

Countering Terrorist and Extremist Criminal Offences: A Situational Approach

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the unique characteristics of terrorist and extremist activities in Kazakhstan compared to other countries. The primary objective is to analyze public perceptions of extremism and terrorism while identifying key socioeconomic and political factors contributing to their emergence. A quantitative survey method involving 2,905 respondents assessed public attitudes toward these issues. Additionally, a situational approach was used alongside historical and comparative legal methods to trace the development of extremism in Central Asia and highlight distinctive regional influences. The survey findings indicate that declining living standards, internal political instability, and external factors significantly contribute to extremist activities. Based on these insights, the study proposes targeted recommendations, including strengthening the legal framework, enhancing inter-agency coordination, integrating advanced information technologies, and adopting a situational approach to mitigate extremist threats. These measures are expected to improve national security and facilitate international cooperation in combating terrorism. The study underscores the necessity of a comprehensive and proactive strategy to address the region's evolving nature of extremist threats.

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1. Introduction

Countering terrorism and extremism remains a major challenge, as religious extremist movements often arise in regions with high extremist activity and spread to states with weaker security. Extremist methods are promoted as effective means to resolve social conflicts. Kazakhstan's Criminal Code distinctly defines terrorism and extremism: terrorism involves deliberate violent acts to incite fear and disrupt order, while extremism includes radical ideas that legitimize or encourage violence for political, religious, or ideological aims. This legal differentiation shapes law enforcement, judicial classification, and countermeasures by separating extremist ideologies from their violent terrorist actions. This framework supports

a nuanced, situational analysis of belief systems and their violent manifestations, which guides this study's approach.

Combined with socioeconomic challenges, terrorist threats and political instability significantly weaken the exercise of human and civil rights and slow societal and state development. Extremists and terrorists rapidly change tactics, form resilient groups, and adapt to countermeasures, highlighting the need for thorough scientific study of extremism's nature, causes, conditions, and factors leading to citizen involvement. Developing national mechanisms to counter extremism requires a comprehensive analysis of its impact on the socio-political situation and international experience in combating this phenomenon. According to the U.S. Mission Kazakhstan's 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom, the spread of religious extremist ideology under external influences is a critical issue for Kazakhstan and other Central Asian states. Gaps in the country's religious policy may pose future national security threats.¹ A concerning trend is the intellectual and ideological weakening of traditional Islam, partly due to the lack of effective development strategies and active political education by official spiritual institutions, which limits their influence amid globalization and growing politicization of society.

The problems associated with the spread of the ideology and practice of religious extremism under the influence of external forces continue to be the most pressing for Kazakhstan and other Central Asian republics. The research on extremism and terrorism has shown significant growth, being the focus of political scientists, sociologists, economists, and lawyers. For instance, Natalia Mergembaeva², Irina Danilova, et al., and Joshua Freilich et al.³ examined aspects of the criminal procedure policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan that require revision, such as investigative jurisdiction and jurisdiction over crimes related to terrorism and extremism.

In existing academic and policy literature, the main tasks of the state and society in countering terrorism and extremism are generally defined as enhancing the legal framework, improving coordination among institutions, and strengthening preventive and educational measures. Jerzy Gut stressed that religious extremism and terrorism had become serious destabilizing factors for the global economy and politics, as well as for the international community as a whole.⁴ Particular attention is paid to various religious organizations and their activities, as well as the influence of these organizations on certain groups of people. Susilo Wibisono et al.⁵ Mira Maulsharif, and Zhamilya Bazarkulova discussed the concept of religious extremism, its manifestations in Kazakhstan, the reasons for its emergence, and methods of combating it. Particular attention was paid to the activities of various religious organizations and their influence on certain population groups. Alkhaldy Ayman and Alhrahshehr Rakan noted that

¹ Alona Tiurina and others, 'Social Responsibility and Modern Business During the Global Crisis: Threat or Opportunity for the Guam Member Countries', *Journal of Eastern European and Central Asian Research (JEECAR)*, 10 (2023), 201-12. <https://doi.org/10.15549/jecar.v10i2.1276>.

² H Mergembayeva, 'Some Aspects of Criminal Procedure Policy in Countering Terrorism and Extremism', *BULLETIN of L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University Law Series*, 140.3 SE- (2022), 81-88. <https://doi.org/10.32523/2616-6844-2022-140-3-81-88>.

³ Joshua D. Freilich and others, 'Terrorism, Political Extremism, and Crime and Criminal Justice', *Annual Review of Criminology*, 7.1 (2024), 187-209. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-criminol-022422-121713>.

⁴ Jerzy Gut, 'Countering the Phenomenon of Radicalization and Violent Extremism: Analysis Based on the Example of Selected Western European Countries', *Security Theory and Practice*, 2.1 (2023), 97-109 <<https://doi.org/10.48269/2451-0718-btip-2023-2-007>.

⁵ Susilo Wibisono, Winnifred R. Louis, and Jolanda Jetten, 'A Multidimensional Analysis of Religious Extremism', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10.1 (2019), 2560. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02560>.

religious extremism is intricately linked to terrorism and fundamentalism. The problem is exacerbated by the inability of society, the state, and science to respond effectively to the growth of extremist manifestations, including religious extremism, mistakenly believing that with the development of science, religion will lose its influence.⁶

