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KABARDINO-BALKARIA: ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS IN THE NORTH CAUCASUS IN THE 1990s AND 2000s

North Caucasus is one of the regions of the modern Russian Federation. Most of the peoples of the North Caucasus are Muslim. Islam penetrated into this region from the seventh to the fifteenth centuries. The modern peoples of North Caucasus are undergoing a revival of Islam in all aspects of their religious life, including some political and legal aspects of Islam. The aim of my paper is to consider the relation between Muslim and the Russian State in contemporary North Caucasus, using my field data on Kabardino-Balkaria – one of the republics of Russia in the North Caucasus.

Modern Islamic community

According to the official data gathered by the agencies that control activity of the Islamic communities in Kabardino-Balkaria, there were 132 Muslim communities (jamaats) in the republic by the end of 2002. In the 1990s, two to three Islamic communities emerged in every Kabardino-Balkarian settlement, usually uniting believers living in the same block (jamaat) and going to the same mosque or house of prayer.¹ This is why the modern Islamic communities of KBR are also called jamaats. The number of jamaats in a settlement depends on several factors: firstly, on its total population; secondly, on the popularity of modern Islam among the younger generation of Kabardins and Balkars who makes up a larger part of the congregation; and thirdly, on the features of historical development of Islam in specific districts of Kabardino-Balkaria and the Islamic traditions established during the Soviet period.

The number of Kabardino-Balkarian jamaat members is difficult to identify – there are no clear-cut criteria to determine whether a person may join it or not. Jamaats can be formed by four categories of Muslims: 1) Muslims who do not go to mosque but offer timely namaz and keep fasts at home (these category of Muslims includes many women); 2) Muslims who only go to mosque on the major Islamic holidays, do not offer namaz at

1. The Declaration of Islamic jamaats of Kabardino-Balkaria, "Severnii Kavkaz," *Hal'chik*, no 6 (Febr. 2001).

home nor keep fasts; 3) Muslims who offer the Friday namaz at mosque and are free to offer it or not at home the other days; 4) Muslims who offer namaz at mosque every day if possible (this category of Muslims includes many young people).

The majority of middle-aged and elderly men consider themselves believers though they do not go to mosque or go there very seldom, on major holidays. Few of them consider themselves atheists. The process of Islamic revival has primarily touched on the young people aged 15 to 35, living in towns and villages, mostly in Balkaria and Greater Kabarda.

Most women do not go to mosque, or offer namaz at home. Elderly women, usually wives of senior Muslim believers, offer namaz and go to mosque on holidays or Fridays wearing hijabs. Also there are elderly women in Smaller Kabarda who hold to the tradition of offering namaz at home, like in the Soviet years. Twice a year, on the major Islamic holidays, many women happen to come to mosques in KBR. During the 1990s many middle-aged women had completed the Elementary Islamic Knowledge Institute courses and obtained the mosque school teaching certificates (certificates of the Spiritual Board of the Muslims of KBR).

Road to Islam

The Islamic revival as a whole has hardly touched on the middle and older generations. Most elderly and old Muslims who go to mosque and offer namaz now were doing so during the Soviet years as well. But there are also old men who adopted Islam very recently, in the early 1990s. The number of Muslims in KBR increases on account of involving teenagers and the young in the Islamic movement. A good part of the present-day religious community members started to go to mosques of the KBR five years ago, at most. The persons who usually encourage them to turn to Islam are their older relatives (brothers), friends, classmates, workmates, and teachers.

Mosques and houses of prayer

Every Muslim community has either a mosque or a cemetery house of prayer (Kabardian *kh'e une*). Young imams are now trying to explain to the mullahs who lead Friday namaz in cemetery houses of prayer that, according to the rules of Islam, the namaz cannot be performed there. It is obvious that such a tradition was actually born during the Soviet period when most mosques in the KBR were closed. The Soviet authorities only permitted Soviet Muslims of KBR to build small cabins for funeral implements at cemeteries. The highlanders fitted those cabins for performing religious rites and turned them into houses of prayer. According to the figures of the

official republican agencies, there are 102 mosques and 30 houses of prayer open in KBR, most of which are situated in Smaller Kabarda.²

Islamic leaders

There is no strict hierarchy within the Islamic clergy. The situation varies from mosque to mosque. In general, the structure looks like this: *imam-hatyb* (combines the functions of community leader, mosque chief, and the preacher who delivers the Friday *hutba*), *imam*, *amir* (the surrogate imam who is responsible for tutoring the young), *muadzin* (responsible for performing *azan*), *dugashi* (*duh'e* – those who perform the *dua* rite at funeral).

