

# Fundamentalist Movements in The Northern Region of The Caucasus: Chechnya And Dagestan At the End of the 20th Century and The Beginning of the 21st Century

## Kuzey Kafkasya Bölgesinde Selefi Hareketler: 20. yüzyılın Sonu ve 21. Yüzyılın Başında Çeçenya ve Dağıstan

Metin Aksoy<sup>1</sup>, Abbas Karaağaçlı<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

*The Mujahedeen, who had received military training in Afghanistan and Pakistan against Soviets and fought against that force, steered to new objectives or they were directed to do so after the dissolution of the USSR. The Mujahedeen received training in accordance with the Salafist-Wahabi faith in general. They sometimes operate peacefully in an impolitic manner but they also operate politically and act as a member of an armed organization at times. Their aforementioned field of activity is focused on regions, where a power vacuum occurred as the result of the dissolution of the USSR and the subsequent decline in the state authority. The attempts of Selefi organizations such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda to infiltrate into the Caucasian region are common. It should be noted that the indicated organizations house a large number of terrorists from this region within their own structure and that they also receive external aid and assistance. In this article, the actions of the fundamentalist groups to settle into the Northern Caucasian Region and their activities shall be analyzed within the historical context. Afterwards,*

**Keywords:** Fundamentalism, the Caucasus, Salafism, the Middle East, Russia

### Öz

*1979 yılında SSCB'nin Afganistan'a askeri müdahalesiyle birlikte radikal İslamcılık Doğu Asya ve Ortadoğu'yu etkileyen en önemli siyasal akım olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılması ile birlikte Afganistan ve Pakistan'da Sovyetlere karşı askeri eğitim alan ve mücadele veren mücahitler yeni hedeflere doğru yönelmiş veya yönlendirilmişlerdir. Mücahitler genel olarak Selefi-Vahabi inancına uygun olarak eğitilmişlerdir. Bunlar kimi zaman barışçıl ve siyasetten uzak kimi zaman da siyasi ve silahlı örgüt üyesi olarak faaliyet göstermektedirler. Bu faaliyet alanları genel olarak SSCB'nin ortadan kalması ve devlet otoritesinin zayıflamasının sonucu güç boşluğunun meydana geldiği bölgelerde yoğunlaşmaktadır. İŞİD, El Kaide ve benzer Selefi örgütlerin Kafkasya bölgesine sızma girişimlerine sıklıkla rastlanmaktadır. Örgütlerin bünyelerinde, bu coğrafyadan gelen birçok teröristi barındırdığı ve dışsal yardımlar aldığı gerçeği göz önünde bulundurulmalıdır.*

*Bu makalede aşırı dinci grupların tarihsel süreçte Kuzey Kafkasya bölgesine yerleşmeleri ve faaliyetleri analiz edilecektir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Radikal Hareketler, Kafkasya, Selefilik, Ortadoğu, Rusya

**Araştırma Makalesi [Research Paper]**

**Submitted:** 26 / 11 / 2020

**Accepted:** 08 / 02 / 2021

<sup>1</sup> Doç. Dr. Gümüşhane Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü, metinaksoy@hotmail.de ORCID: 0000-0002-3118-6739

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Giresun Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü, kara\_agacli@yahoo.com ORCID: 0000-0002-4476-6572

## Introduction

The social and political movement called the “Arab Spring” (Karaağaçlı, 2019) has destabilized many sovereign and independent states such as Egypt, Tunisia, Iraq and Libya in a region encompassing Middle East and Northern Africa, leading dragging the indicated nations into civil wars. During the course of this so called Arab Spring, various terrorist organizations also emerged and came into the scene. Majority of such organizations are comprised of groups that adopted Salafi – Wahabi ideology. The terrorist organizations, with the financial and moral support and assistance of Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Jordan and some of the other Arabic countries, have been disposed to destabilizing the different regions of the Islamic world through chaos and violence by the instrumentalisation of the terrorism (Dihstelhoffund and Lohse, 2017). As the result of such actions, countries like Libya, Iraq, Syria and Yemen showed the signs of destabilization and were dragged right into the chaos.

Starting from 80's, the Pakistani citizens as well as the citizens from other Islamic nations, who had been receiving training in religious educational establishments, were influenced by extremist ideologies and thus turned into jihadist and radical militants. They were subsequently dispersed to various spots of the Islamic world, including Afghanistan. They situated themselves in the Great Middle Eastern Project and the Arab Spring that occurred during this period according to their own perceptions. Employing terrorist organizations by states is a long-known method and the details are always privy to the top cadre only. They know to whom they serve to and why they are employed. However, the members of the lower echelons wage wars only for the sake of their own faith. Jihadists in such mentality fight with the security forces under the influence of the Selefi ideology on behalf of the God without questioning a single thing.

