

**CONFLICTS BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND
NON-TRADITIONAL ISLAMIC TRENDS:
REASONS, DYNAMICS,
AND WAYS
TO OVERCOME THEM**
(based on North Caucasian documents)

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I n t r o d u c t i o n

The religious situation in the Northern Caucasus, a conflict-prone territory of the Russian Federation, is becoming noticeably politicized due to the overall difficult, often contradictory, socioeconomic and political-cultural transformations in the country. This situation can be called the rebirth of Islam, or revivalism, to use Western terminology.

Islamic revivalism in the Northern Caucasus is a specific phenomenon whereby regional traditional Islam receives a revivalist boost in the form of its free development. During the years when the Soviet ideological system prevailed, this gave rise to certain problems. However, Islamic revivalism also has another special feature relat-

ed to the penetration of radical and extremist trends that are not traditional for this region. These include the Salafite trends, among which an important place is occupied by so-called Wahhabism.

The main purpose of this article is to look at how relations between traditional Islam in the Northern Caucasus and the non-traditional Islamic religious trends are developing. In order to do this, we need to look at the special features of local traditional Islam, the reasons for the appearance and spread of Wahhabism, the contradictions and conflicts between them, the interrelations between Chechen teyps and wirts, and the ways to overcome religious extremism.

1. The Special Features of Traditional Islam

The Muslims of the Northern Caucasus are mainly Sunnis who follow the Shafi'i and Hanafi schools of thought. There are more Sunnis than Shi'ites in the region. However, researchers often incorrectly cite the number of Sunnis and Shi'ites. For example, a study translated from English to Russian notes that: "the Sunnis comprise the minority of Muslims in Tatarstan, Daghestan, Chechnia, Ingushetia, and Kalmykia, which belong to the Russian Federation."¹ In actual fact, however, Sunnis, on the contrary, comprise the majority of the Muslims in these Russian constituents. There are approximately eight million of them, that is, their numbers are much higher than the number of Shi'ites living in Azerbaijan itself.

Back in Soviet times, when trying to define the specifics of Islam in Russia's Northern Caucasus, some researchers described it as parallel (extra-mosque) popular Islam. In Daghestan, Chechnia, and Ingushetia, which belong to the Northeast Caucasus, Islam existed (and exists) in the form of *Sufism*, while in the Northwest Caucasus (Ossetia, Kabarda, Karachai, and Adigey), it closely interacts with elements of the national culture, including paganism, which were sacralized and became objects of worship. On the whole, we should realize that Islam in the Northern Caucasus is a syncretic phenomenon that includes both religious and folk components.

Sufi Islam in the Northeast Caucasus functions through the *Naqshbandiya*, *Qadiriya*, and *Shazaliya* Tariqahs, which have their own distinguishing ideological foundations and ritualistic features. All of these three *Tariqahs* are widespread in the Republic of Daghestan, while in the Chechen Republic and the Republic of Ingushetia only the *Naqshbandiya* and *Qadiriya* trends are known and function. They, in turn, are broken down into smaller religious fraternities—*wirds*, the total number of which reaches three dozen.

Wird fraternities named after the following sheikhs belong to the *wirds* of the *Naqshbandiya* Tariqah in Daghestan, Chechnia, and Ingushetia: Tashu-Haji, Ahmatuk-Haji, Elah-Mulla, Abdul Vahlab, Abdulaziz Shaptukaev, Deni Arsanov, Iusup-Haji of Koshkeldy, Bagautdin Arsanov, Umalat-Haji, Sugaip-Mulla, Uzun-Haji, Solsa-Haji, Suleiman-Haji, Albast-Haji, Magomed-Amin, Iangulba-Haji, Kana-Haji, Ibragim-Haji, Kosum-Haji, Shamsuddin-Haji. The following main *wird* fraternities of sheikhs Kunta-Haji, Bamatgirei-Haji, Batal-Haji, Chimmirza, Ali Mitaev, Iusup-Haji of Makhkety, Mani-Sheikh, and Vis-Haji belong to the *Qadiriya* Tariqah. All of these *wird* fraternities evolved in the 19th-20th centuries, their founders comprised a pantheon of saints, the worship of which was the most important part of the religious rituals not only of the Chechens and Ingushes, but also of some Daghestanis. Almost all of them have their own ritualistic features, in which their followers or the researchers of the traditional institution of *wird* fraternities in the Northeast Caucasus are well versed. In Chechnia and Ingushetia, almost every founder of a *wird* has his own *ziarat*-mausoleum built by his followers and considered a site of systematic pilgrimage.

