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The Role of Wahhabism in Profiling of Islam in Russia

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Abstract. This dissertation addresses the topic of how predominantly non-Muslim population of Russia manages to peacefully co-exist with its highly integrated Muslim minority in the aftermath of the war in Chechnya and in the international environment of the Global War on Terror. It attempts to answer the question of Wahhabism as a major role in profiling Islam in Russia through research into Russian discourse on Wahhabism that bounds dialogue between non-Muslim majority and Muslim minority in Russia. This research is conducted through a methodology that includes qualitative content analysis of discourses from five different approaches, the analysis of reports by Russian media containing speeches and declarations that mention Wahhabism have provided most important part of primary data for this research. The study is centred around Wahhabism as a sign within a wider context of Russian debate on freedom of conscience and its limits. It finds that securitization - a concept developed within the so-called Copenhagen school of international studies - is applicable to a study of Russian discourse on Wahhabism.

The study concludes that there are at least two narratives within Russian discourse on Wahhabism. Both narratives have the tendency to securitize Wahhabism, though in different ways. First, it is the narrative which tends to securitize Wahhabism as part of Islam. Participants to that narrative tend to treat Wahhabism as a proof that the conflict between predominantly non-Muslim majority and highly integrated Muslim minority in Russia is intensifying, with Wahhabism being at the spear point of the conflict. Second is the narrative which treats Wahhabism as another radical sect rather than a sect within Islam, the former narrative can be considered extreme while the latter mainstream. Participants to that mainstream narrative tend to treat Wahhabism as a proof of the threat that radical sects pose to people of all faiths, equally to non-Muslim majority in Russia and Russian Muslims themselves.

Keywords: Chechnya, Discourse, Extremism, Islam, Profiling, Securitization, Wahhabism

Хоел Иван Гонсалес Седилло

Роль ваххабизма в восприятии ислама в России

Аннотация. Эта диссертация посвящена тому, как преимущественно немусульманскому населению России удастся мирно сосуществовать с его высокоинтегрированным мусульманским меньшинством после войн в Чечне и в международной обстановке «Глобальной войны с террором». Диссертация пытается ответить на вопрос ваххабизма с его важной ролью в профилировании ислама в России посредством исследования российского дискурса по ваххабизму, который ограничивается диалогом между немусульманским большинством и мусульманским меньшинством в России. Это исследование проводится с использованием методологии, которая включает в себя качественный контент-анализ дискурсов пяти различных подходов и анализ отчетов российских СМИ, содержащих речи и декларации с упоминанием ваххабизма, которые предоставили наиболее важную часть первичных данных для этого исследования. Исследование

сосредоточено вокруг ваххабизма как знакового явления в более широком контексте российской дискуссии о свободе совести и ее ограничениях. Исследование считает, что секьюритизация - концепция, разработанная в так называемой Копенгагенской школе международных исследований - применима к изучению российского дискурса по ваххабизму.

В исследовании делается вывод о том, что в российском дискурсе по ваххабизму есть как минимум две точки зрения. Обе имеют тенденцию к секьюритизации ваххабизма, хотя и по-разному. Сторонники первой точки зрения стремятся секьюритизировать ваххабизм как часть ислама. Они склонны рассматривать ваххабизм как доказательство того, что конфликт между преимущественно немусульманским большинством и высокоинтегрированным мусульманским меньшинством в России усиливается, причем ваххабизм находится в центре конфликта. Вторая точка зрения рассматривает ваххабизм как еще одну радикальную секту, но эта секта не является частью ислама. Первый взгляд на ваххабизм можно считать экстремальным, в то время как второй является мейнстримом. Те, кто придерживаются этого «мейнстрима», склонны рассматривать ваххабизм как доказательство той угрозы, которую радикальные секты представляют и для немусульманского большинства в России и самим мусульманам России.

Ключевые слова: Ваххабизм, Возпрятия, Дискурс, Ислам, Секьюритизация, Чечня, Экстремизм

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INTRODUCTION

More frequent discussions are taking place in the Western European and American societies on what freedom of speech should protect and what should be censored by the State to avoid conflicts of dominant groups promoting supremacy over sexual, gender and ethnic minorities. This situation has particularly aggravated in the U.S. where liberal groups who enjoyed access to the decision-making circles of the White House from 2009 to 2017 managed to turn the roles to their favor and create the conditions for the conservative discourse that used to repress them, take their position as new dominated. This brought great advances on social inclusion of minorities and sectors of the population who used to be powerless, like women. Nevertheless, as it evolved, and was taken to the extreme by far-left groups that voiced for censoring all conservative discourse, a conservative countermovement of those who were tired of what they called "political correctness" started growing. As the so-called political correctness, this countermovement was not new, and neither an isolated phenomenon unique to the U.S., where one of its major drivers was the possibility to speak up publicly against propositions of the government, like immigration and multiculturalism. This took force in the summer of 2015 when thousands of people fleeing conflict zones in the Middle East and Africa made it to European shores in look for refugee status and worsened with the terrorist attacks in Paris in November that year. This conservative countermovement brought back old stereotypes on Middle Eastern people and Muslims through discourse, as the men responsible of the attacks shared these characteristics, and was well-received in the U.S. and Western Europe reviving the idea of a clash of civilizations between Christian based societies and Islam.

