

**Trebin Mikhail Petrovich**, Doctor of Philosophical Sciences, Professor,  
Head of the Department of Sociology and Political Science of the Yaroslav  
the Wise National Law University, Kharkiv, Ukraine  
e-mail: m.p.trebin@nlu.edu.ua  
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-1328-9865

## RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM: UNDERSTANDING THE ESSENCE

*The essence of extremism, features of its manifestation, the purpose of extremist discourse are revealed. It is justified that an important type of extremism is religious. Its signs, causes and peculiarities of manifestation at the individual level are singled out. It is proved that the prevention of the expansion of religious extremism should be oriented towards the formation of a tolerant, responsible and successful personality, which firmly stands on the positions of citizenship and patriotism. The state, civil society and citizens must jointly oppose religious extremism.*

**Keywords:** *violence, extremism, fanaticism, religious extremism, religious terrorism.*

**Problem setting.** Violence was, is and will be a sad reality of human existence. How many millennia has not passed, but for some reason the person believes that a forceful solution to the problem is the simplest and most effective way. The radical actions of individuals and groups lead to enormous human casualties, the death of innocent people. But human blood flows, wars, aggression, terrorism, extremism continue to be the reality of our days. All the more obvious is the actualization of the negative potential of various religious organizations and the modification of the role of the religious factor in politics aside destructiveness. The increasingly frequent manifestations of religious extremism and, in particular, religious terrorism in modern society, the desire of individual political elites and political actors under religious slogans to solve their political and other tasks set the Ukrainian state the need to create political arrangements and improve the effectiveness of political institutions aimed at identifying and the elimination of the causes and conditions of religious extremism.

**Recent research and publications analysis.** Special scientific works devoted to the consideration of new threats connected with the religious factor, and, first of all, with the expansion of non-traditional religious forms to the world, began to appear at the turn of the 20th – 21st centuries. A major contribution to the study of religious extremism was made by R. Abdulganeev, A. H. Baker, C. Baker-Beall,

M. Bin Ali, R. Bobohonov, L. Byrne, D. Carlson, S. Clarke, H. El-Said, D. Gambetta, L. Gusev, M. Hardy, A. Kazantsev, R. Kronish, D. Mangushev, A. Rabasa, J. Stern and others [1–27]. The problem of understanding religious extremism is also in the field of view of Ukrainian scientists (O. Bardin, A. Chaikovskiy, V. Klius, O. Likarenko, V. Ostroukhov, V. Petryk and others) [28–32]. Religious extremism is constantly changing, mutating and requiring constant monitoring.

**Paper objective.** The purpose of this article is to try to penetrate into the essence of one type of violence – religious extremism.

**Paper main body.** When we speak of religious extremism, we must realize that this phenomenon is undoubtedly relative to extremism. Therefore, first we must understand the phenomenon and the main features of extremism for ourselves. The term «extremism» is an extensively debated term and different attempts at its definition have not escaped controversy. While other «-isms» (terrorism, imperialism, racism, anti-semitism, fascism, communism, and more) have a semantic core which at least in part explains the use of a concept, extremism has no such kernel which could offer guidance as to its meaning. According to Alex Schmid, «since extremism is a relational concept, to answer the question: «what is extreme?» one needs a benchmark, something that is (more) «ordinary», «centrist», «mainstream», or «normal» when compared with the (extreme) political fringe [33]. Peter Coleman and Andrea Bartoli, on the other hand, describe extremism as «...activities (beliefs, attitudes, feelings, actions, strategies) of a character far removed from the ordinary» [34]. In conflict settings it manifests as a severe form of conflict engagement. However, the labeling of activities, people, and groups as «extremist», and the defining of what is «ordinary» in any setting is always a subjective and political matter. From our point of view: extremism – «a tendency to extreme views and methods in politics and ideology ...The peculiarities of manifestation of extremism are ignoring the real analysis of the political situation; the desire to accelerate the event; misunderstanding of the laws of society's exit from the crisis, in particular from the political one; the inability to match the scale and speed of the changes; the desire to conquer the political process of freedom without taking into account the balance of political forces, the logic of the political process; legal nihilism, the destruction of historically formed state and political structures; the rate on power methods» [35, p. 238–239].

Ideologically, extremism acts as a complete denial of dissent, an attempt to affirm its system of views in any way, a requirement for its supporters to unconditionally obey all orders and instructions. The appeal of extremists is not to reason, but to feelings creates a special type of a person, subject to self-excitation, loss of control over their behavior, willingness to do anything by order of leaders. Therefore, extremism is inseparable from the ideology of totalitarianism, the cult

of the leaders proclaimed by the bearers of higher wisdom, and their ideas must be taken faithfully and steadfastly executed by masses.

