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SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS DETERMINING RADICAL ISLAMIC ACTIVITIES AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE AND COUNTERMEASURES

Akayev Vakhit Khumidovich (a)*, Nanaeva Boryat Balaudinovna (b),
Abubakarov Avalu Suleymanovich (c), Akayev Aslambek Vakhidovich (d),
Suleymanova Zumrud Suleymanova (e)

*Corresponding author

(a) Grozny State Oil Technical University, Grozny, Russia, akaiev@mail.ru

(b) Grozny State Oil Technical University, Grozny, Russia, bara_aldi@mail.ru

(c) Grozny State Oil Technical University, Grozny, Russia, avalu-ne@mail.ru

(d) Dagestan State University, Gadjev str., 43-a, Makhachkala, Russia, akaiev@mail.ru

(e) Dagestan State University, Gadjev str., 43-a, Makhachkala, Russia, zumrud-suleyman@bk.ru

Abstract

The paper explores the main socio-psychological factors causing the perception of the ideas of radical Islamism among the young people and the reasons for accepting them. The paper provides various interpretations of the construction "Radical Islamism" and its understanding by some youth representatives in the North Caucasus. The authors propose that one of the most important reasons for this perception is that the young people, schoolchildren, students, unemployed youth, being psychologically unstable, ideologically and culturally disoriented, sometimes conflicting with society, its conservative traditions, are motivated to perceive a new, radical, denying all norms activity. This factor is often used by various types of advisers and religious actors tending to involve in their groups the young people who are socially indifferent and with unstable mentality, who do not perceive the traditional ethnocultural traditions and who want to live in the new world, which they imagine. Family disadvantages, social injustice, the wish to change the world or to take part in this process are the causes to perceive Radical Islamism. To counteract these phenomena, it is important to implement therapy of such processes by legal, political, spiritual and cultural means. These must include bringing the activists to legal responsibility, coercion, measures of ideological and political influence.

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1. Introduction

Radical Islamism is an extreme form of Islamism and it has a formal relationship to Islam as a monotheistic religion focused on world-building, spiritual improvement, harmony and cooperation among the believers. The supporters of Islamism pursue religious-political and extremist goals, also they proclaim a thesis of creating an Islamic society based on only Islamic values, for which they call for the overthrow of the existing political system, call for the fight against the enemies of Islam, without understanding the means. Some Islamist groups in the world set ambitious goals to involve young people into the Global Jihad. One of that group was the terrorist organization al-Qaeda, created by Osama bin Laden, who was killed in Pakistan, in his home, by a United States military special operations unit.

Also, Islamists spread Jihadist attitudes in the North Caucasus (Dagestan, Chechnya, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia), urged the young people to wage war against Russia, the Russian Armed Forces, causing them maximum damage and committing different terrorist acts. The rationale for this statement is enclosed in the book of Avar Magomed Tagaev (1999), published in secret. In this book, the youth of Dagestan is urged to fight against the Russians, seeking the liberation of the Caucasus from Russia. In the Quran, he was eager to find a justification for such actions. In some mosques in Chechnya, Islamists urged the young people to Jihad against Russia and promised pastures of Heaven to those who would die taking this route. Among some of the youth were those who were given in to such sermons, took up the arms, and, finally, many of them died. The sermoners themselves, who urged the young people to Jihad, moved with their families to foreign countries during the military operations.

The authorities gradually began to carry out the focused efforts against the Islamists, sometimes carrying out the rude persecution. The analysis of the events of October 13, 2005, in Nalchik, showed that the pressure of the authorities, especially the military and security forces, the persecution of supporters of pure Islam, bullying, violence, tortures motivated them to extreme measures, to the armed opposition to the military and security forces. Having performed ablution before the attack as well as appropriate rituals, in the morning more than 200 young Muslims from Kabardino-Balkaria carry out an armed attack on the security forces of Kabardino-Balkaria in the city of Nalchik. That was the reaction of the young Muslims from Kabardino-Balkaria, organized into "jamaats", who refused the "religion of the fathers", considering it a deformation of pure Islam. And they manifested a desire to live according to the Islamic laws that exist in Saudi Arabia. The attempts to implement them in Kabardino-Balkaria generated a conflict between them and the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Kabardino-Balkaria, which compiled the lists of religious radicals and transferred them to the security structures. The preventive measures of the latter exacerbated the religious conflict, turning them into the outcasts of society.

