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THE CONFLICT AND POST-CONFLICT ISLAMIZATION OF CHECHNYA AS SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHENOMENON

Abstract

The article is aimed to reveal the influence of religious factor on the conflict and post-conflict societal and political spheres of the Chechen Republic. The study is based on the retrospective and discourse analysis of central and republican newspapers, interviews and speeches of political leaders, publications of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Chechen Republic, materials of opposition, and hostile Internet resources. The study identifies several phases of the Islamization of Chechnya: 1) an attempt to create an Islamic state during the struggle for sovereignty; 2) the choice of Akhmad Kadyrov in favor of loyalty to the federal center and adherence to traditional Islam in defiance of the Wahhabi project; 3) Wahhabism, which had not taken root in Chechnya, went into the cyber underground, and its supporters joined the "Global Jihad"; 4) today's penetration of traditional Islam into social (school, family, gender relations) and political (local and regional administration, international relations) life of the republic. The restoration of the role of Islam as an important social, moral and political regulator demonstrates the possibility of new gaps between secular society and the political system of modern Russia and Chechnya as a part of the country.

Keywords: Chechen conflict, gazavat, jihad, radical Islam, traditional Islam, society, political sphere

Introduction

The Chechen conflict resulted in two Chechen wars in 1994-1996 and 1999-2001, has darkened the post-soviet history of Russia. Although its beginning was associated with the fight for sovereignty of Chechnya, a religious factor played the significant role on different phases of the conflict development. The link between religion and ethnic conflict remains an important methodological issue which attracts many scientific works. S. Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana studied the complexity of conflicts "when different religious systems encounter each other

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because religion, as a system of beliefs and practices relating to the sacred, and uniting its adherents in a community, has a powerful hold on people's way of thinking, acting and perception of interests"². Isaak Svensson emphasized the difficulties for the conflict resolving when religion was involved³. Jonathan Fox found out that religion can be involved in conflict that was based on secular causes and transform it into a religious one⁴. He examined the influence of religion on ethnic nationalism and civil wars since 1945 to 2001 and resumed that the role of religion in the conflict may change over time; and now it is increasing that contradicts the theory of modernization and secularization of modern societies⁵.

The important aspect of studying the conflict and post-conflict Chechen Republic is politicization of Islam. The term "political religion" was firstly used by Peter van der Veer for the political version of Islam⁶. Daniel Pipes insisted to use the term "Islamism" as far as this phenomenon can be compared to others ideologies of the twentieth century⁷. The politicization of Islam is not just a process of reviving religion; it is an attempt to bring some of the unsolved socio-economic and spiritual problems into the political sphere.

Examining the views of Russian and foreign authors we can see three different directions in the modern Islam in the Russian North Caucasus. First, traditional Islam (Sufism) is apolitical, and unwilling to use violence. As Igor Dobayev notes, its representatives do not set political goals and "are able to cooperate with the authorities representing various political systems and regimes"⁸. Mukhtar Yakhyayev writes in the journal "Islamovedenie": "it is traditional Islam that today turns out to be the most adapted system of values to local conditions"⁹. While not claiming a special role in politics, traditional Islam dominates the educational, cultural and social practice of most of the republics of the North Caucasus.

Second, modernism, following the ideas of Abdel Razek¹⁰, rejects the political role of Islam. For modernists, Islam is reduced to the achievement of personal piety and is not the basis of the social and political order. This trend in North

2 Ayse S. Kadayifci-Orellana, "Ethno-Religious Conflicts: Exploring the Role of Religion in Conflict Resolution", in: *The SAGE Handbook of Conflict Resolution*, Jacob Bercovitch, Victor Kremenyuk and William I. Zartman (eds.), SAGE, London, 2009, p. 264.

3 Isaak Svensson, *Ending Holy Wars: Religion and Conflict Resolution in Civil Wars*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 2012, p. 22.

4 Jonathan Fox, The Ethnic Religious Nexus: The Impact of Religion on Ethnic Conflict, *Civil Wars*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 2000, p. 1.

5 Jonathan Fox, The Rise of Religious Nationalism and Conflict: Ethnic Conflict and Revolutionary Wars, 1945-2001, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 6, 2004, p. 715.

6 Peter van der Veer, "Political Religion in the Twenty-First Century", in: *International Order and the Future of World Politics*, T.V. Paul and John A. Hall (eds.), Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 312.

7 Daniel Pipes, Islam and Islamism: Faith and Ideology, *The National Interest*, No. 59, Washington, 2000, p. 90.

8 Igor Dobayev, *Islamskiy Radikalizm: Sotsial'no-Filosofskiy Analiz*, Isd-vo SKNTs VSh, Rostov-na-Donoy, 2002, p. 11.

9 Mukhtar Yakhyayev, Islam v Politicheskikh i Sotsiokul'turnykh Protssakh na Severnom Kavkaze, *Islamic Studies (Islamovedenie)*, No. 1, 2014, p. 87.

10 Abdel Razek, "Loutfi Maryam, Filali-Ansary Abdou, Islam and the Foundations of Political Power", in: *Translation: Modern Muslim Thinkers*, Vol. 2, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2013.

Caucasian Islam is still rather weak, but it has prospects among the regional intelligentsia and student youth¹¹.

Finally, anti-Western and anti-liberal political Islam seeks to seize political power and can take radical forms using extremism and terrorism. At the turn of the 1990s-2000s in the Russian North Caucasus there was real threat of Wahhabism, one of the versions of radical politicized Islam¹². Igor Dobaev considers that the Wahhabi-project in the Russian North Caucasus is being implemented by Saudi Arabia and Qatar; they stimulate separatist aspirations among Muslims based on their desire to live according to Sharia law¹³. Sociological studies conducted in Dagestan in 2002 after the adoption of anti-Wahabist laws showed that 79,2% of Dagestanis positively assessed the prohibition of propaganda of radical Islam. According to similar surveys in 2011, 75% of residents of Kabardino-Balkaria and 70,7% of residents of Chechnya believed that Wahhabism should be banned throughout Russia¹⁴. Ruslan Mamaraev links the counteraction to the spread of religious extremism with the efforts of the authorities to socio-economic development and improvement the welfare of the population¹⁵.

Valery Tishkov based on personal interviews analyzed the ethnography and socio-cultural and religious dynamics of Chechen society in an armed conflict. He followed the change of group consciousness from Soviet atheism to Islam revival since 1991 and then arrival of Wahhabism in early 2000s. Valery Tishkov predicted that after the conflict, in Chechnya the symbiosis of traditional Islam and secularism would prevail¹⁶. Elise Giuliano emphasized that Muslims in Chechnya and Dagestan "largely opposed radical Islam" and debunk stereotypes that they were ready to mobilize against Moscow¹⁷. But Robert Schaefer called the affairs in the North Caucasus a "slushy" conflict that was "not frozen, not burning, but definitely not over" and the Chechen separatists' cause had been taken up on the Internet by Salafi-jihadists¹⁸.

