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ПОСТСОВЕТСКОЕ ГОСУДАРСТВО И ИНСТИТУЦИОНАЛИЗАЦИЯ ИСЛАМА В КАБАРДИНО-БАЛКАРИИ

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Аннотация. С 1990-х годов на Северный Кавказ пережил различные конфликты между государством и религиозными акторами, иногда с устрашающими последствиями. Комплексный взгляд на эти вспышки конфликта часто ограничивается вниманием к возрождению и внутренней динамике ислама в постсоветский период. Между тем, изменения в российском государстве с 2000-х годов, которые носили характер рецентрализации, усиления государственной монополии на насилие и государственного контроля над организациями, можно также рассматривать как важный фактор, влияющий на легальное существование оппозиционных групп или организаций. Кейс Кабардино-Балкарии, традиционно стабильной республики Северного Кавказа, способствует пониманию того, как преобразование государства в России с конца 1990-х годов повлияло на развитие религиозного конфликта и институционализацию ислама на региональном уровне.

Ключевые слова: Северный Кавказ; Кабардино-Балкария; основное естественное государство; ислам; институционализация.

THE POST-SOVIET STATE AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF ISLAM IN KABARDIN-BALKARIA

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Abstract. Since the 1990s, the North Caucasus has experienced various conflicts between state and religious actors, sometimes with dreadful consequences. A comprehensive perspective on these outbursts of conflict is often constrained by the sole focus on the revival and internal dynamics of Islam in the post-Soviet period. The changes in the Russian state since the 2000s, which were in the nature of recentralization and strengthening of the state's monopoly over violence and the state's control over organizations, can be considered as an important factor influencing the legal existence of opposition groups or organizations. The case study of Kabardino-Balkaria, traditionally a stable republic of the North Caucasus, contributes to understandings of how the transformation of the state in Russia since the late 1990s influenced the development of religious conflict and the institutionalization of Islam.

Keywords: North Caucasus; Kabardino-Balkaria; basic natural state; Islam; institutionalization.

Map 1. The administrative division of the North Caucasus.

In recent decades, the North Caucasus has been consistently associated with violence, and ethnic and religious conflicts. The remarkable diversity of languages, cultures, and religions represents a grave challenge to the security concerns on this

area. Such diversity contributes to the risk of violence, and the societies of the North Caucasus encompass a fragmented institutional framework in which informal traditional institutions not only tend to run counter to the formal rules and norms, but also may contradict each other.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rapid revival of religion in public spaces, the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic (KBR) faced a conflict between two alternatives to Islamic development in the late 1990s to early 2000s. The Spiritual Administration of Muslims (*Dukhovnoe upravlenie musul'man*, *DUM*) adhered to a position of moderate Islam, mild desecularization, and keeping religion in the private sphere. Radical fundamental Muslims conceptually united around unregistered organizations and the united *Jamaat*. The leaders of the latter preached the need to spread pure Islam and Sharia law, and opposed ethnic Islam and a compromise between ethnic traditions and religious rites, set in previous decades. Sharp disputes arose over issues of religious education, funeral and wedding ceremonies, "correct" mosques, and the preservation of non-Islamic elements in culture. Structural and institutional changes had been taking place in the Russian state, parallel to the growth of religiously-oriented violence, which led to an increase in Moscow's control over processes in the Russian regions, especially in the conflict-ridden North Caucasus.

The issue of Islam in the North Caucasus is mainly tackled in connection with conflicts between the state and religious actors [Dannreuther 2010; Филатов 2007; Кисриев 2007; Шогенов 2011; Shterin, Yarlykapov 2011; Стародубровская, Казенин 2016], which, to one degree or another and at different times, have engulfed virtually all Muslim republics from Dagestan to Adygea. The dominance of the conflict-oriented approach is due to the ingrained academic tradition and the view of the Russian state as a guarantor of stability and development in the national republics. The question of the causes of the conflict in Kabardino-Balkaria, of why the line was cut in this republic, does not find an unambiguous answer. My research question is to examine the impact of the political institutions transformation since the late 1990s on the conflict in Kabardino-Balkaria between the Spiritual Administration of Muslims, supported by the state, and the Jamaat representing the interests of fundamental Muslims.