The special military and political action committed by the Islamists of Kabardino-Balkaria has its psychological, political and criminal roots. Psychologically, that action was the revenge on the security forces for their bullying and violence. Ideologically, they stood up for their beliefs based on the religious dogmatics, fundamentalist values, directed against the existing national traditions and the local religious beliefs. The political task of the Islamists was to change the leadership of the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Kabardino-Balkaria, which they considered as a roadblock on the implementation of the project to build a Jamaat society on the analogy of the socio-political structure of the Muslims in Saudi

Arabia. However, it was impossible to achieve such religious and political situation since the political system in Russia could not allow constructing the society on the values of Islam.

2. Problem Statement

Among the Islamist organizations in Dagestan, there were so-called moderate and immoderate Wahhabis, the leader of the first ones was Ahmad-Qadi Atayev, one of the organizers of the "Islamic Renaissance Party", and the leader of the immoderate ones was Bagaudin Kebedov, the former member of the Parliament of the Republic of Dagestan. The activities of the immoderate Wahhabis were directed against the religious traditionalists represented by the so-called Sufis (tariqatists) of the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Dagestan. In Chechnya, the Wahhabis were those, who were strongly opposed the local Sufi wirts, the total number of which exceeds 30. They pursued a religious and political goal to push the Traditional Muslim Clergy back to the periphery of spiritual and social life. In Chechnya, the official Sharia courts were established in 1996, replacing the secular courts, that operated until 2000. From the beginning of the 2000s, the official authorities in the Chechen Republic carried out the focused efforts against the Wahhabi, Salafi jamaats and the Islamist groups, "orienting the young people to extreme forms of political activity. Their activities "against the official authorities, the traditional clergy, they considered as the part of the Global Jihad against Kufra" (Akayev, Abubakarov, & Animokov, 2019, p. 59).

The attempt to Islamize the socio-political situation among the young people was observed in the 90s, also in Karachay-Cherkessia. In this territory, the Wahhabi group of A. Gochiyaev, who is considered to be the organizer of the terrorist attacks in 1999 in Moscow, exhibited the criminal activity. As Dobaev (2003) noted: "The main places of radical groups concentration were Malakarachayevsky district of the city of Karachayevsk, Karachayevsky Region" (p. 167), the total number of "Wahhabi community" was fixed at the level of 300-500 people. The authorities of the Karachay-Cherkess Republic to counteract the Islamists adopted a law restricting the activities of the Wahhabis on the territory of this Republic.

In the 2000s, so-called "jamaats" were created in Kabardino-Balkaria, among of which "Jamaat Yarmouk" was known for his extremism. In their religious and political activities, they were anti-traditionalist and anti-secular, and therefore the authorities applied the repressive measures against them, although they were not always justified, the authorities could do without them, using non-violent means and dialogue (Akayev, Abubakarov, & Animokov, 2019).

