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**EVOLUTION OF RADICAL ISLAM AS A FORM OF POLITICAL
PROTEST IN THE CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS IN THE LATE SOVIET AND
POST-SOVIET PERIOD (ON THE EXAMPLE OF UZBEKISTAN, TAJIKISTAN,
AND KYRGYZSTAN)**

Specialty 5.5.2-Political institutions, processes, technologies

Abstract

dissertations for the degree of Candidate of political sciences

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The relevance of the topic of the dissertation research is due to the following circumstances:

- Firstly, radical Islam in the modern world is becoming a truly global phenomenon. Most of the largest Islamist groups, such as Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State (IS), Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami (HT) and similar ones, operate in a number of countries around the world. Moreover, their activity is not limited to countries with a predominantly Muslim population. They have their own underground cells in Europe, the United States, Russia, South-East and Central Asia, etc. and are capable not only of committing terrorist acts, but also of directly threatening the constitutional order in some states, especially given the fact that political issues are beginning to take an increasingly large place in the concept of radicals, including the creation of a terrorist organization. a global Islamic state-caliphate.
- Secondly, the Russian information space (mass media, public discussion, academic community – in part) continues to be dominated by the most simplified point of view on the division of Muslims into "tradicionals" and "radicals", and the latter are associated exclusively with Salafism or Wahhabism;
- Thirdly, despite the decline in radical activity compared to the 1990s, the problem of Islamism in the Central Asian republics remains extremely serious. People from Central Asian countries often become members of international fundamentalist groups. Ethnic Uzbeks, Tajiks and Kyrgyz in the ranks of the Islamic State actively participated in the fighting in the Middle East. Some of them continue to conduct terrorist activities, including in neighboring Afghanistan as part of the "branch" of the IS "Vilayat Khorasan", and some return to their countries and are quite capable of creating underground cells and recruiting new members. The importance of the issue of Islamic radicalism in Central Asia is clearly indicated by the results of sociological studies.
- Finally, the potential escalation of the situation in the Central Asian republics is fundamentally not in Russia's national interests. Two of the three countries studied (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) are Russia's allies in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). On their territory there are strategic Russian military facilities:

the 201st Russian military base and the optical-electronic complex "Window" in Tajikistan, as well as a joint Russian military base in Kyrgyzstan. In addition, all three countries are important trade and economic partners of the Russian Federation, and Kyrgyzstan is a member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). In addition, there is a risk of "exporting" Islamist ideas to the Russian Federation, which can become a threat to the country's national security.

The scientific novelty of the study:

1. It is proved that long-term Islamic rule (caliphate/imamate) is considered as an exclusively political phenomenon. It is a special variant of an undemocratic political regime that has a number of similarities with some forms of authoritarianism, but is characterized by the fundamental role of religion and does not imply sole authority.
2. As a result of the study of Islamic fundamentalism in the evolutionary context, it was concluded that radical Islam in the XX - XXI centuries, without losing its religious basis, is increasingly focused on the political agenda. This gives it additional opportunities for adaptation and distribution in those regions that were previously considered "unfriendly" for such ideological constructions (Europe, the United States, and the Russian Federation – partially).
3. It is revealed that in the Central Asian republics, the radicalization of Islam has a general trend associated with the unity of the cultural and religious space and the strong interconnection of the peoples inhabiting the region. Protest movements in Central Asian countries usually arise for socio-economic (sometimes political) reasons, but they are quickly supplemented by a religious component. And it is precisely this idea that becomes predominant, while Islam becomes the main factor consolidating the opposition.
4. It is established that in contrast to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan, radical Islam has not had a serious impact on the political process for a long time. The nomadic lifestyle influenced the level of religious knowledge, Sufi

connections, the importance of Islam in the daily life of Kyrgyz people, as well as resistance to Soviet atheist propaganda. For the majority of the Kyrgyz population, the level of national and clan identity still prevails over religious identity.

5. It is revealed that in recent years, public attitudes in the Kyrgyz society have gradually begun to change, and the influence of factors that "restrain" Islamization is decreasing. Citizens' confidence in religious organizations is steadily growing (political organizations have traditionally remained low) and the demand for political Islam is growing, which is confirmed by sociological studies. There are also more frequent cases of residents of the republic joining radical groups, including HT and IG. This is facilitated by a favorable environment for the spread of Islamism: a stably difficult socio-economic situation, political turbulence, limited control over religion by the state, low spiritual education of mullahs, etc. Thus, it is advisable to state that the Kyrgyz society is developing in a region-wide trend, but with some "delay" due to the specifics of nomadic society. Accordingly, in the event of political crises in the future, the probability of activating the Islamist underground increases significantly.

The source base of the study was a wide range of written and audiovisual sources. They can be divided into six main groups.