Matti Izora İbrahim and Taylan Özgür Kaya,⁷ Michael Jensen et al.⁸ investigated the evolution of Islam in Kazakhstan and identified the principal causes of its radicalisation. The researcher critically analysed state religious policy and assessed the country's potential risks of increasing religious extremism. The theoretical aspects of the ideology of religious extremism, its material, psychological, and religious causes, and issues of social antagonism in the religious sphere were analyzed. Particular attention was paid to the psychology and religious beliefs of extremists, as well as the reasons for their radicalization. Issues of collective identity, interpretations of justice, and social categorization were examined. Awni Etaywe focused on analyzing the development of measures to combat religious extremism and terrorism in the Republic of Kazakhstan. Having analyzed the regulations, state institutions, principles, and approaches of the state policy of Kazakhstan, the researchers highlighted key aspects and development features of the system of countering the ideology of religious extremism and terrorism. Special attention was paid to improving legislation and state policy in this area.⁹

Zhanat Aldiyarova et al., through a historical-comparative analysis, identified the distinctive features of the two countries regarding ethnic and confessional composition, the structure of public administration, religious education, the activities of religious associations, interreligious dialogue and tolerance, as well as measures to combat religious extremism and terrorism. Considering the diversity of manifestations of extremism and terrorism against the background of accelerating political processes, studying various aspects of this multifaceted and controversial topic remains relevant and requires further research.¹⁰

Given the rising threat of extremism and terrorism in Kazakhstan and the broader Central Asian region, it is crucial to analyze the structural, ideological, and situational factors that fuel their proliferation. The purpose of this study was to identify the specific features of extremist and terrorist activities in Kazakhstan in comparison with other states. The main objectives of the study included analyzing the characteristics of extremist and terrorist activities in Kazakhstan relative to other countries, identifying the most effective methods and strategies to counter extremism and terrorism, exploring the possibility of adapting the international experience to improve these measures and examining the social, economic, and political factors contributing to the development of extremist and terrorist movements in Kazakhstan.

⁶ Alhrahshahr Rakan Ayman, Alkhaldy, 'Religious Extremism in a Multifaceted Context', *Journal of the Sociology and Theory of Religion*, 13.1 (2022), 223–38. <https://doi.org/10.24197/jstr.1.2022.223-238>.

⁷ Matti Izora İbrahim and Taylan Özgür Kaya, 'Analyzing the Disparity in Application of the Laws Governing Foreign Fighters: A Securitization Theory Approach', *Journal of Global Security Studies*, 9.4 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogae043>.

⁸ Michael A Jensen, Anita Atwell Seate, and Patrick A James, 'Radicalization to Violence: A Pathway Approach to Studying Extremism', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 32.5 (2020), 1067–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2018.1442330>.

⁹ Awni Etaywe, 'Discursive Pragmatics of Justification in Terrorist Threat Texts: Victim-Blaming, Denying, Discrediting, Legitimizing, Manipulating, and Retaliation', *Discourse & Society*, 35.6 (2024), 725–56. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09579265241251480>.

¹⁰ Aldiyarova Zhanat and others, 'Peculiarities of Kazakhstan and Malaysia in View of the Relationship between State and Religion', *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization*, 13.1 SE-Articles (2023). <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.131.06>.

2. Research Method

In the study of countering criminal offenses of terrorist and extremist orientation in Kazakhstan, the situational approach played a significant role. The analysis of legal acts regulating the interaction between law enforcement agencies and forensic experts helped assess the problem's current state and identify ways to improve it. The norms of various legal sources were investigated, including the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 953 'On Approval of the Comprehensive Plan for the Implementation of State Policy in the religious sphere of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2021-2023', and statistical data.¹¹

The situational approach, as articulated by Cherney¹² and Gruenewald et al.¹³, pertains to the examination of particular contexts, events, and environments where extremist and terrorist activities transpire, focusing on the interaction between individual behavior and situational factors. This study employed a situational approach to perform a thorough analysis of specific incidents and the factors affecting the occurrence and execution of extremist and terrorist acts in Kazakhstan. This entailed examining the distinctive attributes of each instance, including the participants' objectives, the strategies and techniques utilized, and overarching contextual elements, such as socioeconomic inequalities, political volatility, and religious conflicts. This technique enabled the study to discover context-specific factors contributing to radicalization and violent extremism, thereby achieving its goal of revealing the unique characteristics of these phenomena in Kazakhstan relative to other nations. Additionally, the historical technique was utilized to delineate the chronological progression of extremism in Central Asia, whereas the comparative legal method facilitated the recognition of regionally and internationally disparate legislative and institutional responses. These methodologies collectively enabled the development of evidence-based recommendations for enhancing Kazakhstan's counter-terrorism policy, informed by local realities and international best practices¹⁴.

The statistical method was applied to analyze the Committee on Legal Statistics and Special Records data of the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Kazakhstan. A questionnaire survey of 2,905 persons was conducted to study the population's attitude toward the problem of terrorism and extremism. The results helped to understand the attitudes of the population of Kazakhstan towards the problem of terrorism and extremism within the country. The data allowed for a deeper understanding of the context and dynamics of current events, the identification of key factors contributing to the emergence and spread of terrorist and extremist threats, and the development of recommendations to improve legal and operational work in this area. The questionnaire survey revealed significant differences in threat

¹¹ Yordan Gunawan and others, 'Journalist Protection on the Battlefield Under the International Humanitarian Law: Russia-Ukraine War', *Jurnal Hukum Unissula*, 39.1 (2023), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.26532/jh.v39i1.24685>.

¹² Adrian Cherney, 'Exploring Youth Radicalisation through the Framework of Developmental Crime Prevention: A Case Study of Ahmad Numan Haider', *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 32.3 (2020), 277-91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10345329.2020.1784503>.

¹³ Jeff Gruenewald, And Grant Drawve, and Brent L Smith, 'The Situated Contexts of American Terrorism: A Conjunctive Analysis of Case Configurations', *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 46.1 (2019), 884-901. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854819842900>.