Here, I will first touch upon the problem of the state in post-Soviet Russia, which in the twenty-first century has regained assertive control over violent non-state actors and regional public organizations it had lost in the disorder of the 1990s. I will describe the development of the conflicts between the state and the official legal Muslim organization, the DUM KBR, on the one hand, and the Jamaat KBR, the organization that turned out to be beyond the limits of state control, on the other. This case study contributes to understandings of how the transformation of the state in Russia since the late 1990s influenced the development of religious conflict and the institutionalization of Islam in Kabardino-Balkaria.

Directions of Institutional Change in the Russian State Since the Late 1990s

The Russia of the 1990s could be said to have been in a state of decentralization, in which chaotic liberalization accompanied a weakening of the

social performance of the state and temporary loss of control by the Center over national politics. One of the decentralization effects was the growth of separation tendencies in the regions, especially in ethnic republics, with the growing mistrust of citizens toward the state and its institutions, and their preference to resort to "non-state" violence as the best way to protect their interests.

In the 2000s, the state reasserted its control over administrative and economic resources in the Russian regions and the involvement of sub-national elites in the ruling coalition. It was not only informal institutions that began to actively penetrate the structure of regional power. The central unfolding processes of structural political changes in Russia are associated with the formation of a system of vertical distribution of power, the so-called vertical of power. In a crisis of centrifugal tendencies, by the end of the 1990s the ruling coalition faced a drastic challenge to create mechanisms that could turn these trends in the opposite direction and bring together the interests of federal and regional elites. The immediate post-Soviet years demonstrated that formal institutions in the structure of power were less effective than informal rules and networks of trust.

At the end of the twentieth century, the process of re-centralization began, and the state gradually returned to fulfilling its functions, and to a more complete control over power resources, which is historically customary for the Russian state. In contrast to the 1990s, a period that began with active economic transformation, the 2000s marked the reorganization of the governmental system, which provided a fast and vigorous transformation and ideological consolidation that, in turn, increased federal control over regional resources.

To frame the analysis of institutions and their dynamics in post-Soviet Russia and the North Caucasus we refer to research of North et al. [North and oth. 2009]. All countries in the world are either open-access states or, and more often, limited-access states. The latter can be divided into fragile states (unable to support any organization except the state itself), basic states (able to support organizations but within the framework of the state), and mature states (able to support a wide range of organizations outside the immediate control of the state patron–client networks among the ruling class, based on personal relations emerging in the conditions of a fragile natural state, and aspiring to "structure the creation, gathering, and distribution of rents that can limit violence" [North and oth. 2009: 21].**)** This analysis implies that the transition to a more mature form of the state leads to a greater monopolization on violence on the part of the government, while rents provide economic incentives for elites to reduce violence, cooperate in the ruling coalition, and maintain social stability. Being limited-access orders, natural states are organized in such a way that access to rents is limited to non-elite actors and organizations.

The Soviet Union was an exception among basic natural states since it monopolized violence to the extent that is typical of mature natural states [Стародубровская, Соколов 2016: 21]. Russia returned to being a fragile state after the collapse of the Soviet Union. At the beginning of the 2000s, however, it retransformed into a basic state. This process was particularly difficult in the conflict-ridden regions of the North Caucasus, where the level of violence became greater than in the rest of the country.

Researchers attribute today's KBR and postwar Chechnya to the basic natural state. Concurrently, a number of features of a fragile natural state are still visible in Dagestan [Стародубровская, Казенин 2016: 67–8]. The "fragility" of the system can be an advantage as it reduces the risk of violence through bringing about more economic advantages. The level of business development, freedom of expression, and diverse social activity in Dagestan compared favorably with the more stable postwar Chechnya, until recently.

Regional and local elites consider government subsidies to be the main access to rents and are prone to organizational and financial dependence on the center, so the state has the opportunity to increase its influence at the local level. In Chechnya and Ingushetia, there was an almost complete renewal of regional elites in 1990s, while in Dagestan power was taken by representatives of new national movements and businesses. In Karachay-Cherkessia, entrepreneurs from the world of the shadow Soviet economy (*tsekhoviks*) came forward. But, in the KBR, late Soviet elites continue to dominate in the twenty-first century [Стародубровская, Казенин 2016: 22]. The mechanisms and forces that ensured the renewal of elites in the 1990s were largely dependent on regional changes and the struggle of local elites, but in the 2000s and 2010s, state strategies and decisions changed to be increasingly decisive.