The first group consists of materials containing speeches of Islamists from Central Asian countries. The second group includes the main sources of Islamic law. The third group of sources is represented by the works of Islamic fundamentalist theorists. These are the works of famous Muslim faqihs, whose works are based on modern Islamists. The fourth group includes regulatory legal acts of the Central Asian republics. The fifth group is represented by published statistical data. It is advisable to divide this group of sources into two subgroups: economic statistics and the results of sociological studies of the level of human development, education (including religious education), crime, and other factors that indirectly affect the radicalization of Islam. The sixth group of sources consists of news agency reports and periodicals.

The object of research is radical Islam as a political phenomenon.

The subject of the study is the evolution of radical Islam in Central Asia as a political phenomenon.

The chronological scope of the study is limited to the period from 1985 to 2022. It was in 1985, with the beginning of the policy of perestroika, that the USSR began a period of religious revival in the republics of Central Asia. At the same time, for the study of radical Islam in the late Soviet and post-Soviet period, it is necessary to consider the history of the formation and development of the Muslim faith in the region, as well as the origins of the ideology of radical Islam, which makes it necessary to expand the chronological framework in these matters.

Territorial scope of the study. In this dissertation, the author examines radical Islam in three republics: Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan.

The aim of the study is to identify key political, socio-economic, religious and cultural factors of radicalization of Islam in the Central Asian sub-region (on the example of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan).

Based on this goal, it is logical to identify a number of **tasks**:

- to determine the place of "Islamic rule" in the modern scientific typology of political regimes;
- to identify the features of the historical development of radical Islam. Consider its evolution and conduct a comparative analysis of traditional concepts (Ibn Hanbl, Ibn Taymiyyah, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab al-Wahhab) with theoretical paradigms of the XX-XXI centuries. and highlight common and distinctive features.
- to identify the key features of the formation and development of Islam in the Central Asian sub-region with a focus on the period when these territories were part of the USSR due to the fact that it is during this period that the process of politicization of Islam begins.
- to assess the degree of influence of Soviet atheist propaganda on the population of the Central Asian republics and to identify the reasons for the rapid Islamization of society in the late 1980s —and early 1990s;

- identify cultural, religious and political reasons for the formation of Islamist groups in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in the post-Soviet period;
- to determine the significance of socio-economic factors in the spread of Islamist ideas in the sub-region-Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan— ;

Hypothesis. During the religious revival in the late Soviet and post-Soviet periods, Islamists in the Central Asian republics began to turn less to the traditional Sufism for this sub-region, which gave way to " post-Soviet Wahhabism", which has a pronounced political component and appeals to the concept of the caliphate. In this form, it has actually become the dominant ideology of political protest. This was due to the long-term isolation of local Muslims from the Islamic world and the repression of Sufis during the Soviet period, as well as changes in the socio-economic and political situation in the Central Asian republics of the former USSR.

Theoretical and methodological basis of the study

The dissertation research is complex and involves studying various aspects of the evolution of radical Islam in the Central Asian republics in the late Soviet and post-Soviet periods. Consequently, it includes both specialized and general scientific methods.

The theoretical basis of this research is the neo-institutional approach. More specifically, one of its trends is historical neo-institutionalism, represented in the works of K. Thelen, P. Pearson, P. Hall, T. Longstreth, and others.

An important role in this dissertation is played by the method of cross-cultural analysis. The paper provides an inter-country comparison of the ethno-cultural characteristics of the population of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan that affect Islam and the level of religiosity of society.

The author uses a historical and descriptive method to study the dynamics of the development of Islam in Central Asia. Among the methods of historical science, the applicant also uses the biographical method.

In addition, the paper uses a descriptive statistics method. The author presents economic statistics in the form of tables and graphs: nominal GDP, GDP (GRP) per capita, poverty level, etc.

Theoretical significance of the study. This study will allow us to determine the place of Islamic rule (caliphate) in the classification of political regimes existing in modern political science.

The practical significance of the study lies in the fact that the results obtained can be applied by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and other authorities dealing with foreign policy issues to build relations with the countries of Central Asia. In addition, the findings of this study can be used by structures that ensure Russia's national security for a more in-depth analysis of the nature of radical Islam, since this problem can also pose a direct threat to our state.

The results of the study can be used in further research of the genesis of radical Islam both in the post-Soviet space in general and in Central Asia in particular.

Also, the materials of this dissertation research can be used in the preparation of lectures and practical classes on religious studies and courses on political processes in the post-Soviet space.

The main provisions submitted for defense:

1. Islamic rule (imamate/caliphate), which is sought by most Islamist groups, is an alternative version of a political regime that does not fit into the existing classifications in modern political science. Based on its main propositions set forth at various times by faqihs al-Mawardi and Ibn Khaldun, it does not correspond to democracy in the classical academic sense of the term by most criteria, but it has common features with some types of non-democracy, distinguished, for example, by Linz and Stepan post-totalitarianism and monarchical authoritarianism (Wehman, Hadanius, Theorell).. At the same time, its full identification with them by some criteria is also impossible. In contrast to post-totalitarianism, where, according to Linz and Stepan, the beginnings of political pluralism and the so-called "second (parallel) culture" appear, which distinguish it from classical totalitarianism, under Islamic rule they are impossible in principle, since this will immediately be a

deviation from Sharia norms. In the case of comparison with monarchical authoritarianism, the caliphate, for example, lacks a clearly formed (in accordance with the constitution or established tradition) practice of transferring power to a successor (there are three different mechanisms for electing a new caliph). In addition, unlike these types of nondemocracies, Islamic government is characterized by the principle of the omnipotence of Allah.

