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SOME ASPECTS OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM

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Abstract:

This article analyzes the dynamics and changing trends of women's participation in religious extremism and terrorism. The study examines the socio-economic and psychological factors that contribute to the involvement of women in radical movements, as well as their role in preventing extremism. Special attention is paid to state policies and social initiatives aimed at countering the spread of extremist ideologies among women. The findings highlight the importance of preventive and educational measures in addressing radicalization processes.

Keywords: women, religious extremism, terrorism, radicalization, social factors.

Introduction Today, terrorism and religious extremism are among the most complex socio-political problems posing a threat to global security. In recent years, the issue of women's participation in extremist organizations has gained particular scientific and practical importance. Previously, women were mainly considered victims of terrorism or family members of terrorists; however, today their direct involvement in extremist activities is increasingly observed.

In Uzbekistan, this issue is also given special attention at the level of state policy. In particular, the national strategy for combating extremism and terrorism emphasizes increasing the role of women in society and involving them widely in preventive activities as one of the key priorities. Therefore, analyzing the



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causes and trends of radicalization processes involving women has become an urgent scientific task.

Methodology

The study employed historical, systematic, and comparative analysis methods. In addition, archival materials, official statistical data, scientific literature, and information from mass media were analyzed.

Documents from the National Archive of Uzbekistan, state programs, legal and regulatory acts, as well as scientific studies and expert interviews served as the main sources. These methods made it possible to conduct a comprehensive analysis of women's participation in extremism and terrorism within historical and social contexts.

Literature Review

This issue has been studied by a number of researchers in recent years. In particular, studies devoted to women's social protection and their role in society are extensively covered in the scientific works of M. Kh. Shamsieva, where the activities of state and non-governmental organizations in this field during the years of independence are analyzed.

At the same time, some studies note an increase in the number of supporters of religious extremism among women in Central Asian countries. According to experts, women constitute approximately 15–20% of members of extremist organizations, indicating the global relevance of the issue.

Archival documents and periodical press materials also serve as important sources for studying women's participation in socio-political processes and the history of preventive measures against extremism.



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Analysis and Results

Traditionally, in Eastern societies, the image of a mother and a woman has been highly respected. A woman is recognized not only as a guarantor of family stability but also as an important social institution ensuring the continuity of generations. Therefore, in Eastern culture, the image of a mother is often associated with the concept of the Motherland, emphasizing its sacred and educational significance [1].

However, the socio-economic changes that occurred in the early years of independence led to certain negative social phenomena. For example, in the mid-1990s, there was a noticeable increase in female crime in Uzbekistan. According to 1996 statistics, the number of crimes committed by women reached 6,343, representing a 5.5% increase compared to the total number of crimes [2].

During this period, socio-psychological problems in society also affected youth. In 1997–1998, psychological issues among minors intensified, leading to an increase in suicide attempts. According to statistics, 261 minors attempted suicide in 1997 and 294 in 1998, with 168 and 209 fatalities respectively. This represented a 12.6% increase [4].

In response, state and public organizations focused on improving systems for working with women. For example, in 1998, a special sector for working with women was established within the Committee on Religious Affairs [3]. This structure played a role in promoting correct understanding of religion and preventing the spread of radical ideas.

Educational efforts were also intensified to explain the peaceful and humanistic nature of Islam and expose harmful extremist ideologies. Books, articles, roundtable discussions, and meetings were organized for this purpose [5].

To prevent social problems and strengthen the family institution, comprehensive state measures were implemented. Notably, in 1999, the “Year of Women State



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Program” was adopted, focusing on strengthening family relations, protecting the rights of women and children, safeguarding motherhood, and reducing youth crime [6].

At the same time, in the early 2000s, crimes related to extremism and terrorism were recorded. For instance, in 2001 there were 1,026 such crimes, rising to 2,214 in 2002. These involved individuals from various age groups, highlighting the need for enhanced preventive measures among youth and women [7].

In modern society, terrorism, extremism, nationalism, and militarization pose serious threats to global security. These processes negatively affect political stability, human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. Therefore, it is important for all segments of society, including women, to actively participate in combating these issues.

In recent years, the involvement of women in extremist groups has increased, which is particularly concerning given their important social and educational role. For example, 17 criminal cases were initiated against 20 women involved in extremism-related activities. Most of them were unemployed, indicating gaps in social support systems [9].

Statistical data also show an increase in women inclined toward extremist ideologies. For instance, in the first nine months of 2009, the number increased from 14,714 to 15,800 [10].

International research indicates that women constitute 15–20% of members of terrorist organizations. Moreover, not only Muslim women but also women from Europe and other religious backgrounds are involved, demonstrating the global nature of the issue [11].

In Central Asia, similar trends have been observed, with preventive measures introduced in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Although women’s radicalization



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does not always lead directly to terrorism, their social influence makes this issue particularly important.

Socio-economic factors such as unemployment, low social protection, financial difficulties, and perceived injustice play a significant role in women's vulnerability to extremist ideologies. Recruiters often exploit these conditions by offering financial support or employment opportunities.

In Uzbekistan, combating extremism and terrorism is a key direction of state policy. The National Strategy for 2021–2026 emphasizes preventing the spread of extremist ideas, strengthening tolerance, and increasing women's role in these efforts [12].

Conclusion

The research findings indicate that women's participation in extremism and terrorism is influenced by various social, economic, and psychological factors. Unemployment, low social protection, insufficient education, and family problems can increase susceptibility to radical ideas.

At the same time, women represent an important social group with strong educational and social influence. Therefore, increasing women's social activity, expanding their rights and opportunities, and improving educational and preventive systems are crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of anti-extremism measures.

This approach not only strengthens social stability but also plays a key role in preventing the spread of radical ideologies.

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