The Islamic insurgent groups in the Caucasians adopted fundamentalist ideology as political view in Tsarist Russian Era. In the period that USSR ruled the region, this ideology was interrupted. However, as the USSR dissolved, the fundamentalist outfits that benefitted the consequent power vacuum reactivated their efforts. Salafi – Wahabi terrorist organizations (Falkowski, 2016) played pivotal roles especially during the Chechen and Dagestani Wars. That is why it has been alleged that the Saudi regime finances the Salafi – Wahabi Jihadist terrorist groups by spending billions of dollars each year. (Maier, 2017:153; Köse,2019: 407-424)

The Russian Federation, which inherited the Soviet legacy after the dissolution of the USSR, encountered with a number of security issues. Without a doubt, the most important of them all is the separatist and fundamentalist terrorist activities within the Northern Caucasian Region. Clashes in the Southern Caucasians and the Georgia as well as the occupation of the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan by Armenians lead to the destabilization of the region. In the Central Asia; the Civil War in Tajikistan (1992 – 1997) and the post-independence ethnic and religious conflicts within the Fergana Valley (Maier, 2017:153) that is situated between Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan expanded the area of destabilization. The internal conflict in Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea and other crises impacted the security of the Russian federation in an indirect manner. (Cornel, 2005) However, the involvement of the Selefi – Wahabi militants in the conflicts in Chechnya and Dagestan in the Northern Caucasian Region escalated the situation to an extent that it directly threatens the territorial integrity and the security of Russia as it has also changed the nature of the conflict as well. (Forsyth, 2013) In addition to the fact that USA, Turkey and Iran are also active within Russia's own sovereign domain, the ethnic separatists and religious movements being supported by several countries bothers Russia. Especially the support of the fundamentalist groups for the religious movements leads to increase in religious fundamentalism in the region.

In this study, the influence of the external interventions and involvements to the ethnic and religious differences in Chechnya and Dagestan shall be analyzed within the context of the Northern Caucasians.

## 1. The Characteristics of The Caucasian Region

Northern Caucasians house more ethnic, linguistic and religious groups than any other region of the Russian Federation. Dagestan comes to forefront with more than 30 indigenous ethnic groups and their languages. The Northern Caucasians has a population of 6,5 million people, comprised of ethnically divergent minorities and 7 Federal Republics. They are (from West to East) Adygien, Karachay-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria, North Ossetia-Alania, Ingushetia, Chechnya, Dagestan. Krasnodar, Stavropol and Rostov, with a combined population of 10,5 million, belongs to the Northern Caucasians although officially counted within the administrative region of Southern Russia. The mountainside of the Caucasian Mountains is one of the most important agricultural areas of the former Soviet Union. (Souleimanov and Aliyev, 2014: 44-46) The other sectors of the region (Chechnya, Stavropol, Kuban region) have industrial importance due to the oil reserves. Furthermore, due to the fact that this region is situated along the passage route of the projects, which shall transfer oil to the Russia from the Northern Caucasian Caspian Region, holds geopolitical and strategic importance. (for example the pipeline extends to the Black Sea port of Novorossiysk) After the USSR dissolved, the Northern Caucasians became the sovereign domain of Russia. This region, which is under the influence of Russia, experiences religious and

ethnic conflicts of its own in addition to being the arena for the foreign actors such as USA, Turkey and Iran. It is often voiced that Russia is experiences strategic difficulties especially along its borders with Georgia and Azerbaijan. (Halbach, 2003: 3-9) After the fall of the USSR, the people of Caucasians began practicing their religions in the public space in a noticeable manner. However, it is asserted that the other Islamic states have radicalizing influence over the faith of the Muslim population of the Northern Caucasians (Bryan, 1992:195-218).

