

**IULIAN CHIFU, OANA POPESCU, BOGDAN NEDEA**

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**RELIGION AND CONFLICT  
RADICALIZATION AND VIOLENCE  
IN THE WIDER BLACK SEA REGION**

Colecția  
CĂRTI ÎN LIMBI STRĂINE

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**Chapter 1**  
**CONFLICTS, CONFLICTS OF IDENTITY.**  
**RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS.**  
**CHARACTERISTICS AND SPECIFICITIES**

**IULIAN CHIFU**

*Conflicts and Typologies*

The definition of conflicts can be found in many disciplines and schools of thought and has been worded in various manners. As a result, as conflict is a common place, many specialized courses even avoid a definition as such<sup>1</sup>. In the academic world, in the field of international and even intranational conflicts, we operate with a definition<sup>2</sup> that includes, invariably, the existence of two or more parts that want, at the same time, an element of power — authority, resources, or prestige/status, that have the resources and are willing to spend them and even decide to spend them with a view to obtain the element that they want.

The definition captures, simultaneously, the three fundamental elements of power: authority — political power, resources — economic power and symbolic power — prestige, recognized status (power issues note). Obviously, there are variations that emphasize more on interests — political, economic, status — or on authority (instead of power) — political, economic or symbolic, but the essence and substance of the three dimensions are found or reproduced in any formula.

The definition we operate with introduces the transition from *potential* — having the resources to acquire the desired item — to the *will stated, expressed* and, finally, *to action*, to the actual spending of resources. The distinction must be made, as it marks a hierarchy in the degree of polarization and the desire to achieve the desired item, from *the potentiality* of entering a dispute with an important opponent, who commands respect and, possibly, considering negotiating or ignoring a request of the opponent — to the will stated, located in space of *credible threat* — which may determine the opponent, of course, to reconsider the dispute, in which case the risk of entering

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<sup>1</sup> Denis J. D.Sandole, Sean Byrne, Ingrid Sandole-Staroste and Jessica Senehi, *Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution*, Routledge, USA and Canada, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Iulian Chifu, *Analiza de Conflict*, Editura Politeia SNSPA, Bucharest, 2004.

an open conflict is obvious — and the conflict in itself, fully expressed. From the Galtung's curve perspective, the first part, of potentiality, would consist in divergences, antagonisms, to polarization, the second, from polarization to the onset of the conflict, and the last, from the onset of the conflict and manifest violence, with all means, to cease fire<sup>3</sup>.

The three elements that are part of a dispute — Power/authority, Resources and Prestige/status — are also defining for a potential classification of conflicts<sup>4</sup>, namely in *conflicts authority*, *conflicts of attribution* and *conflicts status*. Obviously, it's worth mentioning that there is no "pure-breed" type of conflict: a separatist conflict has to do with land and resources, and, at the same time, with the comprehensive authority over a regional component, and with prestige — the status of internationally recognized state; having resources, means, in principle, having access to political authority and prestige; the same applies for either form of power held: with authority, one envisages the access to resources and to a status that entails prestige and, conversely, one who is famous and has a certain status has access to resources and authority.

Further on, we will focus, in the first instance, on that component of conflicts status that have to do with prestige, with moral, scientific, religious, symbolic authority, because this is an important component of conflicts with deep causes or, as Ho-Won Jeong would call them, *non-realistic conflicts*<sup>5</sup>, which are not related to concrete elements such as authority or materials resources, but to ideals and symbolic elements that can generate conflict even without having the resources to undertake it; this type of conflicts has a significant degree of irrational, emotional<sup>6</sup> motivation.

The nature, the causes and the dynamics of each conflict are different, nuanced, and depend on context, on rationality and, more recently, according to the neo-liberal institutional cognitive approach, on the perception of each party on the conflict. However, the understanding of the inter-group, national, inter-state, global conflicts resides in the elements related to three levels of analysis<sup>7</sup>: *human motivation* — with its psychological reasons, *social interaction models*, pertaining to groups, with the particular relevance of social psychology and sociology — and the *institutional level*<sup>8</sup> — related to political sciences, international relations and conflict analysis. The distribution of authority and resources and the access to positions of decision — intranationally and internationally — is the third level of analysis. The causes and

<sup>3</sup> Oliver Romsbotham, Tom Woodhouse, Hugh Miall, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, second edition, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Iulian Chifu, *op. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> Ho Won Jeong, *Understanding Conflict and Conflict Analysis*, Sage, Los Angeles-London-New York-New Delhi, Singapore, 2008, p. 43.

<sup>6</sup> *Idem*, p. 49; Dominique Moisi, *The Geopolitics of Emotion*, Anchor Books, New York, 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Ho Won Jeong, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>8</sup> Eric Stern, *Crisis Decisionmaking: A Cognitive Institutional Approach*, Swedish National Defense College, Elanders Gotab, Stockholm 2003.

the reasons of conflicts are interrelated and influence, fuel or mitigate each other, as appropriate.

As for *conflicts of status*, they include in their substance symbolic elements that address, simultaneously, the three levels; they have to do with basic human needs, with defining elements of any group and collective structure of human society, just as they have to do with the reason to exist and the place of institutions in the society, with their functionality and the social life structured in objectified forms of society, which have acquired their own self-awareness and reason to exist<sup>9</sup>. *The causality* remains, in the case, conflicts of status<sup>10</sup>, hence the relevance and importance of studying the *sources of conflicts*.

There are schools of thought that see conflict as *fundamentally bad*, irrational in nature and *undesirable*<sup>11</sup>, others believe they are deeply related to human nature and the result of either the *primary animal origin*<sup>12</sup>, explaining humans' inclination to violence and conflict with instincts and basic needs, Freud's *internal psychology*<sup>13</sup> or elements of *collective memory, frustration, anger* and other psychological variables of human groups, where the experience lived in common, rather than instincts, determine violent behaviour and trigger conflicts<sup>14</sup>, which are deeply connected and amplified by poor communication and misperceptions.

In addition, some researchers link conflict of its embedding into *social structures* (starting from Marx) that *shape* social life and realities *in a wrong manner* and have a certain latency, a delay to changes occurring in society, with complementary reactions as well — based on inertia, convenience, minimum resistance and agoraphobia fostered by common, habitual environment — to any social, institutional, regulatory change, causing behavioural changes<sup>15</sup>. Thus, behind *hostility and antagonism*, there are often imbalances of power, economic disparities and discrimination on the basis of collective identity which generate sufferings<sup>16</sup>, reflected in the *construction of the cognitive-institutional scaffolding*.

Returning to Jeong's classification, in realistic and non-realistic conflicts (for conflicts of authority and attribution and, respectively, for conflicts of

<sup>9</sup> Claudette Lafaye, *Sociologia organizatiilor*, Editura Polirom, Iași, 1998.

<sup>10</sup> Ho Won Jeong, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>11</sup> Wright S.C. and Taylor, D.M., "The Social Psychology of the Cultural Diversity: Social Stereotyping, Prejudice and Discrimination", in MA Hogg and J. Cooper (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Social Psychology*, London/Thousand Oaks, CA/New Delhi: Sage, 2003, pp. 432-457.

<sup>12</sup> Lorenz, evolutionists, Darwin. See K. Lorenz, *On Aggression*, New York, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1966.

<sup>13</sup> Sigmund Freud, "Why War?," in *Collected Works*, vol. 16, Imago, London, 1933.

<sup>14</sup> R. Brown, *Group Processes: Dynamics Within and Between Groups*, Basil, Blackwell, Oxford, 1988.

<sup>15</sup> S. Tormey, J. Townsend, *Key Thinkers from Critical Theory to Post-Marxism*, Sage, London, 2006.

<sup>16</sup> Ho Won Jeong, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

status), he labelled as *realistic* those conflicts that stem from material shortages, limited administrative and management positions and other objective circumstances that create a gap between interests on the one hand and aspirations and expectations on the other hand, the ability to perform them in inter-group or institutional competition, while assessing the *need and desire* to achieve specific purposes and also the balance between *costs and benefits* of goal, and the *faith, the confidence* in their feasibility as well.

As for *non-realistic conflicts*, Jeong believes they are either the expression of *anger, anxiety, shame*, related to personal or group stress, to incompatibilities given by the manner of establishing the power role, the social and economic competition, the identity in the group dynamics; they are intensified by the lack of communication and understanding of others' intentions, by elements of *antagonistic behaviour* and *frustration*, respectively, the *exacerbation of the sufferings*; in other words, conflicts can stem in combined realistic and non-realistic elements, because the emulation effect and the force of social coagulation, of polarization given by the underlying symbolic elements of non-realistic conflicts is a guarantee for triggering conflicts with a realistic basis. Then, we must not forget that, *hostility and frustration* arise in marginalized or minority groups, to dissipate the tensions in the core, when they are counterproductive or irrational in generating a conflict that would lead to obvious defeat; this is a pathological, profoundly human manner of dissipating real tensions to the groups and topics that are unrelated to the original source of conflict, which are used as substitutes for the real enemy, hence the creation of secondary conflicts, no less powerful, and the deeper hiding of the real causes of the conflict.

Sometimes, *rationalizing aggression* in the case of irrational conflicts requires the *construction of a comprehensive ideology*, but the intentions and actions aimed at destroying rivals are related to *fear and envy* for other groups; aggression may also arise from *sinister reasons*, fabricated to release the frustration of individuals upon another group. Thus, massacres and genocide, the complete or partial destruction of ethnic, racial, end religious categories get to allow, in fact, violence, beyond the moral law, as it is stated in all human communities.

Therefore, *conflicts of status* may have extremely powerful reasons, motivation and effects, and there are limited opportunities and enormous difficulties in reversing the process to reconciliation. Here, we can find conflicts of values, of ideology, of model, of perception and conflicts of identity. *Conflicts of identity* are a specific category, precisely because they relate to defining and characteristic elements that are deeply rooted, at human and group level; moreover, identity is, both in meaning and nature, involved in any type of inter-group conflict.

Thus, *identity* is, on the one hand, an *inseparable feature* of any human group, which allows drawing elements of symbolic nature between the interior and the exterior of the group, with better underlined or a more permeable boundaries, depending on the strength of the identity considered, but *identity*

is a principle which, in itself, can create extremely strong conflicts of status, as disputing, questioning or perceiving an attack on the content of the assumed identity can have an enormous mobilization and polarization force.

This is the general force that complicates *the generation* of conflicts of status, because the elements that it entails are, in fact, *characteristic* to any human person or group — set of values, perhaps even ideology (elaborated in an early or incipient form, but lived and guessed by protagonists), pattern, perception, identity — and also elements which generate, *per se*, *deeply symbolic reasons*, which antagonize and generate aggression and violence.

### *Identity. Group. Emotions and Identity*

In the theoretical debate, one of the key points of identity is explaining the reasons why *humans need group belongingness*, the perception of solidarity and of an identity, of a superior agenda, shared with other humans, that would complement the level of prestige and personal identity. The easiest answer is that *man is a social animal*, having precisely this characteristic of self-awareness, which differentiates him from other animals and the group structure that man forms exceeds the level of groups created instinctually, for purposes that cannot be reached individually; in this respect, language, verbalization and construction of social relations based on the self-awareness of the individual play substantial role. A large component of sociology studies *group dynamics* and defines or explains the humans' need of socialization.

Generally, *identities* are seen as collective phenomena of expressing the similarities within the group. The deep forms of similarities within communities can be expressed in various ways and at levels that cover physical similarity, similarity of tastes and occupations, of culture and customs, common language and memory, elements that distinguish a group from another. Affiliation to a group is *partially objectively assumed*, implicitly, by birth, geography, habit of blood relatives, or has subjective components, pertaining to the individual's choice. The link between individual and group identity is an equally fascinating field of study, with many theories and approaches, but no definitive or even dominant formula has taken shape.

A certain desire to complete one's identity and individuality with features that support *self-esteem*, a desire placed in the area of human basic needs, makes individuals seek membership of social groups that would offer them affection and support their moral options. The *significance of collective identity* for individuals is given by the desire to belong to a group, where they would feel *solidarity and cohesion*, along with a positively perceived *other*. Self-perception is related to group belongingness, and therefore *collective identity strengthens self-esteem* at individual level<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Ho Won Jeong, *Conflict Management and Resolution. An Introduction*, Routledge, London and New York, 2010, p. 63.

The “enlargement of personal identity offers fulfilment and realization of self”<sup>18</sup>. Identifying with a greater cause and the *sense of loyalty* to those with whom one works alongside for the same cause are elements which lead naturally to the *emergence of collective identities*. Symbolic boundaries with a strong *emotional nature* are created precisely by collective actions and the shared commitment to protect the goals that unite those who experience joint distress.

In his excellent work, a response to Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations”<sup>19</sup>, Dominique Moisi attempted to draw the lines that characterize and define the world, not strictly in terms of geopolitical elements, related to geographical determinism, civilizations and religions, but in a deeper manner, focusing on the *fundamental emotion* experienced by human beings — *fear, humiliation and hope*; he tried to assign such a dominant emotion to a related type of model and personality, primarily related to a particular geographical area of the globe, but factoring in the background of globalization, when this link has been diluted substantially and human types, even in this separation, coexist worldwide.

Apart from the excellent intellectual exercise, to which we will return, Moisi explains the connection between *globalization, identities and emotions*. Thus, against a contemporary background — following the model already launched by Huntington, who related to post Cold War conflicts and the revival of inter-ethnic conflicts — Moisi shows that such symbolic elements related to the borders of groups — between the interior and the exterior, elements of myth and exterior representation of these “strong” barriers — acquire increased significance for individuals and even “virtual territoriality” that catalyse *primary emotional elements* and are extremely solid boundaries; overcoming these borders is a *casus belli* and the root for triggering an “irrational” conflict in Jeong’s view, mentioned above, a conflict where the assessment of risk, costs and benefits no longer finds its place.

Moisi also contradicts Thomas Friedman’s metaphor that “the world is flat” as a result of globalization, arguing that the same phenomenon has made the world more *passionate*, in other words, more connected to *emotions and feelings*, which are generated by the *insecurity* entailed by great changes caused by globalization, hence the *need for identity*, which appears in direct causality; it is a reaffirmed, renewed and confirmed need for identity, as well as the burst of irrational reactions when this identity is called into question by others. In the bipolar world, things seemed clear, simple, and *identity* was immobile, obvious, clear, at least at the superior level of belonging to one of the two blocks, to one of the two worlds, systems, organizations; today, in a world in a perpetual, fast, change, a world without clear and reinforced borders, the issue of identity is more and more debated and deeply

<sup>18</sup> W.A. Gamson, “The Social Psychology of Collective Action”, in A.D. Morris and A.D. Miller, *Frontiers in Social Movements Theory*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1992, p. 56.

<sup>19</sup> Samuel Huntington, *Ciocnirea Civilizațiilor*, Antet Publishing House, Bucharest, 1997.

relevant. And *identity* is deeply linked to *confidence*; in its turn confidence — or lack of confidence — is *expressed in emotions*, including the three fundamental emotions taken by Moisi from psychology.

After the 20<sup>th</sup> century, called “the American century” or the “ideology century”, the 21<sup>st</sup> century marks the leap to the *the Asian century* and *the identity century*<sup>20</sup>. Changing from ideology to identity and from the key and the symbols of the Western representations to those of the Eastern World means, at the same time, that the role of *emotions* becomes more important than ever.

As a matter of fact, this is confirmed by today’s economic crisis, which started as an economic and financial crisis, subsequently a political elites’ crisis, a crisis of politicians who failed to control the financial elites and make them accountable, and even cohabitated and profited from their mismanagement, and later fell deeply, after Germany launched its observations on sovereign debt, in a *crisis of confidence*. Moreover, even the mechanisms of prevention and prediction, of early warning of future crises contain, beyond the mechanisms of taxation of capital flows and of their derivatives, a mechanism that should include, following the model of insurance and risk premiums, the *quantification of the public confidence*, elements that are deeply emotional and dependent, and can be manipulated by global coverage media and super-information (and the related super-manipulation).

### *Shaping Identities. The Dual Nature of the Influence of Identities in Conflicts*

As we have seen, *identity* plays an important role in shaping and substantiating groups, in border delimitation between groups and cohesion within the group, bringing added value to the individual identity and being, therefore, inherently related to individual needs, and to humans’ nature as social beings. Social identity, group identity, collective identity play *a critical role* in any type of conflict, but on the other hand, identity can be, in itself, the debated element that generates a category of non-realistic conflicts, as Jeong defines them, or a conflicts of status in our classification, namely the *conflicts of identity*. In the category of conflicts of identity, the most common and present in the post-Cold War years were firstly the *inter-ethnic conflicts* — with a national, then separatist nature, particularly in artificial states maintained by the existence of the ideological “common enemy” from the opposite block, the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union — then (sometimes in parallel) religious conflicts, with an interpenetration, interdependence and mutual emulation of one feature or another to the fore, as a major determining factor.

<sup>20</sup> Dominique Moisi, *The Geopolitics of Emotion*, Anchor Books, New York, 2009, p.14.

In order to underline the identity component of the conflicts, then the specificities of conflicts of identity *per se*, is useful to review the theoretical components and studies already conducted, at psycho-sociological level, in terms of social identity. Here, we have approached the issue from this angle in relation to the sociological school of thought that says any conflict involving human communities is a sociological one. We will build, further on, on group dynamics with *psycho-sociological* elements, touching upon elements related to the *polarization and politicisation of identity*, and moving to *conflicts of identity* and the instruments of Conflict Analysis, which we consider a distinct discipline, with its own apparatus, derived from several disciplines, but which is distinct in relation to sociology or political science, due to its specificities and relevant specific difference.

*Identity* plays a vital role in social conflicts, because it plays an important role in the self-perception of communities and individuals, in the way they define who are “we” and “them”, in the *mobilization* of individuals and communities and in the *building of legitimacy* and justification for the general and group aspirations<sup>21</sup>. According to this school of thought, sociological identities are created and transformed in processes of social struggle, explaining the emergence, escalation and potential social conflict transformation.

With the respect due to the instruments and the solid theoretical basis that we will use, in the extended form, we advocate for substantial nuances of this topic and we support rather a *dual theory* that sees identity not as a datum — the Wilsonian nationalism and further deterministic theories, talking about the defining features assigned to each nation, possibly depending on the climate in which they live or the race they belong to, on ethnicity, etc. — but based on a number of *objective characteristics*, which are stable, observable and measurable, and also number of items from *historical memory*, events lived together, joint *experiences*, and items pertaining to *individual choice, option*, perhaps a result of “social conflicts” as well.

Returning to the two elements of distinction of identity in conflicts, the *structural* one, related to identity as a feature of any group, and the *determining* one, in the case of *conflicts of identity*, when the core of the conflict is determined by the questioning or collision of the perception or of the definition of identity, it is obvious that identity contributes in any kind of conflict of identity; *mobilization* is the attribute that relies mainly on this feature, but in the case of the *conflicts of identity*, the degree of mobilization and the challenging of the identity substance is a more important force, pertaining to status, prestige, symbols, myth and *emotion, faith and confidence* in the justice of the cause defended and the need to defend at all costs, hence the labelling as non-realistic conflicts, as pragmatism is irrelevant, and so are the calculation and the estimation of consequences or costs.

<sup>21</sup> Celia Cook-Huffman, “The Role of Identity in Conflict”, in Denis J.D.Sandole, Sean Byrne, Ingrid Sandole-Staroste and Jessica Senehi, *Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution*, Routledge, USA and Canada, 2009, p.19.

We therefore have identity, inextricably linked to conflict, and we have a special category of *conflicts of identity* where motivation for conflict lies in the substance of identity. The key question is whether identity, identity differences or even the distinct perception and definition of identity is sufficient to generate a conflict; it is, certainly a factor that supports and exacerbates conflict. *Conflicts* are not all generated by differences in identity, obviously, but we have many cases where the motivation relies in identity, in conflicts of identity but the *difference of identity*, does not entail, directly, the conflict; such as comparison, followed by competition, confrontation and counteraction<sup>22</sup>, requires other ingredients in order to open a conflict. However, due to the special characteristics of identity, it is not infrequent that *realistic conflicts*, with very clear goals related to power, interests and resources *are converted by using the differences of identity* in order to strengthen the boundaries between groups and achieve superior mobilization, polarization and outbreak of conflict.

The field of Conflict Analysis, which also deals with the intervention formula aimed at limiting, stopping and resolving conflicts, adopts, at theoretical level, the analytical framework that separates identity creation processes by the content of identity in itself<sup>23</sup>. If we adopt a perspective that stresses on identity as process and interaction of various projects, on relationships and patterns of understanding, there is a risk of *making a confusion* between the two components and of *treating, in non-discriminatory manner*, any conflict as a conflict of identity or, conversely, of *ignoring the substance and content of identity*, directly involved in a conflict of identity by the prevalence given to the shaping of collective identity and group identity, to the detriment of the substance of identity. This is one of the key differences made by the Conflict Analysis in relation to Sociology and the way that social identity is defined.

*Social identity* is defined as a series of phenomena, of various social experiences and distinct processes, functioning both as an *analytical instrument* and a *theoretical concept*<sup>24</sup>. Identities are complex, delimited historically and constructed socially, thus moving continuously. They can be transient, in some cases, and rigid and inflexible, in others, as they are constructed in the *specific realities of life*, delimited and shared through stories, myths, history and legends<sup>25</sup>.

In their most generalized form, identities are a form of *self-definition*, of knowing and understanding the self. *Identities* acquire *significance, meaning and value* in specific contexts and cultures and help people understand what

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> R. D. Ashmore, L.J. Jussim, D.A. Wilder, *Social Identity, Intergroup Conflict and Conflict Reduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001.

<sup>25</sup> P. W. Black, "Identities", in S. Cheldelin, D. Druckman, and L. Fast (eds), *Conflict from Analysis to Intervention*, Continuum, New York 2003.

they are as individuals, as holders of specific roles and members of certain groups. The *social identity* is part of the identity, different from the individual one, in the sense that it is a part of that image of the self that derives from the steady and sustainable membership to a group<sup>26</sup>. As a *theoretical concept*, identity is used to understand various aspects of the identification process, with a view to explaining the impact of relations and social conflict<sup>27</sup>.

There are three aspects that support the explanation of the relationship between the self as an individual and the group, the society:

Firstly, identities are *symbols of understanding* created through social interactions<sup>28</sup>, arguing that identities are the result of one's own project; a narrative sense of the self creates and integrates the past, the present and the future.

The second perspective is given by the way that *identity is built* through relationships in specific times and places, and the *importance of social comparison* in this process, respectively the way groups use differences and similarities in order to manage the implications and consequences of specific categories and the way individuals *negotiate, reconstruct and represent* their own identity<sup>29</sup> through discussions and interactions.

Finally, the third perspective relates to the issue of *the relevance, sustainability, resilience of the assumed identity*. While we accept that an individual can adopt multiple identities, this durability, consistency allows the study of how and why a particular identity *acquires meaning and value* to individuals and communities and how they are assumed, probably to the detriment of others, which are ignored, of how various individuals succeed in assuming *multiple identities* simultaneously and how they negotiate the borders and limits of the scope of identity, namely of *identity categories*<sup>30</sup>.

*Social identity*, an intrinsic characteristic of the group, plays an important role in *mobilizing* a group against another, therefore in fostering conflict, primarily through maintaining the functions of border, demarcation and boundary between groups<sup>31</sup>. Then, identity as group feature plays an important role in *solidarity, cohesion*, and, apart from the clear *delimitation* of the group, and the *emulation effect* of group members in competition and confrontation. Identity is related to *norms, beliefs, practices and traditions* that influence the interaction of a group environment.

<sup>26</sup> F.E. Stets, P. J. Burke, "The Past, Present and Future of Identity Theory", *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 63(4), 2000, pp. 224-237.

<sup>27</sup> C. Goodwin, M.H. Goodwin, "Interstitial Argument in A. D. Grimshaw" (ed.), *Conflict Talk. Sociolinguistic Investigations of Arguments in Conversation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990.

<sup>28</sup> Celia Cook-Huffman, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>29</sup> V. Gecas, "The Self Concept", *Annual Review of Sociology*, 1982, Nr.8, pp. 1-33.

<sup>30</sup> P. Oakes, "Forum: Psychological groups and political psychology, a response to Huddy's critical examination of social identity theory", *Political psychology*, 23, 2002, pp. 809-824.

<sup>31</sup> Ho Won Jeong, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

Identity shaping is related to the *categorization that homogenizes the perception* of the «inner» and «the outer»<sup>32</sup> while the threat to the identity itself, to the substance and content of the identity of a group, increases the *potential of the destructive conflict*, especially by reinforcing, strengthening, solidifying the group border, rendering it more rigid. Self-perception replaces the lens through which one sees “the other”, and thus, “in case of conflict, positive self-identification comes from comparing «the inner» to «the outer»”<sup>33</sup>. The “strong” and “exclusive” identities increase a group’s likelihood to defame, to justify discrimination against “the outer” or against another group from outside, and to develop stereotypes as well<sup>34</sup>.

From a constructivist perspective, borders are drawn by the social background, the shaping of identities has multiple filters given by *perceptions*, such as *strong feelings* about a common fate, and they can become prevalent over *absolute, objective categorizations*. Group identity is seen as a cultural resource and is reinforced by emotional attachment, remaining a common place that mobilizes forces.

The components and the dominant themes of a culture can be conveyed in the hearts and minds of people, becoming a major weapon, used politically, as we shall see below, as the *generation of symbols and myths* pertains to family and school-level education, and to the subsequent social forms. *Language and communication* create strong boundaries and borders which can even increase competition in a multilingual and multicultural society; moreover, there are also conflicts generated by the language itself, such as *linguistic conflicts* (for instance the decolonization, and also the post-Perestroika Republic of Moldova, with iterations and periodic outbursts of the subject to date).

*Socially constructed identities* are characteristic and lead not only to promoting *separate parochial distinctions*, but also to shaping larger, integrating identities (the EU case). As identity is not immutable, its forms, nature and significance vary with distinct historical moments. Even *the objective components of identity* may acquire greater or smaller relevance and significance, supporting the idea of identity transformations that help in the processes of reconciliation, integration and resolution. Peaceful coexistence is based on construction of *values and identities that are superordinate* to those of the groups that are initially in conflict<sup>35</sup>, combined with the *tolerance of differences* and the decrease of their relevance, or, in another tactical approach,

<sup>32</sup> M.A. Hogg, “Social Categorization, Depersonalization and Group Behavior” in M. A. Hogg, R. S. Tindale (eds.) *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Group Processes*, Blackwell, Oxford/Malden 2001, pp. 56-85.

<sup>33</sup> D. Operario, S. T.Fiske “Integrating Social Identity and Social Cognition: a Framework for Bridging Diverse Perspectives” in D. Abrams and M.A. Hogg (eds.), *Social Identity and Social Cognition*, Blackwell, Oxford/Malden, 1999, pp. 26-54.

<sup>34</sup> Ho Won Jeong, *Conflict...*, p. 66.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

the deletion or “thinning” of borders, which would allow them to be permeable, easy to cross, assuming double identities and shaping elements that will underpin the future superordinate identity (in the case of inter-ethnic conflicts, the role of deletion of borders, of openness to integration is assigned to mixed families).

Thus, *inclusive superordinate identities* can coexist with identities that are narrower in scope<sup>36</sup>. At the same time, perceptions of past experiences and of future expectations can be modified through cooperative interaction, which has the role of decreasing, blurring the differences between groups. In this regard, there are a number of paradigms used as models in overcoming differences and achieving post-conflict reconstruction. Thus, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and of the Berlin Wall, the approach expressed in the Charter for a New Europe and the NATO Partnership for Peace, and further on, in the model of NATO and EU enlargement, played an essential inclusive role, against the background of that era.

Later on, in the Western Balkans *the joint project model/paradigm* was adopted through EU instrument named the Stability Pact; the principle was that funding a joint project that would require both conflicting parties to work together (the defining model of joint project was the *bridge*, with ends on both sides) would build a goal that is more important than the previous dispute or than maintaining, perpetuating it, hence the self-assumed limitation of conflict. Later, while working together for that common goal, the parties come to discuss, to communicate all troubles and grievances, but also to eat, to work, and to rejoice together, so that *reconciliation* can be complete. The model was extended, following the final declaration of the EU summit in Thessaloniki, to a grander and more appealing project, namely the future European Union membership, guaranteed to all Western Balkan states.

For the post-Soviet states, the model was significantly different, because it lacked the guaranteed prospect of EU accession. The model was given by conjecture made by Barry Buzan<sup>37</sup>, according to which if there are substantial differences at the border between the two groups, that one is the place for conflict. Consequently, the paradigm of building the EU Neighbourhood Policy was precisely the need to *harmonize* the traffic, and trade in goods, models rules, and similar institutions *at the border*, so as to decrease the risk and likelihood of conflict outbreak. One of the limitations of this policy was precisely the *absence of the inclusive identity* and the perpetuation of the use of “us” and “them” with regard to the EU countries in the immediate neighbourhood.

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<sup>36</sup> A. Bizman, Y. Yinon, “Intergroup conflict management strategies as related to perceptions of dual identity and separate groups”, *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 144(2), 2004, pp.115-127

<sup>37</sup> Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear; an agenda for international security studies in the post-Cold War Era*, OSI, 1991(Cartier 2000 Publishing House, second edition in Romanian).

*The Individual and Identity.  
Group Identity. Identity Polarization*

From a sociological point of view, *identity* has been assumed as a real panacea, a central concept for understanding conflicts, a dominant concept whose relevance is unquestionable; however, this concept is sliding into confusion, as we have emphasized earlier, which should keep us alert when we cross, as conflict analysts, the space of conflicts *of identity*. We can notice this veneration of identity, and its turning into a central concept through the various approaches<sup>38</sup> which state that “From an interpersonal level to international conflict, passing through all intermediate levels of analysis, researchers use the concept of identity to understand the dynamics of conflicts, and explain behaviours”.

Most of the literature associated to this school of thought considers identity and conflict in the light of social identities, and of understanding the self as part of groups, respectively. There is, however, a distinct literature that discusses the involvement of the *individual's identity* in conflicts, using concepts and paradigms that start from *individual identity needs* to the building and *pride of self-image* and to elements related to the need *to keep up appearances*<sup>39</sup>, with deep sociological approaches, not pathological, psychological or psycho-sociological.

Individuals have *a sense of the self, an identity and a public image* (identity perceived by others) that they want the others to notice, and relate to their characterization. It incorporates features, attributes and skills that accompany self-description and self-assessment, and, together, make up *personality* and personal, individual identity. Individuals want to show themselves and be seen in the way this *sense of self*<sup>40</sup> works.

When conflict circumstances bring into discussion *someone's perception about themselves*, the conflict in itself changes — becoming a *conflict of identity*, as shown earlier. Changes occur both in the conflict parties, and in their structure, strategies and emotional responses, in their perception of the *elements brought into cause*, within the conflict, self-perceptions and perceptions of the other, and resolving the conflict already involves a negotiation of *identity needs*<sup>41</sup>, becoming significantly more complicated. Identity elements become root and motivation for conflicts when there is a perception that interaction challenges or threatens the self-image, or that it affects the

<sup>38</sup> J. Rothman, M. Olson, “From Interests to Identities: towards a new emphasis in interactive conflict resolution”, *Journal of Peace Research*, 38(8), 2001, pp. 289-305.

<sup>39</sup> J. P. Folger, M. S. Poole, R. K. Stutman, *Working Through Conflict: Strategies for Relationships, Groups and Organisations*, Harper Collins, New York, 1993.

<sup>40</sup> M. A. Hogg, D. Abrams, *Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes*, Routledge, London, 1988.

<sup>41</sup> Celia Cook-Huffman, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

individual's "face", the way others perceive him, significantly different from their own perception, aspiration and mental image<sup>42</sup>.

Threats to identity lead to an *increase in inflexibility, rigidity and defensive responses*, which, in their turn, exacerbate the conflict (by strengthening the boundary between the individual and the exterior). When interactions do not address or satisfy individual identity needs, or elements occur that *violate, challenge, mitigate or threaten identity elements*, responses arise<sup>43</sup> that originate in the *denial of identity threat* — with an obsessive predilection for stories and elements that confirm the "real version" — *denial of the conflict of identity, increase in the inflexibility* of the individual; these responses push towards a sensation of exceeding "acceptable compromises" because identity needs and self-image are not negotiable<sup>44</sup>.

Identity is indeed not negotiable when the conflict threatens *essential, basic constructs* — the aspects of self-image that serve to organize all other constructs of self-image<sup>45</sup>, which challenge *the individual's fundamentals*. The same type of response is also determined by conflictive behaviours that threaten the individual's *sense of autonomy*<sup>46</sup> — the feeling of impotence, dependence, of being incapable of providing the necessary elements of existence by themselves. This feeling is labelled, as usual, as a desire *to withstand the imposition of the external will* of someone else, perceived as an unfair request, which affects positive self-image.

Alternatively, threats to identity can determine an *offensive* reaction and strategy, when individuals wish for making other accountable and revenge for the challenge addressed to identity. People can make important sacrifices in relevant domains in order to restore *their positive self-sensation*, or to keep up appearances. The strategy can be exactly a retaliation one, namely attacking the identity of the other party as a means of carrying victory again, and saving one's image. When *identity elements* become a concern, there is high likelihood that associated perceptions, suppositions and communication dynamics turn a potentially negotiable subject into an *unapproachable conflict*<sup>47</sup> focused on issues related to the relationship and image of the two parties.

<sup>42</sup> S. Vuchinich, "The sequential organization of closing in verbal family conflict", in A.D. Grimshaw (ed.) *Conflict talk...*

<sup>43</sup> E. Goffman, "On facework: An analysis of ritual elements in social interaction", *Psychiatry*, 18, 1955, pp. 213-231.

<sup>44</sup> J. P. Folger, M. S. Poole, R. K. Stutman, *Working Through Conflict: Strategies for Relationships, Groups and Organizations*, Harper Collins, New York, 1993.

<sup>45</sup> T. A. Northrup, "The dynamics of identity in personal and social conflict", in L. Kiriesberg, T. A. Northrup, S. J. Thorson (eds.), *Intractable Conflicts and Their Transformation*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, 1988.

<sup>46</sup> R. Brown, "Social Identity theory: Past achievements, current problems and future challenges", *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 30(6), 2000, pp. 745-778.

<sup>47</sup> T. A. Northrup, *The dynamics...*

We have noticed that not any type of social and political action relies on the reference to identity; moreover, the variable frequency in time of the actual conflict action does not necessarily relate with and is not correlated to the *content of identity*, but rather to the *context of mobilization based on the common identity* of the group. The experiences of the group are embedded into multi-faceted markers of experiences anchored in *social hierarchies* — based or not on a status or other — differences between *cultural values, economic disparities, lack of resources, disagreements on power distribution, socio-historical divisions* that can strengthen the *allocation of wellbeing*. Representing particular social characteristics, various sources of identity are important for mobilization during conflicts, as their identity is related to the manner in which *social separations* are built, used and managed<sup>48</sup>.

Stepping aside completely from the area of social conflict approaches, and remaining in the area of approaches in the context of conflict analysis, we can notice that many of the world conflicts reflect *mutually incompatible perceptions* and expressions of the differences between groups with *distinct identity affiliations* that make up the substance of the conflict. Such identities that generate conflicts by bringing into discussion the *identity substance as such*, migrating from individually perceived identities to group ones, originate in ethnicity, religion, tribal affiliation, similarity of third coordinates, class, caste, gender, race, orientation, assumption of the same ideology about the formula of the ideal model sought by society, relation to the same moral basis — a refining of the basic model of humanism, characteristic to each human race.

Inter-group conflicts, obviously, have distinct historical sources and behaviour manifestations of the fight between the principals that vary between them but *adversity relationships* can be assumed to certain common mechanisms of cognitive and emotional perception. The division occurred in a competition creates challenges on inter-group cooperation, and the increase in the intra-group cohesion, common ethics and conformism pressure may be easily accompanied by *hostility* towards those outside the group. The *identity content* is then formulated by various events, which, in time, outline the relationship with the others, in a specific moment and place. Group identity can be achieved precisely in the *group rivalry* context. Identity can also originate in *feelings of injustice* and *relative deprivation* of rights and goods or *group discrimination*, if this is the case or at least if they are perceived as such by group members, as results of *unfair and unequal access* to resources and positions. Normative-based justification of discrimination and inequalities can be a reason for insults and lack of trust in others.

That is why we will discuss, below, more about the *formation of group identity* (not necessarily of social identity, as the angle and approach rules are different even if most of results are revalidated). Unlike the crowd and the

<sup>48</sup> Ho Won Jeong, *Conflict...*, p. 76.

sum of individuals, the *group* involves certain regularity and order, a certain similitude. The *group* is necessary to develop a *common goal* for people who perceive their destiny in common, in a way or another. As we have seen, group formation has its origin in the fear of domination of another rival group, as well, but also in the fear of deep commitments and common values shared, assumed and defended by members. *Group awareness* is shaped based on the perception of the fact that group members share the same destiny.

Inter-group *competition and rivalry* create the preparation and internal cohesion of the group, and strengthens the external boundary of the group. But this does not triggers the conflict automatically, as the course goes through adopting, first, certain perceptions and *extreme views* about the other group and its members, outlined as enemies, which encourages less tolerance and discourages internal differences and dissidents<sup>49</sup>. It increases *internal cohesion, intolerance* and the competitor is no longer defined as the rival, but as *enemy*; this step helps also in designing the direct solution of winning the competition by using violence and the temptation to annihilate it, and not to resolve rivalry based on the rules of the triggered competition.

*Perception of deprivation* gives the feeling of unfair treatment and the wish to correct it, and the *strong identity* of a group plays an important role in demonstrating the decision to achieve the common goals of the group or of the assumed and acknowledged leadership thereof, once the group acquires a more elaborated structure. Cohesion based on a “tough”, strong *common identity* enables the group — structured or not — to develop “behaviour models that seem normal to members but may be considered reprehensible and polarizing for those outside the group”<sup>50</sup>. When *common identity* is seen as an *exclusive goal* to be “defended at whatever risk and by all means”, it is difficult to control large scale conflict outburst<sup>51</sup>. Strong and different identities do not lead automatically to violence but they can lead to manifest conflicts if acts of exclusion of leaders or group occur due to the competition for status, position, authority or resources and wellbeing.

We have seen above that identity impact is also revealed in the creation of *specific behaviour patterns*. Under special circumstances of division, even ways of communication, interpretation and perception of events and behaviours appear inside the group. A strong investment in polarized identities becomes the main obstacle for constructive ways of approaching the conflict because the *emotional attachment* to someone’s belief (the way in which the respective believes that reality goes) blocks the ability to empathize with other views and experiences. There are also the cases of groups with opposed identities, which encourage litigation tactics, and do not concretize the

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> M.W. Isenhardt, M. Spangle, *Collaborative Approaches to Resolving Conflict*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks 2000.

<sup>51</sup> S. A. Giannakos, *Ethnic Conflicts: Religion, Identity and Politics*, Ohio University Press, Athens OH 2002.

enemy's perception, even installed in a violent conflict (pacifists, Mahatma Ghandi's movement, silent protests etc.). Identity-based divisions between groups (in the sense of identity differences or even antagonisms, of the substance and content of identities assumed by groups) are often related to *conflict radicalization* and *extreme behaviours* — killing at random, abusive treatment of the civil population with another identity etc.

There are a significant number of studies related to *human behaviour in collectively*, with respect to both positive behaviour and social changes, and the capacity to destroy<sup>52</sup>. Research subjects include ethnocentrism, selective perception, attribution errors, use of *collective identities* to justify discrimination and inequalities, polarization, enemy image, and genocide. The research direction of understanding the attempts to create, define, support and protect collective identities follows the line of *identity needs*<sup>53</sup>.

Thus, the central thesis is that *human needs* maintain conflict when they are not satisfied, speaking here about basic, universal and non-negotiable needs. The explanation for violence and conflict originates in four such fundamental needs<sup>54</sup>: personal development, security, acknowledgment and identity. Identity needs, in particular, have lately given rise to many conflicts because they were not satisfied by states<sup>55</sup>. When *basic needs* are brought into discussion, the classical approach of interest-based negotiations goes down. It is not for nothing that the classical model of resolving and transforming conflicts<sup>56</sup> — positions, interests and needs<sup>57</sup> exhausts its capacity to act exactly when it reaches discrepancies, and the incapacity to satisfy the basic needs of the two conflicting parties.

In identity-related issues, as part of basic needs, as we have seen earlier, fundamentals refer to the capacity *to develop collective identity*, to have the identity of the group *acknowledged* by others, to have *access* to the resources, systems and structures capable of supporting the necessary conditions to fully achieve identity build-up, and substantiation thereof<sup>58</sup>. Azar has identified 4 variables of a state, which, when met, lead to a maximum probability to trigger a violent conflict based on identity: *group identity* as an analysis unit (potentially generating inequalities, frustration, fragmentation, lack of

<sup>52</sup> Denis J. D. Sandole, Sean Byrne, Ingrid Sandole-Staroste and Jessica Senehi, *Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution*, Routledge, USA and Canada, 2009, p. 21.

<sup>53</sup> S. Byrne, "Consociational and civic society approaches to peace building", in *Journal of Peace Research*, Northern Ireland 38(3), 2001, pp. 327-352.

<sup>54</sup> J. W. Burton, *Conflict: Human Needs Theory*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1990.

<sup>55</sup> R. Rubenstein, "Basic Human Needs: The next steps in the Theory Development", *International Journal of Peace Studies*, 6(1). 2001.

<sup>56</sup> Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse, Hugh Miall, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, Second Edition, Polity Press, Cambridge UK-Malden USA, 2005.

<sup>57</sup> A. Floyer Ackland, *Resolving Disputes Without Going to Court*, Century Business Books, London, 1995.

<sup>58</sup> E. E. Azar, *The Management of Protracted Social Conflict: Theory and Cases*, Aldershot, Dartmouth, 1990.

system legitimacy, and conflicts), *intercommunity dynamics* (intergroup), the *state's ability* to meet collective needs of citizens (most often the dominant group uses the state to its own benefit at the disadvantage of the other groups), and, finally, the capacity and resilience of the state to face *globalization pressures* coming from the exterior — with an inclination for high interest in economic dependencies, interdependence or external political-military patronage rather than on the internal needs of its own population. To this, the capacity to mobilize identity groups adds — “*communal action*”, “*state / Government action*” — from domination and submission strategies to those of accommodation and adjustment — and *conflict dynamics*, respectively — vindictive-type escalation spirals, attribution errors, development of the image of enemies at the level of groups, dehumanization and polarization<sup>59</sup>.

*The Social Identity Theory* developed by Henri Tajfel<sup>60</sup> refers to the way in which people use *categories* and categorization to understand the surrounding world. The theory states that the desire to develop an inter-groups distinction leads to the occurrence and escalation of conflicts. The theory further discusses the way in which *identity* affects and gives shape to the need of inter-group competition, conflicts and social change<sup>61</sup>.

Thus, individuals need and want a *positive sense of self*, a positive role for themselves, if you will, in their own story, the heroic role in the group with the determining positive role; that is why they want their group to look favourable compared to other groups<sup>62</sup>. When the comparison creates a lower level on the hierarchy that matters for the group and for the common inter-group axiology, *strategies for strengthening and raising the status* of their own group appear, obviously affecting the status quo. When boundaries are perceived as limiting or illegitimate, discriminating the group's goals, members will try to change them in order to obtain a group with *a more important value* — reflected, obviously, on the individuals who are members. The conflict appears when the dominant group tries to withstand change and preserve its status.

Most of social identity theories refer to relationships between individual and group identity. Many of them study the tensions, contradictions and conflicts associated with both individual, and group identity<sup>63</sup>. *Collective identity* is achieved through feelings of unity with other people, while individual identity outlines the differences from the other members of the group or other external individuals. Obviously, here we have to do with a formula where either individual identity is more important and prevails — in the case

<sup>59</sup> E. E. Azar, J. W. Burton (eds.), *International Conflict Resolution*, Wheatsheaf Books, Brighton, 1986.

<sup>60</sup> Henri Tajfel, “Social Stereotypes and social groups”, in J. C. Turner, and H. Giles (eds), *Inter-group Behaviour*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1981.

<sup>61</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>62</sup> M.A. Hogg, D. Abrahams, *Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes*, Routledge, London 1988.

<sup>63</sup> Ho Won Jeong, *Conflict.....*, p. 68.

of individuals with personality or relevant positions in the group, in particular — or collective identity is dominant with respect to individual choices and behaviour.

An interesting approach refers to identity of values and its capacity to maintain a collectivity and a group that reject the use of violence. V Gecas<sup>64</sup> underlines the role of culture in identity of values, and how individuals see one another in the light of their values. The connection between *behaviour* and *culturally accepted values* can be noticed depending on each individual's general tendency to develop a positive image related to their attachment to culturally accepted values.

Rothbart proves to be a critic of the *limits of the social identity theory* which are worth considering. He states that the impact and identity transformation as result of interactions are missing from the assessment, and, against the background of this theory, it is difficult to decrypt the reason and the mechanism by which an individual would give up their primary identity to obey community values<sup>65</sup>. Although it covers cognitive, emotional and motivational aspects, an explanation for *collective valorisations* is missing from field studies, and the *normative component* and its impact on identities are underestimated. Therefore, the theory does not decrypt how a group relates to a collective axiology that contains the haste to use violence as a means of resolving inter-group conflicts.

### *Properties, Features and Characteristics of Identities. Politicisation of Identity*

The various interpretations of how identities are shaped cover a wide range of trends and theories. Primordialists refer to a *firm, strong and stable basis*, with *objective elements of identity*, although they maintain the idea that identity remains a perception of the self and of the “similarities” with others in the group, similarities that lead to social coagulation in the groups. Identity would reflect the vision of the outside of the self and of the group and is given by birth, memory, shared experiences and individuals accept it without questioning it.

On the other hand, this view is contradicted by the *fluctuating modes of the self*<sup>66</sup> and it is a vision that comes from the inside out, so it values the changes, perceptions and choices of the person/group. Borders are created by individual *will, action and competition*. *Interaction* with others inside and outside the group plays a key role in defining and transforming identities. This is the basis for the entire theory of conflict management, conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction, particularly when the subject dis-

<sup>64</sup> V. Gecas, *The Self...*

<sup>65</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>66</sup> Ho Won Jeong, *Conflict...*, p. 62.

cussed is the *conflict of identity* and other methods seem to produce no results and to prove their limits.

Thus, identities can be constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed by reinterpreting common experiences, collective memory and myth in relationship with others. Even generating and highlighting other external dangers that provide the new cohesion to an emerging group is an important adjunct<sup>67</sup>.

The *specificity* of a group is given by the manner of creating, maintaining and reproducing the perceptions of the world. The question about who is and who is not a member of the community does not depend so much on the *content of their own culture*, as on the *purpose* for which the community / group acts together, so that the group's borders can be redrawn, although they have, in their original form, a clear cultural outline, as "instrumentalists view ethnicity, for example, as a tool that can be used to pursue one's own interests and obtain material goals."<sup>68</sup> The statement is complementary to the one which holds that, in the case of conflicts, there is *a tendency to turn them into conflicts of identity* in order to accelerate and strengthen the component of mobilization, polarization, the strong emulation effect, even when the real reason of the initial conflict is not the questioning of the nature of identity.

In addition to serving as an instrumentalised form of social action, there are various motivations for which individuals searching for a group they can belong to. So the action based on common identity is not only based on a *rational-instrumental* motivation, related to direct gains acquired, but also on *immaterial values, beliefs, traditions, habits* (here, the physical and social rule of inertia and minimum resistance, the minimum action for achieving goals, the conservation agoraphobia and the trend to preserve common ground have to be factored in; group members are socially and psychologically dependent on *obtaining satisfaction* (fulfilling needs, achieving goals, attitudes, consensual validation of values and attitudes, *creating the model* and the networking axiology and the elements of *conformity* within the group).

*Self-perception* is related to group membership, to collective identity that reinforces *self-esteem*, at individual level<sup>69</sup>. The enlargement of personal identity provides accomplishment and realization of the self and is subsumed

<sup>67</sup> Mikhail Gorbachev said in his *Memoirs* (Nemira Publishing House, Bucharest, 1994) that he had told his American counterpart, Ronald Reagan, that „I shall inflict the greatest harm upon you: I shall leave you with no enemies”, referring to the fact that, in the absence of a common enemy, the Western Block will collapse just as the socialist empire and Soviet Union had done. The background behind his approach was the abolition of the Warsaw Treaty, when the Soviet Union was asking for a mirror action: the disestablishment of NATO. Pascal Bruckner wrote his essay, *Nostalgia democratiei: Cum sa traiesti fara du'mani* ( Antet Publishing House, Bucharest 1996), in the same key, of the need of enemies that would provide cohesion to an alliance or community.

<sup>68</sup> D. G. Ellis, *Transforming Conflict: Communication and Ethnopolitical Conflict*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham MD, 2006.

<sup>69</sup> W. A. Gamson, "The Social Psychology of Collective Action", in A.D. Morris, A.D. Muller (eds.) *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1992.

to the ideas on the need to belong to prestigious groups and to the paradigm of *man as a social being*, who needs life in the community. As we have seen, this *addition to personal identity* derived from group identity is one of humans' primary identity needs and links directly to the personal and group identity.

Identifying a *more important cause* and the *sense of loyalty* to those who work for the same cause are natural elements of the need for collective identity, pertaining to the importance attached to the membership to some groups, by choice. Furthermore, we would add the idea of a *higher cause*, more important than the individual ones, which we need and build or discover in others' models; this idea has to do with the self-awareness and the *awareness of death* — man is the only creature aware that he is not eternal and that he would die, and who tries, thus, to deal with death, by religion, by constructing an existence after death, by perpetuating the individual creative solutions aimed at *expanding one's relevance* after death, the tendency to embrace eternity — and also to identify a *goal of the earthly life*, a purpose in life, an obvious reason, superior to the individual, limited and bordered by the limits of physical life.

*The awareness of inherent death and the desire to survive* beyond physical death are other elements that determine the search of a higher goal, of group objectives, and may become, in itself, powerful identities and forces of cohesion and solidarity for various categories of groups. Moreover, the *emotional basis* that fosters the sense of belongingness to a collective identity is formed through collective action and joint commitment, shared with others, protecting the common goals that unite the group. And the force of attraction or natural social coagulation of these elements is even stronger, objective, when we have groups of individuals who feel they have been *wronged*, a feeling which, as we saw, is an engine of cohesion.

Korostelina<sup>70</sup> developed an early warning study on *identity conflicts*, which required a refining and deeper investigation of the characteristics, forms and types of identities, types of cultures and of intergroup relations, respectively of treatment of minorities, a study that involved an effort of classification and decrypting of some *intimate features of identity*. Beyond certain nuances or reservation of opinion, view or school of thought embraced, we believe experience is extremely useful for assessing and concretizing elements of identity and conflicts of identity.

Thus, she identifies four categories of *characteristics of identity*:

— *relevance of identity*: the more relevant, more sustainable and stronger the identity, the more it causes actions against other groups, which can lead to conflict; therefore, this is a relevant criterion, just as changes are in the importance, impact and number and quality of group members, which may prevent the involvement of the group or of its members in a conflict

<sup>70</sup> Karina V. Korostelina, "Identity Conflicts. Model of Dynamics and Early Warning" in Sandole, *Handbook...*, pp. 100-116.

— *the prevalence of group goals*: assessing whether the goals of the group acquire precedence over the goals, objectives and even individual identities of the group members. Prevalence has several components, namely the prevalence of group aspirations over the individual ones, overcoming or forgetting differences and conflicts within the group once there is an external threat, and the tendency to unite against any group outside. The more this type of conformism increases, the more are one's own values and goals forgotten in favour of behaviours required for rendering the group operational and solid. This prevalence determines the increase of the desire and propensity to a conflictive behaviour, if group identity is not necessarily relevant.

— *the internal locus of self-esteem*: if group members are satisfied with the positions held and are proud of belonging to a group, they have a good level of confidence even when they do not make necessarily favourable comparisons between their group and other groups. Thus, they have fewer conflictive intentions and do not want to fight with other groups. If group members need to use favourable comparisons with other groups in order to raise their self-esteem or have no opportunities to promote their own culture, if they cannot develop or revive it, this leads to an external locus of self-esteem and a sound basis for conflicting intentions and there is a tendency to be quickly ready to fight with other external groups.

— *satisfaction related to the functions of identity*: Social identity fulfils five functions — increasing the self-esteem, improving the social status, personal safety, protection and group support and recognition by group members. The study of identity functions helps us understand the basic needs of a particular group. If group members feel and give importance and functions to a new identity, and this identity becomes relevant, it can replace the previous identity which fulfilled these functions. If the common primary identity fills these functions, this reduces rivalry and conflict between subgroups significantly.

*The manners of understanding identity* are described in four categories, which are interwoven in reality, even if the dominant one is the defining. Accordingly, we deal with a *descriptive manner* — traditions, values, characteristics of members exposed narratively as an element, an *ideological manner* — ideology is dominant when dealing with third party groups, an *historical manner* — when the history, background and relationship of the group to the other groups matter in particular, and a *relativizing manner of understanding identity* — focused on the way in which group identity is seen by the outside, where the reverberated image prevails. In the case of descriptive identity, we have no prospects for the fall into conflict, while all other ways of looking at identity lead, under specific conditions, through convenient manipulation of identity elements, to conflictive behaviour.

*There are three forms of identity*: cultural, reflected and mobilizing. First, *cultural identity* and common culture involves specific behaviours, habits, food, music, without a deeper insight on group identity or goals, on which

there is no common sense or direct thinking. The *reflected identity* form involves precisely a high degree of understanding, after a thorough evaluation, and recognition of goals, targets and group goals, history and relations with other groups, changing status and group position and its prospects. The indicator must have an appreciation of values and beliefs of the group, of the group's role in society. The form of *mobilizing identity* involves comparing identity groups and the perception of competition between groups, but also of the incompatibility of different groups. Here, we already have a particular *ideologisation of identity*, comparisons on position, power and status. The first two forms of identity have little or no impact in conflicts, unlike the third form of group identity.

There are four *types of identity* identified: *the identity of positioning* — when a person is identified with a category of relationships and a position, but does not adopt the rules, values and beliefs associated with this position in society, *the dyadic identity* — the person describes oneself in terms of a specific category or group, adopts the values and beliefs and engage in appropriate interpersonal relationships, *the descriptive identity* — complete identification, without being a member of that group, without participating in group activities, but sharing his beliefs, goals, rules; *the collective identity* — requires membership, participation to activities, sharing the group's beliefs and showing loyalty to the group. Dual and collective identities significantly influence positions, perceptions and beliefs of the person, while descriptive and positioning identities only influence the perceptions and evaluations based on the categories and group assessments. A collective identity has significant impact on personal perceptions against the background of intergroup relations and has the highest conflict potential. The types of identity measure the commitment to group membership and group identity and are relevant in the processes of radicalization.

*The types of collective axiology* refer to the degree of axiological balance and the degree of collective generality perceived by the group. The lower the axiological balance and the higher the level of generality, the more the group becomes unable to understand and perceive the Other's virtues, to appreciate and nuance the complexity of the "outer" group and properly evaluate decisions. This identity gives rise to extreme forms of nationalism, fascism, racism and sectarianism.

*The nature of identity*, associated or acquired, has relevance in conflict as the acquired identity has greater impact on a person than the one associated by birth. Those who convert to new religions or assume new identities have a higher attachment to the acquired identity.

*The type of culture* — individualistic or collectivist — is relevant because collectivist cultures tend to value the group's objectives rather than the person, so it is more focused on mobilization and conflict.

Obviously, the discussion factors in the *context, the environment, the framework* in which *intergroup relations* work. And here is an entire literature covering studies that indicate what the type of environment predisposes to

conflict. In principle, there are 5 elements of context in focus: the intergroup prejudice, the threats from outside the group, the internal support for decisions involving the use of violence and the conflict outbreak, relative deprivation of rights and the security dilemma.

*The intergroup prejudice* concerns the existence of a negative attitude or dislike based on false and inflexible, possibly guilty, generalizations, which is felt or expressed against an entire group or individual because that person is a member of a group<sup>71</sup>. A non-discriminating assessment, positive of the interior and negative of the exterior of the group is a situation predisposing to conflict.

*The external threats* are those that emphasize the existence of prejudice or perception within a group, escalate hostility to the outside of the group and helps justifying the initiation of the conflict. The context in which the outside is perceived as a threat to the group is determined by inequalities — economic cultural or of political positions — between groups, the difference of citizenship within groups<sup>72</sup>, the memory of a domination of external groups and attributing to them the desire to reinstall this situation<sup>73</sup>, the perception that the positions of the group or individuals inside the group are worse than others', limiting socio-economic opportunities of the group imposed by others and others' political extremism, violence or nationalism.

*The internal support* reflects the expectation that all members have the same expectations and goals, the same intention to change the situation. The more group members are ready to fight with others, the closer the conflict. Moreover, the absence of the internal support makes it impossible to mobilize domestic support and trigger conflict.

*The relative deprivation of rights* or the perception or the existence of disadvantages and discrimination that are argued on the basis of comparisons between groups cause social activity if people realize that there is a better standard of living. We might call it a "If I go down, I'll take you with me" mentality, in other words, if someone lives well when I don't live well, then there is certainly discrimination and my group is being refused this prospect.

*The security dilemma* concerns the principle of the perceived threat from a group that increases its own security, once this is interpreted as detrimental to their own group, determines, here as well, investments in improving the security and the spiral of escalation and perceived threat continues. The dilemma lies in determining how much they can improve the security status of their own group, so that it is not perceived as a threat to other groups which would react, and possibly worsen the situation<sup>74</sup>. It has a major role in

<sup>71</sup> G. W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, Addison-Wesley, Cambridge, MA, 1954.

<sup>72</sup> Ernst Gellner, "Nationalism and Modernization", in J. Hutchinson, A. Smith (eds), *Nationalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994.

<sup>73</sup> T. R. Gurr, *Minorities at Risk: A global View of Ethnopolitical Conflict*, USIP, Washington DC, 1993.

<sup>74</sup> Kurt M. Campbell, Michael E O'Hanlon, *Hard Power: The new politics of National Security*, Basic Books, Cambridge MA, 2006.

conflicts of identity and in increasing nationalism, because strengthening the group identity can be easily perceived as a threat to other group's identity. Competition based on emotion, which leads to status issues, increases the perception of the threat<sup>75</sup>.

*The incompatibility of principles, values and preferences* of different groups can affect various elements, from cultural to political ones. *The identity* based on preferences and value systems, positive or negative, on race, religion, gender, language or occupation that justify relationship between groups enable *excessively subjective assessments*, politically managed, on *categories* based on *deeply objective criteria*, used for strengthening a privileged status and an undeserved wealth. Polarization of the identity categories based on such objectives can be easily used for political mobilization.

The reason for social categorizations is, most often, allowing a group to produce an important social status or privileged access to resources or to authority positions, based on *strong moral foundations* that would legitimize and justify the claim to dominate other groups; this strategy becomes a real *group policy*. Obviously, the competition generated under such form generates conflict.

Superiority which is undeserved or *politically subjectively justified* for clearly objectively defined categories are classic discrimination clichés, perceived generally at humanity level, which tends to give added credibility to these claims in such cases, where the objective component of the identity of the virtually discriminating group entails, naturally, the faith that there has been a subjective assessment of the situation of its members by others, even if it is not the case. Furthermore, the *political use of an aspect related to the objectively established identity* is placed in the same area where the *presumption of discrimination* is turned into a label associated to these group policies.

Not only the *emotional significance* attached to the membership to a group, but also *primitive impulses*, based of displeasure and animosity, dislike and even enmity, are involved in the *degradation of the image* of those against whom that group competes for power. There is even a "natural" tendency of the dominant group to act so as to preserve the social and communication differences and features (and the related symbolic privileges set) by undermining the status of subordinate groups against whom they compete<sup>76</sup>.

In *multi-ethnic communities*, any competition tends to be assumed on the basis of "strong" identity differentiation and creates hostility between these groups, especially if there is a traditionally older, historical confrontational framework and context. *Any competition* tends to relate to historical conflicts between "strong" identities in society, helps in reinforcing and strengthening ethnocentrism and is easy to manipulate and handle by external actors. As a logical result of such continuous development of firm intervention and re-

<sup>75</sup> Korostelina, *op. cit.*, p.109.

<sup>76</sup> P. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1991.

conciliation, the process leads to the formation of hyper-nationalist<sup>77</sup> movements, responsible for genocide and ethnic cleansing.

Repeated experiences lead to the *strengthening of beliefs and perceptions*, sliding into stereotypes, which outline, with an absolute title, the perception about themselves and each other. Any event gets to build on the immediate and strong mobilization tendency, along the line of opposition to the evil and negative in the Other, already established. *Identity* plays a crucial role in creating persistent narrations associated to the history of a particular group and in the *anticipate outlining*, without no direct objective examination of the general opinion about the rights and claims that it has issued. This situation perpetuates the reality of a party that dominates the other and does not allow any fault of developing elements of *confidence and cooperation*.

*Ethnic Identity, the Identity of Large Groups.  
Inter-ethnic Conflicts.  
Specific Differences with regard to Conflicts of Identity*

*Interethnic conflicts* are a particular case of conflicts of identity, which are marked by a number of specificities. Firstly, we are dealing with a *strong identity*, in which affiliation is undisputed and raises numerous passions, in which identity is prescribed for the most part by birth, family, language, history, common myths, *Blood lines*, blood descent, as Vamik Volkan<sup>78</sup> called it, who marked the specific difference of ethnic identity within the group identity through the affiliation to the *large group identity* category.

It is true that there is an interpretation dispute with multiple and relevant nuances situated between the assertion that *ethnicity* is a social and especially *political* product, and that the objective part would be either debatable, or with a restricted relevance. While in the opposite pole, there is another school of thought that indissolubly bonds national ethnic groups to blood descent and takes into consideration the bond based exclusively on *objective elements*. Some extreme interpretations even refer to an ethnic and national determinism, so that a certain ethnic group is assigned characteristic traits that, subsequently<sup>79</sup> would lay at the basis of the *legitimation of the position* in the world and of the functional and decisional attributes, of the level of authority or dominant or subordinate position.

<sup>77</sup> A. Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*, Routledge, London/New York, 2006.

<sup>78</sup> Vamik Volkan, *Blood lines. From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*, Wetview Press, 1997.

<sup>79</sup> From Friedrich Nietzsche, "Thus spoke Zarathustra", writings of Carl Schmidt and Adolf Hitler's Arianism in *Mein Kampf*, up to influences and serious sociology research with interwar German influence with impact in Romania as well — see A.D. Xenopol, "Unity of the Romanian Soul", conference in Piatra Neamț, Mircea Vulcanescu, "Romanian Man", conference in 1937, C. Radulescu-Motru, "Vocation of Romanians", excerpted from the *Energetic Personalism and other writings*, Emi-nescu Publishing House, Bucharest, 1984, all assumed in Emil.I. Emandi, Gh.Buzatu, Vasile S. Ciucu, *Geopolitics*, Volume I, "Glasul Bucovinei" Publishing House, Iași, 1994.

*Interethnic conflict theories* further explain the internal mechanisms through which the group gets mobilised for a common action for *political purposes*, due to the collective identity. We find ourselves in the classical situation of the *identity politicisation* described above, and the strongest results<sup>80</sup> are given by the relationship of the context factors with the mobilisation process of identity categories. Practically, in the specific case of interethnic conflicts and ethnic-based identity, we can establish a connection of dependency between two major criteria, which are at the basis of identity categories that show the tendency towards conflict.

The theoretical assumptions support the fact that *collective identity* can be *chosen* by the individuals, *imposed* by the ones who are in a position of authority or it can *be constituted* in the social interaction process. Certainly, all these mechanisms suggest numerous roles and significances of the identity, and maintaining the objective resemblance elements exclusively in the sphere of “social interactions” and not their placing them in a separate, distinct category, may be simplifying, since there are collective identity components –the specific case of ethnic identities — which have that *innate, objective component*, with the substantial force of strengthening the group border, such as the elements related to language, family, traditions, myths, common history, group experiences that are relevant.

The key question of the studies performed in the field of ethnic identities is to show the different identities that contribute to violent conflicts occurrence and escalation and how conflicts themselves can determine the *mobilisation* of *group identities* or can even lead to the emergence of collective identities<sup>81</sup>. As the reversed process is already known and it has already been described above, respectively the role of collective identities in the mobilization of the group members and of the group *per se* in case of a conflict. Moreover, the fact that *identity differences* can be sufficient to trigger conflicts within the conditions of *limited resources*<sup>82</sup> has already been accepted.

The dynamics between the groups and the contextual, situation factors, affects the potential for interethnic conflict when it aggravates the identity preoccupations<sup>83</sup>. *Political or socio-economic uncertainty* makes the groups question the legitimacy and credibility of the relevant social institutions<sup>84</sup>. This fact drives the groups to take up actions for their own security, which replace and double the state institutions, and, when there is a *shortage of*

<sup>80</sup> Celia Cook Hoffman, *The role...*, p. 23.

<sup>81</sup> P. W. Black, “Identities”, in S. Chedlin, D. Druckman, L. Fast (eds), *Conflict: From Analysis to Intervention*, New York, Continuum, 2003.

<sup>82</sup> S. Reicher, “The context of social identity: domination, resistance and change”, *Political Psychology*, 25, 2004, pp. 921-945.

<sup>83</sup> K. Cavanaugh, “Understanding Protracted Social Conflicts: A Basic Needs Approach”, in C. Byrne, C. Irvin(eds.), *Reconcilable Differences: Turning Points in Ethnopolitical Conflict*, Kumarian Press, West Hartford, CT, 2000.

<sup>84</sup> J. D. Frank, *Sanity and Survival: Psychological Aspects of War and Peace*, New York, Random House, 1967.

*resources* and a *relative discrimination*, engaging in actions against those who perceived to be the cause of such discrimination — institutions or dominant groups — becomes probable<sup>85</sup>.

The groups with *strong and sustainable cultural identities* — based on common descent, parents and family and blood relations, language, history, common system of beliefs — have a solid foundation for the mobilisation of collectivities, the ethnic identity being included, clearly, in this category. The same phenomenon, or, if you like, an accentuate formula of it, when the elements overlap, takes place at the time when the community feels that it has *too much to lose*. Furthermore, when a group considers that the *recognition of “other’s” identity* threatens or denies their own right to identity<sup>86</sup>, violence can flare.

People believe that another feature that differentiates humans from animals is *reason*, the ability to think and evaluate on the basis of arguments and the mindful weighing of alternatives. This is the case of individuals in their vast majority, except those who we consider to be in the pathologic space. However, reality and studies have confirmed that new, stressful moments, for which we are unprepared, bring forth the risk of profoundly irrational instinctual elements emerging from the human being that is under pressure and under the influence of *emotions*, rather than logical and pragmatic thinking.

This is the reason why, in order to avoid these natural moments of the human being, of reactions in time of crisis, in stressful situations, in situations for which the human has not been prepared, *institutions are created*, institutions with clear procedures, functional mechanisms and structures that are meant to mitigate the emotional moments and to produce reactions, institutions that are less and less related to the decision taken by a single person or random or discretionary decisions in democratic systems. This is why we expect that *collective structures*, institutions, and organisations should not be the subject of irrational actions, determined by emotion, stress or will applied discretionarily.

Reality has proven, however, on repeated occasions, in former Yugoslavia, Rwanda and countless other places, that *ethnic groups* react more *irrationally*, that the border is fragile and that emotions prevail at collective level, and reactions, in these cases, are much more similar with the *individual reactions* rather than with the ones of collective structures or democratic institutions. As we have noticed, in the case of groups with “strong” identity and strengthened borders, the individual values get faded underneath conformism and strong *collective will* prevails, the unity of the group facing the exterior transformed into a common enemy, even though it is a neighbouring group with which it has peacefully coexisted throughout history, violence and inexplicable actions are produced, even more so when *collective will is personalised* through the emergence of a *charismatic leader*.

<sup>85</sup> R. Rubenstein, *Basic Human Needs: the next steps in the Theory Development*, International Journal of Peace Studies, 6(1), 2001.

<sup>86</sup> S. Byrne, *Consociational...*

Understanding and covering the *ethnic* phenomenon has remained a concern for researchers with diverse specialisations. The word itself comes from the Greek word *ethnos*, which means company, people, nation or tribe. A definition of ethnicity, in the vision of the anthropologist George de Vos would be “those who have in common a *set of traditions* that they do not share with others with whom they enter into contact”<sup>87</sup>. Some of these traditions are: art and folklore, religious beliefs and practices, language, a historical continuity, common ancestors, common place of origin/birth, shared history and experiences. George de Vos talks as well about the *myth* derived from a blood, biological and genetic descent, unbroken for generations, which is considered to be the source of special traits and characteristics of the group<sup>88</sup>. Being unique and special means being different from the others, hence the *strong and distinct identity element* of ethnic affiliation.

Howard Stein brings the definition to a subjective level, by considering *ethnicity* to be more of a marker of social and personal identity, which reflects a *way of thinking* and of looking at things, and less the result of a natural, objective and biological category<sup>89</sup>. He challenges the inclination towards finding *objective criteria* as well as physical and cultural characteristics in a social community. The proposed model is the one coming from former Yugoslavia, where the groups belonging to the same blood line — South Slavs — with the same characteristics, are still the subjects of a confrontation in the context of *interethnic conflicts* (the religious component is only a specific component of the ethnic group and not a characteristic of the type of conflict that takes place over there).

It is obvious that blood line and objective criteria should not be ignored in the debate about ethnic groups and interethnic conflicts, in the same way in which ignoring the ethnic group’s *subjective component, political component, politicisation of the ethnic identity* would not explain firstly why a large group of people would feel *unique, special, distinct*, and then why it would shape a *solid common will* that would lead inclusively to the mobilisation for violent conflicts and even to the outbreak of the dehumanising acts of genocide and atrocities in the name of ethnic differences. The *concept of ethnic group* has, in terms of the extremely broad use, an increased flexibility, but it differs from race, and the temptation of objectifying ethnicity up to anthropomorphic<sup>90</sup> characteristics — the skull dimensions, nasal profile etc. — leads to the confusion with *race*, concept that overlaps, often in an unfortunate manner, with the one of *ethnic groups*. However, the two concepts are

<sup>87</sup> G. De Vos, “Ethnic Pluralism: Conflict and Accommodation”, in G. De Vos, L. Komanucci-Ross (eds.), *Ethnic Identity: Cultural Continuities and Change*, Mayfield, Palo Alto, Calif, 1975, p. 9.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Howard Stein, *The International and Group Milieu of Ethnicity: Identifying Generic Group Dynamic Issues*, *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*, 17(1990) pp. 107-130.

<sup>90</sup> F.-C. Cole, *The People of Malaysia*, New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1960; H. L. Shapiro, *The Jewish People: A Biological History*, UNESCO, Paris, 1960.

not synonymous, hence the need of imposing limits to the flexibility of the concept, which would allow the limitation of confusions.

“Ethnicity is pointless beyond interethnic relations”<sup>91</sup>, but a tendency to *eliminate ethnicities* and the ethnic principle (and, therefore, depriving the politics of such an important basis for mobilisation and cohesion) or to mix, concentrate and not to distinguish them, as a solution to eliminate certain differences that create the space for violent conflicts, would have a disastrous result, because it would go against the human’s natural tendency to find beings similar to himself as an individual.

*The identities of large groups*, such as ethnicity, are the result of a historical continuity, of a geographical reality and of a myth component of a common inception and of countless events shared in common throughout time; therefore they are the result of a *natural evolution*. For that reason, the ethnic differences and ethnocentrism should not be completely condemned; they are natural, even healthy and fully acceptable within certain limits<sup>92</sup>. We only need to learn to manage these elements without having this reality cause the outburst of violent conflicts.

Another distinction that should be made in the case of *ethnic groups* is the one with the concept of *nation*. There is a direct connection, in certain cases, between nation and ethnic group, but the difference is that nation demands *authority and political autonomy*, most of the times established and recognised frontiers, or, at least, an organisation that requires *roles, positions and statute*<sup>93</sup>. There is also the tendency to use the mixed term of ethno-nationalism in order to mark the attachment to both elements concomitantly, or the references to ethnic groups, which, especially in multi-ethnic states, are made in terms of sub-nations<sup>94</sup>.

*Nationalism* has become a current and a dominant political movement after the French and American revolutions, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, by creating “objective” criteria for the delimitation of national frontiers, the right of a nation to have a state or the rules of cohabitation with the minorities, at the end of the first world war, through the Wilsonian principles. The birth of *nation-states* has rearranged the map of Europe, but was the capacity of nationalism was particularly relevant — as a *political expression of the affiliation to a nation*, virtually based on the affiliation to the same *ethnic identity* — to inspire and generate actions throughout the course of history, ability that has only been equalled by religion<sup>95</sup>. However, a *normative and*

<sup>91</sup> Committee of International Relations, Group Advancement of Psychology, *Us and Them: The Psychology of Ethnonationalism*, Bruner/Mazel, New York, 1987.

<sup>92</sup> Vamik Volkan, *Bloodlines...*, p. 20.

<sup>93</sup> J. B. Gittler, *Toward Defining an Ethnic Minority*, *International Journal of Group Tensions*, 7(1977), p. 6; W. Peterson, *Concepts of Ethnicity*, in *Harvard Encyclopedia of Ethnic Groups*, eds. Thernstrom, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass 1980, p. 234.

<sup>94</sup> Peterson, *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> P. Loewenberg, *Fantasy and Reality in History*, Oxford University Press, New York 1995, p. 196.

*political definition* of the term “nation” still remains problematic<sup>96</sup>, and since nations have different foundation formulae, the degree of inclusion or exclusion, of legitimising the access to this statute or the denial of said legitimacy<sup>97</sup>, differs from one nation to another.

When *large groups interact*, the sense and internal significance of each *collective identity* and of the perception regarding their own group generates fine, but extremely solid lines, which play a substantial role in the drama that has yet to be written. Therefore, the individuals are not preoccupied in the large identity they belong to, they might not be aware of this reality, unless it is *threatened*. The classical model is the physiologic model of the lungs and breath<sup>98</sup>, when a normal person doesn't feel that he is breathing or that he has lungs until the moment when he has caught a cold or has pneumonia.

When a group is in a continuous conflict or even at war with a neighbouring group, then it is one of the cases in which *affiliation to a large group is perceived*; affiliation and this collective identity acquire an acute sense, going up to the point where this preoccupation and large collective identity — especially the *ethnic* one — can determine the *complete abandonment* of the preoccupation for the individual needs and even of their own survival.

*Large groups*, as well as the individuals, *regress* under a shared stress<sup>99</sup>, and fall back to primitive and instinctual behaviours, the basic ones. They can see the environment as being more dangerous than it is in reality or they see the others as being stronger than they are in reality. This situation determines, in the case of the threatened ethnic or national groups' psychology, a behaviour that is similar to the situation in the Army or the religious hierarchy in relation to the *undisputed leader*. Such behaviour does not explain, however, the relation to the charismatic leader in normalcy situations, the role of aggression in the existence of the human beings or the reason for which the emotional investment in large identity groups can sometimes lead to mass violence and cruel and horrible actions.

*Language* plays an important role in the ethnic delimitations, strengthening the borders of the ethnic groups and initiating conflicts on this basis and it also has a major impact in the nationalist ideologies. Since they are general at the level of an ethno-linguistic culture and of the community habits, the common language elements, language and communication support the maintenance of ethnic delimitations<sup>100</sup>.

Many *marginalised groups* have attempted to increase their cohesion and mobilisation force by resorting to *traditional* extinct or underused *languages*

<sup>96</sup> Vamik Volkan, *Bloodlines...*, p. 23.

<sup>97</sup> Loewenberg, *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> Vamik Volkan, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>100</sup> W.B. Gudykunst et al, “Language and Intergroup communication” in M. K. Asante, W. B. Gudykunst (eds), *Handbook of International and Intercultural Communication*, Sage, Beverly Hills, CA, 1989, pp. 145-162.

as a distinct element, attempting to accredit them and to impose them at least in a public domain. Such tactics are encouraged by *restrictive policies on language usage* or formulae of discrimination based on linguistic criteria, which can enhance exclusion from public positions and can create economic blockages to the respective ethnic group, thus solidifying the border between the groups and, thus, the internal cohesion of the respective group. By creating solid frontiers, the linguistic and communication divisions can intensify the competition between groups, especially in the multi-linguistic societies.

As we have already stated above, the major conflicts in multicultural societies originate from the *lack of respect* towards the dissimilarities in relation to the axiological preferences of the dominant group. The multiple dimensions of marginalised identity groups are represented by characteristics such as language or religion, rituals and traditional behavioural customs, all of which *strengthen the internal unity* of the group.

In this respect as well, the lack of *reconciliation efforts* in the extremely divided societies or in relation to the marginalised identity groups, resulting in *humiliation* in case of defeat and perpetuation of the historical episodes of the results of the conflicts, in which the defeat was doubled by humiliation and degrading gestures, devoid of respect towards the defeated, can lead to polarisation and perpetuation of resentment and trauma in time, with an impact on the tendency of an eternal conflictive behaviour.

*Nationalism* targets a primordial human affiliation to a historical country, with a common fate<sup>101</sup>. *Solidarity* is created through shared culture, common memories, the same ancestors and the same ideological preferences. Therefore, the nation becomes a common behaviour entity, which aims at political and social objectives, while nationalism develops the feeling of loyalty to such an entity<sup>102</sup>.

*The individuals are more profoundly attached to a nation rather than to a state*, represented by a Government, by bureaucracy and institutions. When the state comprises a single nation, almost everyone is presumed to support the national legitimacy. This is why the nation state has been regarded as the main reference of political identity and population's loyalty<sup>103</sup>. When we are dealing with multi-ethnic states, the persistence of sub-regional identities often conflicts with the loyalty to the state (the Welsh, Walloons, Québécois, etc.).

Since the existence of *ethnically-pure states* is almost impossible nowadays, the divisions between the majority and minority or minorities are frequent. If the respective minorities belong or find themselves within other nations, perhaps from *neighbouring states*, the conflict is even more pro-

<sup>101</sup> B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, Verso, 1991, p. 57.

<sup>102</sup> W. Connor, "A Prime for Analyzing Ethnonational Conflict", in S. A. Giannakos (ed), *Ethnic Conflict: Religion, Identity and Politics*, Ohio University Press, Athens, OH, pp. 21-42.

<sup>103</sup> Ho Won Jeong, *Understanding...*, p. 58.

found, especially if the two states have a history of conflicts and ownership changes over the territories where the respective ethnic minorities live. The *historical claims on the recovery of possessions* regarding the statehood of certain regional minorities-ethnic groups or the *claims of territorial recovery* between neighbours are the most frequent causes for disputes at a historical level in Europe. The results are often genocide and mass murders, ethnic purge based on media and propaganda tools that provide enough grounds and motivation for the nationalism-based reactions and claims.

*The nationalist leadership* of a state often affects the minorities in that state, just as nationalist behaviour can instigate the minority in the neighbouring state and it can create tensions between the neighbouring states. On the other hand, *isolation and segregation of minorities* in enclaves and groups situated in various administrative divisions create the vulnerability of these minority ethnic groups, which can face random or systematic violence from their neighbours, the majority group, which they provoke through self-isolation.

In the case of the *construction of new states*, there is a tendency of the new central leadership to reject and deny, and even to discriminate the affirmation of different traditional identities, which is also the reason of a *centralizing and authoritarian* tendency. Such an evolution favours the *dominant ethnic group* that tends to completely take over the positions in the new state, where there is the absolute necessity to consolidate the freshly-acquired statehood as well as promotion for the new state. The gestures of excluding the leaders and the interests of the minority groups from the agenda are the sources of the future interethnic conflicts.

The lack of *involvement of ethnic minorities* leads to the consolidation of the solidary entities of the ethnicity-based group; moreover, the minority ethnic group are also instigated by the gestures of the dominant group that ignores them along with their desires. Hence the fact that they *create their own agendas* as well as pursuing self-defined interests at group level, the majority of which being mostly antagonistic with respect to the dominant group and even with the idea of cohesive state. More displeasure and suffering occur when the distribution of rights, authority positions, resources and opportunities between and opportunities among ethnic groups is considered *abusive and illegitimate*.

### *National Identity, Nationalism and the Sacredness of the Nation*

Due to the tendencies to determine important polarizations, and to give birth to conflicts, *nationalism* is considered to be a predecessor of violence, especially at an interethnic level, reason for which it is carefully monitored and excluded from frequentable political currents and acceptable behaviours, as it is the first step towards extremist formulae, xenophobe or reprehensible

racist manifestations, large scale discrimination and a source of conflicts. *The strong feelings and emotions* induced by this affiliation to a common ethnic identity proved to be those that underlie tolerance and justification of atrocities for ethnic reasons, hence the general reaction to such manifestations. Moreover, nationalism gives birth to tendencies of both internal, inter-ethnic conflicts, and international, interstate conflicts.

As regards nationalism, the most problematic aspect has always been its extraordinary capacity to connect *reason and moral justification to the use of force and violence*<sup>104</sup>. Historically, this connection has been created based on the proclamation — and assumption — of the nation as a *fundamental collectivity of values* and fundamental basis for identity, community support, solidarity and cohesion, security and wellbeing, that induced the natural character of the crucial necessity to defend such community and the identity of the attached large community, with a deep ethnic sub-layer, including claiming *the right to use force and violence* for this purpose<sup>105</sup>.

This combination of common beliefs and actions has turned nationalism into the most important *source of legitimation of using force* and violence in modern and postmodern history. The use of force and violence in the name of the nation has been *historically manifested* in a great number of ways, from the establishment of nation-states, their defending against internal or external enemies by the use of force, defending national interest throughout the world through conquests and colonisations — with the birth of modern imperialism as a product of nationalism and not the other way, the launching of anti-colonial revolutions for the purpose of creating their own exclusive ethnic-national state or the violent secession in a multinational state, even the launch of civil wars for the purpose of promoting their own view on national values, identity and interest in the middle and on behalf of the same nation. In all these cases, nationalism was founded based on this connection between the idea of the nation as a supreme community of values, and *the right to use force and violence as legitimate means* of defending it<sup>106</sup>.

*The mechanism of nationalism* is very subtle, and it manages to turn pervert actions into moral actions in the name of the nation, guilty actions into reputable ones and actions that result in a great number of human victims into heroic actions<sup>107</sup>. Moreover, all the symbols of a nation, from hymns to monuments and historiographies, are collections of narrations and stories about wars, revolutions, heroic acts and bloodshed as supreme references for the national identity, glory and honour<sup>108</sup>.

<sup>104</sup> Harry Anastassiou, “Encountering Nationalism. The Contribution of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution”, in Dennis D. J. Sandole et al, *Handbook...*, p. 37.

<sup>105</sup> M. Howard, “War and Nations”, in J. Hutchinson, A.D. Smith (eds.), *Nationalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994.

<sup>106</sup> P. Alter, *Nationalism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Hodder Arnold, London, 1994.

<sup>107</sup> C. Hedges, *War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning*, Anchor Books, New York, 2002.

<sup>108</sup> M. Howard, *Ibid.*

The force to *change meanings*, and the placement of *symbolic references to violence* in the foreground of its image has made nationalism values to be reshaped at various levels, and the tone of their contemporary reshaping was supported by in-depth studies about religious violence and terrorism, which revealed, in the course of the analysis, the tender and reprehensible spots of the invocation of nationalism. For example, the studies conducted subsequent to the in-depth analyses of religious conflicts were those that revealed that venerating and *transforming the nation into a sacred element* by nationalists has made human killing and sacrifice for defending the nation in critical moments in history become a *moral debt*, not only a legitimate action.

Moreover, there is also a tendency to develop high tolerance towards *using lethal guns* to resolve conflicts for national reasons, especially when “you defend the nation against enemies”, as well as a high tolerance towards *the loss of human lives* for the same purpose, both from among the enemies, and from among people from one’s community. Our studies of *religious conflicts* have revealed that this important characteristic indissolubly tied to the nation, from a historical point of view, and to the ethnic group, from an identity point of view, has its essence precisely in the *promotion of the sacred character of the object of worship*, the nation, unanimously agreed by the large identity community as a *supreme value*, with a *supernatural* significance, and an eternal life, much longer than the perishable human life<sup>109</sup>.

Moreover, using the built instrument, in the context of the *psychological theories* that enable identification of *young Muslims* susceptible to fall for *terrorist recruitments and acts*, including suicide terrorism<sup>110</sup> and applying the *reductionist theory of uncertainty*<sup>111</sup>, we can notice the coincidence of the sacred principle and the need to manage the awareness of inherent death through attachment to a certain group that promotes a superior identity, that can go beyond individual death, and can become a purpose in life and a response to the superior purpose of living an invariably finite life.

But the connection between *nation and religion*, the support of its sacred character is much deeper. In many religions, certainly in great biblical religions and not only, direct references are made to the relevance of defending the nation for the Judgment Day and eternal life beyond the end of time, about a certain individual assessment but also “alongside the Nation” before the supreme Judgment, about a certain reward in the afterlife for the status

<sup>109</sup> Anne Speckhard, “Understanding the Psycho-Social and Political Processes Involved in Ideological Support for Terrorism” in Mary Sharpe, *Suicide Bombers: The Psychological, Religious and Other Imperatives*, IOS Press, Amsterdam, 2006.

<sup>110</sup> Jose Liht and Sara Savage, “Identifying Young Muslims Susceptible to Violent Radicalisation: Psychological Theory and Recommendations”, in Mary Sharpe, *Suicide Bombers: The Psychological, Religious and Other Imperatives*, IOS Press, Amsterdam, 2006.

<sup>111</sup> M. A. Hogg, “Uncertainty and extremism: Identification with high entitativity groups under conditions of uncertainty”, in V. Yzerbyt, C.M. Judd, and O. Corneille (eds.), *The psychology of group perception: perceived variability, entitativity and essentialism*, Psychology Press, New York, NY, 2003.

of hero of the Nation, with *emphasize on national unity*, relevance of nations and the *sacred character of the nation*, but also with a reward that is on the other side for those who are keen on the prosperity of their nation. At other times we find the role of the Nations integrated into the classical *cosmic war* between Good and Evil, Heaven and Hell, God and Devil as *specific myths* from the times of the “chosen people”.

More, there are already visible signs, on the earth, of a *very terrestrial variant of entering into eternity* for national heroes, once they are dedicated statues, stories, pages in manuals of history, movies, and all these go beyond their physical death as formulae of *reproduction and survival of their own life* for eternity. Moreover, their life is already romanced, cleared of all reprehensible elements that are forgotten, and only *heroic and positive moments* are maintained in the collective memory. Even bloody wars or cruel moments are *forgotten or painted* with symbolic elements, or turned into *elements of pride and reference* (the case of Vlad Tepes in Romania, and the literary and historical references to him are relevant, as well as the rejection of the bloody way in which he is presented and desacralized in the person of Dracula).

The climax of this nationalist trail is the *phenomenon of ethnic cleansing*. Apparently, in a conventional reasoning, it refers to *cleaning a territory* from people perceived as “the others”, illegitimate *foreigners* who live on one’s own territory, who *alter the purity of the nation* by interfering with families and ordinary life, and mixing their blood with the pure national race. However, here is also a sub-layer of sacred relevance that moves ethnic conflict towards the significance of religious conflict. This is a *rite*, a blood rite whereby the ethnic-national community *purifies its collective self* by removing impure elements from its society and territory. Here we can also find one of the classical symbols of *religious conflicts*, arisen between the *pure and ingenuous group*, untouched, and the Others, the *vitiating, bedraggled and dirty exterior*<sup>112</sup>.

Reality shows us that there are still *multi-ethnic nations*, there is already an ethnic overlap, and the reality of globalization has fundamentally mitigated nationalist outbursts, as they only survive in *new states* or in those with *strong and deep roots*, who have not experienced natural mixing. The recent declarations of the European leaders regarding *the end of multiculturalism* (Chancellor Angela Merkel, the French President Nicolas Sarkozy and the British Prime-Minister David Cameron) together with the come-back of the extreme right wing and the disproportionate concerns for migration in Europe, as well as the pathologic case of Anders Breivik, the Norwegian who committed the terrorist attack in Oslo against its own Government and young Labourites, shows that the subject of nationalism is an endless battle.

We cannot finish the passing in review of the elements related to inter-ethnic conflicts without identifying the conditions that make the *tensions*

<sup>112</sup> Daniel Rothbart, Rose Cherubin, “Causation as a Core Concept in Conflict Analysis”, in Dennis J. D. Sandole et al., *Handbook...*, p. 60.

between the majority and the minority, or between two ethnic groups that live within the same geographical area and the same state burst into a conflict. There are many studies here, but we will use again the references to the criteria for the elaboration of early warning systems in case of conflicts of identity with direct and specific reference to interethnic conflicts.

One of the characteristics of a nation is the community's life in the same territory; hence the case when many people realized that they were in a new national state made up just because they lived in the same territory, and within *recently acknowledged borders*. The establishment of new states proved to be an important premise for both the attempts to turn it into a *purely ethnic* one, with attempts to exclude "the others", and for the interethnic conflicts with existing minorities<sup>113</sup>.

*The inclination of ethnic minorities* to fight against the majority during the process and after the establishment of the new state depends on three conditions, pursuant to Korostelina's early warning model<sup>114</sup>: the relevance of national identity, satisfaction resulted from meeting identity needs, and the adoption of the national culture.

The meaning given to the *national identity* of the new state can have special relevance for creating the conflict, or for a tolerant behaviour. One of the fundamental problems that occur when the national identity of a state is formed is the relationship between the majority and the minority, and the relationship between the natives and the immigrants: whether minorities or immigrants are discriminated, whether they have opportunities to maintain their own ethnic culture. Pursuant to the model, people can have three different concepts, or they can perceive three different meanings of *national identity: ethnic, multicultural or civic*.

*National identity in its ethnic sense* marks the pre-eminence of the majority ethnic group, around which and based on whose rules minorities need to integrate, being, mostly, assimilated. The *multicultural* sense involves an equal existence of all ethnic groups, in representation, rights and governance, even formulae of independence for private issues of the community. Ultimately, the *civic* one involves the national contract based on citizenship, while the ethnic affiliation is irrelevant. Pursuant to particular case studies, the ethnic sense leads to the creation of conflicts between the majority and the minority, seldom involving a discouragement of minorities, while the multicultural interpretation maintains the possibility of conflicts between different minorities, limiting the possibility of conflicts between the majority and minorities, while the civic one is the closest to the ideal model of exclusion of interethnic conflicts.

<sup>113</sup> H. C. Kelman, "Creating the Conditions for Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 1, 1982, pp. 39-76.

<sup>114</sup> Karina V. Korostelina, "Identity Conflict. Models of Dynamics and Early Warning" in Sandole, *Handbook...*, pp. 100-112.

*Minority size* is also important. Thus, minorities are more mobile, more adaptable to change, more willing to exhibit the moments and cases of discrimination, and to create interethnic conflicts especially if they are numerous. *The experience of the past dominance* also has its role<sup>115</sup>: minorities with past *dominant positions* have the tendency to claim dominant positions in new situations, as well; more, majorities and dominated minorities are more willing to enter into conflicts, and they are concerned about the possibility to refresh the previous dominance relation.

Ultimately, in the case of *transnational affinities*<sup>116</sup> the members of ethnic groups do not just emphasize the negative traits of others, using large scale stereotypes, but they also allocate them different purposes and goals. If a minority has a state of origin in its vicinity, it can be seen as a “fifth column”, and a *separatist or state reorganization tendency*, and the change of borders for the purpose of connecting it to the mother country can be presumed in its favour. This presumption and allocation of purposes is due to the ethnic minority seen as an enemy, and a *threat to the nation*.

### *Religion and Conflict. Religious Conflicts and Specificities of Conflicts of Identity. Violence with Religious Motivation*

Religion is one of the fundamental elements of identity, which is why we have approached, from the onset, *religious conflicts* as a particular case of conflicts of identity. As in the general case of conflicts of identity, religious conflicts maintain a *dual nature*, doubled by the fact that the conflict protagonists are believers, professing or non-professing, or atheist, so they can be seen in terms of their religious denomination.

Aside from the important role religion plays in any conflict and in conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction processes, the dual aspects of religious conflicts and conflicts of identity stem, on the one hand, in the relevance and intrinsic link of *sacred symbols* and *identity* seen as a result of a *higher order of nature*, as a datum, and on the other hand in the force given by the mobilization and involvement in conflicts which are directly motivated by religion, religious difference or religious discrimination. And here, a range of approaches concern exclusively the *conflicts of fundamental values*, included in the component of *religious conflicts*, as a specific form of conflicts of identity.

The study of religious conflicts reveals interesting items and conclusions on a wide range, when the approach analyses *radicalization and conversion*,

<sup>115</sup> T. Gurr, B. Harff, *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics*, 2-nd Edition, Westview Press, Boulder CO.

<sup>116</sup> D. Lake, D. Rothschild, *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion and Escalation*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1998.

using the tools of psychology and psycho-sociology; moreover, a large number of data, explanations and approach ideas are taken from the perspective of the *cosmic war* between Heaven and Hell, which is characteristic in all religions. Particularization is no less rich in meanings and explanations, and new elements are brought by specific components in the case of *Islam*, of the interference and relations with the Christian religion, *the impact of modernity and globalization* — which explains in a more concrete and comprehensive manner, as we have seen above, the transition from the ideology century to the identity century, which has become prevalent and has burst as the main feature of the post-Cold War conflicts.

Here, we have focused in particular on elements resulting from *religious conflicts* viewed as a particular case of *conflicts of identity*, while the other aspects and angles of approach will be detailed in subsequent chapters. Furthermore, the developments herein will be push, at the end, to the emotional component area, in order to mark the transition to the explanation stemming from Dominique Moisi's theory on the *geopolitics of emotions*.

If we consider *religious conflicts as conflicts of identity*, we have already seen that when we talk about causality and its many causes that are not reducible to material conditions, causes of identity-based violence include *normative commitments of protagonists groups*, commitments that focus on notions of *internal purity* of the group and *the vice* of the external world. Thus, in identity-based conflicts, the cause is expressed in a combination of stories with a mystical sub-layer, an internal logic of action and a model of group differences<sup>117</sup>.

In the “us and them” approach, of differences between groups — adapted to the context — the symbols of the Others and of the borders bring to reality the demarcation between interior and exterior, of the *sacred space* of familiar order and the *profane space* of chaos, anarchy or unnatural order, with strong differences between the territory of one's own space, the House, and the alien one, hostile unknown. In many cases, those who build stories tend to identify the sources of violence, disruption or violation of *cosmic ethics and order*, which are at the centre of the stories about conflicts, with the exterior<sup>118</sup>.

Thus, we notice elements related to the *duality of religious conflicts* as conflicts of identity, with elements related to symbols, which can be seen in any type of conflict, bringing it in an area of religious significance, but also, complementary, in conflicts generated by religion, where the religious identity is the core and the direct reason of conflict, when notions as *cosmic war* and respectively the conflict between the *forces of evil and the good elements* of cosmos and eternity<sup>119</sup>.

<sup>117</sup> Rothbart, Cherubin, *Causation...*, p. 60.

<sup>118</sup> M. Jackson, *The Politics of Storytelling*, Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2002, p. 22.

<sup>119</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (3rd ed.), Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003, p. 220.

Thus, violent action is only the necessary *response* to threats coming from the killer Other; it is the battle of life against the *forces of injustice and vice*<sup>120</sup>. It is found in the ethics and propaganda of Al-Qaeda and of other groups that discuss in terms of occupation or defilement of the sacred sites of Islam by the infidels, in the tribulations of Hamas, who sees the space of decolonization as a result of the struggle against the attack on Islamic civilization, just as in the terrorist attacks in London, on July 7<sup>th</sup> 2005, Mohammad Sidique Khan proclaimed an *edict* in which he stated that the terrorist actions represent the struggle of the believers-soldiers against the governments responsible for “atrocities against their own people”.

Obviously, there is also an interpretation and approach of religious conflicts as a particular case of conflicts of identity, through the particular perspective of *conflicts of values*. Here, identity inside the group and the identity of the Other are outlined in axiological terms, being linked to normative judgments that replicate a duality such as good-bad, truth-lie, right-wrong, virtue-vice<sup>121</sup>. In times of disasters and of moral crisis, notions and categories help in comforting the extremist, and make him discern what’s right and what is not right, what is good and what is wrong, what is pure and what is impure.

The Other always falls in the category, comfortably to describe, of the vicious, weak, immoral, criminal, uncivilized, evil, depraved, while the group appears, by contrast, as fundamentally virtuous, morally pure, and the source is a combination of blood line, birth and place where we were born and live, in the heritage of the monarchs anointed by God or in the social order established and approved by God. Sacred elements are present without fail.

In their own perception, members of the protagonist group act based on the sense of collective axiology in the space of global confrontation, with a nuance of cosmic battle. Thus, the *values* of the group are *privileged, inviolable and prevalent*. Of course, in this case the *false consensus effect* occurs, so that everyone expects the vision embraced to be similar, the group members to have the same goals, to embrace the same beliefs and expectations, to identify the same needs and same formulae for social change and to share same criteria of group differences<sup>122</sup>. Studies show even a *tendency to overestimate* the number of individuals who share the same beliefs in the conservative groups.

*Collective axiology* is a system of commitments to a set of values that determine the correct action and the appropriate time to do what one should

<sup>120</sup> R. S. Moore, „A Broad Strategy for Defusing the War on Terrorism in Advanced Systems and Concept Office”, in *Defence Threats Reduction Agency, Terrorism: Concepts, Causes and Conflict Resolution*, Fort Belvoir, VA, 2003, p. 153.

<sup>121</sup> Rothbart and Korostelina, *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>122</sup> D. Granberg, „Candidate Preference, Membership Group and Estimates of Voting Behaviour”, *Social Cognition*, 5(1987) pp. 323-335.

do for the common good. Commitment on this scale determines which action is prohibited and which one should be mandatory. Such judgments are rooted in notions of sacred land, and essentialized in laws which mention the inevitability of conflict. Birth in the canonical space, in the *predestined territory ensures virtues*, and birth on the enemy territory birth marks a *stigma* on the individual, which links him to the profane territory of foreignness. One's own space provides attractive richness to potential conquerors, and must be defended. Basically, through collective axiology, individuals gain clarity on who are enemies, accept polarized vision of the world and of one's own possibilities. For the protagonists of violence, current manoeuvres are rooted in past events, highlighting the crime and the danger represented by the Other.

In *religious conflicts* per se, where violence is determined by membership to a religion or another, *the reward* is linked to promises of spiritual glory, to entering the holy areas of religion, which are reserved for the most sacred figures of the religion in question. By demonizing the enemy, the group elevates and reinforces its own *moral standing*, receiving *divine forgiveness* (and *satisfaction*, along with the *promised reward*) for the acts they are to commit.

Religious militants encourage and urge one another to guard themselves and guard the others against the "impurities" of society, against those coming from outside. Even children can be demonized by their ties to enemies parents — *the curse* extends to the entire family and group, they are portrayed as menacing, amoral and evil, even if we are talking of the most innocent representatives of the Other. This *collective generalization* is translated in a homogeneous perception and behaviours attributed to members outside the group, assigning a stability of beliefs and thoughts to all those outside the group, resistance to the change of their own ideas on the Other and assigning the perceived purpose charged on the Other.

Thus, followers of the so-called *fundamentalist* religions tend to rely on a high level of collective generality. This type of perspective can be easily seen in the stories and narrations that are common in such groups, and traditions are associated with an *apocalyptic struggle* against cosmic forces of Evil.

In major religions and in derived forms, there is a formal, *de plano* commitment to peace and violence. Moreover, in all religions there are precepts related to relations with other religions, which preach understanding and exclude violence. Religious leaders are often involved in conflict settlement. However, the commitment of religion to peace and nonviolent conflict resolution is complex, as some representatives of religions, on behalf of religions engage in the most debilitating and cruel forms of violence.

Religion has been, in history, one of the major contributors to *wars, hatred, bloodshed, intolerance*. This despite the fact that in religions we can find the source, the origin of the development of civilized behaviour laws, cultural commitments to the values of peace, empathy, openness and even love toward

strangers, suppression of the ego and of the greed for property, human rights, generous unilateral acts of forgiveness and humility to those who were wronged, acceptance and repeated forgiveness for past sins as a means of reconciliation. Not incidentally Jesus, the apostles and other prophets appear, in religious narrations, in shabby clothes, as unknown persons, rewarding people who do not know them who extended their hospitality to them; equally, the cycle *mistake/sin — recognition of sin/repentance — forgiveness of the sin and absolution from guilt* appears, in a religious context, as a solution, subsequently adopted unanimously, at symbolic level, for the most sophisticated forms of post-conflict reconciliation.

Religious texts are a solid *reference* basis for believers engaged in conflicts, as examples and guidelines for ending those conflicts, just as the accounts contained in religious teachings cover a wide range of experimented formulae, *examples and lessons learned* directly recounted in the sacred texts on how to prevent, mediate and solve a conflict. Moreover, religion plays an important role in the intimate life of millions of people, thus playing a key role in them moving towards or away from violence, shaping the *propensity to violence*.

Religious language contains a unique symbolic transfiguration of reality, a unique manner of criticizing it. The entire range of emotions is expressed in the exemplary and plastic religious language. Therefore, it becomes important to know the *myths, rules, metaphysical assumptions* which believers have expressing and responding to the deepest feelings. This knowledge provides a substantial knowledge and additional elements in address any area of conflict, as we know that the *spiritual language of hatred, frustration, revenge* leads to violence. Irrespective of the conflict reason, revolt against an existing situation can be formulated in religious terms<sup>123</sup>.

Another interesting category of religious studies related violence refers to texts, images, perceptions on *the use* or the *expression of violence*, respectively:

— the relationship of the enemy with his Self (generating the inner circle of his image and feelings towards it, by dehumanization, in the case of propensity to conflict, or, on the contrary, picturing him as a close person, a friend and a relative, humanized in the account).

— the role of deep, historical, wounds, in manifestations of violence or in the cases of quickly resorting to violence

— human needs satisfied by biblical/religious representations of violence.

The texts are studied in terms of *deep fear suggested, of basic concerns*, but also of actions they suggests as a response; they may provide relevant data on the formulae of expected response from the religious community involved, but also on methods of intervention and relief<sup>124</sup>.

<sup>123</sup> David Smock (ed), *Religious Perspectives on War: Christian, Muslim and Jewish Attitudes to Force after the Gulf War*, Washington DC, USIP, 1992.

<sup>124</sup> Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon*. Oxford University Press, Oxford/New York, 2009, p. 16.

We should note is that there is no *direct causal dependence* between religious precepts and the reactions of the respective community, as many other elements are involved. Basically, all followers of a religion or another are exposed to the same sacred texts, but this does not push them to violent or conflictive behaviours, and it does not safeguard them from such behaviours either. The influence of *profound elements* of individual, family and community *education*, frequency of relations to religion and the selection of such texts by religious leaders is also relevant here. Moreover, the emotional response of each believer has to be factored in as well.

Otherwise, we cannot explain very precisely why some remain in the area of metaphorical contemplation of the texts, adopting the lessons for self-improvement and struggle against vices, excesses or vicissitudes of life, while others walk the *path of radicalization*, some get to *use violence* as a reaction to frustration, and fewer of them go beyond thoughts of violence and commit violent actions as such, and, finally, very few resort to *religion-based terrorism or terrorist suicide*. The level of impact of various religious precepts is different and religion, or a particular religion, should not be blamed for these variations; but there are deeper elements involved, as we shall see, in the study of radicalization or conversion to another faith religious.

The theory of individual needs refers to *certain cognitive and emotional needs* which are met by certain myths and images that open the path to violence. But it turned out that *the benefits of belonging to a group*, of acquiring a strong group identity are more important than the need to align with *the appeal to violence* entailed, or the *policy of coercion* associated to the membership to that group; therefore people will take this step out of need rather than from conviction or propensity, innate or acquired by reading, learning and repeating religious texts.

Furthermore, *ambiguity* in unclear situations, be they ethical and political, *the major emotional impact* leads to the search of religious images, of an answers guide for the more unsecure individuals; these images and answers come from religious lives and precepts, and may turn the individual seeking answers, equally, to a life of holy man, rebel, revolutionary hero or terrorist. Choice has to do with individual choice, context, inner space and many other elements, not related per se to the narration or the teachings of one religion or another. Moreover, it is not infrequent that religious persons, having all the characteristic of these emotions, with convictions deeply carved in their behaviour, react completely different from the content of precepts they know.

For this reason, certain schools of thought deny completely *the religious motivation of conflicts*, claiming that this reason is invoked for gestures based on completely different reasons, many of which deeply pragmatic, such as access to resources or the desire for power. However, this approach is rather simplistic and does not motivate why two religious groups struggle, sometimes reaching complete mutual destruction, along with their family and their city, for the simple reason of following one religion or another.

*Religious intolerance* remains a fact of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, therefore we need to appeal to formulae of de-radicalization and prevention of violent religious-based conflicts; this would mean resorting either to the *universal, humanitarian, secular discourse on human rights and civil rights*, which is used commonly in Western societies, or to religious leaders, so as to capture the form in which they define themselves, and to succeed, further on, in removing religious elements that make reference to the reason of narrative interpretations of conflict and the use of violence, or even more often, to *exposing the real, authentic, texts* of the religion in question, and to urge to a profound, new and authentic interpretation of their content, relevant to the believers; another useful method would be introducing certain elements, claimed by certain currents, in the theological debate in order decrypt their relevance, to debunk or reinterpret the proposed ideatic content, in the context of the religion in question, by de-credibilising the violent interpretation preached.

*Religion* is used primarily to promote the *spiritual transformation, through reflection and ethical progress*, in religious experiences, such as confession, avowal, redemption, atonement of sins, repentance, requesting forgiveness of sins, with the direct significance of spiritual elevation, cleanliness and redemption from traumas, without accumulating them, with a view to obtaining individual inner peace.

Certain universal, general values of religion are also very important in the appeal to reconciliation and conflict resolution. Thus, *empathy*, underestimated in Western cultures, remains characteristic of all religions, under the sign of helping one's neighbour, *nonviolence and pacifism* are defining, and so are the *sanctity of life* — of divine origins, unrepeatable, impossible to reproduce by man, hence the need to maintain it at all costs and the inclination to live in holiness, *the interiority of spiritual life, compassion* — in the sense of loving one's neighbour, of rejoicing at one's neighbour joy, of helping the one in need and the reward of good deeds to others, *religious discipline* — of the body, the life, limiting violence upon the self, *fasting* as an element of tolerance and mutual respect, *messianism and imagination* that entail the desire of a fairer social construction by religion, all of the above are elements that support formulae of avoiding open conflict and refraining from violence and force in conflict resolution.

There are obviously elements characteristic of most, if not all religions, which affect the appeal to pacifism and non-violence; on the contrary, they are fast lanes to triggering violence. First, we have *religious expansionism* — the obligation to preach one's religion, until it becomes universal, *evangelism, religious proselytizing*, converting others, which are direct steps taken against other religions. The talk of the *best religion* or the *most effective* one, with *the most direct access to divinity and sanctity* gives way to totalitarian and exclusive formulae in religion, by promoting the existence of a *true path* towards God or divinity.

Furthermore, *the manner of addressing religious pluralism*, in various religions is another marker of conflictive tendencies in a religion. What matters, therefore, is the presence or absence of *respect and tolerance* for other religions, so the affront to the group does not become perceived as a threat to the survival of the individual. The interpretation of *compromise* in religion, whether it is interpreted as an attack on one's own legitimacy, is also important.

Superidentification with one's own religious group, as in the case of the relationship with one's own ethnic group, may be ominous for the fanatical believer — we will see later, when analysing the stages of the believer's radicalization. When these two dimensions overlap the result is a *strong identity instrument of cohesion and mobilization*.

Last but not least, a relevant marker in a religion, faith or in the individual manner of receiving it, is the way it reflects *general human values*. Major religions have a deeply humanistic tendency and cover substantially the general human and moral values, creating even a narrative form, easy to promote, of the moral background, but there are also adverse experiences and interpretations, in altered forms of religion, when *identity as an individual* becomes subordinated to *religious identity* and the use of inhuman actions and gestures in the name of religion becomes relevant, sometimes predominant.

The area of understanding religiously motivated violence is extremely large, determined by the increase in relevance of religion, the impact on millions of people who follow religious precepts, and proves that religion has a major relevance in the power game. Obviously, we see religious conflicts as a special case of conflicts of identity, but with specific notes. An immediate motivation of increased enthusiasm for religion could come from image of the *forbidden fruit* in communism, the rediscovery of religion, a need for religion in the Western world<sup>125</sup>. Here we see that there is an entire talk on the need of *moral references* in contemporary society, and even "classical" religion is challenged and deemed unable to maintain the current morally standard and to assert as a reference on the moral scale.

As part of the relation between religion and conflict and of the manner of judging the internal precepts of a religion, in relation with the use of violence, a first component to assess is the *legitimacy of war*, of the use of violence in the respective religion. The scope of this discussion covers the idea of the *just war*, a war with religious causes, alternative to promoting the idea of pacifism in the majority of established religions<sup>126</sup>, primarily in Christianity, and complementary elements from the ethics of war, reflected in the interpersonal ethics on the alternative relation between love and hatred, compassion

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>126</sup> Terry Nardin (Ed.), *The Ethics of War and Peace*, Princetown University Press, Princetown, N.J., 1996.

and anger, peace and conflict. This *duality of message* and, respectively, the permissibility in the *selective access* to the two categories of messages, both validated by religious doctrines, depending on the representative, specific need or goal<sup>127</sup>, is the first issue in the religious discourse and literature that involve the perspective on the *just war*.

The second fundamental issue identified is related to the *extreme options* of the two components, namely of the two approaches, somehow *unnuanced*, a dichotomy or Manichaeism of choices, in religious debates, on war or peace. Eliminating these shades involves some important typical human issues. For example, we cannot address, in religious terms, interpretations such as “war is the *failure of other choices*, the inability to use other options”, or the approach which argues that “war is sometimes necessary in order to clarify, to clear things, to relieve an affair and to conclude a prolonged litigation.” Sometimes, from the experience in conflict analysis, in choosing between war and peace, it is precisely the absence of alternatives that may give way to enforcing and triggering conflict<sup>128</sup>.

A third issue related to the *just war* is the direct approach of rules from the general perspective of the Western democratic culture, based on classical precepts, *which excludes a variety of cultural contexts*. We are not adepts of the talk of *original democracy* or *sovereign democracy*, specifically, but we relate to the classical democratic rules, which are met and observed to a lesser or greater extent, without considering that a certain state should be more or less democratic or that historical tradition, ethnicity and geopolitical context or religion would determine the nature and level of democratization. However, the approach, the manner of relating, of “enwrapping” and of supporting these solutions, with a *universal vocation*, should factor in the cultural context in communication and in conveying messages, experiences, lessons learned and best practices, not only in assessing reactions the “*external model*”, which may be imposed, but also when the model is outlined internally, so as to build its *legitimacy, credibility and support*, in a society or another.

Thus, from a religious perspective, there is a tendency to define war and peace in terms of *one’s own religious criteria*, especially in biblical religions. However, we can find major differences between these components and real action; when it comes to war and conflict, many individuals, even fundamentally religious believers — as we have seen above — do not relate to the Holy Scriptures, but often to realpolitik and interests, to the game of power and the religious component is then used as the *basis for arguing and reasoning*, for social coagulation, mobilization and use of resources with a view to launching an open conflict or, conversely, to relieving and condemning an imminent one. And this appeal goes through debates at elite’s level and identifying the theological speculation that are necessary for the goal.

<sup>127</sup> Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, Basic, New York, N.Y., 1977.

<sup>128</sup> Kenneth Kraft (ed), *Inner Peace, World Peace: Essays on Buddhism*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1992, p. 129.

The syntagm of the *just war* has been used, not seldom, to counter the *bad war* — absolutism, government terror, social injustice — and some of its effects, supported by the religions of different colours, were felt in the area of *civil society construction*, of balancing governance and injustices, and the background was religious, non-religious and multi-religious alike. Error still exists — in the sense discussed above, on the approach on communicating solutions, in the case of conveying *fixed, coercive standards*, to others, in the name of peace, especially when they relate to alteration, modification or condemnation that affect elements related to the type of religion or beliefs in the matter. Moreover, the appeal to religion and religious leaders in conflict prevention actions occur very late, the approach occurs when the *conflict is imminent* or when violence has already started, and so the strong, constructive effects of religion are not capitalized.

We have already seen, unfortunately, that *religion has a major contribution in triggering conflicts*. A large amount of violence that has been generated in history, and also in modern times, after the collapse of the dual system, has to do with religion. We have various phenomena in all religions, from radical Islamic groups, Hebrew settlers, suicide terrorists in the name of Allah, killing the head of state who signed the peace agreement in the name of Yahve.

Moreover, today we can witness a refusal to consider the effects, impact and utility of religion in launching, preventing or stopping conflicts, because of a *deep fear or dislike*, a sociological widespread phenomenon of regressive fear that affects persons in bureaucracies with secular approaches and liberal believers in the academic area and civil society, in relation to Religion. This has led to a *real strategic paralysis* of those called to anticipate, prevent or manage conflicts.

Such approaches are refined into categories, bureaucrats refuse on the basis of their own actional paradigm related to the *secular nation state* and the liberal academics refuse on the basis of the humanistic and agnostic assumption underlying the *intellectual paradigm*<sup>129</sup>. *The projection of rationality, freedom, individuality* of the academic, governmental, economic and business elite has neglected an important component of community, more obscure and abstruse, bigoted and even retrograde, in any case less visible and insufficiently publicised, located outside the main-stream media but not insignificant in number, relevance and impact, for which the *pejorative projection* in relation to their own set of values and intimate beliefs created reactions, emphasizing the spiral of the initial misunderstanding. There are also differences, rivalries, nuances and contradictions, between different categories of elite, of the mainstream, mentioned above; conflicts may also rise at this level, although they all support major themes such as individual freedoms, human rights, free market economy and they seldom have the tendency to associate with or appeal to the other elements of society.

<sup>129</sup> Marc Gopin, *Ibid.*, p. 38.

This abstruse and numerically important component of the society has, visibly, other values, constituting groups in proto-state, sub-state, non-state and network formulae, elements that create the premises for the new actors whose role is increasing globally, from tribe to terrorist network, separatist group or other forms of association that generate the *international actors of the third generation of contemporary conflicts*, opened, at international level, with the September 11 attack.

We must also note, in the context of the conflict analysis that includes the ones with religious relevance and motivation, a lack of solid research basis and knowledge of *religious communities*, of *the pre-modern life*, deficit in the knowledge and development of the *cross-cultural approach*, but also of the background, relevant information regarding the *de facto* situation of the *religious hierarchy and authority* expressed in reality, with various traditions and approaches of the two components of religious bodies, but also of some internal issues of religious approaches.

*Labelling the enemy* — not negotiable in these groups, addressing subjects labelled as taboo by religion, such as blasphemy, sin, behavioural limits of “what is appropriate”, especially in the more conservative forms of religions, all require knowledge and different approaches, using also, with the adequate precautions, *de-sacralisation* of subjects or moving them to a larger framework, redefining and rewording them so as to foster approaches that are obvious in the space of free, clear, logical, scientific thinking. The most sensitive part is the one related to the *personal change* and the *inner life* of the *believers*.

Moreover, *rationality* and *pragmatism* are not supported and are even challenged in some religions, but there are spaces and niche approaches — the talk and debate on *compromise*, *rightness of resources distribution*, *justice*, accepted in all religions, channels and niches useful in promoting an approach of elements, which, formally, would be taboo in direct approaches. Here, *emotion in a religious context* play a very important role, as the foundation for addressing religious (and ethnic) conflicts appeal, at individual and group level, to fundamental emotions and feelings, and also to the phenomenon of contagion and emulation of collective emotions in large groups.

### *Geopolitics of Emotions*

The association in the subtitle may be strange, but it is built on a unique and extremely solid basis, which has evolved as a natural development of solid theses that were conveyed so far by the most fashionable foreign policy and international relations analysts. Thus, the grounds of the analysis are based on several elements, in response to the “Clash of Civilizations”, Samuel Huntington’s essay of 1993<sup>130</sup> that made an era and defined, on the

<sup>130</sup> Samuel Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*, Antet Publishing House, Bucharest, 1997.

one hand, a *geography of “civilizations”* — a composite combination of religion, ethnicity and historical past in different imperial components with major influences, *classic geopolitics* in fact — and a certain cyclicity of references and fundamental elements that used to lead the world.

In fact, in a trivialising formulation or rather a naive explanation of Arnold Toynbee — in “A Study of History”<sup>131</sup> — Huntington tried to present, in a formula for the general public, in the classic recipe for a best seller, giving up the complex theoretical grounds in a methodological simplification down to schematization, the *theory of historical cycles* that addressed the grounds of the evolution from religions to states, nations, ideologies to civilizations, the clash of which would have *dialectically* led to the current evolution of the world. Thus, the *clash of civilizations* — vaguely and unconvincingly defined, rather exploiting the perception existing at various levels on “civilization” in a wider sense, of populations or, more elevated, of the educated elites — included simultaneously *elements of realpolitik* related to an aspiration to more power and domination of the global policies, to culture, national interest and political ideology superposed in an heterogeneous quintessence.

It is also remarkable that this theory was fundamentally based on the *principle of the enemy*, respectively, it placed the entire evolution of the humanity on the existence of an enemy and the entire construction and progress depended on the existence of that enemy. Things could be built in these terms in the world until the collapse of bipolarism, but this couldn't be subsequently fit to the *post-Soviet patterns*. A mechanism already suggested by Mikhail Gorbachev<sup>132</sup>, who, in his Memoirs, remarked that “I shall inflict greatest harm upon you, I shall leave you with no enemies”, provoking the entire system of thinking and cohesion, why not, of the Western society, by the disappearance of the common enemy.

Pascal Bruckner<sup>133</sup> was even more inspired when he explained, in detail, few years after, a certain confusion and anarchy introduced in the system by the *disappearance of the enemy*, both in the space governed and coordinated ideologically by the Soviet Union and in the Western space, through the major change in the structure of the international system — that had become uni-multipolar with anarchic periphery<sup>134</sup>. In the essay “How to live without enemies?”, starting from the statement of Mikhail Gorbachev, he was able to present things in the key of the real questions related to the means and criteria for *redefining the system* in the new context. He did this assuming some risks when the Russian Federation, a successor to the treaties of the former Soviet Union, demanded, in response to the abolition of the Warsaw

<sup>131</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee, *A study of History*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 1997.

<sup>132</sup> Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, Nemira, 1994.

<sup>133</sup> Pascal Bruckner, *Democratic Melancholy — How to live without enemies*, Antet, 1996.

<sup>134</sup> Iulian Chifu, “International Relations after September 11: Globalization with Variable Geometry”, *Historia* magazine, 1<sup>st</sup> issue. 2002, pp. 28-32.

Treaty, the disestablishment of NATO on the grounds that there was no more opponent to fight.

While Francis Fukuyama proclaimed *The End of History*<sup>135</sup> and the *final victory of the liberal democracy*, of the *market economy* and the ideologically, the evolution of the reality didn't confirm his theory and showed that, far from being ended, the history re-launched on other levels, with actors who had another powers, with mechanisms that went from *revised realpolitik*, in which substate actors started to be present and have an impact — with ethnic wars in the post-Soviet space, in Yugoslavia and in the south-Asian and African peripheries — to the *post-modernism* of a more and more solid European construction, with major regional influences, combined with the *impact of globalization*, which redefined actors and trends, all culminating with the transition from the age of the global war, when the state actor with global relevance, the USA, clashed with the network global actor<sup>136</sup> with not responsibilities, called Global Terrorism, on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

Dominique Moisi<sup>137</sup> took the idea of the Huntington's Clash of Civilizations, abandoned the controversial and not demonstrated elements, including the dialectics within the core of this theory, maintained the *reference to the cyclic history* and went on to the essence, identifying as unitary element the red thread of the cyclicity, *emotions*. Indeed, regardless of the way of presenting things to the public, to the population, gradually evolved in the history, more sophisticated and exigent with their leaders, in fact all the forms of explanation and the principles that dominated, in each stage, the explanatory model “with enemies” comprised, in fact, *the reference, commitment and widespread use of emotions*.

The approach is correct and covers multiple levels, *emotions* being responsible for most of the *processes of social coagulation of the human groups and society*, either it is about references about the *symbols and feelings* contained in the symbolic signification — on the criteria of classic semiotics — or they come from the introspection of religious values, of peoples, nations, ethnic and ideological values. The importance of emotions was revealed from Plato to Hobbes, from Kant to Hegel, of which the latter ones contrasted constantly the influence of the classic concept of *passion* to the Marxist concept of *class interest* in explaining the mechanisms that drive the crowds, coagulate people and lead them to brave common enterprises, some into war, others into revolutions or in major turnabouts, where the forces ratio didn't announce such an outcome. From them, Stanley Hoffman<sup>138</sup> of the Harvard University and Pierre Hassner<sup>139</sup> of Sorbonne, revealed, independently, the *influence of emotions* in geopolitics.

<sup>135</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The End of the History and the Last Man*, Paideia, Bucharest, 1992.

<sup>136</sup> Iulian Chifu, “Terrorism — a Global Actor”, *Historia* review, 3rd issue, pp. 62-66.

<sup>137</sup> Dominique Moisi, *The Geopolitics of Emotion*.

<sup>138</sup> Stanley Hoffman, *World Disorders: Troubled Peace in the Post-Cold War Era*, Updated ed., Rowman & Littlefield, 2000.

<sup>139</sup> Pierre Hassner, *Guerre et Sociétés. États et violence après la guerre froide* (avec Roland Marchal, dir.), Karthala, Paris, 2003.

Dominique Moisi launched the idea of the *primary, defining element* of the coagulation and drive of large groups of people based on the *emotions* accessed by leaders, politicians, heads of churches, first in March 2006, in a project called “The Emotional Clash of Civilizations”<sup>140</sup>, then in the article published in *Foreign Affairs* in January 2007, “The Clash of Emotions”<sup>141</sup> and ending with the essay book called “Geopolitics of emotion” in 2010, a course that shows the gradual evolution and shaping of the basic theory.

Without being original, using elements of psychology, psycho-sociology and philosophy, Moisi has the merit of formulating the theory on the *mechanism of determination* of the relevant gestures by small groups to large groups — peoples — or by the human society in its entirety as a result of the revealed emotional elements. His central thesis is *that emotions are crucial in understanding the nature and evolution of the world*, and it is most likely that the mechanism remain defined like this as long as the human species shall exist on Earth.

The great advantage of Moisi’s theory is that it superposed perfectly on the fundamental themes and the explanation of the *formation of conflicts*.

Thus, the defining elements of the conflicts<sup>142</sup> include one or more parts that share the elements of power — authority, resources or status — that have the necessary resources and are ready to spend for reaching, achieving the object of dispute moreover, they have the will to do it and they do it. Johan Galtung defines<sup>143</sup>, in the classic variation, a conflict as a triangle formed by *contradiction, attitude and behaviour*, underlining directly the necessity of resources, attitude and also of the will and related behaviour in order to make the transition from a latent or potential conflict to an a real conflict. The attitude component in Galtung’s model, namely the transition from *contradiction to latent conflict* directly affects the emotions of the concerned group, the ones that generates the attitudes. Moreover, the explicit transition to the dimension of the open violence requires a major support of the leadership beyond the attitude and marks the transition to violent behaviour, namely the *manifest conflict*, the support of the emotions being very important here.

In another classic model, the one of the *escalation and de-escalation*<sup>144</sup>, things become clearer when we talk about the phase of jumping to polarization contradictions. *Polarization* is made by leadership and decision makers on the basis of accessing the emotions of the populations for obtaining the support within the latent conflict or the war that follows. *Emotions* ensure the mobilization, full involvement of the society and preparing resource allo-

<sup>140</sup> Dominique Moisi, p. XIII.

<sup>141</sup> Dominique Moisi, “The Clash of Emotions”, *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2007.

<sup>142</sup> Iulian Chifu, “Conflict Analysis”, Lecture notes, Department of International Relations, SNSPA, 2010-2011.

<sup>143</sup> Johan Galtung, “Conflict as a way of life” in H. Freeman ed., *Progress in Mental Health*, London, Churchill, 1969.

<sup>144</sup> Oliver Romsbotham, Tom Woodhouse, Hugh Miall, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, second edition, Polity Press, Cambridge, p. 11.

cation for acquiring the desired element of power. It is also a direct element of the impact of the transition from contradiction to the *attitudinal conflictive involvement* of the large groups of the society.

We have seen above the major role of the *identity* in conflicts. The coagulation and preparation of the group for conflict involves polarization, mobilization of the internal forces, which means, in terms of identity, in *strengthening the borders*<sup>145</sup>. This border separates the group from the exterior of the group and it is the visible sign of mobilization. In the case of antagonistic groups, of course the elements in question are reflected symbolically, *symbols* being assigned to the internal identity of the group, separates the sacred inside, the good and the elements that need to be defended, from the profane outside, especially the identity of the enemy.

Of course, when we enter in the field of *conflicts of identity*, where the object of difference and the reason of the conflict is the *identity* itself, we have the direct manifestation of the *dual nature of identity* — first for the creation and defining of the group, then for building the characteristics that become the subject of dispute pushed in the violence area. Here, the *symbolism* is stronger, *the cohesion elements of the more visible large groups*, where the ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, all objective elements, play a major role, as the related symbols. Also, *the emotion* is more relevant when the symbols are *profaned*, desecrated by the enemy.

The mechanism of accessing emotions are diverse and multiple. It depends on the inventiveness of the leaders and also the fashion and the resorts of the era in accessing the right elements for determining the *emotion that coagulates* and engages, moves the mechanism to violence or, on the contrary, to projects and *creative visions*, to construction, not destruction. But the emotion, the passions, in a classic form, cannot be separated from the human nature and social mechanisms, from *triggering the actions of the large groups*.

*Emotions* present some *irrationality*, unpredictable in any human action, that it is about the individual or collective dimension. And irrationality can often lead to *violence*. Moisi talks about the categories of emotions that generate pure human reactions, stating that “Fear against hope, Hope against humiliation, humiliation causing irrational reactions or even, sometimes, leading to violence — nobody can understand the world we live in without examining the emotions that help define it<sup>146</sup>”.

The same Moisi succeeds in defining, in a creative manner, the conflict during the post-Cold War and shows the *fundamental source and emotions*. Thus, he shows that, after the fall of the Berlin Wall and bipolarism, after the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of the enemy, the *globalization process* has led to insecurity and has placed the emphasis on the *question of*

<sup>145</sup> Ho Won Jeong, *Conflict...*, p. 76.

<sup>146</sup> Moisi, *Ibid*, p. XI.

*identity*. Parenthesized in the anterior period, when *ideology* was dominant and the bipolar conflict with the enemy counted, first of all, over everything, to the detriment of national aspirations and of territorial and inter-ethnic conflicts inside the blocks, *identity* flared, in various forms with the fall of one of the super powers, when the imperative of *maintaining the front united* faded or disappeared completely. The inter-ethnic and religious, sectarian conflicts in the post-Cold War period were based also on such mechanisms.

The transition from the century of *ideology* to the one of the *identity* is coined by Moisi, with a specific emphasis on *emotions*, which become more important than never. From competitive ideologies built in the bipolarism of the hyper-politicised models, the fall in the *battle for identity* caused by a fundamental need was made almost naturally. And identity is deeply linked to *confidence*, an indispensable ingredient for both basic individual's identity needs — personal identity and group identity<sup>147</sup> — and the confidence or the lack thereof is expressed through emotions, particularly *fear, hope and humiliation*<sup>148</sup>.

Moreover, the multiplication of the players and the appearance of the diffuse and non-state opponent in the paradigm of *enemy in the city*, difficult to identify and to negotiate with, moving the conflicts from the “external”, interstate format to a domestic and diffuse enemy, unspecified and indistinct accentuated the insecurity, vulnerability and *fear* as associated fundamental emotion. Even though useful in maintaining the spirit of conservation, fear multiplied over *long periods* while maintaining an exaggerated perception of threats, creates major changes in the individual and group psyche, leading to formulae of defence or adjustment that affects the balance of the society.

*Self-confidence*, in its individual or collective form, is measurable, and the impact is very important as it accesses, in fact, the elements of the fundamental emotions. Self-confidence as a person or as a group is inextricably linked with the proclaimed identity, because trust first allows the ability of projection into the future, the ability to meet individual and collection abilities. Thus, confidence is linked to the *hope* of reaching and fully capitalizing on the existing availability, of shaping and accomplishing the individual or group vision and projects; confidence is one of the most important and healthy components of the presented mechanism of defining the group, individual and society. Hope has also *a constructive relevance*; it is a *positive emotion* that can drive the constructive resources of the person or the large group in question.

Moisi describes and identifies the *three fundamental emotions* that drive the individual and the society<sup>149</sup>, basic emotions that stem precisely from their relation with confidence: *humiliation, fear and hope*. He explains pri-

<sup>147</sup> Ho Won Jeong, *Conflict management ...*, p. 63.

<sup>148</sup> Moisi, *Ibid*, p. 12.

<sup>149</sup> Moisi, *Ibid*.

mary emotions, even though they don't necessarily exist in a pure form, but mixed emotions in individuals and groups. Thus, fear is not far from hope, and behind fear or even hope we may often find humiliation.

*Fear* is the lack of confidence, brings in the worry for the present and makes people wait for a more dangerous future. *Hope* is, by contrast, an expression of trust, based on the conviction that today is better than yesterday and tomorrow will be better than the present. *Humiliation* means the hurt confidence of those who lost hope in the future and for whom the lack of confidence is the result of the mistakes of the people who treated them badly in the past<sup>150</sup>. The contrast between the idealised and glorious past and the frustrating present is too big, and humiliation prevails.

Hope means I want, I can and I will do. Humiliation means that I will never succeed because of others, so I should try to destroy them since I can't join them. I want, but I can't because I cannot afford. Fear means that I am there, I have, I don't want to give or allow the others, and I expect them to do something to me<sup>151</sup>.

Measuring confidence is possible through perceptions. *National confidence* is measured by indicators such as the level of trust of the population in institutions, authorities and government, in patterns of expenditures and the level of investments. In international relations or relations between states we can mention, as measures or *levels* of trust, the number and quality of the agreements between the two players.

While the main, fundamental emotions are the three we have already noted, they are indeed natural, but they function in a *convenient dosage*. Unbalancing the relation between emotions leads to extremely serious things, to blocking the pragmatic thinking and to violence. States and governments should take rational actions in the system, *pragmatism and rationality* being presumed. It is the same reason why democracy creates mechanisms and institutions that temper individual decision makers, so that emotions do not affect the situation decisively.

Emotions have been kept away from the decision area because they add *an element of additional irrationality* in a world that is already in a natural state of disorder. But even states are influenced by the emotions of the individuals in key positions in the decision process and of the different groups that start to manifest a common emotion state.

Thomas Friedman's famous metaphor of globalization becomes the key of the theory: "The world is flat"<sup>152</sup>. The phenomenon made *the world more passionate* than ever and emotions become essential for understanding the

<sup>150</sup> Iulian Chifu, "Religion and Conflict. Radicalization and Violence in the Wider Black Sea Area", in George Maior and Serghei Konoplyov, coordinators, *The Strategic Knowledge in the Wider Black Sea Area*, Rao, 2011, pp. 202-221.

<sup>151</sup> Moisi, *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> Thomas Friedman, *The World is Flat. A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2005.

complexity of the world we live in. *Amplified by mass-media*, emotions reflect and react to globalization and the quick access of media to events, running for audiences (thus, *emotions*) makes that the angle, the objective of the camera and video editing, magnifying glass through which realities are seen, exacerbate emotions because emotions attract people, they mobilize them and financially support the media.

In a globalized world, with no limits and censorship due to ideological reasons, *the access to mass media and information* became a universal constant. In a transparent world, the poor, uneducated and deprived of rights people become aware by the world of the rich, and the rich lost the privilege to deny the right to these benefits. The world as we know it has become even more vulnerable, more and more difficult to manage.

Against this background, even the global terrorism personified by Al-Qaeda, after the September 11 attacks, proved to be only *a label* that facilitated the definition and the designation of the enemy rather than its clear identification. The critique of the *concept of the global war against terrorism* is partially correct — which is why even George W. Bush gave this term up during his second term — in fact, this wording was not only a method of simplifying the model, in accordance with the changes in the post-bipolar age, the age of transition to the globalized world.

This process of globalisation, the complexity of threats and the changes in the nature of the enemy, together with the *disappearance of ideologies* as a principle of cohesion, the age of asserting the individuality after the fall of the communist regime, everything led to the need to find *community links in identities*. It has become more and more important to affirm your individuality, and the *cohesion necessary to the group* led to an increased struggle for identity.

