

particular, its history and traditions, which will allow it to comfortably coexist and cooperate with the other traditional confessions of the Russian Federation.

HOW THE DISCOURSE OF SUFISM BECAME THE EXPRESSIVE DISCOURSE OF ISLAMIC RADICALISM IN THE REGIONS OF “POPULAR ISLAM” IN RUSSIA

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ABSTRACT

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the Caucasus became, once more in its history, the sphere of vital and strategic interests of Western and Eastern powers that placed a stake on separatist sentiments and Islamic forces. The importance of

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researching this issue is explained by the fact that radical Islam, which professes the idea of “pure Islam” (purified from the extraneous layers that built up over the course of history), made the ideas of Wahhabism easily grasped and, therefore, willingly embraced, making regional communicative practices very distinctive. Salafism in its neo-Wahhabi garb opposes the region’s traditionalism. Given the vehement conflicts unfolding between groups of Muslim clerics and their followers in Daghestan, the already familiar antagonism between the traditionalists (followers of three Sufi tariqats) and fundamentalists (conventional definition of those who believe that Islam should be returned to the times of the Prophet Muhammad) was further intensified by the contradictions between spiritual leaders, each of whom represented specific ethnic groups. The communicative register is not relevant to the conflict discourse of extremism and/or terrorism, while any communicative failure may reveal its constructive potential if those

involved in the discourse, which may unfold according to any scenario, are not afraid to define the situation. It was in the wake of the Chechen wars that the radical Islamic movement in the Northern Caucasus acquired specific organizational forms. The wars served as a catalyst for the Wahhabi movement in Daghestan, and were responsible for the gradual emergence of a highly specific discourse of radicalism, the product of transformation of the traditional Sufi discourse as one of the common features of “popular Islam”. It was at that time that the neo-Wahhabi discourse acquired predominantly extremist features, which is especially apparent in the digital format. The systemic crisis transformed the idea of Imarat Kavkaz into the only force that offered its own model of unification of the Caucasus. The idea of pure Islam willingly embraced by the local Muslims, first and foremost the younger generation, which became cannon fodder for the leaders of Imarat and the sluggish civil war underway in Daghestan.

KEYWORD: *the discourse of Sufism, Islamic radicalism, “people’s Islam,” the Northern Caucasus, extremism.*

Introduction

In 2004, according to a sociological poll, over 83% of the clerics and up to 40% of the faithful in Daghestan were fundamentalists. The studies of radicalization of the Islamic movement in the Republic of Daghestan at the turn of the twenty-first century relied on the methods that combined statistics related to the regional context, results of empirical studies, and relevant information scattered across all sorts of publications. This information, however, is complicated by the dilettantism of certain experts at the earliest research phase, different methods/methodologies employed, and the hardly compatible territorial scopes ranging from the scale of an educational establishment and/or a town to practically the entire Northern Caucasus. This explains the baffling variability in the numbers and ages of the polled individuals, the frequently ignored social statuses and the town-countryside definition. The prominence of the law and order structures on the regional scene complicates sociological studies and academic research; the same applies to the hardly consistent official figures supplied by the administration, FSB, Ministry of the Interior that differ significantly from those obtained through empirical studies. Badma Biurchiev has correctly pointed out that the somewhat contradictory situation is explained by the more stringent anti-terrorist laws and the considerably widened range of crimes defined as crimes of terror. Strange as it may seem, Ramazan Abdulatipov, who until

recently headed Dagestan, and Minister of the Interior Abdurashid Magomedov were right in their own way. “There are fewer terrorist attacks yet, paradoxically, the number of associated crimes has been steadily rising.”¹ Irina Starodubrovskaja, likewise, was correct when she wrote that the youth of Dagestan is not only more religious but also more conservative than of other Caucasian regions.²

Today, the ideology of armed national separatism has been replaced with the ideology of armed jihad of supranational (caliphate) nature and the changes in the ruling circles of the so-called Caucasian Emirate (Imarat Kavkaz).

As a part of the political process, the religious factor may stabilize or destabilize the political space, which means that we should identify the mechanisms and technologies of politicization of religion: religious organizations have become important political actors, yet their role on the political arena has not been adequately studied.