One can speak of the presence of such a concept as extremist discourse, whose purpose is: 1) to report information that has any sign of extremist activity; 2) the belief in the truth of the information that is proved; 3) appeals to extremist actions. In this regard, it seems possible to define extremist discourse as two interconnected essences: nuclear and peripheral [36, p. 242]. Nuclear extremist discourse represents a system of knowledge, tactics and communication strategies, driven by cognitive and axiological uniformity, in order to ensure the successful existence of extremist text in conditions of closed group communication. Peripheral extremist discourse is a system of knowledge, tactics and strategies for organizing communication, driven by cognitive and axiological diversity, in order to ensure the successful existence of extremist texts in an open, interpersonal communication. Each entity represents a special category: nuclear – closed and inaccessible to persons who are not part of the group; peripheral – open and precisely aimed at the representatives of the outgroup with a view to their initiation or one-time involvement in the activity. Communicative strategies that has been used to achieve the goals are also different. In the first case, the focus is on isolation, often with the use of «secret» language or its elements, when the decoding of information is available only to cryptologists. In the second case we can talk about the use of «mass» language, which is baffling not only terms and concepts, but also concepts with a fuzzy core and a wide periphery of emotionally shaped connections.

An important kind of extremism is the religious, existing millennium, apparently from the time that religion emerged as a social phenomenon. But the first known case of using the term «religious extremism» is Ohio Brewers' note in the St. Paul Daily Globe (Minnesota) May 16, 1883, which described the gathering of brewers who protested against the position of some representatives of the local clergy, who accused alcohol producers in immorality and retreated from the truths of Christianity [37, p. 2]. Over the course of several years, the term became widely used to refer to a very wide range of phenomena associated with religious fundamentalism and manifestations of its aggression. Today, the concept of «religious extremism» is very ambiguous and varied: it is used to describe both politically passive, escapist Christian denominations, and such active groups as «Muslim Brothers» or Irish Republican Army. It combines heterogeneous elements of illusory reflection of reality, destructive social practices and social protests, as well as certain social ideals. In speaking about religious extremism, Western researchers provide a number of concrete indicators to identify it. Thus, Charles Kimball identifies five warning signs of religious extremism, which are not exclusively applied to individuals, but in some cases may also be applicable to an entire group or theocratic regime. In his opinion, these signs are: 1) absolute truth claims; 2) blind obedience;

3) establishing the «ideal» time; 4) the end justifies any means; and 5) declaring holy war [38]. We will adhere to the point of view of religious extremism, which is shared by most researchers, and which in general is defined as a manifestation of intolerant attitudes towards representatives of other denominations or confrontation within a confession.

Religious extremism is based on fanaticism. Fanaticism in some form and degree is present in the real relations of people in any society, it destabilizes society and leads to its disintegration, allowing coercion and violence. It presupposes prejudice, an unfairly negative attitude toward «others», the assertion of «double bookkeeping», when «alien» is not forgiven what is considered permissible among «our». In the relations of people fanaticism generates such antivalues as intolerance, ill-will, hostility, aggressiveness, etc. Fanaticism leaves no room for tolerance, the primary becomes the opposition between «our» and «strangers» according to the principle: «who is not like us not with us, he is against us». Fanaticism as a social problem is a denial of others' right to be different from us, not to agree with us, lack of understanding and agreement between «us» and «others». Cultivating in the relations between «their» values, rallying them, fanaticism leads to disintegration outward, creates a hostile image of «another's», which is most often used as a means of rallying «one's own».

We can distinguish the following signs of religious extremism: the phenomenon of social life, which is based on the extremist religious ideology, which is characterized by the accentuation of relations with other believers and heretics, the actualization of religious intolerance, the formation of the image of the enemy of the true faith, the religious sanction of aggression against the enemies of the true faith, accentuation of social content religions in the form of the religious ideal of righteous life and righteous society, dichotomous rectilinear polarization of the world; adherence to extreme views; a manifestation of intolerance towards others who follow a different outlook; moral permissiveness in conjunction with moral-religious rigorism, shift of moral guidelines (or moral disorientation); confrontation within one or more denominations, resulting in crimes.

There are such fundamental reasons for the emergence and spread of religious extremism: the historical and doctrinal factor (conceptual conclusions about appearance, distribution, evolution, the mechanism of ideological substantiation of fundamentalism, the emergence of extremism); factor of modernization (unsuccessful modernization process, presence of acute social, economic, ecological and other problems); geopolitical factor («great geopolitics» of the main events, phenomena and processes, collision of civilizations); globalist factor (collision of traditional cultural settings and settings of a global society, awareness of the unity of the world, the process of modernizing religious communities in finding their

place in the modern world). A special factor in the emergence of religious extremism is also the phenomenon of «Islamic revival» [39, p. 128].