¹⁴ Ivan S. Grigoriev, 'What Changes for the Constitutional Court with the New Russian Constitution?', *Russian Politics*, 6.1 (2021), 27-49. <https://doi.org/10.30965/24518921-00601003>.

perceptions among different social and age groups. In the study of countering criminal offenses of terrorist and extremist orientation in Kazakhstan, various approaches to the understanding and legal nature of such offenses were systematized. Factors affecting the regulation of measures to counter terrorist and extremist threats and current problems in this area were also identified.

3. Results

3.1. Socioeconomic and Political Drivers of Extremism and Terrorism

Extremism is an activity aimed at violent or otherwise unlawful action that is based on radical beliefs and aimed at destroying, destabilizing, or undermining established norms and principles. This phenomenon is conditioned by various historical, political, social, and economic factors, varying from country to country or region to region. In most cases, the causes of extremism are intertwined, including both religious and nationalist motivations that can mobilize large sections of the population.

Terrorism is the most brutal and violent method of achieving its goals. Terrorist organizations use terrorist attacks to achieve their goals, often succeeding in their strategies. The number of cases of extremism and terrorism in a state, their spread, the level of popular support, and measures to counter them are important indicators of social tension, the effectiveness of democratic institutions, and the maturity of civil society (Figure 1).

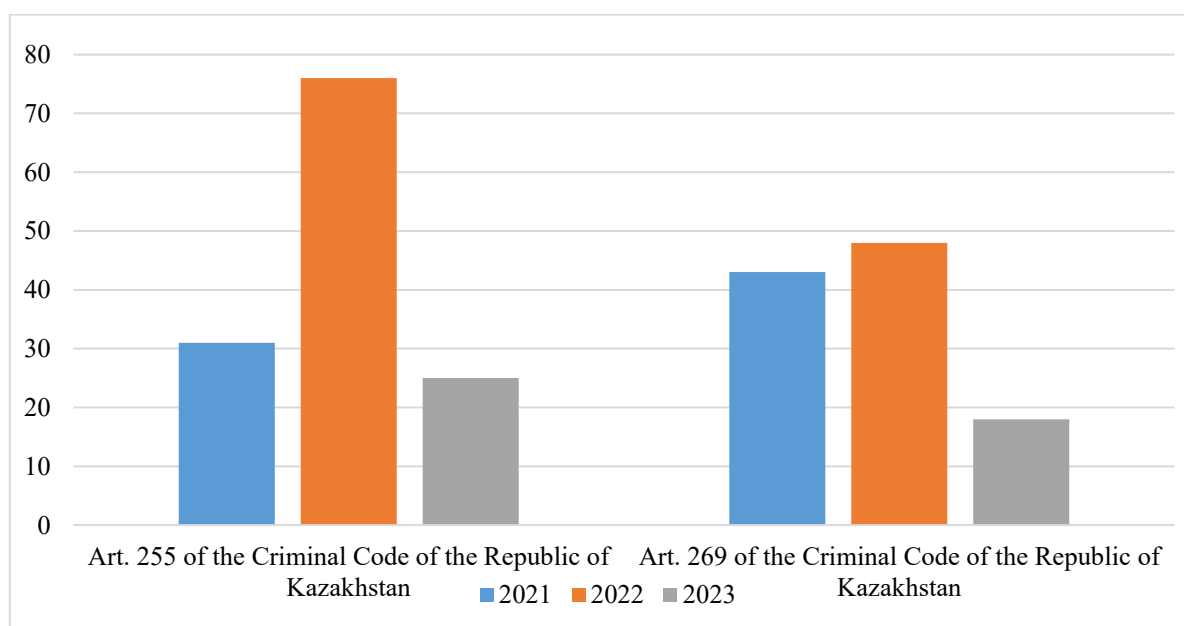


Figure 1. Statistics on the number of terrorist and extremist offences committed in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2021-2023

Source: created by the authors of this study based on Global Terrorism Index 2023.

The results of the analytical report on the results of the survey conducted to investigate the attitude of the population towards the problem of terrorism and extremism, where 2,905 people were surveyed, suggest that the majority of respondents believe that the deterioration of living standards of citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan is the main reason for the manifestation of terrorist activity in Kazakhstan in January 2022 (Table 1). This emphasizes the significance of socioeconomic factors in the context of terrorism and extremism. The survey

results showed that the population of Kazakhstan is generally positive about changes in society but is concerned about material difficulties, corruption, and the threat of extremism. The key sources of information on terrorism are the internet and the media. Inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations are perceived relatively calmly, but there is potential for conflict under certain conditions.¹⁵

Table 1. Results of an analytical report on the results of a survey conducted to study public attitudes toward the problem of terrorism and extremism

What do you think was the main reason for the manifestation of terrorist activity in Kazakhstan in January 2022?	Male Respondents	Female Respondents	Male Respondents (%)	Female Respondents (%)
Intra-economic – deterioration of living standards of citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan	1253	371	56.47%	54.08%
Internal political – clan disunity and confrontation within the Republic of Kazakhstan	371	119	16.72%	17.35%
Foreign policy – an attempt to involve and use Kazakhstan in the global political crisis	287	77	12.93%	11.22%
Religious – an attempt to establish a radical state in Kazakhstan	154	35	6.94%	5.10%
National – an attempt to establish nationalist ideas	154	84	6.94%	12.24%

3.2. Regional Trends and Historical Patterns of Extremist Activities

Throughout its history, Kazakhstan has faced terrorist acts that deeply impacted society and challenged law enforcement and political structures. Notably, in 2016, extremist attacks in Aktobe and Almaty resulted in multiple deaths and prompted extensive counter-terrorism operations, with perpetrators receiving life sentences. Earlier, in 2012, an armed attack on police in Atyrau was similarly suppressed. Extremism and terrorism remain urgent threats to national security and social stability, especially amid globalization and sociocultural changes that increase risks of radicalization. Ongoing vigilance by state and non-state actors is essential to prevent violence and protect the country's religious and ethnic harmony. Religious extremism, driven by radical beliefs, aims to destabilize and destroy state and social values.¹⁶

