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Perception of the terms "salafism" and "wahhabism" in contemporary Russia

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Perception of the terms "salafism" and "wahhabism" in contemporary Russia

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Introduction

The idea of this thesis came to me after meeting with a friend from Bashkortostan, who identifies as a Salafi Muslim. He told me his story — how he moved to one of the Gulf states, and after five years went home to a town in Bashkortostan.¹² After our talks, my personal experience in the region, and dialogue with independent Russian journalists, I had the impression that there is a substantial difference between writing on the topic and the reality on the ground. According to the majority of Russian scholars, the main Russian Muslim NGOs, and the official statements of government representatives, the Russian *umma* (Russian Muslim community) can be categorized as a "Traditional Russian Islam" and Islamic extremists, known also as "wahhabis" or more rarely "salafis". The latter is often described in the press³ as an undesirable and dangerous import from the Middle East.

I had already planned my field research in the region but, unfortunately, the Russian-Ukrainian war made any fieldwork impossible. Most of the people refused to participate in any sort of interview or even talk to someone affiliated with a Western university. That is how I was pushed from anthropological research, through which I wanted to learn more about the life and religious practices of Salafi Muslims in Bashkortostan, to analysis of the terms "wahhabism" and "salafism" in contemporary Russian discourses from the beginning of Putin's presidency in 1999 to the present day.

There are more than twenty-million people who define themselves as Muslim or as adhering to Muslim culture in Russia.⁴ With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, a process of religious revival began in Russia and the other post-Soviet republics. Contrary to the Russian Orthodox Church, the Russian *umma* does not have one spiritual leader for all Muslims. Moreover, it is hard to claim that any of the members of the Russian official Muslim clergy could be considered by Russian Muslims as a spiritual leader due to the specifics of Islamic education in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. It would be correct to call the high-ranked Russian Muslim clergy as CEOs of huge

¹ Also called Bashkiriya, A Russian republic situated between the Volga and the Ural Mountains.

² In order to protect his privacy, I cannot disclose his name or any other personal details.

³ Mihail Tul'skij, "Vahkhabyt v Rossii pobezhdayut umerennykh musul'man?" accessed May 30, 2022 https://www.ng.ru/ideas/2001-06-19/8_vakhabit.html.

⁴ Aleksey, Malashenko, *Islamic alternative and Islamists project* (Moscow: Ves Mir, 2006), 7.

NGOs. Two multidirectional processes have been occurring since 1991— Russian Muslims receiving religious education in Arab countries and Turkey, and Putin's political turn toward "traditional values".⁵ After 1991, open borders played a significant role in creating a new class of well-educated Russian Muslims determined to share their worldview with their spiritual brothers.

Another factor which influenced not only the Russian *umma* and various movements within it, but also the perception of Muslims by other citizens, the government and academia, was terrorism. Between the 1990s and 2020, "salafi" and "wahhabi" Muslims in Russia were often considered a radical and violent sect. In the media, official statements of the government, and many academic papers, the words "salafi", "salafia" or "wahhabism" were often found together with "terrorism", "extremism", and "Islamism". Official Muslim clergy have typically distanced themselves from "salafi" Muslims for several reasons — they had to defend their position as representatives of the *umma*, and after many accusations⁶ of a low-level Islamic knowledge, it became harder to do so.

In the second chapter and the third part of this thesis, accusations of "salafism" or "wahhabism" as religious movements responsible for violence and terror will be analyzed. I deliberately use the words "salafism" and "wahhabism" with lower case and within double quotation marks when I describe usage of these terms by Russian or Russian speaking actors, because this analysis is not about Salafi or Wahhabi Muslims in Russia nor any particular movement; it is about the terminology and the divergent definitions used by different actors. I was advised to use them in italics as usually foreign terms are written, but I think that it could disturb the reader and give her or him a wrong perception that there is a right definition of Russian term "wahhabism" or "salafism".

These terms were used in the press, academic papers, police reports, court decisions, religious and political statements, legal opinions, and many other circumstances. Each time, using the same terminology, various people implied different things. Moreover, I found out that the majority of the mainstream Western academia consider "salafism" as a homogenous 'creature' with more or

⁵ Svetlana Kochetkova, "Putin: Islam vsegda byl odnoj iz osnov podderzhki nashej gosudarstvennosti." Published December 2011.

<https://www.yuga.ru/news/248064/>

⁶ "Social'nyj oblik imamov Urala nachala XXI veka-Kul'turnyj komponent," Medina Press., Accessed May 30, 2022 <http://idmedina.ru/books/regions/?3844>.

less radical wings⁷, while in my research I personally witnessed opposite ex cathedra opinions: some Russian citizens and very popular Russian speaking Muslim bloggers and thinkers who call themselves "salafi" deny the right of the violent groups to identify as "salafis".

When someone formulates a topic for research, comparative analysis is often used to describe changes under discussions or in attempting to define the role of a particular event. Reading contemporary academic literature, I have been unable to pinpoint the exact moment when a change of perception of "salafism" occurred, if occurred. In private conversations with investigative journalists, I have heard about the proliferation of "salafia" among the ranks of clergy in Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, and other regions. I wondered how it's possible to encounter mostly hostile definitions of "salafism" from all concerned parties and at the same time to witness the substantial expansion of peaceful "salafi" ideology all over Russia, according to all my sources. Searching through the Russian internet I found many sites, YouTube channels and forums providing with "salafi" discourses. Many of these sources were not created by Muslims in exile, as in the case of Abdullah Kostekskiy⁸, but run instead by local Russian imams.

In Russian language there are two words: *rossiyanin* (a citizen of the Russian Federation), and *ruskij* (ethnically Russian), while in English the word "Russian" defines both. In this research I used the word "Russian" only in the meaning of *rossiyanin*.

Research question

The objective of this research is to analyze the terms "salafism" and "wahhabism" in modern Russia. The question could be formulated thus: What does "salafism" and "wahhabism" mean to politicians, academics, and official Muslim clergy in Russia; How did their understanding/perception evolve in the recent history?

Theoretical framework and structure

In the first chapter, I shall begin my foray into the topic with a brief historical overview of the origins of Islam in Russia. In my thesis I considered less known, primarily Russian sources that

⁷ Roel Meijer, "Introduction," In *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, ed. Roel Meijer (Oxford University Press, 2014), 7.

⁸ Abdullah Kostekskiy YouTube channel, accessed December 31, 2021
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYFckUZBFAR12YvpQH92pfw>

have not been translated into foreign languages and thus remain largely unknown among western scholars. In this review will be included the classic three volumes of Mark Batunsky.⁹ The latter offers probably the most comprehensive analysis of the subject, which unfortunately has never been translated into English. The author was a Ukrainian Jew who made an academic career in Tashkent and Moscow, immigrating to Germany in the 1980s. For the purpose of revealing the subject from a Russian Tatar Muslim perspective, I used the work of the historian, poet, and professional translator Ravil Bukharaev, who acknowledged the role of Muslims in this region even before the emergence of Russian statehood.¹⁰ A more neutral approach was found in the work of Robert D. Crews.¹¹

I continue the review moving from the past to the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. For this purpose, I looked at the works of the Russian scholar Aleksey Malashenko, in which the author shares his opinion and concerns about radical Islamic movements¹² and his analysis of interactions between the Russian government and umma.¹³ However, I cannot consider his book as a comprehensive study of Russian government understanding and perception of Islam. This was observed from a different angle by Aleksandr Verkhovsky, who analyzes the situation from the perspective of religious institutions, evident in the name of the article: "Religious Organizations and the Possibilities of Ideological Engineering in Putin's Russia".¹⁴

The literature on Russian Traditional Islam and its tensions with Islamic discourses of the Arabian Peninsula could be found both in Russian and English in abundance. Frequent use of the term "Russian Traditional Islam" notwithstanding, a comprehensive overview is required. The Salafi-Sufi-"Traditional Russian Islam" complex became a direct object of study in a volume edited by Roland Dannreuther and Luke March.¹⁵ This is one of the earliest and more successful attempts to look at the issue not only as a local problem of the Caucasus, or Islam in relation to Russian

⁹ Mark Batunskiy, *Rossia i Islam* (Russia and Islam). Vol. 1-3. 3 vols. (Moscow: Progress-Tradition, 2013)

¹⁰ Ravil Bukharaev, *Islam In Russia, The Four Seasons*. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 7.

¹¹ Robert D. Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Harvard University Press, 2009).

¹² Malashenko, *The Islamic Alternative and the Islamist Project* (Moscow: Ves Mir, 2006.)

¹³ Aleksej Malashenko, *Rossia i Islam* (Russia and Islam) (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007).

¹⁴ A. Verkhovsky, Religious Organizations and the Possibilities of Ideological Engineering in Putin's Russia in *Twenty Years of Religious Freedom in Russia*, ed. by Malashenko and Filatov (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2009).

¹⁵ Roland Dannreuther and Luke March, ed. *Russia and Islam: state, society and radicalism* (Taylor & Francis e-Library. March 2010).

foreign policy, but to understand the experience of Muslims across Russia in the post-Soviet period.

In the last part of the first chapter I look at papers written by Michael Kemper and Alfrid Bustanov on Traditional Russian Islam.¹⁶ In 2020, two comprehensive studies of Islam in Russia were published, both edited by Renat Bekkin — "The People of Reliable Loyalty...Muftiates and the State in the Modern Russia"¹⁷ and "The Concept of Traditional Islam in Modern Islamic Discourse in Russia".¹⁸ In these, many sources on the Tatar language are analyzed.

Sufi Islam, widespread mainly in the Republics of the Caucasus and it is also included to the concept of Traditional Russian Islam. For Sufism I adopted the definition of Alexander Knysh: "the ascetic-mystical stream in Islam that emerged at the very early stage of this religion's development and that subsequently took on a wide variety of devotional, doctrinal, artistic, and institutional forms."¹⁹ In Chechnya and Dagestan historically the majority of population were adherents of Shafii *madhab*. Qādiriyya and Naqshbandiyya are the most popular *tarīqas*. I will not further elaborate on the Sufi movement in the North Caucasus because it is not a topic of the thesis.

In the second chapter, the history and Western academia views on "salafism" and "wahhabism" are described. It will help to contextualize which parts of the concept are used by different sources in Russia. In the second part of the chapter, I present the view of "salafism" and "wahhabism" in Russian-language Youtube using the videos of Muslim vloggers, interviews with Russian Muslims who define themselves as Salafi, and an expert interview.

In the third and the final chapter, I analyze different perceptions of "salafism" and "wahhabism" by the main interested parties: legislature and law enforcement, Russian academia, and the largest Muslim organizations in Russia, their chief clergy and the government. In this chapter, I use primary sources such as court decisions, legal opinions, and expert's comments in order to define what these quarters mean by "salafism" or "wahhabism". For the second group, examples of

¹⁶ Michael Kemper, Alfrid Bustanov, Yazyk 'traditsionnogo islama' v tekstah Valiully Yakupova [Traditional Islam Vocabulary in the Texts by Valiulla Yakupov], *Vostok/Oriens*, (March, 2017): 123-139.

¹⁷ Renat Bekkin, *People of Reliable Loyalty... Muftiates and the State in Modern Russia*. (Stockholm: Elander, 2020).

¹⁸ Renat Bekkin, ed. *The Concept Of Traditional Islam In Modern Islamic Discourse In Russia* (Sarajevo: Center for Advanced Studies, 2020).

¹⁹ Alexander Knysh, *Sufism: A New History of Islamic Mysticism* (Princeton University Press, 2017), 14.

discourse regarding "salafism" and "wahhabism" in Russia were collected. For the third group I surveyed attitudes toward "salafism" and "wahhabism" among official Muslim clergy and top-ranking Russian politicians (Putin) based on their official statements. I do not take into account the speeches of heads of regions or republics. This choice is justified not on the grounds that such men have no weight, nor a voice in Russian politics, but because their views often align with the position of dominant Muslim organizations and the course of Islam in a given region; and thus we would risk overestimating the strength of their positions.

Methodology

Qualitative discourse analysis is employed in studying government discourses, law enforcement and legislature, the views of Muslim clergy and scholars as represented in their official statements, and academic research papers and books. Besides these, I interviewed Russian anthropologist, Rasul Abdulhalikov from the European University in Saint Petersburg. Since, in the majority of these sources, "salafism" or "wahhabism" is mentioned as an extremist movement, even labeling its adherents "infidels", I analyzed popular Russian Muslim bloggers suggested to me by three Russian Muslims who call themselves Salafi.

The number of definitions provided by these groups will demonstrate the ambiguity of the terms in modern Russia; YouTube videos analysis and interviews helped to qualify Russian Muslims who call themselves Salafi according to William Shepard's classification.²⁰ In order to have a less blurry division between Islamic modernism and Islamic traditionalism in Shepard's definitions, questions about their ties to particular "salafi" scholars like Nasir al-Din al-Albani (1914-1999)²¹ and Jamal al-Din al-Afgani (1838-1897) or Al-Maqdisi (b. 1959) and Zawahiri (b. 1951) should be asked. Regarding *ijtihād*²² and *taqlīd*²³, we need to determine how far they are

²⁰ William E. Shepard, *Introducing Islam* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 229. The classification is described in the second chapter of the thesis.

²¹ Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī was a leading figure in modern Salafī circles and one of the most controversial Salafī scholars of the twentieth century. The controversy related to religion rather than to politics, which al-Albānī avoided, advocating instead obedience to the established government (Brill Encyclopaedia of Islam, vol. 3).

²² *ijtihād*: literally "exerting oneself, is the technical term in Islamic law, first, for the use of individual reasoning in general and later, in a restricted meaning, for the use of the method of reasoning by analogy (*qiyās* [q.v.]). The lawyer who is qualified to use it is called *mudjtahid*.

https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/idjtihad-COM_0351?fromBrillOnline=true

²³ *taqlīd*: imitation, blind imitation; (law) legal conformism. Following a position or opinion on the basis of authority.

<https://brill.com/view/book/9789004412866/back-3.xml?language=en>

ready to go in their critique. For all Islamic terminology the Brill's encyclopaedia spelling is used.²⁴

Drawbacks

The most sufficient disadvantage of all research carried out by a foreign scholar, or research based on English sources, is poor command of the dominant language in the area in question. The same may apply to me, Russian citizenship and Russian language knowledge notwithstanding. The reason for this is well-described by Renat Bekkin:

"A serious drawback to some of the works is excessive politicization of discourse, and that authors seem to have only superficial acquaintance with sources both in the languages of the so-called Muslim peoples of Russia and in Russian. The first problem is inherent mainly in the works of Russian authors, the second in publications by authors from the West."²⁵

I do not possess any knowledge of either Tatar and Bashkir, nor of the languages of the Caucasus. In an attempt to mitigate this limitation, preference was given to academic papers and books with sources in local languages mentioned in their bibliographies.

As an example of empirical proof of "salafi" expansion within the Russian umma and official clergy, quantitative analysis of the percentage of "salafi" imams and other clerics within the official clergy (the three main Muslim organizations) during a specific period of time could be done. Unfortunately, it seems impossible to make such a comparison since none of them publicly declares themselves "salafi".