The religious situation in Chechnia and Ingushetia is largely defined by the relations that developed among the *wird* fraternities. As they become drawn into the political processes, they are often in conflict with each other. Moreover, this situation also depends on the relations between the traditional and non-traditional Islamic trends in the Northern Caucasus.

The Tariqah of *Shazaliya* functions successfully in Daghestan thanks to the activity of Sufi sheikh Said Afandi of Chirkey, who is still living and has an immense influence on the official clergy. In

¹ C. Horrie, P. Chippendale, *Chto takoe islam: Istoria i deistvitel'nost'*, Amfora. TID Amfora, St. Petersburg, 2008, p. 384.

Chechnia and Ingushetia, the Qadiriya wurd of sheikh Kunta-Haji Kishiev is the most authoritative, to which President of the Chechen Republic Ramzan Kadyrov, the mufti, and most of the Chechen clergy belong. The Naqshbandiya wurd of sheikh Deni Arsanov, which has complicated relations with the kunta-hajis, has less influence.

The followers of Sufism in Daghestan, Chechnia, and Ingushetia are Muslim Sunnis who rely on the basic provisions of Islam and adhere to Sufi traditions: worshiping their teachers—*ustazes* and the *sheikhs and avliya* they know. Pilgrimages to sites where the saints are buried, performing religious rituals—*zikrs*, and building *ziarat*-mausoleums over the graves of deceased Sufi teachers are important elements in the religious activity of the traditionalists.

Due to its long centuries of adaptation to the specific local ethnocultural features and national culture, Islam in the Northern Caucasus, including in Chechnia, acquired its own elements which are distinguished by liberalness and tolerance toward other confessions. What is more, since the end of the 1980s, the religious-political situation in this region has become complicated and tense due to the penetration of a religious-political teaching which the representatives of the regional Muslim clergy call “Wahhabism.” The followers of this teaching regard themselves as the bearers of pure Islam, the followers of the *tauhid*, and believe they are called upon to revive Islam of the times of the Prophet Muhammad and the four righteous caliphs by purifying traditional Islam of delusions and Sufi innovations and organizing Shari‘a-ization of the entire sociocultural reality of the North Caucasian Muslims. Some researchers call them *Salafis*, that is, the supporters of the traditions of the first Muslims, others, *neo-Wahhabis*, thus trying to show that they are distinct from the supporters of Wahhabism—the official ideology of the Muslim state of Saudi Arabia. Pursuing the same goal, we called this teaching “North Caucasian Wahhabism.”

2. Regional Wahhabism and the Reasons for its Appearance

During Gorbachev’s perestroika and glasnost, re-Islamization was observed in the Northern Caucasus: religious learning institutions and centers cropped up everywhere, the clergy became more involved in religious-political activity, and previously unknown and inaccessible religious literature appeared. Speeches were given at meetings of Muslims in Makhachkala, Grozny, and Karachaevska criticizing secularized society for moving away from God’s commandments and claiming that Muslim society should live in compliance with the Qu’ran, which Muslims regard as their “Constitution.” At the same time, religious parties and movements appeared that aroused the interest and support of some of the Muslims in the region. Branches of the Islamic Revival Party formed in 1990 in Astrakhan were created in Daghestan, Chechnia, and other regions of the country. Members of the traditional clergy called the members of this party Wahhabis, since it acted against traditional Islam with its cult of saints. Moreover, this party was the only Islamic organization in the country that aimed to assess the situation and develop Muslimism in the U.S.S.R.

As a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, an ideological vacuum arose which was filled, among other things, by various Islamic trends, right down to radical ones. According to Daghestani researcher K. Khanbabaev: “At the end of the 1980s, illegal formations of a religious-political fundamentalist Islamic trend appeared in several towns and regions of Daghestan and Chechnia, which was

later called Wahhabism.”² A split occurred in the Muslim community of the Northern Caucasus as a result of this activity and struggle for power among the clergy, and the single Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the region created in 1944 (with its center in Makhachkala) broke down into a number of independent administrations: the Dagestani, Checheno-Ingushetian, North Ossetian, Kabardino-Balkarian, and Karachaevo-Cherkessian. The Dagestani Spiritual Administration of Muslims in turn broke down into a few smaller national associations.³ The Wahhabi who criticized the official clergy for cooperating with the communist regime and corruption took active part in these processes.

