Radicalization—Protest Activity—Extremism: Modern Paradigms and Manifestations

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Abstract. The article examines the nature, basic models and manifestations of radicalization, protest activity and extremism. The authors have analyzed individual and contextual factors that foster radicalization growth and promote protest activity and extremist acts through the example of such communities as youth, migrants, representatives of LGBT communities and people held at detention facilities. The study revealed that the most significant individual factors that foster radicalization growth and promote protest activity and extremist acts are the identity crisis, loss of value orientation, lack of group identification, estrangement, deprivation. Disequilibrium of government bodies’ decisions, inconsistency between socio-economic society transformations and people’s expectations, destruction of the existing social value system, disruptive activities of radical factions aimed at social disintegration of the society, deformation of public legal awareness and forced fabrication of the mental model of personality (society) are among the most significant contextual factors of radicalization, protest activity and extremism. It is found that radicalization, protest activity and extremism are interdependent manifestations, generated by similar determining factors and based on the protest nature.

1. Introduction

Involvement of various population groups in protest acts developing into civil disorders and probably culminating into crimes against constitutional order and internal security of the State, including crimes of extremism and “color revolutions”, becomes the principal method of political-and-social situation destabilization in the modern society [1]. Thus, in 2010s outbreak of protest movements as part of the Arab Spring took place in almost all Arab states. As a result of the revolutions, Morocco, Egypt and Tunis adopted new constitutions [2].

Protest activity represents a complex social phenomenon resulted into formation of collisions, conflicts and social strain in the society.

It should be noted that Russian legislation does not prohibit various forms of mass negative attitude expression towards these or that changes in the life of society. Moreover, such actions pertain to enforcement of essential rights of Russian citizen. The major problem lies with the determination of limits of lawful and illegal conduct of protesters and, as a result, formation of state policy vector line in the sphere of protest relations legal forms regulation.

Under pretence of active citizenship expression at political meetings and demonstrations, organized by public associations or individual subjects, other aims, including the straightly extremist ones, are pursued [3]. Therefore, under the image of peaceful campaigns there is realized an illegal, socially destructive activity, compromising both the institute of public association and legally provided expression forms of public opinion, which can exert pressure on government bodies’ decision-making and conducted state policy [4].
Mass protest actions are actively gathering pace in foreign countries. Thus, protest campaigns against petrol price increase, started in France in November 2018 and known as Yellow Vests Movement (Gilets Jaunes), involved some other countries as well – Israel, Belgium, Netherlands and lasted in 2019. The characteristic features of protest campaigns 2018-19 in Paris were massive involvement, organized nature, manifestation of aggression, diversified participation by professional spheres (power engineers, air-traffic controllers, healthcare professionals, policemen, court personnel) [5].

In the Russian Federation, there are lots of examples of spontaneous mass protests, provoked by resonating violent crimes, conducted by strangers in relation to local residents in circumstances of long-lasting self-withdrawal of local government bodies from solving particular social and economic problems.

Growth of radical attitude among various social groups with transition to practical extremist actions is also one of the trends of the contemporary history. The foundation of radicalism is based on extreme, aggressive ideologies and actions, aimed at introduction of significant transformational changes into social and political system [6, 7].

The political arena is getting more and more distinct by active actions of oppositional religious groups, destructive sects of political trends, participating in protest actions with the use of new destructive technologies, religion’s potential and popular discontent, thus promoting the rousing hatred and quarrel, creating grounds for inter-religious conflicts and increasing the number of extremist religious factions [8].

Such specific forms of political protest behavior as voting negativism and absenteeism (electoral protest) are getting widespread. So the scientific approach to evaluation of radicalization and protest activity necessitates the visualization of essence and trends of their transformations into manifestations of extremist character.

2. Distinctive Features and Forms of Manifestation of Radicalization, Protest Activity and Extremism (by the example of subgroups within the general population)

2.1 Representatives of youth

During the last 10 - 15 years, there has been registered a rise in protest activity on the part of Russian youth and increase in activity of youth formations of extremist orientation in Russia.

Transformations in various spheres of modern society intensify the trends of ideological intolerance, discontent with social, political and economic situation, lead to group and communal isolation of youth associations, create conditions for formation and expansion of youth criminal subculture, radicalization, growth of asocial and illegal forms of youth activity, developing the complex of determinants of youth extremism [9].

Representatives of the young generation overreact to escalation of social inequality. The examples of youth participation in massive protest campaigns are political meetings at Manezh Square and March of Discontented in Moscow. There was detected a new kind of informal youth organizations of extremist focus oriented adherence to criminal subculture.

