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## International Terrorism as a Threat to the National Security of the Countries of Central Asia

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### Abstract

The study is highly relevant due to the conjugation with the phenomenon of globalisation of regional integration processes. Because of the processes of regional integration and loosening of the state structure of many countries in general and countries of Central Asia in particular, there has also been an increased threat of international terrorism undermining global security. This study aims to analyse the prerequisites for forming international terrorism and extremism in the region. For this, the study deployed several methods, such as the theoretical method, the method of logical analysis, the method of deduction, the method of induction, the dogmatic method, and others. The study revealed that Central Asia's states have a rather crucial geopolitical significance due to the availability of energy resources and geographical location, particularly for participation in international integration projects. But at the same time, the development of countries is hindered by terrorist threats stemming from the large number of internal problems that provoke this phenomenon. It was noted that international terrorism is a serious challenge to the functional development of Eurasian integration. The main prerequisites and directions for the development of terrorist activity were identified, and, importantly, an analysis of the identified factors on the regional security of the Central Asian states was carried out. It was also revealed that at the present stage, there is a prospect of increasing the activity of terrorist, extremist, and separatist groups in the region. To counteract the spread of these phenomena, an integrated approach of a global orientation was proposed, which will provide an opportunity to increase the level of national and international security.

**Keywords:** Integration Processes; Geopolitics; Extremism; International Terrorism; Terrorist Threats; Central Asia.

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## Introduction

In contemporary times, countries are progressively embracing integration procedures as a crucial element in creating adaptable frameworks for cross-border collaboration. Sinnar (2019) designates integration as one of the three megatrends influencing contemporary world politics in conjunction with globalisation and democratisation. Integration, in this sense, signifies a protracted, complex process that influences the qualitative advancement of global political systems. While there has been significant scholarly attention on the transformational potential of integration, there remains a limited exploration of how substantial challenges, such as international terrorism, interact with and influence these processes, particularly in regions like Central Asia (CA).

In this context, Wilkinson (2019) questions the propensity in academic discourse to restrict the definition of integration to economic rapprochement among countries. He contends that integration involves a wider range of collaboration, including supranational engagements. The study tends not to focus on the importance of non-economic factors, especially those related to security risks, in shaping integration outcomes. Terrorism, as a significant danger to national and international security, disrupts these processes. Terrorism, as a serious crime against humanity and state sovereignty, increasingly functions across all levels of governance (Buribayev et al., 2020; Yevseiev et al., 2022). The rise of globalisation has rendered the fight against terrorism more intricate. There is a noticeable gap in research examining the effects of international terrorism on integration efforts, particularly in regions with emerging political structures, such as CA.

The CA area encounters distinct problems attributable to its particular geopolitical and socio-economic circumstances (Faichuk et al., 2022; Nurtazina et al., 2015). The region's geopolitical significance, due to its strategic location at the crossroads of major global powers like China, Russia, and the US, places it amid competing interests that further

complicate its stability. CA nations are young as independent political entities, still working on building robust institutional frameworks and establishing their roles in international relations, which leaves them vulnerable to external influences and internal instability. Furthermore, the region is plagued by socio-economic disparities, including high levels of poverty and inequality, which create fertile ground for extremist ideologies to thrive. The persistence of corruption, political instability, and underdeveloped democratic institutions exacerbate these vulnerabilities. The lack of effective cooperation between the countries in the region and the influence of external powers also hinder the development of cohesive strategies to combat terrorism and extremism.

Lemon (2018) emphasises that Central Asian nations are comparatively youthful as separate political entities, still engaged in developing resilient institutional frameworks and delineating their responsibilities in international relations. This transitory phase presents the potential for integration, although it concurrently generates weaknesses that extreme ideologies may exploit. Extremist religious narratives frequently proliferate in areas with socio-economic challenges, including poverty and inequality (Apakhayev et al., 2017; 2024). Although these findings are valuable, the research could benefit from a more comprehensive examination of how vulnerabilities affect integration processes in CA and the potential strategies to address them.

