

## Conference Paper

# Youth Extremist Attitudes Driven By Destabilization of Traditional Culture

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## Abstract

The paper considers a relevant and burning issue of youth extremism. The authors analyze the reasons for radical and extreme attitudes of the youth and state that extremism among youth is caused by destabilization of the traditional culture. The core of the traditional culture is purposefully destabilized by creating some pseudo-scientific problems and assigning heroic features to minor people in history. Many young people are conscious in their choice of traditionalism with different archaic violence practices which try to openly challenge the modern civility standardized under liberal capitalism and a consumerist society. Mass culture extensively contributes into the development and expansion of the youth extremism patterns. The paper underlines that overall social psychological attitude and confidence of young people in their future, a developed self-consciousness and tradition succession play a huge role in combatting extremism among the youth. Traditional behavioral aspects could oppose extremist manifestations which are rejected at a deep ethnical level of culture, because they contradict its nature and search for development in the today's world.

**Keywords:** youth; extremism; traditions; destabilization; culture.

## 1. Introduction

Globalization-driven challenges, new information technologies together with the expansion of the international terrorism make the theme of the research relevant. Here we can focus on special countercultural determinants generating different extremism forms among youth. Extremism is about being committed to extreme radical views.

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Recently, youth extremism is paid a lot of attention to, which could be explained by the expansion of the international terrorism and the adaptation issues of the migrants mainly from non-European countries. The theme is thoroughly examined, nevertheless, it remains relevant as the issue is burning. Proposed countermeasures against the extremist attitudes among youth appear to be inefficient, because people who oppose common rules are likely to hold quite radical approaches and are ready to sacrifice many victims among population. The issue needs theoretical analysis to identify the root causes for these attitudes in the society. To do this, a structural functional method was applied to reveal the connections in sociocultural space and to structurize the phenomena of the spiritual culture.

Modern global world is characterized by stagnation, and the traditional values of the spiritual culture capable to protect against outside and inside threats are mitigated. The core of the traditional culture is purposefully destabilized by creating some pseudo-scientific problems and assigning heroic features to particular people in history who are not the main ones.

A sophisticated multi-faceted globalization in the traditional societies develop differently: versatile social economic models deal with specific manifestations in the culture aimed to destabilize the psychic culture elements for further modifications. In the modern world, youth being the most powerful and the most energetic part of the society is both its strong driver and a weak element with no traditional socialization channels.

The subject of the study is an extremist attitude of the youth who are the most active members of the society striving to find their identity. With their own age, psychological peculiarities, youth is the least resistant to the impact from the destabilizing factors. On the one hand, youth is trying to reproduce the traditional ideas, to aestheticize an ethnic past, although, on the other hand, youth faces a problem when the traditional space of the spiritual culture is desacralized. Trying to find their identity and new life affirming meanings, youth becomes very selective in reproducing the traditional ideas which are vividly represented in the heroic images from the past.

## I.

In recent years, youth extremism based on the extreme interpretations of the past cultural traditions appears to be the most dangerous for the social wellbeing. It is not for nothing that young people are reasonably interested in religion which is perceived by them as a legitimation resource of the political violence [9].

Desacralization of the cultural superstructure in the modern society is accompanied by the growth of reflexivity in collective consciousness, this created the prerequisites for more freedom for the youth to construct their own identities. Here it is interesting to note that many young people are quite deliberate in choosing “traditionalism” with different archaic violence practices which are trying to openly challenge modern civility standardized in accordance with liberal capitalism and consumerism society. Mass culture, in its turn, also contributes into the consciousness and the spread of youth extremism patterns. Arts popularizing violence through movies blur the norms of permitted behavior in youth consciousness by addressing the theme of “walking” deads, vampires, etc. and demonstrating rivers of blood and separated human bodies.

Hence, young people tend to romanticise extremism and to aestheticize violence that can pass with age under the accumulated experience and the understanding of values of an individual life. It is important to be aware of the fact that a young extremist is not just a hooligan attacking strangers he does not like, but a person acting under particular countercultural determinants. The latter shapes young extremist’s personality in the context of the non-traditional interpretation of the traditional culture which, for example, could easily distort the principles of patriotism and replace them with chauvinism and race hate or could involve the experience of “cultural trauma” and turn it into the major factor for being unsatisfied with all mainstream culture.

