitudes and the desire for social mobility among young people; and third, cultural and ideological conditions that allow Islam to function as a new unifying force in the region [3, pp. 20-22]. Many researchers identify the political factor as a key driver for spreading the Islamist ideas, linking this trend to the process of state-building and political system formation in newly independent states of the region following the USSR collapse. Konstantin Polyakov emphasizes the growing influence of international terrorist organizations such as “Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami”*. This is due to the weak political power in the region and the incorporation of Islam into the political opposition as a basis for accusing the government of deviating from ancestral traditions. For example, the terrorist organization “Islamic Movement of Turkestan”** proclaims its goal to be the forcible overthrow of the “apostate” rulers [24, p. 9]. Andrey Suleimenov conducted a SWOT analysis of the opposing spatial strategies of terrorist organizations “Al-Qaeda”*** and “Islamic State”4*. The political division of the region has been identified as an opportunity for their realization. It is precisely this that enables the establishment of an umbrella organization for ethno-religious terrorist groups united by anti-Western ideas and the project of a global caliphate [28, p. 121]. Fachri Aidulsyah characterizes the appeal of radical Islam,

* Decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation dated February 14, 2003, No. GKPI 03116 – to designate Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami (Party of Islamic Liberation) as a terrorist organization and to prohibit its activities on the territory of the Russian Federation. URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/20160108040711/http://nac.gov.ru/content/3934.html>

** Decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation dated February 14, 2003, No. GKPI 03116 – to designate the Islamic Party of Turkestan (formerly the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan) as a terrorist organization and to prohibit its activities on the territory of the Russian Federation. URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/20160108040711/http://nac.gov.ru/content/3934.html>

*** Decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation dated February 14, 2003, No. GKPI 03116 – to designate Al-Qaeda as a terrorist organization and to prohibit its activities on the territory of the Russian Federation. URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/20160108040711/http://nac.gov.ru/content/3934.html>

4* Decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation of December 29, 2014, No. AKPI14-1424S – to designate the international organization the Islamic State as a terrorist organization and to prohibit its activities on the territory of the Russian Federation. URL: <https://www.consultant.ru/cons/cgi/online.cgi?req=doc&base=ARB&n=417350#5vAqWIVolleDBN8w1>

particularly “urban Salafism.” He notes that it facilitates the blending of urban youth groups’ pop culture with the Islamic tradition of Arabism, as well as the organizing of mass campaigns that promote Islamic narratives and cultural values in a hybrid style [1, p. 257].

However, the positions considered above do not fully explain the sustainability of the acceptance of Islamist ideas and the involvement of Central Asian youth in the activities of Islamist terrorist organizations. The demand and attractiveness of the project to create an Islamic theocratic state (a world caliphate) remain open, which leads to violations of state sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the commission of criminal acts. To achieve this goal, young people are ready to radically change their patterns of thinking and behavior and organize their daily lives in accordance with medieval norms. This occurs against the backdrop of the global fight against terrorism, which significantly worsens their political and economic situation and complicates their social lives.

Results. Solving the problem of Islamist terrorism is for the states of Central Asia not only an item on the political agenda but also a necessary condition for sustainable development, formation of civic identity, reduction of ethno-religious tensions, and separatist sentiments. Numerous terrorist organizations justify and legitimize their violent activities by appealing to Islamic tradition, which is deeply rooted in the local culture. The socio-political projects they promote – such as the establishment of a global caliphate – entail a fundamental repainting of the political map, which is already fragmented and contested in many regions. The terrorist acts (Andizhan, 2005; Bishkek and Osh, 2002–2003) attest to the struggle between terrorist organizations for control over this territory. This conflict exacerbates the complex situation and prompts political institutions to make ambiguous decisions in the state-religious sphere.

We highlight the following groups of factors that contribute to the acceptance, relevance, and popularity of Islamist ideas among Central Asian youth. Note that these factors have not previously been considered in terms of the sustainability of the ideology of terrorism and the activities of Islamist terrorist organizations in this region over the last three decades.