After the state coup in the Checheno-Ingushetian A.S.S.R. in 1991, representatives of separatism wheedled their way further into the power bodies, who gradually fell under the influence of political and religious radicalism and extremism, neo-Wahhabis being the bearers of them. Since 1992, their activity in the Chechen Republic has been acquiring an active ideological and then political nature. They initially introduced the idea of monotheism, rejected the cult of saints, and stated that there should be no intermediaries, to which they related the saints worshiped in Sufism, between the Almighty and the believers. In this way, Wahhabism became a controversial alternative to traditional Islam.

After the end of the First Chechen War, acting president of Ichkeria Z. Yandarbiev closed the secular courts in October 1996, not without help from the Wahhabis, and formed the Supreme Shari‘a Court of Ichkeria with its regional structures which investigated many criminal and civil cases for several years. During the period under review, the social and cultural life of the people became Islamized. Secular society was not ready for this turn in events; the activity of the Shari‘a courts and methods of “complete Islamization” and “Shari‘a-ization” did not become popular among the Chechens. All of this intensified the conflict between their traditional culture and Wahhabi Shari‘a-ization.

Another aspect of the conflict was that the representatives of traditional Islam were pushed to the periphery of social life. The Ichkerian authorities tried to form a clergy from representatives of the religious radicals with a clear anti-Russian orientation.

3. Traditional Islam and Wahhabism: Conflict Interrelations

In the post-Soviet period in Chechnia, the ideology and practice of the representatives of so-called North Caucasian Wahhabism were entirely directed against the wurd fraternities, which gave rise to inter-religious conflicts.

Some of today’s descendants of the Chechen saints have influence on the believers, which is manifested in their peacekeeping activity, in settling conflicts among the believers, and in reconciling those embroiled in blood feuds. Often the power structures turn to them in search of support of a particular political official.

² K. Khanbabaev, “Etapy rasprostraneniia vakhkhabizma v Dagestane,” in: *Alimy i uchenye protiv vakhkhabizma*, Makhachkala, 2001, p. 105.

³ See: R. Gajiev, “Vakhkhabizm: problemy religioznogo ekstremizma v Respublike Dagestan,” in: *Religiozniy faktor v zhizni sovremennoogo dagestanskogo obshchestva: Materialy Respublikanskoj nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii (27 October, 2000)*, Noviy den Publishers, Makhachkala, 2002, p. 196.

Some fraternities directly participated in the political events of the 1990s, supporting the head of the separatists Jokhar Dudaev. But there were also those who were in direct opposition, for which they were persecuted by the regime. The followers of the wurd of Deni Arsanov, who had significant influence among the believers of the republic's Nadterechny Region, as well as among the Ingushes, were on the side of the opposition. The traditional Chechen clergy, which mainly consisted of Naqsh-bandiya followers, did not recognize the Dudaev-Alsabekov gazawat declared in the fall of 1994 against the Russian troops.

The wurd fraternities could not avoid a confrontation with the Wahhabis, and some of them, for example, the fraternity of Tashu-Haji and Kunta-Haji, clashed with them on 14 June, 1998 in Gudermes in an armed skirmish, during which the Wahhabis, who suffered defeat, moved to Urus-Martan, where they established Shari'a order until August 1999, much to the discontent of the population.

E. Kisriev writes that "Daghestani Wahhabism should be related to the reformist modernist trend in Islam, while the Daghestani Tariqah followers and representatives of the traditional Orthodox priesthood currently opposed to the reforms of the Wahhabis, that is, the professional ministers of the Islam cult—the mullah and imams of the mosques—are for all intents and purposes fundamentalist in nature."⁴ This viewpoint gives rise to arguments, since it is difficult to agree with the claim that representatives of the Tariqahs and traditional clergy are fundamentalists. The term "fundamentalism" does not fit here; if it is used at all, it can only be applied to the North Caucasian Wahhabis, but not to the Daghestani Tariqah followers, who are among the followers of traditional Islam in the Northern Caucasus.

4. Interaction between the Chechen Wirds and Teyps

The problem of interaction between wurd and teyp in Chechnia was being analyzed more intensively in connection with the attempts of certain researchers in Rostov-on-Don, Moscow, and St. Petersburg to understand the social structure and religious situation in Chechen society. In this respect, insufficiently professional arguments are often presented. As for today's social structure in Chechnia, researchers reduce it to kindred, teyp relations, ignoring the fact that the Chechens, as many other nations of the former U.S.S.R., went through different stages of Soviet modernization, and elements of democratic and civil origin are traditionally strongly developed in their society. In the past, they resolved their national problems by means of the Mekhkan Kkhiel, which translates from the Chechen as the Country Council (national parliament).