2. Soviet atheist propaganda contributed only to a certain erosion of religious attitudes among the peoples of the Central Asian republics, but did not eradicate religious identity. This contributed to the formation of a special kind of radical Islam — post-Soviet Wahhabism. On the one hand, he retained the idea of "purifying the faith" and many traditional methods of dealing with "infidels". On the other hand, it was not based on deep religious knowledge. According to authoritative Muslim theologians, many leaders and ideologues of Islamist movements, such as T. Yuldashev and D. Namangani, had only a superficial knowledge of Fiqh. Consequently, such a variant of "Wahhabism" could combine Salafist ideas with Sufi practices and issues of national identity and clan affiliation.
3. Radical Islam in the form of "post-Soviet Wahhabism" in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan actually became the dominant ideology of political protest, pushing aside or absorbing classical doctrines in the form of left-wing ideologies, liberal democracy, etc.
4. Strong and relatively secular authoritarian governments in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have helped contain and temporarily eliminate the Islamist threat. Effective methods of countering Islamic radicalism used by the governments of I. Karimov (since 2016 — Shavkat Mirziyoyev) in Uzbekistan and E. Rahmon in Tajikistan have significantly reduced the activities of radical groups. Both Countries consistently pursue policies aimed at increasing the role of national rather than religious identity in the first place, and limiting informal ties with foreign religious organizations. In addition, law enforcement agencies are actively working to identify underground Islamist cells. Already at the beginning of the 21st century, the

largest regional Islamist group, the IMU, almost completely ceased to exist in the region, and the activity of other radical associations significantly decreased.

5. In Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, Islam is a key tool for consolidating society, which is most clearly seen in times of crisis. Islam is firmly rooted in the minds of the predominantly settled population of these republics, and they have developed strong Sufi ties. This makes it possible for spiritual leaders, who sometimes act as political figures, to unite people under Islamic slogans during difficult periods. The Muslim faith brought together representatives of different social groups both in the early 20th century (the Basmala movement) and in the post-Soviet period, including during the civil war in Tajikistan.
6. The clan division into conditional "North" and "South" and complex interethnic relations with Uzbeks and Tajiks still prevail over the awareness of the Kyrgyz population of a single Islamic identity, which somewhat hinders the spread of radical ideas in the republic. At the same time, the Islamization of society is proceeding quite rapidly. Given the relatively liberal religious policy of the authorities, the republic risks facing a serious threat of Islamic radicalism in the medium term.

Testing of research results. The main results of the dissertation research are reflected in six publications of the author included in the list of periodicals recommended by the Higher Attestation Commission, as well as a chapter in the collective monograph.

1. Margulis S. B., Demidenko S. V. On the issue of radicalization of Islam in Central Asia on the example of the IMU and IRPT. // Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta. Ser. 12. Politicheskie nauki, 2019, no. 6—, pp. 44-63.
2. Margulis S. B., Feinshmidt R. I. On the issue of factors of radicalization of Islam on the example of Uzbekistan and Indonesia (Aceh province). // PolitBook, 2020, No. 4. - pp. 147-175.
3. Margulis S. B. Doctrinal foundations of the formation of Islamic fundamentalism. / Vestnik Moskovskogo gosudarstvennogo oblastnogo universiteta, Ser. Istoriya i politicheskie nauki, 2020, no. 3—, pp. 165-174.

4. Margulis S. B. On the theoretical foundations and historical development of radical Islam as a political ideology. // Journal "LOCUS: people, society, Culture, meanings", 2020, vol. 11, No. 2. - pp. 88-105.
5. Margulis S. B. Factors of radicalization of Islam in post-Soviet Tajikistan. // Bulletin of Omsk University. Series: "Historical Sciences", 2020, Vol. 7, no. 4 (28)—, pp. 121-130.
6. Demidenko S. V., Margulis S. B., Feinshmidt R. I. The phenomenon of post-industrial Islamism in the Russian Federation. // Bulletin of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia. Political Science Series, 2022, Vol. 24, no. 4. — pp. 665-685.
7. Margulis S. B. Genesis of radical Islam in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan. / Rethinking the role of the Religious Factor in Global Political Processes, —Moscow: Delo Publishing House, RANEPa, 2021—, pp. 58-89.

Approbation of the research results was also carried out in the framework of three research projects carried out by the applicant within the framework of a state order as part of the author's team, as well as at a number of international and all-Russian conferences.

Structurally, the study consists of an introduction, three chapters, seven paragraphs, a conclusion, a list of references and sources, and appendices.