Schmid (2018) observes that international terrorism can induce "rollback cycles" in major integration initiatives. However, there is little analysis of this occurrence within the context of CA. The impact of terrorist actions on regional cooperation and the measures to counter these threats have been examined little. Furthermore, whereas several studies acknowledge the significance of "soft power" instruments in combating extremist ideologies, few examine their actual implementation in Central Asia or evaluate their effectiveness in enhancing regional security. Murphy (2017), similarly

examines the influence of religious and political extremism on regional stability, highlighting the contributions of national extremists and radical international organisations in disseminating radical Islamic ideology. He contends that these activities substantially undermine the socio-political structures of Central American republics. Nevertheless, current research frequently examines these risks in isolation, overlooking their interrelation with larger systemic challenges. Underdeveloped democratic institutions, internal political conflicts, and the absence of integrated regional strategies accentuate these challenges. Political instability in a single Central American state often has ripple effects that destabilise other nations (Nitsenko et al., 2017; Nurtazina & Toktushakov, 2017). While the literature acknowledges these issues, it provides limited guidance on building collaborative frameworks to address these shared vulnerabilities.

Extremist and terrorist organisations in California demonstrate similar operating strategies and objectives. However, as Murphy (2017) and Lemon (2018) indicate, extremist groups' increasing independence and autonomy and the robustness of their networks hamper counterterrorism initiatives. The lack of effective, unified regional collaboration intensifies this problem, restricting most counterterrorism efforts to the national level (Kullolli, 2024). Although several studies advocate for improved regional collaboration, few provide practical frameworks or critically assess the reasons for the failure of prior cooperative efforts.

This study examines the reasons, requirements, and evolution of terrorist offences in Central Asian nations to solve existing gaps. The aim is to thoroughly understand the intersection between terrorism and regional integration processes, highlighting both problems and potential for effective action. By critically examining current literature and addressing underexplored issues, this study enhances the development of realistic, evidence-based solutions for countering terrorism and fostering regional cohesion.

The study is organised into five main parts. The first section provides a theoretical framework, introducing the concept of international terrorism, its characteristics, and the factors contributing to its spread, focusing on its relevance to CA. The second section describes the materials used to create the study and the implemented methods. The third section analyses the region's unique geopolitical and socio-economic challenges, exploring how terrorist and extremist groups exploit these vulnerabilities. It also examines the impact of international terrorism on regional integration, assessing how terrorism disrupts cooperation and the development of institutional frameworks. The fourth section then analyses the current counterterrorism strategies and cooperation in Central Asia, evaluating the effectiveness of national and regional policies, as well as the role of external actors. Finally, section five offers conclusions and recommendations, summarising the study's findings and proposing strategies to enhance counterterrorism efforts, foster regional collaboration, and address the socio-economic factors contributing to extremism.

## **Materials and Methods**

The study, whose scope included identifying international terrorism as a threat to the national security of the CA countries and its characteristic features at the present stage, employed various methods that enabled a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. The theoretical method unveiled the concept of "international terrorism" and identified its inherent signs, elements, characteristics, and causes of spread. The functional method helped to identify the main prerequisites and directions for the development of terrorist activity, and an analysis of the identified factors on the regional security of the CA states was carried out. The logical analysis method revealed that the CA states hold significant geopolitical importance, primarily because of their energy resources and strategic location for participation in international integration projects. However, the proximity to unstable states poses a terrorist threat,

impeding their development. The dialectical method provided an opportunity to highlight that, at the present stage, there is a prospect of increasing the activity of groups of a terrorist, extremist, and separatist nature in the region. The dogmatic method helped analyse the fact that international terrorism is a serious challenge for the functional implementation and development of Eurasian integration.

The method of system analysis made it possible to consider all the elements of the phenomenon of international terrorism through the prism of their totality and interaction with each other, which ensures the prevalence of this illegal act. Using the abstraction method, the main factors that influence the spread of terrorist crimes and their impact on security in international society were analysed. The legal hermeneutics method revealed a lack of practical, consolidated cooperation among countries in the region to counter extremism, resulting in a domestic-only approach to the fight against terrorism. The deduction method made it possible to characterise the phenomenon of international terrorism in CA countries based on its inherent features and principles of implementation. The method of induction based on the identified characteristic elements provided an opportunity to conduct a detailed analysis of the phenomenon of international terrorism. Based on the obtained results, the synthesis method facilitated the identification of strategies to address this problem. These strategies included repressive opposition to the spread of this phenomenon and searching for the most effective ways to use “soft power” tools.