The radical Islam did not take root in Chechnya and remained a sign of marginality and opposition, however the role of religion in the modern Chechen society has dramatically increased, posing a number of serious research questions:

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- 11 Aleksey Bardakov, Polomoshnov Andrey, Gurbanov Emil, Islam – Politicheskii i Sotsiokul'turnyy Faktor Razvitiya Severnogo Kavkaza, *Russia and the Muslim World*, No. 7, 2014, p. 66.
 - 12 Igor Dobaev, Ideologicheskoye Obosnovaniye Terrorizma v Mire i na Severnom Kavkaze, *Russia and the Muslim World*, No. 12, 2015, p. 70.
 - 13 Igor Dobaev, Vneshniye Faktory Geopoliticheskikh Protsessov na Yuge Rossii v Usloviyakh Globalizatsii i Regionalizatsii, *Russia and the Muslim World*, No. 3, 2020, p. 10.
 - 14 Abdulagatov Zaid, "Antivakhkhabskiy" Zakon v Kontekste Obshchestvennogo Mneniya, *Islamic Studies (Islamovedenie)*, No. 1, 2012, pp. 32-34, 38.
 - 15 Ruslan Mamaraev, Severnyy Kavkaz: Religioznyye Protsessy, *Russia and the Muslim World*, No. 9, 2016, p. 61.
 - 16 Valery Tishkov, *Obshchestvo v Vooruzhennom Konflikte (Etnografiya Chechenskoy Voyny)*, Nauka, Moscow, 2001, p. 343.
 - 17 Elise Giuliano, Islamic Identity and Political Mobilization in Russia: Chechnya and Dagestan Compared, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, No. 11, 2005, p. 215.
 - 18 Robert Schaefer, *The Insurgency in Chechnya and the North Caucasus: from Gazavat to Jihad*, Praeger Security International, Santa Barbara, 2011, p. 276.

1) is the growth of religiosity in Chechen society a consequence of the trauma of two wars; 2) how far the growth of Islamization contradicts the modernization of Chechen society; 3) whether the religious factor can be the potential basis for new conflicts with the federal center. The article is aimed to reveal the trends and phases of Islamization during and after the Chechen wars to understand the influence of the religious factor on the societal and political spheres in the republic.

The study is based on the retrospective and discourse analysis of the wide range of sources, mainly central and regional newspapers (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, *Isvestiya*, *Kavkaz*, *Golos Checheno-Ingushetii*, *Groznenskiy Rabochiy* and others), interviews and speeches of political leaders, publications of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Chechen Republic, materials of opposition and hostile Internet resources. The discourse analysis is oriented on extraction the central ideas, background and intention of the published materials and establishes a connection between the content and religious values of different actors and groups. The mass-media monitoring allows the author to represent everyday socio-political processes in critical and dramatic periods of modern history. It is also used a secondary analysis of the sociological surveys.

Dudaev's and Maskhadov's Inchkeria as an Islamic State

In April 1992, a republican newspaper *Golos Checheno-Ingushetii* published an interview with Dzhokhar Dudayev, who stated: "The genetic code has been formed in the struggle, for about 300 years the Chechens have been fighting with Russia for their freedom"¹⁹. The historical memory about Caucasian war (1816-1864) and deportation of the North Caucasian peoples in 1944 played an important role in the revival and politicization of Islam during the first Chechen War.

Although the history of the Russian Empire and the Soviet presence in the Caucasus is full of tragic and contradictory pages, the myth of the "deep civilizational divide" between Muslim Chechens and Russian Orthodox Christians, used by separatists, does not take into account many details of the Russian history. During the Caucasian War in the 19th century, mountain communities of Chechnya and Dagestan were united under the rule of Imam Shamil, a spiritual leader who called them to *gazavat* (a holy war) against Russians. But after the inclusion of the Caucasus in the Russian Empire, the imperial authorities carried out land, judicial and military reforms, taking into account some local peculiarities; for example, in district courts, the norms of *adat* (customary law of mountain peoples) and Sharia were used in proceedings. The local nobility was integrated into the upper strata of Russian society, primarily through service in the Imperial Army. As Jeronim Perović wrote: "The Russian Empire was an extremely diverse

¹⁹ *Golos Checheno-Ingushetii*, April 4, 1992, p. 1.

amalgam of peoples and cultures and was characterised by an equally heterogeneous administration structure that constantly incorporate members of all sorts of ethnic groups and religions"²⁰.

The deportation to Central Asia of Chechens, Ingush, Karachais and Balkars accused of collaborating with the Nazis became the tragic page of Soviet history. They could not return to the homeland until 1956-1957. Alexey Smirnov associated the period from the late 1950s to the late 1980s in the North Caucasus with the process of modernization²¹. It showed up in the urbanization and industrialization of the region, the introduction of Soviet social culture and political administration, and the active inclusion of the ethnic groups of the North Caucasus in the Soviet national space. The secularization of social life has resulted in the fact that religion had become a personal and family affair. At the dawn of *perestroika* and democratization, attitudes towards socio-political transformations in Chechen society were of a secular nature.

Since 1989, Islam has been taking root more and more deeply into the social and political life of Chechnya. This was facilitated by internal changes in the Soviet Union: there was a collapse of the communist ideology, a vacuum formed that was quickly filled by Islam. By the early 1990s, Sufism predominated in Chechnya; the Naqshbandi and Qadiri Sufi tariqas were widely represented, the leaders of which competed with each other. In 1986, more than 280 *murid* groups (spiritual groups associates according to the principle "murshid (master) – murid (disciple)") in Chechen-Ingushetia²². The *Naqshbandi tariqa* was historically widespread in the plains of Chechnya, while the *Qadiri tariqa* was widespread in the mountainous part. The religion had the strongest positions precisely where the *teip* (tribal unit) structure was preserved – mostly in the rural areas of Chechnya. Thanks to the preservation of traditional institutions, the religious revival in Chechnya in the 1990s was accompanied by the spread of radical Islamic movements that excluded any form of social interaction if it deviated from the Quran and Sharia. The norms of Sharia law began to constitute a real alternative to both secular legislation and the *adat* norms. The transition to the purposeful Islamization of the Chechen state was accomplished during the Dudayev's rule, who himself was a secularly educated person. Christopher Marsh rather aptly called this phenomenon a "desecularization of the conflict", stressing that during the Soviet period, ethnic divisions were secularized²³.

The Muslim clergy attended the ceremony of Dudayev's inauguration on November 9, 1991; the new leader of Chechnya swore on the Quran to defend

20 Jeronim Perović, *From Conquest to Deportation. The North Caucasus under Russian Rule*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2018, p. 8.

21 Alexey Smirnov, *Etnopoliticheskiye Protsessy na Severnom Kavkaze: Osobennosti i Osnovnyye Tendentsii*, IMEMO RAN, Moscow, 2001, p. 43.