There is a little doubt that the surge in scholarly interest in violent Islamic extremism and Islamic extremism is a partial result of the securitization of political Islam as potentially one of the largest threats facing World in the 21st century. Given that prior to 9/11 little attention had been paid to the phenomena of religiously inspired terrorism in the field of terrorism studies, scholars and practitioners have come a long way in shedding light on the particularities of the processes underlying it [40, p. 67]. As notes Magnus Ranstorp, only seven out of 102 articles between 2001 and 2002 were related to «Muslim extremism or an associated Middle East terrorist topic» [41, p. 22 ].

The studies on radicalization have been slow to unfold, bearing answers that have been useful in identifying checklist factors perceived to contribute to the process, but challenged by the lack of solid working theory. Much credit has been given to terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda in their efforts to radicalize and recruit, despite the fact that these organizations lie on the fringe of a much wider spectrum of non-violent political Islam. Such intentional myopia can arguably be attributed to the sensitive nature of this particular brand of terrorism, given that its adherents draw from the one of the world's fastest growing religions. Scholarship has offered several explanations as to why individuals and groups have had the compulsion to act out what they believe to be a religious duty. To this end, the progression of Islamic theology and its breakdown into various competing understandings and sects has provided the groundwork for understanding the radicalization process from a religious perspective [42–43]. This has been followed by profiling and intensive research in social movement theory and the socialization process of would-be Jihadis, the assumed predisposition of specific «identities», a suggested clash between Western and Islamic values in general, and studies on integration which more or less constitute the cornerstone of most state-sponsored radicalization prevention efforts [44–47].

Extremist activity can be manifested at the group and individual levels. It is at the individual level that the transformation of consciousness occurs through the introduction of destructive ideas from the outside, the absorption of religious extremist discourse. Similar tendencies can be considered both as consequences of an individual's collision with a dysfunction of the social environment, which leads to the formation of negative experience, and in the future – to the emergence of a certain (destructive) attitude to the social structure as a whole and its elements in particular, in this case, the axiosphere of the religious extremist is very close with a destructive mode of being a terrorist [48]. The events of the 21st century indicate that for today's society, the problem of extremism in the religious sphere is extremely topical. Sad example: events in Syria, where ISIS united the district itself

religious extremist organizations heterogeneous in their composition for the sake of destructive purpose [26].

Thus, it is possible to single out the criteria of religious extremism as a social threat [49]: the existence of a special mission, formed on the basis of religious experience or on the basis of evaluation of religious texts; a cult of its own exclusivity and superiority, a radical self-distinction religious group in relation to other religious groups and secular society as a whole, the existence of an aristocratic code of conduct (comparison with «Aristocracy of the spirit»); own subculture filled with spirit of expansion; high group cohesion and corporate identity; the existence of a religious doctrine as the transformation of the world, even if by its negation and categorical consciousness; the activity of a distinctive opposition in relation to the «alien»; aggression towards society and other religious groups.

**Conclusions of the research.** Extremism is a complex social phenomenon, which includes three main elements: extremist ideology, which is the theoretical basis of extremism; extremist activity, which is the implementation, embodiment of an extremist ideology; an extremist organization that is a form of social organization of extremist activity. Religious extremism is a kind of extremism based on religious ideology. Extremist religious ideology differs from the normal, not its radical form, not by the content of religious dogmatics and not by ritualism, but by specific accents of religious consciousness, which are actualized only by certain aspects of religious ideology, shifting its other sides to the background. The content of religious extremism compounds of social ideals expressing the interests of certain social groups. In the social ideals or the program of religious extremism, the real social and political interests of certain social groups are not fully concure, an illusory incarnation, for them are based only on faith in God, and also are vague and non-specific in nature. Therefore, they can hardly be adequately implemented through extremist activity. But extremist activity creates in her agents a false, illusory sense of realization of their ideals and interests. Analysis of the essence of religious extremism leads us to the conclusion that the prevention of its expansion should be focused on the formation and strengthening of a tolerant, responsible and successful personality, firmly standing on the positions of citizenship and patriotism. The state, civil society and citizens must jointly counteract religious extremism.

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**Требин Михаил Петрович**, доктор философских наук, профессор, заведующий кафедрой социологии и политологии Национального юридического университета имени Ярослава Мудрого, г. Харьков, Украина

## РЕЛИГИОЗНЫЙ ЭКСТРЕМИЗМ: ПОНИМАНИЕ СУЩНОСТИ

*Раскрыта сущность экстремизма, особенности его проявления, цель экстремистского дискурса. Обосновано, что важным видом экстремизма является религиозный. Выделены его признаки, причины возникновения и особенности проявления на индивидуальном уровне. Доказано, что профилактика экспансии религиозного экстремизма должна быть ориентирована на формирование толерантной, ответственной и успешной личности, которая твердо стоит на позициях граждан-*

ственности и патриотизма. Государство, гражданское общество и граждане должны совместно противодействовать религиозному экстремизму.