Despite the fragmentation among wurd, Islam in Chechnia is nevertheless united, and the republic's Muslims are Sunnis, who adhere to the Shafi'ite madhab (theological-legal school founded by Muhammad ash-Shafi'i). Due to its simplicity, this madhab is widespread in many Muslim countries and penetrated into Daghestan, Chechnia, and Ingushetia. This makes it possible to explain the non-acceptance of Wahhabism, which rejects the Sufi traditions recognized by most of Chechnia's Muslims.

For many Chechens, adherence to the wurd fraternities is historical tradition, the sacral side of their spiritual life. The spiritual-cultural traditions of the Chechens remain primarily homogeneous,

⁴ E. Kisriev, *Islam i vlast' v Dagestane*, OGI, Moscow, 2004, p. 109.

although the diversity of the teyps and wirds often gives rise to contradictory situations in which inter-religious unity is violated. The existence of archaic social and religious institutions shows the sociocultural diversity and amorphousness of Chechen society, but it only seems this way. Chechen society has always mobilized and rallied together whenever some outside influence posed a threat to or derogated the religious interests of the ethnoses.

Some research studies mention the direct link between the teyps and wirds, which in the strict scientific sense cannot be recognized as authentic. For example, A. Iarlykapov claims that "in Chechnia and Ingushetia, wirds and teyps intermingled."⁵ From my viewpoint, the situation is slightly different. Being directly involved in studying the ties between Chechen teyps and wirds myself, I cannot in any way vouch for this "intermingling." For there have been no studies so far that make it possible to define the special features of the interaction between teyps and wirds. Without such studies, it is impossible to obtain a clear picture of their interrelations and any statement about this will only be a presumption.

The principle of religious-political organization of the wird fraternities is not based on affiliation with only one teyp. The representatives of different teyps usually belong to a wird fraternity. During the years of Soviet power, A. Salamov, S. Umarov, and V. Gadaev⁶ identified the total number of wird fraternities (or murid communities), revealed the forms of their activity, described the holy places (*ziarats*) in Checheno-Ingushetia, and showed their political and spiritual role in the life of believers. Despite their ideological bias, these studies contained valuable information and still retain their empirical significance today.

If we make a quantitative comparison of the Chechen wirds and teyps, the former are far fewer than the latter. According to M. Mamakaev, Chechen society comprises 135 teyps,⁷ and the number of wirds amounts to 30. According to some expert evaluations, wirds encompass approximately 80% of the believers, 60% of which belong to the Qadiriya wirds, among which followers of Kunta-Haji's wird are the most numerous, and 20% are followers of the wirds of Naqshbandiya. However, 15% of all believers do not belong to wird fraternities, and 5% are indifferent in the religious respect.

The procedure for establishing interaction between the teyps and wirds, particularly recognizing their coincidence, is in our view a largely artificial and incorrectly treated problem. Most people think that the Chechen kin and teyp are identical concepts, but we cannot agree with this, since from our viewpoint, the Arabic term "tayfa" means an aggregate of people living in a particular territory, but they do not have to be related by blood-kinship ties. Tayfa cannot be identical to "kin" based precisely on blood-kinship ties.⁸ L. Iliasov correctly claims that "many Russian researchers identify teyp with kin, family, thus concluding that Chechen society has a kin-tribe structure."⁹ As social structures, kin and teyp have very different foundations. Clarifying our position, we will note that teyp is not a kinship and not a tribal structure, it is a union consisting of different families living on the same territory and entering into certain sociocultural relations.

⁵ A. Iarlykapov, "Musulmane Severnogo Kavkaza mezhdru "traditsionalizmom" i "arabizatsiei," in: *Rosiia i islam: mezhtsivilizatsionnyy dialog*, Moscow, Ufa, 2006, p. 150.

⁶ See: A. Salamov, "Pravda o 'sviatykh mestakh' v Checheno-Ingushetii," in: *Trudy Checheno-Ingushskogo NIIYAL* (Works of the Checheno-Ingush Scientific Research Institute of Language and Literature), Vol. 9, Grozny, 1964; S. Umarov, "Izmenchivye sud'by sviatykh," *Nauka i religia*, No. 7, 1976; idem, *Sotsial'naia sushchnost' kul'ta "sviatykh" mest*, Grozny, 1983; idem, *Evoliutsia osnovnykh techeniy islama v Checheno-Ingushetii*, Grozny, 1985; V. Gadaev, "Miu-ridskie obshchiny na territorii Checheno-Ingushetii," in: *Metodicheskie rekomendatsii. Checheno-Ingush State Pedagogical Institute*, Grozny, 1987.

