SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND

CAUSES AND MOTIVES OF RADICALIZATION AMONG CENTRAL ASIAN LABOR MIGRANTS IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

A COUNTRY REPORT

ON THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN
Contents

Preface ............................................................................................................................................ 2
Executive summary .......................................................................................................................... 4
Introduction .................................................................................................................................... 6
Structural motivations for involvement ......................................................................................... 9
Individual vulnerabilities and motivations ..................................................................................... 11
Enabling (stimulating) factors ......................................................................................................... 12
Factors of resilience to radicalization ............................................................................................ 14
Risk factors and risk groups ........................................................................................................... 15
Conclusions and recommendations ................................................................................................. 16

This report is principally authored by Bakhtiyar Babajanov, independent researcher. The overall project was delivered in cooperation with Search for Common Ground, Institute of Oriental Studies under the Russian Academy of Science (IOS RAS), Royal United Services Institute of Great Britain (RUSI), National Academies of Sciences of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, as well as independent researchers from Central Asia, who all had some input into the different versions of the report, but ultimately each one is responsible for their iteration. IOS RAS is the principal author of the Russian one, RUSI for the English one, the Central Asians each respectively for theirs.

This report is published with the assistance of the British Embassy Tashkent. It does not reflect the views of the Embassy.
Preface

Dear reader,

Welcome to the findings of a unique research around the causes and motives of Radicalization among Central Asian Labor Migrants in the Russian Federation!

Migration, particularly economic migration, has emerged as an important factor in increasing Central Asians’ susceptibility to radicalization and recruitment into extremist groups. There also exists a group of experts who believe that isolation, discrimination, and resentment might even play a greater role in radicalizing labor migrants in Russia, rather than strong or extreme religious beliefs. The study also considered the resiliency factors in these communities that prevent individuals from becoming radicalized. In order to better understand the causes and motivations of radicalization amongst migrant workers from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan currently residing in Russia, including drivers and recruitment methods, Search, in collaboration with key research and think tank institutions, conducted this unique research.

The research was conducted in 13 different cities across Russia. A team of Central Asian researchers collected 218 interviews from labor migrants, diaspora leaders, imams, local officials and others to gain an understanding of the factors that play a role in the radicalization of labor migrants in Russia. Our special thanks is extended to the teams of Central Asian researchers (from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan), who were on the ground for over a month speaking with respondents, as well as to the team of two world-known think tank institutions – the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences (IOS RAS) and the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies (RUSI). RUSI helped design the research questionnaire and train the research teams, while IOS RAS provided support on the ground in Russia and contributed to the analysis of the data.
We, the team at Search for Common Ground, believe the findings of the research will contribute to filling the research gap regarding the radicalization of Central Asian labor migrants in Russia and will be used to inform policy makers, academics and practitioners and improve their understanding of the nature and extent of the violent extremist threat linked to Central Asia.

The project team also believes that the research base will seek to identify potential areas of strategic cooperation around PVE/CVE among state and non-state actors in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Russia, building an appropriate programmatic response.

Once again, thank you to our partners for working to sustain peace in Central Asia!

Yours truthfully,
Keneshbek B. Sainazarov
Central Asia Program Director
Search for Common Ground
Executive summary

The goal and objectives of the project include studying the peculiarities of the stay of migrant workers from Central Asian countries in Russia and identification of the conditions for the emergence of a minority susceptible to the ideology of violent extremism and radicalism. The sociological research tool is individual and group interviews followed by their transcribing and desk study. The surveys are unique in terms of their coverage and are the first to have been conducted in 13 cities and suburbs of the Russian Federation. 218 respondents were interviewed. Informal interviews with an additional 25 respondents were conducted before and after the project was completed.

Key Findings:

The scale of the dissemination of the ideology of violent extremism among labour migrants from Uzbekistan to Russia is relatively small. The number of Uzbek migrants who get involved in groups with the ideology of violent extremism during their stay in Russia is severely limited and their share is lower than that of migrants from neighboring countries. We can talk about the phenomenon of limited radicalization. This does not mean that there are no problems and there are no potential threats.