With a consolidated conservative administration in the U.S. that won the presidential election of 2016 using a discourse that its followers considered against the politically correct, and that did not pay too much attention in drawing a clear line between Wahhabi (referred also as extremist Islamists) groups that take part in international terrorism and Muslims, attacks against this segment of the population became more frequent. This situation was also seen in England, France and the Netherlands with key elections where conservative nationalist parties used a similar formula and target population. Though the political success of these conservative movements is rather questionable, these societies have to ask themselves what will be consequences of profiling all Muslims as dangerous and possible terrorists in the making through their

discourse. Here a theory of extremization through discourse that can try to explain this can be introduced, as when in a functional society that goes through a traumatizing event or series of events capable of creating the conditions for a discourse that blames a specific group (powerless), the threat of extremization emerges as members of the blamed group (powerless) are pushed out of society through discourse and enter the process of searching a new identity. They may find themselves attracted to extreme ideas they perceive can counterbalance the discourse that first expelled them as well as provide them with shelter. The process is not linear as individuals do not go from being functional members of the society to extremists in a straight line, they must go through a process that includes rejection and acceptance and can last their entire lives. They can choose to continue this search endlessly until they are either taken back by the society, decide to embrace extremism or live in exile from the society (we see this with diasporas).

In terrorism and counter-terrorism studies exist pull and push factors of radicalization accepted by the academia. Among them, the work of E. Bakker analyzed in this research, gives little attention to the role discourse may play in the extremization of individuals. Discourse more than just the means to make available an extremist message should be considered a factor as it can target emotions in the search of a reaction, and with more frequent terrorist attacks in Western Europe and the U.S. and more young men joining extremist groups, the urgency of this topic can be exposed by asking ourselves if we are creating extremists through our discourse. Extremization of individuals is not a phenomenon unique to the West but also one that Russia experiences. The importance of this research lies in two levels, the first one at the national level which can help understand what is Wahhabism and how it developed in the Russian context, its relationship with international terrorism and who is fighting against it. Among this, it can also help re-educate non-Muslim Russians on their accepted socially constructed perception that all Muslims are or can be extremist Islamists who pose a danger to the society, and with this eventually eliminate discrimination and prejudice. At the international level it helps understand both, the Muslim and non-Muslim Russian society through history but also why some legal instruments in Russia need to exist. This is crucial to ameliorate the perception the Russian government and its actions have in countries like Mexico, where some sectors of the population are extremely critical on decisions taken on the outlaw of religious organizations considered extremists like Jehovah Witnesses without appropriate knowledge of the ongoing fight against

extremism of all types in the country, the legal framework and its origin. This research can also give a better understanding on the composition of the Russian Federation for students and academics who may have been exposed to a more Western conception of Russia as the representative of an Orthodox Christian group of countries populated entirely by ethnic Russians, ignoring the Federal composition of the state and the existence of all other ethnic and religious groups, though it is predominantly cultural Orthodox Christian. A different approach to understanding why the participation of Russia in the conflicts in the Middle East is more welcomed than that of Western countries is given too, highlighting the struggle against international terrorism and extremist Islamist groups, like Syria and Russia fighting the Islamic State.

On the other hand, **the relevance** of this research lies in identifying the connection between discourse and profiling, focusing on Islam and Muslims in the Russian context due to the lack of material on this and the area of opportunity it represents. Identifying this relation should be of high importance for the Russian government to create a more complete strategy in the fight against international terrorism and extremism, as if we identify there is a connection between discourse on Wahhabism and profiling of Muslims as extremists, we could prevent extremization of individuals by moderating discourse. This analysis can also provide new information for researches from the West specializing in security studies and who could see in the Russian model, an example of the attempts to moderate extremist discourse, parting from the assumption that a moderate discourse on Islam and Muslims has prevented individuals from being pushed out the society and get extremized, this in combination with a military strategy, intelligence work and social regeneration.

Since the introduction of extremist Islamism or Wahhabism in the Northern Caucasus during the first Chechen war, it underwent a process of acceptance and rejection as knowledge on it increased. It was not possible to find references on what was the perception of Islam among non-Muslim Russians before 1992, though this period is out of the timeframe this analysis was conducted, we can make some assumptions based on the information that was gathered on the relation between Islam and the Soviet Union in chapter II that mentions a constant drawing of legal lines the Soviet government would change every once in a while, tightening or loosening control on Muslim communities. Muslims and non-Muslims have co-existed in what is part of the contemporary Russian

territory since the tenth century,¹ Muslim majority countries became part of the Soviet Union and currently, they are neighbors of the Federation and a source of migrant workers. Adding to this, the promotion of the friendship of the peoples' ideology where all nations were to unite under the international socialist, which included the Northern Caucasus and was open for other states in the Middle East and Central Asia. It would be interesting to know if the military conflict in Afghanistan against the mujahedeen was a starter or had any influence on the Soviet people's perception of Muslims as dangerous or the enemy, or were they not seen as Muslims but as rebels fighting an ally as in many other states in the world that chose the Soviet model over the American one. Anyhow, this conflict though lasting, was not geographically close to the core of the Soviet Union where more non-Muslim Russians who still identified as Soviet rather than Orthodox Christians lived, and so did not have the same capacity of shaping perception on Muslims like the situation in Chechnya did. It is worth to mention the other almost synchronized military conflicts in the decade of the 90's that Muslims in the Gulf War where a U.S. led coalition fought Iraq and the Yugoslav Wars where the Muslim factor was present with Bosniaks fighting Serbs and Croats.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, more exposure to external events, and the new search for an identity, non-Muslim Russians may have fallen for the discourse that depicted Muslims as problematic or the enemy, that later was brought to reality with the terrorist attacks in New York in 2001 and the next year in Moscow committed by followers of Wahhabism. This is where the hypothesis for this research emerges, stating that because of the previously mentioned traumatizing events carried out by Wahhabis, all Muslims could be profiled as extremists through discourse, understanding Wahhabism is an ideology that promotes extremist Islamism. The **aim** of this research is to identify if Wahhabism has had any role in profiling of Islam in the country, answering the **research question**: do different sectors of the Russian society consider Wahhabism and Islam are an equal concept that is related to international terrorism?, this will be done through a **methodology** that includes a qualitative content analysis of discourses on Wahhabism from five different approaches (political, academic, nationalist, Muslim and Orthodox Christian) that are considered relevant in shaping perception among the Russian people, trying to find if there are any correlations between