22 Khanbabayev Kaflan, *Ekstremizm v Sovremennoy Chechne, Islamic Studies (Islamovedenie)*, No. 3, 2010, p. 104.

23 Christopher Marsh, *The Desecularization of Conflict: the Role of Religion in Russia's Confrontation with Chechnya, 1785–Today, The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2016, p. 1.

the Muslim faith²⁴. The confrontation with the Russian federal authorities served as a natural background for the formation of Islamic ideology and appropriate behavioral stereotypes. But political administration did not find the common views with representatives of traditional clergy. Mufti Beshir-Khaji Arsanukaev, elected in 1991 at the congress of Muslims of the republic, did not want to obey Dudayev and was forced to resign. His successor, Mohammed-Khaji Garkaeв, also quickly retired²⁵. At the same time, Islam began to penetrate into the education system. In August 1992, the meeting of Vizarat on Islamic Religious Affairs of the Chechen Republic decided to recommend to the Ministry of Public Education to introduce the minimum of Sharia for students in the sixth and seventh grades of secondary school²⁶.

In 1993, the unknown Khusein-Khaji Alsabekov, who arrived from Kazakhstan, was elected to the post of the Mufti of Chechnya. He was an ardent supporter of Dudayev, and declared “*gazavat*” against Russia. During the First Chechen war of 1994-1996 Islam was used not as a deep spiritual tradition, but as a source of aggressive ideology. The radicals headed by Dzhohar Dudayev used the national-religious feelings of the population and the Islamic rhetoric to mobilize the masses. The idea of *gazavat* – military resistance to “infidels” until they were completely exterminated or driven out united all strata of society, especially Chechen youth. Many separatists wore green headbands with sayings from the Quran, declaring themselves warriors of Islam and vowing to fight without sparing their lives²⁷. In June 1995, there was the first major terrorist attack in Budennovsk, when Chechen militants captured about 1,500 civilians, including hospital staff and patients.

The unfulfilled hopes for the international recognition of Chechnya also contributed to the Islamization of the republic. By the decree of Dudayev and the decision of the parliament in 1995, a Shariah court was created, the family and criminal codes based on Sharia law were issued. A special institute was opened in Gudermes to retrain judges to the Sharia basis²⁸.

In the mid1990s from Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Turkey, Libya, groups of missionaries who called themselves “preachers of Islam” began to arrive in the North Caucasus. They were representatives of fundamentalist, political Islam. The preachers acted according to a banal scheme: they gave out 1,000-1,500 dollars to local mullahs for agreeing to join the Wahhabi movement, and then they were paid 100-150 dollars per month²⁹. In addition to propagandists, people with combat experience in waging wars in Afghanistan and the Mid-

24 *Golos Checheno-Ingushetii*, 12 November 1991, p. 1, Grozny.

25 Khanbabayev Kaflan, *Ekstremizm v Sovremennoy Chechne*. . . p. 105.

26 *Kavkaz*, August 14, 1992, p. 1.

27 Anatoly Savateyev, *Islam i Politika v Chechenskoy Respublike*, *Social Sciences and Contemporary World*, No. 2, 2000, p. 85.

28 M. Israpilov, *Kakim Sudom Sudit*, *Groznskiy Rabochiy*, October 11-17, 1996, p. 3.

29 *NG-Stsenarii*, May 5, 1998, p. 15.

dle East, appeared in the republic. They were equipped and transported to the North Caucasus by representatives of international Islamic extremism. Support from abroad played a significant role in Dudayev's departure from the secular model of statehood and reorientation to the Islamic values³⁰.

After the first Chechen war 1994-1996 leaders of Chechnya made an attempt to create an Islamic state. On November 9, 1996, despite the elimination of Dzhokhar Dudayev, celebrations were held in Grozny in honor of the 5th anniversary of his inauguration. Acting President of Chechnya Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev said: "For our people, Dzhokhar Dudayev will always be the president, and all the others will be only people in this position... *gazavat* is not over... The heads of Arab and other Muslim countries did not have the courage to provide moral and material assistance to Chechnya"³¹.

In September 1997, there were public executions held for criminal offenses and violation of the moral norms of Islam. On November 5, 1997, Aslan Maskhadov, elected president since January, proclaimed the creation of the Chechen Islamic Republic. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (ChRI) Mavladi Udugov in 1998 said: "We form state structures on the basis of Sharia law. The so-called Roman law, which is widely practiced in the world, is unnatural for the Chechens. For the legislation, we need to find a basis that would be accepted by our people. Islam is a suitable basis for Chechens"³².

Members of the Chechen government, field commanders Shamil Basaev, Zelimhan Yandarbiev, Arbi Baraev, Mavladi Udugov and others adopted the ideas of Wahhabism and the creation of an Islamic state in the North Caucasus. Their appeal to radical Islam was dictated by the desire to win over the financial, political and human resources of the Muslim world. This is evidenced by the numerous attempts of separatist leaders to appeal to the official authorities of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, as well as Afghanistan³³. The Wahhabis did not have much support from the local population, but were supported from abroad, so their "insurgency cannot be regarded as an ethno-territorial conflict"³⁴.

The relations between representatives of Wahhabism and Sufism sharply deteriorated. So, in July 1998 in Gudermes, there were major clashes between armed detachments of Wahhabis (Sharia Guard and a special Islamic battalion for special purposes) and Sufis, as a result of which more than 50 people died. The president Aslan Maskhadov accused the supporters of radical Islam of organizing the riots. He disbanded the Sharia Guard and the Special Purpose Battalion³⁵. Maskhadov's weakness in the face of Wahhabi tendencies and the inability to

30 Leonid R. Syukiyaynen, *Neprosto put' k shariatu*, *NG-Religii*, January 23, 1998, p. 4.

31 "Plushchad" *Sheykha Mansura*, *Grozniyskiy Rabochiy*, November 15-21, 1996, p. 1.

32 *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, September 12, 1998, p. 1.

33 Gennadiy Charodeyev, "Kto Pomogayet Chechenskim Boyevikam", *Izvestiya*, December 8, 1999, p. 2.

34 Babak Rezvani, *Reflections on the Chechen Conflict: Geopolitics, Timing and Transformations*, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 6, 2014, p. 878.

35 Kaflan Khanbabayev, *Ekstremizm v Sovremennoy Chechne*, *Islamic Studies (Islamovedenie)*, No. 3, 2010, p. 108.

create effective public institutions led to a new conflict with the federal center³⁶.

In 1999, the opposition turned to open disobedience, acts of violence, and even made several attempts on Maskhadov's life. In February 1999, the field commanders, supporters of Wahabism, created a parallel power structure – Shura, stating that the presence of Shura meant the end of Maskhadov's presidential powers. Thus, among the Chechen secessionists, a split was outlined between Aslan Maskhadov, the official leader, who signed the Khasavyurt agreements with Moscow, and the supporters of Wahhabism, they insisted on continuing hostilities to involve other parts of the North Caucasus in the fight against Russia.

Between Traditional and Radical Islam: The Choice of Akhmad-Khaji Kadyrov

At the same time, a third political bloc began to form in the Chechen Republic, headed by one of the most consistent opponents of Wahhabism, the Mufti of Chechnya Akhmad-Khaji Kadyrov. In May 1999, he announced that he was starting to create an "army of defenders of *tariqa*" (traditional Islam), which should number up to 4,000 fighters³⁷. His statement came amid new armed clashes between Wahhabis and Sufis in Grozny.