Methods and Materials

In our studies of the radicalization of the Islamic movement in the Republic of Dagestan at the turn of the twenty-first century we relied on official statistics, the results of our own empirical studies, and information obtained by linguists, sociologists, political scientists and experts, which appeared in various publications. Our Internet poll produced 1,675 completed questionnaires with three maximally precise basic questions (the result of discussions with religious people and imams) as the starting point for an analysis of religious groups:

- “*Do you pray five times a day?*” to identify practicing and ethnic, or secularized Muslims;
- “*Do you belong to a tariqat?*” to identify Sufis among practicing Muslims;
- “*Do you take part in mawlid?*” to identify traditionalists and those who profess non-traditional Islam among practicing Muslims, who do not consider themselves to be Sufis.

Sociological polls showed that in the early 1990s young people were less xenophobic than the older generation. Starting in the mid-1990s, however, the youth has been increasingly more responsive to radicalism. By the early 2000s, xenophobia among the youth became more prominent than in all other age groups, up to and including the older, traditionally xenophobic, generation. In Soviet times, one out of four polled young men spoke of himself as a believer; today, the correlation is three out of four.

The number of Muslims who performed hajj is the best illustration of the rising religious feelings in Dagestan: 365 Muslims in 1990; 1,200 in 1991; 6,000 in 1992; 9,398 in 1995; 12,525 in 1996; 12,208 in 1997; 13,268 in 1998; 5,449 in 2000; 14,000 in 2001; and over sixteen and a half thousand in 2004. In 1986, there were 27 functioning mosques in the republic; by 2014, their number rose to 2,350.

Zaid Abdulagatov has analyzed the results of four sociological polls to conclude that at first, starting in 1996, the level of religious feeling in Dagestan was slowly decreasing from 85% to 79%. In 2010, however, the degree of religiosity among young people spiked to 94.3%. About 12% of the respondents demonstrated extremist potential; while the highest figure of losses in the republic’s gene pool was registered among the young members of illegal armed groups. “In 2005, 76% of casualties

¹ B. Biurchiev, “Dvoynaja bukhgalterija borby s terrorizmom,” available at [http://kavpolit.com/articles/dvojnaja_buhgalterija_borby_s_terrorizmom-19093/], 15 September, 2017.

² See: B. Biurchiev, I. Starodubrovskaja, “Dagestanskikh musulman ob’ediniat modernizatsionnye tsennosti,” available at [http://kavpolit.com/articles/irina_starodubrovskaja_Dagestanskikh_musulman_obedi-29816/], 12 September, 2017.

among the members of illegal armed groups were young men between 15 and 30; in 2008, their share was 71.2%; in 2009, 70.1%.³ Nearly 30% of the polled Muslims in Dagestan were ready to protest if “state laws contradicted their faith.” Between 2000 and 2010, the share of “fundamentalists” in the youth milieu increased from 53.9% to 77.6%. In 2010, the share of “fundamentalist” answers among the students of secular and Islamic educational establishments rose from 63.1% to 89.1%. According to another sociological poll, 60.78% of the students were negatively disposed to atheism; 50.98% preferred to live in a theocratic state. This looks like a latent threat of a Caucasian version of the Islamic Caliphate.

In 2012-2013, Anastasia Rogovaia registered in the Khasaviurt region “consistently high values of the two main factors of the spread of terrorist ideology:

- (1) displeasure with authorities, bordering on hatred of some of its structures and representatives and
- (2) ethnoconfessional and religious tension.”⁴

Further studies revealed the two main opposing groups and their “peripheral” zones: those who support the ideas of extremism and terrorism and do not bother to conceal their membership in nationalist and religious organizations and are ready to use force (4.5% of the total people polled) and those who reject the ideas of terrorism (29.7%); 5.7% of the peripheral zone lean toward extremist and terrorist activities (“support and ready to join an extremist organization”), while 37.9% side with anti-terrorist ideology (“do not support extremist organizations as sources of conflicts”). There are “in-between” groups in the zones of ideological confrontation: depending on the situation they are either “affected by extremist ideology” or “undecided”—8.3% and 13.9%, respectively.