Chapter 1: History of Islam in Russia from the perspective of Russian authorities and scholars

1.1. Before 1917

In order to make any conclusion from the analysis of different usage of the terms "salafism" and "wahhabism", it is necessary to elaborate on the historical context of Islam and Muslims in Russia. In this thesis I refer to Islam and Muslims as an integral part of Russia. But for nearly the entire history of Muslims living under the Russian state, this question was irrelevant. Depending on

²⁴ https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-the-quran/*-EQDUM_00670

²⁵ Bekkin, *People of Reliable Loyalty... Muftiates and the State in Modern Russia*, 7.

different philosophical concepts, Islam and Muslims were considered a part of the dark and evil “east”, or more surprisingly, as a sophisticated Western influence that was adopted by the Russian civilization from the Middle East. "Islam", according to the Soviet scholar Mark Batunsky, had predominantly negative connotations, meaning even "pagans" and referring to violent and adversarial tribes in general, Tatars and Mongols in particular.²⁶ The word "*pagan*", or in Russian "*poganiy*", was used then and now with the meaning of "disgusting" or "filthy". And though during the Mongol invasion and the age of Mongol rule there was no real threat of "Muslimization" of the Russian population, the principalities' leaders posited a conflict between the good, true, Orthodox Christian Russia and the “evil” Muslim nomads that should be destroyed with the help of God.²⁷

Islam as a religion was also not of interest to Orthodox Christians. Since in Christian ideology Jesus was the central figure and savior of humanity, a facile parallel was made regarding Islam — Muhammad was considered the cornerstone of the Muslim faith and therefore the religion was called "*magometanstvo*" (the religion of Muhammad or *Magomet*). Muhammad was seen as an apostate and there is no known example of theological dispute or analysis made by Russian Orthodox clergy in the 11-15th centuries.²⁸

For all their hostility toward the “Latins”, these leading Russian ideologists, such as Nikon or Theodosius²⁹, put at the forefront the principle of common Christian unity with an anti-Muslim orientation, both against “distant”, and against “their”, “neighboring” confessors of Islam³⁰. Using the medieval tradition, Nikon calls the Arabs "*Ismailans*", "*Agaryans*", "*Saracens*", and "*basurmans*". The descendants of Ismail include not only “*Saracens*”, but also local nomads — Turkmens, Pechenegs, Cumans and others.³¹ Therefore, in the "Mongolian era"³² in Russia – more precisely, until about the middle of the 14th century, when the Muslimization of the Golden Horde intensified³³ – there is no reason to speak of the functioning in Russian culture of an autonomous model of Islam, and not any other concept, say, "non-Christians", "polytheists", or "pagans".

²⁶ Batunskiy, *Rossia i Islam*, Vol. 1. 84.

²⁷ Batunskiy, *Rossia i Islam*, Vol. 1. 184.

²⁸ Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Edinburgh: One World 1962), 33.

²⁹ Nikon, Illarion, Anthony, and Theodosius were the main Orthodox Christian figures in 11th Century. They established Kyiv-Pechersk Monastery.

³⁰ Batunskiy, *Rossia i Islam*, Vol. 1. 120.

³¹ Batunskiy, *Rossia i Islam*, Vol. 1. 93.

³² Bukharaev, *Islam In Russia, The Four Seasons*, 765.

³³ Marie Favereau, *The Horde: How the Mongols Changed the World* (Harvard University Press, 2021), 161.

Due to the expansion of the Russian territory, many peoples became subjects of the Russian Empire, and relationships between the state, the titular nation, and different religious minorities were often tense. From Ivan the Third (1440-1505) and beyond there was a rise in the inclusion of a significant number of Muslim Tatars in the general structure of the Russian state.³⁴ In this period, military unions were created on a new basis — friends of the multinational Russian state against its enemies, not West against East, or Orthodox Christians against "pagans" or Muslims.³⁵ The desire to build a strong centralized state led to certain breakthroughs toward confessional tolerance within the diverse Russian state.

From Peter the Great's time onward, it is possible to trace the position of the Muslim population in Russia more or less in the same parameters that I have chosen for this research: the Russian government, laws and judicial decisions, and various types of researchers. The full texts of all legislative acts aimed at regulating the life of the Muslim population were extracted from government publications by contemporary Russian historian Dmitrij Arapov. He analyzed various legal codices of the Russian Empire containing papers from 1649 to the October Revolution.³⁶ This revealed a growing level of interest in the Muslim populace on the part of the authorities. The first Russian orientalist, Prince Dmitry Kantemir (1673-1723), published in 1722 the first study in Russia of Islam.³⁷

In general, however, the legislative system was primarily concerned with restricting Islam. The construction of new mosques was curtailed, the conversion of Muslims to Orthodoxy, and the missionary activity of Orthodox clergy were encouraged in every possible way. Attempts to return from Orthodoxy to Islam were harshly suppressed:

According to Russian legislation, one dominant church has the right within the state to persuade subjects who do not belong to it to accept its doctrine of faith. Consequently, Islam had no legal right to spread itself.³⁸

³⁴ Batunskiy, *Rossia i Islam*, Vol. 1. 237.

³⁵ Dmitrij Arapov, ed. *Islam v Rossijskoj Imperii: zakanodatel'nye akty, opisanija, statistika* (Moskva: IKC Akademkniga, 2001), 12.

³⁶ Arapov, *Islam v Rossijskoj Imperii*, 23.

³⁷ Arapov, *Islam v Rossijskoj Imperii*, 13.

³⁸ Batunskiy, *Rossia i Islam*, Vol. 2. 560.

During the reign of Catherine II (1762-1796), the government as whole began to lean towards the idea that tolerance for Islam may be more profitable than the spread of Orthodoxy. It would appear that every Russian tsar starting from Peter the Great was concerned with Islam only inasmuch as it had to do with national security problems, such as peaceful governance of the Russian Empire's periphery where the majority were Muslim, participation of Muslim soldiers in the standing army, and the influence of a "pagan" religion on the indigenous Russian Christian population. The methods of influence on these mainly security issues and the application of force were very similar to contemporary methods: control of Muslim religious education, protective edicts, and benefits for loyalty to local leaders.



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For greater convenience of state supervision over the life of Russian Muslims from the end of the 18th century, the authorities of the empire began to create the necessary religious institutions, similar to the Synod. A number of legislative acts during Catherine's reign began the formation of governing bodies for Muslims in Russia. In 1788, the Orenburg Mohammedan Spiritual Assembly was established, the jurisdiction of which was initially extended to the whole of Russia.⁴⁰

³⁹ Husainia mosque in Orenburg, 1910, an image from the Governmental Archive of Orenburg region <https://arzamas.academy/materials/1706>

⁴⁰ Arapov, *Islam v Rossijskoj Imperii*, 14.

In the 19th century, the subject of Islam became very popular with the rise of Western Orientalism. In the PhD thesis of Simona Merati, this phenomenon was called "Russian Orientalism" with its own distinctive features.⁴¹ The main difference between Said's well-known definition of Orientalism and the Russian version was the distance between the object of interest and the final goal⁴²: Russian geographical position and expansionist politics did not allow it to limit its ambitions to academic curiosity — Russia had to incorporate its Asian or Oriental identity into the body of the country. Although travelers, diplomats, Christian Orthodox missionaries, and historians wrote about Islam and Muslims extensively, I have not found a single text in which these topics were covered in a neutral style. The purpose of such texts is either to defend the Christian population and the faith itself, or to determine what benefit could be extracted from the Muslim realm within Russia in the interest of the state.

Famous Russian philosopher and critic of the Russian government Petr Chaadayev (1794-1856), on the other hand, wrote very positively about Islam. From his perspective, Islam accomplished the important task of eradicating polytheism. He also mentioned that Islam spread over a huge part of the globe, including areas that would seem inaccessible, the concept of a unitary God.⁴³ He did not consider Islam a threat to Christian civilization in general and for Orthodox Russians in particular:

Islam is one of the most remarkable manifestations of the general law; to judge it otherwise is to deny the all-encompassing influence of Christianity from which it originated.... In the great process of development of revealed religion (Christianity), the teachings of Mohammed must necessarily be considered one of its branches.⁴⁴

Chaadayev considered Muslims to be Christians who had not yet realized it. Nikolay Danilevskiy (1822-1885), a member of the Slavophile movement, who participated with Fedor Dostoyevsky in the Petrashevskiy circle, rejected the notion that Islam is a “preparatory step” in the perception of Christianity. The denial of any positive, independent role for Islam also resulted in this absurd leap by Danilevskiy:

⁴¹ Simona Merati, "Russia's Islam: Discourse on Identity, Politics, and Security," 6.

⁴² Simona Merati, *Muslims in Putin's Russia*, 10.

⁴³ Batunskiy, *Rossia i Islam*, Vol. 2. 182.

⁴⁴ Batunskiy, *Rossia i Islam*, Vol. 2. 188.

... the Ottoman Empire is just a puppet in the hands of insidious Europe, which... saw in it only a means to spread its power and influence over the peoples of the Greek and Slavic Orthodox world.⁴⁵

While Russian research on Islam had a similar tone in the second part of the 19th century, the content focused on different branches of Islam and their value to progress, or the security and stability of Islamic regions and thus of the whole empire. One of the most brilliant Russian orientalists, Nikolai Khanykov (1822-1878), who occupied different public positions and served in the Caucasus, saw Sufi Islam as a direct threat to the Russian government:

...with the Qur'ān in hand and exclamations about the oppression of the faith by its enemies, the murid unites numerous followers around him and demands from them, on the basis of the rules of *ṭarīqa*, not only senseless obedience, bloody feats of struggle against the Christian authorities...

Khanukov spoke not only of differences between Shia and Sunni Islam, but even advocated official status for Islam in the Russian empire, arguing that its enemies would use the lack of religious freedom against the country.⁴⁶ Anti-Sufi rhetoric was espoused by Mikhail Miropiev (1852-1919), a Russian ethnographer, who specialized in educational programs for non-Christian subjects of the Russian Empire. His discourse against Sufism⁴⁷, quite aggressive and categorical, is very similar to the language of Ramzan Kadyrov's imams fulminating against "salafism" and "wahhabism" in our day, which will be analyzed in the third chapter of this thesis.

Another distinguished scholar and professor at Saint Petersburg State University, Ilya Berezin (1818-1896), saw Islam as the main obstacle to enlightenment in Muslim countries.⁴⁸ Vasily Smirnov (1846-1922), also a professor in St Petersburg, argued for the need to exert strict control over domestic Islam, but skillfully and flexibly. The healthiest government policy would be to ignore Islam, even if it were completely distorted by those who profess it; thus, Smirnov believed that if left to degenerate on its own, the better this would be for the Russian state — any

⁴⁵ Batunskiy, *Rossia i Islam*, Vol. 2. 396.

⁴⁶ Batunskiy, *Rossia i Islam*, Vol. 2. 302.

⁴⁷ Batunskiy, *Rossia i Islam*, Vol. 2. 930.

"After all, ...murids in the hands of ishan are a more blind instrument than the followers of war in the hands of their mentors. This is the great power and the great danger for us of Sufism... among the most beloved and assiduously disseminated ideas (ishans) are the rise of Islam and its confessors, dissatisfaction with the existing order and its overthrow. That is why they have always produced and continue to produce political unrest and ... In all this, a highly original, complex and strong phenomenon of the religious life of Islam - Sufism, is for we Russians, a strong brake on our influence and the greatest political danger to our domination in the region. Sufism with its ishans and murids can never and in no way be our ally; it can only be our enemy always and in everything. It is not excusable and even criminal on our part to leave this to the mercy of fate..."

⁴⁸ Batunskiy, *Rossia i Islam*, Vol. 2. 322.

government regulation with respect to Islam should encourage its "fanatical tendencies". "Sentimental dreams" of the equality of all religions, Smirnov believed, were detrimental to the interests of the Russian state.⁴⁹ In the following quote, Smirnov seems to be targeting Muslim modernists, liberal and conservative:

And since the time has not yet come for the realization of "sentimental dreams" about the equality of all beliefs, it is necessary to eliminate, as far as possible, the fanaticism, impatience and bitterness of Muslims, and above all their modernizing representatives, as well as its Russian incarnation.⁵⁰

Smirnov did not elaborate on who precisely he was talking about, but I assume it to be one of the first anti-Jadid and perhaps anti-Salafi statements in Russia. This discourse is very similar to the today's discussions about the role of Traditional Russian Islam and the impact of Middle Eastern and Gulf sects.

Russian Muslim intellectuals were quite vocal in the last decades of the 19th century. Gasprinsky (1851-1914), Bayazitov (1846-1911), and Murza-Alim were Jadidis and advocated for the revival of local Islam and study of the Tatar language. They actively carried out propaganda and counter-propaganda activities for Islam and were against the Saint Petersburg orientalists. They accused them of the same faults that would be true a hundred years later — poor knowledge of Arabic and of local languages and cultures. In 1882, Murza-Alim published a series of articles in the newspaper Saint-Petersburg Vedomosti under the general heading "Islam and Mokhammedanism", in which he argued that the teachings of Islam belong to all mankind, and that the point is to introduce modern education to the Russian Muslim environment, and first of all: "to resurrect for our Muslims the glorious Arab madrasahs of the golden age of Islam."⁵¹ He claimed that in fifteen years, Russian Islam,

instead of the current ignorant clergy, would have a developed clergy, educated *ulamā*, instead of the current stupid teachers — prepared for their activities and developed teachers, and then it would be possible to raise the course of elementary schools-mektebs to modern standards and introduce improved methods of teaching... then Russian gymnasiums and universities would acquire significance in the eyes of Muslims, while their aloofness, distrust and apathy, the consequences of ignorance, would vanish like fog.⁵²

⁴⁹ Batunskiy, *Rossia i Islam*, Vol. 2. 516.

⁵⁰ Abrar Karimullin, *Tatarskaya Kniga Poreformennoi Rossii: Research* (Tatarskoe knignoe izd., 1983), 121-122.

⁵¹ Batunskiy, *Rossia i Islam*, Vol. 2. 638.

⁵² Batunskiy, *Rossia i Islam*, Vol. 2. 620.

This battle between the old and new reminds one of the contemporary struggles between "Traditional Russian Islam" and the "new" Islam influenced by the world's *umma* and the Middle East.

1.2. Soviet period

The majority of Muslims were loyal to the tsarist regime and bravely fought in mixed units against the Central Powers⁵³. Islam was accused of being a tool in the hands of capitalists, and Muslims were considered disloyal to the revolution.⁵⁴ Under the tsar, Muslims were outsiders because the state identified itself as part of Christian civilization, moreover as the one and the only true version of Christianity — Orthodoxy.

In the Soviet period the line in the sand was drawn differently: a secular socialist state against religion. Islam was put in the same box with Christianity, Judaism and Buddhism. Communist Party policies toward religions were equal at first glance, but quite selective in reality.⁵⁵ The Soviet government's targets were prioritized — the greatest threats first (Orthodox church), others later.⁵⁶ After 1917, as part of the anti-religion campaign launched by the Soviet government, Islamic institutions in the USSR were persecuted. By 1924, Islamic (*Shari'a*) courts were abolished, and by 1928 religious schools were closed. The publication of Muslim periodicals and literature was stymied. The vast majority of mosques in the USSR were closed.

In the 1920-1930s, the country's leadership carried out a policy of limiting the civil rights of clergy, expressed in a discriminatory tax policy against them, the restriction and prohibition of religious education, and deprivation of voting rights. In addition, measures of administrative and criminal prosecution were applied to Muslim clerics. In Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, the total established number of Muslim clerics subjected to repression was over 350 people. The anti-religious policy of the Communist government, known in the 1920s-1930s as a policy of "militant atheism", resulted in a sharp reduction in the number of mosques and Muslim communities in the USSR.

⁵³ Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar*, 351.

⁵⁴ Husni, Akhmedov, Nani Herlina, and Kormiltsev. "Islam in Russia: History, Challenges, and Future Perspective," *Religious Studies: an International Journal* Vol. 8, No. 1, (January – June 2020), 52.

⁵⁵ Bekkin, *People of Reliable Loyalty*, 147.

⁵⁶ Bekkin, *People of Reliable Loyalty*, 149.

Ufa retained its status as the capital of Russian Islam, but at the scale of the USSR it was pushed to second place by Tashkent after WWII.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, DUMES (The Spiritual Administration of Muslims in the European part of the USSR) was the most important organization, since it controlled the entire territory of the RSFSR, with the exception of the North Caucasus republics, and all the European republics of the USSR were under its jurisdiction. Immediately after the death of Mufti Rizaetdin Fakhretdinov (April 12, 1936), one of the most famous Muslim scholars and activists of the period and a Mufti in Ufa from 1922, repression began against members of the TsDUM, all of them being arrested in June-October 1936 and sentenced to death⁵⁸. The number of mosques decreased from 26,000 in 1912 to about 1,000 by 1940.⁵⁹

During WWII, the government needed the support of the whole population, Muslims included. The officials were ready to give more freedom and rights to the Muslim population in exchange for absolute loyalty. In 1943, in addition to the existing TsDUM (from 1948 - DUMES), three more spiritual administrations of Muslims were formed — the North Caucasus in Buynaksk, the Transcaucasus in Baku, and the Central Asia and Kazakhstan in Tashkent⁶⁰.