¹ Hunter, Shireen T. Islam in Russia. The Historical Background. Islam in Russia. The Politics of Identity and Security. The Center for Strategic and International Studies. M.E. Sharpe. Armonk, New York. P. 3

this extremist Islamist ideology and traditional Islam. Mass media was not considered for this research since it is not an actor capable of producing discourse by itself but rather the means to spread it. The **objectives** of this research are to give a historical review of the events that started in 1979 with the involvement of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and how it relates to the future events in the Northern Caucasus and these, to the terrorist activities committed by Wahhabis. Also, to demonstrate the existence of the current legal framework that delimitates freedom of speech obey the necessity to maintain co-existence with mutual respect in a complex multinational and multi-confessional state. And finally, to set the basis for future research on how discourse can be a driving force to extremization of individuals.

Structure of thesis. Since perception and profiling are both products of discourse, the first chapter of this research will be dedicated to explaining and understanding what this concept means. This analysis focuses on the those at the top of the social structure, if it is seen in a vertical spectrum where power and resources play the most important role in spreading a message. This analysis does not include the study of those on the bottom of the social structure as their capacity to create reality for others on specific topics through discourse is limited by their power and resources. Nevertheless, this research sets the basis for further analysis that focuses on the perception of the general population with no access to influence the masses through the discursive practice. Following the lines the liberal movement and the so-called political correctness delimit, the proposition of being careful with our words go far beyond being polite but involve the post-structuralist idea that claims our words create our reality. The term political correctness then becomes obsolete, as it can be considered a tool conservatives use to discredit a responsible discourse that seeks to create a non-hostile environment through the appropriate use of words. This approach will be analyzed in chapter I through a social constructivist theoretical approach to discourse, supporting the proposition that our reality is shaped not only by our words but also actions and omissions, and this becomes more relevant when those on the top of the social structure are the ones with more capabilities to shape our reality. The information gathered for this chapter was based on different literature found in search engines and books. The central part of this work focuses on discourse and the discursive practice, terms that are very frequent throughout the chapters, being loyal to the post-structuralist approach to discourse, everything we say and do as well as what omit can be considered discourse and this includes narrative and rhetoric. These two terms

though applicable, can be very limiting to understand and explain discourses given by actors as, their speeches and writings are not only about how they tell a story, the words they use or their public speaking skills (not all discourses analyzed are public speeches) but it rather involves moments, when the discourses were given as speeches or written as articles, to the time the events occurred and the intention they had to communicate a message.

Chapter II will cover a historical analysis of the events previously mentioned in a **time frame** starting from 1978 in Afghanistan to 2017 in contemporary Chechnya, the information was retrieved from literature found in elibrary.ru and some books on the history of Russia and Islam. The republic of Tatarstan with a considerable Muslim population and its own identity and language, also went through a separatist movement in the 90's with a referendum for sovereignty that 61.4% of the voters voted in favor² to secede from Russia. Nevertheless, since this case was not as dramatic as those in the republics of the Northern Caucasus in regard to the level of military operations carried out by the Russian army and the separatists, as well as Wahhabis from Tatarstan committing terrorist attacks of great magnitude outside of Tatarstan. There have been considerable attacks by Wahhabis in Tatarstan against muftis and leaders of traditional Islam³, and because of this, discourse analysis of Tatar religious leaders is included in chapter IV. Chapter III starts with the discourse analysis of the non-religious groups with access to spreading their discourse to the population through different means, politicians, academics and nationalist groups and individuals. In the case of politicians this includes **sources** as public speeches, interviews for news channels, online newspapers, parliamentary addresses in the State Duma and meetings with regional leaders. Academic discourse are limited to the **literature** analysis of articles retrieved from elibrary.com by Russian academics and nationalist discourse corresponds to the **literature** analyzed in one book by a non-fiction author and a **source** of the website of a group that promotes Rusizm. Finally, chapter IV analyses the religious discourse on Wahhabism, highlighting the importance for Russian Muslims to define Wahhabism and distance themselves from it, as well as the hard work invested in fighting this extremist Islamist ideology. Orthodox Christian discourse is also included in this chapter but due to the lack of information

² Edwards, Maxim, Gabidullin, I. Remembering referendums: Tatarstan and Crimea. 20 April 2014 // Aljazeera. URL: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/04/remembering-referendums-tatarst-201441791739224343.html> (date of retrieval 15.05.2017)

³ In a First, Muslim leaders attacked in Tatarstan. 15 May 2017 // The Moscow Times. URL: <http://themoscowtimes.com/news/in-a-first-muslim-leaders-attacked-in-tatarstan-16385> (date of retrieval 15.05.2017)

available, there are no major characteristics of this discourse that could be exalted. For both of these approaches, information was gathered from **literature** like articles, and **sources** like websites of religious organizations, and online newspapers. Additionally, official documents like the Russian constitution, laws and legal codes were used throughout the chapters.