The Roots of Religious Schism in the KBR

The dynamics of social order imply the consolidation of adapted changes among institutions rather than substitution of old institutions by new ones. A conflict offers a convenient presentation of the applicability of adaptive changes as criteria for accomplished institutional change. A single conflict can also contribute to the status quo in any institutional space, or to returning to the arena of those institutions that once lost their applicability. The confrontation between the Jamaat KBR and the DUM KBR reflects the opposition between the institutions of a newly resurgent Islam striving to its fundamental origins and that of traditional Islam that seeks to preserve its internal order.

In the North-West Caucasus, traditional Islam alone cannot provide an organizational alternative to fundamental Islam. Despite the fact that this role is sought by state-oriented Spiritual Administration's leaders as well as national intelligentsia calling for moderate religiosity and a return to the ideals of ethnic culture and ethical attitudes, the state and power structures are the main opponents of fundamentalists and, concurrently, investors in traditional Islam.

With the fall of the Soviet Union, new trends in Islam rapidly became popular against the background of traditional settings of beliefs such as Sunni Islam, for instance, and giving "plain and concrete answers to terrestrial problems" these trends gained success in the new "spiritual marketplace" [Pelkmans 2009: 2]. Although the republics of the North-West Caucasus did not remain aloof from the impressive and rapid growth of Muslim identity, their starting positions were less advantageous than in the east. In Chechnya, Dagestan, and Ingushetia, the pace and scale of Islamization was significantly greater, largely due to the more stable resistance of Sufi communities to the Soviet anti-religious policy, as well as geographical and other

factors. Yarlykapov [Ярлыкапов 2006] points out that in the North-West Caucasus (Adygea, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia), it is more appropriate to speak not about rebirth but about the re-establishment of Islam; that is, re-Islamization.

By the early 2000s, there were two parallel options for the future of Islam in the KBR. The first was to maintain the status quo; that is, to keep religious institutions closer to the private sphere and allow a combination of national traditions and Islam. Despite the various organizations and commissions in the sphere of state–confessional relations, it was the DUM system that was destined to play the key role of intermediary between the power system and Muslims of all types at the regional level. However, the official clergy could not, and still cannot, gain the trust of all communities in the short run. If too closely identified with the state, official Muslim figures always risked "losing religious authority in the eyes of some Muslims and being accused of working in the interest of the state rather than representing Muslim communities" [Braginskaia 2010: 51].

The priorities of the DUM are more likely connected not with gaining prestige in society, but with trustworthy relations with the authorities. The reliance of governmental authorities on legal religious institutions leads to the latter aiming to satisfy their own corporate interests, rather than to any protest against the political system and its ideological basis [Филатов 2007: 43]. This opens Spiritual Administration up, as non-profit organizations, to access to government grants and funds, as well as the support of private sponsors.

The second option for the future of Islam in the post-soviet KBR was fundamental Islam that looked more attractive to those who aspired to establish "pure" Islam. In parallel with the formation of the DUM system in the public life of the entire North Caucasus in the 1990s, radical religious movements were becoming increasingly powerful in public spaces, receiving various names in research, the media, and official state rhetoric (Wahhabists, Salafis, fundamentalists, etc.). Basically, ambiguous terms in religious discourse in the North Caucasus reflect the region's diversity, including the dissonance between the theological foundations of a particular religious movement and its practice in society. For some scholars the case of fundamental Islam requires a sensible and even meticulous approach to terminology, as the abandonment of a "theological" approach to understanding Wahhabism [Кисриев 2007: 107; Стародубровская, Казенин 2016: 5], or understanding the regional specifics of Islamic fundamentalism in North-West Caucasus [Ярлыкапов 2006].

In the case of the North-West Caucasus, the term "Young Muslims" is widely used, carrying both an age aspect and one of identity, opposed to "popular" Islam. An unexpected emergence of groups consisting predominantly of young people seeking to purify Islam from "superfluous" and imported traits was primarily caused by the return to the KBR of Muslims who studied at Arab universities. They often identified as "praying Muslims," setting themselves against Muslims who stay outside the mosque and the community most of the time.

An analysis of Islamic fundamentalism in the North Caucasus shows it can have radical and moderate facets and depend not only on the adopted configuration of values and priorities in various groups of communities. Berger considers religious

fundamentalism as a "hard-to-explain thing" but, in any case, "passionate religious movement" [Berger 1999: 2]. In some social conditions, fundamentalists can quite successfully and organically adapt to the surrounding reality while maintaining their specific identity, while in other cases they become irreconcilable opponents, choosing a path of armed confrontation against the state and political power [Стародубровская, Казенин 2016: 19].