Main reasons that stimulate the risks of recruitment of labour migrants are:

a) Legal (the lack of well-defined agreements between the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan on labour migration, obstacles in official registration, deficiency of the Law on labour migration, legal naivety of migrants themselves, etc.);

b) Economic (high cost of licensing documents, corruption, deception by employers, etc.);

c) Personal or social (poor knowledge of laws of the Russian Federation and Russian language and, as a consequence, difficulties with legalization; poor educational background of migrants; unpreparedness for social adaptation in an unfamiliar environment).

However, these incentives for radicalization have also a limited effect, as labour migrants learn to adapt to these conditions by using the social structures that are habitual in their country of origin for mutual support (mahalla, kinship ties, etc.), and they also create working teams and groups based on kinship relations and connections between people from the same area. This contributes to the establishment of internal control within communities and...
has become a deterrent against the involvement of young migrants in extremist groups. Labour migrants have learned to overcome social or ethno-confessional alienation in the Russian Federation. This process is reciprocal and migrants are increasingly trusted by the native population of the Russian Federation.

Labour migration benefits both the Russian Federation and the sending countries. At the same time, some authorities of the Russian Federation tend to use the problem of migrants for political purposes, in particular, as an instrument in relations with the countries of Central Asia.

**Recommendations**

For the Republic of Uzbekistan: At first, it is necessary to accelerate the establishment of additional consulates in the cities of the Russian Federation and to prioritize their work with labour migrants. It is important that the relevant government bodies of Uzbekistan publicly acknowledge the problem of labour migration and treat it as part of the external economic policy with the subsequent improvement of the forms of official dispatch of labour migrants to foreign countries. Special radio and television programs (with the participation of lawyers, psychologists, theologians) should be organized to help migrants assess the risks and difficulties associated with labour migration and equip them with other knowledge related to staying and working abroad.

**For the Russian Federation:** It is important to improve the law and secondary legislation of the Russian Federation on migrants in order to facilitate legal, economic, and social adaptation of labour migrants.
Introduction

Violent extremism is a phenomenon that is not associated with a specific religion, ideology, or region, while its humanitarian consequences spill over the borders of conflict zones. There is no broad consensus on the definitions of violent extremism and radicalization. In general, this phenomenon can be defined as an ideology based on intolerance of other views, preference for using violence to promote exclusive social, economic and political goals that damage stability, economic and social development. To this day, the struggle is mainly aimed at eliminating the consequences of various radical manifestations of violent extremism, although it is obvious that the best way to overcome the threat is to identify it and develop a thorough understanding long before its critical growth.

In the early independence period, when the former ideological paradigms were collapsing, the Central Asian countries encountered for the first time the problem of the emergence and growth of groups that were spontaneously accepting ideologies based on religiously motivated extremism. Then extremism led to various forms of radicalism, often descending into armed terror, as was the case with the so-called Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan/Turkestan (IMU), which became part of al-Qaida and which was active in 1997-2010 in the territories of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Attempts to neutralize this kind of quasi-ideologies exclusively by force proved to be ineffective. The military defeat and breakdown of the IMU, as it turned out, did not mean the eradication of its ideology which, as a result of the globalization of conflicts, acquired the form of violent extremism, especially among the youth. Such an analogy gives grounds to assume that the self-proclaimed Islamic State that has suffered a considerable loss today, may arise the other day elsewhere in another guise.

The ideology of violent extremism has proven to be highly adaptable. The IS skillfully used the global scale of the conflict, the intervention of third countries and, through skillful and professional propaganda, could attract and recruit a number of volunteers not only from countries with a predominantly Muslim population, but also
Probable reasons for the limited radicalization of labour migrants from Europe, America, etc. The environment of labour migrants in the Russian Federation was no exception. There are different figures about the number of actual recruits, however, even the minimal published number (about 500 recruited people from Uzbekistan) is evidence of a problem.

The studies of recruitment among labour migrants in Russia published so far are primarily journalistic investigations focused on statistical data (sometimes unverified) and based on incidental data or information from stakeholders and institutions. No large-scale and in-depth studies on the root causes of support for the ideology of violent extremism or the involvement of individuals in the ranks of the IS have been conducted. Therefore, the presented project should be considered a unique one, due to the unprecedented geographical coverage (13 cities and suburbs of the Russian Federation, 218 respondents). Such a large-scale project in the territory of the Russian Federation was carried out for the first time. Both well-established contacts and spontaneous encounters on the ground were used for the project, while the survey methods changed accordingly.