CHAPTER 1. DISCOURSE AND ITS RELATION TO PROFILING

A social constructivist approach to discourse with a content analysis as methodology is used in this work, giving special attention to some authors, like Louise Phillips and Marianne Jorgensen who in their book “Discourse Analysis: Theory and Methods” provide a crucial approach to the understanding of discourse, as well as Teun Van Dijk for his extensive work on the field. After the events of the 1990’s in the Russian region of the Northern Caucasus, much information became available on Islam and Wahhabism, possibly drawing a thin line in the minds of the receptors who knew little or nothing about Islam creating a dangerous association of both. With the years, more knowledge available and a consolidated government strategy to fight international terrorism, today, those in charge of spreading official information try to make it clear that in Russia, the enemy is not Islam.

This chapter will be divided in two sections, the first one will be a theoretical approach covering the description of discourse and critical discourse analysis, as well as the implementation of it on speeches, declarations and interviews given by politicians, religious leaders and academics. The second part will be an analysis of the influence discourse has in Russian domestic and foreign policies through the study of some official documents that will demonstrate the authorities' position on targeting radicalism of all kinds. In this section, the concept of profiling will be described since, being part of the process of evaluating or identifying the “other” to identify ourselves⁴, is shaped by discourse and hence, critical to this research. Sufficient academic evidence of how discourse does have a weigh on the perception of the other and its profiling will be provided to demonstrate this relation. In domestic cases, this discourse transforms into actions that benefit or affect the communities and in regard to foreign policy, it can dictate how the Russian Federation conducts its bilateral or multilateral relations with other states.

1.1 Discourse and Power

There is an extensive multidisciplinary scholarship on discourse that has provided many definitions, among which is that of Van Dijk who describes discourse as “data that

⁴ McLeod, Saul. 2008. Social Identity Theory. Simply Psychology. URL: www.simplypsychology.org (date of retrieval 05.01.2017)

is liable for empiric analysis”⁵ which has the constructivist advantage of not limiting discourse to only text for example, but it includes everything else like pictures, speeches, advertisements and other forms of communication. Fairclough’s definition states that discourse is “...the whole process of social interaction of which a text is just a part”⁶ from which we see that he also includes text, and leaves room for other components. For Blommaert and Blucaen “discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned”, and “an opaque power object in modern societies”⁷, this definition fits the nature of discourse from a constructivist approach as it is the society that gives value to the elements and situations those with power will use to shape it depending on the perceived needs of their dominated. Here it is necessary to highlight the importance of discourse in the exercise of power of the State that may come in a variety of forms. The State will not have to regulate or outlaw something if it has created the necessary conditions through discourse that make the society accept or reject specific attitudes or behaviors within itself.

Habermas describes discourse as "a special kind of communication, a specific dialog which goal is an impartial analysis of reality, purified from the researcher's subjectivism"⁸. Tolpygina analyses the definition by Sheigan that states "discourse is a system of communication in the field of communication practices, examined in real and potential aspects", in which she describes the real dimension as the "actual speech activity" and the potential dimension is the “text resulting from it” that can be represented in a variety of symbols⁹. Tolpygina’s approach is important as she identifies how the speech activity can provide as many as possible interpretations and shape reality and recognizes communication as a crucial part of it.

Finally, Phillips and Jorgensen define discourse as “a special way of communication and understanding of the world around us (or any aspect of the world)”¹⁰, this definition is the most appropriate and complete for this work since it includes all the

⁵ Quoted in Horváth, Juraj. *Critical Discourse Analysis of Obama’s Political Discourse // International Conference of Language, Literature and Culture in a Changing Transatlantic* (2009): 45. Univerzitná knižnica Prešovskej university.

⁶ Ibid. p. 45

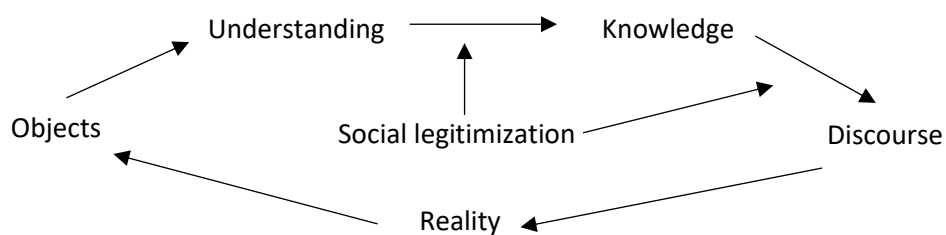
⁷ Blommaert, Jan, Chris Blucaen. *Critical Discourse Analysis // Annual Review of Anthropology. Annual Reviews. Vol. 29* (2000). P. 447. JSTORE. Web. 3. Jan. 2017.