Thus, the work was carried out in several stages:

- The first stage consisted of studying the theoretical aspect by analysing the concept of “international terrorism.” The theoretical element was identified, and the concept of “international terrorism” was analysed and identified, along with its characteristic features, implementation principles, and signs.
- The second stage involved examining this illegal phenomenon in the CA states, assessing the effects of international

terrorism, and identifying the key preconditions and directions for the growth of terrorist crimes.

- The third stage, based on the obtained results, allowed for identifying the most optimal ways to address this problem, which negatively impacts the region’s national security and the overall security of international society.

## Results

The problem of international terrorism in modern conditions is quite acute. This phenomenon, which affects the territorial integrity and inviolability of the state, can be understood as the repeated use of political violence with coercion by non-state actors (Netanyahu, 2017). The Central Asian region holds geopolitical importance due to the energy exports from its five nations — Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan — while also serving as a battleground for competing interests among major global powers such as the United States, Russia, and China (Margariti, 2018). For Kazakhstan, they are an important and remarkable transport hub in the implementation of construction projects of the “Silk Road Economic Belt”. Xi Jinping announced the project’s implementation on Kazakhstan’s territory in 2013, underscoring the significance of this state and other CA countries collectively (Nurtazina et al., 2018; Shulin & Yipu, 2024).

The CA region is still undergoing the process of formation of an institutional structure that defines states as independent and independent international actors and their importance in the system of international relations, which is due to the fact that countries have become independent as a result of the collapse of the USSR. Also, the CA states are characterised by an internal contradiction since their development takes place between two political forces, namely China and Russia (Kalaganov et al., 2018). In this case, we are referring to two significant integration projects: the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Eurasian Economic Union, whose combination negatively affects the development of relations among the CA republics (Wang &

Kong, 2019; Zhanbulatova et al., 2020). That is to say, not only have threats and challenges arisen in the region in various forms, but the lack of cooperation among the states in the region and the competition from external forces further complicates the current situation.

Terrorism and extremism continue to pose significant risks to the national security of Central Asian governments, aggravated by socio-economic issues including unemployment, poverty, and the marginalisation of populations that foster dissatisfaction and the emergence of extremist and terrorist groups (Khamzin et al., 2016; Mukambaeva et al., 2023; Tepavicharova et al., 2020). These domestic causes have substantially facilitated the rise of Islamist organisations, such as the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, and Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) attempted to establish the Ferghana Valley as an autonomous state, potentially disintegrating Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. The Ferghana Valley, characterised by its dense population and elevated unemployment rates, emerged as a focal point for recruiting by extremist groups (Jalalzai, 2020). The IMU's militant factions significantly contributed to Tajikistan's civil war by aligning with opposing forces. After the fighting, the IMU withdrew to Afghanistan, forming an alliance with the Taliban and subsequently cooperating with Al-Qaeda until aligning with the Islamic State near the Pakistani border (Botakaraev, 2018).

The Islamic Renaissance group of Tajikistan rose to popularity during the Tajik Civil War, evolving from a terrorist organisation into a legitimate opposition group (Collins, 2020). Deputy Minister of Defence A. Nazarzoda accused the party, initially promoting political reform through peaceful discourse, of funding a coup attempt in 2015. This resulted in a prohibition of its operations and its classification as an extremist and terrorist organisation by Tajik authorities (Tajikistan has convicted, 2022). Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami, a Pan-Islamic political entity established in the 20th Century in East Jerusalem (Minardi, 2019), swiftly proliferated across

Central Asia, increasing the potential for radicalisation among its adherents. Although the group openly repudiates violence, its ideological literature rationalises its use, and it has acknowledged participation in many coup attempts in the Middle East. Estimates indicate that its followers in Central Asia are between 15,000 and 20,000. Notwithstanding assertions of peaceful endeavours, its affiliations with other extremist and terrorist organisations provoke considerable apprehension regarding its contribution to regional instability.