The novelty of the project, principles of selecting respondents, surveys and research:
- The diverse social stratification of the interviewed persons (ordinary workers, heads of diasporas, imams, lawyers, local migration specialists) also makes the project a unique one. In this case, consideration was given to the fact that local experts or the assumed “elite” of labour migrants’ communities are well aware of the situation on the ground and more open to information. The imams and heads of the diasporas are even closer to working migrants, which also makes interviews with them particularly valuable;

- The project involved specialists from three Central Asian countries whose citizens make up the bulk of migrants in the Russian Federation and are most at risk of recruitment. Experts from each country conducted their surveys and studies autonomously, which made it possible to obtain the most impartial and independent results.

The goal, objectives, methods, approaches
The main goal of the project was to accumulate the possibly largest data and use it to broaden our understanding of the conditions that could potentially contribute to the support of the ideology of violent extremism by labour migrants and lead to their radicalization. It was even more important to reconstruct and understand the reasons for
the ideological, psychological and partly religious resilience of most labour migrants to the influence of the ideology of violent extremism and radicalization, since such knowledge would obviously be more useful for developing various aspects of internal and external policies of the sending and receiving countries in the process of labour migration.

We took into account that main reasons for religiously motivated radicalization and relative susceptibility to recruitment among labour migrants are various social and psychological problems of differing origins. For this reason, desk research, in addition to text reconstruction, was combined with a more extensive analysis of factors of limited radicalization, based on the study of the colleagues’ research. These settings increase the reliability and allow us to understand more fully the reasons for the resilience of those persons who resisted the attempts of recruitment (such cases were noted in Samara, Astrakhan, Moscow, St. Petersburg). Other applied methods of sampling, selecting for types of content analysis and coding categories are described in the RUSI report.

Limitations and the main strategy for conducting interviews and research

The project could not have been aimed at interviewing those people who were targeted for radicalization and for whom the involvement in the network of ideologists of violent extremism and recruiters was like a post factum (for example, those who were serving in the ranks of the IS army). Access to such persons is limited or impossible for clear reasons.

However, the study of the environment where recruitment is conducted or where there is a set of conditions for radicalization, could be no less, if not more productive, as the basic reasons for recruiting labour migrants can be reconstructed using their knowledge and experience (or the experience of their family and friends) which are still the most valuable source of information. The only challenge was to overcome the fears and natural bias or the façade of political loyalty of the interviewed persons using indirect and additional questions.

Therefore, the questionnaire had an open and flexible structure. Each interview was adjusted based on the social and educational status of respondents, while interview methods were changed (often in the form of informal talks/suhbat) in order to increase respondents’ trust, additional questions were formulated taking into account the respondents' usual apprehension and their natural bias.
Probable reasons for the limited radicalization of labour migrants from The Republic of Uzbekistan in the Russian Federation

Structural motivations for involvement

Despite the large scale of surveys and studies conducted, we can hardly say that we were able to reconstruct the full picture of the reasons for the engagement of a small part of labour migrants in a network of religiously motivated radicals or in criminal structures. The number and the environment of the interviewed respondents do not allow to fully recreate a typical profile of individuals involved in radicalized structures. Therefore, the factors listed below are considered as additional but not decisive incentives for the possible emergence of sympathy for religious extremist ideology in the communities of labour migrants. Since, as our surveys show, many of them find themselves in an uncomfortable legal, economic, or social situation, but few become so desperate as to step over the line. The most vulnerable are young people (most of them have extremely poor education), especially the so-called “savages” who come to Russia with no connections to established social and related networks of labour migrants and who, as a rule, end up as illegal migrants. Their decisions are influenced by other (mostly individual) motives. However, structural motivations become the first reason for the emergence of favorable conditions that eventually make labour migrants cross the red line.

In this group of motivations, legal aspects are most noticeable. They are related to the obstacles and difficulties (often man-made) in the preparation of permits for work and residence permits, which lead to difficulties with legalization and open the way for corruption. It is confirmed by almost all respondents. This fact could have been ignored, as suggested in the report of colleagues from the UK and Russia, due to the natural desire of labour migrants to attract attention to their problems in terms of legalization. However, it is exactly these factors that cause a significant number of illegal migrants (up to 20-25%), which, according to the surveys, are most vulnerable to recruitment for extremist networks. Systematic detentions of labour migrants by law enforcement agencies of the Russian Federation also contribute to their alienation and psychological depression (as told by foremen of migrant workers in Moscow, Samara, St. Petersburg).