In August 1999, Chechen militants carried out an unsuccessful raid into Dagestan with the aim of creating an Islamic state on the territory of Chechnya and Dagestan, after which a new open phase of the conflict in Chechnya began.

In June 2000, by the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation, an interim system of executive authorities in the Chechen Republic was formed. The former Mufti of Chechnya Akhmad Kadyrov was appointed the Head of the Temporary Administration; and the opponents of the continuation of the war started to group around him.

Akhmat-Khaji Kadyrov as an Islamic scholar chose traditional Islam for cultural revival of Chechnya. At that time, 400 mosques functioned in Chechnya, half of which were opened from 1978 to 1991. There were madrasahs under many of them. In contrast to Dagestan, Sufism in Chechnya not only closed itself within the framework of its own *tariqa*, but was also more often limited to the framework of a separate *teip*, which was headed by the respectful spiritual leader. The specificity of Sufism in Chechnya is that pre-Islamic customs have been preserved in the Sufi ritual. In addition, the Chechen Sufi *tariqas* during the deportation of the Chechens and Ingush in 1944-1957 found themselves under the significant influence of Central Asian Islam³⁸.

In 2000, the religious organizations and groups professing the Wahhabi trend in Islam was banned in the Chechen Republic. The decision was made af-

36 Vanora Bennet, *Crying wolf: The return of war to Chechnya*, Pan Books, London, 2001, p. 538.

37 Aleksey Malashenko, Severnyy Kavkaz: Islamskiy Factor (stat'ya vtoraya), *Svobodnaya mysl'* – XXI, No. 11, 2001, p. 27.

38 Kafan Khanbabayev, Ekstremizm v Sovremennoy Chechne, *Islamic Studies (Islamovedenie)*, No. 3, 2010, p. 106.

ter numerous appeals of local mullahs of Chechnya³⁹. According to the report of Oleg Mironov, Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation in 2002, among the priority tasks were not only the restoration of industrial and agricultural facilities and social infrastructure of Chechnya, but also the restoration of mosques. Moreover, special funds were used to make the spiritual pilgrimage of Muslims living in Chechnya to Mecca (hajj), to train religious mentors in theological educational institutions of different subjects of the Russian Federation⁴⁰. Special quotas were established for the admission of Chechen youth to universities in other regions of Russia for the speedy integration of Chechnya into the national social space.

In March 2003, the Head of the Chechen Republic's Administration Akhmad Kadyrov announced that the republic would seek to obtain broad economic benefits, not political independence. "We have learned from experience, and we know where talking about political status led to. It is enough to look out the window ... Obtaining the broadest economic autonomy will make it possible to restore the war-ravaged republic in the shortest period"⁴¹.

Akhmad Kadyrov consolidated different parts of Chechen society and assembled his team of representatives of different political forces. The Constitution of the Chechen Republic adopted in 2003 recognized it as the part of the Russian Federation. On the eve of the referendum, the leadership of Chechnya and the election commission of the republic appealed to the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference with the proposal to send a delegation to Grozny. "The Chechen authorities are striving to make the plebiscite transparent, to show the whole world that the people of the republic have the right to adopt the Constitution themselves", said the head of the initiative group, Khasan Taymaskhanov⁴².

On May 9, 2004, the President of the Chechen Republic Akhmad Kadyrov was killed as a result of the terrorist act. After the three-years presidency of Alu Alkhanov, on March 2, 2007, Ramzan Kadyrov was elected the President of the Chechen Republic. He continued his father's work in countering the ideology and practice of religious extremism.

The New Turn of Jihadist Ideology: Emirate Caucasus, "Cyber Jihad" and ISIS

The Chechen secessionists went underground, transferring their hostile propaganda to the Internet, and conducting terrorist attacks in different parts

39 *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, July 26, 2000, p. 3.

40 "Report On the activities of the Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation O.O. Mironov in 2002". Available at: <http://www.consultant.ru/cons/cgi/online.cgi?req=doc&base=EXP&n=261561#01367915600535281> (accessed June 18, 2021).

41 *Groznenskiy Rabochiy*, March 18, 2003, p. 1.

42 *Groznenskiy Rabochiy*, March 11, 2003, p. 2.

of Russia (Moscow, Beslan, Volgograd, Saint Petersburg and others). On October 30, 2007 separatist websites published a statement of the leader of the Chechen fighters Doku Umarov (Abu Usman), he proclaimed himself the *Emir* of the Caucasus. He announced the establishment of the "Emirate Caucasus" (*Imarat Kavkaz*) without definition of any territorial borders, and declared "*jihad*" against Russia.

This declaration caused split in the so called "Chechen Resistance". They were divided to the supporters of secular Chechen Republic of Ichkeria acting on websites *ichkeria.info* and *thechechenpress.com*, and those who supported idea of creation the Islamic state in the Caucasus using the Internet resources *kavkazcenter.com*, *kavkazmonitor.com*, *shamilonlin.org*, etc.⁴³ This split was the natural consequence of death of the "last legitimate" president of the ChRI Aslan Maskhadov. As during his presidency, the conflict between adherents of traditional Islam and Wahhabis began, both movements pretend to be the successors of Dudayev's and Maskhadov's Chechen Republic of Ichkeria.

By the Decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation on February 8, 2010, "Emirate Caucasus" was recognized terrorist organization and its activity in the Russian Federation was forbidden⁴⁴. The Federal Law No.114-FZ "On Countering Extremist Activity"⁴⁵ establishes responsibility for legal mass media, provides possibility of suspension of operations of the extremist organization, by submission of the judicial claim about its ban and elimination.

The Internet activity of terrorist groups, supporters of "Emirate Caucasus", joined to Global "*Cyber Jihad*". The discourse analysis of the separatist Internet websites has revealed the methods of extremist propaganda⁴⁶:

1. Though the majority of similar sites had the section of "news", their main objective was not to disseminate the information about the latest events, but rather their ideological interpretation. Thus, extremists tried to popularize the geographical names accepted among them. They called the North Caucasian republics of the Russian Federation "wilayahs" (provinces) of *Imarat Kavkaz*, so they spread the news from *Wilayah Nokhchiycho* (Chechnya), *Wilayah Glialaiche* (Ingushetia), united *Wilayah of Kabarda, Balkaria and Karachay*.

2. They used special symbols and the ways of self-presentation as "*jihad*"

43 After the tightening of state control over the Internet in Russia from November 1, 2012, the names of the sites began to change constantly. The adherents of "*Cyber Jihad*" began to use social networks and thematic forums, protected by privacy requirements. Currently, sites with hostile and jihadist propaganda are included in the list of prohibited and banned in Russia. See: "Federal List of Extremist Materials", Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation, available at: <https://minjust.gov.ru/ru/documents/7821/> (accessed June 18, 2021).