The identity is defined less by political beliefs and ideas than by the *perception* of our existence, gained from the *respect* received from others. Emotions are our mirror. They are mutual and here influenced by the characteristics of the group. We are talking about emotions that are intertwined, mutually dependent, essential for understanding our world today, dominated by identity.

*Fear, humiliation and hope* are natural ingredients that are vital for the human being. All three are important for life: fear is necessary for surviving, hope fires up “the engine of life”, humiliation, in small doses, can stimulate somebody’s improvement and development if it comes from somebody who knows better and is a friend or an uninterested party. But humiliation without hope is destructive and *too much fear, too much humiliation, without sufficient hope* is the most dangerous social combination that leads to the greatest instability and tension.

**Chapter 2**  
**RADICALIZATION AND VIOLENCE IN ISLAM**  
**A CLASSIFICATION OF RADICALIZATION**  
**MECHANISMS**

**IULIAN CHIFU**

The triangle made up of radicalization, violence and Islam is not a compulsory dependence and nuances in that area are needed in order to identify the real pattern and mechanisms of radicalization that lead to violence acceptances and terrorist gestures, if not suicide bombings. Defining a topology of radicalization mechanisms is a challenging endeavor and only one common pattern could be identified: identity disorders and ambiguity in assessing and accepting its own identity by the virtual possible recruit for radicalization in order to be turned to actor of violent actions in the name of faith, ideology or political causes. And religion is first and foremost used as a tool for polarization and strong identities attractive for young people that are associating prestige characteristics to radical beliefs and behavior.

*Radicalization, violence and Islam:  
an unavoidable triad?*

When we are trying to identify the reasons behind terrorism, suicidal acts and violence, we enter the narrow space linking religious radicalization and violence, therefore generating the preconception that a single religion, Islam, is to blame. The politically correct approach should distance itself from the preconception linking the Islamic religion with such catastrophes, genocides and mass killings, crimes against humanity, and human history shows us such events happen in every religion, and furthermore, they are not necessarily linked with religion.

Christianity had its shameful moments too. The times were different. The discussion regarding fact and fiction in religion and the 600 years difference between Jesus and Mohamed is also irrelevant. However, if we accept a broader take on religion and we place in the same field as ideology and political science, we will find many formulas that justify killing fellow humans and other radical actions, even if suicide can't be explained. Preconceptions

prevent us from writing an all encompassing study, or maybe the low number of cases found in other religions, or maybe in present times, when reality is over-covered by mass media, Islamic radicalism is emphasized.

The case of Anders Breivik, the Norwegian that perpetrated the Oslo and the Utoya Island massacres on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July 2011 is compelling. What is the exact difference between him and a jihadist? He even shares the same pseudo-religious radicalism, with history fragments and Christian religious precepts, the same historic myth of saving his race and the same posing as a martyr of the faith along with other followers recruited on the internet. The religion he was preaching was questionable, it has nothing to do with mainstream Christianity, he posed as a lone wolf, but in the end he was no different from a self-radicalized, internet inspired jihadist who carries out terrorist attacks in other parts of the world. The only missing element was the suicidal intent.

The concept of “Vigilante Knights“, a resistance without leaders similar to the concepts promoted in the USA by some white supremacy groups that pursue a certain “Christian identity”, give birth to lonely wolfs who have a pack and pose as crusaders, chosen by God to be His agents on Earth. Attacks against fellow humans, fuelled or not by xenophobia targeting foreigners, immigrants or Muslims tend to be part of a “holy war” needed to save the white race<sup>1</sup>. On the other hand, it’s difficult to differentiate between extremists and fundamentalists found in any religion or ideology who are willing to organize attacks and those who only preach and have extremist beliefs<sup>2</sup>. This is precisely why the focus should not be religion or radicalization, maybe not even people who hold radical beliefs, but, of all of these, only those people who can take the step from radical beliefs to radical actions. And when, besides those who are politically, religiously or ideologically motivated, psychically unstable characters enter the picture, the formula needed for identification becomes more obvious.

The formula becomes even more complex and the number of variables increases when we take into account the possibility of negotiating with jihadists, fundamentalists of any faith. Ranging from the Taliban and Al Qaeda to sects in the USA which practice mass suicide and could not be stopped in time, negotiating with God’s agents on Earth or those seeking eternal salvation proved extremely difficult. It’s hard to fight on Earth with warriors engaged in a cosmic war<sup>3</sup>, even more so when the purpose of life preached by fake religion or ideology — the man is the only being which is aware of its limited life span<sup>4</sup> — isn’t creation, procreation, neither love, nor good deeds

<sup>1</sup> Scott Stewart, *Norway: Lessons from a Successful Lone Wolf Attacker*, STRATFOR, 28<sup>th</sup> of July 2011.

<sup>2</sup> *Utoya attacks*, Stratfor, 23<sup>rd</sup> of July 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (3rd ed.), Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003, p. 220.

<sup>4</sup> Gregory F. Treverton, Heather S. Gregg, Daniel Gibran, Charles W. Yost, *Exploring Religious Conflict*, The RAND Corporation, 2005.

but suicide and, like the Japanese sect Aum Shinrikyo did, taking with you as many non-believers as possible, purpose preached using sarin gas, flames or a crashing plane.

The stories about Jihad define and highlight many types of radical approaches, but teach us that regardless of context, whether it's a secular insurgency or secular terrorism, there can be negotiations and reconciliation, that radical Islam once in charge of a state, in a genuine competitive environment, even if it's not democratic, assumes responsibilities and lower the aspirations they previously had, however persons who tie their destiny to religious obligations or martyrdom, who answer a higher call — religious, divine, but also “saving a nation” or a race, class warfare, or any other political, ideological or religious form — do not negotiate their role, messianic, heroic or historic vocation<sup>5</sup> and, ultimately, their defeating death and the continuation, in one way or another, of their earthly life in eternity.

While blaming solely Islam is an exaggeration, just like talking about Islamic radicalization as a terrorist producing laboratory and nursery — terrorists who later kill innocent people in Western Europe and the North America — it is equally true that current statistics show us this reality can no longer be ignored. In Europe, the Middle East, United States, North Caucasus or South-East Asia most attacks and acts of violence are perpetrated in the name of Islam by extremists educated in a jihadist form of the religion — which may not be part of Islam, but utilizes its precepts and writings. And although not all Muslims are extremists, and not all extremists are necessarily violent, and not all those who preach violence are willing to act<sup>6</sup>, this is still the main recruiting pool for violent extremists. This is the reason why I approached this type of radicalization that leads to violence, linked to Islam, but I tried to distance myself enough in order to be able to tackle, in a broader context, any formula of radicalization, regardless of source.

*The use of religion. The use of Islam.  
Feranda religion and the new religion*

The use of religious precepts to generate violent behaviour is justified by religion's capacity to mobilize people, especially in its fundamentalist forms, but also by the legitimacy offered by God, the superior being, and by the reward received by the martyr in the afterlife and the eternal salvation. The capacity to divide is also relevant when it comes to religion, because of the power of sanctity and righteousness versus the profane, the impure and the lack of faith. The Heaven — Hell dichotomy and the impact of this image, the

<sup>5</sup> Larry Goodson, Thomas H. Johnson, *Parallels with the Past — How the Soviets Lost in Afghanistan, How the Americans are Losing*, FPRI, April 25, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Sharpe, *Suicide Bombers: The Psychological, Religious and Other Imperatives*, St. Edmunds College, University of Cambridge, ISO Press, Amsterdam, London Washington DC, 2006.

use of symbols and emotions generated by the desecration of these symbols are, also, ingredients that encourage the use of religion as a factor in generating violent behaviour among believers.

However, religion is not enough because, by its very essence, it calls for peace, love, peaceful coexistence, teaching that do not help create violent behaviours. Elements regarding the just war<sup>7</sup> and the justification of violence can be found in some religion, while the practice of using violence in the name of religion has been in use for more than 2000 years. There are also religions that allow, on a large scale, interpretations of religious leaders to augment fundamental text, both having equal value for the believer.

This opens the way for abusive interpretation of religious text and for the creation of a new branch, whose ideas and precepts are completely different from those of the old religion. In fact, we are dealing with a completely new religion, with everything resulting from it. And in the case of violence, we can identify the way in which the religion is altered, in this case Islam, when we weight in how many ideas the religion offers and how many are being offered by various interpretations during the process that is feranda religion.

Violence as a sacred duty is the mechanism that generates the most complicated messages, which cannot be refuted by logic, pragmatism or negotiations. They are found in all religions, but some are more open to change, others are more rigid, because they do not allow priests to change or interpret fundamental texts, and there is just one holy book.

In other religions, interpretations are allowed, Islam being one example. And here, the fundamentalism, traditional customs are able to react against modernity<sup>8</sup>, against openness and access to information and education, with all the resulting side effects, and undesirable trends may include the „return to origins“, but the impact of the mercantile secularism, of liberty and excess of images generate the recoil that delimitates the sacred from this profane, by building precepts where Quran and Hadith does not provide any answers, and edicts issued by imams are sources of inspiration for religious-based violence that targets the new world, modernity and freedom, describes exclusively via the excesses and the human perversion it generates.

Just like apocalyptic, millennial or alien cults, the Islamic fundamentalism tends to be exclusive, because it highlights its own unique avatars and relevance, while searching for „strong“ and well known identities. „Innovative traditionalism“ is the result of the symbiosis between religious fundamentalism and secular modernity<sup>9</sup>. Here resides the formula used for radicalization and „politicization of religion“: selecting a precept, focusing attention on it and ripping it out of context, so that its interpretation and its mea-

<sup>7</sup> Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon*, Oxford University Press, Oxford New York, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred. Religion, Violence and Reconciliation*, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham-Boulder-New York-Oxford, 2000.

<sup>9</sup> Emmanuel Silvan, *The Mythologies of Religious Radicalism: Judaism and Islam* in Mark Jurgensmeyer ed., *Violence and the Sacred in the Modern World*, Harper and Row, San Francisco, 1989.

ning can be attached to a particular political objective or policy. Thus, for the purpose of achieving its aims, symbolic power and divine legitimacy are used to legitimize the policies and aspirations of a particular group.

Jihad and the legitimization of religious violence, including Islam, or mainly in Islam, is based on extremist innovation, on interpretation, on *ijtihad*, and not the classic texts. This is true for both in Sunni Islam and Shi'a Islam. Both branches of Islam claim the roots of the martyr and that they represent the „true Islam“, but the violence of Sunni extremist Al Qaeda or the violence of Shi'a Hezbollah — the party of Allah — is the result of „newly created religions“, not of the original precepts.

Recently, the versatility of the Islamic religion which allows an imam, an Emir or an ideologue to issue religious decrees that are mandatory and augment classical texts, led to expansion of the role of ideologies, schools of thought or interpretation, warriors, politicians and leaders, militants and insurgents who calibrate their own aspirations and political ideas in ideologies transcribed in Islamic religious texts, so to enhance their legitimacy by citing their divine origin<sup>10</sup>. This is the case of the Emirs who lead the Caucasus Emirate — recently converted to Islam even though they only know a handful of suras in Arabic that they keep on repeating — and also of Ayman Zawahiri, the Al Qaeda ideologue, who is diverting the struggle to defend their own Islamic people, against rebellious political leaders — the Arab dictators — and creates the battle against the „far enemy“, that can't be found on Arab territory, where fighting is legitimate according to both wahabism and salafism, and is only found in his home state, enabling the identification of innocent civilians as legitimate targets. Universal Jihad was declared in this manner.

### *Radicalization and violence. The steps of transformation*

The urge to investigate the link between Islamic radicalization and violence is all the more legitimate when beyond the large number of cases, that allow us to address the issue using relevant statistics, the Islam has today all the elements and ingredients necessary for a journey of radicalization, which allows us to observe patterns of radicalization that may lead to the use of violence and to the acceptance terror and even self-sacrifice by suicide as valid instruments.

However, we need to be careful here because, despite the fact that both classic Islam and the new Islam have texts that encourage radicalization, radicalization does not automatically lead to violence, or encourage violence or the use violence against others. In this case the methodology is more complex and requires many more elements.

<sup>10</sup> Mihaela Matei, *Islamul politic și democrația. Între reformă, interpretare și Jihad*, Rao Publishing, Bucharest, 2011.

If we use terms of Johan Galtung<sup>11</sup>, the trigger, the start of the conflict has several phases. Thus, radicalization and the preaching of violence, the religious, ideological or political justification of violence, formalized by documents, books or direct instruments of radicalization — e-jihad or sites — are reasons and represent the first phase when contradictions are created. Preparation of the attackers and the attack is the equivalent of the attitudinal component, because it requires thought and preparation of potential capabilities, based on radicalization. Extremists are trained in camps or acquire the needed skills for perpetrating the attack and enter the suicidal state using on-line resources. These are the ideological and practical components of jihad. Finally, the third step which actually marks the use of violence, the one that provides the link between virtual crime and actual crime involves the planning of a violent action and the implementation of all the elements and capabilities needed, including the ones necessary when it comes to a suicide bombers, whose conditioning and will must exceed the usual radicalization or training since he must become a „martyr“. In some cases we are dealing with networks that use well established formulas, unique to each group, in other cases we are dealing with direct radicalization.

This process is extremely difficult to quantify and there are numerous methods that aim to clarify it, some even based on the procedures used by jihadist websites or networks, but they do not fully cover enormous range of possibilities and motivations. Chris Heffelfinger<sup>12</sup> proposed a model that includes the „steps of radicalization“, model that was used by Clint Watts to evaluate how these methods can be used on U.S. Army soldiers and to identify types of personalities which are vulnerable to such procedures<sup>13</sup>.

The model has 4 phases: Introduction — when individuals find out about the with extremist ideology and the related literature for the first time, Immersion, the second phase, involves the immersion of the individual into the extremist ideology and acceptance its integration into the individual's way of thinking (which is when the contradictions appear because the individual has to choose between society and the use of violence). During the third phase, identified by Heffelfinger, Frustration appears in reaction to other believers' unwillingness to act — this is equivalent to the appearance of the attitudinal components according to Galtung's classic model. Finally, the fourth level is the action, namely the phase of Determination, when the individual been conditioned and is now ready to act in support of the extremist ideology that he now believes he is a part of.

Each phase corresponds to a number of steps and every step is composed from a number of many indicators that allow us to accurately track the evo-

<sup>11</sup> Johan Galtung, *Violence Theory in Transformation by Peaceful Means (Transcend Method)*, United Nations Disaster Management Training Programme, United Nations, 2000.

<sup>12</sup> Chris Heffelfinger, *Radical Islam in America*, Potomac Books, New York 2011.

<sup>13</sup> Clint Watts, *Major Nidal Hasan and the Fort Hood Tragedy: Implication for the US Armed Forces*, FPRI, June 27, 2011.

lution of an individual up to the moment when he executes the act of violence, i.e. the terrorist attack. These steps are often accompanied by certain events occurring in the person's emotional life, family related, wealth related, moments that bear a psychological impact or are relevant professionally. During all these phases up until personal decision to use violence — when personal determination accompanies the attitudes and contradictions that led to its existence — there is a way back for the individual.

Although during the initial phase only the search literature related to extremist ideology is an indicator of the path, during the immersion phase elements of the ideology begin to be used by the individual in dialogues he has with the persons he trusts the most and may become recruits or allies and, also, he begins to participate in rituals or activities related to the ideology he's following such as altering his physical appearance and clothing according to match his ideological beliefs. However, the opposite is not true, not every man who lets his beard grow and wears traditional Islamic clothing is a future terrorist, and the same is true for women who decide to wear a burka.

Warnings begin to show during the manifestation of frustration phase, attitudinal elements are more obvious, and they are targeted both by those who recruit jihadists and the by law enforcement. Debates concerning the „true“ ideology and discussions regarding the lack of action are signs of frustration and desire for action, the preparation for the leap to violence. Increasing self-isolation and a tendency to get the widest possible approval for the use of violence, or investing in their own education — which include going to ideological training camps that are far away from home — are tangible warning signs. But this does not indicate either the willingness to resort to violence, even if the individual accepts the possibility that violence may be necessary.

Only the last phase is decisive. And the ability to perceive in time the jump or the emotional element which serves as the trigger for the jump to the need for action, tolerating violence and desire to see things change in the chosen direction, to involvement and committing the terrorist act demanded by the extremist ideology, is extremely low and varies depending on the situation and on the individual involved. This is when weapons are acquired, actions are being planned, property is being donated to friends, wills are being written, actions that are to be executed during the actual attack being rehearsed and all the third parties targeted by the violent actions are being threatened directly.

### *Radicalization and the reasons for radicalization. Types of radicalism*

If the psychological approach focuses especially on how individuals who go through a process of radicalization can be identified, another approach, this one from a sociological point of view, focuses on social context and the environment that push individuals towards extremism. The Research Group

for Psychology and Religion at the Cambridge University<sup>14</sup>, in a project led by Mary Sharpe, utilized the sociological methodology to identify what part of our contemporary society makes individuals to resort to extremist radicalization and violence.

On the sociological scale, approaches are diverse and range from the impact of the relocation of migrants and the failure to adapt to modern society to the detachment from religion and moral values present in modern society and the prejudices created by 9/11 towards Arabs and Muslims but also include other more sophisticated items. Excessive media coverage, the abundance of images and information, alienation caused by the computer and the virtual space, the impact of globalization, all bring key elements that can be interpreted in the context of excessive individualism, lack of community spirit and temptation presented by radical options.

All the written information and practical experiences, along with the study of failed cases of suicide bombers, who were interviewed in prison, an excellent study conducted by a team led by Mary Sharpe<sup>15</sup>, allowed us to identify a formula used to classify violent radicalization, formula which we present below:

Religion based radicalization and the continued advance towards accepting and later using violence on religious grounds — as a form of ideology, covering political goals, the result of religion's polarization potential and, also, its potential to mobilize believers — is motivated primarily identity related reasons<sup>16</sup>, which are the basic needs of the human personality: the need for a self-identity and the need to belonging to a prestigious group identity, needed to complement and often compensate for the lack of relevant self-identity file. Thus, the most exposed individuals to suicidal terrorism are those who are not satisfied their identity and are unable to define their life purpose or those who resort to compensating this component, as a result of personal identity ambiguity, of dissatisfaction related to their own achievements, of their group identity completely replacing own identity<sup>17</sup> while they become more attached to the group, obeying every rule and even over interpreting precepts of the group precisely because they need to strengthen the barriers so they can hide inside the group their own lack of identity<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Jose Liht, Sara Savage and Psychology and Religion Research Group, University of Cambridge, *Identifying Young Muslims Susceptible to Violent Radicalisation: Psychological Theory and Recommendations* in Mary Sharpe, *Suicide Bombers: The Psychological, Religious and Other Imperatives*, St. Edmunds College, University of Cambridge, ISO Press, Amsterdam, London Washington DC, 2006.

<sup>15</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>16</sup> Iulian Chifu, *Religie și conflict. Violență și radicalizare în Regiunea Extinsă a Mării Negre* in George Cristian Maior and Sergei Konoplyov Ed., *Cunoaștere strategică în zona Extinsă a Mării Negre*, Harvard Kennedy School, RAO Publishing, 2011, pp. 223-230.

<sup>17</sup> Iulian Chifu, *Influence of Religious Extremism on the Stability and Security of Democratic Societies in the Balkans*, in Sorin Butiri and Dusan Mihailovic Ed., *Evolving Asymmetric Threats in the Balkans*, NATO Science for Peace and Security Series, IOS Press, 2011, pp. 37-54.

<sup>18</sup> Iulian Chifu, *Religion and Conflict: Radicalism and Violence in the North Caucasus*, "Turkish Policy Quarterly", Vol.10, 2011, pp 121-133.

This reality contradicts pre-existing stereotypes that claim that the person who resorts to violence, terrorism and suicide terrorism to achieve the recognition haven to be mentally ill or suffering from an incurable disease, that would push him towards that. Very few of those who choose this path of violent radicalization are mentally ill, but most of those who are radicalized come from difficult backgrounds and poor education. There are also the perpetrators of the most terrible actions of suicide terrorism, such as 9/11, that have with higher education, are fully aware of what they are doing and doing it wilfully.

The same false stereotypes are recorded in relation to poverty and origin of extremists from poverty dominated environments. The perpetrators of 9/11 or of the London bombings were individuals with a secure future, who benefited from scholarships and whose actions were not financially motivated. Furthermore we cannot deny the existence of the historical Palestinian terrorism, carried out by refugees that had little culture, little training and education, knew little about Islam or religious precepts, and were susceptible to conditioning and radicalization<sup>19</sup>, or the existence of the famous Hezbollah suicide fighters whose portraits adorned the streets of Beirut and whose families received the financial reward for their suicidal actions along with the honour represented by the fact they had a martyr in the family.

Conversion is another resort with strong impact on the mind of the person making this step, usually towards the extremist precepts of the religion he chose<sup>20</sup>. On the other hand, this field offers surprises and counterexamples too: conversion after joining mercenary groups or a political struggle, excessive formalism converting to a religion that, in fact, they know little about. Religiously unprepared militants are often the target of radicalization because they have already accepted violence and the religion offers a justification for an already existing.

Even worse, as we have seen before, the adopted religion is a new form of feranda religion, which claims to be part a pre-existing doctrine, adapted to the ideological, political or practical needs of the group, possibly inspired by religious conservatism or by a fundamentalism that becomes exclusive. The ideology appears only after the group and goals are defined, its completion is necessary because it will later spread the precepts of the group and will draw in new followers, resulting in the need to legitimize their own actions using the „will of God“.

Finally, we can highlight a few reasons that stand behind violent radicalization, including terrorist actions involving suicidal acts:

— radicalization as *a form of protest*, where a certain „official religion“ was confiscated and is controlled by non-democratic authorities, and swit-

<sup>19</sup> Iulian Chifu, *Religie și conflict. Violența motivată religios*, “Sfera Politicii”, Vol. XIX. Nr.10, 2011, pp. 22-32.

<sup>20</sup> Jahangir E. Arasli, *Violent Converts to Islam: Growing Cluster and Rising Trend, in Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program*, (online), Vol. 1, No.1 CTX 1, 8/1/2011.

ching to radical, fundamentalist or extremist forms of the religion are a form of protest against the authority — e.g. North Caucasus.

— radicalization as *an act of bravery* — an interesting form found especially among young people who use violent radicalization as a way to express their rebellious nature, just like who others have embraced extreme ideologies or radical political options. It's a form of fashion can be found among young Muslims that live both in the West and in Islamic states, but it's also a basic formula their conversion by militant groups and may even lead to suicidal attacks.

— radicalization as *an aspiration* — when religion becomes a purpose in life, when the violent action preached by religion or fighting for God become the sole life purpose. Here we find the most serious identity problems and the most radical solution to life problems generated by real or perceived shortcomings. It is a last resort formula of personal motivation in life and it relies on a people with big ego that do not have the skills necessary to achieve the status they desire.

— radicalization as *an identity* — it deals with the lack of personal identity and, from the need to find an identity, the individual slides towards adopting a group identity to which he is fully subordinated, leading to extremes generated by the need to strengthen the group identity that protects the individual against the lack of identity. Identity radicalization leads to the subordination of personal identity to group identity, a situation that it deemed necessary, by those affected by identity radicalization, under the pretext of true commitment, for all those who are in group.

— radicalization based *on ignorance* — is a radicalization form that capitalizes on the lack of proper knowledge regarding a certain religion, policy or ideology that are presented in a mystic way, using a large number of symbols, and tries to influence the emotional and not the cognitive functions of the individual. By using the lack of education and knowledge a militant character or religious authority can force his will onto others around him who “fear God” and do not wish to challenge his authority. It's the classic case of the Chechen President, Ramzan Kadârov, and also the case Doku Umarov, leader of the Caucasus Emirate, both of them knowing only a few suras in Arabic that they keep on repeating over and over again but uses them to impose themselves over their subjects.

— radicalization *for a reward* — involves the use of the suicidal act hoping in return for either a direct reward or the promise of reward after death. Mary Sharpe<sup>21</sup> found out after interviewing a number of failed suicide bombers that they did not wanted jihad, or death infidels, or the destruction of rebellious presidents, but wanted to get the prize of 72 virgins that awaited them in heaven. Similarly it was the material reward offered to their families that made Palestinians found in Hezbollah funded camps to choose the path

<sup>21</sup> *Idem.*

of martyrdom in actions against Israel, with the addition of the honours bestowed upon them and their families as a results of their so called heroic actions.

### *Conclusions*

Radicalization and the call for extremist actions are not the direct or the exclusive result of the alienation of migrants in western societies, unlike those radicalized by the “enemy inside the citadel” paradigm. Despite sociological studies that talk about maladjustment and “the clash of civilizations”, this theory cannot explain the actions of immigrants that represent the 3<sup>rd</sup> or the 4<sup>th</sup> generation, are completely integrated, and suddenly leave their homes to blow themselves up in public transport means along with their compatriots — the case of the London bombings. However the mechanism and the temptation of finding “the faith of the ancients”, the return to origins, and the acceptance of the extremist preachers of the religion, offer an explication — incomplete, but hold water.

Despite the attempts to find patterns, violent radicalization generates difficulties when it comes to its classification, either because of the small number of cases that resort to violence, or because very few of those who do resort to violence are caught and psychically or socially evaluated. The common ground of all radicalized remains an religion/ideology taken to the extreme, but even here there are a number of counterexamples such as those who join actions, fights and “causes” and only later convert or embrace an extremist form of faith that justifies their actions *a posteriori*, they seem to be inclined towards a mercenary life or radicalism as a form of bravery or aspiration.

Still, the identity component remains a cornerstone, the allure of radicalization and the search for prestigious group identities — apparently as well as the image of the environment they came from — by stripping the individual from a person’s future and the subordinations of the self-identity to that of the group, respectively to its objectives and system of beliefs.

## **THEORY**

**Chapter 3**  
**RELIGION AND CONFLICT: RADICALISM  
AND VIOLENCE IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS**

**IULIAN CHIFU**

Lately, the North Caucasus has become a major attraction point due to a great number of events and the worrisome trend in the region with regards to religion based violence, radicalization, and the conversion of Russian/Slavic inhabitants. This situation has a big impact on the Russian Federation, the Wider Black Sea Region, as well as the overall fight against terrorism. This article explores into the causes of this emerging phenomenon in the region with the rising violence and radical approaches based on religion: the factors giving impulse to such trend and its spread in the Wider Black Sea region are analyzed here. Themes surrounding the subject are various, requiring researchers to pay a great deal of attention to several areas of study and to access numerous bibliographical references in order to provide in depth evaluations. We, as the Center for Conflict Prevention and Early Warning Center in Bucharest, have carried out such study as part of a project supported by the German Marshall Fund Black Sea Trust.

One goal of this study is to supply a base of evolving information, ideas, and theories to support the evaluation of the situation in the North Caucasus. The other goal is to foresee, based on these qualitative theories and trends, where this road is heading, and in which way the current situation will evolve. It will also be interesting to see whether the essential elements present for this region — Jihadism; conversion to radical Islam; suicide attacks; and terrorism — are to be found in other areas of the world and whether they represent grounds for the assessment of a much larger phenomena.

*Bibliography, Associated Themes, and Ideas On How  
to Approach the Conflicts in the North Caucasus*

The theme entailing conflicts in the North Caucasus is extremely broad and becomes particularly interesting, especially when we focus specifically on religion-based conflicts. Initial ethnic and national-separatist reflexes today

have acquired a different manner of existence over a religious context, as exemplified by the Caucasus Emirate project as well as numerous religious insurgent groups dominating the region. At the same time, we also notice the involvement of Slavs that have converted to Islam and the rediscovery by moderate secular Muslims of the post-Soviet societies<sup>1</sup> of their religious identities in radicalized forms.

Our research is separated into three essential parts: the first part consists in the theoretical background originating from numerous disciplines, covering several realities easily identified in the North Caucasus. This ensures that subsequent evaluations will be based on consistent studies that have benefited from the evaluation of other regions which are not directly related to the North Caucasus but carrying the characteristics of the various elements of Islamic radicalization analyzed here. Furthermore, the theoretical and general assessment of the phenomenon will help us draw conclusions that will be useful for showing the direction in which the North Caucasus is evolving into. They will be able to portray a prediction on the path and the nature of the transformations in the region, their impact on the wider Black Sea area, and maybe even offer models for other regions.

In terms of methodology, we approach conflicts systematically, recognizing the role that identities play in these conflicts as well as considering identity conflicts as a specific type of conflict. There is also a need to further analyse the characteristics of interethnic conflicts, focusing more on specific traits of religious conflicts and elements defining the relation between religion, conflict, and violence.

Last but not least, it is useful to take into account the original ideas of Dominique Moisi<sup>2</sup>, who created the “geopolitics of emotions,” which replaces Samuel Huntington’s stereotypes in the *Clash of Civilizations* with a model that brings emotions to the forefront. This approach is valuable because it brings into discussion emotions, representations, and individual perceptions, as well as, commune emotions that could trigger collective reactions of different groups and communities in the forefront.

The second part of the study involves the socio-psychological elements that have determined radicalization and conversion; meaning the transformation from following a religion to pursuing its radical forms and to accepting violence as an instrument for a personal agenda of radical groups<sup>3</sup>. Also, this section looks into the mechanism that shapes terrorist actions, especially those related to suicide terrorism through bomb detonations. This is the type of action most often used in asymmetrical situations, which also entails the greatest emotional load and which could in itself explain the road to radi-

<sup>1</sup> The Muslims who now live in the post-Soviet states mostly used to be believers without a firm stand or clear base due to Soviet Union’s restrictions on religion and religious services.

<sup>2</sup> Dominique Moisi, *The Geopolitics of Emotion* (New York: Anchor Books, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Mary Sharpe Ed., *Suicide Bombers: The Psychological, Religious and Other Imperatives* (New York: Cambridge, 2008).

calization or self-radicalization (in front of the internet, for example, as seen in the case of “lone wolves”).

The third part of the study should cast a deep and original look at Islam by including a variety of research and perspectives from its presentation as the major biblical religion — as described by Karen Armstrong<sup>4</sup> and thoroughly presented by numerous older or contemporary researchers that analyse all the components and ramifications of this religion — to the political Islam. Here, the politicization of Islamic concepts and the use of Islam as an instrument to generate mobilization in conflicts will also be discussed. We grant an important role to the discovery made by Mihaela Matei<sup>5</sup> in her recent Ph.D. thesis showing the versatility, opportunistic behaviour, and adaptability of Islam to the space where it is manifested, as well as the existence of several types of Islam, and formulas of the new Islam. She elaborates on the contemporary movements, from those inspired by the Iranian revolution and Al Qaeda type jihadist movements to John Esposito’s “new Islamic Protestantism<sup>6</sup>” formula, also predicted by academics, which includes the evolution and revolution of modern Islam as professed, with certain limits, on two fronts in present day Turkey<sup>7</sup>.

The theoretical component would not be complete without the analysis of two strong and useful instruments for the North Caucasus: those regarding ungoverned territories and the strongly divided societies. They are conceived with a solid internal construct, theorized and applied to extended territories ranging from the Federally Administered Autonomous Territory in Pakistan (FATA) to larger areas of weak states and to societies created upon antagonistic existences with a long history still remembering the conflict throughout generations. These instruments will prove useful in analyzing the North Caucasus region since the reality of the region validates the fact that these types of already researched models are applicable to the area.

Finally, this study would not suffice if we do not attempt to radically change the points of views by giving them relevance and amplitude by trying to approach the subject also from the angle of the receptor’s own deficiencies, where the receptor is made up of societies that are undergoing the effects of this reality. Here, we are talking about the evolution trends of acceptability of these realities by modern western societies, the decrease of our resilience and the sometimes exaggerated reaction when analyzing these events and raising them to catastrophic levels. This is important, because, terrorism is only relevant when there exists the proper environment to be terrorized, and

<sup>4</sup> Karen Armstrong, *Istoria lui Dumnezeu [The History of God]* (Bucharest: Nemira Publishing House, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Mihaela Matei, *Islamul politic și Democrația. Între Islakh, Irjihad și Jihad [The Political Islam and Democracy: Between Islakh, Irjihad and Jihad]* (Bucharest, PhD, Thesis, SNSPA 2010).

<sup>6</sup> John L. Esposito, *The Future of Islam* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> Esposito’s book is about the ‘reform’ that is being observed within Islam today: this transformation process within the certain factions of Islam is compared to the Lutheran and Calvinist movements experienced in Christianity.

the hyper sensitivity and the lack of resilience of our society, along with the hyperbolizing of such events and our perception of these realities, do nothing more but amplify the impact of terrorist actions, and, consequently, escalate the number of attacks precisely due to the visibility and the impact that make them all the more appealing to insurgents, terrorists, and whomever wishes to send a political message while lacking visibility, audience or a critical mass<sup>8</sup> that will satisfy their ego.

In the next step of this study, the direct relevance of the application of these theories to the North Caucasus region will increase. After a presentation of events and particularities of the region, and the manner in which they are described, we will apply all of these theories in order to understand to what extent the fundamental hypotheses are being verified and whether conclusions are relevant to our specific case. This is where most other conclusions will derive from along with the prospective picture that will be created for the medium and the long term by the current situation for the Wider Black Sea Region and for the evolution of international affairs in general in the future.

### *Methodology: Thesis and Key Findings in the North Caucasus*

The preliminary analysis of theoretical and factual elements allow us to draw a number of intermediary conclusions which are to be reevaluated by revisiting the interviews from the field. Based on the theoretical and documentary base, we can present the following preliminary conclusions as working hypotheses:

The Salafists/Wahabits (named specifically by different actors) are, most of the time, wrongfully accused of having had a certain role in the radicalization of the population in North Caucasus, in the conversion to Islam of certain Slavic elements from Stavropol Krai and Krasnodar Krai or from ethnic republics in the North Caucasus. Radicalization of Islam expresses itself in different forms. Self-radicalization of local Islamists searching for “real Islam,” which they claim to be different from secular or officialized formulas accepted in the Russian Federation by the state and by republican or regional leaders, is one of these forms. Another new and attractive type of jihadist Islamic radicalism, or the radical New Islamic Movement, embraces radical and even jihadist religions and the quest for the so called “new religions.” The picture would not be complete without converts, whose fall into this space can no longer be assigned to the need for group identity or for fame that would substitute a severe identity problem, and it is more likely a

<sup>8</sup> Mary Sharpe and Abimbola Agboluaje (Eds.), *Science and Society in the Face of New Security Threats* (Amsterdam-Berlin-Oxford-Tokyo-Washington DC : IOS Press, 2004).

sign of the adherence to the radical “old” formula or to the new form of regional radical-jihadist Islam as a form of protest, an anti-system reaction.

The formulas offered by the radical versions of Islam or by the new Imams of regional Islamism entail the transformation of the state; of its organization form, and of the dependence on the authoritarian local ruler of the Russian metropolis. Introduction of the Sharia law as an alternative to corrupt financial circuits that ensure the wealth of leaders as opposed to earnings of the population, as well as the avoidance of taxes and the brotherly support known as *zakat*, are all perfectly fitting both for a traditional but reinterpreted type of Islam and for the wish to brake loose from the Russian metropolis or from the revisioning of already existing state structures.

The North Caucasus is starting to be shaped more and more like a new Pakistani FATA — a tribal federally administered region close to the Afghan border, which is neither marked nor controlled. With no viable institutions, this region is subject to outside influences and exposed to trans-border pressures. This provides FATA with an excellent space for the promotion of various ideologies and moreover, an appropriate area from where attacks can be launched right to the heart of the system. In this context, the Caucasus resembles the classic Arab world more, rather than a version of independent, autonomous, financially unsustainable states and republics. Another complementary direction that could serve as a model is precisely the reaction to a form of previous “colonization” that melted away national awakening and initial separatist protest and fell into extreme forms of protest.

Chechnya, the Caucasus Emirate, and the new jihadist-Islamic movement are becoming well established, sovereign entities over time. According to existing data, their links to Al-Qaeda, for example, is accidental, informal, and is virtually limited to the training of its fighters on the field. The Caucasus Emirate looks nothing like an Al-Qaeda type construction either, but there exist external connections with the organization. The Emirate, moreover, is a specific local construction, extended onto the areas of republics with Islamic populations, with the notable exception of North Ossetia, though the footprint of conversion has been felt there as well.

Another characteristic of these entities is local attraction and support. They display a special ability to attract insurgent fighters, which can only happen due to systemic dissatisfaction that allows the birth of sympathy, as well as of institutionalised forms of protest. This attraction also leads to extreme cases such as the conversion of Slavic Christians in the region and neighbouring regions to Islam, as well as the extreme radicalization of all Muslims — original or converted — whose members put their own lives on the frontline through suicide bombings.

The violence of authorities, impunity of the Army, abusing of the local population by secret services and representatives of security forces, complicated economic situation in the region, increased unemployment rate, gap between the lives and wealth of ordinary people and the local authorities,

along with unproportional salaries paid to those working for Moscow, have created the base for deep discrepancies and hatred towards local and regional authorities, as well as towards Moscow. Under these circumstances, all it takes is a personal trigger, which consists of traumatizing personal experiences, injustice, and humility, to ensure that people openly support and join the insurgency and go to mountains or even proceed to violent acts.

Beside the direct involvement of unsatisfied people, the insurgency also benefits from a context providing it with even larger recruitment space; the quest for radical movements, does not necessarily have anything to do with personal search towards “true faith,” but it is rather a movement against the officially accepted religion, a movement which is situated more on the realm of protest reactions than in that of the search for a sufficiently strict “true faith” that would ensure “afterlife”.

There is an entire body of theory talking about support of certain factions of the population for ethnic and national causes. According to such theories, however, it is observed that although tendencies exist towards embracing of national and ethnic identities, they do not necessarily lead to separatist movements, because there is a common realization that there are economic grounds in the North Caucasus that would give base to such movements. Certain points of these theories can be worthy of consideration; however, the inhabitants of the region unhappy of their leadership, both regional and central, are more inclined towards religious forms of insurgency, which creates an emotional climate in which reactions are likely to be harsher in comparison to a logical framework. Although ethnic-national sentiments and ethnic-separatism combine and create a force, they still fall weaker than and contrary to the idea of a Caucasus Emirate, a regional separatist formula funded religiously, not ethnically, and a model for reproducing the Sharia governed Caliphate with specific national autonomies.

Ethnic separatism has not disappeared entirely. In fact it is persistent and anti-Russian, flowing from the idea of contesting the colonist and the imperial metropolis, the imposed and nonelected authority, and the non-traditional forced-down rules and abuses.

It is also important to notice elements connected to sociological experiments which, in time, caused the rebirth of ethnic-national sentiments as a side effect after the fall of the former USSR. What is referred here is, the result of the ethnic construction experiments in the USSR, including the Caucasus region: the experiments were launched systematically by a number of sociologists in order to create multiple ethnic identities.

They identified ethnic groups spread out over half of one village by differentiating their cultural elements based on distinctive alphabets and symbolism, and managed to collect folkloric elements, which they transferred into several volumes of virtual “ethnic literatures.” The entire effort was aimed at underlining multi-ethnicity and the claim that the USSR was a haven of peoples living together in accordance with an ideological commu-

nion. It was also aimed at undermining the distinct classic national elements completely with specific key traits in order to avoid nationalist and separatist tendencies, attempting to magnify the existence of a multitude of ethnic groups and peoples living happily in the Country of the Soviets. The strategy was obviously applied against big national republics as well as against North-Caucasian ethnic republics from the Ural-Volga area or from the Far East, elements covering and encompassing the issue of invaded territories. The approach was amplified by deportments and by the distinction between good and bad ethnic groups, asserted especially by Stalin, adding to the complications created by the comeback from Gulags and from these deportations, which entailed confiscation of lands and houses and their redistribution to other peoples and families stabilized in the area. Additionally, there was a territorial re-drawing based on the doctrine of maximum ethnic complexity, which was meant to bloc any subsequent attempts to break lose the USSR formation, as well as, the possible unification of republics; the real and projected formulas for a Caucasus republic, temptations, and sociological experiments with effects are still being noticed today.

The new strategy also aimed at rejecting national separatism and the attempts of different populations in the Russian Federation to question their stay in the conglomerate after the fall of the USSR, on the same train of thought of national pre-existence and the lack of consent for entering the Union or the Federation. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was an instrument for succeeding to the former USSR; through two components: one was the succession of the Russian Federation in the Treaties, and the second was the succession of the new independent states into the USSR borders. However, it was also an instrument aimed at creating a reverse movement of integration and unification in the post-Soviet space at a time when, after the fall of the USSR, the Russian Federation itself was threatened by territorial collapse through separatism.

There are analyses presuming that, in combating the Chechen phenomenon, there was even some type of support by Russian central government authorities for radical insurgency, for forced ties to radically religious Arabs and the international religion-based terrorist Islamic movement, and, subsequently, even to Al Qaeda — initially western, rather than Arab faction — in order to demonstrate international involvement of Al Qaeda, and the denial of the reality that something objective was taking place in the Russian side: a form of national rebirth at the level of ethnic republics comprising the Russian Federation. Therefore, national separatist movements have been combated by moving the subjects of Islamic radicalism and international terrorism on the ground and by sliding of the forefront image of separatist movements to the benefit of the religious radicalism and violence. The result was the loss of public interest for the national and separatist sentiments objectively legitimised and their replacement with religion-based elements throughout the Caucasus. Therefore, jihad was, at first, embraced as an imposed

formula, which was proposed by the authorities themselves, and, it, then, took over at one point and built itself as a solution as a form of protest. Eventually, it was preferred to the ethnic-nationalistic separatism.

There is also the hypothesis that the entire radical Islamic movement, initially implanted in order to show the colors and the trend of separatism movements, was actually invented in Russia. After the opening of Pandora's box, the situation became real and what was once a scheme to be used for public perception later became an integral, radical, regional, jihadist movement very real and supported by the local population, as a way of protest. The initial project of counterbalancing separatism got out of hand.

Today, religious insurgency is attractive and people are joining it, Muslims and Christian Orthodox alike — the former radicalized, the later converted to Islam — with the aim of fighting the establishment officially, pragmatically, and subliminally. The real aim and target of the movement remain unknown because of the multitude of leaders and their speedy elimination. However, it will eventually become clear in the process with the evolution of the situation, if the Emirate gains more self awareness, unity, coherence, and organizational characteristic, becoming more institutionalized — in a process similar to the OFP —; and, if it assumes responsibility for the fate of the entire region, evolving towards publically winning the dispute with local republican authorities, as well as with regional and central ones. This way, a formula of a proto-quasi-state can be imagined in the North Caucasus.

An Islamic Caliphate-like pseudo-state with Sharia law as its principle for the executive-legislative process, with autonomous structures based on republics and ethnic groups which would, step by step, take over control and authority and would abandon the fight launched at the mountain heights. The state formula would be a trans-Caucasus one with such autonomous structures and the Russian-Slavic element either eliminated or converted to Islam, having an influence beyond the North Caucasus region.

Most likely, the North Caucasus will not undergo such process but in order to be able to oppose the classic counteracts of Russian security structures, it will remain in the combo of failed state and weakly governed border territory, without a completely organized and responsible structure and more likely with a network-type organization that is purely contesting and asymmetrical. Endemic instability will be a characteristic of the region on medium term, and a type of export of further instability in the South of the Federation by Russian migrants and a direct impact through the rush of the local Islamic elements for resources in richer areas, due to the demographic force of the North Caucasus, with a tendency to export insurgent attacks to the center of the country and to the metropolis, maybe even to Moscow will be added. The scenario we would most likely encounter here is more complex than that of a separatist authority taking over and creating a visible enemy in such a way, because, the formulation of an undefined and blurry enemy borrowing diverse identities would be nothing more than a copy of the Al

Qaeda type franchise model, where the franchised brand here would be the Caucasus Emirate. Uncertainty is likely to become a way of life in the region and in the surrounding area, possibly extending to the whole of Russia.

Demography is the greatest vulnerability of the Russian state as it makes possible the worst case scenario: the general destabilisation of Russia with the creation of key points of gathering for spreading radical Islamic jihadist ideology, with great dissemination energy. Socially motivated migrants looking for work and better living standards could sustain such an epidemic and could export structural instability.

Demographic changes in the region are intense. The de-population of North Caucasus by ethnic Russians is a phenomenon that has already been noticed by the leadership of the North Caucasus District as well as by the entire population in Russia. This is why there is a need for two stable points: one is the comeback of religion to the area, while the other would be to keep in mind that the stabilisation of the Russian Church and the split between good and bad Islam in the area are not good solutions. Ensuring a moral reference and a real understanding of Islam could require the support of Turkish authorities and the direct influence of a political Islam resulting from reform, as was the case in Christianity with Protestantism.

The Slavic islands are shrinking demographically at an accelerated pace. Things here could evolve with the planned version of repopulating of the area by Khazaks but this Slavic ethnic component will be interpreted more like an imposed colonist population. Furthermore, it will be the first one exposed to conversion to Islam and subsequent radicalization — as we have seen in Krasnodar Krai and Stavropol Krai. The process of forced transplantation of this population, taking refuge in the South of Russia, would bring intolerance toward local population, and, therefore, enclaving would not be a solution either, especially since the maintaining of this population at a local level can only be possible through warranting well paid jobs, created artificially and discriminatorily in relation to the local population.

The determined conversion campaign of Islamization that continues through the extending of the demographically superior Caucasus population that is free to roam Russia needs to be broken, but in a natural manner, and not through the creation of artificial barriers within the Russian State since it could be interpreted as a sign of discrimination. Ensuring employment and a coherent religious base, which would be a conservative, non violent, and austere form of Islam, could work to the extent where authorities would not sustain or try to impose it, but only tolerate it, all the while also taking some critical stands in regard to possible excesses of this type of practice.

The discussion regarding the temptation to detach North Caucasus from Russia as a solution remains in the forefront, and we believe it will perpetuate, as the version of cutting the lizard's tail, but the formula would most likely bring irrelevant results at this point as it comes to attention too late and since the entire surrounding region is influenced by radical forms of Islam,

whose embrace is also a direct result of brutal, un-adapted policies in the region. It is also a result of the policies applied to the whole of Russia, with special reference to the installation of authority vertically and the eluding of elected leaders as genuine representation forms in favour of appointed leaders of false representation formulas<sup>9</sup>. Moscow is all the more exposed to the counter reaction, the anachronic nationalism, and xenophobia of the majority of the population manifesting actions against foreigners and non-Russians, thus accentuating Islamic alienation and enclavisation right in the heart of Moscow and other Russian cities and predisposing local metropolis radicalisation similar to those felt in Great Britain, France, Germany, and the U.S.

The Georgian wars also did not help. The recognition and militarization of South Ossetia and Abkhazia did not add value to the stabilization of the North Caucasus, beyond the international costs. On the contrary, we have witnessed waves of recrudescence of suicide bomb attacks both in the North Caucasus and in Moscow as an effect of a constant revolt not necessarily connected to events in the South Caucasus but still with a certain dependency and chronological coincidence.

The recognition of the two separatist Georgian regions as independent states by Moscow and the resistance of Georgia against the Russian army resparked national impulses in the North Caucasus. The national, ethnical, and separatist movements had previously melted in the face of the attractiveness and visibility of the religious insurgency of the North Caucasus Emirate, where the jihadist and religious radicalism were more catchy than the ethnic-national one the Russian authorities had to do with the creation of such situation as well. Georgia is also attempting to build good relations with the North Caucasus republics who aspire only for national rebirth, self-governing, and independence but also for feeding a vision of good neighborhood. Georgia is most likely to follow an ethnic agenda rather than a religious one, as it is the first one affected by the perspective of an Islamic wall north of the Caucasus Mountains to isolate Christian Georgia and Armenia at the Black Sea and in between distinct Islamic trends, some moderate, some politicized and radicalized amongst whose representatives sectarian type conflicts could arise at any time.

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<sup>9</sup> “Vertical authority” here means that the appointed governors and the representatives of the Central authority unit can also determine the eventual result of the local Parliaments’ elections by rejecting, if they wished to do so, the legitimacy of an elected local official and replacing her/him with whomever else they want to.

**Chapter 4**  
**POST-SOVIET INSECURITY AND UNREST**  
**IN RUSSIA'S NORTH CAUCASUS BORDERLANDS:**  
**SOURCES, IMPLICATIONS**  
**AND SOME POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

**ARGUN BASKAN**

*Introduction*

North Caucasus (hereinafter, NC)<sup>1</sup> has been the most troubled part of the Post-Soviet Russian Federation (RF) due to historical, ethnic, religious and socio-political reasons dating back to the even pre-Soviet times. Unfortunately, NC is mostly known for its ethno-religious and political instability rather than its rich multicultural composition and scenic beauties which, otherwise, would promote the region as a noteworthy point of the world's cultural and geographical heritage.

Achievement of stability and prosperity in the NC would be a beneficial target for all not only in the region but the rest of the world. However, despite the ostensible simplicity and desirability of this win-win objective, policies and attitudes of all interested parties, ranging from the local inhabitants to Russian leaders and the West, do not necessarily end up in a coherent sum in reality. Examples of competition and cooperation exist simultaneously. Yet,

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this study, the toponym North Caucasus (NC) will be used only in reference to the ethnofederal subjects in the region: Republic of Adygheya, Republic of Dagestan, Republic of Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkar Republic (KBR), Karachay — Cherkess Republic (KCR), Republic of North Ossetia — Alania and Chechen Republic (CR) (see below). Otherwise, Krasnodar and Stavropol Krai can be well accepted as other parts of the NC in the conventional sense. The toponym Northwest Caucasus (NWC) will cover Adygheya, KBR and KCR whereas Northeast Caucasus (NEC) will include Ingushetia, CR and Dagestan. North Ossetia and its adjacent areas can be given as Northcentral Caucasus (NCC). The toponym Chechnya will be used primarily in the geographical sense. CR is the officially recognized, pro-Russian and partially Sharia ruled republic under the leadership of Ramzan Kadyrov and Chechen Republic of Ichkeriya (CRI) stands for the now extinct, secessionist and predominantly secular republic established by Dzhokhar Dudayev in 1991. Dokka (Dokka) Umarov (Dokka Abu Usman), last president of the CRI and first Amir of the Caucasus Emirate (CE), abolished CRI in 2007 to make it a province of the then newly declared, secessionist and jihadist CE against the will of the “government-in-exile of the CRI” represented by its prime minister Akhmed Zakayev now living in the UK. Presently, CE is mostly a nominal entity represented by insurgent forces rather a regular political establishment and territory. According to 2006 data, the NC makes up 0.66 % of the RF's territory and 4.6% of its population (Dunlop and Menon, 2006: 97). See also Figure 1.

there are a few examples of opportunity windows like Moscow's recent adoption of socio-political reform initiatives or Russian-Turkish rapprochement or the European Union's (EU) relatively growing interest in the region. These factors would help stabilize and further open the region to the world especially in a Western-style orientation. The responsibility of eliminating instability in the region lies foremost with the Russian leadership. Next, local inhabitants and international community bear their own responsibilities. Problems and their possible solutions in this region would also teach us some lessons that might help us explain and solve similar ethno-religious radicalization issues in other parts of the world through a longer historical perspective.

This chapter will examine the multiple historical, ethno-religious and socio-political roots of the instability in the NC and provide a discussion of its implications for the wider world in addition to a few policy recommendations for all major interested parties.



Figure 1. The NC Republics and Neighbouring Political Entities  
Source: Blandy, 2009: 1.

### *How to Understand and Explain the North Caucasus?*

Our mainstream media coverage and general intellectual knowledge about the NC is a mix between: a complex cross of high level of multiethnicity (a linguist's heaven/hell), breathtaking natural scenes, romantic setting of the 19th century war novels and plenty of noble savagism, the other lesser civilized half of the Caucasus, ancient hatreds, vendettas, bandits, bride-kidnapping romances, textbook-style imperialism, anti-colonialism, a micro-laboratory of all communist evils and unfulfilled miracles, neverending secessionism, freedom fighters, curseful natural resources, almost omnipresent oil and gas pipelines, safe haven for terrorist and organized crime networks with local Al Qaeda franchises, highly dynamic and sometimes armed intra-Islamic theological debates, a quiet watch-worthy corner of the Eurasian geopolitical chessboard, Russians' perennial soft belly and "Vietnam", and, by the way, non-discovered international tourism "hotspot" and the venue of the 2014 Sochi Olympics which might be the next "1972 Munich" experience or a PR-success for Moscow. These depictions all hold some truth (some much less than others, tough), but this is not enough. A systematic examination of the major driving forces may help us organize, clarify and revise our understanding and knowledge about the NC especially pertaining to the interconnectedness of the variables and nuances to explain the current insecurity and instability in the region.

As noted above, the NC looks like an enigmatic mix within the RF which is already a successor to *a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma* in Winston Churchill's words. Fortunately, Churchill continues as "[...] but perhaps there is a key [to decypher Russia]. That key is Russian national interest."<sup>2</sup> Departing from Churchill's intellectual clue, this chapter will try to make a modest contribution to the analyses on the NC by categorically tracing the roots and current footprints of local ethnic, religious and socio-economic interests at play in the region with references to the wider international geopolitics. The main objective of the inquiry is to provide a multidimensional examination which would underline the somewhat unappreciated nuances and the interconnectedness of local, national and international political processes pertaining to the region primarily in the form insurgency and counter-insurgency.

### *Two Politically Motivated Sources of Insurgency: Self-Determination and Jihadism*

A deeply embedded, almost sub-conscious "dream" or "ideal" for being independent in the form of a secular or theocratic nationstate has been the

<sup>2</sup> James, R. R. (1974), *Winston S. Churchill: his complete speeches, 1897-1963*, Vol. 6, New York: Chelsea House Publishers, p. 6161.

intention driving force of almost all ethno-religious mobilization cases in the NC, most seriously in the two Russo-Chechen wars. Compared to the nearby ethno-federal republics, Chechnya has long enjoyed more ethnic homogeneity and it has the conjectural prospects of sustaining statehood. Not surprisingly, it was only the Chechens who tried to breakup from the RF in the immediate Post-Soviet period. Other NC republics or nations refrained from officially demanding something more than federal rights from Kremlin. These republics had a number of reasons not to follow the Chechen way.

A large number of ethnic groups stretching across at least two (artificially designed) republican boundaries do not necessarily facilitate the emergence or work of nation-wide organizational capacities to effectively demand self-determination. As seen in the cases of KBR and KCR — where Kabardians and the Cherkess (commonly known as the Circassians including the Adyghe of Adygheya and Shapsugh of Krasnodar Krai) are ethnically akin in contrast to the same type affiliation of the Karachai and the Balkars (commonly known as the Malkar Turks) —, artificiality of the republics' borders force the titular nations to compete against each other as much as they would challenge Kremlin. Hence, it is not uncommon to see Kabardians/Cherkesses trying to do everything to get Kremlin's support vis-à-vis the Balkars/Karachais, or simply vice versa. Secondly, tribal divisions within each national group also hinder the prospects of "national unification". Additionally, multi-ethnic religious jamaats/communities/tariqats are both a challenge and advantage for self-determination projects. These religious units converge different national groups under the same broad social goals but they do not necessarily produce competent ethnic coalitions following a single agenda<sup>3</sup>.

### *When History Matters... A Lot*

Geopolitical history, be it on a local or Eurasian scale, is an essential starting point to understand and explain the prominent political, ethnic and religious features of the NC. The peoples of the NC have had a long history of geopolitical unrest and social turbulence as a result of the region's harsh local geography, tribal/feudal divisions and, of course, its somewhat unfortunately peripheral location at the intersection of Asia, Europe and, to some extent, the Middle East. The region has suffered from being one of the theaters of centuries long competition among foreign greater powers like the Greeks, Mongolians, Romans, Arabs, Persians, Turks and finally the Russians especially in the last few centuries. The phenomenon of surviving "foreign invasion/rule" and accompanying turbulence have always been a key part of national experiences and political culture/psychology in the region.

<sup>3</sup> Philipot, C. A. (2010), 'The North Caucasus: Russian Roulette on Europe's Borders', *Journal of the US Army War College*, 40, 2, pp. 87-100.

This unfriendly mix of local and foreign historical factors has greatly undermined the urbanization, state and nation-building initiatives of the NC peoples. Except too ancient, (i.e. proto-Circassians' Meotian-Sindica Kingdom<sup>4</sup>) temporary or weak cases<sup>5</sup> native statehood and city life have been the exception whereas competitive co-habitation of highly stratified feudal principalities under loose confederations of ethnically akin national sub-groups have been the norm of socio-political order at least until the widescale establishment of the modern Tsarist/Soviet/Federal Russian ruling apparatus through a mix of mostly coercion and consent since the 19th century onwards. So were the properly functioning networks of "organized religions" in the Abrahamic manner of the definition, national economic market and any form of native literacy. Strict ethnic codes of honour and social etiquette, agricultural self-sufficiency, simple barter economy, competent yet unorganized warriorship traditions, social stratification, slavery, varieties of paganism and a quiet steadfast resistance culture against any form of foreign rule have filled the historical lack of official/central political, economic, religious and educational bodies that would be found in any (proto-) modern state. These have been the broad patterns of historical existence of the NC peoples (e.g. Circassians, Chechens, Avars) at least until the 17th and most definitely late 19th century<sup>6</sup>. Even the massive tariqatist ghazawat (holy war or simply grand jihad) mobilization of the 19th century in the NEC and partly NWC was not enough to establish a real statehood in the region. Despite the fact that the NC peoples initially welcomed the anti-Tsarist Bolsheviks, they soon got disappointment with the unique style imperialism and cruelty of the regime. Post-Soviet era, too, was another period of disappointment as discussed in this chapter.

### *Inter-religious and Inter-sectarian Competition*

Islam and, to a lesser extent, Christianity have been the two major belief systems that shaped the current religious makeup and politics of the NC. Some earlier pagan elements were either incorporated into Christianity, Islam and folklore (and, much later, nationalisms). Technically, Judaism was never a serious candidate for the masses as elsewhere in the world except the exotic medieval Khazar Khanate era which ended with almost no prominent legacy for today. Even though Christianity (precisely Catholicism, and rather, Orthodoxy; Protestantism always remained alien to the region) had a strong start

<sup>4</sup> Coene, F. (2010), *The Caucasus: An Introduction*, New York: Routledge, p. 94.

<sup>5</sup> Hille, C. and Mathilde, L. (2010), *State Building and Conflict Resolution in the Caucasus*, Leiden: Brill, pp. 54-56.

<sup>6</sup> Bram, C. (2004), 'The Congresses of the International Circassian Association: Dilemmas of an Ethno-National Movement', in Gammer, M., ed., *Caspian Region*, Vol. 2, London: Routledge, pp. 34-35.

in the Medieval Ages enjoying the official support of the Italian city states, Romans/Byzantines and somewhat neighbouring Slavs, this religion barely hold ground in the NC regarding long term mass-scale success except a still surviving very tiny contemporary Orthodox Circassian (Kabardian) community in Mozdok and the Ossetians who had actually denounced Christianity once after their conversion in the Middle Ages for the sake of national paganism. They were later re-Christianized under Tsarist Russian rule<sup>7</sup>. There is also a small and quite silent Muslim North Ossetian community.

Generally speaking, the situation in the South Caucasus (SC) always happened more promising for Christianity (Orthodoxy). It remained well consolidated in Georgia, Armenia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia despite its temporary success in historical Azerbaijan or, rather, Caucasian Albania state. So, winning over the slow, long term and remittent competition of local national/tribal paganisms, Christianity, Judaism, and by the way, so called Iranian religions which already perished by the 600s, Islam prospered as the dominant religion of the NC up until our day thanks to the historic efforts of the Sunni (Hanafi and Shafii) medieval Arabs, and, for the most part, Ottomans. Iran-backed Shia Islam was adopted only in Azerbaijan<sup>8</sup>. Islam gained its latest mass scale victory against the quite challenging Soviet-style atheism which still has adherents among the local populations. However, according to many in and outside the region, the problem at hand now is to pick the “true (version of) Islam” for the post soviet NC: Traditional Islam (practically, Sunni Hanafi, Sunni Shafii, Sufi/Tariqatist/Folk/Parallel Islam and Official Islam categories all combined) or Salafi Islam (Wahhabist; as part of Sunni Hanbali)?

For the most part, consolidation of Traditional Islam in the contemporary sense was closely associated with the socio-political turbulence in the NC at least since the 19th century. Generally speaking, the peoples of the NC resisted fiercely against the Tsarist Russian expansion. However, there were also exceptional local cases of shifting alliances with the Russians against other foreign (e.g. Ottomans) or neighbouring forces (e.g. intertribal rivalries). Islam (“Ghazawat”) played a pro-resistance, unifying role in the Russo-Caucasus Wars especially in the NEC more than the case in the then relatively new/lesser Islamicised NWC where anti-Russian resistance was no less weaker<sup>9</sup>. Nevertheless, all this was not a kind of pure religious conflict between Islam and Orthodoxy but of classical territorial expansion and counter-resistance. Things did not necessarily change for the best in the Soviet era when all religions were forbidden at all. This oppression policy weakened the public power of Islam for a while but could not eliminate it.

Perestroika and the end of the Soviet Union created optimism for a fresh Islamic start for the NC. Mosques and spiritual centres burgeoned as Tradi-

<sup>7</sup> Richmond (2008), p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> Coene, F. (2010), *The Caucasus: An Introduction*, New York: Routledge, pp. 79-85.

<sup>9</sup> Richmond (2008), pp. 24-25, p. 67.

tional Islam was harshly oppressed during the communist era. Post-Soviet Traditional Islamic revival had two wings: Official Islam and Sufi/Tariqatist/Folk/Parallel Islam. Soviet era Islamic Spiritual Boards which represented "Official Islam" were disintegrated in 1989-1992 along ethno-federal lines so each NC republic had its own branch or "muftiat" of Official Islam. These local muftiats were headed by "young imams" who criticized the earlier generation of Official Islamic clergy for being corrupt, ignorant and ineffective. As represented by the tariqats and wirts (some 20-50 branches of "tariqats") of Naqshbandi, Shadhili and Qadiri, Sufi Islam gradually gained control of the Official Islamic bodies in Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan by mid-1990s. Hence, Official Islam and Sufi Islam practically became intertwined in these republics. In Adygheya, KBR and KCR where Sufi tariqats were historically non-present, Official Islam and Folk Islam existed loosely connected. Folk Islam meant not Sufi Islam but simply folk version of mainstream Hanafi Islam.

Hierarchical tariqats are headed by some 25 shaykhs in the region. A shaykh can sometimes head more than one tariqat. Tariqats have social, political and economic power and settle intra-clans problems. Contrary to other international Sufism cases, Sufi tariqats are highly localized and even 'clan'-ized in the NC. Despite their origins and names, they are not a part of an international Sufi Islamic network. This is practically a disadvantage for them compared to Salafi Islam which enjoys international contacts. Adherence to wirt is not an individual choice but closely related to family, clan and ethnic identity. Sufi Islam of the NC emphasizes shaykhs' karamats (miracles) which are absent in mainstream international Sufism; supernatural characteristics of the mazars (Sufi shrines); ziyarat (pilgrimage to shrines), reading Qur'an at funeral services and mourning; mawlids (chanting praise to saints or shaykhs); amulets and talismans; endorsing payment to saints; baraka (divine grace) provided by saints, shaykhs and their artefacts (i.e. shrines); times and forms of dhikr (repeated reference to Allah); material obligations rather than mysticism and spiritual development. Naqshbandi and Shadhili tariqats have more religious and political power in Dagestan whereas the Qadiri wirt of Kunta-Hadji, the wirt of the Kadyrov clan, prevails in Chechnya. Ramzan Kadyrov has been officially imposing the rituals of Kunta-Hadji wirt over the general population. But lack of sufficient religious training on the wirt facilitates the preference of Salafi Islam over Traditional Islam by young people<sup>10</sup>.

Born in 18th century Saudi Arabia (then part of the Ottoman Empire), Salafi Islam first appeared in Dagestan in the NC in the 1980s thanks to the growing hajj pilgrimage travels to Saudi Arabia. Since then, Salafi Islam contradicted and challenged almost every aspect of Traditional Islam and,

<sup>10</sup> Yemelianova, G. (2010), 'Divergent Trends of Islamic Radicalization in Muslim Russia', in Dannreuther, R. and March, L., eds., *Russia and Islam: State, Society and Radicalism*, New York: Routledge, pp. 128-129.

hence, it was seen as a rival rather than an ally by the Traditional Islamic clergy. Salafi clergy was more competent to address the lack of Islamic teaching and socio-political problems of the day. They treated tariqatism as a *bida* (deviation) from true Islam and criticized corrupt Sufi beliefs and practices. They also opposed the central role of clans and ethnic linkages in the religious life. Their vision was to introduce a more inclusive and puritan Islamic identity which would be well connected with the transnational Islamic world, or, rather, the Salafi part of it. Another challenge of Salafi Islam was its interpretation of jihad. According to Traditional Islam, jihad was a shaykh-guided, pacifist individual search for spiritual development whereas Salafi Islam regarded jihad as a combination of all possible means (especially armed ones) to spread and defend Salafi Islam all over the world. Salafi Islam paid special attention to recruit young people aged between 10 and 14, eliminate the expensive yet locally quite important Traditional Islamic funeral rituals, and conducting prayers in local languages instead of Arabic which was not really known even by the Traditional Islamic clergy who advocated Arabic prayers. Since mid-1990s almost all legal presence of Salafi Islam was banned in the RF excluding a few unimportant exceptions. So, a more radicalized and underground wave of Salafi Islam replaced the earlier more moderate cadres. Foreign mujahedeen of the First and Second Russo-Chechen Wars were the most extreme example. Even a more ambitious circle of insurgents later applied shahidism (suicidal jihadist attack) in the 2000s. Instead of shaykh-led *wirds*, Salafi Islam was organized as amir-led *jamaats* (i.e. Yarmuk *jamaat* in KBR and Shariat *jamaat* in Dagestan). Despite the overall radicalization process of Salafi Islam in the NC, moderate wing of Salafism (known as the “New Muslims”) managed to outnumber the radicals in the NWC until 2002. These “New Muslims” sought to get integrated with the wider society rather than openly challenging it. Nevertheless, it was taken over by the radical wings afterwards. After the 2005 Nalchik attack, Salafi Islam was more fiercely oppressed in the NWC where it was not considered as dangerous as it is in NEC due to the historical lack of Traditional Islamic tariqats in the considerably more secular NWC<sup>11</sup>.

Yemelianova<sup>12</sup> also states that majority of the Circassian diaspora repatriates are Salafi and led by a repatriate from Kosovo named, Ibrahim Tsey, an imam. I consider this might be a partially problematic statement for a few reasons. Firstly, diaspora Circassians, an overwhelming majority of which live in Turkey, follow Sunni Hanafi madhhab not Sunni Hanbali madhhab which embraces Salafism. Secondly, the number of diaspora repatriates is rather low both in the overall population of the diaspora and homeland Circassians. Their socio-political influence is minimal and they generally tend to fit in the homeland society. Thirdly, Ibrahim Tsey’s influence has been quiet limited, incomparable to any Salafi or Traditional Islamic leader in the

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 129-132.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 132.

NC. Tsey has made a name for being an unhappy repatriate and outspoken critic of the local corruptions and lack of Islamic values in daily life for understandable reasons from his point of view. There are many unhappy repatriation stories like his due to different religious, economic, cultural or personal reasons. Besides, oddly enough, it is not certain whether he has been a Salafist at all. However, all this does not rule out that there may be newly flourishing Salafi segments within the repatriate community including Tsey's circle. He might have moved to Salafism from being a dissident imam. This is not impossible considering the hajj and Islamic teaching connections with Saudi Arabia or elsewhere in the Middle East or simply the rise of the CE. But, regardless of the specific case and fate of Tsey and his small group of followers, it would be analytically misleading to state that the diaspora repatriates boosted Salafi Islam in the NWC.

Before the Nalchik incident in 2005 Kremlin openly combated against the Salafi Islam in alliance with the long established Traditional Islamic clergy. However, the Nalchik attack became a turning point in that policy. In early 2006, Putin stated that "Wahhabism" was a legitimate way of Islamic belief but the problem was its abuse by the terrorists<sup>13</sup>. So, the Islam element in Kremlin's NC policy entered a new phase since then with less demonizing of Salafi Islam per se and more emphasis on terrorism itself and the wider socio-political factors driving radicalism. Nevertheless, Salafi Islam is very far from being accepted as a legal and legitimate Islamic sect in the region.

### *Everchanging Demography*

Throughout its history, the NC has witnessed large waves of voluntary or forced immigration and emigration. These massive population movements have shaped not only the demographics but culture, identity, economics and politics of the NC until our day. 1864 Circassian Exile, i.e. forced imperial deportation of some 500.000-2.000.000 Circassians (present day, Adyghe, Kabardians and Cherkess) and some other segments of other NC nations like the Abkhazians by the Tsarist Russia at the end of the Russo-Caucasian Wars and 1878 Ottoman-Russian war, is a good example of that phenomenon in the modern ages (Kaya, 2004; Çelikpala, 2006; Gultekin-Punsmann et al 2009). This single event can be perhaps interpreted as the first modern genocide which was first officially recognized by Georgia in 2011 (Lomsadze, 20 May 2011). Briefly speaking, the Circassian Exile created the core of the NC/Circassian diaspora and laid the earliest seeds of the present day unrest in the NWC as it disproportionately and arbitrarily increased the Slavic (mostly Cossacks) populated territories at the expense of the Circassian and Malkar (Karachai and Balkar) communities and hence brought a severe decline in the life quality and overall livelihood of these communities. This

<sup>13</sup> Perovic, J. (2010), *The North Caucasus on the Brink*, Zurich: International Relations and Security Network (ISN), pp. 22-23.

legacy helps to understand why some people in the NC diaspora almost unexpectedly protest the 2014 Sochi Olympics as they point that Sochi was a forgotten ground of genocide killings and deportation in the 19th century<sup>14</sup>.

Besides other wider factors specific to the Georgian and Abkhazian histories which would not be covered in detail here, the process also opened the pave for the de-Abkhazianification of Abkhazia to the (short-term) favour of the Slavs, Georgians, Mingrelians and Svans. Hence, it is not surprising to see why the Abkhazian and Georgian governments keep debating the ethnic demography of Abkhazia (e.g. “low” percentage of ethnic Abkhazians in Abkhazia; repatriation of the Abkhazian diaspora or the situation of the Internally Displaced Persons/IDPs who currently suffer harsh living conditions in Georgia proper) as a non-changing agenda item to justify their arguments today (for a wider discussion see Baskan, 2011). The irony of these historical events is that they not merely a win-lose situation, i.e. Russians and Georgians being the winners and Circassians, Malkars and Abkhazians being the losers, but a lose-lose situation for all. Indeed, all sides of the historical forced population movements suffer the unfairness and arbitrariness in question. In the simplest sense, nobody feels ethno-territorially secure and contempt in the North or South Caucasus today because of the truly long term problematic colonial legacy of the Tsarist era and local games of inter-ethnic micro-imperialisms as would be observed in the today’s KBR for instance.

Unfortunately, above mentioned unjust demographical engineering patterns of the Tsarist era was not rejected but maintained by the Soviets to a very large extent especially in the Stalin era as seen in the deportation of the Karachai, Balkars, Chechens, Ingush and some other groups to Central Asia. The deportees could return to their native lands only after 1957. These forced population transfers have created long term problems among the returning deportees and those groups who were settled into the lands of the deportees as perfectly seen in the Ingush-Ossetian clashes. Post-Soviet era saw important transformations in the ethnic composition of the NC. Whilst overall population of the RF was in decline mainly due to the low birth rates of the non-Muslims/Slavs, Muslim/non-Slavic segments of the population grew significantly especially in the NC led by Dagestan. Besides, as more and more ethnic Russians left the NC for socio-political reasons, the NC (especially NEC) became more distinct and independent from the rest of the RF demographically<sup>15</sup>.

### *Controlling the Territory*

As often noted in the literature, local administrative borders in the NC have been changed numerous times due to the changing mood of Russian

<sup>14</sup> King, C. (2010), *Extreme Politics: Nationalism, Violence, and the end of Eastern Europe*, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 52-53.

<sup>15</sup> Hahn, G. M. (2007), *Russia’s Islamic Threat*, New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 10-11.

leadership for political reasons which barely overlapped with the actual ethno-religious borders in the region. This classical trend was strongly revived by Putin. Using the pretext of the Beslan school hostage taking incident in 2004, Putin took the liberty to take a further step to defederalize the administrative structure of the NC as elsewhere in the RF'S ethno-federal republics. He did this by practically turning locally elected federal presidents into Kremlin's appointed governors almost overnight as a continuation of the process he launched since his first days in office.

Merging of federal subjects into larger and ethnic Russian dominated units appeared as Putin's other tool to exercise more authoritarian control over the country. But despite initial successful examples (e.g. merging of Perm Oblast and Komi-Permyak Autonomous Oblast into Perm Krai), the policy became partially successful in the NC due to the protests of the non-Slavic locals especially in Adygheya where Circassian Adyghe and the NC diaspora clearly protested and stopped the proposed merger of Adygheya into Krasnodar Krai, probably despite the behind-the-doors betrayal of Hazret Shovmen, then President of the republic<sup>16</sup>. However, Putin (and Medvedev) managed to establish the barely meaningful Southern Federal District in 2000 (initially named as the North Caucasian Federal District) and the (new) North Caucasian Federal District in 2010<sup>17</sup>.

### *The Economics of Order and Disorder*

Poverty and unemployment are two interrelated long term socio-economic problems in the NC. Corruption and bribe are other accompanying factors that worsen the overall socio-economic life quality of the region. Younger segments of the society are more vulnerable to the unemployment problem which facilitates (but does not necessarily mandate) the spread of radicalism and/or disillusionment with being a citizen of the RF. Brutal treatment at the hands of local authorities and other human-rights violations also push the youth of the region to radicalism. Some researchers note that socio-economic factors are perhaps the primary factor driving radicalism rather than religious or political ones. According to a pioneering survey study of Gerber and Mendelson conducted on 1200 local respondents in the NC in 2006:

“...contrary to conventional wisdom, at the time of the survey there was little popular support for radical Islam in that particular “Islamist Theatre of Operation.” The leading concerns for young men in the region are persistent economic woes and poorly functioning institutions, not religious,

<sup>16</sup> Saunders, R. A. and Strukov, V. (2010), *Historical Dictionary of the Russian Federation*, Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, pp. 28-29.

<sup>17</sup> Bugajski, J. (2010), *Georgian Lessons: Conflicting Russian and Western Interests in the Wider Europe*, Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, p. 41.

cultural, or foreign policy issues associated with the Islamist cause. But they are indifferent as to who helps meet their socioeconomic and governance needs, leaving the door open for radical or violent Islamist groups”<sup>18</sup>.

Ironically this is the case considering that the NC republics are heavily dependent on financial transfers from Moscow to pay wages. Socio-economic factors undoubtedly play their part in the radicalization process in the NC, however it would be wrong to believe that ethnic and religious variables are of secondary importance. However, it is not easy to come up with a final conclusion on the matter. Results and interpretations may vary depending on the time and respondents of such fieldwork. There is simply more need for new and wider surveys in the NC.

Economic variables are perhaps the trickiest ones to manage and interpret in complex conflict situations like those in the NC. A recent ongoing study by Alexseev (2011) exemplifies the paradoxical outcomes of Moscow’s transfer of funds to the region as a part of its counterinsurgency strategy. Between 2000 and 2010, Moscow allocated \$30 billion to the NC and federal subsidies per capita in the region exceeded \$1000, roughly six times higher than the average in the RF. Public infrastructure (e.g. hospitals, roads, airports) were significantly renewed especially in CR where Europe’s largest mosque was also recently built. Yet, insurgency related deaths reached to 1500 people between 2008-2010 in the overall region. Federal financial transfers seem to have helped reduce violence in Ingushetia and CR where they created the opposite effect in Dagestan and, especially, Kabardino-Balkar between 2006-2010.

Based on his preliminary findings, Alexseev provides the following explanations to interpret and overcome the contradictory effects of federal funding:

“... economic development funding can be counterproductive, at least in the short run. Government investment in economic development in turbulent regions may contribute to reducing but also to increasing violence. The comparison of Dagestan and KBR is particularly informative because it suggests that the success of economic development in fighting the insurgency depends not necessarily on how much money is handed down to a region or in what sectors, but on the insurgency type in a specific local context. In areas such as Dagestan, where due to social makeup and traditions the insurgency has strong and widespread roots in political and economic competition within local communities, the availability of funding at the county level reduces scarcity—and, hence, the intensity of competition that is ultimately about power and resources. Because the insurgents have stakes in the outcome of these competitions, the availability of funds helps appease or buy off the conflicting parties and thus reduces the intensity of the struggle. In areas such as KBR, however, where the insurgency’s key actors

<sup>18</sup> Gerber, T. P. and Mendelson, S. E. (2009), ‘Security Through Sociology: The North Caucasus and the Global Counterinsurgency Paradigm’, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 32: 9, p. 831.

have lesser stakes in the outcomes of local competition for power and resources, the money extorted or otherwise seized by the insurgents is more likely to go toward funding their anti-government operations in pursuit of larger, universalist symbolic goals than toward appeasing feuding clans or other local groups. In this type of insurgency, symbolic goals matter — as evidenced by the brutal attacks on Moscow tourists and the blowing up of a ski lift at KBR's Mt. Elbrus, Europe's tallest mountain, in February 2011 (both plausible sources of revenue "taxable" by the insurgents). Social theory suggests that economic development in such areas needs to be accompanied by measures that will maximize the cost of access to government funds by insurgents and minimize the costs to the government of monitoring and enforcement. This means greater reliance on civic engagement of the general population and clearer, simpler, and more transparent rules for governing the implementation of economic development projects funded by the federal government"<sup>19</sup>.

### *Scope of Violence*

Whereas the first Chechen war concerned nationalist self-determination, the second is commonly considered to have assumed a broader jihadist ambition. Since then, Chechen militants have exported their operations to nearby republics. Nevertheless, jihadist Chechen insurgency lost significant power compared to its earlier times since the late 1990s when it had relatively more organized fighting command. Russian security forces and intelligence services have killed or assassinated significant leaders of the jihadist insurgency as they already did the same for the earlier non-jihadist Dudayevist line of leaders even when they were in asylum abroad in Turkey or Qatar<sup>20</sup>.

In June 2010, however, the Russians gave further sign that they might be open to a more holistic approach to the NC problem. For the first time the Russian Duma delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe endorsed a resolution critical of their nation's policies toward the NC. Russian officials also cited the threat of mafia gangs mainly engaged in narcotics and weapons sale business as another source of widespread violence (i.e. assassination style attacks against police officers) which is not actually new to the region or Russia as a whole. In early 2010, President Medvedev announced that the criminal networks have to be a priority target for the local police forces as part of a wider vision to support economic development and decrease corruption<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> Alexseev, M. (2011), Rubles Against the Insurgency: Paradoxes from the North Caucasus Counties, PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo, 157, pp. 3-4.

<sup>20</sup> Cronin, K. A. (2009), *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*, Princeton : Princeton University Press, pp. 28-29.

<sup>21</sup> Philipot, C. A. (2010), 'The North Caucasus: Russian Roulette on Europe's Borders', *Journal of the US Army War College*, 40, 2, pp. 94-96.

*Recent Development as a new Milestone?*

As of late 2011 and early 2012, some quite interesting developments took place in the NC politics. Even though there is no guarantee that they will have authentic long term and dramatic impact in the coming months and years, as a whole, they may be tipping that the NC is entering a new phase in 2012.

Firstly, Salafi Islam was reported to have achieved a significant follower base in Dagestan. According to a striking survey conducted on 6000 respondents in the republic:

“...20 percent of the republic’s youth consider themselves moderate Salafis. Only 10 percent of the respondents referred to themselves as Sufis — traditionally the main Muslim branch in Dagestan. The most educated among those who identified themselves as moderate Salafis said they were in favor of mimicking the experience of such countries as Brunei, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman in bringing norms of sharia into governance in Dagestan. The survey also found that 12 percent of the respondents favor the radical methods of struggle adopted by the North Caucasus militants. It is especially striking that young people openly stated support for rebels in the republic. According to a Dagestani expert on Islam, Ruslan Gereyev, the survey was conducted only in cities, and support for the rebels would have been even higher had the interviews been conducted in rural areas of the republic...[and]... a widening gap between rich and poor, rampant official corruption and discrimination against Muslims leave radicalization as the only attractive option for some young people. If two years ago the insurgency consisted mainly of people aged 25 to 40, today the insurgents range in age from 18 to 30 years old, although some independent experts say the age range is from 14 to 45.” (Dzutsev, 14 December 2011).

Vatchagaev adds that the survey simply shows that “one in five Dagestanis describes him or herself as a moderate Salafi. Only ten years ago, this republic was considered to be 99.9 percent Sufi.” (Vatchagaev, 15 December 2011).

Secondly, Medvedev proposed a new bill in mid January to restore the direct elections in the titular republics albeit under the supervision of the RF’s President. The bill appears as a partial political concession to appease the growing dissidence not only in the NC but whole RF as well nowadays. It is not still clear whether the local presidential candidates and/or their nominating parties will be obliged to consult with the RF’s President to take his approval before the elections. Medvedev’s proposal is a mix of pre-Beslan direct public elections system and Putin’s post-Beslan centralized appointment mechanism. If accepted, all current federal presidents in the NC are quite likely to lose the elections due to mismanagement, corruption and insecurity in the republics. Magomedislam Magomedov, president of Dagestan, and Ramzan Kadyrov, president of Chechen Republic, might be two exceptions as the former just recently took the post and the latter does not

seem to have any alternatives that would be approved by Moscow (Dzutsev, 18 January 2012).

Thirdly, a number of public and grassroots homeland Circassian organizations pledged the Kremlin in late January 2012 to allow the repatriation of a portion (estimated to be 150,000 people) of the some 148 years old Circassian diaspora (estimated between 2-7 million mostly in Turkey) from the presently quite dangerous and Russian-backed Syria to the historical homeland NWC (aka Circassia), or more precisely by today's realistic standards, republics of Adygheya and Kabardino-Balkaria only as Karachai-Cherkess was too Karachaised and other nearby areas like the tiny Shapsugh enclave in the Krasnodar Krai was socio-politically too weak to welcome the repatriates. Indeed, repatriation of the diaspora is not something new in the Circassian-Kremlin relations. Though generally being not so eager to win the hearts and minds of the Circassians on the issue, Kremlin has been long allowing, if not actively facilitating, smaller and irregular numbers of Circassian repatriation, albeit under unfriendly socio-political and bureaucratic treatment, when it is riskless and even beneficial for itself since the late Soviet times. Considering the side of the Circassians, it would not be fair to say that every single diaspora Circassian wishes to repatriate but cannot do so because of Kremlin's feet-dragging. Many wish to stay in the diaspora (especially Turkey and Jordan) and dream to visit the homeland as cultural tourists perhaps once in a life time at all. Yet, there has always been a practically low profile but still sustained repatriation idealism and practice among the Circassians. Being as a success story of its kind, Kremlin has accepted a good number of Circassian repatriates from former Yugoslavia during the early 2000s as it would be welcomed by the Russian-backed Serbians as well.

So, the case of the Syrian diaspora's repatriation is not a totally new topic. But, Kremlin refrains from dealing with the issue as it would make Assad's bloody regime look worse than it already is because Syria will seriously look like somewhere where people want to flee from, and, of course, this is true. Besides, local ethnic Russians and other non-Circassian nationality groups like the Balkars or local Armenians will not really be happy to have new (or "returning") neighbours for a mix of semi-selfish historical, ethnic, religious and socio-political reasons. Absorption of mass scale immigration looks like a difficult project as it would be almost elsewhere in the world. Yet, Kremlin is likely to save the appearance by accepting some, if not all, repatriate groups from Syria and market it as a case of benign humanitarianism to minimize the risks of Circassian caused troubles in the eve of the approaching Sochi Olympics and in the face of already existing instability in the region (Dzutsev, 25 January 2012).

The 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics to be held in the Krasnodar Krai adjoining the North Caucasus republics would be a source of big public relations success or disaster for Kremlin regarding its capacity to keep things under control in the region. Presently, the Olympics are being protested by

some Circassian organizations as the Circassians (the Adygheyans, Kabardians, Cherkess and Shapsugh combined) and, their akin ethnic cousins, the Ubykhs (who are now extinct), had suffered genocidal ethnic cleansing in the Sochi area in the last years of the Russo-Caucasian Wars in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Even though some Circassian diaspora and homeland non-governmental organizations have launched an anti-Kremlin Sochi Olympics protest campaign to create international awareness about those massacres, this is not necessarily a source of violent threat per se. Indeed, some other Circassian organizations tend to follow a softer line towards Kremlin in general to negotiate about its desired blessing over the issues of repatriation of the diaspora Circassians to the NWC and fate of the other ethnic cousins of the Circassians, that is, the Abkhazians, who really seriously refrain from voicing the tragedies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Kafkas Federasyonu, 30 December 2010). However, the Sochi Olympics may indeed face armed danger probably from the nearby Chechen-dominated Caucasus Emirate not necessarily because of historical crimes mostly (but not only) pertaining to the Circassians, Ubykhs and the Abkhazians but political and religious matters of today focusing over Chechnya and jihadism allegedly in connection with international terrorist networks like Al-Qaeda.

Fourthly, and perhaps most interestingly, Umarov, leader of the CE, declared a partial cease fire against the Russian targets. Referring to the mass anti-Putin protests taking place recently, Umarov ordered his forces to stop attacking civilian Russian targets as the protests show that even the Russians are victims of Putin's regime. Nonetheless, he added that insurgent forces will keep attacking military and political targets in the RF (Dzutsev, 3 February 2012). Umarov's statement hints that he is open to use interesting tactical tools including his style of public diplomacy. Even though his message drew international media attention, mostly negative and indifferent attitude of the wider Russian public opinion towards the CE and, the NC in general, is unlikely to change regardless of Putin's political fate. Besides, Umarov's international image is not very bright due to the alleged connections between the jihadist wing of NC insurgency and Al Qaeda.

The alleged linkage with the NC insurgency and Al Qaeda has been long debated. There are generally three broad views on the issue: (1) there is no linkage; (2) there is an irregular and minimal one; and (3) there exists a strong and comprehensive relationship between Al Qaeda and all sorts of Chechen insurgency including the earlier Dudayevist non-jihadist secessionism. According to Kuchins et al. (2010: 10), similarities between the Al Qaeda and contemporary insurgency of CE are primarily almost coincidental as both share common jihadist rhetoric, jargon and symbols but they do not have solid organizational connections and solidarity. More evidence is needed to confirm the connection theory. Chifu<sup>22</sup> states that the EC-Al

<sup>22</sup> Chifu, I. (2011), 'Religion and Conflict: Radicalism and Violence in the North Caucasus', *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 10, 3, p. 126.

Qaeda connection is “accidental, informal, and is virtually limited to the training of its fighters on the field. The Caucasus Emirate looks nothing like an Al-Qaeda type construction either”. On the other hand, Hahn (2011) strongly asserts that both Dudayevist non-jihadist and Umarovist jihadist waves of Chechen insurgency have long maintained direct and significant contacts with Al Qaeda and exchanged various forms of support. Hahn stresses that there is no need to doubt the connection between Chechen insurgency and Al Qaeda.

Due to the quite secretive and manipulative nature of the topic and most information sources, it is difficult for us to reach a conclusive statement on the matter from a strictly social sciences perspective. We may at least point that neither two waves of Chechen insurgency have not attacked non-Russian Western/infidel/Dar al-Harb/Dar al-Garb targets at least for now. On the contrary, earlier non-jihadist Dudayevist wing of Chechen insurgency is known to have asked for international support especially from NATO countries against Moscow. Last surviving representative of the earlier non-jihadist insurgency wave, Akhmed Zakayev, has been long living in asylum in London under the protection of British authorities as his life remains under constant danger for he is a critic of both Moscow and Umarov. However, these facts do not readily eliminate the possibility that some elements from any wing of Chechen insurgency might have sought any sort of assistance from Al Qaeda as a part of their hopeless and/or pragmatic search for foreign support. At least, it is obvious that so called “Arab mujahedeen” led by Samir Saleh Abdullah Al-Suwailem (aka Emir Khattab), Jordan-born Afghanistan veteran of Al Qaeda, have played their semi-independent dubious roles in the First and Second Russo-Chechen Wars. Vidino (2005) argues that Emir Khattab’s presence in Chechnya was good evidence of the connection between Chechen insurgency and Al Qaeda which is downplayed by Western governments that put the emphasis on the brutality of the Russian forces against North Caucasians. To conclude, one thing is clear enough; presently Chechen-led NC insurgency has its unique roots (including the obviously secular one, that is, nationalism), dynamics and supporter base apart from Al Qaeda and both North Caucasian insurgency and Al Qaeda do not fundamentally need each other to survive or grow.

### *Implications for the Southern Caucasus and the Wider World*

As NC and SC have strong ethnic, historical, political and religious ties, instability in the NC has direct implications on the SC. Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia matter not only for Tbilisi and Moscow but Circassians and Northern Ossetians as well. Likewise, Dagestan and Chechnya are also important for Azerbaijan and Georgia respectively. Armenia has less direct connections

with the NC but it is not immune to what is happening there. Actually, the relationship between the NC and SC is not a unidirectional one. Nor is the wider relationship between the Caucasus and rest of the world. The logic of connection is actually an example of interdependence, albeit an asymmetrical one. The NC may import/export instability from the SC and wider world depending on the context. Even though, long being almost totally forgotten project, a pan-Caucasian unification was once strongly promoted in the region during the interregnum between the fall of the Tsarist Russia and arrival of the Bolsheviks. Such an ambitious undertaking seems utopian by today's standards and it may actually be. However, given the obvious interconnection of the NC and SC, local and international actors have to develop a holistic approach to promote stability in the whole region. Needless to say, this is another uneasy ideal as major local and international actors have diverging interests which do not necessarily compile up in a harmonious order.

The US, EU and Turkey may be noted as the leading international actors interested in the NC. The US and the EU are the two most competent actors that may help the reform minded Russian leaders to transform the NC into a more internationalized and developed part of the RF. This is not necessarily about the level of risks that would be caused by the NC's jihadist insurgency against the Western interests like energy security, human rights, and refugees, stability of SC or outright terrorist attacks in coordination with Al Qaeda. Western involvement in the NC should be designed in a much wider framework encompassing not only security concerns but socio-economic, cultural, educational and identity related ones. Furthermore, NC deserves to be acknowledged as the eastern-most part of the new Europe alongside SC. Fortunately, considerable segments of the NC society are more than willing to be connected to the wider world, especially the West, beyond the region and rest of the RF. However, this reality should be managed positively not to further complicate the secessionist and/or radical issues in the region. The NC should be assisted to transform itself into a truly federal and prosperous component of the RF enjoying wider scale international contacts including the mobility of capital, goods and, most importantly, persons. Meanwhile, all of community leaders and ordinary individuals of the NC should clarify their stance vis-a-vis all socio-economic problems like corruption, unemployment, inter-religious/inter-sectarian tolerance and, lastly, their prospects of remaining part of the RF. They need to follow a democratic, pluralist and consistent line in their actions, especially regarding inter-ethnic relations with their neighbours.

Turkey is the other major external actor which can exercise noteworthy influence in the developments in the NC due to its long historical, cultural, religious, demographical, ethno-linguistic and geopolitical linkages with not only NC but also SC. Turkey can be a really helpful partner for the West and even Moscow to deal with post-Soviet challenges in the NC. Indeed, it has

been increasingly fulfilling its potential to a considerable extent in the final years. But, of course, Turkey's performance in the NC is not flawless. The Chechens vs. Kurds, mainstream Sunni Islam vs. Salafism, respect for self-determination vs. territorial integrity, human rights vs. economic relations, Armenia vs. Azerbaijan, Georgia vs. Abkhazia, and competition vs. cooperation with Moscow are examples of the dilemmas that have been complicating the outcomes in Turkey's involvement with the Caucasus. Recent rapprochement between Turkey and the RF is promising to further open the NC to the world but this has not really been realized yet. International involvement in the NC politics is not a one-way route for all. There is no guarantee that all related actors will be able to harmonize their interests in and around the region. Yet, there are some windows of opportunity even right now.

Moscow has been following a "relatively" more transparent and realistic policy in the region in the form of a socio-political reform package. It would be also helpful if all segments of the Russian public (ranging from the Cossacks to the presently growing Moscow-based anti-Putin Russian dissidence movement) would show more constructive interest, sympathy and support for the peaceful transformation of the NC. Despite the ongoing and deep rooted insurgency in the NC, Moscow still has a strong capacity and even local bases of support to bring stability and prosperity to the NC. Major segments of the NC society are not engaged in insurgency. To conclude, both the NC and the rest of the RF would greatly benefit from a genuinely (not only temporarily) open minded mentality in the Russian leadership which would balance security and socio-economic concerns in the NC. Winning local wars or concluding successful anti-terrorist operations or backing corrupt but "useful" leaders in the region do not necessarily mean winning hearts and minds of the real people living there in the long-term. Indeed, this is a lesson valid not only for the RF but all other terrorism/secessionism/insurgency-stricken countries and societies. This is what the wider world may (re-)learn from the contemporary NC.

### *Conclusion*

NC has long been a source of unrest for Russian rule since its annexation into the Tsarist Russian Empire. In many ways, it remained as a semi-alien subject to the Tsardom, USSR and present-day RF. However, Russians administrations still managed to produce a mix of coercion and consent to keep the region within the Russian political space, the former being used rather excessively than the latter. Ongoing insurgency and radicalization threats are thus a part of a larger picture. Security risks in the NC take their roots from historical, ethno-religious and socio-political causes. Hence, these risks should be addressed in a comprehensive manner reaching well beyond classical armed oppression methods. Experience shows that Moscow's short

term military successes at the expense of massive human rights violations do not guarantee long term stability in the NC. Fortunately, Russian leadership seems to have learned a few lessons from the past as it has introduced a socio-political reform package recently. Yet, it is not sure whether this will be a genuine strategic change or a tactical manoeuvre for the short term. In any case, Russian leaders have the major part of burden to stabilize the NC as they are the most component actors to do so. Local inhabitants and major interested parties like the US, EU and Turkey, too, have their responsibilities, interests and resources to contribute to a peaceful transformation of the NC from a poorer, marginalized region into a more prosperous and internationalized one. Nevertheless, interests and actions of local, national and international actors barely end up in a harmonious sum in the region. Cases of cooperation and competition exist at the same time and it is not certain which will prevail in the long term. In any case, introduction of stability and prosperity to the NC would be a long term, multi-actor objective which requires Moscow's reduction of military use of force and all sorts of ethno-religious civilian restrictions as the first step. Regarding the academic perspective on the subject, the case of the NC requires newer and multi-disciplinary studies to produce more detailed analyses and better policy recommendations in the future.

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## **Chapter 5**

# **MOSCOW AND RUSSIAN ISLAM**

**ADRIANA SAULIUC**

### Part I

#### RUSSIAN FEDERATION. RELIGION IN RUSSIA

##### *Religion in Russia*

The Russian Federation is the largest country in the world. The biggest part of its territory is located in Northern Asia, the Western areas of the Urals are a part of Europe and Russia borders the Atlantic Ocean, between Europe and the North Pacific Ocean. From northwest to southeast, the Russian state borders Norway, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland (both via Kaliningrad Oblast), Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, China, Mongolia and North Korea.

The Russian Federation also has maritime borders with Japan on the Sea of Okhotsk and United States of America, on the Behring Strait. With a territory so large, the Russian Federation covers more than a ninth of the Earth's land area and spans over 9 time zones. Beginning in 1991, as a result of the collapse of the Soviet state, the Russian Federation became the legal successor of the Soviet Union.

Historians talk about the territory of the present Russian Federation beginning with the Paleolithic Age, when in 862 B.C. the first predecessor of today's modern state of Russia was established. In the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Vladimir, the leader of the Russian state adopted Greek Orthodox rites and Christianity became the state religion, a decision that allied Vladimir's kingdom with the powerful empire of that time — the Byzantine Empire.

An important moment in Russian history is the Crimean War, initiated when differences over holy places in the Ottoman cities of Bethlehem and Jerusalem made Russia resort to military action, but the decision had negative results for the Russian state: it had to accept a humiliating peace. Orlando Figes, a respected professor of history at the University of London, talks about czarist Russia as a deeply religious state on a "divided mission" to recapture

Constantinople and deliver millions of Orthodox Christians from Ottoman rule.<sup>1</sup>

During the Soviet Era, which started in 1922, when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics — USSR was formed, as a result of the Russian Red Army's success in conquering Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia and Ukraine, religion in the Soviet states was forbidden. Soviet policy not only limited it, but it made atheism the official doctrine of the Soviet Union, based on the Marxist-Leninist ideology. This ideology has consistently advocated the control, suppression and, ultimately, the elimination of religious beliefs.<sup>2</sup>

The Soviets did everything to destroy religion and its symbols: they destroyed holy places like churches, temples and mosques; religious leaders were ridiculed, harassed, deported and even killed. Schools and media were overwhelmed with messages coming from aggressive atheistic propaganda, and at all levels of the society, the idea of "scientific atheism" was promoted, as the only truth the Soviet people should accept.

Even if the Soviet Union's Constitution guaranteed freedom of worship, punishments for those who practised religion were harsh and religion was completely suppressed in the time of the Socialists. Later on, the official religion was tolerated and used by communist officials in order to expand control in areas where they could use this as a tool. We can say that never before in human history had there been such a concerted effort to stamp out not merely a religion, but all traces of it.<sup>3</sup>

But from the late '80s, with Mikhail Gorbachev in power, the Soviet Union changed a lot. He gave people new freedoms, both political and social, and as a result, many of the buildings, monasteries and churches were returned to the official Orthodox Church. The year 1988 was an important turning point in the history of religion in the Soviet Union; it was the year when many old churches and monasteries closed down by the Communists during the Soviet era were reopened.

It was for the first time in the Soviet state's history when Russian people were allowed to see live transmissions on television broadcasting church services, as a result of the lifted ban on religious expression on state TV. From that moment on and continuing with the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991), many of the churches that had been closed in Soviet era (some 85 percent of all Russian churches) were reopened.

Today, Russia has a number of religions with adherents and the most important are Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Judaism. From all these, Russian

<sup>1</sup> Gary J Bass, *Why the Crimean War matters*, July 11, 2011, <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:oiMnFmazZB8J:wap.business-standard.com/storypage.php%3Fid%3D5%26autono%3D442239+russia+a+religious+state&cd=47&hl=en&ct=clnk&source=www.google.com>.

<sup>2</sup> *Soviet Union. Policy towards Nationalities and Religions in Practice*, <http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-12521.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Greeley, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (Sep., 1994), pp. 253, <http://www.jstor.org/pss/1386689>.

Orthodoxy is the main, the dominant religion in the Russian Federation. Approximately 100 million citizens identify themselves as Russian Orthodox, although only 5 percent of Russians call themselves observant of the religious Orthodox customs.<sup>4</sup> Most of the Muslim population lives in Volga — Ural region, but also in the Northern Caucasus, Moscow, St. Petersburg and the Western part of Siberia. The Buddhism adherents live in three regions of the Russian territory: *Buryatia, Tuva and Kalmykia*. Russia also has people who still practice pantheistic and pagan rites. They are residents of the Siberian region and are from Far East part of the country, *Yakutia, Chukotka* etc.

As a rule, ethnic lines lie at the basis of people's introduction to religion: Slavic people are Orthodox Christians, Muslims are predominantly Turkic, but not all Turkic groups in Russia are Muslims.

Estimates show that Christians constitute the largest religion of the Russian Federation, almost 83% of the country's residents considering themselves Russian Orthodox Christians. In 1997, on September 26, President Boris Yeltsin signed a law on religion that recognized four main religions: Orthodoxy, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism. The law's preamble recognizes the special link between Orthodoxy and the history of the Russian state, and also with the establishment and further development of the spirituality and culture of the Russian people.

The law adopted in 1997 officially guaranteed, even if it wasn't necessary, Orthodoxy as the main religion of the country. Furthermore, it gave full legal privileges to the Orthodox Church, which became the only religious organization eligible to receive state aid.

The close relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and Moscow has a long history. Long ago, the Orthodox Church played a very important role in unifying lands under the power of Moscow, freeing them from the domination of the Golden Horde. From that moment, the Russian Orthodox Church's involvement in social and political life has become more and more important. In the fourteen century, at a time when Moscow became a political power in the eastern part of the continent, the significance of the Russian Orthodox Church increased, and Moscow declared itself true defender of the Orthodox faith. At the end of the sixteen century, the creation of a patriarchate in Moscow generated a unique situation in Russia: the czar served as the leader of secular life while the patriarch was the leader of ecclesiastical life, playing an important role in the country's decisions.<sup>5</sup>

In the post-Soviet era, the relationship between the Russian state and the Russian Orthodox Church has focused on a few issues like: the admissibility

<sup>4</sup> *Russia*, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, International Religion Freedom Report 2010, November 17, 2010, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2010/148977.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> Annalise Blech, *The Russian Orthodox Church. History and Influence*, Center for Russian, East Europe and Eurasian Studies, University of Texas, 2008, p. 9, [http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/creees/\\_files/pdf/curriculum/CREEES-developed-units/russian\\_orthodox.pdf](http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/creees/_files/pdf/curriculum/CREEES-developed-units/russian_orthodox.pdf).

of religious instruction in public schools (through the framework of “Fundamentals of Orthodox Culture” courses); the introduction of chaplaincy in the armed forces; the restitution of property; and the limitation of competition by other faiths on Russian soil.<sup>6</sup>

Today, not only do the clergy take part in all levels of the social and political life in Russia, but the relationship between Orthodox Church and Kremlin seems to be very close, placing, in some opinions, other religions at a disadvantage. One of the people who identifies a problem in this closer relationship is Sergei Mozgovoi, from the independent Freedom of Conscience Institute, who stated in January 2010, that Russian lawmakers are rushing through laws to legitimize decisions made earlier by President Dmitry Medvedev on behalf of Russian Orthodoxy. These include teaching the Orthodox faith to the exclusion of others in public schools and universities and establishment of a military chaplain corps.<sup>7</sup>

### *Islam in Russia*

The second religion in Russia is Islam. The Russian Public Opinion Research Center Levarda made public in 2007, June 6, a poll that indicates that 6% of the respondents say that they consider themselves Muslims. They constitute the nationalities that live in the North Caucasus region, somewhere between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea: *Adygheyans, Balkars, Chechens, Circassians, Ingush, Kabardins, Karachay*, and numerous *Dagestani* peoples. Another area where Muslim live is the middle of Volga Basin, Tatars and Bashkirs, most of them Muslims.

In the Russian Federation, Islam is considered a traditional religion, a part of the Russian historical heritage. In the existing Russian territory, the first Muslims were the Daghestani people, from the region Derbent (8<sup>th</sup> century) and the first state of Muslims in Russia was Volga Bulgaria, established in 922. From the beginning of the Soviet era, the regime, fearful of a pan-Islamic movement, tried to divide the Muslims into smaller groups, into separate entities, separation that was accomplished by creating six Muslim republics, where the Soviet authorities promoted the development of a separate culture and language.<sup>8</sup>

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the official conciliation between Russian Federation — the successor of the Soviet state — and Islam begins.

<sup>6</sup> Dmitry Gorenburg, *The Russian Orthodox Church and Russian Politics*, Russian Military Reform, January 20, 2011, <http://russiamil.wordpress.com/2011/01/20/the-russian-orthodox-church-and-russian-politics-editors-introduction/>.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Fedynsky, *Kremlin Ties to Orthodox Church Raise Concern*, Voice of America, January 31, 2010, <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/europe/Kremlin-Ties-to-Orthodox-Church-Raise-Concern-83215807.html>.

<sup>8</sup> *Soviet Union. Policy towards Nationalities and Religions in Practice*, <http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-12521.html>.

In 1990, the restriction imposed by the Communists to the practice of religion was lifted, increased the numbers of Russian Muslims that made pilgrimages to the holy city of Mecca. Also, in 1995, the Union of Muslims of Russia was established, an organization interested in improving the inter-ethnic relations and ending the bad impression of Russians regarding the Muslim people and Islam.

But in late 1994, something happened in Russia that affected the relations between Islam and Russian authorities and people. As a result of the Chechen rebels' intention of separation from the Russian state, Moscow decided to send the security forces in the Republic of Chechnya, where a brutal military action was launched. After two years of violations of human rights on both sides, Russian and Chechen authorities signed an agreement settling a form of peaceful *modus vivendi*, so the Russian security forces withdrew from the Chechen territory.

The Peace Treaty signed in 1997 wasn't enough to erase the suffering and the hate from the Chechens hearts, so a number of terrorist attacks assigned to the Chechen separatists made Kremlin decide to launch a second intervention in Chechnya in 1999. Ten years later, after the situation in Chechnya changed after Ramzan Kadyrov was confirmed as Chechen President in 2007 and in 2009, Russian authorities decided to end the counterterrorism operations in Chechnya, the specter of potential conflict in the North Caucasus was raised again by the March 2010 bombing of the Moscow Metro and the January 2011 explosions in Moscow's Domodedovo airport.<sup>9</sup>

### *Chechen insurgency and terrorist activities*

An ethnic minority, the Chechens live in the Russian region of the Northern Caucasus region, in a mountainous region. Even if they wanted to be a separate and autonomous territory, for the past two hundred years they generally remained under the Moscow power. The collapse of the Soviet Union animated the Chechens separatists who launched a campaign for independence, but the death of the general Djohar Dudaev, the historical leader who led the independence war, followed by the killing of several successors and leaders of the insurgency, that began to use terrorist procedures and means, like the most prominent one, Shamil Basayev, in July 2006, made the movement weaker.

Several terrorist attacks are attributed to Chechens separatists, like the hostage crisis of the Dubrovka Nord-Ost Theater in Moscow, bombings of the buildings in Moscow, the Budionovsk Hospital hostage situation, as well as the Beslan attack and hostage situation of a school, the killing of the former pro-Russian president Akhmad Kadyrov during a football match, on a stadium in Grozny and several attacks to the train infrastructure. Some of

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of State, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs Background Note: Russia, March 16, 2011, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3183.htm>.

them were genuinely accepted and claimed by the Chechen insurgency, some other were pretexts for launching news operation in Chechnya, some are rejected by the Chechen insurgency.

— The Budyonnovsk hospital hostage crisis refers to the incident that took place in the southern Russian city of Budyonnovsk. It began on 14 June 1995 and lasted until 19 June, when a group of 80 to 200 Chechen terrorists led by Shamil Basayev attacked the city. They demanded an end of the First Chechen War, and also direct negotiations with Moscow. But the Russian intervention made them regroup in the town hospital, where the Chechens took between 1.500 and 1.800 hostages. The crisis ended in a dramatic way: 129 civilians were killed and a number of 415 people were injured. Boris Yeltsin, the Russian President, denounced the incident as *unprecedented in cynicism and cruelty*.<sup>10</sup>

— The Russian apartment bombings, in September 1999, hit four apartment blocks in three Russian cities: Moscow, Buynaksk and Volgograd, killing 293 people and injuring 651. These incidents represented at that time one of the causes of the Russian invasion in Chechnya and the beginning of the Second Chechen War.

— Known as the 2002 Nord-Ost siege, the Moscow theater hostage crisis took place on 23 October 2002, when between 40 and 50 armed Chechens took 850 hostages inside the Dubrovka Theater, demanding the end of the Second Chechen War and the withdrawal of Russian army from the Chechen territory. After two-and-a-half-day, Russian special forces, *Spetsnaz*, intervened in force after havin pumped an unknown chemical agent into the theater's ventilation system, killing 39 Chechens and 129 hostages. Most of them died because of the toxic gas, and only a few were killed directly by the Russian forces. Moscow's Mayor, Yuri Luzhkov, stated at that time that operation were completed by the special forces in a brilliant way, but the consequences of the incident were serious. President Vladimir Putin announced that he is giving the military new powers to fight terrorism, because *Russia will not... give in to any blackmail*.<sup>11</sup>

— The Beslan school hostage crisis took place on September 1, 2004, when a group of Chechens attacked the School Number One located in Beslan, a town in North Ossetia, taking more than 1.100 hostages, 777 of them children. The terrorist group was lead by the Chechen separatist Shamil Basayev, who demanded an end to the Second Chechen War. The number of deaths after the Russian intervention reached 380 people: 334 hostages, including 186 children and 21 special forces soldiers; and hundreds of people were wounded. As a consequence of the terrorist attack, Moscow proceeded to toughen laws on terrorism and expand the powers of *law enforcement*

<sup>10</sup> John Kohan, Dean Fischer, Yuri Zarakhovich, *Assault at High Noon*, Time Magazine, June 26, 1995, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,983088,00.html>.

<sup>11</sup> *Putin vows to crush rebels*, BBC, 28 October 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2368023.stm>.

*agencies*. Also, the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, decided to sign a law that replaces the direct elections of the Russian Federation federal subjects with new leaders proposed by the Russian President.

However, violence in the Northern Caucasus has escalated since 2008, and Moscow experienced its most serious attack in six years with the bombing of a metro station in March 2010<sup>12</sup>, followed by another incident that terrified the population in Russia, the bomb attack at the airport in 2011.

— The 2010 Moscow Metro bombing was a suicide attack carried out by two women on March 29, 2010, at two stations of the Moscow Metro — Lubyanka and Park Kultury. At least 40 people died and approximately 100 people were injured. Moscow accused Chechen for the criminal act. In April 2010, Chechen leader, Doku Umarov, declared in a video interview: “blood will no longer be limited to our cities and towns. The war is coming to their cities. If Russians think the war only happens on television, somewhere far away in the Caucasus where it can’t reach them, then God willing, we plan to show them that the war will return to their homes”.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the investigation of the terrorist attack revealed that one woman from Dagestan and one Chechen woman are responsible for the suicide attacks at the Moscow Metro.

— The Domodedovo International Airport Bombing was a suicide attack that took place on 24 January 2011. The terrorist attack was committed by a 20-year man from the North Caucasus and the blast killed at least 37 people and injured more than 180 people. On 8 February 2011, Doku Umarov, the leader of so called Caucasian Mujahideen claimed the responsibility for the attack, threatening further horrible attacks. In an interview posted on the Islamist website *www.Kavkazcenter.com*, Umarov talked about the “Moscow’s Domodedovo airport on January 24 as a «special operation» directed against the Russian people and its Prime minister, Vladimir Putin”.<sup>14</sup>

— The most important incident of the summer was the murder of the former Russian colonel Yuri Budarov on June 10, 2011. Budarov was released two years earlier after he received a 10-year jail sentence for the kidnapping and murder a Chechen teenager. The killing of Elza Kungayeva, provoked outrage in Chechnya, where many civilians died at the hands of Russian forces and pro-Moscow militia during the long war against rebels, as well as Budarov’s own assassination, in daylight beside a children’s playground, caused revulsion in Russia.<sup>15</sup> A Chechen man was arrested in Moscow over the murder of a former colonel.

<sup>12</sup> Preeti Bhattacharji, *Chechen Terrorism (Russia, Chechnya, Separatist)*, Council of Foreign Relations, April 8, 2010, <http://www.cfr.org/terrorism/chechen-terrorism-russia-chechnya-separatist/p9181>.

<sup>13</sup> *Interview of the Caucasus Emirate’s Emir Dokka Abu Usman*, Kavkazcenter.com, February 17, 2010, <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2010/02/17/11434.shtml>.

<sup>14</sup> Ralph Boulton, *Doku Umarov: Domodedovo Attack Was My Work*, from Reuters, posted on Huffpost World, 7 February, 2011, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/02/07/doku-umarov-domodedovo-at\\_n\\_819949.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/02/07/doku-umarov-domodedovo-at_n_819949.html).

<sup>15</sup> *Man arrested in Moscow over murder of Yuri Budanov*, BBC, 26 August 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-14681526>.

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Part II  
MOSCOW AND ISLAM — HISTORY AND PRESENT

The current rivalry between Russians and Muslims may have deeper roots from a different part of the history. They started to fight a long time ago, in wars like the Crimean War (1853-1856), or the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878), in both cases, history showing the difference between these two kind of people: Russians and Turkish.

Article 9 of the Paris Peace Treaty signed in 1856, which marks the end of the Crimean War, made it clear that the Ottoman Empire is obliged to grant Christians equal rights with Muslims. Indeed, some were attributed to non-Muslim people, but they still had to face limited rights. The courts did not accept testimony of the Christians against Muslims, and the worst abuses took place in the European part of the empire, regions with a predominantly Christian population. At the time, the Ottoman government was not in a good situation, having serious financial problems, and it started to aggravate because of the 600.000 Muslim Circassians expelled from the Caucasus by the Russians to the Balkan ports of Constanta and Varna and to the Black Sea ports of north Anatolia.

In this context, the Russo-Turkish War broke in 1877 between the Eastern Orthodox coalition led by Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire. It wasn't the first time when these two different religious parts fought against each other, but it was an important moment in the history of both empires.

Beginning with the year 1552, Muslims that lived in the Russian territory were systematically repressed by authorities through policies of exclusions and discriminations. Another measure of repression was the destruction of the Muslim religion by destroying the mosques. Achieving a homogenous Russian Orthodox population in Russia wasn't possible by total expulsion like in some countries, so other policies like promotion of migration and land grants for the Russians and other non-Islamic populations in the areas inhabited by Muslims transformed them from the main population into minorities in parts of the South Ural region, and almost annihilated the Muslims from the Caucasus, the Circassians and Crimean Tatars. This process of russification caused a lot of suffering for the Muslims that lived in the lands where massive deportations took place. The process continued in the time of Tsarist era, and didn't stop during the time of Soviet Union.

From the beginning, the Russian state always bordered two different spaces: Europe and Orient. In the past, the Communists found a way to make it work: they institutionalized atheism, the cult for personality and, in order to unify the people of diverse cults and ethnicities, they tried to make a homogenous working class and use other forms of propaganda to exclude Islam from the day by day problems. But the collapse of the USSR created a vacuum in the people ideology that reignited the search, approach and passion for the religion, so many years suppressed.

A new issue appeared in Russia and became more and more evident: the struggle between Orthodox Christianity and Islam, keeping the pattern of the East versus West competition. The recent years proved that there is a trend for the East to gain domination over the pan-Slavism in a time when the population of Russian Federation follows a downward line and the Muslims from the violent region of North Caucasus are looking for jobs in Russian cities.

Today, Moscow is confronting a big problem: the number of Muslims increased massively, a situation that conducted to an ethnic hatred that affected a big part of the Russian population. In Moscow's Mosques there is not enough space for all the Muslims anymore, so they started to worship on the streets.

With an estimated number of 12,3 million of migrants, Russia risks becoming a battlefield between the immigrants and ultra-nationalists. The latter, perceive the growing number of Muslims as a danger for mother land, so they militate for a "Russia for Russians!"<sup>16</sup>

If we are referring at the Islamization of the West, undoubtedly France is in the worst situation. With a Muslim population estimated at 10-15 % and a very low birthrate among it's own citizens, the native French, and a high number of births among the Muslims immigrants, the future of France is not so bright.

Regarding the Russian Federation, which is a special case, the situation is also problematic. It is estimated that its Muslim population is of about 10 to 12%, with a worst demographic situation than France's.<sup>17</sup> So, in those cases, could we talk about a Muslim power in Russia? Maybe it may sound strange, but the Russian Federation has the biggest number of Muslims of ak states in Europe, with a share of the Muslim population rising very fast.

The 2002 census found that Russia's Muslims numbered 14.5 million, 10% of its total of 145 million of people. In 2005, the Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, estimated the number of Muslims at 20 million. Ravil Gaynutdin, head of Russia's Council of Muftis, talks about 23 million, including Azeri and Central Asian migrants.<sup>18</sup> And the problem is that the Muslim population in the Russian territory is increasing, while the number of native Russian people decreases.

In 2010, the leader of the Russian Muslim community criticized in a serious way the Russian authorities. Ravil Gainutdin, the head of the Council of Muftis of Russia, accused Moscow of attempting to "suppress Islam" and for trying to prevent the unification of all Muslims that live in the Russian Federation. In his opinion, *these puppets, like those who work in govern-*

<sup>16</sup> Oxana Onipko, *Islamization of Russia*, <http://www.reportagebygettyimages.com/content/pdf/custom-pdf/11193.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> *Russian Army to Be Muslim Majority In Few Decades*, Prophecy News Watch, <http://www.prophecynewswatch.com/2011/January01/0141.html>.

<sup>18</sup> *Russia's Muslims. A benign growth*, The Economist, April 4, 2007, [http://www.economist.com/node/8961754?story\\_id=8961754](http://www.economist.com/node/8961754?story_id=8961754).

ment, for example, the Islamophobic Grishin (the director of the Presidential Administration in charge of relations with Islamic organizations), will not hesitate to suppress Islam in Russia ... which is already taking place.<sup>19</sup>

The statements came in a complicated context, when in Russia a few clashes between nationalists and immigrants from Northern Caucasus were registered. Moscow is the home of almost 2 million Muslims and, because of the dissensions between Muslims and native people of Russia, the Russian capital became a battlefield for these two parts that both defend their religion and cultural values.

In 2007, Shamil Alyautdinov, the imam of one of Moscow's four mosques, insisted that Russians should not to use the word "minority" for the followers of a religion which emerged on Russian territory much earlier than Christian religion did. This looks more like an attitude of someone who is defending his territory, a harsh statement that cannot bring anything good.

### *Russian ultra-nationalists and Muslims*

The dissolution of the Soviet Union followed by a increased number of Muslims in the territory of its juridical successor — the Russian Federation, and the effects of the Second Chechen War made many of the Russian extremist groups associate Muslim population and the Islam — their religion, with terrorism and domestic crimes. Among these, Russians are angry because of the Moscow's financial support for the North Caucasus region as part of the Kremlin's policy and intentions to keep it under the Russian influence and control.

In 2005, a report edited by international human rights watchdog, Amnesty International, revealed that at least 28 people were killed and a number of 366 assaulted, violent racism being the cause of these casualties. The report was entitled *Russian Federation: Violent racism out of control* and includes examples of police and prosecutors routinely classifying murders and serious assaults by skinhead extremists as lesser crimes of "hooliganism".<sup>20</sup> The victims of the Russians rage were foreigners, ethnic minorities and antiracist activists.

In 2006, in the northern town Kondopoga, the police forces were supplemented after hundreds of ethnic Russians burned businesses and cars owned by traders that came from Caucasus. The cause of this violence was the death of two ethnic Russians a week ahead, after a fight with some Chechens. The tensions were increased because, as the reports from the town said, members

<sup>19</sup> *Russian Islamic leaders against the Kremlin*, AsiaNews.it, December 23, 2010, <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Russian-Islamic-leaders-against-the-Kremlin-20332.html>.

<sup>20</sup> *Russian racism "out of control"*, BBC News, 4 May 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4969296.stm>.

of far-right groups from across the country traveled to the town to join the violent clashes with the Police.<sup>21</sup>

Even so, until now Moscow kept the first place for political extremism and violence. Official statistics between 2006 and 2008 recorded a number of 146 murders and 649 beatings, all attributed to neo-Nazi and racist groups. At the same period, for the entire territory of Russian Federation, the official statistics talked about 248 murders and 1.561 beatings.

In August 2007, the Russians were horrified by a video post on the internet showing two ethnic Russian neo-Nazis killing two Muslim men in an execution-style: one from Dagestan and one from Tajikistan. At that moment, Alexander Verkhovsky, an activist involved in monitoring racist crimes in Russia, stated that he had never heard anything about the organization claiming having planned the attacks, but the film appeared to him to be genuine.<sup>22</sup>

Russian authorities always had a tolerant policy regarding extreme-right nationalist groups. They are allowed to gather for an annual rally every year. Banned a year before for technical reasons, in 2010 the event was reuniting together more than 5.000 people. On December 11, present in Moscow's Manezh Square, somewhere close to Kremlin, Nazis saluted and launched racist slogans. They didn't stop and started savagely beating citizens around what seemed to be from Central Asia or the Caucasus, Russia's mainly Muslim southern region, and at list 20 people needed medical assistance. The violence had at the base the incident produced on December 6, 2010, when Yegor Sviridov, a member of the fan club that supports Spartak Moscow, one of Moscow's most popular soccer clubs, was shot in the head during a fight with several men from the Caucasus.

The security forces that were sent to solve the problem were unable to stop the violence. In their clashes with the extreme-right nationalists, the security forces had a hard mission to complete. Images from the place where the violence broke showed hundreds of officers incapable of controlling the violent crowd.

Several men from the Caucasus were beaten, as police stood by, helplessly. Human rights activists have long been warning that Russia's simmering tensions of the extremists could spill over<sup>23</sup> and this was one of the developments that happened. The events that took place at the end of 2010 put the Russian racism and nationalism on top of the problems that Russian authorities deal with. It was for the first time that radicals triumphed in organizing such an important gathering in the center of Moscow, committing violent acts and not being dispersed by the security forces.

<sup>21</sup> *Russian town heat by race violence*, BBC News, 4 September 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5312078.stm>.

<sup>22</sup> *Russian held over "deaths" video*, BBC News, 15 August 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6946810.stm>.

<sup>23</sup> Miriam Elder, *Right-wings hooligans terrorize Russia*, *post-gazette.com*, December 19, 2010, <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/10353/1111982-82.stm>.

In May 2011, a court in Moscow sentenced the Russian ultra-nationalist, Nikita Tikhonov, to life in prison after he was found guilty for killing a lawyer and a young journalist. His girlfriend, Yevgeniya Khasis, was found guilty for helping him co-ordinate the attack, so she got 18 years of prison.

Also, in May 2011, at least 9 people were wounded in violent attacks of neo-Nazis all across the Russian Federation and one Armenian national was killed in Moscow. Three incidents took place in the Russian capital, and the Moscow region with 1 killed and 2 wounded, in St. Petersburg a person was wounded from racist attacks as was the case in the Saratov region. This brings the year-to-date total for 2011, until May, to 11 killed; at least 55 wounded in racist attacks in 14 regions across Russia and 5 people have received death threats.<sup>24</sup>

Muslim monuments were another target of the xenophobic vandalism. Four such actions (three in May and one in March) took place at Muslim cemeteries in Nizhny Novgorod. Russian authorities stated that the desecration of Muslim tombs had the clear traits of an ordered action.<sup>25</sup>

During the summer of 2011, the ultra-right movement tried to gain attention from the public sphere, organizing various public events, and it received approval to organize protest actions.

Regarding radical nationalism and xenophobic aggression, SOVA Center announced a sharp reduction of the incidents' number of racism or neo-Nazi violence compared with the period of summer 2010. From June to August, attacks took place in Moscow and St. Petersburg, in Nizhny Novgorod regions, Mari El and Khakassia. The victims were people of 'Asian appearance' (seven persons), people with dark skin (six persons), people of Central Asian (four persons) and Caucasian (two persons) origin.<sup>26</sup>

Also, from June to August 2011, at least 21 acts of vandalism were recorded, motivated by hatred or neo-Nazi ideology. Two of this were committed against Muslim targets (a mosque in Sverdlovsk region and tombs in Nizhny Novgorod region, and since the beginning of the 2011 year, the number of acts of vandalism committed at Nizhny Novgorod cemeteries against Muslim tombs reached seven cases.

In September 2011, according to a report released by SOVA Center, it was recorded nine acts of neo-Nazi vandalism. The main targets of attack were Protestant objects and buildings, buildings associated with the Jehovah's Witnesses (in four cases), Eastern Orthodox sites (two cases), and only one Muslim sites.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *Racism and Xenophobia Update for May 2011*, SOVA Center for Information and Analysis, June 1th, 2011, <http://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/news-releases/2011/06/d21777/>.

<sup>25</sup> Natalia Yudina, Vera Alperovich, *Spring 2011: Causes Celebres and New Ultra-right Formations*, SOVA Center for Information and Analysis, 12.07.2011, <http://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2011/07/d22101/>.

<sup>26</sup> Natalia Yudina, Vera Alperovich, *Summer 2011: A New Batch of Neo-Nazi Convicts and Dreams of a Second Manezh*, SOVA Center for Information and Analysis, 09.11.2011, <http://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/reports-analyses/2011/11/d22976/>.

<sup>27</sup> *Racism and Xenophobia in September 2011* SOVA Center for Information and Analysis, 05.10.2011, <http://www.sova-center.ru/en/xenophobia/news-releases/2011/10/d22701/>.

*November 4, 2011 — “Take Back Russia” protest*

Only two days before the big Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha, on November 4, thousands of far-right Nazi-saluting nationalists gathered on the streets of the Russian capital in what it was called the “Take Back Russia” demonstration against the Muslim population. People were angry because of the migrants coming from Caucasus region, but also for the money Moscow is allocating for this region. About 5.000 Russians, most of them young people were chanting *Russia for Russians* and *migrants today, occupiers tomorrow*, protesting against the danger of the grown number of non-Slavs people in Moscow and other parts of the country.

Police feared a violent brake up, so a large number of policemen stood shoulder-to-shoulder along the streets where protesters express their opposition regarding the Muslim population from Moscow.

This mass protest was the biggest demonstration against non-Slav population, more precisely against the Muslims since the event in December 2010, when the clash between the extremists and the police broke in an unprecedented outbreak of hate crimes. From that serious incident, Russian authorities have adopted a series of measures in order to keep the streets of Moscow safe, and also to prevent other similar events. But even so, they cannot erase the hate from the Russians hearts, and the proliferation of the violently xenophobic groups.

Two days later, on November 6, 2011, tens of thousands of Muslims prayed on the Moscow’s streets, to celebrate the religious holiday of Eid al-Adha. With only a few mosques in the Russian capital, the large number of Muslims that live in Moscow don’t have any other solution but to pray in the streets. The 100-year-old main mosque was torn down and now a new one is under construction, but even so, the 80.000 Muslims gathered nearby to say their prayers. They also used the parks as the place for religious habits. A real problem for the Muslims from Moscow is the lack of the places where to practice their religion and to share their beliefs, so they are usually do it in public annoying the citizens of the Russian capital.

“Of course new mosques are needed”, said Maruv, a shop worker from Tajikistan who gave only his first name. “Look at how many people are in the street and it’s cold. They have been standing here waiting for the beginning of prayers since 6 a.m. and there are no facilities”.<sup>28</sup>

The Muslims were supervised by the police, who coordinated the area and looked for dangerous objects by monitoring the worshippers with metal detectors. In the tense context, Russian authorities took all the measures needed for a peaceful celebration. Also, the Russian President, Dmitry Medvedev and the Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin, sent a message to all Muslims in the

<sup>28</sup> *80.000 Muslims Pray On The Street In Moscow*, HuffPost Religion, Nov. 6, 2011, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/11/06/muslims-in-russia\\_n\\_1078424.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/11/06/muslims-in-russia_n_1078424.html).

country, stressing the importance for the young generation to guide itself after strong moral values, and they also promoted religious and ethnic accord.

Today, the Russian Federation has to face another challenge. The protests that began on December 5, 2011 and are still ongoing, are based on political issues, being a response to the 2011 Russian legislative election process. Until now, there is no link between these demonstrations and the Muslim issue, an issue that created tensions in the recent past in Moscow. No doubt, the problem of the increasing number of Muslims among Russian people will not be definitively abandoned, but in this period Russians are more concerned about the issue of elections that took place in 2011 and the presidential elections that will be held in 2012. Ignoring in such a way a problem that a while ago created so much tension among the inhabitants of Moscow, but also in several other Russian cities, shows that indeed, Muslims from Russia are a concern for the indigenous population, but there are definitely other preoccupations for the Russian population and authorities, and the Muslim problem is not the most important one. At least not for now.

### *Conclusions*

If we do analyze all these violent incidents with a race-motivated base, we can conclude a few things. First of all, it became a largely phenomenon limited to Russian capital and St. Petersburg, ranked second after Moscow at number of murders and racism-inspired beatings and violence. Second, Russia still has a growing racism problem, even after more than 20 years that followed the dissolution of the Soviet Union, event that left an ideological vacuum.

But the collapse of the Soviet state meant the end of the Russian imperial state and one of the effects was the assertiveness of the Russian Muslims. Some of them say they have nothing against ethnic Orthodox Russians and others stated that they do see them as the enemies of the Russian Muslims or the whole Muslim community.

Regarding the ethnic Russians, they responded in a few different ways. For some of them, the assertiveness of Muslims in the Russian Federation represents an incentive to convert to Islam. But for the majority, these changes led to the present-day racism and the growing power of the slogan "Russia for Russians".

The evolution of this angle of approach does not necessarily mean an inevitable clash for the time that will come, but this depends on the good governance, administrative capacities strength, openness and democratic situation of the Russian authorities and state, with respect to ethnic and religious minorities, the education and culture of tolerance, because only such a state can prevent the future serious threats.

Whether Russia will be both democratic and able to accept its diversity, address and deal with the minorities, or it chooses only to be strong and re-

pressive, it is to be seen in the future. For the moment, those problems are in the forefront of the agenda. Undoubtedly, the increasing influence of the Muslim community, corroborated with the demographic shift (if it proceeds for a long time), can change the situation in Russia in a dramatic way, and the country would suffer because of the decrease of the number of adherents to the Christian religion. And this is the biggest fear of all Russians.

But the Russians' fear is in contrary to the feelings of the Muslim population about Russia. Generally, Muslims here declare themselves proud for living in this country: "We, Russian Muslims, are proud of our fatherland, Russia, and we are trying to make Russia proud of us, our culture and our contribution to the modernization and development of our state"<sup>29</sup>, said the head of the Council of Muftis, Ravil Gainutdin.

In this context, the real problem for Kremlin seems to be the different approach of the situation by the two sides involved in it: while the unwanted Muslims are right in the place they want to be and they want to live, Russians' hatred is growing and is impossible to fight with, because in their opinion, Russia is only for the Russians and not for other people. Also, Kremlin must eliminate or at least blur the causes of the disagreement between the Russians and Muslims. But how can Moscow do this? There are two important issues and none of it can be "fixed": first, there is the religious problem, and the second one is the money that Kremlin allocates for North Caucasus so it can control and maintain its domination in the region.

In this case, Moscow must find a solution to make the cohabitation of the Russians and Muslims much harmonious, and to reconcile both sides for now and for the future, especially as it is estimated that, by the year 2050, Islam is likely to become Russia's predominant religion.

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<sup>29</sup> *Idem*.

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## Chapter 6

# RUSSIAN POLICIES IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS

**BOGDAN NEDEA**

### *Overall Situation*

The theme of this particular chapter could be viewed as a challenge for anybody willing to approach it due to the lack of a formal comprehensive policy towards the North Caucasus. Ever since the second Chechen war in 1999 the Russian authorities have done their best to present a calm atmosphere in the region, something that could not be further from the realities in the field. Therefore, we can emphasise from the very beginning that Moscow still lacks a coherent policy for the region and continues to deny its failures especially when it comes to implementing impulsively developed strategies. We could assess even that 2010 turned out to be more difficult for Russia than the previous year in terms of its problems in the North Caucasus. Nearly all top Russian officials, including Russia's president, the head of the Investigative Committee of the Prosecutor General's Office and the Interior Minister, among others, have had to acknowledge the worsening situation in the region. Even according to official data, the total number of militant actions against Russian authorities in 2010 increased one-and-a-half to four times compared to 2009.<sup>1</sup> Denial, along with lack of creative solutions and continuous failures regarding security for Russia's own citizens and for the entire region, have turned the North Caucasus, over the past two years, into one of the most unstable regions on the planet. Debate on the matter is kept on the low in Russia and other countries find it a waste of time as no cooperation from Russian authorities can ever be taken into consideration. Moreover, total lack of transparency from local and federal authorities regarding almost every aspect of the North Caucasus makes it impossible to obtain a fully fledged evaluation of the situation in the region. Even so, undeniably Moscow has an approach to the North Caucasian region that is best described as 'highly flexible'. This ironic definition refers to the frequent and sudden changes Moscow makes in its modus operandi in North Caucasus. We can

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<sup>1</sup> "Medvedev initiatives remain on paper", *Trud*, September 28, 2010, Issue: 180, [www.trud.ru/article/28-09-2010/251087\\_5\\_initsiativ\\_medvedeva\\_ostavshixsja\\_na\\_bumage.html](http://www.trud.ru/article/28-09-2010/251087_5_initsiativ_medvedeva_ostavshixsja_na_bumage.html).

also identify a series of general trends the Russian officials embrace when it comes to the region.