It should be said that the highly emotional extremist discourse of Islamic radicalism may infiltrate the region through Northern Caucasus border zones.⁵

Cultural relativism claims that “cultures are different but equal,” which means that all cultures, values and traditions are equally important for human civilization. Negative stereotypes of, attitudes to and prejudices against representatives of a different ethnic culture are spawned by the distortion of the principles of cultural relativism. It is noteworthy that the conflicting discourses between or within confessions, or between ethnicities is a natural and inevitable result of the evolution of ethnic groups: it is neither positive nor negative, it is merely a fact of life.

Results

Twenty-two percent of the polled were secularized; 27% were Sufis; 28% traditionalists, 23% represented non-traditional Islam. The latter group is very archaic in many respects, yet a closer scrutiny of its axiological structure reveals that it is not homogenous.

About 90% of the polled agreed that secular education was highly important either in its own right or combined with religious education.

³ I. Grimasov, “Politologi prosledili zavisimost mezhdru religioznosti i ekstremistskim povedeniem sredi dagestanskoi molodezhi,” 29 October, 2016, available at [<http://lawinrussia.ru/content/politologi-prosledili-zavisimost-mezhdru-religioznosti-i-ekstremistskim-povedeniem-sredi>], 4 November, 2017.

⁴ A.V. Rogovaia, “Protivodeystvie ideologii ekstremizma i terrorizma na rossiyskom Kavkaze (po materialam sotsiologicheskikh issledovaniy),” *Oekumene. Regionovedcheskie issledovania*, No. 3 (38), 2016, pp. 45-54.

⁵ See: A. Shadzhe, I. Karabulotova, R. Khunagov, Z. Zhade, “Ethnopolitical Influence in Regulating National Security in Border Territories of the Countries in the Caucasian-Caspian Region,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 17, Issue 3, 2016, pp. 66-75.

In July 2014, Head of the Main Administration of the RF Ministry of the Interior General Sergey Chenchik illustrated the situation of the last decade with the following figures: “There are 250 nongovernmental Islamic religious educational establishments in the republic; 14 of them are higher educational establishments; there are 105 madrasahs and 130 maktabas at mosques. Only 59 of them are registered with the Republican Ministry of Justice; only 14 madrasahs and 1 higher educational establishment are licensed. The student body is approximately 2 thousand 700 hundred. The question is: How can this happen within a law-governed state?”⁶

Different experts offer different periodization of the process of the radicalization of Islam in Daghestan: definitive chronological frames are impossible to outline, since it is an ongoing process.

Here is our own more complete and updated periodization: I—late 1980s-1991: general Islamic ideas planted in the minds of the republic’s population; Wahhabis move from semi-legal to legal activities; official Muslim clerics are discredited. II—1991-1997: the conflict between the Wahhabis and Sufis is intensifying, as the former attract more and more supporters; foreign fundamentalist centers extend their aid; Wahhabi literature is printed and distributed on a mass scale; three centers of Wahhabism—radical, moderate-radical and moderate—appear. III—late 1997-mid-1999: calls to jihad against the “enemies” of Islam to bring the Daghestani society into accordance with “the Shari‘a and establish the power of Allah on earth”;⁷ independent Islamic territory is proclaimed in the villages of the Kadar Zone; cooperation with Chechen separatists and Wahhabis to oppose governmental structures in Daghestan is launched; attacks on militia checkpoints and border guard units occur along the entire stretch of the Chechen border. IV—1999: perfidious attacks are undertaken by Wahhabis as part of international terrorist bandit groups led by warlords Basaev and Khattab in August-September 1999 on the Tsumada, Botlikh and Novolaxskoe districts of Daghestan; illegal armed formations are defeated and the Wahhabi enclave in the Kadar Zone is liquidated; the Law of the RF on Banning Wahhabi and Other Extremist Activities in the Territory of the Republic of Daghestan is passed on 19 September, 1999. V—2000-2006: Wahhabis become a clandestine organization engaged in terrorist activities against state and municipal officials, officers of the law and order structures, regular people (so-called blind terrorism). Umalat Saygitov has the following to say about this period: “Religious, political, pro-Chechen, criminal, economic and, finally, state terrorism is present in the Republic of Daghestan to different degrees. Nationalist terrorism in Daghestan has been replaced with terrorism as a form of religious extremism.”⁸ VI—2007-2012: a network of subversive terrorist underground appears in the Northern Caucasus and Daghestan (Imarat Kavkaz, 2007) as part of the international terrorist structures; shahid terrorism, as the most dangerous type of terrorism, becomes more active than ever and is aimed against servicemen of the law and order structures, state officials, official Muslim clerics; terrorist groups become financially independent at the expense of those from whom they extort money as a “tax on jihad”; terrorist activity is developing in waves. VII—2013-now: Neo-Wahhabis are actively and successfully luring young men from Daghestan to the Middle East, with the numbers steadily rising; a number of factors points to the fact that the idea of Imarat is receding into the past; in 2013, the Islamic State calls on the Muslim youth to perform hijrah; a latent threat of the revival of the Caucasian version of Islamic Caliphate persists; harsher anti-terrorist laws are passed in the Russian Federation; the civil war in Daghestan drags on.