44 Decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation of February 8, 2010 (No. GKPI 09-1715) to recognize the international organization "Imarat Kavkaz" ("Caucasian Emirate") as terrorist and prohibit its activities on the territory of the Russian Federation. Available at: <http://nac.gov.ru/zakonodatelstvo/sudebnye-resheniya/reshenie-verhovnogo-suda-rf-ot-8-fevralya.html> (accessed 18.04.2021)

45 "Federal Law No. 114-FZ On Countering Extremist Activity", July 25, 2002. Available at: http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_37867/ (accessed June 18, 2021).

46 The author refrains from directly citing websites with hostile and extremist information, which are prohibited in Russia.

warriors, using black and green colors, headbands with sayings in Arabic, closed faces, and also appear in photographs and videos hung with weapons. They placed the photos and announcements of *amirs* (commanders of fighters) and *sheikhs* (spiritual leaders). On the day of the tragedy in the Moscow metro on March 29, 2010 on the website "*Jama'at Shariah*" there was an appeal to all Muslims to obey the authority of Doku Umarov. In his video message he said that the terrorist attacks in the Moscow metro is the revenge for "Russian invaders".

3. They used the "hostile language" agents and gave to some words not conventional meaning. It should be noted that Islamic concepts such as *jihad* (spiritual struggle), *mujahideen* (fighters), and *murtads* (apostates), *kaffirs* (infidels) were widely used on the websites of the separatists. The published content gave the necessary ideological assessment of the activities of the separatists as martyrs and devotee of the faith, and their opponents as unbelievers and traitors, for example, used the name *murtads* for Muslims working in public institutions and police. "*Jihad*" in their interpretation was the war they declared against Russia and the Western world. Currently, the "Federal list of extremist materials" banned in Russia contains more than 5,000 items. A simple quantitative content analysis of unwanted materials gave the following statistics for the agents of the "hostile language": *jihad* 111, *mujahideen* 115, *Imarat Kavkaz* 47, *wilayah* 26, *kafir* / *infidel* 18/4, *murtad* / *apostate* 3 / 2⁴⁷.

4. The next method of the separatists' propaganda was obviously false interpretation of history. They promoted the myth about "four-centuries-old" struggle of Caucasian Muslims for their freedom against Russia.

The "*Cyber Jihad*" created the new reality on the Internet. Perversion of news and the facts, promoting of the geographical names accepted among separatists, using of agents of "hostile language" formed the virtual world of *Imarat Kavkaz* which was out of legal, cultural and information space of the Russian Federation⁴⁸. Adrián Tarín Sanz also made critical discourse analysis of "Kavkaz Center" materials and concluded that one of the main secessionists' informational strategies "revolved around the construction of an "us" embodying the Chechen victims of the initial aggression in a conflict provoked by the Russian "other"⁴⁹.

Soon the activities of the "Caucasus Emirate" acquired an international character. Some radicalized people from the Caucasus joined fighting in the ranks of the "Islamic State" in Iraq and Syria. On September 3, 2014, supporters of the "Islamic State" distributed a video in which they threatened to "liberate the

47 "Federal List of Extremist Materials", Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation, available at: <https://minjust.gov.ru/ru/documents/7821/> (accessed June 18, 2021)..

48 Tatiana Litvinova, A New Twist on the Ideology of "Jihad" in the North Caucasus: News Countering Threats, *Sociological Science and Social Practice*, No. 4, 2014, p. 127.

49 Adrián Sanz Tarín, When we are the violent: The Chechen Islamist guerrillas' discourse on their own armed actions, *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, No. 8, 2017, p. 193.

Caucasus by the grace of Allah”⁵⁰. The statement of Amir Ali Abu-Muhammad (Aliaskhab Kebekov), who condemned the actions of one of the Chechen militants Umar Shishani, who led the group of the “Islamic State” in Iraq, was the evidence of the split in the terrorist organization *Imarat Kavkaz*. The head of the “virtual emirate” also touched upon the question of where the *jihād* should be waged – in Syria or Russia. The answer for him was unequivocal – he did not condemn participation in the Syrian war, but called on the militants to stay in the Caucasus and return home from Syria and Iraq in order to launch a full-scale war in the southern Russian regions⁵¹.

On April 19, 2015, during a special operation, the leader of the *Imarat Kavkaz*, Aliaskhab Kebekov, was killed, after which the organization began to lose its position in the North Caucasus while its supporters continued to join the ranks of the ISIS⁵².

Specialists who have studied the foreign recruits of the ISIS highlight the following motives for joining the terrorist “state”, which are simultaneously religious, psychological and rational: from the desire to protect Islam from the attacks of unbelievers to material incentives, for some young people it might be “thirst for thrills”, for persons “with a criminal background, the practical appeal of an identity that confirms their hostility to Western society and offers a community and a mechanism for carrying out that hostility”⁵³. Recruitment of women into jihadist organizations, involving into suicide terrorist attacks also became global threat⁵⁴.

The National Anti-Terrorism Committee is searching for and prosecuting militants returning to Russia from “hot spots”, recruiters, as well as those who create channels for transferring bandits and financing their activities. The Director of the FSB Alexander Bortnikov in his interview for *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* at the beginning of 2021 noted that, there were about 4,500 Russian citizens who went abroad to participate in hostilities on the side of international terrorist organizations. The most acute question is the return and adaptation of the militants’ children, who at an early age were taken by the wives of terrorists to Syria and Iraq or were already born there⁵⁵. So, the rhetoric of the “*Cyber Jihad*” is dangerous in

50 ““Islamskoye gosudarstvo Iraka i Levanta” rasprostranilo video s ugrozoy perenesti boyevyye deystviya na Kavkaz”, *Caucasian Knot*, September 3, 2014. Available at: <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/248525/> (accessed June 18, 2021)..

51 “Glavar’ “Imarata Kavkaz” osudil sotrudnichestvo Umara Shishani s IGIL i prizval boyevikov vozvrashchat’sya na “dzhikhad” v Rossiyu”, *Voenenny obozrevatel’*, June 25, 2014. Available at: <http://warsonline.info/severniy-kavkaz/glavar-imarata-kavkaz-osudil-sotrudnichestvo-umara-shishani-s-igil.html> (accessed June 18, 2021)..

52 “Vykhodtsy s Kavkaza v ryadakh IG (IGIL)”, *Caucasian Knot*, May 21, 2018. Available at: <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/251513/> (accessed June 18, 2021)..

53 Thomas McCabe, A Strategy for the ISIS Foreign Fighter Threat, *Orbis*, Vol. 60, No. 1, 2016, pp. 144-145.

54 Gabriel Weimann, “The emerging role of social media in the recruitment of foreign fighters”, in: *Foreign fighters under international law and beyond*, Andrea de Guttry, Francesca Capone and Christophe Paulussen (eds.), TMC Asser Press, The Hague, 2016, pp. 77–95.