In general, Central Asian countries adhere to a fairly tough and steadfast position on this issue, and Uzbekistan is the leader in this opinion (Karagiannis, 2011). Central Asia is becoming a region with a high terrorist threat because of the gradual destabilisation of Afghanistan and the spread of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). ISIL poses a significant threat due to the expulsion of its militants from Syria and Iraq, which resulted in their migration to Afghanistan (Hillier et al., 2018). Also, a factor in the consolidation of ISIL in this territory is the provision of financial support to the militants. By the start of 2018, the organisation had established two branches in the autonomous territories of Afghanistan, specifically in the non-Pashtun and Pashtun regions (Fogacci et al., 2020). As a result, the threat of a terrorist plan has increased more for the CA states. It is worth noting that the CA region is one of the leading suppliers of militants who fought in Syria and Iraq for Salafi-Jihadist terrorist groups. While immigrants from the CA make up nearly 20% of all foreign fighters, the region's population does not surpass 5% of the global Muslim population (Foreign Fighters, 2015). Taking into account all the listed threats, Central Asia has witnessed numerous terrorist attacks (Table 1).

The table's data indicates a high level of instability in the CA states. The listed terrorist acts are a consequence of the external and internal problems of the region. Terrorists orchestrated 19 deadly attacks, leading to the deaths of one or more individuals, including the terrorists themselves. It is also worth noting that as a result of organised illegal acts, 411 people

died from 2008 to 2023. The majority of reported terrorist attacks took place in Kazakhstan, while Tajikistan accounted for more than half of the deaths. Based on this, it is quite essential to analyse the total number of supporters of terrorist and extremist activities and the number of convicted persons (Table2).

<b>Table 1: Terrorist Attacks in Central Asia Region</b>				
<b>Country</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Number of Deaths</b>	<b>Date</b>
Tajikistan	Isfara	Police killing	1	19/04/2009
Uzbekistan	Andijan	Explosion	2	26/05/2009
Tajikistan	Khujand	Explosion	4	03/09/2010
Tajikistan	Camarob	Armed attack	25	19/09/2010
Kazakhstan	Aktobe	Explosion	1	17/05/2011
Kazakhstan	Astana	Explosion	1	23/05/2011
Kazakhstan	Aktobe	Armed attack	3	01/07/2011
Kazakhstan	Atyrau	Explosion	1	31/10/2011
Kazakhstan	Almaty	Armed attack	1	08/11/2011
Kazakhstan	Taraz	Armed attack	7	12/11/2011
Tajikistan	Khorog	Murder	1	21/07/2012
Kazakhstan	Almaty	Mass kill	14	30/07/2012
Tajikistan	Khorog	Armed attack	1	23/05/2014
Kyrgyzstan	Bishkek	Explosion	1	19/05/2015
Tajikistan	Dushanbe	Armed attack	39	04/09/2015
Kazakhstan	Aktobe	Armed attack	21	05/06/2016
Kazakhstan	Almaty	Armed attack	10	18/07/2016
Kyrgyzstan	Bishkek	Explosion	1	30/08/2016
Tajikistan	Dangara	Driving into a crowd	4	29/07/2018
Tajikistan	Qabodiyon	Armed attack	2	06/11/2019
Kazakhstan	Almaty	Armed attack	238	05-07/01/2022
Tajikistan	Dushanbe	Armed attack	32	01-17/05/2022
Kyrgyzstan	Bishkek	Armed attack	1	17/05/2023
<b>Sources: Bifolchi, 2023; Collet, 2024; Lemon, 2018</b>				

It should be mentioned that the fight against the phenomena of extremism and terrorism is a key task of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), whose member organisations are CA states. Thus, CSTO includes three countries: Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. According to Article 8 of the Charter of the SCTO, the Member States are obliged to coordinate among themselves and unite their efforts in countering the development of extremism and terrorism, illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, weapons, organised transnational crime (including human trafficking), and other types of

illegal actions that are a threat to national and international security (Organization of the, 2022). It should be noted that in 2009, the Collective Rapid Reaction Force was created, the key task of which was to be constantly ready to counter threats to regional security (Collective Rapid Response, 2009). SCO includes four states in the CA region, which include Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. In the Charter of the SCO, one of the target tasks is the joint counteraction by the member states to the phenomena of extremism, terrorism, and separatism in all possible manifestations, as well as drug and weapons trafficking and other types of transnational crime that undermine the

integrity of states and threaten global security (Shanghai Cooperation Organization, 2022). However, the role of the CSTO and SCO in combating terrorism and extremist crimes is primarily theoretical rather than practical. This

entails the development of a specialised regulatory framework and the implementation of exercises. Each of the CA republics frequently engages its national forces to counter these illegal acts.