Firstly, there is the general influx of funds that are being injected in the region on the off chance that this could change the mood of the republics. Even though the republics' budget is subsidized as much as 70% and some of them far exceed budgets of other regions of Russia that are undoubtedly more important, the lack of jobs and poverty are the highest in the entire country. This is the result of the high level of corruption of the administrative apparatus and a "don't ask, don't tell" policy adopted by Moscow regarding funds that go into the region. The figures we are confronted with are based on releases from the Russian government but there are sources that claim that budgetary infusions are being made through special channels and listed as other than budget income. This part of Moscow's strategy has yet to be productive and lately, due to financial difficulties worldwide, has aroused popular unrest and tensions that threaten to rapidly transform into ethnic hatred towards the people of the region. In 2011, after multiple failures in the North Caucasus, the Russian government took into consideration a type of economic disengagement of the republics that would imply a drastic reduction of the federal funds injected in the region. This means that at least three out of five republics in the area would go bankrupt in less than six months. Even though such a move would be to the liking of ethnic Russians across the Federation, the implications of such a gesture are hard to foresee, especially in the economic realm, as Moscow would spend the money it saves on security related issues.

A second manifestation of Moscow's lack of resolve and solutions for the North Caucasus is the hard component. It is a well-known fact the Russian authorities' response to most insurgent actions or popular unrest inside the six republics in the region has been and appears to remain the use of intimidation and force. The constant upgrading of police forces, federal forces and special units of the FSB and Russian army for the republics is a good indicator of the failure of the policy in question but also of the low level of preparedness and expertise that these forces have. Moreover, scenes reminiscent of the last Chechen war, which in the opinion of some analysts is not yet over, makes the presence of an ever-growing number of Russian forces in the region alienate the population from the central government.

Under the same topic we have to take into consideration the brutal and damaging methods that both the federal troops and local police forces use in order to achieve their goals. There have been numerous reports of abductions, disappearances, torture, violence, threats, and other activities not suited to be representative for the authorities of an allegedly democratic regime. These reports have intensified in the last three years ever since the beginning of the worldwide economic recession due to problems that the central government has been facing economically, not being able to sustain the financially high-set bar for the North Caucasian republics. The repercussions of such

actions are the ever-growing ranks of the militant movement, lack of cooperation with the authorities and a new wave of religiously-driven groups that bring additional threats to local security and further prevent any federal achievements in the region.

The third general trend that Moscow appears to have adopted could be defined as a form of isolation of the autonomous republics of the North Caucasus. The correct definition is hard to find due to the fact that we are not talking about just isolation per se. Isolation is just a part of this policy; as human rights NGOs are censored or outright silenced from reaching out with comprehensive statistics or studies, the outside world is most of the time prevented from catching a glimpse of the real situation and the rest of the country is intentionally misled according to political interests.

Although the deterioration of the situation in the North Caucasus had multifaceted manifestations — in the sense that there were various factors, including social, political, economic and religious — the dominant and defining factor overshadowing all of them was the ongoing armed resistance movement. It was exactly the intensified insurgency that compelled the Russian authorities to confess that the situation in the region in 2010 had indeed significantly worsened compared to 2009. While in 2009, the violence and unrest were concentrated mainly in Ingushetia, in 2010 the much larger Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria came to the forefront, which could have an impact on Russia's Black Sea area, where Russia hopes to host the Sochi Winter Olympics in 2014<sup>2</sup>.

Against the background of the Circassian public outcry over the Russian decision to hold these games in their historical habitat, there have been news reports that are so ominously familiar to the rest of the North Caucasus region. The bombing of a train near Sochi on November 21, 2010<sup>3</sup> and the fact that caches of weapons and ammunition have repeatedly been found in the Sochi area appear to indicate the emergence of an indigenous group of local nationalists that could establish close contact with the armed underground of the North Caucasus at the initial stage, while not even being their ideological supporters<sup>4</sup>. Trying to remain in power, the leaders of the North Caucasus republics have been adopting the tactic first used by Ramzan Kadyrov, in which priority is given to the local police (or rather its individual structures), directly subordinated to local authorities. However, a strategy to counter the militants by using paramilitary structures composed of representatives of the indigenous population of a republic would hardly lead to the result that has

<sup>2</sup> “Moscow’s Position in the North Caucasus Worsened Dramatically in 2010”, Volume: 12, [www.jamestown.org](http://www.jamestown.org).

<sup>3</sup> Дело о подрыве железной дороги в Краснодарском крае возбуждено по статье “терроризм”, Nov 21st 2010, на <http://www.interfax.ru/politics/news.asp?id=165863>, [www.interfax.ru/politics/news.asp?id=165863](http://www.interfax.ru/politics/news.asp?id=165863).

<sup>4</sup> “A weapons cache was found near Sochi”, December, 29, 2010, <http://southdistrict.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/179035/>.

been purportedly achieved in Chechnya, since it ignores the many differences between the organization of Chechen society and that of the other polities in the region.

According to the authorities, more than 300 militants were killed in the North Caucasus in 2010, a majority of whom were liquidated in Dagestan during the last four months of the year<sup>5</sup>. These data include a certain percentage of those whose participation in the ranks of the armed resistance movement has not been proved; hence, they should be classified as civilians. It should be noted that siloviki losses are comparable to those inflicted on the rebel fighters. According to the Russian Prosecutor General's Office, there were 529 armed attacks on law enforcement and military personnel in 2010. In the course of their actions, militants killed 218 and wounded 536 people<sup>6</sup>. Interestingly, the figures given by Russian law enforcement agencies are little trusted by Dmitry Medvedev himself, who has literally said that all these figures for the North Caucasus are nothing but nonsense<sup>7</sup>. Thus, even the leadership of the Russian state has to admit what has been obvious for so many analysts working on Russia and specifically on the North Caucasus: that the figures published by Russian officialdom should be treated with great suspicion. According to independent sources basing their data on open news reports, the losses among the civilian population, including those killed by the Russian security forces, totaled 117 people in 2010<sup>8</sup>.

### *General Policies*

*Russia's* problems with the North Caucasus are far from new, the only novelty here being that the crash of the former USSR made it possible for the world to learn about the issue. If under soviet rule we can talk about a large-scale bloody repression, the intricacies of the democratic self-made Russian Federation and all its financial problems that made it difficult for the authorities to exercise the same control as before allowed national identity searches and religious unrest across the North Caucasus area. We could consider the first Chechen war not only a necessity for the ever-growing unrest in the region and therefore a manifestation of Moscow's early '90 hard policy but also a necessity regarding Russia's foreign policy. Kremlin's need to demonstrate the still existing Russian power after the crash of the USSR was another factor that led to the war in Chechnya in 1994. Looking back, we can

<sup>5</sup> "More than 130 militants killed in four months in Dagestan", Dec. 27, 2010, [www.rian.ru/defense\\_safety/20101227/314088692.html](http://www.rian.ru/defense_safety/20101227/314088692.html).

<sup>6</sup> "More than 300 militants killed this year in the North Caucasus — the data Prosecution", December 8, 2010, [www.interfax-russia.ru/South/main.asp?id=196058](http://www.interfax-russia.ru/South/main.asp?id=196058).

<sup>7</sup> "North Caucasus remains unstable — Medvedev", November 19, 2010, RIA Novosti News Agency.

<sup>8</sup> "Claimed the year", December 29<sup>th</sup> 2010, [www.kasparov.ru/material.php?id=4D1B301B9BD2D](http://www.kasparov.ru/material.php?id=4D1B301B9BD2D).

assess that the region was in its early stages in the religious and political warfare.

At the beginning of the 1990s, problems in the North Caucasus were predominantly limited to deferred payment on Soviet debts. The first stirrings in the regions were provoked not by Russian federal power, but the regional political communities. But they didn't manage to hold on to their power everywhere: in Chechnya, for instance, the local nationalist communists disturbed the 'beast' of ethnic nationalism, which then devoured them. But on the whole, the freedom parade was a matter for the higher echelons: the populace was given the role of the cavalry at the demonstrations. It was these elites that forced the Russian authorities to pacify the Caucasus using the method of trial and error — treaties and concessions, police operations and military campaigns, Khasavyurts (the Khasavyurt Accords at the end of the 1st Chechen War, 1996), treaties on the separation of powers and buying the favors of the regional elites. The result was the considerable reduction of the wave of interethnic conflicts (with the exception of Chechnya)<sup>9</sup>. The then Russian president, Boris Yeltsin, who had no functioning state institutions, but created them as he went along, succeeded in not allowing the division of republics with two constituent ethnic elements along ethnic lines. The key questions of the development of the Caucasus region were not only unresolved at that time; they were never properly formulated. Among them:

- the overpopulation of the republics, leading to high levels of unemployment and acute problems of land use;
- town planning mountain-style i.e. people moving from the mountains to the valleys;
- the archaic nature of social and political life;
- the insularity of ethnic and religious groups;
- legal pluralism and the strong influence of traditional law<sup>10</sup>.

Many of the Russian authorities' problems in the region derive from the mistakes and failures of those same authorities and their unwillingness to address existing problems. The current crisis in the Caucasus can hardly be said to be Yeltsin's fault: it stems from the actions of that same vertical. Putin would seem to have everything Yeltsin didn't have: a working state, loyal parliament and the support of the people. But in Putin's Russia government policies in the Caucasus have been reduced to a scenario of the Brezhnev period of stagnation. The authorities have adopted a reactive approach, deploying more Interior Ministry forces and carrying out unsystematic raids and purges without doing anything to address the reasons for terrorism and extremism in the Caucasus. The strengthening of the vertical started in 2000 and has meant a new pact between the federal centre and the regional elites

<sup>9</sup> Sergei Markedonov, *Yeltsin's complicated legacy in the Caucasus*, 19 February 2011, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/sergei-markedonov/yeltsin%E2%80%99s-complicated-legacy-in-caucasus>.

<sup>10</sup> *Idem.*

that have agreed to keep away from the public debates regarding nationalism in return for the Kremlin's blind eye regarding their "weaknesses"<sup>11</sup>.

Once again, we can state that problems in the North Caucasus are not new, adding that government does less than nothing to fix them. The above-quoted author, Sergei Makedonov, a prominent member of the analytical society regarding Russia's most burning problems provides a nationalistic solution for the Southern region: *Federal Government should today consider its most important task in the North Caucasus to be the continuation of Yeltsin's strategic course. The Russianisation of people with only a vague concept of themselves as citizens of one country can be delayed no longer. The majority of people in the region put ethnic, religious, tribal matters before their common Russian identity. To overcome this, internal apartheid in the region has to be vanquished and internal migration optimized. The Russian government has to change its recruitment policy. Dedicated bureaucrats and corrupt officials will not be able to promote the Russian Idea in the Caucasus. What is needed are politically motivated people — representatives of Moscow and a layer of so-called Eurocaucasians or people with roots in the republics of the Caucasus who are determined to get away from tribalism and traditionalism and to modernize. Bringing this project to fruition would be the best memorial to the founding father of today's Russian Federation.*<sup>12</sup>

The solutions put forward above are more than reasonable seen from a Russian point of view except for the fact that Moscow has already tried most of them lacking any success. The nationalistic bid with an extensive Russification of the area or the attempt to dilute the ethnically dense population are all experiments that not only failed (see the latest most resounding of them: the North Caucasus District) but were able to arouse more ethnic hatred towards the central government. Moreover, these ideas seem to neglect the fact that the area is still confronted with high levels of corruption, bureaucracy and a general weakness of the administration in the area. First of all we should be prepared to take into consideration the fact that Moscow is not even close to being prepared to let go of such a system as it is the best option for keeping the area under a form of control when faced with the multitude of problems. The leaders in Kremlin are not yet prepared to take into consideration a democratic approach to the problem and therefore see no other way of handling this problem. During Dmitry Medvedev's term in office, there was an attempt to break the monopoly of nepotism in the region but the president did so only by imposing his own leadership in the person of Aleksandr Khloponin. When Khloponin was faced with high disobedience from the republican leaders that had the backing of the former leader of the vertical system, Putin, who was keen on preventing Medvedev from gaining an actual foothold in the power nest, the North Caucasus District experiment

<sup>11</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>12</sup> Sergei Markedonov, *Yeltsin's complicated legacy in the Caucasus*, 19 February 2011, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/sergei-markedonov/yeltsin%E2%80%99s-complicated-legacy-in-caucasus>.

was declared a failure. Furthermore, the high level unofficial struggle for power in the Kremlin reflected on Khloponin's highly-praised managerial skills. Known to be an excellent economist and a successful manager (due to his close ties with the Kremlin, a fact known by few), his central support ended when he attempted to go against the many and subdue the Putin vertical to the Medvedev vertical. So, if the simple task of appointing a capable leader that would oversee governance in the republics is met with such harshness from those who should present solutions to problems, not further aggravate them, we can safely assume that eliminating corruption and putting forward politically-capable men in executive positions is out of the question. Along with this, the idea of promoting Russian ethnicity through a righteous political segment can be overruled from the beginning.

Secondly, the ethnic solution lacks the understanding of an ever-growing element: the Islamic resistance, an organization that is based on religious beliefs and religious extremism rather than on the intricacies of politics. This movement, under the socio-economic realities created by Moscow's ethnic policies so far, is able to claim more young minds, more popular support than the Russian identity ever could. Moreover, the insurgency has so far been able to make gains against Russian authorities. We should take into consideration, following the string of events that led to the current situation and brought it to a stalemate: Russian or a lack of Russian policy towards the region led to discontent and acted as a catalyst to the Islamic radical movement which in turn led to heavy repressions of the central government that led to an increasing number of attacks from the insurgency, which in turn led to ethnic hatred of Russians towards ethnic Caucasians. So, the end result, the newest development of the situation is that ethnic Russians reject the region completely and such a thing could have serious consequences, both political (in the light of the presidential elections of 2012) and social (see the street riots in Moscow in 2010), that distinctly state the ethnicity policy is nothing more than a stall bound to end in failure.

After the second Chechen war, it took years before they realized in Moscow that the region had not been pacified and, even worse, that there could not be any pacification at all, due to the multiple processes occurring there. The situation looks so unpredictable to the Kremlin that today a significant number of analysts in the state apparatus, including the law enforcement agencies (collectively called the *siloviki* in Russian) and officialdom dedicate their time, energy and resources to working on the North Caucasus. It means that the Russian government is giving unparalleled attention to the region. Moscow is ready to invest astronomical sums, even to the detriment of all other Russian territories, in order to turn the situation around by improving the quality of life of the local population<sup>13</sup>. Despite the biggest unemployment rate in the

<sup>13</sup> "Moscow's Approach to the North Caucasus Looks Increasingly Deluded", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume: 11 Issue: 10, November 17, 2010.

entire country, the residents of the autonomous republics of the North Caucasus have some of the highest living standards compared to other regions. This paradox is created by high social and unemployment aid given by the local authorities in accordance with the policy dictated by Moscow. This is often a reason for discontent by ethnic Russians towards the central government and many times the root of ethnic hatred and clashes. Even so, this policy is far from being productive as the dialogue between the governments and the population in the North Caucasus is scarce, which in turn leads to mass discontent. State mechanisms are often circumvented by its people as a result of lack of faith in the administrative institutions, a phenomenon that can be accounted for mainly through the high level of corruption of the authorities and despotic leadership. Such level of rejection towards the authorities created a broad base of support for those who have chosen to pick up arms to fight against the government. Having virtually no understanding of the real situation on the ground, Moscow tries to solve the problem by building additional ski resorts, in the hope that this would miraculously deny insurgents the support of the population. At their turn, the local authorities in the region, who are completely dependent on Moscow, act as if they are outsiders, and this reinforces the population's impulse to reject them. The local authorities even seem to realize this phenomenon, but avoid offending those in Moscow who make recommendations to them on how to act on the ground. Incidentally, it is difficult to find even one solid and reputable analyst or specialist on North Caucasus issues in the Kremlin's analytical circles. Almost all of the experts currently focusing on the North Caucasus left the region in the 1990s because they were unable to influence the situation then. Yet they are now issuing instructions from the Kremlin on how to change nearly the same situation in the region they had originally fled. The absolute majority of experts outside the Kremlin comprise those seeking to obtain grants abroad and then quickly leave the country that they were supposed to defend against those handing out the grants.

Under these circumstances, Moscow attempts different schemes in order to receive the result it looks for, without too much trouble if possible. Separate attempts to introduce specific social policies, like repopulating the area with Cossacks or launching a fully fledged religious campaign using the Orthodox Church, prove that the vision about the region's problems is highly distorted and divided.

Given the fact that Moscow has yet to present more than glimpses of an official policy towards the North Caucasus region, we will attempt to highlight the main guidelines, as much as they can be observed from the outside, lacking conclusive official data and statistics. In this respect, we appreciate that the best way to do this is to provide an extensive analysis of the main events that have occurred in the region in the past two years and the noticeable effects they produced regarding Moscow's attitude towards the region.

During 2010 we can identify two distinct events that, under very special circumstances, can be construed as a form of Russian policy for the North Caucasus. The first is the creation of the North Caucasus Federal District — a new administrative district that comprises all of the autonomous republics (Chechnya, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia and Dagestan) along with the Stavropol Krai region. The new administrative changes envisaged more than one objective: firstly, there was the economic aspect for which Moscow appointed Aleksandr Khloponin as a special envoy to the presidency and leader of the new district. Secondly, the dilution of the ethnic clusters in the region through stimulation of migration of the local population throughout Russia and relocation of the ethnic Russians from across the Federation in the area, which is the main reason that the Stavropol Region was included. The third main reason is the political one. Aleksandr Khloponin was the governor of the Krasnoyarsk Krai region and registered a number of financial successes mainly due to its close relation with the Kremlin. The fact that he was named special presidential envoy proves the fact that president Medvedev was trying to get a foothold in the dense political constituency of the North Caucasus created by his predecessor Vladimir Putin.

All of these elements, along with lack of experience regarding troublesome regions like the North Caucasus, where the financial is closely linked to the social and the religious, and disobedience from local republican leaders made it clear from the start that the administrative project would have a doubtful outcome. Therefore, more than two years after Aleksandr Khloponin was appointed the Russian president's envoy to the specially created North Caucasus Federal District, it can be safely concluded that he has not brought anything new or particularly important to Russia's troubled region<sup>14</sup>. An attempt to shift Russia's policy priorities in the North Caucasus from using coercive methods to solving social problems has not yielded any tangible results. He has virtually turned into a bureaucrat who has to ingratiate himself with local leaders, which means first of all the Chechen and Dagestani leaders, in order to save his own reputation. Incidentally, whether or not his mission is considered successful depends entirely on the gains he should make in those two Russian republics. But his major achievement so far is that he has failed to become an independent politician with the upper hand over a whole set of local leaders in the region whose management is entrusted to him<sup>15</sup>. Upon taking in his new office, Khloponin presented his ambitions in the region with three scenarios labeled inertial, basic and optimal<sup>16</sup>. The optimal scenario is designed to overcome the hallmarks of the

<sup>14</sup> "Success Eludes the Presidential Envoy to the North Caucasus! *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume: 11 Issue: 1, July 2, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> Khloponin, *Actual Comment*, January 20, 2010, <http://actualcomment.ru/man/384/>

<sup>16</sup> Yevgenia Pismennaya, Maria Tsvetkova, *Khloponin's Offshore*, <http://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/22670419>.

North Caucasus as seen from Moscow — the influence of clans, corruption, primitive economic forms, ethnic separatism, religious radicalism, the degradation of skilled labor force and the inclination among part of the population to depend excessively on state handouts.<sup>17</sup>

Moscow's decreasing ability to finance the North Caucasus, pressures connected to the Sochi Winter Olympics in 2014 and the unending violence in the region could be marked as the main reasons behind Moscow's policy change in the region. The North Caucasus Federal District comprises 6.5 percent of the population of the Russian Federation, while supplying only 1.18 percent of the country's tax revenues. All the region's republics receive more than half of their budgetary funds from Moscow, with Chechnya and Ingushetia obtaining over 90 percent of their budget funds from the federal center while Stavropol receives only 35 percent. Khloponin argued that there was no correlation between the economic development of a region and the amount of federal money it receives. So, he proposed launching priority projects, along with improving the overall investment climate in the North Caucasus in 2010-2012 and starting an active growth phase in 2013-2025. Implementation of the strategy is left to the head of the North Caucasus Federal District, which implies a diminishing role for the republican authorities and an increasing role for Moscow's envoy<sup>18</sup>. The development of the transport infrastructure in the North Caucasus is probably the most extreme example of the policy change that Khloponin's team advocated. It envisaged the construction of highways across the North Caucasus, invigorating the development of railroads to the South Caucasus, construction of ports on the Dagestani coast of the Caspian Sea and creating a transport corridor to Iran. The strategy heavily depends on the government's direct investments and tax breaks for private enterprises. A member of Khloponin's team said that there was not yet any sign of Moscow's approval of the strategy and that the extent of the resources the Kremlin would commit to the program was unknown. An anonymous Russian government official declared at the time that the new strategy would create a state within a state with lower or zero taxes, virtually an offshore zone — something that Moscow would be highly unlikely to support<sup>19</sup>. Even so, we shouldn't consider this problem from the able spectrum but from the willing one. Moscow may not be so receptive to Khloponin's proposals, however good they might be. Problems like ethnic claims from the local population, as well as the insurgency movement, are not even near to having a viable solution, therefore any investment made by Russia in the region would cost twice as much to protect it and it would still be subject to risks.

Among the marquee 'priority projects' envisaged by Khloponin are: the construction of an oil refinery in Chechnya; the construction of new port

<sup>17</sup> "Khloponin's Innovative Approach to the North Caucasus Faces Uphill Struggle", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 11, Issue: 2 July 16, 2010.

<sup>18</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>19</sup> *Idem.*

terminals in Makhachkala and Derbent; and the construction of skiing and health resorts in locales throughout the region. The Khloponin plan might usefully be broken down into four distinct categories — tourism, transport, energy, and banking — each of which is intended to function as a pillar for the future economic development of the region.

In terms of tourism, the plan outlines a scheme for the foundation of health sanatoria in Stavropol Krai, Karachaevo-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria and Chechnya. Ski resorts will be built in locations in Chechnya, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachaevo-Cherkessia and North Ossetia. While Khloponin has praised the region's existing transport infrastructure, he intends to improve its road and rail systems with a view to improving trans-regional economic links, as well as links with the countries of the Southern Caucasus.

Energy is the third key component of Khloponin's strategy. The plan emphasizes Dagestan's potential as an energy hub for the entire region and beyond. Khloponin recommended improving the region's existing energy infrastructure. He also insisted that the various republican governments service their debts towards the energy sector, a section where he especially mentions Chechnya as the main consumer of the region. Khloponin's plan also envisages the establishment of a new banking system for the new district. The state-owned Vnesheconombank (VEB) is to open a subsidiary in the region. This subsidiary will be capitalized by VEB as well as other (as yet unidentified) banks and the Russian exchequer. The SKFO branch of VEB will help to finance priority projects throughout the Northern Caucasus. This, in effect, would lead to breaking the North Caucasus' relative isolation from its immediate neighborhood and potentially other parts of the world<sup>20</sup>. So far, Moscow has taken upon itself all the projects Khloponin has put forward as the North Caucasus District was the central government's project but we can safely presume that the externalization of the region towards the outside world is not on any of Moscow's lists. One reason for this could be the effort Moscow has put into keeping the region ever more isolated from the reach of other states in order to prevent further discontent and secondly, due to the fact that once the international opinion gains access to the region, frightening numbers that could produce negative effects on Russia, could come out of there.

This aspect should not be a concern to Moscow as all of these projects require financing, financing that the Kremlin may not have available when the politically damaging part of these projects could be put into practice. Therefore, Khloponin's plan anticipates these projects being financed by public-private joint venture initiatives. But what investor(s) might reasonably be expected to get involved in a region that is evidently in the grip of

<sup>20</sup> Kevin Daniel Leahy, *Khloponin Endeavours to Raise Investor Confidence in Northern Caucasus*, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5373>.

wide-scale social unrest? For now, there is a clear consensus among Russian business people that any investment in the Northern Caucasus is risk-averse<sup>21</sup>. Even so, investments have been made in the region but only under heavy guarantees from the Kremlin, guarantees that may not be given for implementing policies that could aggravate the status-quo of the region. Without these guarantees no one will be adventurous enough to invest in a region where no promises can be made. Therefore, we are compelled to stress that the region needs security instead of 450 billion rubles worth of ski resorts. Security does not refer only to protection against insurgent bomb or armed attacks but to protection against local warlords, clans and influential characters that are tolerated by Moscow and who interpret the law in their own way. So, even with Moscow's blessings, a businessman cannot be sure of his investment as property rights are regulated by clan wars and knowing also that basic infrastructure makes an easy target for terrorists, as demonstrated numerous times. In fact, the key problem of the region may not be economic, since the real level of income is significantly higher than that reflected in official statistics (as any comparison of a village in Dagestan and in central Russia would confirm). It is the paternalistic political system based on administrative corruption that generates social discontent and fosters extremism. However, neither Khloponin nor Medvedev have any idea how to transform it into a successful project<sup>22</sup>.

This element puts pressure on the local leaders that are faced with an added bundle of problems if they don't present results: the local leaders' desire to communicate with Russia's central authorities, which is why the North Caucasus District project was faced with upheaval from within from the very beginning. The local leaders who have now become tied to the North Caucasus Federal District were faced with losing their shaky influence over their bureaucratic apparatus. They need direct support from Moscow, otherwise the struggle at the local level would turn into permanent squabbles for positions and influence between them and the Russian president's representative. Moscow, thus, remains as a type of talisman for the local leader that obviates the necessity for him to fight for his place. Despite Khloponin's rank of deputy prime minister, he is not yet able to overrule the heads of the republics that see the distribution of funds amongst their clientele as their main instrument of power. This system of privatizing the federal budget generates far greater profits for officials and their businesses than any investment, while the growth of small enterprises is suppressed by racketeering. Reporting to Medvedev on the situation in Dagestan in August 2010, Khloponin had to admit a net outflow of investment, on top of a total waste of spending on local projects that had been earmarked for federal funding<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>22</sup> Pavel K. Baev, *The Terrorism-Corruption Nexus in the North Caucasus Ponars Eurasia Policy Memo*, No. 114, International Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO).

<sup>23</sup> *Idem.*

After a year of experimenting, Moscow and its representatives in the field had to face failure. As any historian can recall, Russia has never admitted failure but has always placed blame. This is what Aleksandr Khloponin did when he expressly blamed instability in the region on the security services of Western countries, stating that the situation in the North Caucasus was aggravated artificially. According to Khloponin, Western security services and various provocateurs were inflaming interethnic tensions in the region in the run up to the 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi on the Black Sea coast. In particular, Khloponin pointed to the Circassian question and the Ossetian-Ingush conflict — which, he said, are drawing the attention of the Russian government's opponents abroad<sup>24</sup>. As usual, Russian propaganda was trying to explain the negative trend by pointing to increased foreign influence over the region. In Russian understanding, it is impossible for the armed resistance movement in the North Caucasus to exist and survive autonomously. The Russians seem to present the organization of the North Caucasus rebels as some commercial branch that cannot subsist on its own without the overseas market. The mythical financial injections that pseudo-analysts have much talked about over the course of 11 years of war in the North Caucasus have never in fact been substantiated with evidence; neither has the flow of funds to the actual perpetrators from individuals alleged to have ordered terrorist attacks ever been clearly proven. In general, such allegations are meant for ordinary people who are prone to believe everything shown on Russian TV<sup>25</sup>. Khloponin's accusations are especially ironic given that only in May he came up with the plan to develop tourism in the North Caucasus and is expecting assistance from a number of Western banks — Morgan Stanley, J.P. Morgan, Citibank and Allianz<sup>26</sup>. It is peculiar how Moscow reconciles its suspicions of the West's meddling in the North Caucasus (never even attempting to prove it) with seeking support from Western financial institutions for its high-flying plans in the region. Such allegations which can easily be interpreted as propaganda are not new in Moscow rhetoric, nor are they likely to cease anytime soon and so far have had little importance to the west. But, if we take into consideration the 2010 US-Russia reset such declarations could prove to be damaging.

On 4 October 2010, the Russian Federation government website published the full text, complete with tables and appendices, of a development strategy for the North Caucasus, a document which is worth mentioning for our analysis, even though it does not bring many changes to the table, as it is the only relevant piece of official material Moscow has on the matter, so far. Publication of the *Strategy for the Socio-economic Development of the North*

<sup>24</sup> “Separatism Spreads in the North Caucasus while Moscow Blames Outsiders”, *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 11, Issue: 6, September 30, 2010.

<sup>25</sup> “Moscow's Behavior in the North Caucasus Increasingly Reminiscent of its Imperial Past”, *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 11, Issue: 9, November 1, 2010.

<sup>26</sup> *Idem*.

*Caucasus Federal District until 2025* has provoked a good deal of comment. Such documents are rare in Russian politics, domestic or foreign. The main diagnostic assessments are given in section two, *An analysis of the socio-economic situation in the North Caucasus Federal District*. Strategy-2025 does not have a special section dedicated to the socio-political situation in the region, even just in relation to the economic prospects. Since the early 90s most of the constituent members of the North Caucasus Federal District have, for a number of objective socio-economic reasons, been the most susceptible to crisis, the document states<sup>27</sup>. Strategy-2025 provides a comparative history of the situation to date. Falling production figures for the Caucasus and Russia as a whole are compared. But there is no analysis of the reasons for this decline in the Caucasus. According to Strategy-2025, *the last decade has seen a drastic reduction in the Russian population in the North Caucasus Federal District. This has been caused by the falling birth rate and an increase in the flow of migrants to other regions of the Russian Federation. At the same time, the indigenous ethnic groups in the republics of the North Caucasus Federal District are growing steadily because their birth rate is rising and the Russian nationals are leaving*<sup>28</sup>. These conclusions are incontrovertible. But the changes were not only caused by the market transformations of the 1990s. Ethnic conflict played its part, particularly in Chechnya, as did the increasing importance granted to ethnic affiliation by the local authorities and the lack of an overall coherent concept of nation building<sup>29</sup>.

Two incomplete subsections of Strategy-2025 are devoted to ethnic relations, but they are limited to generalities. There is no real information and no analysis. The current socio-political and ethno-political situation in the North Caucasus Federal District is characterized by several pronounced negative social tendencies, manifestations of ethno-political and religious extremism, and a high risk of conflict<sup>30</sup>. This document of considerable strategic importance offers no explanation for why events developed as they did. The reader is left to guess. The Strategy's analytical section does not even have a subsection dealing with the religious revival, although radical Islam is the main vehicle for protests in the Caucasus. Anything to do with relations between the religions is relegated to the subsection *Ethnic Relationships*<sup>31</sup>. The reasons for the growth of radical Islam are set out with alarming simplicity: Radical forms of Islam (have been) imported into the said Federal District. The text

<sup>27</sup> *Strategy for the Socio-economic Development of the North Caucasus Federal District until 2025* СТРАТЕГИЯ социально-экономического развития Северо-Кавказского федерального округа до 2025 года, [www.government.ru/media/2010/10/435578/file/1485.doc](http://www.government.ru/media/2010/10/435578/file/1485.doc).

<sup>28</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>29</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>30</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>31</sup> Sergei Markedonov, "A strategy for North Caucasus: don't mention politics or religion!", 1 November 2010, oD Russia, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/sergei-markedonov/strategy-for-north-caucasus-don%E2%80%99t-mention-politics-or-religion>.

offers no explanation as to what these imported forms are. In the interests of objectivity, one can of course say that other reasons for the dissemination of extremist views (the Strategy makes no special distinction between nationalists and Islamists) include widespread corruption or questions relating to the owning and disposing of land, which are unregulated and the cause of most of the ethnic conflicts, including at the level of the man in the street, and also ethnic tension as a result of ill-defined civic identity. But again, none of this can be linked to the need for institutional change in the Caucasus.

According to Strategy-2025, *today, the staunching flow of ethnic Russians leaving the North Caucasus Federal District and encouraging them to return there is a strategic objective. They are important for the District because they represent ethno-political stability, as well as being a source of the highly qualified work force needed to enable the District to achieve steady growth and investment attractiveness*<sup>32</sup>. The departure of Russian manpower from the Caucasus has undoubtedly created many problems, and this is recognized by many representatives of the Caucasian, Turkic and other peoples of the region. But it would be a huge mistake to reduce the whole picture to black and white (competent/highly qualified Russians vs. semi-literate and savage hill people). The problem is that those who are economically active and professionally well off are leaving the region, irrespective of what ethnic group they belong to. In many ways, this is because it is simply impossible to do business, have a career as a scholar or simply live as a free person in this region<sup>33</sup>. There seems little point in detailing the descriptions of natural, industrial and other potentials set forth in the Strategy, or commenting on the prognosis that the gross regional product will grow by 7.7% per year, along with a general increase in salaries and a drop in unemployment. This is all very remotely related to the economy. The best natural climatic potential will never be realized without investments and guarantees for these. An example of this is the many countries in Africa, Latin America and Oceania with natural opportunities that an investor could only dream of. However, the weak institutional base, incompetent management, corruption and political instability make these assumptions unrealizable.

In short, the objectives of Strategy-2025 are quite clearly unachievable. It focuses on economic growth without addressing the socio-political preconditions that make the North Caucasus explosive and unstable. This document seems to isolate the economy and the social sphere from the rest of the not uncomplicated whole<sup>34</sup>. The complex problems that Moscow has in the

<sup>32</sup> *Strategy for the Socio-economic Development of the North Caucasus Federal District until 2025 СТРАТЕГИЯ социально-экономического развития Северо-Кавказского федерального округа до 2025 года*, [www.government.ru/media/2010/10/435578/file/1485.doc](http://www.government.ru/media/2010/10/435578/file/1485.doc).

<sup>33</sup> Sergei Markedonov, "A strategy for North Caucasus: don't mention politics or religion!", 1 November 2010, oD Russia, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/sergei-markedonov/strategy-for-north-caucasus-don%E2%80%99t-mention-politics-or-religion>.

<sup>34</sup> *Idem*.

region are not able to permit such liberties like addressing one issue in the absence of another, especially given the fact that all elements of society create the troublesome whole and their intricacies and linkage do not permit differentiated approaches. Therefore it is more than obvious that Moscow's strategy will not be implemented very soon due to its structural flaws.

Under these circumstances, the fact remains that on March 4, 2012, Vladimir Putin has once again won another presidential term, this time for the next six years. As we have proven above, he is not a leader prone to change, therefore we can safely presume that the status-quo, leadership and general situation in the North Caucasus will remain the same for a very long time.

## Chapter 7

# INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM IN NORTH CAUCASUS

CIPRIAN BORDEI

Geopolitically, instability in the North Caucasus contributes negatively to conflict transformation and stabilisation efforts in the wider Caucasus region. The North Caucasus also functions as one component in a chain of instability and terrorist activity that spans the Middle East, Eurasia, and South Asia<sup>1</sup>.

This is why the Russian authorities are concerned about the interconnected nature of Islamist activity in the wider region. The political and security situation in Afghanistan will become very important in the upcoming years, against the background of the West's intention to withdraw its military role in Afghanistan. Moscow fears that this may lead to Islamist-inspired extremist groups and illegal drug and arms traffickers in the Afghanistan/Central Asia region revitalizing linkages with North Caucasian insurgents, as was the case during the 1990s.

The North Caucasus has been on al-Qaeda's (AQ) radar screen for a decade and a half. Ayman al-Zawahiri visited the region in mid-1990s and was even arrested (and subsequently released) by the Russians. He identified the Caucasus as one of the primary fronts in the war against Russia and the West.

One of the consequences of the increasing impact of the Middle East in the North Caucasus has been the growing influence of the notion of jihad, which was originally introduced into the region during the Chechen wars. The influence of jihadist ideologies altered the nature of what began as a secessionist struggle for Chechen independence, into a guerilla war fought under the green flag of Islam.

Also the al-Qaeda-tied foreign fighters, many of whom settled down and even married in Chechnya and other NC republics after the second war, were in large part responsible for the growing influence of jihadist ideologies in the region and fundamentally altered the nature of what began as a secessionist struggle for Chechen independence<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Aglaya Snetkov, "Russia's North Caucasus: An Arc of Insecurity", CSS Analysis in *Security Policy*, No. 95, June 2011, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Gordon M. Hahn, "Getting the Caucasus Emirate Right", a Report of the CSIS, Russia and EurAsia Program, August 2011, p. 6.

Nationalist ideas and cadres were, from the Chechen national separatist movement, gradually displaced by jihadist elements, transforming the secular movement into a jihadist one. The Chechen Republic Ichkeria's (ChRI) expanding ties made Caucasus Emirate's (CE) further integration into the AQ-led global jihadi revolutionary movement or alliance inevitable.

Today the main concerns are related to the radicalization of North Caucasian youth that travel to the Middle East for education and the ongoing regional links between the North Caucasus insurgency and al-Qaeda groups in the wider Middle East and Afghanistan.

Though Russian officials have long said the militants depend on financing from the Middle East and al-Qaida (AQ), analysts and Western diplomats have disputed this, saying the government did not want to admit to a home-grown insurgency.

Many analysts and activists have either ignored or rejected both Chechen Republic Ichkeria (ChRI) and Caucasus Emirate (CE) connections to AQ and the *global jihadi revolutionary alliance* in which AQ plays a leading role.

Al-Qaida is providing the Islamist insurgency in the North Caucasus with increasing amounts of money and vocal support in their effort to create a state called the Caucasus Emirate stretching from the Black Sea to the Caspian.

Underestimating the danger posed by the Caucasus Emirate, *only increases the vulnerability to attack*. Al-Qaida has played an important role in proselytizing jihadism and providing financial, training and personnel support to the mujahedeen in Chechnya and the Caucasus.

Since 9/11, AQ has become even more decentralized than it was before, and it is now one of many networks, interlocked with other jihadist networks, including CE. AQ functions more like a *grant-giving foundation* for financing and otherwise facilitating various Jihadi terrorist projects and is just one of many actor-networks intertwined with others, including the CE. Taken together, these now comprise the global jihadi revolutionary movement or alliance<sup>3</sup>.

Analysts and especially activists underestimate the importance of the CE jihadi terrorist network as a united and organized political and military force engaged in jihad and proselytizing the Salafist takfirist theo-ideology across the Caucasus. Although it is true that the CE is a decentralized organization or network and that some of its local jamaats might be formed on the basis of local grievances, it would be wrong to see it as driven solely by local concerns and lacking central control or hierarchy<sup>4</sup>.

There is evidence of CE's integration into the global jihad. The declassified Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) report goes on to document AQ's plans and methods for funding and organizing the establishment of training camps not just in Chechnya but also in other NC republics and its sending

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 14.

several hundred trainers, ideologists and fighters to the region<sup>5</sup>. Doku Umarov has repeatedly associated the CE with global jihad, from his announcement declaring the foundation of the CE and jihad against anyone fighting against Muslims anywhere across the globe, as we have seen in his appeals aimed expressly at the Egyptians and Tunisians, February 2011.

*What is happening in the North Caucasus is without any doubt a unified, if decentralized, region-wide jihad that is part and parcel of an even more diffuse but still unified global jihadi revolutionary alliance*<sup>6</sup>. The CE's growing ties with AQ and the global jihad in 2010 gave us the recent CE-tied Belgian plot and Czech cell, not to mention the arrests of the several Chechens arrested on terrorism charges in France, Sweden and Denmark. The "Shariah4 Belgium" group's plot uncovered last autumn included Chechens, Marocans and probably AQ' Awlaki (or at least one of AQ's main website) in recruitment and financing for the CE and planning and attack to be carried out in Belgium.

The European Union will have to look more closely into a possible link between the North Caucasus diaspora living in EU member states and the recruitment of jihadist fighters and the financing of terrorist activities. The move has been called for by member states with a sizeable number of immigrants and refugees from the North Caucasus following a string of recent terrorism-related arrests in the European Union<sup>7</sup>.

Legislative power in areas concerning justice and home affairs largely rests with individual member states, but the EU can issue specific responses when it comes to border management, visa regimes, and cooperation with transit countries such as Turkey and Russia to combat terrorism.

The situation inside the North Caucasus continues to be a source of tension between Russia and its European partners, particularly in relation to asylum cases and human security<sup>8</sup>. The EU is the recipient of a large influx of asylum seekers from the North Caucasus. Since 2003, asylum seekers from Russia (many of whom are from the North Caucasus) have been the third largest nationality group claiming asylum in Europe, leading to debates within certain countries (such as Poland and Norway) about the status of these asylum seekers.

Furthermore, the European Court of Human Rights is seeing a significant flow of plaintive cases from North Caucasians, asserting human rights abuses by the Russian Federation, which are being settled in favour of the North Caucasus population.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> *EU To Probe Possible North Caucasus Diaspora Link To Terrorism*, September 13, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/eu\\_to\\_probe\\_possible\\_north\\_caucasus\\_diaspora\\_link\\_to\\_terrorism/24326875.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/eu_to_probe_possible_north_caucasus_diaspora_link_to_terrorism/24326875.html).

<sup>8</sup> Aglaya Snetkov, "Russia's North Caucasus: An Arc of Insecurity", *CSS Analysis in Security Policy*, No. 95, June 2011, p. 3.

### *Foreign Fighters*

*Samir Saleh Abdullah Al-Suwailem*, known as *Emir Khattab* (“The Black Emir”)

The most prominent Arab fighter in Chechnya. He was poisoned by the FSB in March 2002. He was thought to be from Jordan, but after his death it emerged that he was born in Saudi Arabia to an Arab father and a Circassian mother<sup>9</sup>.

*Emir Khattab and Abu Al-Walid*

Were accused of organising the apartment bombings in Moscow in September 1999. Abu Al-Walid was said to have received US \$4.5m for a terrorist attack on the Moscow metro in 2004.<sup>10</sup>

The future leader of the Arab mujahedeen in Chechnya. He first posed as a TV reporter, but soon abandoned his journalist’s cover to take part in ambushes on Russian army columns. In April 1996 he became famous for his ambush of a large armored column in a narrow gorge near Yaryshmaryd village in the Argun valley, where he killed up to 100 soldiers and burned dozens of armored vehicles.

In 1999 Khattab’s image was allowed to be used in collecting money abroad.

Khattab was allowed to supervise a training camp, known as “Khattab’s camp”<sup>11</sup>.

*Abu Ibn al-Khattab*

An al-Qaeda operative that fought in the North Caucasus.

Participated in leading the invasion of Dagestan in 1999 together with his ally Shamil Basaev that sparked the second post-Soviet Russo-Chechen war. Died in 2003<sup>12</sup>.

*Abdulla Kurd*

Emissary of al-Qaeda, close comrade-in-arms with Doku Umarov, the international coordinator of his terror cells, killed by Russian security forces in counterterrorist operations in the spring of 2011<sup>13</sup>.

A member of the so-called Arab groups of al-Qaeda under the command of *Khattab*, *Abu al Walid* and *Abu Havs*. Kurd took on control of the North

<sup>9</sup> Agentura.ru — *The role of Al-Qaeda in the North Caucasus*, September 13, 2010, <http://www.agentura.ru/english/terrorism/alqaedanc/>.

<sup>10</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>11</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>12</sup> Gordon M. Hahn, “Getting the Caucasus Emirate Right”, a Report of the CSIS, Russia and EurAsia Program, August 2011, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Ariel Cohen, *After bin Laden’s Death, Al-Qaeda Turns to the North Caucasus*, The Foundry: Conservative Policy News Blog from The Heritage Foundation, May 20, 2011, In *American Leadership, Protect America* <http://blog.heritage.org/2011/05/20/after-bin-laden%E2%80%99s-death-al-qaeda-turns-to-the-north-caucasus/>.

Caucasus al-Qaeda. Kurd and Doku Umarov would have organised most of the terrorist attacks involving suicide bombers in Russia. Kurd was also a coordinator of foreign financial inflows for the criminals. Kurd came to Russia's Northern Caucasus in 1991 through the Pankisi Gorge in Georgia.

Killed in May 2011<sup>14</sup>.

*Saudi Abu al-Walid*

Saudi fighter in Chechnya, that succeeded Emir Khattab, who was killed in April 2004<sup>15</sup>.

*Abu Hafis al-Urduni*

The most prominent mujahedeen fighter from Jordan, in Chechnya. He was the personal envoy of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, until his death in November 2006<sup>16</sup>.

*Omar al-Seif*

Opened up AQ's ties to Chechnya and the Caucasus along with Khattab in the mid-1990s<sup>17</sup>.

*Abu Omar al-Seif*

Saudi fighter in Chechnya, who was given a role of the mujahideen's spiritual leader, until his death in December 2005<sup>18</sup>.

*Khaled Yusef Mukhammed al Emirat(i)*

*Moganned / Mukhannad / Mohannad*

Is known as a religious authority and top coordinator of the Islamist insurgency. Killed April 2011.

In April 2011 Russian federal authorities said that a top emissary of al Qaeda's Islamist insurgency in the North Caucasus had been killed in a security operation in Chechnya. The National Anti-terror Committee said Khaled Yusef Mukhammed al Emirat — known as "Moganned" — was among its most wanted insurgents and had participated in the planning of several suicide bomb attacks in Russia in recent years. Almost all acts of terror using suicide bombers in the last years were prepared with Moganned's involvement.

Russian officials said Moganned had been operating in the northern Caucasus since 1999 and by 2005 had emerged as the main "coordinator" for

<sup>14</sup> Al Qaeda leader to North Caucasus killed, May 4, 2011, <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20110504/163857477.html>.

<sup>15</sup> Agentura.ru — *The role of Al-Qaeda in the North Caucasus*, September 13, 2010, <http://www.agentura.ru/english/terrorism/alqaedanc/>.

<sup>16</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>17</sup> Gordon M. Hahn, "Getting the Caucasus Emirate Right", a Report of the CSIS, Russia and EurAsia Program, August 2011, p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> Agentura.ru — *The role of Al-Qaeda in the North Caucasus*, September 13, 2010, <http://www.agentura.ru/english/terrorism/alqaedanc/>.

handling money that was coming in from abroad to support the militant underground.

Moganned's death marks a particularly important victory for the regional authorities of Chechnya, because the rebel had made it his mission to oust Kadyrov from power<sup>19</sup>.

Emissary of al-Qaeda, arrived in Chechnya in 1999, close comrade-in-arms with Doku Umarov, killed by Russian security forces in counterterrorist operations in the spring of 2011<sup>20</sup>.

Had become known to the public after three leading Chechen commanders renounced their oaths of allegiance to Doku Umarov, emir of the North Caucasus Emirate. Mukhannad was accused of organizing the conspiracy against the rebel leader<sup>21</sup>.

Liquidation of Emir Mukhannad, a well-known Arab volunteer in the ranks of the Chechen armed resistance movement, on April 23, 2011<sup>22</sup>.

Local Chechen security forces killed of Emir Mokhannad<sup>23</sup>, during special operations conducted in the mountains and foothills of Chechnya in spring 2011<sup>24</sup>.

In April, pro-Russian forces in Chechnya eliminated the Arab field commander Muhanned, or Khalid Yusuf Muhanned al-Emirati. Umarov had blamed Muhanned for inciting the controversy with the dissident chechen field commanders through engaging in seditious and slanderous activity in order to undermine the Caucasus Emirate project.

It is likely that his elimination paved the way toward reconciliation with the Chechen dissidents<sup>25</sup>.

Arab Mohannad, *killed on April 22* when pro-Moscow police and security forces launched a major offensive against a group of fighters spotted in Venedo district. The militants promptly split up into groups of two in a bid to evade capture: all managed to do so except for *Muhannad and his companion*<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> Gabriel Borrud, "Russia says top al-Qaeda militant in North Caucasus killed", 22.04.2011, <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,15025069,00.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Ariel Cohen, "After bin Laden's Death, Al-Qaeda Turns to the North Caucasus", The Foundry: Conservative Policy News Blog from The Heritage Foundation, May 20, 2011, In *American Leadership, Protect America*, <http://blog.heritage.org/2011/05/20/after-bin-laden%E2%80%99s-death-al-qaeda-turns-to-the-north-caucasus/>.

<sup>21</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Latest Russian Claims of Victory in North Caucasus Ring Hollow", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 12, Issue: 9; April 29, 2011.

<sup>22</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Moscow Kills Rebel Leaders in Kabardino-Balkaria, but was it a Mortal Blow?", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 8, Issue: 87; May 5, 2011.

<sup>23</sup> [www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/184324/](http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/184324/).

<sup>24</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Elimination of Jamaat Leaders has little Impact on Situation in the North Caucasus", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 8, Issue: 93 May 16, 2011.

<sup>25</sup> Kevin Daniel Leahy, "Chechnya's Rebel Movement Reunites under Doku Umarov's Leadership", 08/17/2011 issue of the *CACI Analyst*, <http://cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5609>.

<sup>26</sup> "When 'Runners' Turn Snitch: FSB Targets North Caucasus Insurgency Support Personnel", May 16, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/runners\\_snitch\\_fsb\\_targets\\_north\\_caucasus\\_insurgency/24176439.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/runners_snitch_fsb_targets_north_caucasus_insurgency/24176439.html).

Member of the group of dissident Chechen field commanders.

Umarov and his supporters blaming Muhanned, a fighter of non-Chechen origin, for damaging morale in the rebel ranks and Gakayev, Vadalov and their associates in turn accusing Umarov of provoking the controversy by ignoring the collective will of Chechnya's rebel organisation<sup>27</sup>.

*Yousef Uyeri*

Saudi Jihadi scholars who tried to see the Chechen struggle as part of global Jihad, and supporters of global Jihad circulated videos from Chechnya on Jihadi web sites.<sup>28</sup>

*Mahmud Muhammad Shaaban (Amir Seif al-Islam)*

In 2007 an Egyptian jihadist Mahmud Muhammad Shaaban (Amir Seif al-Islam), present in Chechnya since the mid-1990s, was appointed the chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ichkeria-Chechnya<sup>29</sup>.

On February 2, 2010 Mahmud Muhammad Shaaban was killed in a shootout in the Botlikh district of Dagestan. The FSB called him an Al-Qaeda envoy, sent to Dagestan by Doku Umarov in autumn 2009 to oversee Dagestan's jihadis<sup>30</sup>.

*Abu Anas Muhammad*

Foreign fighter, Jordanian killed by Russian forces in April 2011<sup>31</sup>.

*“Abdullah” Doger Sevdet*

Foreign fighter, ethnic Kurd from Turkey killed by Russian forces in May 2011<sup>32</sup>.

Turkish national ([www.zarusskiy.org/islam/2011/05/04/emissar/](http://www.zarusskiy.org/islam/2011/05/04/emissar/)), killed by local Chechen security forces, during special operations conducted in the mountains and foothills of Chechnya, May 2011<sup>33</sup>.

*Seif al-Islam al-Masry*

Al-Qaeda ruling Majlisul Shura member, was an officer in BIF's Grozny office, which moved to Ingushetiya in 1998<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> Kevin Daniel Leahy, “Chechnya's Rebel Movement Reunites under Doku Umarov's Leadership”, 08/17/2011 issue of the CACI Analyst, <http://cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5609>.

<sup>28</sup> *Agentura.ru — The role of Al-Qaeda in the North Caucasus*, September 13, 2010, <http://www.agentura.ru/english/terrorism/alqaedanc/>.

<sup>29</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>30</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>31</sup> Gordon M. Hahn, *Getting the Caucasus Emirate Right*, a Report of the CSIS, Russia and EurAsia Program, August 2011, p. 13.

<sup>32</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>33</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, “Elimination of Jamaat Leaders Has Little Impact on Situation in the North Caucasus”, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 8, Issue: 93 May 16, 2011.

<sup>34</sup> Gordon M. Hahn, *Getting the Caucasus Emirate Right*, a Report of the CSIS, Russia and EurAsia Program, August 2011, p. 4.

*Sudanese Yassir al-Sudani*

The death of a senior commander in Chechnya that can be attributed to FSB penetration was that of the Sudanese Yassir al-Sudani, who together with the men under his command unwittingly consumed food supplies that had been deliberately poisoned<sup>35</sup>.

*Al-Maqdisi*

Although the level of influence from Arab fighters in the Caucasus has waned, the connection to the overall global jihadi community has become further cemented. When ruling on the schism, the leading shari'ah official in the Caucasus Emirate, Ali Abu Muhammed al-Dagestani, stated that the opposition faction's disobedience to Umarov was contrary to Islamic law. This echoes the *fatwa* released by al-Maqdisi, who is considered the most influential living jihadi theorist, in September 2010. Al-Maqdisi has had a keen interest through his Minbar al-Tawhid wa-l-Jihad (The Pulpit of Monotheism and Jihad) project in "purifying" the jihad from so-called negative influences and, as a result, has focused on providing advice to the Caucasus Emirate since he believes it provides a good example of how jihad should be waged "cleanly." Therefore, although the Caucasus Emirate's connections to al-Qaeda may be scant, al-Maqdisi's advice and blessings upon Umarov's leadership, and the way his movement conducts jihad, provides his group with legitimacy from a highly regarded religious scholar, placing the Caucasus Emirate as an important front in the global jihad against *tawaghit* (tyrants)<sup>36</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> *When 'Runners' Turn Snitch: FSB Targets North Caucasus Insurgency Support Personnel*, May 16, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/runners\\_snitch\\_fsb\\_targets\\_north\\_caucasus\\_insurgency/24176439.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/runners_snitch_fsb_targets_north_caucasus_insurgency/24176439.html).

<sup>36</sup> Aaron Y. Zelin, "The Reunification of the Caucasus Emirate", 08/31/2011, <http://cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5619>.

## Chapter 8

# NORTH CAUCASUS VIOLENCE: SHORT HISTORY AND KEY TRENDS

CIPRIAN BORDEI

Called the North Caucasus, the area in the Russian Federation commonly includes seven republics (Adygeia, Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachai-Cherkessia and North Ossetia) and two regions (Stavropol Krai and Krasnodar Krai), though sometimes another region (Rostov Oblast) is also included. From January 2010, The North Caucasian Federal District<sup>1</sup> (NCFD) was split from the Southern Federal District and comprises the above republics (except Adygeia) and Stavropol Krai.

North Caucasus is not a single uniform entity. *The traditions of its peoples are diverse, their routes to Russia and their life within Russia are by no means similar*<sup>2</sup>. In general, terms such as North Caucasus can be divided into two sub-regions<sup>3</sup>: the ‘East’ which includes Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia and the ‘West’ consisting of the remaining republics. The ‘East’ is regarded as having a far greater degree of Islamization and as being more unstable than the ‘West’.

### *Ethno-religious make-up of the region*

The North Caucasus is *one of the most ethnically diverse regions of the Russian Federation*. About 40 ethnic groups of Turkic, Iranian and Caucasian origin are currently living in the region<sup>4</sup>. Each has its own distinct national identity, language, history and culture and a strong attachment to their

<sup>1</sup> By the 2010 census, NCFD has a population of 9.5 million (6.5% Russian population) and approximately 170,000 square km (1% Russian territory).

<sup>2</sup> C. W. Blandy, *North Caucasus: Negative Trends*, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Research & Assessment Branch 2009, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Historically, this was the pattern for most of the Long Caucasian War in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the majority of Imam Shamil’ the Third’s military campaigns.

<sup>4</sup> Domitilla Sagramoso, *Violence and conflict in the Russian North Caucasus*, “International Affairs”, 83: 4 (2007) 681-705, p. 684.

national or ethnic identities. In Dagestan alone there are up to 20 smaller ethnic groups and tribes in addition to 10 'significant' peoples (5000 and more).

In addition, many linkages exist between ethnic groups in the North Caucasus and their ethnic kin across the borders in either Georgia (the Ossetians, and the Circassians or Cherkess who are linked to the Abkhaz) or Azerbaijan (the Lezgins).

The language composition<sup>5</sup> is extremely complex, with sharp contrasts between the Indo-European family (Ossetians), Turkic family (Balkar, Karachai) and various branches of Caucasian languages.

Besides its intricate ethnic make-up, *the region also hosts a complex religious configuration*<sup>6</sup>. Most of the region's ethnic groups are Sunni Muslims, adhering either to the Shafii *madhhab* or school (most Dagestanis, Chechens and Ingush) or to the Hanafi *madhhab* (all others), with the exception of the Ossetians and Slavs, who are Orthodox Christians, and the Tats, most of whom are Jewish. Also NCFD borders Kalmykia, the only buddhist region in Europe.

### *Significance*

St. Petersburg and then Moscow saw the North Caucasus as possessing a great strategic importance for the realization of global foreign policy projects in the Black Sea area, as well as in the Near and Middle East. But at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the North Caucasus has evolved from a jumping-off place for Russian expansion into the Near and Middle East to become a forward position against militant Islam and against the spread of American and West European influence.

Because of the geographical location and ethnic composition, North Caucasus has a major strategic significance<sup>7</sup> to Russia, and also to the West as a whole. Russia's decision to intervene in Georgia in August of 2008 signified that it was prepared to take on the role of the *Caucasus's guarantor of security and stability*<sup>8</sup>. Russia's South Caucasus policy is understandable because destabilization of the South Caucasus would provoke new instability within an unstable region.

Events in the North Caucasus also have significant implications for Europe. The enlargement of the European Union and the inclusion of Ukraine and the three South Caucasian states (Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) into the EU

<sup>5</sup> Pavel Baev, *The North Caucasus*, "Conflicts in the OSCE Area" 2004, p. 101.

<sup>6</sup> *Violence and conflict in the Russian North Caucasus*, Domitilla Sagramoso, "International Affairs", 83: 4 (2007) 681-705, p. 685.

<sup>7</sup> Domitilla Sagramoso, *Violence and conflict in the Russian North Caucasus*, "International Affairs", 83: 4 (2007) 681-705, p. 683.

<sup>8</sup> Andrew C. Kuchins, Matthew Malarkey, Sergei Markedonov, *The North Caucasus, Russia's Volatile Frontier*, a Report of the CSIS, Russia and Eurasia Program 2011, p. 3.

neighborhood policy have brought these countries and the adjacent areas of the North Caucasus closer to the EU. At the same time, United States and the Atlantic alliance have become substantially involved in the South Caucasus.

The countries in the Caspian region as a whole are also highly significant to the West because of their vast energy resources, with important routes for oil and gas supplies transiting through the South Caucasus to international markets.

### *Background*

During the Soviet era the ethno-territorial arrangements meant that only several North Caucasian ethnic groups were given their own autonomous republics/districts. At the same time, during the Second World War some ethnic groups were deported en masse to Central Asia (the Chechens, Ingush, Balkars and Karachai). Although they were allowed to return in the 1950, this has left severe scars in their historical memories. This has created significant tensions among some ethnic groups and complicated the internal administration of each republic, because the process involved severe problems of resettlement and border adjustments<sup>9</sup>.

During the 1990s, all the republics of the North Caucasus became increasingly autonomous in the handling of their own internal affairs, and Chechnya even opted for outright independence. The federal centre remained a source of budgetary funding and an ultimate guarantor of their security.

Despite the existence of formal democratic procedures in most republics, proper democratic institutions and effective governance have failed to materialize. Instead, informal arrangements, such as clans, client-patronage networks and shadow economic relations, have dominated the political life of the North Caucasus republics.

Regional elites proved totally unprepared to address the various challenges faced by the North Caucasian republics after the end of the Soviet Union (severe economic decline, rising poverty and mounting unemployment, coupled with increasingly high birth rates and significant flows of refugees).

More significantly, the North Caucasian republics failed to avert violent conflict. Besides the violence between Ingush and North Ossetians over the fate of the disputed Prigorodny, the region also witnessed the outbreak of war between the federal centre and the secessionist republic of Chechnya. The two Chechen wars had a significant impact on the security and stability of the region, and are partly to blame for the current spread of violence.

<sup>9</sup> In the case of the Ingushetia and North Ossetia it has resulted in the outbreak of violent conflict in 1992 for the disputed Prigorodny, a district currently lying in North Ossetia, Domitilla Sagramoso, *Violence and conflict in the Russian North Caucasus*, "International Affairs", 83: 4 (2007) 681-705, p. 684.

With the arrival of Vladimir Putin as Russian president in 2000, efforts were made to reverse the countries' decentralizing tendencies<sup>10</sup>. These moves were presented as a step in building a so-called "vertical power."

The results of these measures have been mixed, especially in respect to the North Caucasus, where the federal centre is still forced to rely on local elites to ensure stability and loyalty to the Kremlin. Moreover, such changes have not resulted in the reduction of violence in the region.

### *Roots of Violence*

Violence occurring across the North Caucasus today is not driven by secessionist goals anymore. The interest of the republics is to remain under the Russian economic and security umbrella. Ethnic secessionist movements have become subdued and receive little popular support in today's North Caucasus.

Ethnic nationalist movements, on the other hand, became an increasingly more potent force in the region. These nationalist forces didn't strive for independence from Moscow, but they were in reaction and fueled by such modern-day sociopolitical grievances.

In the past decade the violence in the North Caucasus has undergone a significant evolution<sup>11</sup>, as a separatist and then nationalist movement based in the republic of Chechnya has turned into a network of extremist Islamic jihadists, which has taken root in many of the other Muslim republics of the region.

Although Chechnya provided an ideological and logistic basis for the development of such networks in the early 2000s, today local jihadist *jamaats* respond to local grievances and circumstances, able to operate more autonomously, although they all remain interconnected and linked to Chechen fighters.

The "drivers" behind the violence are hard to elucidate, and result from a complex mix of factors, all of which play a part in radicalizing young individuals in the region.

*The illegitimacy of many of the North Caucasian regimes, and their inability to respond to the demands of society, have created a significant void which has been filled by Islamic groups and organizations.* Thus, the North Caucasus has a strong alternative to Russia's political system — Islam. Ra-

<sup>10</sup> For example in 2004 the election of governors was eliminated and they were replaced by nominations approved by the local parliaments. On January 16, 2011 in what may constitute a major political shift, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev introduced a bill reinstating the direct election of governors in the regions of the Russian Federation. Both Putin and Medvedev quickly altered their opinion following the mass protests in Moscow in December 2011, after fraud in the country's parliamentary elections was publicly exposed on a large scale.

<sup>11</sup> Domitilla Sagramoso, *Violence and conflict in the Russian North Caucasus*, "International Affairs", 83: 4 (2007) 681-705, p. 703.

dical Islam has effectively replaced ethnic nationalism and secessionism as the militant counter-ideology of armed struggle<sup>12</sup>.

The Islamization of political and economic structures represents a worrying trend as religious beliefs are increasingly interwoven into the fabric of society. And, as the region becomes more Islamicized, there is the concern that the societies there will increasingly resist attempts at modernization and reform, thus becoming less and less integrated into the rest of Russia<sup>13</sup>.

### *A New Wave of Violence*

Since the spring of 2009 or even as early as the summer of 2008<sup>14</sup> we are seeing a new wave of terrorism in the North Caucasus, which is distinctly different from the previous wave of terrorism that slowly retreated after the raid on Nalchik, Kabardino — Balkaria on 13 October 2005.

Several Russian policymakers have suggested that the August 2008 Russia-Georgia conflict contributed to increased instability in the North Caucasus<sup>15</sup>. Several observers warn that separatists in the North Caucasus could be encouraged by the example of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Attempting to refute such a link, Prime Minister Putin claimed in September 2008 that before the conflict, some groups in the North Caucasus had advocated separatism because they felt that Russia was not defending the rights of South Ossetians. He asserted that by defending South Ossetia, Russia averted destabilization of the North Caucasus. But a more plausible rationale is that Russia's use of overwhelming force against Georgia served as a potent example to the North Caucasus (as was the case of Chechnya) that Russia would continue to use force to safeguard its interests in the Caucasus. This example will constrain separatism, as will the fear of civil conflict and the fear of breaking what are regarded as essential economic ties with Moscow.

The rise in terrorist attacks has been met by an increase in “zachistki” and in reported human rights abuses linked to security forces, such as abductions for ransom or “disappearances”.<sup>16</sup> Before the recent rise in terrorism, it seemed that government security forces had been successful in tamping down their range and scope by aggressively carrying out over a thousand sweep opera-

<sup>12</sup> Pavel Baev, *The North Caucasus: a Hotbed of Terrorism in Metamorphosis*, July 2011, IFRI, *Russie.Nei.Visions* no 60, p. 14.

<sup>13</sup> Andrew C. Kuchins, Matthew Malarkey, Sergei Markedonov, *The North Caucasus, Russia's Volatile Frontier*, a Report of the CSIS, Russia and Eurasia Program 2011, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> Some authors place this new wave right after the russian-georgian war from the August 2008, Andrew C. Kuchins, Matthew Malarkey, Sergei Markedonov, *The North Caucasus, Russia's Volatile Frontier*, a Report of the CSIS, Russia and Eurasia Program 2011, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Jim Nichol, *Stability in Russia's Chechnya and other regions of the North Caucasus: Recent Developments*, Congressional Research Service, December 13, 2010, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL34613.pdf>, pp. 7-8.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 2.

tions (“zachistki”) in the North Caucasus. During these operations, security forces surround a village and search the homes of the residents, ostensibly in a bid to apprehend terrorists. Critics of the operations allege that the searches are illegal and that troops frequently engage in pillaging and gratuitous violence and are responsible for kidnapping for ransom and “disappearances” of civilians.

We have seen not only a quantitative rise in the number of incidents of violence in the North Caucasus, but also a qualitative rise<sup>17</sup>. The insurgent groups across the region have begun attacking military and security targets in 2009, while increasingly instigating attacks against economic, industrial and political targets (hydroelectric power plants in Kabardino-Balkaria and Dagestan and brazen assaults on the Chechen Parliament in Grozny and on Tsenteroi) as we have seen in 2010. So the overall character of the armed violence is changing towards *a combination of guerilla violence and classical terrorism*<sup>18</sup>.

Another feature of this new wave is the increased frequency of suicide bombers<sup>19</sup>. Over the course of 2009 and 2010, suicide bombers, mostly males have most commonly been used to target police and security services in the region.

The tactic of suicide bombing was at its height in the years following the end of the second Chechen war<sup>20</sup>. However, following the Beslan school siege in 2004, the tactic of suicide bombings dissipated. Suicide bombings are a tactic employed by the insurgents because they are a graphic way of demonstrating the weaknesses and limitations of the Russian security forces and also serve the purpose of instilling great fear in the mind-set of the Russian public.

This return to the suicide tactic has been largely attributed to the Caucasus Emirate, which was reported to have revived the Riyadus-Salikhiin suicide brigade originally established by Shamil Basayev. Most important suicide bomber killed 36 people at Moscow’s Domodedovo Airport in January 2011.

It is now overtly clear that the suicide bombings are no longer exclusive to Chechnya, Chechens, or female, and the tactic like the insurgency, has spread across the North Caucasus and beyond.

A trend of particular note is the increasing numbers of people of Slavic origin who have engaged in terror attacks in recent years<sup>21</sup>. The North Cau-

<sup>17</sup> Andrew C. Kuchins, Matthew Malarkey, Sergei Markedonov, *The North Caucasus, Russia’s Volatile Frontier*, a Report of the CSIS, Russia and Eurasia Program 2011, p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> Pavel Baev, *The North Caucasus: a Hotbed of Terrorism in Metamorphosis*, July 2011, IFRI, *Russie.Nei.Visions* no 60, 2011, p. 9.

<sup>19</sup> Andrew C. Kuchins, Matthew Malarkey, Sergei Markedonov, *The North Caucasus, Russia’s Volatile Frontier*, a Report of the CSIS, Russia and Eurasia Program 2011, p. 12.

<sup>20</sup> In this period, suicide bombers were almost exclusively women from the Chechnya who had joined the insurgency following the death of a relative during the fighting or at the hands of Russian security forces, thus they became known as “Black Widows”.

<sup>21</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, *Is the North Caucasus Rebel Movement Spreading Beyond the North Caucasus?*, “Eurasia Daily Monitor”, Volume 8, Issue: 150, August 4, 2011.

casian resistance membership is expanding beyond simply natives of the North Caucasus. If this trend further escalates, it will be impossible to cope with militant attacks in Russia, specifically in Moscow, because the resistance movement will no longer be only regional in character.

Ethnic prejudice by Russians against North Caucasian migrants reportedly has contributed to a substantial share of hate crimes in Russia. The Moscow Human Rights Bureau estimated that about 170 xenophobic attacks occurred in Russia in 2010, leaving 39 people dead and about 213 injured<sup>22</sup>. These numbers have declined in recent years, perhaps partly attributable to the creation of an extremist crimes subunit in the Interior Ministry. Some hate crimes in Moscow and elsewhere against North Caucasians have been linked to military and police veterans of the Chechnya conflict. Reacting to the hate crimes, Caucasian youths in Moscow formed the “Black Hawks” group to carry out revenge attacks.

On December 17, 2011 Colonel Vadim Sultanov, a member of a special police unit, Center E, was killed in the town of Khasanya, in the suburbs of the republic’s capital, Nalchik. Center E is traditionally involved in counter-insurgency and has been known for its brutal practices. Sultanov’s murder was preceded by a series of dramatic killings. Looks like Vadim Sultanov was the leader of the so-called Black Hawks — an “anti-Wahhabi” organization that claims to be a civic self-help group propelled by citizens’ discontent with rebel actions and is determined to take revenge on the militants. The group’s leaders have promised to kill not only rebels, but also their relatives, spouses and children<sup>23</sup>. In general, the hostilities have reached a new level of intensity as the families of both rebels and servicemen are increasingly targeted.

The only source that feeds the growth of extremist networks, according to official discourse, is external supported, from Al Qaeda and international jihadi organizations (although sometimes even western security services are mentioned<sup>24</sup>).

But it is obvious that successful recruitment allows the rebels to compensate for the high casualties and that their message of resistance against brutal suppression finds a sympathetic audience, despite massive state propaganda.

Alexander Khloponin said on December 16, 2011 at a meeting with journalists in the city of Essentuki, Stavropol Territory, that death penalty could

<sup>22</sup> Jim Nichol, *Stability in Russia’s Chechnya and other regions of the North Caucasus: Recent Developments*, Congressional Research Service, December 13, 2010, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL34613.pdf>, p. 18.

<sup>23</sup> Valery Dzutsev, *Relocating Syrian Circassians to the North Caucasus Poses Problems and Opportunities for Moscow*, “Eurasia Daily Monitor”, Volume 9, Issue: 1, January 3, 2012, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=38829&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=587](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=38829&tx_ttnews[backPid]=587).

<sup>24</sup> A documentary aired on a Russian stateowned television channel in April 2008 alleged that France, Germany, Turkey, and the United States instigated and supported Chechen separatism. (*Documentary Alleges West Sought Chechen Secession*, RFE/RL Russia Report, April 23, 2008, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1109623.html>).

be reintroduced for terror acts, as it is done in Belarus<sup>25</sup>. But, it is believed that the death penalty will bring no positive results. He said that this measure would not stop terrorists, because they are convinced that they are right, and are ready to die.

The main driver for this process is also the *deep corrosion in the structures of governance*<sup>26</sup>. A key element of Putin's strategy for stabilizing the region of North Caucasus in the mid- and late-2000s was buying the loyalty of local elites and that has engendered *neopatrimonial regimes* across the North Caucasus, each based on the redistribution of wealth provided by Moscow among the clients and entourage of masters.

The violent clan struggle, which has reached maximum intensity in Dagestan, is often indistinguishable from terrorism<sup>27</sup>. Local police and other law enforcement structures are effectively "privatized" by political clans and operate as their "muscle" in racketeering. Corruption<sup>28</sup>, a pervasive feature not only in Caucasus, has a profound impact on genuine terrorism by generating social discontent and directly feeding Islamic networks.

Terrorism remains unacceptable for the majority of Muslims but the rebels can rely on widening social support and domestic sources of funding, which amounts to a solid recruitment base<sup>29</sup>.

Over 700 people were killed in the North Caucasus in 2011, including government forces, insurgents and civilians. In Afghanistan, the total number of fatalities in 2011 was 2,500, including US-led coalition forces. So the difference between the officially "peaceful" North Caucasus and Afghanistan, which is in state of war, is not large. However, if we compare Afghanistan's population of 30 million to the North Caucasus's population of 6.5 million, it appears that, in relative terms, the "peaceful" North Caucasus suffered proportionally more casualties in 2011 than Afghanistan.<sup>30</sup>

Ongoing disorder in the North Caucasus has caused increasing numbers of the Russian elite to contemplate granting independence to the area. Analysts suggested that Vladimir Putin might someday be criticized for keeping Chechnya as part of Russia rather than permitting it to have a relationship with Russia, similar to that of Abkhazia. Among such advocates of granting

<sup>25</sup> Khloponin offers cancelling death penalty moratorium for terrorists, "Caucasian Knot", Dec 17 2011, <http://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/19374>.

<sup>26</sup> Pavel Baev, *The North Caucasus: a Hotbed of Terrorism in Metamorphosis*, July 2011, IFRI, *Russie.Nei.Visions* no 60, 2011, p. 15.

<sup>27</sup> The assassination of Adylgirey Magomedtagirov Interior Minister of Dagestan, was found not to be an act of terrorism but a contract killing executed by a military officer.

<sup>28</sup> In Transparency International's 2010 Corruption Perception Index, Russia slipped yet lower: below Nigeria, Iran and Pakistan.

<sup>29</sup> Pavel Baev, *The North Caucasus: a Hotbed of Terrorism in Metamorphosis*, July 2011, IFRI, *Russie.Nei.Visions* no 60, 2011, p. 16.

<sup>30</sup> Valery Dzutsev, *Russian Military Decreases Number of Conscripts from the North Caucasus*, Eurasia Daily Monitor, Volume 9, Issue: 22, February 1, 2012, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=38955&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=587](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=38955&tx_ttnews[backPid]=587).

independence, Stanislav Belkovskiy, the director of Russia's National Strategy Institute, stated in December 2010 that "I remain a supporter of the theory of secession and independence for the North Caucasus. At least for the Muslim republics. ... [In fact,] the North Caucasus is not under Russia's control ... in terms of either mentality, or law, or security. ... The sooner that Russia amputates this diseased organ, the fewer negative consequences [growing foreign Islamic influence] will have on the main part of Russia"<sup>31</sup>. He also warned that much of Russia's re-development budget allotted to the North Caucasus is being used by local "business interests" to deepen their influence throughout Russia by buying up domestic firms.

As popular protests against the return of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin to the Russian presidency spread, the leader of the North Caucasian armed resistance, Doku Umarov tried to use the situation to his own advantage, declaring a moratorium on operations targeting Russian civilians, at the beginning of February<sup>32</sup>.

Targeting civilians was one of the main contentious issues in the row between Umarov – who supported targeting civilians — and the Chechen rebel commanders who revolted against him — considering civilians off limits — and proclaimed Khusein Gakaev as their new leader in August 2010.

One year later, when they reunited under Umarov's command, it was clear that the leader of the North Caucasian militants would have to make some concessions in return for their reaffirmation of allegiance, especially as a Sharia-based examination of the dispute reconfirmed that the dissenters were right on political grounds, but that they contradicted Sharia.

In explaining his decision to change the status of the civilian population of Russia, Umarov stated that by opposing Vladimir Putin, the population of Russia was also condemning the government's actions against the North Caucasus. Umarov may also have intended to signal to the West his willingness to alter the militants' policies.

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<sup>31</sup> Jim Nichol, *Stability in Russia's Chechnya and other regions of the North Caucasus: Recent Developments*, Congressional Research Service, December 13, 2010, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL34613.pdf>, p. 19.

<sup>32</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, *North Caucasus Rebel Leader Tries to Capitalize on Russian Anti-Kremlin Protests*, "Eurasia Daily Monitor", Volume 9, Issue: 28, February 9, 2012, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=38990&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=587](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=38990&tx_ttnews[backPid]=587). Also see *CE Emir Dokku Abu Usman changes status of Russian population and orders to avoid attacks on civilian targets*, Kavkaz Center, <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2012/02/03/15745.shtml>.

## **POLICIES**

## Chapter 9

# WHO IS WHO IN NORTH CAUCASUS INSURGENCY

### CIPRIAN BORDEI

Although a decentralized organization, the Caucasus Emirate jihadi terrorist network is a united and organized political and military force engaged in jihad and proselytizing the Salafist takfirist theo-ideology across the Caucasus.

The Caucasus Emirate (CE) amir Dokku “Abu Usman” Umarov appoints the amirs of all of the CE networks’ basic nodes. All amirs take the Islamic loyalty oath or Bayat to him. The CE’s organizational structure is determined by Umarov by decree (omra in Arabic) and is a mix of typical network forms.

Its nodes, the so-called vilaiyats (Arabic for province), are based, for the most part, along the lines of the North Caucasus republics. The most important and only continuously acting nodes are the Nokchicho (Chechnya) Vilaiyat, the Galcaiche (Ingushetiya) Vilaiyat, the Dagestan Vilaiyat and the United Vilaiyat of Kabardiya, Balkariya and Karachai, which covers the Russian republics of Kabardino-Balkariya and Karachaevo-Cherkessiya. Each of these consists of several fronts or sectors and tens of combat jamaats.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Dokku Umarov, “Abu Usman” — Caucasus Emirate Amir*

Chechen rebel leader Dokku Umarov<sup>2</sup> has claimed responsibility for the March 29 twin suicide bombings on the Moscow metro system that killed at least 39 people. Umarov is one of just a couple of veteran rebel commanders who have fought since the very start of the first post-Soviet Chechen war in the fall of 1994. Since then, Umarov has risen from a rank-and-file fighter to command a network of insurgent groups across the North Caucasus. He has jettisoned the cause of Chechen independence in favor of an independent Islamic state comprising swaths of the North Caucasus, southern Russia and

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<sup>1</sup> Consistent with Gordon M. Hahn, *Getting the Caucasus Emirate Right*, A Report of the CSIS, Russia and EurAsia Program, August 2011, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Liz Fuller, *News Profile: Who Is Dokku Umarov?*, April 01, 2010, [http://www.rferl.org/content/News\\_Profile\\_Who\\_Is\\_Dokku\\_Umarov/1999886.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/News_Profile_Who_Is_Dokku_Umarov/1999886.html).

the Volga region. He has also abandoned his previous repudiation of terrorism, affirming in his most recent statements that it is a legitimate weapon in light of what he calls the Russian population's indifference to the systematic reprisals inflicted on the Chechen population by Russian military and security forces.

Umarov was born in April 1964 in the village of Kharsenoi in the Shatoi Raion of southern Chechnya, into a family he describes as belonging to the intelligentsia. Umarov graduated from the construction faculty of the Oil Institute in Grozny. He told RFE/RL's Russian Service in 2005 that he was in Moscow when the first Russian-Chechen war broke out in 1994 and that, as a patriot, he considered it his duty to return to Chechnya to fight.

#### *Rapid Rise*

Umarov was an active participant in both the 1994-96 and 1999-2000 wars, and gained a reputation as a skilled and courageous commander. He was injured on several occasions, and underwent extensive plastic surgery to repair damage to his face and jaw. In the spring of 2005, he was walking with a limp after having stepped on a land mine. He was reportedly injured again in the fall of 2006.

Following the Khasavyurt accord that ended the first Chechen war in 1996 and the election of former Soviet Army Colonel Aslan Maskhadov as Chechen president in January 1997, Umarov was named by Maskhadov to lead the Security Council. In that capacity, he intervened in July 1998 to quash an armed clash between moderates and Islamic radicals within Maskhadov's entourage.

During the second war, Umarov commanded the southwestern front. After Maskhadov's death in March 2005, his successor, Abdul-Khakim Sadullayev, named Umarov vice president and thus his designated successor. Umarov took over as president and resistance commander after Sadullayev was killed in June 2006. At that time, Maskhadov's son Anzor said, „Everyone, including fighters in neighboring republics, will give their oath to serve him.”

In early 2005, Umarov's father, brother, wife, and infant son were detained by the Chechen authorities. He told RFE/RL's North Caucasus Service in April 2006 that his wife and child were subsequently released. His father's death was reported in 2007 in unclear circumstances.

In the fall of 2006, Umarov expanded the network of resistance fronts to create two operating outside the North Caucasus, in the Volga region and the Urals.

#### *Change Of Heart*

One year later, in late 2007, Umarov broke with the ideology of Chechen independence and proclaimed himself, reportedly under pressure from the radical Islamist wing of the insurgency, the leader of an Islamic state encom-

passing the entire North Caucasus. Just two months earlier, he had issued a statement commemorating the anniversary of the declaration in September 1991 of the secession of the Chechen Republic-Ichkeria from the rapidly disintegrating USSR.

At least until Maskhadov's death, Umarov, like Maskhadov, was among the more moderate wing of the resistance that eschewed terrorism against civilians. In his 2005 interview with RFE/RL, he categorically rejected the use of terrorism as a tactic: „If we resort to such methods, I do not think any of us will be able to retain his human face.“ He specifically condemned the Beslan school hostage taking of September 2004.

But more recently Umarov has condoned not only sabotage attacks on civilian targets outside the North Caucasus, but also suicide bombings and other acts of terrorism targeting civilians.

Unlike Maskhadov, who just weeks before his death had proclaimed a unilateral cease-fire in the hope of inducing Moscow to agree to talks on ending the war, Umarov ruled out the possibility of any formal talks with Russian leaders. In a series of video clips posted on militant websites, he has pledged to destroy the Russian presence in the North Caucasus.

In a video address summarizing a meeting of senior field commanders in April 2009, Umarov announced the revival of the Riyadus-Salikhiin suicide battalion originally formed by renegade field commander Shamil Basayev, which he said would conduct operations across Russia in what he warned would be „a year of offensives.“

#### *Increasing Targets*

Umarov also warned that his fighters would target not just Russian police and security forces, but transport and infrastructure. Insurgent groups subordinate to Umarov duly claimed responsibility, first for the explosion in August 2009 that severely damaged the Sayano-Shushenskaya hydroelectric plant, and then for the bomb in late November that derailed the „Nevsky Express“ train, killing 27 people. Umarov personally affirmed in early December that the „Nevsky Express“ bomb „is only the beginning“ of a series of attacks on targets in Russia. Moscow authorities have blamed the train bombing on Chechen extremists, but have dismissed terrorism in the dam explosion, attributing it to technical and infrastructure problems.

In February, 2010 Umarov vowed to „liberate“ not only the North Caucasus and Krasnodar Krai but Astrakhan and the Volga region as well. In that video address, Umarov said there was every reason to estimate the strength of the insurgency at 10,000, 20,000, or even 30,000 men. At the same time, he admitted that he did not have the means to train and arm all volunteers who wish to join the jihad. The number of fighters currently under arms was, however, „perfectly adequate at this stage,“ he added.

In March 29, 2010 Umarov said the two suicide bomb attacks in the Moscow metro earlier that day were undertaken on his orders and constituted „a

legitimate act of revenge“ for the killing in early February by police and security forces of a group of impoverished Chechen villagers gathering wild garlic in a wooded area on the Chechen-Ingushetian border. Russian human rights activists confirmed that the men had been shot not in a combat operation but at close range, and their bodies mutilated.

Umarov said he considered accusations that he engages in terrorism inappropriate, coming as they do from persons who he said have never blamed Russian President, then-Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin for the killings of Chechen civilians. He did not mention Dmitry Medvedev.

In April 2009, Dokku Umarov, also known as Dokka, proclaimed the revival of the Riyad-us-Saliheen Martyrs' Brigade (RSMB), a unit originally established in October 1999 by the notorious Chechen terrorist Shamil Basayev, who was killed in July 2006. The brigade has been linked to several high-profile suicide attacks in Russia over the past year that cumulatively have killed roughly 150 people, wounded nearly 1,000, and caused great disruption.

Umarov has often made unverifiable (and evidently inaccurate) claims of responsibility for various attacks in Russia. However, video recordings and other evidence have confirmed the RSMB's role in these recent attacks. The RSMB's stepped-up activity is significant because its primary goal has been to establish an Islamic caliphate in the Caucasus and other “Muslim lands” in Russia.

Shortly after the January 2011 suicide bombing at Domodedovo Airport, Umarov explained the purpose of the attack:

“We, the mujahedeen of the Caucasus, are waging jihad today only for Allah, only in the name of Allah, and only in order to have the word of Allah in the Caucasus. There will be hundreds of suicide bombers ready to sacrifice themselves for the establishment of Allah's word.”

Umarov made it clear what his objectives were when posting two videos on the guerrilla website Kavkaz Center: ending Russia occupation and restoring an Islamic caliphate.

In the videos he declares that the two goals are inextricably linked and that the “occupation” encompasses not only the whole of the Caucasus but also “all of the territories of Muslim lands occupied by “Rusnya — Idel-Ural, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and everywhere else in Russia where Muslims live.” He calls on Muslims all over Russia to embark on their own suicide terrorist campaigns:

“If today a Jihad is under way here in the Caucasus against an enemy that wants to destroy Islam, then for you, too, this becomes a Jihad, for you, too, it becomes a fard al-ayn [obligation for all Muslims]. I exhort you to destroy the enemies of Allah wherever they are. I exhort you to destroy the enemies wherever your hands can reach and to open new fronts of the Jihad.”

Addressing Muslims who might worry about killing themselves along with the enemy, Umarov reassures them that the earlier “martyrs” (perpetra-

tors of suicide terrorist attacks) “have not perished, they are alive and are receiving their due reward from their Lord. We know they are awaiting our own ascension to Heaven, Allah be willing.”<sup>3</sup>

In 2007, the insurgency in the North Caucasus appeared to undergo a revival when the so-called president of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria resigned from his position and declared himself the head of the newly formed Caucasus Emirate and united the North Caucasus under an Islamic state based on Sharia law. It is at this point that the insurgency in the North Caucasus arguably joined the global jihad.

The Caucasus Emirate took Umarov’s authority well beyond Chechen borders and united the jamaats in all the republics of the North Caucasus under the entity of the Emirate, and since its establishment there have been annual increases in the levels of violence as the Emirate’s armed resistance intensifies its operations to liberate the ‘Muslim lands’ in the Caucasus and the broader region.

To garner support for his pan-Caucasian jihad, Umarov intends to organize the Caucasus Emirate in the context of global jihad by using anti-Western slogans and rhetoric and drawing parallels to his “brothers” in Saudi Arabia.

Umarov is a field commander and by no means an ideologue, but by presenting the Caucasus Emirate as part of the global jihad and fighting on behalf of the ill-treated and misrepresented in society, he has created a powerful mantra that young, disaffected people find appealing.

Internet resources representing the Caucasus Emirate continually link its movement to the global jihad through incorporating al-Qaeda-related rhetoric, symbols, and doctrine. Yet, al-Qaeda appears not to have incorporated yet the North Caucasus into part of its global jihad. The conjecture that there is a link between the Caucasus Emirate and the global jihad, namely al-Qaeda, is something that has yet to be substantiated.

In June 2010, the U.S. State Department designated Umarov as a terrorist.

Challenged by the North Caucasus mountainous geography, as well as Russia’s security forces, Umarov’s control over the network is limited. Standardization and cooperation among groups across the militant movement are minimal. Thus Umarov has established the norm whereby the individual jamaats may carry out ‘small’ attacks of their own volition, but significant missions have to receive the approval of the emirate’s leadership. The jamaats also appear to be financially self-sufficient, drawing funds locally through racketeering and collecting zakat from the local population, thereby increasing their independent nature. This disconnected character, although a challenge to Umarov’s authority, makes it more difficult for Russian security to link and track them.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Kramer, *Understanding suicide terrorist bombings in Russia*, PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No 155, May 2011.

In August 2010, the Caucasus Emirate leadership was in crisis when Dokku Umarov resigned from his position, then reclaimed it days later. Accounts vary but a group of prominent Chechen emirs clearly broke away from the emirate and revoked their oaths of loyalty to Umarov. Causes range from dilution of support, supplies, and funds away from Chechnya to the disillusionment of the nationalist wing of the Chechen insurgency.

Although its role in the global Islamic jihad and its link to such networks as al-Qaeda is debatable, the Caucasus Emirate poses a genuine threat to Russian, and indeed Western, security.<sup>4</sup>

Dokku Umarov was the chief suspect in the Domodedovo terrorist attack in January 2011, along with Adam Ganzhiyev, Islam Yevloyev, Aslan Tsechoyev and Aslan Batukayev.

According to the investigation, Umarov was in charge of preparing the suicide bomber Magomed Yevloev for the Domodedovo mission on January 24, 2011. In early February, Umarov released a video of himself on the Internet, claiming the responsibility for the terrorist attack.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Supyan Abdullaev*

Umarov's naib, vice-president of CE, killed in March 2011.

Umarov's naib and long time mujahid was killed in 2011. If Umarov is unable to designate a new naib or successor before he is killed or captured, that could severely unsettle the organization and effectiveness of the CE.<sup>6</sup>

In March 2011, a Russian airstrike in Ingushetia resulted in the death of Supyan Abdullayev, Umarov's long-time deputy. Abdullayev was a member of the small cabal of advisors who encouraged Umarov to declare the Caucasus Emirate in 2007 and was therefore a polarizing factor in the standoff between Umarov and the dissident Chechen field commanders.<sup>7</sup>

It is likely that his elimination paved the way toward reconciliation with the Chechen dissidents.

#### *Aslan Batukayev, Emir Khamzat*

Umarov's naib (deputy) — western direction, Chechnya.

Dokku Umarov's assistant has been found guilty in absentia of organizing the bombing of Moscow's Domodedovo Airport. Along with Dokku Umarov, Batukayev was pronounced guilty of terrorism, banditry, organizing an illegal armed group and handling illegal weapons.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Andrew C. Kuchins, Matthew Malarkey, Sergei Markedonov, *The North Caucasus, Russia's Volatile Frontier*, A Report of the CSIS, Russia and Eurasia Program 2011, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> *Dokku Umarov Sentenced in Absentia on Terrorism Charges*, 26 Oct 2011, <http://pik.tv/en/news/story/22317-dokku-umarov-sentenced-in-absentia-on-terrorism-charges>.

<sup>6</sup> Gordon M. Hahn, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> Kevin Daniel Leahy, *Chechnya's Rebel Movement Reunites under Dokku Umarov's Leadership*, (08/17/2011 issue of the CACI Analyst) <http://cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5609>.

<sup>8</sup> *Dokku Umarov Sentenced in Absentia on Terrorism Charges*, 26 Oct 2011, <http://pik.tv/en/news/story/22317-dokku-umarov-sentenced-in-absentia-on-terrorism-charges>.

He is one of the closest of Umarov's followers, one of the few Chechen field commanders who remained loyal to him during the course of the recent controversy with the Chechen field commanders.

Umarov and Batukayev are natives of south-western Chechnya. The latter has recently bolstered his profile by laying claim to several high-profile attacks — the suicide attack on Moscow's Domodedovo airport earlier this year, for example — in the name of the Riyad-us Saliheen Martyrs Battalion, which he leads.<sup>9</sup>

As it became known to the editorial staff of Kavkaz Center, Emir of the Caucasus Emirate, Emir of Province of Nokhchicho (aka Chechnya/Ichkeria), Dokku Abu Usman, appointed his naib (deputy) in the Province of Nokhchicho Emir Khamzat (western direction) and Emir Hussein (eastern direction).<sup>10</sup>

#### *Said-Emin Dadayev*

The identity of Batukayev's lieutenant, or 'naib', when it becomes known in due course, will also be of interest. It is likely Umarov will award this post to someone who supported him throughout the controversy — Said-Emin Dadayev, perhaps. Reportedly the pre-eminent field commander in Umarov's native Shatoi District, Dadayev has been included by Umarov in a previous rebel shadow government. In contrast to the majority of Chechnya's field commanders, Dadayev declined to publicly ally himself with Gakayev and Vadalov during the recent dispute.<sup>11</sup>

#### *Emir Hussein*

Umarov's naib (deputy) — eastern direction, Chechnya.

As it became known to the editorial staff of Kavkaz Center, Emir of the Caucasus Emirate, Emir of Province of Nokhchicho (aka Chechnya/Ichkeria), Dokku Abu Usman, appointed his naib (deputy) in the Province of Nokhchicho Emir Khamzat (western direction) and Emir Hussein (eastern direction).<sup>12</sup>

#### *Sheikh Abu Muhammad al-Dagestani*

The Qadi, or Supreme Judge of the Caucasus Emirate, Shari'a Court.<sup>13</sup>

Although the level of influence from Arab fighters in the Caucasus has waned, the connection to the overall global jihadi community has become further cemented. When ruling on the schism, the leading shari'a official in

<sup>9</sup> Kevin Daniel Leahy, *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> *Emir Dokku Abu appoints Emir Khamzat and Emir Hussein as deputies of Province of Chechnya*, 23 July 2011 <http://www.kazcenter.com/eng/content/2011/07/23/14810.shtml>.

<sup>11</sup> Kevin Daniel Leahy, *op. cit.*

<sup>12</sup> *Emir Dokku Abu Usman appoints Emir Khamzat and Emir Hussein as deputies of Province of Chechnya*, 23 July 2011, <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2011/07/23/14810.shtml>.

<sup>13</sup> *Supreme Judge of Caucasus Emirate Sheikh Abu Muhammad: 'Testing and patience'* 28 May 2011, <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2011/05/28/14392.shtml>.

the Caucasus Emirate, Ali Abu Muhammed al-Dagestani, stated that the opposition faction's disobedience to Umarov was contrary to Islamic law.<sup>14</sup>

*Sheikh Abdul Halim Sadulayev*

President of the self-proclaimed Chechen republic of Ichkeria 2005-2006.

After Maskhadov's death in March 2005, his successor as president of the self-proclaimed Chechen republic of Ichkeria, Abdul-Khakim Sadullayev, named Umarov as vice president and thus his designated successor. Umarov took over as president and resistance commander after Sadullayev was killed in June 2006.<sup>15</sup>

The Chechen republic of Ichkeria (ChRI) was the name of the unrecognized independent Chechen state between 1991 and 2000.

*Akhmed Yevloyev* real name *Ali Taziyeu*, also called *Amir Magas* is Top military commander (the military amir) of the Caucasian insurgency July 2007 – June 2010 (captured)Ingush Jamaat.

On July 21, the rebel Kavkaz Center website posted a new decree by Dokka Umarov, the leader of the Chechen and North Caucasian rebels and the president of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. According to the decree, Akhmed Yevloyev, a.k.a. Magas, became the top military commander (the military amir) of the Caucasian insurgency. This appointment is especially interesting given that Shamil Basayev himself held this position in the past. Thus, Akhmed Yevloyev became the successor of the most famous Chechen warlord. The position of military commander first appeared in the hierarchy of the Chechen rebels in 2002. At that time, the rebels wanted to reunify into a single force, but disagreements between two main leaders, Aslan Maskhadov and Shamil Basayev, needed to be overcome first.

Since the death of Aslan Maskhadov and then of Shamil Basayev, the position of military commander has lost its political significance. In fact, the new president Dokka Umarov is both the top political and military leader of the Caucasian insurgency. He makes all crucial decisions and travels around the North Caucasus, personally ensuring that the rebel squads in each of the republics are battle ready. This May (2007), Dokka Umarov appointed Seif Islam, a commander of Arab origin, as the rebel Chief of Staff, and it seemed that the resistance had returned to the time of Dzhokhar Dudayev, the first Chechen president, who was the rebel forces' supreme commander while Aslan Maskhadov was the Chief of Staff and coordinated the military activities of the field commanders.

This system of governance proved its effectiveness during the first Chechen war. The appointment of Yevloyev as the top military commander raises the question of why the insurgents again require this post. It is also

<sup>14</sup> Aaron Y. Zelin, *The Reunification of the Caucasus Emirate*, 08/31/2011, <http://cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5619>.

<sup>15</sup> Liz Fuller, *op. cit.*

interesting that Yevloyev is an Ingush and not a Chechen. There is not much information about the origin of Akhmed Yevloyev, better known as Amir Magas. The public first heard of Magas in June 2004, when hundreds of Chechen and Ingush rebels launched a large-scale raid on Ingushetia, killing dozens of police officers and soldiers. The day after the raid, Akhmed Zakayev, the rebel envoy to Europe, said at a press conference that the attack had been conducted by Ingush rebels headed by a commander called Magomed. The same day, Russian law-enforcement agencies announced that this commander's full name was Magomed Yevloyev. After some time, the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) published a file on Yevloyev (utro.ru, September 24, 2004).

According to the FSB, Magas' real name is not Magomed Yevloyev or Akhmed Yevloyev, as he was called in Umarov's latest decree, but Ali Taziyeu. He is a former Ingush policeman who disappeared without a trace in 1998. In 2000, a court in Ingushetia officially declared him dead. Taziyeu, however, was not dead: he had joined Shamil Basayev's group and was fighting the Russian army in Chechnya. In April 2004, when the Chechen insurgency started to implement its new strategy of exporting the war from Chechnya to the other parts of the North Caucasus, Basayev, as the military commander, appointed Magas the commander of the Ingush sector. During the June 21, 2004 raid on the republic, Magas headed a group of 30 Ingush fighters who set up a checkpoint in the middle of Nazran, the largest Ingush city, searching for policemen. According to the FSB, Yevloyev-Taziyeu personally killed Abubakar Kostoyev, the then acting Interior Minister of the republic. Last October, Umarov appointed Magas as the commander of the rebel Caucasian front. Magas became responsible for the rebel activity west of Chechnya in Ingushetia, North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachaevo-Cherkessia, Krasnodar and Stavropol. Magas' appointment as the top rebel military commander means that he now controls Chechnya and Dagestan. Three senior Chechen commanders — Muhhanad, Tarkhan Gaziyeu, and Aslanbek Vaduyev — were appointed by Umarov to be Magas' deputies. Why has Umarov chosen Magas to be Basayev's successor? The recent increase in rebel attacks in Ingushetia — attacks on military garrisons and other facilities — has demonstrated how skillful a commander Magas really is. It is possible, however, that Magas became the top military commander for other reasons. His appointment could be a part of the information war that is being conducted by the rebels. By appointing Magas as the military commander, Umarov may be trying to make the Russian military believe that the rebels' main strike will be in the western part of the North Caucasus when in reality, preparations are under way for a massive attack in another area. Yevloyev's appointment could also mean that, if a major attack occurs, Magas will be the one who will lead the rebels in their offensive.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Andrei Smirnov Source: *The Jamestown Foundation Kavkaz Center*, KAVKAZCENTER.COM: 7 August 2007, <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2007/08/07/8721.shtml>.

*Amir Magas (Ali Taziyev)*

Amir Magas (Ali Taziyev) was captured unarmed in Malgobek in June, 2010 allegedly by the same team of Moscow-based FSB personnel who killed Shamil Basayev four years earlier. Hunafa.com, the website of the Ingush insurgency wing, posted a statement on July 7, 2010 announcing that the „traitor“ who betrayed Magas to the FSB was killed during an attempt to capture him alive on June 21. The man’s name was given as „Timur Arselgov,“ which does not sound Ingush. He was said to have been infiltrated two years before into one of the North Caucasus fighting units and to have won the respect and trust of his fellow fighters thanks to his prowess as a sniper. He reportedly betrayed several other fighters before Magas. How many, if any, other „sleepers“ remain within the insurgency ranks can only be guessed.<sup>17</sup>

*The Dagestan vilaiyat**Magomed Tagayev*

A Dagestani ideologist of separatism and torchbearer of the 1999 Islamist insurgency in Dagestan, has called for Russians to be expelled from the Caucasus and eventually from all of Russia. In his book “The Call of Eternity, or My Caucasus,” he talks about “Russian colonists,” “bloodthirsty occupants” and “Russian terrorists”.

In another book, eerily titled in an apparent nod to Hitler “Our Struggle, or the Rebel Army of Imam,” he writes: “There is only one solution — with the sword and fire, to burn and raze everything and everyone so that not a single one of them may crawl away.”<sup>18</sup>

*Magomed Vagapov (aka Seyfullakh Gubdensky)*

Dagestan Vilaiyat amir and Caucasus Emirate qadi. Killed, summer 2010.

Dagestani Magomed Vagapov recruited the two women from Dagestan who blew themselves up in the Moscow metro in March 2010, killing 40 people and injuring a further 95.<sup>19</sup>

Killed in a counterterrorism operation in summer 2010.<sup>20</sup>

Late Dagestani amir and CE qadi, led the Gubden Jamaat.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> When ‘Runners’ Turn Snitch: FSB Targets North Caucasus Insurgency Support Personnel, May 16, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/runners\\_snitch\\_fsb\\_targets\\_north\\_caucasusinsurgency/24176439.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/runners_snitch_fsb_targets_north_caucasusinsurgency/24176439.html).

<sup>18</sup> Anna Dolgov, *The Caucasus’ Own Hamas*, 03 October 2011, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/the-caucasus-own-hamas/444686.html>.

<sup>19</sup> Liz Fuller, *Why Is The North Caucasus An Unholy Mess?*, August 15, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/north\\_caucasus\\_why\\_is\\_it\\_such\\_an\\_unholy\\_mess/24297384.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/north_caucasus_why_is_it_such_an_unholy_mess/24297384.html).

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Designates North Caucasus Insurgency As Terrorist Organization, May 30, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/us\\_designates\\_north\\_caucasus\\_insurgency\\_as\\_terrorist\\_organization/24209876.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/us_designates_north_caucasus_insurgency_as_terrorist_organization/24209876.html).

<sup>21</sup> Gordon M. Hahn, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

Dagestan Vilaiyat amir and Caucasus Emirate qadi, during the split in CE. He wrote an informative letter to Umarov at the peak of the crisis that ended in a schism within Chechnya Vilaiyat.<sup>22</sup>

*Umalat Magomedov („Amir Al-Bara“)*

Vagapov's predecessor, as commander of the Dagestan wing of the North Caucasus insurgency.<sup>23</sup>

*Magomed Vagapov („Seyfullakh Gubdensky“)*

Commander of the Dagestan wing of the North Caucasus insurgency, killed in August 2010.

Magomed Vagapov („Seyfullakh Gubdensky“) died in August 2010, when Interior Ministry and security personnel backed by APCs surrounded the house in Gunib where he was staying in a predawn maneuver, and opened fire when he refused to surrender. It is not clear how the FSB located Vagapov. The only arrest in the preceding weeks of a suspected auxiliary who might conceivably have been aware of his movements was in Khasavyurt, 60 km to the north. The man in question was believed to have provided food, medication, and accommodation, and to have acted as a driver for two fighters killed in 2009, one of them apparently in the same operation as Vagapov's predecessor Umalat Magomedov („Amir Al-Bara“).<sup>24</sup>

*Emir Khasan (aka Israpila Validzhanov)*

Leader of Dagestan's Sharia Jamaat, killed on April 17, 2011.<sup>25</sup>

*Israpil Velijanov*

Vagapov's successor as commander of the Dagestan wing of the North Caucasus insurgency was killed in a shootout in April 2011 when the car in which he was traveling refused to halt at a police checkpoint. The independent Dagestan weekly „Novoye delo“ characterized Velijanov as cautious and highly security conscious, to the point that he rarely ventured beyond his home base in southern Dagestan. The operation to monitor traffic on the Tashkapur-Levashi highway where his car was intercepted was undertaken on the basis of „operational information,“ meaning information provided by an informer either voluntarily or under duress.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 15.

<sup>23</sup> *When 'Runners' Turn Snitch: FSB Targets North Caucasus Insurgency Support Personnel*, May 16, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/runners\\_snitch\\_fsb\\_targets\\_north\\_caucasus\\_insurgency/24176439.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/runners_snitch_fsb_targets_north_caucasus_insurgency/24176439.html).

<sup>24</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>25</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "US Move Against Dokku Umarov Will Have Little Impact on Militant Activities," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 8, Issue: 105 June 1, 2011.

<sup>26</sup> *When 'Runners' Turn Snitch: FSB Targets North Caucasus Insurgency Support Personnel*, May 16, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/runners\\_snitch\\_fsb\\_targets\\_north\\_caucasus\\_insurgency/24176439.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/runners_snitch_fsb_targets_north_caucasus_insurgency/24176439.html).

*Israpil Validzhanov (Amir Hassan)*

He headed Dagestani militants from August 2010 until his death April 18, 2011.

At night, on April 18, 2011 on the highway Tashkapur-Khadzhadmakhi in the Levashin District of Dagestan security agents and law enforcers killed four suspected militants; one of them was Israpil Validzhanov, 42, also known as Amir Hassan. He headed Dagestani militants from August 2010 after the death of Magomedali Vagabov. His successor is Ibragimkhalil Daudov (Amir Salikh).<sup>27</sup>

*Emir Adam (Adam Guseynov)*

The first Naib, Emir Adam (Adam Guseynov), leading Dagestan's Sharia Jamaat, after Emir Khasan (Israpila Validzhanov). He died at the beginning of 2011.<sup>28</sup>

*Adam Guseinov (nom de guerre Khasan)*

Velijanov's second-in-command of the Dagestan wing of the North Caucasus insurgency, Adam Guseinov (nom de guerre Khasan), commander of the Northern Sector, was killed together with his wife in their home in Khasavyurt in January 2011.<sup>29</sup>

*Emir Salikh (aka Ibragimkhalil Daudov)*

Leader of Dagestan's Sharia Jamaat, replacing Emir Khasan, from April 2011.

Umarov, through his decrees #25 and #26 issued on May 9, 2011 appointed a new leader of Dagestan's Sharia Jamaat, replacing Emir Khasan (Israpila Validzhanov), who was killed on April 17, with Emir Salikh (Ibragimkhalil Daudov). As a Naib (deputy), Emir Salikh was second in line for this position. The first Naib, Emir Adam (Adam Guseynov), died at the beginning of 2011. Emir Salikh was born in 1960 in the village of Gubden in Dagestan's Karabudakhkent district. Previously, Emir Salikh headed a central sector of the Dagestani theater of operations. His family lived for a long time in the Stavropol region, where the Dagestani diaspora grows larger each year as a result of settlements in Stavropol's border areas. In 2007, the family resettled in Gubden, where the strength of Salafis is on average much higher than in other areas of Dagestan. Emir Salikh joined the resistance movement together with his three sons, two of whom were killed during clashes with the authorities in 2009 and 2010. Presumably, his wife, Zavzhat Daudova, was killed in an explosion in Moscow on December 31.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *Dokku Umarov appoints new leader of Dagestani armed underground*, May 10, 2011, <http://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/17069/>.

<sup>28</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, *op. cit.*

<sup>29</sup> *When 'Runners' Turn Snitch: FSB Targets North Caucasus Insurgency Support Personnel*, May 16, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/runners\\_snitch\\_fsb\\_targets\\_north\\_caucasus\\_insurgency/24176439.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/runners_snitch_fsb_targets_north_caucasus_insurgency/24176439.html).

<sup>30</sup> <http://moidagestan.ru/news/crime/6664?PHPSESSID=u3mmk24gfqd7bqa7i2leadhfg1>.

According to investigators, she died while preparing to carry out a terrorist act in Moscow. It is therefore not surprising that investigators in Moscow initially suspected Emir Salikh's third son of carrying out the terrorist act at Moscow's Domodedovo airport on January 24 (37 people died and 168 people were wounded as a result of the explosion). In the end, these suspicions were not confirmed. It is thus worth treating seriously the candidacy and desire of the new leader of Dagestani militants to avenge the death of his family members. He is a person who came to war with his entire family but during this war lost three of his five family members.<sup>31</sup>

*Ibragimkhalil Daudov (Amir Salikh)*

The commander of North-Caucasian militants Dokku Umarov has appointed Ibragimkhalil Daudov (Amir Salikh) to be the new head of Dagestani underground. Let us remind you that at night on April 18 on the highway Tashkapur-Khadzhadmakhi in the Levashin District of Dagestan security agents and law enforcers killed four suspected militants; one of them was Israpil Validzhanov, 42, also known as Amir Hassan. He headed Dagestani militants from August 2010 after the death of Magomedali Vagabov. Earlier Daudov, who is now instead of Validzhanov, was the head of the „central sector of the Dagestan Front,“ says Umarov's statement, posted by one of the sites supporting the militants. Law enforcement bodies had found Ibragimkhalil Daudov responsible for organizing the double terror act committed in Gubden on February 14. He was searched for committing a number of grave and especially grave terror crimes, including murders of law enforcers. Militants of Daudov's grouping were checked for involvement in the terror act at the Domodedovo Airport. According to the Department of the Russian FSB for Dagestan, Daudov's wife perished in the explosion on December 31, 2010, in Moscow, when, presumably, an improvised explosive device, prepared for committing terror acts, accidentally blew up. According to Mairbek Agaev, editor of the information and policy division of the „Chernovik“ newspaper, it was known that for more than ten years his family lived in the Stavropol Territory, where there is a numerous Dagestani diaspora; three years ago they moved to Gubden.<sup>32</sup>

*Emir Daud (aka Abdulla Magomedaliev)*

Leader of the Makhachkala sector in the Makhachkala-Kaspiisk insurgency, Dagestan, killed August 11, 2011.

The main event of August 2011 took place in Makhachkala, Dagestan's capital. On the night of August 11, Emir Daud (aka Abdulla Magomedaliev), leader of the Makhachkala sector in the Makhachkala-Kaspiisk insurgency, was killed in a shootout with security forces.

<sup>31</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, *op. cit.*

<sup>32</sup> Dokku Umarov appoints new leader of Dagestani armed underground, May 10, 2011, <http://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/17069/>.

As soon as he was named leader of Dagestan's insurgency in June, Emir Salikh (aka Ibragimkhalil Daudov) stripped Emir Daud of special battalion commander's status because he considered it an unnecessary unit in the command structure. This action may have meant that the relations among the top commanders of Dagestan were problematic. By subordinating Emir Daud to Kaspiisk's emir, Abu-Mukhammad, Emir Salekh may have turned Daud into an opponent. Emir Daud had a rather colorful personality in comparison with the many unknown commanders around Emir Salikh.

He started his military career during the Chechen war, and Chechen rebel military commander Shamil Basayev, shortly before his death in 2006, appointed Daud emir of the Shelkovskoi and Gudermes districts of Chechnya (<http://ummanews.com>, August 12, 2011), which testified to Basayev's great trust in Daud.

Yet, in 2007, Emir Daud moved to Dagestan, where he continued his activities in Makhachkala. Under Emir Khassan (aka Israpil Velidzhanov), Emir Daud was appointed commander of a special battalion that enabled him to stage attacks not only in his home city of Makhachkala, but in other parts of Dagestan as well. Whatever the mechanism, under Emir Daud, attacks, shootouts and explosions became a daily routine in Makhachkala. It must be noted, however, that Makhachkala's emir is not responsible for all the activity occurring in the city. Many other sectors do not shy away from carrying out operations of their own. So part of the credit for the insurgency's activities in Makhachkala should be shared among the commanders of all of the Dagestani sectors. The death of Emir Daud might decrease the activities of his group during the transitional period to a new leadership, but it is unlikely to benefit the federal forces significantly.<sup>33</sup>

*Abu-Mukhammad, Kaspiisk's emir*  
One of the leaders of Dagestani insurgency, 2011.<sup>34</sup>

*The United vilaiyat of Kabardiya, Balkariya and Karachai*  
(Covers Russia's republics of Kabardino-Balkariya  
and Karachaevo-Cherkessiya)

*Seifullah Anzor Astemirov, Amir United Vilaiyat of Kabardiya,  
Balkariya and Karachai*

The leader of the Kabardino-Balkaria jamaat.

Qadi (ideological and judicial leader) of the Supreme Sharia Court 2007-2010 (dead in March 2010).

He had the idea of uniting all the anti-Russian separatist and religious groups in the Caucasus.

<sup>33</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "The North Caucasus' Troubled August," *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 12, Issue: 17, August 18, 2011.

<sup>34</sup> *Idem*.

Astemirov and Ingush *jamaat* leader Ilyas Gorchkhanov approached Shamil Basayev with a suggestion to unite with the Chechen *jamaat* to form a Caucasus-wide coalition.

Basayev did not agree and suggested they subordinate themselves to the rule of the president of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (ChRI) Abdul-Khalim Sadullayev. In exchange, Basayev helped insurgents in Kabardino-Balkaria organize a massive military attack on security forces in the regional capital of Nalchik in October 2005, which made Astemirov one of the most influential leaders in the Caucasus.

The Chechen republic of Ichkeria (ChRI) was the name of the unrecognized independent Chechen state between 1991 and 2000. After the beginning of the second Chechen war, the Chechen government in exile and the resistance kept the name ChRI until the establishment of the Caucasus Emirate even if Akhmad Kadyrov was elected as the new president of Chechnya in 2003.

After the deaths of Basayev and Sadullayev in the summer of 2006, Astemirov proposed the creation of a Caucasian Emirate (CE) to Dokku Umarov, the new president of the ChRI. The new structure absorbed the ChRI and included it as one of its regions. The CE was divided into six *vilayats* (administrative divisions). The new ideology was established at the foundation of the CE in October 2007.

A group of insurgents denounced the transformation of ChRI into CE and elected a new president of ChRI, Ahmed Zakayev. This election did not prevent the creation of the Caucasus Emirate.

Umarov became Emir and Astemirov became Qadi (ideological and judicial leader) of the Supreme Sharia Court. The Emirate had two main goals: to change the ideology from separatism/nationalism to religious extremism and to establish an Islamic state in the North Caucasus — though they see themselves as fundamentalists and claim they are fighting for jihad (holy war) against terror perpetrated by the state.

During the summer of 2010, the ideological split among the insurgency leaders continued when Chechen warlords Hussein Gakaev and Aslanbek Vadalov withdrew their oath to the Emir but did not renounce their loyalty to the CE.

As *qadi* of the CE, Astemirov was responsible for judgment against “traitorous Imams.” Umarov organized actions against *siloviki* and “infidels.” However, they did not agree with respect to traditional Islam.

While the main trend of the new CE ideology became anti-nationalist, Astemirov made several statements aiming to expand his supporters by reaching out to nationalists. On March 2009, he claimed that Sultan Sosnaliev, a Kabardian commander of the Abkhazian army during the Georgian-Abkhaz war and later a defense minister of Abkhazia, was on the side of the CE. Alexei Bekshokov, responded that Astemirov’s statement was false and that the late Sosnaliev was never connected to religious extremists. In spite of the

differences in ideologies, the insurgents in Kabardino-Balkaria never regarded nationalists as their targets.

Astemirov could be seen more as a politician than a military commander. Indeed, the upsurge of violence in Kabardino-Balkaria coincided with his death in March 2010.

Astemirov rejected the unnecessary use of violence against Muslim civilians; he sought the support of the local population and put forward a proselytizing strategy to convert moderate Muslims to radical Islam. Opposing such a policy, Umarov claimed that it was wrong to regard as the enemy only those who attacked insurgents directly.<sup>35</sup>

The timing of the rise in violence in Kabardino-Balkaria is associated with the death of Anzor Astemirov, head of the local jammāt, in March 2010. Astemirov believed in a policy of maintaining a latent insurgency to prevent Russian intervention and the potential breakup of the republic.<sup>36</sup>

#### *Anzor Astemirov*

According to his own writings, shown in a November 20, 2007 posting on the Kavkaz Center website, he convinced Umarov to establish the CE; he and his closest associate Musa Mukozhev demanded in a shura with Basayev in 2005 that the ChRI be fully jihadized and the extremist Chechen nationalist project be jettisoned for the present project for a purely Salafist and pan-Russian emirate tied to a future caliphate.<sup>37</sup>

#### *Musa Mukozhev*

Close associate of Anzor Astemirov.

According to his own writings, shown in a November 20, 2007 posting on the Kavkaz Center website, he convinced Umarov to establish the CE; he and his closest associate Musa Mukozhev demanded in a shura with Basayev in 2005 that the ChRI be fully jihadized and the extremist Chechen nationalist project be jettisoned for the present project for a purely Salafist and pan-Russian emirate tied to a future caliphate.<sup>38</sup>

#### *Valery Eteзов*

A close associate of Anzor Astemirov.

Kabardino-Balkaria is where the FSB has had the greatest success in locating and killing insurgency leaders, partly by means of apprehending support personnel, and partly due to shockingly lax operational security.

In March 2010, FSB operatives recognized outside a café in Nalchik Valery Eteзов, a close associate of Anzor Astemirov, at that time commander

<sup>35</sup> Sufian Zhemukhov and Jean-François Ratelle, *The Kabardino-Balkaria Insurgency: A comparative analysis of ideological trends in the North Caucasus*, PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No 156.

<sup>36</sup> Andrew C. Kuchins, Matthew Malarkey, Sergei Markedonov, *The North Caucasus, Russia's Volatile Frontier*, A Report of the CSIS, Russia and Eurasia Program 2011, p. 4, 11.

<sup>37</sup> Gordon M. Hahn, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>38</sup> *Idem.*

of the Kabardino-Balkaria-Karachai wing of the North Caucasus insurgency. They killed Eteзов in a shootout, and reportedly found on him information about Astemirov's probable movements that enabled them to ambush and kill Astemirov days later.<sup>39</sup>

*Asker Jappuyev, Emir Abdullakh*

The Wali of the Wilayah KBK, killed April 29, 2011.

Astemirov's successor.

The commander of the Kabardino-Balkaria-Karachai wing of the North Caucasus insurgency, together with his deputy Kazbek Tashuyev („Abdul-Djabbar“), Ratmir Shameyev („Zakaria“) and nine other fighters and support personnel were killed on April 29 after being betrayed to the FSB, possibly by one of the six support personnel arrested three weeks earlier in Nalchik, Chegem and the village of Zaragizh. One of the six was identified as having acted as a driver for Jappuyev's fighters and carried messages between them. Two more men apprehended in Nalchik on April 27 were similarly suspected of providing the militants with accommodation, food, and information about police personnel.<sup>40</sup>

Leader of Kabardino-Balkaria Jamaat, April 2010-May 2011 (when killed).

In April 2010, Asker Jappuyev was appointed the new leader of insurgents in Kabardino-Balkaria. The explosion of the Baksan hydroelectric power plant in July 2010, the murder of prominent Kabardian folklorist scholar Aslan Tsipinov in December 2010, attacks aiming to interfere with the local tourist industry in February 2011, and other terrorist acts against civilians have demonstrated the ideological turn among the insurgents in Kabardino-Balkaria.

In May 2011, federal forces killed several insurgents including the KBK vilayat leader. The choice of the new leader will probably have an immediate impact on the situation and on the insurgents' tactics. However, recent history also shows that it does not necessarily mean a decrease in the level of violence.<sup>41</sup>

The head of Kabardino-Balkaria-Karachai jamaat unequivocally rejected the recourse to indiscriminate terror attacks. Jappuyev enjoined his fighters to make every effort to avoid any civilian casualties. He issued repeated warnings to the republic's population to avoid locations such as police stations and patrol posts that could be attacked at any time, and he assured police

<sup>39</sup> *When 'Runners' Turn Snitch: FSB Targets North Caucasus Insurgency Support Personnel*, May 16, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/runners\\_snitch\\_fsb\\_targets\\_north\\_caucasus\\_insurgency/24176439.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/runners_snitch_fsb_targets_north_caucasus_insurgency/24176439.html).

<sup>40</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>41</sup> Sufian Zhemukhov and Jean-François Ratelle, *The Kabardino-Balkaria Insurgency: A comparative analysis of ideological trends in the North Caucasus*, PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No 156.

officers that they would no longer risk being subject to reprisals if they quit the police force and publicly announced they had done so.<sup>42</sup>

The most recent series of attacks began on the night of April 29 when a group of armed men was spotted in a private home in a residential district near the village of Progress on the border between the Stavropol region and the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic. In the ensuing firefight, which lasted several hours, everyone in the house was killed — in total, eight men and two women ([www.regnum.ru/news/kavkaz/1400277.html](http://www.regnum.ru/news/kavkaz/1400277.html)). Among the bodies identified were some of the leading figures in the Kabardino-Balkaria jamaat: Emir Abdullah (aka Arsen Dzhappuev), the jamaat leader himself; Abdul Jabbar (aka Kazbek Tashuev), the emir of the northeastern sector; his naib, or deputy, Abdul Gafur (Aslanbek Khamurzov); and Emir Zakaria (aka Ratmir Shameyev), one of the toughest senior commanders of the Kabardino-Balkaria jamaat and head of its southwestern sector. The men were listed on the federal wanted list for being members of illicit armed groups and for illegal possession of weapons.<sup>43</sup>

The Kabardino-Balkaria jamaat's future fighting tactics will greatly depend on who becomes its next leader. While Anzor Astemirov (aka Emir Seifullah) emphasized the ideological aspects of the Caucasus Emirate — he was indeed one of the most prominent supporters and architects of the idea of an Islamic state in the North Caucasus — his immediate successor Dzhappuev (Emir Abdullah) shifted the jamaat's modus operandi to frequent operations against the Russian siloviki — attacking, at the same time, religious officials who condemned Salafism and nationalist leaders who rejected the militants' vision of the future of the North Caucasus within the framework of an Islamic state.<sup>44</sup>

*Kazbek Tashuyev* („Abdul-Djabbar“)

Deputy of Asker Jappuyev („Abdullakh“) commander of the Kabardino-Balkaria-Karachai wing of the North Caucasus insurgency.

Astemirov's successor Asker Jappuyev („Abdullakh“), as commander of the Kabardino-Balkaria-Karachai wing of the North Caucasus insurgency, together with his deputy Kazbek Tashuyev („Abdul-Djabbar“), Ratmir Shameyev („Zakaria“), and nine other fighters and support personnel were killed on April 29 after being betrayed to the FSB, possibly by one of the six support personnel arrested three weeks earlier in Nalchik, Chegem and the village of Zaragizh. One of the six was identified as having acted as a driver for Jappuyev's fighters and carried messages between them. Two more men

<sup>42</sup> *U.S. Designates North Caucasus Insurgency as Terrorist Organization*, May 30, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/us\\_designates\\_north\\_caucasus\\_insurgency\\_as\\_terrorist\\_organization/24209876.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/us_designates_north_caucasus_insurgency_as_terrorist_organization/24209876.html).

<sup>43</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, “Moscow Kills Rebel Leaders in Kabardino-Balkaria, but was it a Mortal Blow?”, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 8, Issue: 87, May 5, 2011.

<sup>44</sup> *Idem*.

apprehended in Nalchik on April 27 were similarly suspected of providing the militants with accommodation, food, and information about police personnel.<sup>45</sup>

A leader of Kabardino-Balkaria's militants, Kazbek Taushev, is said to have been killed on the republic's border with Stavropol territory, a source in Kabardino-Balkaria's law enforcement services told Interfax. „The unconfirmed information available to us suggests that Kazbek Taushev, one of the leaders of Kabardino-Balkaria's militant network, was killed in a security operation in the village of Progress. We have come to this conclusion because Khamurzov, who always accompanied Taushev, was eliminated there,“ the source said. Taushev was accused of masterminding an explosion at the Baksan hydroelectric power plant, as well as of being involved in the murder of policemen in Kabardino-Balkaria, he said.<sup>46</sup>

*Abdul Jabbar (Kazbek Tashuev)*

The emir of the northeastern sector of the Wilayah KBK, killed April 29, 2011.

The most recent series of attacks began on the night of April 29 when a group of armed men was spotted in a private home in a residential district near the village of Progress on the border between the Stavropol region and the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic. In the ensuing firefight, which lasted several hours, everyone in the house was killed — in total, eight men and two women ([www.regnum.ru/news/kavkaz/1400277.html](http://www.regnum.ru/news/kavkaz/1400277.html)). Among the bodies identified were some of the leading figures in the Kabardino-Balkaria jamaat: Emir Abdullah (aka Arsen Dzhappuev), the jamaat leader himself; Abdul Jabbar (aka Kazbek Tashuev), the emir of the northeastern sector; his naib, or deputy, Abdul Gafur (Aslanbek Khamurzov); and Emir Zakaria (aka Ratmir Shameyev), one of the toughest senior commanders of the Kabardino-Balkaria jamaat and head of its southwestern sector. The men were listed on the federal wanted list for being members of illicit armed groups and for illegal possession of weapons.<sup>47</sup>

*Abdul-Gafur (Aslanbek Khamurzov)*

The Naib (deputy) of Amir Abdul-Jabbar (The Amir of the North-Eastern sector of the Wilayah KBK), killed April 29, 2011.

The most recent series of attacks began on the night of April 29 when a group of armed men was spotted in a private home in a residential district

<sup>45</sup> *When 'Runners' Turn Snitch: FSB Targets North Caucasus Insurgency Support Personnel*, May 16, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/runners\\_snitch\\_fsb\\_targets\\_north\\_caucasus\\_insurgency/24176439.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/runners_snitch_fsb_targets_north_caucasus_insurgency/24176439.html).

<sup>46</sup> *Baksan HPP blast suspect possibly killed on Kabardino-Balkaria's border with Stavropol, NALCHIK*. April 29 (Interfax) <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=60272616&site=ehost-live>.

<sup>47</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Moscow Kills Rebel Leaders in Kabardino-Balkaria, but was it a Mortal Blow?", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 8, Issue: 87, May 5, 2011.

near the village of Progress on the border between the Stavropol region and the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic. In the ensuing firefight, which lasted several hours, everyone in the house was killed — in total, eight men and two women ([www.regnum.ru/news/kavkaz/1400277.html](http://www.regnum.ru/news/kavkaz/1400277.html)). Among the bodies identified were some of the leading figures in the Kabardino-Balkaria jamaat: Emir Abdullah (aka Arsen Dzhappuev), the jamaat leader himself; Abdul Jabbar (aka Kazbek Tashuev), the emir of the northeastern sector; his naib, or deputy, Abdul Gafur (Aslanbek Khamurzov); and Emir Zakaria (aka Ratmir Shameyev), one of the toughest senior commanders of the Kabardino-Balkaria jamaat and head of its southwestern sector. The men were listed on the federal wanted list for being members of illicit armed groups and for illegal possession of weapons.<sup>48</sup>

*Zakary (Ratmir Shameyev)*

The Amir of the South-Western sector of the Wilayah KBK, killed April 29, 2011.

One of the toughest senior commanders of the Kabardino-Balkaria jamaat and head of its southwestern sector.

The most recent series of attacks began on the night of April 29 when a group of armed men was spotted in a private home in a residential district near the village of Progress on the border between the Stavropol region and the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic. In the ensuing firefight, which lasted several hours, everyone in the house was killed — in total, eight men and two women ([www.regnum.ru/news/kavkaz/1400277.html](http://www.regnum.ru/news/kavkaz/1400277.html)). Among the bodies identified were some of the leading figures in the Kabardino-Balkaria jamaat: Emir Abdullah (aka Arsen Dzhappuev), the jamaat leader himself; Abdul Jabbar (aka Kazbek Tashuev), the emir of the northeastern sector; his naib, or deputy, Abdul Gafur (Aslanbek Khamurzov); and Emir Zakaria (aka Ratmir Shameyev), one of the toughest senior commanders of the Kabardino-Balkaria jamaat and head of its southwestern sector. The men were listed on the federal wanted list for being members of illicit armed groups and for illegal possession of weapons.<sup>49</sup>

*Emir Abdul Malik*

On November 14, the Kabardino-Balkarian insurgency's new website published a video address by an Emir Abdul Malik. The young man with an uncovered face called on Muslims to provide assistance to the insurgents in Kabardino-Balkaria, while also threatening the Russian security services.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>49</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>50</sup> Valery Dzutsev, "Kremlin Proves Unable to Stabilize Security Situation in Kabardino-Balkaria," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 8, Issue: 212, November 16, 2011, [http://www.djamaattakbir.com/2011/11/blog-post\\_862.html](http://www.djamaattakbir.com/2011/11/blog-post_862.html).

### *The vilaiyat of Nokhchicho (Chechnya)*

*Hussein Gakayev*, emir of Chechnya (Vilaiyat of Nokhchicho), *Tarhan Gaziye*v, deputy of Hussein Gakayev, emir of Chechnya, and *Aslanbek Vadalov*, commander of the Eastern Front, Chechnya are Chechen Dissent leaders against Dokku Umarov.

Dokku Umarov provoked a sharp difference of opinion within Chechnya's rebel organisation by refusing to relinquish his position as Emir of the Caucasus Emirate. Umarov's prevarication upset many within the organization in Chechnya and several senior field commanders — Hussein Gakayev, Tarhan Gaziye

v and Aslanbek Vadalov — who felt obligated to complain publicly about his continued stewardship of the Caucasus Emirate.

According to Gakayev, the basis for his opposition to Umarov is the latter's failure to lead by consensus. Umarov's decision to proclaim the Caucasus Emirate in late 2007 was taken, Gakayev complains, "without consulting all of the Mujahedeen". Gakayev argues that such a monumental initiative should have been put before the rebels' Majlis al-Shura for extended deliberation. Umarov took the decision to proclaim the Emirate on foot of consultations he held with a narrow circle of advisors, very few of whom were in harmony with the main body of opinion within Chechnya's rebel organisation.

Gakayev has convened a new Majlis which includes field commanders from throughout Chechnya. Six sector commanders are also included in the Majlis, three from the Western Front and three from the Eastern Front. Emirs Zumso, Abu Muslim and Abdullah represent the West, while Mahran, Muslim and Zaurbek represent the East.

It is clear, therefore, that the Gakayev-Vadalov-Gaziye

v axis enjoys considerable support from Chechnya's rebel rank and file.<sup>51</sup>

#### *Hussein Gakayev*

Emir of Chechnya. Leader of the group of dissident Chechen field commanders.

On July 23 the Kavkazcenter.com website announced that the self-styled Emir of the Caucasus Emirate, Dokku Umarov, had been reconciled with a group of estranged Chechen field commanders who withdrew their oath of loyalty to him in late 2010. This reconciliation was reportedly achieved at a recent meeting of the Caucasus Emirate's Supreme Sharia Court. Video pictures accompanying the report showed Umarov flanked by the current chairman of the Sharia Court, Ali Abu-Muhammed al-Dagestani, and the leader of the group of dissident Chechen field commanders, Hussein Gakayev.

Before going any further, a brief explanation of the origins of this controversy is in order. From late 2007 Gakayev and several other leading field commanders based in Chechnya began to experience misgivings with Uma-

<sup>51</sup> Kevin Daniel Leahy, "Protagonists Rebuild Their Political Foundations Following Split in Chechnya's Rebel Organization," 04/27/2011 <http://cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5545>.

rov's style of leadership, which they deemed to be excessively autocratic. Umarov's decision to announce the establishment of a Caucasus Emirate in October 2007, for example, was apparently arrived at without any consultation with senior field commanders in Chechnya. Matters did not come to a head until late 2010, however, when Umarov seemingly reneged on an agreement to relinquish his position as Emir of the Caucasus Emirate. This volte-face led to Gakayev and several likeminded colleagues, including well-known field commanders such as Muhanned and Aslanbek Vadalov, to rescind their oath of allegiance to Umarov. The resulting split was acrimonious, with Umarov and his supporters blaming Muhanned, a fighter of non-Chechen origin, for damaging morale in the rebel ranks and Gakayev, Vadalov and their associates in turn accusing Umarov of provoking the controversy by ignoring the collective will of Chechnya's rebel organisation.

Gakayev and Vadalov are strongest in eastern districts like Gudermes, Kurchaloi and Vedeno.<sup>52</sup>

As well as other commanders who previously rescinded their *bay'at* to Dokku Umarov, he renewed their allegiance. This episode provides further evidence of the decline of Arab fighter influence in the Caucasus jihad, yet paradoxically shows the impact of popular Arab online jihadi shaykhs. It also solidifies Umarov's pan-Caucasus project as the leading resistance to Russian aggression in contrast to the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria's claims as the true representatives of the more nationalist-Islamist Chechen struggle.past research on the waning level of Arabs fighting in the Caucasus.<sup>53</sup>

*Khusayn Gakayev*

„Leader of the military forces and parliament of the Chechen Republic Ichkeria“.<sup>54</sup>

*Tarhan Gaziyeu*

Deputy of Hussein Gakayev (emir of Chechnya).

Member of the group of dissident Chechen field commanders.<sup>55</sup>

*Aslanbek Vadalov*

Commander of the Eastern Front, Chechnya.

Member of the group of dissident Chechen field commanders.Gakayev and Vadalov are strongest in eastern districts like Gudermes, Kurchaloi and Vedeno.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Kevin Daniel Leahy, *Chechnya's Rebel Movement Reunites under Dokku Umarov's Leadership*, (08/17/2011 issue of the CACI Analyst) <http://cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5609>.

<sup>53</sup> Aaron Y. Zelin, *op. cit.*

<sup>54</sup> *U.S. Designates North Caucasus Insurgency As Terrorist Organization*, May 30, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/us\\_designates\\_north\\_caucasus\\_insurgency\\_as\\_terrorist\\_organization/24209876.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/us_designates_north_caucasus_insurgency_as_terrorist_organization/24209876.html).

<sup>55</sup> Kevin Daniel Leahy, *Chechnya's Rebel Movement Reunites under Dokku Umarov's Leadership*, (08/17/2011 issue of the CACI Analyst) <http://cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5609>.

<sup>56</sup> *Idem.*

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*Emir Zumso*

Chechen field commander, western front.

Practically nothing is known about Emir Zumso other than the fact that he was previously under the command of Tarkhan Gaziyeu as part of the now-defunct South-Western Front.<sup>58</sup>

*Emir Mahran (real name Mahran Saidov)*

Chechen field commander, eastern front.