Religious and educational conditions represent the first group. In the Central Asian

region, there is a limited number of official religious education institutions. Thus, the MiriArab madrasa in Bukhara – established in 1946 and enrolling only 40 students by 1961 – and the Tashkent Islamic Institute, named after Imam al-Bukhari and founded in 1971 [10, pp. 42–43], could not satisfy the religious expectations of the local population and prepare qualified personnel in the necessary number to develop a civilized traditional version of Islam. It would raise the general level of religious education, thereby reducing the appeal of terrorist ideology in the long run.

The demand for religious education provokes the growth of illegal educational institutions (khujr), which deal with Islamic upbringing and spiritual training for all interested individuals. This tradition of home-based religious education – particularly at the primary level (maktab) – is widespread among communities with Arab-Muslim cultural heritage. This tradition functions under the authority of a spiritual leader without formal confirmation of his professional training. For centuries, maktabas have been established in mosques and private houses. They were respected by the masses, supported by donations and income from waqf lands. According to Muslim cultural norms, education in such institutions was traditionally conducted separately. Girls were taught by the imam’s wife, a qadi, or a woman proficient in Arabic and experienced in teaching, while boys were taught by the imam, a qadi, or the most capable of his students [9, p. 943]. In this context, neither state authorities nor community bodies can ensure proper monitoring of educational program content or qualification of teaching staff.

At the end of the 20th century, these institutions became places where Central Asian youth were extensively exposed to radical Islam and Islamism and recruited into international Islamist terrorist organizations. The older generation of believers lacked sufficient experience and expertise in theological matters to effectively counter such extremist indoctrination, while the official Islamic clergy had limited authority among young people, who viewed them as accomplices of political regimes and supporters of the status quo. Under these conditions, it was impossible to discern the distinction between historically familiar local interpretations of the union of political and spiritual authority (exemplified by the Emirate of Bukhara and the

Khanate of Khiva) and the project of a global caliphate propagated by Islamists.

The second set of factors includes nation-building processes and the development of civil society. The state promotes the belonging of individuals or groups to a political and/or socio-cultural community in order to democratize and institutionalize rights and duties at different political levels. Civil society provides a space for constructive dialogue and consultation. However, this space may be restricted because of security threats posed by terrorism [25, p. 146]. As Rustam Haydarov notes, national unity is a supreme value that indicates the importance of each nation, political independence, and protection against the subversive influence of religious-political extremism [14, p. 115]. While agreeing with this view, it is crucial to recognize that strong national identity and intercultural dialogue within a multiethnic society also ensure religious identity. Currently, religious identity is growing among Central Asian youth, despite living in a multicultural environment that has been shaped by modern Western European values. These values encourage multiple identities – a context that contrasts with traditional Islamic norms. Young people emphasize that their practice of Islam is their personal choice, made as a reflection of religious beliefs. They acknowledge the cultural tension between their religious identity and dominant individualistic values [8, p. 34].

Soviet atheist propaganda in Central Asia has led to a lack of basic knowledge among the local population about Islam, their own culture, and the traditions of other peoples who have lived together for many centuries. This situation has created a crisis of religious identity, manifested in a) the search for religious truths among adherents of Islam and leaders of Muslim movements in Egypt and Saudi Arabia and b) the rise of cultural nationalism. The crisis was exacerbated by secular governments' attempts to construct a civic identity, ignoring the population's historical religiosity but emphasizing ethnic cultural identity. However, young people seek clear behavioral models that are reinforced by religious values. Thus, the goal of the concept for the development of civil identity "Kyrgyz Zharany" in the Kyrgyz Republic for 2021–2026 is defined as fostering a cohesive civic community of citizens, transcending ethnic, cultural, and religious differences, united

by the desire to strengthen the sovereignty of the country and its welfare [20]. At the same time, Kyrgyzstan declares over two thousand years of statehood, continuity of democracy from the steppe peoples, and the key role in shaping the nation of the epic "Manas." Local researcher Misirali Koldoshev emphasizes that some elements of the epic reflect ethnic customs and values that modern youth should strive to follow in their lives and draw moral lessons from them [19, p. 67].