## 2. Fundamentalist Movements in The Caucasian Region

The USSR, to protect its Southern borders, to ensure stability and to avert a possible war against the Soviet Union, intervened Afghanistan in 1979 (Steinbach, 2013:777). Against this military intervention, foreign powers explicitly and implicitly began organizing. USA and Saudi Arabia supported such organizational efforts through weapons and financial aid (Zeitler, 2017:136). Especially Pakistan became a base for the conflict. Thanks to the CIA operation, the mujahedeen were trained with modern weapons and Stinger Missiles after spending 6 billion USD (Hielscher, 2019) It has been alleged that Al-Qaeda and similar terrorist outfits were aided by the USA and Western states in terms of logistical and intelligence support in order to be deployed against the Soviet Union (Scroeder,2016:188). The soldiers of the mujahedeen groups comprised of the children of the militants killed in action and the children of the immigrant families with the support of the USA, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Participation from the Gulf States was also common within the scope of the religious brotherhood (Heine, 2009:190). As the USA did not carry out direct combat operations, it also left the command in the region to the Taliban under its guidance ( Baraki, 2002: 32-38; Schetter, 2003, 518). After the war ended, the mujahedeen carried their experiences when they returned home by joining Islamic outfits in order to spread the fundamentalist Islamic view (Baraki, Schetter).

Upon the occupation of Afghanistan, the world thought that as the last fortresses of insurgency within the lands of Afghanistan fell in December 2001 as the end of El-Qaeda was near or a perception was imposed in this manner. The latest actions of the extremist El Qaeda under the leadership of Osama Bin Laden, in Pakistan and Afghanistan were brought before the public eye. The organization, which tactically retreated as the result of the air and land strikes, carried out by the USA and the coalition, recovered and promptly reorganized itself in line with its future tactics that it would follow within the new conjecture as the result of the new reality (Gunaratna, 2002). A significant portion of the aforementioned terrorists headed for the former Soviet regions. Caucasians, especially the Northern Caucasians became a proving ground for the jihadist terrorists to practice their battle experience, resulting from Afghanistan. For Muslim groups, which came to Afghanistan from the Caucasians to wage jihad, to fight together created an ideological unity between the different groups.

The roots of the dispute between the Chechens and the Russians can be traced back to Tsarist Russia. The war, waged by the legendary leader of Dagestani Avars, Sheikh Samil<sup>3</sup> against Russians, starting from 18<sup>th</sup> Century and the Chechen campaigns are still fresh in the memories of both the Russians and the Muslims. After the capture of Sheikh Samil in 1859, Russians took control of the region thereby breaking of Chechen insurgency. Chechens had carried out their fight and opposition for a long time. Starting from the Tsarist Russian Era, Russians, in order to solidify their command within the region, provoked the Muslim minorities (Chechens, Ingushs, Balkars, Dagestanis, Tatars and others) against each other and by benefiting their conflicts, solidified their grip on the region ( Rezvani, 2014:870-890).

Today, the Chechen Muslims are known as extreme or even Wahabist. The fact that Saudi Arabia provides support to Selefi – Wahabi groups all around the world and the fact that El-Qaeda, ISIS and other terrorist organizations house insurgents from Caucasian regions, especially from Chechnya and Dagestan, drew attention to this region. Since Armenia in Southern Caucasia has a homogenous population and the population of Georgia is mostly comprised of Christians, the fundamentalism found no foothold in those regions as an element but nevertheless, it has recently been witnessed that the Azerbaijani citizens join some jihadist terror organizations and involve in terrorist actions (Ludwig, 2010). If the authority in Iraq and Syria is re-established and thus the stability is assured, it is likely that the jihadists shall choose the Azerbaijani route in order to infiltrate the Northern Caucasians. In such a case, the lack of authority, resulting from the Armenian – Azeri conflict shall create harbouring and grouping opportunities in this area.

The external elements and factors for the expansion of the fundamentalist groups in Caucasian Region should be taken into account as well. According to various news and findings, the Gulf Countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE etc, in close cooperation with the USA, have been hard at work for a long time in order to nest the Salafi – Wahabi faith through the Muslim minorities in Northern Caucasians, which are the weak spots of the Russian Federation. According to some comments, the most important player in the generalization of the Salafi faith in the Middle Asia and Caucasians is Qatar (Migacheva and Frederic, 2018:80-85). The historical progress of the Salafi view in the Caucasian Region starts in 1940's. It is known that during those years, small scale groups took action to spread the Hanafi Sect in the Central Asia and that they

---

<sup>3</sup> Sheikh Samil, the political and the religious leader of the people of the Northern Caucasus. The leader of the resistance during the Caucasian War and the third imam of Dagestan and Chechnya. He is known as the Caucasian Eagle in Turkey. He was born in June 26, 1797.

especially rallied around Sami Damla, a Harezmi born cleric (Olcott, 2007:1-44). It is seen that the Muslims in the Central Asia and the Caucasians strained themselves to get acquainted with the newest movements and views that were developing in the Islamic World, albeit in limited capacity. For example, the opinions and the works of Islamic scholars such as Seyit Cemalettin Afgani (Köse, 2019), Muhammed Abduh<sup>4</sup> as well as Muhammad Hindustani Rustamov reached to the region. Especially the religious training centres, located in Zargana Valley had been influenced by the aforementioned views. In addition to the Central Asia, some of the religious movements and views picked the interest of the Muslims in the Caucasians Region. For example, it was revealed that the ideas of the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood<sup>5</sup> Hasan al-Banna<sup>6</sup>, Yusuf al-Karadavi<sup>7</sup> and Al-Mawdudi<sup>8</sup> were adopted and rescripted by the Salafi religious clerics in the Dagestan region of the Northern Caucasians (Roshchin, 2006).