After the Soviet Union's collapse, national and religious radicalization sharply increased, heightening terrorism threats. This was evident during the Tajik civil war (1992–1997), where religious extremism underpinned the Islamic Renaissance Party and armed opposition. Following independence, Uzbekistan faced major opposition rallies in 1992, risking political conflict similar to Tajikistan's. Learning from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan's government forcefully

¹⁵ Musa Surajo Alhaji and others, 'A Preliminary Investigation of Copter Drone Detection by Using Forward Scattering Radar', *Journal of Aerospace Engineering and Mechanics*, 6.1 (2022), 588–95. <https://doi.org/10.36959/422/465>.

¹⁶ Isabella Banks and Leonore Ten Hulsen, 'Human Rights Weekend: Artificial Intelligence, Big Data & Human Rights: Progress or Setback?', *Amsterdam Law Forum*, 11.3 (2019), 70. <https://doi.org/10.37974/alf.340>.

suppressed protests, prompting opposition leaders to flee. In Kazakhstan, Islamic extremism developed in three stages: from 1991 to 1998, initial conditions and infrastructure formed amid post-Soviet political and socioeconomic changes; subsequent stages reflect its further evolution up to the present.¹⁷

At the beginning of the second stage (1999-2010), the Kazakh leadership realised the seriousness of the threat of Islamic extremism. A series of terrorist attacks in neighbouring Uzbekistan in February 1999 provided a major impetus. Uzbek nationals involved in the Tashkent attacks were detained in Kazakhstan and extradited to Uzbekistan. Since the beginning of 2005, there had been a significant increase in the manifestations of terrorist activity in Kazakhstan, which had led to an increase in the number of persons prosecuted for establishing and taking part in terrorist organisations. This period was also characterised by an increase in terrorist trafficking, including the export and import of ideological tools, human resources, and technological techniques. Statistical data show that the southern and western regions of the country had a special impact on negative processes. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, public associations aimed at forcibly changing the constitutional order, undermining the security of the state, or inciting inter-ethnic and religious discord, as well as the creation of paramilitary groups, are prohibited in Kazakhstan.

Since 2011, Islamic extremists in Kazakhstan have increasingly adopted terrorist methods, prompting the need for new legal and strategic responses. Religious extremism manifests in terrorist acts and armed conflicts, often fueled by internal disputes among radical Islamist groups using religious dogma to justify violence¹⁸. Extremism reflects a commitment to destroying traditional social norms, with violent acts serving as strategic tools. Individual extremist beliefs, shaped by various political, economic, religious, and cultural factors, become deeply embedded worldviews. A study found that only 41% of respondents strongly support Kazakhstan's interreligious policy, indicating public concern over terrorism and extremism (Table 2).

Table 2. Results of a pilot study conducted to identify potential threats and investigate the population's attitude towards the problem of terrorism and extremism

How do you assess the state policy in the sphere of interreligious relations?	Male Respondents	Female Respondents	Male Respondents (%)	Female Respondents (%)
Highly, I fully endorse it	41	35	41%	26.6%
I partially agree with it, disagree with it	29	34	31.6%	9.1%
I totally disapprove of it	11	12	6.2%	11.3%
Our state does not have that policy	31	6	12.6%	6.3%
I am not interested in politics	15	7	11.4%	3%

¹⁷ Cherney.

¹⁸ Mihail Păduraru, 'Theoretical and Practical Considerations Regarding the Use of Conditional Probability Assessment Algorithm in Early Warning Tasks Aimed to Prevent Acts of Terrorism and Violent Extremism', *Journal of Applied Security Research*, 17.2 (2022), 208–40. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19361610.2020.1858691>.

Extremist groups identify supporters and opponents through targeted propaganda and methods aimed at controlling thoughts, beliefs, and actions. They spread ideological beliefs by interpreting religious texts to justify political or religious goals. Emotional manipulation—appealing to guilt, fear, or dissatisfaction—is used to attract followers. These groups isolate members from external information that might challenge their views, reinforcing control and discouraging doubt. They foster a strong group identity, creating a sense of belonging to an exclusive community with shared values. Additionally, they highlight examples of committed behavior, such as participation in violent acts or religious rituals, to persuade and mobilize members, increasing their dedication and involvement.¹⁹

Extremism and terrorism both involve violations of human and civil rights. Extremists seek to illegitimately change social or constitutional orders, impose their beliefs, alter education, religion, and legal systems, and suppress or destroy perceived enemies to build an ideal world.²⁰ Terrorists similarly use violence and threats to destabilize political systems, enforce their ideology through propaganda and coercion, disrupt social norms, and undermine cultural and scientific achievements.²¹ Their actions aim to create fear and chaos, enabling control over society while violating fundamental rights and freedoms²².

In different regions of the world, the problem of radicalization of religion has its specific features. In Central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, the legislation provides broad powers to block Internet resources, including pages linked to extremism and terrorism. During social tension, these countries have often used shutdowns, when Internet service providers shut down network access over large areas. The state of affairs in Kazakhstan is characterized by ambiguity as the country continues to search for the best model of religious policy through trial and error. In this process, it is important to learn from the practices of other countries where analogous models have been successfully implemented and proven effective.²³

In the UK, for example, law enforcement agencies have been active in using targeted measures against extremist groups and their supporters. This is achieved by using specialized units located in different localities. A significant role is played by informed citizens who report suspicious activity by citizens displaying behavior that raises suspicion of extremist beliefs. For example, the county of Surrey has specialized online platforms for providing information on suspicious persons. The UK Government's main priority is to ensure security at home. Within the framework of its efforts, the government has developed the Prevent program to avert radicalization and provide counseling and social support. The program includes work

¹⁹ Joshua D Freilich and others, 'An Intervention Analysis of Fatal Far-Right Extremist Violence within a Vector-Autoregressive Framework', *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*, 13.2 (2020), 143–71. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17467586.2019.1700541>.