In 1990 the terms that designated Islamic leaders in KBR began to change. Due to the fact that Islam had been penetrating into the Kabardian and Balkarian societies from the Ottoman Empire and the most active missionaries around this region came from the Ottoman clergy, the Islamic leaders were designated by the words *mullah* (Arabic) and *efendi* (Turkish). The situation has not been changed until the 1990s. The word *mullah* was more widespread in Smaller Kabarda, while *efendi* was more typical of Greater Kabarda and Balkaria. Islam of the 1990s introduced the new terms – *imam-hatyb*, *imam*, *amir* – that were out of use before. Nowadays, young Muslims use these newer terms more often than older Muslims, who prefer the old words.³

Education of religious leaders

Generally, the mosque chiefs with the higher religious education are few in the KBR. Elderly imams had been receiving private education during the Soviet years, many of them (Balkars) living in Kazakhstan or Central Asia. The grandfathers of many elderly religious figures of the present day were recognised in the early twentieth century as experts in Arabic language and Islam fundamentals, which they were sharing with their grandsons. Young imams are usually more literate than the elderly clergy. Many of them have an elementary Islamic education, some secondary or higher one. There are also young imams who have been educated in the Islamic schools and universities of Near Eastern countries, or in the Islamic Institute of Nalchik (such as imams from the villages of Zolukokoazhe, Verkhni Kurkuzhin, Elbrus, Verkhniaia Balkaria).⁴

2. Personal interview with Timur Atmurzayev, Deputy Mufti of the Religious Administration of the Muslims of Kabardino-Balkaria (2002), *Hal'chik*, Nov. 20.

3. Personal interview with Anzor Astemirov, Deputy of the Director of the Young Islamic Center in Kabardino-Balkaria (2002), *Hal'chik*, Dec. 10.

4. Personal interview with Musa Mukozhev, Director of the Young Islamic Center in Kabardino-Balkaria (2002), *Hal'chik*, Dec. 20.

Financial support of Islamic establishments

The Islamic establishments in the KBR are financed by congregants, sponsors, and charities. There have never been vakufs in the KBR. The Islamic clergy of KBR is also partly supported by the republican authorities. They pay monthly presidential stipends (400 roubles) to the mosque chiefs loyal to the authorities. Those stipends are also allocated for the Orthodox and Judaic communities of the republic. Administrations of kolkhozes and sovkhozes located in most villages of KBR that has been converted into stock companies help local imams and mullahs with food or money. The company administrations pay some Islamic leaders a monthly salary of 500 roubles. Most imams and mullahs in KBR make their own secular living either working somewhere or servicing their private farms.

Rivalry between older and younger generations

The second half of the 1990s brought to life the intra-Islamic rivalry between community and mosque chiefs for the leadership in society in the KBR, which then started to grow dramatically. This process has primarily impacted on the city mosques of Nalchik and the Spiritual Board of the Muslims of KBR, though the countryside clergy was not passed over either. The most widespread form of intra-Islamic rivalry is the rivalry between Islamic leaders representing the older and younger generations for either the post of village or city imam, or expansion of their influence and authority among congregants and community members. Young Islamic leaders have skills in delivering sermons and spreading Islamic ideology, and that is why they are able to easily defeat the religious leaders of older generation – “Soviet mullahs” – who often do not possess necessary eloquence and knowledge. The elderly imams often yield their right to deliver Friday hutbas to the young, keeping just the role of a formal mosque chief for themselves.

There is no unified Muslim community in KBR. Controversies and mutual misunderstanding are alive between congregants of different age, youths and elders. The conflict of generations emerged in 1996-1998 and grew in its intensity and direct manifestation in the late 1990s through to the early 2000s.