A massive new onslaught against religion began in 1958. Having proclaimed the full-scale construction of communism, N.S. Khrushchev (1894-1971) set the task of "overcoming religion as a relic of capitalism in people's minds." The dominant phenomenon in the religious sphere was declared by ideologues to be the "crisis of religion". Religious life was presented by propaganda as an inevitable process of "degeneration" and "extinction". This attack lasted until 1964, and during this period many mosques and places of pilgrimage were closed.⁶¹ CC CPSU issued various memoranda and secret resolutions toward a full-scale attack on religious institutions and clergy.⁶²

In the Brezhnev era, hostility towards religion abated yet remained as a general line of the Communist Party that chanted the Marxism-Leninism ideology. The Soviet Muslim community remained almost invisible, in spite of friendly relations between the USSR, the Arab world, Indonesia and other Muslim countries. However, the leaders of these countries seemed to forget

⁵⁷ Roman Silantiev, *Noveishaya Istoria Islama v Rossii*, 191.

⁵⁸ Ayslu Unusova, *Islam in Bashkortostan* (Ufa: UfimolifigraphKombinat, 1999), 286-287.

⁵⁹ Husni, "Islam in Russia: History, Challenges, and Future Perspective," 54.

⁶⁰ Yaacov Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union: From the Second World War to Gorbachev*, 101.

⁶¹ Husni, "Islam in Russia: History, Challenges, and Future Perspective," 54.

⁶² Bekkin, *People of Reliable Loyalty*, 174.

that there was Islam in the USSR as well.⁶³ There was no communication between Soviet Muslims and the global umma. Hajj was the only way to meet other Muslims, but in the 45 years after the victory in WWII and the collapse of the Soviet Union, only 900 people were allowed to go to Mecca.⁶⁴

A comprehensive analysis of Soviet Oriental academia was made by Alfrid Bustanov, and as he mentions in the beginning of his book, *Soviet Orientalology* inherited much from its Imperial Russian predecessor.⁶⁵ In the Soviet period, Oriental Studies saw the beginning of huge collective scientific projects. It became relatively difficult to receive approval for individual research.⁶⁶ The Soviet Union was focused on creating an ideal Soviet individual and not on the anthropology of existing populations. It was a time of great historians and linguists, but much less attention was given Muslim cultures.

1.3. Post-Soviet period to the present

The process of ending the government's direct control of religious life began six years prior to the collapse of the USSR. RSFSR's Council for Religious Affairs was created in 1986 in order to enact new liberal policies, and finally, the RSFSR law "On Freedom of Religion" was adopted. Thereafter began a revival of religion in Russia.

Rennat Bekkin, a Russian Islamic studies scholar, used and updated the timeline of former member of the All-Union Council for Religious Affairs, Mikhail Odintsov. The first period was from 1985 till 1990 when the law, mentioned above came into force. During 1990-1993, despite the new Russian Constitution, there was a slowdown in the process of building a non-confessional state. The third period is probably the most important from the perspective of my research: 1994-1997, when the federal law "On Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Associations." divided religions into "traditional" and "non-traditional". The next period (1997-2015), the Russian Orthodox Church enjoyed the preferences of an all-Russian religion, and others, Muslims in the present case, could avail themselves of this "traditional" religion status only in republics with a

⁶³ Malashenko, "Russian Muslim Community in the World umma," 99.

⁶⁴ Malashenko, "Russian Muslim Community in the World umma," 99.

⁶⁵ Alfrid Bustanov, *Soviet Orientalism and the Creation of Central Asian Nations*, 12. intro.

⁶⁶ Alfrid Bustanov, *Soviet Orientalism and the Creation of Central Asian Nations*, 2.

majority Muslim population. In 2016 the Yarovaya amendments significantly reduced the level of freedoms in all spheres of civil life, and religion was not an exception.⁶⁷

The modern post-Soviet history of Muslim organizations and muftiates has been quite turbulent, rife with internal politics, scandals and power struggles. From the perspective of this study, two things should be addressed — the separation of religious organizations from the state and the nature of the three most powerful entities. All have nearly the same structure, with a mufti at the top. All of them represent so-called "Traditional Russian Islam", at least from the point of view of the government.

The Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Russia⁶⁸, or TsDUM (1788), has long been the largest and the most powerful Muslim organization in the country, with its center in Ufa. According to Bekkin, its success stems from having the full support of the government and the personal skills of its leader, Talgat Tadzhuddin (b. 1948).⁶⁹ Despite the status of an all-Russia muftiate, TsDUM is an ethnic religious organization that represents mainly the Tatar and Bashkir Muslim population. TsDUM and its establishment are not only loyal to the federal government, but also have very good relations with the Russian Orthodox Church. This relationship was described by Bekkin as a "younger brother".⁷⁰ From the religious perspective, TsDUM advocates a lighter version of Islam that permits its followers to forego even basic religious requirements.

The Council of Muftis of Russia⁷¹, or SMR (1996), and the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Russian Federation⁷², or DUM RF (1994⁷³), are the main competitors of the TsDUM. These are two different organizations with the same leader, so for the sake of simplicity I will address to them as to one entity. Its leader, Ravil Gaynutdin (b. 1959), rules his organization from Moscow, giving him greater opportunity for establishing better government relationships. DUM RF has positioned itself as an all-Russian muftiate without ethnic boundaries. Government loyalty notwithstanding, DUM RF's strategy is to compete with the Russian Orthodox Church. DUM RF

⁶⁷ Bekkin, *People of Reliable Loyalty*, 193.

⁶⁸ *Central'noe dukhovnoe upravlenie musul'man Rossii*

⁶⁹ Bekkin, *People of Reliable Loyalty*, 263.

⁷⁰ Bekkin, *People of Reliable Loyalty*, 276.

⁷¹ *Sovet muftiev Rossii*

⁷² *Dukhovnoe upravlenie musul'man Rossijskoj Federacii*

⁷³ *Koordinatsionnyj centr musul'man Severnogo Kavkaza*

has a much larger international presence, education included, and its leaders can afford to be vocal in criticizing some of the state's decisions.



The Coordination Center of Muslims of the North Caucasus, or KTMSK (1998), unites the region with the majority Muslim population. The political reality in the Caucasus is different from the rest of Russia. Here, in all republics but Dagestan, local muftiates cannot argue with local political power. Their policies and religious statements do not contradict the general line of a governor.⁷⁵ In the republics of the North Caucasus, the leadership's appeal to Islam was inevitable and obligatory, first because of the traditional nature of society, and second, due to the authorities' need for additional religious legitimacy.

In a number of republics with a Muslim majority, Friday has become an unofficial day off. The issue of polygamy was raised in the parliaments of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan. In Tatarstan, in accordance with the republican constitution, the rights of believers in business and institutions were expanded, who were thus permitted to perform religious rites at the workplace. Religious

⁷⁴ Talgat Tadzhuddin and Ravil Gaynutdin shaking hands with Vladimir Putin on the official celebration of the Russian national holiday *Den' Narodnogo Yedinstva* (The day of the nation's unity) in 2017
Author unknown, image from the website of the Russian embassy in Thailand.
<https://thailand.mid.ru/key-issues/3253-v-moskve-otmetili-den-narodnogo-edinstva>

⁷⁵ Malashenko, *Russia and Islam*, 14.

organizations created networks of businesses and institutions serving believers in accordance with canonical guidelines, for example halal shops, taxi services or medicinal centers. The Islamic tradition in different forms, representing movements that have contradictions among each other, developed as well in modern Russia.



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The Islamic revival in Russia began simultaneously with the progressive split of their Muslim communities. Divisions among Muslims were immediately based on personal hostility, ethnic conflicts, financial disputes, religious differences and political views. The fragmentation of the once unified Muslim center corresponded to the legal and economic independence of religious organizations in the regions. A redistribution of restored Muslim property occurred, which resulted in confrontation between Muslim leaders. The struggle for power among higher clergy, projected onto interethnic relations, led to the formation of national administrations in the republics. Contradictions between the new generation of imams and Soviet mufties catalyzed the process of

⁷⁶ Two green regions on the central part of Russia are Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, and on the South-West there are republics of the North Caucasus: Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Karachay-Cherkessia. Created by maphobbiest, (Areas in Russia with a Muslim majority) 2010. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_Russia#/media/File:Islam_in_Russia.png

division. In some regions, the orientation of the Muslim communities was little more than the personal affinities and antipathies of the imams for one or another Muslim leader.⁷⁷

Another problem here at the root of everything was, what version of Islam should predominate in Russia? In the 1990s, thousands of young people, seeking to gain religious knowledge, rushed to the Middle East. Some were sent to study by muftiates, some traveled on their own initiative, but by and large these trips were financed by foreign sources. The level of knowledge acquired abroad was indeed higher than that which could be obtained in Russia. However, returning to their homeland, graduates of Arab and Turkish universities - consciously or not - become missionaries of a "different" Islam. Under the patronage of Arab organizations, dozens of educational institutions were opened in Russia itself, where the emphasis was on an understanding of Islam unusual for Caucasians and Tatars. The activities of domestic and foreign missionaries which, ideally, contribute to religious enlightenment, at the same time divide the Muslim community.⁷⁸ Education was the starting point of the problem analyzed in this paper — "salafism" and "wahhabism" were among terms that are used to label "different" Islam.

So-called "Traditional Russian Islam", from the government perspective, is a cult officiated over by the official Muslim clergy. The term "Muslim clergy" is logically contradictory and rather arbitrary, since in Islam there is no special spiritual estate possessing divine grace, just as there is no church institution serving as intermediary between believers and Allah. This is why any body created unilaterally by the government cannot be stable, for when the official clergy (approved by the government) does not evolve but continues to adhere to an outdated line, its authority declines. There were, of course, differences between the Muslim republics. Thus, in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, secular authorities, relying on administrative resources, freely manipulated Islam and controlled the religious landscape. But in the Caucasus, the authorities needed Islam as an ally.

Under the umbrella of "Traditional Russian Islam" there are Sunni Hanafi, Shafiite Islam and Sufi Islam. Hanafi *madhhab* adherents prevail almost everywhere in the country. Shafiite *madhhab* and Sufi Islam is widespread mainly in the Republics of the Caucasus.

⁷⁷ Unusova, *Islam in Bashkortostan*, 286-287.

⁷⁸ Malashenko, *Russia and Islam*, 21.

Poorly understanding what this tradition consists of, the authorities favor traditional Islam, considering it to have long been integrated into society, and having a good influence on inter-religious relations. For the federal authorities, the main thing, indeed the only thing that is important, is the loyalty of Islam to the state. Traditional Islam, according to the understanding of the government, is a kind of single mass opposed to the "alien", "exported" Islam, and obviously ready to cooperate with them. The fact that traditional Islam is heterogeneous and politicized is ignored. In the meantime, "Soviet Islam", which existed under the guise of the traditional, is absolutely inert, "traditional in the Soviet way," gradually changing, becoming neo-traditionalist. Fighting "wahhabism", the federal government relied on the so-called "traditional" Islam without a proper understanding of either term. To define Traditional Russian Islam I will use the definition given to Tatar traditionalism:

...five attributes of Tatar traditionalism: 1) declared affiliation with the Hanafi school of jurisprudence (*madhhab*), which has dominated the Volga-Ural region since the 10th century CE; 2) appeal to the ethnic heritage of Islam among the Tatars, as the single largest Muslim ethnic group in Russia, as a 'national value'; 3) institutional and historical continuity with the many officially-recognized muftiates in Moscow, Ufa, and Kazan; 4) opposition to reformist Islamic currents originating within the former Soviet Union or entering Russia from abroad since the fall of the Soviet Union; and 5) open allegiance to the Russian nation state, proclaiming the historical and current role of Tatar Muslims within the Russian national enterprise.⁷⁹

It is also important to clarify that Traditional Russian Islam has nothing to do with Islamic traditionalism. The traditions that are meant here are local customs with various origins, from pagan to Christian and even Soviet. For instance, the main Russian holiday of New Year's Eve has no Islamic roots, but it is permitted to celebrate this day or at least to congratulate others and to receive congratulations. Another example is commemoration of passed relatives. This tradition has pre-Islamic roots, but cohesion is so strong that many official clerics allow meetings on special dates, but ask that attendees not specify the purpose as commemoration itself.

Despite an absolutely different approach to religious practices, there is one common thing that unites Russian Muslims against "foreign" Islam, and this is tradition. Islam canonized some traditions, but at the same time, in such a vast area, there could be no question of a comprehensive unification Muslim life. The Muslim community was forced to recognize many local pre-Islamic

⁷⁹ Almazova and Akhunov, "In Search of 'Traditional Islam' in Tatarstan," *The Concept of Traditional Islam in Modern Islamic Discourse in Russia*, ed. by Renat Bekkin. (Sarajevo: Center for Advanced Studies, 2020), 27.

customs and rituals. So, the cult of Muslim “saints” and their graves has ancient origins and developed in the Middle Ages, mainly due to Sufism. In addition to the actual Islamic, Sufi foundations, some cults undoubtedly spring from certain pre-Islamic roots. Shamanism is one of the most noticeable phenomena in the religious traditions of the Muslims of the Lower Volga region, preserved from the pre-Islamic era.⁸⁰ There are also influences of the state — public holidays, a New Year holiday, Christian Orthodox holidays and others.

The official Russian Muslim clergy allow all or some of these traditions. It always depends on the organization and the personality of the imam — TsDUM clerics would allow an "Islam-lite"⁸¹ version, as Bekkin dubbed it, and DUM RF would be more rigid. But for many who return from studies abroad, or use the internet as a source of knowledge, these pre-Islamic traditions or Christian and state holiday celebrations are unacceptable. In strict Muslim tradition, these customs could be considered innovation, or *bid'ah*. Some of these young, educated Muslims call themselves Salafi, others just call themselves good Muslims.

Chapter 2: Divergent definitions of "salafism" and "wahhabism"

2.1. Definitions used by Western academia

Salafism and Wahhabism as religious movements have become frequent subjects of research as many Muslim extremists have chosen violence as a vehicle for their ideology. Many of these individuals and organizations have proclaimed themselves to be Salafi. This is an obvious reason for a consistent pattern in academic literature, journalism and government pronouncements — in a text about "salafism" the focus will be on political Islam, terrorism and violence, while in a text on security issues and terrorism, the focus will be put on "salafism" and "wahhabism". Does it mean that every Salafi/Wahhabi is a terrorist or extremist? To answer this question I must review what academia says about "salafism" and "wahhabism".

Academic discussion of Salafism can be split into the Islamic modernism movement, which lasted from the end of the 19th century until the 1960's, and religious purism within Sunni Islam. In the

⁸⁰ A.V. Syzranov, *Gosudarstvo i Islam v Postsovetsoĭ Rossii v 1991-2008*, (Astrakhan': Izdatel'skiĭ dom Astrakhanskiĭ universitet, 2013), 216.

⁸¹ Bekkin, *People of Reliable Loyalty*, 276.

first Salafism, discourse is about political Islam and thinkers such as Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), Rashid Rida (1865-1935), and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897). This movement argued for the social and political role of Islam in the modern world. Their ideas were reflected in the ideology of the Egyptian thinker Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), who was not only the main ideologue but also a leader of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Critically, Muslims did not use the term Salafism to define the reformist movement of the time; it was rather modern Western historians and scholars of Islamic studies who attached this label.⁸² The modern term Wahhabism may also be associated with the late Rashid Rida's time and political ideology. Rida's views and his support of the Saudis had a substantial influence on the perception and destiny of the Wahhabi movement in the 20-21st centuries.⁸³

As for the second Salafism, this was the concept of a "pure" Sunni Islam which maintains that Islam should avoid any religious innovation and other influences without precedent in the Qur'ān and Sunna, that indeed, Muslims should look back to the age of *salaf* or the "pious predecessors" — the first three generations after Muhammad. This is why Salafi Muslims are usually associated with the Hanbali *madhhab*. Currently, however, Salafi Muslims claim they are not Hanbali, because they are against *taqlīd*, or blind following of any authority but the Qur'ān and *Sunna*. In other words, Salafis would apply any of four *madhhabs* if there be direct proof of the Qur'ān and Sunna. Some will see here a complete denial of all *madhhabs* as a source of decision-making, while Salafis will argue that this is merely the only way to avoid *taqlīd*.