On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of migrants have little or no knowledge of the laws of the Russian Federation, as there is no established system of
informing and preparing potential labour migrants for their stay in a foreign country as a new and sometimes alienated environment. The life of labour migrants becomes regulated by the laws about which they have a very vague idea or no idea at all. At the same time, if there are violations or the lack of possibility of legalization, they often find themselves in a desperate situation and cannot obtain legal protection from the Uzbek embassy, because the embassy staff are not able to cope with such a number of labour migrants without the official acknowledgment of this phenomenon by the Uzbek government and, accordingly, an increase in the number of consular services. These and other similar factors facilitate social alienation and psychological discomfort, which also increases the vulnerability of labour migrants.

In cases where heads of diasporas and foremen of migrant workers manage to establish relations with local administrative and law enforcement bodies on the basis of recognition of mutual interests, the situation (primarily criminal and social) usually improves, while no more people get involved in extremist groups (the experience of the workers’ brigades in Novosibirsk, Yekaterinburg, Astrakhan was studied).

The economic vulnerability of labour migrants is related to legal aspects and manifests itself in various forms of corruption, dishonesty of some employers (non-fulfillment of contracts, non-payment or delay of wages, illegal deductions from wages, dishonesty of creditors and intermediaries helping to legalize former citizens of Uzbekistan). In this regard, “illegal” individuals are particularly vulnerable as some of them get impoverished, and it also may cause their social alienation and discontent. Another consequence of this situation is their vulnerability to recruitment, when members of extremist networks offer financial support to them.

However, the problems in these areas primarily affect the vulnerability of inexperienced labour migrants, especially those who came to Russia for the first time as “savages”, i.e. without an official invitation, without personal connections and established contacts, with no idea about local conditions and especially laws. That is, there is legal and social naivety (according to a respondent from Novosibirsk, “‘savages’ go to Russia in search of work, as if they are moving to a neighboring village”).

The social vulnerability of labour migrants is also related to the above-mentioned factors, and is expressed primarily as xenophobia towards labour migrants, social and ethnic stigmatization (alienation) which is often created artificially. The overwhelming majority of respondents are extremely dissatisfied with negative stereotypes about migrants imposed by local media, where the migrants’ presence and behavior in the Russian Federation is presented as a source of growth of criminal activities, social
instability and disorder. All this seriously stimulates social exclusion and at the same time does not facilitate better work of migration authorities as they receive a kind of carte blanche to pressure migrants, while encouraging corruption in these bodies.

At the same time, there are more objective articles about problems of labour migrants, corruption related to migrants, risks to which they are exposed, etc. However, these articles are mostly published in small-circulation newspapers or on low ranked websites.

**Individual vulnerabilities and motivations**

As can be inferred from several cases of attempts to involve labour migrants in extremist networks noted by respondents, personal and social forms of vulnerability become the most important factors attracting the attention of recruiters. Individual vulnerability is most often associated with poor secular education of labour migrants, their unpreparedness for social adaptation in a new environment, inexperience (social or religious naivety), individual psychological characteristics (non-resilience to problems, susceptibility to external influences such as the influence of websites presenting jihad as a heroic action, propensity for personal adventurism, emotional instability, etc.) and financial incentives (“easy money”, one-time cash assistance from recruiters).

Being connected with structural and economic motivations, such risks do not always become the direct cause of vulnerability. It should not be overlooked that the overwhelming majority of labour migrants are similarly affected by systemic motivators but most of them remain resilient. In this regard, it was revealed that main reasons for the personal instability of recruited individuals (including women) were not only financial or moral problems related to impoverishment or alienation and, as a result, psychological trauma which led to hopelessness and serious personal depression. As revealed in the course of the surveys (Samara, Astrakhan, Yekaterinburg), such persons attract attention of recruiters who consider problems of targeted persons and try to use methods of moral, religious and psychological control. At the same time, only a small part of such migrants succumbs to persuasion and accepts the arguments of recruiters.