Emir Mahran, (real name Mahran Saidov) is a particularly active guerrilla leader who commands the Tsentoroi sector of operations in Chechnya's Gudermes district.<sup>59</sup>

Second tier field chechen commanders, members of the group of dissidents.<sup>60</sup>

*Emir Muslim, or Muslim 'Dunga' Gakayev*

Chechen field commander, eastern front.

Emir Muslim, or Muslim 'Dunga' Gakayev, is in charge of the Shali sector of operations in eastern Chechnya. He is the younger brother of Hussein Gakayev and has in recent years been one of those responsible for the recruitment and training of suicide bombers.<sup>61</sup>

*Emir Zaurbek, or Zaurbek Avdorkhanov*

Chechen field commander, eastern front.

Emir Zaurbek, or Zaurbek Avdorkhanov, is the younger brother of Akhmed Avdorkhanov, killed in 2005. Akhmed Avdorkhanov was a close associate of the late Chechen leader Aslan Maskhadov.

Emir Zaurbek is a successful guerrilla commander in his own right who operates mainly in the Kurchaloi and Nozhai-yurt districts. Along with Va-

<sup>57</sup> Aaron Y. Zelin, *op. cit.*

<sup>58</sup> Kevin Daniel Leahy, *Protagonists Rebuild Their Political Foundations Following Split Chechnya's Rebel Organization*, 04/27/2011 <http://cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5545>.

<sup>59</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>60</sup> Kevin Daniel Leahy, *Chechnya's Rebel Movement Reunites under Dokku Umarov's Leadership*, (08/17/2011 issue of the CACI Analyst) <http://cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5609>.

<sup>61</sup> Kevin Daniel Leahy, *Protagonists Rebuild Their Political Foundations Following Split Chechnya's Rebel Organization*, 04/27/2011 <http://cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5545>.

dalov, Mahran and Avdorkhanov planned and executed the attack on Ramzan Kadyrov's compound in the village of Tsentoroi in August 2010.<sup>62</sup>

Second tier field Chechen commanders, members of the group of dissidents.<sup>63</sup>

*Emir Ilman (Ilman Estemirov)*

Estemirov was the Emir of the rebels' Tevzana sector in Chechnya's Vedeno District. In August 2010 he had been included on a list of Chechen field commanders allegedly opposed to Dokku Umarov. This list was posted on the Daymohk.org website which has taken Gakayev's side in the recent controversy. The integrity of this compilation has been called into question in recent weeks. According to certain rebel sources, Ilman was killed on March 28 in the Ingush village of Upper Alkun, during the same special operation that accounted for Umarov's deputy, the Chechen ideologue Supyan Abdullayev. Does this indicate that Emir Ilman was actually in league with Umarov at the time of his death? Was he playing a double game, adopting an equivocal stance by staying on terms with both parties? Or could it be that he was present in Abdullayev's camp as Gakayev's emissary, with the mission of soothing relations between the two factions? Emir Ilman's presence among the casualties of the raid on Upper Alkun suggests that Umarov will continue to exert influence within Chechnya's rebel community until he is killed. Furthermore, this apparent inaccuracy in the internet list mentioned earlier suggests that there may be other field commanders who are still reluctant to commit to either party. Assuming it exists, should Umarov begin canvassing this undecided constituency aggressively, there is a possibility that he might broaden his support base substantially.<sup>64</sup>

*Lechi Dudayev, Khunkar-Pasha Israpilov, and Big and Little Aslanbek (Abdulkhadjiyev and Ismailov respectively).*

Chechen field commanders, died during the night of January 31-February 1, 2000.

Only once before have so many prominent commanders died simultaneously in circumstances where their deaths might have been avoided. That was during the infamous retreat from Grozny during the night of January 31-February 1, 2000 in which Chechen field commanders Lechi Dudayev, Khunkar-Pasha Israpilov, and Big and Little Aslanbek (Abdulkhadjiyev and Ismailov, respectively) perished picking their way through a minefield, Basayev having decreed that the senior commanders should go first.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>62</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>63</sup> Kevin Daniel Leahy, *Chechnya's Rebel Movement Reunites under Dokku Umarov's Leadership*, (08/17/2011 issue of the CACI Analyst) <http://cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5609>.

<sup>64</sup> Kevin Daniel Leahy, *Protagonists Rebuild Their Political Foundations Following Split Chechnya's Rebel Organization*, 04/27/2011 <http://cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5545>.

<sup>65</sup> *When 'Runners' Turn Snitch: FSB Targets North Caucasus Insurgency Support Personnel*, May 16, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/runners\\_snitch\\_fsb\\_targets\\_north\\_caucasus\\_insurgency/24176439.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/runners_snitch_fsb_targets_north_caucasus_insurgency/24176439.html).

*Akhmad Zakayev*

The apparent reconciliation between the various factions would be a major blow to the Chechen Republic Ichkeria (ChRI), the predecessor to the Caucasus Emirate, which has focused more on Chechnya as a nationalist-Islamist oriented secessionist movement. Twice following the outbreak of the fissures within the Caucasus Emirate — first in October 2010 and most recently in June 2011 – Akhmad Zakayev, the leader of the ChRI in exile following Umarov's creation of the Caucasus Emirate, announced and later reaffirmed he was resigning as President, dismantling his cabinet and supporting Gakayev as the new leader. The reconciliation between Gakayev's faction and the Caucasus Emirate, therefore, is not only a repudiation of Zakayev, but also eliminates any possibility that the conflict with Russia will once again be centered on Chechen nationalist and secessionist ideas versus Umarov's pan-Caucasus Islamic identity. Following the announced détente between the two Caucasus Emirate rivals, Zakayev's ChRI released a statement in July 2011 condemning them, arguing that they were fomenting *fitnah*, which strengthens Russian hands in their conflict.

The reconciliation between Umarov's Caucasus Emirate and Gakayev's faction ends a years-long dispute that pitted influential leaders that have played crucial roles in the insurgency against the Russians the past few years. This development sidelines Zakayev and his ChRI leadership in exile. It also further diminishes Arab fighter influence over the Caucasus Emirate, yet boosts the importance of Arab shaykhs from the outside. Most significant, though, is that the Caucasus Emirate can now refocus its conflict with Russia instead of internecine fighting, and expand its sphere of influence in other former Muslim lands that they perceive to be occupied, such as the Volga-Ural region, which the Caucasus Emirate has attempted to reach out to recently in its propaganda. The resolution between the two parties also points to the victory of the global jihadi vision over more nationalist-Islamist claims in the long-running and protracted war with Russia.<sup>66</sup>

In 2007, a group of insurgents denounced the transformation of ChRI into CE and elected a new president of ChRI, Ahmed Zakayev. This election did not prevent the creation of the Caucasus Emirate.<sup>67</sup>

The London-based head of the ChRI government in exile.<sup>68</sup>

*Akhmed Zakaev and Movladi Udugov*

The increasing conflict between nationalists and jihadists could be seen in the polemic between Akhmed Zakaev, the comparatively moderate leader of

<sup>66</sup> Aaron Y. Zelin, *op. cit.*

<sup>67</sup> Sufian Zhemukhov and Jean-François Ratelle, *op. cit.*

<sup>68</sup> U.S. *Designates North Caucasus Insurgency As Terrorist Organization*, May 30, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/us\\_designates\\_north\\_caucasus\\_insurgency\\_as\\_terrorist\\_organization/24209876.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/us_designates_north_caucasus_insurgency_as_terrorist_organization/24209876.html).

the Chechen resistance, and Movladi Udugov, the emerging ideologist of the jihadists and the editor of *Kavkaz Center*, the most popular internet site of North Caucasian resistance. Responding to Zakaev's nationalistic appeal, Udugov stated that he plainly did not understand why Zakaev was so preoccupied with Chechens regardless who they were. Udugov questioned why he should be attached to Chechens who behaved as infidels and might even serve the Kremlin, a regime of infidels and the mortal enemy of true Muslims. While the jihadists argued that even Chechen infidels should be considered enemies, the Islamic resistance instead opened for ethnic Russians converted to Islam.<sup>69</sup>

*Chamsoudin Avraligov*  
Chechen field commander.<sup>70</sup>

### *North Ossetia*

*David Murashev*

On May 26, the beheaded body of Shamil Jikayev, a venerated Ossetian poet and dean of the Department of Ossetian Philology of the North Ossetian State University was found in a village near the republic's capital city of Vladikavkaz. Three days later, in a fierce shootout with North Ossetian police forces, Jikayev's alleged murderer, David Murashev, was shot dead. As Murashev, himself an Ossetian, is said by authorities to have turned to "radical Islam" a few years earlier, this incident stirred up talks about the increasingly uncomfortable coexistence of Christian and Muslim communities within North Ossetia, renewing fears of the "jihadization" of a part of North Ossetian Muslims.<sup>71</sup>

*Aslan Digorsky*

Leader of Qataib al-Khoul (Battalions of Power in Arabic), North Ossetia (2005-2008)

Qataib al-Khoul (Battalions of Power in Arabic) was the name of an organization that is believed to have established itself back in 2005-2006 by North Ossetian Muslims as part of the regional jihad. Some claim the group never existed while others argue its members were primarily recruited from among ethnic Ingush as part of their anti-Ossetian strategy. This unit was

<sup>69</sup> Dmitry Shlapentokh, *The Role of Converts in North Caucasian Terrorism*, 09/21/2011 issue of the CACI Analyst), <http://cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5627>.

<sup>70</sup> Gordon M. Hahn, *Getting the Caucasus Emirate Right*, A Report of the CSIS, Russia and EurAsia Program, August 2011, p. 5.

<sup>71</sup> Emil Souleimanov, *North Ossetia: Jihadization in the Making?*, 06/08/2011 <http://cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5573>.

reportedly led by prominent Jihadi fighter Aslan Digorsky, and gained publicity in the 2005-2008 when it attacked casinos and gambling houses in Vladikavkaz, and engaged in a series of assassinations of high-ranking military and state officials, reaching a peak in 2008 with the murder of the mayor of Vladikavkaz, Vitaly Karayev, who was accused of harassing Ossetian women wearing the hijab in public. However, following Karayev's murder, for reasons that are not entirely clear, the activities of the Ossetian Jamaat came to nothing. This likely served as a ground for Dokku Umarov, head of the Caucasus Emirate, to abolish the "vilayet of Iriston (Ossetia)" and to formally incorporate it into the Emirate's "vilayet of Galgaychö (Ingushetia)" in May 2009.<sup>72</sup>

### *The Galcaiche vilaiyat Ingushetiya*

*Ilyas Gorchkhanov*

Ingush *jamaat* leader.

Astemirov and Ingush *jamaat* leader Ilyas Gorchkhanov approached Shamil Basayev with a suggestion to unite with the Chechen *jamaat* to form a Caucasus-wide coalition.<sup>73</sup>

*Sheikh Said Abu Saad Buryatskii, born Aleksandr Tikhomirov*

Ingushetiya, Popular ideologist of jihad, killed March 2010.

Buddhist convert to Islam, of Russian and Buryat nationality, he had never set foot in the North Caucasus to feel the force of Russian brutality, until he joined the jihad. Upon arrival he met with CE amir Umarov, who dispatched him to Ingushetiya where he organized a series of deadly suicide bombings, including the explosion of an entire police headquarters in Nazran that killed 25 MVD personnel and wounded nearly 200 MVD and civilians (including children) and a nearly successful assassination of Ingushetiya President Yunus-bek Yevkurov.<sup>74</sup>

*Said Buryatsky*

Dead in March 2010, he was an effective political ideologist and propagandist who was committed to the global jihad and had a large online following. His death represented the neutralization of a salient threat and a victory for the security services.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>72</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>73</sup> Sufian Zhemukhov and Jean-François Ratelle, *The Kabardino-Balkaria Insurgency: A comparative analysis of ideological trends in the North Caucasus*, PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No 156.

<sup>74</sup> Gordon M. Hahn, *Getting the Caucasus Emirate Right*, A Report of the CSIS, Russia and EurAsia Program, August 2011, p. 21.

<sup>75</sup> Andrew C. Kuchins, Matthew Malarkey, Sergei Markedonov, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

*Aleksandr Tikhomirov (aka Said Buryatsky)*

A convert to Islam from Buryatia and a hugely popular ideologist of jihad, staged two car bombings in Ingushetia in 2009, one of which narrowly missed killing Zyazikov's successor as president, Yunus-Bek Yevkurov.<sup>76</sup>

*Said Buryatsky*

Said Buryatsky was killed in March 2010, after a two-day siege of a private home in Ekazhevo, his presence there having been presumably betrayed to the FSB, possibly by apprehensive neighbors.<sup>77</sup>

*Alexander Arteyev (Abu-t-Tanvir Kavkazskii)*

Leading ideologist of the CE's Ingush mujahedeen of its G'ialg'aiche (Ingushetiya Vilaiyat).<sup>78</sup>

*Slavs Engaged in terror attacks**Viktor Dvorakovsky*

Of Slavic origin. He has engaged in terror attacks. Arrested in the summer 2011 in the Stavropol region.<sup>79</sup>

Russian law enforcement recently tried to arrest a jihadist named Viktor Dvorakovsky. Dvorakovsky does not belong to any of the ethnic groups in Russia which are historically Muslims. Dvorakovsky's case has indicated that jihadist converts, who have become Islamists in spite of lacking a historical connection to Islam, continue to constitute a serious problem for Russian counterinsurgency operations. The event indicates that jihadism continues to expand in Russia and that Islamist terrorism cannot be reduced to people from the North Caucasus.<sup>80</sup>

Suspected „Russian Wahhabi“ Viktor Dvorakovsky, who was wanted federally, was detained in the village of Inozemtsevo in Stavropol Territory after he offered armed resistance early on Thursday, a source in territorial law enforcement services informed Interfax. „A young man was stopped by police in Inozemtsevo last night for an ID check. The man shouted at them that he was Dvorakovsky and that he would blow them up if he is not

<sup>76</sup> Liz Fuller, *Why Is The North Caucasus An Unholy Mess?*, August 15, 2011 [http://www.rferl.org/content/north\\_caucasus\\_why\\_is\\_it\\_such\\_an\\_unholy\\_mess/24297384.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/north_caucasus_why_is_it_such_an_unholy_mess/24297384.html).

<sup>77</sup> *When 'Runners' Turn Snitch: FSB Targets North Caucasus Insurgency Support Personnel*, May 16, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/runners\\_snitch\\_fsb\\_targets\\_north\\_caucasus\\_insurgency/24176439.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/runners_snitch_fsb_targets_north_caucasus_insurgency/24176439.html).

<sup>78</sup> Gordon M. Hahn, *Getting the Caucasus Emirate Right*, A Report of the CSIS, Russia and EurAsia Program, August 2011, p. 7, <http://kavkaz.org.uk/eng/content/2011/02/27/13681.shtml>.

<sup>79</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Is the North Caucasus Rebel Movement Spreading Beyond the North Caucasus?," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume: 8 Issue: 150 August 4, 2011.

<sup>80</sup> Dmitry Shlapentokh, *op. cit.*

allowed to go. He threw an improvised grenade at police which blew up, wounding one of the police officers," the source said. „Police fired shots at the man when he was about to blow up another grenade. The grenade went off right in his hands. Dvorakovsky was injured and was detained. He sustained gunshot and blast wounds and is in the hospital," he said. Dvorakovsky was wanted federally for making, keeping and selling improvised explosive devices, other territorial law enforcement sources told Interfax. „He is suspected of involvement in an explosion in an apartment in Pyatigorsk when a self-made bomb went off when it was being dried on a radiator. Dvorakovsky professes radical Islam," a source said. Police are working to finally establish his identity.<sup>81</sup>

*Eldar Bitayev, Viktor Dvorakovsky, Ibragim Torshkhoyev  
and Alexander Dudkin*

Suspicion of plotting terror attacks and suicide bombings in the North Caucasus.

Police in Stavropol continue the hunt for four suspected suicide bombers: Eldar Bitayev, Viktor Dvorakovsky, Ibragim Torshkhoyev and Alexander Dudkin, acting head of the local police department for public order maintenance Gennady Berezin told journalists on Wednesday. Police have recently received information about the possible whereabouts of the suspected organizers of attacks in North Caucasus and acts of sabotage, he said. „We have been receiving information, periodic calls from members of the public who saw similarly-looking people. We certainly process all the reports, all the information. But until today there has been nothing to confirm this information. And people who were mentioned were not involved. They just look similar," Berezin said. Stavropol residents should be more vigilant and help law enforcement authorities in searching for the suspected criminals, he said. Facial composites of the suspected suicide bombers have been distributed not only on public transport and on the website of the local branch of the Russian Interior Ministry, but also handed out to all police squads, he said. The above individuals are wanted on suspicion of plotting terror attacks in North Caucasus and involvement in the acts of sabotage and terrorism in the Stavropol Territory, the local Central Police Department said last Tuesday.<sup>82</sup>

Four people are being searched for in the Stavropol Territory on suspicion of plotting terror attacks in the North Caucasus region and involvement in subversive and terror activities. The suspects are native of Stavropol Terri-

<sup>81</sup> Suspected terrorist Dvorakovsky detained in Stavropol territory — source, ROSTOV-ON-DON. July 14 (Interfax), <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=62801078&site=ehost-live>.

<sup>82</sup> *Four Stavropol suspected suicide bombers still wanted — ministry*, STAVROPOL. May 12, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=60584788&site=ehost-live>.

tory Eldar Bitayev, born in 1978, native of Makhachkala (Dagestan) Viktor Dvorakovsky, born in 1987; native of Armavir (Krasnodar Territory) Ibragim Torshkhoyev, born in 1991 — all three trained as suicide bombers, and also resident of Sochi Alexander Dudkin, born in 1984, who left Sochi in March „to perform the jihad against the infidels“<sup>83</sup>

*Pavel Kosolapov*

Pavel Kosolapov is possibly one of the most well-known among these early Russians converts, who engaged in terrorist activities. Kosolapov was clearly indoctrinated by members of the North Caucasus resistance and later became one of its most successful terrorists. He was engaged in several spectacular terrorist attacks and was supposedly engaged in the attack of the Nevskii Express.<sup>84</sup>

*Anton Stepanenko*

While the first generation of Russian jihadists were trained and indoctrinated by jihadists belonging to historically Muslim ethnic groups, the converts gained followers of their own as time progressed. The new generation of jihadists came from the spiritual children, so to speak, of those who were themselves converts. The case of Anton Stepanenko could be a good example here. Stepanenko had been converted to Islam in 1996 by his step-father who was Muslim. His mother and presumably biological father were Russian. Despite his young age and the absence of formal theological education, Stepanenko became quite known in Pyatigorsk, a city near the North Caucasus, where he converted a considerable number of people, of which the majority were most likely ethnic Russians, to Islam. The authorities noted Stepanenko's activities and he was arrested in 2006, but was soon released under the pressure of highly positioned members of the Russian Islamic community. He left Russia for Saudi Arabia, but some observers believed he maintained the relationship with his followers in Russia. While engaging in preaching in Pyatigorsk, he created a visible community of converts, mostly ethnic Russians, some of which engaged in jihad and participated in the attack on Nalchik in 2005. It is quite likely that Dvorakovsky was also indoctrinated by Stepanenko. While most of the converts were either ethnic Russians or people of mixed ethnicity, other groups were represented as well.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Search on in Stavropol Territory for four suspected suicide bombers, PYARTIGORSK. May 10 (Interfax), <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=60528145&site=ehost-live>.

<sup>84</sup> Dmitry Shlapentokh, *op. cit.*

<sup>85</sup> *Idem.*

*Vitaly Razdobudko*

A Slavic origin person who has engaged in terror attacks. Killed in the Dagestani village of Gubden, 2011.<sup>86</sup>

Vitalii Razdobud'ko, a Ukrainian, became a Muslim under the direct influence of Stepanenko together with his wife Mariia Khorosheva. Both of them engaged in suicidal terrorist attacks causing the death of two and wounding of twenty-five members of Russian law enforcement.<sup>87</sup>

*Vladimir Petrosyan*

An Armenian played an active role together with Stepanenko in encouraging Dvorakovsky to take up arms.<sup>88</sup>

The detectives have found that the connection between “Russian Wahhabite” Viktor Dvorakovsky and terrorist recruiter Vladimir Petrosyan, who was earlier detained in Georgiyevsk, is fully proved, acting chief of the first police search task force in the North Caucasus Federal District Nikolai Olekhovich said. “The connection between Dvorakovsky and Petrosyan was found not only in the operative files, but also under the criminal case, and was fully proved. They were members of a group that was engaged in extremism propaganda,” Olekhovich said. Five criminal cases were opened against them, he said. All of Dvorakovsky’s connections in the territory and constituents of the North Caucasus Federal District were exposed urgently long ago and all technical measures were being taken for the detected phone numbers. Georgiyevsk resident Vladimir Petrosyan, 52, was detained in the settlement of Lysogorskaya in the Georgiyevsk district of the Stavropol Territory in late April. A hand grenade, audio and video discs with the extremist content and banned religious literature were confiscated from him. Petrosyan was reported to move to the Stavropol Territory from Grozny at the late nineties of the previous century during the second Chechen war. Olekhovich noted that Petrosyan was already sentenced to 4.5 years in prison for illegal circulation of explosives and a threat to commit a terrorist act. “The guilty evidence was gathered against Petrosyan and a criminal case is about to be opened against him for public appeals to extremism,” he said. Speaking on Dvorakovsky’s health, Olekhovich noted that he is not informed about it, but assured that “the investigation actions are being taken involving Dvorakovsky.” “All places, which he visited, and all people, with whom he was communicating, are being investigated,” Olekhovich underlined.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, “Is the North Caucasus Rebel Movement Spreading Beyond the North Caucasus?,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 8, Issue: 150, August 4, 2011.

<sup>87</sup> Dmitry Shlapentokh, *op. cit.*

<sup>88</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>89</sup> *Connection between Wahhabite, terrorist recruiter found proved*, 22/07/2011, PYATIGORSK, July 22 (Itar-Tass), <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c154/190597.html>.

*Ruslan Ozniev*

According to reports, converts play an active role not only in conducting terrorist operations inside Russia, but also in filling other important functions for the resistance. One example is Ruslan Ozniev, whose mother was Russian and father Chechen. His father abandoned the family early on and he spent most of his childhood and adolescence in Grozny under Dudaev's rule. His mother was arrested for selling alcohol and was beaten to death. This, however, did not prevent him from being converted to Islam and finally becoming the right hand of Dokku Umarov, the leader of the resistance. He finally ended up in France where he engaged in fundraising for jihad. He later moved back to Russia where he planned to engage in various terrorist acts and was finally arrested.<sup>90</sup>

*Farid (or Faeel) Nevlyutov*

Russian terrorist suspect arrested in Moscow, a native of Mordovia who converted to Islam, 2011.<sup>91</sup>

*Suicide bombers**Amir Hamzat*

RSMB (Riyad-us-Saliheen Martyrs' Brigade) commander was killed in a raid by Russian federal forces after January 2011 bombing at Domodedovo Airport.<sup>92</sup>

The two "black widows" who carried out the March 2010 Moscow subway suicide attacks

*Dzhanet Abdurakhmanova*

17 years, suicide bomber, who detonated her explosives at the Park Kultury metro station, was the widow of the CE Dagestan Veleyat's amir "Al-Bara" Umalat Magomedov, killed by the security services in a special operation in early January in Dagestan's capital, Makhachkala, on the previous New Year's Eve.

*Maria Sharipova*

23 years, was the widow of the Arab amir Doctor Mohammed and then wife of the amir of the DV's Gubden Sector "Seifullah Gubdenskii" Magomed Vagabov, who became Dvampir in July 2010.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Dmitry Shlapentokh, *op. cit.*

<sup>91</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Is the North Caucasus Rebel Movement Spreading Beyond the North Caucasus?," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 8, Issue: 150, August 4, 2011.

<sup>92</sup> Mark Kramer, "Understanding suicide terrorist bombings in Russia".

<sup>93</sup> Gordon M. Hahn, *Getting the Caucasus Emirate Right*, A Report of the CSIS, Russia and EurAsia Program, August 2011, p. 19.

*Khava Barayeva*

The first female Chechen suicide bomber drove a truck filled with explosives into a military camp in Alkhan-Yurt in June of 2000.<sup>94</sup>

*Batyr Dzhaniev*

Suicide bomber, who detonated his car bomb in Nazran, Ingushetiya, on December 16, 2009, killing 10 MVD (Ministry of Internal Affairs) servicemen and injuring its suicide bomber unit, the Riyadus Salikhin Martyrs' Brigade.<sup>95</sup>

*Zavzhat Daudova*

Presumably, Zavzhat Daudova, the wife of Emir Salikh (Ibragimkhalil Daudov), was killed in an explosion in Moscow on December 31.<sup>96</sup>

According to investigators, she died while preparing to carry out a terrorist act in Moscow.<sup>97</sup>

*Magomed Yevloev*

Dokku Umarov was the chief suspect in the Domodedovo terrorist attack in January 2011, along with Adam Ganzhiyev, Islam Yevloyev, Aslan Tsechoyev and Aslan Batukayev.

According to the investigation, Umarov was in charge of preparing the suicide bomber Magomed Yevloev for the Domodedovo mission on January 24, 2011. In early February, Umarov released a video of himself on the Internet, claiming the responsibility for the terrorist attack.<sup>98</sup>

*Others Insurgents**Vakha Umarov*

Dokku Umarov's brother. Insurgent?

The murder attempt of Shamsuddin Batukayev in Turkey was uncovered not by the Turkish security services, but by the Chechen refugees themselves. The would-be killer, identified as Bakhran Batumaev, was disarmed and taken to the police along with his weapon. The arrested man stated that

<sup>94</sup> Agentura.ru — *The role of Al-Qaeda in the North Caucasus*, September 13, 2010, <http://www.agentura.ru/english/terrorism/alqaedanc/>.

<sup>95</sup> Gordon M. Hahn, *Getting the Caucasus Emirate Right*, A Report of the CSIS, Russia and EurAsia Program, August 2011, p. 18.

<sup>96</sup> <http://moidagestan.ru/news/crime/6664?PHPSESSID=u3mmk24gfqd7bqa7i2leadhfg1>.

<sup>97</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "US Move Against Dokku Umarov Will Have Little Impact on Militant Activities," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 8, Issue: 105, June 1, 2011.

<sup>98</sup> *Dokku Umarov Sentenced in Absentia on Terrorism Charges*, 26 Oct 2011, <http://pik.tv/en/news/story/22317-dokku-umarov-sentenced-in-absentia-on-terrorism-charges>.

he was also supposed to kill Dokku Umarov's brother, Vakha Umarov, who also lives in Istanbul.<sup>99</sup>

*Shamsuddin Batukayev*

A 55-year-old Muslim scholar and leader of the Chechen separatist movement in the 1990s. He resides in Turkey as a political refugee.

Shamsuddin Batukayev is the former head of the Supreme Sharia Court of Chechnya. On September 2011 there was an attempt to assassinate him. Police detained the suspect and three other people and seized a gun with a silencer during a search of the suspect's hotel room. Suspect name is Barham B.

Kavkaz Center, a website sympathetic to the North Caucasus insurgency, identified the alleged would-be-killer as Barham Batumayev. It claimed that the other detained suspects included Uvais Akhmadov, an alleged associate of Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov.

Batukaev comes from a family of respected Islamic theologians, including his uncle, Hussein Batukaev. After the first Russian-Chechen war of 1994-1996, Batukaev was appointed chairman of the Supreme Sharia Court and, under his auspices, public executions were carried out in the center of Grozny in 1997. However, under the pressure of public opinion, he was forced to abandon this practice. During the revolt of the Salafis (aka Wahhabis) against the then president of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, Aslan Maskhadov, in Gudermes on June 14, 1998, Batukaev displayed ambivalence and was removed from office.<sup>100</sup>

*Renat Ismailov* convicted of funding an armed unit in North Caucasus that was under the command of Emirs *Abdulla Parkhudinov* and *Abdul Malik*.

The Krasnodar Sovetsky District Court has convicted Dinsky district resident Renat Ismailov of funding an illegal armed unit in the North Caucasus. „R. Ismailov was sentenced to four years in prison,“ the territorial department of the Russian Investigations Committee reported on Thursday. The court said that Ismailov, 32, born in Uzbekistan, was working in the Krasnodar territory. „He transferred money via bank and gave cash donations to an illegal armed unit in the North Caucasus. The unit was under the command of emirs Abdulla Parkhudinov and Abdul Malik [both were killed in police operations],“ the department said. The suspect was seized in Da-

<sup>99</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Assassination Campaign of Chechen Opposition Figures in Turkey Reaches New Level," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 8, Issue: 193, October 20, 2011.

<sup>100</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Assassination Campaign of Chechen Opposition Figures in Turkey Reaches New Level," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume: 8 Issue: 193, October 20, 2011, and "Turkey Detains Suspects in Chechen Plot" 13 October 2011, The Associated Press published in Moscow Times, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/turkey-detains-suspects-in-chechen-plot/445343.html>.

gestan on April 2, 2011, and taken to Krasnodar. A policeman had said that Ismailov had donated over 50,000 rubles to the militants.<sup>101</sup>

*Akhmed Abdulkerimov*

(„Adam,“ amir of the Mountain Sector)

Veteran fighter Akhmed Abdulkerimov („Adam,“ amir of the Mountain Sector) was shot dead in his own home in December 2010.<sup>102</sup>

*Cherkes Rustamov, Farid Misriyev and Abibulla Abdullayev*

The top investigative agency for Stavropol Territory has completed an investigation into the criminal case in relation to the native of Dagestan, Cherkes Rustamov, accused of carrying out a terror attack in central Stavropol in May 2010, as Russian Investigative Committee spokesman Vladimir Markin has announced. „According to investigators, Rustamov with other natives of Dagestan Farid Misriyev and Abibulla Abdullayev, carried out a terror attack near a culture and sport palace in central Stavropol,“ Markin told Interfax on Tuesday. Misriyev and Abdullayev were killed in June 2011 and in September 2010, he said. „The criminal case against Rustamov with a confirmed indictment has been referred to the court,“ Markin said.<sup>103</sup>

*Berg-Hadj Musayev, Zaurbek Amriyev and Rustam Altemirov*

Chechens that were shot dead on Sept. 16, 2011 in a parking lot in Istanbul, were suspected of involvement in a January suicide bombing at Moscow's Domodedovo Airport that killed 37 people. The killing attack was blamed on Russian special services.

Berg-Hadj Musayev was closely link to Dokku Umarov.<sup>104</sup>

*Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev*, former Chechen rebel, was murdered in Qatar in 2004 by Russian intelligence.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>101</sup> *Man to spend four years in prison for funding North Caucasian militants*, Krasnodar. Sept 1 (Interfax), <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=65158422&site=ehost-live>.

<sup>102</sup> *When 'Runners' Turn Snitch: FSB Targets North Caucasus Insurgency Support Personnel*, May 16, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/runners\\_snitch\\_fsb\\_targets\\_north\\_caucasus\\_insurgency/24176439.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/runners_snitch_fsb_targets_north_caucasus_insurgency/24176439.html).

<sup>103</sup> *Stavropol terror attack case referred to court*, Moscow, Sept 6 (Interfax), <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=65241716&site=ehost-live>.

<sup>104</sup> „Russia Links Chechens Shot in Turkey to Bombing“ 27 Oct. 2011, Reuters, published in *Moscow Times*, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russia-links-chechens-shot-in-turkey-to-bombing/446379.html>.

<sup>105</sup> „Russia Links Chechens Shot in Turkey to Bombing“ 27 Oct. 2011, Reuters, published in *Moscow Times*, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russia-links-chechens-shot-in-turkey-to-bombing/446379.html>.

*Nogai Jamaat Wahhabi group*

In 2010, after starting of a new wave of violence in the region in 2009, the spread of terrorism had two different geographic directions: the first — toward Dagestan and the second — toward Kabardino-Balkaria and the Stavropol Territory. This is worrying because the Stavropol Territory is close to Sochi, which will host the 2014 Winter Olympics and could become an enticing target for terrorists. Stavropol faces a possible increase in terrorism but has not adopted any targeted measures to improve the situation. Experts believe the problem of the *Nogai Jamaat Wahhabi group*, which is active in the region, is more the product of journalists' inaccurate information than indicative of the presence of a real organization.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Grigory Shvedov, Alexey Malashenko, *North Caucasus: Results of 2010*, March 15, 2011, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/03/15/north-caucasus-results-of-2010/41rj>.

## **NORTH CAUCASUS**

## Chapter 9

# WHO IS WHO IN INSURGENCY NORTH CAUCASUS

### CIPRIAN BORDEI

Although a decentralized organization, the Caucasus Emirate jihadi terrorist network is a united and organized political and military force engaged in jihad and proselytizing the Salafist takfirist theo-ideology across the Caucasus.

The Caucasus Emirate (CE) amir Dokku “Abu Usman” Umarov appoints the amirs of all of the CE networks’ basic nodes. All amirs take the Islamic loyalty oath or Bayat to him. The CE’s organizational structure is determined by Umarov by decree (omra in Arabic) and is a mix of typical network forms.

Its nodes, the so-called vilaiyats (Arabic for province), are based, for the most part, along the lines of the North Caucasus republics. The most important and only continuously acting nodes are the Nokchicho (Chechnya) Vilaiyat, the Galcaiche (Ingushetiya) Vilaiyat, the Dagestan Vilaiyat and the United Vilaiyat of Kabardiya, Balkariya and Karachai, which covers the Russian republics of Kabardino-Balkariya and Karachaevo-Cherkessiya. Each of these consists of several fronts or sectors and tens of combat jamaats.<sup>1</sup>

#### *DOKKU UMAROV, “Abu Usman” — Caucasus Emirate Amir*

Chechen rebel leader Dokku Umarov<sup>2</sup> has claimed responsibility for the March 29 twin suicide bombings on the Moscow metro system that killed at least 39 people. Umarov is one of just a couple of veteran rebel commanders who have fought since the very start of the first post-Soviet Chechen war in the fall of 1994. Since then, Umarov has risen from a rank-and-file fighter to command a network of insurgent groups across the North Caucasus. He has jettisoned the cause of Chechen independence in favor of an independent Islamic state comprising swaths of the North Caucasus, southern Russia and

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<sup>1</sup> Consistent with Gordon M. Hahn, *Getting the Caucasus Emirate Right*, A Report of the CSIS, Russia and EurAsia Program, August 2011, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Liz Fuller, *News Profile: Who Is Dokku Umarov?*, April 01, 2010, [http://www.rferl.org/content/News\\_Profile\\_Who\\_Is\\_Dokku\\_Umarov/1999886.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/News_Profile_Who_Is_Dokku_Umarov/1999886.html).

the Volga region. He has also abandoned his previous repudiation of terrorism, affirming in his most recent statements that it is a legitimate weapon in light of what he calls the Russian population's indifference to the systematic reprisals inflicted on the Chechen population by Russian military and security forces.

Umarov was born in April 1964 in the village of Kharsenoi in the Shatoi Raion of southern Chechnya, into a family he describes as belonging to the intelligentsia. Umarov graduated from the construction faculty of the Oil Institute in Grozny. He told RFE/RL's Russian Service in 2005 that he was in Moscow when the first Russian-Chechen war broke out in 1994 and that, as a patriot, he considered it his duty to return to Chechnya to fight.

#### *Rapid Rise*

Umarov was an active participant in both the 1994-96 and 1999-2000 wars, and gained a reputation as a skilled and courageous commander. He was injured on several occasions, and underwent extensive plastic surgery to repair damage to his face and jaw. In the spring of 2005, he was walking with a limp after having stepped on a land mine. He was reportedly injured again in the fall of 2006.

Following the Khasavyurt accord that ended the first Chechen war in 1996 and the election of former Soviet Army Colonel Aslan Maskhadov as Chechen president in January 1997, Umarov was named by Maskhadov to lead the Security Council. In that capacity, he intervened in July 1998 to quash an armed clash between moderates and Islamic radicals within Maskhadov's entourage.

During the second war, Umarov commanded the southwestern front. After Maskhadov's death in March 2005, his successor, Abdul-Khakim Sadullayev, named Umarov vice president and thus his designated successor. Umarov took over as president and resistance commander after Sadullayev was killed in June 2006. At that time, Maskhadov's son Anzor said, „Everyone, including fighters in neighboring republics, will give their oath to serve him.”

In early 2005, Umarov's father, brother, wife, and infant son were detained by the Chechen authorities. He told RFE/RL's North Caucasus Service in April 2006 that his wife and child were subsequently released. His father's death was reported in 2007 in unclear circumstances.

In the fall of 2006, Umarov expanded the network of resistance fronts to create two operating outside the North Caucasus, in the Volga region and the Urals.

#### *Change Of Heart*

One year later, in late 2007, Umarov broke with the ideology of Chechen independence and proclaimed himself, reportedly under pressure from the radical Islamist wing of the insurgency, the leader of an Islamic state encom-

passing the entire North Caucasus. Just two months earlier, he had issued a statement commemorating the anniversary of the declaration in September 1991 of the secession of the Chechen Republic-Ichkeria from the rapidly disintegrating USSR.

At least until Maskhadov's death, Umarov, like Maskhadov, was among the more moderate wing of the resistance that eschewed terrorism against civilians. In his 2005 interview with RFE/RL, he categorically rejected the use of terrorism as a tactic: „If we resort to such methods, I do not think any of us will be able to retain his human face.“ He specifically condemned the Beslan school hostage taking of September 2004.

But more recently Umarov has condoned not only sabotage attacks on civilian targets outside the North Caucasus, but also suicide bombings and other acts of terrorism targeting civilians.

Unlike Maskhadov, who just weeks before his death had proclaimed a unilateral cease-fire in the hope of inducing Moscow to agree to talks on ending the war, Umarov ruled out the possibility of any formal talks with Russian leaders. In a series of video clips posted on militant websites, he has pledged to destroy the Russian presence in the North Caucasus.

In a video address summarizing a meeting of senior field commanders in April 2009, Umarov announced the revival of the Riyadus-Salikhiin suicide battalion originally formed by renegade field commander Shamil Basayev, which he said would conduct operations across Russia in what he warned would be „a year of offensives.“

#### *Increasing Targets*

Umarov also warned that his fighters would target not just Russian police and security forces, but transport and infrastructure. Insurgent groups subordinate to Umarov duly claimed responsibility, first for the explosion in August 2009 that severely damaged the Sayano-Shushenskaya hydroelectric plant, and then for the bomb in late November that derailed the „Nevsky Express“ train, killing 27 people. Umarov personally affirmed in early December that the „Nevsky Express“ bomb „is only the beginning“ of a series of attacks on targets in Russia. Moscow authorities have blamed the train bombing on Chechen extremists, but have dismissed terrorism in the dam explosion, attributing it to technical and infrastructure problems.

In February, 2010 Umarov vowed to „liberate“ not only the North Caucasus and Krasnodar Krai but Astrakhan and the Volga region as well. In that video address, Umarov said there was every reason to estimate the strength of the insurgency at 10,000, 20,000, or even 30,000 men. At the same time, he admitted that he did not have the means to train and arm all volunteers who wish to join the jihad. The number of fighters currently under arms was, however, „perfectly adequate at this stage,“ he added.

In March 29, 2010 Umarov said the two suicide bomb attacks in the Moscow metro earlier that day were undertaken on his orders and constituted „a

legitimate act of revenge“ for the killing in early February by police and security forces of a group of impoverished Chechen villagers gathering wild garlic in a wooded area on the Chechen-Ingushetian border. Russian human rights activists confirmed that the men had been shot not in a combat operation but at close range, and their bodies mutilated.

Umarov said he considered accusations that he engages in terrorism inappropriate, coming as they do from persons who he said have never blamed Russian President, then-Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin for the killings of Chechen civilians. He did not mention Dmitry Medvedev.

In April 2009, Dokku Umarov, also known as Dokka, proclaimed the revival of the Riyad-us-Saliheen Martyrs' Brigade (RSMB), a unit originally established in October 1999 by the notorious Chechen terrorist Shamil Basayev, who was killed in July 2006. The brigade has been linked to several high-profile suicide attacks in Russia over the past year that cumulatively have killed roughly 150 people, wounded nearly 1,000, and caused great disruption.

Umarov has often made unverifiable (and evidently inaccurate) claims of responsibility for various attacks in Russia. However, video recordings and other evidence have confirmed the RSMB's role in these recent attacks. The RSMB's stepped-up activity is significant because its primary goal has been to establish an Islamic caliphate in the Caucasus and other “Muslim lands” in Russia.

Shortly after the January 2011 suicide bombing at Domodedovo Airport, Umarov explained the purpose of the attack:

“We, the mujahedeen of the Caucasus, are waging jihad today only for Allah, only in the name of Allah, and only in order to have the word of Allah in the Caucasus. There will be hundreds of suicide bombers ready to sacrifice themselves for the establishment of Allah's word.”

Umarov made it clear what his objectives were when posting two videos on the guerrilla website Kavkaz Center: ending Russia occupation and restoring an Islamic caliphate.

In the videos he declares that the two goals are inextricably linked and that the “occupation” encompasses not only the whole of the Caucasus but also “all of the territories of Muslim lands occupied by “Rusnya — Idel-Ural, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and everywhere else in Russia where Muslims live.” He calls on Muslims all over Russia to embark on their own suicide terrorist campaigns:

“If today a Jihad is under way here in the Caucasus against an enemy that wants to destroy Islam, then for you, too, this becomes a Jihad, for you, too, it becomes a fard al-ayn [obligation for all Muslims]. I exhort you to destroy the enemies of Allah wherever they are. I exhort you to destroy the enemies wherever your hands can reach and to open new fronts of the Jihad.”

Addressing Muslims who might worry about killing themselves along with the enemy, Umarov reassures them that the earlier “martyrs” (perpetra-

tors of suicide terrorist attacks) “have not perished, they are alive and are receiving their due reward from their Lord. We know they are awaiting our own ascension to Heaven, Allah be willing.”<sup>3</sup>

In 2007, the insurgency in the North Caucasus appeared to undergo a revival when the so-called president of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria resigned from his position and declared himself the head of the newly formed Caucasus Emirate and united the North Caucasus under an Islamic state based on Sharia law. It is at this point that the insurgency in the North Caucasus arguably joined the global jihad.

The Caucasus Emirate took Umarov’s authority well beyond Chechen borders and united the jamaats in all the republics of the North Caucasus under the entity of the Emirate, and since its establishment there have been annual increases in the levels of violence as the Emirate’s armed resistance intensifies its operations to liberate the ‘Muslim lands’ in the Caucasus and the broader region.

To garner support for his pan-Caucasian jihad, Umarov intends to organize the Caucasus Emirate in the context of global jihad by using anti-Western slogans and rhetoric and drawing parallels to his “brothers” in Saudi Arabia.

Umarov is a field commander and by no means an ideologue, but by presenting the Caucasus Emirate as part of the global jihad and fighting on behalf of the ill-treated and misrepresented in society, he has created a powerful mantra that young, disaffected people find appealing.

Internet resources representing the Caucasus Emirate continually link its movement to the global jihad through incorporating al-Qaeda-related rhetoric, symbols, and doctrine. Yet, al-Qaeda appears not to have incorporated yet the North Caucasus into part of its global jihad. The conjecture that there is a link between the Caucasus Emirate and the global jihad, namely al-Qaeda, is something that has yet to be substantiated.

In June 2010, the U.S. State Department designated Umarov as a terrorist.

Challenged by the North Caucasus mountainous geography, as well as Russia’s security forces, Umarov’s control over the network is limited. Standardization and cooperation among groups across the militant movement are minimal. Thus Umarov has established the norm whereby the individual jamaats may carry out ‘small’ attacks of their own volition, but significant missions have to receive the approval of the emirate’s leadership. The jamaats also appear to be financially self-sufficient, drawing funds locally through racketeering and collecting zakat from the local population, thereby increasing their independent nature. This disconnected character, although a challenge to Umarov’s authority, makes it more difficult for Russian security to link and track them.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Kramer, *Understanding suicide terrorist bombings in Russia*, PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No 155, May 2011.

In August 2010, the Caucasus Emirate leadership was in crisis when Dokku Umarov resigned from his position, then reclaimed it days later. Accounts vary but a group of prominent Chechen emirs clearly broke away from the emirate and revoked their oaths of loyalty to Umarov. Causes range from dilution of support, supplies, and funds away from Chechnya to the disillusionment of the nationalist wing of the Chechen insurgency.

Although its role in the global Islamic jihad and its link to such networks as al-Qaeda is debatable, the Caucasus Emirate poses a genuine threat to Russian, and indeed Western, security.<sup>4</sup>

Dokku Umarov was the chief suspect in the Domodedovo terrorist attack in January 2011, along with Adam Ganzhiyev, Islam Yevloyev, Aslan Tsechoyev and Aslan Batukayev.

According to the investigation, Umarov was in charge of preparing the suicide bomber Magomed Yevloev for the Domodedovo mission on January 24, 2011. In early February, Umarov released a video of himself on the Internet, claiming the responsibility for the terrorist attack.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Supyan Abdullaev*

Umarov's naib, vice-president of CE, killed in March 2011.

Umarov's naib and long time mujahid was killed in 2011. If Umarov is unable to designate a new naib or successor before he is killed or captured, that could severely unsettle the organization and effectiveness of the CE.<sup>6</sup>

In March 2011, a Russian airstrike in Ingushetia resulted in the death of Supyan Abdullayev, Umarov's long-time deputy. Abdullayev was a member of the small cabal of advisors who encouraged Umarov to declare the Caucasus Emirate in 2007 and was therefore a polarizing factor in the standoff between Umarov and the dissident Chechen field commanders.<sup>7</sup>

It is likely that his elimination paved the way toward reconciliation with the Chechen dissidents.

#### *Aslan Batukayev, Emir Khamzat*

Umarov's naib (deputy) — western direction, Chechnya.

Dokku Umarov's assistant has been found guilty in absentia of organizing the bombing of Moscow's Domodedovo Airport. Along with Dokku Umarov, Batukayev was pronounced guilty of terrorism, banditry, organizing an illegal armed group and handling illegal weapons.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Andrew C. Kuchins, Matthew Malarkey, Sergei Markedonov, *The North Caucasus, Russia's Volatile Frontier*, A Report of the CSIS, Russia and Eurasia Program 2011, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> *Dokku Umarov Sentenced in Absentia on Terrorism Charges*, 26 Oct 2011, <http://pik.tv/en/news/story/22317-dokku-umarov-sentenced-in-absentia-on-terrorism-charges>.

<sup>6</sup> Gordon M. Hahn, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> Kevin Daniel Leahy, *Chechnya's Rebel Movement Reunites under Dokku Umarov's Leadership*, (08/17/2011 issue of the CACI Analyst) <http://cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5609>.

<sup>8</sup> *Dokku Umarov Sentenced in Absentia on Terrorism Charges*, 26 Oct 2011, <http://pik.tv/en/news/story/22317-dokku-umarov-sentenced-in-absentia-on-terrorism-charges>).

He is one of the closest of Umarov's followers, one of the few Chechen field commanders who remained loyal to him during the course of the recent controversy with the Chechen field commanders.

Umarov and Batukayev are natives of south-western Chechnya. The latter has recently bolstered his profile by laying claim to several high-profile attacks — the suicide attack on Moscow's Domodedovo airport earlier this year, for example — in the name of the Riyad-us Saliheen Martyrs Battalion, which he leads.<sup>9</sup>

As it became known to the editorial staff of Kavkaz Center, Emir of the Caucasus Emirate, Emir of Province of Nokhchicho (aka Chechnya/Ichkeria), Dokku Abu Usman, appointed his naib (deputy) in the Province of Nokhchicho Emir Khamzat (western direction) and Emir Hussein (eastern direction).<sup>10</sup>

#### *Said-Emin Dadayev*

The identity of Batukayev's lieutenant, or 'naib', when it becomes known in due course, will also be of interest. It is likely Umarov will award this post to someone who supported him throughout the controversy — Said-Emin Dadayev, perhaps. Reportedly the pre-eminent field commander in Umarov's native Shatoi District, Dadayev has been included by Umarov in a previous rebel shadow government. In contrast to the majority of Chechnya's field commanders, Dadayev declined to publicly ally himself with Gakayev and Vadalov during the recent dispute.<sup>11</sup>

#### *Emir Hussein*

Umarov's naib (deputy) — eastern direction, Chechnya.

As it became known to the editorial staff of Kavkaz Center, Emir of the Caucasus Emirate, Emir of Province of Nokhchicho (aka Chechnya/Ichkeria), Dokku Abu Usman, appointed his naib (deputy) in the Province of Nokhchicho Emir Khamzat (western direction) and Emir Hussein (eastern direction).<sup>12</sup>

#### *Sheikh Abu Muhammad al-Dagestani*

The Qadi, or Supreme Judge of the Caucasus Emirate, Shari'a Court.<sup>13</sup>

Although the level of influence from Arab fighters in the Caucasus has waned, the connection to the overall global jihadi community has become further cemented. When ruling on the schism, the leading shari'a official in

<sup>9</sup> Kevin Daniel Leahy, *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> *Emir Dokku Abu appoints Emir Khamzat and Emir Hussein as deputies of Province of Chechnya*, 23 July 2011 <http://www.kazcenter.com/eng/content/2011/07/23/14810.shtml>.

<sup>11</sup> Kevin Daniel Leahy, *op. cit.*

<sup>12</sup> *Emir Dokku Abu Usman appoints Emir Khamzat and Emir Hussein as deputies of Province of Chechnya*, 23 July 2011, <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2011/07/23/14810.shtml>.

<sup>13</sup> *Supreme Judge of Caucasus Emirate Sheikh Abu Muhammad: 'Testing and patience'* 28 May 2011, <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2011/05/28/14392.shtml>.

the Caucasus Emirate, Ali Abu Muhammed al-Dagestani, stated that the opposition faction's disobedience to Umarov was contrary to Islamic law.<sup>14</sup>

*Sheikh Abdul Halim Sadulayev*

President of the self-proclaimed Chechen republic of Ichkeria 2005-2006.

After Maskhadov's death in March 2005, his successor as president of the self-proclaimed Chechen republic of Ichkeria, Abdul-Khakim Sadullayev, named Umarov as vice president and thus his designated successor. Umarov took over as president and resistance commander after Sadullayev was killed in June 2006.<sup>15</sup>

The Chechen republic of Ichkeria (ChRI) was the name of the unrecognized independent Chechen state between 1991 and 2000.

*Akhmed Yevloyev* real name *Ali Taziyeu*, also called *Amir Magas* is Top military commander (the military amir) of the Caucasian insurgency July 2007 – June 2010 (captured)Ingush Jamaat.

On July 21, the rebel Kavkaz Center website posted a new decree by Dokka Umarov, the leader of the Chechen and North Caucasian rebels and the president of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. According to the decree, Akhmed Yevloyev, a.k.a. Magas, became the top military commander (the military amir) of the Caucasian insurgency. This appointment is especially interesting given that Shamil Basayev himself held this position in the past. Thus, Akhmed Yevloyev became the successor of the most famous Chechen warlord. The position of military commander first appeared in the hierarchy of the Chechen rebels in 2002. At that time, the rebels wanted to reunify into a single force, but disagreements between two main leaders, Aslan Maskhadov and Shamil Basayev, needed to be overcome first.

Since the death of Aslan Maskhadov and then of Shamil Basayev, the position of military commander has lost its political significance. In fact, the new president Dokka Umarov is both the top political and military leader of the Caucasian insurgency. He makes all crucial decisions and travels around the North Caucasus, personally ensuring that the rebel squads in each of the republics are battle ready. This May (2007), Dokka Umarov appointed Seif Islam, a commander of Arab origin, as the rebel Chief of Staff, and it seemed that the resistance had returned to the time of Dzhokhar Dudayev, the first Chechen president, who was the rebel forces' supreme commander while Aslan Maskhadov was the Chief of Staff and coordinated the military activities of the field commanders.

This system of governance proved its effectiveness during the first Chechen war. The appointment of Yevloyev as the top military commander raises the question of why the insurgents again require this post. It is also

<sup>14</sup> Aaron Y. Zelin, *The Reunification of the Caucasus Emirate*, 08/31/2011, <http://cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5619>.

<sup>15</sup> Liz Fuller, *op. cit.*

interesting that Yevloyev is an Ingush and not a Chechen. There is not much information about the origin of Akhmed Yevloyev, better known as Amir Magas. The public first heard of Magas in June 2004, when hundreds of Chechen and Ingush rebels launched a large-scale raid on Ingushetia, killing dozens of police officers and soldiers. The day after the raid, Akhmed Zakayev, the rebel envoy to Europe, said at a press conference that the attack had been conducted by Ingush rebels headed by a commander called Magomed. The same day, Russian law-enforcement agencies announced that this commander's full name was Magomed Yevloyev. After some time, the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) published a file on Yevloyev ([utro.ru](http://utro.ru), September 24, 2004).

According to the FSB, Magas' real name is not Magomed Yevloyev or Akhmed Yevloyev, as he was called in Umarov's latest decree, but Ali Taziyeu. He is a former Ingush policeman who disappeared without a trace in 1998. In 2000, a court in Ingushetia officially declared him dead. Taziyeu, however, was not dead: he had joined Shamil Basayev's group and was fighting the Russian army in Chechnya. In April 2004, when the Chechen insurgency started to implement its new strategy of exporting the war from Chechnya to the other parts of the North Caucasus, Basayev, as the military commander, appointed Magas the commander of the Ingush sector. During the June 21, 2004 raid on the republic, Magas headed a group of 30 Ingush fighters who set up a checkpoint in the middle of Nazran, the largest Ingush city, searching for policemen. According to the FSB, Yevloyev-Taziyeu personally killed Abubakar Kostoyev, the then acting Interior Minister of the republic. Last October, Umarov appointed Magas as the commander of the rebel Caucasian front. Magas became responsible for the rebel activity west of Chechnya in Ingushetia, North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachaevo-Cherkessia, Krasnodar and Stavropol. Magas' appointment as the top rebel military commander means that he now controls Chechnya and Dagestan. Three senior Chechen commanders — Muhhanad, Tarkhan Gaziyeu, and Aslanbek Vaduyev — were appointed by Umarov to be Magas' deputies. Why has Umarov chosen Magas to be Basayev's successor? The recent increase in rebel attacks in Ingushetia — attacks on military garrisons and other facilities — has demonstrated how skillful a commander Magas really is. It is possible, however, that Magas became the top military commander for other reasons. His appointment could be a part of the information war that is being conducted by the rebels. By appointing Magas as the military commander, Umarov may be trying to make the Russian military believe that the rebels' main strike will be in the western part of the North Caucasus when in reality, preparations are under way for a massive attack in another area. Yevloyev's appointment could also mean that, if a major attack occurs, Magas will be the one who will lead the rebels in their offensive.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Andrei Smirnov Source: *The Jamestown Foundation Kavkaz Center*, KAVKAZCENTER.COM: 7 August 2007, <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2007/08/07/8721.shtml>.

*Amir Magas (Ali Taziyev)*

Amir Magas (Ali Taziyev) was captured unarmed in Malgobek in June, 2010 allegedly by the same team of Moscow-based FSB personnel who killed Shamil Basayev four years earlier. Hunafa.com, the website of the Ingush insurgency wing, posted a statement on July 7, 2010 announcing that the „traitor“ who betrayed Magas to the FSB was killed during an attempt to capture him alive on June 21. The man’s name was given as „Timur Arselgov,“ which does not sound Ingush. He was said to have been infiltrated two years before into one of the North Caucasus fighting units and to have won the respect and trust of his fellow fighters thanks to his prowess as a sniper. He reportedly betrayed several other fighters before Magas. How many, if any, other „sleepers“ remain within the insurgency ranks can only be guessed.<sup>17</sup>

*The Dagestan vilaiyat**Magomed Tagayev*

A Dagestani ideologist of separatism and torchbearer of the 1999 Islamist insurgency in Dagestan, has called for Russians to be expelled from the Caucasus and eventually from all of Russia. In his book “The Call of Eternity, or My Caucasus,” he talks about “Russian colonists,” “bloodthirsty occupants” and “Russian terrorists”.

In another book, eerily titled in an apparent nod to Hitler “Our Struggle, or the Rebel Army of Imam,” he writes: “There is only one solution — with the sword and fire, to burn and raze everything and everyone so that not a single one of them may crawl away.”<sup>18</sup>

*Magomed Vagapov (aka Seyfullakh Gubdensky)*

Dagestan Vilaiyat amir and Caucasus Emirate qadi. Killed, summer 2010.

Dagestani Magomed Vagapov recruited the two women from Dagestan who blew themselves up in the Moscow metro in March 2010, killing 40 people and injuring a further 95.<sup>19</sup>

Killed in a counterterrorism operation in summer 2010.<sup>20</sup>

Late Dagestani amir and CE qadi, led the Gubden Jamaat.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *When ‘Runners’ Turn Snitch: FSB Targets North Caucasus Insurgency Support Personnel*, May 16, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/runners\\_snitch\\_fsb\\_targets\\_north\\_caucasusinsurgency/24176439.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/runners_snitch_fsb_targets_north_caucasusinsurgency/24176439.html).

<sup>18</sup> Anna Dolgov, *The Caucasus’ Own Hamas*, 03 October 2011, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/the-caucasus-own-hamas/444686.html>.

<sup>19</sup> Liz Fuller, *Why Is The North Caucasus An Unholy Mess?*, August 15, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/north\\_caucasus\\_why\\_is\\_it\\_such\\_an\\_unholy\\_mess/24297384.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/north_caucasus_why_is_it_such_an_unholy_mess/24297384.html).

<sup>20</sup> *U.S. Designates North Caucasus Insurgency As Terrorist Organization*, May 30, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/us\\_designates\\_north\\_caucasus\\_insurgency\\_as\\_terrorist\\_organization/24209876.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/us_designates_north_caucasus_insurgency_as_terrorist_organization/24209876.html).

<sup>21</sup> Gordon M. Hahn, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

Dagestan Vilaiyat amir and Caucasus Emirate qadi, during the split in CE. He wrote an informative letter to Umarov at the peak of the crisis that ended in a schism within Chechnya Vilaiyat.<sup>22</sup>

*Umalat Magomedov („Amir Al-Bara“)*

Vagapov's predecessor, as commander of the Dagestan wing of the North Caucasus insurgency.<sup>23</sup>

*Magomed Vagapov („Seyfullakh Gubdensky“)*

Commander of the Dagestan wing of the North Caucasus insurgency, killed in August 2010.

Magomed Vagapov („Seyfullakh Gubdensky“) died in August 2010, when Interior Ministry and security personnel backed by APCs surrounded the house in Gunib where he was staying in a predawn maneuver, and opened fire when he refused to surrender. It is not clear how the FSB located Vagapov. The only arrest in the preceding weeks of a suspected auxiliary who might conceivably have been aware of his movements was in Khasavyurt, 60 km to the north. The man in question was believed to have provided food, medication, and accommodation, and to have acted as a driver for two fighters killed in 2009, one of them apparently in the same operation as Vagapov's predecessor Umalat Magomedov („Amir Al-Bara“).<sup>24</sup>

*Emir Khasan (aka Israpila Validzhanov)*

Leader of Dagestan's Sharia Jamaat, killed on April 17, 2011.<sup>25</sup>

*Israpil Velijanov*

Vagapov's successor as commander of the Dagestan wing of the North Caucasus insurgency was killed in a shootout in April 2011 when the car in which he was traveling refused to halt at a police checkpoint. The independent Dagestan weekly „Novoye delo“ characterized Velijanov as cautious and highly security conscious, to the point that he rarely ventured beyond his home base in southern Dagestan. The operation to monitor traffic on the Tashkapur-Levashi highway where his car was intercepted was undertaken on the basis of „operational information,“ meaning information provided by an informer either voluntarily or under duress.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 15.

<sup>23</sup> *When 'Runners' Turn Snitch: FSB Targets North Caucasus Insurgency Support Personnel*, May 16, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/runners\\_snitch\\_fsb\\_targets\\_north\\_caucasus\\_insurgency/24176439.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/runners_snitch_fsb_targets_north_caucasus_insurgency/24176439.html).

<sup>24</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>25</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "US Move Against Dokku Umarov Will Have Little Impact on Militant Activities," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume: 8 Issue: 105 June 1, 2011.

<sup>26</sup> *When 'Runners' Turn Snitch: FSB Targets North Caucasus Insurgency Support Personnel*, May 16, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/runners\\_snitch\\_fsb\\_targets\\_north\\_caucasus\\_insurgency/24176439.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/runners_snitch_fsb_targets_north_caucasus_insurgency/24176439.html).

*Israpil Validzhanov (Amir Hassan)*

He headed Dagestani militants from August 2010 until his death April 18, 2011.

At night, on April 18, 2011 on the highway Tashkapur-Khadzhadmakhi in the Levashin District of Dagestan security agents and law enforcers killed four suspected militants; one of them was Israpil Validzhanov, 42, also known as Amir Hassan. He headed Dagestani militants from August 2010 after the death of Magomedali Vagabov. His sucesor is Ibragimkhalil Daudov (Amir Salikh).<sup>27</sup>

*Emir Adam (Adam Guseynov)*

The first Naib, Emir Adam (Adam Guseynov), leading Dagestan's Sharia Jamaat, after Emir Khasan (Israpila Validzhanov). He died at the beginning of 2011.<sup>28</sup>

*Adam Guseinov (nom de guerre Khasan)*

Velijanov's second-in-command of the Dagestan wing of the North Caucasus insurgency, Adam Guseinov (nom de guerre Khasan), commander of the Northern Sector, was killed together with his wife in their home in Khasavyurt in January 2011.<sup>29</sup>

*Emir Salikh (aka Ibragimkhalil Daudov)*

Leader of Dagestan's Sharia Jamaat, replacing Emir Khasan, from April 2011.

Umarov, through his decrees #25 and #26 issued on May 9, 2011 appointed a new leader of Dagestan's Sharia Jamaat, replacing Emir Khasan (Israpila Validzhanov), who was killed on April 17, with Emir Salikh (Ibragimkhalil Daudov). As a Naib (deputy), Emir Salikh was second in line for this position. The first Naib, Emir Adam (Adam Guseynov), died at the beginning of 2011. Emir Salikh was born in 1960 in the village of Gubden in Dagestan's Karabudakhkent district. Previously, Emir Salikh headed a central sector of the Dagestani theater of operations. His family lived for a long time in the Stavropol region, where the Dagestani diaspora grows larger each year as a result of settlements in Stavropol's border areas. In 2007, the family resettled in Gubden, where the strength of Salafis is on average much higher than in other areas of Dagestan. Emir Salikh joined the resistance movement together with his three sons, two of whom were killed during clashes with the authorities in 2009 and 2010. Presumably, his wife, Zavzhat Daudova, was killed in an explosion in Moscow on December 31.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *Dokku Umarov appoints new leader of Dagestani armed underground*, May 10, 2011, <http://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/17069/>.

<sup>28</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, *op. cit.*

<sup>29</sup> *When 'Runners' Turn Snitch: FSB Targets North Caucasus Insurgency Support Personnel*, May 16, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/runners\\_snitch\\_fsb\\_targets\\_north\\_caucasus\\_insurgency/24176439.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/runners_snitch_fsb_targets_north_caucasus_insurgency/24176439.html).

<sup>30</sup> <http://moidagestan.ru/news/crime/6664?PHPSESSID=u3mmk24gfqd7bqa7i2leadhfg1>.

According to investigators, she died while preparing to carry out a terrorist act in Moscow. It is therefore not surprising that investigators in Moscow initially suspected Emir Salikh's third son of carrying out the terrorist act at Moscow's Domodedovo airport on January 24 (37 people died and 168 people were wounded as a result of the explosion). In the end, these suspicions were not confirmed. It is thus worth treating seriously the candidacy and desire of the new leader of Dagestani militants to avenge the death of his family members. He is a person who came to war with his entire family but during this war lost three of his five family members.<sup>31</sup>

*Ibragimkhalil Daudov (Amir Salikh)*

The commander of North-Caucasian militants Dokku Umarov has appointed Ibragimkhalil Daudov (Amir Salikh) to be the new head of Dagestani underground. Let us remind you that at night on April 18 on the highway Tashkapur-Khadzhadmakhi in the Levashin District of Dagestan security agents and law enforcers killed four suspected militants; one of them was Israpil Validzhanov, 42, also known as Amir Hassan. He headed Dagestani militants from August 2010 after the death of Magomedali Vagabov. Earlier Daudov, who is now instead of Validzhanov, was the head of the „central sector of the Dagestan Front,“ says Umarov's statement, posted by one of the sites supporting the militants. Law enforcement bodies had found Ibragimkhalil Daudov responsible for organizing the double terror act committed in Gubden on February 14. He was searched for committing a number of grave and especially grave terror crimes, including murders of law enforcers. Militants of Daudov's grouping were checked for involvement in the terror act at the Domodedovo Airport. According to the Department of the Russian FSB for Dagestan, Daudov's wife perished in the explosion on December 31, 2010, in Moscow, when, presumably, an improvised explosive device, prepared for committing terror acts, accidentally blew up. According to Mairbek Agaev, editor of the information and policy division of the „Chernovik“ newspaper, it was known that for more than ten years his family lived in the Stavropol Territory, where there is a numerous Dagestani diaspora; three years ago they moved to Gubden.<sup>32</sup>

*Emir Daud (aka Abdulla Magomedaliev)*

Leader of the Makhachkala sector in the Makhachkala-Kaspiisk insurgency, Dagestan, killed August 11, 2011.

The main event of August 2011 took place in Makhachkala, Dagestan's capital. On the night of August 11, Emir Daud (aka Abdulla Magomedaliev), leader of the Makhachkala sector in the Makhachkala-Kaspiisk insurgency, was killed in a shootout with security forces.

<sup>31</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, *op. cit.*

<sup>32</sup> Dokku Umarov appoints new leader of Dagestani armed underground, May 10, 2011, <http://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/17069/>.

As soon as he was named leader of Dagestan's insurgency in June, Emir Salikh (aka Ibragimkhalil Daudov) stripped Emir Daud of special battalion commander's status because he considered it an unnecessary unit in the command structure. This action may have meant that the relations among the top commanders of Dagestan were problematic. By subordinating Emir Daud to Kaspiisk's emir, Abu-Mukhammad, Emir Salekh may have turned Daud into an opponent. Emir Daud had a rather colorful personality in comparison with the many unknown commanders around Emir Salikh.

He started his military career during the Chechen war, and Chechen rebel military commander Shamil Basayev, shortly before his death in 2006, appointed Daud emir of the Shelkovskoi and Gudermes districts of Chechnya (<http://ummanews.com>, August 12, 2011), which testified to Basayev's great trust in Daud.

Yet, in 2007, Emir Daud moved to Dagestan, where he continued his activities in Makhachkala. Under Emir Khassan (aka Israpil Velidzhanov), Emir Daud was appointed commander of a special battalion that enabled him to stage attacks not only in his home city of Makhachkala, but in other parts of Dagestan as well. Whatever the mechanism, under Emir Daud, attacks, shootouts and explosions became a daily routine in Makhachkala. It must be noted, however, that Makhachkala's emir is not responsible for all the activity occurring in the city. Many other sectors do not shy away from carrying out operations of their own. So part of the credit for the insurgency's activities in Makhachkala should be shared among the commanders of all of the Dagestani sectors. The death of Emir Daud might decrease the activities of his group during the transitional period to a new leadership, but it is unlikely to benefit the federal forces significantly.<sup>33</sup>

*Abu-Mukhammad, Kaspiisk's emir*  
One of the leaders of Dagestani insurgency, 2011.<sup>34</sup>

*The United vilaiyat of Kabardiya, Balkariya and Karachai*  
(Covers Russia's republics of Kabardino-Balkariya  
and Karachaevo-Cherkessiya)

*Seifullah Anzor Astemirov, Amir United Vilaiyat of Kabardiya,  
Balkariya and Karachai*

The leader of the Kabardino-Balkaria jamaat.

Qadi (ideological and judicial leader) of the Supreme Sharia Court 2007-2010 (dead in March 2010).

He had the idea of uniting all the anti-Russian separatist and religious groups in the Caucasus.

<sup>33</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "The North Caucasus' Troubled August," *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume: 12 Issue: 17, August 18, 2011.

<sup>34</sup> *Idem*.

Astemirov and Ingush *jamaat* leader Ilyas Gorchkhanov approached Shamil Basayev with a suggestion to unite with the Chechen *jamaat* to form a Caucasus-wide coalition.

Basayev did not agree and suggested they subordinate themselves to the rule of the president of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (ChRI) Abdul-Khalim Sadullayev. In exchange, Basayev helped insurgents in Kabardino-Balkaria organize a massive military attack on security forces in the regional capital of Nalchik in October 2005, which made Astemirov one of the most influential leaders in the Caucasus.

The Chechen republic of Ichkeria (ChRI) was the name of the unrecognized independent Chechen state between 1991 and 2000. After the beginning of the second Chechen war, the Chechen government in exile and the resistance kept the name ChRI until the establishment of the Caucasus Emirate even if Akhmad Kadyrov was elected as the new president of Chechnya in 2003.

After the deaths of Basayev and Sadullayev in the summer of 2006, Astemirov proposed the creation of a Caucasian Emirate (CE) to Dokku Umarov, the new president of the ChRI. The new structure absorbed the ChRI and included it as one of its regions. The CE was divided into six *vilayats* (administrative divisions). The new ideology was established at the foundation of the CE in October 2007.

A group of insurgents denounced the transformation of ChRI into CE and elected a new president of ChRI, Ahmed Zakayev. This election did not prevent the creation of the Caucasus Emirate.

Umarov became Emir and Astemirov became Qadi (ideological and judicial leader) of the Supreme Sharia Court. The Emirate had two main goals: to change the ideology from separatism/nationalism to religious extremism and to establish an Islamic state in the North Caucasus — though they see themselves as fundamentalists and claim they are fighting for jihad (holy war) against terror perpetrated by the state.

During the summer of 2010, the ideological split among the insurgency leaders continued when Chechen warlords Hussein Gakaev and Aslanbek Vadalov withdrew their oath to the Emir but did not renounce their loyalty to the CE.

As *qadi* of the CE, Astemirov was responsible for judgment against “traitorous Imams.” Umarov organized actions against *siloviki* and “infidels.” However, they did not agree with respect to traditional Islam.

While the main trend of the new CE ideology became anti-nationalist, Astemirov made several statements aiming to expand his supporters by reaching out to nationalists. On March 2009, he claimed that Sultan Sosnaliev, a Kabardian commander of the Abkhazian army during the Georgian-Abkhaz war and later a defense minister of Abkhazia, was on the side of the CE. Alexei Bekshokov, responded that Astemirov’s statement was false and that the late Sosnaliev was never connected to religious extremists. In spite of the

differences in ideologies, the insurgents in Kabardino-Balkaria never regarded nationalists as their targets.

Astemirov could be seen more as a politician than a military commander. Indeed, the upsurge of violence in Kabardino-Balkaria coincided with his death in March 2010.

Astemirov rejected the unnecessary use of violence against Muslim civilians; he sought the support of the local population and put forward a proselytizing strategy to convert moderate Muslims to radical Islam. Opposing such a policy, Umarov claimed that it was wrong to regard as the enemy only those who attacked insurgents directly.<sup>35</sup>

The timing of the rise in violence in Kabardino-Balkaria is associated with the death of Anzor Astemirov, head of the local *jamat*, in March 2010. Astemirov believed in a policy of maintaining a latent insurgency to prevent Russian intervention and the potential breakup of the republic.<sup>36</sup>

#### *Anzor Astemirov*

According to his own writings, shown in a November 20, 2007 posting on the Kavkaz Center website, he convinced Umarov to establish the CE; he and his closest associate Musa Mukozhev demanded in a *shura* with Basayev in 2005 that the ChRI be fully jihadized and the extremist Chechen nationalist project be jettisoned for the present project for a purely Salafist and pan-Russian emirate tied to a future caliphate.<sup>37</sup>

#### *Musa Mukozhev*

Close associate of Anzor Astemirov.

According to his own writings, shown in a November 20, 2007 posting on the Kavkaz Center website, he convinced Umarov to establish the CE; he and his closest associate Musa Mukozhev demanded in a *shura* with Basayev in 2005 that the ChRI be fully jihadized and the extremist Chechen nationalist project be jettisoned for the present project for a purely Salafist and pan-Russian emirate tied to a future caliphate.<sup>38</sup>

#### *Valery Eteзов*

A close associate of Anzor Astemirov.

Kabardino-Balkaria is where the FSB has had the greatest success in locating and killing insurgency leaders, partly by means of apprehending support personnel, and partly due to shockingly lax operational security.

In March 2010, FSB operatives recognized outside a café in Nalchik Valery Eteзов, a close associate of Anzor Astemirov, at that time commander

<sup>35</sup> Sufian Zhemukhov and Jean-François Ratelle, *The Kabardino-Balkaria Insurgency: A comparative analysis of ideological trends in the North Caucasus*, PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No 156.

<sup>36</sup> Andrew C. Kuchins, Matthew Malarkey, Sergei Markedonov, *The North Caucasus, Russia's Volatile Frontier*, A Report of the CSIS, Russia and Eurasia Program 2011, p. 4, 11.

<sup>37</sup> Gordon M. Hahn, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>38</sup> *Idem.*

of the Kabardino-Balkaria-Karachai wing of the North Caucasus insurgency. They killed Eteзов in a shootout, and reportedly found on him information about Astemirov's probable movements that enabled them to ambush and kill Astemirov days later.<sup>39</sup>

*Asker Jappuyev, Emir Abdullakh*

The Wali of the Wilayah KBK, killed April 29, 2011.

Astemirov's successor.

The commander of the Kabardino-Balkaria-Karachai wing of the North Caucasus insurgency, together with his deputy Kazbek Tashuyev („Abdul-Djabbar“), Ratmir Shameyev („Zakaria“) and nine other fighters and support personnel were killed on April 29 after being betrayed to the FSB, possibly by one of the six support personnel arrested three weeks earlier in Nalchik, Chegem and the village of Zaragizh. One of the six was identified as having acted as a driver for Jappuyev's fighters and carried messages between them. Two more men apprehended in Nalchik on April 27 were similarly suspected of providing the militants with accommodation, food, and information about police personnel.<sup>40</sup>

Leader of Kabardino-Balkaria Jamaat, April 2010-May 2011 (when killed).

In April 2010, Asker Jappuyev was appointed the new leader of insurgents in Kabardino-Balkaria. The explosion of the Baksan hydroelectric power plant in July 2010, the murder of prominent Kabardian folklorist scholar Aslan Tsipinov in December 2010, attacks aiming to interfere with the local tourist industry in February 2011, and other terrorist acts against civilians have demonstrated the ideological turn among the insurgents in Kabardino-Balkaria.

In May 2011, federal forces killed several insurgents including the KBK vilayat leader. The choice of the new leader will probably have an immediate impact on the situation and on the insurgents' tactics. However, recent history also shows that it does not necessarily mean a decrease in the level of violence.<sup>41</sup>

The head of Kabardino-Balkaria-Karachai jamaat unequivocally rejected the recourse to indiscriminate terror attacks. Jappuyev enjoined his fighters to make every effort to avoid any civilian casualties. He issued repeated warnings to the republic's population to avoid locations such as police stations and patrol posts that could be attacked at any time, and he assured police

<sup>39</sup> *When 'Runners' Turn Snitch: FSB Targets North Caucasus Insurgency Support Personnel*, May 16, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/runners\\_snitch\\_fsb\\_targets\\_north\\_caucasus\\_insurgency/24176439.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/runners_snitch_fsb_targets_north_caucasus_insurgency/24176439.html).

<sup>40</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>41</sup> Sufian Zhemukhov and Jean-François Ratelle, *The Kabardino-Balkaria Insurgency: A comparative analysis of ideological trends in the North Caucasus*, PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No 156.

officers that they would no longer risk being subject to reprisals if they quit the police force and publicly announced they had done so.<sup>42</sup>

The most recent series of attacks began on the night of April 29 when a group of armed men was spotted in a private home in a residential district near the village of Progress on the border between the Stavropol region and the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic. In the ensuing firefight, which lasted several hours, everyone in the house was killed — in total, eight men and two women ([www.regnum.ru/news/kavkaz/1400277.html](http://www.regnum.ru/news/kavkaz/1400277.html)). Among the bodies identified were some of the leading figures in the Kabardino-Balkaria jamaat: Emir Abdullah (aka Arsen Dzhappuev), the jamaat leader himself; Abdul Jabbar (aka Kazbek Tashuev), the emir of the northeastern sector; his naib, or deputy, Abdul Gafur (Aslanbek Khamurzov); and Emir Zakaria (aka Ratmir Shameyev), one of the toughest senior commanders of the Kabardino-Balkaria jamaat and head of its southwestern sector. The men were listed on the federal wanted list for being members of illicit armed groups and for illegal possession of weapons.<sup>43</sup>

The Kabardino-Balkaria jamaat's future fighting tactics will greatly depend on who becomes its next leader. While Anzor Astemirov (aka Emir Seifullah) emphasized the ideological aspects of the Caucasus Emirate — he was indeed one of the most prominent supporters and architects of the idea of an Islamic state in the North Caucasus — his immediate successor Dzhappuev (Emir Abdullah) shifted the jamaat's modus operandi to frequent operations against the Russian siloviki — attacking, at the same time, religious officials who condemned Salafism and nationalist leaders who rejected the militants' vision of the future of the North Caucasus within the framework of an Islamic state.<sup>44</sup>

*Kazbek Tashuyev („Abdul-Djabbar“)*

Deputy of Asker Jappuyev („Abdullakh“) commander of the Kabardino-Balkaria-Karachai wing of the North Caucasus insurgency.

Astemirov's successor Asker Jappuyev („Abdullakh“), as commander of the Kabardino-Balkaria-Karachai wing of the North Caucasus insurgency, together with his deputy Kazbek Tashuyev („Abdul-Djabbar“), Ratmir Shameyev („Zakaria“), and nine other fighters and support personnel were killed on April 29 after being betrayed to the FSB, possibly by one of the six support personnel arrested three weeks earlier in Nalchik, Chegem and the village of Zaragizh. One of the six was identified as having acted as a driver for Jappuyev's fighters and carried messages between them. Two more men

<sup>42</sup> U.S. Designates North Caucasus Insurgency as Terrorist Organization, May 30, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/us\\_designates\\_north\\_caucasus\\_insurgency\\_as\\_terrorist\\_organization/24209876.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/us_designates_north_caucasus_insurgency_as_terrorist_organization/24209876.html).

<sup>43</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Moscow Kills Rebel Leaders in Kabardino-Balkaria, but was it a Mortal Blow?", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume: 8 Issue: 87; May 5, 2011.

<sup>44</sup> *Idem*.

apprehended in Nalchik on April 27 were similarly suspected of providing the militants with accommodation, food, and information about police personnel.<sup>45</sup>

A leader of Kabardino-Balkaria's militants, Kazbek Taushev, is said to have been killed on the republic's border with Stavropol territory, a source in Kabardino-Balkaria's law enforcement services told Interfax. „The unconfirmed information available to us suggests that Kazbek Taushev, one of the leaders of Kabardino-Balkaria's militant network, was killed in a security operation in the village of Progress. We have come to this conclusion because Khamurzov, who always accompanied Taushev, was eliminated there,“ the source said. Taushev was accused of masterminding an explosion at the Baksan hydroelectric power plant, as well as of being involved in the murder of policemen in Kabardino-Balkaria, he said.<sup>46</sup>

*Abdul Jabbar (Kazbek Tashuev)*

The emir of the northeastern sector of the Wilayah KBK, killed April 29, 2011.

The most recent series of attacks began on the night of April 29 when a group of armed men was spotted in a private home in a residential district near the village of Progress on the border between the Stavropol region and the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic. In the ensuing firefight, which lasted several hours, everyone in the house was killed — in total, eight men and two women ([www.regnum.ru/news/kavkaz/1400277.html](http://www.regnum.ru/news/kavkaz/1400277.html)). Among the bodies identified were some of the leading figures in the Kabardino-Balkaria jamaat: Emir Abdullah (aka Arsen Dzhappuev), the jamaat leader himself; Abdul Jabbar (aka Kazbek Tashuev), the emir of the northeastern sector; his naib, or deputy, Abdul Gafur (Aslanbek Khamurzov); and Emir Zakaria (aka Ratmir Shameyev), one of the toughest senior commanders of the Kabardino-Balkaria jamaat and head of its southwestern sector. The men were listed on the federal wanted list for being members of illicit armed groups and for illegal possession of weapons.<sup>47</sup>

*Abdul-Gafur (Aslanbek Khamurzov)*

The Naib (deputy) of Amir Abdul-Jabbar (The Amir of the North-Eastern sector of the Wilayah KBK), killed April 29, 2011.

The most recent series of attacks began on the night of April 29 when a group of armed men was spotted in a private home in a residential district

<sup>45</sup> *When 'Runners' Turn Snitch: FSB Targets North Caucasus Insurgency Support Personnel*, May 16, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/runners\\_snitch\\_fsb\\_targets\\_north\\_caucasus\\_insurgency/24176439.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/runners_snitch_fsb_targets_north_caucasus_insurgency/24176439.html).

<sup>46</sup> *Baksan HPP blast suspect possibly killed on Kabardino-Balkaria's border with Stavropol, NALCHIK*. April 29 (Interfax) <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=60272616&site=ehost-live>.

<sup>47</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Moscow Kills Rebel Leaders in Kabardino-Balkaria, but was it a Mortal Blow?", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume: 8 Issue: 87; May 5, 2011.

near the village of Progress on the border between the Stavropol region and the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic. In the ensuing firefight, which lasted several hours, everyone in the house was killed — in total, eight men and two women ([www.regnum.ru/news/kavkaz/1400277.html](http://www.regnum.ru/news/kavkaz/1400277.html)). Among the bodies identified were some of the leading figures in the Kabardino-Balkaria jamaat: Emir Abdullah (aka Arsen Dzhappuev), the jamaat leader himself; Abdul Jabbar (aka Kazbek Tashuev), the emir of the northeastern sector; his naib, or deputy, Abdul Gafur (Aslanbek Khamurzov); and Emir Zakaria (aka Ratmir Shameyev), one of the toughest senior commanders of the Kabardino-Balkaria jamaat and head of its southwestern sector. The men were listed on the federal wanted list for being members of illicit armed groups and for illegal possession of weapons.<sup>48</sup>

*Zakary (Ratmir Shameyev)*

The Amir of the South-Western sector of the Wilayah KBK, killed April 29, 2011.

One of the toughest senior commanders of the Kabardino-Balkaria jamaat and head of its southwestern sector.

The most recent series of attacks began on the night of April 29 when a group of armed men was spotted in a private home in a residential district near the village of Progress on the border between the Stavropol region and the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic. In the ensuing firefight, which lasted several hours, everyone in the house was killed — in total, eight men and two women ([www.regnum.ru/news/kavkaz/1400277.html](http://www.regnum.ru/news/kavkaz/1400277.html)). Among the bodies identified were some of the leading figures in the Kabardino-Balkaria jamaat: Emir Abdullah (aka Arsen Dzhappuev), the jamaat leader himself; Abdul Jabbar (aka Kazbek Tashuev), the emir of the northeastern sector; his naib, or deputy, Abdul Gafur (Aslanbek Khamurzov); and Emir Zakaria (aka Ratmir Shameyev), one of the toughest senior commanders of the Kabardino-Balkaria jamaat and head of its southwestern sector. The men were listed on the federal wanted list for being members of illicit armed groups and for illegal possession of weapons.<sup>49</sup>

*Emir Abdul Malik*

On November 14, the Kabardino-Balkarian insurgency's new website published a video address by an Emir Abdul Malik. The young man with an uncovered face called on Muslims to provide assistance to the insurgents in Kabardino-Balkaria, while also threatening the Russian security services.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>49</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>50</sup> Valery Dzutsev, "Kremlin Proves Unable to Stabilize Security Situation in Kabardino-Balkaria," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume: 8 Issue: 212, November 16, 2011, [http://www.djamaattakbir.com/2011/11/blog-post\\_862.html](http://www.djamaattakbir.com/2011/11/blog-post_862.html).

### *The vilaiyat of Nokhchicho (Chechnya)*

*Hussein Gakayev*, emir of Chechnya (Vilaiyat of Nokhchicho), *Tarhan Gaziyeu*, deputy of Hussein Gakayev, emir of Chechnya, and *Aslanbek Vadalov*, commander of the Eastern Front, Chechnya are Chechen Dissent leaders against Dokku Umarov.

Dokku Umarov provoked a sharp difference of opinion within Chechnya's rebel organisation by refusing to relinquish his position as Emir of the Caucasus Emirate. Umarov's prevarication upset many within the organization in Chechnya and several senior field commanders — Hussein Gakayev, Tarhan Gaziyeu and Aslanbek Vadalov — who felt obligated to complain publicly about his continued stewardship of the Caucasus Emirate.

According to Gakayev, the basis for his opposition to Umarov is the latter's failure to lead by consensus. Umarov's decision to proclaim the Caucasus Emirate in late 2007 was taken, Gakayev complains, "without consulting all of the Mujahedeen". Gakayev argues that such a monumental initiative should have been put before the rebels' Majlis al-Shura for extended deliberation. Umarov took the decision to proclaim the Emirate on foot of consultations he held with a narrow circle of advisors, very few of whom were in harmony with the main body of opinion within Chechnya's rebel organisation.

Gakayev has convened a new Majlis which includes field commanders from throughout Chechnya. Six sector commanders are also included in the Majlis, three from the Western Front and three from the Eastern Front. Emirs Zumso, Abu Muslim and Abdullah represent the West, while Mahran, Muslim and Zaurbek represent the East.

It is clear, therefore, that the Gakayev-Vadalov-Gaziyeu axis enjoys considerable support from Chechnya's rebel rank and file.<sup>51</sup>

#### *Hussein Gakayev*

Emir of Chechnya. Leader of the group of dissident Chechen field commanders.

On July 23 the Kavkazcenter.com website announced that the self-styled Emir of the Caucasus Emirate, Dokku Umarov, had been reconciled with a group of estranged Chechen field commanders who withdrew their oath of loyalty to him in late 2010. This reconciliation was reportedly achieved at a recent meeting of the Caucasus Emirate's Supreme Sharia Court. Video pictures accompanying the report showed Umarov flanked by the current chairman of the Sharia Court, Ali Abu-Muhammed al-Dagestani, and the leader of the group of dissident Chechen field commanders, Hussein Gakayev.

Before going any further, a brief explanation of the origins of this controversy is in order. From late 2007 Gakayev and several other leading field commanders based in Chechnya began to experience misgivings with Uma-

<sup>51</sup> Kevin Daniel Leahy, "Protagonists Rebuild Their Political Foundations Following Split in Chechnya's Rebel Organization," 04/27/2011 <http://cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5545>.

rov's style of leadership, which they deemed to be excessively autocratic. Umarov's decision to announce the establishment of a Caucasus Emirate in October 2007, for example, was apparently arrived at without any consultation with senior field commanders in Chechnya. Matters did not come to a head until late 2010, however, when Umarov seemingly reneged on an agreement to relinquish his position as Emir of the Caucasus Emirate. This volte-face led to Gakayev and several likeminded colleagues, including well-known field commanders such as Muhanned and Aslanbek Vadalov, to rescind their oath of allegiance to Umarov. The resulting split was acrimonious, with Umarov and his supporters blaming Muhanned, a fighter of non-Chechen origin, for damaging morale in the rebel ranks and Gakayev, Vadalov and their associates in turn accusing Umarov of provoking the controversy by ignoring the collective will of Chechnya's rebel organisation.

Gakayev and Vadalov are strongest in eastern districts like Gudermes, Kurchaloi and Vedenov.<sup>52</sup>

As well as other commanders who previously rescinded their *bay'at* to Dokku Umarov, he renewed their allegiance. This episode provides further evidence of the decline of Arab fighter influence in the Caucasus jihad, yet paradoxically shows the impact of popular Arab online jihadi shaykhs. It also solidifies Umarov's pan-Caucasus project as the leading resistance to Russian aggression in contrast to the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria's claims as the true representatives of the more nationalist-Islamist Chechen struggle.past research on the waning level of Arabs fighting in the Caucasus.<sup>53</sup>

*Khusayn Gakayev*

„Leader of the military forces and parliament of the Chechen Republic Ichkeria“.<sup>54</sup>

*Tarhan Gaziyeu*

Deputy of Hussein Gakayev (emir of Chechnya).

Member of the group of dissident Chechen field commanders.<sup>55</sup>

*Aslanbek Vadalov*

Commander of the Eastern Front, Chechnya.

Member of the group of dissident Chechen field commanders.Gakayev and Vadalov are strongest in eastern districts like Gudermes, Kurchaloi and Vedenov.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Kevin Daniel Leahy, *Chechnya's Rebel Movement Reunites under Dokku Umarov's Leadership*, (08/17/2011 issue of the CACI Analyst) <http://cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5609>.

<sup>53</sup> Aaron Y. Zelin, *op. cit.*

<sup>54</sup> *U.S. Designates North Caucasus Insurgency As Terrorist Organization*, May 30, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/us\\_designates\\_north\\_caucasus\\_insurgency\\_as\\_terrorist\\_organization/24209876.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/us_designates_north_caucasus_insurgency_as_terrorist_organization/24209876.html).

<sup>55</sup> Kevin Daniel Leahy, *Chechnya's Rebel Movement Reunites under Dokku Umarov's Leadership*, (08/17/2011 issue of the CACI Analyst) <http://cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5609>.

<sup>56</sup> *Idem.*

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*Emir Zumso*

Chechen field commander, western front.

Practically nothing is known about Emir Zumso other than the fact that he was previously under the command of Tarkhan Gaziyeu as part of the now-defunct South-Western Front.<sup>58</sup>

*Emir Mahran (real name Mahran Saidov)*

Chechen field commander, eastern front.

Emir Mahran, (real name Mahran Saidov) is a particularly active guerrilla leader who commands the Tsentoroi sector of operations in Chechnya's Gudermes district.<sup>59</sup>

Second tier field chechen commanders, members of the group of dissidents.<sup>60</sup>

*Emir Muslim, or Muslim 'Dunga' Gakayev*

Chechen field commander, eastern front.

Emir Muslim, or Muslim 'Dunga' Gakayev, is in charge of the Shali sector of operations in eastern Chechnya. He is the younger brother of Hussein Gakayev and has in recent years been one of those responsible for the recruitment and training of suicide bombers.<sup>61</sup>

*Emir Zaurbek, or Zaurbek Avdorkhanov*

Chechen field commander, eastern front.

Emir Zaurbek, or Zaurbek Avdorkhanov, is the younger brother of Akhmed Avdorkhanov, killed in 2005. Akhmed Avdorkhanov was a close associate of the late Chechen leader Aslan Maskhadov.

Emir Zaurbek is a successful guerrilla commander in his own right who operates mainly in the Kurchaloi and Nozhai-yurt districts. Along with Va-

<sup>57</sup> Aaron Y. Zelin, *op. cit.*

<sup>58</sup> Kevin Daniel Leahy, *Protagonists Rebuild Their Political Foundations Following Split Chechnya's Rebel Organization*, 04/27/2011 <http://cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5545>.

<sup>59</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>60</sup> Kevin Daniel Leahy, *Chechnya's Rebel Movement Reunites under Dokku Umarov's Leadership*, (08/17/2011 issue of the CACI Analyst) <http://cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5609>.

<sup>61</sup> Kevin Daniel Leahy, *Protagonists Rebuild Their Political Foundations Following Split Chechnya's Rebel Organization*, 04/27/2011 <http://cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5545>.

dalov, Mahran and Avdorkhanov planned and executed the attack on Ramzan Kadyrov's compound in the village of Tsentoroi in August 2010.<sup>62</sup>

Second tier field Chechen commanders, members of the group of dissidents.<sup>63</sup>

*Emir Ilman (Ilman Estemirov)*

Estemirov was the Emir of the rebels' Tevzana sector in Chechnya's Vedeno District. In August 2010 he had been included on a list of Chechen field commanders allegedly opposed to Dokku Umarov. This list was posted on the Daymohk.org website which has taken Gakayev's side in the recent controversy. The integrity of this compilation has been called into question in recent weeks. According to certain rebel sources, Ilman was killed on March 28 in the Ingush village of Upper Alkun, during the same special operation that accounted for Umarov's deputy, the Chechen ideologue Supyan Abdullayev. Does this indicate that Emir Ilman was actually in league with Umarov at the time of his death? Was he playing a double game, adopting an equivocal stance by staying on terms with both parties? Or could it be that he was present in Abdullayev's camp as Gakayev's emissary, with the mission of soothing relations between the two factions? Emir Ilman's presence among the casualties of the raid on Upper Alkun suggests that Umarov will continue to exert influence within Chechnya's rebel community until he is killed. Furthermore, this apparent inaccuracy in the internet list mentioned earlier suggests that there may be other field commanders who are still reluctant to commit to either party. Assuming it exists, should Umarov begin canvassing this undecided constituency aggressively, there is a possibility that he might broaden his support base substantially.<sup>64</sup>

*Lechi Dudayev, Khunkar-Pasha Israpilov, and Big and Little Aslanbek (Abdulkhadjiyev and Ismailov respectively).*

Chechen field commanders, died during the night of January 31-February 1, 2000.

Only once before have so many prominent commanders died simultaneously in circumstances where their deaths might have been avoided. That was during the infamous retreat from Grozny during the night of January 31-February 1, 2000 in which Chechen field commanders Lechi Dudayev, Khunkar-Pasha Israpilov, and Big and Little Aslanbek (Abdulkhadjiyev and Ismailov, respectively) perished picking their way through a minefield, Basayev having decreed that the senior commanders should go first.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>62</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>63</sup> Kevin Daniel Leahy, *Chechnya's Rebel Movement Reunites under Dokku Umarov's Leadership*, (08/17/2011 issue of the CACI Analyst) <http://cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5609>.

<sup>64</sup> Kevin Daniel Leahy, *Protagonists Rebuild Their Political Foundations Following Split Chechnya's Rebel Organization*, 04/27/2011 <http://cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5545>.

<sup>65</sup> *When 'Runners' Turn Snitch: FSB Targets North Caucasus Insurgency Support Personnel*, May 16, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/runners\\_snitch\\_fsb\\_targets\\_north\\_caucasus\\_insurgency/24176439.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/runners_snitch_fsb_targets_north_caucasus_insurgency/24176439.html).

*Akhmad Zakayev*

The apparent reconciliation between the various factions would be a major blow to the Chechen Republic Ichkeria (ChRI), the predecessor to the Caucasus Emirate, which has focused more on Chechnya as a nationalist-Islamist oriented secessionist movement. Twice following the outbreak of the fissures within the Caucasus Emirate — first in October 2010 and most recently in June 2011 — Akhmad Zakayev, the leader of the ChRI in exile following Umarov's creation of the Caucasus Emirate, announced and later reaffirmed he was resigning as President, dismantling his cabinet and supporting Gakayev as the new leader. The reconciliation between Gakayev's faction and the Caucasus Emirate, therefore, is not only a repudiation of Zakayev, but also eliminates any possibility that the conflict with Russia will once again be centered on Chechen nationalist and secessionist ideas versus Umarov's pan-Caucasus Islamic identity. Following the announced détente between the two Caucasus Emirate rivals, Zakayev's ChRI released a statement in July 2011 condemning them, arguing that they were fomenting *fitnah*, which strengthens Russian hands in their conflict.

The reconciliation between Umarov's Caucasus Emirate and Gakayev's faction ends a years-long dispute that pitted influential leaders that have played crucial roles in the insurgency against the Russians the past few years. This development sidelines Zakayev and his ChRI leadership in exile. It also further diminishes Arab fighter influence over the Caucasus Emirate, yet boosts the importance of Arab shaykhs from the outside. Most significant, though, is that the Caucasus Emirate can now refocus its conflict with Russia instead of internecine fighting, and expand its sphere of influence in other former Muslim lands that they perceive to be occupied, such as the Volga-Ural region, which the Caucasus Emirate has attempted to reach out to recently in its propaganda. The resolution between the two parties also points to the victory of the global jihadi vision over more nationalist-Islamist claims in the long-running and protracted war with Russia.<sup>66</sup>

In 2007, a group of insurgents denounced the transformation of ChRI into CE and elected a new president of ChRI, Ahmed Zakayev. This election did not prevent the creation of the Caucasus Emirate.<sup>67</sup>

The London-based head of the ChRI government in exile.<sup>68</sup>

*Akhmed Zakaev and Movladi Udugov*

The increasing conflict between nationalists and jihadists could be seen in the polemic between Akhmed Zakaev, the comparatively moderate leader of

<sup>66</sup> Aaron Y. Zelin, *op. cit.*

<sup>67</sup> Sufian Zhemukhov and Jean-François Ratelle, *op. cit.*

<sup>68</sup> U.S. *Designates North Caucasus Insurgency As Terrorist Organization*, May 30, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/us\\_designates\\_north\\_caucasus\\_insurgency\\_as\\_terrorist\\_organization/24209876.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/us_designates_north_caucasus_insurgency_as_terrorist_organization/24209876.html).

the Chechen resistance, and Movladi Udugov, the emerging ideologist of the jihadists and the editor of *Kavkaz Center*, the most popular internet site of North Caucasian resistance. Responding to Zakaev's nationalistic appeal, Udugov stated that he plainly did not understand why Zakaev was so preoccupied with Chechens regardless who they were. Udugov questioned why he should be attached to Chechens who behaved as infidels and might even serve the Kremlin, a regime of infidels and the mortal enemy of true Muslims. While the jihadists argued that even Chechen infidels should be considered enemies, the Islamic resistance instead opened for ethnic Russians converted to Islam.<sup>69</sup>

*Chamsoudin Avraligov*  
Chechen field commander.<sup>70</sup>

### *North Ossetia*

*David Murashev*

On May 26, the beheaded body of Shamil Jikayev, a venerated Ossetian poet and dean of the Department of Ossetian Philology of the North Ossetian State University was found in a village near the republic's capital city of Vladikavkaz. Three days later, in a fierce shootout with North Ossetian police forces, Jikayev's alleged murderer, David Murashev, was shot dead. As Murashev, himself an Ossetian, is said by authorities to have turned to "radical Islam" a few years earlier, this incident stirred up talks about the increasingly uncomfortable coexistence of Christian and Muslim communities within North Ossetia, renewing fears of the "jihadization" of a part of North Ossetian Muslims.<sup>71</sup>

*Aslan Digorsky*

Leader of Qataib al-Khoul (Battalions of Power in Arabic), North Ossetia (2005-2008)

Qataib al-Khoul (Battalions of Power in Arabic) was the name of an organization that is believed to have established itself back in 2005-2006 by North Ossetian Muslims as part of the regional jihad. Some claim the group never existed while others argue its members were primarily recruited from among ethnic Ingush as part of their anti-Ossetian strategy. This unit was

<sup>69</sup> Dmitry Shlapentokh, *The Role of Converts in North Caucasian Terrorism*, 09/21/2011 issue of the CACI Analyst), <http://caciaanalyst.org/?q=node/5627>.

<sup>70</sup> Gordon M. Hahn, *Getting the Caucasus Emirate Right*, A Report of the CSIS, Russia and EurAsia Program, August 2011, p. 5.

<sup>71</sup> Emil Souleimanov, *North Ossetia: Jihadization in the Making?*, 06/08/2011 <http://caciaanalyst.org/?q=node/5573>.

reportedly led by prominent Jihadi fighter Aslan Digorsky, and gained publicity in the 2005-2008 when it attacked casinos and gambling houses in Vladikavkaz, and engaged in a series of assassinations of high-ranking military and state officials, reaching a peak in 2008 with the murder of the mayor of Vladikavkaz, Vitaly Karayev, who was accused of harassing Ossetian women wearing the hijab in public. However, following Karayev's murder, for reasons that are not entirely clear, the activities of the Ossetian Jamaat came to nothing. This likely served as a ground for Dokku Umarov, head of the Caucasus Emirate, to abolish the "vilayet of Iriston (Ossetia)" and to formally incorporate it into the Emirate's "vilayet of Galgaychö (Ingushetia)" in May 2009.<sup>72</sup>

### *The Galcaiche vilaiyat Ingushetiya*

*Ilyas Gorchkhanov*

Ingush *jamaat* leader.

Astemirov and Ingush *jamaat* leader Ilyas Gorchkhanov approached Shamil Basayev with a suggestion to unite with the Chechen *jamaat* to form a Caucasus-wide coalition.<sup>73</sup>

*Sheikh Said Abu Saad Buryatskii, born Aleksandr Tikhomirov*

Ingushetiya, Popular ideologist of jihad, killed March 2010.

Buddhist convert to Islam, of Russian and Buryat nationality, he had never set foot in the North Caucasus to feel the force of Russian brutality, until he joined the jihad. Upon arrival he met with CE amir Umarov, who dispatched him to Ingushetiya where he organized a series of deadly suicide bombings, including the explosion of an entire police headquarters in Nazran that killed 25 MVD personnel and wounded nearly 200 MVD and civilians (including children) and a nearly successful assassination of Ingushetiya President Yunus-bek Yevkurov.<sup>74</sup>

*Said Buryatsky*

Dead in March 2010, he was an effective political ideologist and propagandist who was committed to the global jihad and had a large online following. His death represented the neutralization of a salient threat and a victory for the security services.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>72</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>73</sup> Sufian Zhemukhov and Jean-François Ratelle, *The Kabardino-Balkaria Insurgency: A comparative analysis of ideological trends in the North Caucasus*, PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No 156.

<sup>74</sup> Gordon M. Hahn, *Getting the Caucasus Emirate Right*, A Report of the CSIS, Russia and EurAsia Program, August 2011, p. 21.

<sup>75</sup> Andrew C. Kuchins, Matthew Malarkey, Sergei Markedonov, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

*Aleksandr Tikhomirov (aka Said Buryatsky)*

A convert to Islam from Buryatia and a hugely popular ideologist of jihad, staged two car bombings in Ingushetia in 2009, one of which narrowly missed killing Zyazikov's successor as president, Yunus-Bek Yevkurov.<sup>76</sup>

*Said Buryatsky*

Said Buryatsky was killed in March 2010, after a two-day siege of a private home in Ekazhevo, his presence there having been presumably betrayed to the FSB, possibly by apprehensive neighbors.<sup>77</sup>

*Alexander Artyev (Abu-t-Tanvir Kavkazskii)*

Leading ideologist of the CE's Ingush mujahedeen of its G'ialg'aiche (Ingushetiya Vilaiyat).<sup>78</sup>

*Slavs Engaged in terror attacks**Viktor Dvorakovsky*

Of Slavic origin. He has engaged in terror attacks. Arrested in the summer 2011 in the Stavropol region.<sup>79</sup>

Russian law enforcement recently tried to arrest a jihadist named Viktor Dvorakovsky. Dvorakovsky does not belong to any of the ethnic groups in Russia which are historically Muslims. Dvorakovsky's case has indicated that jihadist converts, who have become Islamists in spite of lacking a historical connection to Islam, continue to constitute a serious problem for Russian counterinsurgency operations. The event indicates that jihadism continues to expand in Russia and that Islamist terrorism cannot be reduced to people from the North Caucasus.<sup>80</sup>

Suspected „Russian Wahhabi“ Viktor Dvorakovsky, who was wanted federally, was detained in the village of Inozemtsevo in Stavropol Territory after he offered armed resistance early on Thursday, a source in territorial law enforcement services informed Interfax. „A young man was stopped by police in Inozemtsevo last night for an ID check. The man shouted at them that he was Dvorakovsky and that he would blow them up if he is not allowed to go. He threw an improvised grenade at police which blew up,

<sup>76</sup> Liz Fuller, *Why Is The North Caucasus An Unholy Mess?*, August 15, 2011 [http://www.rferl.org/content/north\\_caucasus\\_why\\_is\\_it\\_such\\_an\\_unholy\\_mess/24297384.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/north_caucasus_why_is_it_such_an_unholy_mess/24297384.html).

<sup>77</sup> *When 'Runners' Turn Snitch: FSB Targets North Caucasus Insurgency Support Personnel*, May 16, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/runners\\_snitch\\_fsb\\_targets\\_north\\_caucasus\\_insurgency/24176439.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/runners_snitch_fsb_targets_north_caucasus_insurgency/24176439.html).

<sup>78</sup> Gordon M. Hahn, *Getting the Caucasus Emirate Right*, A Report of the CSIS, Russia and EurAsia Program, August 2011, p. 7, <http://kavkaz.org.uk/eng/content/2011/02/27/13681.shtml>.

<sup>79</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Is the North Caucasus Rebel Movement Spreading Beyond the North Caucasus?," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume: 8 Issue: 150 August 4, 2011.

<sup>80</sup> Dmitry Shlapentokh, *op. cit.*

wounding one of the police officers," the source said. „Police fired shots at the man when he was about to blow up another grenade. The grenade went off right in his hands. Dvorakovsky was injured and was detained. He sustained gunshot and blast wounds and is in the hospital," he said. Dvorakovsky was wanted federally for making, keeping and selling improvised explosive devices, other territorial law enforcement sources told Interfax. „He is suspected of involvement in an explosion in an apartment in Pyatigorsk when a self-made bomb went off when it was being dried on a radiator. Dvorakovsky professes radical Islam," a source said. Police are working to finally establish his identity.<sup>81</sup>

*Eldar Bitayev, Viktor Dvorakovsky, Ibragim Torshkhoyev  
and Alexander Dudkin*

Suspicion of plotting terror attacks and suicide bombings in the North Caucasus

Police in Stavropol continue the hunt for four suspected suicide bombers: Eldar Bitayev, Viktor Dvorakovsky, Ibragim Torshkhoyev and Alexander Dudkin, acting head of the local police department for public order maintenance Gennady Berezin told journalists on Wednesday. Police have recently received information about the possible whereabouts of the suspected organizers of attacks in North Caucasus and acts of sabotage, he said. „We have been receiving information, periodic calls from members of the public who saw similarly-looking people. We certainly process all the reports, all the information. But until today there has been nothing to confirm this information. And people who were mentioned were not involved. They just look similar," Berezin said. Stavropol residents should be more vigilant and help law enforcement authorities in searching for the suspected criminals, he said. Facial composites of the suspected suicide bombers have been distributed not only on public transport and on the website of the local branch of the Russian Interior Ministry, but also handed out to all police squads, he said. The above individuals are wanted on suspicion of plotting terror attacks in North Caucasus and involvement in the acts of sabotage and terrorism in the Stavropol Territory, the local Central Police Department said last Tuesday.<sup>82</sup>

Four people are being searched for in the Stavropol Territory on suspicion of plotting terror attacks in the North Caucasus region and involvement in subversive and terror activities. The suspects are native of Stavropol Territory Eldar Bitayev, born in 1978, native of Makhachkala (Dagestan) Viktor Dvorakovsky, born in 1987; native of Armavir (Krasnodar Territory) Ibragim Torshkhoyev, born in 1991 — all three trained as suicide bombers, and also

<sup>81</sup> Suspected terrorist Dvorakovsky detained in Stavropol territory — source, ROSTOV-ON-DON. July 14 (Interfax), <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=62801078&site=ehost-live>.

<sup>82</sup> *Four Stavropol suspected suicide bombers still wanted — ministry*, STAVROPOL. May 12, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=60584788&site=ehost-live>.

resident of Sochi Alexander Dudkin, born in 1984, who left Sochi in March „to perform the jihad against the infidels“<sup>83</sup>

*Pavel Kosolapov*

Pavel Kosolapov is possibly one of the most well-known among these early Russians converts, who engaged in terrorist activities. Kosolapov was clearly indoctrinated by members of the North Caucasus resistance and later became one of its most successful terrorists. He was engaged in several spectacular terrorist attacks and was supposedly engaged in the attack of the Nevskii Express.<sup>84</sup>

*Anton Stepanenko*

While the first generation of Russian jihadists were trained and indoctrinated by jihadists belonging to historically Muslim ethnic groups, the converts gained followers of their own as time progressed. The new generation of jihadists came from the spiritual children, so to speak, of those who were themselves converts. The case of Anton Stepanenko could be a good example here. Stepanenko had been converted to Islam in 1996 by his step-father who was Muslim. His mother and presumably biological father were Russian. Despite his young age and the absence of formal theological education, Stepanenko became quite known in Pyatigorsk, a city near the North Caucasus, where he converted a considerable number of people, of which the majority were most likely ethnic Russians, to Islam. The authorities noted Stepanenko's activities and he was arrested in 2006, but was soon released under the pressure of highly positioned members of the Russian Islamic community. He left Russia for Saudi Arabia, but some observers believed he maintained the relationship with his followers in Russia. While engaging in preaching in Pyatigorsk, he created a visible community of converts, mostly ethnic Russians, some of which engaged in jihad and participated in the attack on Nalchik in 2005. It is quite likely that Dvorakovsky was also indoctrinated by Stepanenko. While most of the converts were either ethnic Russians or people of mixed ethnicity, other groups were represented as well.<sup>85</sup>

*Vitaly Razdobudko*

A Slavic origin person who has engaged in terror attacks. Killed in the Dagestani village of Gubden, 2011.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Search on in Stavropol Territory for four suspected suicide bombers, PYARTIGORSK. May 10 (Interfax), <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=60528145&site=ehost-live>.

<sup>84</sup> Dmitry Shlapentokh, *op. cit.*

<sup>85</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>86</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Is the North Caucasus Rebel Movement Spreading Beyond the North Caucasus?," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume: 8 Issue: 150 August 4, 2011.

Vitalii Razdobud'ko, a Ukrainian, became a Muslim under the direct influence of Stepanenko together with his wife Mariia Khorosheva. Both of them engaged in suicidal terrorist attacks causing the death of two and wounding of twenty-five members of Russian law enforcement.<sup>87</sup>

*Vladimir Petrosyan*

An Armenian played an active role together with Stepanenko in encouraging Dvorakovsky to take up arms.<sup>88</sup>

The detectives have found that the connection between "Russian Wahhabite" Viktor Dvorakovsky and terrorist recruiter Vladimir Petrosyan, who was earlier detained in Georgiyevsk, is fully proved, acting chief of the first police search task force in the North Caucasus Federal District Nikolai Olekhovich said. "The connection between Dvorakovsky and Petrosyan was found not only in the operative files, but also under the criminal case, and was fully proved. They were members of a group that was engaged in extremism propaganda," Olekhovich said. Five criminal cases were opened against them, he said. All of Dvorakovsky's connections in the territory and constituents of the North Caucasus Federal District were exposed urgently long ago and all technical measures were being taken for the detected phone numbers. Georgiyevsk resident Vladimir Petrosyan, 52, was detained in the settlement of Lysogorskaya in the Georgiyevsk district of the Stavropol Territory in late April. A hand grenade, audio and video discs with the extremist content and banned religious literature were confiscated from him. Petrosyan was reported to move to the Stavropol Territory from Grozny at the late nineties of the previous century during the second Chechen war. Olekhovich noted that Petrosyan was already sentenced to 4.5 years in prison for illegal circulation of explosives and a threat to commit a terrorist act. "The guilty evidence was gathered against Petrosyan and a criminal case is about to be opened against him for public appeals to extremism," he said. Speaking on Dvorakovsky's health, Olekhovich noted that he is not informed about it, but assured that "the investigation actions are being taken involving Dvorakovsky." "All places, which he visited, and all people, with whom he was communicating, are being investigated," Olekhovich underlined.<sup>89</sup>

*Ruslan Ozniev*

According to reports, converts play an active role not only in conducting terrorist operations inside Russia, but also in filling other important functions for the resistance. One example is Ruslan Ozniev, whose mother was Russian and father Chechen. His father abandoned the family early on and

<sup>87</sup> Dmitry Shlapentokh, *op. cit.*

<sup>88</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>89</sup> *Connection between Wahhabite, terrorist recruiter found proved*, 22/07/2011, PYATIGORSK, July 22 (Itar-Tass), <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c154/190597.html>.

he spent most of his childhood and adolescence in Grozny under Dudaev's rule. His mother was arrested for selling alcohol and was beaten to death. This, however, did not prevent him from being converted to Islam and finally becoming the right hand of Dokku Umarov, the leader of the resistance. He finally ended up in France where he engaged in fundraising for jihad. He later moved back to Russia where he planned to engage in various terrorist acts and was finally arrested.<sup>90</sup>

*Farid (or Faeel) Nevlyutov*

Russian terrorist suspect arrested in Moscow, a native of Mordovia who converted to Islam, 2011.<sup>91</sup>

### *Suicide bombers*

*Amir Hamzat*

RSMB (Riyad-us-Saliheen Martyrs' Brigade) commander was killed in a raid by Russian federal forces after January 2011 bombing at Domodedovo Airport.<sup>92</sup>

The two "black widows" who carried out the March 2010 Moscow subway suicide attacks

*Dzhanet Abdurakhmanova*

17 years, suicide bomber, who detonated her explosives at the Park Kultury metro station, was the widow of the CE Dagestan Veleyat's amir "Al-Bara" Umalat Magomedov, killed by the security services in a special operation in early January in Dagestan's capital, Makhachkala, on the previous New Year's Eve.

*Maria Sharipova*

23 years, was the widow of the Arab amir Doctor Mohammed and then wife of the amir of the DV's Gubden Sector "Seifullah Gubdenskii" Magomed Vagabov, who became Dvampir in July 2010.<sup>93</sup>

*Khava Barayeva*

The first female Chechen suicide bomber drove a truck filled with explosives into a military camp in Alkhan-Yurt in June of 2000.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Dmitry Shlapentokh, *op. cit.*

<sup>91</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Is the North Caucasus Rebel Movement Spreading Beyond the North Caucasus?," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume: 8 Issue: 150 August 4, 2011.

<sup>92</sup> Mark Kramer, "Understanding suicide terrorist bombings in Russia".

<sup>93</sup> Gordon M. Hahn, *Getting the Caucasus Emirate Right*, A Report of the CSIS, Russia and EurAsia Program, August 2011, p. 19.

<sup>94</sup> Agentura.ru — *The role of Al-Qaeda in the North Caucasus*, September 13, 2010, <http://www.agentura.ru/english/terrorism/alqaedanc/>.

*Batyr Dzhaniev*

Suicide bomber, who detonated his car bomb in Nazran, Ingushetiya, on December 16, 2009, killing 10 MVD (Ministry of Internal Affairs) servicemen and injuring its suicide bomber unit, the Riyadus Salikhin Martyrs' Brigade.<sup>95</sup>

*Zavzhat Daudova*

Presumably, Zavzhat Daudova, the wife of Emir Salikh (Ibragimkhalil Daudov), was killed in an explosion in Moscow on December 31.<sup>96</sup>

According to investigators, she died while preparing to carry out a terrorist act in Moscow.<sup>97</sup>

*Magomed Yevloev*

Dokku Umarov was the chief suspect in the Domodedovo terrorist attack in January 2011, along with Adam Ganzhiyev, Islam Yevloyev, Aslan Tsechoyev and Aslan Batukayev.

According to the investigation, Umarov was in charge of preparing the suicide bomber Magomed Yevloev for the Domodedovo mission on January 24, 2011. In early February, Umarov released a video of himself on the Internet, claiming the responsibility for the terrorist attack.<sup>98</sup>

*Others Insurgents**Vakha Umarov*

Dokku Umarov's brother. Insurgent?

The murder attempt of Shamsuddin Batukayev in Turkey was uncovered not by the Turkish security services, but by the Chechen refugees themselves. The would-be killer, identified as Bakhran Batumaev, was disarmed and taken to the police along with his weapon. The arrested man stated that he was also supposed to kill Dokku Umarov's brother, Vakha Umarov, who also lives in Istanbul.<sup>99</sup>

*Shamsuddin Batukayev*

A 55-year-old Muslim scholar and leader of the Chechen separatist movement in the 1990s. He resides in Turkey as a political refugee.

<sup>95</sup> Gordon M. Hahn, *Getting the Caucasus Emirate Right*, A Report of the CSIS, Russia and EurAsia Program, August 2011, p. 18.

<sup>96</sup> <http://moidagestan.ru/news/crime/6664?PHPSESSID=u3mmk24gfd7bqa7i2leadhfg1>.

<sup>97</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "US Move Against Dokku Umarov Will Have Little Impact on Militant Activities," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume: 8 Issue: 105 June 1, 2011.

<sup>98</sup> *Dokku Umarov Sentenced in Absentia on Terrorism Charges*, 26 Oct 2011, <http://pik.tv/en/news/story/22317-dokku-umarov-sentenced-in-absentia-on-terrorism-charges>.

<sup>99</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Assassination Campaign of Chechen Opposition Figures in Turkey Reaches New Level," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume: 8 Issue: 193, October 20, 2011.

Shamsuddin Batukayev is the former head of the Supreme Sharia Court of Chechnya. On September 2011 there was an attempt to assassinate him. Police detained the suspect and three other people and seized a gun with a silencer during a search of the suspect's hotel room. Suspect name is Barham B.

Kavkaz Center, a website sympathetic to the North Caucasus insurgency, identified the alleged would-be-killer as Barham Batumayev. It claimed that the other detained suspects included Uvais Akhmadov, an alleged associate of Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov.

Batukaev comes from a family of respected Islamic theologians, including his uncle, Hussein Batukaev. After the first Russian-Chechen war of 1994-1996, Batukaev was appointed chairman of the Supreme Sharia Court and, under his auspices, public executions were carried out in the center of Grozny in 1997. However, under the pressure of public opinion, he was forced to abandon this practice. During the revolt of the Salafis (aka Wahhabis) against the then president of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, Aslan Maskhadov, in Gudermes on June 14, 1998, Batukaev displayed ambivalence and was removed from office.<sup>100</sup>

*Renat Ismailov* convicted of funding an armed unit in North Caucasus that was under the command of Emirs *Abdulla Parkhudinov* and *Abdul Malik*.

The Krasnodar Sovetsky District Court has convicted Dinsky district resident Renat Ismailov of funding an illegal armed unit in the North Caucasus. „R. Ismailov was sentenced to four years in prison,“ the territorial department of the Russian Investigations Committee reported on Thursday. The court said that Ismailov, 32, born in Uzbekistan, was working in the Krasnodar territory. „He transferred money via bank and gave cash donations to an illegal armed unit in the North Caucasus. The unit was under the command of emirs Abdulla Parkhudinov and Abdul Malik [both were killed in police operations],“ the department said. The suspect was seized in Dagestan on April 2, 2011, and taken to Krasnodar. A policeman had said that Ismailov had donated over 50,000 rubles to the militants.<sup>101</sup>

*Akhmed Abdulkerimov* („Adam,“ *amir of the Mountain Sector*)

Veteran fighter Akhmed Abdulkerimov („Adam,“ *amir of the Mountain Sector*) was shot dead in his own home in December 2010.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>100</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, „Assasination Campaign of Chechen Opposition Figures in Turkey Reaches New Level,“ *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume: 8 Issue: 193, October 20, 2011, and „Turkey Detains Suspects in Chechen Plot“ 13 October 2011, The Associated Press published in Moscow Times, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/turkey-detains-suspects-in-chechen-plot/445343.html>.

<sup>101</sup> *Man to spend four years in prison for funding North Caucasian militants*, Krasnodar. Sept 1 (Interfax), <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=65158422&site=ehost-live>.

<sup>102</sup> *When 'Runners' Turn Snitch: FSB Targets North Caucasus Insurgency Support Personnel*, May 16, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/runners\\_snitch\\_fsb\\_targets\\_north\\_caucasus\\_insurgency/24176439.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/runners_snitch_fsb_targets_north_caucasus_insurgency/24176439.html).

*Cherkes Rustamov, Farid Misriyev and Abibulla Abdullayev*

The top investigative agency for Stavropol Territory has completed an investigation into the criminal case in relation to the native of Dagestan, Cherkes Rustamov, accused of carrying out a terror attack in central Stavropol in May 2010, as Russian Investigative Committee spokesman Vladimir Markin has announced. „According to investigators, Rustamov with other natives of Dagestan Farid Misriyev and Abibulla Abdullayev, carried out a terror attack near a culture and sport palace in central Stavropol,“ Markin told Interfax on Tuesday. Misriyev and Abdullayev were killed in June 2011 and in September 2010, he said. „The criminal case against Rustamov with a confirmed indictment has been referred to the court,“ Markin said.<sup>103</sup>

*Berg-Hadj Musayev, Zaurbek Amriyev and Rustam Altemirov*

Chechens that were shot dead on Sept. 16, 2011 in a parking lot in Istanbul, were suspected of involvement in a January suicide bombing at Moscow's Domodedovo Airport that killed 37 people. The killing attack was blamed on Russian special services.

Berg-Hadj Musayev was closely link to Dokku Umarov.<sup>104</sup>

*Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev*, former Chechen rebel, was murdered in Qatar in 2004 by Russian intelligence.<sup>105</sup>

*Nogai Jamaat Wahhabi group*

In 2010, after starting of a new wave of violence in the region in 2009, the spread of terrorism had two different geographic directions: the first — toward Dagestan and the second — toward Kabardino-Balkaria and the Stavropol Territory. This is worrying because the Stavropol Territory is close to Sochi, which will host the 2014 Winter Olympics and could become an enticing target for terrorists. Stavropol faces a possible increase in terrorism but has not adopted any targeted measures to improve the situation. Experts believe the problem of the *Nogai Jamaat Wahhabi group*, which is active in the region, is more the product of journalists' inaccurate information than indicative of the presence of a real organization.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>103</sup> *Stavropol terror attack case referred to court*, Moscow, Sept 6 (Interfax), <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=65241716&site=ehost-live>.

<sup>104</sup> „Russia Links Chechens Shot in Turkey to Bombing“ 27 Oct. 2011, Reuters, published in *Moscow Times*, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russia-links-chechens-shot-in-turkey-to-bombing/446379.html>.

<sup>105</sup> „Russia Links Chechens Shot in Turkey to Bombing“ 27 Oct. 2011, Reuters, published in *Moscow Times*, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russia-links-chechens-shot-in-turkey-to-bombing/446379.html>.

<sup>106</sup> Grigory Shvedov, Alexey Malashenko, *North Caucasus: Results of 2010*, March 15, 2011, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/03/15/north-caucasus-results-of-2010/41rj>.

**Chapter 10**  
**POWER AND RESOURCES STRUGGLE  
BEHIND THE MASK OF A FALSE RELIGIOUS  
WAR IN CHECHNYA**

**BOGDAN NEDEA**

*Current situation*

Summing up the situation unfolding in Chechnya over 2010, it is worth noting that diametrically opposite processes took place in that part of the North Caucasus. Anyone who had a chance to visit Chechnya over the last years seems to be excited about the changes that have been occurring in the landscape of the war-torn republic. At the site of yesterday's ruins, Turkish companies have been erecting modern houses that now decorate the capital Grozny and nearby towns.

Quite a few Muslim countries might envy Chechnya for the architecture and luxurious embellishments of the mosques that have already been built. There is virtually no village or settlement in the republic without natural gas or electricity, and the roads in Chechnya have become the best in Russia<sup>1</sup>.

Nevertheless we can easily identify the other side of the fence as Moscow's policy "money in exchange of peace" appears to be one-sided. A lot of federal funds are injected annually in the republic and even so Chechnya is still the main center for the insurgency in the North Caucasus. Although the situation is unclear especially for the international organizations, as facts and figures are being influenced or denied by the authorities on a regular basis, we can identify the main issues that hide behind the pretty pictures painted by the reconstruction efforts.

First we have the Russian policy towards all the autonomous republics in the North Caucasus, a policy emphasized in Chechnya due to the presence of Kremlin's watch dog Ramzan Kadyrov. His results in the first stages of his leadership convinced Moscow to fully assert him, unchecked power in the republic thus transforming him into a tyrant and allowing his policies to worsen the situation. Kadyrov's continuous struggle to subdue those who still oppose him inside the official segments of the republic, complete with

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<sup>1</sup> "The Year in Chechnya: Reconstruction Marred by Lingering Insurgency and Inter-Chechen Conflict", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 12, Issue: 2, January 21, 2011.

creation of mercenary bands that do all the “dirty jobs”, led to the deterioration of the social aspect of Chechnya.

Furthermore, poverty, a very real aspect of the low and middle classes, lack of jobs and corruption up to the highest level are also realities that complete the grim picture of the problems in the republic. So, while Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov has called corruption as great a threat to society as terrorism, Chechen human rights activists and inhabitants of the republic alike believe that corruption has become an “unwritten rule” in Chechnya and categorize it as being “enormous,” even when compared with high levels of corruption in the rest of Russia<sup>2</sup>.

A conclusive example took place in 2010 when a criminal case involving the embezzlement of 3.5 million rubles (more than \$115,000) in budgetary funds allocated for the construction of a school-hostel for deaf and hearing-impaired children in Grozny, was filed<sup>3</sup>. Also, rights activists and independent journalists accuse Kadyrov of kidnappings, torture, extrajudicial killings in Chechnya, including involvement in the murder of their colleagues Natalya Estemirova, Zarema Sadullaeva and Alik Dzhabrailov in the summer of 2009<sup>4</sup>.

As an example, we could mention an incident in which a group of Russian human rights activists were unlawfully detained by Chechen law enforcement personnel. On February 7, 2010, Chechen police detained three human rights activists, members of a special mobile group that Russian human rights activists set up in 2009, after the murders of their colleagues in the summer of that year<sup>5</sup>. According to the detained activists, they were searched and interrogated, but not given any written document in support of the police actions or even given a proper verbal explanation, something that Russian law requires. They were released one day after their de facto arrest, having spent the night in the police station.

As the details of the incident emerged, it appeared that the human rights activists had not simply been intercepted while doing their work, but were actually lured by the Chechen police into a make-believe situation in which a local police chief pretended he had been victimized by the government authorities<sup>6</sup>. These events indicate that Ramzan Kadyrov, on the one hand, is trying to strike a conciliatory tone with human rights activists in Moscow, but on the other hand he does not tolerate any independent rights monitoring in Chechnya. Both sides of Kadyrov’s tactics perfectly fit into the Kremlin’s

<sup>2</sup> “Rights Activists Say Corruption in Chechnya” is an “Unwritten Rule”, *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 11, Issue: 0, September 27, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>4</sup> “Chechen Leader Says he Does Not Repress Religion and Press Freedom, or Kill his Opponents”, *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 11, September 10, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> [www.kavkaz-uzel.ru](http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru), February 8.

<sup>6</sup> [www.kavkaz-uzel.ru](http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru), February 11.

strategy of presenting the image of a “pacified Chechnya” while at the same time limiting the flow of information out of Chechnya as much as possible<sup>7</sup>.

The illicit actions undertaken by the Chechen leadership also caught the eye of international organizations despite the lack of data. Such an example is the US Commission on International Religious Freedom’s Eleventh Annual Report on Religious Freedom, released on April 29, 2010, that paints a bleak picture of the state of religious freedom in the North Caucasus. The report states that the region — particularly Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, and Kabardino-Balkaria — is facing *chronic instability due to severe economic dislocation, especially among young men; certain radical foreign influences on indigenous Muslims, and endemic corruption and local political grievances*.<sup>8</sup>

All these factors, the report adds, are fuelling *increasingly widespread and sometimes violent expressions of popular dissatisfaction by Muslims with the local and national Russian government*<sup>9</sup>. The US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) report cites human rights groups as reporting that in Russia, and particularly in the North Caucasus, Muslims perceived as “overly observant” have been killed, “disappeared” or arrested on *vague official accusations of alleged Islamist extremism or for allegedly displaying Islamist sympathies, without any proven relationship to Islamist militancy*. Persons suspected of involvement in alleged Islamist extremism have also reportedly *been subjected to torture and ill-treatment in pre-trial detention, prisons, and labor camps*, the report states<sup>10</sup>.

The report, which says that respect for freedom of religion or belief varies in Russia depending on the personal views of regional justice ministry officials or even governors, specifically cites Kadyrov, noting that he has *declared that his republic ‘would be better off’ if it were ruled by sharia law* and has *justified polygamy and honor killings*. Among the report’s “priority recommendations” is that the US impose a visa ban and freeze the US assets of Kadyrov for *his leadership of the Chechen armed forces, which the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has found involved in severe human rights abuses*, his alleged killings of political opponents and local human rights activists; and his *institution of strict sharia law in Chechnya in violation of international religious freedom standards*.<sup>11</sup>

As expected, Kadyrov was “extremely surprised at the content” of the report denying all the indirect accusations brought to him. Nevertheless we

<sup>7</sup> “Kadyrov and Rights Activists Struggle to Find Common Ground Amid Killings of Civilians”, *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 11, September 27, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, May 2010, <http://www.uscirf.gov/images/annual%20report%202010.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>11</sup> “Chechen Leader Says he Does Not Repress Religion and Press Freedom, or Kill his Opponents”, *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 11, September 10, 2010.

have to admit that the problem remains and is rather persistent and the silencing of the human rights activists and denial of foreign observers' reports proves it.

### *Social demands of secession of the North Caucasus*

The sum of these elements led to the emphasis of the main problem of all the republics in the region, especially Chechnya. In 2010, the rebels intensified their activities in the North Caucasus and Kabardino-Balkaria was added to the list of territories where they were most active, in addition to such "traditional" hotspots as Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia. According to the Kavkazsky Uzel website, the confrontation between the Russian security forces and law enforcement (called collectively *siloviki* in Russian), on the one hand, and the extremist underground of the North Caucasus, on the other, was most intense in Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan.

In 2010, no fewer than 127 people were killed and at least 123 injured in the armed conflict in Chechnya, including *siloviki*, militants and civilians. Forty-four law enforcement officers were killed and 93 more injured. As for the suspected militants, 80 of them were liquidated and another 166 were captured. In the same period, 37 explosions were reported in Chechnya, including suicide bombings. There were 12 cases of terrorist acts committed by *shahid* martyrs (suicide bombers). Six people were kidnapped and only two of them returned home<sup>12</sup>.

Also 2010 was the scene of some of the most brazen militant operations as an attack on the village of Tsentoroi in the Kurchaloi district of Chechnya at the end of August, where Kadyrov himself lives. This attack was followed by a suicide assault on the parliament building in Grozny on October 19<sup>13</sup>. In both cases, the bombers were *shahids* for whom, in all probability, the armed attack itself was more important than its outcome. This sent a clear message that the goal of the insurgency was to force the outside world to talk about Chechnya again, not as a Russian republic that is undergoing reconstruction, but as a place where the local pro-Moscow government is strongly opposed by the armed opposition headed by Doku Umarov — the leader of the movement. And this objective was fully achieved by the militants.

Nevertheless, one of the most important development concerning the North Caucasus in 2010 did not occur there or even in Moscow. Rather, it took place in the minds of an increasing number of Russians who have concluded that the costs — economic, political and human — of holding the North Caucasus within the borders of the Russian Federation are too high and that consequently, Russia should "separate" the region from itself. And

<sup>12</sup> Armed conflict in Chechnya in 2010 led to the deaths of 127 people, January, 15, 2011, <http://chechnya.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/179709/>.

<sup>13</sup> [www.jamestown.org](http://www.jamestown.org).

while the Kremlin and the Russian government both reject such ideas, Moscow has taken steps (including the creation of the North Caucasus Federal District, the elaboration of massive investment programs, and the stepping up of military efforts against the anti-Russian militants) that have had the effect of feeding this trend in Russian public opinion, leading ever more ethnic Russians to conclude that the game in the North Caucasus is not worth the candle and that the time has come to admit as much rather than continue to pour endless funds in the region<sup>14</sup>.

This social trend was set by a number of consequences of the failed policies of Moscow in the region, consequences like the Metro bombings in April 2010 or the Domodedovo bombings in January 2011 to which we can add daily reports of bombings, suicide bombings, and attacks on law enforcement officers along the entire North Caucasus. As more and more ethnic Russians demand the “letting go” of the region the situation begins to resemble more and more to the final days of the Soviet empire that died not along the periphery but at the center when ethnic Russians decided that it was not worth fighting to hold the non-Russian republics or even concluded that Russians were spending far too much of their wealth on developing peoples who were anything but sympathetic supporters of the empire.

A similar mentality is adopted in contemporary times and has set up a chain reaction from ethnic Russians. The second element that has caught the public eye are the expenses that Moscow injects in the region, which tend to be a reminder of the cost of imperial ambitions of Moscow. If no one cares about spending when income is going up, ever more Russians are questioning why they should be paying for the most violent and the most ungrateful part of the population of the Russian Federation, now that times are tough. Throughout the Russian media and especially the blogosphere, people are asking why Chechens should get ten or twenty times more money per capita from Moscow than Russians in Ivanovo — especially when the residents of Ivanovo have sent more money to the central treasury from which the Chechen money comes<sup>15</sup>.

These social grievances have turned to violence towards non-ethnic Russians, and discontent is manifested towards the central government as well, an example being the demonstrations that took place in Moscow in November 2010. Even if Moscow were to let the North Caucasus go, it would not be allowing the emergence of truly independent states. The countries that would emerge would be closely tied to and even controlled by Russia, but they would be controlled as Moscow controls foreign countries near its borders, not as it tries to control people within those borders.

