

SPIRITUAL ASPECTS OF COUNTERING TERRORISM

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Abstract: This article scientifically and theoretically analyzes the ideological threats posed by extremist groups operating today under terrorism, fundamentalism, and various religious disguises, as well as the role and potential of spirituality in neutralizing these threats. In addition, the article highlights the role of spiritual education in combating terrorism.

Keywords: terrorism, extremism, fundamentalism, threat, spirituality, enlightenment, knowledge, ideology, information, internet, idea, globalization.

In the current era, globalization processes are increasingly deepening on the international stage. As a result, threats against various negative ideologies are increasing. In the present period of globalization, ideological threats and the ideological landscape of the world encompass all spheres of society. Today, to gain influence in the world, rather than confrontations as in the past, attempts are made to take control through ideas and ideologies, and young people's worldview is increasingly shaped through the use of internet and information resources.

Currently, gaining influence over a state is achieved not through weapons but through ideas. Today, the idea itself is becoming the most valuable commodity. In this process, information resources are actively used as a platform to achieve interstate conflicts and geopolitical goals. In such circumstances, the information factor plays a key role in protecting our national interests. Modern times require conducting a strong information policy that is aligned with democratic principles and aimed at protecting national values.

From the earliest years of Uzbekistan's independence, the choice of the democratic path of development has been characteristic of the country. Generally, democracy has many criteria, but the most important of them is measured by the creation of an open information space in society. In other words, the informatization of society becomes an inevitable process. An informed society faces the world.

The main feature of the globalizing information era is that there are no barriers or borders for the flow of information. The global information space absorbs all states, ignoring traditional information boundaries, national specificities, and the unique ways of life, conditions, and capacities of each country. Yet, each state is independent and has its societal and individual interests, and no one has ever given up their national interests.

The development of borderless internet networks creates a powerful force capable of scattering and misleading public opinion anywhere in the world, diverting it from healthy paths. Manipulating large segments of the population in this way can destabilize society and ultimately put the fate of the state at risk, which poses extremely serious and urgent challenges, especially for young states in the early stages of development.

In modern human society, as information is increasingly assimilated, it is becoming the sole, ever-growing resource and an independent economic and social unit. Today, as new means of transmitting and receiving information become widespread, the role of information in the life of an individual and society as a whole continues to increase. Once it became possible to deliver any piece of information to any corner of the world within a short period, the use of information as a psychological tool has turned into an extremely powerful instrument to achieve geopolitical and economic objectives, as evidenced by numerous examples that continue to grow every day.

In such conditions, protecting people’s minds from information of a destructive nature – which prompts inadequate actions and deprives individuals of strong sources of moral energy – has become a matter of urgent importance for every modern state.

Moreover, in today’s global geopolitics, shifts in the balance of geostrategic forces, the emergence of multipolar centers, competition among them, and the open claims of some states to global domination negatively affect the process of building free, legally democratic societies in new independent states and ensuring national and regional security. As a result of this geopolitical competition, new unconventional threats to international security are emerging, including international terrorism, religious extremism, fundamentalism, drug trafficking, and illegal arms trade. These threats increasingly endanger national, regional, and international security due to globalization and integration in modern international relations. In recent years, alongside these factors, previously unseen threats have also emerged as a result of changing geopolitical situations and intensifying competition.

Terrorism – from Latin, meaning fear or terror – is a method of violence based on coercion, targeting people through abduction, killing, destruction of social objects, and spreading fear and panic, in opposition to high moral principles. By instilling fear, perpetrators attempt to impose their control.

Extremism refers to a tendency toward radical struggle and measures in politics. The factors that give rise to extremism are numerous, including the breakdown of social structures during transitions from one system to another, impoverishment of large groups of the population, and social or economic hardships. The primary aim of extremism is to use religion as a guise to instill fear among people and poison the minds of youth in order to seize state power.

Fundamentalism refers to a doctrine that rigorously defends the original and pure form of certain teachings or divine texts, rejecting their metaphorical interpretations, and encompassing a set of social, ideological, and religious beliefs. In fundamentalism, the Quran and Hadith are interpreted literally, but the objectives are often entirely different. They are manipulated by those who seek political power under the guise of religion. Today, the goal is to destabilize a state’s political stability by influencing the consciousness of people, especially the youth. In the 21st century, the state with the stronger ideology achieves dominance. This process increases the need for a strong national ideology, which must perform its functions more effectively than ever.

In countering ideological threats, our primary goal is to strengthen society’s spiritual foundation. First and foremost, this requires deeply instilling the national idea into the consciousness and hearts of citizens. It is also crucial to cultivate healthy beliefs among the population, especially the younger generation, and to promote national and universal values harmoniously. In general, if we consistently work to enhance citizens’ knowledge, critical thinking, and legal culture, no threat will be able to endanger us.

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