⁸ Quoted in Tolpina, Olga. A. *Discourse and Discourse Analysis in Political Science // Political Science. 202. No 3. P 76* (Толпыгина, Ольга А. *Дискурс И Дискурс-Анализ В Политической Науке // Политическая наука. 2002. № 3. С. 76*)

⁹ Ibid. p. 78

¹⁰ Phillips, Louise, Jorgensen, Marianne. *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method. Trans. From English. 2nd edition. SAGE publications, 2002. P. 18.* (Филлс, Луиза, Марианна Йоргенсен. *Дискурс Анализ. Теория И Метод/ Пер. С англ. – 2э изд., испр. – С.: Изд – во”Гуманитарный Центр”,2008. С. 18*)

elements provided by other scholars, like communication, and introduces new ones like understanding. Things do not have a meaning until we give them a name, for us to understand our surroundings we have to understand the meaning of what is around us. Through understanding we can create knowledge, understanding that comes from discourse¹¹ and that through social interaction, proves what is correct and what is wrong¹² and from there, our knowledge evolves and helps create a new discourse, that contributes to shape a new reality around us. This is a circular process in which it is crucial to understand that the world around us is not static and it can be changed according to people's understanding and knowledge of it.



Phillips and Jorgensen's definition does not limit itself to name a specific type of communication as texts or pictures, but includes them all and recognizes them as part of the discursive practice. As seen in the figure above, in the circular process of shaping reality through discourse, social legitimization occurs twice, first when *understanding* is transformed into *knowledge* in which, historical and cultural factors affect the resulting knowledge. The second intervention occurs when the resulting *knowledge* is put under examination in social interaction when the society decides what is right and what is wrong¹³. There is a need of a second legitimization since, different societies can understand objects differently that, does not mean one is wrong and the other is right, their understanding is conditioned by their unique characteristics. On the other hand, to legitimize *knowledge*, it must be proven right or wrong through a careful methodology that can include empiric or scientific evidence.

All the definitions presented before have some aspects in common like analysis of data in form of text or speech, social interaction, the reality around that gives shape to it, and power that emanates from the social activity. When it comes to defining power, we find scholars who claim that this is a broad concept that will depend from what field

¹¹ Ibid. p. 24

¹² Ibid. p. 25

¹³ Ibid. p. 25

the researcher is using it and a variety of factors like the comparison we intend to make among actors in different situations that will help us understand power instead of defining it¹⁴. Dahl provides two relevant aspects for trying to define power: 1) it is a relation among people and 2) the means available to exercise power over the others¹⁵. In this approach, there is a relation between power and discourse as an object of power, since both discourse and power are a social phenomenon that results from interaction of people and at the same time, discourse can be a means of getting power.

1.1.1 Control and Access

Van Dijk identifies control as part of the exercise of power, meaning to either "limit the others' actions of influence their minds"¹⁶. From his approach, we can identify two types of exercising power: 1) elementary or what we can call outdated, that involves the use of direct repressive force or violence, and 2) modern that in his words, it "is mostly cognitive, and enacted by persuasion, dissimulation or manipulation...to change the mind of others in one's own interests"¹⁷. Karnaushenko's definition of power is more useful as defines it as "the right and opportunity of some to command, control and manage others, the skills and abilities of some to exercise their will in relation to the others, to have a decisive influence on their behaviour and activities, using their authority, law, violence and other means"¹⁸. In Karnaushenko's definition "other means" can signify cognitive means like those Van Dijk proposes. Hence, power is about control and influence those without it, using the means the powerholders have access to.

Access is an important element of discourse in the relation between power and dominance¹⁹. Those on the top of the society usually have access to more resources of all types, in the case of discourse, it is more accessible for them to get their message spread through media and legitimized by official institutions created by the system itself, which in the same time, is constructed by the dominated. In his analysis of power and dominance and the lack of access for the dominated, Van Dijk's proposition can be complemented with a more contemporary reality in which those who he refers to as "*ordinary people*"²⁰,

¹⁴ Dahl, R. The Concept of Power. Behavioral Science, 2:3 (1957: July) P.203

¹⁵ Ibid. P. 203

¹⁶ Van Dijk, T. Principles of critical Discourse analysis // Discourse & Society. University of Amsterdam. P. 254

¹⁷ Ibid. P. 254

¹⁸ Karnaushenko, Leonid V. "Political Power" and "State Power": to the Question of the Correlation of concepts and the semantic content of definitions // Philosophy of Law. 2008. No 1. P. 23. (Карнаушенко, Леонид В. «Политическая Власть» И «Государственная Власть»: К Вопросу О Соотносимости Понятий И Смысловом Наполнении Дефиниций // Философия права. 2008. № 1. С. 23)

¹⁹ Van Dijk. p. 255

²⁰ Ibid. p. 255

today have created and opened other resources to spread their message reaching out to the same or an even bigger audience the elites or establishment (the powerholders) do.

Additionally, *language* is an element of access because it is the basis of communication and in modern societies and the recently new available means to spread our discourse, like social media and internet platforms, the reach our message can have depends not only on the availability of our means in other regions but also on the possibility of our message to be transmitted or receive other discourse in a different language as well as the information we have access to. Not only language helps have access to a specific “market” but also to better understand the sentiments of the nation it is addressed to. The researcher can always translate a news release or the speech given by President Putin in certain conference but if the researcher has no knowledge of the conditions around it that helped create it, the information will be limited to articulated words in a speech. In this case, Russian language can be the “door” to understanding what Russians think or perceive of terrorism that took the authorities take a specific position and write the speech the President addressed to the nation. It can also help the researcher investigate what the people’s feelings and thoughts on that speech are, by talking directly to them, gathering information from social media or interviewing Russian experts.