The Young Muslims in the KBR have been able to substantially challenge the dominant perspective of Islam, but it continues to prevail today. However, the move to streamline relations between the center and the regions did not become a guarantor of stability; conversely, it provoked an escalation in violence. The KBR that relatively peacefully survived the 1990s faced the threat of religious split in the following decade, and armed radicals even attempted to seize power in Nalchik in 2005. According to Luckmann, institutionally specialized religion may become a dynamic social force, causing tensions "between religious experience and the requirements of everyday affairs. Specifically religious communities may emerge, claiming loyalties that place their followers in conflict with 'secular' institutions – or the members of other religious communities" [Luckmann 1967: 117]. But the dynamics of the competition or violent conflict between religious movements and organizations remains an unclear issue without understanding the influencing factors such as changes in political institutions.

The State Reacting the Conflict of Religious Organizations

During its formation between 1998 and 2005, the Kabardino-Balkarian Jamaat (the Jamaat KBR) became one of the republic's largest organizations. It came close to autonomous development and to influencing political discourse and the legal system without being controlled by the state-oriented DUM. The word *jamaat* has, since the early 1990s, been increasingly applied to a union of Muslims living in the same block (quarter) and attending the same mosque or prayer house [Бабич, Ярлыкапов 2003: 67].

With the spread of fundamental Islam, the jamaats became more associated with the Young Muslims. Being an unregistered association, the Jamaat had a rigid vertical structure; that remarkably resembled the internal structure of the DUM. The organizations bore similarities in having been impacted by the general concept of territorial administration and decision-making through the councils of religious leaders.

There were both external and internal factors related to the transformation and radicalization of the Jamaat and other similar regional and supra-regional organizations. External influence accounted for the spread of radical Salafist ideology that "prioritise[d] a Muslim over an ethnic or national identity, also provide[d] a connection with the global dynamics of radicalisation in Islamic thought and practice" [Dannreuther 2010: 122]. In this context, the Kabardino-Balkarian Jamaat was "a new religious group that turned violent as a result of a complex evolution," whereas some other organizations − such as Caucasian Emirate (since 2007) − were

initially “designed to implement their ideology through violent means” [Shterin, Yarlykapov 2011: 321].

The 1990s saw a spontaneous emergence of various religious groups and organizations that were not initially opposed to each other. So, it is quite easy to confuse the Islamic Institute at the DUM (since 1993) − from where the future head of the DUM, Pshihachev, graduated − with the Islamic Centre opened with the DUM’s approval in 1993 and headed by Mukozhev, proclaimed by the Young Muslims as an Amir of the Kabardino-Balkarian Jamaat in 1998.

The transition from a fragile limited-access order to a basic one in the early 2000s narrowed the possibilities for organizations to exist outside the immediate control of the state. The campaign to register religious associations − stretching for several years after the adoption of the federal law “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations” (1997) − was the first stage in legalizing those organizations that fell under the definition of “traditional” for Russia, and in dislodging those organizations that did not fit into the post-Soviet institutional framework. In official Russian doctrine, Russian Islamic communities are not formally restricted to represent themselves as a part of the Muslim world. But, throughout the 2000s, Muslim communities had decreasing opportunity to obtain funding from abroad and access to study in universities in Arab countries.

In the early stages of the Islamic revival, the DUM had neither the intention nor the resources to prevent the emergence of alternative structures. In the KBR there were not enough qualified and educated mullahs. Organizational and resource weakness in management consolidation of frameworks, and the simultaneous strengthening of opposition structures among Muslim communities, led the DUM to appeal for the support of secular authorities. Discrediting the Jamaat and its leaders, the official clergy regained the positions of status that had been lost in 1990-s [Шогенов 2011: 117]. Members of the Jamaat, in turn, opposed the official clergy and activities of the DUM in matters of Islam. Rather than being of a theological nature, the ripening conflict took the shape of a struggle for influence over Muslims, encompassing personal confrontations.