Before the dissolution of the USSR, the Afghani wars and especially the extremist ideas of the Afghani Mujahedeen, who fought against the Soviet backed Afghanistan Government, influenced the Muslim soviet soldiers, stationed in Afghanistan. As a matter of fact, as the strict regime loosened its grip after Mikhail Gorbachev came to power; all kinds of political movements were able to find a footing in the Soviet lands, in one way or another. During the attempts to implement Perestroika by Gorbachev, the ideas of Muhammad Bin Abdülvehab, the founder of the Wahabism, rapidly began spreading in the Northern Caucasians.

After the USSR collapsed, different political and social movements occurred in the former Soviet republics. Some of them escalated to civil war levels. During the civil war of Tajikistan between 1992 – 1997, fought between the Islamist groups and the Government, many extremist Muslims poured into Tajikistan from the Soviet region to fight alongside the Islamic side. For example, Ahmed-Kadji Akhtaev from Dagestani Avars, joined the war and founded the Islamic Party of Revival. (IPR). Ahmed-Kadji Akhtaev, who was a traditional religious scholar and doctor, created a movement called Islamiye upon returning to Dagestan. Afterwards, with the participation of other Islamists, this movement turned into one of the most important political movements in the Dagestan Region (Ware and Kisriev, 2015). In the Caucasians, especially in the Northern Caucasians, Islamic movements and organizations were gradually met with the sympathy of the public and as they placed Russia to their crosshairs, they received a fair amount of support from various states and intelligence agencies while accelerating their endeavours to organize within the populace. The extremist outfits, which usually come together around the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood and the aforementioned Islamic scholars, did not bother to conceal their intention to form an Islamic state in Chechnya and Dagestan. The Muslims of the region, who united around the United Islamic North Caucasus Movement, began sounding their demands of autonomy in line with the solutions to the problems of the Muslims in the region (Ware and Kisriev).

Ahmed-Kadji Akhtaev came up as one of the main actors in organizing the radical groups in Caucasia. Selimhan Yandarbiyev<sup>9</sup> assumed the leadership of the Caucasian Conference movement while Movladi Udugov led the Islamic Nation Movement. While Ahmed-Kadji Akhtaev had a significant role in both movements, he was also the chief Muslim Judge of the Islamic Nation Movement during the same period. At the same time, some other radical outfits began conducting activities in the region as well. One of them was the Islamic Way Party, which was active in Dagestan and Chechnya with the goal of establishing a Muslim caliphate state. This party was founded by Bislan Gantamirov in 1990 (Ware and Kisriev). In 1992, Chechnya declared its independence and in 1994, the first Chechen War began. With the start of this war, the region became an epicentre of the political and ideological developments in the Northern Caucasians. During this long and wary war, the region became organization and activity grounds of the extremist jihadist outfits. During the same years, Şamil Basayev<sup>10</sup>, who came into prominence as the leader of the jihadist warriors in the Chechnya, promised to liberate the Dagestan region from the Russian Hegemony. The Islamic Community Movement, founded in 1998, declared Jihad in the Caucasian Region by renouncing the government of Dagestan as infidel. During this period, Wahabi leaders Şamil Basayev and Abdurrahman and Ömer El Hattap of Arabic origins united their paramilitary strength and founded an organization called the Islamic Peace-Making Troops (Bobrovnikov, 2001:29).

---

<sup>4</sup> Mohammed Abduh, with his full name; Mohammed Abduh bin Hasan Hayrullah et-Türkmâni el-Mısri. Egyptian born Turkish educator, judge and reformist. He is known as the founder of the Modernist Islamism.

<sup>5</sup> The League of the Muslim Brotherhood or Iḥvânü'l-Müslimîn, in addition to being the oldest and the largest Islamic movement of the Arabic World, is the most widespread political opposition organization in many Arabic countries. It was banned in Egypt after the coup plotter Abdul Fettah Sisi came to power and its leader is on trial with the death penalty.