Even if this idea is highly rejected and the leaders in Moscow tend to cling on to their imperial ambitions, the lack of a comprehensive solution for the

<sup>14</sup> “The Most Important Development in the North Caucasus in 2010: Russians Begin Talking About Letting It Go”, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 8, Issue: 18, January 26, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> *Idem* 4.

region could spark in the next period a series of ethnic clashes that the central government might not be able to contain.

Even more so the worsening economic situation could speed up the process. In mid 2011 president Medvedev proposed a new economic setup in which the north-Caucasian republics would sustain themselves without the help of Moscow, only on local budgets. The central government would subsidize only the law enforcement agencies and the military in these regions. Given the poor economic performance of Chechnya, which the official Russian statistics do not capture, this could prove to be a socio-economic disaster.

Even though Ramzan Kadyrov was portrayed as being a good economic manager and the rebuildier of Grozny after the second Chechen war, his performances are nothing more than a result of the constant flow of money from Moscow. However, facing mounting difficulties in its own economy and budgets and probably also on the basis of political calculations, the Russian government finally decided to restrict its support for Chechnya. Moscow has reduced its financial assistance to Chechnya by \$100 million or five percent of its initial budget for 2010<sup>16</sup>.

The 2010 budget for Chechnya, with an official population of 1.3 million, was still confirmed at over \$18 billion. By way of comparison, the 2010 budget for neighboring Dagestan, with its official population of 2.7 million, was less than \$1.6 billion. The 2010 budget for Kabardino-Balkaria, with a population of 900,000, was \$650 million while the budget for North Ossetia, with a population of 700,000, was \$400 million<sup>17</sup>. Therefore, all of the North Caucasian republics are heavily dependent on Moscow's financial aid, but only Chechnya's population is so utterly dependent on federal budget funds.

According to official data more than 60 percent of Chechnya's population is unemployed, thus the dependence on the central budget. Ramzan Kadyrov's unlimited control over Chechnya's budget spending, as well as sporadic reports about Kadyrov's fondness of luxury, imply that Chechnya's population is under enormous pressure to survive under these conditions<sup>18</sup>. We can rightfully assume that the economic situation is one of the main factors that drive young Chechens to join the ranks of the insurgency and not the fight for freedom as it would be assumed.

The lack of opportunities inside the system makes the armed resistance a good option for misguided youth that consider it a way to express themselves and make use of their talents. Also, the financial aspect is appealing. Even so, these data are not recorded anywhere officially. Even basic information, such as population size and ethnic composition are considered to be highly sensitive and are invariably rigged. While the official population of Chechnya nears 1.3 million, some sociologists and other experts have persuasively argued that it is significantly exaggerated.

<sup>16</sup> [www.chechnya.gov.ru](http://www.chechnya.gov.ru), November 6, 2009.

<sup>17</sup> [www.gks.ru](http://www.gks.ru), [openbudget.karelia.ru](http://openbudget.karelia.ru), accessed on November 7.

<sup>18</sup> "Ramzan Kadyrov's Regime is Unable to Cope with Sagging Chechen Economy", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 11, November 8, 2010.

The same goes for unexpected jumps in population estimates for Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria. Such erroneous figures even made it into Moscow's official strategy for the North Caucasus, which was published this past September. It wrongly estimated that the region had a population surplus of 1.7 million in the past 20 years, and then spoke of this as being a negative factor<sup>19</sup>.

Moscow is reluctant to reveal demographic and population figures for a number of reasons, most of them politically motivated. One of these reasons is fear of real statistics of how low the population has dropped following the two devastating Chechen wars. Also, for political reasons, Russia is reluctant to admit the real number of Russian ethnics outflow from the republics. This situation is closely related to a higher-than-real number of birth certificates that the local authorities claim to issue annually, in order to provide a plausible reason for its attempts to properly increase the migration rate of North Caucasians into Russia.

### *Politics and religion in Chechnya*

In order to better understand the autonomous republic of Chechnya it is very important to have an overview of the political processes that govern the region and take a look inside the system that develops and drives these processes. At the center of this system we can identify clashing mentalities, interests that far precede those of a regular governing elite and a lust for power that, at times is only surpassed by greed.

Therefore, it would be more than wise to begin our analysis with a more careful insight on Ramzan Kadyrov's reign and policies along with their consequences. Most part of Kadyrov's rule is based on a marriage-like relationship with Moscow that consists mainly of severe dependencies between the two, along with an entire complex of favors and compromises that is pretty effective in covering the weaknesses of the other side. The marriage-like collocation is meant to describe a relationship that far transcends the lucrative parameters of an employee-employer relationship, given a more familiar note that helps the issues-settling process to be more effective.

Ramzan Kadyrov's early political days started alongside his father Akhmed Kadyrov, which as a Mufti (political and religious leader) called a Jihad in Chechnya against Russia. In 1999, at the beginning of the second Chechen war, Ahmed Kadyrov changed his allegiances to Moscow following a conflict with the wahabbi inside the movement that he led. Problems began when the wahabbi part of the armed movement attempted a mass conversion to wahabbi religion of the mufti side under the pretext that the mufti side was the wrong belief of Islam.

<sup>19</sup> [www.government.ru](http://www.government.ru), September 6, pp. 4-9.

Ahmed Kadyrov, having realized that these quarrels would only be in Moscow's advantage, attempted a dialogue but failed, and as the wahabbi side of the armed resistance was more numerous, a losing battle would have followed. After Ahmed's death, his son Ramzan took over where his father had left of and was named president of Chechnya with full blessings from Moscow and the then president Vladimir Putin — after a short intermezzo as Prime Minister but strong arm of the country.

One of the reasons the armed resistance is so fierce in Chechnya is due to the "betrayal" by Ramzan Kadyrov's father, but this was of little importance to Kremlin that just wanted a strong leadership that could subdue one of its wildest regions. The fulfilling of these orders meant unlimited power, money and control for the Chechen president that gained his early glory as the "re-constructer of Chechnya". In time, the Caucasian republic turned into a haven of lawlessness, especially for the president's men that were exonerated of any crime they would commit. The republic is now a replica of the 1990's Chechnya led by Dudaev, where criminals were harbored.

In fact, the 1994 Chechen war took place not only due to separatist claims, but also because the republic had become "a lawless criminal zone" and a base for raids in other republics and cities in the region. Nowadays, Chechnya is again a place where Russian criminals can hide from the authorities; however, the situation is not quite the same. Ramzan Kadyrov's influence and power make him a ruthless "lord of the land" and most criminals that end up in Chechnya might get shot in the street if Moscow really wants it. Moreover, all criminals that are sent or run to the republic might consider themselves imprisoned as they are being constantly watched by Kadyrov's guard.

Most criminals are either shot in the street by Kadyrov's guards, as this saves the expenses of a trial and imprisonment, or forced to join the president's private army in order to fight against the insurgency or those who oppose Moscow's rule. All these liberties turned Kadyrov into a proud and sometimes disobedient watch dog, but nevertheless, the unhealthy and at times bizarre relation between Grozny and Moscow has explanations for all its aspects. The equation is quite simple: Moscow sends a lot of money and permits Kadyrov's repressive rule in exchange for order and a total lack of transparency of the real situation in the republic.

Even so, the space for Kadyrov's political maneuvering is fairly limited. He must have understood by now that the more thoroughly he eliminates the insurgency in Chechnya, the easier and less costly it will be for Moscow to replace him. This might tempt him into continuing the fight with the insurgents in Chechnya for as long as possible. The strategy of scaring Moscow with the possibility of local violence has worked in other, far quieter republics of the North Caucasus, where the local leaders used it to enhance their positions in their talks with Moscow, so it is bound to work in Chechnya<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> "Kadyrov's Forces Accused of Aiding the Insurgency and Obstructing Federal Forces, North Caucasus Analysis" Volume 11, Issue: 3, July 30, 2010.

Paradoxically, having fought two wars with Chechen separatists and winning the second one, Moscow now controls Chechnya least among the North Caucasian republics. Chechnya under formal Moscow's control is currently in many ways much more Islamic than it was under the Ichkerian government of Aslan Maskhadov, prior to the start of the second Russian-Chechen war in 1999<sup>21</sup>. Most disturbingly for Moscow, the state of Kadyrov's rule in Chechnya is such that it can hardly be reformed. The only way of going ahead with changes in Chechnya is removing Kadyrov from his position.

Also, Kadyrov's future may be intimately intertwined with the future of relations between the all-powerful Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, and the weak President Dmitry Medvedev. There were many speculations on the subject in 2010, when the North-Caucasus District was formed and everyone expected Moscow to put Kadyrov in charge. The appointment of Aleksandr Khloponin, special envoy to the Russian President came as a shock for most interested in the subject and as some officials asserted, Kadyrov was quite close to being elected in that position. But this omission has nothing to do with the Chechen president's results as a leader, but rather with the covert political struggle that was going on in Moscow at the time between followers of premier Putin and those of president Medvedev.

Whatever the case, separating the North Caucasus Federal District from the Southern Federal District has brought little gain for Moscow both politically and financially. On the contrary, new funds from the federal budget were allotted to maintain additional management institutions for the new administrative unit. The arguments that the new special presidential envoy to the North Caucasus will be a financial manager did not stand up to scrutiny and the effectiveness of Khloponin as a governor of Krasnoyarsk region, one of the wealthiest in Russia, failed to occur. In other words, a smaller clone of the Southern Federal District was created, but has not changed the situation in the region<sup>22</sup>.

It is clear that the North Caucasus has not become calmer in recent years<sup>23</sup>. In a way, it is recognition of the inefficient policies implemented under the rule of Vladimir Putin. Moreover, President Medvedev expressed himself unequivocally: "There is a lot of money in the region," he said. "That is why a financial manager is needed, as opposed to just a hard man".<sup>24</sup> It is not hard to figure out that the remark was aimed at Ramzan Kadyrov.

Many were and still are unsatisfied with the creation of the new federal district. People who thought it would simplify their lives are particularly upset<sup>25</sup>. Even Ramzan Kadyrov, who does not believe that the problem could

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/topic,463af2212,463af2532,4c7629262,0.html>.

<sup>22</sup> "New Federal District Will Not Stabilize the North Caucasus", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 11, September 27.

<sup>23</sup> The Kremlin's steward looking modernizers, [www.gazeta.ru](http://www.gazeta.ru), January 20, 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Ramzan Kadyrov, starting a blog, made a terrible mess, a second record was quickly removed, [www.newsru.com](http://www.newsru.com), January 24.

<sup>25</sup> [www.rus.expertclub.ge](http://www.rus.expertclub.ge).

be solved just by appointing a special envoy, was criticized for saying that he did not want to resolve his problems through a middleman<sup>26</sup> and refusing at first to work with the new presidential envoy, preferring to continue bearing discussions directly with Moscow.

Shortly after Khloponin was introduced to journalists, one could notice that Kadyrov was a little bit perplexed<sup>27</sup>. In all likelihood it is clear that the local leaders were told to address all their issues to the administration of the new federal district, as opposed to turning to Moscow for advice, practice that was seen by republic presidents a way of consolidating their position with the Kremlin.

Some of the more vocal leaders like the Chechen president sought right to make a habit in fighting this new authority. So, it is worth mentioning one of the very first episodes of reciprocal dismissal between Khloponin and Kadyrov that occurred on March 31, 2010, when Chechnya's parliament issued a statement expressing its disapproval of the presidential envoy to the North Caucasus, Alexander Khloponin.

According to the Chechen Parliament, delays in changes in the socio-economic development of the region were disappointing and could potentially damage President Dmitry Medvedev's reputation and create apathy among the population of the region. The parliamentarians said Chechnya did not receive enough attention from the North Caucasus Federal District and the district bureaucracy did not succeed in building a suitable work team<sup>28</sup>.

Chechnya's parliament is widely known for its complete allegiance to the republic's president, Ramzan Kadyrov. Even though the statement by Chechnya's Parliament did not target Khloponin directly, it implied quite openly that he is not succeeding in his job<sup>29</sup>. Thus, Kadyrov and Khloponin began moving down the path of a major confrontation, one that is likely to be of critical importance to the North Caucasus. Kadyrov's critique towards the presidential envoy indicates his concern over possible rearrangement of his relation with Moscow. Some analysts suggested that the creation of the North-Caucasus District was meant to attaining a way to control the Chechen president, but as time proved, it was a reckless way to do so.

Kadyrov's government and Chechens have been much on the Russian media's radar screen in the last years as several clashes and crimes have caused a public outcry across the country. One of the most outstanding incidents was a clash between young Chechen holidaymakers and local residents in the Krasnodar region on July 25, 2010<sup>30</sup>. Following the fistfight and departure of 400 Chechen tourists, Chechnya's human rights ombudsman

<sup>26</sup> [www.ramzan-kadyrov.ru](http://www.ramzan-kadyrov.ru).

<sup>27</sup> With foundation of new federal district, Northern Caucasus acquires its special status in Russia, [www.kavkaz-uzel.ru](http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru), January 20, 2010.

<sup>28</sup> Parliament Criticized Special Envoy, [www.chechnyatoday.com](http://www.chechnyatoday.com), April, 2010.

<sup>29</sup> Chechnya' Parliament Criticizes Russian Presidential Envoy in the North Caucasus, North Caucasus Analysis, Volume 11, September 14.

<sup>30</sup> [www.kavkaz-uzel.ru](http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru), July 29, 2010.

Nurdi Nukhazhiev stated that the incident should be given a political assessment by Moscow in order to avoid repercussions for the Sochi Olympics. Not only Russian media, but international media have been keeping an eye on the flashy president of Chechnya, most of them criticizing his methods or indulging with spicy details of his eccentric life.

One of these outlets is the USCIRF (US Commission on International Religious Freedom) that released an Annual Report at the beginning of 2011 in which a full chapter concerns the Chechen Republic — the only Russian region to which the report pays special attention. As such, we pay a special attention to this report due to the warning signs it raises and the perspective in which it presents certain issues. The report takes notice and assesses that Kadyrov's Chechnya is being transformed into an Islamic state by the ones that were suppose to prevent that from happening.

It is noteworthy to mention that Ramzan Kadyrov, a practicing Muslim himself, sought and continues to seek to establish the Sufi tradition of Islam in Chechnya, in opposition to the so called "Wahhabi" version of Islam, which is frequently found among the insurgents operating in the region. In the North Caucasus, the term "Wahhabi" is used for adherents of the branch of Islam that is worshiped in Saudi Arabia and several other countries. However, supporters of this version of Islam in the North Caucasus consider this term a label with a negative connotation, and call themselves Salafist or fundamentalists<sup>31</sup>.

Dogmatic or canonical Sunni Islam, represented by Shafii legal school, is followed primarily by the so-called official clergy, i.e. imams and leaders of officially registered congregations, which are overseen by Chechnya's Spiritual Board of Muslims. That school of Sunni Islam was tolerated in the Soviet Union, while Sufism, a more esoteric and internalized expression of Islamic teaching, was suppressed and driven underground<sup>32</sup>.

As such, Kadyrov has instituted the ideological vetting of all imams and dismissed those deemed incompetent; decreed a uniform schedule for daily prayers; and named an Islamic theologian to run a new website intended to promulgate Sufism and attract young believers who might otherwise be drawn to the websites of the various subdivisions of the North Caucasus Islamic insurgency that promote Salafi Islam<sup>33</sup>. In order to enforce these new provisions the Chechen president dispatched bands of masked men in military uniform patrolling the streets of Grozny and firing paintballs at any woman not wearing a head scarf in line with an edict issued by Kadyrov in 2007.

<sup>31</sup> "Kadyrov Exploits Ties With Moscow To Build Islamic State", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 8, Issue: 90, May 10, 2011.

<sup>32</sup> Holier Than Thou: Ramzan Kadyrov And 'Traditional Chechen Islam', [http://www.rferl.org/content/Holier\\_Than\\_Thou\\_Ramzan\\_Kadyrov\\_And\\_Traditional\\_Chechen\\_Islam\\_/2073626.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Holier_Than_Thou_Ramzan_Kadyrov_And_Traditional_Chechen_Islam_/2073626.html).

<sup>33</sup> The Chechen president has demanded from the clergy to unify time prayers, March 11, 2010, <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/166421/>.

In its internal policy, the Chechen Republic has all the appearances of being relatively independent from Russia. We could assess that Ramzan Kadyrov is trying to present the war in the North Caucasus as a religious one — as a fight between traditional Sufi Islam of the North Caucasus against the “Wahhabi heresy”, but this is nothing more than propaganda aimed at maintaining the high popularity rates of the Chechen president. As a result, we could conclude that the “Islamic state founded by Ramzan Kadyrov”<sup>34</sup> conclusion of the USCIRF report is mainly wrong.

The key elements of today’s Chechnya are far from being religious ones, but rely on more realistic features like political power and wealth. Considering the fact that the lust for power is a major catalyst in Russia, in the particular case of the Chechen president, this element is a basic one. Therefore we can assume that the Sufi religion which Kadyrov so effectively uses is nothing more than a political tool used to raise popular support against the wahabbi armed resistance.

Due to the fact that the politics he adopted or the steps he has taken, haven’t always been effective against an ever-growing armed resistance movement, popular support is of utmost importance, guaranteeing him his position as president. Therefore, if the Mayan religion would have represented a solution to his problems in the republic we can be sure that the president would have adopted it. One specific element that proves that this is all about politics is the means through which Kadyrov decided to implement his method: fear rather than conviction, and that could never be a solid base for a long term belief.

In its final conclusions, the report also warns about the danger of Chechnya becoming one of the biggest enemies of Moscow under Kadyrov’s rule. This theory is also wrong, considering the difficult position the Chechen leader would put himself in such a case. On one side he would confront Moscow’s troops and on the other the armed resistance that would deny him the right of an alliance due to the historical disputes mentioned above. Also, considering the fact that power is Kadyrov’s favorite cup of tea, he would never renounce it just to pick up a lost cause.

Upon this string of theories, Moscow’s position is quite relaxed mainly because of the certainties it has when it comes to the political element in Chechnya. Moreover, Kadyrov’s methods matter less as his results against the insurgency, the local and international media and regional control he exerts currently satisfy the political elite in the Kremlin.

Nevertheless, certain gestures of so-called rebellion on Kadyrov’s part have been noticed since he is in power, gestures meant to impose his own influence over that of Moscow. These sporadic actions were never permitted to erupt into full scale scandals that could deteriorate the relation between Grozny and Moscow, but have raised problems between the two.

<sup>34</sup> Annual Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, May 2010, <http://www.uscirf.gov/images/annual%20report%202010.pdf>.

As an example, we could mention a problem that resurfaced in Chechnya, in 2010, several years after it was thought that the issue had long been resolved, if not amicably then by the necessity to comply with and operate under the Russian law. This is Ramzan Kadyrov's ongoing dispute with the Zapad battalion<sup>35</sup>. This unit was previously commanded by Kadyrov's longtime opponent Magomed Kakiev. Kakiev, who commanded this special battalion of the Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) of the Russian General Staff and received a Hero of Russia award, passed the post to his protégé Bislan Elimkhanov.

This military unit is permanently stationed at Khankala, Russia's major military base in Chechnya, which is located on the eastern outskirts of Grozny along the Grozny-Argun highway. The Russian press described this conflict as a war of intelligence services, referring to the GRU unit and the local government's regiment under Ramzan Kadyrov's command<sup>36</sup>. The military units led by Bislan Elimkhanov are among those few in Chechnya that remain out of Kadyrov's control, and this fact could play a bad joke on those who try to hide behind the Russian defense ministry.

The defense ministry was unable to protect the life of Sulim Yamadaev, the commander of the Vostok special battalion, or that of his brother. Nor could it avert the removal of Magomed Kakiev or the attempted murder of Bislan Elimkhanov on September 17, 2008<sup>37</sup>. The two rival groups clashed once again in central Grozny on November 14, 2010<sup>38</sup>, when soldiers from the GRU military unit refused to obey the order to present their identification cards, and a quarrel turned into a fight and ended in the murder of Lieutenant Gelani Akhmadov, a traffic police officer. In response, speaking on local TV, Kadyrov demanded the disarming of all soldiers of the unit leaving the territory of the Khankala base and the surrender of the alleged killer — the Zapad serviceman, Aslan Magomadov, better known in Chechnya by the nickname "Tyson."

The story, therefore, was to be continued, and that was exactly what happened on January 9, 2011, when Elimkhanov was attacked shortly before entering the Khankala military base. He was wounded and his driver killed in the incident. Two of the attackers were killed and one man wounded — Lecha Bogatyrev, who together with his old comrades from the former FSB Special Forces unit called Gorets, organized the attack on Elimkhanov.

Incidentally, Bogatyrev is the man wanted by the Austrian police on charges of murdering the Chechen refugee in Vienna, Umar Israilov, on January 19,

<sup>35</sup> "The Year in Chechnya: Reconstruction Marred by Lingering Insurgency and Inter-Chechen Conflict", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 8, Issue: 15, January 21, 2011.

<sup>36</sup> Yuri Vershik, *In Chechnya, the war started special services*, [www.rosbalt.ru/2011/01/17/808953.html](http://www.rosbalt.ru/2011/01/17/808953.html).

<sup>37</sup> Vladimir Voronov, *Without the „West“ and „East“: there is only Ramzan*, <http://www.ej.ru/?a=note&id=8565>.

<sup>38</sup> "The Year in Chechnya: Reconstruction Marred by Lingering Insurgency and Inter-Chechen Conflict", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 8, Issue: 15, January 21, 2011.

2009<sup>39</sup>. It appears that the relationship between the pro-Russian military units in Chechnya, represented by the GRU's Elimkhanov, on one side, and the former Federal Security Service (FSB) officer Bogatyrev, on the other, is deteriorating. In this standoff, Kadyrov is supported by the FSB and opposed by the army.

Given the fact that the goal has not been achieved yet, by any side, the confrontation will probably continue if there is no intervention by Kremlin officials. However, past experience shows that the diplomatic efforts of mediators are of little use in such conflicts. So far, Moscow has yet to show interest in these "quarrels" but most likely, if things would turn serious, it would intervene probably backing Kadyrov or removing the Army commander from his post there. Bottom line is that even more examples like this could be given, as Moscow still considers Kadyrov to be indispensable in Chechnya.

### *Islam in Chechnya and international terrorism*

One of the most sensible subjects of the Chechen republic is the armed resistance movement called the Caucasus Emirate, an extremist terrorist movement whose main declared objective is to create an autonomous Islamic state within the borders of today's North Caucasus region. The Caucasus Emirate was created and is led by Doku Umarov, a seasoned veteran of both the first and second Chechen wars in which he was in charge of his own battalion.

By 2006, Umarov had become the self-proclaimed president<sup>40</sup> of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, an unrecognized secessionist government of Chechnya. He has been declared dead at least eight times by fellow militants as well as Chechen and Russian authorities, most recently in April 2011<sup>41</sup>. Yet he continues to appear in videos claiming attacks against Russian targets, including a video dated March 29, 2010, in which he claimed responsibility for the Moscow metro attacks<sup>42</sup> or the 2011 Domodedovo airport bombing<sup>43</sup>.

Umarov, who is primarily a field commander and definitely not an ideologue, understood that by exchanging the banners of the ChRI for the idea of the Caucasus Emirate may resuscitate and expand the ranks of the resistance movement. Furthermore, it allows the expansion of militant actions onto the

<sup>39</sup> *Soldiers: In Chechnya, there are no laws, but the will of Kadyrov*, [www.rosbalt.ru/2010/11/18/791437.html](http://www.rosbalt.ru/2010/11/18/791437.html).

<sup>40</sup> *Chechnya: A Surrender of Questionable Importance*, [http://www.stratfor.com/memberships/40980/chechnya\\_surrender\\_questionable\\_importance](http://www.stratfor.com/memberships/40980/chechnya_surrender_questionable_importance).

<sup>41</sup> *Umarov reported dead after raids on terrorists*, <http://news.windowstorussia.com/umarov-reported-dead-after-raids-on-terrorists.html>.

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article7083501.ece>.

<sup>43</sup> *Umarov Claims Responsibility for Bombing*, Combined Reports, [http://www.sptimes.ru/index.php?action\\_id=2&story\\_id=33516](http://www.sptimes.ru/index.php?action_id=2&story_id=33516).

territory of neighboring republics. This is why in October 2007, Umarov resigned as the head of the ChRI and declared himself “Emir (Commander-in-Chief) of militants of the Caucasus and the leader of Jihad” as well as “the only legitimate authority on all territories, where there are mujahedeen”<sup>44</sup>.

The composition of the newly declared state consisted of a number of North Caucasian regions of Russia, including Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Stavropol and Krasnodar Territories, North Ossetia-Alania, Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachaevo-Cherkessia. All of these constituent parts were renamed vilayats (provinces) — Chechnya, for instance, became known as the vilayat Nokhchicho.

According to one of the authors of the separatist website ChechenPress, “the only objective of the recent speeches by Abu-Usman (this is how supporters call Dokka Umarov) is to develop slogans that will be general and equally comprehensible to all Caucasian partisans irrespective of their ethnic self-identification, and which will unite them to build a jihadist movement in the North Caucasus in such a manner so that Umarov himself, and anyone who would come to replace him, is perceived as its only natural leader”<sup>45</sup>.

His position was highly threatened in 2010 after announcing his resignation and then going back on his decision. This caused an unstable wave in the armed insurgency movement that caused a split between Umarov and three of his field commanders.

Doku Umarov will be remembered by many Chechens as far from being a positive character. His name is associated with the betrayal of major values in the struggle for Chechnya’s independence. With his own hands, Umarov did away with the remnants of the statehood of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria by turning the system of the former republic into a new formal creation. This virtual state was founded on the doctrine of Salafism.

Umarov’s closest associates were yesterday’s Salafists, who devoted their whole lives to a struggle against secularism in Chechnya: Supyan Abdullaev, Isa Umarov, Movladi Udugov, Islam Khalimov and others who stood at the foundation of the Party of Islamic Revival in Chechnya in 1988 when the Soviet Union was still in existence<sup>46</sup>.

The movement has been charged by the Russian authorities with a number of crimes, some of which its members did not commit. This is not an unusual practice when dealing with an extremist organization that along the way has claimed many lives. We can talk about the Caucasus Emirate in the context of Chechnya for two simple reasons: first, its headquarters and leader are situated in this republic and second, it is a regional movement dedicated only to the territory of the Russian Federation. No one has ever found a

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/newstext/news/id/1200657.htm>.

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.chechenpress.info/events/2008/01/14/02.shtml>.

<sup>46</sup> “Palace Coup’ Reveals Split between Umarov and Rebel Commander Aslanbek Vadalov”, *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 11, Issue: 4, August 13, 2010.

Chechen who had been fighting in such hot spots as Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Iraq or other places.

Every single person said to be a Chechen ended up being a citizen of the Russian Federation, presenting himself as a Chechen in order to increase his significance. It was a favorite topic of Russian media sources to write about those kinds of incidents, but they never disclosed the results of their investigations. No Chechen was ever transferred to the Russians; no Chechen ever appealed for help to the Chechen authorities; no Chechen ever tried to reach out to his relatives. A mythical Chechen link thus suited many.

For the Russians, this was an opportunity to create, in the eyes of the world community, the negative image of Chechens as partners of international terrorists. Foreign journalists wanted to prove the trustworthiness of their imaginary conspiracy theory. Foreign military officials, on the other hand, tried to explain the ineffectiveness of their counterinsurgency operations by talking about Chechen mercenaries. The term Chechen has long become a synonym of “incredible audacity and bravery,” and if a town or fortified village in Afghanistan or Iraq puts up a strong resistance, everyone immediately starts to claim that it is because Chechens are defending it<sup>47</sup>.

Time has convincingly shown that Chechnya has no role to play in al-Qaeda’s global game. This is largely due to al-Qaeda’s own decision to not fight everywhere and against everybody, although Chechens probably would not have been against some kind of engagement if they had been presented with an opportunity. If al-Qaeda had provided assistance to the rebel movement in the North Caucasus, it would have had to face Russia’s wrath as well, thus exacerbating the global Jihadist movement’s situation by requiring it to fight on a multitude of fronts.

Al-Qaeda might see some common ground with Russia, as a country that represents a perpetual alternative to the United States across the regions of the Muslim world. There would appear to be a tacit agreement between Moscow and al-Qaeda, although that does not mean that there necessarily are actual direct negotiations on those issues between Russia and the al-Qaeda leadership. This could well be in the form of a policy of noninterference in each other’s actions in territories under their control. For this type of relationship, it is sufficient to not go against each other’s interests.

In accusing the North Caucasus rebels of having an al-Qaeda connection, Russia realizes that it is referring to an actor that is not present in the region. Those accusations have no impact on al-Qaeda’s own affairs, thus suiting both parties’ interests. Examples such as the training of pilots in the Chechen mountains for future Twin Towers-like attacks in New York or the discovery of a plot to launch terrorist strikes in London’s underground stations have not been taken seriously except for pro-Kremlin journalists, for some analysts and a whole cohort of commissioned experts on the Caucasus who are trying

<sup>47</sup> “The Caucasus Emirate: a Strictly Home-Grown Movement”, *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 11, October 8, 2010.

at all costs to depict Russia as a “democratic” country, though with shades of a barbarian<sup>48</sup>.

The possible neutrality declared by al-Qaeda vis-à-vis Moscow seems to be truly advantageous to Russia’s geopolitical interests. The never-ending stories attesting to the actions undertaken by al-Qaeda emissaries in the North Caucasus region are nothing but an attempt to portray Russia as a victim of one of the world’s most infamous terrorist organizations. Al-Qaeda’s policy of neutrality toward Russia could be the result of some agreement at the earliest stages of the establishment of that organization in Afghanistan that excluded Russia from the list of al-Qaeda’s major enemies. Otherwise, it is difficult to explain why al-Qaeda’s leadership has no desire to see the militants in the North Caucasus as their supporters or comrades-in-arms<sup>49</sup>.

In that case, it could be assumed that the North Caucasus rebels, finding themselves neglected by al-Qaeda, chose to create their own alternative to win the hearts and minds of the Muslim population. But the creation of the Caucasus Emirate coincided with a period when the armed resistance was not at its height. The heavy losses inflicted on the rebels forced them to embark on a more cautious policy than they would have wanted to undertake.

Whatever the case, it must be taken into account that the North Caucasus armed resistance is an autonomous movement whose actions are not coordinated with any of the well-known terrorist organizations, even though on the ground some international known terrorists were signaled and if some recruitments of some unemployed persons for the Islamic Schools in the Arab world are a fact, including some of the persons involved in the attacks in Moscow seems to have passed through stages of training in such camps. But those have to be considered individual or independent options rather than a direct implication of Al Qaeda franchise organization.

Over the past year, in addition to the weekly attacks we expect to see in the region, the Caucasus Emirate has claimed five significant attacks against larger targets and, notably, ventured outside of the northern Caucasus region. The first of these attacks was a suicide VBIED (Vehicle Born Improvised Explosive Device) bombing that seriously wounded Ingushetia’s president, Yunus-bek Yevkurov<sup>50</sup>, and killed several members of his protective detail in June 2009 as Yekurov was traveling along a predictable route in a motorcade from his residence to his office. Then in August of that year, CE militants claimed responsibility for an explosion at the Siberian Sayano-Shushenskaya hydroelectric dam<sup>51</sup> that flooded the engine room, disabled tur-

<sup>48</sup> *Killer of Russian diplomats in Iraq was sentenced to death*, [www.lenta.ru/news/2010/05/23/execution/](http://www.lenta.ru/news/2010/05/23/execution/).

<sup>49</sup> “The Caucasus Emirate: a Strictly Home-Grown Movement”, *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 11, October 8, 2010.

<sup>50</sup> *Ingushetia: Lessons Learned from an Assassination Attempt*, June 29, 2009, [http://www.stratfor.com/memberships/141329/analysis/20090629\\_ingushetia\\_lessons\\_learned\\_assassination\\_attempt](http://www.stratfor.com/memberships/141329/analysis/20090629_ingushetia_lessons_learned_assassination_attempt).

<sup>51</sup> *Russia: The Chechen Economic War Threat*, August 21, 2009, [http://www.stratfor.com/memberships/144426/analysis/20090821\\_russia\\_chechen\\_economic\\_war\\_threat](http://www.stratfor.com/memberships/144426/analysis/20090821_russia_chechen_economic_war_threat).

bines, wrecked equipment and killed 74 people (the structure of the dam was not affected).

In November 2009, the group claimed responsibility for assassinating an Orthodox priest in Moscow and for detonating a bomb that targeted a high-speed train called the Nevsky Express<sup>52</sup> that runs between Moscow and St. Petersburg and killing 30 people. One of the most recent attacks outside of the Caucasus occurred on March 29, 2010, when two female suicide bombers detonated IEDs in Moscow's underground rail system<sup>53</sup> during morning rush hour, killing 40 people. Last but not least is the Domodedovo airport bombing in January 2011 that killed 37 and wounded 140.

### *Meaningful losses in the Caucasus Emirate's ranks*

Despite a number of successes, including those of projecting the coups in the heart of Moscow and in Central Russia, the rebel movement suffered a great deal of loss during 2010 and 2011. Surprisingly, during this period, the Russian authorities became rather good at tracking down and killing movement leaders. Among the losses that really affected the Caucasus Emirate rebel movement we could exemplify two: the death of ideologist Said Buriatsky and that of second in command after Umarov, Supyan Abdullaev.

Aleksandr Tikhomirov, also known as, Sheik Said Buryatsky, the Muslim convert from eastern Siberia's Buryat republic who became the main ideologist of the North Caucasus insurgency, was one of the six rebels killed in a special operation in the village of Ekazhevo in Ingushetia on March 2, 2010. The operation itself, which lasted two days, spoke volumes about the significance of the situation. Usually, such government endeavors lasting days are a sign that top leaders of the militant underground are among those targeted, which explains their fierce resistance.

The militants involved in the resistance have no chance of being given a fair and democratic trial. In accordance with the traditions of Russian jurisprudence, the captured militant is blamed for all possible actions undertaken against the authorities in recent years. The authorities have their own reasons for doing this, since it allows the police to write off multiple attacks and shootings that remain unsolved. Therefore, it is not surprising that the besieged militant is taken into FSB custody alive. The militant has no choice, and he chooses death<sup>54</sup>.

<sup>52</sup> *Russia: Bomb Attack on Train*, November 28, 2009, [http://www.stratfor.com/memberships/149570/analysis/20091128\\_russia\\_rail\\_attack\\_train](http://www.stratfor.com/memberships/149570/analysis/20091128_russia_rail_attack_train).

<sup>53</sup> *Russia: Telltale Signs of Caucasus Militants' Involvement in Attacks*, March 29, 2010, [http://www.stratfor.com/memberships/158169/analysis/20100329\\_russia\\_telltale\\_signs\\_caucasus\\_militants\\_involvement\\_attacks](http://www.stratfor.com/memberships/158169/analysis/20100329_russia_telltale_signs_caucasus_militants_involvement_attacks).

<sup>54</sup> "Killing of Said Buryatsky Unlikely to Deter North Caucasus Insurgency", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 7, Issue: 48, March 11, 2010.

Born in the city of Ulan-Ude, Buryatsky later studied Islam in Egypt and joined the North Caucasus insurgency in the summer of 2008<sup>55</sup>. Said Buryatsky attracted attention by virtue of his proselytizing activities within the armed resistance. A native of distant Buryatia, born to a Buryat father and a Russian mother, he became neither a Buddhist (Buryats are Buddhists) nor a Christian (like his mother). Buryatsky during adulthood chose Islam as his personal religion and very rapidly (thanks to his YouTube lectures) became popular among the youth throughout Russia.

His studies abroad (in Egypt and Kuwait) were not lengthy, thus it is unclear whether or not he received a diploma from al-Azkhara, one of the most important Universities of the Islamic world<sup>56</sup>. Buryatsky arrived in the Caucasus sometime at the end of 2007 or the beginning of 2008, where he provided major ideological support for the Caucasus Emirate, the representatives of which noticeably felt a shortage of such preachers. He often sharply criticized Sufi Muslims, critics of the Emirate, and spoke out against the commanders who disagreed with Doku Umarov's views.

His joining the ranks of the militants marked the beginning of a new period in the North Caucasus resistance movement. It resulted in the movement's internationalization, attracting young recruits from among those living thousands miles away from the region and demonstrated that the views and ideas of the movement were finding support among Russian youth. It may have played a role in the creation of a multitude of underground militant movement support clubs across the Russian Federation<sup>57</sup>.

Said Buryatsky truly became a hero for many youths when he made a video of a suicide attack on a regional interior ministry (ROVD) building in the city of Nazran. This was received as inspirational, as many at first thought that it was Said Buryatsky himself who sat behind the wheel of the vehicle laden with TNT<sup>58</sup>. In reality, he apparently planned the operation and filmed it nearby, which allowed the Russian security services to blame him for the blast<sup>59</sup>.

His death became powerful ideological tool in the hands of the armed resistance<sup>60</sup>. As it turns out, even in the last minutes of his life, he was preaching to his comrades, telling them to remain calm and to believe that a better world awaited them than the one they were leaving behind<sup>61</sup>. Meanwhile, the authorities were happy to blame Buryatsky for all the major militant actions in Russia, including the attack on Nevsky Express train in November 2009<sup>62</sup>.

<sup>55</sup> "Said Buryatsky Reported to be Among Six Militants Killed in Ingushetia", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 11, September 21, 2010.

<sup>56</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>57</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>58</sup> <http://guraba.net/rus/content/view/630/37/>.

<sup>59</sup> [www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4wFomfe68Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4wFomfe68Q).

<sup>60</sup> [www.hunafa.com](http://www.hunafa.com), August 27, 2009.

<sup>61</sup> [www.kavkazcenter.com](http://www.kavkazcenter.com), March 6, 2010.

<sup>62</sup> *Russia: Bomb Attack on Train*, November 28, 2009, [http://www.stratfor.com/memberships/149570/analysis/20091128\\_russia\\_rail\\_attack\\_train](http://www.stratfor.com/memberships/149570/analysis/20091128_russia_rail_attack_train).

The death of Said Buriatsky quickly became a defining factor in the tactics of the armed resistance and was avenged in a bloody manner with the Moscow metro bombings that claimed 40 lives and wounded 100. Moreover, the blasts were carried out by the so-called black-widows, women trained to become suicide terrorists that are allegedly trained by the ones they were avenging. Even though the unwritten code of the radical movement states that loss is taken painlessly, Buriatsky's demise came as a shock given his influence with the militants and his young age (24).

Supyan Abdullaev, second in command and heir of the Caucasus Emirate, was alongside another 17 militants in an operation targeting a rebel base near the village of Upper Alkun in Ingushetia. Russian authorities had hoped to be able to kill Umarov himself, so the liquidation of Abdullaev was little solace for the Russian leaders<sup>63</sup>.

In reality it is Abdullaev's death that can and should be regarded as a severe blow to the entire North Caucasus militant movement and to the supporters of the Caucasus Emirate. It was Abdullaev who was behind the creation of the Caucasus Emirate, and was responsible for extending the Emirate's frontiers to virtually all Muslim peoples of the North Caucasus, well beyond Ichkeria, which was de jure confined to the boundaries of the Chechen Republic<sup>64</sup>.

The role of Emir Supyan, also known as Supyan Abdullaev, together with that of Emir Seifullah, also known as Anzor Astemirov, who was killed in March 2010, were of exceptional significance for the implementation of the Islamic component and physical structure of the armed rebel movement<sup>65</sup>. If Emir Seifullah tried to tackle the issue of subordinating Muslim regiments of various ethnicities across the region to the president of Ichkeria, Emir Supyan, for his part, put into practice the very idea of forming an Islamic state in the North Caucasus — a concept that had been cherished by both men ever since the second half of the 1980s when they had participated in the Islamic Revival Party<sup>66</sup>.

The role that Supyan Abdullaev had within the system of the Caucasus Emirate was clearly manifested when some of the most influential Chechen commanders renounced their oaths of allegiance to Umarov in August-September 2010, after the latter first announced his resignation as head of the North Caucasus rebels and declared Chechen commander Aslanbek Vadalov as his successor<sup>67</sup> — but reversed that decision three days later and reinstalled himself as Emir of the Caucasus Emirate<sup>68</sup>.

<sup>63</sup> "Death of Umarov's Successor Is a Major Setback to Rebel Movement," *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 12, Issue: 7, April 7, 2011.

<sup>64</sup> *Jihad in Kabarda, Balkaria and Karachai: Ideas, Vectors, and Prospects*, March 26, 2010, [www.jamaatshariat.com/ru/content/view/531/29/](http://www.jamaatshariat.com/ru/content/view/531/29/).

<sup>65</sup> *MS Explorer Babitsky — on the Elimination of Anzor Astemirov*, March 25, 2010, [www.svobodanews.ru/content/article/1993831.html](http://www.svobodanews.ru/content/article/1993831.html).

<sup>66</sup> [www.nmayd.com/forum/showthread.php?t=826&page=1](http://www.nmayd.com/forum/showthread.php?t=826&page=1).

<sup>67</sup> Ilya Azar, *Umarov, resigned from the emirate*, [www.gazeta.ru/politics/2010/08/02\\_a\\_3403658.shtml](http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2010/08/02_a_3403658.shtml).

<sup>68</sup> <http://inforotor.ru>.

It was not difficult to guess that this was precisely due to the position of Abdullaev, who ignored the joint declaration by such prominent Chechen commanders as Aslanbek Vadalov, Tarhan Gaziev and Hussein Gakaev. Allying himself with Umarov, Emir Supyan played a crucial role in the subsequent developments. After the Chechen commanders left for their bases, it was Supyan, who had always been close to Umarov, who managed to persuade him to reverse his decision. Thus, the role of Supyan Abdullaev became decisive in the fight against the dissident Chechen commanders<sup>69</sup>.

Abdullaev's death was the second hard blow taken by the rebel movement and was avenged also in a violent way by the Chechen movement. The message that the rebels attempted to pass on, this time was designated only for the Chechen authorities. On October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2010 four shahids (suicide bombers) detonated themselves in the fenced yard of the Chechen parliament, killing two and wounding six<sup>70</sup>.

The opinion voiced by some political analysts alleging that the incident was a defeat for the rebels does not seem to be well founded<sup>71</sup>. This point of view is based on the argument that not a single member of Chechen parliament was taken hostage. But, taking hostages was not the key goal of the rebels' plan. Additionally, it seems unlikely that three militants would have been sufficient in order to seize the Parliament building which was fenced in and guarded from all sides. Given that, it might be presumed that the goal of the three suicide bombers hardly was to take Parliament members hostage and put forward demands. This is not a characteristic feature of the shahid *modus operandi*, as they are never interested in negotiations.

The fact that the first explosion took place at the entrance to the Parliament proves that the rebel had no desire to engage in a shootout or combat; his task was to commit the suicide bombing in order to destroy the building's entrance-exit points. The terrorist attack was characterized as a gift for Russia's chief policeman. Apparently, they did not plan for a seizure of the Parliament building, but rather to bring about a powerful message through their action. To that end, they pulled off their scheme rather efficiently.

The bombing of the Chechen Parliament was reported by all international news agencies, without exception. Even those who had already forgotten the reports from war-torn Chechnya, once again became engaged with Chechen issues<sup>72</sup>. The bombing took place after numerous Russian government statements claiming that Chechnya was now stable and calm. With that, Ramzan Kadyrov's prestige was also severely hit. So, we can conclude that

<sup>69</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>70</sup> "Attack on Parliament in Grozny: Gain or Loss for the Rebels?," *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 11, Issue: 8, October 28, 2010.

<sup>71</sup> Andrei Shary, *Political analyst Timur Muzayev — an attack on the Chechen parliament*, October 19, 2010, [www.svobodanews.ru/content/article/2194856.html](http://www.svobodanews.ru/content/article/2194856.html).

<sup>72</sup> Rashid Nurgaliev, *In the Chechen Republic's Interior Minister arrives Russia*, October 18, 2010, [http://groztrk.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=3112&Itemid=99999999](http://groztrk.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3112&Itemid=99999999).

the main reason for this endeavor was nothing more than public exposure and gaining the international attention that has dimmed over time.

*The internal secession that threatened  
the Caucasus Emirate*

There is one event that is of greater importance to the Caucasian Emirate than all the above-mentioned. This is the 2010 rift that took place inside the rebel movement, rift that was produced by the alleged resignation of rebel leader and Emir, Doku Umarov. In a recorded message posted on August 2, 2010<sup>73</sup>, Umarov announced that he was stepping down as emir of the Caucasus Emirate and handing over the leadership position to one of his deputies — Aslambek Vadalov, aka Emir Alsmbek. However, just two days later, on August 4, pro-rebel websites posted a new video statement by Umarov, in which he announced that he was not stepping down as emir of the Caucasus Emirate and said that the video in which he had announced his resignation had been „fabricated.“<sup>74</sup>

On August 15, Khusein Gakaev released a statement announcing that Chechen rebel fighters would no longer take orders from Umarov. He said, however, that they were still part of the Caucasus Emirate. Gakaev said that Umarov, in rescinding his own resignation, had shown disrespect toward the „majlis“ — the Caucasus Emirate’s legislative body<sup>75</sup>. The message transmitted by Gakaev was met with harsh critique from Umarov and those still loyal to him in a video that features, along with Umarov, three other emirs — Abu Supyan (aka Supyan Abdullaev, later deceased), Khamzat and Islam.

Abdullaev, who was Umarov’s first deputy at the time, said that he would stick by his baiyat (pledge) to Umarov and called on the mutinous emirs to understand that their actions had no basis. He was then followed by Khamzat and Islam, who made similar statements. The video ended with Abdullaev again, who called on the dissident wing of the Emirate to weigh carefully its decision to violate the pledge of subordination to Umarov, the „chosen emir“.<sup>76</sup>

Simultaneously, texts began to appear on the websites of the North Caucasus national Jamaats calling for subordination to the emir and the punishment of those who orchestrated a mutiny against his authority<sup>77</sup>. This, in fact, meant that the reader was being told that the controversial episode involving Umarov’s dismissal might well be a plot against him, and that the conspirators should be punished.

<sup>73</sup> [www.kavkazcenter.com](http://www.kavkazcenter.com) August 2, 2010.

<sup>74</sup> [www.kavkaz.tv](http://www.kavkaz.tv), August 4.

<sup>75</sup> [www.kommersant.ru](http://www.kommersant.ru), September 22; [www.kavkaz-uzel.ru](http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru), September 23.

<sup>76</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WpixQeLMjNY>; [www.kommersant.ru](http://www.kommersant.ru), September 22; [www.kavkaz-uzel.ru](http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru), September 23, 2010.

<sup>77</sup> [www.islamdin.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=866:2010-08-03-10-15-32&catid=27:2009-02-09-17-38-17&Itemid=16](http://www.islamdin.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=866:2010-08-03-10-15-32&catid=27:2009-02-09-17-38-17&Itemid=16).

As we are lacking any further evidence of what transpired at the beginning of August 2010 and the real reasons of Umarov's resignation or if the recorded message was not fake we can only assume but no matter the case, the strategy that the rebel leader and his followers adopted seems to have worked. Accusing a forgery and afterwards accusing treason Umarov managed to maintain the allegiance of some of the Jammaats in the region and some field commanders in Chechnya.

The newly-elected Emir of the Caucasus Emirate (although it still remains a mystery whether he indeed was elected) Aslanbek Vadalov was no neophyte for the rebels. He is well-known among those who have been fighting against the Russian rule since the war started in 1999. Born in 1972, Vadalov is from the village of Ishkhoy-yurt in the Gudermes district of Chechnya. The truth is that Emir Aslanbek was first a subordinate of Shamil Basaev and then later fought under Akhmad Avdorkhanov.

Emir Aslanbek maintained excellent relations with the late Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov and that was why he became responsible for the Gudermes sector of the armed forces of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. After President Maskhadov was killed by the Russians and Abdul-Khalim Sadulaev succeeded him, Emir Aslanbek was appointed as deputy commander of Chechnya's Eastern Front. And under Doku Umarov he was elevated to the post of the Emir of the Eastern Front before becoming the naib, or deputy emir, of the Caucasus Emirate before the so-called resignation of Umarov<sup>78</sup>.

In a video posted on the Chechen rebel website Daymohk.org on October 7, Aslanbek Vadalov and two other Chechen rebel field commanders, Emir Gakaev and Tarkhan Gaziev, say they renounced their oath of allegiance to Umarov because he refused to seek the advice of other "emirs" and allegedly dismissed the Majlis al-Shura, the legislative organ of the North Caucasus Emirate<sup>79</sup>. They also indicated that Umarov announced the creation of the North Caucasus Emirate in November 2007 without consulting other rebel leaders — although they add that the creation of the North Caucasus Emirate was a correct decision. The Chechen field commanders said in the video that Gakaev, aka Emir Khusein, has been elected as "Emir of the Vilayat of Nokhchicho [Chechnya]." Gakaev said that a new Majlis consisting of rebel emirs has been set up and will decide issues based on a majority of votes, as in a Parliament.

The three Chechen rebel field commanders said that all Chechen mujahideen support them and that they may join up with the other militants of the North Caucasus after Umarov steps down as head of the North Caucasus Emirate. At the same time, they stressed that they remain part of the North Caucasus Emirate and that they are not splitting off from their "brothers" of

<sup>78</sup> "Palace Coup' Reveals Split between Umarov and Rebel Commander Aslanbek Vadalov," *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 11, Issue: 4, August 13, 2010.

<sup>79</sup> www.daymohk.org, October 7, 2010.

“the Vilayat of Dagestan, the Vilayat of Ingushetia, the Vilayat of Kabarda Balkaria and Karachai, from the Nogai”<sup>80</sup>.

Even though he was recognized in Chechnya, Emir Aslanbek was not granted allegiance by all other national jamaats of the North Caucasus. These are Sharia (Dagestan), Sharia (Ingushetia), Yarmuk (Kabardino-Balkaria), Karachay (Karachay-Cherkessia), the Nogai Steppe (the Stavropol region and the northern parts of Chechnya and Dagestan), and al-Garib (Adygea) jamaats; and possibly the Jamaat of Azerbaijan, which is better known as the Sumgait Jamaat.

In his video appeal to the Emirs of Dagestan, Ingushetia and Kabarda, Doku Umarov had asked them to present their opinion on his choice as soon as they could<sup>81</sup>.

This entire episode has obviously created an imbalance in the structure of the Chechen and even Caucasian insurgency and left the question of leadership within the rebel movement. The new Chechen leadership made up of the commanders who broke away from Umarov was not be able to count on support from neighboring jamaats, and most importantly from the powerful Sharia Jamaat in Dagestan. The crux of the matter is that the former leader of the Dagestani jamaat, Seifullah of Gubden (aka Magomed Vagapov), who was killed in August 2010 had publicly accused the “seditious” Chechen commanders of deviation from and violation of the principles of Islamic governance<sup>82</sup>, which makes the existence of a coup a plausible scenario. This scenario determined the launching of a guilt-proving campaign against the three secessionist commanders, by those loyal to the Emirate. Middle Eastern sheiks were summoned up to support Umarov and issued fatwahs supporting him, one after another, not overly burdening themselves with attempts to understand the essence of the conflict<sup>83</sup>. The Dagestani Jamaat was another supporter of Umarov and provided him with powerful support from the very beginning of the schism demanding, in very strong terms, that the legality of Umarov’s leadership not to be questioned. The emir of Ingushetia, Adam, and the emir of Kabardino-Balkaria, Seifullah, also did not shy away from supporting Umarov<sup>84</sup>.

These elements lead to the thinning of the supporter-base of those who were castigated for trespassing Sharia law. Undoubtedly the Chechen forces

<sup>80</sup> <http://daymohk.net/video/obrashenie1.mp4>; [www.kavkaz-uzel.ru](http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru), October 7; [www.newsru.com](http://www.newsru.com), October 8.

<sup>81</sup> “‘Palace Coup’ Reveals Split between Umarov and Rebel Commander Aslanbek Vadalov”, *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 11, Issue: 4, August 13, 2010.

<sup>82</sup> [www.islamdin.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=883:2010-08-12-21-25-33&catid=2:kavkaz&Itemid=3](http://www.islamdin.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=883:2010-08-12-21-25-33&catid=2:kavkaz&Itemid=3).

<sup>83</sup> “Dagestani Militant Leader Brokers Reconciliation Deal Between Chechen Commanders”, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 8, Issue: 145, July 28, 2011.

<sup>84</sup> Kazi IR, Amir of Province of Dagestan Seyfullah, „Amir Dokka Abu Usman is the only legitimate ruler“, Kavkaz Center, <http://kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2010/08/13/74527.shtml>, August 13, 2010.

were severely weakened in recent times, unlike those of the Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria Jamaats, which today stand as the most active forces in the North Caucasus armed movement.

Considering these elements added with the death of Umarov's closest associate, Supiyan (Supiyan Abdullaev), on March 22, 2011 and the death of emir Mukhannad apparently made the schism issue more relevant for the Emir. While Umarov was inclined to blame Mukhannad for the militants' internal conflict, the dissident commanders held Supiyan responsible for convincing Umarov to retract his resignation. Thus, since the two main figures in the split had died, a dialogue between the two sides became possible and realistic, especially as the dissident commanders had failed to secure a permanent independent channel of support abroad, in the diaspora, which lead to their isolation. In his turn, Umarov, having had support from abroad, failed to find viable replacement figures for the Chechen commanders who renounced him. In other words, Umarov was the head of the North Caucasian militants, but not of the Chechens themselves, a position bound to produce a very uncertain future for sure.

Thus, both sides of the conflict needed a face-saving form of reconciliation. The fact that the previously demoted commanders became Umarov's deputies reaffirms that they have the real power. At the same time, the fact that the dissident commanders submitted to Umarov also strengthened his positions among the non-Chechen sector of the resistance. Umarov scored this victory with the assistance of Emir Salikh (Ibragimkhalil Daudov), the leader of the Dagestani jamaat, and Sheikh Abu Mukhammad Ad-Dagestani, the Caucasus Emirate kadi (Muslim judge)<sup>85</sup>.

We could not assess that the chechnyan part of the Caucasus Emirate is at its former full strength, a fact concluded by the lack of any major actions at the end of 2011 and beginning of 2012, nor that the leadership of the movement fully restored but we could conclude the situation is as it was before the schism. We could elaborate and presume that the one-year experience was at least meaningful for the four main players involved revealing their interdependencies.

The truce within the insurgency was not overlooked by the Russian authorities that, in turn, considered that the lack of internal quarrel could restore the Chechen insurgency to its former injuriousness. As a result the Russian authorities decided to start an unprecedented rearmament program that is under way in southern Russia. As a rule, overall military spending in the region over the past 10 years has outpaced government spending on developing the region economically. The rearmament process has been the fastest in the whole post-Soviet history of Russia<sup>86</sup>. All tank brigades in the south of

<sup>85</sup> "Dagestani Militant Leader Brokers Reconciliation Deal Between Chechen Commanders", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 8, Issue: 145, July 28, 2011.

<sup>86</sup> Sergei Konovalov, *Update the defense of the North Caucasus*, November 25<sup>th</sup> 2010, [http://www.ng.ru/nvo/2011-10-25/6\\_kavkaz.html](http://www.ng.ru/nvo/2011-10-25/6_kavkaz.html).

the country have been rearmed with the new T-72B tanks with upgraded rocket and cannon systems. Infantry units in North Ossetia and the Volgograd region and tank battalions in Dagestan and Abkhazia have been entirely rearmed with T-90A tanks, BMP 3 infantry fighting vehicles and BTR-82A APCs. Anti-aircraft guns and new air defense systems were overhauled, starting with those in Chechnya. The new Barnaul-T air defense system has been installed at the Kalinovskaya military base, which is in the northern part of Chechnya close to the Terek River, thus transforming the North Caucasus in one of the most densely packed with military hardware Russian region<sup>87</sup>.

The federal military command in Chechnya reported it had received new military command and communication vehicles consisting of armored personnel carriers equipped with video cameras and GLONAS, the Russian analogue of the GPS navigation system, which should improve navigation and even permit battles with insurgents to be filmed. The machines are expected to improve the Russian military's ability to carry out tactical tasks<sup>88</sup>.

The military spending is nothing more than a product of Kremlin's worries regarding the region in the light of the 2014 Sochi Olympics. These developments lead us to conclude that the situation in the region is far worse than the one Moscow anticipated and maybe one hundred times worse than the one it presented to the public. Moreover, in Chechnya, where Islam had become the dominant political factor, one which now outweighs the Russian constitution, the military factor appears to be the only thing standing between the existent unstable order and a full-scale turnover of the situation.

### *A different kind of hard policy*

The reaction of the authorities would appear useless if we take into consideration the events that followed shortly. On February 2, Doku Umarov ordered his forces to refrain from attacks on Russian civilians in connection with the fact that, "the process of civil protest has begun in Russia and the population no longer accepts Putin's policies". These orders were given through a video posted on the insurgency website Kavkaz-Center. According to Umarov, this could mean that Russian citizens do not support the methods of war in the North Caucasus sanctioned by Putin and therefore, "the Russian population has the choice either of supporting the Russian authorities and again becoming rebel targets, or decisively rejecting the policy of murder and terror. The peaceful population of Russia does not support the Cheka regime of Putin... [T]hese people are hostages to the same regime that brutally fights against Islam on the territory of the Caucasus." Given the new

<sup>87</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>88</sup> Military experts comment on the draft program of Putin, Irina Arzahova, Ria Novosti, <http://voennovosti.ru/2012/01/voennye-eksperty-prokomentirovali-proekt-programmy-putina/>.

circumstances, Umarov said, “the Mujahedeen must protect this civilian population” since these people do not fight against Muslims, but rather oppose Putin’s regime that attacks Islam in the North Caucasus<sup>89</sup>. Umarov added that the moratorium on attacks on civilian targets does not include the Russian military and political structures, or the Russian state itself, until there is a “truce,” meaning that the Russian power structures, army, special services and political leadership will still be targeted. Explaining his decision to change the status of the civilian population of Russia, Umarov stated that by opposing Vladimir Putin, the population of Russia was also condemning the government’s actions against the North Caucasus<sup>90</sup>.

In spite of the fact that all the supporters of the insurgency and even Umarov attempted to depict this decision as a ground-breaking, revolutionary decision. Truth be told, ever since 2007, the resistance movement in the North Caucasus under Doku Umarov has been entirely associated with Islamic radicalism and the figure of the “Emir” stands above all major violent events that have happened ever since. That is why we should consider Umarov’s move a purely political one, a simple PR stunt that is meant to bring points to the insurgency in the context of the Moscow riots. In fact if we were to break down Umarov’s message we could observe that new elements have been added to its rhetoric: first of all the insurgent leader addresses his message to the Russian ethnics as well as Caucasians, attempting to make a parallel between the lack of options that drove the Russian population into the street and the lack of options that the islamist front has been faced with in the North Caucasus. The common factor of the two situations is identified in the Kremlin and as a contrast to it Umarov tries to project a human image to the bad reputation of the insurgency thus attempting to sensitize the ethnic Russians. Moreover, the Emir subtly tries to suggest that any protest of the population against Moscow’s policies is a protest against the policies conducted against the insurgency thus forcing him and the entire organization into legitimacy. Furthermore, Umarov addresses the “violence” issue, suggesting that violence is used by the central authorities against the claims of democracy of the people in the street and against the religious claims of the North Caucasus ethnics and appeals to the mujahedeens to protect the population against such violence. Thus, the leadership of the North Caucasian militants is attempting to capitalize on the rising tensions in the Russian society, as popular protests against the return of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin to the Russian presidency spread.

Although Umarov is inarguably the leader of all the jamaats of the North Caucasus, it is hardly possible he can exercise control over all operations of

<sup>89</sup> *Emir Dokka Abu Usman IR changed the status of the population of Russia and gave the order to avoid attacks on civilian targets*, Kavkaz Center, February 3, 2012, <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2012/02/03/88591.shtml>.

<sup>90</sup> *Umarov ordered the rebels in the Caucasus, to avoid attacks on civilian targets*, Kavkaz-Uzel, February 2012, <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/200452/>.

the militants, especially those outside the region. Thus, hasty statements by experts about the possible complete overhaul of the North Caucasus resistance movement should be considered premature<sup>91</sup>.

It is evident that the targeting of civilians was one of the main contentious issues in the row between Umarov — who supported targeting civilians — and the Chechen rebel commanders who revolted against him — considering civilians off limits — and proclaimed Khusein Gakaev as their new leader in August 2010. One year later, when they reunited under Umarov's command, it was clear that the leader of the North Caucasian militants would have to make some concessions in return for their reaffirmation of allegiance, especially as a Sharia-based examination of the dispute reconfirmed that the dissenters were right on political grounds, but that they contradicted Sharia. This vague finding allowed both sides of the dispute to save face. The dissenters did not like the fact that Umarov took responsibility for all the terrorist attacks across the Russian Federation. The Sharia-based examination of the dispute was performed by the principal Sharia qadi (judge) of the Caucasus Emirate, Sheikh Abu Mukhammad of Dagestan<sup>92</sup>. If the North Caucasus' insurgents abstain from targeting the civilian population, it would have a radical impact on the course of insurgency war in the region. Up to this point attacks against Russian civilians did not benefit the insurgency even more so, contributed to the growth of an anti-Caucasian and anti-Muslim mood among Russians and a significant growth in support for Putin, due to his position as a protector against terror. Even so, the Russian public is unlikely to change its negative attitude toward the North Caucasus insurgents as the result of Umarov's statement to stop targeting civilians. Official Moscow may even try to portray the Russian opposition as "terrorists' allies." Still, this statement neutralizes possible plots of the Russian government officials to ban public protests under the pretext of "terrorism threat." Also if an attack against civilians still takes place in the run up to the presidential elections on March 4, it will be harder for the government to blame it on the insurgents<sup>93</sup>.

Upon concluding we would like to address a very determinative event that occurred at the end of 2011, one that can reveal the trends regarding Chechnya for the next period. In December 2011 Premier Vladimir Putin visited Chechnya for the ninth time in his career as a politician (for the first time in December 1999) and this one bears no lesser importance than the one thirteen years ago.

One of the main "attractions" of Putin's visit was the political aspect and the fact that after all this time his tactics are the same. In a statement prior to

<sup>91</sup> *Caucasus Emirate is ready to take the plunge to victory?* Post utmost importance to Kavkaz-Center, Avrom Caucasus, February 3, 2012, <http://avrom-caucasus.livejournal.com/155534.html>.

<sup>92</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "North Caucasus Rebel Leader Tries to Capitalize on Russian Anti-Kremlin Protests," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 9, Issue: 28, February 9, 2012.

<sup>93</sup> Valery Dzutsev, "Leader of the Caucasus Emirate Vows to Stop Attacks Against Russian Civilians," *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 13, Issue: 3, February 3, 2012.

his visit Putin said he knew “there are many claims against the head of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, but he is reconstructing the republic and the ‘corruption ingredient’ is minimal”<sup>94</sup>. Putin’s statement should be regarded as direct support for his henchman in Chechnya, and as a sign that he intends to continue supporting Kadyrov after again becoming Russia’s president.

Thus, Vladimir Putin’s ninth visit to Chechnya was an expression of personal support for Ramzan Kadyrov and Putin’s other henchmen in the republics of the North Caucasus. These are the same leaders who are regularly accused by their respective populations of corruption and human rights breaches. These leaders frequently do not really understand what is going on in their regions, which makes their policies absurd and provokes radicalism. Having concluded that the secession of the North Caucasus republics would lead to the disintegration of the Russian Federation, Putin thereby acknowledged that the situation in the region is exactly the same as it was 20 years ago — i.e., at the moment of USSR’s dissolution in December 1991, i.e. 20 years ago<sup>95</sup>. As such we can’t expect any major political change in the region in the near future. Moreover, the violence of the region caused by the lack of proper policies of the authorities has, up to this point brought many votes for Vladimir Putin therefore the interest is towards maintaining this status quo.

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<sup>94</sup> “Putin: Support for the North Caucasus will be continued within a reasonable”, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, December 15, 2011, <http://www.rg.ru/560639-anons.html>.

<sup>95</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, “Putin Signals He Will Stick to the Status Quo in Chechnya,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 9, Issue: 4, January 6, 2012.

**Chapter 11**  
**INGUSHETIA'S INSURGENCY**  
**AND THE ROLE OF ISLAM**

**RADU ARGHIR**

Ingushetia has long been one of the focal points of the North Caucasus insurgency. The relatively small province has been very active in terms of terrorist activity, and, even though smaller than its neighbors and with higher population density (therefore making it an unlikely hiding place), it served as a safe haven for many leaders of the North Caucasus insurgency. The fact that the insurgency as a whole has a religious component is a well known fact, however what this paper aims to establish is whether the strong presence of the insurgency in Ingushetia is in any way related to the presence of religious extremism in the province or if there is a different reason for that. Also it is necessary to establish the extent of the presence in the area of religious extremism in order to assess the risk it poses both now and in the long and medium term.

However, before we take into consideration the religious factor, there are a number of other issues that need to be considered, ranging from economic indicators to ethnicity.

*Land and population*

Ingushetia is now part of the recently created North Caucasus Federal District<sup>1</sup> and borders Georgia to the south, Chechnya to the East and North Ossetia to the North and West. However this configuration is rather new. From a historical viewpoint Ingushetia is a fairly young province with a tumultuous history marked by wars, uprisings and ethnic cleansing. In fact, it may still have been part of Chechnya today had it not decided in 1991, when the first Russo-Chechen began, not to join the Chechen rebellion and instead join the Russian Federation in a move that was probably aimed at gaining Moscow sympathy; hence Ingushetia was created in 1992. However, despite

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<sup>1</sup> "Kremlin Picks Outsider As New Caucasus Overlord", 19.01.2010, Radio Free Europe Website.

the decision not to join the insurgency and a history of injustice, not much land was assigned to the new province. According to the 2008 census it has a population of 413,000<sup>2</sup> and the total territory size is of only 3 600 km<sup>2</sup>, most of it being mountains and hills<sup>3</sup>, making it the smallest province in Russia in terms of territory and one of the smallest in terms of population. As a result of the small territory size the province is more densely populated than neighboring provinces such as Dagestan, Chechnya or North Ossetia, leaving fewer hiding places for insurgents. The rugged landscape should compensate partially for the difference in density but then again the landscape of neighboring provinces is similar. Also, its small population should provide a smaller recruiting pool for militants.

In practice, none of these factors has made any difference since the province has proved to be a hotspot for the insurgency, at least after the second Chechen war, and the important question is why.

First of all, the province's economy paid a heavy price during the Chechen wars. Despite deciding to join the Russian Federation, Ingushetia was not spared from the war's devastation. There is little accurate information (and this in itself shows the gravity of the situation) but during the first and especially the second Chechen war, the number of refugees arriving in the province almost doubled its population. According to a UN estimate at least 200 000 refugees arrived from Chechnya alone<sup>4</sup> and to this we have to add the internally displaced persons and around 40,000 ethnic Ingush that fled from North Ossetia<sup>5</sup> (I will further elaborate on the problem of internally displaced persons later on). The presence of so many refugees left a lasting mark on the province's economy (this becomes more obvious if we also take its size into consideration), especially considering that it wasn't exactly flourishing to begin with. Recent estimates put unemployment at over 60% and highlight the fact that the Government of Ingushetia is highly dependent (88%) on funds received from Moscow<sup>6</sup>. It's difficult to evaluate the exact state of the Ingush economy but these numbers speak for themselves. This high unemployment is definitely a determining factor for the success of the insurgency in Ingushetia. There isn't much to do and joining the rebels offers the prospect of a better life. Also, since the Ingush government is largely dependent on funds from Moscow for its survival, it is natural to assume it does not care much for the voice of the population. Unlike provinces like Tatarstan or Chechnya that receive significant amounts of funding and now enjoy a large degree of autonomy, Magas (the capital of Ingushetia) is still

<sup>2</sup> Russian Federal State Statistics Service, *Urban and rural population of the Russian Federation*, 28.03.2011, [[http://www.perepis-2010.ru/results\\_of\\_the\\_census/results-inform.php](http://www.perepis-2010.ru/results_of_the_census/results-inform.php)], 05.07.2011.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ingushetia.ru/about/index.shtml>.

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR, *Chechnya: 8,000 cross in two days*, Briefing Notes, 5.11.1999, [<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=3ae6b82534&query=ingush>], 15.08.2011.

<sup>5</sup> Executive Committee of UNHCR, *Overview of Regional Developments*, 4.01.1996, p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> Liz Fuller, *Ingushetia: Militant Attacks Increase As Cracks Emerge Within Leadership*, 1.08.2007, Radio Free Europe Website.

largely dependent on Moscow and acts accordingly. The authoritarian leadership both alienates the population and offers ideological ammunition for the insurgency leaders that enjoy calling authorities “puppets” of Moscow<sup>7</sup>.

Secondly, there is a significant ethnic conflict still raging in the area. I mentioned earlier the internally displaced people; this had nothing to do with the war. During World War II, Stalin ordered the deportation of hundreds of thousands of ethnic Ingush, leaving large areas unoccupied<sup>8</sup>. Before the Ingush ethnics could return, many of these were settled by Ossetians and ethnic Russians. When the Ingush did return (1989) conflicts arose between residents and returning Ingush. Most conflicts were settled when Ingushetia was created (1992) but later on, Ingush ethnics became the target of ethnic backlash from Ossetians and Russians<sup>9</sup>. This only ended in 2008, after the Russo-Georgian war, meaning that the insurgency in Ingushetia also had a self-defense dimension. Militants fought the “unknown” forces that kidnapped random ethnic Ingush (probably Ossetians and members of the Russian Army, since the number of kidnappings drastically decreased once most of the troops were moved from North Ossetia to South Ossetia). Now, much of Ingush population (present in the entire Russian Federation), that according to the 2002 estimate stands at a grand total of 410,000 people<sup>10</sup>, lives in Ingushetia and accounts for 83% (around 340,000) of the region’s population, followed by Chechens and Russians that collectively account for around 15% of the population<sup>11</sup>.

Last, but not least, there are a number of territorial disputes deriving from ethnic conflicts that also have a political dimension. Ingushetia has ongoing territorial disputes with both of its neighbors. To the west there is the Prigorodny district that used to belong to the Ingush population and now is part of North Ossetia<sup>12</sup>, a territory that is now being reclaimed by both Ingushetia (authorities) and the insurgents (who generally disagree with the government, but support this claim<sup>13</sup>). To the east, Dukvakha Abdurakhmanov, appointed prime minister by Kadyrov in March 2006, has periodically argued that either Chechnya and Ingushetia should again be combined into a single federation subject, or the border between the two republics should be formally drawn in such a way as to give back to Chechnya parts of the Sunzha and Malgobek districts of present day Ingushetia that were Chechen territory

<sup>7</sup> <http://kavkazcenter.com>.

<sup>8</sup> UNHCR, *Punished peoples: the mass deportations of the 1940s*, 1.05.1996.

<sup>9</sup> UNHCR, “Population displacement in the former Soviet Union”, *Refugees Magazine*, Issue: 98 (After the Soviet Union), 1.12.1994.

<sup>10</sup> Russian Federal State Statistics Service, *National composition for regions of the Russian Federation*, 2004, [<http://www.perepis2002.ru/index.html?id=87>], 05.07. 2011.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.ingushetia.ru/about/index.shtml>.

<sup>12</sup> UNHCR, “Population displacement in the former Soviet Union”, *Refugees Magazine*, Issue: 98 (After the Soviet Union), 1.12.1994.

<sup>13</sup> Valery Dzutsev, “Ingushetia’s Islamists Adopt Nationalist Rhetoric”, *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 11, Issue: 7, 7.10.2010.

prior to the creation, in January 1934, of the Chechno-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic<sup>14</sup>. This generated much friction between presidents Ramzan Kadyrov and Yunus-Bek Yevkurov but also united Chechen and Ingush insurgents, because both consider Kadyrov an enemy.

Together, all these issues make Ingushetia an ideal recruiting ground for the insurgency and none of them have anything to do with religion.

### *The insurgency*

While the insurgency in Ingushetia was strongest in the years after the second Chechen War, for the purpose of this analysis I will focus only on the last two years. The year 2010 marked a decrease in the number of incidents mostly because the capture or elimination of a number of key figures in the insurgency. However, it was still significantly bloody compared to what happened in other provinces.

Based on figures provided by the Russian media, in 2010 Ingushetia registered the second largest number of victims of violence in the North Caucasus<sup>15</sup>. According to those figures 134 people were killed and 192 injured in the province while the total number casualties in the North Caucasus region was of 1,710<sup>16</sup> — meaning that roughly one in six casualties occurred in the half a million-large province. And all this despite the fact that the insurgency suffered a number of blows that left a visible mark on its capacity to operate. The first important loss the insurgency suffered happened on the 2nd of March when Said Buryatsky (aka Alexander Tikhomirov), one of the chief ideologues of the North Caucasus militant movement, was killed in the Ingush village of Ekazhevo as a result of Russian intelligence operation. Buryatsky, an ethnic Buryat from eastern Siberia's Buryat republic, born of a mother of Buryat nationality and a Russian father, studied Islam in Egypt and joined the North Caucasus insurgency in the summer of 2008<sup>17</sup>, climbing quickly through the ranks of the insurgency. Some even considered him the insurgency's top ideologist. After this success, the Russian authorities delivered another significant blow to the insurgency when, in June, Emir Magas (aka Akhmed Taziev-Yevloev), the founder of the Ingush Jamaat, was arrested. Amir Magas was born in 1978 in Grozny and was one of the few Ingush ethnics that joined Shamil Basaev's insurgency. He fought in both Chechen wars and after 2000 Basaev ordered him to go Ingushetia and organize the scattered band of rebels operating there, creating the first united

<sup>14</sup> "Who's Out To Exacerbate Chechen-Ingush Tensions?", 18.01.2010, Free Europe Website

<sup>15</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Ingush in 2010: The Insurgency Remains a Potent Force", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume: 12, Issue: 2, 28.01.2011.

<sup>16</sup> *The armed conflict in the North Caucasus: 1710 victims in 2010*, 18.01.2011, Kavkaz-uzel website.

<sup>17</sup> The "Jamestown Foundation", Said Buratsky Reported to be Among Six Militants Killed in Ingushetia, *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 11, Issue: 0, 21.09.2010.

Shariat Jamaat of Ingushetia<sup>18</sup>. His rap sheet is impressive and ranges from different minor crimes committed throughout Ingushetia to the attempted assassination of Ingushetia's president, Yunus-bek Yevkurov, and a possible involvement in the assault on a school in the North Ossetian town of Beslan on September 1, 2004. Even if, most probably, he wasn't a fervent supporter of the idea of a North Caucasus Emirate, he did pledge allegiance to Doku Umarov, the head of the Caucasus Emirate<sup>19</sup>, an allegiance that remained unchanged until his capture. His arrest significantly affected the operational capacity of the Ingush Jamaat, resulting in a decreased number of attacks in the last six months of 2010 compared to the first six months of the same year and also compared to the last six months of 2009. Also officials in Ingushetia, cited by the Jamestown Foundation, said that overall in 2010 "the number of crimes related to assaults on law enforcement agents declined by 37 percent compared to 2009".<sup>20</sup>

The year 2010 also marked a major change in the Ingush Jamaat's strategy. For reasons yet unknown, the focus of their activities changed from attacking local authorities to attacking targets in North Ossetia and fueling the ethnic conflict between the two regions. On October 4, contrary to the rest of the North Caucasian Islamic insurgency, the Ingush Jamaat decided to focus on nationalist matters. The insurgents declared in a videotaped statement that they would temporarily cease attacks against Ingushetia's law enforcement personnel and would only attack members of the Russian (federal) security apparatus. Also, insurgents repeatedly urged the Ingush people to pray for them and not to betray them to the Russian authorities. The motivation behind the decision was that this would allow the local insurgency to deal with the Ossetian threat. In a nationalistic and xenophobic message, the insurgents accused the neighboring Ossetian people of being the source of the majority of Ingush people's problems and vowed to attack Ossetians and to reclaim any disputed Ingush land that is held by North Ossetia<sup>21</sup>. And they did so before the change in tactics was even mentioned. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of September, almost a month earlier, a suicide blast in Vladikavkaz killed 17 people and injured 100 other<sup>22</sup>. It's unclear whether the blast was part of the new strategy or it was an unrelated incident and the new strategy was developed as a result of the incident (the outcome made the insurgency reconsider its strategy). Either way, the strategy is somewhat different from the aims of the North Caucasus insurgency that, as a whole, is targeting Russian authorities and does not encourage ethnic divide. Ossetians are indeed a

<sup>18</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Moscow's Biggest Victory over the North Caucasus Rebels Since Fall", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 11, Issue: 0, 6.07.2010.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>20</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Ingush in 2010: The Insurgency Remains a Potent Force", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 12, Issue: 2, 28.01.2011.

<sup>21</sup> Valery Dzutsev, "Ingushetia's Islamists Adopt Nationalist Rhetoric", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 11, Issue: 7, 7.10.2010.

<sup>22</sup> *Blast At Vladikavkaz Market Kills 17*, 09.09.2010, Free Europe Website.

close ally of the Russian authorities (mostly as a result of common goals, especially in the light of the 2008 war, and the fact that the predominant religion in the province is Christianity) but starting an ethnic conflict is hardly an objective of the North Caucasus Jamaat since it would divert important resources from the fight against the actual federal authorities. This may indicate that since the leaders (that organized the initial Ingush insurgency) were captured or killed, new ones have steered further away from Umarov's agenda. And if the Russian claim to have captured Emir Adam, Emir Magas's successor, is true, then this effect will be amplified in the future<sup>23</sup>. The insurgency is yet to confirm or deny the claim, but even if Emir Adam wasn't captured, the hesitation in itself indicates that the insurgency is no longer very well organized. This theory is supported by a report issued by the insurgency itself, which mentions that there were 17 casualties on both sides in the war against authorities (11 were insurgents)<sup>24</sup> in the first four months of the year 2011, a significant decrease compared to the previous year. The most recent special operation of the Russian authorities, carried out on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January 2012 in the Ingush village of Ekazhevo, ended with the death of two insurgents and an accomplice. One of the insurgents was identified as Djemaleil Mutaliev, one of leaders of the "Imarat Kavkaz" movement. A significant amount of explosives was found at the location<sup>25</sup>.

Obviously, the raid also proves that the insurgency still exists and is capable of perpetrating effective attacks. In the second half of 2011 it even showed signs of recovery. It managed to assassinate Magomed Korigov, the FSB's principal official in Ingushetia's Malgobek district, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August<sup>26</sup> and on the 9<sup>th</sup> of December a government official, Sofa Esmurzieva (Deputy Minister of Public Health) was attacked and injured in Ingushetia<sup>27</sup>. In the case of the latter incident no group has claimed responsibility yet but given the fact that she is a government official there is a high possibility the attack is the work of the insurgency.

However, the fight has considerably weakened and local authorities seem to be on the right track when it comes to countering it. According to the Caucasian Knot, from the 1<sup>st</sup> of January to the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2011 some 103 people became victims of armed attacks in Ingushetia (69 killed and 34 injured), a considerable number but a steep decline compared to the previous year when no less than 326 people (134 killed and 192 injured) were victims

<sup>23</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Ingush in 2010: The Insurgency Remains a Potent Force", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 12, Issue: 2, 28.01.2011.

<sup>24</sup> *Caucasus Emirate. Summary of combat operations by Mujahideen of Caucasus Emirate*, 6.04.2011, Kavkazcenter website.

<sup>25</sup> *During the week of January 23-29, 15 persons fell victim to armed conflict in Northern Caucasus*, 02.02.2012, Caucasian Knot website.

<sup>26</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "The Revival of Ingushetia's Insurgency", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 8, Issue: 169, 15.09.2011.

<sup>27</sup> *Attempt on Sofa Esmurzieva, Deputy Minister of Public Health, undertaken in Ingushetia*, 09.12.2011, Caucasian Knot website.

of similar attacks<sup>28</sup>. Even more, Ingushetia is no longer the second deadliest province in the North Caucasus region, and now ranks fourth in terms of the number of people killed in attacks (after Dagestan, Chechnya and Kabardino-Balkaria)<sup>29</sup>. Moreover the work of the authorities was simplified recently when, as a result of the widespread protests that followed after the widely contested elections in Russia (December 2011), the leader of the North Caucasus insurgency, Doku Umarov, ordered his followers to halt all attacks aimed at the Russian civilian population. Umarov considered that the civilian population was no longer a valid target because it no longer supported the regime of Vladimir Putin<sup>30</sup>.

Whether they can stay on track remains to be seen, but it will most likely depend on Moscow capability to appoint good leadership. For the moment there is growing discontent among the people with the corrupt leadership of the current president Yunus-bek Yevkurov<sup>31</sup>, giving them a reason to rebel and join the insurgency. Moscow can easily remove Yevkurov from power, especially now when he's facing new corruption charges<sup>32</sup>, but this doesn't necessarily mean that he will be replaced or that the person that will succeed him will be more popular. The legislative elections of December 2011 and the protests following it have put some serious pressure on Russian authorities and as a result they may become reluctant to anything involving change. On the other hand, recent events might have the opposite effect and encourage Moscow to remove Yevkurov in order to save face and prevent further manifestations of discontent. Both scenarios are equally possible.

### *Conclusions — Religion and the insurgency*

The insurgency considers itself part of the North Caucasus Jamaat and the insurgents call themselves mujahedeen. Also, any message they send has a religious reference<sup>33</sup> and, since it calls for martyrdom and attacks, is definitely a form of extremism. However, this sums up all the religious extremism in the area. For the moment there is nothing to indicate that religious extremism is present in the province outside of the insurgency.

Unlike the neighboring province of Chechnya, local authorities have done very little when it comes to religion and politics (they did not enjoy too many funds either so they focused on more important issues) and, as mentioned earlier, the insurgency itself seems to be steering away from the objective of

<sup>28</sup> *Ingushetia: 103 victims of armed conflict for 11 months of 2011*, 6.12.2011, Caucasian Knot website.

<sup>29</sup> *Armed conflict in Northern Caucasus: 1205 victims in 11 months of 2011*, 2.12.2011, Caucasian Knot website.

<sup>30</sup> *Caucasus Insurgency Head Backs Halt Of Terror Attacks On Russian Civilians*, 03.02.2012, Free Europe Website.

<sup>31</sup> *Is Moscow's Ingushetia Strategy Working?*, 29.04.2011, Free Europe Website.

<sup>32</sup> *Villagers Accuse Ingushetian Leader's Relative Of Extortion*, 18.11.2011, Free Europe Website.

<sup>33</sup> <http://kavkazcenter.com>.

the North Caucasus Jamaat. There is some ethnic strife that can be associated with religion between the ethnic Ingush (mostly Muslim) and Ossetians (mostly Christians) but the conflict itself has little to do with religion and more to do with years of clashes and territorial disputes. While religion can be used to justify attacks, it does not represent the problem. Also, since the deadly September attack in Vladikavkaz, despite the change of tactics, the Ingush Jamaat has done little to attack inhabitants of the neighboring province of North Ossetia. This may be due to lack of leadership or simply because of the decrease in its activity that occurred in 2011 but this has meant that its attacks in the past few months have been focused on the traditional, secular targets: Russian authorities.

As a result, it is safe to assume that the presence of religious extremism in the province is linked to the presence of the North Caucasus insurgency and its religious doctrine. In other words, there is hardly any domestic sign of religious extremism in the province and even manifestations related to the Ingush Jamaat are for the moment very scarce. Now, given the difficult economic conditions in the province and the authoritarian rule of Yunus-bek Yevkurov<sup>34</sup>, the Jamaat may still regain lost momentum but, for the moment, it seems to be losing the battle with authorities. And the partial defeat of the local insurgency pretty much puts an end to any display of religious extremism because it's not the religious extremism that drives the insurgency but the other way around.

Russian Federal authorities should use the recent victories against the insurgency and the relative calm to rebuild the province's economy and liberalize the rule of Yevkurov as much as possible; otherwise, as mentioned before, we may witness the resurgence of the Ingush Jamaat and, with it, of religious extremism.

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## **Chapter 12**

# **REPUBLIC OF DAGESTAN**

**ADRIANA SAULIUC**

### **Part I**

#### **HISTORY AND RELIGION**

Dagestan is one of the Russian republics of the Northern Caucasus. Located in southern European Russia in the northern part of the Caucasus region, Dagestan borders Chechnya and Georgia to the west, the Caspian Sea to the east, Stavropol Krai and Kalmykia to the north and Azerbaijan to the south. The capital — Makhachkala, is not only the biggest city in the country, but also the largest in the North Caucasus region and is located on the Caspian Sea.

The word Dagestan means “land of mountain” in the Turkic languages and expresses one of its geographical features: some of its peaks are so high and inaccessible that can be only be reached by helicopters. More than 30 peaks are above 4.000 m, with the highest peak Bazardyuzyu, measuring 4.466 m

Physically, Dagestan can be divided in five regions. The first covers almost the entire southern half of the republic and spans the Caucasians Mountains, with Mount Gouton crest (3.648 m) and Bazardyuzyu (4.466 m). The second region is located at the north side of this mountainous area and is characterized by hills covered with dense forests of oak, beech, hornbeam, maple, poplar and black alder. The third region represents an area with a narrow coastal plain that lies between the mountains and the Caspian Sea. This region is rich in marine sediments, but also has natural gas and petroleum. The biggest river of Dagestan, Terek River, forms its delta in the fourth region which continues the plain. Finally, the fifth region is composed of a sandy plain and represents the northern boundary of the Republic of Dagestan, marked by the Kuma River. The republic is rich in energy resources: natural gas and petroleum. Dagestan also has deposits of iron ore, coal, rare and nonferrous metals.

*The history of Dagestan before the dissolution  
of the Soviet Union*

The territory of Dagestan was first penetrated by Russians in the early time of 15<sup>th</sup> century. In 1813, as a result of an agreement signed by Iran and Russia, the region was annexed by the latter. Even so, it took a while until the Russians had total control over the area and this happened in 1877. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Dagestan became the place where Imam Shamil, the legendary fighter, was born. He spearheaded fierce resistance by tribesmen of Dagestan and Chechnya to the spread of the Russian empire.<sup>1</sup>

But in 1921, after the Russian Civil War, Dagestan became an autonomous republic within the Russian territory. It was the year when Dagestan ASSR was formed. In the time of Dictator Stalin, people from Dagestan escaped the mass deportation, measure that affected Chechens and many other people from the region. But Stalin's industrialization avoided Dagestan, so it became the poorest region in whole Soviet Union. In the late '80s, Dagestan and its neighbors, Azerbaijan and Chechnya, developed a new nationalist movement. Dagestani nationalism was animated by the extremely multiethnic nationalities and ethnic diversity. The republic is also named the "mount of languages". The Bible related about the people of Babylon who were not allowed to build a tower up to heaven, God punishing them for the arrogance by stopping them from understanding each other's languages. Regarding the Dagestani people, it is difficult to identify a reason for their punishment, but this cannot be ignored: on a territory the size of Scotland with a population of 2.5 million inhabitants, there are about 30 ethnic groups and 81 nationalities. Most of them speak Caucasian, Turkic or Iranian languages.<sup>2</sup>

*The history of Dagestan after the dissolution  
of the Soviet Union*

On September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1991, it has been renamed Dagestan SSR, and 3 month later, on December 17<sup>th</sup> — Republic of Dagestan. After the fall of the Soviet Union, in 1991, Kremlin considered the Dagestani authorities loyal, but corrupted and incompetent. The activity of oil and caviar mafias amplified in time and kidnappings and violent actions became very common in Dagestan, where assassinations and firearms were regular events. But these are not the only causes that made Dagestan a volatile area. Many other factors, like long-standing tensions between various ethnic groups of the

<sup>1</sup> *Region and territories: Dagestan*, BBC News, 19 January 2011, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country\\_profiles/3659904.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/3659904.stm)

<sup>2</sup> *Dagestan*, Enciclopædia Britannica eb.com, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/149638/Dagestan>.

republic, and growing Islamic militancy encouraged in part by the separatists neighbors, Chechens, sit at the base of a tense situation in this part of the world.

The 1990s were extremely violent for the Republic of Dagestan, where Chechens led armed operations. In 1995 and 1996, animated by separatist cause, they took hundreds of hostages in hospitals in Budennovsk and Kizlyar, many of them lost their lives in the attacks. Also, many people died between 1995 and 1999 in Kaspiysk and Buynaksk, killed by bombs that targeted Russian forces.

In 1999, a revolt broke out in Western and Central Dagestan, but it was suppressed. After this event, Dagestan had to face another important moment: a fundamentalist Muslim group from Chechnya, led by *Ibn Al-Khattab*, and *Shamil Basayev* invaded Dagestan. The purpose was obvious: they wanted to create an “independent Islamic State of Dagestan”. Both of them thought that Dagestani people will see them as liberators, but the situation was different. They perceived them as occupiers and unwelcome religious fanatics. Russian military intervention made the invaders drive back to Chechnya, reinvaded by Russian forces later that year.

But this was not the first Chechen intervention in Dagestan. In May 1997, a Dagestani force associated with the radical Islamic sect named Wahhabites obtained control over some villages, one of these, the village where Khattab’s wife was born. Seven months later, in December 1997, a group of guerrillas from Chechnya joined the Wahhabites force and planned to attack Russia near Buinask. Even so, relations between Chechnya and Dagestan have never been simple, being tensioned by military, religious and political reasons.

Chechens’ invasion in Dagestan in 1999 in the Kadar zone only radicalized the Dagestani perception on Chechens because of their fear of the Chechnya’s instability. With no other solution, Dagestani people sought support from Moscow and the republic maintained good relations with Kremlin. In its fight against separatism in Dagestan, Russia initiated some operations in Dagestan, while the authorities adopted an anti-Wahhabi position and policy. But this policy, supported by repression against moderate Islamists in a context of high youth unemployment, determined the radicalization of a section of youth which now embraces Jihadi ideology and joins extremist groups like Shariat Jamaat.

Starting that moment, numerous bombing attacks targeted Russian military stationed at Kaspiysk, Buynaksk and Budennovsk. In 2002, dozens of them died in a bombing attack that took place during a Russian military parade in Kaspiysk. From that year on and for the time being, dozen of terrorist attacks are committed by adherent at religious and extremist groups. In July 2005, at least 10 Russian soldiers died in a bomb blast in Makhachkala. In 2008, an important journalist was killed. One year later, a senior police investigator and the Minister of Interior were shot dead.

In this context, the Dagestani elite comprised today of Avars, Dargins and Russians understands that for the near future, the Republic of Dagestan needs the support of the Russian Federation as it is unable to handle the situation alone. That it's why they consolidated its power by keeping a good relation with Moscow, as a continuation of the loyal attitude.

### *Wahhabi*

Wahhabism is a branch of Islam, or a religious movement, developed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by *Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab*, a Muslim theologian from Najd, Saudi Arabia, where Wahhabism is the dominant form of Islam. This revivalist movement which sprang up in the Arabian Peninsula was born as a result of Muhammad Ibn Abdul-Wahhab efforts in a time when he felt that local practice of Islam had lost its original purity.<sup>3</sup> He was influenced by the writings of Ibn Taymiyya, and its teachings were more often referred to by adherents as *Salafi*, which means “following the forefathers of Islam”.<sup>4</sup>

The terms “Wahhabi” and “Salafi” are used very often interchangeably, but sometimes Wahhabi is called a particular orientation within Salafism. The “Wahhabi” term is not used by many of the adherents to this movement. Its members call themselves *Muwahhidun*, meaning “unitarians” or “unifiers of Islamic practice” and they use the *Salafi Da'wa* or *Ahlul Sunna wal Jama'a*.

Born 200 years ago as a reform movement, Wahabbism's aims were to rid the cultural practices and interpretation that had been acquired over the centuries from the Muslim societies.

The Wahhabi subscribe to the primary doctrine which sustain the idea of a unique God (Tawhid — the concept of monotheism in Islam), and the idea that once one affirms the existence of God and His Lordship, one must worship Him alone. Its theology sees the Quran and Hadith as the only fundamental and authoritative texts.

In one of his books called *Kitab al-Tawhid*, Ibn Abd-al-Wahhab explained that worship in Islam includes conventional acts of worship like the five daily prayers, fasting, *Dua* — in the terminology of *Islam*, represents the act of *supplication*; *Ist'ana* (seeking help); *Istia'dha* (seeking protection or refuge); *Istigatha* (seeking benefits). Wahhabi also considers that praying to anyone or anything else than Allah, represents an act of “shirk” and is in contradiction with Tawhid.

The Wahhabis/Salafis adherents consider themselves “not attached to tradition” or “non-imitators”, in a word, unaccountable in front of any school of law. Believing in the early Islam's teachings, Wahhabism denounces the

<sup>3</sup> Roger Hardy, *Analysis: Inside Wahhabi Islam*, BBC News, September 30, 2001, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/1571144.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/1571144.stm).

<sup>4</sup> *Wahhabi*, GlobalSecurity.org, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/gulf/wahhabi.htm>.

practice of blind adherence to the scholars' interpretations. Also, it denounces the practices passed on within the tribe or family.

Osama bin Laden was a Saudi-born and a Wahhabi adherent. In Russian mass-media the term "Wahhabi" refers to the Muslim activists in Central Asia, the Caucasus and Russia. It is sort of an equivalent of "Islamic fundamentalist", expression used by the Western part of the globe.

### *Wahhabi in Dagestan*

From ancient times, Dagestan is known to be a religious area in the North Caucasus and with the exception of Chechnya, it is the most religious republic in Russian Federation. The majority of its Muslims adhere to traditional Sunni Islam.

The fundamentalist Islam–Salafi, appeared in Dagestan at the end of the 1980s. Dagestani Salafis are divided in two branches: a moderate one and a radical one. The latter, adopted a more formal structure by the second half of the 1990s and today it is called the *Muslim Jama'at*, meaning "Muslim community". From the beginning, its spiritual leader and most important representative of the radical wing of Wahhabis in Dagestan was an ethnic Khavarshin (Khavarshin being a small ethnicity that lives in the northern part of Dagestan), named Bagauddin Muhammed. He was proclaimed "Amid of Muslim Jama'at".

During the Soviet era, a part of the Khavarshin people was forcibly moved to the Chechen land, so Bagauddin was born in Vedenno, the same village where Shamil Bassayev was born. In 1993, Bagauddin and his associates were based in Kyzilyurt, a town near Mahachkala, and they represented the subject of a systematic repression and discrimination both by the representatives of the traditional Sufi Islam and the government. Four years later, in 1997, they decided to retreat to Chechnya. In all this time, the alienation of the Wahhabi movement in Dagestan from the rest of the society was growing, so the movement became more and more radical. Between 1997 and 1999, the Buinaksk region in the central part of the Republic of Dagestan became the center of Wahhabi. Here, in the villages of Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi, the beliefs of the *Muslim Jama'at* were put into practice. Almost all of the people from these villages accepted the ideology of the radical movement, so the local Muslim community became a small entity, a "Wahhabi republic" considered to be the guard of radical Islam. From that moment on, this place functioned like a powerful magnet for all the young people in search of "pure Islam" from Dagestan and even other republics of the Northern Caucasus.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Mikhail Roshchin, "Sufism and Fundamentalism in Dagestan and Chechnya", *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde turco-iranien*, no. 38, July-December 2004, p. 7, <http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com/publica/cemoti/textes38/roshchin.pdf>.

## Part II INSURGENCY IN DAGESTAN

### *Shariat Jamaat*

*Jamaat Shariat*, officially known as *Islamic Jamaat of Dagestan* “*Shariat*” or *Shari’ah Jamaat* is the largest Islamist militant organization in the Republic of Dagestan. The *Jamaat* was created during the Second Chechen War and its aim was from the beginning the independence of Dagestan, as an Islamic state. Active since 2002, the *Jamaat* is responsible for the death of hundreds of people from Russian army to security personnel, officials and civilians.

*Sharia Jamaat* was established by Emir Rasul (Rasul Makasharipov), a Dagestani Islamist leader born in south-western Tsumadinsky District at the frontier with Chechnya. In 1997, Rasul was expelled from the parental house by his father and decided to move in Chechnya. In 1999, during the rebel Chechen invasion of Dagestan, Makasharipov started the fight against the government. Russian military intervention led to the retreat of the Chechen rebels so Makasharipov had to surrender to Dagestani authorities in 2000. He was released one year later. In 2002, he return to his homeland and established the *Jennet* organization, whose main goal was to eliminate senior officers of the security forces in Dagestan.

Being in good relations with Shamil Basayev, Rasul’s extremist group was loyal to Chechen commander. Several important figures were killed by *Shariat Jamaat* extremists such as Kamil Etinbekov, the head of counterintelligence and counterterrorism of Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB); Magomed Gusayev, the Minister of National Policy, Information and External Relations; and Akhberdilav Akilov, head of the Police Department against Extremism and Criminal Terrorism. Another 28 officers of his department were also killed.

Makasharipov was blamed for the tragic incident that took place in 2002, when an attack that ripped through a military parade in the city of Kaspiysk, Dagestan, killed at least 19 soldiers, 12 children and wounded 133 people. He denied its contribution and rejected any responsibility for the terrorist attack.

According to a list made public by the moderate Chechen resistance website *chechenpress.org*, on August 8, 2006, 18 attacks were perpetrated by militants in Dagestan between late December 2001 and end of 2004. The attacks included the assassination of three senior Dagestani Interior Ministry officials in September 2002, March 2004, and December 2004, and of republican Nationalities Minister Magomedsalikh Gusayev in August 2003.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Dagestan’s Islamic Fighters Continue to Hone Military, PR Skills*, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, August 16, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/Daghestan\\_Islamic\\_Fighters\\_Hone\\_Military\\_PR\\_Skills/1375350.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Daghestan_Islamic_Fighters_Hone_Military_PR_Skills/1375350.html).

In late 2004, after the loss of several important leaders, *Jennet* was reorganized and became *Sharia Jamaat*, meaning in Arabic “Islamic law community”. From the beginning, this new form was stronger than previous, being much larger and more decentralized by including the semi-autonomous local *jamaats* in *Buinaksk*, *Gubden*, *Khasavyurt* and *Kaspiysk*. It was composed of a big number of small clandestine urban cells, some of them with only three to five people, but with strong presence in the Dagestani capital, *Makachkala*. In 2005, *Sharia Jamaat* became part of the Caucasian Front Organization, formally established in May 2005 as an Islamic structural unit of the *Chechen Republic of Ichkeria’s* armed forces.

Acting under the structure of a new group, *Sharia Jamaat* was considered responsible for many terrorist attacks like the bombing in July 2005 in *Makhachkala* that killed at least 10 Russian forces troops, and wounded 14 soldiers and 13 civilians. The extremist group claimed the attack through a message posted on Internet. It also announced the intention to conduct more attacks and said “an invasion group” had been sent to Moscow to carry out sabotage operations under a code name it described as “stab pig’s heart”.<sup>7</sup>

The republic’s deputy Interior Minister, General *Magomed Omarov* was assassinated in the same year.

Amid these events, on July 6, 2005, *Makasharipov* was shot dead by Russian security forces and the command was taken by his deputy, *Rappani Khalilov*. *Rappani* was known for his good reputation in recruiting young fighters and as a close ally with Chechen rebels. He died two years later, on September 17, killed by the Russian Special Forces.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2007, the *Kavkaz Center* published a statement of the new Chechen leader, *Dokka Umarov*, who announced that *Abdul Majid* (*Ilgas Malachiyev*) is *Rabbani’s* successor. *Majid* was a former fighter in the Second Chechen War and joined *Jamaat* right from the moment it was created. Once he came to power, he pledged not to attack civilians. One year later, on September 8, 2008, he was killed during a joint military operation of Russian and Azeri security forces in southern Dagestan, near the border with the Azeri state.

*Emir Muaz* (*Omar Sheikhulayev*) was named by *Dokka Umarov* as the successor of *Abu Majid*. He was also killed by Russian special troops on February 5, 2009, at *Makachkala’s* periphery. *Emir Bara* (*Umalat Magomedov*) came to power but he died in the same year killed on December 31, 2009. During the leadership of his successor, *Magomed Vagabov*, the ban on indiscriminate attacks against civilian targets was ended. He lost his life in a gunfight with Russian security forces on August 21, 2010.

Immediately after the incident, the *Sharia Jamaat* website posted the information that a new Emir will be appointed in a short time and that the attacks against local and Russian authorities will continue. *Emir Hassan* was

<sup>7</sup> *Islamic Group Says It Set Off Dagestan Blast*, The New York Times, July 3, 2005, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9F04E6DB113AF930A35754C0A9639C8B63>.

appointed as the Vagabov's successor on September 1, 2010, and few days later, on September 5, a suicide attack took place killing three servicemen and determining a new wave of counter-terrorist operations. He was killed on April 18, 2011, during a Russian action.

In May, Doku Umarov, the leader of the North Caucasus rebels, decided on the name of the new head of the insurgent organization in Dagestan, so on May 9, he appointed Ibragimkhalil Daudov (aka Emir Salikh).

But on February 14, 2012, the leader of Jamaat was found dead in a forest after being wounded few days before in a shootout when police stormed a nearby house where he was hiding in the mainly Muslim region of Dagestan.<sup>8</sup> His death was confirmed by Russia's Anti-Terrorism Committee.

### *Black widows — a real problem for local and Russian authorities*

The bombs in the terrorist attack in March 2010 in Moscow were detonated by two women. Dzhanet Abdullayeva, a 17-year-old "black widow" from Khasavyurtzky, Dagestan was behind the Park Kultury metro station explosion. Abdullayeva was the widow of 30-year-old Umalat Magomedov, a prominent insurgent who officials said had been killed by security forces on December 31 (2009).<sup>9</sup>

The second attacker was Maryam Sharipova, a 28-year-old Dagestani woman. She set off an explosive device at the Lubyanka metro station in Moscow, on the same day of March 29, 2010.

Women like these attackers are known as "black widows" because they usually lost their husbands, brothers or other close relatives in one of the two Chechen wars, when Russian soldiers fought against rebels from Chechnya, or in the recent clashes, during the military actions initiated by the Russian security forces in North Caucasus. The last time Black widows struck outside the area they are living was in 2004, when women attackers blew up two passenger planes that took off from the Russian capital, bombed the Moscow metro twice and took part in the siege of School Number One from Beslan, where hundreds of people became the victims of the terrorist attack. Beginning with 2009, after 5 years of pause, they started a new campaign against Russian authorities striking in most of the cases in the Muslim North Caucasus region, in republics like Dagestan, Ingushetia and Chechnya.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Russian forces kill Islamist rebel leader*, Reuters Africa, Feb 15, 2012, <http://af.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idAFTRE81E0020120215?pageNumber=2&virtualBrandChannel=0>.

<sup>9</sup> *Second Moscow bomber identified. Female Dagestani teacher named as the other suicide bomber in metro attacks*, Aljazeera, April 7, 2010, <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/europe/2010/04/201046141158638627.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Andrew Osborn, *Moscow bombing: who are the Black Widows*, The Telegraph, March 29, 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/7534464/Moscow-bombing-who-are-the-Black-Widows.html>.

Immediately after the bombing of the metro in Moscow, there were voices whispering that approximately 1.000 widows and sisters of dead militants had already been recruited by the North Caucasus underground movement.<sup>11</sup>

Because of their loss, Black Widows are interested to revenge the death of the loved ones. They are usually poorly educated women that can be easily recruited by the extremists and trained up to commit suicide attacks. But, like in any other area, there are exceptions. Maryam Sharipova was a computer science teacher. She had a degree in mathematics and psychology from the Dagestan Pedagogical University obtained in 2005.

### *Attacks and insurgent activity in Dagestan*

Located in an area characterized by tensions and violence, the Republic of Dagestan succeeded to avoid large-scale violence. Even so, terrorist attacks are making victims out of both civilians and military personnel. Since 2003, several hundred local and federal security forces, administrators, politicians, ministers and journalists have been killed.<sup>12</sup>

Today, the situation is not different from past years, in the Dagestani capital, Makhachkala, there are reports of incidents and attacks on a daily basis. In the past two years, the Republic of Dagestan and Ingushetia exceeded Chechnya, considered to be the most unstable republic from the North Caucasus. In both republics mentioned above, almost daily incidents occur, transforming Dagestan and Ingushetia in two dangerous zones. The most important attacks in Dagestan in past two years are:

#### *2010*

— on January 6, a powerful explosion of a suicide car that tried to break into the territory of the base's traffic police killed 5 policemen and injured 24;

— on March 31, two bombs rocked the center of the town Kizlyar, killing 12 people and wounding 23;

— in April 2010, eight policemen died and several were wounded in rebels attacks;

— on June 4, the head of administration of Dagestan's Magaramkentsky district, Azadi Shikhbabaev, was killed when unidentified gunmen opened fire on the car in which he was driving in the village of Magaramkent;

— on July 23, three Russian policemen were killed in an attack and other four people died too;

<sup>11</sup> Tanya Lokshina, *The Black Widows of Dagestan: Media Hype and Genuine Harm*, Open Democracy: Russia, Post-Soviet world, June 17, 2010, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/tanya-lokshina/black-widows-of-dagestan-media-hype-and-genuine-harm>.

<sup>12</sup> *Russia's Dagestan: Conflict Causes*, International Crisis Group, Europe Report n°192, 3 Jun 2008, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/europe/caucasus/192-russias-dagestan-conflict-causes.aspx>.

— on August 3, two members of the Russian interior ministry's mobile detachment were shot and killed in an attack in the Dagestani city of Khasavyurt. Later that evening, unidentified gunmen fired automatic weapons and grenade launchers at a police unit in Khasavyurt, but no one was hurt in that attack. That same day in Kizlyar, the deputy head of the district branch of the interior ministry's anti-extremism center, Colonel Shevket Kudzhaev, was shot by two unidentified gunmen at his home. He lost his life during the incident;

— a number of attacks on police took place in Dagestan during December 2010. On December 3, Dzhabrail Barkalaev, the vice president of Dagestan's judo federation, was shot dead in the capital Makhachkala. On December 4, three policemen were wounded in a shootout in Kirov-Aul. One day later, an officer with the Dagestani interior ministry's tax crime department was shot by a young men in a café and died later in the hospital. On 14 December, the imam of a mosque in the village of Gubden from Karabucakhkent sky district in Dagestan, Gazimagomed Gadzhimagomedov, was shot near his house and died later in hospital. Another insurgent action took place when a freight train was bombed in Derbent district on December 16. No one was injured in the incident.

### *2011*

— on January 1, Magomedrasul Makachev, the head of the criminal department police of Untsukul district of Dagestan, region known for its strong Islamic traditions and an endless fight against authorities, was killed in his own house;

— on January 26, at least three people were killed by a car bomb in Khasavyurt;

— on February 14, a double suicide attack that took place in the Dagestani village of Gubden killed two servicemen and injured about 20 people. The suicide bombers were Vitaly Razdobudko and his wife Maria Khoro sheva, both ethnic Russians converts to Islam. Only in February 2011, 15 bombings and other terrorist attacks took place in Dagestan, and 22 people died in insurgent incidents;

— on March 8, in Buinaksk city, an improvised explosive device was detonated near an entrance of a store and on March 10, a grocery store blew up in a bomb attack in the same town. No one was killed in the attacks;

— on March 14, three men attacked the headquarters of the Kizilyurt district police. They were killed the next day, during a shootout in a suburb of Makhachkala;

— on March 17, the body of a Dagestani officer from the Federal Penitentiary Service was found in Makhachkala. He was shot twice in the head. The same day, a policeman was killed in the Dagestani capital, shot by an unidentified gunman;

— on April 12, in Tumadinsk District, two policemen died and three were wounded in an attack with guns initiated by militants;

— on April 24, a man who practiced non-traditional medicine was killed near the village of Khutseyevka in the Dagestan's Kizlyar district. Also, one policeman was killed by an unidentified man who shot up a police post in Khasavyurt;

— on May 10, a suicide bomber detonated a bomb in Makhachkala, near a hospital where policemen wounded in a special operation in Dagestan were treated. The bomber was killed by the explosion, along with Shakhabas Magomedov, inspector at Dagestani interior ministry's criminal investigation department;

— on May 12, two policemen died in a shootout in the village of Karamakhi in Dagestan's Buinaksk district. The man who opened the fire was killed too;

— on May 31, Bagaudin Bagaudinov, the head of the criminal police for Dagestan's Magaramkentsky district died a day after he was wounded in a shootout with a suspect in the village Telegyun;

— on June 7, Maksud Sadikov, the head of the Institute of Theology and International Affairs in Makhachkala was killed;

— on July 10, an unidentified men killed the imam of a rural mosque in Dagestan, village of Karamakhi;

— on June 12, Yakub Nutsalov, the head of the tax inspectorate of the Dagestani city of Khasavyurt was shot to death near his home by an unidentified man;

— on July 14, an inspector with the West Caspian water resources protection service in Dagestan was shot in the head in his house by two attackers. Also, Shamil Murtuzaliev, the deputy commander of the republic's OMON special tasks police unit, was killed in his home in Dagestani capital, Makhachkala;

— on July 28, Garun Kurbanov, the head of the press service of Dagestan's president and his driver were killed in the Dagestani capital, Makhachkala. A few hours later, in the same city, three people in a Lada Priora automobile were killed by unidentified men;

— on August 1, Senior Lieutenant Umar Temirkaev, the commander of a public order platoon of the interior ministry's branch in Dagestan's Khasavyurt district, was shot and died later, after his car was attacked by four people;

— on August 3, the head of Dagestan's Untsukul'sky district, Magomegadzhi Tagirov, along with his driver and bodyguard died the day after their car was hit by a bomb;

— on August 11, one policeman was killed and two wounded in a shootout with rebels in Dagestan's Tsuntinsky district. The rebels were killed in the gunfire;

— on September 1, Lt.-Col. Ibragim Dzhabrailov, the deputy head of the city's branch of the FSB was killed by an explosion. Four persons, all relatives that were in the same car were wounded and needed medical assistance;

— on September 8, a group of rebels attacked a Federal Security Service (FSB) border guard post in Dagestan's Tsuntinsky district, wounding two servicemen;

— on September 15, Zainudin Daiziev, the imam of the village of Kadar was killed in a gunfire attack, when unidentified men shot him inside his house;

— on September 20, Lt.-Col. Magomed Gamzatov, officer with the Dagestani branch of the Federal Security Service (FSB), was killed in the Dagestani capital, shot in the yard of his house. The incident came in the context of other two attacks on servicemen: one on September 17, when a policeman was killed by an attacker in the village of Bairamaul in Dagestan's Khasavyurt district; and the second, that took place on September 17, when a FSB border guard was killed and two wounded in a bomb attack on their vehicle;

— on September 22, two bomb attacks in Makhachkala killed one serviceman and wounded 61 people, 44 of them police officers;

— on September 28, one policeman and seven civilians (including an 11-year-old girl) were killed in the explosion of a car in Dagestan's Levashinsky district;

— on October 3, an armored police van was hit by a bomb, killing two policemen and wounding one. Another bomb detonated on the Kaspiisk-Makhachkala highway in Dagestan near a car injured a policeman and his 10-year-old daughter;

— on October 11, a policeman was shot and died in Dagestan's Khasavyurt district, after his car was attacked;

— on October 13, Muslim Dakhkhaev, the head of the Dagestani branch of the Federal Penitentiary Service, was attacked by some gunmen who shot him and threw grenades at the Mercedes car in which he was traveling. He was wounded and hospitalized;

— on October 27, a gunman fired on a group of Interior Ministry servicemen and policemen in the village of Bairam-Aul in Dagestan's Khasavyurt district. On the same day, Sirazhutdin Israfilov, a well-known religious figure, better known as Sheikh Sirazhudin Khuriksky, was shot to death in the village of Khurik in Dagestan's Tabasaransky district;

— on November 2, Salman Alaev, the head of administration of Dagestan's Khivsky district, was killed outside his house in Chuvek. On the same day, two policemen were shot to death when they tried to stop a car in the village of Babayurt in Dagestan's Babayurtsky district;

— on November 12, Akhmed Asmanov, an aide of an imam in the village of Matsal-aul in Dagestan's Khasavyurt district, was killed by unidentified gunmen. A friend of his, was also shot and hospitalized with serious wounds;

— on December 1, Nazhmudin Abdulkerimov, the deputy director of the Makhachkala Industrial-Economic College, was found in his car dead. He was shot to death in his head;

— on December 8, one policeman was killed and five other people were wounded in Dagestan's Kizlyar district, after some gunmen opened fire on police;

— on December 14, Arsen Gadzhibekov, the acting head of the investigative department of the Investigative Committee's branch in Makhachkala's Sovietsky district, was killed in the city of Kaspiisk by a gunman;

— on December 15, Khadzhimurad Kamalov, the founder of the Dagestani independent weekly newspaper Chernovik, was killed in Dagestani capital, Makhachkala. He was shot to death.

### 2012

— on January 9, a road patrol police unit was attacked in Dagestan's Kizilyurt district as unidentified attackers fired at the post, first with a grenade launcher and then with automatic rifles. There were no casualties;

— on January 10, a police lieutenant, the head of the traffic police in Dagestan's Tarumovsky district and his daughter (15 years old), were wounded after a gunman opened fire on the victim's car;

— on January 11, one policeman was killed and 10 wounded while they were trying to defuse a huge IED discovered in Dagestan's Kizilyurt district;

— on January 13, two policemen were wounded when a police unit was attacked in the town of Izerbash.

— on January 14, an officer from the Federal Security Service (FSB) was shot to death in the Dagestani capital, Makhachkala;

— on January 21, three people were killed by the explosion of a car on the outskirts of the Dagestani city of Izberbash;

— on January 27, four Russian servicemen were killed and two were wounded in a shootout with militants in Kizlyar district. In another incident, a police major was shot death in the village of Chapaevo in Dagestan's Kumtorkalinsky district.

### *Reaction to the violence and insurgency in Dagestan*

The history of North Caucasus seems to repeat itself and the future is not bright. Regarding Dagestan, we can say without being wrong that the situation is critical. Islamic terrorism in this republic is growing, transforming the issue into a major problem for the Russian and local authorities. Terrorism in Dagestan is more complicated and sophisticated than in Chechnya and has a more serious ideological content. First of all, it is closer to "international standards" of terrorism. Terrorist attacks organized by Chechens insurgents are mostly anonymous and the organizations responsible for them are established after police's investigation. In Dagestan, the problem is simpler: terrorist attacks are orchestrated by one organization: *Shariat Jamaat*.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Sergei Markedonov, *Terror in Dagestan has religious roots*, Ria Novosti, June 27, 2005, <http://en.rian.ru/analysis/20050725/40969497.html>.

Since 2003, violent acts against members of security forces and state authorities became a daily reality in Dagestan and its number seems to be bigger. *Shariat Jamaat* rebels have already killed several hundred civil servants, district chiefs, judges, ministers and mayors, but their favorite target seems to be the police officers and crime inspectors.

Today, the situation is critical, because *Shariat Jamaat*, the main responsible for the attacks in Dagestan, seems able to attract more and more young people, motivated by a mixture of frustration because of the current situation characterized by corruption, economic exclusion and anger caused by policemen measures against them.

The members of the Islamist group become more and more violent after the adoption of the anti-Wahhabism law in September 1999. The law that bans Wahhabism and “other extremist activity” passed at the initiative of Dagestan’s President, Magomedali Magomedov, just after Dagestani civilians and Russian troops combined their forces against successive armed incursion of Chechen rebels in the summer of ’99. In Russia, Wahhabism is usually associated with the belief in legitimacy of violence in the pursuit of Islamic ideals. In this context, the law proceeded from the assumption that Wahhabi ideology inevitably leads to violence.<sup>14</sup>

The law banning “Wahhabism” and “other extremist activity” was followed by raids initiated by Russian security forces targeting suspected religious radicals. These measures made the Dagestani young people more aggressive, so they started to seek revenge against arbitrary arrests, fabrication of evidence and detention abuse.

But the attacks on police and other governmental representatives, as well as civilians, triggered a harsher response from Moscow. Russia decided to send more than 5,000 law enforcement agents to stop the attacks initiated by the Dagestani Islamist radicals. Since 2005, large operations took place in Russian republic conducted by the federal officers deployed in Dagestan.

#### 2005

— January and June, between 4,000 and 5,000 Russian security forces were fighting in Dagestan against the radicals;

#### 2006

— January — the operations’ target was to root out the extremists near Gimri and Shamil Kala;

#### 2007

— seven special operations were conducted in Dagestan;

<sup>14</sup> Geraldine Fagan, *Russia: Does Dagestan need its anti-Wahhabi law?*, Forum 18 News Service, Oslo, Norway, May 5, 2010, p. 1, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/topic,4565c2252c,4565c25f37d,4be262c92,0.html>.

## 2008

— after the assassination of a Dagestani parliamentary deputy, the measures against extremists were intensified. Only in the first six weeks of 2008, 5 special operations took place in: Makhachkala, District of Derbent, Babaiurt District and Tabasaransky District;

## 2009

— on February 16, Russian forces in Dagestan raided a house of insurgents, killing 4;

— on March 21 — in a special operation initiated by Russian forces near the village Kakashura, between 5 and 7 insurgents were killed;

— on July 12 — Russian FSB operatives killed five rebels in *Khasavyurt* after rebels opened fire on security personnel;

— on July 28 — eight militants were killed between Talgi and Makhachkala by security forces;

— on August 31 — a top Algerian Al — Qaeda coordinator in the North Caucasus was killed by Russian special forces in town of Mutsalaul, within the *Khasavyurt* region;

— on September 19 — 3 rebels were killed by police. Russian officials claimed that one of them was Abdullah Saadulayev, a major militant leader;

— on October 8 — FSB special forces blocked the house of the so-called Amir of the *Makhachkala jamaat*, Gadzhimurad Kamalutdinov. He and his wife were killed in the operation;

— on December 9 — in the village of Shamhal-Termen, 2 rebels, one of them female were killed by FSB security forces;

— on December 31 — in a FSB operation, 4 militants lost their lives.

## 2010

— on January 7 — in a counter terrorism operation in the village of Korkmaskala, 2 rebels were killed;

— on January 31 — 2 insurgents were killed by Russian special forces in Kaytahskogo;

— on March 13 — in the village of Zubutli-Miately within the *Kizilyurt* district, 4 militants were killed in a raid orchestrated by special forces;

— on March 22 — a counterterrorism operation took place in *Makhachkala*, organized by Russian FSB, one rebel was killed;

— on April 11 — in the forests of Karabudahkentskogo District, a counter terrorism operation took place;

— on June 3 — in an joint FSB — MVD operation in *Makhachkala*, 3 militants were killed;

— on June 26 — in a special operation in *Karabudahkentskom* District, at least one rebel was killed by security forces;

— on August 20 — 4 insurgents were killed in a shootout between Russian security forces and rebels;

— on August 21, in *Khasavyurt*, Russian security forces blocked a rebel group inside a building. Five of the insurgents were killed, including the militant leader, Magomedali Vagabov, who was involved in the Moscow Metro bombings (March 29, 2010);

— on September 13 — 10 militants were killed in a special operation in *Makhachkala* and other 3 in the village of Komsomolskoye, in the *Kizilyurt* District;

— on December 5, the National Anti-Terrorism Committee (NAK) announced that Russian special forces killed six militants in the village of Kirov-Aul in Dagestan's Kizilyurt district. Yusup Magomedov, a local insurgent leader was among the people killed in the shootout;

— on December 12, Russian security forces conducted a special operation in the village of Buglen in Dagestan's Buinaksk district, killing 3 suspected rebels, including Nabi Migibdinov, identified by the National Anti-Terrorist Committee as the head of a group of militants. Nabi was involved in a few violent actions like the murder of four policemen and seven women;

— on December 26 — in Dagestani capital, *Makhachkala*, more than 8 rebels lost their lives in a Russian special operation against militants in an apartment, including Magomed Sheikhov, known as the “emir of Makhachkala”;

### 2011

— on January 5 — in *Khasavyurt* at least 4 militants were killed in a special operation, including the alleged “emir of Khasavyurt”, Ruslan Makavov.

— on January 27 — 2 militants including the so-called Deputy Emir of Dagestan for the *Caucasus Emirate* and his wife died in a operation in *Khasavyurt*;

— on February 1 — 2 rebels, including the head of the Kizilyurt sabotage and terrorist group were killed by Russian forces in *Makhachkala*;

— on February 20 — in *Khasavyurt*, one militant leader known to be responsible for several terrorist attacks in the surrounding regions of this republic died in a special operation;

— on February 27 — in *Makhachkala*, 5 rebels were detained by Russian special forces accused to have carried out attacks and assaults on local forces;

— on April 18, near the village of Tashkapur in the republic's Levashinsky district, four militants were killed. The body of Israpil Validjanov, known as Emir Hassan, the head of Dagestan's Sharia Jamaat armed resistance movement, was identified by Russian intelligence services among them. He became the leader of the movement in September 2010, after his predecessor, Magomedali Vagabov, was killed in August 2010. Israpil

Validzhanov is the sixth head of the Dagestan jamaat liquidated by the Russians since 2007.<sup>15</sup>

— on June 14, in a special operation in Kaspiisk, Rustam Radzhabov, the leader of the rebels in the Dagestani city was killed. The National Anti-Terrorist Committee reported that he was involved in some terrorist attacks like bombings and murders of policemen, civilians and military servicemen;

— on June 15, four rebels opened fire on police in the village of Achi in Dagestan's Karabudakhkent'sky district. They were killed by the security forces and according to a police source, among them was Arsen Abdullaev, the leader of rebels in Makhachkala;

— on June 21, in the northern Dagestan's Kizlyar district, an important clash between security forces and insurgents took place. Two or three servicemen and five militants were killed, but this information wasn't confirmed by the police. Three days later, a source from the Russian interior ministry said that the number of servicemen who died in the fight with insurgents reaches 13;

— on July 8, police killed one gunman and wounded another man after they attacked the house of the director of a branch of a commercial bank in the Dagestani town of Sergokala;

— on June 12, a person that opened fire on police in Dagestani capital, Makhachkala was killed;

— on July 21, three rebels were killed during a special operation near the Tarki-Tau Mountain, outside the Dagestani capital Makhachkala. The special operation was a joint action conducted by FSB commandos and servicemen from Dagestan's OMON special task police unit and other Dagestani interior ministry forces. The authorities told later that the rebels were members of the "Kaspiisk gang", and were suspected of a bomb attack over a police patrol on July 18, but they were also suspects in some murders;

— on August 11, six suspected rebels were killed in an operation conducted in the Dagestani capital, Makhachkala. According to National Anti-Terrorism Committee, one of them is Abdulla Magomedaliev, aka Daud, who had been appointed last year by the Dagestani rebel leader Magomedali Vagabov (who was later himself killed) to head a rebel "special battalion." The rebel "special battalion" subsequently carried out attacks on law-enforcement and other government officials, including the September 2010 attack on a base of Interior Ministry Internal Troops in Buinaksk<sup>16</sup>;

<sup>15</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Emir of Dagestan's Sharia Jamaat Reportedly Killed in Russian Special Operation", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 8, Issue: 78, April 21, 2011, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews\[swords\]=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx\\_ttnews\[any\\_of\\_the\\_words\]=Dagestan&tx\\_ttnews\[pointer\]=13&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=37823&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=7&cHash=6f46afe19b7a4be2cc3d37f34c6d8c6c](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[swords]=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews[any_of_the_words]=Dagestan&tx_ttnews[pointer]=13&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=37823&tx_ttnews[backPid]=7&cHash=6f46afe19b7a4be2cc3d37f34c6d8c6c).

<sup>16</sup> *Violent Incidents Claim 20 Lives in Dagestan in One Week*, The Jamestown Foundation, August 12, 2011, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews\[swords\]=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx\\_ttnews\[any\\_of\\_the\\_words\]=Dagestan&tx\\_ttnews\[pointer\]=7&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=38313&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=7&cHash=ccadfaa1569ce06ab8dbaeb3ed3098f2](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[swords]=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews[any_of_the_words]=Dagestan&tx_ttnews[pointer]=7&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=38313&tx_ttnews[backPid]=7&cHash=ccadfaa1569ce06ab8dbaeb3ed3098f2).

— on September 4, in a special operation in the city of Khasavyurt, Ibragim Mukhuchev (aka Abu Umar), a rebel leader from Dagestan was killed along with his common-law wife. According to the National Counter-Terrorism Committee, he was involved in attacks on civilians, law-enforcement personnel and also officials;

— on October 17, a special operation of Russian security services targeted Dagestani village of Khutrakh. The policemen searched the houses and interrogated men and women;

— on October 30, two rebels were killed by police in Dagestan's Kizlyar district. One of them, Magomed Magomedov, a resident of the Kizlyar district village of Yasnaya Polyana, was wanted for killing a person in 2010;

— on November 1, a suspected rebel was killed in a special operation near the village of Ishkarta in Dagestan's Buinaksk district and several were discovered during the same action;

— on November 7, a rebel bunker was discovered two kilometers away from the village of Krasnyi Voskhod on the banks of the Talovki River in Dagestan's Kizlyar district. It was destroyed by security forces, because it was used by the Kizlyarskaya group, known as a group of militants;

— on November 14, the security forces surrounded an apartment building in the Dagestani city of Kaspiisk where they killed two rebels in a shootout. According to the National Anti-Terrorism Committee, one of them was Magomed Dzhamayev, the leader of the rebel group in Kaspiisk, and the other, Islam Rashidov, was an active member of the same rebel group.

## 2012

— on January 13, security forces destroyed a rebel base on the outskirts of the village of Bolshaya Oreshevka in Dagestan's Kizlyar district;

— one day later, on January 14, one insurgent was killed in a gunfire. He was identified as Ruslan Sagidkhadzhiev, the main bomb expert of a rebel group that operates in Dagestan's Kizlyar district.

— on January 20, three alleged militants were killed by security forces in the republic's Khasavyurt district;

— On January 27, in a shootout in Kizlyar district, five militants were killed by Russian servicemen;

— Ibragimkhalil Daudov, the Dagestani Islamist rebel leader was killed in a shootout when police stormed a nearby house where he was hiding, but he escaped during the incident. But he lost a lot of blood and froze to death, and his body was found on February 14 in a forest. Four militants were also killed in the shootout.

No doubt, in the past two years, North Caucasus crossed a tense period and Dagestan had a big if not the biggest contribution to the destabilization of the area. In 2010, the insurgency in this republic made a number of casualties that cannot be overlooked: 178 deaths in terrorist attacks in North Caucasus and Moscow, with 68 in or linked to Dagestan, meaning 38 per-

cent. If we talk about exact figures, this means a total of 112 terrorist attacks that took place in Dagestan in 2010, including 5 suicide explosions.

But the proliferation of attacks and insurgency generated much more attention for both Russian and Dagestani authorities, who intensified their response to this situation, and the result was inevitable: the insurgents in Dagestan suffered substantial losses, only in 2010 three of the leaders being killed: Umalat Magomedov from town of Khasavyurt was killed on December 31, 2009; Ibragim Gadzhidadaev from Untsukul district was killed on July 15, 2010; and the last one, Magomedali Vagabov of Gubden, was killed on August 21, 2010.

The ultimatum gave by Vice-Prime Minister of Dagestan, Rizvan Kurbanov, on July 23, 2010, to the militants, who gave them the choice either to surrender or suffer the consequences, by promising that the authorities would “*eliminate the supporters of the militants along with the militant themselves,*” adding, “*within the legal framework, but without any mercy*”<sup>17</sup>, was not enough for the insurgents to stop the fight.

But local authorities are far outweighed by the situation, being unable to handle it as well as the insurgency that amplify the violence in the republic. In this context, Moscow, who financed 75% of Dagestan’s budget in 2010, less that in 2009, when the cash injection from Russia reached 82%, decided that the Dagestani issue cannot be solved in another way than through a military approach, so in September 2010, the insurgency in Dagestan was the target of the Russian military forces. Also, on November 14, the formation of the first battalion to fight against insurgency in Dagestan was announced, composed of 300 soldiers. Some analysts think that this might be a sign that Moscow is about to “Chechenize” the Dagestani issue. Maybe, or maybe not, but one thing is sure: the two cases have a few things in common, so the Kremlin’s decision to adopt a harsher attitude is not surprising anybody, especially in a time when the Russian authorities are facing more problems in the North Caucasus.

In 2011, the activity of the insurgents from Dagestan led to the disappearance of the Moscow’s little hope that the republic can become a place characterized by peace and stability. The sustained attacks on local authorities, civilians and servicemen from Russia proved that Dagestan is far from being a safe republic, so Moscow decided to handle the situation in its own way: on June 27, 2011, Russian Interior Minister Rashid Nurgaliev declared an unprecedented boost to Dagestan’s police forces. The recent attacks in the Russian republic from North Caucasus amplified Moscow’s fear for similar rebels actions like those in 2004, which culminated in the Beslan school siege where more than 300 people died.

<sup>17</sup> Valery Dzutsev, “An Assessment of Events in Dagestan in 2010: The Year in Review”, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume January 10, 2011, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews\[swords\]=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx\\_ttnews\[any\\_of\\_the\\_words\]=Dagestan&tx\\_ttnews\[pointer\]=18&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=37339&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=7&cHash=4aa339f7092421c30dc b15855f307ff5](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[swords]=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews[any_of_the_words]=Dagestan&tx_ttnews[pointer]=18&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=37339&tx_ttnews[backPid]=7&cHash=4aa339f7092421c30dc b15855f307ff5).

It was the Kremlin's reaction to the first half of the year security situation, situation that knew a continuous deterioration. Rashid Nurgaliev announced the creation of the 7,000-man joint police, military and security service group to fight the rebels in the republic. The decision was followed by the local authorities' intention (August 31) to dispatch an additional 200 troops in the Kizlyar district, where the situation became volatile and dangerous because of the fight between insurgents and government.

But Moscow understood that military action is not enough for North Caucasus and especially Dagestan to stop the violence, and the failure to control the region by military means made Moscow announce additional financial infusions, most of all in Dagestan, the biggest threat to the Russian influence and interests in North Caucasus. On July 25, 2011, Kremlin made public the plan to invest \$140 billion in this region in the period 2012 — 2025. Also, Moscow mentioned about providing 100% guarantees for foreign investors, but even so, it was hard and quite impossible to attract investment in the economy of a republic where no one can guarantee the safety of anything. And the reports represent proof of the danger that characterizes life in Dagestan: in 2011, at least 204 people died and 149 were injured. Also, during the first six months of the year at least 61 armed conflicts occurred in Dagestan, 46 explosions and terror acts, in which 27 people, including one power agent, six members of the armed underground and 20 civilians were killed; 63 people, including 13 power agents and 50 civilians, were injured. The number of terrorist acts includes three suicide bombings, in which eight people in total were lost, including one power agent, four suicide bombers and three civilians. Also, 29 people, including one power agent and 28 civilians, were injured.<sup>18</sup>

But with all the measures, promises, plans and threats coming from Moscow, the summer of 2011 was bloody in Dagestan and the Kremlin knows that the situation in the Caucasian republic is deteriorating as time passes. Because of the daily violence, the population in Dagestan became "paranoid". After every attack, shooting and explosion, everybody is calling everybody — relatives, friends etc to check if they are alive. This state of panic keeps a high level of tension among people, who are not protected by any means against the possibility of being wounded or killed.

And this was the trend for the second half of the year for Dagestan, as for the entire year. Even if the Russian authorities tried to remediate the situation by military and economic means, the reports at the end of the year showed that the situation in the Caucasian republic worsens. At least 842 victims were registered (413 dead and 411 injured), compared to the year 2010, when the number of casualties reached 685 victims.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *Dagestan: at least 353 persons lost and injured during the first half of 2011*, Caucasian Knot, July 20, 2011, <http://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/17821/>.

<sup>19</sup> *Dagestan: 824 persons lost or wounded in 2011 in armed conflict*, Caucasus Knot, January 5, 2012, <http://abhazia.eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/19591/>.

If we make a retrospective of last year (2011), we can see that the insurgency in the North Caucasus region followed an ascending trend. Also, the policies of Russian authorities failed to stop the violence and only fueled anti-Russian sentiment in Dagestan. The militants' practice of extract tribute from politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen still continues, even if this situation is not new: this extortion has been public knowledge for a decade now.<sup>20</sup> In this case, what is the future of the Republic of Dagestan? Are all the measures doomed to fail? And in this case, how does the future sound for Dagestani people? Until now, nothing can guarantee that the future plans and policies will work, so the violence and insurgency can still represent the main feature for this territory. Indeed, both Moscow and local authorities are trying to find a solution to issues that Dagestan is facing, but the big problem is that both fails to identify the best path to lasting peace in Dagestan.