55 “Pyatnadsat’ let protiv terrora”, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, March 10, 2021. Available at: <https://rg.ru/2021/03/10/direktor-fsb-za-10-let-v-rossii-udalos-predotvratit-okolo-200-teraktov.html> (accessed June 18, 2021).

two main senses: as the promoting of the activities of terrorist groups, and as the channel of online recruiting the new fighters for “pure Islam”.

Modern Chechnya and Traditional Believers

In modern Chechnya, there is the restoration of traditional social and political structures and the revival of Islam as the most important moral regulator. Ramzan Kadyrov continued his father's work in strengthening the position of traditional Islam. The Chechen clergy had to become a reliable support for the government of the republic and made real competition to the Wahhabi ideology.

In 2008, the Heart of Chechnya Mosque was built in Grozny, which became an Islamic cultural and educational center. At the same time, primary Islamic schools for children and madrasahs of hafiz (scholars of the Quran) began to open everywhere. In 2009, the Russian Islamic University named after Kunta-Khaji was opened.

The influence of Islam on social sphere can be seen from the example of the school education. The Constitution defines the Russian Federation as a secular state in which no religion is recognized as dominant. And only at the request of parents, with the consent of schoolchildren, it is possible to teach them about religion outside the framework of the compulsory educational program by a religious organization. In the Chechen Republic, in 2010, 99.6% of school students preferred to study the foundations of Islamic culture⁵⁶.

The dominance of traditional Islam led to the introduction of a specific dress code for women, for example, wearing hijab. In 2007, in Chechnya, the mandatory wearing of a headscarf was introduced for schoolgirls from the age of ten, and in some schools from the age of seven, and for female students. Since 2010, it has been almost impossible to meet a woman in Grozny bareheaded⁵⁷. The special requirements for clothing and behavior shows the change in the position of a woman. Anna Matveeva also noticed this tendency and wrote about reduction of women's presence in public agencies and in high-level jobs⁵⁸. By the way, the only women in the current composition of the Government of Chechnya is Aishat Kadyrova - the Minister of Culture - who is a 22-year-old daughter of Ramzan Kadyrov; there are no woman in the deputy corps of the Parliament of the republic.

The promotion of the norms and values of traditional Islam, along with the condemnation of the practice of radical Islam, has borne fruit. The results of a comprehensive sociological study conducted under the supervision of Professor

56 “Report of the Commissioner for Human Rights in the Russian Federation for 2010”, March 3, 2011. Available at: <http://www.consultant.ru/cons/cgi/online.cgi?req=doc&base=EXP&n=505012#07399587825586715> (accessed June 18, 2021)..

57 “Pokryt’ golovu, no ne litso: zhenskiy dress-kod v Chechne”, 3 December 2020, *Caucasian Knot*, <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/357151/> (accessed June 18, 2021).

58 Anna Matveeva, Chechnya: Dynamics of War and Peace, *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 54, No. 3, 2007, p. 5.

Sergei Khaikin in 2013 in the North Caucasus (n=3500) showed that the population's trust in the clergy of traditional Islam significantly prevailed over the trust in the Wahhabis, the so-called defenders of "pure Islam" (85% against 7%)⁵⁹.

Islamization in social life affected the identification of Chechen youth. The study of the religious identity of Chechen youth (n=417) made in autumn of 2015 showed a significant weight of satisfaction with membership in a group of co-religionists and the cohesion of the group. The study of social consolidation showed that Chechen students felt the highest degree of consolidation with representatives of their religion (Muslims) and their ethnicity (Chechens). The least degree of social consolidation of the respondents was in relation to the citizens of their country⁶⁰.

In 2016, the Russian public opinion research center (VCIOM) summed up the results of the study "Self-identification of youth in the North Caucasus as a factor of national security" (n=3000, 500 respondents in each republic). When asked about self-identification, 83% of Chechen youth chose the answer "Citizen of Russia and Muslim", 14% - "Muslim", while only 3% chose the secular identity "citizen of Russia". A number of research questions were aimed at clarifying the attitude of young people to extremist practices. So, to the question "How do you assess the actions of people who left to fight on the side of the "Islamic State" (ISIS)?", only 1% of Chechen youth answered "these people are jihad warriors," 46% decided "This is their mistake, they are fighting not for Islam, but for false values", 12% considered it was a crime against Islam. True, the share of those who found it difficult to answer was very high (41%). Among the main reasons why young people are becoming members of extremist groups respondents indicated: specific interpretation of religious teachings, lack of work, means of subsistence, lack of opportunities for self-realization⁶¹.

The return to traditional Islam acted as a specific ethno-protective mechanism against the influence of radical views. At the same time, sociologists also record a certain level of intolerance towards dissent. In 2016 the scientists from North Ossetia conducted a study on the attitude of the peoples of the North Caucasus to apostates (n=1200). When asked how they would react if their Christian acquaintances converted to Islam, 70% of Chechens answered that they would be glad, 21% considered it was a personal matter. When asked how they would react if their acquaintances converted from Islam to Christianity, 49% answered that they would break off relations with them, 16% thought that such people should be punished, only 14% answered that this was a private matter⁶².

59 Nikolai Popov and Sergei Khaikin, Northern Caucasus: Difficult Dialog with Power, *Communicology*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 2014, pp. 136-137.

60 Olga Pavlova, Venera Minazova and Oleg Khukhlaev, Religious Identity in Muslim Students (A Study of Young People Living in the Chechen Republic), *Cultural-Historical Psychology*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 2016, p. 96.

61 "Ustanovki molodezhi Severnogo Kavkaza kak faktor natsional'noy bezopasnosti", VCIOM, June 21, 2016. Available at: https://profi.wciom.ru/fileadmin/file/nauka/ns_doklady/2016/sev_kavkaz.pdf (accessed June 18, 2021).

62 Khasan Dzutsev and Natal'ya Kornienko, Attitude of the North Caucasus Republic Population to Religious Freedom and

The good example for studying the Chechen youth' attitudes is the YouTube channel *GoBro* which issues video series "The Chechens Answer Questions". The outlook survey of young people on the streets of Grozny necessarily includes a question on the knowledge of the Chechen language and at the end several questions on the knowledge of the Quran. Answering questions that often do not go beyond the school curriculum, Chechen young men and girls demonstrate very different levels of training. The same can be said about the knowledge of the native language, which can be explained by the fact that the spoken Chechen language uses a lot of terms and everyday words from Russian. But knowledge of the basics of Islam is the strongest side of the Chechen youth⁶³. It is also worth noting that in the first episodes of the video project, the girls stood facing the camera. But due to numerous comments from subscribers that it is not necessary to photograph the faces of unmarried girls, now the girls are removed from the back.

Since 2000, the number of mosques in Chechnya has almost tripled. In October, 2020, there were 1184 mosques in Chechnya, of which 330 are cathedral, where Friday prayers are performed, and 854 mosques for daily prayer⁶⁴.

The Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Chechnya pays great attention to countering the propaganda of radical views, for example, it carries out regular raids on bookstores of spiritual literature in order to identify and seize banned publications under the Federal Law on the Protection of the Senses of Believers. According to the report on the activities of the Canonical Department in 2019, the Department carried out 1,564 inspections of Islamic shops in Chechnya⁶⁵.