⁷ See: M. Mamakaev, *Chechenskiy teyp v period ero razlozhenia*, Grozny, 1973, p. 18.

⁸ We wrote about this in more detail in: "Chechenskoe obshchestvo v poiskakh geopoliticheskoi i sotsiokul'turnoi identichnosti," in: *Sovremennye problemy geopolitiki Kavkaza. South Caucasian Review*, Iss. 5, ed. by V. Chernous, North Caucasian Scientific Center of Higher School Publishers, Rostov-on-Don, 2001, p. 126.

⁹ L. Iliasov, "Chechenskiy teyp: mify i real'nost'," *Chechenskoe obshchestvo segodnia*, No. 1 (9), 2007.

Wirds play a very perceptible role in the social and political mobilization of the Chechens. As we noted above, certain political figures during political campaigns, including elections at different levels, were at times compelled to turn to authoritative wird leaders in search of support, who often mobilized their flock to achieve these goals. In addition, wird authorities play a key role in reconciling hostile sides, particularly those involved in blood feuds. The descendants of the sheikhs or wird authorities often wield greater weight in Chechen society than teyp authorities.

Sociocultural traditions imbibe valuable universal features, but neither are they deprived of conservative aspects. Religious traditions have played a significant role in contemporary Chechen society, which was accompanied by opposition to extremist manifestations.

In national Islam, the ethnic component has become more firmly embedded than the religious. The believer often faces an identity dilemma: is he a Muslim or a representative of the ethnos? This problem was raised in particular during the confrontation between the supporters of neo-Wahhabism and the representatives of traditional Islam. The former believed that religious affiliation, particularly to Jamaat groups with their sights set on creating a caliphate, was higher than kinship and ethnic relations. While the latter preferred the ethnic component, seeing a threat to spiritual and cultural traditions in the ideology and practice of the radicals. Opposing the ideology and practice of Wahhabism that is non-traditional for Chechnia, A. Kadyrov, as mufti and then president of the Chechen Republic, clearly defined his position on this issue. "We (that is, the Chechens.—V.A.) are first Chechens, and then Muslims," he said.

Ethnicity predominates in the Chechen self-consciousness, which is also characteristic of many other peoples of the Northern Caucasus. But this was not taken into account by the forces which imposed religious-ideological values formed beyond the civilizational-cultural space of the Caucasus on Chechen society.

Some ethnographers believe that the problem of Islamic conventionality in the Northern Caucasus "inevitably leads to another problem—confrontation between the Islamic youth and representatives of the older generation who position themselves as the bearers of so-called traditional Islam."¹⁰ The author goes on to write that "in response young people have thought up some rather scathing names for their opponents, the most inoffensive of which is "ethnic" Muslims, that is, Muslims by birth (?), but not in reality. The most humiliating characteristic of "ethnic" Islam heard is "funereal Islam."¹¹

The present author, who has worked for many years with the Chechen youth, never had occasion to hear such "humiliating characteristics" of traditional Islam. Nevertheless, it should be noted that young people criticize some provisions of Sufi Islam, believing that it departs from the ideology of Salafism (Islam of the times of the righteous caliphs). They also say that the religion of the fathers must be purified of innovations and delusions. This shows the influence of the representatives of the non-traditional trends that have penetrated the Northern Caucasus.

5. Ways to Overcome Religious Extremism

Many terrorist acts in the Northern Caucasus are justifiably related to the radicalism and extremism of the neo-Wahhabi trend in Islam, which is non-traditional for the region. In this respect, the need has

¹⁰ See: A. Iarlykapov, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

¹¹ *Ibidem.*

arisen to limit and, in general, intercept the ideological and practical activity of the neo-Wahhabis. For this purpose, the power bodies, with the support of the official clergy represented by the spiritual administrations of Muslims of the region, carried out several legislative and ideological-propagandistic measures. For example, legislative acts were adopted in Daghestan, Chechnia, Ingushetia, and Karachaevo-Cherkessia that prohibit the extremist activity of the Wahhabis. Special subdivisions have been created in the power-related structures that are called upon to fight the spread in Wahhabi influence and oppose their extremist (including terrorist) acts.