<sup>6</sup> İmam Hasan b. Ahmed b. Abdurrahman el-Bennâ, Egyptian political and religious leader. He is the founder of the organization called the Muslim Brotherhood. He was born in Egypt in October 14, 1906.

<sup>7</sup> Yusuf el Karadavi, Egyptian religious scholar and the chairman of the World Muslim Scientist Association. He also holds Qatari citizenship. Born in September 9, 1926.

<sup>8</sup> Seyyid Ebu'l A'lâ El-Mevdudî, Pakistani glossator, Islamic Scholar and writer. Born in September 25, 1979 in India.

<sup>9</sup> Zelimkhan Abdumuslimovich Yandarbiyev, second president of the Chechen – Icheria Republic. Born in Kazakhstan in September 12, 1962. Died in February 13, 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Şamil Salmanoviç Basayev, Chechen leader and the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the Chechen – Icheria Republic. Born in January 14, 1965, died in July 10, 2006.

The Second Chechen War, began in August 1999 was swiftly ended with the support of the jihadist groups rapidly poured from the Islamic World to the Northern and the Chechen Government was toppled quickly. In October 2002, a strike on the Theatre Building in the capital city of Russia, Moscow, claimed the lives of 117 Russian citizens and 50 Chechen militants. After this, in September 2004, a terrorist attack on a primary school in the city of Beslan<sup>11</sup>, which resulted in the death of at least 344 people, the war engulfed the whole region. As the result of the security measures, enacted by Vladimir Putin after coming into power and after the air and land operations, conducted by the Russian Army, the war in Chechnya finally ended in April 16, 2009. Reconstruction works began in the capital city, other cities and towns, devastated by during the war, initiated. During the war, most of the Jihadist Chechen, Dagestani and Arabic commanders were killed. Despite this, the warriors, who went underground in the other parts of the Northern Caucasians, continued their ideological and armed training.

### 3. Salafism in Today's Caucasians

Today, terrorist organizations such as El-Qaeda, El Nusra Front<sup>12</sup>, ISIS, El-Shabab<sup>13</sup>, Ensar-ı Kudus etc, continues to operate in the Caucasians. The ideological base of those organizations is comprised of Wahabi faith. Autonomous republics that are situated within the borders of the Soviet Federation such as Dagestan, Chechnya and Tatarstan are some of the operating grounds for the radical groups. The general ideology of such outfits is to destabilize the autonomous republics of the Russian Federation, where the majority is Muslim. It has been alleged that tens of thousands of Caucasian originated jihadist warriors were sent to Iraq and Syria (Halbach and Isaeva, 2015:8)

Since the civil war in Afghanistan, the Fergana region of the Central Asia, has turned into sheltering, regrouping and sometimes, battlegrounds of the Jihadist organizations. Especially the Endican, Namangan and Fergana regions of Uzbekistan as well as Bedahsah (Karaağaçlı, 2012) region of Tajikistan has been used as a forward base to infiltrate to the Sing Yang state of the People's Republic of China (Eastern Turkistan) and to the inlands of Russia. Jihadists of Central Asia and Caucasian origins took part in the internal conflicts in Middle Eastern and Northern Africa such as the ones in Libya, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan, Pakistan etc. as jihadist foot soldiers and commanders in extremist outfits. Furthermore, it is an undeniable fact that some jihadists of Middle Asia and Caucasian origin actively involved in the Islamist outfits and fronts in Kashmir of India, the Central Africa, Europe and Philippines. The head of the FSB, the Federal Security Services of Russia Alexander Bortnikov indicates that at least 1.700 Russian Citizens involved in the ISIS as militants (Abdulmo'in, 2014).

Across the entire Northern Caucasians, many youngsters cut their moustaches and grew beard so that they were able to show their commitment to Wahabism in a cultural manner as a propaganda tool. Radical groups, during the civil wars in Iraq and Syria, organized young people, who have overbalancing Islamic ideas, and directed them towards to terrorist organizations. When committing such actions, they pressured the families of the indicated youth and forced the freshly recruited soldiers to obey their orders. Jihadist groups, in order to cement their positions and to impose themselves to the Muslims as the sole alternative way of Islam, resorted to eliminate those, who oppose their ideology (Bobrovnikov, 2011:281-301). In this regard, the radical outfits commenced to take out the real Muslim scholars in the region with common sense. For example, the Anti-Wahabi Chief Islamic Judge of Dagestan Region, Muhammed Hacı Ebubekirov was murdered by the Wahabi terrorists in August 21, 1998. (Takiabadi, 2014). After that, more than 10 Muslim scholars in the same region was killed in 2012 because of the fact that they refused to join to Wahabism. In August 28, 2012; Sayit Atasiyev, the most important Islamic philosopher of the Dagestan Region and the successor to the Chief Islamic Judge Ebubekirov, was killed by a Ukrainian borne Wahabist<sup>14</sup>. This has been the most important act of terrorism in the Caucasians ( Vatchagaev, 2012). Again, the Dagestani sofi leader Ilyas Hacı Ilyasov was killed in January 2013 by Wahabist terror organizations (Vatchagaev, 2012).