Young Muslims dissociate themselves from so-called *ethnic Muslims* (traditional Muslims), with whom they number the KBR residents who consider themselves Muslims but who do not offer namaz either at home or in mosques. The ethnic Muslims usually remember Islam at funerals, weddings, and on major Islamic holidays. That is why young Muslims call the Islam of older generation *funeral, folk, or traditional Islam*. At the same time, young Muslims call themselves *praying, young Muslims developing*

new, or pure Islam. In return, elderly Muslims believe that the Islam of young citizens of KBR is *Turkish* or *Arabic*.⁵

Young Muslims seek to promote and partly modernise the Islamic life of Kabardians and Balkars that had been weakening significantly during the twentieth century, of which only fragments had survived by the beginning of the 1990s. Young Muslims justly believe that most Muslims of the older generation lack necessary knowledge of Islam and Islamite behaviour. But the very activities of the Muslim youth happened to be rich in mistaken ideas and actions, misunderstanding of the political situation, the same religious ignorance, but above all impatience. Gradualism is one of the main principles of faithful Muslims, and it is largely violated by the young Muslims who are eager to change the Islamic life in Kabardino-Balkaria immediately and abruptly. The older generation of Muslims has rejected their activities, which they have taken as a danger to the special privilege of the elders and to the historically-formed walk of Kabardinian and Balkarian societies.

The conflict of generations often concerns the members of kin groups. Children and their parents in some families offer namaz and keep fast together, but this is not a rule. The most widespread type of the conflict is a conflict between young Muslims and their irreligious parents.

Religious behavior

Offering namaz has become an important point in the development of Islamic life in the KBR, because it has complicated the relationships between the young and elder Muslims. The controversy has aroused about the order of offering namaz. The first question is about where one has to offer daily namaz. According to the historically-formed tradition in the republic (complying with the Islamic canons) one can offer daily namaz at home and go to mosque for the Friday namaz. Muslims of Smaller Kabarda keep following this tradition. But young Muslims of Balkaria and Greater Kabarda have introduced the rule of daily namaz at mosque. Usually five to ten young Muslims want to go to mosque everyday. Elderly Muslims prefer to offer namaz at home. They are mostly those who kept doing it secretly throughout the whole Soviet period. The majority of KBR residents of middle and older age who consider themselves Muslims do not aim to offer namaz at all. At best, they come to mosque for the Friday afternoon namaz. Young Muslims offer namaz five times a day. Some of them offer one additional namaz at night (at 2 or 3 am), especially during the Ramadan.

5. Personal interview with Rasul Kudaev, Deputy of the Director of the Young Islamic Center in Kabardino-Balkaria (2002), *Hal'chik*, Dec. 25.

Controversies are also caused by the praying postures people adopt during namaz. Some young Muslims of KBR began to stick to *the Shafiite tradition* in offering namaz. They do it without any cap holding their hands above the navel and raising them to the shoulders when bowing down low and saying “Allahu akbar!” Elderly Muslims offer namaz following Hanafite rules.

Clothes and food

For the present-day Islamic movement of Kabardino-Balkaria, the appearance, clothes and food of Muslims have become an important evidence of a Muslim’s thoughtful attitude to Islam. Hijabs (female Islamic dress consisting of a gown and a shawl that covers arms, legs, and hair of a woman) and abba (male robes of white and black color for imams) appeared in the republic, and the young promote the Islamic rules of wearing men's clothes, etc. The hijabs had not been an attribute of Islamic life in the past in Kabardino-Balkaria, but still the tradition is alive that women wear shawls. That is why young Muslims who were inviting women to wear hijabs hoped that those hijabs would gradually replace the highlander's shawls. In Greater Kabarda and Balkaria, the teen-age girls and young Muslim wives agree to wear the real hijabs, i.e., a gown and a shawl. Nevertheless, the majority of women feel quite negative about such a prospect.

Having adopted Islam in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries the North-Western Caucasus highlanders started to grow beards, but this tradition totally vanished during the Soviet years, to such an extent that the elderly Muslims now oppose the revival of this tradition the strongest. However, the younger Kabardino-Balkaria Muslims were striving to have a beard as a symbol of their faith up to the end of the 1990s. Also, the younger Muslims try to eat meat of animals killed only according to the Muslim rules. They do not violate the prohibition on pork and hog’s meat uptake, and diminished the amount of alcohol imbibed.⁶

Religious consciousness

Young Muslims quite strongly apprehended the idea of jihad that was influenced, more than any other notion, by Chechen and Arabic propaganda striving to combine it with the idea of a war against the wrong believers and against Russia. Radical literature and films distributed in KBR support these views.

Due to a distorted and one-sided knowledge about Islam some young Muslims arrived at *the conclusion that the development of Islam in KBR*

6. Personal interview with imam of mosque, Verhnya Balcaria, Kabardino-Balkaria (2003), Jan. 10-20.

and building of an Islamic state are tightly connected and indispensable to each other. They have practically no information about the states where Islam as a religion is separated from state affairs (such as Turkey and others). This drives a certain portion of young Muslims to a very radical notion regarding the essential role that the establishment of the Islamic State in KBR will play for the Islamic life development in the country.