2.2 Protests and radicalism in detention

The main criminogenic factors of protest activity and radicalization in detention facilities are social and psychological strain, caused by disapproval of the administration’s activity, illegal actions of the facilities’ employees, discontent with incarceration conditions and health support.

Peculiarities of incarceration conditions in detention facilities, including distribution of pseudoreligious literature, active promotion and imposture of radical ideas, recruitment activities on the part of radically-minded convicts to extremist and terrorist organizations, contribute to radicalization of convicts.

2.3 Representatives of migrants

Feeling of social injustice affects migrants, who in the face of lack of support from state
authorities in social issues and xenophobia, fall victim to attacks on the part of representatives of the receiving party [10].

Furthermore, some social and psychological determinants lead to the situation when migrants become participants of large-scale outrages, protest campaigns, crimes, encroaching on sexual freedom and sexual immunity of local population; it is especially noticeable on the example of a similar crime wave, flooded over a number of European countries.

2.4 The LGBT community

Identity problems, stigmatization, sense of injustice, sensation of fear, discrimination and homophobia cause victimization of representatives of LGBT-communities, prompting them to search for new strategies and active practices in advocating and preservation of their rights. Among representatives of LGBT-communities there are cases of manifestation of the so called inner form of homophobia towards individual representatives of these communities. Complaints on LGBT representatives’ applications about violation of their rights are considered in European Court of Human Rights [11].

Rise in protest activity of population is redoubled by western-minded forces’ application of destructive technologies, expressed in imposing of ideological ideas, aimed at breaking down of historically established value system, underlying the existing mental model of personality (society), leading to artificial construction of an individual, societal collapse, deformation of public legal awareness and creation of a new “existence mode”, based on postulate “We -are against -them”. Such technologies in the science are known as “Spiral of Silence” (E. Noelle-Neumann), “Overton Window” (J. Overton) [1, 12].

Thus, analysis of scientific literature and case materials allows for the conclusion that representatives of such subgroups as youth, migrants, LGBT communities as well as people held at detention facilities (pre-trial detention centers, correction facilities, prisons) are most susceptible to radicalization and protest activity.

3. Results

Nowadays in the Russian society, there occurs formation of new modern forms of protest practices, characterized by reinforcement of power, including non-legal protest practices; use of aggressive forms, dependent on unstable psycho emotional state of the considerable part of the society.

A rather new trend is an increase in the number of spectacle (game) forms of protest activity, characterized by distribution of promotional antiauthority ironical posters, conduction of public campaigns with exposure of intimate organs (“naked protests”), demonstrative suicides among convicted and LGBT-representatives, organization of riots, hunger-strikes and massive self-aggressions by convicted persons [13].

Spectacle protest forms actively occupy the political stage as well. For example, numerous public speeches of active LGBT women in Russia and Western countries, directed against certain provisions of state policy [7].

The conducted analysis allowed us to formulate the main features, characterizing radicalization, protest activity and extremism, with due account for their essence, basic forms of appearance, aims and determining factors.

Radicalization is the process of individual’s (group’s, society’s) mental mode transformation, consisting in formation of a new worldview concerning the existing system of values, views and opinions towards political, social, economic and faith-based institutions of the society, directed at their far-reaching changes, not excepting the use of forced forms and methods.

Protest activity is a type of individual’s (population groups’) social activity, caused by dissatisfaction with the state of social, economic, political and faith-based institutions of the society, resulting from long-time inactivity of public authorities and local government bodies and (or) their officials in relation to infringement of rights and legitimate interests of citizens in various spheres of public life.
Extremism is an unlawful activity of protest character, directed at confrontation and destabilization of provisions of the existing state policy, disruption of foundations of the constitutional system and domestic security, mainly with the use of forced forms and methods.

4. Conclusions

The conducted study allowed us to draw a conclusion that the radicalization process and protest activity most actively involve such subgroups of population as youth, migrants, representatives of LGBT communities, people held at a detention facility.

Individual (personal and psychological) and contextual (situational) factors influence the radicalization process and development of protest activity.

Individual factors (micro-level) can be insignificantly different for certain subgroups of population. Factors of the meso- and macro-levels play an equally important role in increasing protest activity and the level of radicalization, depending on the choice of a model for overcoming life crises.

Radicalization, protest activity and extremism are interdependent manifestations, caused by similar determining factors and based on a protest character.

Minimization of the population’s protest activity and radicalization can be reached by development of range of measures on adoption of balanced resolutions regarding social, economic, political and mental transformations in the society, consistent with expectations of the population; arrangement and conducting of monitoring of the society’s protest potential and radicalization level on a regular basis.

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