The clergy of the Chechen Republic works on strengthen the institution of the family – to harmonize marriage and family relations and reunite spouses who have children. In January 2019 Deputy Mufti of the Chechen Republic Lema Khashuev in his interview emphasized a positive trend in this direction, since about 1,767 families with 4,533 children had been reunited⁶⁶.

The return of Chechen society to earlier forms of social behavior contradicts modernization and the promotion of secular values. In the political sphere, the regression of traditional Islam coincides with the revival of clan and *teip* structures and traditional models of administration, inseparable from the outbursts of religious activity.

Apostates, *Sotsiologicheskie Issledovaniia*, No. 1, 2018, p. 88.

63 "Chechentsy otvechayut na voprosy", *GoBro*, Issue 25. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyvQY03QS1I> (accessed June 18, 2021).

64 "12 godovshchina otkrytiya tsentral'noy mecheti "Serdtshe Chechni", *The Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Chechen Republic*, available at: <https://www.dumchr.ru/blog/archive/2020/10/page/2> (accessed June 18, 2021).

65 "Deyatel'nost' kanonicheskogo otдела", *The Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Chechen Republic*, available at: <https://www.dumchr.ru/blog/archive/2020/02/page/2> (accessed June 18, 2021).

66 "Zamestitel' Muftiya ChR Lema Khashuyev rasskazal o rabote, provodimoy predstavitel'yami dukhovenstva po ukrepleniyu instituta sem'i", *The Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Chechen Republic*, available at: <https://www.dumchr.ru/blog/archive/2019/01/page/6> (accessed June 18, 2021).

In June 2011, Khoj-Akhmed Kadyrov, a cousin of Akhmad-Khaji Kadyrov, built and headed the Council of Ulema, consisting of 60 Islamic scholars from all parts of Chechnya. He also put into practice the qadis (local Islamic judges) who were directly subordinate to Mufti of Chechnya. The Qadis in Chechnya have become the sort of "religious advisers" in local administrations, and are engaged in reconciliation of the parties in blood feud and bride kidnapping, sort out some property disputes, conduct educational conversations among believers, for example, about the dangers of alcohol and smoking, about the need to comply Muslim dress code, etc.⁶⁷. Qadis of municipalities of the Chechen Republic regularly report to the Spiritual Administration of Muslims. A special problematic knot is that the transformation of Islam into a state regulator of all processes has led to certain social contradictions. Thus, an Islamic analogue of the administrative system was formed in Chechnya, which exists in parallel to the secular control system and supplements it.

Russian scientists mostly believe that following the norms and values of traditional Islam has become the only adequate alternative to the Salafi project "*Caucasus Emirate*"⁶⁸. The activities of the Head of Chechnya and the clergy in educating the youth "are aimed at clarifying the essence of extremism and terrorism; they reveal the humanistic, peacekeeping content of Islam, which does not accept violence"⁶⁹. But Joanna Swirszcz saw in political and social activity of Ramzan Kadyrov an attempt "to build a personality cult around himself, much as a religious leader would, in order to emphasize his support for and connection with the Chechen people"⁷⁰. Meanwhile, as Aleksey Malashenko rightly noted, "Ramzan Kadyrov has consistently expressed his agreement with the official Russian course, while emphasizing criticism of the West"⁷¹.

Ramzan Kadyrov plays a significant role in the penetration of Islamic values into the social and political life of the Chechen Republic. In his interview with the federal channel *Russia 24*, he said that a Muslim was allowed to have up to 4 wives, although he denied that this would be allowed by law. To the question about the early marriage of girls in Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov answered it was possible after girl's graduation from school and with the permission of her parents, and added that nowhere in Russia the institution of the family was more revered than in his republic. When a journalist asked if he was going to become the

67 Darya Selenteva, Elena Sorokina, Viktoriya Surina and Elena Cherkasova, Implementation of the Principles of Traditional Islamic Management in the Modern Chechen Republic: Causes and Consequences, *International Journal of Humanities and Natural Sciences*, Vol. 2, No. 11, 2018, p. 119.

68 Ibidem.

69 Vakhit Akayev, Boryat Nanaeva, Ali Salgiriev, Magomed Soltamuradov and Vakha Gaziev, Islamism in the North Caucasus: Appearance, Conflict with Traditions, Measures Against, *The European Proceedings of Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2020, p. 3532.

70 Joanna Swirszcz, The Role of Islam in Chechen National Identity, *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 2009, p. 79.

71 Aleksey Malashenko, Ramzan Kadyrov: Rossiyskiy Politik Chechenskoy Natsional'nosti, *Russia and the Muslim World*, No. 10, 2009, p. 74.

informal leader of Russian Muslims, the Head of Chechnya modestly replied that "the leader is not the one who proposes himself, but the one who is elected"⁷².

Ramzan Kadyrov does not hide his deep interest in international events in the Middle East, in the fight against international terrorism, the service of the Chechens in units of the Russian military police in Syria, and his concern for the protection of faith⁷³. In his interview to the *RT Arabic* TV channel, Ramzan Kadyrov emphasized that his role in the diplomacy with the Arab states was small, and the main merit in building good relations with the Muslim world belonged to the President of Russia Vladimir Putin. Meanwhile, he showed his personal interest in building contacts with Saudi Arabia: "I am for Saudi Arabia, because there are the holiest places on earth – Mecca and Medina. I am ready to die defending Saudi Arabia, because it is my duty as a Muslim"⁷⁴.

There is no doubt that Ramzan Kadyrov has established himself as one of the most consistent fighters against terrorism; he and his team are doing a great job to prevent the spread of jihadist ideology among Chechen youth. At the same time, it is also obvious that he positions himself not quite as a secular leader, moreover, he declares his religious identity and a special role as a defender of the faith. The international political activity of Ramzan Kadyrov goes beyond his powers as the head of the subject of the Russian Federation, and although he himself stated that his role in the dialogue with the Arab world is small, he builds personal contacts with the leaders of Muslim countries with rather conservative regimes.

The discourse analysis of the publications of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Chechen Republic reveals some specific features of the language used and intentions:

1. To denounce the crimes of terrorists, it is not used simply irreconcilable terms and derogatory manner, but their comparison with the devil, unconditional condemnation of international terrorism and its accomplices. In October 2020, after the elimination of four militants in the Oktyabrsky district of Grozny, the Mufti of the Chechen Republic Salakh-Khaji Mezhiyev, condemning them, called them the "slaves of Iblis", "nonhumans"⁷⁵. In other publications, he called the ISIS the world's evil "Iblis State".

2. A significant number of publications cover the meetings of the clergy with

72 "Glava ChR dal interv'y u telekanalu "Rossiya 24", April 24, 2018. Available at: <http://chechnya.gov.ru/novosti/glava-chr-dal-intervyu-telekanalu-rossiya-24/> (accessed June 18, 2021). This is the official site of the Head of the Chechen Republic.