²⁰ Nurlan Apakhayev and others, 'Review on the Outer Space Legislation: Problems and Prospects', *Statute Law Review*, 39.3 (2018), 258–65. <https://doi.org/10.1093/slr/hmx010>.

²¹ Dmytro Karamyshev and others, 'Multi-Level Public Administration in the Context of Hybrid Threats', *Social Legal Studies*, 7 (2024), 44–54. <https://doi.org/10.32518/sals2.2024.44>.

²² Yordan Gunawan, M. Fabian Akbar, and Eva Ferrer Corral, 'Kafala v. Human Rights Migrant Workers at the 2022 Qatar World Cup', *Journal of Indonesian Legal Studies*, 9.2 SE-Research Article (2024), 571–98. <https://doi.org/10.15294/jils.v9i2.2601>.

²³ Charlotte Heath-Kelly and Sadi Shanaah, 'Rehabilitation within Pre-Crime Interventions: The Hybrid Criminology of Social Crime Prevention and Countering Violent Extremism', *Theoretical Criminology*, 27.2 (2022), 183–203. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13624806221108866>.

in the education and health sectors, engagement with religious and charitable organizations, and countering radicalization on the Internet. There is a particular focus on the integration of Muslims into British society.²⁴

Adapting an analogous approach to that implemented in the United Kingdom represents an additional strategic dimension within this research and aligns with the situational framework adopted throughout the study. The UK's Prevent strategy, as part of its broader counter-extremism policy, incorporates early intervention mechanisms, localized response units, and civil society engagement to detect and prevent radicalization before it escalates into violence. This approach emphasizes multi-agency cooperation, community-based reporting channels, and the integration of education, healthcare, and social services into national security planning. In the context of Kazakhstan, such a model can be instrumental in enhancing grassroots-level situational awareness, particularly by empowering local law enforcement units and civil actors to identify early warning signs of extremist behavior. Moreover, incorporating informed citizen participation and community support systems into Kazakhstan's counter-extremism infrastructure can significantly improve responsiveness to localized threats. By proposing the adaptation of this preventative, inclusive, and multi-sectoral model, the study not only expands the situational approach but also demonstrates how international best practices can be contextually reinterpreted to reinforce Kazakhstan's national security objectives and promote societal resilience.²⁵

Successfully countering religious extremism requires not only the development of theoretical concepts and research into the concrete causes of different types of religious extremism but also a suitable legal framework, effective legislation, and a government program that provides comprehensive measures to counter this phenomenon. Effectively countering extremism requires a comprehensive approach that includes addressing the social causes that give rise to extremism. Measures taken by the authorities on religious issues, violence, and repression against individual extremists, however consistent and brutal, will not eradicate extremism if its deep roots stay intact. Such measures can only lead to an escalation of extremism and aggravation of the situation, which could lead to grave social and civilizational cataclysms, as well as a worsening of the crime situation.

Countering religious extremism requires a set of effective and prompt measures that will create a barrier to the spread of this negative social phenomenon. Counter-terrorism is a key element of national security, and public policy in this area is essential.²⁶ This policy should protect the nation's interests and define a strategy to combat terrorism. The state policy of counter-terrorism includes a set of actions of public authorities and elements of the political

²⁴ Rita Augestad Knudsen and Paul Betts, 'UK Counter-Terrorism and Multiple and Complex Needs: A Policy-Informed Discourse Analysis', *European Journal for Security Research*, 1.1 (2024), 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41125-024-00103-y>.

²⁵ Rachel Georghea Sentani and Mathijs ten Wolde, 'The Legal Policy of Executability in the International Arbitral Tribunal Decision', *Bestuur*, 9.2 (2021), 144-55. <https://doi.org/10.20961/bestuur.v9i2.54451>.

²⁶ Arben Hysi and others, 'Role of Legal Regulation in the Establishment and Development of the Public Administration System with Local Self-Government Aspects', *Social Legal Studios*, 7 (2024), 27-36. <https://doi.org/10.32518/sals1.2024.27>.

system, which should be consistent and aimed at ensuring political and public security, eliminating the causes of terrorism, and minimizing or eliminating the terrorist threat.²⁷

State policy to counter-terrorism includes a set of measures aimed at political support for anti-terrorist operations by special services and security agencies, reducing the level of the terrorist threat and protecting the vital interests of the state and its citizens.²⁸ The key targets of this policy are social groups dissatisfied with their socio-economic or political situation, as well as those who implicitly or explicitly support terrorists. This includes individuals and organizations designated as terrorists, the ideology of terrorism, and the conditions conducive to its occurrence.²⁹

The main internal and external factors contributing to the growth of Islamic extremism in Kazakhstan include corruption; the lack of effective socio-economic reforms; the inability of official Islam in Kazakhstan to counter unofficial Islam, including that introduced from abroad; attempts by foreign states (especially the United States and its NATO and Middle East allies) to use the Islamic factor to destabilize the political situation in Central Asia; the insufficient readiness of the law enforcement forces to effectively counter-terrorism; and the inability of the law enforcement agencies to combat terrorism. To prevent manifestations of extremism, local authorities are instructed to constantly monitor all Islamic religious associations. Special attention is paid to religious associations with a mixed national composition or composed entirely of national minorities.