In this case, Moscow decided not to change its approach in a dramatic way, so at the beginning of this month, on February 2, 2012, at a meeting in Dagestan's capital Makhachkala, Dagestani leader Magomedislam Magomedov stated that five "combined operational groups," consisting of Interior Ministry and FSB personnel and Internal Troops commandos, have been set up in areas where the republic's rebels are most active – the Derbent, Kizlyar, Sergokalinsky, Untsukul'sky and Tsumadinsky districts.<sup>21</sup>

On the same day, the local government outlined its intentions for curbing the insurgency in the Republic of Dagestan. It is about exerting control over the republic and the plan is closely linked to Russia's decision mentioned above. This means that it will follow a bloody period, with fights between local authorities supported by Russians forces and insurgents, in a war that will continue as long as the insurgency in Dagestan will be nurtured and animated by the existence of militants. And the number of insurgents is big, leaving aside that they are constantly recruited followers.

### *Conclusions*

The history of Caucasus, like that of Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq or Balkans, demonstrates that the attempts to obtain the supreme goal of self-determination ends all to often with violent situations like wars and human suffering. The causes of such events are the inappropriate and inadequate ways followed in the struggle for independence and self-determination, like terrorism attacks or/and attacks on the borders of neighbors. North Caucasus, with a

<sup>20</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "North Caucasus Authorities Unable to End Wave of Rebel and Criminal Extortion", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume January 26, 2012.

<sup>21</sup> *Insurgency-Related Incidents Reported in Chechnya, Dagestan and Kabardino-Balkaria*, Eurasia Daily Monitor, February 3, 2012, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews\[swords\]=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx\\_ttnews\[any\\_of\\_the\\_words\]=dagestan&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=38969&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=7&cHash=3cbe3d4cc9c5246b36cbc0fdc2e355f8](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[swords]=8fd5893941d69d0be3f378576261ae3e&tx_ttnews[any_of_the_words]=dagestan&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=38969&tx_ttnews[backPid]=7&cHash=3cbe3d4cc9c5246b36cbc0fdc2e355f8).

strategic importance because its natural and mineral resources, the Caspian Sea and the Baku – Novorossiisk pipeline, is a good example of incidents like those mentioned above.

If we try to identify a solution for the Dagestani problem, we must keep in mind that Dagestan was never an independent state inside its frontiers. The Russian republic, like many others in the region, faces a lack of concept of statehood, in this context being impossible to formulate and apply a state strategy in order to solve the existing crisis, a strategy that must be acceptable for all thirteen ethnicities in the Dagestani republic.

Until then, this part of the North Caucasus area remains a big problem for Moscow, which is now focusing its major anti-insurgency efforts in Dagestan, the epicenter of violence as rebels move their operations from Chechnya to neighboring areas. No doubt, Dagestan made the greatest contribution to the general trend of destabilization in the North Caucasus in the past two years. A large-scale war is unlikely to develop in Dagestan, but violence is not expected to reach a dead end in the near future.

In this case, the question is *what Moscow can do to keep the situation from becoming more volatile in Dagestan?* First of all, the Russian Federation must face reality: the scale and scope of the conflict in Dagestan increasingly resemble a civil war.<sup>22</sup> Here, because the rebels don't have the force and weapons needed for an open fight, they orchestrate psychologically damaging attacks not only in Dagestan but in Russia too. In this case, it is vital for Moscow not to allow the situation to further deteriorate, for one reason: Dagestan has both strategic and economic value. It borders the eternal enemy Georgia and the gas fields of Azerbaijan. Also, Makhachkala is one of the few Russian ports free of ice year-round.<sup>23</sup>

The current situation does not seem encouraging. The incidents in past years are evidence that the Russian security services, based in Dagestan, and their regional allies are unable to provide safety for the Dagestani people even for a single day, in a time when attacks are expected to be staged and additional security precaution have been taken.<sup>24</sup>

Last year, in order to avoid the total loss of the control over Dagestan, Russia thought up a new plan, presented by President Dmitry Medvedev. In brief, it is about solving the region's problem by winning over the population, which is 90% Muslim. For Kremlin, Dagestan represents the most important front in its battle for the hearts and minds of Caucasians. But now, Moscow

<sup>22</sup> Valery Dzutsev, "Conflict in Dagestan Approaches the Level of a Civil War", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 8, Issue: 33, February 16, 2011, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=37519](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=37519).

<sup>23</sup> Nina Achmatova, *The "slaughterhouse" of Dagestan is not Chechnya*, AsiaNews.it, September 29, 2010, <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/The-slaughterhouse-of-Dagestan-is-not-Chechnya-19561.html>.

<sup>24</sup> Valery Dzutsev, "Government Authorities Fail to Provide Security in the North Caucasus", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 11, Issue: 0, September 7, 2010, [http://www.jamestown.-org/programs/edm/single/?tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=36376&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=484&no\\_cache=1](http://www.jamestown.-org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=36376&tx_ttnews[backPid]=484&no_cache=1).

already seems like an occupying power in retreat. Police became popular targets for the rebels and some of them need to be guarded by elite Ministry units in armored vehicles when they exercise their job.<sup>25</sup>

And so far, Dagestan is one of those dangerous places in the world where every single day somebody is injured or even killed.

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## Chapter 13

# REPUBLIC OF KABARDINO-BALKARIA

**BOGDAN NEDEA**

### Part I

#### REPUBLICAN AUTHORITIES AND THE LACK OF AUTHORITY

We could categorize Kabardino-Balkaria as one of the most “unexpected” republics of the North Caucasus regarding the religious warfare and Islamic extremism. This republic’s evolution from almost zero to more than one hundred percent on the dangerous scale in less than two years is a “progress” that could have hardly been foreseen. Looking back, it is hard to believe now that up until the spring of 2010 the situation in Kabardino-Balkaria was relatively quiet. According to the Kavkazsky Uzel (Caucasian Knot) website, which closely monitors the situation in the North Caucasus, there were 12 attacks in Kabardino-Balkaria in 2009, with the government and insurgents suffering four casualties each, while in 2010 there were nearly 100 attacks in the republic, with 22 government officers and 20 insurgents killed in fighting. In addition, 15 civilians or people with unclear affiliations were killed in 2010. The bulk of the attacks occurred in the republic’s main city of Nalchik and the nearby town of Baksan. The security situation in Kabardino-Balkaria deteriorated so rapidly that it quickly reached a degree that rebels in other long time unstable regions of the North Caucasus had not been able to reach. On July 21, 2010, for the first time in the North Caucasus, an important infrastructure site, the Baksan hydroelectric plant, was attacked and rendered unusable. Before that, on July 11, as many as five transmitters were blown up in just four hours<sup>1</sup>. By the end of 2010 most of the international opinion was ready to declare that the republic was entering a state of civil war. This stark warning came after a well-known researcher of Circassian traditions and rites, Aslan Tsipinov, was killed on the doorsteps of his home on December 29. Two weeks earlier, on December 15, the republic’s mufti, Anas Pshikhachev, was killed in a similar fashion. Police in the

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<sup>1</sup> *Kabardino-Balkaria: Chronicle of explosions, shootings and bombings*, Caucasian Knot, <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/172027/>, July 23, 2010.

republic appeared to be actually curtailing their presence, especially at night, and therefore fears are rising that the next step in Kabardino-Balkaria might be an open civil war between the Islamists and secular nationalists, the latter propped up by Moscow<sup>2</sup>. The young Islamist leader Emir Zakaria (aka Ratmir Shameyev) confirmed that the insurgency would now target not only government officials and the police, but also all “infidels”, “traitors of the faith” and “pagans”. This is a very broad definition of “legitimate” targets, which essentially allows the Islamists to attack the vast majority of the republican population<sup>3</sup>.

The downward spiral in Kabardino-Balkaria accelerated following the killing of the rebels’ leader, Anzor Astemirov (aka Emir Seifullah), on March 24. Astemirov reportedly had adopted an insurgent strategy of keeping a low profile in order to prevent a large-scale incursion of Russian armed forces into the republic which he feared would create the utter destruction of the republic, as it had in Chechnya. Also, Kabardinian and Balkar activists clashed throughout 2010, arguing about land ownership, which still provides subsistence for many households. The Kabardinians (aka Circassians) comprise about 55 percent of the republic’s population and the Balkars, who speak a Turkic language, make up 12 percent of the population. The Balkars occupy the mountainous areas, including lucrative tourist destinations around Mount Elbrus. Balkar activists launched several hunger strikes, while the Kabardinians pressed ahead with stripping the Balkar villages of their “extra” pastures<sup>4</sup>. The issue was so hotly contested that at one point, Moscow’s envoy to the North Caucasus, Aleksandr Khloponin, even stated that it was “under the personal control of the president of Russia”<sup>5</sup>. Karachaevo-Cherkessia, located to the west of Kabardino-Balkaria, has the opposite ethnic make up. The Turkic-speaking Karachays, who are closely related to the Balkars, comprise the majority, while the Cherkess (Circassians) are a minority in this republic. It is important to note that the insurgents view Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachaevo-Cherkessia as a single territorial entity within the Caucasus Emirate, called “The United Velayat of Kabarda, Balkaria and Karacha”, or KBK<sup>6</sup>.

Despite the dramatic deterioration of the situation in Kabardino-Balkaria in 2010, President Dmitry Medvedev reappointed Arsen Kanokov as the head of the republic in September 2010. Prior to his reappointment, Kanokov and Khloponin had complained that unspecified forces were purposefully

<sup>2</sup> “Wave of Destabilization Swept Kabardino-Balkaria”, in 2010 (Part One), *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 12, Issue: 2, January 17, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> [www.islamdin.com](http://www.islamdin.com), January 8, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> *Imereti residents demand to stop factories located in the territory of ornithological park*, Jan 11 2010 *CAUCASIAN KNOT*, [www.kavkaz-uzel.ru](http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru).

<sup>5</sup> *Kabardino-Balkaria sums up youth forum “Kavkaz-2020”*. Jul 23, 2010, *Caucasian Knot*, <http://kabardinobalk.eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/13928/>.

<sup>6</sup> “Wave of Destabilization Swept Kabardino-Balkaria”, in 2010 (Part Two), *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 12, Issue: 2, January 17, 2011.

destabilizing the republic to cast doubt on Kanokov's ability to lead the republic<sup>7</sup>. However, more than one year after Kanokov's reappointment, the situation in the republic remains just as volatile to this day.

On January 13, several Kabardino-Balkarian civil organizations with ties to the government called for government authorities to defend the people against the perceived threat by the Islamists. Curiously, the address emphasized the importance of ethnic identity for successfully combating the jihadist ideology<sup>8</sup>. The next day, on January 14, the President of Kabardino-Balkaria, Arsen Kanokov, stated rather inconclusively that the government would hold the insurgents' clan and family members responsible for suppressing the rebels' activities<sup>9</sup>. The practice of collective punishment worked in Chechnya to some extent, but may be much less effective in Kabardino-Balkaria. First of all, traditional clans are much weaker in that republic than in Chechnya and, secondly, the republic did not experience a large-scale war that would allow the government to justify extreme actions of that kind.

The nationalist uprising in Moscow in December 2010, when crowds of Russian nationalists staged pogroms in the Russian capital against those with North Caucasian or Asian appearance, intimately touched Kabardino-Balkaria. Aslan Cherkesov, who is accused of killing a Russian soccer fan and triggering the clashes in Moscow, comes from Kabardino-Balkaria. The anti-Caucasian protests in Moscow received a cool response not only among the ordinary people in Kabardino-Balkaria, but even in the local government where the local leadership differs with the Kremlin. Kanokov, for example, equated the Russian nationalists with the Islamic rebels in the North Caucasus, while the Russian leadership in Moscow adopted a much more conciliatory tone toward the Russian extremists. Having displayed a particularly precipitous deterioration of the security situation, Kabardino-Balkaria was likely, according to given facts, to deliver more surprises in 2011. So far, the Russian and local authorities had indicated little resolve or strategy to improve the situation in this republic's situation that lead to the most uncertain state it has experienced in recent years.

The scapegoat for all the republic's problems appeared at the beginning of April, when the head of Kabardino-Balkaria, Arsen Kanokov, and Moscow's envoy to the North Caucasus, Aleksandr Khloponin, jointly announced that the resignation of the republic's government was imminent (April 4). In his statement Kanokov held his government responsible for Kabardino-Balkaria's instability over the previous several months: "The government is responsible, in particular, for interaction with youth, for fighting the reli-

<sup>7</sup> *Power agents suspect Kazbek Tashuev of organizing the Baksan HPP terror act* Jul 22, 2010, Caucasian Knot, <http://kabardinobalk.eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/14010/>.

<sup>8</sup> *In Kabardino-Balkaria, public and political organizations concerned about situation in republic*, Jan 13 2011, Caucasian Knot, <http://kabardinobalk.eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/15817/>.

<sup>9</sup> *The trust of the population to law enforcement agencies to expire*, President of Kabardino-Balkaria, January 14 2011, <http://www.caucasustimes.com/article.asp?id=20726>.

gious extremism. I plan to strengthen precisely these sides in the new administration". In the same speech Khloponin reassured Kanokov that he still trusted him and that he did not think Kanokov himself was responsible for the instability that has been growing Kabardino-Balkaria since May 2010<sup>10</sup>. Aleksandr Merkulov was appointed as the head of Kabardino-Balkaria's government in August 2009, following his predecessor, Andrei Yarin's departure to the Russian president's administration. Neither of the two men enjoyed particularly close personal or business relationship with Kanokov, they had little prior knowledge of Kabardino-Balkaria and were known for being ineffective managers therefore it can be concluded with a great degree of certainty that their function was to be Moscow's "eyes and ears" in Kabardino-Balkaria's government to keep Kanokov in check. Merkulov's dishonorable resignation symbolizes another profound failure of Moscow's policies to implement a bureaucratic version of checks and balances in the republic and the same time, it highlights the weak position of Kanokov, who apparently was unable to select a head of government on his own will until now.

The desperate situation in the republic was best expressed by the changes that took place in the beginning of 2011. The lack of solutions against the insurgency has led the Russian security services revert to outright terror in an attempt to scare the insurgents and their support base. In the process, the security services invariably also killed innocent people, which in turn evoked wider protest and takes the violence to a higher level. Furthermore, the parliament of Kabardino-Balkaria came up with an initiative to revoke the right of close relatives to testify against crime perpetrators. The move, which is designed to allow officials to pressure the relatives of rebels into reporting them to the police, goes against not only the existing Russian criminal code, but also the country's constitution<sup>11</sup>. The rebels appeared to have ignored an earlier call by relatives to surrender: on March 15 a group of 11 mothers of suspected rebels, encouraged by official promises to give them fair trials, appealed to their sons to submit to the authorities<sup>12</sup>.

### *Popular or unpopular unrest*

Nevertheless the political aspect is not the only problem as there are several sources of discontent breeding violence in Kabardino-Balkaria. First, violent actions have replaced the participatory political process, as elections for local governors were abolished by Moscow in 2004 and the electoral

<sup>10</sup> Valery Dzutsev, "Kabardino-Balkaria's government blamed for allowing region's destabilization," *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 12, Issue: 7, April 4, 2011.

<sup>11</sup> *The gunmen of Kabardino-Balkaria did not respond to their parents' call to surrender*, <http://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/16554/>, March 31, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> *Idem*.

institutions degraded. Second, the issue of the 2014 Sochi Olympics, which Circassians connect to the issue of the Circassian “genocide,” given that Sochi was inhabited by Circassians who were partly exterminated and deported as the Russian empire encroached on their lands in the nineteenth century. Third, the rising Islamic consciousness of the local Muslim populations is coming into conflict with a fervently secularist Russian state that at the same time tends to discriminate in favor of the Russian Orthodox Church. In addition, there is a simmering interethnic rift between the Kabardins and the Balkars, deriving from the issue of land ownership, which has a strong ethnic connotation in this comparatively densely populated area.

The militant insurgency in Kabardino-Balkaria has become so strong in the past two years that businesses reportedly are now required to pay the insurgents money “for jihad” in order to continue functioning safely. Insurgents have attacked alcohol sellers in Baksan in the past, while unknown assailants have attacked relatives of the militant leaders. Thus, the anti-terrorist techniques employed by the local government can be identified as the last but not least of the problems that affect the region. These methods are not only lacking in efficiency but are able to gather even more support for the extremist methods employed by the insurgent movement. Moreover, the methods that the local government chose for re-establishing order in the republic during 2010 and 2011 have done nothing more than expose the lack of authority of the central administration and the inability to reinforce the law. We could almost say that the insurgent movement had better chances at accomplishing their own goals than the central administration.

If we were to give an example we could refer to the fact that in February 2010, Doku Umarov, the leader of the Caucasus Emirate, of which the Kabardin jamaat is a part of, announced a campaign of targeting infrastructure across Russia. The veracity of the threat was tested later on in 2010 when, on July 21, a group of militants in Kabardino-Balkaria launched a bold attack on the Baksan hydroelectric plant, ransacked the facility and rendered it unusable after a series of explosions. Two policemen who were guarding the plant were killed in the raid. Despite the fact that the destruction of the hydroelectric plant did not lead to a major disruption in the supply of electricity to Kabardino-Balkaria, the Russian government’s reaction was unusually brusque and nervous. It became a moment of truth for Moscow’s envoy to the North Caucasus, Aleksandr Khloponin, who has faced his greatest crisis so far since being dispatched to the region in January 2010. Khloponin used the harshest and the most informal words, calling the insurgents “brutalized louts,” which probably betrayed his exasperation and despair with the destabilization that is unfolding in the region of his responsibility.

Nevertheless that wasn’t the single most important mistake Khloponin made, but the moment when he suggested that Cossacks should be assigned

to guard vulnerable infrastructure sites in Kabardino-Balkaria<sup>13</sup>. Khloponin's statement has the great potential to have an incendiary effect in this multi-ethnic region, where ethnic Russians comprise 25 percent of the general population, which is approaching one million, while the Kabardins, aka Circassians, comprise 55 percent of the population and the Turkic-speaking Balkars make up 12 percent. Khloponin's proposal means that Moscow regards ethnic Russians as its only loyal and trustworthy subjects in Kabardino-Balkaria, automatically putting them at loggerheads with the rest of the local population. Along with demonstrating his lack of knowledge of the region and his inability to control himself in a crisis situation, Khloponin's statement only underlined the local government's inability to rely on its own strength thus being forced to refer to civic constituencies.

A statement by president Medvedev in the aftermath of the attack contributed to the range of misplaced government reactions. He demanded that the law enforcement agencies and businesses do everything they can to prevent future attacks. He threatened that if such an attack were to happen again, "not one of the heads of the law enforcement agencies and companies would remain in place. All would be fired". The statement opened the way for more actions of the insurgents with the intention to weaken president Kanokov's position, whose term would have expired in September 2011<sup>14</sup>. In fact, the President of Kabardino-Balkaria, Arsen Kanokov, may well have been the main target of the attack on the Baksan hydroelectric plant himself, figuratively speaking. According to Khloponin, the uncertainty about the future of presidency in Kabardino-Balkaria and the latest attack were directly linked, a fact recognized by president Kanokov himself that had stated earlier that year that destabilization of the situation in the republic had to do with his expiring term and certain shadowy forces were trying to show Moscow that he did not control the situation in the republic and thereby prevent him from being elected to a second presidential term. Both the republic's president Arsen Kanokov and the Russian president's envoy to the North Caucasus, Aleksandr Khloponin, have explained the rapid destabilization that has hit Kabardino-Balkaria especially hard in 2010 due to an ongoing power struggle and in the wake of the expiring presidential mandate of the Kabard president, some people are eager to show to the Kremlin that he is not in control of the situation in the republic.

Nevertheless on August 23, 2011, President Dmitry Medvedev reappointed Kanokov as the head of Kabardino-Balkaria and on September 1 the republican parliament formally accepted Medvedev's appointment, with 53 votes in favor and 4 abstaining<sup>15</sup>. However, hopes that fighting in the repu-

<sup>13</sup> *Attack on Kabardino-Balkaria Hydroelectric Plant Exposes Government's Weakness*, July 30, 2010.

<sup>14</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>15</sup> *Coordination board of Balkar organizations starts preparing Congress of Balkar People*, Sep 01, 2010, Caucasian Knot, <http://kabardinobalk.eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/14309/>.

blic would end as soon as Russia's leadership made up its mind on the candidacy of the republican president were shaded by continuing violence.

One example took place on September 11, a police armored truck and a gas pipeline were blown up in the Elbrus district, located in the mountainous part of Kabardino-Balkaria. The attack left five servicemen injured and several settlements without gas supplies. The strength of the blast was estimated at 10-12 kilograms of TNT. That same night, a war memorial was blown up in the same area of Kabardino-Balkaria. Local insurgents claimed responsibility for both attacks. On September 8, a federal judge in the Baksan district of the republic was gunned down in front of his house. The Kabardino-Balkarian insurgents' website took responsibility for this event too, even though the source did not explain why that particular judge was singled out<sup>16</sup>. There are many more such examples. Therefore, despite some improvements in economic life, Kanokov had to start his work from scratch because of the insurgency and lack of popular political participation as well as Russia's economic problems, which together, hinder regional economic growth. It is becoming an ever-growing reality that economic reforms by themselves would not solve corruption, security or even essential economic issues. The region is in need of wider political participation, a boost to civil society and investment in building democratic institutions. These goals apparently come into conflict with Russia's overall development in the direction of a more centralized state allowing its citizens less political participation.

Another incident that has the power to reveal not only the inabilities of the government but also the ever increasing volatile situation of Kabardino-Balkaria took place on December 29, 2010, when a prominent Circassian ethnographer, Arsen Tsipinov, was gunned down at the doorsteps of his home in a suburb of Nalchik, the capital of the republic. Tsipinov was known for his active role in promoting Circassian ethnic identity and culture. The ethnographer's killing came just two weeks after Kabardino-Balkaria's mufti, Anas Pshikhachev, was killed also at the doorsteps of his home on December 15<sup>17</sup>.

Aslan Tsipinov was known as a devoted advocate of Circassian traditions and beliefs who did not hesitate to criticize the Muslim part of Circassian identity. The authorities and observers blamed his murder on Kabardino-Balkaria's Islamic insurgents. These killings were widely seen as an attempt by Moscow to play off Circassian nationalists against the Islamists. The authorities called on the population to close ranks and fight the Islamists thus attempting to mastermind a clash between the two ideologies in order to weaken the broad support received by the insurgency in the republic.

<sup>16</sup> "Security in Kabardino-Balkaria Fails to Improve After Reappointment of President", September 16, 2010, *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 11, Issue: 5.

<sup>17</sup> *Ethnographer Aslan Tsipinov assassinated in Kabardino-Balkaria*, Dec 29 2010, *CAUCASIAN KNOT*, <http://kabardinobalk.eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/15686/>.

Even so, the Islamists' dislike of Arsen Tsipinov may have been quite genuine, without the need for a third party to fuel conflict between them. On May 29, 2009, Tsipinov was criticized for attempts to reintroduce Circassian "pagan" rituals<sup>18</sup>. In a statement by the Islamists issued on August 2, 2009, Tsipinov was described as a typical "pagan" supporter of the "infidel" authorities in Kabardino-Balkaria. An insurgency-related website claimed that by killing Tsipinov, the attackers had carried out the order of a "Sharia court" but provided no further details<sup>19</sup>. Therefore we cannot rule out that Kabardino-Balkaria's rebels may have been settling their own scores with Tsipinov and the republican mufti Anas Pshikhachev, or may have done so as a result of a clever plot by the Russian security services to put the insurgents at loggerheads with Circassian nationalists. Whatever the case, the bottom line is that Moscow cannot control the situation in the republic using conventional means.

On January 2, 2011, the leadership of the insurgency in Kabardino-Balkaria released a video taking responsibility for the killing of Pshikhachev, accusing him of having fought "against Islam." The insurgents also claimed responsibility for the killing of the eight hunters, accusing them of having been Russian spies, and warned that the forest areas in the republic are "war zones" urging civilians to stay out of them. The insurgents also detailed several other recent attacks on policemen and otherwise "morally corrupt people" in the republic. They made no mention of Tsipinov's death, most likely, because the video was shot before December 29. The rebels vowed not to attack ordinary civilians, saying they were fighting on behalf of their own people<sup>20</sup>.

## Part II GROWTH OF THE ISLAMIC FRONT IN KABARDINO-BALKARIA

We could pinpoint the reactivation of the Yarmuk Jamaat of Kabardino-Balkaria around the first half of 2010. Up to this point the jamaat members kept away, with some exceptions, from any high-profile bombings or major attempts against the authorities due to the belief of its leader Anzor Astemirov, that any such action would trigger a disproportionate response as it had happened in Chechnya. Astemirov, a major character in the insurgency, was killed by the Russian authorities on March 25, 2010. His demise led to

<sup>18</sup> Jamaat Takbir, *Who leads us back to paganism?*, May 29, 2009, [http://www.djamaattakbir.com/2009/05/blog-post\\_6929.html](http://www.djamaattakbir.com/2009/05/blog-post_6929.html).

<sup>19</sup> *JOINT Vilayat CSC, in the village of Shalushka, eradicated malignant hypocrite*, December 30<sup>th</sup> 2010 UmmaNews. Com, <http://ummanews.com/news/kavkaz/191-2010-12-30-15-28-08.html>.

<sup>20</sup> "High-profile Murders in Kabardino-Balkaria Underscore the Government's Inability to Control Situation in the Republic", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 12, Issue: 1, January 3, 2011.

a pick-up of insurgent activity in Kabardino-Balkaria mainly due to the importance he had gained in the beginnings of the Caucasus Emirate movement. During the Second Chechen War, insurgency leaders sought support from religious groups outside Chechnya to expand the insurgency across the North Caucasus. While cooperation started between jamaats (Islamic councils or assemblies) in Kabardino-Balkaria and the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (ChRI)<sup>21</sup>, no formal structure existed. The idea of uniting all the anti-Russian separatist and religious groups in the Caucasus belonged to Anzor Astemirov, the leader of the Kabarda-Balkaria jamaat. In 2005, Astemirov and Ingush jamaat leader Ilyas Gorchkhanov approached Shamil Basaev with a suggestion to unite with the Chechen jamaat to form a Caucasus-wide coalition. Basaev did not agree and suggested they subordinate themselves under the rule of the president of the ChRI, Abdul-Khalim Sadullayev. In exchange, Basaev helped insurgents in Kabardino-Balkaria organize a massive military attack on security forces in the regional capital of Nalchik in October 2005, which made Astemirov one of the most influential leaders in the Caucasus<sup>22</sup>. After the deaths of Basaev and Sadullayev in the summer of 2006, Astemirov proposed the creation of a Caucasian Emirate to Doku Umarov, the new president of the ChRI. The new structure absorbed the ChRI and included it as one of its regions. The CE was divided into six vilayats (administrative divisions). The establishment of the Emirate led to a clash between religious and nationalist branches inside the insurgency and a group of insurgents denounced the transformation of ChRI into the Caucasus Emirate and elected a new president of ChRI, Ahmed Zakayev. This election did not prevent the creation of the Emirate as, following elections, Umarov became Emir and Astemirov became Kadi (ideological and judicial leader) of the Supreme Sharia Court. The Emirate had two main goals: to change the ideology from separatism/nationalism to religious extremism and to establish an Islamic state in the North Caucasus—though they see themselves as fundamentalists and claim they are fighting for jihad (holy war) against terror perpetrated by the state

Following the liquidation of Astemirov, members of the jamaat, in an apparent revenge for the loss, intensified their strikes against Russian authorities across Kabardino-Balkaria but that is not the only reason for their newly-found spirit. The other reason links to the new leadership of the jamaat, position that was filled by Emir Abdullah (Asker Jappuev), Astemirov's long-time close associate and deputy. Little information was available about Jappuev. He was born in 1971 in the town of Tyrnyauz in Kabardino-

<sup>21</sup> The Chechen republic of Ichkeria (ChRI) was the name of the unrecognized independent Chechen state between 1991 and 2000. After the beginning of the second Chechen war, the Chechen government in exile and the resistance kept the name ChRI until the establishment of the Caucasus Emirate even if Akhmad Kadyrov was elected as the new president of Chechnya in 2003.

<sup>22</sup> Sufian Zhemukhov, Jean-François Ratelle, "A Case Study of the Kabardino-Balkaria Insurgency", *A comparative analysis of ideological trends in the North Caucasus*, Ponars Eurasia Policy Memo No. 156, May 2011.

Balkaria. His close relative Adamey Jappuev, who sometime in the past also had been the late Astemirov's deputy, was killed last year. The Yarmuk Jamaat's new leader has been on the list of the Investigation Committee of Kabardino-Balkaria as a fugitive since 2007, when he and 12 comrades in the jamaat were accused of killing four hunters and five gamekeepers on November 4, 2007<sup>23</sup>. The Yarmuk Jamaat's leader was an ethnic Balkar and as a Chechnya war veteran, he was known to have participated in the Chechen armed resistance movement under the leadership of military commander Shamil Basaev. The certainty regarding Jappuev's leadership is that the methods he employed were far more bellicose than the ones used by his predecessor which could be another explanation for the revival of the insurgency in the kabard jamaat.

As a result, in the following months, the Russian government began emitting reports stating that militant activity in Kabardino-Balkaria has increased four to five times –more than anywhere else in the North Caucasus region<sup>24</sup>. During 2010, there were 108 attacks on law enforcement personnel, including judges and prosecutors, in which 42 were killed. In addition, there were losses among the civilian population, with 31 people killed and 53 injured<sup>25</sup>. It is hard to overlook the intensity of rebel actions given the killings of and bombings targeting police and Federal Security Service (FSB) officers as well as the assaults perpetrated against hunters in the foothills of Kabardino-Balkaria.

Major support from the population led not only to the expansion of the jamaat under Jappuev's rule but also to the increase of the number of members willing to join the cause. The first thing that draws attention when you watch video clips made by representatives of the Kabardino-Balkaria Jamaat is their age. Almost none is older than 40, and there are many who are not even 30. That is, as in other parts of the North Caucasus, young people are the base of support of the ideology of resistance to Russian rule.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising that the president of Kabardino-Balkaria, Arsen Kanokov, had to admit that the prognosis for the crime situation in the republic continued to be "disappointing"<sup>27</sup>, revealing the fact that in spite of the optimism projected by Russian authorities the situation was worsening. The kabard president in an attempt to justify his lack of solutions and the fact

<sup>23</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Rebel Attacks on the Rise in Kabardino-Balkaria", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume: 11, August 27, 2010.

<sup>24</sup> *In Kabardino-Balkaria, five times increase in the number of terrorist offenses*, <http://www.rosbalt.ru/main/2010/11/29/794929.html>, Rosbalt, 29/11/2010.

<sup>25</sup> *In Kabardino-Balkaria were four times more likely to attack security forces*, <http://news.mail.ru/inregions/caucasus/7/5216092/>, January 28, 2011.

<sup>26</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Rebel Attacks in Kabardino-Balkaria Skyrocket", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume: 12 Issue: 3, February 4, 2011.

<sup>27</sup> *The head of the Kabardino-Balkaria called forecast of the crime situation in the republic disappointing*, <http://www.regnum.ru/news/kavkaz/kab-balk/1365972.html#ixzz1mZEdCBKw>, Regnum, January 19, 2011.

that the insurgency was gaining momentum from year to year, once again blamed militants from outside who are penetrating into his republic in order to destabilize the situation there. His assessment appears to be a few years late as the local jamaat in Kabardino-Balkaria do not require any outside help. On the contrary, during 2010 and 2011 we have witnessed the strengthening of the role of jamaats in the northwestern Caucasus, specifically in Karachaevo-Cherkessia and Adygeya, a consequence of the activity of Yarmuk, the Kabardino-Balkaria Jamaat. Taking into account the performance of the local militant leaders and the number and quality of attacks they have perpetrated against the Russian authorities throughout Kabardino-Balkaria, it can be stated that they have succeeded in organizing jamaat structures virtually in all major towns that are capable of acting autonomously in case the Russian government takes action against the jamaat leadership.

### *Rebirth of the Kabard Insurgency*

The high-point of Jappuev's leadership came only a few months after he took over the Yarmuk Jamaat when he not only took credit but was identified as the putative mastermind behind the *attack on the Baksan hydropower plant* north of Nalchik on July 21, 2010. According to Russian media reports, a group of between two and four fighters killed two guards and made their way into the Baksan power plant, where they planted explosive devices that damaged two of the three turbines, and then retreated safely<sup>28</sup>. As expected, the attack came as a surprise to the authorities in the region that even though had kept the rising of the insurgency under observation failed to assess their capabilities. Moreover, the action in itself could be described as defiant as the attack occurred in less than a week from the *appointment* of a new head of the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic branch of the Federal Security Service (FSB).

The lack of reaction and results from the local government led the federal authorities to take drastic measures so, by December 2010 a counterterrorist operation regime was in place in Elbrus and Baksan regions (insurgency hotspots) of Kabardino-Balkaria and by the end of February 2011 it was in place in parts of the republican capital Nalchik, and the Chegem and Cherek districts<sup>29</sup>. The introduction of a counterterrorist operation regime in much of the republic followed an attack that occurred on February 25 when an insurgent unit believed to count approximately 12 fighters attacked several

<sup>28</sup> *New Kabardino-Balkaria Militant Commander Suspected Behind Power Plant Attack*, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, July 21, 2010, [http://www.rferl.org/content/New\\_KabardinoBalkaria\\_Militant\\_Commander\\_Suspected\\_Behind\\_Power\\_Plant\\_Attack/2105947.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/New_KabardinoBalkaria_Militant_Commander_Suspected_Behind_Power_Plant_Attack/2105947.html).

<sup>29</sup> Valery Dzutsev, "Government Helpless as Rebels Expand Operations in Kabardino-Balkaria", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 12, Issue: 5, February 28, 2011.

police checkpoints and a Federal Security Service (FSB) resort in Nalchik<sup>30</sup>. The surprise simultaneous insurgent attacks in Nalchik revived memories of the massive October 2005 assault on the capital. In that raid, an estimated 200 rebels attacked the law enforcement agency buildings throughout Nalchik, leaving more than 130 rebels, servicemen and civilians dead. Although the security services easily put down the 2005 rebellion, the divisive effect of the clashes have plagued the republic ever since. While no people were reported being killed in the February attack in Nalchik, its psychological impact was significant, because it took place when law enforcement agencies in the republic were already on high alert.

Apparently, the Nalchik attack was the incite that the authorities needed to take any form of action and, as it rarely happens in North Caucasus, the action that ensued was a decisive one. On April 29, Russian law-enforcement agencies conducted a special operation in the village of Progress, located on the administrative border between Kabardino-Balkaria and Stavropol Krai. According to the National Anti-Terrorist Committee (NAK), 16 people suspected of involvement with the “armed underground” were killed in the operation. Four local rebel leaders were reportedly among the slain militants: Asker Jappaev, aka Emir Abdullah, the 40-year-old leader of the militants in Kabardino-Balkaria; Ratmir Shameyev, a 22-year-old resident of Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkaria’s capital, who headed a militant group active in the republic and had been involved in attacks on law-enforcement personnel and other crimes; Kazbek Tashuev, the 32-year-old head of the Baksan rebel group; and Tashuev’s 31-year-old deputy, Aslanbek Khamurzov<sup>31</sup>. It is safe to say that the Russian security services wiped out the leadership of the insurgency in Kabardino-Balkaria in a single stroke but despite widespread optimism among Russian policymakers, future developments showed that the killing of several rebel leaders was a tactical success that would not by itself resolve the underlying causes of instability in the republic. The authorities should have remembered that paradoxically, the situation in Kabardino-Balkaria was dramatically destabilized earlier precisely because the security services were so successful in killing off the leader of the rebels, Anzor Astemirov and that after one month of regrouping, the defiant rebels stepped up attacks against the government forces at levels Kabardino-Balkaria had not previously seen and made it one of the hottest spots in the volatile North Caucasus.

The insurgents’ website *Islamdin.com* confirmed the death of eight of its leaders the evening of the same day they were killed. This speedy reaction showed that the rebels’ communications system fared surprisingly well after sustaining such a serious blow. Elsewhere in the North Caucasus, it normally

<sup>30</sup> *FSB refutes data about victims in attack on FSB sanatorium in Kabardino-Balkaria*, Caucasian Knot, <http://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/16237/>, Feb 25, 2011.

<sup>31</sup> *Upon elimination of militants in the Stavropol region opened a criminal case*, Regnum, April 29, 2011, <http://www.regnum.ru/news/kavkaz/1400277.html>.

takes several days and sometimes over a week for the insurgents to admit a loss or claim responsibility for an attack<sup>32</sup>.

Looking back we could say that the deaths of these leading figures of the Kabardino-Balkaria jamaat represented a major blow to the rebels and have had serious repercussions on the standing and operability of the local jamaat, but it wasn't enough to terminate it. Incidentally, all of the leaders killed in that battle were hafiz (those who have memorized the Koran), which gave them an impeccable reputation in terms of knowledge of the general theology of Islam. Should the Kabardino-Balkaria jamaat continue to function even after this major setback, it would be a clear sign that its viability is irreversible. The experience of the neighboring Karachay jamaat — which could not recover fully after the attacks against its leaders from 2005 to 2007 — indicates that if a jamaat represents a narrow circle of like-minded individuals who do not enjoy broad public support, then after the leaders are eliminated the remaining structures of the jamaat plunge into a deep recess<sup>33</sup>. Therefore, the, at that moment, vacant leadership of the jamaat and the tactics employed by the next Emir would prove to be crucial to the survival of the group. The importance of this element had been proven in the last year: while Anzor Astemirov emphasized the ideological aspects of the Caucasus Emirate — he indeed was one of the most prominent supporters and architects of the idea of an Islamic state in the North Caucasus — his immediate successor Jappaev shifted the jamaat's modus operandi to frequent operations against the Russian siloviki — attacking, at the same time, religious officials who condemned Salafism and nationalist leaders who rejected the militants' vision of the future of the North Caucasus within the framework of an Islamic state.

Moscow's actions were not halted with the elimination of the leadership of the Yarmuk Jamaat and only three months after the April operation, on July 18, the Russian air force launched a surprise massive military exercise in Kabardino-Balkaria, which included fifteen military aircraft: Su-24, Su-25, Su-27, Su-34, MIG-29 and Tu-22M3 planes, and Mi-24 and Mi-28 helicopters. These were the largest maneuvers in the republic in the past 15 years<sup>34</sup>. These massive exercises suggest that Moscow was and will not prepare for the development of tourism in the North Caucasus, but rather for a war. Although the stated aircraft models are of an older generation, they were probably sufficient to impress the locals and any other parties the drills might have been addressed to. At the same time, however, the demonstration of military might signifies certain weakness on the part of Moscow, which chose to ensure the loyalty of its citizens by utilizing air force, in

<sup>32</sup> Valery Dzutsev, "Death of Insurgent Leaders in Kabardino-Balkaria Unlikely to Halt Attacks", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 12, Issue: 9, May 5, 2011.

<sup>33</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Moscow Kills Rebel Leaders in Kabardino-Balkaria, but was it a Mortal Blow?", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 12, Issue: 9, May 5, 2011.

<sup>34</sup> Valery Dzutsev, "Moscow Reverts to Crude Force to Control the Situation in Kabardino-Balkaria", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 12, Issue: 15, July 20, 2011.

spite of the counterterrorism operation regime that was still in place in the republic.

September brought forth a new leader of the Yarmuk Jamaat. Alim Zankishiev who's nom de guerre is Emir Ubaidallah. He was named by Dokku Umarov as the new leader of the kabard branch of the insurgency. An ethnic Balkar, Zankishiev is 30 years old and comes from the village of Verkhnyaya Zhemala and is on the Russian federal wanted list on charges of attacking police officers. Along with the new leadership we could see a revival in the morale of the insurgents demonstrated by an increase of the number of small attacks against authorities. Nevertheless the new leader was unable to bring the jamaat to its former glory. It is worth mentioning that the name of the jamaat was changed from United Jamaat of Kabarda, Balkaria and Karachay to Jamaat Takbir<sup>35</sup>. Emir Ubaidallah was not unknown among the rebels: he led the Nalchik sector of the jamaat prior to his appointment. In the several weeks following his appointment, the new emir appointed new people to all sectors of the jamaat. This signaled that the reorganization period was quick and painless and the jamaat retained the bulk of its personnel. Arguably, the December 17 assassination of Vadim Sultanov, a police colonel from the center "E", was the most notorious killing of the year in Kabardino-Balkaria<sup>36</sup>. Rebel websites declared that Sultanov was the masked person who had made videotaped statements against the militants on behalf of Kabardino-Balkaria's civilians. The colonel claimed he represented an organization called Chernye Yastreby (the Black Hawks), which would hunt down the militants and members of their families<sup>37</sup>.

Even so, the Russian authorities were apparently aware of the strength the jamaat and its new leader were capable of, so on November 5 they decided to lift the counterterrorism operation regime that had been in place for the last eight months only to reinstate it again on November 14 in the forested mountainous parts of Kabardino-Balkaria's Chegem and Baksan districts and in parts of the town of Baksan. However, the regime's usefulness can be doubted if we consider the following elements. First, the regime was introduced in the town of Baksan on November 14 at 7:30 a.m. but was lifted three and half hours later — at 11:00 a.m. Second, in the mountainous areas of Chegem and Baksan districts, the regime was introduced at 1:00 p.m. on November 14 and lifted at 1:00 p.m., on November 15. Yet at 1:30 p.m., on November 14, as the regime came into effect in Chegem and Baksan, unidentified attackers gunned down two policemen in Nalchik, the capital of Kabardino-Balkaria. One of the policemen died on the spot while the other

<sup>35</sup> *Emir Dokka Abu Usman EC has appointed Amir Alim CSC Joint Vilayat Zankisheva*, [http://www.djamaattakbir.com/2011/09/blog-post\\_6867.html](http://www.djamaattakbir.com/2011/09/blog-post_6867.html), September 13, 2011.

<sup>36</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Fewer Killed in the North Caucasus Last Year, but Overall Situation Remains Unchanged", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 9, Issue: 13, January 19, 2012.

<sup>37</sup> *Interior Ministry denies that killed deputy head of Center for Nalchik "E" was involved in "Black Hawks"*, [http://rss.novostimira.com/n\\_1971821.html](http://rss.novostimira.com/n_1971821.html), December 28, 2011.

died later in the hospital<sup>38</sup>. Actions like these continued to defy and undermine the authorities' optimism about turning back the wave of insurgency in Kabardino-Balkaria. The militants were showing increased signs of having recovered from the profound loss of all of their leaders and since the rebels staged their latest series of attacks in the winter, when they could not hide in the mountains easily, these brazen attacks were a testament of the considerable support from the local population in towns that provide shelter and food for them. A further boost for the morale was a video address by an Emir Abdul Malik, leader of the northwest sector of the Caucasus Emirate. The young man with an uncovered face called on Muslims to provide assistance to the insurgents in Kabardino-Balkaria, while also threatening the Russian security services<sup>39</sup>. The counterterrorism operation regime has apparently turned into a useful tool for the security services to show off how active they are. However, by using this special regime so often, the authorities risk degrading its special character and also show how unstable the situation in Kabardino-Balkaria remains. The counterterrorism operation regime has become nearly the last vestige of government authority in the republic, since other, more routine methods do not work.

By the end of 2011 the situation in Kabardino-Balkaria was fairly critical in spite of the ongoing situation in the insurgency. A decrease in rebel attacks in Kabardino-Balkaria took place. Despite the abrupt decrease that occurred from May to October 2011, there were still 173 victims including 98 casualties and 39 wounded persons (as opposed to 118 victims, including 79 casualties and 39 wounded in 2010), of militant attacks, most of which occurred in the first months of 2011, before the Russian security services wiped out nearly the entire leadership of the jamaat between March and May. In the second half of 2011, the Kabardino-Balkarian jamaat was busy with reorganization and self-preservation, given that all its top leaders could not have been killed without treachery in the rebels' own ranks<sup>40</sup>. During 2011 70 suspected militants were liquidated — five times more than last year (only 16) and for the first time Kabardino-Balkaria has had more victims of armed conflict than in neighboring Ingushetia, which had been the epic center of the regional insurgency in previous years<sup>41</sup>.

It is important to note that the stability of the situation in the whole Northwest Caucasus is determined by the political situation in Kabardino-Balkaria. First of all, this republic has a much larger population than Karachaevo-Cherkessia and Adygeia, and consequently plays a key role in its

<sup>38</sup> Valery Dzutsev, "Kremlin Proves Unable to Stabilize Security Situation in Kabardino-Balkaria", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 12, Issue: 22, November 16, 2011.

<sup>39</sup> *Message from the Emir of the North-Eastern Sector Abdul Malik*, [http://www.djamaattakbir.com/2011/11/blog-post\\_862.html](http://www.djamaattakbir.com/2011/11/blog-post_862.html), November 14, 2011.

<sup>40</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Fewer Killed in the North Caucasus Last Year, but Overall Situation Remains Unchanged", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 9, Issue: 13, January 19, 2012.

<sup>41</sup> Igor Rotar, "Growing Violence in Kabardino-Balkaria Threatens to Destabilize the Northwest Caucasus", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 12, Issue: 23, December 1, 2011.

immediate region. Second (and perhaps more importantly) Kabardino-Balkaria is only a few dozen kilometers from Chechnya which makes it accessible to mujahedeens from other jamaats and more easy to back-up, not to mention close to the “center” of the Caucasus Emirate. All these elements make the kabard jamaat a steady movement, one that may prove hard to disperse.

### *Rise and demise of the Black hawks*

At the beginning of 2011 a new issue appeared on the war-map of Islam versus federalism: the emergence of a paramilitary organization comprised only of citizens, as the ringleaders described it, which would attack the families of members of the Kabardino-Balkaria insurgency. The creation of the “Black Hawks” as it was called was announced in early February, through a video in which a man in a black mask hiding his face and neck read: “A reward of two million [rubles] has been announced for [killing] you. We do not need this bounty. We will liquidate you for free. Never in the history have Adyges or Balkars [ethnicities in the northwestern Caucasus] obeyed Chechens. You, Jappaev [the Emir of the Kabardino-Balkaria Jamaat], have publicly stated that your master is Doku Umarov [the Chechen rebel leader who is Emir of the North Caucasus Emirate]. He ordered you to kill and rob your own people, report on your exploits on videos, and then give the stolen money to him. Umarov has betrayed his people; he delivers the young to the slaughter, and then declares them martyrs [shahids]. He himself does not seem to be in a hurry to go the gardens of paradise! Mamishev and Shameyev, you are killers and we will soon find you. Your whereabouts are known to us, and the punishment will be short”<sup>42</sup>. Standing on the fine line between nationalism and extremism the new organization was highly publicized by Moscow media outlets, with the authorities failing to self-appraise against the threats issued. Starting on this pattern a few other inconsistencies, that put the paramilitary-civic nature of the organization in a doubtful light, issued. The man in a mask makes a statement in good Russian, without any accent characteristic of Kabardins or Balkars, monotonously reading his text as if he were a television announcer. Clearly, the emphasis is made on eliciting ethnic hatred towards the Chechens and on trying to extricate themselves from the influence of the Chechens, which confirms that the Russian authorities are well aware that the key to solving the problem in the North Caucasus lies in the mountains of Chechnya.

Following the video, the so-called leader of the organization was interviewed by a journalist from Moscow. It is quite strange that a little-known journalist from one of Moscow’s TV channels arrives in Kabardino-Balkaria,

<sup>42</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, “Kabardino-Balkaria’s “Black Hawks:” Grassroots Vigilantes or FSB Surrogates?”, *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 12, Issue: 5, March 11, 2011.

locates the leader of the organization pretty quickly and then interviews him on the street. If an ordinary non-local journalist from a secondary Moscow channel called Ren TV can so easily afford to talk with the leader of this organization, then his apprehension by the Federal Security Service (FSB), the interior ministry or the prosecutor-general's office should not be a problem. In the interview with REN TV, the leader of the movement explained who the Black Hawks are and what steps they intend to take. "The Black Hawks are we, the ordinary citizens of the republic. We are fed up with the outrage created by that bearded evil who don't let this republic live in peace. We want our friends from other regions to come here without having to fear being shot dead, or robbed"<sup>43</sup>.

Another significant point is that in the Caucasus mentality, vendetta does not apply to children under any circumstances; nor does it apply to women. Moreover, if the killer is alive, the vendetta is not transferred to other family members. Apparently, those who organized the group and came out with the statement did not really bother to delve into the details of the popular Caucasus mentality. All of these aspects of the newly-concocted organization, voluntarily or involuntarily reveal a large and unprepossessing Kremlin tail. Furthermore, the term "hawks" is usually not used in the Caucasus, unlike the term "eagles". Besides, although the grey hawk is present throughout the region, the black hawk is not. The black species of the hawk family in the Caucasus is in fact a vulture that feeds on carrion, which is why its image in the region does not bear the same positive symbolism as in other areas of Russia, especially in the structures of the interior ministry and the FSB where some special forces wear the emblem of the vulture. If the "Black Hawks" paramilitary unit did indeed represent local avengers, they would have come up with something more realistic and closer in spirit to the Caucasians<sup>44</sup>.

Moreover, the reaction of some influential politicians — for example, Aleksandr Torshin, who is a member of the National Anti-Terrorist Committee (NAK) and first vice-speaker of the Federation Council believes that the phenomenon can play a positive role in the fight against the North Caucasus rebels: "The people who have united in the 'Black Hawks' represent a real power; it is a youth organization, the backbone of which is represented by young men who want to live by civilized laws, not by a radical Islamic religious order"<sup>45</sup>.

The support of some voices in politics, lack of reaction of any authorities and the fact that this mythical organization did not carry out a single action in a year confirms that it likely originated in the police structures. The group gave frequent interviews to Moscow TV channels, and reporters rather easily

<sup>43</sup> *Russian vigilantes launch own war on terror*, <http://www.rferl.org/>, March 02, 2011.

<sup>44</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Kabardino-Balkaria's "Black Hawks": Grassroots Vigilantes or FSB Surrogates?", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 12, Issue: 5, March 11, 2011.

<sup>45</sup> *State senator proposes to use in the CBD, "Black Hawks", who promised to kill children*, <http://www.newsru.ru/russia/04mar2011/torshin.html>, March 4, 2011.

found and conducted interviews with its members, but it increasingly looked like publicity for a non-existent organization. Whatever the case, the emergence of such an organization was evidence that the Russian authorities and the armed opposition forces continue their struggle against each other, using different forces and methods. For the Russian government, this represents a search for new means, against the backdrop of its apparent losses in the fight against the insurgency<sup>46</sup>.

The entire issue went numb, excepting some press articles and interviews of members, until the second half of December when a member of “Center E” or “Center for Combating Extremism” a special division in the Russian police of the North Caucasus Federal District, 36-year-old Lt. Col. Vadim Sultanov, was assassinated. Presumably he was the ringleader of the notorious death squad of “people’s avengers” — the “Black Hawks”, which was actively promoted by Russian media and the FSB<sup>47</sup>. There was no further evidence of his leadership except the claims of his assassins, the kabard jamaat but following his death any activity of the Black Hawks appears to have stopped.

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<sup>46</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, “Fewer Killed in the North Caucasus Last Year, but Overall Situation Remains Unchanged”, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 9, Issue: 13, January 19, 2012.

<sup>47</sup> *Mujahideen eliminate death squads ‘Black Hawks’ ringleader in Kabardino-Balkarian capital*, <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2011/12/19/15519.shtml>, December 19, 2011.

## Chapter 14

# KARACHAY-CHERKESSIA

**NARCIZ BALASOIU**

### *North Caucasus — Context*

The Caucasus is definitely one of the most complex regions in terms of ethnicity, religion and subsequently, frozen conflicts. The Republics situated in this reservoir of diversity are amongst the oldest civilizations, yet currently among the least developed of the post-Soviet bloc. The Caucasus finds itself at the crossroads of Asia and Europe, at the border of civilizations, under the perpetual harassment of strong empires seeking to conquer it. The manifold Caucasian nations, regardless of their origin, indigenous or Turkic, that often carry out their existence in small mountainous communities, have historically maintained an introspective, reluctant and xenophobic view of the outside world. History was cruel with these nations, so most of their actual appearance is nothing else than the result of an adjustment process. The anthropological profile reveals a population originally specialized in horse breeding and agriculture, but constant invasions forced them to develop a warrior culture and further isolate themselves in the mountains. This was in fact a proper environment for tribal development that gives way to the customary Caucasian law, mostly a combination of unwritten law and a community control system, sprinkled with provisions from Islamic Shari'a law. The Caucasus region is apparently the ultimate puzzle system, governing both the peoples and the institutional architecture, but as fascinating as it may seem, the problems posed by this lack of homogeneity are extremely complex and often dramatic.<sup>1</sup>

The Caucasus region can be divided into the North Caucasus, located within the Russian state, and the South Caucasus, split among the current post-Soviet States of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. The North Caucasus republics are: Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, Adygea, and North Ossetia. The South Caucasus republics are: South Ossetia, Ajaria, and Abkhazia. Even though all of these republics are inhabited by an ethnic majority, each is also home to important minority

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<sup>1</sup> Connie Margaritis, "Conflict in the Caucasus".

populations, like ethnic Russians or Georgians, creating the prerequisites for dissensions that often degenerate into conflicts.

### *Religion*

The lack of nationhood had to be compensated by another binding element. In this respect, religion has become the defining characteristic that has cemented the different groups in the region. Historically speaking, the Caucasus served as a battlefield for the “clash of civilizations”, and also for a clash of religions, considering the northern Orthodox influence descending from Russia and the Islam pressure from the south. In the first instance, the czarist Imperial regime exerted its power in order to secure frontiers and defeat mountain peoples, also by using local Christian peoples in the battles against Ottoman Turkey that years later managed to take over control of the region. Every great empire that came into power tried to exert its influence by any means, and from this point of view religion was nothing else than a treacherous mechanism to enhance domination. These struggles between Islam and Christianity created an animosity that never quite faded away from Caucasus culture. The historic rivalry came to an end due to Muslim Arab invasion, when the entire region was occupied. Under Arab influence the local nobles preserved their positions and privileges, as long as they were paying the tribute. This tactic was perfidious but effective at the same time, considering that all the negative energy and animosities were directed towards local authorities, while the actual rulers were collecting the “protection fees”. By the nineteenth century, the czarist Empire had restored some of its control over the Caucasus, but the effect for the region was far from beneficent, considering the 1865 deportation of 40,000 Chechens back to Ottoman territory in retaliation for a violent uprising. The Bolshevik Revolution was an episode that worsened the situation in terms of religious life, that led to 1920s crimes against the Caucasian religious leaders. Religious diversity was under tight embargo during the Soviet era, but the fall of the Iron Curtain made possible the revival of Islam, a process that is also continuing nowadays.

In this respect the number of mosques built over the last decades constitutes a relevant indicator, given that in the Soviet era building Islamic religious edifices was strictly forbidden. By 1999, 1,670 mosques had been constructed in Dagestan, 400 in Igushetia, 96 in Kabardino-Balkaria, and 150 in Karachaevo-Cherkessia. During the 1990s, the institutions and values of Islam regained quickly their former influence on the social and political life in the Northern Caucasus. This manifestation of Islam in political life can be seen most poignantly in “Wahhabi” movements. These originated in Arab states as resistance against secular governments and have been adopted by separatists in the Caucasus, particularly the Chechens. The violence reached

inconceivable levels in the case of Chechen separatism and “Wahhabism”, such as the 2002 seizure of a Moscow theater, resulting in the deaths of more than 100 spectators, as well as the Beslan massacre in September 2004, killing 400 people, mainly innocent parents and children. It is worth mentioning that these catastrophic figures are not only the results of a cruel act of terror, but the outcome of a barbarian intervention by Russian security forces. The slaughter was mutual. This resistance is no longer contained within Chechnya, but rather has spread by now to other republics in the Northern Caucasus and acts of terrorism, including suicide bombing by women, have been committed in Moscow, other Russian cities, and all over the Northern Caucasus. Guerilla fighters have learned to use the war vocabulary of Islamist fighters from Arab nations, and are spreading Islamic movements throughout the Caucasian region, with predilection in republics hosting a Muslim majority. Moscow and Tbilisi are continuously trying to contain the Wahhabi phenomenon, but the process is complex and requires more time and resources.

### *General Overview*

A brief appeal to history shows that the Karachay actual position is the effect of the clash with the Mongol tribes in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. This conflict forced the majority of the population to migrate into the highlands of the North Caucasus region. Later, during the rise of the Russian Empire, in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Karachay territories were annexed, but they continued to resist until the 1920s, when the first Russian Oblast was established – The Karachay Autonomous Okrug. This was a critical period, during which many Karachay tried to escape Russian oppression, most of them emigrating to the Ottoman Empire.

The Cherkess are a subgroup of the Circassians. They came under Russian control in the 1550s for protection against the Crimean Tatars and some Turkic tribes. The atmosphere in the new oblast became tense when the number of the Russians settled in this region increased considerably.

Following the end of the Ottoman claim to the Caucasus in 1829 and the resulting uprisings, Russia completed its occupation of the territory in 1864. In order to weaken the ethnic fiber, a deportation process was initiated, during which a considerable number of Cherkess were deported to Turkey. The Karachay and Cherkess Autonomous Oblasts were merged to form the Karachay-Cherkess Autonomous Oblast in accordance with Stalin’s strategy of joining unrelated ethnic groups into administrative units to divide and conquer any resistance. The two territorial entities were also subjected to a process of identity dilution, which consisted in changing names and status of the so-called oblasts, during a continuous relocation of the people of the North Caucasus region. This uprooting effort was conducted throughout the whole empire in a systematic and ruthless manner.

During the Second World War, in 1943, the Karachay were deported to Central Asia but the Cherkess remained in the region. The Karachay were rehabilitated and permitted to return in 1957 and the Karachay-Cherkess Autonomous Oblast was re-established. The notion of “Autonomous” was in fact generic and hazy. The territory populated by now with 40 percent Russians was administratively indirectly subordinated to Moscow through Stavropol Province. Only after the fall of the Iron Curtain in the early 90’s may we observe an attempt to restore the autonomy level, but the process was difficult due to the consistency of the Russian community.

On July 3, 1991, the autonomous oblast was elevated to the status of the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Karachay-Cherkessia — under the jurisdiction of the *Russian SFSR*. Only a few months later, the fall of the communist system, that also meant the dissolution of the *Soviet Union*, brought a new title change for the Russian Oblast — the words „Autonomous Soviet Socialist“ was dropped from the name.

The fact that the 28,000 Abaza lack all the privileges of a titular nation, which the 40,000 Cherkess share in power with the much larger group of Karachay, is a clear example of the arbitrary nature of the Soviet construction of double titular nationality republics and its consequences. Despite the so called power-sharing process, political life in the newly created republic was clearly dominated by the Russian community.

The Karachay claim full rehabilitation after the deportations. There were also radical Karachay groups asking for territorial adjustments according to the historic situation, but it was obvious that Moscow was not ready for such a compromise. They were even asking for autonomy in the attempt to create a separate Karachay Republic, an ambitious idea which tried to restore the status existing prior to deportations. Cossacks have voiced claims of seceding from the republic to join the Kuban Cossacks in the neighboring Krasnodar district.

Nevertheless, the majority of people of the Karachay-Cherkess republic rejected extremist groups and extreme views on the country’s future. This attitude was revealed during a poll held in 1993, which resulted in 78.6 percent wanting to preserve the Karachay-Cherkess republic as an undivided unit, meaning that most people fear the consequences of claims made by the radical groups.

### *Political framework*

The head of the government in Karachay-Cherkessia is the President. Until February 2011, the president was Boris Safarovich Ebzeyev, a former judge of the Constitutional Court of Russian Federation. *Rashid Temrezov* is currently the acting president.

Ethnic tensions are definitely a matter of concern in the republic. In May 1999, Karachay-Cherkessia conducted its first ever free regional presidential

election. When *Vladimir Semyonov*, a Karachay, won the election over Stanislav Derev, a Circassian, there were protests by supporters of Derev, with widespread allegations of fraud. A court ruling later upheld the election result, prompting thousands of Derev's supporters to march in protest, many advocating partition of the republic.

The National Assembly (Parliament) elected on the basis of universal, equal, and direct suffrage by secret ballot is the highest legislative authority of the Republic. It consists of 76 members elected for the term of four years. The government is made up of the Chairman of the Government, the deputy Chairmen of the Government, ministers, chairmen of State committees and committees. The Chairman of the Government is appointed by the President of the Republic with the consent of the National Assembly.

### *Economic parameters*

The republic is rich in natural resources, with large deposits of gold, silver, copper, wolfram, marble, and numerous mineral springs. The southern part of the republic — the Elbrus region — is a potential tourist attraction, which has many slopes suitable for downhill skiing, vast areas of pristine forests, alpine meadows, and environmentally clean waterways. Unfortunately, the infrastructure of the area is rather underdeveloped. Despite the ample natural resources of Karachaevo-Cherkessia, the economy of the republic is in bad shape and according to the Russian magazine *Expert* has been in a recession for many years. The decline in economic output in the republic is actually the largest such decline in all of the Northern Caucasus. The investment climate is both unattractive and risky due to political instability, the absence of any sort of benefits or guarantees for investors, and the poorly developed business infrastructure of the republic. The weak economy has generated a high rate of unemployment, which is in fact among the highest rates in the entire region of the Russian Federation. Though the official rate is stated as 1.5% of the working age population, the real level is closer to 15%. Similarly, the average per capita monthly income in the republic is 440 rubles (about \$15), and ranks 85th out of the whole country.

### *The ethnic puzzle*

The complicated and rather uneasy Republic of Karachay-Cherkessia represents only a small fraction of Russia's total population, only 0.3%. It is home to roughly 440,000 people, 117,000 of whom live in the capital city of Cherkess. Considering the socio-economic realities closely related to demography dynamics, the situation is unstable and creates concern mainly by checking a few statistics revealing population decline coupled with the

child mortality rate rising, while the emigration/immigration ratio is unbalanced. There are five major ethnic groups in the republic: the Russians (40% of the population), the Karachay (36%), the Circassians or Cherkess (9.7%), the Abazins (6.6%), and the Nogais (3.1%). In the past several years, inter-ethnic relations have shifted in favor of the Karachay. This seems to be the most important factor influencing the current political situation in the republic. It also needs to be mentioned that despite some latent animosities, the violence is not even by far used as a method of expression. Ethnic and religious differences have been overcome quite successfully in the recent years, also by rejecting all sorts of extremist groups. On the other hand, the simple exercise of looking over the neighbor's fence makes clear why the people of the Karachay-Cherkess republic are reluctant to any approaches that may lead to escalation and conflict.

*Russians* are ethnic Russians that live in Cherkess as well as the Cossacks who live in the rural areas of the western parts of the republic. From a political point of view, the ethnic Russian community is roughly insignificant, despite the episodes when they are used as a manoeuvre group caught in the middle of the battle for power of the various ethnic elites. This is why maintaining a good relation with the Russian community is healthy for the political outcome of the elections. In other words, a good relation with ethnic Russians keeps Kremlin doors open. This is also the reason why various ethnic elites sustain Russian social organizations. Despite that it can be considered as a strictly interest-driven relation, the recipe is perfectly functional as long as the inter-ethnic groups find a common language able to keep violence out of context.

The *Karachay* are the largest indigenous Turkic ethnic group in the region, and are related to the Balkars that live in Kabardino-Balkaria. Karachaevo-Cherkessia is home to 85% of all of Russia's Karachay. Traditionally they live in the highlands of the country, more precise in three regions situated in the south of the republic. During the 1940's, like many other ethnic groups from the North Caucasian family they were deported to Central Asia. Almost two decades later they were able to return and since then, the Karachay are playing the leading role in the life of the republic. For 28 years the head of the republic has been a Karachay. They also hold all the chief posts in the republic's government and 53 out of 72 seats within its parliament. Over the last ten years the Karachay community members managed to "seize" all the large industry assets in the republic that were once owned by Russians. It is also a known fact that they have developed a strong political relationship with the Balkar neighbours. There is nothing abnormal in that, considering that the Cherkess are ethnically and culturally related to the Kabarda and Adyghe peoples while the Karachay to the Balkars.

The *Circassians* or Cherkess, are related to the Adyghe and the Kabardins and share the same self-given name — „Adyghe.“ „Cherkess“ is also a

widely known name of this ethnic group. They belong to the Caucasus language family, and their history contains tragic and heroic moments of longstanding struggle with Russia for their independence. In the 18th century Cherkessia held wide-ranging territories between the Black and the Caspian Seas and the Circassians were the most numerous ethnic group in the Northern Caucasus. In the 19th century, the Circassians did not participate in Imam Shamil's war with Russia, but had their own resistance movement that outlasted Shamil's by five years and kept the northwestern part of the region free from Russian influence. After their war with the Russian Empire the Circassians lost about 90% of their population, with several tribes being completely annihilated, and many more emigrating to the Ottoman Empire. The total number of Circassians living in the three republics of Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachaevo-Cherkessia and Adygeia today is about a million. Roughly six more million Circassians live in Turkey, across the Middle East, in the U.S. and in other countries. Circassians seek to unite and obtain a state, with Circassian national organizations working for the return of the emigrants' descendants to their historical homeland.

The *Abazins* are one of the world's disappearing ethnic groups. According to the recent census there are only about 30,000 Abazins left, and almost all of them live in Karachaevo-Cherkessia. The Abazins, along with the Circassians and the Abkhaz form the Abkhaz-Adyg subgroup of the Caucasian language family, with Abkhaz and Abazin being essentially different dialects. The Abazins are considered the more warrior group of the Adyghe family. During the last seven years, the main goal of the Abazins has been the creation of one unified Abazin municipal region that would unite Abazin villages spread throughout the republic. This, according to the Abazin leaders, would help to preserve their disappearing ethnic group.

In September 2005, the Abazins picketed the main governmental building of the republic in Cherkess for more than a week and accused the authorities of ignoring their rights. The protest ended with storming the building, with Abazins blockading the parliamentarians within the main conference hall and demanding an immediate resolution of the question of the Abazin region. Following the intervention of Dmitrii Kozak, the presidential representative in the Southern Federal District, the question was settled in Moscow, with the Kremlin ordering the republic's leadership to create an Abazin region immediately. Fradkov signed the official order creating the Abazin region in August 2006. Within the republic itself, however, the map of the new region is still top secret, since the question of territories and borders may elicit a negative response of all those affected.

The *Nogais* are a Mongolic ethnic group that is somewhat close to the Turkic-speaking Karachay. Nogais live in compact settlements within two regions of Karachaevo-Cherkessia, and also in neighboring Dagestan and Stavropolskii Krai. The Nogai battalion is respected by the Chechen rebels.

The demands of the Nogais have become particularly relevant after the Abazins achieved the creation of their own autonomous region, even if it is only on paper. This question elicits much passion among the Cherkess leaders of the Adyg-Khabl region, which stands to lose much of its territory if the Nogai region is established.

### *Genocide and lack of reconciliation*

The Circassian history is terrible, and the numbers revealing how many of them died in battle, drowned, massacred, by hunger or disease, are more than eloquent.

Prior to the Russian conquest, the Circassians numbered about two million, but since 1864, the north-western Caucasus had been emptied of its indigenous population almost in entirety. Somewhere around 150,000 Circassians were relocated in other corners of the Russian empire, being forced to continue their existence in extreme conditions. By the time of the 1897 census, there were 217,000 Circassians in Russia. There are certain ambiguities surrounding the real numbers of this sometimes large ethnic community, but there are historical facts showing that about half a million were deported to Turkey, while more than 200,000 people tried to escape the Russian oppression and occupation, by migrating voluntarily during the 1850s. The numbers are still far from accurate, considering that more than 1 million Circassians are not to be found, not to mention those who died at sea or on arrival.

The number who died in the Circassian catastrophe of the 1860s could hardly, therefore, have been fewer than one million, and may well have been closer to one-and-a-half million. Even though raising the genocide question seems legitimate, there will always be parties to challenge the Circassians' version of the truth. The deportation of the Circassians can certainly be regarded as an example of 'ethnic cleansing', in which massacres and the burning of villages served to force the Circassians into emigration. "This great exodus"<sup>2</sup>, concludes Paul B. Henze, former CIA and national security specialist, *was the first of the violent mass transfers of population which this part of the world has suffered in modern times*. He goes on to suggest that it set a precedent for the Armenian genocide, implying that what happened was at least comparable to genocide. *There was no obsession to wipe out every single Circassian, but there was a determination to get rid of them without delay, in the full knowledge that a large proportion of them were bound to perish in the process*.

There are also estimates revealing that roughly 90 percent of the Circassian population of the North Caucasus were forcibly deported to the

<sup>2</sup> Paul B. Henze, *Circassian Resistance to Russia*.

Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century, following the defeat of the Circassians by the Russian empire. The war itself was described in numerous reports, including Russian generals' own diaries, as extremely cruel, involving mass killings of civilians and other forms of terror. Moscow not only refuses to admit the atrocity that took place in this region, but it continues to serve samples of political cynicism. The last episode was consumed in 2007, when Kremlin forced the three republics of the northwestern Caucasus, where Circassians traditionally live, to celebrate the 450th anniversary of "voluntarily joining Russia."

The last visit of a Moscow high official was conducted in February 27, 2011, when President Dmitry Medvedev surprised with his presence the peoples of Karachay-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria. On this occasion Medvedev made a few acid remarks naming extremism, corruption and the poor socio-economic development of Karachay-Cherkessia among the main problems that plague the republic. Of course the visit and subsequently the discourse were directly connected with the dismissal of the republic's ex-president, Boris Safarovich Ebzeyev<sup>3</sup>, but also with the attacks in which tourists from Moscow were shot and a ski resort cable car line was bombed.

Along with issues related to the ethnic composition of Karachaevo-Cherkessia, and the antagonistic forces governing these minorities, there is another important trend that may escalate tensions with Moscow — the growing movement among the Circassians living in the North Caucasus and abroad demanding that the Russian government recognize the Russian empire's genocidal practices during the conquest of the Circassian lands in the nineteenth century. The moment chosen to put pressure on Russia is not random at all, considering the fact that, the 2014 Olympics in Sochi will be held in lands that were owned by Circassians in the past and where the alleged genocide took place. It is also widely assumed that the Sochi Olympics are Putin's personal ambition. On the same occasion of President Medvedev's visit in February, the International Circassian Association in Nalchik sent a request to the Russian president to incorporate the Circassian element into the Sochi Olympics. The Caucasian organization tried to highlight the fact that while a Native American Indian theme was incorporated into the most recent winter Olympics in Canada, the Circassian subject has not received nearly the same amount of consideration in the planning for the Sochi games.

In this context of maximum visibility it is very likely to witness an increasing effort and pressure from the Circassian minorities in their attempt to show the world what lies beneath the shiny facade of the Olympics, and why not, to make as much political gain as possible.

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<sup>3</sup> Valery Dsutzev, *Murder of Circassian Activist Unsettles Multi-Ethnic Karachaevo-Cherkessia*.

*Is Karachay-Cherkessia a volcano ready to erupt?*

The killing of local police and federal security agents is maybe the most exact instrument to assess the population's attitudes towards the government. Sixty members of various security and law enforcement agencies have been killed since 2000, with 16 having been shot since January 2005. This includes FSB officers as well as various officers of special units stationed within the republic. The vast majority of these attacks occurred in Karachaevsk and the Karachaevskii region. This is the part of the republic closest to Georgia. Despite a very heavy security presence it is barely controlled by the authorities.

An information ban prevents one from getting an accurate picture of what goes on in Karachaevo-Cherkessia. For example, a few years ago, the republic's government warned of the heightened risk of terrorist acts, leading to a month-long closure of all schools, kindergartens, colleges and trade schools. All ambulatory patients were discharged from hospitals and spare beds were made available in case mass casualties ensued. It is known that regular police crackdowns occur and torture is widely practiced, making most young men in the republic extremely wary of the authorities.

In the last decade the Kremlin has rejected any hypothesis sustaining that the Circassian region is part of a conflict paradigm, but at the same time some of its elite combat troops are stationed in this unstable part of the Russian Federation. From this point of view Dmitri Medvedev finds himself trapped in the shoes of the Vladimir Putin of the early 2000. The former president seems to have had a very difficult job, that of taking the relay from Putin in terms of toughness and even rudeness.

Referring to North Caucasus jamaats and their leaders, Medvedev said: *There are just dirty, smelly caves where they hide. And they are no emirs but ugly beasts who kill children and women*<sup>4</sup>.

Medvedev's visit to the North Caucasus on the 18<sup>th</sup> of February 2011, was an attempt to reestablish order and confidence in the Republic that earlier has experienced terrorists' actions conducted by rebels — tourists from Moscow were shot, a resort skyline was bombed, and also engaged in a series of attacks on the periphery of Nalchik, the capital of Kabardino-Balkaria. The episode that followed created real consternation in the camp of Russian high rank officials. On the evening of February 25, a few days after Medvedev left for Moscow, several rebel units opened fire and attacked government facilities simultaneously in different parts of Nalchik firing rocket-propelled grenades at the local Federal Security Service building and an FSB hotel near the house where Arsen Konokov, the head of Kabardino-Balkaria, lives, and at security checkpoints in the suburbs of the city. The contagion effect is very real in this situation, given the rapidly growing influence of the neighboring Kabardino-Balkaria Jamaat and its leader. From this perspective Karachay-

<sup>4</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, *Is Karachaevo-Cherkessia the Next North Caucasus Hot Spot?*.

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Cherkessia is increasingly vulnerable and may well become the next hot spot in the North Caucasus. It is worth mentioning that Karachay-Cherkessia was one of the most daring jamaats in the North Caucasus in the early 2000s, so its revival in a violent manner should be taken into consideration.

The Russian leadership's reluctance towards use of terms related to the armed opposition does not imply that the armed resistance in the North Caucasus will simply disappear. Putin should accept the problem as a first step to solving it, and also try to seek common ground with the demands of the armed opposition, which could give greater hope for the future of the North Caucasus.

Seemingly, Russian authorities have chosen to ignore and suppress Circassian initiatives, so the premises for destabilization are met, which is likely to deepen on short term, at least in this part of the North Caucasus.

## **Chapter 15**

### **ADYGEA**

**NARCIZ BALASOIU**

#### *General Overview*

The so-called Cherkess (Adygh) Autonomous Oblast would become the Republic of Adygea in 1992. Not very popular outside the post-Soviet perimeter, Adygea lies at the edge of the very turbulent North Caucasus region. Currently, the small republic has slightly less than 440,000 dwellers (according to the 2010 census), who are distributed in a balanced proportion between urban and countryside. Its rural population is about 235,000 people, while 205,000 people live in urban areas. The urban population is roughly concentrated in two towns – Maykop and Adygheisk. In retrospect, we will see that, unlike most other North Caucasus provinces, Adygea has not featured in news reports about violence and the majority of the population enjoys a relatively peaceful life. Yet residents of Adygea acknowledge that tension and a vague sense of unease are becoming familiar characteristics of daily life. Thus, the lack of violence should not be misinterpreted as ethnic harmony, because the Muslim and Russian communities are in fact deeply divided.

#### *Evolution of Islam in the aftermath of the Soviet era*

Gorbachev's "Perestroika" of the late 1980s practically revived the process of Islamisation in the Republic of Adygea, which led to official recognition of this community. The re-Islamisation of Adygea had an important impact on what might be regarded as the basic features of Soviet Adygea. Actually the Soviet era was not such a dark period for the small republic, mostly due to the fact that Adygea had become an administrative part of Krasnodar, known for its prosperity, notably higher compared with other territories situated in the south part of the empire. The variety of ethnic groups living here is overwhelming — more than 100 nationalities —

but even so, the most important ethnic groups are: Russians 69%, Adygh 23%, Ukrainian 3%, Armenian 2.7%, Tatar 0.7% , Byelorussian 0.6%, others 1.5%.

In the post-communist era, due to significant democratic reforms, Islam has regained much of its power in society. Currently, in Adygea there are more than 16 Islamic religious groups, which are officially registered at the Ministry of Justice. There is also an executive body coordinating the activities of Adygh Muslims, called the Spiritual Department of Muslims, coordinated by a 25-people board. The Adygh administration of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Muslim Spiritual Department have managed to build a stable relationship, often transposed in meetings of the heads of major religious organizations, aiming to discuss inter-confessional and intercultural issues. This is in fact a concerted effort to strengthen the traditional Russian confessions in the religious spectrum in society. The Mufti as a leader of the Muslim community is also taking care of the educational process by creating a group of editors who have the responsibility for creating religious programmes for mass-media. Religious leaders have felt that there is a certain demand for such programmes but even so, in-depth sociological research shows some interesting discrepancies. It is a well-known fact by now that local Islamic institutions and clergy have failed in the beginning to be rigorous and systematic in educating new believers. This led to the emergence of new religious figures, highly educated, but outside the traditional establishment. The result of such an “unconventional” approach created an interpretative flexibility of the traditional tenets, making way for extremist vision. The Spiritual Department has stated that methodological deficiencies in religious education are the primary source of “false teachings” which have been systematically spread by Islamic revisionist proselytes throughout the entire North Caucasus.

Officially, there are no Islamic Wahhabi groups in the republic of Adygea. However, the Spiritual Department is incapable of stopping every missionary coming from abroad from spreading ideas that are radically different from traditional Islam teachings. Thus, the post-Soviet democratic context has complicated the religious landscape by reviving a whole new range of traditions, a process to which the diaspora has fully contributed. Thereby, Adygh people have rediscovered Islam, and more than that, the young generation now has the possibility to study Islam at its very source, in the leading Islamic institutions throughout the Middle East.

### *Trends and concerns*

As of 2007, there were few signs that the Muslim community of the Adygea Republic had embraced the radical Islamic tendencies seen in other

parts of the Northern Caucasus. There is no reason to suppose that the socio-political situation in the republic is being aggravated by the Islamic revival in places such as Chechnya.

Yet, there are trends that threaten to change this. The influx of Middle Eastern men, especially Muslim clerics, who visit the region on a regular basis, is a source of popular unease. Given that many Muslims in Adygea distrust the local clergy, Middle Eastern missionaries working in the republic may eventually enlist support for radical Islam. The Adygh people are more likely to define themselves in terms of ethnicity than in terms of religious affiliations. This factor mitigates possible tensions emerging from appeals by radical outsiders hoping to exploit the distrust of local clergy.

There is also a general sense of distrust when it comes to diaspora members. Many citizens of Adygea are actually convinced that foreign intelligence services, from Turkey or other Middle East countries, are using the diaspora in order to obtain sensitive information, a crucial step towards consolidating influence in the North Caucasus region. This is not only a matter of perception, and the numerous Islamic extremist organizations sending paid missionaries come to support such concerns. The Adygean youth is already targeted by 'ideological snipers' coming from Saudi Arabia, the Iranian Islamic organization Nahtadul Islamia (meaning "the revival of Islam"), or the Fethullahcilar, who are proselytes of the Turkish Islamic leader, Fetullah Gulen. Organizations like these are in fact sides of the same coin, with a clear objective: to educate the youngsters in the principles of Islamic dogma, thus creating a new generation of extremists who will later promote intolerance towards Christians. This is why many Adygh citizens are very reluctant to activities carried out by such missionaries, considering the entire current as dangerous and subversive. There are also organizations from Saudi Arabia, Syria and Turkey, like Al-Igasa-al-Islamia ("Salvation") engaged in financing scholarships and study trips. However, none of these approaches is suitable for the general profile of the population. Despite the Islam resuscitation efforts, the majority of people, who are non-believers, consider religion an important aspect, but nothing more than a component, among others, important for preserving the national identity. For the time being, Adygea is undoubtedly an exception, a peaceful oasis, in the North Caucasus basin, that managed to maintain interdenominational tolerance and a constructive atmosphere among the major confessions.

The rigid social, economic, and political divisions between the Muslim and the Russian communities offer potential for future sectarian disruptions. The Nalchik violence of 2005 also led to police actions that local Muslims interpreted as persecution. Also, the latest serious violent incident registered in February 2011 is not religion-related. Khajimos Kachetsukov, a candidate for Adygea's regional parliament on behalf of Just Russia party, was shot to death in the city of Maikop, during his electoral campaign. Further investi-

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gation tied the murder to previous business conducted by the Just Russia party candidate. However, such incidents in the peaceful republic of Adygea raise a question mark over the North Caucasus volatility.

Tolerance not only governs relations within the Islamic community between radicals and moderates, but also relations with the security forces and local authorities. Separatism is not a factor and there is a general recognition that without membership in the Russian Federation, Adygea would hardly be able to survive. Undoubtedly, Adygea is in the middle of an Islamic revival process, like any other republic in the North Caucasus, but for the moment, none of these activities have disturbed the balance in social and political life.

## Chapter 16

# STAVROPOL AND KRASNODAR KRAI

CIPRIAN BORDEI

### Part I

#### NORTH CAUCASUS VIOLENCE: SHORT HISTORY AND KEY TRENDS

The area in the Russian Federation commonly called the North Caucasus includes seven republics (Adygeia, Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachai-Cherkessia and North Ossetia) and two regions (Stavropol Krai and Krasnodar Krai), though sometimes another region (Rostov Oblast) is also included. From January 2010 The North Caucasian Federal District<sup>1</sup> (NCFD) was split from the Southern Federal District and comprises the above republics (except Adygeia) and Stavropol Krai.

North Caucasus is not a single uniform entity. *The traditions of its peoples are diverse, their routes to Russia and their life within Russia are by no means similar*<sup>2</sup>. In general terms the North Caucasus can be divided into two sub-regions<sup>3</sup>: the ‘East’ which includes Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia, and the ‘West’ consisting of the remaining republics. The ‘East’ is regarded as having a far greater degree of Islamisation and as being more unstable than the ‘West’.

#### *Ethno-religious make-up of the region*

The North Caucasus is *one of the most ethnically diverse regions of the Russian Federation*. About 40 ethnic groups of Turkic, Iranian and Caucasian origin are currently living in the region<sup>4</sup>. Each has its own distinct national

<sup>1</sup> By the 2010 census, NCFD has a population of 9.5 million (6.5% Russian population) and approximately 170,000 square km (1% Russian territory).

<sup>2</sup> C.W. Blandy, *North Caucasus: Negative Trends*, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Research & Assessment Branch 2009, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Historically, this was the pattern for most of the Long Caucasian War in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the majority of Imam Shamil’ the Third’s military campaigns.

<sup>4</sup> Domitilla Sagramoso, “Violence and conflict in the Russian North Caucasus”, *International Affairs*, 83: 4 (2007), 681-705, p. 684.

identity, language, history and culture and a strong attachment to their national or ethnic identities. In Dagestan alone there are up to 20 smaller ethnic groups and tribes in addition to 10 'significant' peoples (5,000 and more).

In addition, many links exist between ethnic groups in the North Caucasus and their ethnic kin across the borders in either Georgia (the Ossetians, and the Circassians or Cherkess who are linked to the Abkhaz) or Azerbaijan (the Lezgins).

The language composition<sup>5</sup> is extremely complex, with sharp contrasts between the Indo-European family (Ossetians), Turkic family (Balkar, Karachai) and various branches of Caucasian languages.

Besides its intricate ethnic make-up, *the region also hosts a complex religious configuration*<sup>6</sup>. Most of the region's ethnic groups are Sunni Muslims, adhering either to the Shafii *madhhab* or school (most Dagestanis, Chechens and Ingush) or to the Hanafi *madhhab* (all others), with the exception of the Ossetians and Slavs, who are Orthodox Christians, and the Tats, most of whom are Jewish. Also NCFD borders Kalmykia, the only Buddhist region in Europe.

### *Significance*

St. Petersburg and then Moscow saw the North Caucasus as possessing great strategic importance for the realization of global foreign policy projects in the Black Sea area, as well as in the Near and Middle East. But at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the North Caucasus has evolved from a jumping-off place for Russian expansion into the Near and Middle East to become a forward position against militant Islam and against the spread of American and West European influence.

Because of the geographic location and ethnic composition North Caucasus has a major strategic significance<sup>7</sup> to Russia, and also to the West as a whole. Russia's decision to intervene in Georgia in August of 2008 signified that it was prepared to take on the role of the *Caucasus's guarantor of security and stability*<sup>8</sup>. Russia's South Caucasus policy is understandable because destabilization of the South Caucasus would provoke new instability within an unstable region.

Events in the North Caucasus also have significant implications for Europe. The enlargement of the European Union and the inclusion of Ukraine and the three South Caucasian states (Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) into the EU

<sup>5</sup> Pavel Baev, "The North Caucasus, Conflicts in the OSCE Area", 2004, p. 101.

<sup>6</sup> Domitilla Sagromoso, "Violence and conflict in the Russian North Caucasus", *International Affairs*, 83: 4 (2007), 681-705, p. 685.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 683.

<sup>8</sup> Andrew C. Kuchins, Matthew Malarkey, Sergei Markedonov, *The North Caucasus, Russia's Volatile Frontier*, a Report of the CSIS, Russia and Eurasia Program 2011, p. 3.

neighborhood policy have brought these countries and the adjacent areas of the North Caucasus closer to the EU. At the same time, United States and the Atlantic alliance have become substantially involved in the South Caucasus.

The countries in the Caspian region as a whole are also highly significant to the West because of their vast energy resources, with important routes for oil and gas supplies transiting through the South Caucasus to international markets.

### *Background*

During the Soviet era the ethno-territorial arrangements meant that only several North Caucasian ethnic groups were given their own autonomous republics/districts. At the same time, during the Second World War some ethnic groups were deported en masse to Central Asia (the Chechens, Ingush, Balkars and Karachai). Although they were allowed to return in the 1950s, this has left severe scars in their historical memories. This has created significant tensions among some ethnic groups and complicated the internal administration of each republic, because the process involved severe problems of resettlement and border adjustments<sup>9</sup>.

During the 1990s, all the republics of the North Caucasus became increasingly autonomous in the handling of their own internal affairs, and Chechnya even opted for outright independence. The federal centre remained a source of budgetary funding and an ultimate guarantor of their security.

Despite the existence of formal democratic procedures in most republics, proper democratic institutions and effective governance have failed to materialize. Instead, informal arrangements, such as clans, client-patronage networks and shadow economic relations, have dominated the political life of the North Caucasus republics.

Regional elites proved totally unprepared to address the various challenges faced by the North Caucasian republics after the end of the Soviet Union (severe economic decline, rising poverty and mounting unemployment, coupled with increasingly high birth rates and significant flows of refugees).

More significantly, the North Caucasian republics failed to avert violent conflict. Besides the violence between Ingush and North Ossetians over the fate of the disputed Prigorodny, the region also witnessed the outbreak of war between the federal centre and the secessionist republic of Chechnya. The two Chechen wars had a significant impact on the security and stability of the region, and are partly to blame for the current spread of violence.

<sup>9</sup> In the case of the Ingushetia and North Ossetia it has resulted in the outbreak of violent conflict in 1992 for the disputed Prigorodny, a district currently lying in North Ossetia. Domitilla Sagramoso, "Violence and conflict in the Russian North Caucasus", *International Affairs*, 83: 4 (2007). 681-705, p. 684.

With the arrival of Vladimir Putin as Russian president in 2000, efforts were made to reverse the countries' decentralizing tendencies. In 2004 the election of governors was eliminated and they were replaced by nominations approved by the local parliaments.

On January 16, 2011 in what may constitute a major political shift, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev introduced a bill reinstating the direct election of governors in the regions of the Russian Federation.<sup>10</sup>

The proposal to bring back elections for regional governors could improve the chances for peace in the North Caucasus. If people in the North Caucasus are allowed to elect their own governors in free elections, this is likely to lower the tension and reduce the violence in the region, since at least some political disagreements will be resolved through the electoral process.

The results of these measures have been mixed, especially with respect to the North Caucasus, where the federal centre is still forced to rely on local elites to ensure stability and loyalty to the Kremlin. Moreover, such changes have not resulted in the reduction of violence in the region.

### *Roots of Violence*

Violence occurring across the North Caucasus today is not driven by secessionist goals anymore. The interest of the republics is to remain under the Russian economic and security umbrella. Ethnic secessionist movements have become subdued and receive little popular support in today's North Caucasus.

Ethnic nationalist movements, on the other hand, have become an increasingly more potent force in the region. These nationalist forces didn't strive for independence from Moscow, but they were in reaction to and fueled by such modern-day sociopolitical grievances.

In the past decade violence in the North Caucasus has undergone a significant evolution<sup>11</sup>, as a separatist and then nationalist movement based in the republic of Chechnya has turned into a network of extremist Islamic jihadists, which has taken root in many of the other Muslim republics of the region.

Although Chechnya provided an ideological and logistic basis for the development of such networks in the early 2000s, today local jihadist *jamaats* respond to local grievances and circumstances and are able to operate more

<sup>10</sup> Valery Dzutsev, "Return to Popularly Elected Regional Leaders Could Bring Sweeping Political Changes to the North Caucasus", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 9, Issue: 12, January 18, 2012, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=38894&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=587](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=38894&tx_ttnews[backPid]=587).

<sup>11</sup> Domitilla Sagramoso, Consistent with «Violence and conflict in the Russian North Caucasus», *International Affairs*, 83: 4 (2007), 681-705, p. 703.

autonomously, although they all remain interconnected and linked to Chechen fighters.

The drivers behind the violence are hard to elucidate, and result from a complex mix of factors, all of which play a part in radicalizing young individuals in the region.

*The illegitimacy of many of the North Caucasian regimes, and their inability to respond to the demands of society have created a significant void which has been filled by Islamic groups and organizations.* Thus the North Caucasus has a strong alternative to Russia's political system — Islam. Radical Islam has effectively replaced ethnic nationalism and secessionism as the militant counter-ideology of armed struggle<sup>12</sup>.

The Islamisation of political and economic structures represents a worrying trend as religious beliefs are increasingly interwoven into the fabric of society. And as the region becomes more Islamicised, there is concern that the societies there will increasingly resist attempts at modernization and reform, thus becoming less and less integrated into the rest of Russia<sup>13</sup>.

### *A New Wave of Violence*

Since the spring of 2009 or even as early as the summer of 2008<sup>14</sup> we have seen a new wave of terrorism in the North Caucasus, which is distinctly different from the previous one, which slowly retreated after the raid on Nalchik, Kabardino – Balkaria on 13 October 2005.

We have seen not only a quantitative rise in the number of incidents of violence in the North Caucasus, but also a qualitative rise<sup>15</sup>. The insurgent groups across the region have begun attacking military and security targets in 2009, while increasingly instigating attacks against economic, industrial and political targets (hydroelectric power plants in Kabardino-Balkaria and Dagestan and brazen assaults on the Chechen Parliament in Grozny and on Tsenteroi) as we have seen in 2010. So the overall character of the armed violence is changing towards *a combination of guerilla violence and classical terrorism*<sup>16</sup>.

Another feature of this new wave is the increased frequency of suicide bombings<sup>17</sup>. Over the course of 2009 and 2010, suicide bombers, mostly

<sup>12</sup> Pavel Baev, *The North Caucasus: a Hotbed of Terrorism in Metamorphosis*, July 2011, IFRI, *Russie. Nei. Visions* no 60, p. 14.

<sup>13</sup> Matthew Malarkey, Sergei Markedonov, *The North Caucasus, Russia's Volatile Frontier*, Andrew C. Kuchins, a Report of the CSIS, Russia and Eurasia Program 2011, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> Some authors place this new wave right after the Russian-Georgian war from the August 2008, see for example, *The North Caucasus, Russia's Volatile Frontier*, Andrew C. Kuchins, Matthew Malarkey, Sergei Markedonov, a Report of the CSIS, Russia and Eurasia Program 2011, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> Pavel Baev, "The North Caucasus: a Hotbed of Terrorism in Metamorphosis", July 2011, IFRI, *Russie. Nei. Visions* no 60, 2011, p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> Andrew C. Kuchins, Matthew Malarkey, Sergei Markedonov, *op. cit.*, a Report of the CSIS, Russia and Eurasia Program 2011, p. 12.

males, have most commonly been used to target police and security services in the region.

The tactic of suicide bombing was at its height in the years following the end of the second Chechen war<sup>18</sup>. However, following the Beslan school siege in 2004, the tactic of suicide bombings dissipated. Suicide bombings are a tactic employed by the insurgents because they are a graphic way of demonstrating the weaknesses and limitations of the Russian security forces and also serve the purpose of instilling great fear in the mindset of the Russian public.

This return to the suicide tactic has been largely attributed to the Caucasus Emirate, which was reported to have revived the Riyadus-Salikhiin suicide brigade originally established by Shamil Basayev. The most important suicide bombing killed 36 people at Moscow's Domodedovo Airport in January 2011.

It is now overtly clear that the suicide bombings are no longer exclusive to Chechnya, Chechens, or females, and the tactic, like the insurgency, has spread across the North Caucasus and beyond.

A particularly noteworthy trend is the increasing numbers of people of Slavic origin who have engaged in terror attacks in recent years<sup>19</sup>. The North Caucasian resistance movement's membership is expanding beyond simply natives of the North Caucasus. If this trend further escalates, it will be impossible to cope with militant attacks in Russia, specifically in Moscow, because the resistance movement will no longer be only regional in character.

The only source that feeds the growth of extremist networks, according to official discourse, is external support, from Al Qaeda and international jihadi organizations (although sometimes even western security services are mentioned).

But it is obvious that successful recruitment allows the rebels to compensate for the high casualties and that their message of resistance against brutal suppression finds a sympathetic audience, despite massive state propaganda.

The main driver for this process is also the *deep corrosion in the structures of governance*<sup>20</sup>. A key element of Putin's strategy for stabilizing the region of North Caucasus in the mid-and late 2000s was buying the loyalty of local elites and that has engendered *neopatrimonial regimes* across the North Caucasus, each based on the redistribution of wealth provided by Moscow among the clients and entourage of masters.

<sup>18</sup> In this period, suicide bombers were almost exclusively women from the Chechnya who had joined the insurgency following the death of a relative during the fighting or at the hands of Russian security forces, thus they became known as "black widows".

<sup>19</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, "Is the North Caucasus Rebel Movement Spreading Beyond the North Caucasus?," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 8, Issue: 150, August 4, 2011.

<sup>20</sup> Pavel Baev, *The North Caucasus: a Hotbed of Terrorism in Metamorphosis*, July 2011, IFRI, *Russie. Nei. Visions* no 60, 2011, p. 15.

The violent clan struggle, which has reached maximum intensity in Dagestan, is often indistinguishable from terrorism<sup>21</sup>. Local police and other law enforcement structures are effectively “privatized” by political clans and operate as their “muscle” in racketeering. Corruption<sup>22</sup>, a pervasive feature not only in the Caucasus, has a profound impact on genuine terrorism by generating social discontent and directly feeding Islamic networks.

Terrorism remains unacceptable for the majority of Muslims but the rebels can rely on widening social support and domestic sources of funding, which amounts to a solid recruitment base<sup>23</sup>.

### *Another problem — Migration*

After the North Caucasus, the migration question constitutes the authorities’ *second Achilles’ heel*<sup>24</sup>. Russia has the world’s second-largest migrant intake after the United States, but its identity narrative is not one of an immigration country. Russia finds itself in the position of the United States or Canada, but with a narrative inspired by that of West European populist movements, focused on the implicit separation between the “native/indigenous/white population” and “migrants/Muslims.” Popular discontent at the announcement of further mosque constructions is a telling sign of growing Islamophobia, a phenomenon historically non-existent in Russia. The authorities’ refusal to place at the core of public debate the question of the inevitable transformation of Russian society in forthcoming decades only reinforces popular nationalism and everyday xenophobia and blocks all solutions to the North Caucasus question.

Across the North Caucasus, migratory waves started after the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s and were largely due to the worsening security conditions, as the region became embroiled in conflict. After hostilities ended, many migrants opted to settle rather than return to their war-ravaged homelands.

But in addition to the mass migrations from the North Caucasus, the main negative tendencies which *threatened the vital interests of the Russian Federation* was the active outflow of ethnic Russians and Slavs<sup>25</sup> from all

<sup>21</sup> The assassination of Adylgirey Magomedtagirov Interior Minister of Dagestan, was found not to be an act of terrorism but a contract killing executed by a military officer.

<sup>22</sup> In *Transparency International’s 2010 Corruption Perception Index*, Russia slipped yet lower: below Nigeria, Iran and Pakistan.

<sup>23</sup> Pavel Baev, *The North Caucasus: a Hotbed of Terrorism in Metamorphosis*, July 2011, IFRI, *Russie. Nei. Visions* no 60, 2011, p. 16.

<sup>24</sup> Marlène Laruelle, *Russia’s Gordian Knot, Radical Nationalism, The North Caucasus and Migration*, PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 163 September 2011, p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> C. W. Blandy, *Consistent with North Caucasus: Negative Trends*, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Research & Assessment Branch 2009, pp. 5-6 and Andrew C. Kuchins, Matthew Malarkey, Sergei Markedonov, *The North Caucasus, Russia’s Volatile Frontier*, A Report of the CSIS, Russia and Eurasia Program 2011, pp. 15-16.

the region's republics (with the sole exception of Adygea), which has left the region with negligible numbers of ethnic Russians.

The migratory processes have greatly altered the demographic character of the region and there is a real threat of a widening gap between the North Caucasus and the social-political and cultural space of the Russian Federation.

The trend of ethnic Russians leaving the Muslim republics in the North Caucasus also needs to be seen against the decline in the ethnic Russian birth-rate throughout the Russian Federation, while the Russian Muslim population is growing rapidly.

### *A solution — “Modernization Strategy”*

Due to the aggravation of the chronic security deficit in the region in 2009, President Medvedev sought to address this issue in the context of his new grand strategy of “modernization”<sup>26</sup>. A new administrative unit, the North Caucasus Federal District, was established in January 2010 and a new type of conflict manager Alexander Khloponin, former governor of Krasnodar Krai, was appointed new envoy, with the rank of deputy prime minister. At the same time, in December 2010, Putin appointed himself as head of the Russian government's commission for the socioeconomic development of the North Caucasus<sup>27</sup>.

A very successful governor of the Krasnoyarsk region, Khloponin believed that the key to stabilizing his new domain could be found in accelerating its economic development. Khloponin developed an ambitious plan stretching as far as 2025 which envisaged a range of targets for growth and modernization on two key propositions: tighter control over federal funds by his office and a massive inflow of private investment into job-creating sectors like construction and tourism.

Federal authorities want to develop depressed and belligerent North Caucasus into a flourishing resort. Dmitry Medvedev called to develop the region into a tourist cluster. 8.1 trillion rubles (\$261 billion), including 2.6 trillion rubles from the federal budget, will be spent through 2025 to develop the North Caucasus. The other 5.5 trillion rubles will come from extra budgetary sources<sup>28</sup>.

Already the Russian government allocated approximately \$30 billion to the North Caucasus from 2000 to 2010 (for a population of about 9 million

<sup>26</sup> Pavel K. Baev, *The Terrorism-Corruption Nexus in the North Caucasus*, PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 114, 2010, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> Andrew C. Kuchins, Matthew Malarkey, Sergei Markedonov, *The North Caucasus, Russia's Volatile Frontier*, a Report of the CSIS, Russia and Eurasia Program 2011, p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> “Security Council Promises More Funds for North Caucasus”, 13 October 2011, *The Moscow Times*, <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/security-council-promises-more-funds-for-north-caucasus/445342.html>.

people). Federal funding has increased tenfold from about \$0.6 billion at the beginning of 2000 to \$6 billion at the beginning of 2010. By 2010, Russian federal subsidies reached over \$1,000 per capita in the North Caucasus ethnic republics — about six times more than Russia's average<sup>29</sup>.

The huge costs to calm Northern Caucasus irritate nationalists in Russia<sup>30</sup>. At the same time, control of the federal funds immediately encountered stiff resistance from the republics.

Federal budget expenditures make up the bulk of the republics' economies. But the shadow economy in the North Caucasus is substantial and because of that local and federal authorities fail to receive taxes on trade and commodities, and this has become the established norm in the region.

In the short run, the policy of heavily subsidizing the republics of the North Caucasus has helped stimulate economic growth and people of the region benefited, although corruption does result in large amounts being embezzled. The process of buying political stability cannot be understood as a practical long-term policy for the Kremlin in dealing with the situation in the region, but, at present, the region certainly would be worse off without such a model<sup>31</sup>.

## Part II STAVROPOL KRAI

Stavropol Krai is the only predominantly ethnic Russian region included in the North Caucasus Federal District (NCFD). Because of its contemporary geopolitical position, at the center of the North Caucasus, contiguous to a majority of the republics of the area, Stavropol Krai occupies a special place in the strategy for Russia's territorial development<sup>32</sup>.

Most of its territory is steppe-like with a marked trend toward drier grassland to the south and east. The rayons on the borders with Kalmykia and Dagestan are sparsely populated, with sheep-herding as the major agricultural activity. To the northwest, large farms (formerly kolkhozy), dominate in the chernozem soils. Here, grains are the main product. In the south of the region lies the piedmont, of which the southwestern part known as *Kavkaz Mineral'nyye Vody* (Caucasian Mineral Waters) is a region of spa and resort cities that developed during the early to mid-19th century.

<sup>29</sup> Mikhail Alexseev, *Rubles Against the Insurgency, Paradoxes from the North Caucasus Countries*, PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo, No. 157, May 2011, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> The Russian Civil Union movement held a rally in Moscow in April under the slogan "Stop Feeding Caucasus. Participants branded North Caucasus" as "a voracious crocodile which demands more blood and money". "Russia plans unprecedented subsidies for volatile North Caucasus", by Itar-Tass World Service writer Lyudmila Alexandrova 26/07/2011, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c39/192620.html>.

<sup>31</sup> Andrew C. Kuchins, Matthew Malarkey, Sergei Markedonov, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>32</sup> Alexander Panin and Frank Witmer, *Population Change and Migration in Stavropol' Krai: The Effects of Regional Conflicts and Economic Restructuring*, John O'Loughlin, 2007, p. 250.

Because it is a region with attractive urban and rural opportunities for employment in the immediate vicinity of conflict zones, it has become a primary destination for migrants. Stavropol city and Krai have historically been known as an advance post of Russia in the Caucasus, with the Krai mirroring numerous contemporary ethnic-demographic and migration problems of the North Caucasus region and, more generally, of the entire country.

### *Migration in Stavropol Krai*

Differential ethnic mobility and patterns of settlement, in addition to the usual demographic factors (mortality, fertility, and migration) are increasingly important in influencing the nature of social and political development that is occurring in contemporary Russia<sup>33</sup>.

During the post-Soviet migrations of the 1990s, millions have moved to their titular lands, both the ethnic republics within Russia and, at a more general scale, to Russia from the former republics of the Soviet Union. Among ethnic republics of the North Caucasus, both rapid population growth and outmigration remain a well-established tradition. Within the latter region, the natural population decrease of ethnic Russians contrasts dramatically with the high natural increase of the Caucasian peoples.

The ethnic Russian population in the North Caucasian republics decreased from 26 percent of the region's total population in 1989 to an estimated 12-15 percent in 2002. In the same period, the indigenous population of the North Caucasus increased from 66 percent of the total population to 80 percent<sup>34</sup>.

The exodus of ethnic Russians from the North Caucasian republics seems to have continued after 2002, as security and the economic situation have remained problematic across the region.

Analysis of the ethnic structure of migration in the Krai over the past decade indicates that the most important groups are Russians, Armenians, Dargins, Nogays, and Chechens. Events in the broader Caucasus region have had an impact on the migration flow of Russians, first promoting their movement outward from the former Transcaucasian republics (south of the Great Caucasus Range), and then from the republics of the North Caucasus, especially Chechnya and Dagestan.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>34</sup> In Chechnya and Ingushetia, the ethnic Russian population fell by 94 percent, in Dagestan by 31 percent, in Karachaevo-Cherkessia by 26 percent, in North Ossetia by 16 percent, in Kabardino-Balkaria by 10 percent and in Adygea, where ethnic Russians are still a majority, by 3 percent. Valery Dzutsev, "Demographic Tug of War in Stavropol Undermines Kremlin Plans for North Caucasus Melting Pot", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 12, Issue: 18, September 14, 2011.

Census data<sup>35</sup> indicate acceleration in the population growth of North Caucasian peoples in Stavropol' Krai, both as a function of in-migration and high rates of natural increase. For example, the number of Dargins in the Krai increases and its Diaspora in the Krai is one of the largest in Russia<sup>36</sup>.

Among the entire population of net in-migrants to Stavropol' Krai, Russians predominated until 2001. A trend of "de-Russification," reflecting Russians' low rates of net in-migration and natural increase, is manifest in a noticeable reduction in the ethnic Russian share of the total population, now 82 percent of the total as compared to 84 percent in 1989 and 88 percent in 1979<sup>37</sup>.

Given negative natural population growth in most rayons and the aging of the population, future demographic projections for Stavropol' are similar to most other subjects of the Russian Federation — population decline.

What distinguishes the Krai is the increasing share of non-Russians and a regional stratification of the population along ethnic lines<sup>38</sup>. Because migration has tended to be ethnic-specific in character, and to specific areas of Stavropol' Krai, the end result is increasing internal differentiation. Taken to an extreme, this sorting could lead to ethnic spatial polarization, although because job opportunities remain largely in the major cities (Stavropol' and those of the Kavkaz Mineral'nyye Vody region), future in-migration to these sites is likely to exhibit a mixed ethnic character. Conversely, as in the case of Dagestan, rural areas will likely experience increasing ethnic segregation.

The more prominent population dynamic is the overall shift of inhabitants from rural areas to cities, both in the Krai and elsewhere in Russia. In this respect, Stavropol' Krai is more typical of a Russian oblast than a North Caucasian territory.

On October 18, the Russian public chamber held a special hearing on the exodus of ethnic Russians from the North Caucasus. Poor economic conditions, personal insecurity and the regional political climate were cited most often as the main factors driving ethnic Russians out of the North Caucasus. A well-known Russian expert from Stavropol region, Viktor Avksentyev, stated that Stavropol should be prepared to take in ethnic Russians who leave the North Caucasian republics<sup>39</sup>. According to Avksentyev, ethnic Russians in the North Caucasus do not have "the mechanisms for ethnic consolidation and self-defense," unlike the North Caucasians.

So while the results of the 2010 census are still unknown, they will likely indicate yet another decrease in the size of the Russian population in the North Caucasus.

<sup>35</sup> John O'Loughlin, Alexander Panin and Frank Witmer, *Population Change and Migration in Stavropol' Krai: The Effects of Regional Conflicts and Economic Restructuring*, 2007, p. 256.

<sup>36</sup> Dargin in-migrants initially clustered in Levokumskiy, Neftekumskiy, and Arzgirskiy rayons, near the Dagestani border in the eastern part of the Krai, areas concentrating on sheep rearing, a traditional Dargin activity in their Dagestani homeland.

<sup>37</sup> John O'Loughlin, Alexander Panin and Frank Witmer, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 265.

<sup>39</sup> Valery Dzutsev, "Russian Ethnic Outflow From the North Caucasus Continues to Worsen", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 8, Issue: 197, October 26, 2011.

In July 2011, President Dmitry Medvedev appealed to the North Caucasian muftis to help bring ethnic Russians back to the region. Moscow's envoy to the region, Aleksandr Khloponin, offered to design a most-favored-migrant regime to lure ethnic Russians back to the region.

### *Out of NCFD?*

In October 2010, Russian activists in Stavropol gathered over 10,000 signatures on an appeal to President Dmitry Medvedev asking him to remove the Stavropol region from the North Caucasian Federal District<sup>40</sup>. The authors of the appeal complained that Stavropol region crime rate shot up after the region was joined with the North Caucasian republics. The internet campaign attracted the attention of the media, experts and officials to the region.

Stavropol region, home to the Caucasus envoy, is geographically in the center of NCFD, borders many of the republics of the district (and Kalmykia, part of the Southern Federal District) and compared to the neighbors is more stable and secure. Stavropol has many immigrants from former Soviet republics and, having at the same time a high proportion of the Russian population, it became a kind of center of gravity for Russians across North Caucasus.

The proximity to Chechnya and the North Caucasian republics has contributed to the formation of Stavropol politicians with a *certain culture of political mediation and the ability to negotiate the interests of different groups*. So the region, considered the center of "Russian world" in the North Caucasus, could develop a *mechanism for civil, rather than ethnic assimilation* of different ethnic groups<sup>41</sup>.

For the future, Stavropol, as a *frontier*, has two perspectives: one — strengthening the internal boundary between the "Russian world" and "North Caucasian internal other" or the second — turning the region into a base platform for the formation of the *Russian civil identity*. To do this, there are certain prerequisites — management of migration flows, modern adaptation mechanisms ("newcomers" to "indigenous" and "indigenous" to the "newcomers"), a system of inter-ethnic mediation etc.

In this sense, the exit strategy of the Stavropol SKFO and its transition to the jurisdiction of the Federal District will not solve any of the acute problems of the region.

### *Possible Ethnic Conflicts*

Since the 1980s Islam in the North Caucasus has undergone a renaissance throughout the region. One of the driving forces behind this growth has been

<sup>40</sup> Valery Dzutsev, "Demographic Tug of War in Stavropol Undermines Kremlin Plans for North Caucasus Melting Pot", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 12, Issue: 18, September 14, 2011.

<sup>41</sup> *Abandoned outpost of Russia*, 01.11.2011, [http://www.gazeta.ru/comments/2010/11/01\\_x\\_3433818.shtml](http://www.gazeta.ru/comments/2010/11/01_x_3433818.shtml).

its rising popularity among the younger generations, a trend evident across the region.

Just as the North Caucasus is home to many ethnic groups, it is also representative of numerous Islamic movements. Hanafi Muslims are predominantly concentrated in the north-west, whereas Sufis are mostly found in the north-east.

The increasing growth of Islam is diversifying its geographical makeup<sup>42</sup>. A tranquil and latent Islamization is taking place in the north-western part of the North Caucasus, particularly among the youth in Karachay-Cherkessia and the Stavropol district, which will ultimately transform the demographic context of that part of the region in years to come.

Stavropol region has also been affected by the spread of violence in the North Caucasus, though to a considerably lesser extent. The shoot-outs and explosions that are becoming far too frequent occurrences in the area appear to be fueled by ethnic unrest<sup>43</sup>.

In 2010, after the beginning of a new wave of violence in the region in 2009, the spread of terrorism had two different geographic directions: the first — toward Dagestan and the second — toward Kabardino-Balkaria and the Stavropol Territory. This is worrying because the Stavropol Territory is close to Sochi, which will host the 2014 Winter Olympics and could become an enticing target for terrorists. Stavropol faces a possible increase in terrorism but has not adopted any targeted measures to improve the situation. Experts believe the problem of the *Nogai Jamaat Wahhabi group*, which is active in the region, is more the product of journalists' inaccurate information than indicative of the presence of a real organization<sup>44</sup>.

In 2011, at least 1378 people were victims of the ongoing armed conflict in Northern Caucasus, including 750 casualties and at least 628 wounded persons. These are the results of calculations run by the "Caucasian Knot" based on its own materials and information from open sources.<sup>45</sup> In Stavropol Territory there were reported about 24 victims, including 17 casualties and seven wounded persons (in 2010, the territory had 89 victims: 10 casualties and 79 wounded persons).

The most prominent terrorist incident in Stavropol in 2010 was a suicide attack at a concert hall in Stavropol that killed seven individuals and injured another 40, on May 26.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Andrew C. Kuchins, Matthew Malarkey, Sergei Markedonov, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> Grigory Shvedov, Alexey Malashenko, *North Caucasus: Results of 2010*, March 15, 2011, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/03/15/north-caucasus-results-of-2010/41rj>.

<sup>45</sup> These and the following data related to the armed conflict are from: *In 2011, armed conflict in Northern Caucasus killed and wounded 1378 people*, "Caucasian Knot", <http://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/19641/>.

<sup>46</sup> Jim Nichol, *Stability in Russia's Chechnya and other regions of the North Caucasus: Recent Developments*, Congressional Research Service, December 13, 2010, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL34613.pdf>, p. 6.

In 2011, the regions of the North-Caucasian Federal District (NCFD) saw at least 167 explosions and terror acts, two of which in the Stavropol Territory. For comparison, in 2010, Northern Caucasus saw at least 238 explosions and terror acts and three in the Stavropol Territory, respectively. Let's note that the 2011 statistics of explosions and terror acts included 14 suicide bombings and self-explosions.

According to police reports, in 2011, the losses of the armed underground in Northern Caucasus made 335 victims (in 2010 — 349 persons), who died as a result of self-explosions and actions of power agents; 15 of these were in the Stavropol Territory (in 2010 — two persons).

In 2011, the overall losses of law enforcers in Northern Caucasus, suffered as a result of shootings, explosions and armed clashes, made 239 casualties (in 2010 — 225 lost persons), including two in the Stavropol Territory (in 2010, there were no casualties there). In 2011, in total, 462 power agents were wounded (in 2010 — 467 persons), of which 6 in the Stavropol Territory (in 2010, there were no wounded law enforcers there).

The confrontation of power agents and members of the armed underground is directly affecting the civilian population of the Northern Caucasus regions; and the statistics of civilian victims is a confirmation. In 2011, Northern Caucasus lost — as a result of terror acts, bombings and shootings — at least 176 civilians (in 2010 — 180 persons). At least 163 civilians were wounded (in 2010 — 489 persons). There were no such victims in Stavropol Territory.

In 2011, Northern Caucasus continued registering kidnappings, disappearances and unlawful detentions. In total, there were at least 70 such registered cases (in 2010 — at least 50 cases). Again, Stavropol Territory is not present in the statistics.

Affected by increasing instability in the North Caucasus, Stavropol and Krasnodar Krai are considerably more nationalistic than other territories of Russia. The political background and political culture of the southern Russian regions differ significantly from those in central Russia<sup>47</sup>.

The ethnic structure of the Krai's population has changed more dynamically than any of the other North Caucasian territories, which is clearly evident in the growing territorial differentiation and increase in the Krai's population.

An important feature of migration in contemporary Russia, and indeed in all of the post-Soviet space, is its ethnic character<sup>48</sup>. *If movement to/from origins and destinations is not proportionate to the shares of various ethnic groups in the broader population, spatial polarization can result.*

<sup>47</sup> Ivan Kurilla, *Southern Russia: The Heartland or Russia's Soft Underbelly?*, April 2000, PONARS Policy Memo 120, Volgograd State University, p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> John O'Loughlin, Alexander Panin and Frank Witmer, *Population Change and Migration in Stavropol'Krai: The Effects of Regional Conflicts and Economic Restructuring*, 2007, p. 253.

Falling (and now largely negative) rates of natural population increase among ethnic Russian populations combined with an increase in the percentage share of Caucasian peoples in Stavropol' Krai are dramatically altering the structure of the population at the beginning.

Once predominantly mono-ethnic areas have become increasingly multi-ethnic and this changing demographic makeup of some communities has led to an increase in tension and hostility between ethnic groups.

Migratory patterns have probably contributed to conflict in the eastern part of Stavropol'<sup>49</sup>, where tensions are escalating between the local population and the Chechen minority and Mineralny Vody, where locals are in a struggle with Vainakh, Dagestani, Karachay and Circassian migrants.

The Stavropol region borders Dagestan, and many Dagestanis moved to the region in search of agricultural land and jobs. Ethnic tensions, mainly between Russians, on one side, and Chechens and the Dagestanis, on the other, have erupted periodically in Stavropol region because of the mass influx of North Caucasians.

Tensions inside Dagestan are also on the rise as people from mountainous areas of the republic resettle in the plains, putting a strain on the limited local resources. Thus some Dagestanis choose to move further into the Stavropol region, which conveniently borders Dagestan in the northwest. Over 100,000 ethnic Dagestanis reside in Stavropol region.

The hardships North Caucasians face in Stavropol region have been reported for years and in fact become routine. Whether Dagestani settlers in Stavropol region encounter subtle opposition from the local Russians or a state orchestrated campaign, this contradicts the Kremlin's officially stated plans<sup>50</sup>. According to a Russian government document outlining its strategy for the North Caucasus unveiled in September 2010, one of the main elements was an outflow of ethnic North Caucasians to other Russian regions. Stavropol region's example, however, raises questions about the feasibility of these plans and whether the government remains fully committed to pursuing them.

On September 12, 2011 there was a large-scale displacement of ethnic Dagestanis from the Stavropol region<sup>51</sup>. A local court in the region's Andropovsky district annulled the registration of at least 21 Dagestanis. The loss of registration makes these people ineligible for owning any property they acquired. The website's source, Murad Khalilov, stated that the Dagestanis had lived in the area for several decades and were suddenly deprived of their rights. Court officials say the places where these people lived were not part of any existing settlements and therefore they should not have been registered there.

<sup>49</sup> Andrew C. Kuchins, Matthew Malarkey, Sergei Markedonov, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 15.

<sup>50</sup> Valery Dzutsev, "Demographic Tug of War in Stavropol Undermines Kremlin Plans for North Caucasus Melting Pot", *North Caucasus Analysis*, Volume 12, Issue: 18, September 14, 2011.

<sup>51</sup> *Idem.*

This year, 2012, in the Stavropol Territory, at the mosque of Pyatigorsk, free courses on Russian language for foreign immigrants are to be established.<sup>52</sup> Opening of the courses was initiated by the Spiritual Administration of Muslims in the Stavropol Territory. Implementation of the initiative was made possible due to the agreement on cooperation signed between the Spiritual Administration of Muslims in the Stavropol Territory and Department of the Federal Migration Service. Initially, the courses are intended for migrants from the former Soviet Union territory and neighboring countries. In practice, young people from Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan can hardly speak Russian, since local schools ceased to teach it long ago, so the initiative could be very useful.

### *Hopes for the Economy*

The special economic zone in the Stavropol territory is one of the seven tourism and recreation zones formed in Russia. The North Caucasus has the tallest mountain range in Russia with five peaks exceeding 5,000 meters above the sea level; the most famous of them is the Elbrus. The construction of five alpine skiing resorts in the North Caucasus — Matlas in Dagestan, Mamison in North Ossetia, Arkhyz in Karachayevo-Cherkessia, Lagonaki in the Krasnodar territory and Adygeya and Elbrus in Kabardino-Balkaria — is a priority project of the federal authorities. The development of modern resorts will be environmentally friendly. The new resorts will be primarily oriented at residents of the North Caucasian Federal District<sup>53</sup>. The cluster will spur on the development of airports and other means of transport in the area. The investments may reach one trillion rubles within ten years, and about 300,000 jobs will be created. The Mineralnye Vody International Airport will be the main air hub of the prospective North Caucasian tourist cluster.

The Stavropol spa within the Caucasian Mineralnye Vody center<sup>54</sup> will become a part of the North Caucasian tourism cluster. The federal authorities have proposed to put all projects within the Caucasian Mineralnye Vody special economic zone under control of the North Caucasian Resorts Company. The Grand Spa Yutsa project<sup>55</sup> will be the center of the new resort. The

<sup>52</sup> *Pyatigorsk mosque opens Russian language courses for immigrants*, "Caucasian Knot", Dec. 23, 2011, <http://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/19446/>.

<sup>53</sup> Authorities expect that residents of the North Caucasian Federal District will make up 50% of the tourists, about 20% of tourists will come from Central Russia, Siberia and the Far East, about 20% from Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan and 10% from abroad.

<sup>54</sup> *Stavropol spa center to become jewel of North Caucasian tourism cluster*, 25/10/2011, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c154/256236.html>.

<sup>55</sup> A recreation and spa center on the area of 843 hectares for 4,500 clients. It is planned to build 14 hotels with more than 2,800 rooms with three to five star service. It is also planned to build artificial water ponds of six hectares, two golf fields, an indoor water park, a horse riding center and a delta and paragliding center.

center is located on Mount Yutsa, ten kilometers away from Pyatigorsk and 35 kilometers away from the Mineralnye Vody International Airport.

Meanwhile, the North Caucasian Resorts Corporation (NCRC) is drafting a tourist security concept. Security in the North Caucasus is a key criterion of the success of this project. Experienced Israeli companies will be involved in the drafting this concept, while the government will give the concept final approval. There is a whole set of measures, including security agents and technical means, such as drones and video cameras. NCRC will bear some of the expenditures, while the state and law enforcers will bear others.

### Part III KRASNODAR KRAI

Geographically the region is located in the south of Russia. 740 kilometers of the total length of the border, constituting 1,540 kilometers, stretches along the Black and the Azov Seas. Also known as Kuban, it is the southern sea gate of Russia, an international transportation corridor, connecting Europe and Asia.

As a result of the collapse of the USSR, Krasnodar, which has become more important as a frontier territory, borders of the former Soviet Republics of Ukraine and Georgia became part of the state borders. The Krai is now Russia's southern maritime gateway. The region's ports, Novorossiisk, Tuapse and Eisk, are now the only Russian ports in the south. Krasnodar Krai and Rostov oblast provide Russia with its only access to the Black and Azov Seas, which are vital for the country's future as a sea power, as well as for its trade routes.

Novorossiisk is an important terminal for the oil transport and at the same time, it is considered the main base of Russia's Black Sea Navy in the event of Russian-Ukrainian complications over Sevastopol. Additionally, it is worth noting that the southernmost Russian space launch site Kapustin Yar is situated there, on the border of Volgograd and Astrakhan oblasts.

Krasnodar region is located on the latitude of northern Italy and southern France. Krasnodar krai is the largest Russian producer of farm products. Some 130 kinds of crops are produced here. In Kuban wheat ripens one month earlier than the Russian average, and vegetables two months earlier. The region has a vast network of fruit and vegetable farms. With its developed agricultural-industrial complexes and tourist industry, Krasnodar has maintained its image of being a peaceful and well-off region.

Moscow has separated the North Caucasus republics from the Southern Federal District. Pyatigorsk, Stavropol is the capital city, but the de facto military and security center is Rostov-on-Don. The explanation<sup>56</sup> for the new

<sup>56</sup> Andrew C. Kuchins, Matthew Malarkey, Sergei Markedonov, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

federal district is that it would allow for better focus addressing the shared problems across the republics of NC; an attempt to improve the effectiveness of Moscow's financial support to the NC; it could also be an attempt to isolate the troublesome NC from the rest of southern Russia, especially with the Winter Olympics fast approaching, to stress that Sochi is not in the NC.

### *The Economy*

A heavily agricultural region, its prosperity has been severely damaged by the steep decline since 1991 of the farm sector's terms of trade with the rest of the economy, while its Black Sea resort sector has at the same time been hammered by the polarization of the Russian income distribution.

Krasnodar Krai has a special economic geography; it contains two sharply differentiated sub-regional economies<sup>57</sup>: the rural heartland that has traditionally been Russia's strongest agricultural region, and the coastal strip that contains two substantial ports, Novorossiisk and Tuapse, and the Sochi-Adler resort area. The main seaside resorts of Russia are concentrated in Krasnodar region. The coastal strip is in many ways more "modern", and certainly more connected with the outside world (including Moscow).

In present times, Krasnodar region is one of the most rapidly developing regions of Russia. Krasnodar's favorable local attitude toward foreign investment could be a model for other regions. When it comes to the level of small business development, Kuban is in the first five among Russian regions.

A key geopolitical objective for Russia in the 21st century will be to get a large part of the economic rents from Caspian oil, developing a profitable network of oil pipelines, and ensuring that Volga, Azerbaijani and Kazakh oil is piped to the port of Novorossiisk for export<sup>58</sup>. One political aspect of a successful development of the Novorossiisk oil pipeline option is that it will keep the Caspian states of the CIS heavily dependent on Russia.

In October 2011 the federal government, the Krasnodar territorial administration and the authorities of the Apsheron district of the Krasnodar territory approved the drafting of a development plan for the Lagonaki resort. The agreement on forming a tourist and recreation zone in Lagonaki was signed in February 2011 in fulfillment of the Federal Government Resolution "On the Formation of the Tourist Cluster in the North Caucasian Federal District, the Krasnodar Territory and the Republic of Adygeya"<sup>59</sup>. Lagonaki will be a part of the tourist cluster in the North Caucasus with the yearly tourist capacity of about 28,000. Apartments, cottages and hotels will provide space

<sup>57</sup> Arbakhan Magomedov, *Samara and Krasnodar: A Different Routes of Russian Adaptation to Political Democracy and Market Economy*, NATO Research Fellowship Program 1999, p. 4.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 6.

<sup>59</sup> *Stavropol spa center to become jewel of North Caucasian tourism cluster* 25/10/2011, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c154/256236.html>.

for 16,000 people. The alpine skiing tracks will be about 164 kilometers long. The Lagonaki resort in the Apsheron district is a new step in the development of the Krasnodar district.

One of the priority projects of the federal authorities in the North Caucasus is the construction of five alpine skiing resorts — Matlas in Dagestan, Mamison in North Ossetia, Arkhyz in Karachayevo-Cherkessia, Lagonaki in the Krasnodar territory and Adygeya and Elbrus in Kabardino-Balkaria. To implement this project The North Caucasian Resorts State Corporation was created. To assist the provision of security of tourists in the North Caucasus, Russia and Israel are forming joint working groups. Israeli specialists are assisting the drafting of a *multi-level systemic concept of the security*<sup>60</sup> of North Caucasian resort clusters.

### *Ethno-Nationalism*

The Cossacks, who enjoy the support of the regional regime, are conceived of within regional discourse as the “indigenous people” and “titular nationality,” laying claim to special political status in the region. In declaring themselves to be the “indigenous people”<sup>61</sup>, the Cossacks lay claim to having a special link with the land of Krai, announcing their right and “sacred duty” to protect the natural and agricultural resources of the region from being pillaged or destroyed. Cossacks have emerged as opponents of market reform in agriculture and are especially against the introduction of land buying and selling, claiming that private landownership is contrary to the traditional Cossack form of communal land usage.

In Krasnodar the regional leadership has been traditionalist and nationalist in character. Krasnodar Krai is one of the few Russian regions which have a regional law on land use: “On the special regime of land use in Kuban”<sup>62</sup>. It stipulates that land cannot be an object of sale. Strategically, the most important aspect of the region is its prospective role in Caspian oil development.

The Kuban is known among both Russian and Western researchers of post-Soviet regionalism for its conservative and reactionary political elite<sup>63</sup>, with the region frequently called the stronghold of radical left-wing and national-patriotic forces in contemporary Russia. International “recognition” has assisted the regime of discrimination against ethnic minorities and migrants that has formed in Krasnodar Krai.

<sup>60</sup> *Israeli specialists to help provide security in North Caucasian resorts*, <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c154/182184.html>.

<sup>61</sup> Anton Popov and Igor Kuznetsov, “Ethnic Discrimination and the Discourse of «Indigenization»: The Regional Regime, «Indigenous Majority» and Ethnic Minorities in Krasnodar Krai in Russia”, *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 36, No. 2, May 2008, p. 243.

<sup>62</sup> Arbakhan Magomedov, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>63</sup> Anton Popov and Igor Kuznetsov, *Nationalities Papers*, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

Although the majority out of the population of 5 million is Russian, at approximately 85% (4,314,783), it is still possible to call the Krai multinational. Armenians (241,964) and Ukrainians (198,570) are the most numerous of the ethnic minorities, even though they comprise only approximately 5% and 4% of the region's population, respectively.

The Krai authorities have paid special attention to the Meskhetian Turks living in the region, in relation to whom a whole body of normative acts has been created defining their "special" position of not enjoying equal legal rights in the territory of the Krai<sup>64</sup>. The Meskhetian Turks were exiled to Soviet Central Asia in 1944 (mainly to Uzbekistan) from Meskhet-Javakheti (southern Georgia). The main mass moved to Krasnodar Krai in 1989/1990, after a wave of pogroms swept through areas with high density populations of Meskhetian Turks in the Ferghana Valley.

The decision to host the upcoming Winter Olympics in Sochi may have reignited latent ethno-nationalist sentiments and aspirations among Circassians<sup>65</sup>. The decision to hold the Games, set to take place in 2014, in Krasnaya Polyana has raised intense debate. That region represents for Circassians their historical homeland and the site of the last battle of the Caucasian War, in which they were defeated by Russian troops.

The region is close to territories that are still prone to ethnic conflicts, like Chechnya and Abkhazia and received the first wave of refugees from the various civil war "hot spots". With the approach of the Sochi Olympic Games, which will heighten the international visibility of the region and its actors, there exists the risk of rising tensions. The authorities' ineffectiveness in combating terrorist attacks not only in the North Caucasus but also in central Russia contributes to a climate of fear.

Another important minority in Krasnodar is the Adygs-Shapsugs. The most important issue for the Adygs-Shapsugs, living near the Black Sea, is the land issue and the fact that the statute of the Krasnodar Territory had not fixed the fact of residence of Shapsugs as the indigenous nation. Shapsugs are the nation from the group of Adygs (Circassians) in the Russian Federation. In the Krasnodar Territory, Adygs-Shapsugs mainly live in the Tuapse and Lazarevskoe Districts.

In May 2011, at the seventh conference of the public organization "Adyge Khase", delegates discussed the current problems of the Shapsugs, living near the Black Sea, including the problem of territories for their stay. The conference noted that "many mountain villages are on the verge of extinction"

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 234.

<sup>65</sup> The ethno-nationalist movements are also gaining traction in Ingushetia and North Osetia with the ongoing failure to resolve the status of the Prigorodny District. Some analysts have contended that the August 2008 Russian intervention in Georgia and its subsequent recognition of the sovereignty of Abkhazia and South Osetia have reignited ethno-nationalist discourses about the lack of settlement over the Prigorodny, an issue about which the Ingush have long harbored historical grievances against Moscow, Andrew C. Kuchins, Matthew Malarkey, Sergei Markedonov, *The North Caucasus, Russia's Volatile Frontier*, A Report of the CSIS, Russia and Eurasia Program 2011, p. 6.

and that the provisions of the Federal Law “On guarantees of rights of indigenous nations” are hardly fulfilled.<sup>66</sup>

Officially, support of the Adygs-Shapsugs, living near the Black Sea, is being conducted within the “Programme for harmonization of interethnic relations and development of national cultures in Krasnodar Territory” and within other targeted programmes. The programme has a section “Saving of environment of traditional habitat of indigenous nations”, which is also relevant to Adygs-Shapsugs, programme approved in 2006. Also other targeted programmes to support villages of Adygs-Shapsugs are underway (like a grant support of the newspaper “Shapsugiya” and Adyg Cultural Centre in the Lazarevskoe District).

### *Circassian Problem*

The Russian and Circassian narratives concerning Circassian history continue to clash. The latest incident is related to Circassian activists who are currently lobbying the Russian government to launch a program for repatriating Circassians from Syria. The Circassians in Syria traditionally were aligned closely with the government, as in most other countries of the region. However, as the government of Bashar al-Assad and his regime increasingly comes under international pressure, the Circassians have reportedly been singled out by the local Arab population for their support for the Assad regime. As some Circassians have been looking for exit options, only Turkey appears to have offered them refuge.

Officially, Moscow responded by saying that no Russian involvement was necessary. The Russian reaction to the plight of Circassians in Syria indicates once again that Moscow *does not treat ethnic Russians and other ethnicities native to the Russian Federation equally*<sup>67</sup>.

The Circassian organization in Adygea, Adyge Khas unveiled plans<sup>68</sup> to declare 2014, when the Winter Olympics are to be held in Sochi, a *year of mourning and remembrance*. According to Circassians, Sochi was the scene of mass killings and the deportation of Circassians by the Russian Empire in 1864.

On November 7, 2011 the European Parliament in Brussels observed Circassian Day<sup>69</sup>. The Circassian issue garnered some public attention internationally because of the Winter Olympics in Sochi set to take place in 2014.

<sup>66</sup> Asya Kapaeva, *Anzor Nibo: Shapsugs in Krasnodar Territory hope for soonest solution of land problem*, Caucasian Knot, Jan 10 2012, <http://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/19650/>.

<sup>67</sup> Valery Dzutsev, “Moscow and Circassians Increasingly Diverge On History and Repatriation”, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 8, Issue: 217, November 30, 2011.

<sup>68</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>69</sup> Valery Dzutsev, “With Sochi Olympics on the Horizon, Russia Bolsters Military Presence in Northwest Cau-casus”, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 8, Issue: 207, November 9, 2011.

The Circassians insist that the Olympics be moved to another location in order to avoid a conflict with the principles of the Olympics. Circassians occupied the lands around Sochi prior to the Russian empire's brutal conquest of the region in the second half of the nineteenth century. The Circassians were forcibly deported to the Ottoman Empire and are now dispersed among many Middle Eastern and European countries, as well as the U.S. Only an estimated 10 percent of the prewar population was allowed to stay in the North Caucasus, but they were driven out of the areas along the Black Sea coast.

Russia's reaction to the increased awareness of the Circassian issue was mixed<sup>70</sup>. Even though most pro-government media and Russian officials dismissed Circassian claims the government also made gestures of accommodation. For example, in Tuapse district of Krasnodar region, where Sochi is located, the local government plans to open Circassian museums. Two ethnic villages will strive to replicate the life of the Circassians prior to the Russian conquest of the nineteenth century.