We have started a new era of discursive struggle for power where what once were thought as official sources of information legitimized by the institutions through the lack of access for criticism by the dominated and their condition in the bottom of the power structure, today lose their constructed identity. Now, the voices of the dominated can be heard since the almost unlimited access they have got to influence or control other people’s minds, has given them power²¹. This represents an unprecedented win for those in the bottom, having the possibility to question the official discourse of those on the top of the power structure. This poses a danger too, since all types of discourses that once were relegated to one-on-one opinion sharing or small room meetings that include misinformed or radical and fanatical points of view resonate hand to hand with the official discourse, are faster to reach out to the audience and sometimes more attractive.

To understand the role of the dominated we have to understand they are only a part of the society. We can group society into three categories: 1) the dominated, 2) the outsiders and, 3) the opposition. The first are those who are under control of the

²¹ Ibid. p. 254

powerholders or dominant, willingly or unwillingly. Once the dominated realize they are under control and decide to stop listening to the discourse that first put them in that group, they become outsiders. The role of the outsiders should be to expose the dominants' intentions with the use of unbiased scientific data to counter balance their actions and the effects on the dominated without involving in the struggle for power. If the outsiders decide to take power from the dominant, they become the opposition and will try by all means to diminish the dominants' reach on the dominated and increase theirs to become the new dominant.

The new voices of the dominated or opposition, deconstructed reality and created a new one through discourse. Arguably, it is inaccurate to say the new dominant are equal in power to the elites or establishment that would have control of the dominated, this would be an unfair comparison as the new dominant may have power to influence an audience but not to make direct changes in the decision-making process. It is the dominated, who follow the new dominant's discourse, the ones capable of changing the decision-making process in their systems. The case of Maksim Martsinkevich better known as "Tesak", three times trialed under the article 282 UK. RF. for inciting ethnic hatred can help understand this. He is a quite popular figure in social media groups in Russia that promote neo-Nazism, racism, Islamophobia and homophobia. Though Martsinkevich was part of the People's National Party (NNP) that promotes "rusizm" and a political ultra-right policy for Russia²², his criminal actions were committed after he arguably left the organization in 2003. With different profiles under his name in social media, and many groups along the country that advertise his project "Occupy Pedophilia" and carry on the same violent activities, his followers account for over 200,000 in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Kiev²³. This case shows how the access we have today to spread our discourse can easily reach out to every corner of the country, defying and revealing against the official discourse of unity of the Russian Federation. This individual did not have access to change the decision-making in the country yet he opened himself other resources to gain power on others who still today and after more than two years of his current prison time, are influenced by his words²⁴. I consider today, the conditions for

²² New National Way (Новый Национальный Путь) URL: www.nnpr.su (date of retrieval 17.04.2017)

²³ Kiev was included for two reasons, the idea of "rusizm" is based on a Russian identity, with its historical origin in Kievan Rus so this might be accepted by Martsinkevich's followers and some members of the group he led in St. Petersburg and Moscow fled to Kiev after his imprisonment like his partner and second in charge, Ekaterina Zigunova to avoid State persecution.

²⁴ Martsinkevich published a book called Restrukt of nationalist content in which he tells about his time in prison, the reasons of it and the projects he started, Format 18 and Occupy Pedophilia.

these groups' actions to have an effect on policy makers do not exist but their discourse is already out there and ready to be heard in any moment the social and political conditions allow it to resurge. At the end, Martsinkevich took an aspect of his surrounding, homosexuality, interpreted it and created an alternative knowledge with his hypothesis of homosexuals are equal to pedophiles that used in his discourse and evolved into an accepted reality among his followers.

1.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

After defining discourse comes the necessity to evaluate how we can understand this process of communication, hence discourse analysis is the tool that we can use to achieve this. Discourse analysis refers to the study of how language is used in the discursive practice. In social sciences, where the struggle for power is determinant in social relations to control and influence the actions of the dominated, indoctrination in the shape of messages and images can be hidden in the discursive practice in a way they cannot be perceived by the dominated, keeping them in that condition. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can help breakdown the message, set it free for the audience and eventually change their situation as dominated²⁵. Van Dijk defines CDA as “a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context.”²⁶, definition that supports Horváth's pronouncement. Because of its “*critical*” nature, CDA can be considered as a useful tool, the opposition can take advantage of when is looking for a change in the status quo in certain society. CDA as a tool is incredibly powerful, that we see today how some governments in the so-called “*Free World*” that traditionally voiced for freedom of speech, are attempting to limit or control the access the dominated have, to spreading their critical voices. This has two reasons, 1) a response to an irresponsible use of CDA tools and 2) a genuine fear of losing control.