The stories told by lawyers or observers in the courts (Samara, Yekaterinburg) show that a special way of recruiting young labour migrants is using their personal immaturity and naivety, their weak or no connection with their fellow countrymen (brigades or groups). In this case, recruiters do not only offer a one-time financial assistance, but they also form special brigades for young alienated labour migrants, thus
creating the illusion of regular social networks. Such brigades have contracts for work, but they are led by experienced recruiters who use their spare time to conduct cautious and unobtrusive religious propaganda. They gradually instill in young minds the idea of the need to “protect Islam and Muslims” trying to persuade them to leave for the fighting in the ranks of the IS or to join extremist networks in Russia (interviews in Samara, Yekaterinburg, Astrakhan). Such observations indicate that recruitment has become a whole system of preparing potential adepts, while their transition over the red line cannot be considered as spontaneous actions.

Although some respondents (Novosibirsk, Samara, Astrakhan, Krasnodar) noted impulsive decisions by some recruited people, they explain such decisions by their adventurism. Unfortunately, the rarity of such cases and, most importantly, the impossibility to interview such people do not allow us to reconstruct quite fully and reliably motivations of this risk group, although it gives grounds to affirm that such individual vulnerabilities exist.

**Enabling (stimulating) factors**

Enabling factors mean contributing conditions, resources, ideologies and their representatives which facilitate the involvement of labour migrants in groups of violent extremism. These are, for example, manipulations through the Internet that have become an effective tool for radical communities to disseminate various propaganda films on religious topics. Some of such videos were downloaded and reviewed for our analysis. Such films which are popular among some labour migrants (especially young girls and women), who are taught first with carefully chosen verses from the Quran and more often with innocuous stories (the story of the Prophet and his supporters), which are then mixed with stories that glorify the “jihad of the immaculate ancestors”. Later episodes of such films include pictures of the “jihad” by the IS which, according to the authors, should demonstrate continuity over time and give sacred permissions for the violent actions of radicals, create a sense of “Islamic solidarity” and religious moralizing, inspire compassion for coreligionists, while trying to replace a viewer’s traditional regional or network identity with a more global Islamic identity and preparing the ground for “recreating the caliphate” which is able to withstand the “suppression of the Muslims”, etc. Such films are being disseminated through existing communication channels, such as WhatsApp, Telegram and others which are relatively cheaper and more accessible.
than in Uzbekistan. In one case (in Yekaterinburg), such a method of propaganda led to self-recruitment.

As noted by some respondents, enabling factors that attract labour migrants to violent extremism include radical religious leaders in mosques or in Internet networks accessible through smartphones (Samara, Astrakhan). The surveys showed that this type of engagement and sometimes direct recruitment is effective enough, but only when control within established traditional networks is weakened: brigades, groups or other forms of social micro-networks based on traditional hierarchies of subordination, authority and control by more experienced and senior countrymen in migrants’ communities. As a rule, religion is often a topic of discussion in such brigades and the older generation conveys a traditional understanding of religion in the form of religious minimalism practiced by the majority of the population of Uzbekistan. However, religious motivation does not become the main one for recruitment. It is rather used as a tool for changing people’s perspectives.

Most respondents, especially heads of diasporas and foremen (Samara, Yekaterinburg, Astrakhan, St. Petersburg) are afraid of the influence of radical religious ideas in the official mosques of the Russian Federation, sometimes directly from the imams. They perceive unusual forms of prayers in most mosques or Friday “sermons” of imams (ma’ruza) like those of “Wahhabism”, although they have a vague and sometimes naive idea about it as a politicized form of Islam. The older generation of labour migrants are worried about calls of imams to abandon more liberal interpretations of ritual prescriptions as practiced within the local forms of the Hanafi madhhab (for example, the permission to postpone a prayer if one is busy at work, which in the local tradition is denoted by the term “kada/kaza” – a deferred religious duty).

Some respondents (Samara, Ekaterinburg, especially Astrakhan) mentioned that the main “ethnic group” in the Russian Federation which becomes an intermediary in involving labour migrants in extremist networks, are natives from the Caucasus disseminating extremist ideologies. It is difficult to verify this data, but it is clear that many heads of Uzbek diasporas and foremen are afraid of such an influence that can be attributed to enabling factors but with a limited capacity.