---

<sup>11</sup> Beslan hostage crisis has lasted for three days and a total of 1.700 people were taken as hostages. More than 300 of them died. The incident occurred in the town of Beslan in the Autonomous Republic of Northern Osetia as the terrorists (predominantly Ingush and Chechen) attacked a school on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2004 and took more than 1.100 people (777 children). The hostage takers committed this act in order to announce that the Chechen commander Samil Bashaev wanted to end the Second Chechen War. On the third day of the standoff, the Russian Security Forces raided the compound by using tanks, HE ordnance and other heavy weaponry. After the initial blasts an armed shootout occurred in the surrounded buildings between the Russian forces and the terrorists. At the end of the skirmish, it was reported that at least 334 people dies (86 children amongst them) hundreds wounded and many were just missing in action. <https://edition.cnn.com/2013/09/09/world/europe/beslan-school-siege-fast-facts/index.html> (accessed April 17, 2020).

<sup>12</sup> Al Nusra Front; armed jihadist organization. Its aim is to topple the Bassar Al Assad regime in the Syria and to create an Islamic State in the region. Acknowledged as a terrorist organization by many countries.

<sup>13</sup> Hareketes-Şebab el-Mücahidin or eş-Şebab in short. An armed organization, fighting in Somali to eliminate the Federal Transition Government. As of 2011, controls most of the Southern regions of the country. It is reported that the organization practices strict Sharia laws in the regions it holds.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

In the cultural side of the things, the Salafirescriptors questioned the traditional Islamic thought process and renounced the practices of faith that have been practiced by the society for hundreds of years and considered the sect based practices and their mourning for their saints and deceased as “polytheism” as they strongly recommended the Salafism as the way of life. The ecclesiastics from the Wahabi school of thought benefited from the ignorance of the society and by taking advantage of the sect based differences between the Muslims especially between Sunni and Shiite sects, they divided people. They continued provoking Sunnis against the Shiite. In this regard, they benefit from the opportunities, provided by the Non Profits such as the Mecca-Saudi Arabia based International Organization of Muslim youth, El Heremein and Ibrahim El Ebrahim. Without a doubt, the Chechen War was a significant turning point in the spread of Salafism in the Caucasian Region. The Caucasian Emirates, founded in October 7, 2007 by Omerov and the subsequent Caucasian Province, established in July 2015 by the ISIS created a generation that adopted the Salafism altogether with their families. This generation either joined the fight starting from their childhood or their families involved in battles as their homes and cities were razed. Such clashes had a deep impact in the souls of the children and youth and prevented the formation of the concept of nationalism and according to some, created the Kalashnikov<sup>15</sup> generation (Souleimanov, 2005:68-100).

## Conclusion

The Caucasian Region is directly in the crosshairs of the jihadist terror outfits. In this regard, Salafism and Wahabism were used as ideological tools to transform and evolve the society towards an extremist manner. The Chechen War ended with the severe intervention of Russia and the security measures became the dominant administrative method for so long. Despite the aforementioned security measures, the many Caucasian based Jihadist, joined in the ranks of Salafi and Wahabi terrorist organizations and took part in conflicts in a greater area, spanning from the Northern Africa to Middle-East, from the Central Africa to the Eastern Asia as jihadist warriors. Due to their geo-political positions, the developments in the Caucasian region influence especially Russia as well as Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iran and other countries of the region. Russia, Iran, Turkey and Azerbaijan moved towards cooperation to combat against the terrorism and radicalism.

The countries in the region are aware that NATO and the USA have plans to settle into the region under the guise of combat against terrorism and radicalism. The head of states of Russia, Iran and Azerbaijan gathered in Baku, the capital city of Azerbaijan in August 28, 2016 and declared that they would cooperate against all kinds of terrorist agenda that may threaten the region. The leaders of the same three countries also reached a consensus in relation to fighting against the terror, which poses a risk for the region, together in The Shanghai Cooperation Summit, held in Astarahan, Russia in July 2015.