Islamic organizations

An official body of religious power presiding over all Muslim communities, mosques and prayer houses in KBR – the Muslim Board of Kabardino-Balkaria (a Spiritual Directorate of the KBR Muslims – KBR SDM) – was formed in the early 1990s, when the Muslim Board of North Caucasus (the Spiritual Directorate of the North Caucasus) divided into several Republican Muslim Boards (Republican Spiritual Directorates). SDM leaders are elected at the KBR Muslims Congress, which gathers once every five years. In reality, however, KBR SDM controls Islam development in Republic only partially. A part of Muslim leaders, mostly the young, refuse to accept KBR SDM as a governing body, refuse also to visit the meetings held by SDM, to pay taxes from the religious ceremonies etc., preferring to contact the Islamic Center. The Center began to develop in the early 1990s as a youth branch of the KBR SDM mainly approaching rural young people in order to involve them into the Islamic way of life. In 1995 the Center was registered in the KBR Justice Department as a separate organisation. Islamic Center introduced a number of governing and controlling bodies: the Jamaat Council bringing together young KBR leaders, and Shura, gathering young jamaat representatives from the same KBR region. The Islamic Center works with a financial support of foreign welfare foundations with the headquarters in Nalchik or in Moscow.

Since 1997 and 1998, when the influence of the Islamic Center on young Muslims started to grow and the leaders of this organisation demonstrated themselves to be striving for power, the relations between the Islamic Center and KBR SDM became aggravated. The Center took an opposing stance towards the official Islamic leaders of KBR. On the pretext of a registration law violation (the Islamic Center had not given a report about its activities to the Law Department of KBR), KBR SDM managed to close down the Center. Since 2000, the Center has existed without the official registration. In 2003, the leaders of Islamic modernisation found themselves socially isolated.

During recent years, the state government exerted counteracting measures against the leaders of the Islamic Center through KBR SDM without sufficient grounds, identifying the Center's activities as being sympathetic to Wakhabbism.

By the start of the year 2000, the Islamic Center managed to win strong influence among the young Muslims of most KBR regions (Balkaria, Greater Kabarda), but the older generation still stands against the radical modernisation of Islamic life. Up to the end of the 1990s the disagreements between generations remained pronounced. But in the new century the Islamic Center has changed its tactics and has made Islamic education a priority. The Center shifted its attention from the work with the older Muslims to the education of a younger generation in the spirit of new Islam, creating future allies in the struggle against non-Islamic features of the Islamic customs. Government does not have any definite policy in the sphere of Islamic education in the republic. Most mosque schools created by the Islamic Center were closed in the end of the 1990s. KBR SDM does not aim at building its own system of primary and high education providing support only for the Islamic Institute.⁷

Islamic ideology

The Islamic ideology of the young Muslims which began to form in KBR in the 1990s is based upon the idea of activation and partial modernisation of the Islamic life in the republic. The methods used to form the Islamic ideology in the minds of young Muslims are the following⁸:

- Forming a system of Islamic education;
- Promoting Islamic ideology in general high schools and sports schools;
- Educating a strong body of preachers delivering Friday hutbas, where the basic postulates of Islamic ideology are explained;
- Re-evaluation of national traditions. Young Muslim leaders consider the Kabardin and Balkarian culture as a certain cultural space which should be analysed through the Islamic traditions (*hadith*) and that new Islamic culture in KBR can contain only those highlanders traditions which are not contrary to Islam⁹:

1. In Northern Caucasus there is still a widely spread practice of bride abduction used when the parents of young people do not agree to their wedding. Islam stands against such a practice admitting for marriage only proper matchmaking procedures.

2. In Northern Caucasus alcohol drinking permeates all festival customs and eating habits. Young Muslims try to limit alcohol intake. The

7. Personal interview with Musa Mukozhev the Director of the Young Islamic Center in Kabardino-Balkaria (2002), *Hal'chik*, Dec. 1-10.

8. Personal interview with Musa Mukozhev the Director of the Young Islamic Center in Kabardino-Balkaria (2003), *Hal'chik*, Febr. 10-15.

9. Irina L. Babich, *Pravovaya kultura adygov* (Moscow: Institut ethnologii i antropologii, 1999).

weddings of young Muslims are celebrated either without alcohol entirely or with a separate table set for the Muslims who do not drink alcohol.

3. The North Caucasian tradition of dance culture includes a wide variety of dances and musical instruments. Islamic canons prohibit dances between men and women. Young KBR Muslims practice only male dances accompanied by drums and trick riding.