<b>Table 2: Number of Supporters of Extremism and Terrorism in the States of Central Asia</b>	
<b>State</b>	<b>Number of Supporters, People</b>
<b>Kazakhstan</b>	<b>More than 25000, of which 765 were found guilty of committing terrorist acts</b>
<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>	<b>More than 18000, of which 520 were found guilty of committing terrorist acts</b>
<b>Tajikistan</b>	<b>More than 13000, of which 2000 were found guilty of committing terrorist acts</b>
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	<b>More than 18000, of which 1000 were found guilty of committing terrorist acts</b>
<b>Turkmenistan</b>	<b>More than 9000, of which 300 were found guilty of committing terrorist acts, and approximately 360 more people fought in Syria and Iraq</b>
<b>Sources: Bifolchi, 2023; Collet, 2024; Lemon, 2018</b>	

Considering all the above factors and the current global situation, an analysis of future prospects indicates an increase in the activity of extremist, terrorist, and separatist groups. It is also worth mentioning that further politicisation of Islam and the spread of the influence of groups that have a radical attitude will continue. The strengthening and consolidation of the activities of organisations while maintaining their autonomy are monitored. It is also possible to increase the types and number of occurrences of terrorist acts and activities of groups. To prevent the aforementioned potential issues, it is crucial to establish a consolidated mechanism that involves the Central Asian republics and the most prominent regional actors, specifically China and the United States. When implementing the mechanism of international cooperation, improving the legal framework and providing assistance to the states of the region from international actors will provide an opportunity to reduce the number of illegal acts of an extremist and terrorist nature and will also reduce the number of these acts altogether.

To effectively combat the escalating threats of terrorism and extremism in Central Asia, a proactive and collaborative approach is essential (Karamyshev, 2024). Given the region's distinct geopolitical problems and socio-economic weaknesses, we must implement specific measures to enhance security, bolster resilience,

and address the underlying causes of radicalisation. The following proposals outline specific measures that could enhance counterterrorism initiatives through regional and worldwide collaboration:

- Implement a regional intelligence-sharing framework. Central Asian nations ought to establish a cohesive intelligence-sharing platform to monitor and dismantle terrorist networks efficiently. This method must incorporate data from the member nations of the SCO and the CSTO. Key areas for collaboration encompass tracking transnational movements of militants, exchanging intelligence regarding financial networks that facilitate terrorism, and detecting internet recruiting initiatives.
- Conduct regular collaborative counterterrorism exercises. The member states must do frequent collaborative counterterrorism drills inside the CSTO framework. These drills should concentrate on situations like border security violations, hostage recovery, and urban terrorism. Collaborative training initiatives may encompass alliances with NATO or other global entities to augment tactical and technological capabilities.

- Implement sophisticated surveillance tools. Advanced surveillance technologies, including drones, biometrics, and AI-driven monitoring tools, must be deployed at critical border crossings, especially in high-risk regions like the Ferghana Valley. International partners, such as China and the European Union, could provide technical expertise and financial support for these initiatives.
- Execute collaborative de-radicalisation initiatives. Regional governments have to implement de-radicalisation activities, encompassing educational and vocational training programs aimed at persons susceptible to extremist recruitment. The United Nations or regional development banks may fund these programs and model them after successful initiatives in countries like Malaysia or Indonesia.
- Engage in collaborative international economic development initiatives. To address the core causes of extremism, such as poverty and unemployment, Central Asian countries should engage in coordinated economic development projects. International donors, including the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, could fund infrastructure development and employment-generating initiatives in high-risk areas like the Ferghana Valley.