**Ключевые слова:** насилие, экстремизм, фанатизм, религиозный экстремизм, религиозный терроризм.

**Требін Михайло Петрович**, доктор філософських наук, професор, завідувач кафедри соціології та політології Національного юридичного університету імені Ярослава Мудрого, м. Харків, Україна

## РЕЛІГІЙНИЙ ЕКСТРЕМІЗМ: РОЗУМІННЯ СУТНОСТІ

**Постановка проблеми.** Насилля було, є і буде сумною реальністю людського буття. Скільки б тисячоліть не минуло, але людина чомусь вважала і вважає, що силове вирішення проблеми – найпростіший і найефективніший шлях. Радикальні дії індивідів і груп призводять до величезних людських жертв, загибелі ні в чому не винних людей. Але кров людська летить, війни, агресія, тероризм, екстремізм продовжують бути реальністю наших днів.

**Аналіз останніх досліджень і публікацій.** Спеціальні наукові роботи, присвячені розгляду нових загроз, пов'язаних із релігійним фактором, і, насамперед, із поширенням світу нетрадиційних релігійних форм, стали з'являтися на рубежі ХХ–ХХІ ст. Вагомий внесок у вивчення релігійного екстремізму зробили Р. Абдулганєєв, А. Х. Бейкер, К. Бейкер-Белл, М. Бін Алі, Л. Бірн, Р. Бобохонов, Д. Карлсон, С. Кларк, Х. Ель-Саїд, Д. Гамбетта, М. Гарді, Л. Гусєв, А. Казанцев, Р. Кроніш, Д. Мангушев, Е. Рабаса, Дж. Стерн та ін. Проблемою розуміння релігійного екстремізму також займаються й українські вчені (О. Бардін, В. Кліус, О. Ликаренко, В. Остроухов, В. Петрик, А. Чайковський та ін.). Але слід враховувати, що релігійний екстремізм постійно змінюється, мутує і вимагає постійного моніторингу.

**Мета даної статті** полягає в тому, щоб спробувати проникнути в сутність одного з видів насилля – релігійного екстремізму.

**Виклад основного матеріалу.** Релігійний екстремізм – це явище видове відносно екстремізму. З'ясовано феномен і основні риси екстремізму. Важливим різновидом екстремізму є релігійний, що існує тисячоліття, мабуть, із тих часів, як виникла релігія як соціальний феномен. Виокремлюють такі ознаки релігійного екстремізму: феномен суспільного життя, в основі якого лежить екстремістська релігійна ідеологія, якій притаманні акцентуація відносин з іновірцями і єретиками, актуалізація релігійної нетерпимості, формування образу ворога істинної віри, релігійна санкція агресії проти ворогів істинної віри, акцентуація соціального змісту релігії в формі релігійного ідеалу праведного життя і праведного суспільства, дихотомічна пряминолінійна поляризація світу; прихильність до крайніх поглядів; прояв нетерпимості до інших осіб, які дотримуються іншого світогляду; моральна вседозволеність у поєднанні з морально-релігійним ригоризмом, зсув моральних орієнтирів (або моральна дезорієнтація); протиборство в рамках однієї або декількох конфесій, у результаті чого чиняться злочини.

Основні причини виникнення та поширення релігійного екстремізму: історико-доктринальний чинник (концептуальні висновки щодо появи, поширення, еволюції, механізму ідейного обґрунтування фундаменталізму, виникнення екстремізму); чинник модернізації (неуспішний процес модернізації, наявність гострих соціальних, економічних, екологічних та ін. проблем); геополітичний чинник («велика геополітика» основних подій, явищ і процесів, зіткнення цивілізацій); глобалістський чинник (зіткнення традиційних культурних установок і установок глобального суспільства, усвідомлення єдності світу, процес модернізації релігійних громад у пошуку свого місця в сучасному світі). Особливим фактором виникнення релігійного екстремізму є також феномен «ісламського відродження».

**Висновки.** Аналіз сутності релігійного екстремізму приводить нас до висновку, що профілактика його експансії повинна бути орієнтована на формування і зміцнення толерантної, відповідальної і успішної особистості, що твердо стоїть на позиціях громадянськості і патріотизму. Держава, громадянське суспільство і громадяни повинні спільно протидіяти релігійному екстремізму.

**Ключові слова:** насилля, екстремізм, фанатизм, релігійний екстремізм, релігійний тероризм.