Moscow's reaction, however, was not only about accommodating Circassian interests. The Russian military has quietly relocated the 33rd mountain infantry brigade from Botlikh, Dagestan, to Maikop, Adygea. The mountain infantry brigade has a listed staff of 2,300 people and became a structural part of the newly formed 49th army in the North Caucasus, headquartered in the city of Stavropol. Various explanations were given as to why this brigade was removed from Botlikh (including, among others, the hostility of the local Dagestani population), yet another reason may have been the need to strengthen the Russian military presence in the northwestern Caucasus to protect the Sochi Olympic from possible attacks.

Discussed at the end of 2011, the idea of attempting to repatriate Circassians in Syria has been gaining momentum. On December 31, Circassian activists in Adygea reported that they had received a third letter from the Syrian Circassians asking to be repatriated to the North Caucasus. Following an emergency meeting on December 29, twenty Circassian civil organizations signed an appeal to President Dmitry Medvedev asking him to intervene in the situation and help the Syrian Circassians relocate to the Russian North Caucasus. They urged Russian authorities to replicate the experience of relocating several dozens of ethnic Circassian families from Kosovo in the 1990s.<sup>71</sup> Russia's law on compatriots encourages the relocation of Russians living abroad to the Russian Federation and mandates government assistance.

This is a perfect opportunity for Moscow to jump in and position itself as a good and just arbiter both in international affairs and in the North Caucasus. Moscow appears to be close to a deal on the Syrian Circassians: on December 30, the president of Adygea, Aslan Tkhakushinov, received a Syrian

<sup>70</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>71</sup> Asya Kapaeva, *Circassian public organization set up commission on repatriation of Syrian Circassians*, Caucasian Knot, Dec 30 2011, <http://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/19523/>.

Circassian delegation to discuss possible solutions to the problem of violence in Syria that affects Circassians living there.<sup>72</sup> The fact that the Adygean official received the Syrian Circassians likely means the move was approved by Moscow.

On January 31, representatives of the 100,000 member Syrian Circassian community held a press conference in Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkaria. Three of the visiting Syrians said their goal was to discuss with the government the possible repatriation of Circassians from conflict-ridden Syria to the North Caucasus.

Officials in Moscow have been put in an awkward position by the continuing appeals of Circassians to organize a massive rescue operation of the Syrian Circassian community.<sup>73</sup> To answer these appeals positively would have meant that Russia had recognized the grave dangers facing the civilian population in Syria. Given that Russia vetoed a United Nations Security Council resolution on resolving the situation in Syria on February 4, Moscow is hardly in a position to acknowledge the humanitarian crisis there. Another concern of Moscow is the North Caucasus itself, and since the Circassians oppose the 2014 Olympics in Sochi and the security situation in the region remains tense, Russia is going to be extremely cautious about permitting any significant repatriation of ethnic Circassians from Syria.

At the same time, inaction on the Kremlin's part may further antagonize the Circassians who live in the North Caucasus, who will lose the last vestige of hope in Moscow to resolve their problems. Ironically, it was Karachaevo-Cherkessia, where the Circassians comprise a clear minority, which immediately said it would accept Circassian refugees from Syria. Moscow is trying to remain ambiguous about the possible repatriation of Syrian Circassians, neither ruling the idea out nor openly supporting it.

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<sup>72</sup> Valery Dzutsev, "Relocating Syrian Circassians to the North Caucasus Poses Problems and Opportunities for Moscow", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 9, Issue: 1, January 3, 2012, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=38829&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=587](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=38829&tx_ttnews[backPid]=587).

<sup>73</sup> Valery Dzutsev, "Syrian Circassians Continue Efforts to Discuss Repatriation to the North Caucasus", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 9, Issue: 27, February 8, 2012, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=38984&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=587](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=38984&tx_ttnews[backPid]=587).

**Chapter 17**  
**ISLAM IN THE URAL-VOLGA REGION:**  
**TATARSTAN AND BASHKORTOSTAN**

**RADU ARGHIR**

The two neighboring Ural provinces are located south-west of the southernmost part of the Ural Mountains and are part of the Volga federal district. According to the 2010 census, they have similar population sizes: Bashkortostan has just over 4 million inhabitants<sup>1</sup> while Tatarstan is slightly smaller with a population of almost 3.8 million<sup>2</sup> people. However, there is a big difference in the total area of the two provinces, Tatarstan being significantly smaller, with a total area of 68 000 sq. km<sup>3</sup>, while Bashkortostan has a total area of 143 000 sq. km<sup>4</sup>. This means the population density differs considerably, but also, and much more relevant to this study, that the population ethnic composition (and with it religious composition) is significantly different.

Because Bashkortostan is much bigger, it encompasses more ethnic groups in different percentages compared to Tatarstan. Regarding the latter, much of the population belongs to two ethnic groups: Tatars and Russians. According to the 2002 census, about 2 million of the province's inhabitants are Tatars and 1.5 millions are Russians, together accounting for more than 90% of the population<sup>5</sup>. It also means that the majority (more than 50%) of the province's inhabitants are of Tatar origin, allowing them to play the central role in the province's administration and acquire a considerable amount of autonomy.

The situation is different in Bashkortostan where the sheer size of the region prevents any ethnic group from being a majority. Bashkirs account for only

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<sup>1</sup> Russian Federal State Statistics Service, *Urban and rural population of the Russian Federation*, 28.03.2011, [[http://www.perepis-2010.ru/results\\_of\\_the\\_census/results-inform.php](http://www.perepis-2010.ru/results_of_the_census/results-inform.php)], 05.07.2011.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>3</sup> Russian Federal State Statistics Service, *The territory, the number of districts, towns and rural administrations of the subjects of the Russian Federation*, 2004, [<http://www.perepis2002.ru/index.html?id=13>], 05.07.2011.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>5</sup> Russian Federal State Statistics Service, *National composition for regions of the Russian Federation*, 2004, [<http://www.perepis2002.ru/index.html?id=87>], 05.07. 2011.

1.2 million people of the region's 4 million inhabitants, less than the Russian population, standing at 1.5 million, and slightly more numerous than the Tatar population of almost 1 million<sup>6</sup>. From a religious point of view, since most of the Bashkir and Tatar population is Muslim, Islam accounts for slightly above 50% of the population. However, unlike Tatarstan, no ethnic group accounts for a majority and the most numerous one is the Russian ethnic group, not the indigenous Bashkirs, preventing the latter from playing a decisive role in the province's administration.

From analyzing the general population-related information, the conclusion that is beginning to take shape is that even if the two provinces have a similar number of inhabitants (around 4 million), of which an also similar number are Muslim (around 2 million), due to differences in the ethnic composition of the provinces, Islam plays a very different role in state politics.

### *State and Religion*

As mentioned before, in both provinces Muslims account for slightly above 50% of the population followed by the Orthodox Christians with over 40% of the population. However, the level of cultural development and the role of Islam in state policy differ considerably.

Tatars are the largest minority group in the Russian Federation and have always enjoyed a privileged status. Until the Chechen wars, they were the principal concern regarding separatism in Russia and enjoyed a lot of attention including funds and an increased autonomy of their home province of Tatarstan. The former President of the Province of Tatarstan, Mintimer Shaimiyev, was well known for his influence in Moscow. In fact, his long presidency that began in 1991 and ended in March 2010 is testament to this influence.<sup>7</sup>

During his 20 years reign, Shaimiyev used resources he received from Moscow and the income of Tatarstan's mostly oil-based economy to turn the province from a somewhat poor one into one of the richest and most vibrant provinces in Russia. Also, Shaimiyev, used the autonomy Tatarstan enjoyed to broaden international relations between it and states with a significant Tatar minority or similar interest.

Most notably Iran and Turkey invested in Tatarstan's economy and also opened a consulate in the capital city of Kazan<sup>8</sup>; however, relations were established with other countries too. The fact that Tatar investments were present even in Libya<sup>9</sup> at the beginning of the civil war is a good indicator of how well-developed the international relations of Tatarstan are.

<sup>6</sup> Russian Federal State Statistics Service, *op. cit.*, 2004, [<http://www.perepis2002.ru/index.html?id=87>], 05.07. 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Brian Whitmore, *Shaimiyev's Long Reign Ends In Tatarstan*, 25.03.2010, Radio Free Europe Website.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>9</sup> *Official: Tatarstan Could Lose \$200 Million In Libya*, 27.20.2011, Radio Free Europe Website.

This was reflected in the province's religious life too. Ethnicity was, and still is important, but religion was also a main part of Tatar identity, and it became especially important after 1991. Many of the mosques found in Tatarstan (well over 90%) are relatively newly built after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Also Kazan was, until recently, the host of the only Islam-themed international film festival in Russia and the largest mosque in Europe can be found there.<sup>10</sup>

Even the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, visited Tatarstan in October 2010.<sup>11</sup> Overall Tatarstan tried, and pretty much succeeded, to present itself as the heart of Islamic life in Russia and one of the most important Islamic centers in Europe. And these objectives did not disappear with the departure of Shaimiyev. His successor, the former vice-president of Tatarstan and a trusted aid of Shaimiyev, Rustam Minnikhanov, suggested that Tatarstan could serve as a bridge for Russia in its cooperation with Islamic countries<sup>12</sup>.

The only change to Kazan's status as a leader of the Muslim community in Russia is the fact that the leader of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, also seeks to make his province the most important Muslim province in Russia. Recent incidents that turned Moscow's attention and, with it, funds towards the Caucasus region, as well as investments from Turkey helped Kadyrov in his ambition, but it is highly unlikely that Chechnya will ever replace Tatarstan's central role as a Muslim province.

The biggest issue here is trust. While Kadyrov may order the creation of a Muslim film festival in Grozny to rival the one in Kazan and can increase the number of mosques in his province, it is highly unlikely he will ever gain the trust of international partners like Tatarstan did. Firstly, while Shaimiyev and Minnikhanov have been accused of corruption and authoritarian leadership, their track record is way cleaner than that of the Chechen leader who is accused of human rights abuses and even involvement in murders.

Also, the Islam advocated by Kadyrov is somewhat different from the one practiced in Tatarstan. While most of the Tatar population practices a moderate version of the Islamic Sunni religion, Kadyrov became known for his rather radical approach regarding religion<sup>13</sup>, discouraging international partners.

This helps highlight another feature of Political Islam in Tatarstan. Since Islam is considered part of national identity, especially after Kadyrov assumed his office in 2007, it was build in opposition to the radical Islam found in Chechnya. Many of the clerics in Tatarstan warned of the threat of

<sup>10</sup> Claire Bigg, *Tatar Strongman's Departure Boosts Chechen Ambitions To Become Top Muslim Region*, 19.09.2010, Radio Free Europe Website.

<sup>11</sup> *Tatarstan Honors Visiting OIC Head*, 21.10.2010, Radio Free Europe Website.

<sup>12</sup> *Tatar President Says Kazan Could Be Russia's Bridge To Islamic World*, 30.06.2010, Radio Free Europe Website.

<sup>13</sup> Claire Bigg, *op. cit.*

radical Islam and the fact that it could divide worshippers and lead to civil war.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, there is little risk of radicalization in Tatarstan because religion (particularly Sunni Islam) is a very important part of the Tatar people's identity and radicalization would mean giving up that part of the identity, a move that is unlikely to gain supporters among the Tatar population. Also, Tatar political and religious leadership will actively counter any movements of that kind.

The Bashkirs also practice moderate Sunni Islam but unlike Tatarstan, Bashkortostan never became a hub of Islamic activity, and the role of Islam in state matters and national identity is significantly more reduced. There was no boom in the number of mosques after 1991 and, since most of the leadership was chosen by Moscow, it was not interested in promoting Bashkir Islamic identity.

Actually, the Bashkir Youth Union (BYU), one of the prominent nationalist movements, complained about the absence of independent institutions in Bashkortostan's administration. And the departure from office of the former president Murtaza Rakhimov, who was president since 1993, and his replacement only amplified fear among ethnic Bashkirs. Rakhimov, although corrupt, supported Bashkir nationalist movements. He was replaced in July 2010 by Rustem Khamitov, who is considered a Putin crony.

As a result of this context, religion never became a tool in the hands of Bashkir nationalist movements and there have always been more important issues, like language<sup>15</sup>. On the one hand, this means there are no significant religious institutions, official or otherwise, that can promote radical Islam (like in the case of Chechnya) but at the same time, because of ethnic strife, the lack of centralized moderate church and opposition to local administration, certain segments of the populations are more prone to radicalization compared to Tatarstan. The extent of radicalization is limited but nevertheless it's there.

### *Separatism and connections with North Caucasus*

Because it has enjoyed significant autonomy, the nationalist movements in Tatarstan have never played a key role in defending the rights of Tatars. Overall, the administration of Tatarstan has done a very good job in this matter. Nevertheless, separatist elements are present among the population, the most important being the Milli Medjlis movement, a self-proclaimed pan-Tatar

<sup>14</sup> *Tatar Cleric Warns Religious Divisions Could Trigger "Civil War"*, 01.04.2010, Radio Free Europe Website.

<sup>15</sup> *Bashkir President Sends Mixed Signals over Native Language*, 26.02.2011, Radio Free Europe Website.

national assembly led by Fauzia Bayramov. The most notable activity of the group is the fact that it issued in 2008 a declaration of independence<sup>16</sup>.

Although the declaration led to no results and the group is hardly representative among Tatars, they did catch the attention of federal law enforcement agencies. Its leader has since been arrested and the group listed as extremist, forcing it out of business. The International Court of Justice ruling on Kosovo declaration of independence awakened the group for a short while<sup>17</sup>, but in the long term it made no major difference.

Now this does not mean there are no nationalist sentiments among the Tatar population. They value their significant autonomy a lot and any movement by Moscow to restrict it has been met with hostility<sup>18</sup>, but there has never existed a significant group demanding independence. The special status of the republic of Tatarstan and the fact that independence is an unrealistic goal has kept independence movements to a minimum.

The same thing is true regarding extremism/terrorist organizations. While there were some incidents involving extremist groups<sup>19</sup> and some arrests were made<sup>20</sup>, it is not a significant phenomenon and there are no indications the number of incidents is increasing. If anything, since the beginning of 2011, the province has been peaceful.

Also, there is nothing to indicate any link between extremist movements activating in North Caucasus and Tatarstan. Doku Umarov, the leader of Chechen rebels, tried to reach out to the rebels in both Tatarstan and Bashkortostan in 2010, but there is no indication he managed to muster any (additional) support or encourage the phenomenon in any way.

The situation is somewhat similar in Bashkortostan, the only difference being that due to Moscow's firm grip on its administration, the local nationalist movements were more active than their equivalents in Tatarstan. As a result Moscow intervened to curb the trend, resulting in more actions by Bashkir nationalist movements, especially youth movements.<sup>21</sup> There were numerous peaceful protests organized to demand more rights or condemn actions of the central government and even a hunger strike was organized by BYI<sup>22</sup>. While these actions were peaceful, violence can also be used as means of resisting the central government and this generated incidents linked to extremism and links between North Caucasus groups and inhabitants of Bashkortostan.

<sup>16</sup> *Tatar Independence Activist Receives Suspended Sentence*, 25.02.2010, Radio Free Europe Website.

<sup>17</sup> *Tatarstan Nationalist Leader Encouraged By Court Ruling On Kosovo*, 26.07.2010, Radio Free Europe Website.

<sup>18</sup> *Tatar Youth Forum Wants To Retain Title Of Republican President*, 30.08.2010, Radio Free Europe Website.

<sup>19</sup> *Alleged Islamist Group Members Killed In Tatarstan*, 26.11.2010, Radio Free Europe Website.

<sup>20</sup> *Alleged Hizb Ut-Tahrir Members Arrested In Tatarstan*, 23.09.2010, Radio Free Europe Website.

<sup>21</sup> *Bashkir Youth Activists Want FSB Chief To Resign*, 17.02.2010, Radio Free Europe Website.

<sup>22</sup> *Bashkir Nationalists 'To Resume Hunger Strike'*, 23.03.2011, Radio Free Europe Website.

Unlike Tatarstan, where although there were some incidents, no link was found between the perpetrators and groups activating in the North Caucasus region, when it comes to Bashkortostan such links were found in several cases. There were both instances when members of Islamic groups, more precisely The Caucasus Emirate (led by Umarov) were arrested in Bashkortostan<sup>23</sup>, meaning that North Caucasus Islamic groups support extremists in the region, and instances where local groups acted as branches of North Caucasus Islamic groups and provided them with support in the form of money<sup>24</sup> or fighters<sup>25</sup>. This year, in two separate incidents, two ethnic Bashkirs were arrested in Daghestan while undergoing training to join the local insurgency and four others were arrested in Bashkortostan for illegal weapons possession, illegal production of explosives, and the intention to use explosives. According to the official arrest report, one of the detained suspects is the leader of the so-called Oktyabrsky Jamaat, which is reportedly part of the self-proclaimed Caucasus Emirate. Also, last year, Bashir Pliyev (also known as Emir Bashkirsky), the leader of a Bashkir extremist group that was involved in kidnappings and robberies in Bashkortostan in order to raise money for the Islamic insurgency in the North Caucasus, was arrested.

Although the number of such incidents is limited (no more than 10 incidents involving ethnic Bashkirs that were linked to North Caucasus groups in the last 2 years) and local extremists are significantly less active than the ones found in the North Caucasus region, this is significant because it means that links are already there. While the number of Bashkirs financially supporting or joining North Caucasus groups as fighters may be currently small, even insignificant, the ongoing protest and the ignored demands of youth groups create a potential segment of the populations susceptible to recruiting. And, since links already exist, the perspective of an increase in the number of Bashkirs joining extremist groups, especially North Caucasus groups, is very real.

Obviously, it won't happen overnight and whether or not Bashkortostan will face increased insurgency will depend on the future reaction of the Bashkir administration and the attention that Moscow offers to Bashkortostan.

So far actions have been hardly impressive and, since Moscow is currently focusing (especially financially) on the North Caucasus region, there is little hope for the future. Further more, the December 2011 legislative elections and their outcome infuriated people in both provinces (as well as the rest of Russia). A Tatar politician, Rafail Khakimov, even suggested the public

<sup>23</sup> *Alleged Islamic Extremists Detained In Russia's Bashkortostan*, 08.02.2011, Radio Free Europe Website.

<sup>24</sup> *Another Suspected Extremist Detained in Bashkortostan*, 31.03.2010, Radio Free Europe Website.

<sup>25</sup> *In Daghestan au fost reþiunþi doi insurgenþi*, 26.02.2011, Ria Novosti Website, quoted by the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affaires.

outcry following the elections should be used by Tatarstan in order to expand its sovereignty<sup>26</sup>. His call did not generate any notable responses. However, overall, the effects of election rigging were greater in Bashkortostan because, following a number of controversial arrests, many civil society activists already considered the Russian authorities “lawless” and planned to protest against them.<sup>27</sup> The vote rigging fits right into that narrative.

### *Conclusions*

When it comes to religious extremism/terrorism there is little threat of it taking roots in Tatarstan. The overall high cultural and economic development of the region, coupled with the existence of a well established moderate Islamic church that has good reasons to reject extremism prevents it from gaining a foothold in this province. Moreover, as long as there is “competition” between Chechnya and Tatarstan for the title of the most important Islamic province in Russia, the latter will continue to describe itself in terms opposite to the previous one.

And since Kadyrov took some radical steps in his enforcement of Islamic tradition, it is safe to assume the religious administration of Tatarstan, as well as its political one, will avoid as much as possible taking similar steps and will shun those who are in support of such actions. Even more, if Tatarstan is to achieve one of its goals, namely to serve as a bridge for Russia in its cooperation with Islamic countries, it must remain on good terms with Moscow and this clearly rules out anything involving radicalism. Evidently, nothing can prevent isolated incidents but, most likely, they will remain just that — isolated incidents.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about Bashkortostan. While currently the situation is not so bad, the total number of incidents being small, there is nonetheless a high risk for more. The growing dissatisfaction and frustrations present among nationalist Bashkir movements, especially youth ones, and the already existing links, even if very few, between North Caucasus extremism/terrorist groups and ethnic Bashkirs may lead to a worsening of the situation.

Although motivated differently (ethnic Bashkir movements have secular demands, while North Caucasus extremism/terrorist groups make religious demands, or at least both secular and religious), Bashkir nationalism may take the form of religious extremism and terrorism. It is safe to assume that the transformation will not be complete and many activists will refuse such

<sup>26</sup> *Tatar Politician: Tatarstan Should Push For More Sovereignty*, 30.12.2011, Radio Free Europe Website.

<sup>27</sup> *Bashkir Activists To Protest Russian Security Forces’ “Lawlessness”*, 1.12.2011, Radio Free Europe Website.

activities, particularly because traditional Islam practiced in the province is moderate, but recent incidents and trends indicate that religious extremism/terrorism can, at least theoretically, take roots in Bashkortostan, among Bashkir youth. Therefore further incidents need to be closely monitored and actions have to be taken in order to avoid this scenario.

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**Chapter 18**  
**RELIGIOUSLY-INSPIRED BONDING:  
CHANGING SOFT POWER ELEMENTS  
IN TURKEY'S RELATIONS WITH AZERBAIJAN**

**NIGAR GOKSEL**

*Background*

Turkish public sensitivities and political outreach towards the Muslims of the Caucasus region have always been there. However, this general sympathy has been channeled into more concrete involvement and has had more effect in recent years. More than 20 years after Azerbaijan's independence from the Soviet Union, and 10 years of Turkey being governed by a relatively more „religiously informed“ government than was the case in Turkish Republican history, this article examines the changing role of religion in Turkey-Azerbaijan relations.

While Muslim identity has always played a role in Turkey's social and political life, and has been reflected in the country's foreign policy inclinations, it has become more explicit in certain ways, and has found a new balance with nationalism in the past decade. AKP has, according to one recent articulation, „wedded popular religious nationalism to the levers of government and remained in power whilst doing so“.<sup>1</sup> This new flavor in Ankara has also had reflections on its foreign policies as well as non-governmental outreach across borders, no less towards Azerbaijan.

With figures ranging significantly high, between 65 to 85 percent of Azerbaijanis are said to be Shiite Muslims — the rest are Sunni and around 6 percent are non-Muslims. Azerbaijan is a secular state and its society has strongly secular traditions. Two official institutions — the State Committee for Work with Religious Organisations (SCWRO) and the Caucasus Board of Muslims (CBM) — are responsible for managing affairs of religious communities. Various fringe religious groups exist in the country, which challenge the authority of these state institutions.

When the Soviet Union dissolved, knowledge of Islam is said to have been very weak in the country, thus providing conducive ground for various

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<sup>1</sup> William Armstrong, „Islam and Turkish Nationalism: A New Balance,“ *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Winter 2012, [www.turkishpolicy.com](http://www.turkishpolicy.com).

religious ideas to be spread without informed challenges from society. Especially when infiltration of religious propaganda from Iran and from radical Sunni groups (such as Wahhabism — puritan Sunni interpretation) was observed to be rising, enthusiasm for “Turkish Islam” taking root in Azerbaijan took precedence. But “Turkish Islam” has also not been without controversy in Azerbaijan.

Turkish involvement in religious affairs in Azerbaijan is done primarily through two channels — one is the official Directorate of Religious Affairs in Turkey and the other is the Fethullah Gülen movement, also called the Nurcu's because the Gülen teachings draw on Said Nursi's writings. The Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs has financed the construction of a number of mosques (eight according to most sources) and trains clergy from Azerbaijan in Turkey, as well as setting up schools in Azerbaijan to train clergy — in collaboration with the Turkish Ministry of Education and Foreign ministry.

The work of the Gülen movement is harder to qualify or quantify — and its interaction with government policies also much more complex. The Gülen Movement was founded by and is led by a Turkish Islamic scholar/preacher named Fethullah Gülen who lives in Pennsylvania. Through companies, education institutions (schools and special training courses), dormitories, media outlets, and political connections, the Gülen movement's presence in Azerbaijan has been growing consistently since Azerbaijan's early years of independence. Across the country, they include primary and secondary schools, university preparation courses, and one university. Perceptions of this movement in Azerbaijan vary widely and are assessed from various sides in this article.

The relationship between trends in democracy, governance and religion are also touched upon in this article. The breakdown of Soviet welfare insurances, the introduction of Western consumption and vast income gaps, economic and political mobility distortions, the weakness of state institutions in delivering services such as strong education, as well as a perception of moral vacuums and ideological voids to bind the society together have arguably led Azerbaijani citizens of various social strata to be more prone to religious propaganda, charity and networking. Religious bonds have increasingly gained traction among Azerbaijanis seeking a sense of belonging, solidarity, opportunity and hope.

The state has been keen to protect secularism, yet it appears somewhat contradictory in dealing with the rise of religious movements in the country. Laws relating to religion were tightened in 2011 in Azerbaijan. Regular crackdowns against Azerbaijanis „engaged in illegal radical religious sects“ take place, with „propaganda books“ being confiscated and imprisonment or monetary fines being imposed. As claims of extremist threat are used to justify harsh crackdowns, some analysts have worried that this may backfire, leading to increased reactions among religious groups that were less of a

threat to begin with. Whether Azerbaijanis with an Islamist political agenda are instrumentalizing human rights and democracy rhetoric or the Azerbaijani state is using 'Islamic threat' as a justification to exert unjustified control is an ongoing debate among critical observers. In any case, crackdowns on protestors of religious restrictions and police violence has enabled Islamists to claim a moral high ground by portraying themselves as defenders of human rights and victims of religious persecution.

The governments of Baku and Ankara clearly approach the ascent of religion in public life from opposite directions — with Baku seeking ways to keep a lid on it and Ankara's ruling political elite arguably aiming to positively discriminate on behalf of the religious groups that it perceives to have been ostracized or suppressed in past decades. The AKP party governing Turkey has tried to empower and raise the visibility of pious, practicing Muslims for the past decade in Turkey. To offer a few examples, the Baku administration keeps a firm grip on religious movements, imposes strict procedures for the registration of religious institutions, and has shut down various mosques which were suspected of harboring radicalism in the last few years. While in Turkey the call to prayer is widely thought to have become louder, in Azerbaijan, the government is said to have reduced the volume — supposedly meant to reflect where they stand in religious practice. In Turkey, efforts by the government and its supporters to loosen the ban on headscarves is ongoing. Meanwhile, in Azerbaijan the restrictions have increased.

While in Azerbaijani universities headscarves are allowed, as of 2011 they are banned in high schools. Prior to 2011, in Azerbaijan there was no law prohibiting wearing headscarves in high school but in practice it was not allowed. There was in fact hardly any such demand, so arguably its prohibition did not need to be spelled out in the regulations defining uniforms. As has been the case in Turkey for years, the debate took many turns. While some claimed that it was a rights' violation to cover young girls as an 'honor' concept, as if uncovered girls were dishonorable, others defended the religious right embodied in headscarf wearing. It is noteworthy though that despite the Turkish government lifting restrictions for religious symbols in public life and the Azerbaijani government introducing them, in Baku university attendance of girls with headscarves has always been allowed, while in Turkey it is a practice only recently tolerated. In Turkey, the issue of religion is more sensitive, more polarized, and more political than in Azerbaijan. However, these sensitivities have been "exported" to Azerbaijan over the years from Turkey and resemblance with the debates in Turkey, such as secular-religious tensions, can now be found in Azerbaijan — which is a relatively new phenomenon, taking place in the past decade only gradually.

Besides examining the changing role of religion and nationalism in Turkey's relations with Azerbaijan, this article also explores how the rising Turkish religiously networked enterprises, media, NGOs, and educational institutions have played into the changing Turkey-Azerbaijan relations.

Zooming particularly into the schools affiliated with the Gülen movement in Azerbaijan, perspectives of support as well as concern are presented.

Though this piece only covers Azerbaijan, some of these Turkish individuals and groups are also active in the wider Black Sea region. While some are skeptical about the intentions and engagement tactics, other observers are optimistic that radicalism can be curbed, particularly in the North Caucasus with the Turkish export of 'moderate Islamism' through practical and progressive functions such as education, business and media.

### *Ideology, religion and politics in Turkey-Azerbaijan relations*

The ties between Turkey and Azerbaijan on the basis of ethnic kinship, history and language are broadly recognized. This affinity has reflections on popular culture, economic links, politics and geo-strategy. Asked which country is Turkey's friend, Azerbaijan tops the list in public opinion polls. Turks and Azerbaijanis customarily rally for each other in the Eurovision song contest and international soccer games. Student exchanges are relatively intense, and Azerbaijani tourists flock to Turkish resorts. This reality in itself has had important reflections in the political relations between the two countries. Politicians on both sides go out of their way to showcase strong bilateral relations. The first state visit of an incumbent president or foreign minister is traditionally to the other's capital.

Ideology has always figured high in shaping the narratives of the Turkish-Azerbaijani relationship. It is often recalled that Azeris and Turks together conceptualized Turkish nationalism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (along with Crimean Turks). These thinkers mostly united in support of Westernization and secularization, as well as, to various degrees, Pan-Turkic visions. While this is a uniting 'memory' for nationalists, it is a page of history with relatively negative connotations for those Turks who prioritize Islamic identity and political visions.

Turkey's Islamist intellectuals and Islamically-informed political class do not traditionally have strong bonds with Azerbaijan. As also reflected in the below quote, some formulate disaffection, rooted in the founding of Turkic nationalism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Azeri intellectuals' anti-clerical agenda, rejection of forming a government on the basis of Sharia<sup>2</sup> and enthusiasm to organize society as a nation state, with Western cultural elements was contrary to the vision of the competing political faction of the time that strived for a united Islamic polity.

'Azeri secular nationalists like Emin Resulzade and Ahmet Agaoglu and migrant intellectuals who were escaping from Tsarist Russia are like the

<sup>2</sup> Altay Goyushov, *Islamic Revival in Azerbaijan, Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, Vol 7, [http://www.currenttrends.org/docLib/20081117\\_CT7final%28lowres%29.pdf](http://www.currenttrends.org/docLib/20081117_CT7final%28lowres%29.pdf).

architects of Turkey's secular nationalist identity (...) They had received secular education in Tsarist Russia and voiced unthinkable ideas about Islam. They defended mixed-gender education and first came up with the idea of adopting the Latin alphabet while they were in Istanbul. They questioned the Turks' relationship with the Islamic world and highlighted the nation rather than religious community as the binding consciousness."<sup>3</sup>

In Soviet times, the Azerbaijani dissent movement was mobilized along the lines of Turkic nationalism and a passion to embrace Turkic culture, traditions and political visions, repressed by Soviet ideology. This was a natural extension of the legacy of freedom in Azerbaijan, lost when the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, the first independent Azeri nation state, was conquered and Sovietized.

Nationalist narratives were also at the core of how third-parties defined Turkey-Azerbaijan ties. Armenian independence struggles were mobilized by the legacy of 1915 — pitting them against Azeris as well, which they deemed the „same people“ as their brethren in Turkey. In other words, Armenians 'otherized' Azerbaijan by pointing to the ethnic-national unity between Turkey and Azerbaijan.

In the 1990s, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Turkish involvement in the Caucasus and Central Asia was framed largely around Turkic solidarity narratives. Nationalism was more prominent than religion, both because the Turkish state ideology had nationalism more at its core, and because the publics that had recently gained independence from the Soviet Union, were more interested in embracing nationalistic ties than religious ones.

But Turkish nationalistic involvement in Azerbaijan was often hardly benevolent. Over the years, ultra-nationalist, mafioso type-Turks frequented Azerbaijan. Some exploited business opportunities through crony relations; others meddled in Azerbaijani internal politics — going so far as to plot an assassination attempt against Heydar Aliyev in the mid-'90s.

Having 11 coalition governments in Ankara in the course of the '90s contributed to the inconsistencies. The political and social divisions in Turkey were reflected in policies towards Azerbaijan. Clashing visions and engagements were pursued at once. While Turkish nationalists advocated the idea of integrating the Turkic world into one political entity, religiously motivated Turkish activists had Islam high on the agenda of their approach to Turkey-Azerbaijan relations.

Nevertheless, links between the state establishments and strong personal relationships between high-level individuals — such as Heydar Aliyev and Suleyman Demirel, between state institutions, as well as general support among the Turkish society, ensured that Azerbaijan's interests were taken into consideration in Ankara at every relevant juncture.

<sup>3</sup> William Armstrong, *op. cit.*

Turkey maintained a closed border with Armenia, as a reaction to Armenia's occupation of Azerbaijani districts in the course of the Karabakh war. The pressure that this closed border imposes on Armenia is seen by many as the only incentive Armenia has to reach a compromise deal with Azerbaijan. Turkey also brought the Karabakh issue to the attention of world leaders and international partners consistently, an important contribution for Azerbaijan particularly before Baku increased its pull in the international arena through energy politics.

Realizing the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline — against many odds at the time — has arguably been strategically the most important achievement of the Turkey-Azerbaijan partnership. Over the years, favorable terms for Turkish businessmen were granted in Baku and military assistance as well as small-scale development and education-related support was extended from Turkey to Azerbaijan.

Though governments changed in Ankara throughout the '90s, the real fundamental 'regime' shift started in 2002 with the rise to power of AKP in Turkey. In the course of the following 10 years, in a few instances, such as in the course of the Turkish-Armenian diplomatic overtures, the change of interlocutors in Ankara left Azerbaijani counterparts without familiar channels to share their concerns with.<sup>4</sup>

Having increased its votes in three consecutive parliamentary elections (2002, 2007, 2011), having carried a leading figure of the party to presidency and after controlling a majority of the country's municipalities, AKP has exerted strong executive authority in Turkey for the past decade.

The change was not only in the Ankara institutions but also in the relative empowerment of different social segments. In the first half of the 2000s, the AKPs purging of the 'old guard' has been aided by support from the liberal intellectuals who have been struggling to weaken the grip of the ultranationalist networks and military power in the country. The empowerment of liberal intellectuals also meant the breaking of taboos on controversial issues such as Kurdish rights and Armenian history.

The rising prominence of liberal intellectuals in Turkey, at the expense of more nationalist-minded, old guard supportive of the military and 'Republican ideals', meant the Turkish press and general social debate also factored Azerbaijan out (relatively), at least for a few years. Azerbaijani counterparts initially felt the brunt of these shifts of power in Turkey.

Though for a few years it was not clear how links between Turkey and Azerbaijan would be accordingly reforged, Baku did not take long to realize the needs stemming from a changing Turkey and to recognize the so-inclined Gülen movement as a significant channel through which to fortify its Turkey relations. Since 2010 a new equilibrium appears to have been established.

<sup>4</sup> "Starting Over? Turkey and Azerbaijan After the Protocols," *Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy (ADA) Bi-weekly*, Vol. II, No. 23 (December 1, 2009) <http://ada.edu.az/biweekly/issues/vol2no23/200912071105718511.html>.

Though Ankara and Baku are both driven primarily by the strategic value of the bilateral relationship, the ideological ties now rest increasingly on a more complex shared identity in which a new blend of ties based on religion, culture, and ethnic identity plays a dominant role.

In the meantime, Turkish intellectuals who had geared to the West and who openly advocate political reform in relatively non-ideological, liberal forms have been unable to build meaningful and sustainable ties with the progressive segments of the Azerbaijani political elites, hampering the representation of the full spectrum of Turkish values, capacities and interests in the sphere of relations with Azerbaijan.

Since the mid 2000s, AKP has stepped up its nationalist credentials, to some extent alienating the liberal segments that it was earlier coalescing with. Coupled with changing global and regional changes, Turkey's foreign policy has also been transformed in the past decade. While in general 'diversification' from a focus on the West has taken place, emphasis placed by Ankara on Turkey's neighbors has increased. Muslim countries and Muslim causes are more prominent in the rhetoric of official Ankara, while relative to the past, references to Turkic solidarity or ethnic kinship has faded. These shifts have led to the expectation among some observers that this government in Ankara would be less adamant about owning up to the legacy of nationalist forerunners of the Republic such as Enver Pasa or Talat Pasa who are controversial figures due to the acts of ethnic cleansing which are attributed to them.

Indeed, in an attempt to live up to the slogan of 'zero problems with neighbors' and to increase its regional traction, Turkey attempted to normalize relations with Armenia — an initiative that was high on the agenda between 2008 and 2010.<sup>5</sup>

Though the attempt fizzled due to Azerbaijan's reaction and the potential fallout of Baku's displeasure on Turkish domestic politics and strategic interests, this process depicted the 'arrangements' between the Gülen-affiliated media outlets and official Baku. In order to proceed with their functions smoothly in Baku, those associated with the Gülen movement were very cautious about standing by Baku and not publicly supporting the Turkey-Armenia normalization process. In a give-and-take relationship, Gülen-affiliated institutions use their network and resources in the interests of Azerbaijan on issues related to the Karabakh conflict/Armenia (such as articles they run, support of diaspora lobby activities on behalf of Azerbaijan etc.) and in return work in Azerbaijan without interruption. (This caution is also extended to issues pertaining to democracy, with the Gülen-affiliated outlets exercising clear caution not to print articles that question the democratic credentials of the administration in Baku, so as to ensure their business in Baku is supported by the Azerbaijani officialdom).

<sup>5</sup> Nigar Goksel, "Turkish Policy Towards Caucasus: A Balance Sheet of the Balancing Act", *EDAM Black Sea Discussion Paper Series 2011/1*, November 2011, [http://edam.org.tr/eng/document/Black\\_Sea\\_Paper\\_Series1.pdf](http://edam.org.tr/eng/document/Black_Sea_Paper_Series1.pdf).

Azerbaijan has recently increased its outreach in the Muslim world, both to back up its claim of bridging civilizations, and as a means to increase support for its Karabakh position. Perceived neglect from the Western world to the plight of Azerbaijanis has increased Baku's inclination to resort to Muslim sympathies, resources and solidarity on this issue. This trend was most recently observed in the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) think tank forum hosted in Baku in early March 2012 where an emphasis was placed on discussing conflicts and the importance of countries of the OIC supporting each other in cases of conflict where the Christian West was either negligent or approached with bias rather than a sense of justice. Muslim countries and their civil societies are increasingly talking about Western bias in preaching norms and values, the failure of Western institutions to deliver moral conflict resolution, the need to pool Muslim assets and weight in the international community to level the playing field, to pass counter-resolutions in their parliaments (against for example the massacres of Azerbaijanis in Armenia in the course of the Karabakh war), playing a stronger role — in line also with the shift of economic gravity in the world, of Muslims on the international agenda-setting processes.

As Turkey has also been putting more emphasis on its relations in the Muslim world, Azerbaijan and Turkey are also collaborating more in this field of international affairs. This trend is more limited on the Azerbaijani side however, not extending in the case of Azerbaijan to hawkish positions against Israel for example.

### *Faith-based networking component of Turkish soft power in Azerbaijan*

While the marginalization of Turkish nationalist networks in both Turkey and Azerbaijan left a vacuum, it has been the religiously networked Turks that have stepped up their presence and involvement in Azerbaijan.

Part of the reason that liberal NGOs and intellectuals have been absent is the prejudice against Azerbaijan, rooted in the antipathy that ethnic-kin rhetoric has developed among Turkish liberals. Part of the problem was the assumption on both sides, as well as among potential donors in Western Europe and the United States, that building such ties required conscious effort — the assumption was that the two sides already know each other well enough to bond and coordinate their development. And finally, the demand from Azerbaijan to have liberal Turks coming to Azerbaijan and talking about human rights and the like was weak.

Turkey's multifaceted influence on Azerbaijan has prevailed though — from avenues such as Turkish soap operas and political debates viewable in Azerbaijan, to business links and joint opposition to perceived Armenian hostility against Turks — which appears to treat Azerbaijanis and so called

„Anatolian Turks“ as one. On occasion Turkey exported its problems to Azerbaijan too. Some in Baku recall Turkish political figures coming to Azerbaijan and talking about the headscarf or hijab issue and creating controversy on issues the Azerbaijani society had not previously been polarized about.

Gülen “initiated the setting up of schools” in Turkey in the early 1980s, and Azerbaijan was the first country outside of Turkey where the Gülen Movement opened schools, in 1992. Since, this trend has continued, exponentially. In their own words, ‘Businessmen, school teachers and academics inspired by Fethullah Gülen’s teachings have opened hundreds of educational institutions of all sizes, from kindergartens to universities, in over 100 countries” in a decentralized manner. The relationships are between individuals rather than institutions, and thus organic structural connections are not concrete.<sup>6</sup>[8]

To get a sense of how they articulate their philosophy, the abundant articles accessible on Gülen websites are a source that can be draw upon. One such example quotes “the end goal” of Gülen’s educational initiatives as being to raise a “generation of ideal universal individuals, individuals who love truth, who integrate spirituality and knowledge, who work to benefit society.” The articulation continues as follows:

“Gülen’s vision of creating the golden generation of Muslims seems already to bear fruits in many parts of the Muslim World where his followers are present. (This paper) argues that Gülen’s educational philosophy have led to the churning of hundreds of thousands of Muslim individuals who have successfully improved societal conditions in their respective societies.”<sup>7</sup>[9]

Fethullah Gülen-‘inspired’ schools are broadly referred to as “Turkish schools” in Azerbaijan, equating them with the Turkish state, government, or nation as a whole in the minds of Azerbaijanis, which is indeed misleading. Gülen-inspired schools are not under any government control; however, they strike more synergy with AKP policies than past governments’ policies, and that their many functions translate into Turkish soft power seems relatively straightforward. They both benefit from and complement Turkey’s increased foreign policy activism, all the more so because non-Gülen media, civil society, educational institutions, intellectuals and the like are not engaging these geographies with anywhere near the intensity of Gülen associates. Given the Turkish state not having philanthropic support for civil society engagement, de facto, a significant share of Turkish cultural educational and other soft power outreach is linked to the Gülen movement. The Gülen movement even has activities and schools where Turkey does not have official diplomatic representation, let alone any other functioning Turkish civil society organization. Advocates of the movement point out that Gülen schools preceded

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.fethullah-gulen.org>.

<sup>7</sup> Mohamed Nawab Mohamed Osman, *Gülen’s Educational Philosophy: Striving for the Golden Generation of Muslims*, 19 October 2010, <http://en.fgulen.com>.

the AKP government and cannot be considered as extensions of Turkish foreign policy in any way.<sup>8</sup>

As in Azerbaijan, the Gülen movement outlets have become dominant in places where Turkish organizations of alternative conviction used to be present, and have in a sense crowded out the other Turkish ideological outreach groups.

In Azerbaijan, “Gülen -inspired” schools and university preparatory courses, dormitories are run under the umbrella of a company called Cag Ogretim — including the Qafkas University that was set up in 1993 and has been growing particularly throughout the 2000s. Other examples of institutions in Azerbaijan of the Gülen Movement (established by Turkish entrepreneurs affiliated with the Movement) are Zaman Azerbaijan newspaper and the Azerbaijani Youth Aid Foundation.

The promotion of a pious lifestyle is often intertwined with promotion of Turkish identity in Gülen’s institutions in Azerbaijan — as well as in other countries that would be receptive to the Turkish component. In the early years of Azerbaijan’s independence, the Gülen schools were low-priced and everyone could afford them. Currently many are high priced and school the children of prominent bureaucrats and businessmen.

As a general strategy, in these schools, worldwide, the level of advocacy of identity/values/religion is said to be adapted to the receptiveness of the context. In countries or environments where ideological components would not fare well, they are kept at a minimum. Islam and its specific understanding by Gülen is projected to students to the degree and in the form that it will not be negatively received — it is fine tuned so as not to be reacted against, which could harm the movement. Thus these schools can also be popular in non-Muslim communities or among adherents of other sects and denominations of Islam. Religion is said not to be forced upon students or employees, but it is taught, its practice rewarded through the granting of more opportunities, and encouraged. Taking part in the Gülen movement can bring scholarships, employment and assistance, with an expectation of loyalty and “giving back” in the future. Intertwined in the schooling is the ethics of solidarity — or looking out for others that are affiliated with the network. Many people can aid the movement without necessarily sharing the religious convictions. The ties are also built upon gratitude for the dedication or financial assistance that has been granted by teachers or other mentors.

### *The debate: Is Turkey’s religious influence in Azerbaijan welcome?*

Firstly it is important to acknowledge that there is practically no open public debate on the issue of religious influences from Turkey into Azerbaijan.

<sup>8</sup> Mehmet Kalyoncu, *Misrepresentation of Fethullah Gülen in English-language media*, 17 May 2011, <http://www.fethullahgulenforum.org/articles/28/misrepresentation-fethullah-gulen-english-language-media>.

This is partially a reflection of the weakness of investigative journalism in Azerbaijan, and partially because the religious connections are often non-transparent, and deemed too controversial to talk about freely. Having little facts leads to „information“ circulating in the form of rumors, fueling speculation and suspicion. Admittedly, this section of the article at hand also reflects this trend, merely reflecting the circulating opinions rather than making a claim. That people who live in and know many dimensions about Azerbaijan can not really put their finger on these realities is in itself a fact to take note of.

There is quite a lot of division in how Turkey's religious influence in Azerbaijan is received, both among ordinary citizens and analysts. While some think the Turkish infiltration with a religious flavor brings danger, others welcome the 'moral' effects as well as opportunities for social mobility introduced by the Gülen movement.

This section of the paper will present different views voiced to the author in casual discussions by a range of people, from families in the northern town of Sheki to individuals in significant positions of state authority. The analysis has no claim to be scientific or representative, but merely gives a sense of the opinions out there.

The Gülen movement is perceived to be aligned with Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) — and therefore its reception in Azerbaijan is often connected to how AKP policies are viewed. While the movement in many senses rides the bandwagon of Turkey's popularity in the country, it also bears the brunt of frustrations with Turkey felt in Azerbaijan.

#### *Positive viewpoints*

When the Soviet Union dissolved, the practice of Islam in Azerbaijan was relatively weak, and thus the ability to teach interested citizens more about the religion was also arguably insufficient to meet the demand triggered by the lifting of Soviet restrictions against religious practice. In this atmosphere, there was a concern about infiltration of Iranian and Saudi influences to fill the vacuum. There was also worry that the Azerbaijanis in the north of Azerbaijan who were of different ethnic composition, such as the ethnic *Laz*, would send their children to Dagestan to get an education, in order not to be assimilated in the Azeri ethnic and religious majority. The schools of Gülen offered a welcome alternative to these potentially radicalizing choices.

The leading reason for positive views of the Gülen activities in Azerbaijan among the educated classes seems to be the quality of the schools. 'Gülen schools' provide stronger education, with more attentive teachers, less corruption, more modern teaching. The added value of these schools is magnified by the degraded state of the public schools in the country.<sup>9</sup> [10] Human

<sup>9</sup> Iveta Silova, Mark Johnson, and Stephen Heyneman, "Education and the Crisis of Social Cohesion in Azerbaijan and Central Asia," *Comparative Education Review* 51:2 (May 2007), 159-180. <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/peabody/heynean/PUBLICATIONS/Ed.%20and%20the%20Crisis%20of%20Social%20Cohesion%20in%20Azerbaijan%20and%20Central%20Asia.pdf>.

capital for Azerbaijan's progress is an issue of great concern in the country. Azerbaijan is at a critical juncture in terms of bringing up the next generation with a work ethic and the skills needed to professionally manage the country, and the Gülen schools play a critical role as such.

The "Gülen schools" also provide Azerbaijani pupils with a grounded identity, blending Turkishness and religious consciousness, a moral compass, and a sense of responsibility to the community. This is seen to be particularly important as the Azerbaijani state is perceived to fall short of providing strong education, imbuing ethical norms, religious grounding, and a uniting, patriotic, convincing vision for the future.

Both for the unsettled questions about the place for nationalism in modern Azerbaijan<sup>10</sup> [11] and the perception of widespread moral degeneration in transition to crony capitalism, these schools provide a sense of security for parents considering how to prevent their children from getting caught up in "societal ills." In addition to the teachers from Turkey, who act like missionaries in their dedication, former students are also involved in mentoring, spiritual guidance, as well as setting examples of discipline and good manners for the students.

The movement is said to have improved the image of 'Anatolian Turks' in Azerbaijan, because their followers who come to Azerbaijan from Turkey do not resonate the "exploitative" image that many Turks who came to Baku created.

Because of the "investments" of the Gülen movement in Azerbaijan since independence and the scholarships provided for students to attend higher education, there are already quite well accomplished graduates, with good jobs. Seeing these individuals' success is an incentive for parents who think it is more likely that their children will be granted opportunities by the Gülen movement affiliates after graduation, as well. It is seen as a means to secure future employment and a 'social security network' in a country where rapid change and income gaps have generated a sense of insecurity among various social strata.

Even among those who are not enthusiastic about the religious underpinnings of the Gülen movement, there are a good many who are also not worried. They explain their lack of concern with the following points: In Turkey and worldwide, Gülen has been a force towards positive change. He has publically denounced Osama bin Laden, as well as terrorism in the name of Islam, in general, and has advocated for Turkey's modernization and accountable governance, as well as taking a more moderate stance about Israel than the current Turkish government.

The assumption on the part of many Azerbaijanis is that Baku authorities have a tight grip on all such activities and are monitoring the situation clo-

<sup>10</sup> European Stability Initiative, Azerbaijan Slides, "Soul-searching — what had gone wrong? Debates on identity, democracy and development," [http://www.esiweb.org/testing/webseiten/pdf/index.php?lang=tr&id=321&country\\_ID=2&slide\\_ID=8](http://www.esiweb.org/testing/webseiten/pdf/index.php?lang=tr&id=321&country_ID=2&slide_ID=8).

sely, and can put on brakes if they feel any threat and need for containment. Infiltration of state institutions is not an act that can go without being noticed in Azerbaijan, they point out. Moreover, reassurance is derived from the conviction that the teachers in the Gülen schools of Azerbaijan are by now predominately Azerbaijani, graduates of the first generation of the schools — and therefore centralized control over the ideological component of the various outlets of the Gülen movement is weak, they suppose. „Azerbaijanis are such that they will benefit from the opportunities but shake off the ideological elements“, was the cynical observation of a few members of the political elite when approached with the question of whether they see the benefits outweighing concerns about the movement’s activities in Azerbaijan. Secular Azerbaijanis assume that their fellow nationals will ultimately not buy into the religion-related calls.

It is important, they argue, not to label and alienate graduates of the Gülen schools. They are intellectually well prepared for state jobs and if they were to be shunned by society as being ‘controlled by Gülen headquarters’, this is an insult to their individualism, and creates the risk of driving them into a resentful state of mind, as has been the case in the polarized environment in Turkey. From this perspective, the best way to counter the risk of such polarization is to embrace and integrate Gülen school graduates and Gülen enterprises employers as an integral and worthy part of the society and policy of Azerbaijan.

The cultural and solidarity-related work the Gülen institutions do is appreciated — as is in particular their contribution to internally displaced persons (IDPs) of the Karabakh war, who are neglected by many other institutions from abroad that function in Azerbaijan. And all institutions and individuals affiliated with the Gülen movement are very careful not to contradict the authorities or get involved in any activity that would irritate the authorities.

This last point is one that can be considered a reason to support or to be against the Gülen movement in Azerbaijan, depending on where one stands vis a vis support of the Baku administration. The Western-educated youth in Baku who are critical of their authorities complain that the Gülen-controlled media outlets or intellectuals never mention democracy deficits in the country, even though they are present and can see it. They interpret hypocrisy in the Gülen movement affiliates standing up for values in Turkey which they not only disregard but openly censor in their media outlets when it comes to the case of Azerbaijan.

#### *Skeptical perspectives*

Skeptics point out that while those attending the ‘Gülen-inspired schools’ in Baku may graduate without even noticing religious promotion in their education, pupils in the lower income regions of the country are ‘converted’ into religious thinking more actively. Particularly, if they have stayed in

Gülen-affiliated dormitories, pupils are said to return home more conservative, less tolerant, and critical of their families' low level of piety.

The Azerbaijani elite of relatively European or liberal orientation express concern that individual choice and meritocracy is neglected by the Gülen mechanism, with loyalty to the movement being more prominent, much like the way in which clan relations and loyalty to the Aliyev regime functions. Thus, they opine, the concept of a 'fair playing ground' and critical thinking or the values of the European model are further weakened.

A leading reason for the ambivalence about Gülen activities in Turkey is the widespread uncertainty or contrary views about the network's speculated grip on power in Turkey. With the consolidation of the power of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey, Gülen movement followers have risen in politics, key state institutions, civil society, and the private sector. Once the Gülen movement supporters rose to controlling spots in Turkey's bureaucracy, police force, media outlets, and judiciary, they have allegedly used this opportunity to favor other followers of the movement, and exclude or even intimidate critics.<sup>11</sup>[12] The movement is thought to promote a trend of a more conservative and religiously observant society in Turkey while also pursuing a global mission to elevate the Muslim world's unity and strength.

The Gülen movement activities in Turkey and around the world appear to reflect an intention of gradual change towards increased Islamization that does not reject modernity and stands against extremism and violence. With media, financial, international networks and synergy with segments of today's leading Turkish political class, contributing to the peaceful rise of the Muslim world and pooling "Muslim capital" to positive ends is arguably a component of this vision. The negative angle of this pursuit is that the Movement's strategy can involve taking over power positions and favoring fellow "followers". This is alleged to lead to power usurpation, and inevitably exploitation. A system that is not based on individual rights, choices, and meritocracy limits freedom, innovation and justice, even if it embraces technology and preaches moderation.

Questions about the Movement's long term agenda in Azerbaijan are raised among Azerbaijani audiences who regularly follow the articles, books and debates about this issue from Turkish outlets.

While Gülen supporters are quick to label these allegations defamation and unsubstantiated, the lack of information about the decision-making

<sup>11</sup> For various English-language sources reflecting critical perspectives of the movement, see Soner Cagaptay, "Behind Turkey's Witch Hunt", *Newsweek*, 16 May 2009, <http://www.cagaptay.com/5593/ergenekon-behind-turkey-witch-hunt>; İlhan Tanir, *Gülen movement's US ride getting tougher*, *Hurriyet Daily News*, 6 March 2011, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=the-gulen-movement8217s-ride-gets-rougher-in-us-2011-06-03>; Delphine Strauss, "Turkey: Inspiring or insidious", 28 April 2011, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/650452e8-71c6-11e0-9adf-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1oT8PI1GN>; Justin Vela, *Behind bars in the Deep State*, *Foreign Policy*, 11 January 2012, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/01/11/behind\\_bars\\_in\\_the\\_deep\\_state?page=0,0](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/01/11/behind_bars_in_the_deep_state?page=0,0).

process and hierarchies, the number of affiliates and the aggregated budget figures of the movement prevent 'closure' from being achieved regarding the suspicions. There are fears that criticizing the movement leads to 'retribution' via negative press, arrests on trumped up charges, or exclusion from job opportunities. Ultimately, it is likely that the direction which Turkey's political evolution under Gülen influence takes will determine the debate about the movement in Azerbaijan.

*Does Baku have a strategy?*

Official Baku appears to 'instrumentalize' the Movement's activities in Azerbaijan, while also trying to ensure that they are 'curbed' — or kept at bay, to ensure that down the line, the Gülen Movement affiliates cannot challenge the authority of the ruling establishment.

The benefits the state derives from Gülen activities in Azerbaijan range from being provided with a better-educated young workforce, to networks across the world that they can utilize. The loyalty of the group is measured by their not challenging state authority or policies, being supportive over Karabakh, and using media outlets as well as a world network to ends that official Baku desires. Particularly due to disillusionment with the West and inability to bring Western progressive institutions to Baku without also dealing with their challenge of Azerbaijan's democracy credentials, Gülen-affiliated institutions have proven to be advantageous for the Baku administration. In return for loyalty and services to Azerbaijan's progress, Baku grants Gülen the ability to maintain enterprises and grow a support base in Azerbaijan. Official Baku assumes it has a strong hold of the reins, and at times gives 'signals' to demonstrate this — by publishing implicit warnings in state-owned newspapers, arresting "Nurcu's" (Gülen followers as they are more commonly referred to in Azerbaijan), or, for example, sending inspectors to Gülen-affiliated organizations in Azerbaijan.

Looking at the Turkey case, the concern among watchful Azerbaijanis is that while the Gülen movement affiliates steer clear of criticism of the Baku administration, they will be well positioned to 'step in' with skilled and closely knit cadres if and when the administration weakens or falls for other reasons. In other words, the Gülen affiliates will remain 'loyal,' not challenge power, but will be positioned to take controlling spots if the existing establishment disintegrates through infighting, foreign intervention, popular uprising or other risks.

However, letting such concerns inform the approach to Gülen-affiliates risks leading to a self-fulfilling prophecy. Approaching the largely well-equipped and progressive graduates of Gülen schools with suspicion, for example, could exacerbate potential tensions. The best way to take advantage of the positive aspects of the Gülen affiliates in Azerbaijan, yet ensure the feared scenarios are not actualized is to offer effective state services and more opportunities to people of the country without discrimination, trying to

overcome the culture of 'cliches' — be they clans or religious networks, and improve the general system of governance and regional development.

The other segments of Turkish NGO, media, and academic spheres also need to upgrade their involvement, to have a presence in Azerbaijan, for a diversity of Turkish influence to take root.

### *Conclusion*

Azerbaijan-Turkey relations have always had a strong ideological component. Substantiating the ideological affinities with elements of concrete cooperation and alignment has also been a recognized need for almost a decade.

A correlation in the evolution of domestic and foreign affairs developments in both Turkey and Azerbaijan, separately, has created grounds for religion to play a more prominent role in the two countries' bilateral relations.

Turkey's Islamically-informed social and political elite, which is still on the rise, has filled the void left by disenfranchised nationalists not only in Turkey's political constellation but also in outreach to Azerbaijan, and other neighboring Muslim communities.

This reality is also shaped by the fact that liberal, Western-oriented Turkish NGOs, academics, journalists, intellectuals have been relatively absent from the scene, with little interest in Azerbaijan.

The Turkish Gülen network has taken the lead in adding multifaceted layers to Turkish-Azerbaijani relations, in civil society, education, charity, and intellectual bonding. Though the common assumption about Islamic networking is that it transcends ethnic or nationalistic bonds, Turkey's religious-based outreach in Azerbaijan has combined nationalism with religious bonding. (This is also despite the fact that Turkey is majority Sunni while Azerbaijan majority Shia.) This blending of Islam with Turkish identity is also characteristic of the values and vision of the currently ruling party of Ankara, AKP.

Though the increased prominence of religion in Azerbaijan-Turkey relations is predominately a function of Turkey's changing domestic political and social scene, it is also 'enabled' by realities developing in Azerbaijan. Weak educational institutions, an ideological vacuum, challenges in the social and economic mobility of Azerbaijanis particularly in regions outside of the capital, and the Western neglect of Azerbaijanis' plight as a result of the Karabakh war have created circumstances in which the Gülen Movement takes root more effectively. The fact that alternative religious movements from the Middle East and beyond are more radical, and the weakness of native religious learning also contribute to the grounds for Turkey's relatively 'moderate' religious solidarity networks in Azerbaijan.

Though Islam has become a more prominent and consistent current in bilateral Turkish-Azerbaijani relations in recent years, religion does not define

state-to-state relations, nor does it underpin the strong affinity between the two societies. Historical, linguistic, nationalistic and cultural bonds are arguably still stronger bonds between the two peoples.

The question remains open, though, about how the role of religiously-informed networks will evolve. The answer will very much depend on the various dimensions of domestic evolution in both countries. Fuelled by their lack of transparency, there are diametrically opposed views about whether the Gülen network is a danger or a positive contribution to Azerbaijan, also reflecting the polarized debate in Turkey about this network.

Arguably, the fate of liberal, Western-oriented, rights and freedoms-driven segments of both countries will play a central role in determining how much of a monopoly nationalistic or religious groups are able to control in this sphere. Besides the question of whether they are free to be empowered, it will also be decisive whether the liberal intellectuals have the passion and the interest to be involved, to compete, and the means to mobilize the public.

The guarantor of solidly sustained Turkish-Azerbaijani relations may be for diverse interest or value-driven communities to be engaged, competing for influence with a level playing ground.

## Chapter 19

# RADICAL ISLAM IN AZERBAIJAN

**BOGDAN NEDEA,  
SAHIB JAFAROV,  
ORHAN MAMADOV**

Azerbaijan can rightly claim to be among the most progressive and secular Islamic societies. Aside from having been the first Muslim country to have operas, theatre plays and a democratic republic, Azerbaijan today is among the Muslim countries where support for secularism is highest, and where radical ideologies have met only very limited interest. This is all the more remarkable as Azerbaijan has by no means been peripheral to the world of Islam. It was invaded by Islamic armies only decades after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, and was subsequently gradually Islamized. It was an Azerbaijani dynasty, the Safavids, who made Shi'a Islam the state religion of Iran. Yet even before Soviet atheism, Azerbaijan saw the rise of a secular intelligentsia that had little interest in religion aside from a marker of cultural identity<sup>1</sup>.

During the seventy years under Communist rule, people were prevented from practicing Islamic traditions. However, during the USSR's perestroika era, Azerbaijanis identified themselves more with the Islamic than the Turkic world. For example, Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was a popular symbolic alternative to the Soviet system. His picture was often displayed in people's homes, despite the fact that these individuals were unfamiliar with his ideology and did not sympathize with his worldview<sup>2</sup>. Despite the fact that Azerbaijan embraced a secular ideology from Turkey, its other neighbours such as Iran and the Arab Gulf Countries, were of a different state of mind. For these countries, the independence of Azerbaijan meant an opportunity to spread their religious ideologies and expand their influence. As a result of such strong foreign influence and growing socio-economic problems, Islamic influences began to slowly spread over the country, challenging the post-soviet governments.

<sup>1</sup> Svante E. Cornell, *The Politicization of Islam in Azerbaijan*, October 2006. <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/Silkroadpapers/0610Azer.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> A. Polonskiy, "Islam v Kontekste Obshestvennoy Jizni Sovremennogo Azerbajjana", *Istoriya*, Vol. 28 (Winter 1999), p. 11, <http://www.1september.ru/ru/his/99/his28.htm>.

At the dawn of the democratic movement in Azerbaijan (1988-1991), the clergy joined the struggle for national independence. Yet, while secular nationalists and pious Muslims cooperated, political parties were concerned with maintaining Islam as a strictly ethical and religious element in social life, one that would not seep into the political arena. During the rule of the national democrats (1992-1993), the Law on Freedom of Worship was adopted. All property taken by the Soviets from mosques and religious communities was to be returned. The Spiritual Department of Transcaucasus Muslims was separated from the state, and state grants to the department and religious communities were stopped. For the first time in 200 years, the religious figures ceased to receive state salaries and resorted to collecting donations from the public<sup>3</sup>. Though the post-Soviet government feared the growth of an Islamist movement, it granted full freedom of worship in order to maintain believers' support for state building. Heydar Aliyev's government, which came to power after a 1993 coup, used official religious figures extensively to legitimize its rule. The clergy generally cooperated with this program, in part because they supported Azerbaijani nationalism over political Islamism. The president of the secular state swore fidelity to the constitution and to the Koran; in exchange, the Spiritual Department gave it a stamp of approval and created propaganda so that government actions were viewed as conforming to Islamic norms. The head of state occasionally visited a mosque, some of which displayed his picture, and a considerable number of the places allocated by Muslim states for Azerbaijani pilgrims are given to representatives of the government.

The Law on Freedom of Worship itself underwent changes in the Aliyev years. Having encountered a number of unexpected problems, such as Christian missionary activity, Salafi and Iranian propaganda, amendments were introduced to limit missionary activity and to subordinate the independent religious communities to semi-state control. The religious department was also restored to a cabinet level ministry. Consequently, Islam during Aliyev's government appeared integrated in and subordinated to the state system. Thus, the religious revival did not generally appear to conflict with the hegemony of nationalism and the stability of the regime. New Islamic educational institutions were opened, mosques were built, and pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina became possible. Aliyev became the first Azerbaijani leader in modern times to go on Hajj, visited mosques on holidays, and encouraged numerous Islamic conferences<sup>4</sup>. This process continued throughout the 1990s. However, while encouraging official spiritual leaders and activities, the state and its supporting clerics opposed independent preaching. Shaykh Hajji Allahshukur Pashazade, head of the Clerical Management Institution, rejected "self-appointed mullahs" who were uneducated and not connected to his

<sup>3</sup> *Law on Freedom of Worship*, 1992. Azerbaijan Legislature, Baku, 1996.

<sup>4</sup> A. Polonskiy, *Islam v Kontekste Obshchestvennoy Jizni Sovremennogo Azerbaijana*, Istoriya, Vol. 28 (Winter 1999), p. 11, <http://www.1september.ru/ru/his/99/his28.htm>.

organization. Yet despite the revival of Islamic traditions in Azerbaijan, public knowledge of Islam still is at a low level. Fortune-tellers insist that they are foretelling the future by using the Koran. Many Shi'a claim that the flagellation ritual on the tenth day of Muharram is the most important.

The inclusion of religion into politics was not left without consequences and in the mid 1990's the first Islamic party appeared. The Islamic Party of Azerbaijan was a small, leftist party. Its peak of activity was in the mid-1990s, when supported by Iranian finances, the party attempted to play an active role in the domestic politics of Azerbaijan. A first crackdown was undertaken when the party sought to establish its political positions and acquire paramilitary forces in 1995-1996<sup>5</sup>. It advocated stronger ties with Iran and even proclaiming the state of Azerbaijan into an Islamic Republic as it rejected the ideas of pan-Turkism, regarding them as dangerous and utopian. Nevertheless it was also an Azerbaijani nationalist party and was known for its fiery nationalist and anti-Armenian rhetoric and frequently advocated a military solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict which is currently under Armenian occupation<sup>6</sup>. It was fiercely opposed and advocated a ban of proselytes and Christian missionary activities<sup>7</sup>. The party was also anti-USA, anti-Zionist and anti-EU and supported Hezbollah and its leader Hassan Nasrallah. In 1995, the Islamic Party of Azerbaijan was accused by the government of Azerbaijan of being covertly financed by some people in Iran, and Iran was accused of covertly financing it, which Azerbaijan regarded as an interference in its domestic affairs and also illegal under Azerbaijani law. Following Islamic riots in the village of Nardaran outside Baku, the power base of the party in 2002, its chairman, Hacı Alikram Aliyev, was arrested and the party's registration was revoked. Subsequently, under the updated secular laws of Azerbaijan, Islamic parties and the formation of Islamic parties are now banned. Since then, the Islamic Party of Azerbaijan does not pose a substantial threat to the government and is not the main driver of the radical forces. The party still exists under another form but is not registered with the Ministry of Justice, and thus cannot participate in elections. Several attempts to stage protest rallies in front of the Ministry of Justice because of the registration problem were either not permitted or did not produce any results.

The result of these actions was highlighted in the later years as the Islamic ideology has become visibly pronounced in Azerbaijan. It is now common to encounter young people observing Muslim traditions or young women dressing in accordance with Islamic traditions. Religion is also actively used

<sup>5</sup> Igor Rotar, *Islamic Fundamentalism in Azerbaijan: Myth or Reality?*, Jamestown Prism, vol. 6, no. 8, 31 August 2000.

<sup>6</sup> *Azerbaijan: Azerbaijan's Islamic Party wants Christian Missionaries banned* (Brief Article), High Beam Research, January 20, 2000, <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-58732534.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Ilham Aliyev, *Where We Stand Now*, Winter 1998. [http://azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/64\\_folder/64\\_articles/64\\_socar\\_ilham.html](http://azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/64_folder/64_articles/64_socar_ilham.html).

by political leaders as a means of pursuing their interests. After the fall of the Communist regime, political leaders began to observe Muslim traditions but this does nothing more than exemplify how Islam is being manipulated by relatively secular politicians.

Young generations are vulnerable to uncontrolled radical propaganda in mosques and religious communities. Therefore Azerbaijan should find a way to create a balance between a secular state system and the uncontrolled part of activities of religious institutions in the country. It is directly related to the reforms aimed at improvement of teaching of humanitarian and social studies including religious issues.

The purpose is not only to teach the history, traditions and dogmas in Islam, but also be able to present wide and up to date concepts of history and ideas of other religions. This will provide a chance to the young generation to acquire sound understanding of religious issues, and indirectly, facilitate propaganda secularism and understanding of Islam's moderate traditions. This will help the government to protect the youth from radical messages spread by radical groups. If youth will have clear ideas on religious issues, especially Islam's main philosophy and principles, basic knowledge of secularism, their interests in radical propaganda will decrease.

According to a survey held several years ago, 45% of youth accepted sharia laws. However current surveys have not discover such kind of a connection. 5.4% of people belonging to the 18-27 age group think that policy in Azerbaijan should be based on religious traditions. 28.9% think that these laws must only partly applied and approximately 65.7% think that policies must be free of religion. The scale among other categories shows that the percentage of those who want religious laws in effect is not too high, as the majority of the population does not support the application of religion to politics.

Meanwhile, 4.3% of those accept the application of religion to public administration and public laws and 9.6% of them are from the 18-27 age group. 85.4% of the 18-27 age group believe that ethics and morality must only partly depend on religion. On asking what model they prefer, 62.5% of respondents chose Turkey, and only 6% of them chose Iran as an example. 27% of youth assume that the country must possess its own model. Only 7% of youth think that the European model is the correct development model for Azerbaijan. A majority of youth — 50% prefer to live in a country where Islam is minimal, while 33% want to live in a country where Islam has a partial impact. The majority of people who want to live in a country where Islam is the state religion are above 68 of age. Approximately 9.3% of participants gave a positive answer to this question. The survey shows that especially the youth do not want to apply religious traditions in Azerbaijan. Most people who accept this are older ones. And what this means to them is that they do not want to lose morality and demolish traditional community standards and they also have hopes for sharia laws to bring social justice.

For the purpose of providing religious independence more effectively, national public debates are organised with the participation of independent clerics and clerics employed by the state, of scholars and NGOs. In return, independent religious communities, Salafists in particular, should strictly warn their members about avoiding terrorism and other military aggression acts and should enter into real dialogue with state clerics and Azerbaijan government (Valiyev 2008).

On the other hand, there is an explosion of tensions between sunni and shia due to the activity of foreign sunni and shia missionaries. Turkey's private and public religious impact strengthens sunni and irritates shia muslims. Some Salafi confessors (in Baku suburbs and some northern regions of the country) even refuse to participate in the dialogue with shiite leaders. Finally, it is supposed that shiite influence from Iran results in serious religious divergence in Azerbaijan (Balci 2010). This will, in its turn, demand application of power for providing security and will provoke serious terrorist activities in the country (Valiyev 2008).

Despite the fact that Azerbaijan embraced a secular ideology from Turkey, its other Islamic neighbours were of a different state of mind. For these countries, the independence of Azerbaijan meant an opportunity to spread their religious ideologies and expand their influence. As a result of such strong foreign influence and growing socio-economic problems, Islamic influences began to slowly spread over the country, challenging the post-soviet governments.

Therefore, however strong government efforts are at keeping religion moderate and in harmony with state secular principles, radical Islam is, and has been for some time now, on the rise in Azerbaijan, for a number of reasons. The scientific literature on Islam in Azerbaijan can be provisionally divided into several categories. Certain scholars are interested in the historical growth of Islam in Azerbaijan (Yunusov 2003), others are interested in the relations of Islam with politics (Abbasov 2001, Sattarov 2004, Kotecha 2006). The core question in many articles on this topic is whether Islam can turn into the real political power to threaten secular state system and current authority in Azerbaijan. The first scholar trying to analyze the relations of Islam with politics clarified this as a broad phenomenon in the context of society living in the transition period (Motika 2001).

For him, Islam plays a limited role in country's political life and only a minor part of the population supports the "Islamic state" idea. This is mainly because of the fact that Azerbaijan has lasting secular statehood experience and, at the same time, the nationalist movement in the country has a secular character. Sometimes it even supports the ruling class against a common enemy —political Islam. Azerbaijanis are not united by ideas, but by common interests. From this point of view, they are more similar with Europeans and Americans than post-soviet nations (Polonskiy 1999).

The national trauma of the loss of sovereignty over Karabakh and the seven regions around it has been a serious contributing factor. The Armenia-

Azerbaijan conflict also has a religious dimension. For the Christian Armenians have their own national church, and this Armenian Apostolic Church, a quasi state organization, has been the rallying point for the Armenian Diaspora. The country's common border with Dagestan further complicates the situation. Dagestan has become the centre of Salafism in the Caucasus region, while the Shiite state of Iran exports the Islamic model of the state. One thing is clear, external influences have had paramount importance on the development of radical Islam in Azerbaijan. Indeed, most radical groupings are supported or trained abroad. Iran, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region, Turkey and the Russian North Caucasus are the main sources of external influence on Islam in Azerbaijan. Among these, Iran has particularly supported radical Shi'a groups, and used this as leverage against secular and pro-western Azerbaijan, affecting its freedom of movement in foreign policy. The Arab Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia, and the Russian North Caucasus, primarily Dagestan, have been equally important in fostering radical Salafi Sunni groups in Azerbaijan<sup>8</sup>. Islamic activism and radicalism, has geographic variations. Shi'a groups are strong in the South, near Iran, while Sunni radicalism is growing in the North, near the border with Russia. The capital Baku is experiencing growth in both Shi'a and Sunni radicalism.

Like in Azerbaijan, in the 1990's in Russia, Islam was financed by foreign powers. Being financed from abroad, religious groups and communities used to fall under their influence and serve their interest. However, later on, a special fund for financing Islamic culture, education and science under the patronage of Russia was established to prevent foreign financing of Islamic groups. It helped to take control of religious processes in Dagestan and Northern Caucasus. A similar process can be observed in Azerbaijan as well.

The processes taking place within the country show that domestic organizations threaten Azerbaijan more than the international terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaida. The core of these extremist organizations is formed of those dissatisfied with the government and unemployed or low-income youth. Radical Islam takes origin from hard social-economical conditions, for instance among the refugees from Karabakh there is potential for massive displeasure. The communist period demonstrated that closing mosques and arresting mullahs could suppress interest in religion and generate potential for ethnic conflict (Svyatovskiy 2002). The creation of an organized form of Islamism does not depend on international aspects, but on local context.

Therefore we should also consider the political dimension, as the popular dissatisfaction with the government has no outlet and Islam appears to be one of the few elements that allow for channeling these frustrations. The secular opposition is weak, demoralised and politically ineffective and the authoritarian project of modernisation which the country has undergone in the last ten years has been accompanied by harsh social stratification, corrup-

<sup>8</sup> Svante E. Cornell, *The Politicization of Islam in Azerbaijan*, October 2006, <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/Silkroadpapers/0610Azer.pdf>.

tion and a change in traditional lifestyle. This atmosphere has developed along the years against a background of widespread disappointment with the USA and the West in general. In the early to mid 1990's many people in Azerbaijan believed that the US and European Union would be able to help Baku resolve the Karabakh problem to their advantage. However, the failure of negotiations led by western nations has given rise to a more cautious attitude and even to fairly widespread hostility to American and European policies. This attitude was further enhanced along the years by the promotion of radical Islam, especially the doctrines that promoted an anti-American stand.

A majority of political analysts agree that there is no potential for a vast sunni movement in Azerbaijan (Balci 2010, Valiyev 2008, Wilhelmsen 2009) for two reasons: first, the number of Sunni is limited and there is no independent legitimate sunni leadership. If Salafists resort to violence though, this can transform into a dangerous threat to Azerbaijan's current political authority. Salafism is supposed to be financed quite well from the Middle East. It bypasses Azerbaijan authorities' effort on controlling information flow and gather supporters by using modern information technologies. Salafism is actually not a political or aggressive movement, but can easily go politicised. Azerbaijan's resolute position against salafism increases the probability of salafism's transformation into a violence-prone movement.

Looking at the global conflicts and disputes, it seems that Islamic radicalism is the "winning version" of Islam; it has not lost its trust among supporters yet and is an alternative model for Western views and models (Wilhelmsen 2009). Along the lines of this argument, it seems that Azerbaijan has faced and will continue to face problems, because it is a Muslim majority country which has taken a Western orientation. There are obvious signs showing revival of the followers of Shiite and Sunni movements. It also happens since Islamism as the most organized ideology attracts other religious groups. However, currently the government of Azerbaijan does not face any significant and organized Islamist opposition and will not face it in the near future, as well.

The possibility of unification of the current secular political opposition with Islamist businessmen or coordinate their agenda is low. The above-mentioned facts and surveys show that Islamism in Azerbaijan is poorly organised. There are very few religious businessmen who can finance this kind of movements. There are no independent influential shiite clerics in Azerbaijan except some isolated examples. The increase in numbers of such clerics depends on Iran's influence. Despite Azerbaijan's government efforts to limit them, it is observed that this impact is accelerated by humanitarian activities and educational programs (Wilhelmsen 2009).

According to Kamil Salimov, taking into the consideration the Wahhabi movement's attempts to take control over Azerbaijan's northern regions on the border and also Iran's representation of shiite movement in the southern

regions, it becomes clear that there is an exceptional alliance between north and south religious extremism. However, even though there are some signs that the religious element occupies a larger segment of the society, it would be wrong to claim that religious leaders are in a position to exert serious influence over the situation in the country, because the state controls both religious and secular politicians. However, there are some “hot points” to which the government should pay more attention. In order to do that, along with economic programs and economic developments there should be some administrative measures and state social policy.

Different experts’ have different views of the internal and external reasons that facilitate the rise of radicalism:

Svante Kornel notes as an internal reason as follows: 1. Western double standards in the solving of Karabakh problem, 2. identity crisis, 3. social problems. On external impact, he considers primarily: “The main origin of Islamic renaissance and radicalism is abroad, especially in political-islamist movements in Iran, Arab countries and Turkey. The main reasons of activation of Islam are: 1. Islamic renaissance and Islamic movements in the world, 2. foreign educated Azerbaijani confessors, 3. foreign finances coming from foreign Islamist groups and countries with the purpose of developing political Islam in Azerbaijan.

Research conducted by the International Crisis Group claims that “Non-traditional Islamic movements in Azerbaijan fill the gap that cannot be filled by official confessors that are not able to compensate moral needs of youth. “

According to Hikmat Hajizadeh, “There is almost no political Islam in Azerbaijan”. The Islamic party is not as popular as to come to government by elections. However, there are some small groups that can possibly carry out terrorist attacks. We know about them, we hear and we see them in courts. There is a danger of a terrorist attack...”.

In the year 2000, the social survey named “Islam in Azerbaijan” was ordered by the Research Centre for Religious Issues. 2,500 respondents participated in the survey.

Comparing the results of the current surveys to that one, we can see significant changes during the last decade.

First of all, the growth of the number of religious people in society. Thus, according to the year 2000 survey, approximately 9% of youth under 30 years, and 14% of people older than 30 years admitted that they prayed permanently, 27.3% said they prayed only occasionally and 22.8% have admitted that they are keeping the fast (close to 50%) Along with this, differences are observed in sectarian self-identification within Islam. In 2000, 15% of respondents called themselves sunni, 58% of them called themselves shiite, 16.5% of them said that they cannot divide religion in this way, and 9.5% of respondents said that they hesitated to answer the question. According to the current survey, 38.5% of respondents identified themselves as shiite, 14% called themselves sunni, 45.9% of respondents said that they

couldn't divide religion in this way, and 1.6% of respondents replied that they did not know. This demonstrates that more people disagree with the idea of division into sects.

Alongside this, the current survey revealed that quite many people plan to fulfil religious ceremonies, such as fasting and praying namaz (32% and respectively, 12%).

So the general number of practitioners of religious ceremonies has doubled in the last decade and will likely increase from now on. Nevertheless, Azerbaijan occupies one of the last places, out of all Islamic countries of the post-soviet region, regarding strength of religion within the social environment. The secularisation process of the Soviet government led to public adoption of secular political and judicial system. The secular state system in Azerbaijan demonstrates that there are very few differences between historical sunni and shiite sects. Despite twenty years' independence Islam has never acquired a special place in the life of the society. A survey that was carried out by the International Centre for Social Research in 2011 shows that secular trends in the country are dominant. Although only 61.9% of respondents are interested in religion, 96.8% of them count themselves as devout or believers. But the survey information contradicts the results. So, only 10% of devout believers and 1.1% of believers practise all the dogma and demands of Islam. 24.9% of devout believers and 8.3% of believers practise the majority of dogmas of Islam. 65.2% of those who count themselves as devout believers, and 90% of just believers do not practise the dogma of Islam at all or just practise a part of it. This proves that people tend to count themselves as devout Muslims without complying with the main dogmas of the religion. From another section, we can see that 52% of people who count themselves as devout believers pray 3 or 5 times in a day, while only 15.2% of religious people pray 3 or 5 times in a day. The majority of believers and a part of devout believers either do not pray or do not do this systematically. Only, there's an interesting observation about 25.3% of devout believers and 38.6% of believers who do not comply with any dogmas, but they are thinking about and preparing to do this. Meanwhile, 3.3% of devout believers and 1.7% of believers have been on pilgrimage. Also 6.1% of female devout believers and 0.9% of female believers wear hijab. It must be admitted that the percentages of devout believers and believers between age groups are divided equally. That's why we can't claim that the largest share of devout believers tends to be in the young age group.

Additionally to external pressure, poverty has been another factor fuelling the rise of Islam. Especially over the last few years Azerbaijan has witnessed increasing levels of poverty with growing income inequality. Coupled with a lack of democratic reforms, this important social element has fuelled the popularity of Islam as its local or imported preachers presented the religious alternative to social groups that due to their condition embraced it right away. In long-term planning if Azerbaijan's political elite will not be able to

improve difficult life conditions that the considerable portion of the population suffer from, then people can start to express their dissatisfaction by means of political Islam (Polonskiy 1999, Motika 2001, Valiyev 2005).

Government policies toward Islam in general and Islamic radicalism in particular have been inadequate. Most damaging has been the lack of legitimacy of the Supreme Board of Muslims of the South Caucasus, the main religious institution in Azerbaijan. A leftover from Soviet times, the board is plagued by cronyism and corruption. To remedy this, the state created the State Committee for Work with Religious Organizations. The committee was established on June 21, 2001 in accordance with the Clause 48 of the Constitution of Azerbaijan on religious freedoms by the Presidential Decree No. 512 to supervise the activities of religious organizations in the country as well as protect, create conditions for and guarantee religious freedoms to citizens and residents of Azerbaijan<sup>9</sup>. Since the inception of the committee, 425 religious communities have been registered to act in Azerbaijan, with 408 being Islamic, 17 — non Islamic (9 Christian, 6 Jewish, 1 Krishna, 1 — Bahai)<sup>10</sup>. This move, while fundamentally sound and correct, in fact led to a diarchy as the State Committee and the Supreme Board compete for religious authority in the country. The acrimonious relations between the two bodies have been an important impediment in the Azerbaijani government's attempts to regulate the religious sphere. In turn, this has led to the Ministry of National Security picking up the slack and dealing with the issue of radical movements. The instruments available to this ministry, however, are mainly coercive. In 1992, the parliament of the republic (Milli mejlis) passed the "Law on freedom of religious belief" of Azerbaijan. Two years later, several amendments were passed which targeted foreign religious missionaries. Foreign citizens were banned from conducting religious propaganda on the territory of Azerbaijan. These amendments were made because of fears of radical Islamic opinions, as missionaries from Jordan, Pakistan and even Afghanistan were working in the republic<sup>11</sup>. Another important step taken by the Committee was the creation of a list of religious literature forbidden in Azerbaijan. Together with other functions given to this body, like participation in elaboration of local legislation on religious issues, supervision for changes in charters of religious organizations, support for inter-confessional dialogue, management of national religious statistics database and analysis of existing or upcoming trends, analysis of education programs prepared by religious schools, etc. —all this gave the government considerable leverage in controlling the situation. In fact this body took upon itself

<sup>9</sup> *Presidential Decree of Azerbaijan Republic on Establishment of the State Committee for Work with Religious Organizations*, [http://e-qanun.az/files/framework/data/3/f\\_3574.htm](http://e-qanun.az/files/framework/data/3/f_3574.htm).

<sup>10</sup> *Azerbaijan's State Committee for Work with Religious Associations gives certificates to 32 religious communities*, 07 Jul 2010, <http://en.apa.az/news.php?id=125775>.

<sup>11</sup> Sergei Markedonov, *Azerbaijan: Islamic threat to religious harmony*, Open Democracy, June 2 2008, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/Russia/article/Azerbaijan-Islamic-threat-to-religious-harmony>.

universal and secular functions which could not be carried out by the clergy from the Administration of Muslims of the Caucasus.

A related problem worth mentioning is the failure of the Ministry of Education to develop a modern curriculum in the humanities and social sciences. The lack of reform in the Ministry of Education has implied that Azerbaijani schools do not provide adequate information and knowledge to students as regards the history and tenets of major religions, let alone the meaning of secularism. Most of the schools in Azerbaijan do not provide moderate religious education on the basics of religion nor is there humanities curriculum. This problem is of great importance since following Azerbaijan's independence more and more people became interested in the topic of religion, which was heavily restricted during the Soviet rule but it is disturbing that most in the country cannot differentiate between Shi'a and Sunni Islam. For this reason it should not be surprising that people opened their doors to the "missionaries" who present themselves as experts on Islam.

This in return could represent a threat to the future stability of the country, as the younger generation is exposed to the radical proselytizing. This lack of religious knowledge enables radical Islamic groups to attract segments of Azerbaijani youth interested in religious issues<sup>12</sup>.

Violence against sects is another factor which can endanger stability within the country (Valiyev 2008). In 1980's tensions between shia and sunni reached the highest peak in all muslim world except Azerbaijan (Roy 2004). However, in 1990's the situation in Azerbaijan changed and the threat of conflict between various islamic sects is not a fiction anymore. At the same time spreading of salafist Islam among religious and ethnic minorities can turn into the important factor threatening national unity of Azerbaijan.

### *Political activism of believers*

Political participation is another indicator of believers' political activism. In some countries, the political participation of believers can sometimes be dangerous, because this increases the probability of Islamists obtaining power and changing the political setup. While examining the political activism of believers in Azerbaijan, we can see that there's no connection between their beliefs and their political choices. 40% of devout believers and 34.8% of believers are not participating in social-political life. Only half of devout believers and 60% of believers follow the news about this. Participation indicators are also low: 2.4% among the devout believers and 3.5% of believers. Also participation in elections is 18.3% of devout believers and 20% of believers. The same situation can be observed in their membership

<sup>12</sup> Leyla Amirova, *Young people increasingly drawn to Islam in Azerbaijan*, Kavkazcenter, August 28, 2007, <http://old.kavkazcenter.com/eng/content/2007/08/28/8785.shtml>.

to political parties — 2.4% of devout believers and 1.2% of believers. 0.4% of devout believers take part in protests; none of believers participate in this kind of demonstrations. Watching the political-social activism of people that belong to shiite and sunni communities, we can see that 27.8% of shiites, 30.8% of sunni and 46.1% of neutrals do not take part in social and political life.

Based on the rate at which the written press is read, and considering these numbers for a possible candidacy, we could state that, shiites are more active in the social and political aspects than sunni and neutrals. Statistic tests have shown that, there is no connection between being a member of a sect and being politically active, and if there is, it's very weak. The political activism of people does not depend on what sect or community they belong to. Having a low level of political and social activity is a positive circumstance in some situations. Firstly, this limits their militantism, and prevents religious leaders from coming into politics. Secondly, this is preventing religious groups from increasing the number of followers.

### *Political activism of Shiites*

Religion-related politics in Azerbaijan is a very hot point especially when it comes to the Shiites that represent the majority. According to surveys, 38.5% of respondents are shiites, 14% are sunni and 50% do not classify themselves as part of one of these groups. Generally, piety among the shiites is higher in the southern regions of Azerbaijan and Baku and its suburbs, and in general this indicator is higher in cities than in the countryside. Researchers admit that the main factor of religiousness of shiite and political beliefs is the visits that they pay to places where shiite scholars and leaders were buried. They believe that the visits and prayers there can help them in solving their problems. Leaders take advantage of this, exploiting sanctuaries for popularity.

The trust levels for the Islamic Party (AIP) are surprisingly high (full trust — 10.8% and half trust — 45.5%) in Azerbaijan. However, these high trust indicators do not mean that people are ready to be mobilized around this party, or actively react to its calls. People that count themselves as shiites, 8.1% fully, and 36.5% partly believe that politics must depend on religion. The percentage of people that support the full or partial dependence of public administration on sharia is 5.6% and among shiites only this number is 36.5%.

While speaking about Islam in the context of a transformation to a liberal political power, it is important to admit that there is a very important component missing from shiite Islamic revolution in Azerbaijan. This is the lack of independent and well-educated Azerbaijani religious leaders. The increasing impact of AIP in Azerbaijan is fully dependant on foreign religious missionaries that, most of the time, are rejected by the local Shiite population.

### *Political activism of the Sunni*

As it was mentioned above, a part of Azerbaijan's population count themselves as sunni. Salafism (mostly known as Wahabbism) — Saudi form of Islam — began to spread among some groups in Azerbaijan after 1990's. A lot of articles have been written about this movement in Azerbaijan, but it's hard to clarify the truth about Salafism. Also the last survey did not reflect the current situation of salafism, because nobody considers themselves to be Salafi. Most of salafists in Azerbaijan are supposed to be non-radical, but the group has a radical wing. There are factors that could possibly contribute to the spreading of salafism in Azerbaijan. First, is that most of local salafists are ethnic minorities. Second, salafists propagandised the universal aspects of their ideology that transcends any tradition of Islam.

### *Types of Islam in Azerbaijan*

While the main debate about Islam in Azerbaijan revolves around radical Shi'a Islam imported from Iran and the Salafi/Wahhabi congregation sponsored by the Arab Gulf, there are also several other religious groups battling over presence in the society. Often referred to as *Wahhabi*, this congregation is a mixture of teachings of the radical Arab theologian Mohammed Ibn Abd Al-Wahhab and the strictest Hanbali school of Sunni Islam. This trend considers itself as Salafist, a follower of the teachings of the prophet. It is heavily anti-Shi'a and suspicious of the traditional Mazhabs or schools of jurisprudence. It has been sponsored and promoted by the wealthy Saudis, Kuwaitis, and the natives of other Gulf States. Their influence is largely present in the Northern regions of Azerbaijan, especially among Sunni Lezgin minorities<sup>13</sup>.

Another radical Islamist threat to Baku and the entire country is that of the *Salafists*, who came to northwest Azerbaijan from Dagestan in the mid-1990s after the war between Russia and Chechnya. There are an estimated 10,000-25,000 Salafists currently in Azerbaijan, and the Salafists' most famous mosque, the Abu Bakr mosque in Baku, has a Friday attendance of 5,000-7,000. While there clearly is a Salafist presence in the capital, most Salafists reside in ethnic minority communities, such as those of the Lezgins and Avars in the north<sup>14</sup>.

There are, however, other Salafi followers who do not associate themselves with the radical Wahhabists of the North. These groups of believers also gather for Friday prayers at Abu Bakr mosque in Baku and listen to the

<sup>13</sup> Arzu Geybullayeva, *Is Azerbaijan becoming a hub of Radical Islam?*, [http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi\\_turkey\\_tpq\\_id\\_110.pdf](http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi_turkey_tpq_id_110.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> *Islamism in Azerbaijan: A Rising but Manageable Threat*, May 7, 2012, <http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/islamism-azerbaijan-rising-manageable-threat>.

speeches of Hadji Gamet Suleymanov, the mosque's imam, condemning problems such as poverty, corruption and social injustice that exist in the country. Militant Salafists, on the other hand, are willing to achieve an Islamic state through violence and destabilization. Understanding the threat posed by militant Salafists requires an understanding of Dagestan, the region from which they hail. The Caucasus republic shares a border with Azerbaijan, and despite the mountainous terrain, the proximity facilitates the spread of people — and religion — across the border. That militancy in Dagestan has remained high for the past few years is particularly concerning for Baku. There were roughly 373 militant attacks there in 2008 but 546 attacks in 2011. Yet, the threat and danger that this school of thought inflicts upon the authorities is unavoidable. Salafi teachings are intolerant of Shi'a Islam, folk Islam, the West, and practices such as visits to holy shrines. Moreover, continued suppression of government as part of its efforts to keep a tight control over religion only intensifies religious upheaval<sup>15</sup>.

Are salafists a real threat for stability in Azerbaijan? Taking into account the content and breadth of the operation performed by Azerbaijani counter-intelligence, one can assume that the salafi threat is no more an exotic topic for Azerbaijan like before. And again — existence of radical and armed sunni extremists had already come several times before in the local newswire. Haji Magomedov's gang destroyed by Azerbaijani commandos in 2003 in Balakan region, the series of special operations in 2007-2008 in northern regions of the country, Abu Bakr mosque bomb blast in 2008 with subsequent series of arrests — these are just several examples.

It is not surprising that, when the Russian Empire collapsed and entered a period of revolutionary turmoil, the first democratic parliamentary republic in the Muslim world, the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic, was established as a secular state based on "Turkic freedom, Islamic culture and Modernity". These three values became symbols in the colours on the Azerbaijani national flag.

Further development of history even strengthened secular values in the minds and collective consciousness of the young nation. In Soviet Azerbaijan, as well as in other republics of the Soviet Union, individual and public interest towards religion was prevented by all means. Decades of state atheism policy brought to religious illiteracy and unawareness among the public. As for Azerbaijan, due to a complexity of historic factors, by the time the Soviet Union collapsed, Muslim Azerbaijan was probably the least Muslim of all Muslim post-soviet republics, including regions of Russia in the North Caucasus populated by Muslims. Islam came into ordinary Azerbaijani life rarely and in the form of traditional rituals such as circumcision for boys or the ritual side of the burial ceremony.

The choice of a majority of people who became salafi followers in Azerbaijan at this stage was not a choice between salafism and other sunni

<sup>15</sup> *Idem.*

sects, pure orthodox sunni Islam and “spoilt” sunni Islam, in salafi terms. No, it was rather a choice between sunni Islam and shia Islam. And it simply could not be in any other way considering that people knew almost nothing of their religion, and there was no easy access to knowledge (the internet came to Azerbaijan a decade later) and the vast majority of religious literature which suddenly appeared in bulk in the local market was by nature salafi literature. Thus, in the initial stage salafists positioned themselves as orthodox sunni and this positioning was very well calculated in conditions when all negative features intrinsic to religious life in Azerbaijan were linked in the minds of people to shia Islam, although this is doubtful, as we see from the factors mentioned above. More than 150 mosques were built in Azerbaijan with foreign sponsorship (mainly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) in the period between 1991 and 2001. The major one was Abu-Bakr mosque in Baku, which became in fact the centre of the Azerbaijani salafi community.

After 1994, when war in Chechnya caused a flow of sunni Chechen refugees to Azerbaijan across the border, activities of emissaries from Saudi Arabia became more explicit. Many of Chechen refugees were in fact warlords, their family members and ordinary wounded militants, who put considerable efforts in salafi propaganda by developing “heroic Chechen warrior” image among young Azerbaijani Muslims. This positioning had considerable synergies with realities of the Azerbaijani society, which was suffering collective psychological trauma after the 1994 ceasefire in Karabakh and occupation of 20% of the country’s territories by Armenia. Chechen refugees became the driving force of salafi propaganda in Azerbaijan.

After 2000, however, the situation changed, but not in favour of salafists. First of all, bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Russia entered a new era of warming, which later developed into what is now called “strategic partnership” by officials of the two states. At the same time, Vladimir Putin’s success in the Second Chechen War was an important factor which considerably decreased political, economic and human resource capacities of the Chechen salafi community in Azerbaijan. Nobody wanted to be on the losers’ side and the two factors mentioned above drove Azerbaijani authorities to take a series of measures, the result of which was that by 2002-2003, capacities of the Chechen salafi community in Azerbaijan were brought to a minimum. Almost all prominent figures of the community left for other countries, their business structures were also taken over by local business people.

At the same time, several other factors played an important role in the decrease of the salafi threat in Azerbaijan. We can name here the growth of welfare and stability in the state, economic and infrastructural development, positive effects of European integration, growth of volume of Islamic literature of non-salafi character (traditional sunni or shia) printed in Azerbaijan, access to Internet, establishment of theology faculties in several local universities (but far too few), more active educating role of the Administration of Muslims of the Caucasus (like grants and scholarships for local students in

theology faculties), as well as such factors as active competition to salafists by other Muslim groups in Azerbaijan (shia and Turkish sponsored nursists). The last factor should be mentioned particularly, because due to the series of complex factors mentioned above many of the advantages that salafists possessed were already diffused. Azerbaijani society was changing, although new times brought new challenges and problems, there was no more a condition of vacuum that existed in 1990's.

We can state that there are serious factors which prevent us from underestimating the hidden political potential of salafism in Azerbaijan:

— Considerable numbers of representatives of ethnic minorities among Azerbaijani salafists. From the very beginning of their activities in Azerbaijan in early 1990's salafists succeeded in building up in the north regions, where the majority of the population belongs to lezgi and avar sunni ethnic groups. This is an example of negative synergy in a shia country, with subsequent dangers for national unity and territorial integrity of the state.

— Politically active, shia groups represent mainly the poorest layers of Azerbaijani society and lower-middle class. Salafists, however, have been traditionally more active and successful among middle class, white-collar office clerks from public or private sector, even graduates of western universities and business schools (many became practicing muslims while studying abroad, in the US or UK, where they first contacted salafists). These people can be called "moderate salafists", secularists by nature. Even if not active in direct political life (membership in political parties, participation in demonstrations, etc.), they are anyway the locomotive of social, political and economic evolution in Azerbaijan and they are a majority among religious Azerbaijanis engaged in political discussions on virtual social networks like Facebook. Taking into account that people from this social layer will in mid-term perspective form the agenda of social, political and economic context in the country, perspectives for growth of salafism's role in Azerbaijani politics are present.

— At the moment political opposition in Azerbaijan is extremely weak. Its weakness is obvious to such extent that some political analysts emphasise the absence of political opposition in Azerbaijan. Opposition leaders available on the scene now have low levels of public trust. The society, however, carries certain protest moods, especially in the regions, where low-scale unrest takes place from time to time, mainly for such issues like corruption of local bureaucrats. In the mid-term perspective (if reasons for protest moods keep in place or grow) politically active religious groups will definitely benefit from these protest moods and salafists will not be the last of them, taking into account a) the content and huge political potential of the salafi philosophy, b) salafists' self positioning and social segregation in Azerbaijan.

In other words, analysis shows that certain internal weaknesses of the current socio-political system in Azerbaijan can become threats. And this is despite the fact that a majority of politically and socially active salafists in Azerbaijan are secular and moderate.

Regarding Shia Islam, Iran has long tried to use its brand of *Shiite* Islamism to gain influence in its northern neighbour, where roughly 80 percent of all Muslims are Shiite. To that end, Iran has focused its efforts on Southern Azerbaijan's ethnic Talysh, who have religious, ethnic and linguistic links to Iranians. Iran has also tried to exert influence in villages close to Baku. The people of these villages — Nardaran, for example — are generally considered very religious, making them particularly susceptible to Iranian influence. In addition, the influential Juma Mosque in central Baku actively professes Shiite ideology, and Iran could use the mosque's influence to its advantage. Today, radical Shi'a Islam is more popular than ever as a result of effective and tactful methods used by Iranian mullahs. Southern regions of Azerbaijan, the IDP camps, and the Absheron peninsula remain the heart of the Iranian Shi'a Islam. One way Iran is spreading its influence is by supporting and financing the Islamic Party of Azerbaijan, a political party formed in Nardaran that has been banned by the government. The party continues to operate extra-legally, participating in anti-government rallies and supporting Islamic issues. Such protests are fairly common in Azerbaijan, but so far government forces have kept the situation under control by monitoring mosques, trying to eliminate religious literature and making arrests. Because diplomatic relations with Iran are currently tense, Baku remains concerned about the spread of Shiite Islamists within its borders<sup>16</sup>. Another tool used by Iran to promote its influence in Azerbaijan is through madrassas (religious schools). In these 'schools', aside from learning Arabic and reading the Qur'an, children also read literature on glorification of Iran and its theocratic regime. While a big percentage of these schools were shut down by the Azerbaijani government in 2002, there are still madrassas operating in the country. Iran also sponsors students who want to study Shi'a theology in Iran. Such trends have intensified after the independence of Azerbaijan and opening of borders<sup>17</sup>.

Another religious movement is the *Jeyshullah*, which was a terrorist Salafi group in Azerbaijan. It was mainly active in the late 1990s, reportedly responsible for several murders and an attack against the Hare Krishna society's Baku headquarters. In spite of being Salafi in orientation, the group, according to Azerbaijani authorities, had clear contacts with Iran, and may have been related to a group with the same name that was briefly active in Turkey in the mid-1990s<sup>18</sup>. Jeyshullah is thought to have planned bombing the U.S. Embassy in Baku. The group's leaders were apprehended and sentenced in 2000<sup>19</sup>. Little more is known about the group's origins and finances.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Is Azerbaijan becoming a hub of Radical Islam?*, Arzu, [http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi\\_turkey\\_tpq\\_id\\_110.pdf](http://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi_turkey_tpq_id_110.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> *Islam in Azerbaidjan*, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam\\_in\\_Azerbaijan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_Azerbaijan).

<sup>19</sup> *Azeri God's Army Cult Members to Stand Trial for Murder*, BBC Monitoring Central Asia, 25 July 2000.

Turkey's influence in shaping post-Soviet Azeri Islam was due to a combination of popular Islam and Turkic nationalism in the form of the moderate Hanafi school of Islam promoted by the Turkish religious sect, *Nur or Nurcular* as it was widely known in Azerbaijan. In contrast to other existing religious groups, this Turkish brand of Islam is less radical and aggressive than that of radical Shi'a and Salafi schools<sup>20</sup>. Its main focus has been the general moral and ethical obligations of Muslims rather than political or controversial topics. Its audience has been the educated layers of the Azerbaijan society. The activities of this branch of Turkish Islam has included building mosques and operating a theology faculty at the Baku State University as well as educational programs, led by ÇagÖgretim İ'letmeleri A.<sup>a</sup>, which concentrated on setting up Turkish high schools and universities, based on western curriculum and approved by the Ministry of Education of Azerbaijan<sup>21</sup>.

Another Turkey-influenced movement is the *Gülenist movement*, a social offshoot of Sunnism that is religiously liberal but socially conservative. Founded in Turkey by Muslim scholar Said Nursi and currently led by Fethullah Gulen, the Gülenist movement is active in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries. In Azerbaijan, the Gülenist movement has become renowned for the formation of its schools, located in most major cities, including Baku, Ganja and Sumgayit<sup>22</sup>.

The movement is relatively passive and, for now, entirely apolitical. Thus, the group cannot be considered Islamist, even though it is trying to spread its own form of Islam. Wary of the spread of the movement, the government has yet to interfere with the Gülenists because so far they have not pursued their political agenda.

As for the Christian community in Azerbaijan, parishes of the Baku and Caspian eparchy of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate also function on the territory of Azerbaijan. This eparchy was founded in 1998. The creation of the eparchy was welcomed by the leader of the South Caucasus religious association of Muslims (Sheikh-ul-islam Allshukur Pashazade). In 1999, Bishop Alexander was received at the presidential palace by Heydar Aliiev. Relations between the eparchy and the state of Azerbaijan are mainly constructive. In 2003, the Albano-Udi Christians group was registered in Azerbaijan. The Udi are an ethnic minority of the country (4,200 people according to the 1999 census), considered to be the descendents of the ancient Albanian tribe of Utik. The Udi are close to Armenian Gregorian Christianity. In 2002, Pope John Paul II made an official visit to Azerbaijan. His visit was used by the Azerbaijan authorities for their own propaganda purposes. The \$100,000 which the pontiff gave for refugees was announced as "funds for the victims of Armenian aggression"<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Islamism in Azerbaijan: A Rising but Manageable Threat*, May 7, 2012, <http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/islamism-azerbaijan-rising-manageable-threat>.

<sup>23</sup> Sergei Markedonov, *Azerbaijan: Islamic threat to religious harmony*, Open Democracy, June 2 2008, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/Russia/article/Azerbaijan-Islamic-threat-to-religious-harmony>.

Regardless of any political inclusion of religion or gaps in strategies in dealing with the ever-growing radical side of the Islamic phenomenon, the best policy Baku has employed so far was an all-out crackdown on any kind of radical or even extremist movement. This tactic though effective was not left without consequences and has produced two events which determined the authorities to further intensify their censorship efforts. On October 29, 2007, Azeri law enforcement agencies reported that they had detained a group of *Salafis* armed with grenade launchers who were preparing an attack near the United States and British embassies. According to the National Security Ministry spokesman it was discovered that the group had four Kalashnikov assault rifles, one Kalashnikov grenade launcher, 20 grenades, ammunition and automatic weapon parts. The group was also reported to have planned to attack a number of state buildings and representatives of private companies<sup>24</sup>. The resulting security measures prompted the closure of the American and British embassies, and some institutions such as Norwegian Statoil and American McDermott oil companies limited their activity. Before this on October 25, the Azeri Ministry of Defence reported that one of the army officers deserted his regiment, taking four Kalashnikov assault rifles along with a machine gun from a military base. The Ministry of National Security has claimed that the officer was a follower of Salafism and the stolen arms were going to be used in terror attacks. 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Kamran Asadov was alleged to have taken four machine guns, a mortar and 20 grenades from his military unit and hidden them in the city for a militant attack<sup>25</sup>. According to a report of the Azeri Ministry of Public Relations Department on 6 November 2007, Abu Jafar, Arab by nationality, affiliated with Al-Qaeda and Al-Jihad and others came to Azerbaijan and established an armed group from the persons who formerly participated in illegal military units in separate conflict zones. During the joint measures of the law-enforcement bodies on 26 September in Qusar rayon, one of the group's members, resident of Qusar rayon, Telman Abdullayev put up an armed resistance, wounding two policemen with the firearm and was able to run from the place of the incident<sup>26</sup>. This incident was very prolific for the Azeri authorities as it not only legitimized their internal repressive actions against Islam but gained the support of the international partners in this endeavour. Moreover, the rapid reaction of the Azeri authorities in apprehending the terrorists, regardless if they were the right ones, has proved the western allies that Baku was ready to be considered a partner.

Regardless of these elements, the internal strive of the Baku administration regarding the radical Islam issue was far from over and one year later,

<sup>24</sup> Anar Valiyev, *Terror Attacks Against U.S. and British Embassies Thwarted in Azerbaijan*, November 6, 2007, <http://web.archive.org/web/20071110024328/http://jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2373767>.

<sup>25</sup> *National Security Ministry of Azerbaijan frustrates Al Qaeda-linked group led by an Arab*, November 6, 2007, APA, <http://en.apa.az/news.php?id=38552>.

<sup>26</sup> *2007 Baku Terrorist Plot*, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007\\_Baku\\_terrorist\\_plot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2007_Baku_terrorist_plot).

in 2008, Azerbaijan and the religious community were shaken by an unexpected event. On August 17, 2008, during evening prayer, a grenade thrown through the window of the Abu Bakr mosque in Baku killed 13 people and wounded dozens. Witnesses claimed that a young man threw a grenade into the mosque where up to 200 people were praying and the assailant was able to run away despite attempts to capture him. The Ministers of National Security and Internal Affairs immediately visited the scene of attack, while the investigation was taken under special control of the Azerbaijani president. Abu Bakr is the largest Sunni Salafi mosque in Azerbaijan and was built in 1997 in Baku by the Azerbaijani branch of the Kuwaiti Revival of Islamic Heritage society. Abu Bakr became one of the most successful mosques in Azerbaijan. While on average Shi'a or other Sunni mosques are able to attract approximately 300 people for Friday prayers, the number of people visiting the Abu Bakr mosque typically reaches up to 5,000 people, which made it a favourable place for the recruitment of fighters destined for the conflicts in Chechnya or Afghanistan, leading the closure of the mosque and the arrest of its imam<sup>27</sup>.

One of the popular explanations for the bombing was the internal struggle inside Baku's Salafi community between Abu Bakr associated leaders and a group of radical Salafists. According to Shaykh Allahshukur Pashazade, the then chairman of Azerbaijan's Caucasian Muslims Office, "The happenings in Abu Bakr mosque are the result of the discord between two groups. These groups can't stand each other, but this should not emerge as a religious problem... The whole world knows that Azerbaijan is a tolerant country. If there had been a problem in the religious field in Azerbaijan, such acts would have been committed against the representatives of other religions — Jews, Christians"<sup>28</sup>.

As early as 2005-2006 members of Baku's Salafi community identified a group of Salafis who disagreed with the leadership of Imam Suleymanov, who professes to be apolitical and urges his followers to cooperate with the state. The discord mainly concerned the issue of relations with the government and other religious communities. Those who disagreed with the policy of the Abu Bakr community and its leadership were expelled from the mosque. Those people are called locally Khawarij ("the expelled") after the seventh century Kharijite sect, which reserved the right to rebel against any Muslim leader who deviated from the path of the Prophet Muhammad and the earliest caliphs. Though Khawarij have largely passed from history, the term remains popular in Islamic circles as a derogatory term for Muslims

<sup>27</sup> *Terrorists blamed for the attack on Abu Bakr mosque and 25 members of the Forest Brothers terrorist group were detained in Azerbaijan*, October 2, 2008, Day.az, <http://news.day.az/society/132051.html>.

<sup>28</sup> Anar Valiyev, *Who is Behind the Bombing of the Salafi Mosque in Baku?*, September 2, 2008, *Terrorism Focus*, Volume 5, Issue: 31, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=5128](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=5128).

who reject religious authority and threaten to divide the community. The Azeri dissidents seek an Islamic state and say that God is their only authority, rejecting the kafir (infidel) government in Baku. The radical Salafis are considered likely to become involved in militant activities. A few weeks before bombing, an Azerbaijani court sentenced a group of Salafi radicals called “the Abu Jafar Group” for plotting to attack Western diplomatic and oil-industry facilities. According to trial materials, the organization, consisting of 17 people and headed by Saudi citizen Abu Jafar (Nail Abdul Karim al-Bedevis), was closely linked to al-Qaeda and al-Jihad. Investigators believe that Abu Jafar had trained in Georgia’s Pankisi Gorge and participated along with other group members in military activities in Chechnya and Dagestan<sup>29</sup>. It is most likely that the bombing was indeed carried out by a group of Salafi radicals in disagreement with the policies of the Abu Bakr mosque. In any case, the bombing became the first terror attack committed in a sacred place in Azerbaijan. The quick and brutal reaction of the authorities regarding this case discouraged the perpetration of any other religious violence and furthermore gave the Baku administration a pretext to increase the crackdown on Islamist groups. The Ministry of National Security of Azerbaijan accused Ilgar Mollachiyev, Samir Mehdiyev (Suleiman), and a group of others of organizing the attack on Abu Bakr Mosque in Baku. They were reportedly members of an illegal group called Forest Brotherhood. In 2007, a total of 17 members of the group were arrested in Sumgayit. As the Ministry reported, “According to their plan, a Sumgayit Jamaat (a secret extremist group) had to be created. They planned a number of robberies in Baku in order to collect funds for a holy war (Jihad).”<sup>30</sup>

### *The Azerbaijani Jamaat*

The Azeri official quoted above was not mistaken at the time he made the statement. We can confirm for a few years now the presence of a Jamaat in Azerbaijan. It was founded in Sumgait when Ildar Mollachiev (aka Emir Abdul-Mejid) was still in charge of the Dagestani jamaat. Mollachiev, who became Emir in September 2007, came from the city of Zagatala in northern Azerbaijan and was an ethnic Tsakhur, a Sunni ethnic group that resides on both sides of the Azeri-Russian border that is closely related to the Lezghians. The Azerbaijani Tsakhurs live mainly in the region of Zagatala and Kakh, a multi-national zone full of small ethnicities, such as the Tsakhurs, Ingiloy and Tabasars<sup>31</sup>. The new segment of the North Caucasian Emirate closely

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> MNS Names Organizers of Terrorist Attack On Abu Bakr Mosque, September 2, 2008, [http://azerireport.com/index2.php?option=com\\_content&do\\_pdf=1&id=506](http://azerireport.com/index2.php?option=com_content&do_pdf=1&id=506).

<sup>31</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, “Azerbaijani Jamaat Cooperates with Caucasus Emirate”, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Volume 9, Issue: 73, April 12, 2012.

cooperated with the North Caucasian jamaats, although it was completely independent from them. In Azerbaijan, this jamaat was called the “Forest Brothers,” but more correctly it should have been called the “Sumgait Jamaat,” since it started off in Sumgait and then spread to other regions of Azerbaijan<sup>32</sup>. The Azeri authorities were aware of the intentions of the Dagestani rebel commander and following his death in September 2008 they organized a strike against the remaining members of the jamaat. Ten of its members were killed while illegally crossing the border from Azerbaijan to Dagestan<sup>33</sup>, the coordinated action taken by Russian and Azerbaijani Special Forces indicating that the operation was planned well in advance and not spontaneous. After this episode, the news regarding the Azeri jamaat went silent partially due to the fact that the central government succeeds in censoring all of the news regarding Islamist extremism and, partially, because the jamaat lacking coordination, ceased its actions. Nevertheless, its members were hunted by local authorities and in 2011, some of its members were charged with serious crimes, including a bomb attack on the Abu-Bakr mosque in Baku on August 17, 2008. Twenty-six members of the jamaat received various sentences at the conclusion of the trial<sup>34</sup>.

The situation remained silent (not quiet) until the beginning of 2012, when a governmental action in Ganja brought the radical Islam issue back into focus. Ganja is situated in the Ganja-Kazakh lowlands in the northeastern foothills of the Lesser Caucasus mountain range and is very close to the North Caucasus. It is Azerbaijan’s second largest city in terms of area and third largest in terms of population. On April 6, 2012, clashes took place between Azeri Ministry for National Security forces and a group of militants, suspected to be part of the “Forest Brothers”<sup>35</sup>. The Azeri version of events, which says that government forces attacked the rebels because they had received information about the arrival of Salafis and their preparations for a terrorist attack in Ganja, does not appear to be accurate. The residents of the house where the militants lived said the suspects had been there for a long time and had caused no trouble<sup>36</sup>. Regardless of this information, the authorities decided to storm the apartment building, resulting in three dead and five wounded on the government side and one dead and two wounded on the militant part<sup>37</sup>. Along with the operation in Ganja, the autho-

<sup>32</sup> A. Matveev, *This is a terrible word “Wahhabism”*, in *Azerbaijan, growing religious fanaticism*, April 4, 2009, <http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1239135120>.

<sup>33</sup> *Baku has declared war on the Wahhabis*, September 29, 2008, [http://www.ng.ru/cis/2008-09-23/6\\_azerbaidzhan.html](http://www.ng.ru/cis/2008-09-23/6_azerbaidzhan.html).

<sup>34</sup> *In Azerbaijan, Dagestani’s are judged: “Forest Brothers”*, June 29, 2009, <http://www.rosbalt.ru/exussr/2009/06/29/651007.html>.

<sup>35</sup> *Azerbaijan. In the city of Ganja was a fight between the police and the Aliyev Salafis associated with the Caucasus Emirate*, April 7, 2012, UmmaNews, <http://ummanews.com/news/kavkaz/6377-2012-04-07-10-45-42.html>.

<sup>36</sup> Maarif Chingizoglu, Shahnaz Beylyargyzy, Gülnur Ragifgyzy, *Shootout in Ganja*, April 6, 2012, Radio Free Europe, <http://www.radioazadlyg.org/content/article/24539448.html>.

<sup>37</sup> *“Forest Brothers” blew himself up along with the officer in MNS: details of raid*, April 7, 2012, Regnum, <http://www.regnum.ru/news/polit/1518530.html>.

rities carried out simultaneous operations in Baku and Sumgayit, as well as in Gakh, Zagatala, Sheki and Gusar regions. They confiscated multiple weapons and Islamic writings. The caches seized included four AK 47-type submachine guns, an RPK-rocket launcher, two Makarov pistols, one revolver-type pistol, one Stechkin pistol, a rifle, six full pistol clips, and 300 cartridges of ammunition of various calibers, as well as 31 hand grenades and 15 explosive devices with remote control, three detonators, a large number of explosive plastics, three clips for a submachine gun, 30 Kenwood hand-held portable radio transmitters, three bayonet-knives, and last but not least a lot of literature that promotes terrorism and jihad<sup>38</sup>.

Thus, the authorities' actions in Ganja should be regarded as a confirmation of the existence of a jamaat (aka the "Forest Brothers") that closely cooperates with the North Caucasian armed resistance. This organization is very dynamic and has multiple cells not only in the north of the country, but also in Baku, Sumgait and Ganja.

Following the shootings in Ganja, authorities in Azerbaijan on April 7 began mass arrests of people suspected of involvement in or sympathy for radical Islam. It should be noted that, special operations against jamaat members are not a novelty for these country regions especially as they are populated mainly by Azerbaijan's Sunni minority and natives of Dagestan<sup>39</sup>. Cases of conversion from Shiism to Sunnism are increasingly common among the youth. By default, the authorities tend to regard such cases as the equivalent of adopting radical Islamic teachings, which is a dangerous method of approaching the issue. The latest operation by Azerbaijan's security services illuminated a problem that has been persistently suppressed by the country's authorities: the fact that Azerbaijan's jamaat closely cooperates with the North Caucasian jamaats — the so-called Caucasus Emirate, the organization of the North Caucasian armed resistance<sup>40</sup>.

Therefore in the future we should expect more government actions aimed at uprooting the structure that was established by Dagestani militant leader Ildar Mollachiev in 2008. The authorities' tactics regarding the Islamist issue hides a number of hidden traps for the long term as continued repression could lead to a wider embrace of the radical phenomenon, especially by young people.

It must be understood that, radical and force-based measures of government would not be the best option and could trigger counterforce. A good example is the Abu Bakr mosque bombing in 2008, after which the mosque was closed down by authorities. But closure of the mosque did not make

<sup>38</sup> *Azerbaijani intelligence service detains 17 members of armed group* (update), April 6, 2012, Trend, <http://pda.trend.az/en/2011589.html>.

<sup>39</sup> *On the border between Azerbaijan and Russia held secret operation*, September 19, 2011, <http://janarmenian.ru/news/4229.html>.

<sup>40</sup> Mairbek Vatchagaev, *Azerbaijani Jamaat Cooperates with Caucasus Emirate*, Eurasia Daily Monitor, Volume 9, Issue: 73, April 12, 2012.

salafi community to disappear — the problem is that, if before they were gathering in a well known and “controllable” big mosque in the centre of the capital, now many of them are dispersed among a number of “shadow mosques” (for example, in private houses) of minor size, with all subsequent problems of control by authorities. This is just one simple example, important however in terms of understanding how daunting the issue is.

The changing geopolitical context in the South Caucasus must be kept in mind also. Yes, Azerbaijan’s foreign policy model has proved its viability through the last two decades. However, Azerbaijan is located in the area of strong soft power projection of several regional powers, like Russia, Iran or Turkey. “You see that certain stirring up among radical groups in Azerbaijan is observed at the moment. Drop a glimpse on neighbouring Russia. We are placed between Russia and Iran and taking this into account, certain dangers are inevitable”, says Rasim Musabekov, a prominent Azerbaijani political analyst and member of the Parliament<sup>41</sup>.

This is an important comment, taking into account that Moscow continuous pressure on radical salafists in the North Caucasus makes certain armed groups cross the border with Azerbaijan from time to time. Thus, Vladimir Putin’s success in the Second Chechen War had a double effect on Azerbaijan. On one side, as we described above, it caused a considerable drop in salafists’ capacities in the whole of the South and North Caucasus. On the other — a majority of armed salafi groups in the North of Azerbaijan are composed of Russian citizens, escaping from prosecution of the other side of the border.

Thus, besides the historic factors and those linked to domestic political context described above, the analysis of the regional geopolitical context is also important. The current quality of bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Russia has a pragmatic and mutually beneficial character. Official speakers talk about strategic partnership and, in fact, at the moment, these relations are on a better level than ever before. The current geopolitical context in the region of the South Caucasus is changing and the final picture is far to be seen yet. It is also subject to strong influences from events in Syria and around Iran’s nuclear program. It should be kept in mind also that official information delivered from MNSA on activities of “Forest brothers” and authorities’ countermeasures is official and measured information. This may really be a big iceberg and there may be much more beneath than above. Considering the Eurovision contest that is to be held in May in Baku an governmental crackdown on religious groups and minorities will surely increase in order to ensure security of the public event, and we may catch a glimpse of that iceberg.

<sup>41</sup> Rasim Musabekov, “Azerbaijani special services have to take all measures to neutralize terror threats in the country”, <http://az.salamnews.org/az/news/read/33040/rasim-musabeyov-azerbaycanin-xuumlsusi-xidmetleri-oumlkedeki-terror-tehluumlkelerinin-neytrallashmasi-uumlccediluumlnbuumltuumlntedbirleri-goumlrmelidir/>.

**Chapter 20**  
**GEORGIA'S POLICY**  
**IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS**

**DIANA TSUTSKIRIDZE**

*Introduction*

On September 23, 2010, Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili told the United Nations that he wanted “to promote a vision about a free, stable and united Caucasus.” He continued, “we might belong to different states and live on different sides of the Caucasus Mountains, but in terms of human and cultural space, there is no North and South Caucasus. There is one Caucasus that belongs to Europe and will one day join the European family of free nations, following the Georgian path.” Saakashvili said that “the historical move toward Caucasian unity should begin with projects in energy, education and culture and the civil society. He called upon Russia to be part of the process of transformation and to treat its neighbors as “partners and not vassals.”

Reactions to Saakashvili’s speech evoked different reactions inside and outside of Georgia. The Georgian opposition called it a dream. Russian authorities said it was a provocation. Objectively, however, geopolitics — Georgia’s proximity to hostile Russia and Russia’s occupation of about 20% of Georgia’s territory — drives the President’s new policy.

Georgia needs goodwill, allies if possible, in both the North and South Caucasus. Its geopolitical circumstance does not afford any other option. So long as it has rather positive relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan in the South Caucasus, it can turn its attention to its relationships with the North Caucasus republics. It must be aware that any possible escalation or conflict in the North Caucasus will cause an inflow of refugees or militants, which will, in turn, bring economic, political and maybe renewed military pressure on the country.

This was a lesson learned after the Russia-Chechnya wars of the nineties, as a result of which Georgia experienced huge inflows of refugees, particularly in the area of the Pankisi Gorge (Sanikidze, 2007). Georgia cannot risk its security again. Consequently, it now seeks to build friendly relations with

North Caucasus republics. In case of conflict in the North Caucasus, hostile relations with those people will harm Georgia.

### *Geography, Ethnography and History*

The North Caucasus region has always been dynamic. It is populated by several ethnic groups that grew from earlier tribes. In some sense, these groups differ from each other, but in another sense, they have lived in a single context of traditions, religion and customs, largely driven by geography.

The Caucasus ridge is flanked by the Caspian and Black Seas, whose narrow and rocky beaches offer neither good anchorage nor passable roads. Several parallel mountain ridges form an imposing natural wall, breached by a single narrow passage into Georgia at Vladikavkaz, in North Ossetia<sup>1</sup>. The tallest mountains, like Mount Elbrus, the highest peak in Europe, remain perpetually snowcapped. The mountains are crossed by deep canyons, which at lower elevations are covered by temperate forests with tenacious and almost impenetrable underbrush. Such geography rendered the region an unassailable rock, squeezed between the grinding wheels of the ancient near eastern empires and the nomadic-dominated Great Steppe. Consequently, these lands never produced modern nation-states such as that south of the Caucasus range<sup>2</sup>.

The Caucasus Mountains offer a safe refuge, but they are poor in resources. This is why the indigenous populations were extremely small. For instance, the Balkarians traditionally inhabited just five villages. This mountain poverty meant that the agrarian exploitation of fertile but militarily exposed lands in the foothills was one of the biggest dilemmas of the North Caucasian peoples.

Since before the Bronze Age, the Caucasus sheltered the remnants of peoples overrun and assimilated elsewhere. The mountain environment offered them many separate micro-spaces, which resulted in ethnic fragmentation. The majority of indigenous peoples belong to the North Caucasian linguistic family. These are the nearly thirty ethnic groups of Dagestan, Chechens, Ingush, Kabardin and other Adygey peoples, otherwise called Circassians, closely related to the Abkhaz. There were also Osset, Karachay, Kalmyk and Balkar ethnic groups. Like the linguistically exceptional Basques of the Pyrenees, these peoples speak languages that have no living relatives anywhere in the world and are totally unrelated to the Indo-European, Afrasian (formerly called Semitic), or Kartvelian (Georgian) families<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Derluguian, G.M., *Historical Formation*, (2006), Retrieved September 4, 2011, <http://www.yale.edu/agrarianstudies/colloqpapers/11noxchi.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Khodorkovsky, M., *The North Caucasus during the Russian Conquest, 1600-1850s*, The National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, (2008), Retrieved September 6, 2011, [http://www.ucis.pitt.edu/nceeer/2008\\_821-08g\\_Khodorkovsky.pdf](http://www.ucis.pitt.edu/nceeer/2008_821-08g_Khodorkovsky.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Derluguian, G.M., *Historical Formation*, (2006), Retrieved September 4, 2011, <http://www.yale.edu/agrarianstudies/colloqpapers/11noxchi.pdf>.



www.evolutsia.net

Traditionally, the strongest people — possessing military strength with battle horses and armor — were the Dagestani Kalmyks, Kabardin and several other Circassian tribes. Consequently, they controlled the best lands in the foothills of the Caucasus. Other groups like the Balkar and Chechens retreated to the high mountains and deep forests to survive. According to Derluigian, this arrangement created multiple unequal dependences across ethnic lines.

During the four centuries between the final smashing of the Golden Horde by the armies of Tamerlane in the 1390s and the arrival of Russian colonialism in the late Eighteenth Century, the North Caucasus was a contested geopolitical vacuum, only tenuously filled with stateless autonomous groups of heavily-armed horsemen. The concentration of expensive, specialized weapons in the hands of a small mobile elite created a familiar feudal pattern. Lords and peasants quite often were of a different ethnic stock. For example, the Kabardin noblemen once dominated the Chechen, Ingush, Osset and Balkar. The peasants generally could not escape aristocratic protection and the demands of tribute (Akhmadov, 2009). The Kabardin became the strongest group and extended coercive patronage and protection over others. In this stateless society, in which social order depended on violence, the Kabardin held themselves together by codified rules of mutual loyalty, individual and family honor, combat hero ethics and lordly conspicuous consumption.

The gunpowder revolution arrived in the Caucasus some time in the seventeenth century. After several generations, it enabled a series of social revolutions, writes Derluguian. These fragmented aristocratic hierarchies and somewhat democratized the peasants. At the same time, the region began to develop industrially, especially in Dagestan. Rural villages grew into large fortified towns with substantial trade fairs, handcrafting, and elaborate civic institutions (Akhmadov, 2009). Industrial and social revolutions were the more important features of North Caucasus development, but religion played another key role in this process.

As numerous and diverse as the peoples of the North Caucasus were, they had one thing in common — with few exceptions, they were Muslim. However, their adherence to Islam varied significantly. In the north-east Caucasus, Islam was deeply entrenched in northern Dagestan and Chechnya. In the north-central Caucasus, Islam held a far more tenuous hold over Kabardinia (eastern Adygeya) and Ossetia. In the north-west Caucasus, Islam was often only nominally accepted by the western Adygey peoples<sup>4</sup>.

Christianity was present among the Abkhaz, who are a mixture of Islam, Christianity and pagan traditions. Chechnya had a significant Russian Orthodox minority, but by 1994, most had left for Russia. The Osset, who inhabited the strategically important valley around the new town of Vladikavkaz, were Christianized by the Russian authorities. Derluguian argues that common religious ties brought the Osset close to Russia.

Judaism is represented by mountain Jews living mainly in Dagestan. The fourth religion in the North Caucasus is Buddhism, which is the religion of the Kalmyks, as recognized in the Russian Constitution<sup>5</sup>.

In sum, Islam — Sunni and Shi'ite — was and is the mainstream religion in the North Caucasus. However, the peoples of the region are a highly fragmented aggregation of Islamic societies organized on the basis of kinship, language and territory. Their elites were interested in preserving and augmenting their own power and wealth through a continued reliance on customary law (*Adat*). On the other hand, the foremost concern of the Muslim clergy (*Ulema*), an alternative locus of power, was to extend the rule of Islamic law (*Sharia*) at the expense of customary law. While seemingly working at cross-purposes, the native elites and the *Ulema* often collaborated and coexisted comfortably<sup>6</sup>. So conflicts in the North Caucasus did not arise from religious conflicts. The main conflict of the region was political in character.

<sup>4</sup> Khodorkovsky, M., *The North Caucasus during the Russian Conquest, 1600-1850s*, The National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, (2008), Retrieved September 6, 2011, [http://www.ucis.pitt.edu/nceer/2008\\_821-08g\\_Khodorkovsky.pdf](http://www.ucis.pitt.edu/nceer/2008_821-08g_Khodorkovsky.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Cornell, E.S., *Religion as a Factor in Caucasian Conflicts*, (1998), Retrieved August 23, 2011, <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/publications/ReligionFactor.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Williams, B.G., *Jihad and Ethnicity in Post-Communist Eurasia*, *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 2, No.3-4, (March-June, 2003), University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth. Retrieved September 4, 2011, [http://www.ethnopolitics.org/ethnopolitics/archive/volume\\_II/issue\\_3-4/williams.pdf](http://www.ethnopolitics.org/ethnopolitics/archive/volume_II/issue_3-4/williams.pdf).

Throughout history, the North Caucasus remained on the fringes of the Islamic world. The neighboring Ottoman and Persian empires never succeeded in conquering and annexing the region, remaining content to collect tribute, taxes, and slaves. Thus it was left to Russia, which since the late eighteenth century brought in colonial institutions, military, missionaries, settlers, courts, and schools to begin altering the traditional geographical and social landscape<sup>7</sup>.

### *The Russian Era*

Initially, Russia's relationship with the indigenous elites of the North Caucasus was similar to those of other colonial empires. The elites were turned into loyal servants of the imperial government. Yet by the mid-eighteenth century, the Russian expansion in the North Caucasus turned into an aggressive expropriation of lands, deportation of local villagers and conversion to Orthodox Christianity. Numerous petitions from indigenous elites for a redress of grievances remained unanswered. Consequently, many chose the path of resistance. Later, the Russians began to support the local commoners in their grievances against their land-owning elites. Khodorkovsky reports that this Russian policy of divide-and-rule along social lines persisted throughout the second half of the eighteenth century until a series of large peasant uprisings pressed the Russian Government to side with local elites.

Once again, the coopting of elites, who were bestowed with high military ranks, large annuities and military assistance against their rivals, had become the principal strategy of the Russian Government. It was called the policy of Russification. Russian officials selected people in different regions, educated them and converted them to Russian Orthodoxy. There were many clashes between local populations and government officials. In the 1830s, the North Caucasus was considered a colony of Russia, but Russian officials were advocating the administrative and legal integration of the region into the Empire. An unacceptable part of Russian policy for North Caucasians was suppression of their customary Adat law and Islamic Sharia law. In particular, this led to a conflict between Russia and the Circassians.

The Circassians fought against Russia for more than a century – from 1763 to 1864. The fight lasted longer for them than for any of the other North Caucasian people, including Chechens. In the 1860s, Tsarist Russia decided to purge the territory of Circassians by resettling them in various other places (mainly in Turkey). Russians burnt down villages and engaged in mass slaughter of villagers. People were exiled by shiploads. Some of the ships sank under the heavy weight of the many people forced on board. Those who arrived in Turkey were subject to famine and epidemics.

<sup>7</sup> Khodorkovsky, M., *The North Caucasus during the Russian Conquest, 1600-1850s*, The National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, (2008), Retrieved September 6, 2011, [http://www.ucis.pitt.edu/nceer/2008\\_821-08g\\_Khodorkovsky.pdf](http://www.ucis.pitt.edu/nceer/2008_821-08g_Khodorkovsky.pdf).

Russia's motivation in controlling Circassia was to gain a strategic foothold after the Crimean War. By doing so, it hoped to preclude any other foreign intervention. Russia resettled other people onto the fertile lands from which it had forced the Circassians. It then redistributed the remaining Circassians within Russia to ensure they would always be a minority wherever they lived and that their common identity would weaken significantly or disappear altogether (Colarusso, 2003).

Another major uprising took place in 1877, when people in Chechnya and Dagestan launched a major rebellion against the Russians. The principal outcome of that conflict was development of new tactics by the Sufi Islam brotherhoods of the North Caucasus. This heightened the sensitivity of Tsarist Russia toward Islam, driving efforts to suppress it. This attitude carried over and was reinforced in the USSR.

### *The Late USSR and Beyond*

In the Soviet Union, every religion was persecuted, including Islam. Mosques were closed, holy texts destroyed and mullahs executed as "parasites"<sup>8</sup>.