4. Caucasian hospitality customs imply a tamada – toast-master – to be appointed to conduct a feast. Islamic rules do not demand such a person.

5. A Northern Caucasian tradition of honouring the elders is still held rather firmly according to which when meeting a man who is older, the younger person should first address him wherever he stands – on the left or on the right side, and then proceed greeting others. Kabardinian and Balkarian customs of honouring the elders also include other rules. Islamic customs do not demand honouring the elders. That is why, in the situation described above, special honour should be paid to a person sitting or standing on the right, age notwithstanding. The tradition of honouring the elders prescribes to give the places in front in the mosque to the elders, whereas according to the Islamic rules the persons who arrived to the mosque earlier occupy the best places.

6. According to the North Caucasian traditions the widow should mourn her deceased husband for a year, but Islamic rules command her to remarry soon.

7. Clan structure remains an important parameter for a North Caucasian society, while in Islam kinship does not have priority in the relations between the members of a community.

8. Young Muslims do not follow traditional Caucasian funeral and wake customs.

9. A tradition to name children according to Islamic canon almost vanished in the Northern Caucasus. Young Muslims strive to revive a tradition to name children and adults with Islamic names.

10. One of the main trends in Islamic culture development in KBR appears to be *Islamic theatre and musical performances*. In recent years young Muslims have shown Muslim followers performances on the Islamic themes and *zikir* concerts during the main Muslim festivals of Kurman Bairam and Uraza Bairam. In the villages of Shalooshka and Volny Aul in 2001-2002, during the Kurman, young Muslims organised processions in fur capes *burkas* and tall fur hats *papakhas*, carrying Islamic and republican flags, riding horses and driving cars on the main roads, during which *zikirs* were sung through the megaphones. Arabic religious songs *nashids* have become more widely spread and performed.

The modern religious and politic practice of Republican authorities

Two periods can be marked in the sphere of relationship development between the State powers and modern Islamic movement in KBR: the first in the early to mid-1990s, when government in KBR either reacted to the Islamic movement neutrally or supported it, even financially (in mosque building etc.); and the second period at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the new century, when radical forms of Islamic movement which appeared earlier in other North Caucasian republics started to develop in KBR (such as Atabiyev group in Hasanya in 1999 and R. Bekkayev group in Elbrus in 2000). During the second period the government and law enforcement structures had to react adequately, though partially scathing those who were quite loyal towards the Russian State. Marking a line between these two periods was a law on religious communities in KBR that was adopted by the republican government in 2000, which significantly limited the life of Islamic communities, mosques and Islamic educational institutions in the republic, and moreover led to an open conflict between the Spiritual Directorate of KBR Muslims and the Islamic Center.

The policy of the republican government towards religion at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of this new century includes three main directions:

- Measures taken by the law-enforcement structures to locate and destroy the armed radical Islamic groups;
- Limitation upon the activities of mosques and Islamic educational institutions;
- Organisation of strong anti-Wakhabbite propaganda aimed at distracting people and preventing them from joining modern Islamic movement.

The anti-Wakhabbite propaganda was based on the superposition of the modern Muslim image, mostly young, with a Wakhabbite, a radical member of an armed group. Such propaganda was conducted through:

- mass media (newspapers, TV);
- village meetings condemning the Wakhabbites;
- active efforts of the village administration in distributing information about radical Islamic groups in KBR;
- talks with high school students and their parents at schools, finding the students visiting namaz on Fridays and persuading their parents to forbid them to visit mosques, creating unbearable conditions for the teenage believers through the threats not to provide them with graduation certificates, etc.;

- from within, using the internal conflict between the younger and older Muslims which caused the rejection of Islamic modernisation in the republic by the older Kabardinians and Balkarians;
- wide distribution of information about radical Islamic armed groups (of Atabiyev and Bekkayev);
- creation of the mood of general disapproval of those who visit mosque;
- establishing a total control of the local (village) authorities over the activities of Islamic communities, mosques and Islamic education institutions activities;

Due to the anti-Wakhabbite propaganda the majority of people got the opinion that all the bearded young Muslims are radicals, Wakhabbiters, dangerous for the society, aiming at overthrowing the existing power and connected with the criminal world in the North Caucasus; that mosques visited by young Muslims are places highly dangerous for children and teenagers, for young people in general; that various forms of Islamic education organised by the young Muslims are quite unnecessary for KBR because the Islam taught by them is not correct; that children and teenagers inspired by young Muslims cease to behave properly and to obey their parents; that young Muslims threaten their parents with death unless they start offering namaz; and that the most dangerous regions are the Elbrus region and Greater Kabarda.