Despite the fact that a Sunni thinker Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328) is considered to be one of the ideological sources for Wahhabism and Salafism, in his writings there is no prohibition of the *taqlīd* practice of the four *madhhabs* for an ordinary Muslim. Only a *mujtahid* (jurisprudent) should follow his own independent reasoning and judgement. A *mujtahid* is also obliged to use as a method *ijtihād* (reaches legal decisions based on the Qur'ān, *ḥadīth*, consensus, and his own intellect).⁸⁴

⁸² Roel Meijer, ed. *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*. (Oxford University Press, 2014), 7. intro.

⁸³ Henri Lauzière, *The Making of Salafism: Islamic Reform in the Twentieth Century*. (Columbia University Press, 2016), 60.

⁸⁴ Meijer, *Global Salafism*, 8. first chapter.

This idea was challenged by the Salafi thinker Al-Albani (1914-1999) and others. The main conceptual difference is the notion of Islamic law as a body of knowledge that almost everyone can learn, and therefore should learn as a duty that empowers the individual. The modern Salafis claims that in the majority of cases a quote from the holy text speaks for itself, and thus there is no need for a surfeit of *mujtahids* in Muslim society.⁸⁵ The gigantic task of selecting only reliable Hadiths was carried out by Al-Albani. His conception of Salafism was supported by Muhammad bin Salih al-Uthaymeen (1929-2001) and Abd al-Aziz ibn Abdullah ibn Baz (1912-1999), the most prominent Saudi Islamic scholars.

Roel Meijer provides six factors in the sense of superiority helping Salafis mobilize adherents, of which I will mention four: it is conservative at the level of the individual, which gives Salafism a complimentary image; Salafism claims intellectual superiority in religious knowledge, inasmuch as knowledge of the Qur'ān and *Sunna* allows them to be critical of the religious establishment, "based on fiqh of the four jurisprudential schools and on "folk Islam""; Salafi Muslims have a strong identity; and the universal religious method gives Salafis a perception of being part of the global *umma*.⁸⁶

Along with these competitive advantages, there are unavoidable problems — Salafi scholars are extremely rigid and allow no compromise with other Muslim movements. This movement denies methods such as *kalam* (medieval Islamic scholasticism) and any other philosophical way of gaining knowledge, e.g. metaphorical interpretation or *ta'wīl* (allegorical interpretations). Salafi Muslims thus deny the Ashari⁸⁷ and Maturidi⁸⁸ doctrines that enjoy tens of millions of followers around the world. Since Salafis also reject any sort of esoteric knowledge, they are critical of Sufi practices as well. The most purist Salafis would also consider these movements and even relatively small *bid'ah* as an act of *kufṛ*, or heresy. The concept of *Al-walā' wa-l-barā'*, which literally

⁸⁵ Meijer, *Global Salafism*, 9. first chapter.

⁸⁶ Meijer, *Global Salafism*, 10. intro.

⁸⁷ The defining characteristic of this school is its use of rational argument to defend the theological positions of the Ahl al-Sunna wa al-jamā'a and Aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth against the doctrines of the Mu'tazila, which they regarded as *bid'a* (innovation)

https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-islamica/al-ashari-COM_0300

⁸⁸ A theological school named after its founder Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī [q.v.] which in the Mamlūk age came to be widely recognised as the second orthodox Sunnī kalām school besides the Aṣḥ'ariyya. The name Māturīdiyya does not appear to have been current before al-Taftazānī (d. 792/1390), who used it evidently to establish the role of al-Māturīdī as the co-founder of Sunnī kalām together with his contemporary al-Aṣḥ'arī.

https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/maturidiyya-SIM_5046

divided people both within Islam and outside the *umma*, and was used by the founding scholar Ibn Wahhab (1703-1792) in the 18th century and again in the modern age by Uthaymeen, has been radicalized by the Jordanian-Palestinian writer Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi (b. 1959) and others.⁸⁹

Someone accused of kufr is called a *kāfir* (pl. *kāfirūn*, *kuffār*, *alladhīna kafarū*, and *kafara*), which latter occurs only once in the *Qur'ān*; often, however, the *Qur'ān* simply calls them *alladhīna lā yu'minūna*, "those who do not believe". The older English translation "infidel" is now used less frequently. The intensive forms, *kafūr* and *kaffār*, describe someone whose kufr takes extreme forms (Q 2:276; 11:9; 14:34; 22:38; 31:32; 35:36; 39:3; 42:48; 50:24). The derived form *takfīr*, not found in the *Qur'ān*, means branding someone, especially a fellow-Muslim, as a *kāfir*. This is condemned in the *ḥadīth* (sayings of Prophet Muhammad) but nonetheless *takfīr*⁹⁰ became an effective instrument of excluding someone from the Muslim community. In the formative period of Islam, the first ones to make this accusation were the *Khārijīs* (q.v.) who reserved for themselves the qualification *mu'minūn* (believers) while applying the term *kuffār* (unbelievers) to all others. Their example has been followed by many others. Similarly, accusations of ascribing partners to God or of making anything else equal to him (*shirk*)⁹¹ have been used by Muslims in both medieval and modern times to challenge those whose views are deemed to be deviant.

Great care should be taken in navigating between the various definitions of Salafism and Wahhabism in the modern Islamic context. As was mentioned in the introduction of the thesis I used Shepard's classification⁹² to show that, even without being too specific, it is extremely hard to organize modern developments within Islam into particular categories. Traditionalism can be defined not only as wariness toward Western influence, but as an idea (which may be supported not only by Muslims) that the setbacks they face (Muslim land under Western oppression) are natural signs of decline, or punishment for their sins. In the 20th and 21st centuries, the concept of

⁸⁹ Lauzière, *The Making of Salafism: Islamic Reform in the Twentieth Century*, 71.

⁹⁰ https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-the-quran/belief-and-unbelief-EQCOM_00025?s.num=3&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-the-quran&s.q=takfir

⁹¹ (also *ishrāk*, a.), association, especially associating a companion to God — honouring another besides God, polytheism. In the oldest *sūras* of the *Qur'ān*, during the so-called first Meccan period, the conceptions *shirk* and *mushrikūn* do not occur.

https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-1/*-SIM_5384

⁹² Shepard, *Introducing Islam*, 235.

neo-traditionalism is still more relevant, since it is almost impossible to ignore modernization. Although there is virtually nothing in common between the current Iranian regime and the Traditional Islam of Central Asia and Russia, which combines allegiance to Sufi *ṭarīqas* on the one hand and to local traditions and superstitions together with Sunni Hanafi Islam on another, I would describe them both as partly neo-traditional.

Under the rubric of Islamic modernism we may also list groups and individuals who have very little in common on the surface. For instance, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) believed that most of Sharīʿa law should be reconsidered according to the current needs of the people. Thus, he propounded his own justifications for allowing usury and so on. Quite the opposite view was held by Jamal al-Din al-Afgani, who claimed that Muslims should adopt nothing but Western science and technology, while at the same time Muslims should revive *ijtihād* and profess the religion of Muhammad's age.

The secularist idea was not necessarily anti-Islamic or anti-religious, merely holding that the modern state should not make Sharīʿa legally paramount. Both modernists and secularists stressed that traditionalists blindly adore their sheikhs or scholars, though traditionalists make the same accusation with a different object of *taqlīd* — the West. Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948), Kemal Ataturk (1881-1938) and others may be defined as secularists, yet both used Islam as the unifying factor in national struggles for independence.

Islamists agree with modernists on critical points: both recognize only the Qurʾān and *Sunna*, and both argue for *ijtihād*. At the same time, they have absolutely different conceptions of its application in real life. Sunni Islamists from Ibn Taymiyya to Banna and Qutb support modernization without secularization. The two most prominent Islamist organizations which advocate for this path are the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-i Islami. Islamist could be distinguished from modernist by the call for an Islamic State.

In light of the foregoing, it is clear that Salafism and Wahhabism can be variously categorized as neo-traditionalism, in modernism or Islamism. This is indeed what we witness in Shepard's book. He therein discusses different trends within conservative Salafis like the *ʿulamāʾ* in Saudi Arabia and their loyalty to Wahhabism and the Hanbali *madhhab*. Another group of Salafis, he says,

insists on absolute *ijtihād* and refuses to follow a *madhhab*. Others do call for changes, but using non-violent methods such education and work with society, while there are, of course, salafi jihadists who have employed terror as a method to achieve their goals.⁹³ The term "salafism" can yet again be associated with Islamic modernism, following Al-Afgani and Muhammad Abduh, according to whom the idea was not to follow the first three generations of Muslims literally and strictly, but to adjust the ideas and practices of early Islam to the modern age.⁹⁴ Sunni Islamists, who claim that the gate of *ijtihād* should be open and any *bid'ah* has to be eliminated, are always political. This movement talks about an "Islamic State" as a concept. Shepard places people such as Hasan Al-Bana (1906-1949) and Abul Ala Mawdudi (1903-1979) in this latter category.⁹⁵ Again in the political dimension:

Can the believer implement this fundamental injunction by accepting political power, even if the ruler does not adhere to Islamic law, the *Shari'a*, and should the believer in that case concentrate on *tarbiya* (education) and da'wa (spreading the faith) in order to create a purified Muslim society? Or should the true believer correct the deviant ruler by verbally upbraiding him or even rising up against him? In other words, is Salafism primarily quietist or activist, and to what degree should it be one of these alternatives?⁹⁶

Self-representation of Muslims as Salafis has little to do with the perspective of academia. For instance, the word Salafi, from medieval times to the second half of the 19th century, was used to define only Muslims who follow Hanbali *madhhab*.⁹⁷

Looking again through various academic papers, I found a paper written by Israeli scholars Uriya Shavit and Fabian Spengler from Tel Aviv University, in which they examine three Salafi converts from a famous mosque in Birmingham, England. Since this paper is about converts to "*salafia*", they also gave their perspective on the movement, divided Salafi from Takfiri groups. The quote from this paper was entirely in accord with other statements I had heard in interviews presented in the next part of the chapter:

They (salafis) particularly oppose the Muslim Brotherhood and takfiri groups (i.e. organizations such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State that excommunicate Muslims, as well as Muslim regimes

⁹³ Shepard, *Introducing Islam*, 237.

⁹⁴ Shepard, *Introducing Islam*, 238.

⁹⁵ Shepard, *Introducing Islam*, 245.

⁹⁶ Meijer, *Global Salafism*, 12. first chapter.

⁹⁷ Lauzière, *The Making of Salafism: Islamic Reform in the Twentieth Century*, 21.

which do not apply Islamic law fully and exclusively, and use violence to advance their objectives).⁹⁸

2.2. "Salafi" discourses according to Russian practicing Muslims

In the second part of this chapter, I use information received from an interview with an expert and three interviews with Russian citizens who consider themselves practicing Salafi Muslims. I also analyze the YouTube videos of Russian Muslims which I either found myself, or which were suggested to me by the Salafi interviewees. Two topics will be covered — explanatory videos about "salafism", and critics of bloggers covering the discourse within the Russian Muslim community.

In an interview, held on February 11, 2022, with Rasul Abdulkhalikov a professor from the European University of Saint Petersburg, I was told that today's anthropology desperately needs more field studies of Russian and "salafi" Muslims. The absence of such studies could be the main reason for discrepancies between the texts of Russian scholars and reality on the ground. He notices, too, that the word "wahhabism" with a strictly negative connotation is connected with the two Chechnian wars (1994-1996 and 1999-2000), while the term "salafism" became more frequent during the Daesh resistance, because thousands of Russian Muslims joined the Islamic State.

I have conducted three separate semi-structured interviews with males from Dagestan, Bashkortostan and Moscow. Magomed, Radik, and Aslan did not agree to our conversations being recorded, and preferred the form of conversation to a strict questionnaire.⁹⁹ Two of them are acquainted with each other. Each has a different story, from their path to Islam and "salafia" to interaction with the authorities and law enforcement. I will focus here only on their religious identity. All three called themselves Salafi Muslims. They described their religion as "Sunni Islam and Salafi movement within Islam as the only right version of Islam"¹⁰⁰.

They do not subscribe to any *madhhab*. I have repeated this question with particular emphasis on Hanbali *madhhab*, but in each case received the same answer. I asked about the mosques where they pray and their attitude towards other Muslim movements in Russia. Each answered that they

⁹⁸ Uriya Shavit, and Fabian Spengler. "Converting to Salafiyya: Non-Muslims' Path to the 'Saved Sect.'" *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 41, no. 2 (April 3, 2021), 339.

⁹⁹ The names of the three were changed as per their request.

¹⁰⁰ Interviews by the author. 29.06.2022

usually go to just one mosque where the imam is Salafi, but if they travel, they use any mosque in the country and they pray with Muslims who consider themselves Traditional Muslims or adherents of Hanafi or Shafiite *madhhabs*. They said they are against *taqlīd* but think that any studies and especially religious studies are not easy, and they wouldn't demand that everyone take them up. At the same time, all three individuals said they had pushed their family toward religious studies in their spare time.

They are against any *bid'ah* in Islamic rituals, therefore they are skeptical of Sufi Islam. I asked them whether they consider Shia, Sufi, Ashari or Maturidi to be Muslims, or is this a matter for *takfīr*. Aslan said he had never thought about it in these terms and didn't want to answer the question, while the others said that, according to their knowledge, there are many "bad things" in these movements, some of which could be considered *kufṛ*. I asked them: "If there are things that you consider *kufṛ*, do you think the adherents of these schools are still Muslim?" Their answers were very similar, saying they regard such Muslims as "misguided", but stopped short of suggesting *takfīr* because it is prohibited by *Sharī'a* law.¹⁰¹

I said that according to my knowledge of "salafism", the use of *takfīr* is one of the most problematic areas, and that the "salafi" movement is usually associated with *takfīr*. All three countered that I am wrong, and they do not see Salafia that way. Magomed said that I was using the language of *vostokovedi*¹⁰²; that he would call himself a Muslim first, and only if there were a need to define himself specifically would he say that he is a Salafi. He said this would be a very rare case, for usually there is no need to explain anything to his "brothers", but under no circumstances would he dare unite with Takfiris. Radik said there is a big difference between Kharijites, Takfirists and moderate *salafia*.

I asked them about scholars (*ulamā*) they read and follow online, and how they see this difference between them, Kharijites and Takfirists. Those mentioned were al-Uthaymeen, Al-Albani, Ibn Baz, the Russian-speaking Rinat Abu Muhammad (unknown) from Kazakhstan, Abu Jahjah Crimean (unknown) from Ukraine, and others. The list of Kharijites and Takfirists included Ayman Zawahiri (b. 1951), Al-Maqdisi, Abu Qatada Britani (b. 1959), Suleiman Al-Alwan (b.

¹⁰¹ Interviews by the author conducted on 30.06.2022.

¹⁰² Direct translation would be: scholars who deal with the East. This is the Russian word for Orientalists.

1969), Russian-speaking natives of Dagestan Abdullah Kosteksky (b. 1975), Abu Umar Sasatlinsky (b. 1980), and someone with the nickname "rauf_salyaf" (unknown). Responding to the second part of my question, Magomed said:

The differences between us and them are so big that I do not want even to mention their names, and I don't like that I did it. I can give you two main differences. First, they are ready to overthrow any government and leader if they decide that he committed *kufir*. And what do they say?! They use this ayah, where it is said that people who rule not by Allah's law are committing *kufir*. And they interpret it as if this ruler had become non-Muslim. But the most famous interpreter of the Qur'ān and companion of the Prophet, Ibn Abbas, interpreted this as minor *kufir*. In other words, the faith of this ruler may not be perfect, but he is still a Muslim. The second difference is *takfir* — they think they can decide who is Muslim and who is *kāfir*. They always forget that if you call a Muslim *kāfir*, and it was a mistake — you are the *kāfir*! This rule was set down on purpose in order to warn Muslims against *takfir*.

Magomed reiterated that Kharijites and Takfirists are not only using *takfir* when it is forbidden, but force other Muslims to agree with them. He said:

I am sitting in front of you, and if a Kharijite says that you are *kāfir*, I have to agree with him immediately, and if I refuse he will say that I am *kāfir*, too! This is not right at all. A judge should decide who is *kāfir* and who is not. Why? People commit wrongs because they may not know what exactly is wrong. A judge can explain to them that they were wrong, and if they agree, there is no *takfir*.