During this time, some Sufi Islamists of the North Caucasus quietly connected with Sunni Muslims in Saudi Arabia. So, after disintegration of the Soviet Union, this region was ripe for missionary work. As a result, Arab fundamentalist Islam or militant jihadist preachers threatened traditional North Caucasian Islam (Akhmadov, 2009). Meanwhile, Chechnya declared independence. Russia reacted violently, first in 1994-1996, and again in 1999, causing a huge humanitarian crisis in the region. Khurtsikidze reports that thousands of Chechen refugees reached the Georgian border and found shelter in the Pankisi region (2002).

Until the second Russia-Chechnya war, most North Caucasians considered Georgia to be Russia's Christian ally. They recalled that during the nineteenth century, Georgians were Tsarist Russia's Christian brothers in the struggle against Islamic resistance in the region. During the twentieth century, Georgian Soviet officers, led by Lavrenty Beria, were prominent in organizing the mass deportation of four North Caucasian nations in 1943-44. This was not forgotten when, in 1989, the Congress of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus held its first assembly in Abkhazia. North Caucasian nationalist intellectuals regarded both Georgia and Russia as colonial powers.

On the other hand, as the Soviet Union slipped into history, other trends emerged. Chechnya's first President, Dzhokhar Dudayev, had very good relations with Georgia's President Zviad Gamsakhurdia, who proposed the idea of a "United Caucasus." But these ideas remained undeveloped as

<sup>8</sup> Williams, B.G., *Jihad and Ethnicity in Post-Communist Eurasia*, The Global Review of Ethnopolitics, Vol. 2, No.3-4, (March-June, 2003), University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth, Retrieved September 4, 2011, [http://www.ethnopolitics.org/ethnopolitics/archive/volume\\_II/issue\\_3-4/williams.pdf](http://www.ethnopolitics.org/ethnopolitics/archive/volume_II/issue_3-4/williams.pdf).

Gamsakhurdia was ousted from office, finding refuge first in Armenia and then in Chechnya<sup>9</sup>.

What might have been did not stand in the way of North Caucasian volunteers fighting alongside the Abkhaz as newly independent Georgia sank into civil war. Shamil Basayev, Chechen warrior and later terrorist, saved the Abkhaz from defeat by Georgian forces many times during the war. Basayev led the operation to recapture the Abkhazian town of Gagra from the Georgians in October 1992, reconnecting the Abkhaz with Russia.

Nonetheless, De Waal reports that Dudayev's successor, Aslan Maskhadov, received a warm welcome in Tbilisi in 1997 and, once war broke out again in Chechnya in 1999, several of his commanders found a safe haven in Georgia's Pankisi Gorge. These facts show that relations between North Caucasus and Georgia have been variable and transitional for some long time.

In this context, President Mikhail Saakashvili's UN speech in UN echoed some themes that had appeared in the early days of Georgia's restored independence. Georgia's new interest in the North Caucasus derives from a calculation based upon Georgia's geopolitical circumstance, Russian hostility and the possibility of renewed conflicts to its north. The new policy includes several steps from the Georgian side. One of the most important ones is offering visa-free entrance to Georgia.

### *Georgian Policy under President Saakashvili*

On October 11, 2010, Deputy Foreign Minister Nino Kalandadze announced a new decree, signed by President Saakashvili. It established a visa-free regime for Russian citizens residing in the seven North Caucasus republics — Dagestan, Chechnya, North Ossetia, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia and Adygea. Residents of the North Caucasus may enter Georgia for 90 days without a visa.

Kalandadze explained that the reason for the decree is to make travel for North Caucasian residents into Georgia easier "through the only legally binding operating land border between Georgia and Russia, Kazbegi-Zemo Larsi." She added that there are many people in the North Caucasus who desire to come to Georgia for commercial as well as other purposes such as enrolling at Georgian universities<sup>10</sup>.

"We have 100,000 Georgian citizens of Ossetian origin residing in Georgia and they have relatives in the North Caucasus. Of course, they need

<sup>9</sup> De Waal, T., *Georgia's North Caucasus Initiative looked designed to take Moscow by surprise*, (May 24, 2011), Retrieved July 23, 2011, <http://www.iiss.org/programmes/russia-and-eurasia/about/georgian-russian-dialogue/caucasus-security-insight/thomas-de-waal/inviting-the-unpredictable/>.

<sup>10</sup> Umudov, A., *Analysis: Why Does Georgia's Visa-free Regime in the North Caucasus Concern Russia?*, (Oct. 20, 2010), Retrieved August 7, 2011, <http://www.usak.org.tr/EN/makale.asp?id=1758>.

to see each other,” said Georgian Foreign Minister Grigol Vashadze. “Visitors from the North Caucasus will see the real image of Georgia.”

The border crossing mentioned by Kalandadze is along the road that leads from Vladikavkaz to Tbilisi and Armenia, beyond. Russia closed the Kazbegi-Zemo Larsi border crossing in July 2006, claiming the necessity of reconstruction and modernization of the border infrastructure. In reality, the move was part of the economic pressure that Russia imposed on Georgia before the 2008 war. Armenia had lobbied for the border reopening to alleviate the effect of its closed borders with Azerbaijan and Turkey (Civil Georgia, Feb. 2010). In March 2010, Russia agreed with Georgia to reopen the border crossing.

This move and the accompanying statements are significant and no doubt sincere. Nonetheless, they are underpinned by hard security considerations. Georgia is strengthening relations with North Caucasian people to insulate itself from the ill effects of a possible explosion in the region. It is seeking goodwill, understanding that there will not be a big inflow of visitors from the North Caucasus. Because of the border crossing’s location, North Ossetians are best positioned to benefit, however, many of them prefer close ties with Russia rather than Georgia.

Russia reacted irefully. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov assessed the Georgian move as “An attempt to divide the population of Russia” that “on various counts contradicts the norms of civilized inter-state communication... There is also clearly a visible link between this decision and Tbilisi’s drive to destabilize the situation and to distract attention from the destructive policy of the Georgian leadership toward South Ossetia and Abkhazia.”

It is hard to comprehend how Russia considers introduction of a visa-free regime as a move against “civilized interstate communication,” particularly recalling that it delivered Russian passports to residents of the internationally recognized Georgian territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and then used these fabricated citizenships as a pretext for war against Georgia in August 2008 (Umudov, 2010).

In reality, Russia fears increasing social interaction between the North and South Caucasus. Moscow portrays Georgia as a failed state, however, with a visa free regime; North Caucasian residents may have an opportunity to witness the real situation in Georgia. Moreover, Georgia seeks to increase its economic interaction with the North Caucasus to interest the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in restoring Georgian territorial integrity in long run.

Pro-governmental Georgian opinion-makers generally support the government’s policy. “It is a correct policy, but very risky,” said Mamuka Areshidze, Georgian expert on Caucasus. “Georgia lost much when Russia created a negative picture of Georgia in the North Caucasus. Poor people from North Caucasus can now go to Turkey and Asia, so economic relations with Georgia are profitable for them. Besides, many ethnic Georgians and Armenians can travel to their ancestral countries.” (Areshidze, July, 2011).

Irakli Menagarishvili, Director of the Strategic Research Center said that no step had only one side. "The Larsi check point is strictly controlled. But it can activate the people of the North Caucasus. On the one hand, it contains security risks, but advantages as well for Georgia and our friends in North Caucasus. On the other hand, Georgia has to deepen its positive relations with historical neighbors, as we are traditionally connected with them." He also added that the doubts about the new policy are not groundless, but it is impossible to conduct national policy without risks.

Menagarishvili was referring to the view of some members of the Georgian opposition that a visa-free regime might allow Islamist militants to cross the border. This argument is not incorrect because political tension has always been high in the North Caucasus and jihadist movements flourish in the region. Nonetheless, it evokes Menagarishvili's points that it is impossible to devise a risk-free foreign policy and the border crossing must be strictly controlled.

And Georgia's reach into the North Caucasus is not confined to its visa policy. Today, the Georgian government sponsors a Russian language TV broadcast aimed at the North Caucasus.

Even before Saakashvili's UN speech, Georgian Public Broadcasting (GPB) in January 2010 set up the "First Caucasian" television channel. Its aim was to counteract negative coverage of Georgia by Kremlin-controlled media in the North and South Caucasus. The station lost its French-owned satellite space under Russian pressure. However, by July 2010, GPB contracted to use another satellite and the station resumed operation in January 2011. President Saakashvili was the first guest on the renewed "Kanal PIK's" broadcast on January 25, 2011. He answered questions from the Georgian public, including questions about Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The President boldly stated that these parts of Georgia are occupied by Russia against international law and they should be returned to Georgia.

Throughout 2011, Georgia continued to develop the Saakashvili policy toward the North Caucasus. On May 20, the ruling United National Movement presented, and the Georgian Parliament adopted a resolution declaring the mass killings of Circassians 150 years ago to have been genocide. The resolution "On Recognition of Circassian Genocide by the Russian Empire" was adopted with 95 votes to 0. This was the culmination of a year of preparatory work, accomplished in meetings between Georgian and representatives of the North Caucasian peoples.

In February 2010, the Georgian Parliament established a Group of Friendship and Cooperation with the parliaments of the North Caucasian republics. The Georgian Parliament called upon the North Caucasian parliaments to work together to develop Caucasian civilization and to maintain ties among the Caucasian nations despite poor relations between Georgia and the Russian Federation. The Parliaments of the North Caucasus republics never responded to this appeal, so the next step was to engage directly with Circassian people.

In March 2010, the conference “Hidden Nations, Enduring Crimes: The Circassians and the Peoples of the North Caucasus Between Past and Future” took place in Tbilisi. The conference was organized by the Washington-based Jamestown Foundation and Tbilisi’s Ilia State University International School for Caucasus Studies. Participants included worldwide North Caucasus experts, among them representatives of the Circassian Diaspora. Participants made an appeal to the Georgian Parliament requesting it to recognize as genocide the deportations and massacre of Circassians in the Nineteenth Century by Tsarist Russia.

Georgian lawmakers announced their readiness to launch broad discussions in April 2010. The process concluded on May 20, 2011 when the Georgian Parliament of Georgia adopted the resolution.

That day, the Chairman of the Committee on Diaspora and Caucasus Issues, Nugzar Tsiklauri, noted, “Georgia and Tbilisi have always been the intellectual, as well as political center of the Caucasus region. We want to return this regional leadership role to Georgia. Now is the moment for great Caucasus solidarity and consensus in solving the above-mentioned issue which will contribute to a new political result.”

Georgia was the first country to recognize the Circassian Genocide. Russia has steadfastly refused. Caucasus analyst Mamuka Areshidze commented that Georgia seeks to exploit Russia’s weaknesses on this count by playing both ends against the middle. With one hand, he says, Tbilisi is massaging its own ties with Caucasian ethnic communities; with the other, it is punching Moscow in a sore spot. “Adopting this resolution comes as a certain kind of reprisal to Russia for recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia,” Areshidze said. “At the same time, the decision came in the context of Tbilisi’s policy to style itself as the center of united Caucasus” (Areshidze, 2011).

### *Conclusion*

Georgia’s current policy in the North Caucasus was launched with President Saakashvili’s speech at the UN General Assembly. It is a departure from earlier circumstances, however, it has been developed over time — well before the UN speech — and it is firmly rooted in Georgia’s geopolitical reality. Georgia is a small country located in a difficult region. It has two breakaway regions and very tense relations with its biggest neighbor, Russia, which attacked it in 2008. Despite all this, Georgia tries to develop its democratic institutions, economy and political aspirations.

Historically, Georgia has always been connected with the North Caucasus, sometimes in positive, sometimes in negative contexts. Now, positive relations with the North Caucasus are essential, despite the Russian ire that this evokes. Therefore, Georgia chose the path of building positive relations with the North Caucasus republics. If successful, this policy will help Georgia to

build stable security frameworks upon it. In the situation in which Georgia's political relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan are quite stable, stabilization of relations with the North Caucasus is a worthy objective. Nobody can say for sure how it will end, and much depends on matters beyond Georgia's control. But a risk free foreign policy is impossible, particularly in this region. In such a situation, the most reasonable course for Georgia is to regain the friendship and support of the North Caucasus peoples.

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## **Chapter 21**

# **GEORGIA'S PANKISI GORGE**

**DIANA TSUTSKIRIDZE**

Georgia's Pankisi Gorge became the focus of much international attention in 2001-2002. After the Second Chechen War, several thousand refugees found shelter in the Pankisi Gorge. Then, Russia complained that Gorge had become a safe haven for militants and terrorists. Russia put much pressure on Georgia to eradicate the terrorist groups or to give the right to the Russian side to control the situation in Pankisi.

In early February 2002, the American Chargé d'Affaires in Tbilisi, Philip Remler, asserted that Islamic radicals fleeing Afghanistan were moving into the region. To help Georgian authorities reestablish control of the region, the U.S. government announced that it would send 100-150 Special Forces advisors to Georgia to train the country's counterinsurgency troops. The announcement was met with an outcry by many officials in Moscow, who took this as evidence of yet another American encroachment into Russia's traditional sphere of influence. The protests only abated after Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, stated that, in his opinion, the U.S. military support for Georgia was in fact "no tragedy".

About thirty kilometers long and three kilometers wide, the Pankisi Gorge is located just south of the Georgian-Chechen border in the Georgian district of Akhmeta. Gorge is situated inside Georgia south of the border that is formed by the icy Caucasus Mountains, the highest mountain range in Europe. It rests along the southeastern slopes of the mountains, where the headwaters of the Alazani River flow down through the woody mountains and foothills of the Gorge and from there south to Georgia's Kakheti region, famous for its wines, and then east to the Caspian Sea.

The region is hard to access; it is not a place where one can use all sorts of transport or make big military operations, especially toward the border with Russia. People can walk there from Russia very carefully and only five months a year due to icy conditions. The mountains where Pankisi Gorge is situated make it very difficult to access and it is often closed altogether.

The Kakheti region, where Pankisi Gorge is located, is mentioned in Georgian history as one of the powerful and rich regions. Georgian historian Vakhushti Bagrationi describes how agriculture was developed in Kakheti

region's Alvani Valley and Lopoti and Pankisi Gorges<sup>1</sup>. Historically, there was no political clash between the central authority of Georgia and Pankisi Gorge (*The Life of Kartli*, 1955). But in 2000-2002, the Georgian Government was so weak and corrupt that it could not control the Pankisi region, which became a shelter for criminals, militant groups and terrorists (Deliso, 2002).

According to statistical figures from the official census of 1989, the Kists represented 43 percent of total population in the Pankisi Gorge; Georgians accounted for 29 percent and Ossetians for 28 percent. However, the ethno-demographical situation has changed significantly since the early 1990s. As a result of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, sections of the Ossetian population emigrated to the North Ossetian Autonomous Republic of the Russian Federation. Moreover, after the influx of refugees from Chechnya, who now have settled in Pankisi villages, the Kists became the largest ethnic group in the Gorge. They are also known as Vainakhs an ethnonym used for both ethnic Chechens and Ingush who migrated into the region from the North Caucasus between 1830 and 1870. They are typically bilingual in Chechen and Georgian and number approximately 5,000 (data is from National Population Census, 2002)<sup>2</sup>.

The religion of the inhabitants of the Pankisi Gorge varied throughout time. The main religions were Christianity and Islam. However people have understood and respected each other's religion very well. Active religious preaching in Pankisi started in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries when Christian missionaries disseminated information about Christianity. Around the same time, Islam was spreading from Ingushetia as well<sup>3</sup>.

Since December 1994, when war broke out between Chechen resistance fighters and the Russian-supported central government in Chechnya, Pankisi has sustained an inflow of refugees from Chechnya. Among them were many families of the Pankisi Kists, who, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, left for Chechnya. The tide of refugees picked up considerably after the collapse of the 1995 Russian-Chechen cease-fire agreement and a new round of violence that broke out in late 1999. Between September and December 1999, refugees began pouring into Chechnya's southern highland areas from northern parts of the republic, particularly Grozny, Urus Martan, Atchoi Martan, Sernovodsk, and Samashki. When Russian military aircraft began bombing the villages of the Itum Oale region, in the southern highland

<sup>1</sup> Bagrationi, V. (1973), *Description of Kingdom of Georgia*, p. 554, retrieved September 6, 2011, [http://www.nplg.gov.ge/dlibrary/collect/0001/000070/Georgian\\_Mountain\\_Regions.pdf](http://www.nplg.gov.ge/dlibrary/collect/0001/000070/Georgian_Mountain_Regions.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Kurtsikidze, Sh. & Chikovani, V. (2002), „Georgia's Pankisi Gorge: an Ethnographic Survey“, Berkeley Program in *Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies*, retrieved July 2, 2011, [http://iseees.berkeley.edu/bps/publications/2002\\_03-kurt.pdf](http://iseees.berkeley.edu/bps/publications/2002_03-kurt.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Sanikidze, G. (2007), *Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Caucasian Region: Global and Local Islam in the Pankisi Region*, retrieved June 28, 2011, [http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no14\\_ses/10\\_sanikidze.pdf](http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no14_ses/10_sanikidze.pdf).

of Chechnya, the Chechen refugees started moving south once again, this time along the Argun Canyon where they used snow-covered cattle tracks to cross the Russian-Georgian border. They headed for the village of Shatili in Georgia's Khevsureti province, and from there they proceeded to the Pankisi Gorge. There, local Kists ended up sheltering about 85 percent of the refugees.

The inflow of approximately 8,000 refugees in 1999 and 2000 aggravated an already difficult economic and social environment in the Pankisi region (Georgian Journal, Dec.2010). Crime worsened: drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and kidnappings became common. At the same time, the number of Arab radical Islamists, so-called "Wahhabis," with ties to the religion of Saudi Arabia, increased significantly.

The history of Wahhabism in the post-Soviet era began in 1989 when "pure Islam" was first preached in Dagestan. The Wahhabis' influence became stronger in Chechnya after the Russian military campaigns in the republic. Many years of war impoverished and destabilized Chechen society, and the Wahhabis used this situation to their advantage<sup>4</sup>. They first appeared in the Pankisi Gorge in spring of 1997. At this time Christianity and traditional Islam were the main beliefs of local inhabitants (during the Soviet period, Christian churches as well as Mosques in Pankisi were closed by the Soviet regime.)

According to Darling, with the preaching of Wahhabism, many Kists abandoned Christianity for Islam<sup>5</sup>. But their belief was quite different from traditional Sufi Islam. In his paper *Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Caucasian Region: Global and Local Islam in the Pankisi Gorge*, Giorgi Sanikidze writes that Wahhabis deny the role of the teacher, which for the Sufi is very important. They also deny the cult of the saints and pilgrimages to the holy shrines that are widespread among the followers of Sufi Islam. Among Kists, and in general in the North Caucasus, the ritual of condolences is widespread. But the Wahhabis think it is enough to bury a deceased person. The inner link with God, typical for the Sufi followers, is denied by the Wahhabis. They allow marriage between relatives, which is prohibited by "Adat" (customs and traditions) of Sufi Islam (2007).

So, there was a clash of religions in Pankisi. In 1997, the cross of Duisi Church was carried off by Wahhabis. This escalated tensions between Christians and Wahhabis. And many newly converted Chechen Wahhabis arrived in the Pankisi Gorge as refugees and attempted to convert young Kists by preaching about "pure Islam." They were joined by many citizens of Turkey and the Arab countries, financed by various Islamic organizations. From 1996 to 2001, four new Saudi-financed mosques were built in the Kist villages of Pankisi. The biggest mosque stands in the village of Duisi where the Chris-

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>5</sup> Darling, D. (2004), *Ansar al-Islam and the Pankisi Gorge*, Special Analysis: *The Amman Plot and Project al-Zabadi*, retrieved July 1, 2011, <http://www.windsofchange.net/archives/004977.html>.

tian cross had been stolen. Additionally, an Islamic college and an Arabic school were opened in Duisi.

The attitude towards Wahhabis among the Vainakhs is controversial. Most Chechen refugees and some Kists (especially younger ones) support them. Wahhabis control humanitarian aid distributions of the “Jamaat” society, which, according to the local Kists, are funded by Arab countries. One of their followers (a Chechen refugee) even said: “It would be better if Red Cross, the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations gave the Wahhabis a right to distribute their aid supplies. We are sure that they would distribute it fairly.”<sup>6</sup>

Giorgi Sanikidze mentions that in a June 2005 personal conversation, local Kists stated:

“We have the religion of our ancestors. Wahhabis say that we are blind and they are the only people who follow the true Islamic tradition. They are like Jehovah’s Witnesses among you, Georgians. Chechens are also against them, but during the war, while they all were in a difficult situation, Wahhabis gave them some money. Khattab (Amir Ibn al-Khattab, citizen of Jordan, some say Saudi Arabia, perhaps of Circassian origin), was one of the most prominent figures of the Chechen resistance. He was considered a leader of Wahhabis. He was their chief. Khattab was killed by Russian federal military forces in 2002. They corrupted our youngsters. If one prays by their faith, they give him dollars. We believe that praying for money is unacceptable. Many young people who went from Duisi to Arab states were sent by Wahhabis. They want to convert young people who can use guns. They wear different clothes than we do. They have no respect for elders and are not loyal to our traditions.”

Despite the differences in religion, there were not any political problems with the Kists until the inflow of Chechen refugees in 1999. Then, the situation in Pankisi worsened; crime and drug trafficking became usual activities, reports Devdariani<sup>7</sup>. In this period, the Georgian ruling elite, which had focused its energies on dividing up the country’s resources and controlling the “lawful” distribution of western credits, lost control over Pankisi Gorge. The situation continued for two years and Pankisi became a very dangerous place.

After the terrorist attack on the United States in September 2001, the main international actors turned their attention to terrorist groups. The Russian government actively started claiming that among the Chechen refugees in Pankisi there were armed groups that used the mountain passes above the Gorge, as well as the Pshavi, Khevsureti, and Tusheti districts of Georgia, to return to Chechnya to carry out terrorist activities against Russia. During the

<sup>6</sup> Kurtsikidze, Sh. & Chikovani, V. (2002), „Georgia’s Pankisi Gorge: an Ethnographic Survey“, Berkeley Program in *Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies*, retrieved July 2, 2011, [http://iseees.berkeley.edu/bps/publications/2002\\_03-kurt.pdf](http://iseees.berkeley.edu/bps/publications/2002_03-kurt.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Devdariani, J. & Halcilova, B. (2002), *Georgia’s Pankisi Gorge Russian*, US and European Connections, CEPS Policy Brief, retrieved June 25, 2011, <http://aei.pitt.edu/1985/>.

preceding year, Russian aircraft went so far as to bomb villages in East Georgia. On November 27, 2001, five Russian military helicopters bombed unpopulated areas of the Gorge near the villages of Omalo and Birkiani. The result was a further heightening of tensions between Russia and Georgia. Russia also demanded that the Georgian government establish proper control of Pankisi and prevent separatist groups from using it as a staging ground for attacks on Russian forces and for "terrorism"<sup>8</sup>.

Tbilisi, however, refused to comply with the Russian demands because the Russian Duma had continued to support the Abkhaz and Ossetian separatist movements in Georgia. Finally, as regaining control over Pankisi was vitally important for the country and the Georgian military had not the experience or firepower to enforce the orders of the central government in Pankisi, the United States became involved, announcing the "Georgia Train and Equip Program." The training was to enable the Georgian military to regain control over Pankisi and to clean it of terrorist and militant groups<sup>9</sup>.

However, according to the Georgian press, conditions in Pankisi had changed substantially by mid-February 2002. The Georgian Government was preparing to register all Chechen refugees in the region. Russia and Georgia had also started talks about the voluntary repatriation of the Chechen refugees to Russia (*Sakartvelos Respublika*, February 14, 2002). As a result, the situation in Pankisi and the surrounding region had become very tense. The arrest of a Pankisi man for selling drugs by the anti-narcotics trafficking unit of the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs further inflamed the situation (*Sakartvelos Respublika*, February 16, 2002). In response to the arrest, four policemen were kidnapped. The kidnappers demanded that the authorities release the arrested man, a powerful figure in the drug business, in exchange for the kidnapped police officers. Later, the Georgian Security Ministry revealed film footage of some leading international terrorists among the 600-700 rebels in the gorge<sup>10</sup>. Georgian news agency Civil Georgia reported that most of these rebels and terrorists left the Gorge by mid-2002 after the warnings from Georgian Defense Minister Davit Tevzadze.

An anti-terrorist operation was launched on August 25 in response to Russian pressure to contain a threat posed by Chechen fighters. The security operation reestablished Tbilisi's authority in the Pankisi Gorge's towns and settlements. The second phase of the operation aimed to pinpoint the locations of suspected criminal elements and Chechen fighters. Georgian intelligence Chief Avtandil Ioseliani said August 31 that up to 160 armed Chechen

<sup>8</sup> Kurtsikidze, Sh. & Chikovani, V. (2002), „Georgia's Pankisi Gorge: an Ethnographic Survey“, Berkeley Program in *Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies*, retrieved July 2, 2011, [http://iseecs.berkeley.edu/bps/publications/2002\\_03-kurt.pdf](http://iseecs.berkeley.edu/bps/publications/2002_03-kurt.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Owen, E. (2004), *Georgia: Pankisi's Chechens worry about implications of Tbilisi-Moscow rapprochement*, Relief Web Report, retrieved June 30, 2011, <http://reliefweb.int/node/147373>.

<sup>10</sup> Chauffour, C. (April 4, 2005), *Michael Saakashvili's Pankisi Valley*, retrieved July 20, 2011, [http://www.caucas.com/home\\_eng/breve\\_contenu.php?id=147](http://www.caucas.com/home_eng/breve_contenu.php?id=147).

separatists were at large in Pankisi<sup>11</sup>. By late 2002, the Security Ministry reported that its anti-terrorist operation in the Gorge was virtually finished.

However, a major shift in Georgia's view of Chechnya and the Pankisi Gorge occurred in early December 2002 when an armed group from Russia crossed into Georgia to commit crimes. Civil Georgia reported that the group had earlier left the Pankisi Gorge following Georgia's crackdown. Shevardnadze asserted that the group constituted the spearhead of terrorists "planning to carry out wide-ranging terrorist acts in Tbilisi," and announced a nationwide anti-crime operation, stating that "I made a big mistake when I failed to pay attention to the terrorist threat." He also alluded to Georgian press reports that prominent Chechen rebel leaders had threatened the Georgian government. He stated that the anti-crime operation would not be aimed against peaceful Chechens residing in Georgia. Responding to Shevardnadze's announcement, Putin commended Shevardnadze "for decisive action in the struggle against terrorism" (Nichol, 2003).

On January 16, 2003, Russia's presidential spokesman, Abdufatokh Sharipov, warned that terrorism was not eradicated in the Gorge and that international attention should remain focused on the area. Russian military officials also announced further efforts to fortify the Georgia-Russia border. U.S. Ambassador to Russia, Alexander Vershbow, responded on January 17 that much remained to be done to eliminate the threat in the area completely<sup>12</sup>. Perhaps heeding such warnings, in March 2003, Georgia sent extra military and police forces into the Gorge to prevent Chechen rebels from re-entering during the spring thaw. Georgian National Security Council Secretary Teo Japaridze in February 2003, was critical of assertions that many al Qaeda members remained in the Gorge, which he said played into the hands of those Russians wanting to intervene.

On September 16, 2004, U.S. Ambassador to Georgia Richard Miles announced his doubt that some terrorists remained in Pankisi and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Valery Loshchinin also claimed, "Terrorists training bases" remained in the Gorge. In response, on September 21, Georgian Interior Ministry forces, in cooperation with the Security Ministry, inspected the Pankisi region in an attempt to demonstrate that the Gorge no longer represented a terrorist threat. The operation was carried out in the presence of Georgian and foreign media. The special operation, which was personally supervised by the deputy Interior and Security Ministers, involved a door-to-door review of identification papers and documents held by the Chechen refugees living in the gorge, whose number had halved 2001-2004 from 5,000 to about 2,650 (*Civil Georgia*, September 21, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> Devdariani, J. & Halcilova, B. (2002), *Georgia's Pankisi Gorge Russian*, US and European Connections, CEPS Policy Brief, retrieved June 25, 2011, <http://aei.pitt.edu/1985/>.

<sup>12</sup> Aladashvili, I. (May 20, 2011), „Will Moscow follow Washington's example and hold a special operation in Georgia?“, *Georgia Today*, Issue: 562, retrieved September 4, 2011, [http://www.georgiatoday.ge/article\\_details.php?id=9082](http://www.georgiatoday.ge/article_details.php?id=9082).

Deputy Security Minister Gigi Ugulava dismissed accusations regarding the presence of Chechen fighters and terrorist bases in Pankisi as disinformation. As he explained, "This information is far from the truth. Our inspection has confirmed that there are no fighters or terrorists in Pankisi." However, he added, "None of the country is secure from the presence of terrorists. But several years ago there were terrorist training bases here. Now, that problem has been eradicated" (*Civil Georgia*, September, 2004).

Russian accusations about Pankisi resurfaced in 2009 when FSB Chief Alexander Bortnikov claimed on October 13 that, the Georgian secret services were assisting "al Qaeda emissaries" to send fighters and arms to Chechnya and Dagestan. The allegation was strongly denied by Tbilisi, which described the charges as Russia's attempt to prepare a ground for possible provocations against Georgia. Because of these accusations, opposition members Nika Laliashvili and Irakli Alasania, who had been Deputy Interior Minister during the 2002 Pankisi operation, convinced the government to organize a trip for foreign diplomats and journalists to the Pankisi Gorge. "Let this group also meet with the local population and law enforcement officers who will brief the fact-finding group about the situation on the ground. It should be done as soon as possible," Alasania said in an interview with the Georgian weekly *Kviris Palitra*, published on October 19. The group of foreign diplomats and journalists did not find any evidence of terrorist activities in Pankisi. EU Monitoring Mission representatives also expressed their satisfaction that the region was calm and much safer than in 2002 (*Georgia Update*, Nov. 2009)

Bortnikov repeated his accusations in 2011. In July, the FSB Director stated that leaders of bandit groups were preparing to break into the territory of the Russian North Caucasus through Georgia. "We have operational information that individual leaders of bandit groups in other states intend to use Georgian territory to infiltrate the North Caucasus" ([www.Georgiatimes.com](http://www.Georgiatimes.com), July 7, 2011). The Georgian side categorically denied the information. The Interior Ministry stated that it was absolutely groundless, as the Georgian border was strictly controlled and there had not been any recent violations of it.

Georgian mainstream opinion makers on Caucasian issues have pretty much the same opinion about the current situation in the Pankisi Gorge. Some of them state that nobody can prove if this place is absolutely free from terrorists or fundamentalists. The basic opinion of the Georgian side is that maybe one or two criminals are still wandering the place, but it is not massive and they say that there is no any organized crime there, as in 2001-2002. Ghia Nodia, Director of International School for Caucasus Studies, stated that in 2001-2002, the Georgian Government was so weak that it simply could not control the place. However, when Russia decided to interfere, Georgian Interior Ministry forces, with the help of US training, conducted a special operation and cleaned the place. "Russia continues to accuse Georgia of sheltering terrorists, as if they are harming Russia, but this is all groundless," said Nodia.

According to all the above-mentioned facts and analysis, nowadays Pankisi Gorge is a calm region of Georgia. There are some different ethnic and religious groups living there, but it is under state control. There is not any organized crime happening or terrorists going in or out of this region. Russian accusations in this regard are mainly aimed at turning the international community against Georgia. Every country faces the problem of crime to a lesser or higher extent, and Georgia is no exception. However, the situation in Pankisi in 2002 has been eradicated and now the Georgian Government controls the region.

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## Chapter 22

# TRANSFORMATION OF RELIGION IN GEORGIA

DIANA TSUTSKIRIDZE

Viewed over the last two or three decades religious life in Georgia can be described as a process during which its religious organizations have been adjusting to the changing historical and social contexts. They have gradually shed the old Soviet ideas and moved toward so-called market principles. During this process there have been elements that could be described as radicalization. Georgian society stepped into the new reality after independence. Some groups in and out of the church have had a hard time adapting to that reality. There were reactions in society, which caused confrontation between religious groups. However, seen as a whole, the process has never reached the level of religious radicalization and is better described as a process of transformation.

Georgia, a small country in South Caucasus, has frequently been the subject of religious discussion. New York Times journalist Allen Barry discussed it as a backward country with old-fashioned traditions<sup>1</sup>. Another author, Mikhail Vignansky, described it as if he Georgian Patriarchate, was fighting against Sectarians. There are several reports written on this issue. The following paper will argue that, there is no religious radicalism in the country, but the movements that are going on are matched with the transformation of the religion more than with religious nationalism or radicalism.

The Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC), as the largest and most influential organization, tried to stem the omnipresent market trends and insist on its own ideas. Meanwhile the GOC and each of the religious organizations have come face to face with globalization and the far from simple geopolitical context in which the country has to live and develop.

The prevailing descriptions of this process suggested two key strategies that determine (fully or partially) the country's religious life. On the one hand, the religious minorities are obviously working toward a liberal religious market in order to acquire more rights and free actions. On the other, the

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<sup>1</sup> Barry, A. (February 18, 2011), *Defying Sexual Mores in Conservative Georgia*, accessed May 21, 2011 at [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/19/world/europe/19georgia.html?\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/19/world/europe/19georgia.html?_r=2).

Georgian Orthodox Church is out to prevent this in order to preserve its traditional role and dominance.

It is hard to determine the exact size of the religious communities in present day Georgia, because the only official poll used about the subject is done in 2002. In the 2002 General National Population Census of the State Department for Statistics of Georgia, the religious structure of the country's population was determined for the first time. After consulting several sources, I have determined that these are the most accurate numbers:

Orthodox 83.9 % (3, 666, 233)  
 Muslims 9.9 % (433, 784)  
 Apostolic Armenians 3.9 % (171, 139)  
 Catholics 0.8 % (34, 727)  
 Jewish 0.1 % (3541)  
 "Other" 0.8 % (33648)  
 Non-Believers 0.6 % (28631) (www.GeoStat.ge 2002).

The only organization which has done a new poll is the International Republican Institute (IRI), although this survey is not oriented on religion. The organization has made the Georgian National Survey in 2010, which includes information about main religious groups. The IRI survey was conducted nation-wide and it counted 1500 permanent Georgian residents eligible to vote. According to this poll 85% of the population are Orthodox Christians, 11% Muslims, and 4% are of other confession<sup>2</sup>.

Georgia is a country which went through difficult development before it became an independent state. Religious groups also had a different history in the Soviet, Post-Soviet and independence eras.

It is difficult to find reliable information about the size and geography of religious organizations in the Soviet Union — it seems the special services that gathered relevant information preferred to keep their findings secret. Officially, the authorities of the Soviet Union announced religion as a withering remnant of the past that deserved no closer scrutiny. Under Soviet power, believers were deprived of the right to set up socially articulate religious movements; any activities attracted the attention of the KGB which immediately informed the organizations or educational establishments of the far from correct religious interests of their employees or students. The Soviet regime spared no effort to stem new religious movements and to keep the traditional ones within the limits of loyalty<sup>3</sup>.

In the post-Soviet era there were several circumstances caused by the adaptation crisis that finally created the current religious context.

<sup>2</sup> *Georgian National Survey*, (Sept.27-Oct. 7, 2010), International Republican Institute. Accessed June 12, 2011. At [www.iri.org.ge](http://www.iri.org.ge).

<sup>3</sup> Stark, R., & Bainbridge, W. S. (1985), *The future of religion: Secularization, revival, and cult formation*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

First, Georgian society, like the larger part of the formerly Soviet population, lived for 70 years in a constrictive historical space with limited ideas about the global processes and unable to contribute to them. In the first years of independence it found itself isolated, with philosophical and cultural paradigms which turned out to be different from what most of Georgian society expected. Many of the products of globalization, especially those that demanded revision of the traditional cultural and religious values were rejected as unacceptable. Some members of the church community were moving toward an ideology that rejected globalization and liberalism as unwelcome. They expressed their fear of losing traditional ties, which were very important for the country. This was the reason why they were so opposed to the new sects coming to the country.

Another feature is that Georgian society is dynamic, not static. It takes many steps at once on its way to development. 200 years ago the state had a different model and nobody was discussing religious organizations at all. However with the new challenges the state has come to function in a religiously diverse society. This has caused reactions and counter reactions of one religion over another.

The 1990s were a time when liberal-minded religious figures also moved to the fore within the Georgian Orthodox Church; their active efforts and frequent criticism of the Church policies failed to dent the religious process and convince the public. Most church figures and believers remained convinced that the liberals were resolved to undermine the nation's cultural and religious identity rather than to remedy the situation.

The liberal wing, however, managed to introduce liberal and democratic terms into the statements coming from the top church officials. In May 2005, the Patriarchate set up the Coordinating Center of Inter-Religious Relations in Support of Statehood which brought together nearly all the confessions functioning in Georgia: the fundamentalist ideology was finally abandoned for the sake of adjusting to the new conditions. The main escalation in 1990s was caused by the religious organizations with big money coming from abroad, well-adjusted to the free philosophical environment, and armed with adequate missionary techniques. The Georgian Orthodox Church (and, to a certain extent, most of the traditional religions in Georgia) had never regarded "faith" and "salvation" as marketable products. This relies on logic of its own and its roots lie in serious religious motivations that should be taken into account. However, according to the Director, Orfaea Center for Global & International Studies, Mark Juergensmeyer, this may result in religious nationalism and religious conflicts. He explores the positive role religion can play in the political life of modern nations, even while acknowledging some religious nationalists' proclivity to violence and disregard of Western notions of human rights. Finally, he situates the growth of religious nationalism in the context of the political malaise of the modern West. Noting that the synthesis of traditional religion and secular nationalism yields a

religious version of the modern nation-state, Juergensmeyer claims that such a political entity could conceivably embrace democratic values and human rights (Juergensmeyer, 1994).

There are other traditional religious organizations (Muslims, Apostolic Armenians, Catholics, Jews), but GOC displayed more reserve with respect to the religious market. On the one hand, they were naturally concerned about the aggressive missionaries of the new religious movements; on the other, the liberalized market protected them against the mounting aggressive religious nationalism.

In the post-Soviet era the number of believers increased in Georgia. After a period of silence under Soviet rule, the influence of religion on society has risen steadily, after the country's independence in 1991 as an important part of the Georgian national identity. As individuals have rights to express beliefs, according to the IRI Survey only 16% of those inquired said they did not attend religious services, while 45% attended regularly<sup>4</sup>.

The fact that the number of believers in Georgia has considerably increased speaks volumes about the country's religious life. Despite the fact that the absolute majority regards itself as Orthodox Christians, due to cultural and historical traditions the number of those who follow Orthodoxy for purely religious reasons is growing rapidly. According to all opinion polls the Orthodox Church enjoys the greatest trust of the nation: in 2003, in the wake of the Rose Revolution, it outstripped the president by several points. This means that the number of followers is not the only indicator of the role of religion in Georgia. Since the 21st century the Orthodox Church has obviously been leaving behind its former image as an ethnographic and cultural curiosity to become a social factor in its own right. Today it strongly affects the country's movement toward the global context. According to the International Republican Institute poll, 91% of the population considers GOC as the most favorable institution in the country<sup>5</sup>.

In the last 20 years minority religions have lost many adherents, while GOC has gained them. Just as many non-Georgians have "georgianized" their names, a number of Georgians of non-orthodox origin have converted to orthodoxy for safety or for the purpose of avoiding ostracism. Today, the phenomenon is blatant in Adjara, the breakaway region which returned to Tbilisi's control in 2004. In July 2006, the third mass conversion took place in Kobuleti and 300 Muslims embraced the Orthodox faith.

In contrast the Georgian Catholic Community has decreased significantly. If there were 90 000 — 100 000 Catholics before Communism, there are only 35 000 left. Similarly the numbers of the Jewish Community have also fallen; from 100 000 Jews there are only left 3 500, after the emigration in 1970s and 1980s.

<sup>4</sup> *Georgian National Survey*, (Sept.27-Oct. 7, 2010), International Republican Institute, accessed June 12, 2011. At [www.iri.org.ge](http://www.iri.org.ge).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

According to its legal status, the Christian Orthodox Church stands above all other religious organizations. This sometimes causes a radical approach among the Orthodox Church and other religious communities. Since 2002, the constitution has given the Orthodox Church an exceptional legal status, one which no other religion has received. The privileges of the GOC are numerous: the Orthodox clergy is exempt from military service, the fundamentals of Orthodoxy are taught in schools, diplomas from Orthodox universities are officially recognized, there are 12 official holidays for Orthodox saints, the church gets state financial assistance etc. On the other hand, in case the state reduces GOC rights, or equals its rights with those of the minorities, it will cause important complaints in the country, as Orthodoxy is strongly linked with Georgian culture and history. Traditional religious groups, Catholics, Lutherans, Baptists, Armenian Apostolic, Jews and Muslims, signed formal documents with the GOC Patriarchate agreeing to the Concordat, but stated after publication that several of these controversial articles were not in the original document that they had signed. Representatives of non-traditional minority religious groups, such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Pentecostals, were excluded from the Concordat process<sup>6</sup>.

In terms of losing ground and being officially discriminated against, other religious groups have expressed different demands. Protestant, Baptist and Muslim organizations have chosen to register themselves as NGOs. Catholics and Armenian Apostolics, among others, have been claiming the same legal titles as the Orthodox Church with no success.

Social attitudes toward religious minorities can be described as historically tolerant toward groups that have a longer history in Georgia — Apostolic Armenians, Muslims Catholics and Jews. In contrast, the attitude is widely intolerant toward other religious groups, which are seen as sectarian. The main reason behind such intolerance appears to be the fact that these groups are seen as a threat to the Georgian Orthodox Church and thus to Georgian national identity (Vischioni, Low 2006).

Relations between the Georgian Orthodox Church and the Muslim and Jewish communities deserve special discussion. Today, as in the past, they live side by side, always prepared to close ranks at times of crises. In a personal interview, Rabbi Meir Kozlovsky said that, Jewish community has no problems living in Georgia. They have their schools and Synagogue. Jewish people never feel disrespected. This is one of the best relations that two religious communities can have (Kozlovsky, 2011).

Relationship between Armenian Apostolic Church and GOC is not bad. Armenian and Georgian populations live together in many places of the country and in Tbilisi as well. If there is any confrontation between these two, it is caused either by ethnic or political reasons. The president of Georgia

<sup>6</sup> Vischioni, P. & Low, N. (December, 2006), *Religious Minorities in Georgia*. Accessed June 5, 2011. At. [http://www.una.ge/pdfs/publications/rcg/Religious\\_Minorities\\_Final.pdf](http://www.una.ge/pdfs/publications/rcg/Religious_Minorities_Final.pdf).

showed up at the opening of the Armenian Church after reconstruction in Tbilisi.

Eldar Ismailov from the journal *The Caucasus & Globalization* describes the mid-1990s as a time when religious nationalism struck root in Georgia. But at first let's look at the definition. Religious nationalism is defined as "Religious philosophy which considers one religion as paramount —this is basically a state of mind or consciousness in which people believe their primary duty is devotion to this religion. This interest excludes the rights of other religions, which can lead the followers to conflict" (*TheFreeDictionary*). It is interesting to discuss some fact and find out how they match this context.

A hundred or more years ago nobody could speak about radicalization of religions in Georgia. The country was based on one belief — Christian Orthodox Religion — and there were no questions in society. Of course, there were traditional minorities at that time too. However Georgia always had other problems historically. The state together with GOC had always been trying to protect itself from Muslim or other conquerors, rather than fight against religious minorities inside the country.

However, as life goes on, society develops and the development always brings new issues. Religious confrontation has become a new issue. As it is mentioned above, it started in Georgia mainly in the 1990s, with the mission of eradicating heretics including not only sects and Protestantism, but Catholicism as well. Extremist brotherhoods were formed. The Mdzleveli and Jvari organizations target assemblies, meetings, constructions, isolated persons or religious symbols. Jehovah's Witnesses, which have been present in the country since the 1950s, became targets of aggression, just as the Baptists and Seventh-Day Adventists did. In the early 2000s, Ex-Priest Basili Mkalavishvili's attacks on Jehovah's Witnesses reached their apex.

Mkalavishvili was excommunicated in 1995, as he was criticized by the Orthodox Church leadership for a stance "not radical enough" towards the religious minorities. As he decided to take this responsibility upon himself, Mkalavishvili and his crowd armed with big wooden crosses, women praying and chanting the religious chorales, beating up Jehovah's Witnesses and burning their religious literature — a footage showing this kind of scenes were usually recorded by Mkalavishvili's supporters themselves and then broadcasted by the Georgian televisions. In 2001 Mkalavishvili and his group raided Tbilisi-based *Rezonansi* newspaper, which was one of the few Georgian media outlets, which was slamming authorities for failing to curb the extremist religious group's activity. The Orthodox Church, which was always distancing itself from Mkalavishvili's activity, also condemned on 12 March 2004 as unacceptable the violent measures to which police resorted when arresting defrocked priests.

In a personal interview, Beka Mindiashvili, the official responsible for minority affairs in the office of Georgia's human rights ombudsman, said

that Basili Mkalavishvili was hired by the Georgian government to act against Jehovah's Witnesses and the GOC was well informed of it. Contrary to what the government often seeks to prove, the highly publicized arrest of ex-priest Basili has not eliminated confrontation. However, the bases for a state of law were laid down and those who commit violent acts are more regularly arrested by the police. That the police do not directly take part in the aggressions and no longer imprison Jehovah's Witnesses is in itself a decisive progress. Court trials are no longer shortened, or are less openly so. According to Beka Mindiashvili, there were approximately 800 attacks against Jehovah's Witnesses prior to the arrest of Father Basili. Since then, approximately thirty cases have been reported. Nevertheless, the measures taken in the beginning of 2004 did not address the root of the problem, but the number of attacks decreased very much in 2004-2007. From 2006, radical movements continued by the Christian Orthodox Parents' Union (Mindiashvili, 2011).

It is worth noticing that the violent intervention of the Orthodox groups, like Christian Orthodox Parents' Union in social issues shows that they are trying to present themselves as guardians of the national morale. At the beginning of 2006, fundamentalists attacked the Rustaveli movie theater for having shown the film "The da Vinci Code." The fight against other religions shares the same politics.

In May 2010, discussion and confrontation started in society around the book "Saidumlo Siroba" — the name is a play on the Georgian for "Last Supper" and could be translated as "Holy Crap". The representatives of Orthodox Christian Parents' Union called for the banning of the book and Liberty Institute advocated for free speech campaigns. An expert quoted by Interfax stated that the book had an anti-Christian orientation. The author was beaten by the representatives of Union after a TV program about this book.

In February 2011 Christian Orthodox Parents' Union protested against Georgian TV station Imedi's program. They wanted the channel to cancel the program about sex.

There were several protest demonstrations in spring 2011 as well, The Orthodox Christian Parents' Union protested the Vatican's supposed influence at Ilia Chavchavadze State University and Union Deputy Head Avtandil Ungiadze said the Vatican was promoting anti-Orthodox activities at the university. "The university has opened its doors to Catholics," he said. "They recently held an 'academic conference,' which was in fact a religious gathering. This is unacceptable." The union demanded the resignation of the rector.

The union had a clash with the Azeri population as well. In 2009, ethnic Azerbaijani villagers began restoring their century-old mosque in Talaveri in southern Georgia, but had to stop soon afterwards when members of the Union of Orthodox Parents, turned up and surrounded the site. Azeri popu-

lation could resume building only in 2010. Beka Mindiashvili said the Talaveri case was part of an alarming wave of anti-Muslim sentiment.

GOC does not recognize the actions of the Union of Christian Orthodox parents. Father George Samanishvili, Priest of Sioni Cathedral, states that the church knows about their actions but it has no leverage to stop them, as they are not connected with the church. Moreover, certain extremist priests are still widely active. The metropolitan Kalistrat of Kutaisi proffers violent sermons against Catholics, a historically important congregation in Imereti. Father David Isakadze of the Church of Dighomi in Tbilisi attacks Pentecostals, or tries to convert Assyrian Catholics into adherents to Orthodoxy. He referred to the evangelical pastor as “Luther’s monkey.” Beka Mindiashvili enumerates crimes against people and buildings or insults against religious groups. In 2006 they attained neither the gravity nor the number of recent years, but they do remain a constant in Georgian daily life and are often neglected by the media.

While violent acts are the work of marginal groups, certain observers consider them to be brought on by the climate of intolerance flooding Georgian society. Although many politicians consider the remedy to involve strengthening the State, Emil Adkhanov, a human rights activist, finds that the problem is much more complex: “It is necessary to proceed with the general education of the society, as in the Age of Enlightenment. Ignorance is the basis of intolerance.” Jewish Rabbi Kozlovsky states that the Georgian Patriarch is very tolerant and there will not be major radicalism in Georgia while Illia II is the head of the church.

Other facts that have happened in Religious organizations’ relations have had even smaller or no effect on the society. Herewith the most so-called radical actions of Basil Mkalavishvili and his followers cannot be framed in Religious Nationalism. It is also worth mentioning that, in the period when Mkalavishvili acted, all these sects were new for the country and while the country has one dominant religion, members of the society needed some time to adjust to new realities. GOC states that their position towards other minorities is tolerant, they didn’t consider Mkalavishvili as a part of the Orthodox Church, they state that the way he behaved was shameful and it has nothing to do with Orthodoxy — says Father George Samanishvili. He also adds that Mkalavishvili’s behavior was radical and unacceptable for normal society (Samanishvili, 2011).

There are many reports about how connected traditions and religion are in Georgia. Especially the so-called Virginity Institute is underlined. New York journalist Ellen Barry made a report about the traditions of Georgia, where the country is described as backward (Barry, 2011). On the other hand, it is sometimes described as a country of religious extremists, who control certain areas of the state, for example Pankisi Gorge. However, neither of these two is totally true. We cannot judge a country by isolated customs in mountainous villages, or incidents in society or certain individuals’ behaviour.

The head of the Tolerance Center, Mindiashvili, states that the condition of religious minorities has improved after 2004. In 2006-2008 law enforcement became equally required for everyone who commits a crime. With changes in the law, religious groups had the chance to register as NGOs and they did not have any problem operating (Mindiashvili, 2011). In 2005, the Parliament of Georgia adopted a new Education Law. In article 14.2 of this law we read “It is impossible to use studying process in the public schools for the purposes of religious indoctrination (inculcate religious ideas, attitudes and cognitive strategies), proselytism (conversion to a religion) or other purposes”. In the same law, the chapter about the freedom of faith says: “It is banned to oblige anybody at school to act against their religious faith, if it does not violate others’ rights. Religious symbols must not be situated in the territory of public school for non-academic purposes. Pupils in schools have the right to study religion or practise religious rituals after study hours, if it serves getting religious education”<sup>7</sup>.

“There are certain things left that could help Georgian society to become more tolerant towards religious groups and minorities” — Mindiashvili states. “The law on education is not fully enforced yet, as in many schools Orthodox religion is taught, many of educational centers have chapels, teachers encourage the pupils to go to church after classes. So, in this regard, the leading religion of the country and other groups are not in the same condition. However there is noticeable success during last years as minorities have had the chance to open their own centers and rent places for meetings” — he adds.

In 2010, the President of Georgia announced Azerbaijan holiday Novruz as a national holiday for the country. This is a step forward, as the Muslim minority is the second largest one after the Orthodox population. Still, there are some important recommendations the state policy lacks.

Number one is equal law enforcement for all religious organizations. Government has to apply one tax policy to all religious groups. If GOC is free from taxes, other groups have to be free as well.

Media has a very influential role in increasing tolerance in the country. Nowadays, media broadcasts only about Orthodox holidays, churches etc. The public broadcaster of Georgia should present educational programs about all religions, to increase awareness in society. As lack of education is the basis of intolerance, media could play a positive role in this development.

According to all the above mentioned facts and analyses, one can conclude that society in Georgia is indeed in transition. The changes that took place in the past years were unimaginable two decades ago. A dynamic society draws attention to many different things. Education and knowledge always bring new questions and those questions cause changes in the political, economic or religious life of society.

<sup>7</sup> *Law on Public Education* (2007). Accessed June 2, 2011. At, [http://www.mes.gov.ge/old/upload/publication/geo/1192002089\\_ZogadiGanatileba\\_122.pdf](http://www.mes.gov.ge/old/upload/publication/geo/1192002089_ZogadiGanatileba_122.pdf).

There is no country in the world where different ideas do not exist. Difference is also necessary — for example, left wing ideas need the right wing to maintain equilibrium. A healthy and active society always has variety inside. In the states where religious radicalism is blooming, it is the number one issue. However, in Georgia, surveys and statistics are done on economic and political matters. It means that there is no escalation in this regard and people who belong to religious minorities are more concerned about other things than religion. In Georgian Statistics Department there is no plan by the government or another organization to do new surveys about religion in the country.

The process that is going on in Georgia after the soviet period can be explained through the 70 years information vacuum. Most of the population tries to fill the gap and it is sometimes overwhelmed. Religion in this country is clearly connected to national identity, which is why there are reactions against other religious groups. If we get back to the definition of religious nationalism, there is no proof that it exists in the country, but taking into account the above mentioned facts, we can see that there are many different ideas and movements in religious terms. Those ideas will spread faster and faster as society develops more. Therefore, there is no major radicalization in Georgian society right now, but transformation is taking place. It is very likely the population will adjust to new realities better and in a more civilized manner, proper ways will be adopted to communicate with all other religious groups. Transformation of the religion will help a transitional society. This society has to grow up, meet new challenges and form in the way it will continue developing in the future.

Note: In the beginning of July 2011, Georgian ruling United Movement Party proposed a set of legal amendments about religious minority groups in Georgia. The Georgian parliament approved the law by first reading on July 1. The law granted a legal status under so-called “public law” to five religious groups that have historic ties with Georgia: the Muslim and Jewish communities, the Roman Catholic Church, Armenian Apostolic Church and Evangelical Baptist Church. As mentioned in the text above, those groups could only register as non-governmental organizations and they have called for a long time to be given the same privileges as the Georgian Orthodox Church.

The amendments were described as unexpected by the Orthodox Church. Georgian Orthodox Church Patriarch Ilia II on July 4 called for parliament to postpone the vote until public discussions and the formation of a governmental commission to study the proposed change would take place. Several hundred Georgian Orthodox Christians rallied on July 4 against changes in the law. However, the law was adopted on July 5 without any consultations (Lomsadze, 2011).

Governing party lawmakers said that believers of all religious minorities would have equal rights, and the changes have been welcomed by the

country's main international supporters: the United States and the Council of Europe.

Expert on Caucasus Mamuka Areshidze stated on the issue: "Democracy includes in it a conditional term, which is another moral value for the nation. Orthodox Christianity is this historical value for Georgia, because 83% of the population is Orthodox. I am sure that the Georgian Government could only benefit if it agreed to the decision of the Patriarchate." (Areshidze, 2011)

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**Chapter 23**  
**CONFLICT AND RELIGION: THE CASE OF UKRAINE**  
**NATALYA BELITSER**

*Religions in Ukraine: A Brief Overview*<sup>1</sup>

Ukraine is not only a multi-ethnic, but also a multi-religious country. More than 97% of the religious communities now registered in Ukraine are Christian. Dominant Orthodox Christians constitute about half of these communities; the other half is divided among Catholics and Protestants.

Orthodoxy in Ukraine is represented by three leading churches and several smaller confessions, including Old Believers and the Russian True Orthodox Church (RTOC). The three main Orthodox Churches of Ukraine are:

— Ukrainian Orthodox Church under jurisdiction of Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP);

— Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyivan Patriarchate (UOC-KP);

— Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC).

Major Catholic churches in Ukraine are represented by the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC), Roman Catholic Church (RCC), and Armenian Catholic Church.

There is also a number of well-entrenched Protestant denominations, whose development, practically stopped due to persecutions by the Soviet regime, has been restored after Ukraine gained independence in 1991. Nowadays, the main Protestant groups in Ukraine are:

— Baptists

— Lutherans

— Pentecostals

— Seventh-day Adventists

— Sub-Carpathian Reformed

Free Churches of Evangelical Christians, the churches of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ukraine (EPCU) included into the Union of Evangelical Reformed Churches of Ukraine, and some other denominations contribute to the diversity of Christian believers.

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<sup>1</sup> Or more information, see the main informational portal on religious life of Ukraine <http://RESU.org.ua>.

Ukraine is home to quite a few *Jewish* and *Muslim* communities, also Buddhists, Jehova's Witnesses, and Neo-pagans; a number of non-traditional and new religious movements are also present, and some of them are growing dynamically.

The very diversity and complexity of religious life in Ukraine often leads to rather complicated inter-church and inter-confessional relations. This sometimes manifests itself through rivalries between different denominations, major and smaller churches, and well-established and new movements and organizations — not to mention internal disagreements. Regrettably, despite the fact that the Constitution of Ukraine clearly declares that Ukraine is a secular country with separated state and religious institutions, in reality interactions between state and different churches and denominations sometimes seem far removed from this ideal, demonstrating once again the involvement of central and local authorities in religious life in an attempt to influence it for their own political purposes and benefit.

### *Legislation*

The main legislative bill, regulating religious affairs and State — Church relations, "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations", still in force, was adopted in April 1991, i.e., a few months before Ukraine's independence.<sup>2</sup> The last substantial changes to it were made in December 1993, with some later insignificant modifications.

By the time of its adoption, this Law was rather advanced and providing a wide spectrum of liberties, sharply contrasting with the actual situation with religious freedom in the still existing Soviet Union. It guaranteed each Ukrainian citizen the right to freedom of conscience, including freedom to profess, take and change religion or beliefs on one's own choice and freedom to profess any religion alone or together with others or not to profess any, to perform religious rites, to express openly and distribute freely his/her religious or atheistic beliefs. Nobody shall be forced in determination of his/her attitude to religion, profess or refusal to profess religion, in participation or non-participation in divine service, devotions and religious ceremonies, teaching religion.

Any discrimination of persons and limitation of citizens' rights and freedoms depending on their attitude to religion shall be prohibited. All religions, creeds and religious organizations shall be equal before law. Establishment of any privileges or limitations of one religion over the other shall be prohibited. According to the Law, church in Ukraine shall be separated from state, whereas the educational system shall be separated from church and have a secular character.

<sup>2</sup> Law of Ukraine of 23.04.1991 No 987-XII "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations in Ukraine" (entered into force on June 18, 1991).

According to the Law, religious organizations established for satisfaction of citizens' religious needs, include:

- religious communities;
- religious administrations and centres;
- monasteries;
- congregations;
- missions;
- theological educational institutions.

Unions of the above mentioned religious organizations.

All of the above mentioned religious organisations are prohibited to:

- participate in activities of political parties;
- perform state functions;
- provide financial aid to political parties;
- nominate candidates for election post;
- agitate or finance election campaigns;
- interfere in activity of other religious organizations;
- preach hostility, intolerance to atheists or believers of other religions.

Attempts to radically change this law have been undertaken in the mid-90s, after Ukraine's joining the Council of Europe (1995) and the adoption of the Constitution of Ukraine (1996). In November 2003, Verkhovna Rada (parliament) rejected the draft governmental bill "On Introducing Changes to Law of Ukraine 'On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations'", and from that time on, "the battles" over changes continued between the main actors — the central government, the Ministry of Justice, the state agency for religious affairs, and various religious organisations and their associations representing emerging civil society of Ukraine.

It could be noted that although a leading role in the activities of the latter belonged to the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations (AUCCRO) — representative inter-confessional and consultative-advisory body that — some new associations were formed to strengthen the voice of Ukraine's believers and their role in the process (see later).

Subsequent attempts to introduce changes to the Law of Ukraine "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations" began in 2006 due to the Presidential Decree No 39/2006 from January 20, 2006, "On the Action Plan for fulfilling the obligations and commitments of Ukraine arising from membership in the Council of Europe." The decree was prompted by Resolution of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) No 1466 (2005) "On the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Ukraine", which was passed following the Report of the Monitoring Committee.<sup>3</sup>

According to the presidential decree, the Ministry of Justice was ordered to develop and submit to the government a new edition of the Law of Ukraine

<sup>3</sup> See: Oleksandr Zaiets, *Council of Europe's requirements for Ukraine's law on religious freedom: between truth and fiction*, 31 May 2011, [http://www.irs.in.ua/eng/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=245:1&catid=36:com&Itemid=55](http://www.irs.in.ua/eng/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=245:1&catid=36:com&Itemid=55).

“On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations.” The working group of the Ministry of Justice, which included representatives of the denominations, the public, and academics, prepared a new draft, which received a positive evaluation from experts of the Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR. In November 2006 the draft was reviewed at a session of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations. As a result of the discussion, the AUCCRO sent an address to President Viktor Yushchenko, asking to continue consultations on the revision of the concept on church-state relations and the new version of the Law of Ukraine “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations” in order to reach a consensus.

In 2008-2010 work on the new draft Law of Ukraine “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations” was carried out by the State Committee on Nationalities and Religions. But the draft was not submitted to the government to be reviewed by the parliament because the AUCCRO and a number of other religious organisations and associations expressed objections to the draft.<sup>4</sup>

After Victor Yanukovich became the next President of Ukraine as a result of presidential elections-2010, the general situation with human rights and freedoms, including freedom of conscience, deteriorated. After Victor Yanukovich, newly elected President of Ukraine, issued on December 12 the Decree No. 1085/2010 „On the Optimization of the System of Central Executive Agencies”, the central governmental body responsible for regulating many aspects of religious life, was liquidated, and its functions were divided between the reorganized Ministry of Culture of Ukraine and the newly created State Registration Service of Ukraine.

According to the President’s Decree, only one of these functions will be carried out by the State Registration Service which will be responsible for registering not only religious, but also civic and charitable organizations, while all others will fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture. This false step obviously violated legislation in force, because Article 30 of the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations stipulates the functioning of a State body on religious affairs responsible for many important tasks, including promotion of mutual understanding and tolerance between different faiths and denominations; The prescribed role of the State Registration Service, violating the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations, thus prepared the ground for hasty amendments to the Law without proper preparation and coordination with the religious communities and their associations.<sup>5</sup> The AUCCRO and other inter-faith associations have repeatedly spoken out against the introduction of any amendments to the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations, justly

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> On the dissolution of the State Committee of Ukraine on Nationalities and Religion. 10 December 2010, [http://www.irs.in.ua/eng/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=216:1&catid=34:ua&Itemid=61](http://www.irs.in.ua/eng/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=216:1&catid=34:ua&Itemid=61).

believing that under present conditions, the legislative process endangers religious freedom in Ukraine. The heads of the confessions stressed that the consideration by the parliament of the initiatives on altering the current Law of Ukraine “On Freedom of Worship and Religious Organizations” is relevant “only on condition of the principled agreement of all the subjects of the law-making process on the importance of religious freedom in Ukraine as one of the greatest achievements of our state in the area of ensuring of rights and freedoms of a person.”<sup>6</sup>

The next Presidential Decree<sup>1</sup> 24/2011 “On the Action Plan for fulfilling the obligations and commitments of Ukraine arising from membership in the Council of Europe” of January 12, 2011, authorised the Ministry of Culture with developing a new edition of the bill on introducing changes to the Law of Ukraine “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations.”

After a meeting between the minister of culture of Ukraine, M. Kulyniak and members of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations it was decided to create a new working group for preparation of a draft law. The working group, which met twice on March 16 and April 8, 2011, decided that there is no urgency in making a new version of the Law of Ukraine on the freedom of religion; however, its members did call for changes in the sectoral legislation, which would regulate the activity of religious organizations in specific areas of public life.

On April 7, 2011, President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich in his annual message to the Parliament of Ukraine proposed the following initiatives on religious matters:

- develop and adopt a concept of Church-State relations;
- develop, with regard to provisions of the concept, a new edition of the Law of Ukraine “On the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations” to ensure interdenominational peace and accord, the equal treatment of all churches, and the debarment of any sort of fundamentalism.

As one of the leading experts on religious affairs has noted, “...it is evident that the presidential decree from January 12, 2011, and the presidential letter to the parliament propose two different approaches to updating legislation on the freedom of religion and religious organizations. Furthermore, representatives of the denominations in the working group of the Ministry of Culture proposed yet another approach to improve legislation”.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, this undetermined and uncomfortable situation and emerged confusion has actually helped to avert the immediate danger of passing through the “docile” parliament of the essentially worsened version of law on religious freedom that might threaten the fragile inter-confessional peace

<sup>6</sup>All-Ukrainian Council of Churches calls Ukrainian authority not to change Law on freedom of worship, 5 November 2010, [http://www.irs.in.ua/eng/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=214:1&catid=34:ua&Itemid=61](http://www.irs.in.ua/eng/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=214:1&catid=34:ua&Itemid=61).

<sup>7</sup>Oleksandr Zaiets, *Head of the Board of the Institute for Religious Freedom*, at [http://www.irs.in.ua/eng/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=245:1&catid=36:com&Itemid=55](http://www.irs.in.ua/eng/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=245:1&catid=36:com&Itemid=55).

and aggravate existing tensions in relations between state and churches, also between different denominations of Ukraine.

### *A Role of Religious Councils and Associations*<sup>8</sup>

Since the number and diversity of the officially registered religious communities and organizations of different faiths has been very high, to escape escalation of actual and potential conflicts between them, a number of different kinds of associations and CSO are taking part in conflict prevention activities, apart from official state bodies. The most influential among the first is the *All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations (AUCCRO)* established in December 1996 at the initiative of Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma. This representative inter-denominational advisory body unites all the major registered religious groups in Ukraine<sup>9</sup>. Among its purposes are:

- to unite the efforts of religious and appropriate public organizations for the national and spiritual revival of Ukraine
- to coordinate inter-church dialogue in Ukraine and abroad
- to participate in the development of current and long-term forecasts on church-state relations and to draft normative acts with regard to these questions

Currently, the AUCCRO includes 19 churches and religious organizations (Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim), which makes up about 95% of the religious network in Ukraine. This Council, being the most influential and well-reputed among all other associations and inter-denominational bodies, was initially associated with Ukraine's National Committee on Religious Matters, later on — with the State Committee on Nationalities and Religions. After liquidation of the latter in December 2010 in a course of so-called "administrative reform", AUCCRO together with some other associations and CSO discussed an issue vigorously and sent numerous appeals to President and Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, demanding to revise such a decision and to restore a single government agency for religious affairs.

Throughout 2010 the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations continued to play a leading role in interfaith and church-state relations. Its Chair during this period (from October 2009 to November 2010) was Bishop Markijan Trofimiak, who is responsible for external relations of the Roman Catholic Church in Ukraine. Since November 4, the new chair of the council is Vasyl Raychinets, senior presbyter of the Union of Free Churches of Christians of the Evangelical Faith of Ukraine.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> For more detailed information, see Oleksandr Zaiets, *Review of inter-denominational dialogue in Ukraine in 2010*, December 2010, Institute for Religious Freedom NGO (Kyiv, Ukraine).

<sup>9</sup> For more detailed information, see <http://old.risu.org.ua/eng/major.religions/auccro/>.

<sup>10</sup> Oleksandr Zaiets, *Review of inter-denominational dialogue in Ukraine in 2010*, 17 December 2010, Institute for Religious Freedom NGO (Kyiv, Ukraine).

Another important and influential association is the *Council of Representatives of Christians Churches of Ukraine (CRCCU)* established in December 2003. According to the founding documents, the main purpose of the Council of Churches is to promote the spread of Christianity and the principles of religious freedom in Ukraine, to promote a dialogue among Christians to revive Christian morality in society, to eradicate Soviet atheism and totalitarianism, and to build partnerships between the state and the church to develop the civil society.

It is worth special mentioning because its formation signified an important step of seeking cooperation between different Christian denominations, marked by sharp inter-confessional conflicts throughout the 90s, but coming together in order to join efforts for protection of religious freedoms. The members of the CRCCU include representatives of nine Christian churches: Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Kyivan Patriarchate, Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchate, Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Roman Catholic Church in Ukraine, Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Christian Baptists, All-Ukrainian Union of Churches of Christians of Evangelical Faith — Pentecostals, Ukrainian Christian Evangelical Church, Brotherhood of Independent Churches and Missions of Evangelical Christian Baptists of Ukraine, and Ukrainian Lutheran Church.

The *Council of Evangelical Protestant Churches of Ukraine (CEPCU)* was formed in 2006. Heads of the following nine Evangelical Churches (religious associations) belong to the council: All-Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, All-Ukrainian Union of Evangelical Christian Churches — Pentecostal (AUECCP), Ukrainian Union Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, Ukrainian Christian Evangelical Church (UCEC), Union of Free Churches of Christians of Evangelical Faith of Ukraine, Ukrainian Lutheran Church (ULC), Brotherhood of Independent Baptist Churches and Missions of Ukraine, the Association of Missionary Churches of Ukraine, and the Association of Independent Charismatic Christian Churches of Ukraine (Full Gospel), which joined the CEPCU in December 2010.

During its sessions, the Council discussed such issues as church-state relations, protection of public morality, attempts to politicize issues of religious organizations, media coverage of Evangelical churches, violation of religious rights and freedoms et al. Activities of the CEPCU helped counteract the attempts of politicizing the religious environment that became especially evident before the local elections of October 31, 2010. The council demonstrated its openness by having dialogues with other Protestant churches, in particular, by inviting representatives of these religious organizations to its meetings and granting them the power to vote.

Another example of association of Christian denominations is the *Ukrainian Interchurch Council (UIC)* formed in 2003. It consists of about 20 religious leaders of evangelical associations and a number of NGOs and reli-

gious press services. Although it attempted to influence church-state relations, experts assessed its impact as limited and insignificant.<sup>11</sup>

The *Council of Representatives of Spiritual Directorates and Centres of Muslims of Ukraine* was formed in April 2009 as a representative advisory body of Muslims of Ukraine affiliated with the State Committee of Ukraine on Nationalities and Religions. Currently, the council is composed of three out of the five Muslim religious associations that operate in Ukraine: the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Crimea, Spiritual Administration of the Kyiv Muftiyat and the Umma Spiritual Directorate of Muslims.

The council is mainly engaged in coordinating pilgrims to holy places of Islam. The activity of this council and its influence were limited because the two of major bodies — the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Ukraine (Kyiv) and the Spiritual Centre of Muslims of Ukraine (Donetsk) — did not join it. These religious associations, however, are members of the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations. After liquidation of the State Committee on Nationalities and religions, the Council has experiences even more difficulties and obstacles in its operation, and a split between Muslim communities subordinated to different religious authorities, seems to be augmenting.

Recently, some new religious associations have arisen, some of them with clear involvement of the ruling Party of Regions of Ukraine. For example, the *Spiritual Council of Ukraine* was formed over a year ago after the presidential elections at the initiative of the Party of Regions. Some members of this council were elected to local bodies of self-government during October 31 elections, “indicating the political basis of this project”. It was concluded that taking into consideration the complicated interfaith and interethnic situation in country, beginning from early 2010, three leading inter-church associations — AUCCRO, CRCCU and CEPCU — strengthened their credibility and contributed to the important task of promoting dialogue between different religious, national, ethnic, and other groups, which is essential for the consolidation of peace, tolerance and understanding in the Ukrainian society.<sup>12</sup>

### *Conflict-Generating Issues in Inter-church Relations*

After 1991, the revival of a number of formerly repressed Christian churches occurred simultaneously with efforts to establish an Autocephaly for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. This initial period was characterised by numerous conflicts between different religious communities and groups of believers, predominantly over the ownership and restitution of church buildings and property, confiscated (or destroyed) during the Soviet era and then

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

(re)distributed between different confessions. Although the contentious and sometimes controversial issues of returning buildings and property, formerly belonging to different communities, are still far from fully resolved, the sharp conflicts and clashes of the 1990s — especially in western Ukraine with its maximal diversity of Christian denominations — have gradually calmed down. In many cases, solutions based on “win-win” strategies and approaches were adopted: for example, by alternating the use of church premises between groups of believers of different denominations. According to the 2009 report of the State Committee for Nationalities and Religions “On the State and Tendencies of the Development of the Religious Situation and State-Church Relations in Ukraine”, the highest index of such good practices was registered in Lviv and the Lviv oblast, thus creating a positive example of interfaith accord and tolerance in the region.<sup>13</sup>

During the presidency of Victor Yushenko (2004 — 2010), much effort was made to unify all the Orthodox denominations into a single, independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church independent of the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate. Although quite a few clergy, congregations and lay people did not support such an approach, the issue was the subject of wide public discussion. However, there were no attempts to impose unification through administrative methods. During this period, the most topical issues of state-church and interfaith relations were addressed through dialogue with the active participation of many interested actors and stakeholders. A high degree of openness in state policies and the permanent involvement of CSOs in this matter were reached which seemed, at the time, irreversible.

This favourable climate has drastically changed in 2010, very soon after electing new president of Ukraine Victor Yanukovich and formation of his government. Already the very procedure of his inauguration had shocked many people, both believers and non-believers: for the first time in the newest history of independent Ukraine, the well-established tradition of inviting heads of all Ukrainian churches to the joint service in the Saint Sofia Cathedral was neglected, thus showing clear preference provided for only one confession — Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Moscow Patriarchy (UOC-MP).

The next day after the inauguration, its head Metropolitan Volodymyr (Sobodan) wrote a letter to Victor Yanukovich, in which he provided the “guidelines” for establishing a new format of relations between State and Church. This document is highly believed to become an “Action Programme” of President Yanukovich in the religious area; it contains several key points as follows:

— introducing the learning of the fundamentals of the Christian ethics, the Orthodox culture and the Scripture in educational institutions at a variety of levels ranging from kindergartens to the most prestigious universities;

<sup>13</sup> See information at <http://maidan.org.ua/static/news/2010/1269516874.html>, 25.03.2010.

— promoting the development of spiritual and educational information projects on TV, radio and in the other media for the purpose of spiritual revival and upbringing of future generations;

— church valuables and constructions must be given back to their real owners; the revival of the Church's economic activity should be promoted;

— the President's great mission is to consolidate the Ukrainian society, to unite the nation on the basis of our traditions and Christian virtues and efforts to be made by the UOC-MP "to cure the wound of the split in the Ukrainian Orthodoxy in the spirit of the canonical system of the Church".<sup>14</sup>

The true meaning and main message of this address consists of a comprehensive plan for the monopolisation of the religious life of Christian believers in Ukraine by the UOC-MP. This is not simply an interpretation. According to the UOC-MP, other Orthodox confessions are non-canonical, while the authority and influence of non-Orthodox confessions should be counteracted and diminished because their values are "not ours".

Moreover, Russian tradition of having state-subordinated church used for political purposes is reflected in wording by Moscow Patriarch Kirill, who blessed Victor Yanukovich for the presidency on 25 February, 2010. He appealed to the notion of "the united holy Russia" and said that "fraternal peoples linked by the common historical tradition are successors of Prince Volodymyr the Great..." In line with this, political repercussions of actual intentions of the UOC-MP are evident in postings at their official site (which is available only in Russian), where calls for "the Unity of the Russian Civilization and the Unity of the Russian Orthodox Church" are widespread.

Indeed, throughout 2010 new powers seemed eager to promptly implement the above "programme", often using the state budget for providing financial support for different activities of the UOC-MP.<sup>15</sup> For example, according to the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated 14 July 2010, several ml hrivnas the Stabilisation Fund have been allocated for construction of cathedrals belonging to this church, whereas other denominations (and tax-payers of different beliefs, as well as non-believers, received none).<sup>16</sup>

On the eve of Easter-2010, the Synod of Bishops of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) called on the President "to secure the equality of all churches in Ukraine before the law and in public life", because preference given to one of the confessions will deepen the split among the citizens and will do harm to the entire Ukrainian people. The letter also reminds about the

<sup>14</sup> For more details, see Iryna Lukomska, "The Church: What Program Is Implemented by the President of Ukraine?", UCIPR expert. Research Update. Vol. 16, No 9/607, 09 April 2010.

<sup>15</sup> For some concrete examples, see <http://maidan.org.ua/static/news/2010/1269950094.html>, <http://proua.com/analytic/2010/08/26/123324.html>, <http://un.ua/ukr/article/256978.html>; <http://korrespondent.net/ukraine/politics/1110845>, [http://risu.org.ua/ua/index/all\\_news/state/church\\_state\\_relations/39100/](http://risu.org.ua/ua/index/all_news/state/church_state_relations/39100/); [http://risu.org.ua/ua/index/all\\_news/state/church\\_state\\_relations/39461/](http://risu.org.ua/ua/index/all_news/state/church_state_relations/39461/).

<sup>16</sup> Government builds cathedrals and centres for UOP on taxes of Ukrainians of different confessions and religious attitudes — journalists' investigation (in Ukrainian), 26 August 2010, RISU.org.ua.

gospel warning of the divided kingdom; in the opinion of the UGCC, “This is just the scenario attempted to be imposed on Ukraine by the forces that do not value its historical traditions, cannot reconcile with its modern status and do not link their future to it.”<sup>17</sup>

Regrettably, this appeal wasn’t heard or taken into consideration, as the attendance by the President of an Easter service at exclusively the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra (belonging to the UOP-MP) has evinced.

Thus, throughout 2010 the situation regarding religious rights and freedoms continued to deteriorate and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church — Kyiv Patriarchate became the principal target of increasing pressure from the UOP-MP, with active support from the authorities and the majority coalition in the Verkhovna Rada.

The practice of “repeated baptism” was introduced by the clergy of the Moscow Patriarchate towards those baptized in the Kyiv Patriarchate. Patriarch of the UOC-KP Filaret sent a letter about these wrongdoings to Moscow Patriarch Kirill but there was no response to it. “We have not seen any response to it, save speeches of some bishops, whose position was mostly grounded on hostility to the Kyiv Patriarchate, not on the teaching of the Church. The practice of “repeated baptism” continues despite the absence of any document of the Moscow Patriarchate or the UOC-MP providing for such a practice and giving it the canonical substantiation,” stated Filaret.<sup>18</sup>

On 28 December 2010, clergy and believers of the UOC-KP organised a protest action near the Kyiv Oblast administration, praying to “enlighten” civil servants who provoked interfaith conflicts and enforced transfers of parishes of the UOC-KP under jurisdiction of the UOP-MP.<sup>19</sup> On the eve of the New Year, Patriarch of the UOC-KP Filaret alarmed Ukrainian media by the statement about vicious plans to completely disintegrate and destroy the Kyiv Patriarchate. According to his words, these plans were worked out in Moscow and delivered to central Ukrainian authorities who in their turn sent coordinated directives to local powers for implementing it. A number of concrete examples of pressuring the priests of the UOC-KP were provided, as well as members of parishes; occasions of unlawful passage of church property and buildings were named. Filaret urged authorities and especially the head of the State to reject such practices and renew a genuine and fruitful dialogue. He warned that otherwise, Ukraine comes under threat of returning to severe inter-confessional battles like those at the beginning of the 90s.<sup>20</sup>

Civil society of Ukraine also reacted to repeated violations of religious rights and freedoms and preferential treatment of the UOC-MP. On 25 October 2010, the Council of the Ukrainian Association for Religious Freedom

<sup>17</sup> Maidan-Info, 29-03-2010, at <http://maidan.org.ua/static/news/2010/1269875996.html>

<sup>18</sup> Iryna Lukomska, *The Church: What Program Is Implemented by the President of Ukraine?*, UCIPR expert. Research Update. Vol. 16, No 9/607, 09 April 2010.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.cerkva.info/uk/news/kyiv/1132-protest.html>.

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.cerkva.info/uk/news/patriarkh/1143-zajava-patr.html>.

expressed concern over the situation. Those present at the meeting analysed religious freedom in Ukraine and pointed to a worsening in relations between faiths. The reason for this was seen as being the special attitude to one particular Church demonstrated by those in power, as well as cases of effective discrimination against all others.

It was also noted that the new version of the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations was prepared not openly and without discussion of its provisions by all interested parties, including representatives of the Churches and religious organizations, experts and believers wishing to take part in a process (as it was until 2010).<sup>21</sup>

Ukraine was also criticized for curbing human rights and freedoms, including religious ones, at the OSCE Conference taking place in Warsaw from 30 September to 8 October. A telling example of the *obstructions created by law-enforcement bodies for believers* belonging to the UOC-KP and trying to reach Kyiv for ceremonies to mark the Festival of the Baptism of Kyivan-Rus on 28 July 2010 was recalled. Thomas Melia, the representative of the US State Department, said that this was all reminiscent of the period before the Orange Revolution, having stressed that “over the last months Ukraine has stopped observing OSCE standards on freedom of assembly and freedom of movement”.<sup>22</sup>

### *2011: New Trends and Developments*

Alerted by the current situation in the religious sphere, in January 2011, 50 MPs of Ukraine, at the initiative of the leader of “For Ukraine!” party Vyacheslav Kyrylenko, addressed the President of Ukraine, expressing deep concern about unlawful preferences given to the UOP-MP, and discrimination of all other churches. It has been stressed that such an approach not only contradicts the Constitution and laws of Ukraine, but leads to ever-growing tensions, threatening to undermine fragile inter-confessional peace and provoke a new wave of acute interdenominational conflicts.<sup>23</sup>

These and a number of other signals from within and outside the country forced authorities to turn to more restrained policies. Repeatedly manifested concerns and dissatisfaction by lack of dialogue with religious organizations and their associations have also had some impact, and on April 21, 2011, President Victor Yanukovich held, for the first time, a meeting with the AUCCRO members. At this meeting, in particular, the president talked about

<sup>21</sup> *Concern expressed over reduction in religious freedom in Ukraine*. 03.11.2010, <http://www.khpg.org/en/index.php?id=1288792240>.

<sup>22</sup> *OSCE Conference criticizes Ukraine's authority for infringing believers' rights*. 8 October 2010, [http://www.irs.in.ua/eng/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=213:1&catid=34:ua&Itemid=61](http://www.irs.in.ua/eng/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=213:1&catid=34:ua&Itemid=61).

<sup>23</sup> 17-01-2011, <http://maidan.org.ua/static/news/2011/1295259249.html>.

the equality of all churches and confessions of Ukraine, the necessity to ensure equal rights for all of them, and promised that the State would perform this task. He also welcomed the active participation of representatives of religious organizations in developing the draft law “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations” (new edition), and noted that after the elaboration of this draft law and its provisions by *general consensus*, he would sign the law.

Repeated calls of the AUCCRO and many other religious and secular CSOs to re-establish a central governmental body responsible for religious affairs seemed to also be taken into consideration (at least, partly). Although a high-level state institution of this kind was not restored, according to the decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine from 7 September 2011, all functions of the former Committee on Nationalities and Religions will be consolidated within the new Department of the Ministry of culture. It is foreseen that this department will consist of four structural units, namely:

- a section of research, analytics, and liaisons with religious organisations;
- a section for registration of statutes and running statistics on religious organisations;
- a section on promotion of social and humanitarian activities of religious organisations;
- a section of interethnic relations.<sup>24</sup>

It is also quite remarkable that in 2011, equal treatment of all confessions has become obligatory for state officials. This requirement was added to the General Rules of Behaviour of a State Official on the basis of Order 176 of the Main Department of State Service of Ukraine of July 17, 2011, which made alterations to Order 214 of August 4, 2010. According to this document that was registered at the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine on August 15, 2011 under #973/19711 and will soon come into force, a state official should not express any preferences for any associations of citizens, religious organizations regardless of their size, status, denomination, line of activity.<sup>25</sup>

In general, it could be noted that in 2011, instead of the anticipated escalation of tensions, main churches of Ukraine resumed a dialogue, seeing it as the main means to overcome existing difficulties in interdenominational relations. In this process, a special role belongs to the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC). It is based on strategies outlined by Patriarch Lubomyr (Husar) and continued by his successor, Patriarch Sviatoslav. The newly elected head of the UGCC recognises his and his church mission as that of a “mediator”, trying to reconcile, to become the bridge between the divided communities. Apart from traditional activities aimed at reaching mutual

<sup>24</sup> 8 September 2011, at [http://www.irs.in.ua/index.php?option=com\\_content.&view=article&id=916%3A1&catid=34%3Aua&Itemid=61&lang=uk](http://www.irs.in.ua/index.php?option=com_content.&view=article&id=916%3A1&catid=34%3Aua&Itemid=61&lang=uk).

<sup>25</sup> *Ukraine's State Officials Obligated to Show No Preferences for Any Religious Organizations*, 2 September 2011, [http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all\\_news/state/church\\_state\\_relations/44164/](http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all_news/state/church_state_relations/44164/).

understanding between clergy and laity of Catholic and Orthodox churches, many efforts are being taken to engage in peaceful dialogue different Orthodox denominations as well. According to Patriarch Sviatoslav, it is important to “create space where they can not only meet with us but also with each other”; the hierarch stressed also the vital importance and great potential of such an institution as AUCCRO that “provides certain kinds of opportunities to cooperate, at least to talk and meet together with state authorities and develop our relations”.<sup>26</sup>

The UGCC head also explained why his church has positively cooperated not only with Orthodox confessions, but also with Protestants in the context of the AUCCRO and the Ukrainian Bible Society. “We actively cooperate with Protestants in the context of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches, and we see that especially when it comes to various social or sociopolitical positions in Ukraine that Christians have or should have, we actually find oneness with Protestants,” said the patriarch. “Protestants — perhaps because they don’t have specific ideological schemes, which weigh heavily over them — are truly Ukrainian patriots and protect Ukrainian statehood and Ukrainian identity very well.” The primate considers the Protestant churches to be “powerful and serious allies.”<sup>27</sup>

It is also interesting to note the change of rhetoric by the head of UOC-KP Filaret. Recalling his alarmed statements of 2010 about intentions of the new authorities to destroy and annihilate this church, his public speeches and interviews of middle-2011 are much more tolerant. In particular, in his interview to the newspaper *Universum*, Patriarch Filaret said that “the struggle between the Kyivan and Moscow Patriarchates is no longer as overt as it used to be”. He added that the events of last year have proved that the Kyivan Patriarchate cannot be destroyed. “Recently we have lost a few parishes, but parishes are transferring from the Moscow to the Kyivan Patriarchate, as has happened, for example, in the Poltava Oblast. And even in these few parishes that experienced attacks, there is strong resistance, and so far they cannot be taken away from us. ... This is a very good sign, which the government sees as well... And if the government wants to rule, it should facilitate this process”. Filaret also expressed his appreciation of President’s meeting with AUCCRO on April 21, and the attitude of the latter toward equal treatment of all confessions. Moreover, his interview contained such revelations as “the clergy and bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate are recognising the ne-

<sup>26</sup> *UGCC to investigate statistics in order to reconcile with Orthodox Churches*, 11 May 2011, [http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all\\_news/confessional/interchurch\\_relations/42286/](http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all_news/confessional/interchurch_relations/42286/); “Head of the UGCC called on seeking ways for reconciliation and uniting with our brothers from UOC-MP, UOC-KP, and UAOC” (in Ukrainian). 22 07 2011, [http://www.religion.in.ua/news/ukrainian\\_news/11084-glava-ugkc-zaklikav-virnix-vitrivalo-shukati-shlyaxiv-primirenniya-ta-poyednannya-z-nashimi-bratami-z-upc-mp-upc-kp-ta-uapc.html](http://www.religion.in.ua/news/ukrainian_news/11084-glava-ugkc-zaklikav-virnix-vitrivalo-shukati-shlyaxiv-primirenniya-ta-poyednannya-z-nashimi-bratami-z-upc-mp-upc-kp-ta-uapc.html).

<sup>27</sup> Head of UGCC on interdenominational relations: “We have a lot more in common than what divides us”. 21 July 2011, [http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all\\_news/confessional/interchurch\\_relations/43439/](http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all_news/confessional/interchurch_relations/43439/).

cessity for the existence in Ukraine of an independent church, and Moscow has noticed this, as well as the fact that the UOC-MP is against Russia's imperialist ideology. Accordingly, Moscow has resolved to deny this church of autonomy and self-governance."

The primate believes that Patriarch Kirill is visiting Ukraine so often to remind Ukrainians that he is the head of the church, not Metropolitan Volodymyr. "The episcopate of the Metropolitan Volodymyr is resisting, inside the Moscow Patriarchate a struggle is being waged," said Filaret.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, an analysis by the Institute for Religious Freedom of the situation within the UOC-MP and its relations with ROC, and particularly with Patriarch Kirill, reveals a number of existing problems in the above mentioned spheres that are far from approximating the settlement; it is also remarkable to note that, according to the same in-depth analysis, attitude and attention of the high rank state officials of Ukraine to Kirill's visits have progressively dropped (in response to the increasingly assertive and demanding position of the head of ROC, reflecting geopolitical ambitions and dominating intentions of Russia's state authorities).<sup>29</sup>

However, the official position of the UOC-MP did not change, and despite a revived dialogue with the UOP-KP, the main issue at stake — independence of a unified Ukrainian Orthodox Church from the Moscow Patriarchate — remained unsettled. When Patriarch Filaret addressed the bishops, clergy and laity of the UOC-MP, present at the Jubilee Council on July 8, with a proposal to find church unity, the head of the UOC-MP Metropolitan Volodymyr's actual response, contained in his report, evidenced that the position of the UOC-MP is to unite all Orthodox Christians of Ukraine but on its own terms.<sup>30</sup> "Demonstrating the willingness to start a constructive dialogue with non-canonical church structures," the UOC, according to Metropolitan Volodymyr, "simultaneously retains its principled position," which "was and remains unchanged": the unification of all Orthodox Christians in the bosom of a single canonical church by returning to it those who separated from it. The way back involves repentance, which is not a "humiliating procedure," said the metropolitan. The UOC-MP is "ready to forget the wounds" that were inflicted on it by those who separated from it.<sup>31</sup>

This rigid position was recently confirmed by the head of the Department of External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan

<sup>28</sup> <http://universum.lviv.ua/journal/2011/3/exclus.htm>; see also Patriarch Filaret Calls on President to Initiate Social Dialogue. 12 September 2011, [http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all\\_news/community/religion\\_and\\_policy/44309/](http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all_news/community/religion_and_policy/44309/).

<sup>29</sup> 01.08.2011, [http://www.irs.in.ua/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=904%3A1&catid=37%3Aart&Itemid=64&lang=uk](http://www.irs.in.ua/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=904%3A1&catid=37%3Aart&Itemid=64&lang=uk).

<sup>30</sup> *Heads of UOC-KP and UOC-MP support dialogue, but have different visions of way to overcome schism*, 11 July 2011, [http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all\\_news/confessional/interchurch\\_relations/43279/](http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all_news/confessional/interchurch_relations/43279/).

<sup>31</sup> 8 07 2011, <http://www.religion.in.ua/news/vazhlivo/10836-predstoyateli-upc-kievskogo-i-moskovskogo-patriarxatov-obmenyalis-svoim-videniem-cerkovnogo-dialoga.html>.

Ilarion in an interview to the Russian magazine Portal-Credo. Answering the question if “such Churches as the Kyivan Patriarchate, Greek Old Style, True Orthodox Church” will be invited to the All-Orthodox (Ecumenical) Council, the metropolitan said: “What you call “alternative Orthodoxy” we call a schism. There were no precedents of invitations of representatives of schismatic organizations to inter-Orthodox meetings so far and I think there will be no such things in the future.” Metropolitan Ilarion also stated that during his meetings with the heads of the Eastern Patriarchates, the situation in Ukraine “was not discussed in detail even though it was touched upon at some meetings.” The metropolitan is certain that the way of overcoming the schism is through repentance and return to the Church communion. At the same time the hierarch does not exclude the possibility that the problems of the schism “may be discussed also at the inter-Orthodox level.”<sup>32</sup>

Therefore, it is clear that a certain “softening” and revision of governmental policy that until recently has in fact provided overt state support to only one confession, is a step developed at a time of worsening relations between Ukraine and Russia, particularly over the issue of gas. Increasing Russian pressure on Ukraine is not limited to political issues but includes humanitarian and religious life. In particular, Patriarch Kirill (elected in 2009), who demonstrates a much more rigid position on Ukrainian “schisms” than his predecessor Aleksiy II, has much experience of dealing with Ukrainian Orthodoxy. It should be recalled that his previous visits were long missionary tours to Ukrainian cities and villages, and that in the 1990s, when part of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church declared its independence from the Russian Patriarchy, Kirill’s visits to Ukraine were in fact attempts to bring Ukrainians back into religious organizations subordinated to the Russian Patriarchy.<sup>33</sup>

But while hopes of achieving a genuine autocephaly for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church with an endorsement from the current Moscow Patriarch have failed, the same seems true of the hopes of the latter — rather premature, as it turned out — that “the schism in Ukraine is, to a large extent, a thing of the past”.<sup>34</sup>

It should also be added that the assertive and sometimes aggressive attempts of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) to fully subordinate the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to the ROC have not been supported by other Orthodox churches beyond Ukraine.

A telling illustration of this is that Patriarchs of the four oldest churches of the world and the primate of the Cyprus Autocephalous Church called the Russian Orthodox Church to observe its canonical territory.

“Due to the events which have recently taken place in the Orthodox Church,” the council stressed the necessity that the Orthodox Churches

<sup>32</sup> “What you call “alternative Orthodoxy” we call a schism, — Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev. 13 September 2011, [http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all\\_news/orthodox/moscow\\_patriarchy/44346/](http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all_news/orthodox/moscow_patriarchy/44346/).

<sup>33</sup> 5 August 2011, <http://risu.org.ua/en/index/blog/~P.Best/43674/>.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

should respect and strictly observe the geographical borders of their jurisdictions “as defined by the holy canons and Thomoses on the foundation of these churches.” These words hinted at non-recognition of a canonical status of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church-Moscow patriarchate as an “integral part” of the Moscow Patriarchate. It was reminded that concerning the Moscow Patriarchate and its canonical borders, the Constantinople Patriarchate and Constantinople Council observe the Thomos of 1589 according to which the territory of present day Ukraine is not part of the Moscow Patriarchate. This comment was considered by the UOC-KP as the way of the Constantinople Patriarchate to show the Russian Orthodox Church “who is the boss”.<sup>35</sup>

### *Muslims*<sup>36</sup>

In contrast to most Western European countries where Muslim communities are constituted by a few generations of immigrants, Ukraine belongs to those European countries which have their own native Muslim population. Although Islam in Ukraine has more than a thousand years of history, this religion was repressed by Soviet regime and almost extinguished; religious and cultural revival of Islam believers has become possible after Ukraine gained independence in 1991.

Some Muslim leaders of Ukraine declare that there are two million Muslims in the country; however, estimates by the government and independent researchers provide the number at approximately 500,000, thus constituting about 1.1 percent of the total population. The majority of Ukrainian Muslims are Crimean Tatars numbering over 250,000, whose return to their homeland after forceful mass deportation of 1944 started only in late 80s.

Islam is far from monolithic in Ukraine. Currently, there are five Islamic religious “umbrellas” indicating the disunity among the mainstream Muslims: the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Ukraine (DUMU), the Spiritual Administration of Crimean Muslims (DUMK), the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Ukraine “Ummah” (DUMU-Ummah), the Religious Directorate of Independent Muslim Communities of Ukraine “Kyivan Muftiyat,” and the Donetsk-based Spiritual Centre of the Muslim Communities.<sup>37</sup> The Interregional Association of Public Organizations, Ar-Raid, could also be mentioned. It is a confederation of 11 organizations from various regions of Ukraine.

The three major and most influential of them are:

<sup>35</sup> *Russian Orthodox Church Asked By Oldest Church Patriarchates to Observe its Canonical Territory*, 5 September 2011, [http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all\\_news/orthodox/orthodox\\_world/44182/](http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all_news/orthodox/orthodox_world/44182/).

<sup>36</sup> For more information, see *Islam in Ukraine*, <http://islam.in.ua>.

<sup>37</sup> Idil P. Izmirli, *Resurgence of Fundamentalist and Radical Islamic Identities in Crimea and its implications for Regional Security in post-soviet Ukraine*, Scholar Research Brief, George Mason University, August 2010.

— DUMK, established in 1991, comprises approximately 70% of all government-registered Muslim communities in Ukraine. Being the spiritual centre of the Crimean Tatar people, it is working in close cooperation with the Crimean Tatars' self-governmental bodies — central and local Mejlises. The DUMK runs its own spiritual school, publishes its own literature and a newspaper "Hidiaet".

— DUMU, established in 1992 in Kyiv, seeks to unite Muslims of different nationalities, regardless of their cultural differences. It has representative offices in 10 regions and has the second-largest number of Muslim communities in Ukraine. It runs the Islamic Institute in Kyiv and publishes a Russian-language newspaper "Minaret."

The Donetsk-based Spiritual Centre of the Muslim Communities of Ukraine was registered in 1994. It is comprised of Muslim communities of predominantly Tatar nationality and is thus known as a national-religious organization operating in 12 regions. In 1997 the centre founded the Party of Muslims of Ukraine.<sup>38</sup>

DUMU-"Ummah" was officially registered in September 2008. According to Mufti Said Ismagilov, the need for establishing this new association was rooted in "a kind of depression in religious life [of Muslims] of the country", and since Ukrainian Muslim community is still young, "stagnation may affect it adversely". There are 10 communities from different regions of Ukraine connected by the joint activities; this new religious administration works in cooperation with Ar-Raid Association.<sup>39</sup>

There were several attempts to unite Muslim organizations and their associations, or at least closely coordinate their activities. One example is the Council of Representatives of Spiritual Directorates and Centres of Muslims of Ukraine that was formed, at the initiative of the State Committee on Nationalities and Religions, on April 15, 2009. All spiritual managements operating in Ukraine were invited to the meeting; however, only three of the five main Muslim associations — namely, DUMK, Spiritual Administration of the Kyivan Muftiat and the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims "Ummah" — arrived, whereas DUMU and the Spiritual Centre of Muslims of Ukraine (Donetsk) did not. After discussing the draft agreement, three spiritual managements signed the document confirming the creation of the Council which becomes the advisory-representative body of Muslims of Ukraine affiliated with the State Committee of Ukraine on Affairs of Nationalities and Religions. Into the structure of the new Association entered not only Muftis, but also two representatives from each spiritual management — three persons from each association, in total. For this reason, the association which originally had to be called the Council of Muftis of Ukraine was named the Council of Representatives of Spiritual Managements and Spiritual Centres of Muslims of Ukraine.

<sup>38</sup> <http://old.risu.org.ua/eng/major.religions/muslims/>.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Mufti of the Religious Administration of the Moslems of Ukraine Ummah Said Ismagilov [http://islam.in.ua/5/eng/full\\_articles/3038/visibletype/1/index.html](http://islam.in.ua/5/eng/full_articles/3038/visibletype/1/index.html), QHA, 10.06.09.

The major task of the council is strengthening of mutual understanding and respect not only between Muslims of Ukraine, but also between representatives of all faiths and citizens of Ukraine as a whole.<sup>40</sup> However, following the liquidation of the central state agency responsible for religious affairs — the State Committee on Nationalities and Religious — the future of this body and the prospects of governmental support for its activities are unclear.

### *Islamophobia: Worldwide Trend and Ukraine*

Islamophobia, especially after the tragic events of 9/11, has been spreading throughout the world. In the non-Muslim mind, Islam and Muslims have become almost synonymous with terrorism.

After ten years of grievances and revenge, this year's commemoration of 9/11 is accompanied by an often aggravated mistrust and hatred, sometimes covering the whole "Muslim world."

Even shocking events in Norway (July 2011), that attracted attention of media and intellectuals to such a phenomena as "white terrorism", proved unable to change essentially the mindset of many people in Europe and the US. Analysing abundant texts of the Norwegian mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik, published on the internet, political analysts of "The Guardian" (UK) indicated that his ideology had nothing to do with Christianity, but was based on an atavistic horror of Muslims and on huge conspiracy theories, the first of which is that "Islam threatens the survival of Europe through what he calls "demographic Jihad". Through a combination of uncontrolled immigration and uncontrolled breeding, the Muslims, who cannot live at peace with their neighbours, are conquering Europe... These ideas, however crazy, are part of a widespread paranoid ideology that links the European and American far right and even elements of mainstream conservatism in Britain".<sup>41</sup>

According to Anya Cordell, the recipient of the 2010 Spirit of Anne Frank Award, "Many pronouncements about "all Muslims", flying fast and loose, seem to hold some hope that Muslims magically disappear. Or maybe, unlike leopards, they could change their spots, just stop being Muslim. I heard a renowned "expert" on Muslim affairs say that getting rid of all Muslims wasn't "practical", while he inferred it was desirable. (Surely the world would then be almost perfect.) There are those who assert that all Muslims, worldwide, are more concerned with hating, converting and destroying others than with simply living, eating, supporting their families, and doing what most

<sup>40</sup> *For the First Time in Ukraine was Created Body Uniting Muslims of Ukraine*, 16 April 2009, the staff reporter for <http://islam.in.ua>.

<sup>41</sup> *Anders Breivik is not Christian but anti-Islam*, 24 July 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/andrewbrown/2011/jul/24/norway-anders-behring-breivik-beliefs>.

everyone on Earth does... those who characterize Muslims as hateful and bent on domination are themselves the most hateful and bent on converting all Muslims..."<sup>42</sup> Reflecting on "all Muslims" stereotypes, the author, herself Jewish, compares them with "all Jews" ones — those preparing the ground for Holocaust... She believes that persons responsible for hate speech — including those behind the horrible crime in Norway this year — "want to affect policies, and influence thought, and become richer and more influential. But, apparently, without worries of consequences."<sup>43</sup>

Despite the often deserved praise for interethnic and inter-religious tolerance, this worldwide trend also seems, regrettably, to be on the increase in Ukraine. Surprisingly, the loudest advocates of "genuine Christian values" (which must be protected from vicious Muslims endangering them) belong to representatives of quite diverse political views and parties, ranging from "Svoboda" on the extreme right to the marginalised extreme left party of Natalia Vitrenko.

Islamophobic speeches and activities of "Svoboda" members, most active in Western Ukraine, are usually targeting — in line with their west European counterparts — immigrant communities. In August 2011, a meeting was organised in Khmelnytsky city, protesting against a decision to allocate a land plot for erecting there a mosque. In the resolution adopted by this meeting it was said that "Building of mosque in Khmelnytsky will become a magnet for incursion of illegal migrants. We are witnessing the invasion of Muslims into Europe. Liberal policies of European governments enabled Muslims to become masters on European Christian continent. They build their mosques, destroy Christian churches, and ruin from within the Christian culture of France, Belgium, Spain, Germany, and Great Britain..." Regrettably, a number of clergy and laity of local Christian denominations of Khmelnytsky took part in the event, allying with those protested.<sup>44</sup>

As a result of these organized protests, negative decision was adopted at a sitting of the Khmelnytsky city council: only five out of 49 deputies voted for providing a land and giving permission to build a mosque.<sup>45</sup>

Echoing these events, anti-Islamic propaganda was also documented in the central Ukrainian town of Bila Tserkva where leaflets were disseminated on behalf of an entrepreneur calling on local residents to oppose the building of a mosque. The arguments were familiar: "The experience of those European countries where erection of mosques had once been permitted showed that the latter became sites of concentration for illegal migrants... My fears are well substantiated because in those very countries where Muslims are in-

<sup>42</sup> Anya Cordell, *Where the Anti-Muslim Path Leads*, August 1, 2011, <http://www.islamophobia.com/2011/08/02/where-the-anti-muslim-path-leads/>.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> «Residents of Khmelnytskiyare against construction of mosque" (in Ukrainian), 10 August 2011, <http://www.radiosvoboda.org/content/article/24276650.html>.

<sup>45</sup> 10 August 2011, information of press-service of the local branch of the VO "Svoboda".

fluent enough, bloodshed, acts of terror, and aggravation of the criminal situation occurred...”<sup>46</sup>

According to a recent monitoring review of xenophobia in Ukraine, Islamophobia has now become one of the most acute and topical forms of xenophobia in our country. Its criminal manifestations, as well as public campaigning, influence decision making at the local and regional level and present a major challenge forcing civil society to consider seriously what could and should be done to improve the situation “before it is too late”...<sup>47</sup> This new threat appears to have substituted previously failed attempts to fuel anti-Semitism in Ukraine. The relative success in that area was due to the joint efforts of civil society and the authorities, allied to close scrutiny from abroad.

At the same time, some positive turns in interfaith relations should be noted and appreciated, including the effort to improve relations and reach mutual understanding between Jews and Muslims not only at the national level, but also internationally. A set of international conferences held at the initiative of the Institute of Human Rights and Prevention of Extremism and Xenophobia, took place in Kyiv in 2011. A number of outstanding religious leaders and experts were invited to discuss the most urgent issues endangering inter-confessional and interethnic accord; in June 2011, young Jews and Muslims from 16 countries were brought together for establishing a permanent dialogue between youth of the two major religions.<sup>48</sup>

### *Religious Knot in Crimea*

In Crimea, the number of registered religious organisations after Ukraine’s independence has been rapidly growing, increasing forty-fold and being thus far ahead of any other region. The most dynamically developing religion in Crimea is Islam.

It should be noted that among all of the contested issues in religious life of Ukraine, the most difficult, diverse and controversial processes are taking place in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. This particular region differs from the rest of Ukraine by several characteristics:

- Ethnic Russians constitute the majority of local population;
- Russia continues to see Crimea as an inalienable part of the “Russian world”, an important element of which is Russian Orthodoxy;

<sup>46</sup> See publication dated 09.06.2011 at <http://www.grif.kiev.ua/city/14700.html?start=3>.

<sup>47</sup> Vyacheslav Likhachev, “Islamophobia in Ukraine: new trends” (in Russian), 08.09.2011, <http://www.eajc.org/page18/news25628.html>.

<sup>48</sup> For more detailed information, attend web site <http://ihrpex.org>, in particular, publication of 30 March 2011 at [http://ihrpex.org/uk/article/297/u\\_kyjevi\\_projshov\\_religijnyj\\_davos](http://ihrpex.org/uk/article/297/u_kyjevi_projshov_religijnyj_davos), and of 12 May 2011 at [http://ihrpex.org/ru/article/523/evrey\\_y\\_musulmane\\_nachnut\\_sovmestnuju\\_borbu\\_s\\_ekstremizmom](http://ihrpex.org/ru/article/523/evrey_y_musulmane_nachnut_sovmestnuju_borbu_s_ekstremizmom). See also <http://evreiskiy.kiev.ua/dialog-evreev-i-musulman-10160.html>, 7.07.2011.

— Because of this, religious life of Crimea is dominated by the UOC-MP, whereas all other confessions and denominations face sometimes insurmountable difficulties and obstacles for their activities;

— Crimean Tatar repatriates, now amounting to 13% of local population, are indigenous people and traditionally, Muslim believers;

— Along with the traditional Crimean Islam which is an essential element of the Crimean Tatar identity, a number of different Islamic groups and communities were formed mostly by missionaries penetrating the peninsula from Arabic countries, Russia, and Turkey. These “autonomous communities” (not subordinated to DUMK), create additional tensions among Crimean Muslims, thus increasing the conflict potential in the ARC.<sup>49</sup>

Initially, the attempts to restore the attributes of Islam in Crimea, almost completely eradicated after forceful deportation of 1944, evoked a kind of a “cultural shock” among the predominantly Slavic population identifying themselves with Russian Orthodoxy. In the beginning of 90s, many regional authorities, media representatives and ordinary people asserted that for them, the very prospect of having mosques and hearing muezzin’s voice in their native localities seemed absolutely unacceptable. However, a number of emerging conflict situations were settled by peaceful means, and step by step, the environment has become less hostile towards the Muslim believers.

Nevertheless, multiple acts of vandalism, targeting Muslim cemeteries, and other potentially dangerous conflict situations continued.<sup>50</sup> In 2011, non-traditional Crimean Muslims claim to be discriminated against because of the prohibition for their women to take photos for passports, driver’s licenses and other documents while wearing hijab, added to the existing tensions (The hijab is the traditional Muslim women’s headdress covering the ears, neck and part of the face).<sup>51</sup>

According to Oleksandr Bogomolov, president of the Ukrainian Association of Middle East Studies (UAMES), the main political actors behind the resurgence of religious activity in Crimea can be divided into two classes:

<sup>49</sup> For a detailed analysis of the four main Islamic branches in Crimea, see Ali Tatar-Zade, “Four Lions in Crimea’s Savanna”, 7 July 2011, Crimean Politics and Security Bulletin, available at <http://maidan.org.ua/2011/07/islamski-levy-u-krymskij-savanni/> (in Ukrainian). See also: Mejlis and its opponents have different views concerning hijab (in Russian). By Vlad Smirnov, 1-ya Krymskaya, N 328, 11 — 17 June 2010, <http://1k.com.ua/328/details/6/3>, and Islam, Orthodoxy, and the State in Crimea. October 09, 2007, [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=events.print&event\\_id=279606&stoplayout=true](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=events.print&event_id=279606&stoplayout=true).

<sup>50</sup> Arzy Emirova in Simferopol, Crimea, Ukraine, “Muslim cemeteries in Crimea attacked” and Ahmed J Versi in London, 30 May 2008 <http://www.muslimnews.co.uk/paper/index.php?article=3504>; Hundreds of Muslim gravestones defaced in Ukraine’s Crimea region. “Earthtimes,” February 11, 2008, at <http://wwrn.org/articles/27736/?&place=belarus-ukraine&section=islam>; and Crimea: Balancing between crisis and conflict. By Patrick Greenberg, 21 July 2008, at Crimea: Balancing between crisis and conflict — New Europe <http://www.neweurope.eu/articles/88895.php#ixzz1NqoobEg4>.

<sup>51</sup> Crimean authorities prohibit hijab for driver’s license photos, 8 September 2011, [http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all\\_news/other\\_confessions/islam/44260/](http://risu.org.ua/en/index/all_news/other_confessions/islam/44260/).

religious groups/denominations, and social movements and political groups referring to faith identity. The religious groups included the UOC-MP; UOC-KP; Crimean Muftiyat (traditional Crimean Tatar Islam); and Islamic opposition groups. The major social groups included the Russian Community of Crimea (“ROK”), the Russian Movement of Ukraine, the Cossacks, and a number of smaller groups. He noted that the Cossack movement was not a continuation of the historic (Ukrainian) Cossacks but rather a new social phenomenon that had developed in the post-Soviet context and was inspired by myths of Cossack military glory. According to Bogomolov, Cossacks are bearers of a “practical ideology” based on seeing their mission in protecting the Orthodoxy on the Crimean peninsula. The Cossacks, ROK, and other Russian nationalist groups in Crimea share an apocalyptic vision of the future, seeing the Muslims as a threat to Christian Orthodoxy.<sup>52</sup>

Potential of the interfaith conflict sharply aggravated in early 2000s after Archbishop Lazar of the Crimea and Simferopol ruling to erect 1,000 worshipping crosses in the Crimea to commemorate the 2. 000<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Birth of Jesus Christ and the millennium of the baptism of Kyivan Rus’. Crimea was proclaimed a “cradle of Christianity”; responding to these developments, the Crimean Mufti declared that such unilateral attitude toward the peninsula’s religious history was offensive to local Muslims. In a gesture of protest, he withdrew from the Interfaith Council, set up in middle 90s.<sup>53</sup>

One of the most acute conflicts triggered by the erection of such crosses took place near Morskoye, a village located in the vicinity of Sudak, a city on the eastern coast of Crimea. On October 25, 2000, a group of Crimean Tatars (who claimed that this place accommodated an ancient Muslim cemetery) destroyed the cross. This met a sharp response from the local Christian community; a crowd numbering 400 gathered and situation moved close to fist fighting. Intervention of village authorities helped to prevent further escalation; they convinced the disputing parties to conduct negotiations, for which ten delegates from each side was appointed.

Mustafa Dzhemilev, Chairperson of the Mejlis of Crimean people and MP of Ukraine, stated that “we condemn the erection of those crosses as an act of violence, but we also condemn their being forcefully torn down. However, I do not understand why should those crosses be put up here? Why should the whole affair be so provocative? Did they want to trigger off a conflict? Is this land to be considered purely Christian? ...This [erection of crosses] should not be done in public places visited by people professing a different religion...”<sup>54</sup>

<sup>52</sup> *Islam, Orthodoxy, and the State in Crimea*, October 09, 2007, [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=events.print&event\\_id=279606&stoplayout=true](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=events.print&event_id=279606&stoplayout=true). For more detailed analysis of the phenomenon of the “Crimean Cossaks”, see publication by Valentina Samar, 08 July 2011, available at <http://dt.ua/articles/84132> (in Ukrainian).

<sup>53</sup> Mykyta Kasianenko, “Crimea faced with imminent threat of religious conflict”, Simferopol “Den”, No 31, 7 November 2000, <http://www.day.kiev.ua/290619?idsource=266643&mainlang=eng>.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

After intensive and heated discussion within the promptly established Reconciliation Commission, also as a result of confidential negotiations between Metropolitan Lazar and Mufti of Crimean Muslims hadji Emirali Ablayev, a compromise solution was eventually found, and it was decided that the cross will be built in another, neutral place instead of the contested one.

The most recent example of this “war of religious symbols” occurred in 2011 near the city of Feodosia. The story has begun on 4 May, when a group of Cossacks erected the worship cross without permission of either local authorities or Crimean Council of Ministers, or blessing from Metropolitan Lazar (UOC-MP). This action was declared by Cossacks as not only establishing one more Orthodox symbol but being also dedicated to 9 May (the day of victory in WWII) celebrations. It actually violated the agreement reached earlier between Metropolitan Lazar and Mufti Emirali Ablayev, and thus ensued discontent of local Muslim community that addressed the Major of Feodosia with a letter of protest. Negotiations between Cossacks, local authorities and municipal Interfaith Council lasted the whole day of May 5, but turned unsuccessful — the Cossacks refused to dismantle the cross, even temporarily, or shift it to another place until the necessary documentation would be obtained.

On May 6, the two lawsuits were submitted by the Council of Ministers and the village council to the Economic Court of Crimea with the demand to dismantle the cross as erected illegally. Not waiting for a court decision, on May 7 the object was sanctified by the priest of Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (because none of the priests of the UOP-MP agreed to do so without sanctions of Metropolitan Lazar). Following the court decision, on July 1 the contended cross was removed and placed in a nearby Orthodox church. The next day, several hundreds of Cossacks and local Orthodox believers attempted to restore it at the former location; warnings from special police troops and attempts to reach peaceful solution have failed, and rather severe clashes between Cossacks and police occurred, resulting in over ten Cossacks being hospitalised and ten more detained. (It should be noted that in the whole “new history” of Crimea this was the first time, setting precedent, when Crimean militia, “restoring public order”, has beaten not Crimean Tatars but Cossacks, — the latter getting used to impunity notwithstanding violation of administrative regulations or even criminal activities).

These events were widely covered by Crimean, all-national and Russian printed and electronic media. Although the whole spectrum of opinions and assessments can be easily identified<sup>55</sup>, the majority of both Crimean and

<sup>55</sup> *Hundreds clash in Ukraine over Orthodox cross*, 03 July, 2011, <http://rt.com/news/cossacks-cross-ukraine-clash/>; *The bloody fighting in the Crimea: Berkut beaten with batons Russian Cossacks*, <http://newsforall.org/archives/4443>, see also <http://www.radiosvoboda.org/content/article/24255491.html>, <http://crimea24.info/2011/07/04/u-odnogo-iz-iniciatorov-feodosijsk>, <http://www.kianews.com.ua/node/34857>, <http://crimea24.info/2011/07/03/dzharty-obeshhaet-adekvatno-otvetit>, <http://novo.ross.info/ecksluziv/8441-mitropolit-lazar-krest-svyatyny>, <http://www.nr2.ru/crimea/338007.html>.

Ukrainian experts considered the story as a conscious provocation, having a clear-cut political colouring and directed not so much against local Muslims but, rather, against “new” Crimean power-holders (the so-called “Djarty’s team” that arrived after presidential elections-2010 to replace local establishment). Indeed, a number of Crimean political analysts accused authorities of persecuting and discriminating against Crimean ethnic Russians and Orthodox faithful people, giving in under the pressure from the Mejlis of Crimean Tatar people.<sup>56</sup> At the same time, it is interesting to note that the leadership of the “Russkoye Yedinstvo” (Russian Unity) political party — the only pro-Russian political force represented in the regional parliament — officially condemned the actions undertaken by the Cossacks and those party members who took part in the events.<sup>57</sup>

Not to go further to the exhaustive chronicle of conflict-generating events and situations, it should be noted that throughout 2000s, interfaith tensions and conflicts of different degree of scope and danger continued in Crimea. Of them, the most acute one, that in Bakhchesaray of summer 2006, is usually mentioned. An important historic Crimean Tatar cemetery and a pilgrimage site there were used by local Slavs for commercial market on top of the holy site; this becomes a source of a prolonged conflict between Crimean Tatars and ethnic Russians. The climax occurred when a group of Russian ultra-nationalists and so-called “new Cossaks” arrived armed with self-made weaponry to disperse a group of Crimean Tatars. When local administration and a security officer attempted to mediate, the response was: “We came to fight.” The Mejlis together with security forces and armoured cars sent by Kyiv managed to stop violence; eventual solution was found later, when it was decided to transfer the market from this place to another.<sup>58</sup>

Several attempts to fuel anti-Islam passions by radical Cossaks organisations occurred also in 2010 and 2011. One of them is worth of special attention, because it clearly shows the extremely negative role that regional, national, and, in the particular case of May 2011 (see below), international media has played in inter-religious conflict escalation.

On May 18, the body of the 19-year-old girl Katya Koren was found in a forest near the village Sovetskoye. Immediately, Crimean, Russian and some Ukrainian media reported that she was stoned to death according to Sharia law because of her participation in a beauty contest. Law-enforcement officials in Crimea have responded to the reports of Korin’s killing by saying the

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, <http://novoross.info/8436-krymskaya-vlast-nachala-voynu-protiv-russkih-politolog.html>, 4.07.2011

<sup>57</sup> See “*Russkoye edinstvo*” *otkrestilos ot svoyego deputata za podderzhku kazakov Feodosii*. (“*Russian Unity*” *dissociate themselves from its deputy for his support of Cossacks of Feodosia*), 04.07.11, <http://www.nr2.ru/crimea/338007.html>.

<sup>58</sup> Laryssa Chomiak and Waleed Ziad, “Islamic Organizations and Challenges in Crimea: An Interview with Dr. Alexander Bogomolov”, 18 April 2008, <http://www.iccrimea.org/scholarly/bogomolov-interview.html>.

tragedy was a “routine crime“ having nothing to do with either stoning, or Sharia law, or any religious motive. Her classmate has been detained and charged with premeditated murder, according to law-enforcement officials quoted by Ukrainian media.

Despite the police statements, those false interpretations were further spreading, attracting also wide international attention after publication of the story in the British Daily Mail.

In Ukraine, some analysts describe it as a campaign to incite religious hatred against Crimean Tatars. A possible role of Russian media allegedly, seeking to manipulate religious sentiments to destabilize Crimea, was actively discussed.

Indeed, the next day after the body of the murdered girl was found, a number of websites — including Novoross.info and Rusnovosti.ru — began making the story more and more sensational. Some of those reports claimed that Gaziev (the suspect) and two other men taking part in this crime were followers of radical Wahhabi teachings. Novoross.info quoted Yuri Pershikov, leader of a local Cossack youth organization who called this murder a “medieval barbaric act” and also told that “Russian children are being murdered by Islamic extremists“ in the neighbourhood of a local Madrasah (religious school).<sup>59</sup>

The story then spread to media in Russia and was picked up by international outlets, including “The Daily Mail“, thus making it more “credible”. “The Daily Mail“ did not respond to requests for comment, but on June 2, the original story on its website was replaced, and its name changed to suggest that “a stalker“ might be responsible for the killing. But by that time, the story went full-circle, with Russian and Ukrainian news outlets citing “The Daily Mail“ initial report. Remarkably, nobody in this chain of misinformation checked the basic facts of the tragedy. It should be noted that local residents, although shocked by this brutal crime, don’t link it to religion.

This fact confirms the conclusion made by Alla Boyko, expert on religious journalism, that “Inter-Confessional Conflicts in Crimea are inflated by Politicians and Journalists”. After research mission to Crimea, she wrote: “I visited an Orthodox Church, lighted a candle, sincerely prayed, and then asked attendants, whether Muslims disturb them, whether there are conflicts on religious or ethnic ground. “God forbid, why we should be enemies?“ was filled with indignation the woman selling candles and religious literature. “They live together, we live together, and our people come here, theirs to the

<sup>59</sup> Detailed analysis of media coverage of this case has been performed within the framework of a project Xenomonitor, see “Manifestations of “hate speech” in criminal chronicles: incorrect coverage of murder in Crimea” (in Russian), 30.05.2011 20:00 <http://xenomonitor.org/ru/news/events/183-event-2011-05-30>. Expert analysis of the role of Daily Mail can also be found in “The Sensational Story That Wasn’t: Reports Of ‘Stoning’ Death Of Ukrainian Girl Turn Out To Be False” by Farangis Najibullah June 02, 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/sensational\\_story\\_wasnt\\_reports\\_of\\_stoning\\_death\\_in\\_ukraine\\_girl\\_false/24213624.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/sensational_story_wasnt_reports_of_stoning_death_in_ukraine_girl_false/24213624.html).

mosque. And everything is calm. *You'd better watch the TV and read newspapers lesser, there all lies...*“ she advised me. Such a characteristic of our mass media did not please me. But, nevertheless, the madam is right...”<sup>60</sup>

### *Intra-Islamic splits and tensions*

Recently, increasing attention of politicians, journalists and expert community has been drawn to those “radical” Islam groupings and communities — first and foremost, Hizb-ut-Tahrir and so-called “Wahhabits” — that are not subordinated to DUMK and are often regarded as a serious threat to public order and regional security. In reality, the situation is much more complicated and multifaceted; current intra-Islam situation and interrelationship between different Islam teachings, groupings and communities was recently presented in many details. According to this analysis, four major and most visible of them are represented by:

1) *Hanafi* Madhab (traditional Crimean Islam, Sunnis, unites the vast majority of Crimean Tatars under the guidance of DUMK that, in turn, is closely connected to Mejlis);

2) *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* (HUT) — established here not as a branch of the political Islamic “The Party of Liberation” but, rather, as a network of seemingly independent groups and communities that appeared in middle 2000s as a protest reaction against “too liberal and secular” position of DUMK and its dependence from the Mejlis;

3) *Habashi* that have close ties with DUMU headed by Sheikh Ahmed Tamim, who once tried to get control over all of the Crimean Muslims; and

4) the *Wahhabits* — the wrong, externally imposed, name for *Salafists* who call for returning to the initial “genuine”, “pure” Islam and reject any changes and turns that had been occurring in this religion for over more than millennium.<sup>61</sup>

Several studies, using, in particular, “field research” methods were undertaken to get a deeper insight into the conflict potential of different branches of Crimean Islam and in particular, to assess its actual — or perceived — danger to societal security. Of them, publication of the Ukrainian Association of Middle East Studies (AMES) is worth special mentioning. The authors conducted a number of personal interviews with leaders of various ethnic and religious communities in Crimea. Summarizing the findings, they characterise most of inter-religious or even “inter-civilizational” conflicts mostly as a struggle for symbolic (also financial and material) resources, often used for political purposes, and indicate that a common denominator

<sup>60</sup> *Inter-Confessional Conflicts in Crimea are inflated by Politicians and Journalists* — Expert Opinion. [http://islam.in.ua/4/eng/full\\_articles/3537/visibletype/1/index.html](http://islam.in.ua/4/eng/full_articles/3537/visibletype/1/index.html).

<sup>61</sup> Ali Tatar-zade, *Four Lions in Crimea's Savanna*, 7 July 2011, Crimean Politics and Security Bulletin.

that makes the region so volatile is actually the unsettled dispute over group identities. In order to overcome negative consequences of the existing multiple ethnic and religious societal divisions, the authors recommend that “community leaders and public officials should learn to appreciate the value of cultural diversity and realise that competing groups interests should not necessarily be advanced in the form of a zero sum game”.<sup>62</sup>

This conclusion and suggestions of how to accommodate different Islam teachings and their followers without fuelling further tensions between them, echoes another research run by the American scholar Idil Izmirli.<sup>63</sup> Her findings, following in-depth interviews in Crimea and Kyiv (DUMU) confirmed that repeated opinions of mainstream Islam leaders that HUT is an extremist, terrorist organisation that poses a significant threat for Crimea and therefore, should be banned as in many other countries of Central Asia, Middle East, Europe, Turkey, also in Russia. However, HUT supporters affirm that they do not support or endorse violent acts or terrorism by any group, and point out that HUT never committed a violent act since its foundation in 1953. They argue that rumours about them being terrorists that are being spread by DUMK and DUMU are false and unfounded. To her opinion, HUT’s popularity in Crimea is to be explained by the endeavours, often successful, to solve the problems of poverty, unemployment, corruption etc., providing a sense of solidarity and strong mutual reliability for all HUT members, and thus becoming a substitute for much needed but practically lacking social protection.<sup>64</sup>

Nevertheless, although the members of the “autonomous” Muslim communities are indeed not engaged in terrorist activities or other violent acts targeting “infidels”, certain unappealing activities, including those at the verge of violence, were recorded — such as seizures of Mosques, replacing of Imams, destroying Crimean Tatar families by converting dissatisfied youngsters to their faith, and in general, discouraging Crimean Muslims — mostly Crimean Tatars — from active participation in public and political life, instead instructing them to do everything possible to reach the eventual (although quite unrealistic) goal of creating a world-wide Islamic super-state — Caliphate. As stated by one of the main actors of HUT, who is a computer engineer, “Our struggle is non-violent and our methods are non-violent, but we are being labelled as radicals because we tell the truth. We do not believe

<sup>62</sup> Oleksandr Bogomolov, Serhiy Danylov and Ihor Semivolos, “Islam and idewntity Politics in Crimea: from War of Symbols to the Acceptance of Cultural Diversity”, Kyiv, “Stylos” Publishing House, 2009 (in Ukrainian).

<sup>63</sup> Idil P. Izmirli, “Resurgence of fundamentalist and radical Islamic identities in Crimea and its implications for Regional Security in post-soviet Ukraine”, *Scholar Research Brief*, George Mason University, August 2010.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*; these findings coincide with my own (N. Belitser) observations and interviews taken in summer of 2011. To read more about HUT ideology, views and aims, see Radicalisation, Extremism & ‘Islamism’: Realities and Myths in the ‘War on Terror’, a report by Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain, at [www.hizb.org.uk](http://www.hizb.org.uk).

that the Caliphate can be established by terror or armed conflict; it can only be established through raised consciousness. Therefore, we do not aim for the Caliphate in Crimea or Ukraine; we aim to establish it globally.”<sup>65</sup>

Taking into consideration that traditional Islam is an important, inalienable element of the Crimean Tatar identity, continued concerns of Crimean Muftiyat (DUMK) and Mejlis over the unity of the Crimean Tatar nation as being endangered by the activities of newly emerged Islamic communities and their leaders, look quite understandable and justified.<sup>66</sup> After the failed attempts of striving for legal prohibition of their opponents, DUMK resorted to another tactics, initiating in 2010 a campaign named ISLAH that aimed at counteracting the [negative] influence of “religious sects”.<sup>67</sup> All families that suffered from splits and grievances caused by missionaries from abroad and non-traditional Islam teachings were invited to provide their stories and evidences on the web-page of the DUMK. Indeed, quite a few such stories were presented and impressed people, some of whom withdraw themselves from the “autonomous” Islam communities.<sup>68</sup> Although official statistics or other reliable data are absent, a number of informal sources of information state that the programme is a success, and that the number of HUT followers stops to increase because those joining them are now balanced by those leaving. These trends are of special importance, evidencing that such measures as persuasion, explanation and informational campaigning can be much more effective than prohibition and persecutions, the latter often leading to further radicalisation of “political Islam” groupings (as developments in many other countries, regrettably, confirm). That HUT in Crimea is currently at a retreat is implicitly confirmed by certain changes in their rhetoric: instead of former straightforward attacks on Western values like democracy, liberalism, individual freedoms and liberties, the newspaper “Vozrozhdeniye” (Rebirth), one of the main HUT media resources, recently called to recognise them as a “religious minority”, referring to the democratic standards when the rights of minorities should be observed and pluralism praised, and asking for a dialogue instead of confrontation.

This seemingly unique example actually reflects the acquired ability to prevent violent interethnic/inter-religious conflicts in Crimea by using certain locally developed mechanisms, based on negotiations and dialogue. As Andriy Klimenko, editor-in-chief of the BlackSeaNews and BigYalta internet portals noted, “...Whenever in Crimea people of different nationalities, different status etc. feel escalation of tensions, immediately, almost automa-

<sup>65</sup> Interview taken by Dr. Idil Izmirli in summer of 2009.

<sup>66</sup> See also Seyran Arifov, Reflecting on Destiny of Muslims of Crimea, Master of Shariat Sciences, 16.05.2011, available at [http://islam.in.ua/4/eng/full\\_articles/6453/visibletype/1/index.html](http://islam.in.ua/4/eng/full_articles/6453/visibletype/1/index.html).

<sup>67</sup> See [http://qirimmuftiyat.org.ua/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=362&Itemid=100033&lang=ru](http://qirimmuftiyat.org.ua/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=362&Itemid=100033&lang=ru) (in Russian).

<sup>68</sup> See, for example, Information about the Islah programme on 3 May 2011 (in Russian). [http://qirimmuftiyat.org.ua/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=412%3A---lr--03--2011-&catid=90%3A-qq&Itemid=100040&lang=ru](http://qirimmuftiyat.org.ua/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=412%3A---lr--03--2011-&catid=90%3A-qq&Itemid=100040&lang=ru).

tically, negotiations at different levels are started. Local policeman visits residents of his district, Mufti meets with Orthodox priest, NGOs come together to talk and discuss urgent issues, administrative bodies also engage in some kind of a dialogue. As a result of such multiple forms of dialogue, a problem is usually settled...<sup>69</sup>

In line of this observation, pragmatic policies of regional authorities of the ARC provide an impressive example of solving peacefully the long-lasting conflict around the construction Guma Gami (the Congregational Mosque) in Simferopol, for which the Crimean Muftiyat and Crimean Tatar community struggled for over ten years. Despite court cases won, their claims were repeatedly rejected by local authorities. This time, the problem was solved, and the decision to allocate for this purpose a land plot was voted by a vast majority of deputies of the city council. Such very positive trends have been highly praised by the international bodies and organisations, CSOs and some media outlets in Crimea; regrettably, they have drawn much less attention of the Ukrainian public at large and national media coverage than they certainly deserve.

After positive decision on giving permission to build the Congregational Mosque at 22 Yaltinskaya Str. of Simferopol, on 3 March 2011 a solemn ceremony of placing the first stone to its foundation was conducted, bringing together high-rank officials of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Mejlis of Crimean Tatar people, the heads of all major religious confessions, media and representatives of CSOs. Descriptions on that first stone were engraved in three languages — Crimean Tatar, Ukrainian and Russian; capsule containing a Message to Descendants was fixed within.<sup>70</sup> According to eye-witnesses and the participants of the event, this day has become a festive occasion, largely contributing to interethnic and inter-religious peace and accord on the Crimean peninsula.

### *Conclusions*

Despite numerous conflict-generating factors and general complexity of the religious life in Ukraine, clashes between believers of different religious denominations over church buildings and properties, distinctive in early and middle 90s, with time calmed down and practically disappeared.

Rather liberal legislation of Ukraine allowed for peaceful co-existence of numerous and diverse traditional and non-traditional confessions and faiths;

<sup>69</sup> 15.02.2011, <http://www.blackseanews.net/read/11452>.

<sup>70</sup> 3 May 2011, <http://www.ark.gov.ua/blog/2011/03/03/vasilij-dzharty-prynal-uchastie-v-zakladke-kapsuly-na-meste-stroitelstva-sobornoj-mecheti-v-simferopole/>. See also Natalya Belitser, *Crimea: Quo Vadis? (Crimea & Security of the Black Sea Region)*, Crimea Policy Dialogue Project, Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels, 22 March, 2011, available at <http://www.bigyalta.com.ua/story/30812>.

a dialogue between such (often conflicting) religions as Christianity and Islam, Islam and Judaism is established, developing mutual tolerance and understanding and helping to counteract together such negative phenomena as radicalism, extremism and acute forms of xenophobia.

Notwithstanding the rather active position of Ukrainian CSO, supported by international community, manifestations of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia continued and even exhibited certain trends of becoming more pronounced, in particular, on the side of the far-right political parties like “Svoboda”. Printed and electronic media in Ukraine, in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, also those coming from Russia, often play quite negative role by fueling inter-faith conflicts, aggravating the existing tensions and disseminating distorted and biased information.

In Church-State relations, the main problem consists in the insistent attempts to ensure the dominance of only one major confession — Ukrainian Orthodox Church subordinated to Moscow Patriarchy — over all other religions and religious organizations. Such attitudes and unbalanced policies of the incumbent Ukrainian Government are detrimental to interfaith harmony and equality of rights of all believers, proclaimed by the Constitution and specific laws of Ukraine.

Often repeated fears and warnings of the threat of “Islamic radicalism” on the Crimean peninsula are largely exaggerated, are often based on ignorance and widespread negative stereotypes and/or politically motivated.

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