There is information (Moscow, Samara, Novosibirsk) that some labour migrants come to the Russian Federation being already attracted by or simply familiar with the ideas of extremist organizations, in particular, those which were part of Hizb at-Tahrir. Nevertheless, the majority of respondents associate the phenomenon of limited radicalization of labour migrants with the influence of networks within the Russian
Probable reasons for the limited radicalization of labour migrants from The Republic of Uzbekistan in the Russian Federation

It is necessary to take into consideration both sources, while their effect is restrained by the individual resilience.

**Factors of resilience to radicalization**

The reasons for resilience as well as risks cannot be explained by one single factor, as partially shown above. In this sense, resilience to the influence of radical ideas can be formulated on the basis of the same factors as discussed above:

1. **Social factors.** Here we mean the observance of commitments in the family, between relatives and friends, which are typical for Uzbek society and generating responsibility for family members and relatives, as well as the strength of ties with social networks (brigades, senior colleagues), based on clear and habitual traditions of mutual assistance and support. Using the tools of hierarchical moral subordination as practiced in Uzbek society, most brigades and groups of labour migrants in Russia (organized primarily as associations of countrymen, relatives, or classmates) create social microorganisms based on mutual obligations and observation in order to withstand various risks, including prevention of possible recruitment. But sometimes Russian media and policies of the authorities instigate a complex of inferiority and a sense of social stigma in brigades. However, most of the migrants learn rules of the game of some politicians (especially in Moscow) who use the theme of migrants to increase their popularity. Thus, labour migrants increasingly accumulate the cognitive experience of adaptation and pass it to their fellows, especially when there are established micro-networks (in the form of brigades, groups, etc.).

2. **Individual characteristics of the main part of labour migrants** can also be considered factors of resilience. These are personal experiences of previous social adaptations, the length of stay in Russia, the level and quality of secular education, the traditionally tolerant perception of religious paradigms, and the knowledge of the local language as a main factor of successful adaptation. The respondents’ extremely superficial and weak knowledge of the essence of violent extremism and terrorism is striking. Foremen of migrant workers and heads of diasporas complain that the clergy (both in Uzbekistan and Russian) are discussing the essence of extremism or religiously motivated terrorism in a overly monotonous and superficial way, which makes migrants extremely vulnerable.
3. Economic and legal factors. The surveys showed that when there is a fair system of legalization (for example, Astrakhan) and established relationships with law enforcement agencies and migrant services, tension in the communities of labour migrants is extremely low and risks are considerably reduced. On the other hand, the knowledge of the law and one’s legal responsibilities, the ability of brigade foremen, heads of diasporas to establish relations with local law enforcement bodies are important for solving the above-mentioned problems. Important deterrent factors are employment, observance of basic obligations by employers such as timely salary payments, etc.

In general, the revealed cases of attempts to involve labour migrants in groups of violent extremism (Moscow, Samara, Astrakhan) as well as observations of heads of Uzbek diasporas and legal support organizations, demonstrate the serious resilience of labour migrants in the Russian Federation to recruitment. The main reason, as all respondents believe, is the availability of the above-mentioned social networks with means of internal control. However, even being a serious deterrent factor, they cannot be a panacea, since the majority of them offer only internal adaptation but not a full socialization in Russian society.

Risk factors and risk groups

The main risk groups and risk factors have already been identified. It should be noted that the cases of people’s involvement in the groups of violent extremism are not uniform and, as a rule, based on a variety of reasons. Migrants themselves, when talking about the reasons for recruitment of their friends or relatives, refer to economic motives (cheating by employers, impoverishment, etc.) or the desire of some inexperienced migrants to “earn easy money” (Novosibirsk, Samara, Yekaterinburg) as the primary causes. Respondents often mentioned professional skills of recruiters who use different tools to attract people. The conscious or emotional involvement for the “protection of Islam and Muslims”, at least, at the initial stages of recruitment is mentioned much less frequently. Apparently, we should not exclude special religious propaganda as a stimulus, especially in relation to the involvement through the Internet. In this regard, it would be much more effective to study specific cases of recruited persons, when it is possible to arrange communication and interviews with them.