73 "R. Kadyrov v pryamom efire otvetil na voprosy programmy Pervogo kanala "Bol'shaya igra", October 20, 2019. Available at: <http://chechnya.gov.ru/novosti/r-kadyrov-v-pryamom-efire-otvetil-na-voprosy-programmy-pervogo-kanala-bolshaya-igra/> (accessed June 18, 2021).

74 "Interv'y u Glavy CHR Ramzana Kadyrova telekanalu RT Arabic", October 17, 2019. Available at: <http://chechnya.gov.ru/novosti/intervyu-glavy-chr-ramzana-kadyrova-telekanalu-rt-arabic/> (accessed June 18, 2021).

75 "Muftiy Chechenskoy Respubliki Salakh-Khadzhi Mezhiyev rezko osudil deystviya terroristov", *The Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Chechen Republic*, available at: <https://www.dumchr.ru/blog/archive/2020/10/page/2> (accessed June 18, 2021).

schoolchildren and students in order to prevent extremism and terrorism, and other educational activities. The website published a meeting between the Mufti of Chechnya and Ramzan Kadyrov, during which the Head of the Republic said “a real hunt has been announced on the Internet for the minds of Chechen youth ... all kinds of propaganda machines are doing everything to bring down our youth, confuse them, catch them in their nets, these are atheists, radicals, all sorts of movements. We should not allow this; it is necessary to strengthen educational work”⁷⁶.

3. In October 2020, the website published the Appeal of the Mufti of Chechnya where the religious leader sharply condemned the proposal of the President of France Emmanuel Macron to hang cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad on government buildings. Salakh-Khaji Mezhev called Macron “terrorist No.1” since he offended the spiritual feelings of Muslims⁷⁷.

4. Everyday events, religious holidays, meetings, conferences, opening of new mosques and madrassas, reports of cadis, reconciliation of families involved in blood feud are presented. Last year’s news contained recommendations for the prevention of COVID-19.

5. Much attention is paid to international cooperation, primarily with Saudi Arabia in connection with the annual Hajj of the Chechens to Islamic shrines. The importance of Chechnya and the Head of the Republic Ramzan Kadyrov as a bridge between the Islamic world and Russia is underlined in many publications. The site also paid attention to Palestine, expressing Islamic solidarity. For example, at one of the conferences the Mufti of Chechnya said: “Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine!”⁷⁸.

Thus, the analysis of the materials from the website of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims shows intransigence towards dissent, intolerance towards those who do not respect the foundations of Islam, demonstrates the influence of the clergy on everyday life and the solidarity with the Islamic world. At the same time, traditional Islamic values to a certain extent contrast with the secular way of life; and definitely social and political models of behavior in the Chechen Republic are very different from the rest of Russia. The author inclines to sum that the post-conflict Islamization of Chechnya is only partly based on historic and traditional factors, but also the result of purposeful efforts of today’s leadership and the clergy of the republic.

76 “Ramzan Kadyrov proved vstrechu s Salakhom Mezhiyevym”, *The Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Chechen Republic*, available at: <https://www.dumchr.ru/blog/archive/2021/03/page/2> (accessed June 18, 2021).

77 “Obrashcheniye Muftiya Chechni v svyazi s zayavleniyem Prezidenta Frantsii Emmanuelya Makrona”, *The Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Chechen Republic*, available at: <https://www.dumchr.ru/blog/archive/2020/10> (accessed June 18, 2021).

78 “Muftiy ChR Salakh Mezhiyev: “Iyerusalim – eto stolitsa Palestiny”, *The Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Chechen Republic*, available at: <https://www.dumchr.ru/blog/archive/2019/02/page/5> (accessed June 18, 2021).

Conclusions

The retrospective and discourse analysis of the influence of religious factor on the conflict and post-conflict Chechnya shows different phases and trends of Islamization. Islam during the First Chechen war began to be used for political purposes, and later turned out to be a cover in the struggle of opposing forces for power (Maskhadov, on the one hand, and the Wakhabis, on the other). This conflict hid the desire of one part of the believers to preserve their identity, and another, preferring Arab-Muslim values, to become more the Muslims than Chechens. Moreover, having suffered a defeat in the promotion of radical Islam in Chechnya itself, they joined the global *"Cyber Jihad"* and terrorist movement.

At the turn of the 1990s-2000s political Islam is actively implanted in Chechnya by external forces interested in stirring up the conflict between the republic and the Russian Federation, in creating a barrier between Russia and the Muslim world exploiting the historic memory about *"gazavat"*. But Wahhabism did not take root in Chechnya. The leadership and the clergy of Chechnya began to make purposeful efforts to revive traditional Islam, which was perceived as a *"medicine"* against extremist tendencies.

The example of post-conflict Chechnya showed a return to traditional social institutions (revival of Islam), the restoration of the traditional social order with all its inherent set of regulatory functions, traditional models of identity, calls into question the modernization of society, and contradicts the theory of secularization. On the one hand, the process of religious regeneration has become a compensatory reaction of the Chechens to the wars they have experienced. On the other hand, the youth of the republic, who know about the conflict only from the stories of their elders, are actively involved in this process of regenerating traditional religious foundations. The regression of elements of the traditional social order, the restoration of the role of Islam as the most important social, moral and political regulator demonstrates the possibility of the formation the new gaps between secular society and the political system of modern Russia and the Chechen Republic as a subject of the Federation. As this study shows, Islam has penetrated deeply into the social (school, family, gender relations) and political life (local and regional administration, international relations) of republic and has become an important part of Chechen identity, in some cases more important than civic national identity.

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КОНФЛИКТ И ПОСТ-КОНФЛИКТНА ИСЛАМИЗАЦИЈА ЧЕЧЕНИЈЕ КАО ДРУШТВЕНИ И ПОЛИТИЧКИ ФЕНОМЕН

Сажетак

У овом чланку се открива утицај верског фактора у политичкој и друштвеној сфери за време конфликта и пост-конфликтног периода у Чеченији. Студија се заснива на ретроспективно и дискурс анализи националних и локалних новинских чланака, интервјуа и говора политичких лидера, објава Духовне администрације муслимана у Чеченији, опозиционих материјала, и непријатељски орјентисаних интернет извора. Истраживање је показало да је исламизација Чеченије текла кроз неколико фаза: 1) покушај да се створи Исламска држава за време борбе за суверенитет, 2) избор Ахмада Кадирова да се посвети лојалности према држави али и традиционалног исламу ради борбе против вахабистичког покрета, 3) прелазак вахабизма у интернет „подземље“ и њихова подршка „глобалног џихаду“, 4) тренутни покушаји традиционалног ислама да допре у друштвени (школе, породица, односи између полова) и политички (локална и регионална администрација, међународни односи) живот. Ревитализација ислама као важног друштвеног, моралног али и политичког регулатора указује на могућност стварања нових раздора између секуларног друштва и политичког система Русије, са једне, и Чеченије, са друге стране.

Кључне речи: конфликт у Чеченији, џихад, радикални ислам, традиционални ислам, друштво, политичка сфера