The first reason, can be explained through the analysis of how the dominated have got almost unlimited access to information from a variety of sources, often questionable, that for the uneducated can lead to suppositions with dangerous consequences for understanding and the creation of knowledge that, following the circular process of

²⁵ Horváth, P. 46

²⁶ Van Dijk, T. A. Critical Discourse Analysis // The Handbook of Discourse Analysis/ edited by Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen, and Heidi Hamilton. Blackwell Publishers. 2001 P. 352

shaping reality (subchapter 1.1), social legitimization in its second filter can mislead to the acceptance of a distorted discourse. We can deepen the concept of “irresponsible CDA” with the following example, country A, in which the current administration is in favor of a multinational identity that includes all ethnoreligious groups and the president’s official discourse show the benefits with facts and data. CDA is a tool that can be used not only by academics but also by journalists, think tanks, and professional and amateur analysts, but the last play a bigger role here so, case 1 appears. Those who oppose the presidential discourse favorable to multinationalism, will use CDA to decompose the official discourse and create alternative facts to spread their ideology, this is irresponsible CDA. The authorities in country A have two options to address this: a) to shut down the access the opposition has, to spreading their ideology through the use of force (see subchapter 1.1.1) and b) educate the society with critical thinking skills to identify real from alternative facts. Option “b” is interesting because, country A has a third option, c) to exercise its control on the entire society and convert them into “dominated” through cognitive means, like mentioned by Van Dijk²⁷ but this is too costly and could revert and turn that part of the society that are not dominated by country A, into part of the opposition when they find out. Hence, option “b” is the best for country A to keep a balance between the opposition, the dominated and the outsiders with critical thinking skills that could criticize country A’s actions but also, help fact check the opposition CDA, filter their message and weaken it before it reaches the dominated. In terms of time-effectiveness, option “a” is faster but can rebuke back and accuse country A of censorship, leaning the outsiders to the opposition. The second reason or the fear of losing control, has more to do with losing legitimacy as being questioned or criticized can make the constructed authorities wobble. For this, we have country B, where exercise of power has exceeded every aspect of the lives of the dominated, the outsiders and the opposition. The last two groups start to organize, together or separated, and spread their message through the accessible platforms in an attempt to reach out to the dominated. For country B to exist, the dominated have to keep this status and therefore, the outsiders’ and the opposition’s access to discourse has to be limited or controlled.

Going back to CDA as an analytical research method to highlight how rhetoric and syntax are key in creating the power relation between the powerholders and the dominated, as mentioned by Van Dijk in many of his works, we can see the example of

²⁷ Van Dijk. P. 254

Russian presidential discourse and Islam, considering the figure of the president as the perceived highest authority in the country, there are not elements in the syntax and rhetoric that entirely relate Islam to terrorism, but this will be analyzed deeply in chapter III. With this said, the dominated who accept the president's power, accept his discourse and are influenced by his words on this topic. On the other hand, we have the president of the United States who for this example, will be considered a counter part of the president of the Russian Federation because of the historical relation between the two States and his discourse on terrorism and Islam. The president of the United States has openly and continuously related both terrorism and Islam and accused all Muslims of being part of it either by committing these acts or not pronouncing themselves against them.²⁸ The dominated of the American president who attend his discourse are genuinely influenced by his words, rhetoric and ideology that their attitude towards Muslims is of confrontation and rejection. Here we have two different discourses, with their own characteristics that include context, history, culture and understanding and in the result, both create their own knowledge and reality on the same issue. This is an exciting comparative analysis of Russian and American discourse on terrorism and Islam that because it is not part of this research, will not be covered deeper.

1.2.1 Ideology and Propaganda

As discourse constructs and is constructed by reality, shaped by the conditions and context around, it helps those who have the power and access in certain society, spread their knowledge and understanding of reality to those who accept their domain. This knowledge and understanding, as shown in figure 1 (subchapter 1.1), depends on a variety of filters affected by conditions those who create and spread their discourse live in or experience. This could result in a special understanding and knowledge of reality around or ideology. Ideology can be defined as “the meaning in the service of power”²⁹ that, according to Althusser works in two ways: 1) repressive state organs (police, military) and 2) ideological state apparatus (mass media)³⁰. These two coincide with Van Dijk’s elementary and modern elements of control analyzed in subchapter 1.1.1. Stress will be made on the modern element that is equal to Althusser’s proposed way of ideological

²⁸ Hawkins, Derek. Trump’s talk — ‘Muslim ban,’ ‘Islam hates us’ — comes back to bite him in court again. 16.03.2016 // The Washington Post. URL: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2017/03/16/trumps-talk-muslim-ban-islam-hates-us-comes-back-to-bite-him-in-court-again/?tid=sm_fb&utm_term=.7fd0ac0219d3 (date of retrieval 16.05.2017)

²⁹ Phillips, L., Jorgensen, M. P. 131

³⁰ Ibid. p. 40

state apparatus. Both use cognitive means to control the dominated and even, drag some outsiders under the dominant's umbrella. But how can the dominant spread their ideology successfully using the power they have, to influence the thoughts or actions of their dominated? Rodero has provided an interesting analysis of propaganda used by Adolf Hitler in the 1930's that can help answer this question³¹. She defines propaganda as the "systematic and reiterated action, exercised by oral, written or iconic means, on public opinion, with a persuasive purpose, mainly through suggestion and similar psychological techniques to infuse any ideology/doctrine..."³². From this we understand that propaganda targets emotions through messages with little or no data at all, it is aimed at getting a rapid reaction with a simplistic message.