In fact the Islamic movement aimed at reforming Islamic life causes negative reaction of KBR citizens and fright. There is no doubt that such a situation appears to be an important negative consequence of the anti-Wakhabbite propaganda. But there can be no doubt also that in KBR and other North Caucasian republics exists a radical Muslim wing siding with political extremists and using Islamic slogans as a pretext for an overthrow of the existing State order. That is why the activities of the government and law enforcement powers are quite lawful and necessary. Still the anti-Wakhabbite propaganda, which has been going on in the country since the end of the 1990s, sufficiently harmed the positive processes of the Islamic reforms and development of Islam as a religious and moral foundation of the highlanders' society. Calling all young Muslims active or potential radicals, practically isolating them from their society, the government of the republic and law-enforcing powers push them towards radicalisation of their views. It is the easiest way to fight with radical movements. Much more difficult is to distinguish between those who opted for radical actions and more moderate people.

Activities of the republican and local administration controlling and restricting Islamic life

Formally the KBR Muslims cannot be under any attack by the State and law-enforcing powers unless they violate the law. In the early 1990s, a Spiritual Directorate of the KBR Muslims was founded in order to, on the one hand, supervise the Islamic life organisation, Islamic institutions (mosques and mosque schools) and coordination between Islamic communities, and on the other, to be an intermediary between KBR Muslims and State powers responsible for the Islamic movement development. This multifunctional Directorate serves as a department mediating relationships between religious unions and KBR Department of Culture, as a Presidential Council on the relationships with religious communes, and Religions Committee in the KBR Government, and also Law Department of KBR where all the city and village Islamic communities have to send reports concerning their activities each year.

Government bodies of the KBR try to counteract and limit the process of younger people becoming imams in the cities and in the country through influencing the elections at the city or village mosques or elections of the Islamic community leaders. Though religion is separated from the State in Russia, an imam cannot be elected if the local administration has some grudges against him. The higher along the ladder in the Islamic hierarchy the more important this covert influence may be, especially at the elections of rais-imams, the Spiritual Directorate Muslim leaders. Local administration totally controls the work of the mosques, Islamic communities and Islamic educational Institutes (if they exist at mosques). Thus, the administration of Chegem city, for instance, does not allow young Muslims to visit the mosque daily, obliging the mosque elder to open it only on Fridays.

Conclusion

Major features of the modern Islamic movement in Kabardino-Balkaria are as follows: engagement of youngsters and adolescents in Islamic communities (jamaats); support given by young Muslims to the Islamic Center which opposes both local secular administration and Muslim Clerical Administration; systematic propagation of Islamic reforms by those young Muslims; internal conflicts between mosque and community leaders (effendi, mullah, and imam) for power in mosques and jamaats; generation gap conflicts; revival of tendencies to re-evaluate national cultures and introduce elements of Islamic culture; aspirations for introduction of Islamic primary and high schools. As we see from the history of Islam in Kabardino-Balkaria (which dates back to the tenth century) these features are

characteristic of any Islamic revival or introduction movement.¹⁰ Moreover, an Islamic movement focused on modernisation or expansion of Islam always harbours some tendencies to arouse public tension. Therefore KBR modern Islamic movement should not be seen as part of the general process of Northern Caucasus radicalisation. The authors believe that the movement does not aggravate regional tensions.

However, there is no reasonable policy for KBR Islamization. The whole process was initiated by foreigners who knew little about Kabardino-Balkarian life – first Adygei repatriates from the Middle East, and then Arabs, while the local clergy came to the lead only in the late 1990s. Activities of the Islamic Center, the main think-tank of the modern Islamic movement, are marked by a lack of care for Islamic tradition that has survived 70 years of limitations; introduction of alien behaviour norms, mostly Shafiite traditions (prayer rules and so on); neglect of a basic Islam principle of progressive and gradual integration of religious norms and mores into everyday life. It was in the late 1990s that young Muslim reformers realised their mistakes and started to embrace this concept of gradualism.

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10. Dmitri Iu. Arapov, *Islam v Rossiskoi Imperii* (Moscow: Akademkniga, 2001); A. Frank, *Muslim Religious Institutions in Imperial Russia: the Islamic World of Novourensk District and the Kazakh Inner Gorder 1780-1910* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).