Control over the activities of oppositional communities proved difficult. In 2005, there were about 150 mosques that were influenced by the Jamaat and DUM supporters at the same time. As of January 2006, 110 Muslim religious organizations were registered in the republic, most of which had appeared since the beginning of the 2000s [Религии… 2008: 394, 448]. Concurrently, by the end of the Kabardino-Balkarian Jamaat’s existence in 2005 it united about 40 communities and, according to some data, extended its influence over several thousand people [Жуков 2008].

In April 2004, the DUM’s chairman, Pshikhachev, started the process of centralizing the organization he led. From then on, the DUM reserved the right to appoint, control, and dismiss imams in any mosque of the republic, thereby knocking the Jamaat out of the legal field on the ground. Increasing insurgency among the Young Muslims, coupled with violent clashes with law enforcement agencies, eventually resulted in the organized attack by the most radical segments on a number institutional targets in Nalchik on October 13th and 14th, 2005, making “underground” Islam an inevitable manifestation of protest.

The scale of this protest of the Young Muslims against the institutions of official Islam and tough counter-terrorist actions of the state demonstrated that the Jamaat had become a serious opposition force. It is noteworthy that in November 2004, about 1500 people pointedly celebrated Eid al-Fitr (the festival of breaking the fast) one day before the day set by the DUM [Религии… 2008: 150]. Strengthening the DUM's control over mosques and madrasas, supported by the participation of security services, compelled the leaders of the Jamaat to focus on their own network of mosques.

The existence and spread of the ideas of radical Islam was not just an imported trend, but a more complex process that developed in specific institutional framework. For example, nationality and language played a significant role in local networks of trust in a multi-ethnic society such as the KBR. This is due to the logic of Soviet national construction and ethnic mobilization that affected the division of interests of ethnic elites. But, in fundamentalist Islamic communities, the influence of the ethno-territorial factor can be traced, too. Jamaats cover mostly mono-national quarters outside urban areas; on a more complex organizational level, the principle of ethnic parity affects the distribution of positions in radical religious organizations (for example, the Caucasus Emirate and its regional offices), "although the local Islamists stand against dividing the areas by ethnicity" [Текушев 2015: 85].

Between 2000 and 2010, the threat of terror and murder became a daily concern within the discourse of Islam in the KBR marked with confrontation, not only between structures and organizations, but also between religious, ethnic, and civil identity models. Three resonant murders occurred in 2010: A. Astemirov, one of the leaders of the Jamaat; A. Pshihachev, the Chairman of the DUM; and A. Tsipinov, the supporter of the idea of ethnic identity's domination over religious identity.

In recent years there has been a marked decrease in the number of victims of religious conflict in the KBR (Figure 1). The official statement that tough counter-terrorist actions of the state, especially on the eve of the Sochi Olympics in 2014, yielded concrete results does not give a sufficiently complete explanation of this dynamic. Of importance is the wider discourse that reflects what Huntington [Huntington 1996] called an exhaustion of the primary participants of the conflict, and that is connected with the perception of actors – "performers" and "targets" – by "observers" [Beck 2015]. Essentially, informal cultural restrictions can penetrate deeper into issues of control over religious communities than formal policies enacted by the state [Finke, Harris 2012: 56]. In the KBR, radical Muslims's attacks targeted local police, long beards or the practice of shaving the mustache are examples of often negatively perceived scenes in urban and rural areas which dismiss the radical fundamentalism no less than the law against religious extremism. State institutions and official religious organizations do not enjoy high public confidence either. For example, the recognition of efforts to streamline funeral rites − DUM's response to the Young Muslim leaders' attempts to eliminate non-religious elements in religious practices − theoretically promised a significant reduction in tension, but neither side found sufficient support. The "observing" party − that is, the majority of the population − still prefers the old, financially and organizationally costly funeral

institution, and this is due to people's commitment to the status quo and preservation of the existing interweaving of national and religious institutions.