## Discussion

In the 21st century, terrorism began to gain particular popularity. According to LaFree et al. (2020), its peculiarity lies in the fact that it does not require an official declaration of war from the attacking side, but it offers a fairly high degree of flexibility in the issue of imposing responsibility on front organisations. In this scenario, participants in the conflict will employ terror tactics to carry out specific tasks through violent means. The key purpose of using terror methods is to intimidate a mock enemy. Distinctive features of military confrontation are

the scale of the use of traditional weapons, the nature of violent actions, and the specifics of the relationship between the objects of confrontation and their subjects (Shahini et al., 2024; Lyndyuk et al., 2023).

In general, when analysing the concept of “terrorism”, it is worth noting that there are numerous definitions of this term, but there is no single generally established one. According to Tinnes (2020), terrorism is defined as a violent ideology and the practice of influencing public authorities to achieve desired outcomes through acts of terrorism and extremism. In the modern society of information technologies, Goswami and Bhatia (2020) argue that cultural orientation within nation-states, rather than ideological and economic factors, will determine the sources of conflicts. That is, conflicts between states against the backdrop of growing contradictions in the sphere of culture are an inevitable part of the development of civilisation. Note that integrating post-Soviet states into a democratic system is highly challenging, particularly for those in the East (Apakhayev et al., 2018; Hysi et al., 2024). This factor determines that the role of international terrorism as an instrument of political manipulation in the current conditions of globalisation will increase.

Analysing the nature of the relationship between the subject and the object, conventionally, terrorism can be divided into “from below” and “from above” (Maulenov et al., 2021; 2023). Terrorism “from below” refers to actions initiated by non-state groups or radical individuals outside formal political structures. These actors typically lack access to institutional mechanisms of influence and resort to violence to gain visibility, resources, or political leverage, as exemplified by underground insurgent or extremist movements. In contrast, terrorism “from above” pertains to acts of political violence orchestrated or sanctioned by state actors, including the use of repressive measures against civilian populations, political opponents, or minority groups to maintain control or eliminate dissent. This form of state terrorism is often masked under the guise of national



security or public order but serves to entrench authoritarian power.

According to Mbanugo and Ewulum (2015), the “from below” terrorism is quite classical: in this scenario, radical underground organisations, which are not part of the systemic opposition and lack official representation in public authorities, resort to terrorist methods to achieve their political objectives and obtain the necessary resources for implementing their programs. Note that modern terrorism not only acts as an additional political pressure mechanism but also frequently triggers military conflicts to achieve specific benefits and goals (Llazo et al., 2024; Lyndyuk et al., 2024). International terrorism, as of today, is a new type of super-systemic terrorism, the purpose and key tasks of which are to promote the processes of globalisation by violent measures.

According to Kassab & Rosen (2022), the activity of Islamist groups, which focus on conducting social protests against authoritarianism, corruption, population impoverishment, and socioeconomic inequality, poses one of the greatest threats to the CA countries. Thus, among the main reasons for the spread of radical Islam, Kassab & Rosen (2022) single out the historical and geographical factors, the conflict of generations, the inability of the authorities to conduct a constructive dialogue with organisations of political Islam, support from foreign countries, as well as the widespread violation of justice, which is one of the most important values in Islam. It is worth noting that in all the five states of the CA region, the official clergy is the only structured Islamic force, and recently, the boundaries between it and the unofficial one are beginning to blur. This is due to its nationalisation, Islamic movements’ activity, and the younger generation’s radicalisation (Sheryazdanova et al., 2024). Thus, a new generation of radical Islamic organisations has formed in the CA countries, which conduct Islamic agitation through the use of digital technologies, conduct the process of recruiting representatives of the regional authorities, and promote the idea of social equality in the form

of “Islamic socialism” (Ismayilov et al., 2024; 2025).

It should be mentioned that in all CA countries, Islamist organisations are a threat to national and regional security. In this regard, Fatima & Zafar (2020) argue that there is a high threat of a repeat of the “Arab Spring”, since there are many similarities between the states in which this phenomenon took place and the CA regions. Given that the movement of radical Islamists has the potential to trigger a systemic crisis in the region, the leadership of the CA countries is intensifying their efforts to combat them, relying heavily on the official clergy for support. It is necessary to use not only repressive measures but also socio-economic reforms (Kapitonov & Vilks, 2022). It is worth agreeing with this, since the resolution of this set of problems is possible only with comprehensive, long-term, and systematic work on all aspects.