Thus, youth extremism is a phenomenon within any countercultural tradition. Dissatisfaction and alienation of the youth from the government, society, and its successful representatives are accompanied with the lack of stability and social benefits. This situation is especially dramatic in the cases when, for example, having graduated from an educational institution, the students have no guarantees in having future successful career. Therefore, in many aspects young people are excluded from successful development because they are from the financially disadvantaged families.

Frustration by the labor differentiation results in a capitalist society turns into a fertile ground for nationalistic ideas [8]. It should be noted that some scholars see the reason for radicalism and extremism in the resettlement of the residents from the Central Asia and Middle East, from the regions with homogeneous traditional culture. They are talking about large groups of people who damage ethnic balance in the region which used to have no interethnic conflicts [10]. It is evident that the migrants lack the desire to adapt due to many communicants of their culture. In other words, the initial acculturation stage which should have been natural in contacts with other cultures stops here at the level of biological adaptation to a climate.

Extremism-inclined young people need their own doctrine which could provide intercultural legitimization of deviate practices. Young deviants become more interested in alternative theories which could justify their extremist behavior patterns. To a greater extent, modern young extremists turn to pseudoscientific theories (mainly to various race theories) or become inspired by religious myths. Reliable information is distorted, that becomes widely spread among young extremists with their ideology based on inappropriate understanding of personality and on stratification of their own social group which they want to protect from newcomers.

Modern sociology tends to study a special social and economic basis for the youth extremism and to focus on the fact that young people become extremists due to poverty and a lack of proper education (Liausheva, Nekhai, Khunagov, Shkhachemukova 2016). This approach is surely to have its outstanding factual support, because socially excluded and frustrated youth is highly likely to manifest their extremist behavior patterns. Indeed, a great number of young people (both girls and boys) who join, for example, Islamic terrorist groups, did not have appropriate both religious and secular education; many of them are victims of low economic development and high corruption level among local authorities. At the same time, the above mentioned approach must not become an absolute one, it should be applied together with other interpretation methods towards youth extremist issues. We can find it difficult to explain numerous facts when well-educated young men from prosperous families join young extremists. That is why, we believe, it is a biased trend to reduce all manifestations of youth extremism to latent forms of class warfare.

We feel that youth extremist could be characterized by one specific feature, romanticism of special kind typical among immature and to a certain extent creative personalities. It is important to bear in mind that different youth extremists from the so called traditionalists turning to the origins of the nations, from neonationalists to neoislamists, are also influenced by the archetypical romanticism.

Thus, the reasons for youth radicalization considered so far make us believe that the overall social psychological atmosphere and the feeling of being confident in the future among young people, developed self-consciousness, tradition succession play an enormous role. Traditional behavioral aspects could combat extremist manifestations which are alienated at the deep ethnical cultural level, because this contradicts its nature and its search for development in the current period.

The factors and motives, however, could be different for everyone, depend on the beliefs and the context of activities. A need of young generation in self-realization is revealed in its behavior and interests. A possible solution is likely to observe and to

eliminate the barriers in career paths for young people, to motivate youth for community works. We will not focus on moral decadence among young generation, because we think that youth's conscience is a derivative of society's conscience. That is why we stress the interconnection of the processes taken place in the society and in the youth's conscience. Better life of modern people in terms of practicalism, utilitarianism causes depreciation of moral values in the traditional communities.

## II.

We consider the following *reasons for religious fanaticism among Chechen youth in the social cultural context of modern Chechnya to be the main ones*:

- *A lack of knowledge about a religion as a phenomenon.* Young people being brought up in a homogenous environment differ from their parents in their non-critical thinking. They see religious conscience as a fact of life, while other deviations from it are heresy. Unique features typical to a religious conscience of a person with another faith are believed to be fake or something that tests their faith [1].
- *A lack of religious upbringing in a family.* Young people often serve to be translators of Islamic religious ideas. Their parents encourage their strive for the religion, but they are not the subjects of socialization here, thus they damage their authority as the main subject of socialization in a family [5].
- *Social psychological tension.* A person becomes closer to God when he feels bad. Social exclusion and a lack of any prospects, as they see it, force the young people to establish a virtual connection with God. Religion is a means to protect against neurosis since it replaces the desired and thus the illusion of dreams becoming true [12].