I have been following Kosteksky, Sasatlinsky and Abu Jahjah Crimean on social media for the last two years, so I was familiar with their discourse and contradictions with each other. This bloggers have tens or even thousands of subscribers in their social networks. In the interview with Abdulkhalikov, I asked about these sources and about "Saliyf Forum"¹⁰³, recommended to me by one of the interviewees. This forum has been the most popular "salafi" website for the last fifteen years. It changed its domain name and registration due to restrictions from Roskomnadzor (Russian government entity that is in charge of supervision of communications¹⁰⁴), but has remained the main source of information for "salafi" Muslims.

According to answers I received in the interviews, there is a movement in Russia that calls itself Salafi, the adherents of which draw a line between themselves and other groups of Muslims who call *themselves* Salafi as well, while using *takfir* in the "wrong" way. In the content I found, there

¹⁰³ asar-forum.com Accessed May 10, 2022

¹⁰⁴ https://eng.rkn.gov.ru/about/statute_of_roskomnadzor/ Accessed May 10, 2022

were many similarities between all bloggers on the topics such as critics of Sufi Islam, murids and Sufi sheikhs, explanation of daily routine, family questions according to *Sharī'a*, and condemnation of *bid'ah*, among others. In the literature list, I provide links to the YouTube and Instagram pages of all bloggers mentioned. In the following paragraphs I analyze only videos and articles in which the topics of *takfīr*, the 'ulamā' scholars mentioned above, revolt against the government, and their criticism of each other, are discussed.

I found many videos from Kosteksky and Sasatlinsky about Russian aggression in Ukraine. In these videos they explain to the audience why Russian Muslims should not join the Russian army, and why any Muslim should avoid participating in the war. There are also videos about the possibility of service in the Russian government and police published before the war. Some of the arguments employ common sense, going into the history of the Muslim population in the Caucasus. What's relevant to the present study is that, in all these videos, they use *takfīr* against Russian Muslim soldiers. Quotes from Kosteksky:

1. It is *kufīr* to participate in this war....you will never be shahid if you fight for Russia¹⁰⁵
2. You cannot marry a man who serves for the Russian police and Guardia. These people defend a law that is contrary to Sharī'a law, so they are *kāfīrs*. You cannot marry a *kāfīr*. If you consider yourself Muslim — leave this job now!¹⁰⁶
Sasatlinsky:
1. Those who serve in the Russian army are not Muslims. According to Islam these people are straying from Islam, because the Russian army kills Muslims in Syria... Russian Muftis allow it because they are corrupt.¹⁰⁷
Rauf_Saliaf:
1. People who join the Russian army in Ukraine and Imams who allow it, you want to sit in two chairs. If you like Putin and you are with him, you should admit that you have abandoned from the Prophet and his religion.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Kosteksky instagram account, Accessed May 10, 2022
https://www.instagram.com/tv/CbU8X4AANNn/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y%3D&fbclid=IwAR0qfvyZW9OfkU4ukTXNjyIaKdDDaUUXFTazsHiUaTO_8qHBdHaXVRrNozg

¹⁰⁶ Kosteksky instagram account, Accessed May 10, 2022
<https://www.instagram.com/tv/CX8jVJfId-R/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y%3D&fbclid=IwAR38HBspGPVzQWt8W6lucvLAIdyKb9uhCDm8Cfb5Z-ct3ipO97N1Qlr7WZI>

¹⁰⁷ Sasatlinsky instagram account, Accessed May 10, 2022
<https://www.instagram.com/reel/CbfaA4LABzb/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y%3D&fbclid=IwAR1ZbkogpOg1rsxXJyS2uG4FjIehCqWkoVfnKLpQfR1zbnQUcQp8td2MVe8>

¹⁰⁸ Rauf Saliaf instagram account, Accessed May 10, 2022
<https://www.instagram.com/tv/CbslDQzAu7p/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y%3D&fbclid=IwAR2dicq-4Z7zTLK37OJ5BovHi4SYPOR9lsCvI5-tJLkZjoTGGodLllwayYc2>

What is of interest to us, is that these bloggers or thinkers use *takfīr* against other Muslims. And what about the bloggers and thinkers mentioned by the interviewees as decent Salafis? Rinat Abu Muhammad, in a video called "Is it possible for a specific person to make *takfīr* if he clearly committed *kufīr* or shirking?", explains why a Muslim should avoid calling another Muslim a *kāfir*, and how difficult and tricky the way to pronouncement of *takfīr*, even if there is be proof of *kufīr*, is:

...well, say we know that this or that particular act is major *kufīr*. Is it enough? Is he *kāfir*? No, take it easy, there is also a fourth step. Prior to announcing *takfīr* we need to examine the case. All conditions should be met and there should be no obstacles. What does this mean, "obstacles"? A man may not even be aware that what he has done is *kufīr*, or he doesn't understand how it is.¹⁰⁹

Abu Jahjah Crimean, in his short disclaimer about *takfīr*, says:

Only the one who really knows the Qur'ān and *Sunna* can use *takfīr*, but even then this is a very complicated and serious question. As the scholars say, it is better to call a thousand *kāfirs* Muslims than to call one Muslim *kāfir*.¹¹⁰

In another video, Abu Jahjah Crimean explains the words of Al-Albani on pronouncing *takfīr* against the bad leader of a country:

There is nothing useful in this. There will be only *fitna* as a result of *takfīr* against the government. Revolution is not the path, because history shows that nothing good is accomplished with this method....¹¹¹

Also of interest to me was direct polemic between bloggers. In his video "Warning from the Kharijite Kosteksky", Rinat Abu Muhammad declares:

There is a big difference between an act of *kufīr* and the *takfīr* of a Muslim. You cannot use *takfīr* if there are obstacles and doubts. And there are nearly always some. You need to send this man to *qadi*, and *qadi* needs to talk to him first. Sometimes people say: "I decided for myself that he is *kāfir*" - no one told you that it is your job to *takfīr* anybody! Even the *qadi* can make a mistake. And why are we discussing this now? Because the problem with these people is that they listen to *jahils* (ignorant men) like Kosteksky.... He has not studied at all. And Kosteksky says, I heard it

¹⁰⁹Rinat Abu Muhammad Youtube page, Accessed May 27, 2022
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3DBQKBMiA1Q>

¹¹⁰ Abu Jahjah Crimean Youtube page, Accessed May 27, 2022
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZuAExIxrR4&t=1s>

¹¹¹ Abu Jahjah Crimean Youtube page, Accessed May 27, 2022
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIQZDDrgzIk>

with my own ears: "If the governor rules 99% according to Shari'a law and 1% not, he is *kāfir*." This Kosteksky is a Kharijite.¹¹²

This video of Rinat Abu Muhammad was not left unanswered. Abdullah Kosteksky recorded his response:

I cannot stay silent while someone distorts Islam. These people think that Allah will give us a pass just for our calls to good behavior. There are moments, however, when you have to fight. If someone says that violence is never allowed, these words are a defamation of the Prophet and Islam. If there is no strength to fight, you need at least to prepare yourself for *jihad*.¹¹³

These videos, and hundreds of others, are full of quotations from the Qur'ān, *Sunna* and various *ulamā* scholars and thinkers. I do not have enough knowledge to analyze the arguments and to define one group of thinkers as Salafi Muslims and another as Kharijite or Takfiri. An obvious conclusion I can make is that these two groups of Muslims are not united, and they obviously have different opinions on the question of *takfir*.

Another difference between these two groups is their assessments of '*ulamā*' thinkers. I searched for any mention of names that I had heard from the interviewees. Sasatlinsky, answering a question on YouTube, said Suleiman Al-Alwan is a great scholar and no one can say bad things about him.¹¹⁴ Kosteksky published a video in defense of Al-Alwan, and he mentions his name alongside those of Al-Uthaymeen, Al-Albani, and Ibn Baz.¹¹⁵ In another video, Kosteksky accuses official Saudi *ulamā* thinkers of having been corrupted by the Saudi and Western governments, and praises Al-Alwan and others who were arrested by the Saudis.¹¹⁶ The opponents of Kosteksky compiled his speech from two different videos in which he reasons about Al-Uthaymeen's *fatwā* allowing Muslims to vote in the US. In one fragment, he says that Al-Uthaymeen's argument may be weak but it is not *kufir*, and in another video, he claims that participating in elections in non-Muslim countries is *kufir*. In one "salafi" forum I found a long article entitled "Deviated individuals:

¹¹² Rinat Abu Muhammad Youtube page, Accessed May 27, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_O91eXhzF8&t=3s

¹¹³ Kosteksky Youtube account, Accessed May 11, 2022 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ADat_C_H3Bs

¹¹⁴ Sasatlinsky Youtube account, Accessed May 10, 2022 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-VZCgrVgduM2>

¹¹⁵ Kosteksky Youtube account, Accessed May 28, 2022 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdEon80sI5c>

¹¹⁶ Kosteksky Youtube account, Accessed May 28, 2022 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ouFIITfwdg>

Abdullah Kosteksky",¹¹⁷ where there are many examples of discrepancies between his statements and those of Abu Jahjah Crimean, Rinat Abu Muhammad and others. Watching one of the Kosteksky videos, I heard:

According to what Kosteksky said he allows the following: If you are a commoner and have seen something reprehensible, then you are allowed to use your own religious understanding to make a decision regarding who did this reprehensible act and carry out punishment yourself, even if it is murder, regardless of: if he is the ruler of Muslims, or he is a Muslim, or he is a *kāfir*, or this is a *kāfir* country, or an Islamic country, whether it is in your power or not and so on..

A genuine pearl expressed by Abdullah Kosteksky in one lecture. This is direct evidence of his Kharijism and lack of religious understanding of the sacred texts. Based on the words of Kosteksky, we see that he allows any Muslim who does not even have a religious understanding, on the basis of his own conclusions, ignoring judges, scientists, and authorities, to make decisions on: beating people after they have committed a reprehensible act, burning grocery stores where alcohol is sold, hotel explosions, bank robberies, beating up drunkards in the street (because they drank), and other nonsense. Moreover, Kosteksky even surpasses the Kharijites — who appeared in the early times and at least endured *takfir* for sins, and only then they killed — and this one [Kosteksky] allows killing even if they do not leave Islam, but merely committed some kind of reprehensible act.¹¹⁸

In conclusion of this chapter, I can state that academia in general sees "salafism" as a developing concept, or even two or more concepts, where Al-Albani is a peaceful Salafi thinker but Suleiman Al-Alwan is an adherent of the same movement who has gone toward militant jihad. From the perspective of those I interviewed and from video, audio, and textual material that I analyzed in the second part of the chapter, it is clear that "salafism" is a very exhaustively described concept, and people such as Al-Maqdisi are considered to be "*takfirists*" and not "salafis" at all. In the next chapter I will adduce many different examples of usage of the terms "salafism" and "wahhabism"; the question is, does any of the definitions I have encountered in Russian sources fit the interviewees' own self-concept and the group of Muslims whom they represent?

¹¹⁷ Magrifa Forum, "About Abdullah Kosteksky" Accessed June 6, 2022
https://bmagrifa.com/abdullah-kostekskij/?fbclid=IwAR0qfvvZW9OfkU4ukTXNjyIaKdDDaUUXFTazsHiUaTO_8qHBdHaXVRrNozg#agent

¹¹⁸ Magrifa Forum, "About Abdullah Kosteksky" Accessed June 6, 2022
https://bmagrifa.com/abdullah-kostekskij/?fbclid=IwAR0qfvvZW9OfkU4ukTXNjyIaKdDDaUUXFTazsHiUaTO_8qHBdHaXVRrNozg#agent

Chapter 3: Evolution of the official definitions of "salafism" and "wahhabism" in contemporary Russia

The main purpose of this chapter is to lay out different examples of usage in the terms "salafism" and "wahhabism" throughout the last twenty-five years by Russian legislature, government officials, non-government organizations controlled by the state, and Russian academic sources. The absence of any chronological trend should not lead to the conclusion that there has been no change in the Russian umma itself. This quote from a work by Henri Lauzière could serve an epigraph to this chapter and the entire thesis:

Epistemological awareness is crucial not only because it allows one to maintain greater critical distance from secondary literature, but also because it raises the issue of the criteria by which Salafism is to be identified in primary sources—a frustrating but essential issue that is too often overlooked.¹¹⁹

Indeed, in this chapter there is an evidence that almost every subject of my research presented their own perception of the terms.

3.1. Russian law enforcement and legislature

In this part of the research I asked for help a Russian attorney in law Vasily Grischak who gave me access to *Garant System*, a professional legal database used across Russia since 1999. In *Garant* I used key words "wahhabism" and "salafism" and their deviations to search the entirety of the archive. This includes federal and local courts decisions and appeals, recommendations of the Russian Supreme Court, comments to the criminal code, and other types of the documentation. Eighty-six times from 1999-2022 the word "wahhabism" was mentioned, and 28 times from the same period "salafism". I had expected to notice any change in the government rhetoric over nearly 25 years. But this is not the case. The term "wahhabism" has very negative connotation in most instances and no chronological trend was found.

On September 22, 1999, a law was passed in the Republic of Dagestan. In the Appendix, there is a full translation of this law made by the author. This is the only official legal document prohibiting "wahhabism" in a Russian region. In spite of that, the term "wahhabism" was never used in

¹¹⁹ Lauzière, *The Making of Salafism: Islamic Reform in the Twentieth Century*, 14.

indictments even in Dagestan. The reason for the absence of prosecutions is that even in the law pertaining to "wahhabism" there is no definition of the phenomenon. Thousands of people have been sentenced in Russia for being accused of attempts to overthrow the regime, or for participating in terrorist activities, but none of them has formally been imprisoned for just being Wahhabi or Salafi Muslim.

Nevertheless, the following text is a rare instance of mentioning particular visual and behavioral attributes of "wahhabism" and "salafism" as a proper cause for the police surveillance:

..and the interrogated person at the preliminary investigation at the hearing witness FULL NAME¹⁰, police detective in g. Makhachkala showed that Shangereev was registered as a Wahhabi because he wore a long beard without a mustache, short pants and attended a Salafi mosque. He was repeatedly taken to the police department and preventive conversations were held with him.¹²⁰

From this legal statement we can find out that from the law enforcement perspective and from the courts' too, the very fact that an individual is a worshiper of a "salafi" mosque is enough to put him or her in a position of a suspect. On the next quote the emphasis shifts from "salafi" or "wahhabi" suspect, to the concept that is dangerous to the state. On July 12, 2000 the Ministry of Education sent a letter to several government agencies. A few sentences from this letter were published:

There is evidence of active attempts by supporters of the so-called "pure Islam" - the Wahhabis - to increase their influence among the youth in the areas of compact residence of Muslims in Russia. Thus, the facts of Wahhabis' involvement in religious activities of students of educational institutions, and Sunday schools at mosques with the aim of inciting religious fanaticism in school-age children and forming groups of young people to be sent to study in foreign Islamic centers have been established. An analysis of the foregoing indicates that a number of non-traditional religious associations operating in the country are increasing their purposeful corrupting influence on certain groups of Russian society, primarily children and youth.¹²¹

This very informative statement demonstrates the primary concerns of the Russian government. The government in 2000 still considered foreign Muslim education as a threat. In the letter, the authors used an adjective "non-traditional", which is very typical way of stressing the difference

¹²⁰ Garant Base. Apellyacionnoe opredelenie SK po ugovnym delam Verkhovnogo Suda Respubliki Dagestan. 24.02.2016. case: N 22-266/2016 Accessed June 9, 2022

¹²¹ Garant Base. Pis'mo Minobrazovaniya RFyu 12.06.2000 N549/28-16 O napravlenii dlya ispol'zovaniya v rabote analiticheskoy informacii o deyatelnosti na territorii RF predstavitelej netradicionnykh religioznykh ob"edinenij Accessed June 9, 2022.

between the two terms — Traditional Russian Islam and "salafi" or "wahhabi" Islam. None of these terms was explicitly defined by the state, but the first is proclaimed to be the "friend" of Russia and the other, its "enemy".