Without a doubt, the dominating authoritarian regimes in the Northern and Southern Caucasians and the common practices of bribery and corruption in their state mechanism and the resulting poverty and desperation create a suitable environment for the growth of terrorist organizations. Unless such handicaps are not challenged, the poor and desperate youth of the region may fall victim to the trappings of the terrorist organizations due their drive to find employment, to gain a social status and even to look after their family.

Various countries provide support and aid for spreading the Salafi Wahabi ideology. Various religious schools, congregations and leagues, which raise this type of militants, are financed by the above-mentioned oil rich countries in a large scale geographic area spanning from Pakistan to Middle Asia, from there to Caucasians and to the Middle East and Africa.

## Bibliography

- Abdulmoin, M. (2014). “The Footsteps of ISIS, from the Middle-East to the Middle Asia”. Shafaq Printhouse, Tehran.
- Baraki, M. (2002). Islamismus und Großmachtspolitik in Afghanistan, (Islamism and Great Power Policy in Afghanistan) in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte: Beilage zur Wochenzeitung Das Parlament*, B 8/2002, 32-38.
- Vladimir, B. (2001). Post Socialist Forms of Islam. Caucasian Wahhabis, ISIM Newsletter. 29. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/15605143.pdf> (accessed Januar 15, 2020).
- Bobrovnikov, V. (2011). ‘Ordinary Wahhabism’ versus ‘Ordinary Sufism’? Filming Islam for Postsoviet Muslim Young People, in: *Journal Religion, State and Society*, 39:2-3, 281-301.

---

<sup>15</sup> AK-47 or the Kalashnikov, a Soviet made 7,62 mm. infantry rifle. Designed by Mikhail Kalashnikov and manufactured by the Ijmaş(factory). Commissioned in 1949 in the Soviet Armed Forces.

- Bryan E.B. F.(1992). Internationalism, nationalism and Islam before 1990, in Abdurakhman Avtorkhanov, Marie Broxup (ed), The North Caucasusbarrier : The Russian advance towards the Muslim World, New York : St. Martin's Press, 195-218.
- Conrad, S.(2003). Ethnizität und ethnische Konflikte in Afghanistan, (Ethnicity and ethnic conflicts in Afghanistan) Berlin, Dietrich Reimer Verlag.
- Cornell, E. Svante, (2005). Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus, London and New York: Routledge Curzon.
- Dihstehoffund, J.& Lohse A. (2017). Arabischer Raum: Einflussund Rolle des Islamismus und dschihadistischen Terrorismus (Arabregion: influenceand role of Islamism and jihadist terrorism), <https://www.bpb.de/internationales/weltweit/innerstaatlichekonflikte/270161/einfluss-und-rolle-des-islamismus-und-dschihadistischen-terrorismus> (accessed April 17, 2020).
- Forsyth J. (2013). Kafkasya (The Caucausu), Timuçin Binder (çev) Ayrıntı yay. İstanbul.
- Gunaratna R. (2002). Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror, Columbia University Press, New York.
- Hanter T. S. (2003). Islam in Russia: The Politics of Identity and Security, Routledge, 2004.
- Halbach U. (2004). Nordkaukasien – von Widerstandgepraegt, Northern Caucasus - characterized by resistance, in: Informationen zur politischen Bildung aktüel, Kaukasus, Berlin, pp. 3-9.
- Halbach U.& Isaeva, M. (2015). Dagestan:Russlands schwierigste Teil republik Politische und religiöse Entwicklung am "Berg der Sprachen" (Dagestan: Russia's most difficult part of the republic Political and religious development on the "mountain of languages"), SWP-StudieStiftung Wissenschaftund Politik Deutsches Institut für Internationale Politik und Sicherheit, Berlin, 1- 8.
- Heine P.(2009). Einführung in die Islamwissenschaft, (Introduction to Islamic Studies) Akademi Verlag GmbH, Berlin.
- Hielscher H.(2019). Sowjetische Invasion in Afghanistan 1979, Das Vietnam der Russen, (Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, Vietnam of the Russians), <https://www.spiegel.de/geschichte/sowjetische-invasion-in-afghanistan-1979-das-vietnam-der-russen-a-1301765.html> (accessed April 17, 2020)
- Hüseyini-Takiabadi M. (2014). The Struggle between the traditional Islam and the Salafism in the Northern Caucasus , Tehran: Caucasian Studies, Printhouse.
- Karaağaçlı, A. (2012). Arap Baharına Farklı Bakış (A Different View of the Arab Spring) <http://www.turansam.org/makale.php?id=3182> , (accessed October 21, 2019)
- Karaağaçlı, A. (2012). Tacikistan'ın Bedahşan Bölgesinde Huzursuzluk (Unrest in Tajikistan's Badakhshan Province <http://www.turansam.org/makale.php?id=4996> (accessed January 15, 2020).
- Kleveman, L. (2004). Yeni Büyük Oyun, Orta Asya'da Kanve Petrol (The New Great Game, Blood Oil in Central Asia) Everest Yay. İstanbul.
- Köse,İ.(2019). İngiliz Arşiv Belgelerinde Arap İsyanı [Arab Revolt in Bristish Archive Records], Kronik Publ. 3. Ed. İstanbul.
- Köse, İ. (2019). Turkey's Soft Power Policy Towards Balkans After 1990's: Challenges and Opportunities, Codrul Cosminului, Vol. XXV, Issue: 2, 407-424.
- Ludwig M. (201), Dagestan: Sandsäcke in den Städten, Kämpfer im Wald, [https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/dagestan-sandsaecke-in-den-staedten-kaempfer-im-wald1608928.html?printPagedArticle=true#pageIndex\\_2](https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/dagestan-sandsaecke-in-den-staedten-kaempfer-im-wald1608928.html?printPagedArticle=true#pageIndex_2) , (accessed April 17, 2020).
- Maciej, F. (2016). Russia's 'Middle East': the escalation of religious conflicts in the Northern Caucasus. OSW Commentary Number 207/04.04.2016. [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/196730/commentary\\_207.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/196730/commentary_207.pdf) (accessed April 17, 2020).
- Maier, J. (2017). İslam, Politik und Gewalt (Islam, Politics and Violence), LIT Verlag Münster,
- Katya, M.& Bryan, F. (2018). Religion, Conflict, and Stability in the Former Soviet Union, RAND Corporation, pp. 80-85, [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2100/RR2195/RAND\\_RR2195.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR2100/RR2195/RAND_RR2195.pdf) (accessed April 17, 2020).
- Olcott, M. B. (2007). The Roots Of Raidcal Islam In Cenral Asia, Washington: Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment For International Peace.