Between 2020 and 2023, Kazakhstan's counterterrorism and counter-extremism legislation underwent significant tightening, largely through both amendments to existing legal frameworks and the adoption of new instruments aimed at curbing the proliferation of radical ideologies. One of the most pivotal regulatory developments during this period was the Government's adoption of Resolution No. 953 "On Approval of the Comprehensive Plan for the Implementation of State Policy in the Religious Sphere for 2021–2023." This resolution outlined an integrated strategy focusing on regulatory enforcement, religious education, and inter-agency collaboration to counter the ideological infrastructure of extremism. It introduced a securitized view of religion by mandating increased scrutiny of religious organizations—particularly those with international affiliations—and reinforced state control over digital information channels suspected of propagating extremist content.³⁰ While the resolution reflected the state's efforts to align legal and administrative mechanisms with the evolving threats, it also revealed operational limitations, such as weak inter-agency coordination and technological capacity gaps that hindered the monitoring of online radicalization vectors.

The implementation of Resolution No. 953 faces significant challenges, primarily due to poor inter-agency coordination and limited technical capacity and digital literacy among officials,

²⁷ Arlene Robinson, Zoe Marchment, and Paul Gill, 'Domestic Extremist Criminal Damage Events: Behaving like Criminals or Terrorists?', *Security Journal*, 32.2 (2019), 153–67. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41284-018-0153-2>.

²⁸ Liana Spytka, 'Prohibition in the USA, the USSR, and the UAE: Ideological and Procedural Differences, Causes of Failures or Successes', *Novum Jus*, 17.1 (2023), 67–92. <https://doi.org/10.14718/NovumJus.2023.17.3.3>.

²⁹ Yordan Gunawan, Ghlyats Amri Wibowo, and Mohammad Hazyar Arumbinang, 'Foreign Fighters in the Ukrainian Armed Conflict: An International Humanitarian Law Perspective', *Volksggeist: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum Dan Konstitusi*, 6.2 (2023), 145–57. <https://doi.org/10.24090/volksggeist.v6i2.9315>.

³⁰ Liana Spytka, 'Practice-Based Methods of Bringing to Legal Liability for Anonymous Defamation on the Internet and in the Media', *Social Legal Studies*, 7.1 (2024), 202–9. <https://doi.org/10.32518/sals1.2024.202>.

hindering effective oversight of online extremism. While the resolution strengthens Kazakhstan's counter-extremism framework, concerns persist about its compliance with international human rights standards, especially regarding freedom of religion and expression. Human rights groups warn of potential abuses like arbitrary website shutdowns and disproportionate targeting of minority religious groups. Despite Kazakhstan's commitment to treaties such as the ICCPR, the resolution's application often prioritizes state security over personal freedoms. Between 2020 and 2023, legal measures became increasingly restrictive, raising tensions between security and human rights. Future reforms must balance these concerns to ensure that counter-extremism efforts respect constitutional rights and international obligations without undermining fundamental freedoms.

3.3. Countermeasures and Strategies for Mitigating Extremist Threats

Introducing a situational approach to Kazakhstan's counter-extremism policy offers significant potential to enhance state efforts. This flexible, adaptive method enables rapid response to evolving threats, focusing on vulnerable areas to minimize impact. It promotes better coordination among state bodies, public organizations, and international partners through shared information and joint actions³¹. Early threat detection and preventive measures improve security, while education and outreach build community resilience. Rehabilitation and social support programs help reintegrate individuals influenced by extremist ideologies, reducing recidivism. Thus, the situational approach can greatly increase effectiveness but requires comprehensive cooperation among all stakeholders for successful implementation.³²

Preventive measures against religious extremism in Kazakhstan must consider local factors such as population religiosity, diversity of beliefs, influence of extremist groups, and the presence and activity of mosques and churches. These efforts should be comprehensive and coordinated among state bodies, public organizations, and other institutions. The situational approach offers strong prospects for enhancing effectiveness but requires broad cooperation³³. The use of modern information technologies greatly improves counter-extremism efforts by enabling data analysis to identify extremist patterns, supporting precise operational planning and rapid detection of extremist ideology online. Technology enhances information sharing and coordination among agencies, while predictive tools allow early threat identification and prevention. It also aids legislative adaptation to evolving extremist tactics. Integrating these technologies systematically into policy strengthens Kazakhstan's capacity to counter religious extremism and terrorism efficiently, optimizing resources and responses³⁴.

³¹ I Gusti Bagus Dharma Agastia, Anak Agung Banyu Perwita, and D B Subedi, 'Countering Violent Extremism through State-Society Partnerships: A Case Study of de-Radicalisation Programmes in Indonesia', *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, 15.1 (2020), 23–43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/18335330.2020.1722317>.

³² Dmytro Palko and others, 'Cyber Security Risk Modeling in Distributed Information Systems', *Applied Sciences*, 13.1 (2023), 2393. <https://doi.org/10.3390/app13042393>.

³³ Matthew Phelps, 'The Role of the Private Sector in Counter-Terrorism: A Scoping Review of the Literature on Emergency Responses to Terrorism', *Security Journal*, 34.4 (2021), 599–620. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41284-020-00250-6>.

³⁴ Jeff Gruenewald, Grant Drawve, and Brent L Smith, 'The Situated Contexts of American Terrorism: A Conjunctive Analysis of Case Configurations', *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 46.6 (2019), 884–901. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854819842900>.