The term "wahhabis" was also found in the numerous comments about opposing extremism on the "Federal Law About Operational Search Activities."¹²² These comments were written by professional lawyers or topical scholars, and in the Appendix there are examples of such texts.¹²³ In most of the comments the term "wahhabism" is used as a synonym of violent extremism or it just names a group of people or an organization without explaining the meaning of the word, but describing why the acts of these groups or individuals should be assessed as a criminal actions.¹²⁴

One of the most surprising contradictions I found literally from the other side of the proverbial bars. The Federal Penitentiary Service in 2011 published a letter with its official recommendations of a working methodology:

So, for example, Christianity is divided into three main confessions - Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam - into such confessions as Sunnism, Shiism and Wahhabism.¹²⁵

The aim of this letter was to provide more explicit instruction to the employees of Russian prisons regarding how they should behave in different situations in their multi-national and multi-religious country. In one sentence, a few patterns are detected: a very low level of awareness about religion in general and Islam in particular, and probably as a consequence of it, a basically neutral attitude towards "wahhabism" as a legitimate branch of one of the four main Russian religions (Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism). This neutrality I consider as an exception to the general rule of perception "wahhabism" and "salafism" as a threat.

¹²² For the full text, please see http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_52146/30b3f8c55f65557c253227a65b908cc075ce114a/ Accessed June 9, 2022.

¹²³ Garant Base. Edlin V.A. *Kommentarii k federal'nomu zakonu 25.06. N 114-FZ "O protivodejstvii ehkstremitsskoj deyatel'nosti"*. - specially written for Garant system in 2010 Accessed June 9, 2022.

¹²⁴ Garant Base. *Kommentari k Ugolovnomu kodeksu RF dlja rabotnikov prokuraturi. Malinovski V.V. "Kontrakt"*, 2011. Accessed June 9, 2022.

¹²⁵ Garant Base. *Pismo ot FSIN RF 27.09.2011. N 7-18004-02 "O napravlenii metodicheskikh rekomendacij o poryadke primeneniya sotrudnikami ugolovno-ispolnitel'noj sistemy obshchikh principov sluzhebnogo povedeniya, utverzhennykh Ukazom Prezidenta Rossijskoj Federacii" from 12.08.2002*. Accessed June 9, 2022

Qualification of "wahhabism" as an extremist religious movement is most common in the juridical documents that I examined. Most of them do not elaborate on what exactly "wahhabism" or "salafism" is, who these adherents are or what they want. I then wondered if I could find an example of competition between different definitions of the terms in one case.

The most colorful example of the clash of definitions of "wahhabism" I found in a town court decision of Sverdlovskaya region dated November 2, 2010. This was a defamation suit in which the claimant demanded the following words be recognized as libel:

... today in the city of Degtiarsk there is an acting unauthorized group that has bent towards Wahhabism. The main initiator of the group is X.¹²⁶

The defendant was an executive public servant from the same town. The judge claimed that since the defendant had sent the letter to the police department where the proper verification procedure was carried out, and the police issued a resolution refusing to initiate criminal proceedings, the content of the letter was perceived by the law enforcement authorities to contain information about a crime. The court's decision was based not only on this logic, but also on the definition of "wahhabism" given by the judge:

In a broad sense, the word "wahhabism" is used today to denote religious and political extremism, correlated with Islam. In this regard, Wahhabis are understood as either carriers of the ideas that make up the teachings of al-Wahhab, or members of groups that are guided by this teaching.¹²⁷

In this case the common knowledge and an a perception of this term current in law enforcement were employed. No one questioned this interpretation, or tried to challenge this definition by ordering an linguistic or cultural analysis of "wahhabism".

I could conclude that Russian courts generally adhere to the same line about this issue, but then found a case, very similar to the previous one, with the opposite decision and rather different logic. On July 29, 2016, the Judicial Collegium for Civil Cases of the Murmansk Regional Court issued a decision that completely contradicts the decision of the case in the Sverdlovskaya region. It too was a defamation suit, but this time it was an appeal of a previous decision. This case most clearly

¹²⁶ *Reshenie Revdinskogo gorodskogo suda Sverdlovskoj obl.* from 02.11.2010. case N 2-1222/2010 Accessed June 15, 2022

¹²⁷ *Reshenie Revdinskogo gorodskogo suda Sverdlovskoj obl.* from 02.11.2010. case N 2-1222/2010 Accessed June 15, 2022

demonstrates the lack of a clear position and assessment of the term "wahhabi" in the modern Russian legal system. From the text of the appeal:

X filed a lawsuit against Y on the protection of honor, dignity and business reputation, compensation for moral damage. In support of the stated, he indicated that during the trial on the claim of the management company LLC "G." to X, the representative of the management company Y, ..., stated that X..., joined Wahhabis, and is currently under control of the law enforcement agencies." At the layman's level, Wahhabism is a synonym for terrorism and extremism, in connection with which the defendant actually accused the plaintiff of having links with terrorists and extremists. Meanwhile, the plaintiff never had problems with law enforcement agencies... for a long time at the university, he studied Arabic and oriental countries. This is currently his professional activity. He believed that the Y's statements defame him in the eyes of others, form an opinion about him as a person prone to committing serious crimes, such as terrorism and extremism. Such statements discredit his business reputation, which he values very much, and cause mental suffering.

This part is absolutely similar to the case that was discussed above. The court used the concept of the common sense and common knowledge, and confirmed the negative connotation of the term "wahhabism". But in the next paragraph the opposite perspective was adopted by an attorney of the defendant Y:

The Y argues that there is no evidence that he has committed unlawful acts.... He believes that oral explanations do not contain defamatory information, do not indicate the commission of an illegal act or incorrect, unethical behavior.... He stresses that by the name Wahhabi are used to call adherents of the religious and political movement in Islam that arose in Central Arabia; founder Muhammad ibn al-Wahhab (Soviet Encyclopedic Dictionary), Wahhabism is an Islamic term known in the Muslim world since the 18th century, while Wahhabism is not officially banned in the Russian Federation and is not identical to the concepts of a terrorist and an extremist. Referring to the Federal Law of 25.07.2002 N 114-FZ "On counteracting extremist activity", he argues that the concept of Wahhabism is not extremist and does not contain insults to honor and dignity.

The previous paragraph speaks for itself, and it could go down in history as another smart attempt of an attorney to defend his or her client by hook or by crook, but the final decision of the appeals court made the difference:

Satisfying the stated requirements for the recognition of widespread Y's information discrediting the honor and dignity of X, the court proceeded from the fact that in a broad sense the word "Wahhabism" is used in Russia to denote religious and political extremism, as well as terrorism, in connection with which the statement of Y contains information about joining X to extremists, terrorists as the reason for surveillance by law enforcement agencies, considering the defendant's explanations as statements of facts, the validity of which was not confirmed during the trial At

the same time, the court of first instance had no reason to believe that Wahhabism is identical to the concepts of extremism and terrorism, since the definition of this term in various dictionaries literally means the religious and political trend of Islam, this trend is not among the banned religions in the Russian Federation, legal prosecution for this religion is not provided. Due to the unproven distribution by Y information discrediting the honor, dignity and business reputation of X, the court of first instance had no grounds for satisfying the derivatives of the main requirements.... Thus it is the court's decision is subject to cancellation with the issuance of a new decision to refuse X in meeting the stated requirements.¹²⁸

What I saw here was completely revolutionary: the Russian appeal court stated that there is nothing wrong or bad in the term "wahhabism". Since Russian legislature system is not based on the case law, this precedent did not changed the general negative perception of the term "wahhabism". These were the only two cases that I found in which the term "wahhabism" played the main role in the process, and was moreover defined from different perspectives. The term "salafism", as mentioned above, was rarely used, but when it was used, the connotation was very similar to "wahhabism". Usually, I encountered this term in descriptions of police or secret services' search operations.¹²⁹

Based on analysis of legal documents containing the words "wahhabism" and "salafism" and their variations, I came to the conclusion that there is no clear understanding among law enforcement officers, judges, and other stakeholders within the Russian judicial system about these terms. Moreover, there is reason to believe that inside the police, General Prosecution Office, and FSB, mere mention of these terms may act as a trigger casting suspicion on anyone in question. This suspicion would have practical implications — for instance, these suspects would be put in a special file labeled "extremists". At the same time, supreme courts in the Russian regions have to use the actual legislative texts for indictments, so on this level, the system refuses to punish an individual for presumably being a member or a follower of something that is not officially defined as a crime.

¹²⁸ Garant Base. Appelyacionnoe opredelenie SK po grazhdanskim delam Murmanskogo obl. suda 29.06.2016 case: N 33-1820/2016 Accessed June 28, 2022

¹²⁹ Garant Base. Opredelenie SK po ugovnym delam Verkhovnogo Suda RF from 7.10.2021 case: N 23-УД21-8-A3 Accessed June 28, 2022

3.2. Russian academia

In this section, I make use of Russian scholarly papers and books as primary sources with the same purpose as in the previous section. Owing to the facts discussed in the second chapter of this thesis, there is every reason to believe that the influence of the internet and the opportunity to study abroad may have significantly changed the portrayal of the Russian umma. I wondered if there had been any change in perception of the terms "salafism" and "wahhabism" in academic papers written by Russian scholars. I am not, of course, discussing the academic quality of these papers or books, only the use and definitions of the two terms. In an academic legal paper published in 2002, the author advocates protective measures against the influence of "foreign" Islam from abroad, mentioning our terms as synonyms:

On April 5, 1872, the State Council of Russia approved the Regulations on the management of the Transcaucasian Muslim clergy of Shiite and Sunni teachings with the prospect of its distribution to the Dagestan, Kuban and Terek regions. Its peculiarity was the norm that entry into the Muslim clergy was allowed only for Russian citizens, and spiritual hierarchs were appointed by the government. The main goal of this act is to ensure state control over orthodox Islamists who are unfriendly to the authorities, and to prevent foreign, hostile religious ideas from invading the empire from Persia and Turkey. Understanding this legislative act and projecting it onto the problems of modern Russia and the North Caucasus gives rise to striking analogies. Even 130 years ago, the national legislator foresaw and defended himself and the state from, in modern terms, religious extremism and external indoctrination from the East of aggressive, radical Islamic Salafism (Wahhabism).¹³⁰

In this example, the author is referring to outdated legislation. From the perspective of this Russian specialist in Shari'a law and *Adat*, the problem has remained the same for the last two centuries. In an article by Esenbekov, written for the Russian police university students in 2018, I found a comprehensive description of "wahhabism" from both the historical and contemporary perspectives:

Wahhabism as a creed creates a kind of surrogate for Islam, which reproduces it outwardly, but, in fact, acts as its completely opposite counterpart. As noted in the work of A. L. Anisin, "the Wahhabist version of Islam as the state religion became widespread at the beginning of the 20th century with the direct material support of Great Britain"... The conviction of the Wahhabis that their opponents are infidels, who formally call themselves Muslims, has become an excuse for

¹³⁰ Garant Base. Fenomen musul'manskogo prava v processakh dinamiki sistem prava Rossii 19-20 veka. Mirsokov Z.H. "Journal rossiyskogo prava". N 10, October 2002.) Accessed June 28, 2022

harshness and intolerance towards them. Such fanaticism contributed to the rallying of the Wahhabis, forming a religious and ideological justification for actions that are contrary to the spirit of Islam. With this in mind, the Al-Wahhab doctrine was originally an ideology of military expansion and predatory raids. ... the process of strengthening the influence of Islam is taking place at a fast pace. For example, the number of mosques has increased significantly. Funding for their construction comes from representatives of the Arab states. And it is not difficult to guess what fundamental knowledge of Islam they are guided by when they preach militant Wahhabist Islam instead of traditional Islam.¹³¹

In the first part of the quote, the "wahhabism" mentioned in the context that is very popular in Russia, especially among leaders, conspiracy theory ideas that the West is behind all the evil. In the second, the author defines the original doctrine of Al-Wahhab as a very bad thing. This statement directly contradicts the position of Putin, discussed later. The third part of the quote describes the two most important concerns with regard to Islam in the region: a financing trail from the Middle East, and as a result problems with protecting so-called Traditional Islam. The import of this text is very similar to the agenda of Russian orientalists in the 19th century. These are exactly the ideas found in the works of Danilevsky and Smirnov¹³² around 150 years ago.

In an article published in 2021 by one of the main Russian law schools, "salafism" is described as fertile soil for terrorists:

The task of counteracting the radicalization of neophytes - adherents of the ideology of "pure Islam" ("Salafism"), including in places of imprisonment, and their recruitment into religious terrorist organizations - phenomena that play an ever-increasing role in preserving terrorist threat around the world, including in the Russian Federation.¹³³

The authors of the three articles mentioned above, are not famous scholars, but their texts were among those I found in the *Garant* system. It means that any judge, attorney, or prosecutor can find these articles when preparing themselves for a case. Moreover, they will not find any articles with a different, positive or neutral view on the subject. It means that the pattern of negative perception of the terms remained constant in this field.

¹³¹ Garant Base. Prichiny i usloviya vozniknoveniya ehkstremitizma na osnove radikal'nogo techeniya (Esenbekov A.Y. journal "Trudi Akademii MVD Rossii" N 3, July-September 2018) Accessed June 28, 2022

¹³² Batunski, *Rossia i Islam*, Vol. 2. 396.

¹³³ Garant Base. Uголовно-pravovoe protivodejstvie ideologicheskomu ehkstremitizmuekstremitizmu (Kochoi S.M., journal "Russian Law" November 2021) Accessed June 28, 2022

I paid special attention to books and articles by Aleksey Malashenko, one of the most distinguished Russian scholars in the field of Islamic Studies. In his book *Islamic alternative and Islamists project*, published in 2006, Malashenko explains to his readers the historical and theological context of the term "salafism" and "salafi" ideology.¹³⁴ This book is not about Russian Islam, but Islam as a whole. In his book *Russia and Islam*, published in 2007, he states that "wahhabism" is a Russian term for Islamists or Muslims who would achieve their goals via politics. He states that the proper term for them is "salafists", due to the historical roots of their ideology.¹³⁵

Malashenko speaks of "wahhabi's zones" in Russia, and uses statistics from police departments and local governments when he calculates the numbers of "wahhabists" in different regions of Russia.¹³⁶ Malashenko gives four main reasons for the proliferation of "wahhabism" in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union — the desire of Islam to regulate the life of society, a natural expression of discontent in a religious form for any Muslim society, instability in the North Caucasus, Chechnya especially, and that a foreign variant of Islam more attractive to the young generation than the local version of Islam preached by the Soviet imams.¹³⁷

Going back to numbers and their ambiguity, Malashenko says there is no simple answer to the question of how many "wahhabists" there are in Ingushetia. A police officer could count the exact number of registered suspect as "wahhabis", people on the street could say that: "jamaat "Ingushetia" includes all adult men of the republic."¹³⁸ Here I see a very important logical problem — what does a Russian police officer, an FSB agent, a Muslim on the street of Dagestan, or a professor of Oriental Studies from St. Petersburg understand by the term "wahhabism" or "salafism", and is it the same definition given by Malashenko from his historical perspective? If not, and there is indeed no common understanding of these terms, how can anyone collect data and come up with statistics?

In the following pages of his book, the term "wahhabists" is used as a synonym of "Jamaat", extremists and even warriors.¹³⁹ Nevertheless, in the same book Malashenko places under serious

¹³⁴ Malashenko, *Islamic alternative and Islamists project*, 47.

¹³⁵ Malashenko, *Russia and Islam*, 27.

¹³⁶ Malashenko, *Russia and Islam*, 28.

¹³⁷ Malashenko, *Russia and Islam*, 29.

¹³⁸ Malashenko, *Russia and Islam*, 32.

¹³⁹ Malashenko, *Russia and Islam*, 33.

criticism the concept of "Traditional Russian Islam" as a phenomenon of the Soviet era, when many traditions with non-Islamic roots were maintained in local Muslim customs. A very low level of religious knowledge among Soviet imams made this "Traditional Islam" unpopular among the younger generation, and helped to spread "young neo-Salafi" ideas¹⁴⁰, Malashenko claims. Discussing the conservatism or neo-traditionalism against modernism notwithstanding, Malashenko uses the term "wahhabism" more than a hundred times and "salafism" four times, and always with a negative connotation. In a 2009 article, the same author repeats the same definition.¹⁴¹ However, in a book edited by Malashenko, his colleague Alexander Ignatenko writes:

During the years of Russia's independent existence, the expressions "wahhabism", "wahhabis" ("wahhabists") and derivatives have acquired a negative value, even though the concept of "Wahhabism" is used in historical, religious (Islamic), ethnographic and political works as neutral (which is how we use it). After all, Wahhabism is one of the many currents in Islam.¹⁴²

In his newest book, from 2019 Malashenko again puts the terms "salafism" and "wahhabism" together with "fundamentalism", "Jihadism", and "Islamism".¹⁴³ Only once, in talking about two trends of reforms in Islam, does he mention "salafism" or "wahhabism" as a reform movement of Islam based on the idea of a return to "true" Islam without any innovation or *bid'ah*.¹⁴⁴

Much comprehensive research dealing with the term "salafism" was written by Alfrid Bustanov, who now works at the University of Amsterdam. In his works on the role of national languages in Islam, he examined the popular notion that so-called "traditional" Islam prefers the local (Tatar in his research) language, and "salafis" use Russian or Arabic because they want to deny any local influence.¹⁴⁵ Bustanov labels "salafis" as "cosmopolitan fundamentalists"¹⁴⁶ when he wants to separate the movement from Traditional Russian Islam. In the same article, Bustanov justifies the usage of the term "salafism" on technical grounds, and later gives an explicit definition:

By 'moderate fundamentalism' and 'Salafism' I mean a trend – widespread specifically among well-educated believers – that emphasizes the strong monotheistic character of Islam. These

¹⁴⁰ Malashenko, *Russia and Islam*, 34.