In general, the following risk groups are identified: 1). Young people estranged from traditional social networks and therefore located outside social hierarchies and the “brigade control”; 2). Illegal migrants (so-called “savages”) who are in a desperate
Probable reasons for the limited radicalization of labour migrants from The Republic of Uzbekistan in the Russian Federation

position and are also open to discrimination; 3). Women, especially those who are single or sold into sexual slavery; 4). Persons or small groups of religiously educated people who were involved in a network of religious extremists in their homeland.

Conclusions and recommendations

The scale of dissemination of the ideology of violent extremism among labour migrants from Uzbekistan to Russia is relatively small, which suggests their limited radicalization and quite insignificant adherence to the ideology of violent extremism. However, there are still cases of recruitment and other risks that should stimulate the efforts to create conditions for their prevention.

The most effective and naturally developed deterrent factor against the involvement of labour migrants from Uzbekistan in extremist networks have become social cells (like brigades) built on the principles of traditional social networks similar to those in their homeland.

The majority of migrants from Uzbekistan managed to adapt to the existing requirements for formal legalization. However, most of them consider these requirements too complicated, expensive and therefore encouraging corruption and an increase in the number of dishonest intermediaries. And although it cannot be a direct cause of migrants’ involvement in extremist communities, it still directly increases the risks of growth of illegal migrants alienated both from the communities and the existing social control.

Social and cultural adaptation is very difficult for the majority of labour migrants, especially for so-called “savages” who come to Russia with no connections to established networks. Such groups are most vulnerable to recruitment risks, since it is very easy to take advantage of their excluded status and, as a rule, their difficult material situation caused by social alienation.

The former government of Uzbekistan, for a number of ideological and political reasons, did not in fact recognize the phenomenon of labour migration. The current government de facto recognized this phenomenon as an economic factor or rather has begun to understand its financial benefits in the process of currency exchange, but it is not going to give it a political and social recognition within the country and thus does no
Probable reasons for the limited radicalization of labour migrants from The Republic of Uzbekistan in the Russian Federation

propaganda work with labour migrants. Therefore, some labour migrants of the new wave leave the country without proper understanding of laws of the host country or expected risks, they also do not feel their connection with the homeland. This type of alienation also becomes an indirect factor that stimulates marginalization and openness to recruitment.

**Recommendations:**

– Labour migration solves the problem of excessive labour supply in the countries of Central Asia. It is highly recommended that the government of Uzbekistan, following the example of its neighbors, recognizes officially the phenomenon of labour migration and then organizes educational events and other forms of raising public awareness about possible risks for labour migrants through the media and the elders of mahallas;

– It is necessary to accelerate the establishment of additional consulates of the Republic of Uzbekistan in those cities of the Russian Federation which have already been approved by the mutual agreement. It is important to expand the work on legal support of labour migrants, using the experience of local diasporas;

– It is important for the countries of the region to strengthen mutual cooperation in developing a common policy for identifying and neutralizing local networks of extremists. Such cooperation should take into account the connections between emerging problems and therefore include actions to jointly regulate labour migration in the Russian Federation, while the cooperation with Russia should also be continued to jointly address emerging risks and problems;

– It is recommended that the Government of the Russian Federation takes measures to simplify and, if possible, reduce the costs of the process of legalization, bearing in mind relatively small earnings of labour migrants, in order to prevent illegal forms of labour migration that also remain open to risks;

– It is necessary to encourage trust-based relations between law enforcement agencies of the Russian Federation and diasporas and brigade leaders on an ongoing basis in order to prevent de-socialization of individual labour migrants. The most realistic and rather simple way is to support already established forms of socialization of labour migrants (brigades, diasporas, etc.);

– Interested institutions of the Russian Federation should conduct a further joint research in cooperation with appropriate organizations and researchers from Central Asian countries, which should include studies of migrant families taking into account the religious aspects of the problem;
– It is unacceptable to use the problem of migrants for political purposes, in particular, as an instrument in relations with the countries of Central Asia. It is important to stop using the problem of labour migrants as a “PR tool”, generating “migrantophobia” and refusing to recognize the very phenomenon of labour migration as mutually beneficial;

– It is necessary to develop joint strategies of intelligence services of the Russian Federation and interested Central Asian countries in relation to detained returnees who took part in the war in the Middle East. To provide local researchers with the information on such people, with the possibility of giving a right to interview detainees to individual researchers.