The Extremist Activity Index in Kazakhstan is an effective tool for analyzing and assessing the threat level associated with extremist activity. This includes developing a methodology for the systematic collection and analysis of data on incidents of extremist activity, establishing criteria and methods for assessing incidents, and cooperating with law enforcement agencies, civil society organizations, and international research organizations. The development of an indexing system should accommodate a variety of aspects of extremist activity, including the frequency and scale of incidents, their geographical distribution, and the use of violence. Promotion of the index requires international cooperation to develop universally recognized methods and evaluation criteria. Ensuring information transparency and accessibility of the index results through open platforms and data visualization tools will allow stakeholders to monitor and analyze extremist activity effectively. The index results can be used to develop and adapt state strategies and programs to counter extremism, including identifying priority areas for intervention and assessing the effectiveness of measures taken.

In conclusion, despite challenging internal and external conditions, Kazakhstan's leadership is taking timely and effective measures to combat terrorism and religious extremism. Religious factors significantly affect national security, especially with the rise of new faiths unfamiliar to the population, which extremists exploit for political aims. Ensuring national security requires addressing both internal and external social risks. An effective counteraction system is essential to counter ongoing internal threats, and social security policy must focus on protecting individuals, society, and the state from both domestic and external dangers.

4. Discussion

Countering terrorist and extremist crimes is a crucial task for law enforcement and state agencies in Kazakhstan, especially given the region's unique historical, social, and political context. The situational approach allows tailoring strategies to Kazakhstan's specific threats by integrating legal, operational, and preventive measures and international cooperation for sustainable results. Scholars from philosophy, sociology, political science, law, and psychology offer varied analyses of terrorism, each emphasizing different aspects based on their disciplines. Researchers such as Nila Febri Wilujeng and Nila Febri Risman³⁵, Elanie Rodermond, and Frank Weerman highlight the close relationship between terrorism and extremism, complicating their distinction. David Parker and Lasse Lindekilde, Jan Jämte, and William Stephens et al.³⁶ discuss the challenges in defining religious extremism due to politicization and differing classifications. While terrorism, extremism, and religious extremism share features, they are distinct phenomena with different motivations and methods, making this differentiation vital for effective counter-strategies³⁷.

As already indicated in the findings, one of the difficult aspects of considering terrorism and extremism is their perception as forms of violence or war. Unlike warfare, terrorists do not adhere to territorial restrictions and do not have a well-defined base of operations, allowing

³⁵ Nila Febri Wilujeng and Helda Risman, 'Examining ASEAN Our Eyes Dealing with Regional Context in Counter Terrorism, Radicalism, and Violent Extremism', *PEOPLE: International Journal of Social Sciences*, 6.01 SE-Articles (2020), 267–81. <https://doi.org/10.20319/pijss.2020.61.267281>.

³⁶ David Parker and Lasse Lindekilde, 'Preventing Extremism with Extremists: A Double-Edged Sword? An Analysis of the Impact of Using Former Extremists in Danish Schools', *Education Sciences*, 10.4 (2020), 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci10040111>.

³⁷ William Stephens, Stijn Sieckelinck, and Hans Boutellier, 'Preventing Violent Extremism: A Review of the Literature', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 44.4 (2021), 346–61. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2018.1543144>.

them to use a wide range of methods, including the use of weapons against civilians. The purpose of terrorists is to induce terror, panic, and create public fear, which sets their approach apart from military strategies. Therefore, it is worth agreeing with the opinion of Lucia Zedner,³⁸ Renanah Miles Joyce and Virginia Page Fortna note that the distinction between war and terrorism remains a challenge, despite some attempts to approach the issue. This highlights the need to clearly define and distinguish these concepts without generalizations.

Extremism is a unique form of thinking and consciousness of individuals, capable of self-reproduction in different social, economic, and political conditions. Robin Andersson Malmros identified 16 patterns of extremist thinking, including the need for unconventional and extreme action, the belief in blocking the legitimate capabilities of the group, messianism, and the concept of a "bright future", the anticipation of supernatural intervention, the idea that evil must be destroyed, the glorification of death for a cause, belief in a vocation to kill or wage war, Machiavellianism, the dehumanization and demonization of opponents, the view of the world as a catastrophe for humanity, and the perception of authority as illegitimate.³⁹

According to Friedrich Lösel and Thomas Bliesener,⁴⁰ the political mechanism that underlies the state policy of countering terrorism determines the priority areas of development and implementation of anti-terrorist measures. This mechanism includes a system of values, traditions, procedures, and rules for the functioning of the executive authorities and determines the distribution of powers, functions, and responsibilities among them. It also ensures that key policy and administrative decisions are made, implemented, and monitored. However, the mechanism aimed at strengthening social relations in the sphere of state policy of countering terrorism and its regulatory support plays a key role in developing and implementing the relevant state policy. As stated above, the main condition for effective counter-terrorism is the establishment of an adequate regulatory framework. In this regard, the complexity of the legal regulation of counter-terrorism emphasises the need for attention from researchers and further scientific investigation in the field of coordination of activities of state structures responsible for countering terrorism, addressing current problems of society that may contribute to the emergence of terrorism, and other aspects.

Religious extremism usually manifests itself in transitional historical moments, such as globalisation and modernisation, which encompasses the entire humanity. Extremism often draws on traditional religious teachings, reinterpreting them in a radicalised form. Therefore, it is worth agreeing with the opinion of Irina Jugl et al.,⁴¹ Sam Andrews and Joshua Skoczylis⁴²

³⁸ Lucia Zedner, 'Countering Terrorism or Criminalizing Curiosity? The Troubled History of UK Responses to Right-Wing and Other Extremism', *Common Law World Review*, 50.1 (2021), 57–75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473779521989349>.

³⁹ Robin Andersson Malmros, 'Prevention of Terrorism, Extremism and Radicalisation in Sweden: A Sociological Institutional Perspective on Development and Change', *European Security*, 31.2 (2022), 289–312. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2021.1974403>.