¹⁴¹ Aleksey Malashenko, and Sergey Filatov, eds. "Twenty Years of Religious Freedom in Russia". (Moscow: Carnegie, 2009), 251.

¹⁴² Malashenko, "Twenty Years of Religious Freedom in Russia," 251.

¹⁴³ Malashenko, *Islam: 21 Century*, 49.

¹⁴⁴ Malashenko, *Islam: 21 Century*, 89.

¹⁴⁵ Alfrid Bustanov, "The Language of Moderate Salafism in Eastern Tatarstan." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 28, no. 2 (April 3, 2017) 184.

¹⁴⁶ Bustanov, "The Language of Moderate Salafism in Eastern Tatarstan," 184.

strongly monotheist moderate fundamentalists feel threatened by Sufi practices, pointing primarily to shrine veneration and the Sufi masters' claim to be able to mediate between God and the believer. Critically, moderate fundamentalism is grounded in the accepted schools of Islamic law (in the Tatar case, Hanafi orthodoxy), but is guided by a strong desire to verify all statements about religion by reference to the *Qur'an* and *Sunna*.¹⁴⁷

Except for the use of the word "fundamentalism" and the ensuing elaboration on the story of Idris Galavetdin and his radical pamphlets, this definition of "salafism" could be used to describe the Salafis I interviewed in 2022. This definition given by Bustanov was the only one in the whole body of literature that I read for this thesis that could be used for that purpose. Nevertheless, the absence of clear boundaries between Salafis and Kharijis in Bustanov's texts could lead to some ambiguity in understanding these movements and people who represent them.

Another prominent Russian scholar, Akhmet Yarlykapov, analyzed the system of Islamic education and Arabic language studies in Russia. He ascribes competition from foreign educators to problems with quality of education at home. He also mentions the annihilation of Islamic education under Soviet rule, and of course the the "so-called "wahhabi" threat".¹⁴⁸ These suspicions of the government that every foreign variant of Islam is "wahhabism" puts every interaction with an educational entity from the Middle East in question.

In another paper on the Islamic State and challenges for Russia, Yarlykapov¹⁴⁹ talks about important changes in Islam in the world. In particular he says that even religious and political movements that have alliances with the government, such as "wahhabism" with Saudi Arabia, have become fragmented. Yarlykapov divides "wahhabism", or "modern Salafi" in his terminology, into two groups: "a large group of so-called classical Wahhabis, those who adhere to the views of... Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab... supports the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia...The leaders of this group are Sheikh Abd al-Aziz Al ash-Shaikh (b. 1940), sheikhs Albani, Uthaymeen, Salih al-Fawzan (b. 1933). Their views are distinguished by relative moderation both in matters of armed jihad and those of political loyalty. Another group...are the Wahhabis-"jihadists".¹⁵⁰ This definition

¹⁴⁷ Bustanov, "The Language of Moderate Salafism in Eastern Tatarstan," 185.

¹⁴⁸ Akhmet Yarlykapov. "Islamskoe obrazovanie na Severnom Kavkaze v proshlom i nastoiashchem" *Vestnik Evrazii* (Acta Eurasica 2003. № 2 (21)), 26.

¹⁴⁹ Akhmet Yarlykapov, "'Islamic State" and the North Caucasus in the Middle East: Challenges and Lessons for Russia" *International Analytics*. (2016. No. 3 (17)), 113.

¹⁵⁰ Akhmet Yarlykapov, "'Islamic State" and the North Caucasus in the Middle East: Challenges and Lessons for Russia" *International Analytics*. (2016. No. 3 (17)), 114.

of "wahhabism" tallies with the answers of the interviewees while still putting the violent jihadist movement under the same umbrella.

In a third article, Yarlykapov makes a comparison between the Hizb ut-Tahrir movement and "salafis". Talking about different methods on the path to accomplishing the same goal (an Islamic State or Caliphate, *selon* Yarlykapov), he says "..Salafis are adherents of more radical tactics, considering it necessary to destroy state of "infidels" and on its ruins to establish an Islamic State..."¹⁵¹ Other words, even in Yarlykapov's view, "salafism" and "wahhabism" are mainly radical extremist movements. By no means do I wish to accuse Yarlykapov of not being aware of different movements within "salafism"; I merely want to stress that academia does not distinguish violent extremism and "salafism" as such, and since in all kinds of security studies violence is the focus, that becomes its defining trait.

The last researcher I chose for this chapter is Roman Silantiev, a Russian sociologist and Islam expert, working for the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church and who is very close to the leader of TsDUM.¹⁵² A very special place in the literature is occupied by his controversial book *The Newest History of Islam in Russia*.¹⁵³ This book can hardly be counted as academic, since it is extremely biased and complimentary towards a top cleric, Talgat Tadzhuddin. I cannot assign this book to one precise group inasmuch as it was written by a scholar who worked in different governmental positions, and the voice of one group was favored. He has a reputation of being an Islamophobe, capable of the following speech:

In Russia, the only traditional Islam is the Islam which teaches Muslims to be law-abiding citizens of Russia and, of course, to respect the Christian majority.¹⁵⁴

In his book he mentions "wahhabism" 105 times and always in the context of extremism and terrorism. He does not make any distinction even within the movement, as in the previous cases. From his perspective, "Salafi is a self-name of Wahhabis... Now there is the question of forbidding

¹⁵¹ Akhmet Yarlykapov. "Islam and Conflict on Caucasus: Trends, Movements, and Religious-Political Views" *Ėtnichnost' i Religii v Sovremennykh Konfliktakh*. eds. by Tishkov, V. A., and V. A. Shnirel'man (Moskva: Nauka, 2012), 623.

¹⁵² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Silantyev Accessed July 5, 2022

¹⁵³ Silantiev, *Noveishaya Istoria Islama v Rossii* (ECSMO, 2005).

¹⁵⁴ Bekkin, *People of Reliable Loyalty*, 222.

Wahhabism-Salafism in Russia, because the biggest terrorist organisations in the world profess this exact ideology."¹⁵⁵

My interest to the Russian speaking scholars was driven by an assumption that at least some politicians, journalists, legislature stakeholders and other actors should obtain their knowledge about the subject from the academia texts. They could not gain their knowledge and develop their opinion in complete vacuum. The analysis showed that in Russian academia there is no consensus on the topic. The one common feature represents the majority of the texts that I found: they include the most violent and extremist groups that call themselves "wahhabis" and "salafis" in the whole body of Salafi an Wahhabi discourse. As a result, that was demonstrated in the first part of this chapter and will emerge again in the following part, "salafism" and "wahhabism" are perceived as a threat.

3.3. Russian government and Official Russian Muslim clergy

In the last part of my research, I analyzed the speeches of Vladimir Putin (b. 1952) as the primary decision-maker of the last twenty-two years, the statements of official Muslim clergy, and video lectures by Russian imams serving in mosques under the direct control of the main Russian Islamic NGOs. I decided not to split them in two different sub-chapters because of the high level of dependency of the clergy on the government.

While searching for data, I found an interview with Ahmed Zakaev (b. 1959), Prime Minister in exile of the unrecognized Chechen republic of Ichkeria. In his interview, Zakaev blames the FSB and the Russian government for patronizing "wahhabism", but at the same time explains that this was not Saudi Wahhabism, merely an ugly Russian criminal environment.¹⁵⁶ Zakaev quotes the first Russian president Boris Yeltsin (1931-2007), that Russia was a democratic state and people could live by Shari'a law if they wanted. Yeltsin based his opinion on the decision of the commission on combating political extremism in 1998:

¹⁵⁵ Tatiana Chernikh, "Kto takie salafiti..." published May 2016
https://chr.aif.ru/belgorod/people/kto_takie_salafity_kak_ne_dopustit_radikalnyy_islam_v_belgorode

¹⁵⁶ Akhmed Zakaev interview, published December 2014
<https://meduza.io/feature/2014/12/11/posle-pervoy-voyny-my-proigrali-mir>

The commission came to the conclusion that the trend of Wahhabism is not extremist. It is necessary to distinguish a religious movement from the extremist trends that exist within it.¹⁵⁷

After analyzing speeches by Putin in which he used the words "wahhabism" or "salafism", or even "Islam" in general, ascertained that his position remained similar to the one formulated by his predecessor. In his yearly press conferences and official statements published on the web site of Kremlin, Putin never uses terms "salafism" or "wahhabism". At the beginning of his career, when he launched the First Chechen War in 2000, Putin stated:

Having desecrated the fundamental principles of Islam under the guise of Sharīʿa norms, the bandits launched a real war against the entire population of Chechnya.¹⁵⁸

Despite the absence of the word "wahhabism" in this statement, many media resources reposted this text as claiming that Putin had started a war against terrorism and "wahhabism". Eleven years later, Putin nearly repeated Yeltsin's words verbatim, but inside his own foreign policy agenda:

We have seen the reaction of the Chechen people to attempts to install forms of Islam that are non-traditional for them, into the consciousness of the local population, first of all. This is where it started. Wahhabism, in its original form, is a normal direction in Islam, there is nothing terrible here. But there are extremist currents within Wahhabism itself. It was precisely these directions that were being pushed into the consciousness of the Chechen people. And people understood this very well, that someone from the outside is not fighting for their interests, but is trying to use them as a tool to "shake" the Russian Federation, as an important, significant player in the international arena.¹⁵⁹

Here Putin used the word "non-traditional" — an ambiguous construct used by different Russian state and non-state actors with a different meaning and implication. I assume that Putin used this term to mean not secure, stable, or familiar to those living now.

The contradistinction of so-called "Traditional Russian Islam" and other forms of the religion is found in almost every speech and statement on the topic made by official Muslim clergy. The leaders of two main Muslim organizations in Russia, the Tatar-born Ravil Gaunutdin, who has served as a grand mufti of Russia since 1996, and Talgat Tadzhuiddin, a chief mufti of Russia and head of the Central Muslim Spiritual Directorate of Russia between 1992 and 2015, and other

¹⁵⁷ Akhmed Zakaev interview, published December 2014

<https://meduza.io/feature/2014/12/11/posle-pervoy-voyny-my-proigrali-mir>

¹⁵⁸ <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24066/print> Accessed July 5, 2022

¹⁵⁹ <https://golosislama.com/news.php?id=1189> Accessed July 5, 2022

influential imams from the North Caucasus, have debated endlessly about the admissibility of Islamic trends. During the second year of Putin's presidency, in the La-La-Tulpan mosque in Ufa, the chairman of the Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Russia (CDUM RF), Supreme Mufti Talgat Tadzhuiddin, said: "We do not want Wahhabis and those from foreign countries to be in our country ... from time immemorial Orthodoxy and Islam have coexisted, for 300 years in Russia they were the basis of the state."¹⁶⁰ A completely different perspective is found in the words of Ravil Gaunutdin, made an year earlier:

Wahhabism is the official ideology of Saudi Arabia, where there is no terrorism or extremism that would be based on Wahhabism. Wahhabism is based on the teachings of the Koran and the *Sunna* of the Prophet. And the teachings of Islam is against any terrorism and violence, enjoining love of one's neighbor, spreading peace and love between people. The adoption in Russia of any law banning Wahhabism will mean infringement on the rights and constitutional freedoms of our Muslim citizens. Would the 37th year come for Muslims when a neighbor or opponent of any person declared that this or that believer is a Wahhabi and should he be judged?¹⁶¹

That statement is also important because it was made during the Second Chechnyan War (7 August 1999 – 16 April 2009) , when the word "wahhabism" was used in the massmedia as a synonym of terrorism. However, in the following months, Gaunutdin supported the Russian government in its military action in Chechnya and used the same "approved" formula — Traditional Russian Islam against new forms: "We will fight against the penetration of radical Islam deep into Russia and call on Muslim believers to profess traditional Islam, the main postulates of which condemn wars, fratricide, and violence."¹⁶²

In recent years, some Russian imams have launched their own YouTube channels and communicate with their audience through social networks such as VK, Instagram, Facebook and others. One of the most popular official Islamic clerics in Russia is Shamil Alyautdinov (b. 1974), imam of the Moscow's Memorial Mosque on Poklonnaya Hill. Alyautdinov studied in Turkey before he joined the DUM RF - the organization under the control of Ravil Gaunutdin. On his official YouTube page I found eighteen videos, with a total duration of about four hours, devoted

¹⁶⁰ https://www.ng.ru/ideas/2001-06-19/8_vakhabit.html Accessed July 5, 2022

¹⁶¹ <https://lenta.ru/news/2000/07/26/mufti/> Accessed July 5, 2022

¹⁶² https://ruskline.ru/news_rl/1999/10/23/muftij_ravil_gajnutdin_zayavil_o_podderzhke_voennyh_dejstvij_rossii_v_dagestane Accessed July 5, 2022

to "salafism" and "wahhabism".¹⁶³ In these videos, Aliautdinov tells the history of Islam and different conceptions of the term "salafism" or "salafiya". He draws a clear line between peaceful "salafism" and any violent forms of Islam and stresses that the words "wahhabism" and "salafism" should not have any negative connotation.

One of the biggest scandals in the contentious domain of defining "the right" form of Islam in Russia occurred in Grozny from August 25-27, 2016. I will give extra attention to the so-called Grozny *fatwā*, the authors of which documents named "salafi" Muslims a violent and dangerous religious sect.¹⁶⁴ The most comprehensive analysis of this event and the two documents was carried out by Damir Shagaviev in his article "*The Ahl al-Sunna wa-I-Jamaah* and the Grozny *fatwā*".¹⁶⁵ In the article, attention is mainly given to the theological dispute between different movements in Islam.

From the perspective of this research, it is essential to lay out the original text of the *fatwā* and the list of people who signed the document. Actually, there were two documents — the declaration, which can be called an external document written in politically correct language, and "the Grozny *fatwā*" itself, an internal document for Russian consumptions. I am concerned with the second one.¹⁶⁶ Almost half of the document consists of an attack on the "salafi" and "wahhabi" movements. There is no distinction in this text between peaceful "salafi" or "wahhabi" movements and the violent, extremist forms like ISIS or al Qaeda.

The Russian Muslim clerics who signed the *fatwā* ignored any other definition of "wahhabism" and "salafism" which describe these movements as global, non-violent, and not in support of the idea of an Islamic State.¹⁶⁷ The text is very political by nature and could be called a quintessence of the different conflicts within the Russian *umma*: Sufi Muslims against Salafi Muslims; Islamic traditions in the Caucasus against Tatarstan, Bashkortostan and central Russia; the old generation of Hanafi Sunni clerics against any Middle Eastern or Gulf influence on their imams and the

¹⁶³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rfy8jbFdCr0&list=PLi9OR27gqoeRgMIAJyaqMEvZ8-Zw2wm8L> Accessed July 5, 2022

¹⁶⁴ (Materials of the World Muslim Conference in Grozny) Accessed December 31, 2021 <https://islamnews.ru/materialy-vsemirnoj-islamskoj-konferencii-v-groznom>

¹⁶⁵ Bekkin. *The Concept Of Traditional Islam In Modern Islamic Discourse In Russia*, 58.

¹⁶⁶ Bekkin. *The Concept Of Traditional Islam In Modern Islamic Discourse In Russia*, 71.