⁶ According to the Ministry of the Interior, in 2014, 36 officers of the law and order structures were killed in the North Caucasian Federal District (see: [http://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/252039/], 15 September, 2017).

⁷ K.M. Khanbabaev, “Vahhabizm v Dagestane,” *Severo-Kavkazskoe obozrenie*, 29 March, 2013 [http://userdocs.ru/geografiya/12152/index.html?page=4], 4 November, 2017.

⁸ U.T. Saygitov, “Poniatie terrorizma kak formy nasilstvennoy organizovannoy prestupnosti,” *Voenna-ugolovnoe pravo*, No. 4, 2004 available at [http://voenprav.ru/doc-2729-1.htm], 15 September, 2017.

Discussion

Geert Hofstede has rightly noted that different power distance indices (PDI) in different countries are responsible for the rate of success in intercultural communication. He says with good reason that a harsh management style dominates in social organizations with high PDI: those low in the chain of command structure live in dread of their superiors and of losing their colleagues' trust. The situation is very different in the low-PDI structures. The road to success in the cultures with low PDI involves knowledge, love and happiness at the core of the value system. On the other hand, members of the high-PDI cultures cherish ancestry, heritage, wealth, stinginess, shrewdness and unscrupulousness in business.⁹

Human consciousness is an "external world" of communications that is systemically organized with the help of the category of meaning tying together its dynamic elements, i.e. emotions. This fact is widely used in the apocalyptic discourse of contemporary Islamic terrorism.¹⁰ Niklas Luhmann rightly defined the contemporary media as one of the basic cognitive systems of the society¹¹ that helps create an illusion of a new and self-sufficient reality. This means that by monitoring the media that deals with the issues of confessions and ethnicity we can trace the evolution and transformation of ethnic stereotypes in Russian society. This becomes especially important in the context of a new Cold War and information-related provocations.

The head of FSB warned that international terrorism was actively moving into new zones of influence and that the Islamic State organization was the main danger: its cells in different regions of the world threaten to destabilize the situation in the CIS, and Central Asia in particular.¹²

The latent negative attitudes that surface in media discourse cause ethnic and confessional tension at the level of everyday conflicts as well as on a larger scale. Interaction in conflict dialogs is possible

- (a) if the sides are able to exert influence on each other and
- (b) if this influence is organized and can, therefore, be regulated.

Conclusion

An examination of the contemporary infosphere of the Russian Federation makes it possible to analyze the situation and draw up a very much needed program that would allow to prevent the insertion of negative sentiments into the linguistic conscience of people. Today, in the specific cultural and historical context of a systemic crisis of the civilized world, informational and psychological impact on the human psyche is growing rapidly, undoubtedly acting as a permanent source of psychological stress and dissonance with the real ethnolinguistic milieu.¹³

⁹ See: G. Hofstede, "Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations," Second edition, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks CA, 2001, Ch. 3.