C. Jung [11], a Swiss psychologist and a culture expert, believed that the individual unconscious exists together with the collective unconscious which is expressed in archetypes and could be observed in the images of mythology and religion. The collective unconscious is similar for all people on the world because it is determined by the person's body, it is at the heart of religion. The differences in religious understandings of different nations could be explained by the historically developed traditions, customs, rituals of these nations. Religion, Jung believed, plays an important function of protection against destructing factors — secret unconscious powers of a human soul.

A person tends to see the devil's hand in his dark thoughts and his aspiration to God in his good acts. It is easier for a person to cope with these objectified images rather than with his own inclinations. Any religion has its own system of actions, rituals aimed to protect a person from the unconscious powers. Jung believed that religion as it is understood here will never disappear because it is always rooted in the features of a human psyche [11].

At the same time, a boom in national self-consciousness and religious mind-set that could be observed in these communities is a result of the phenomena mentioned above. In the modern world young people are low resistant towards the factors of the environment. Today, youth suffers from diseases more than their parents did. We can draw a parallel between an anthropogenic development of the modern society and a biological degradation of young people, disapproval of the traditional ethnic culture, its adaptation capacities. We can clearly see a link with the overall social anomia generating existential vacuum (spiritual emptiness) towards different extreme leisure activities [6].

It should be noted that deviant or aggressive behavior should be purposefully opposed by developing moral habits, by eliminating social inequality [3]. Previous traditional rituals fulfilled a number of functions including preventive measures against deviations, public health preservation.

In the modern world, globalization as a social phenomenon is natural and comes from the integration processes which we could observe in the previous century. On the one hand, its influence is surely to be positive because it helps solve a number of issues primarily in economy and law. On the other hand, however, a unified way of thinking in different areas of human activities creates a range of problems [4]. Interconnection of the processes could lead to both success and failure. For example, in case of a crisis, interconnected mechanisms in person's behavior could make it impossible for a person to choose and to solve a problem.

Traditional spiritual culture, as it is, is characterized by the ability to transform, because the spiritual culture of any ethnos is based on the desire to acquire identity and to be versatile. Traditional space of spiritual culture is able to diversify the cultural space and readily face the challenges of globalization. To preserve its axiological space, the traditional culture should absorb the world of universal human values. Its capacity, however, depends on whether it is aware of its individuality, uniqueness, whether this individuality, uniqueness is perceived by the traditional culture as its purpose and the goal of its own existence and activities. Traditions are a component of collective memory of the society and culture, the reservoir of immortal images which are always addressed to by generations of a social group. A person with no meaning in his life characterizes

shallow, self-focused, egoistic life when everything is fine, all needs and wishes are easily satisfied, and the difficulties are avoided [2].

## 2. Conclusion

Thus, to avoid extremist attitudes among youth, it is necessary to preserve the traditional socialization channels, to preserve authenticity in the global world, because the feeling of belonging and identification is crucial for a person's psychological wellbeing, to develop a creating function of the spiritual culture because popular hedonistic, individualistic trends in the modern culture generate an existential problem of loneliness in the information society; young people try to avoid meaninglessness of the existence and turn to extreme approaches, because these approaches give the reason for injustice and the meanings to life or the life after death. A person's existential need is to live the life of mankind [2].

Globalization is a historic, objective process. Typical features of globalization are as follows: combination of economic culture and consumerism, accultural processes in different areas of science and production between different countries, establishment of an international law and cultural traditional space. The progress connected with new technologies applied in all spheres of human activities faces a person's strive not to dissolve in the modern globalized world. Today we could observe the consumerism expansion towards nature over the planet. The process is accompanied with the rejection of the results of the consumerism. We can declare that the reason is the same for the threat of biosphere destruction and for the threat of dehumanization. Sociocultural interaction is changing: online communication for individuals and for social groups with no barrier in locations and borders. We could observe the changes in the mental aspects of spiritual culture of a modern person. Social space has changed, the forms of human's interaction with nature and interpersonal communications have changed. Previous interaction models which used to be direct interpersonal relations are replaced by the forms of indirect interaction in the modern world. They bring new behavioral patterns and perception of the sociocultural reality. In the global Internet, a person as a user could go away from the limitations and clichés which exist in the real society. A seeming freedom of person's actions in the virtual space "washes away" the barriers in making the dream come true or in actualizing their lowest instincts driven by his moral imperative.

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