¹⁶⁷ Bekkin. *The Concept Of Traditional Islam In Modern Islamic Discourse In Russia*, 71.

education process; the old conflict between the two Supreme Muftis and their struggle for power. Here are quotes from the *fatwā* applicable to my research:

1. This ideology has received in many countries of the world the generalized name "Wahhabism", to which we include a number of extremist movements that pervert the spirit and letter of Islam, including the so-called "Salafism" ...
2. Some sects may seem harmless, but their alienness to the spiritual world of Russian Muslims can be used by the enemies of our country for the purpose of socio-political destabilization in the regions where Muslims are densely populated, creating centers of externally controlled spiritual conflict, which develops into a social conflict...
3. And now attempts to spread the so-called "Salafism" in a number of regions of the North Caucasus, the Volga region and other places, "Khabashism" and "Salafism" in the Crimea, the desire of adherents of sects to mimic traditionalists, can have the same consequences as it was in the Chechen Republic, if they are not stopped in time.
4. We consider it necessary to reflect in the relevant norms of legislation the signs of the Wahhabist ideology, which we set out in the Fatwa.
5. It seems very urgent to supplement the legislative list of signs of extremist activity with the following sign: the dissemination of false, discrediting information about traditional religions in Russia, their foundations (4 *madhhabs*, Maturidi and Ashari schools, Sufi *tariqa*), leaders recognized by the state of Muslim centers in the interests of isolated groups (sects)..¹⁶⁸

The second quote is consonant with statements by Putin which I mention above. This *fatwā* was officially criticized by SMR and its leader, Ravil Gaunutdin.¹⁶⁹ The controversial text of the *fatwā* brought on a wave of mutual accusations and conflicts between Chechnian clergy and SMR leaders. In the official answer of the leader of the Chechnyan muftiate, there is direct reference to the strategy approved by Putin.¹⁷⁰ In the last quote, the authors of the *fatwā* suggest considering even peaceful "salafis" as outlaws, since "salafis" usually criticize the Sufi approach, and are against "blind following" or *taqlīd*, and prefer to analyze all four *madhhabs* in order to find the proper solution or answer.

Despite the official stance that has been always separating the Traditional Russian Islam and other forms implied "salafism" and "wahhabism", in practice the foreign education influenced the whole *umma*, Russian Muslim clerics included. Alyautdinov's instance showed that an interaction rather than confrontation emerged when young well-educated Muslims apply for the job inside the official Russian Muslim structures. In this thesis I did not measure the scale of this infiltration,

¹⁶⁸(Materials of the World Muslim Conference in Grozny) Accessed December 31, 2021
<https://islamnews.ru/materialy-vsemirnoj-islamskoj-konferencii-v-groznom>

¹⁶⁹ https://www.muslim.ru/articles/278/16192/?sphrase_id=28271 Accessed December 31, 2021

¹⁷⁰ <https://dum-spb.ru/news/muftij-chechni-sdelal-zayavlenie-v-adres-ravilya-gajnutdina.html> Accessed December 31, 2021

and therefore I cannot make any deductions about the level of "salafi" and "wahhabi" representation inside these structures. What I can stress, that this representation exists.

In two out of three subjects of the analysis there is no substantial shift in usage of the terms "salafism" and "wahhabism" over the last twenty-two years. Only in statements and video lectures of the representatives of official Russian Muslim Clergy I found some evidence of a changing attitude: during the last three years explanatory videos about "salafia" and "wahhabism" were published. There is some logic in it, because Muslim clerics should react to the shifts within the Russian *umma*, and because these changes reflect the ranks of the imams as well. There is no theory employed in this thesis to answer the question why two other groups are so rigid. Probably, the change in perception of "wahhabism" and "salafism" by the legislature branch is possible only after alteration of a discourse in Russian academia circles. This obscurity notwithstanding, I assume that only Salafi Muslims could have motivation to dig in this topic while other groups feel comfortable in the current framework.

Conclusion

Analyzing the history of the trends of usage the terms "salafism" and "wahhabism" by different Russian actors has been the main objective of this research. The goal was to create a comprehensive overview of the different perspectives inside Russia on the topic.

In order to accomplish this task, I made a concise journey through the history of the relationships between Russian Muslim *umma* and the Russian governmental structures, Russian academia, and Russian Muslim clergy. Throughout history it was seen how the indigenous Muslim population in the periphery of Russia and in the center of the country have been transforming from the object to the rightful subject of Russian society. I have deliberately chosen present perfect continuous tense to describe this change, because, unfortunately, due to the primary sources analyzed, this process is still far from being complete.

From the Medieval times to the October Communist Revolution in 1917, the government and different intellectuals dedicated their attention on "them" - people who should be loyal to "us". In time, the distance became shorter and shorter, various forms of management organizations were established, hundreds of laws were passed. There were periods with more freedom and times of oppression. During the Soviet period, Islam and all other religions in the USSR were either repressed or consigned to oblivion. It does not mean that the Muslim population stopped performing their religious duties, but the precise interest to this topic from the government and the Soviet Orientalists was reduced. The only interest was in creating an impression that the Soviet Union was a tolerant state. The process of maintaining this complimentary image was more similar to the famous Potemkin village than to the real care about multiple ethnic and religious minorities. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, for the first time in almost 70 years, the Russian people enjoyed civil liberties that allowed them to consume religious information from different independent sources, study abroad and practice their religion openly. This period could be considered as a revival of Islam across the whole territory of the former Soviet Union, the Russian Federation included.

This freedom of information in the religious sphere was considered as a threat even before Putin's era, and a law about so-called "traditional" Russian religions was passed in 1994. In order to efficiently counter a threat one needs to define what one is up against. Different actors started,

sometimes perceived and usually on and off, an unconscious process of defining "salafism" and "wahhabism". That was how various definitions of these terms emerged. Each actor looked on the issue from his or her angle and pursued their goals. A purpose could be a scientific interest, macro and micro security considerations, competition and protection of interests, or even work necessity.

Based on the practical part of the thesis it is eligible to state that we witness a case where the originally Islamic terminology was borrowed from Muslim people by different interests' groups, and was used in various circumstances carrying a palette of meanings. Surprisingly, none of the usages of the "wahhabism" and "salafism" terms that were found in Russian sources could explicitly and accurately define the group of Russian Muslims who call themselves Salafi, which representatives participated in the interviews. I consider the definition suggested in Shavit's article¹⁷¹ the most legible I found, because it includes Western academic and Muslim perspectives together. Avoiding to implement the meanings that Muslims (in my case Russian Muslims) are using inside their community, and borrowing originally Muslim terms for academic purposes could lead to serious consequences. As was shown in the third chapter, it could not only lead to confusion in scholarly discourse, but to influence fate of Muslim people in the area.

¹⁷¹ Shavit, "Converting to Salafīyya," 339.

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Appendix 1

Document 1, Garant Base.

Agapov P.V., Borisov S.V., Vagurin D.V., Korshunova O.N., Merkuriev V.V., Khlebushkin A.G. Organization of an extremist community: problems of qualification and proof: a manual (edited by Doctor of Law, Professor V.V. Merkuriev). - "Academy of the General Prosecutor's Office of the Russian Federation", 2013

1. General characteristics of crime associated with the organization of an extremist community (Art. 282.1 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation)

The literature suggests another typology of extremist associations. In particular, depending on the direction of their activities, extremist associations of a nationalist-racist, religious and political orientation are singled out. At the same time, the skinhead movement, as well as some other radical movements (for example, the "Movement Against Illegal Immigration"), are referred to as a nationalist-racist movement. The second group includes extremist associations cultivating religious fanaticism. The most dangerous trend belonging to this group is **Wahhabism**. The activities of organizations and movements that aim to change the constitutional order of Russia are classified as extremist currents of a political orientation. These are right-wing and left-wing radical associations, among which are regional divisions of the "Russian National Unity", the Vanguard of the Red Youth, as well as the now banned National Bolshevik Party

Document 2, Garant Base.

Sentence of the Supreme Court of the Karachaevo-Cherkesskaya Republic dated November 15, 2011.

Khubiev R. M. around January 2008, at his place of residence at the address: "address", "address", met "FULL NAME"⁴ armed with a machine gun "data classified" and learned from him that he was an adherent of an extremist-religious movement Islam "**Wahhabism**", embarked on the path of "jihad", that is, an armed struggle against the infidels and committed an encroachment on the

life of police officers on the territory of the "address" in connection with which, is wanted and needs help - harboring from law enforcement officers.

Document 3, Garant Base.

Edlin V.A. Commentary on Federal Law No. 114-FZ of July 25, 2002 "On Counteracting Extremist Activities". - Especially for the GARANT system, 2010

Article 1. Basic concepts

It should be noted that radical religious groups have contributed to inciting religious hatred. So, for example, the announcement of "jihad" to the world non-Muslim community, and to the Russian people in particular, by the Wahhabis has recently become very frequent. In general, the use of the term "jihad" is strongly associated with the holy slaughter against the infidels. At the same time, Islam understands "jihad" as a personal struggle with one's own passions, spiritual development and represents diligence in faith. Yes, Islam does not exclude physical impact, struggle, but it is a reflection of an attack, but not aggression, not the destruction of all infidels. At least, this is the position expressed by the researchers of Islam who profess this religion.

Document 4, Garant Base.

Commentary on the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation for employees of the prosecutor's office (responsible editor, Candidate of Legal Sciences V.V. Malinovsky; scientific editor, Prof. A.I. Chuchaev). - "CONTRACT", 2011

Article 35

An association of organized groups forms a criminal community when they operate under a single leadership, there are stable ties between them, joint planning and participation in the commission of one or more grave or especially grave crimes, joint performance of other actions related to the functioning of such an association. By proving the existence of relatively independent organized criminal groups that are part of a single organization, the formation of judicial practice on criminal communities began. Thus, the Stavropol Territorial Court recognized the religious paramilitary association of **Wahhabis** "Jammats" as a criminal community, based primarily on the fact that it

included autonomous stable criminal groups as structural units. As other signs, they indicated: the presence of the goal of committing grave and especially grave crimes, their commission, a large and stable composition of the association, a high degree of cohesion and organization of its members, a clear distribution of roles between them, the presence of pronounced leaders - "spiritual mentors" with a high authority, good and stable financing...

Document 5, Garant Base.

Letter of the Federal Penitentiary Service of September 27, 2011 N 7-18004-02 "Methodological recommendations on the procedure for the application by employees of the penitentiary system of the general principles of official conduct, approved by Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of August 12, 2002 N 885, in practice "

Application. Methodological recommendations on the procedure by employees of the penitentiary system of the general principles of official conduct in practice

II. Basic principles of official behavior of employees of the penal system

According to the preamble of the Federal Law of September 26, 1997 N 125-FZ "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations", such religions as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism are recognized as an integral part of the historical heritage of the peoples of Russia. This Federal Law (paragraph 6 of Article 3) prohibits under threat of punishment (in particular, in accordance with the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation) obstruction of the exercise of the right to freedom of religion, including those involving violence against a person, with deliberate insult to the feelings of citizens in connection with their attitude to religion and propaganda of religious superiority, as well as holding public events, posting texts and images that offend the religious feelings of citizens, near objects of religious veneration.

It should be borne in mind that a denomination or creed is understood as a feature of a creed within a certain religious doctrine, as well as an association of believers who adhere to this creed. Confessional division is inherent in any religion. So, for example, Christianity is divided into three main confessions - Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam - into such confessions as Sunnism, Shiism and **Wahhabism**.

Document 6, Garant Base.

Cassation ruling of the Prosecutor in administrative cases of the Fifth Cassation Court of General Jurisdiction dated December 22, 2021 in case No. 8a-9510/2021[88a-9525/2021]

In support of the requirements indicated that Abdulgamidov R.B. unreasonably put on a preventive record as an adherent of extremism, which he became aware of on February 4, 2020, when checking documents at the Chapurinkovsky post of the traffic police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the Volgograd region on the way from the city of Saratov, where the administrative plaintiff studied. Subsequently, on March 23, 2020, the detective of the CID of the MU of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia "Balashihinskoye" took away from Abdulgamidov R.B. explanations about the reasons for registering him, where he became aware that the preventive registration under the category "extremist" was carried out by the OP for the Kirovsky district of Russia in the city of Makhachkala on September 20, 2019. By personal appeal to the OP for the Kirovsky district of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia for g..Makhachkala detective department of the criminal investigation department Yakhyayev H.B. issued from the office computer and printed out on the printer information on preventive registration, explaining that the reason was the fact that upon arrival in Makhachkala, he often stopped at the address: "address" "address", where a citizen lives who has operational interest for law enforcement agencies and is suspected of having links with extremists. March 26, 2020. Abdulgamidov R.B. appealed to the prosecutor of the Kirovsky district of Makhachkala with a request to conduct an audit on this fact, to which on April 7, 2020, Abdulgaidov R.B. response N 168zh-2020 was sent about the lack of sufficient information and grounds for the above registration and about the prosecutor's submission to the head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia for the city of Makhachkala to eliminate violations of federal law and immediately deregister. During the inspection, the internal affairs bodies answered that the information about the registration on any preventive account in relation to Abdulgamidov R.B. do not have, information about registration with the Information Center of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for the Republic of Dagestan in the category of "religious extremist" (**Wahhabi**) gr. Abdulgamidova R.B. not confirmed.

Document 7, Garant Base.

THE REPUBLIC OF DAGESTAN

LAW, dated September 22, 1999 N 15

On the prohibition of **Wahhabi** and other extremist activities on the territory of the Republic of Dagestan

(as amended on February 6, 2018)

(as amended by the Laws of the Republic of Dagestan dated 12.05.2004 N 13, dated 09.03.2007 N 10, dated 06.02.2018 N 5)

Adopted by the People's Assembly

Republic of Dagestan

September 16, 1999

This Law is adopted in order to prevent **Wahhabi** and other extremist activities on the territory of the Republic of Dagestan.

Article 1. Recognize as contradicting the Constitution of the Republic of Dagestan, threatening the territorial integrity and security of the republic and prohibiting on the territory of the Republic of Dagestan: the creation and functioning of **Wahhabi** and other extremist organizations (associations), whose activities are aimed at forcibly changing the constitutional order, undermining the security of the state, violating public security and public order, creating armed groups, propaganda of war, inciting national, racial and religious hatred, infringement on the rights and freedoms of citizens, inducing citizens to refuse to fulfill their civil obligations established by law and to commit other unlawful acts; the activities of religious missions, their branches, religious educational organizations, charitable and other foundations, military sports and other camps, individual missionaries, individuals who preach extremist ideas;

(as amended by the Law of the Republic of Dagestan dated February 6, 2018 N 5) production, storage and distribution of printed publications, film, photo, audio, video products and other materials containing ideas of extremism and separatism, opposing people on a national or confessional basis, calls for a violent change in the constitutional order.

Article 2. Education of citizens in religious educational organizations outside the Republic of Dagestan and the Russian Federation is allowed only on the direction of the governing body of a centralized religious organization, agreed with the state body for religious affairs of the Republic of Dagestan.

(as amended by the Laws of the Republic of Dagestan dated 12.05.2004 N 13, dated 06.02.2018 N 5)

Article 3. Education in religious educational organizations is carried out according to curricula approved by the governing body of a centralized religious organization.

(as amended by the Law of the Republic of Dagestan dated February 6, 2018 N 5)

Persons teaching religious disciplines in religious educational organizations or privately must have a spiritual education and carry out their activities with the permission of the governing body of a centralized religious organization.

(as amended by the Law of the Republic of Dagestan dated February 6, 2018 N 5)

Article 4. All religious organizations operating on the territory of the Republic of Dagestan are subject to re-registration within 3 months from the date of entry into force of this Law.

Registration of local religious organizations is carried out in the manner prescribed by federal law, subject to the conclusion of the expert council of the centralized religious organization.

(as amended by the Laws of the Republic of Dagestan dated 12.05.2004 N 13, dated 06.02.2018 N 5)

Article 5. Persons guilty of violating the requirements of this Law shall be held liable in accordance with federal legislation.

(Article 5 as amended by the Law of the Republic of Dagestan dated March 9, 2007 N 10)

Articles 6 - 7. Repealed. - Law of the Republic of Dagestan dated March 9, 2007 N 10.

Article 8. This Law shall enter into force on the day of its official publication.

Chairman of the State Council

Republic of Dagestan

M.MAGOMEDOV

Makhachkala

September 22, 1999