After the collapse of the USSR, the newly independent states of Central Asia declared a political course for the revival of ethnic, religious, and spiritual historical values. It has been accompanied by a reevaluation of historical narratives, notably regarding the region's incorporation into the Russian Empire and its role within the Soviet state. Thus, in Uzbekistan, the educational course "The Idea of National Independence: Basic Concepts and Principles" was introduced in 2001. Its objectives are defined as follows: (1) To unite the population with a common vision for national development, (2) To foster pride in the nation's ancestral heritage, enduring spiritual values, and time-honored traditions, (3) To cultivate civic responsibility and devotion to the homeland [15, pp. 6-7]. In 2012, a decree was issued "On the Establishment of a Commission for the Development of Historical Science under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Creation of the Fund for the Historical and Cultural Heritage of the People of Kyrgyzstan 'Muras.'" In 2016, this commission held a commemorative event titled "1916–2016: The National Liberation Uprising and the Great Urkun," marking the centenary of the 1916 Central Asian uprising, with a particular focus on Kyrgyzstan and the tragedy of the Great Urkun.

The third group of factors encompasses contradictory decisions by governments in Central Asian states regarding state-religion relations. On the one hand, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan have proclaimed policies of religious tolerance and affirmed the secular status of the state. On the other hand, these governments have tightened regulatory control over religious organizations, including measures such as censorship of religious literature and bans on the registration of new religious groups. These policies generate public discontent, impede the development of religious literacy, and render citizens more vulnerable to Islamist propaganda.

In 2010, the Committee on Religious Regulation of Traditions, Celebrations, and Rituals under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan was established. Its responsibilities include coordination of the election of imam-khatibs and imams of mosques, as well as overseeing the regulation of traditions, celebrations, and rituals. Even the ambivalent state support for religious organizations exercising the right to freedom of conscience – particularly those perceived by the population as challenging Islamic traditions – is often interpreted as undermining ancestral culture and departure from historical roots in favor of foreign influences (notably Russia, the USA, and Iran). For example, citizens of Tajikistan demonstrate misunderstanding regarding the active work of Zoroastrians, in particular Abdulkadir Talbakov's attempts to register the relevant organization.

The fourth set of factors is the geography of the region. Geographical conditions historically determine the specifics of economic activity, ethnic-based settlement patterns, and the nature of interethnic interaction. In the context of modern geopolitical realities, they have begun to contribute to the emergence of ethnic enclaves and interethnic conflicts. The Fergana Valley exhibits a mosaic type of ethnogeographical configuration. Within the context of acute socioeconomic challenges, this spatial arrangement significantly amplifies the region's conflict potential. Some ethnic groups are not territorially organized and segregated. However, they harbor strong social cohesion and separatist tendencies. Others, while possessing a titular state, nonetheless maintain significant populations in neighboring countries [18, p. 55]. In 2010, the Osh conflict erupted in the city of Osh, Kyrgyz Republic. This event has clearly demonstrated that the mismatch of traditional economic activities of the local Uzbek population and natural boundaries of the Fergana

valley with state borders can exacerbate nationalist sentiments.

The sustainability of Islamist ideologies in Central Asia is also facilitated by the following factors: (a) The geographical proximity of states where active terrorist activities are carried out and theocratic social-political projects (creation of a global caliphate), (b) Opening to the local population the training centers of major international Islamist terrorist organizations. In the 1990s, combatants from the Tajik Civil War (1992–1997) were ideologically supported and redirected into terrorist organizations based in Afghanistan and Pakistan. However, over the past decade, the primary source of such influence has shifted to the Syrian Arab Republic. Within its borders, numerous international terrorist organizations, such as the "Jebhat al-Nusra"*, the "Islamic State"** and the "Hayat Tahrir al-Sham"***, which unite ethnic groups of people from Central Asian countries, operate. Strict anti-terrorism measures prevent Islamist terrorism from openly interfering with public policy. However, these measures are not able to limit the growth of illegal activities, the functioning of informal madrassas and mosques, or participation of citizens along ethnic lines in international terrorist organizations based abroad [16, p. 296].