⁴⁰ Friedrich Lösel and Thomas Bliesener, 'Extremism, Radicalization and Terrorism: Editorial', *Monatsschrift Für Kriminologie Und Strafrechtsreform*, *Monatsschrift für Kriminologie und Strafrechtsreform*, 104.3 (2021), 179–83. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1515/mks-2021-0134>.

⁴¹ Irina Jugl and others, 'Psychosocial Prevention Programs against Radicalization and Extremism: A Meta-Analysis of Outcome Evaluations', *European Journal of Psychology Applied to Legal Context*, 13.1 (2021), 37–46. <https://doi.org/10.5093/EJPALC2021A6>.

⁴² Sam Andrews and Joshua Skoczylis, 'Prevent, Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus: Analysing Terrorism Prevention Policies Using Althusser's Framework', *Millennium*, 50.2 (2022), 405–29. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298211063929>.

The free interpretation of religious texts provides an opportunity to use any religion for extremist purposes.

As already indicated in the research findings, measures aimed at improving the material well-being of the population are a key aspect in preventing the spread of religious extremism. This is critical because providing people with jobs and a decent standard of living reduces the social and economic basis for extremist movements. No less significant is the adoption of general preventive measures in the political sphere, such as strengthening statehood, developing democracy, reforming the branches of government, improving interregional relations, and bringing together the interests of different ethnic groups and regions of Kazakhstan. It is also important to balance the fulfillment of political will in combating social negativity in a multi-party environment. Policy measures of aversion also require delineating powers between central and territorial authorities, as well as local self-government bodies, in preventing religious extremism. One of the key areas of activity of government bodies in combating religious extremism is ideological and educational work aimed at embodying the ideas of internationalism and patriotism, as well as educating society about the harmful influence of religious extremism. According to Elmira Akhmetova and Muhammad Izzuddin Jaafar,⁴³ Claire Smith et al.,⁴⁴ and Neela Hassan,⁴⁵ a prominent component of this work is the formation of public opinion about the activities of religious extremists and the overall attitude of society towards this phenomenon.

An effective strategy to prevent religious extremism, according to Wahyudi and David Pradhan⁴⁶ is the comprehensive promotion of cultural and confessional diversity, unity of the country's inhabitants, and history of religious intolerance, genocide, and other crimes related to religious extremism. Therefore, it is worth agreeing with the proposal of Marlies Sas et al.⁴⁷ and Inga Nehlsen et al.⁴⁸ to achieve these goals, it is necessary to organize media appearances by clergy, intellectuals, and veteran representatives to hold round tables on state and local television channels. It is also important to organize assemblies of residents and labor collectives and to adopt appeals condemning the interference of international extremists and terrorists in the internal affairs of the state.

Thus, the cited studies highlight the complexity of defining and analyzing the phenomena of terrorism and religious extremism, requiring integrating different scientific approaches. Researchers from different disciplines highlight key aspects of these phenomena, from legal and political to sociological and ideological. One of the main challenges is the need for a clear definition and delineation of terms, which is important for effectively developing counter-

⁴³ Elmira Akhmetova and Muhammad Izzuddin Jaafar, 'Religious Extremism and Radicalisation of Muslims in Malaysia: The Malay Ties with the Mujahidin, Al Qaeda and ISIS', *Journal of Nusantara Studies*, 5.1 SE-Articles (2020). <https://doi.org/10.24200/jonus.vol5iss1pp104-123>.

⁴⁴ Claire Smith, Lucy Resnyansky, and Craig Taylor, 'Radicalization in the Asia-Pacific Region: Themes and Concepts', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 47.11 (2024), 1383–87. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2022.2034232>.

⁴⁵ Neela Hassan, 'Religion, Extremism and Violence in South Asia', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 36.2 (2024), 265–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2022.2131318>.

⁴⁶ Wahyudi and David Pradhan, 'Glocalization of Religious Extremism and Terrorism in Indonesia', *Sospol*, 7.1 SE-Articles (2021), 121–32. <https://doi.org/10.22219/sospol.v7i1.15959>.

⁴⁷ Marlies Sas and others, 'The Role of Education in the Prevention of Radicalization and Violent Extremism in Developing Countries', *Sustainability*, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12062320>.

⁴⁸ Inga Nehlsen and others, 'Evident and Effective? The Challenges, Potentials and Limitations of Evaluation Research on Preventing Violent Extremism', *International Journal of Conflict and Violence (IJCV)*, 14.(2021), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.4119/ijcv-3801>.

terrorism strategies and activities to prevent extremism. Furthermore, the impact of economic and social factors plays a key role in the development and prevention of religious extremism, highlighting the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing these issues.

5. Conclusions

The study successfully identified key distinctive features of extremism and terrorism in Kazakhstan, including region-specific radicalization trends and local vulnerabilities not typically observed in other geopolitical contexts. The analysis of the characteristics of these activities - supported by empirical data from a survey of 2,905 respondents - revealed the centrality of deteriorating living conditions, internal political fragmentation, and external ideological pressures as primary catalysts. In evaluating counter-strategies, the paper highlighted the utility of Kazakhstan's existing legislative and institutional mechanisms, while recommending enhancements through the adoption of targeted, preventative, and community-based measures. The study critically assessed the relevance and applicability of international practices—such as the UK's Prevent strategy—to the Kazakhstani context, demonstrating how such models could be locally adapted to improve resilience and mitigate radicalization. Thus, all declared research objectives have been met. The findings offer a robust analytical foundation for developing a comprehensive national counter-extremism policy that is adaptive, inclusive, and informed by both local realities and international experience. These conclusions contribute meaningfully to academic discourse and practical policymaking in the field of national and regional security.

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