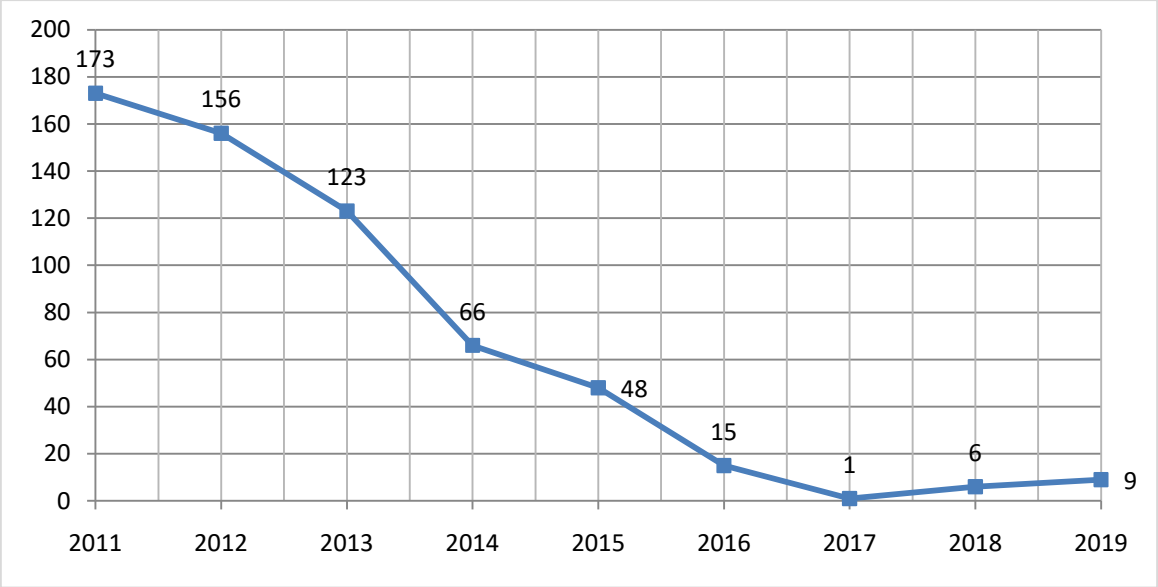

Figure 1. The number of victims of armed clashes in the KBR (Compiled from information on the website "Caucasian Knot"[1])

Conclusions

The modern Russian state positions itself as a social actor that not only wards off the danger of society turning into chaos but that also acts as a necessary external force for integration, even within individual republics, while taking into account the specificity and history of the North Caucasus. The essence of this external force lies in the institutional differences between sub-national state-building and national state-building.

Russian state's centralization in the early 2000s can be described, as a transition from a fragile order that cannot control the formation of organizations to a basic order [North and oth. 2009]. This process was marked by the fact that the vertical of power made inroads into every level of political establishment in the regions of Russia. The state sought to eliminate organizations located outside public discourse and formal constrains. The official Spiritual Administration of Muslims was not prepared to resist the new and dynamically developing alternative structures.

The conflict between the DUM and the Jamaat was an entirely new challenge for the official Islamic establishment, the solutions to which were beyond the extant

[1] В 2017 году число жертв конфликта на Северном Кавказе снизилось на 39% // Интернет-СМИ «Кавказский Узел»: сайт. URL: https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/317687/ (дата обращения: 23.09.2021); За 2018 год число жертв конфликта в Кабардино-Балкарии выросло на 500% // Интернет-СМИ «Кавказский Узел»: сайт. URL: https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/331639/ (дата обращения: 23.09.2021); В 2018 году число жертв конфликта на Северном Кавказе снизилось на 38% // Интернет-СМИ «Кавказский Узел»: сайт. URL: https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/snizhenie_chisla_zhertv_2018#n3_4 (дата обращения: 23.09.2021).

institutional framework. It was the state that emerged as the main deterrent against the evolution of Islamic fundamentalism. Despite the state's increasing interest in institutions of moderate traditional Islam and their integration potential, modern religious policy is aimed primarily at depriving Muslim fundamentalists of the ability to develop their public organizational network within the legal field. The power approach of the state played a role in the escalation of violence, but at the same time it facilitated the reduction in armed clashes that had accompanied religious violence since the early 2000s.

The institutionalization of Islam in the Russian regions is controversial, and moderate traditional Islam still retains a major influence on Muslim communities. An understanding of the dynamics of violence in the modern North Caucasus should take into account three coexisting types of identity − civil, religious, and ethnic − that manifest particularly noticeably in the course of regulatory competition. At the turn of the 21st century the deepening modernization and the state's re-centralization in the North Caucasus came across the growing Islamization of society, and also the tendency of "moderate traditionalization" associated with the preservation of the ethnic culture and language − an idea advocated by the post-Soviet ethnic intelligentsia. But after conflicts of identities the issue of a new, fourth identity capable of balancing the pluralism of multidirectional tendencies and being supported by the state's policies is growing increasingly relevant.

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