The activity of religious extremists and terrorists is currently being intercepted in Chechnia. Traditional Islam is undergoing a tempestuous revival in the republic, which is manifested not only in the building of mosques and religious learning institutions, but also in the spiritual enlightenment of young people. In their daily sermons, the traditionalists are calling on the Muslims to unite and pursue spiritual growth, while condemning drug abuse and other sinful acts.

With the support of the republic's president, Ramzan Kadyrov, the Muftiat (Islamic High Council) of the Chechen Republic organized an International Peacekeeping Forum in Gudermes in 2007 called "Islam is the Religion of Peace and Creation," which had great spiritual-cultural and political significance not only for the Muslims and non-Muslims of the republic, but also of the Northern Caucasus and the Russian Federation as a whole. The reports and speeches of the forum participants noted the humanistic, peacekeeping, and creational role of Islam, condemned radical and extremist manifestations under the guise of religious slogans, and confirmed the need for an inter-confessional dialog among the believers. The forum ended in the adoption of corresponding documents which called on the heads of state, believers, and the peoples to join together in combating violence, poverty and impoverishment, disease, and illiteracy, and in maintaining peace on the planet.

The Muslims of Chechnia, the official clergy in the form of the Islamic High Council headed by Sultan Mirzaev, approve of and support the republic's president, Ramzan Kadyrov, who has restored the economy and social sphere and revived the spiritual foundations of the ethnos.

At a meeting between Ramzan Kadyrov and the king of Saudi Arabia held in Mecca at the end of October 2007, the latter approved of Kadyrov's activity against the religious radicals and emphasized that he, as president, must carry out tough measures to oppose religious extremists and terrorists and in so doing establish order in the Chechen Republic. In this way, Ramzan Kadyrov, as a follower of traditional Islam, received the blessing of a religious-political figure who is prestigious in the Muslim world, which will help to strengthen his position in Russia and in the Muslim world as a whole.

C o n c l u s i o n s

The appearance of Islamic radicalism and extremism, which we believe is related to the increased political activity of Wahhabism, has undoubtedly been generated by the transition from one socio-political system to another, the collapse of the U.S.S.R., de-ideologization, the active democratic changes, and the weakness of the state power being established in Russia.

Traditional Islam in the Northern Caucasus, including in the Chechen Republic, is a symbiotic system that relies on two traditions: ethnic and Islamic. This general description of Islam correlates to the local specifics which are linked with the national culture, including Sufi, and with the functioning of the institution of wurd fraternities and national beliefs which comprise the foundation of the spiritual culture of each ethnos and determine the religious-political situation in society.

During the period of political instability in the Northern Caucasus, when the Wahhabis undermined the situation, were involved in terrorist acts in the region, and took specific steps to create a caliphate, the representatives of traditional Islam acted as supporters of the integrity of the Russian

state and took measures to prevent the threats the Wahhabis posed to society and the state. A graphic example of this is the religious and political activity of A. Kadyrov, the mufti and then president of the Chechen Republic. Evaluating Wahhabi activity in Chechnia during the regime of Aslan Maskhadov, he stated that under the banner of the madrasah, training camps were being created in different parts of Chechnia where not so much Chechens as people from CIS countries, neighboring North Caucasian republics, Middle Eastern states, and even the U.S. and Great Britain were undergoing military training. In his opinion, Chechnia was turning into a center of international terrorism, and the heads of the Chechen Wahhabis were establishing close contact with Osama bin Laden, who was generously financing all the projects in order to transform the republic into a spearhead aimed at Russia's heart.

Ramzan Kadyrov, who is continuing his father's cause, is opposing the extremist and terrorist activity still going on in the Northern Caucasus in every possible way. With the support of the Russian leadership, he is implementing a program of revival of the spiritual-cultural traditions of the Chechen people aimed at achieving peace and stability in the Chechen Republic. Within the framework of this program, abandoned cemeteries and holy places are being restored, the roads leading to them repaired, old mosques reconstructed and new ones built, and madrasahs opened where Muslim clergy are being trained using a curriculum that takes the special features of traditional Islam into account.

This attention to the nation's uniqueness and cultural-religious traditions is promoting a perceptible increase in the prestige of the republican and federal authorities. The Muslims of Chechnia support the policy of the republic's peaceful reforms. This is all helping to block the negative manifestations of radicalism and deal a strong rebuff to religious and political extremism.