Conclusion. In summary, it is worth noting the complexity of the problem of the spread and resilience of Islamist ideas in Central Asia. This is largely due to the historical events of the late 20th and early 21st centuries and the specific nature of nation-state formation in complex ethnoreligious conditions. Nation-building measures do not always take into account the need of young people for religious identity and social activism. Gaps in state youth policy are being exploited by Islamist terrorist organizations, whose calls for a radical change in social reality and proposed behaviors and mindsets resonate with a large share of young people. Their

* Decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation of December 29, 2014, No. AKPI14-1424S – to designate the international organization Jabhat al-Nusra as a terrorist organization and to prohibit its activities on the territory of the Russian Federation. URL: <https://www.consultant.ru/cons/cgi/online.cgi?req=doc&base=ARB&n=417350#5vAqWIVolleDBN8w1>

** Decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation of December 29, 2014, No. AKPI14-1424S – to designate the international organization the Islamic State as a terrorist organization and to prohibit its activities on the territory of the Russian Federation. URL: <https://www.consultant.ru/cons/cgi/online.cgi?req=doc&base=ARB&n=417350#5vAqWIVolleDBN8w1>

*** Decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation of June 4, 2020, No. AKPI20-275S – to designate the organization Hayat Tahrir al-Sham as a terrorist organization and to prohibit its activities on the territory of the Russian Federation. URL: <http://www.fsb.ru/fsb/npd/terror.htm>

sociopolitical projects – such as the creation of a global caliphate – substitute concrete proposals for social justice and improvement of living conditions with abstract assertions and violent methods. The violent activities of Islamist terrorists are accompanied by the incitement of interethnic conflicts and the violation of state sovereignty. The use of familiar narratives about a just state

and the heroic deeds of ancestors, as well as low levels of religious education, ensures support and approval of Islamist ideas among young people.

The presented results highlight the need for more specialized research and underscore the necessity of developing effective counterterrorism programs targeting religiously inclined youth and fostering a competitive worldview.

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Information About the Authors

Denis N. Gergilev, Doctor of Sciences (History), Associate Professor, Head of the Department of History of Russia, World and Regional Civilizations, Siberian Federal University, Prosp. Svobodny, 82A, 660041 Krasnoyarsk, Russian Federation; Leading Researcher, Laboratory for Historical and Socio-Economic Research in Siberia and Central Asia, Krasnoyarsk Scientific Center of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Akademgorodok St, 50, 660036 Krasnoyarsk, Russian Federation, turilak@yandex.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4913-4803>

Tatyana V. Izluchenko, Candidate of Sciences (Philosophy), Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, Siberian Federal University, Prosp. Svobodny, 82A, 660041 Krasnoyarsk, Russian Federation; Senior Researcher, Laboratory for Historical and Socio-Economic Research in Siberia and Central Asia, Krasnoyarsk Scientific Center of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Akademgorodok St, 50, 660036 Krasnoyarsk, Russian Federation, izluchenko@mail.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5644-301X>

Информация об авторах

Денис Николаевич Гергилев, доктор исторических наук, доцент, заведующий кафедрой истории России, мировых и региональных цивилизаций, Сибирский федеральный университет,

просп. Свободный, 82А, 660041 г. Красноярск, Российская Федерация; ведущий научный сотрудник лаборатории исторических и социально-экономических исследований Сибири и Центральной Азии, Красноярский научный центр Сибирского отделения РАН, ул. Академгородок, 50, 660036 г. Красноярск, Российская Федерация, turilak@yandex.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4913-4803>

Татьяна Владимировна Излученко, кандидат философских наук, доцент кафедры философии, Сибирский федеральный университет, просп. Свободный, 82А, 660041 г. Красноярск, Российская Федерация; старший научный сотрудник лаборатории исторических и социально-экономических исследований Сибири и Центральной Азии, Красноярский научный центр Сибирского отделения РАН, ул. Академгородок, 50, 660036 г. Красноярск, Российская Федерация, izluchenko@mail.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5644-301X>