¹⁰ See: E. Ermakova, M. Jilkisheva, G. Fayzullina, I. Karabulatova, Kh. Shagbanova, "The Media and Fiction: Post-modernist Discourse of Contemporary Terrorism in the Context of Apocalyptic Rhetoric," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 17, Issue 2, 2016, pp. 61-69.

¹¹ See: N. Luhmann, "Neveroiatnost kommunikatsii" (Transl. from the German by A.M. Lozhenitsyn, ed. by N.S. Golovin), in: *Problemy teoreticheskoy sotsiologii*, Issue 3, ed. by A.O. Boronoev, St. Petersburg University Press, St. Petersburg, 2000.

¹² FSB learned that the Islamic State wanted to destabilize the situation in the CIS, available in Russian at [<http://govoritmoskva.ru/news/42717/>], 15 September, 2017.

¹³ See: I. Karabulatova, Kh. Vildanov, A. Zinchenko, E. Vasilishina, A. Vassilenko, "Problems of Identificative Matrices Transformation of Modern Multicultural Persons in the Variative Discourse of Electronic Informative Society Identity," *Pertanika Journal of Social Science & Humanities*, No. 25 (S), July 2017, pp. 1-16.

This made the Middle East and a considerable part of Africa a seat of regional and global destabilization: in this context, no country is immune to regime change that radical Islamists might undertake to set up a World Caliphate.¹⁴

Not infrequently radical Islamists and terrorists profit from foreign interference, while the illusion that they are guided by certain states and their special services causes havoc in world politics. The means and methods of influence in the contemporary digital information society are varied: they are used to impose alien experience and alien secondary feelings presented as unique authenticity and individually perceived reality.

The situation in the post-Soviet space is somewhat different.¹⁵ In many post-Soviet states, including Russia, the global crisis moved the state into the center of economic, social and cultural life and consolidated the authoritarian trends in politics.

Ethnoconfessional deviations within confessions are based on the friend/foe opposition within the Caucasian and/or Russian culture. Unlike the cosmos-centric culture of antiquity and/or egocentric culture of the West, Russian culture is socio-centric and relies on the friend/foe dichotomy.

Caucasian sociocentrism is characterized by the fusion of the individual with the collective “we”-space. Sociocentric cultures invariably preserve the image of an enemy in individual consciousness. The friend/foe distribution can be differently justified: in sociocentric cultures the entire space of meanings and associations of the tolerance concept (support, aid, cooperation, patience, leniency, etc.) can be applied only to “friends.” This makes the antagonism of the “foe” a specific feature that separates friends from foes. In real life, there are certain stereotypes at the national self-awareness level that are responsible for the domination of a particular type of culture.

Today, a wide spectrum of communications has become a virtual reality of real life.¹⁶ Emergence of ethnic and/or confessional identity is conditioned by the stereotypes planted in the mind by the instruments of digital information society. This creates a new reality in which certain types of ethno-linguistic-mental identification come to the forefront.

¹⁴ See: I.M. Gabdrifkov, I.S. Karabulatova, I.G. Khusnutdinova, Kh.S. Vildanov, “Ethnoconfessional Factor in Social Adaptation of Migrant Workers in the Muslim Regions of Russia,” *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 6, No. 3, Supplement 4, May 2015, pp. 213-223.

¹⁵ See: I. Karabulatova, “The Islamic Factor and the Political Processes in Tajikistan,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 18, Issue 1, 2017, pp. 118-123; M. Seidina, I. Karabulatova, Z. Polivara, A. Zinchenko, “A Publicist Discourse of the Islamic Organizations of the Central Federal District of Russia and the Issue of Tolerance,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 18, Issue 1, 2017, pp. 109-117.

¹⁶ See: I.S. Karabulatova, P.V. Barsukov, I.V. Akhmetov, O.V. Mamatelashvili., F.F. Khizbullin, “‘Network Wars’ as a New Type of Deviation Processes in the Modern Electronic and Information Society in the Context of Social and Economic Security,” *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, No. 6 (6S3), 2015, pp. 150-159.