Researchers like Sharipova and Beissembayev (2021) note that international terrorism is a phenomenon, the scale of which is planetary, and its consideration involves the analysis of politics, economics, psychology, history, and many other areas of public life. Terrorist acts are the most dangerous crimes against humanity, the state, and society, and as a result of the development of information technology, the fight against this illegal phenomenon is becoming more complex and global (Zile et al., 2023). Central Asian states are characterised by distrust of the authorities, destructive attitudes, bureaucracy among individual government officials, and corruption-related crimes (Abdraimov et al., 2013; Bayanbayeva et al., 2023). These internal vulnerabilities are further aggravated by the unregulated dissemination of radical content through various information channels, including certain religious literature, which contributes to the ideological proliferation of extremism. In such a context, enhancing public trust in state institutions and implementing anti-corruption measures become essential prerequisites for resisting extremist influences. Equally important is establishing civic initiatives and institutional structures that can actively engage in preventive measures,

including awareness-raising campaigns and information hours to counter the spread of extremist ideologies (Sheryazdanova et al., 2020).

Based on the foregoing, the issue of countering terrorism in this region is particularly important due to the increased danger of its occurrence in modern times. An important aspect of counterterrorism in the region involves international military cooperation, particularly with countries located near the Middle East and Afghanistan, which are geographically and strategically linked to the proliferation of security threats. In the current geopolitical landscape, China emerges as a key strategic partner for the Central Asian states. At the same time, support from the United States also plays a crucial role in strengthening regional security capacities (Kyrychok et al., 2020). Noteworthy in this case is also the fact that well-built cooperation opens up an opportunity in the form of neutralising the growth of cross-border security threats in the region, which is a necessary condition for the implementation of the progressive development of the economic plan of all participants in the Eurasian integration. Further, it should be mentioned that due attention should be paid to Turkmenistan, due to its vulnerable position, namely, the border with Afghanistan, which is a flat area that is easily accessible for the activities of terrorist groups (Shukurov, 2022). Thus, at the beginning of 2022, the authorities of Turkmenistan decided to create a new policy concept, the basis of which is to ensure peace and security. It is also worth noting the importance of providing funding and additional economic support to the CA countries since socio-economic problems are one of the reasons for the rapid spread of terrorism and extremism in the territories of the republics. Based on this, the joint efforts of international actors will provide an opportunity to increase the level of security in the CA states and guarantee a more significant and effective result. In turn, the provision of additional economic assistance significantly reduces the level of financial costs of states. Also, it helps resolve a range of socio-political problems,

particularly unemployment, low education, low wages, and others.

## Conclusion

This study focused on analysing the current state of international terrorism in the CA countries. The findings reveal that factors, such as geopolitical location and the presence of political social problems, significantly increase the threat of terrorist and extremist acts. To overcome these aspects, it is necessary to provide support from leading international actors and additional economic assistance to the CA countries.

Scholars argued that one can categorise illegal phenomena of a terrorist and extremist nature into two categories: internal and external. In doing so, they noted that the latter category encompasses the complexity of socio-economic problems, leading to the formation and spread of opposition movements. Besides, the analysis also revealed that the aforementioned factors sparked the emergence of Islamist organisations in the region, specifically the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, and Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami.

An important step in this work was the analysis of statistical data regarding terrorist acts in the region of the CA states. It was noted that this is the result of previously discussed regional issues. The obtained data revealed that the organisation of terrorist acts resulted in 23 fatal attacks, leading to 411 deaths between 2008 and 2024. Notably, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan accounted for the majority of the deaths during these illegal actions. This led to the conclusion that terrorist acts pose a significant threat in the region. Subsequent studies will be aimed at studying digitalised and other measures to prevent the emergence of terrorism, which will improve the levels of regional and global security.

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**Ethical Approval**

The study was conducted without human/animal participation. Ethical approval is not required.

**Conflict of Interest**

The authors confirm that they have no conflicts of interest to disclose. The authors also disclose that the manuscript is not AI-generated.

**Author Contributions**

M.T. and M.A.: conceptualisation, methodology, data curation, writing-original draft preparation. E.K.: visualisation,

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It is not applicable as the study was conducted without human participation.