- Rezvani, B. (2014). Reflections on the Chechen Conflict: Geopolitics, Timing and Transformations, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 50:6, 870-890.
- Roshchin, M. (2006). *Islam In The Northern Caucasus; Dagestan*, Washington DC: Jamestown Foundation.
- Schetter, C. (2003). *Ethnizität und ethnische Konflikte in Afghanistan*, Berlin, Dietrich Reimer Verlag.
- Scroeder, R. (2016). "Our war on terror begins with al-Qaeda, but it does not end there" – Der 11. September als Zeitwende in der amerikanischen Sicherheitspolitik? Zeitenwende 9/11: Eine transatlantische Bilanz (The turn of the 9/11 ? : A transatlantic balance sheet), in: Till Karmann, Simon Wendt, Tobias Endler (ed), Martin Thunert Verlag Barbara Budrich, Berlin & Toronto.
- Souleimanov, A. E. (2005). Chechnya, Wahhabism and the Invasion of Dagestan. *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 9 (4). (48-71)
- Souleimanov, E. & Aliyev, H. (2014). *The Individual Disengagement of Avengers, Nationalists, and Jihadists: Why Ex-Militants Choose to Abandon Violence in the North Caucasus*, Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Steinbach, U. (2013). *Der Nahe und Mittlere Osten Politik, Gesellschaft Wirtschaft Geschichte , Kultur: Grundlagen, Strukturen und Problemfelder (The Middle East Politics, society Economy History, culture: foundations, structures and problem areas) Country analysis) Länder analysen*, Springer-Verlag, Wiesbaden.
- Thielen N. (2011). Hintergrund Al Kaida Die "Franchise"-Terroristen (Al Qaeda Background, The "Franchise" Terrorists) <https://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/alkaida186.html> (accessed April 17, 2020)
- Vatchagaev M.(2011). The Evolution of Salafism in the North Caucasus. *Eurasia Daily Monitor* , 9 (157), 2012/8/16. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/50504af12.html> (accessed Februar 15, 2020).
- Ware, R. B. & Kisriev, E. (2015) *Dagestan: Russian Hegemony and Islamic Resistance in the North Caucasus*, Routledge. <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/isid-orgutu-nedir-isid-kimdir-2214600>
- Zeitler, B. (2007). Von der Stammesherrschaft zur Beseitigung der Taliban, (From the domination to the elimination of the Taliban) In Alexander Straßner, Margarete Klein, Wenn Staatscheitern (ed), VS Verlag Wiesbaden, (131- 145).