The problem to radicalize the young Muslims in the North Caucasus and to turn them into the Islamists, the militants and the government opponents is associated with the anti-Islamic policy of the security structures, according to the professionals, including the former CSS (the Committee for State Security) employees (Zhukov, 2005). The position of Ruslan Nakhushev, a Kabardian, who previously worked in the Soviet state security structures, is indicative in this respect. In his opinion, in the early 2000s, the law enforcement agencies and the intelligence services acted, ignoring the legal framework because of their non-professionalism. They could not bring a suspect to the criminal responsibility, having collected the pieces of evidence, and then reach the case to the court. Instead of thorough professional work, the cases were fabricated, throwing weapons and extremist literature, the tortures were

carried out during interrogations – one person was beaten to death. The antagonism between the government and the young Muslims in the CBR has reached its height. According to Nakhushhev (2015), the law enforcement agencies daily demonstrated to the population that they persecute people for their faith and carried out acts of intimidation. Explaining what Jamaat is in the CBR, he says it was an organized structure that did not have to be feared but had to communicate with it and find a common language. They had sane people, most of them were with higher education, not medieval barbarians. He concluded that the security forces did not want to find a common language with the members of the Jamaat, preferring the war.

Investigating this tragic situation, it is fundamentally important to determine the reasons that determined the attack of the young Muslims of Kabardino-Balkaria on the security forces on October 13, 2005. These include illegal detentions; illegal personal searches (without a written order or witnesses); beatings and abuse during detentions; beatings and abuse of detainees in police stations; dismissal from work and discharges from places of study through artificial reasons; preventing from of the normal operating of prayer halls and mosques and their unreasonable closure (Zhukov, 2005).

Khadzhimurat Gatsalov, the Mufti of that Republic, noted about the tortures of the young Muslims committed by the Armed Forces of North Ossetia – Alania. In his book, he gives the facts that the law enforcement agencies of this Republic captured 14 young Muslims of Ossetian nationality, allegedly belonging to a radical group; they were accused of killing the Ossetian poet Dzhikaev; during 10 days they were beaten; the cases were fabricated against them (Gatsalov, 2016). Gatsalov (2016), analyzing the activities of the law enforcement agencies of North Ossetia – Alania in regards to the Islamic youth, wrote: "Beating the young people, putting them into prison for no reason, killing the belief in justice are the direct way to radicalize the young people" (p. 164).

3. Research Questions

The authors analyzed and identified the socio-psychological factors contributing to the emergence of the radical religious (Islamist) senses among the young people and the attitudes concentrating them on antisocial and often illegal acts. The conflict between the Muslims following the traditional values and the "new" Muslims in the North Caucasus, because of the religious and political activity of the latter and the attempts to "correct" the local situation of Islam, gradually reached an aggravation, which led to the intervention of the law enforcement agencies, which preventive measures, as practice shows, often end in violence, tortures of the young people affected by the so-called "pure" Islam. We think that preventive measures provided by the authorities and the society should consist of not violence, but arranging the warring parties, achieving harmony in society, and tolerating dissent, including religious dissent.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the features of radical Islamism in the North Caucasus, its causes, forms of manifestation and their anti-social nature, as well as to determine the effective countermeasures.

5. Research Methods

The methodological basis of the study was composed of the principles of the system approach, which allow considering the object of analysis concerning the structural elements, entirely giving a holistic vision of it.

6. Findings

The penetration of the radical Islam into the youth in the North Caucasus, presented in the form of Wahhabism, involves the socio-political transformations that occurred before and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the ideologization of social and religious life of the Muslims, the penetration of the Islamic organizations, pursuing the political goals under the covering of the Islamic slogans, psychologically affecting the young Muslims, who perceive sensitively to the Islamic values and are sensitive to social injustice, deprived of a critical attitude to the ideas of Jihad and the creation of a "Caucasus Caliphate". Within the conditions of difficult market relations, a part of the young people in Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria became involved in extremist, criminal groups, financially supported by anti-Russian forces and aimed at anti-state acts.

7. Conclusion

The law enforcement agencies in the North Caucasus, and in the country, generally, have not learned to work with the youth based on the modern methods, excluding tortures, illegal actions, taking into account their religious and psychological, ideological attitudes, using modern socio-psychological methods of therapy and IT-technologies. The lack of this approach has led to the fact that many young people have fallen under the influence of religious extremists, Islamist agitators and religious actors.

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