Rodero mentions that propaganda cannot work if the emotions it targets are nonexistent in the dominated, "propaganda is sustained in the emotional charge, it appeals to feelings creating a genuine emotional pressure" and, "Hitler did not get Germany to become an anti-Semite nation, because the seed was already, to certain degree, implanted"³³. Propaganda works better on the dominated because they are already willing to accept the discourse those they perceive as authorities, give. In this context, and for mere illustrative intentions, through an empirical qualitative analysis of anti-Muslim and anti-Islam sentiments in Russian social media and search engines, we can find numerous derogative pictures and messages that show the ethnocentric principle of "us vs. them", constant in supremacist discourses. Nevertheless, this exercise is not conclusive to say this is a feeling shared by a non-Muslim majority in Russia and therefore, will need further and more specialized research. On the other hand, this online discourse can be considered propaganda if analyzed through Rodero's definition, but since this anti-Islam propaganda does not match the position of the government or the perceived authorities by the dominated, it hardly finds a public space. Those who attend this propaganda, are on the opposite extreme of the government position that should one day the administration change, with a new president for example who supports nationalism, this discourse may be a good tool to exploit.

1.3 Influence of discourse in Russian domestic and foreign policies.

³¹ Rodero, Emma. Concept and techniques of propaganda and its application to Nazism // Acts of the III International Congress on Culture and Mass Media. Pontificia University Publications. Salamanca, 2000. P. 3 (Concepto y técnicas de la propaganda y su aplicación al nazismo. Actas del III Congreso Internacional Cultura y Medios de Comunicación, Publicaciones Universidad Pontificia. Salamanca, 2000. P. 3.)

³² Ibid. p. 3

³³ Ibid. p. 5

To sum up the previous subchapters, discourse can be defined as the way we conceive our surrounding and consciously or unconsciously transmit to others, it is constructed and not static, it involves elements like control and access in the search for power with the use of cognitive means like propaganda to spread an ideology or message. Every person, nation and State have their own interests, reflected in the discourse practice. Sometimes they are easy to spot in the political discourse when the President uses phrases like “it is the best for our nation”, “the people of (x nation) have decided”, or even clearer “it is in the interest of our nation”. Sometimes these interests are more carefully hidden by the political actors involved, in an attempt to avoid direct and open confrontation, like NATO joint military exercises in Poland, from where we understand that for Poland’s interests, it is crucial to count on NATO military and show its readiness and willingness to respond to a perceived Russian aggression. Another example of this is Hungary’s Prime Minister Viktor Orban discourse on refugees, Islam and European Christian roots³⁴. In his discourse on refugees coming from the Middle East to the European Union after the Syrian Civil War of 2012, he often includes historic references to Hungary’s role in the contention of the Ottoman advance into the heart of the then, Christian European kingdoms. His discourse is also plagued with ethnocentric elements that reflect his position of “us vs them” evidencing his interest in influencing Hungarians and possibly other people of the European Union who identify as Christians, by going straight to the emotions with a message like *Christians stopped the Muslim invaders before, Christians must stop them again*. The reasons behind Orban’s discourse could be many, and we must consider his interests not only as protecting Hungary from “Muslim invaders” but also, political interests like positioning his party in elections or getting a new political seat in the future. With these two examples, we see how interests draw the line our discourse will follow, whether they are evident or hidden in it. But how is the interest – discourse relation expressed in the Russian government context? And can a critical discourse analysis reveal the position of the Russian authorities towards Islam and their interests in creating or maintaining relations with the authorities of Muslim majority countries?

1.3.1 The role of discourse in the national context of the Russian Federation

³⁴ Noack, Rick. Muslim threaten Europe’s Christian identity, Hungary’s leader says. September 3, 2015 // The Washington Post. URL: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/09/03/muslims-threaten-europes-christian-identity-hungarys-leader-says/?utm_term=.9e0d43a31edd (date of retrieval 11.05.2017)

The Russian Federation like any other State, has very specific interest at all levels, highlighting guaranteeing national security as one of the top priorities. President Putin has expressed the government's will to cooperate in the fight against international terrorism but this should not be seen only as a gesture of kindness to the West, affected more and more by this phenomenon but rather as part of a wider strategy of national security. If we understand the historical and geopolitical conditions of the Federation, specially paying attention to the 90's and the conflicts in Chechnya, we will find that international terrorism represents a real threat for national security as foreign fighters from countries like Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia joined and provided economic resources to the Chechen separatist movement.

It is also possible to identify the interest – discourse relation of Russia on Islam and the Muslim population if we look at the Constitution of the Russian Federation of 1993. Though it is not explicit, article 3 is clear to show that for the Russian authorities, all ethnoreligious groups, including Muslims, are an important part of the nation: “the bearer of sovereignty and the only source of power in the Russian Federation is its multinational people”³⁵ this is also evidenced in article 29 paragraph 2, “...It is forbidden the propaganda of social, racial, national, religious and language supremacy”³⁶. With the two previous examples, we see how the multinational and multi-confessional nature of Russia is acknowledge by the federal authorities. But there is no clearer example of the commitment of the federal government to fight ethnoreligious hatred than article 282 UK:

Actions aimed at the incitement of hatred or enmity, as well as the humiliation of a person or group of persons on grounds of sex, race, nationality, language, origin, attitude towards religion, and likewise affiliation to any social group, committed publicly or with the use of mass media or information and telecommunication networks, including the network "Internet", -shall be punished by a fine of three hundred thousand to five hundred thousand rubles or the salary or other income for a period of two to three years, or community service for a period of one year to four years, with disqualification to hold certain positions or engage in certain activities up to three years, or imprisonment for a term of two to five years.³⁷

³⁵ Article 3, Constitution of the Russian Federation

³⁶ Article 29, paragraph 3. Constitution of the Russian Federation.

³⁷ Article 282 UK RF, Criminal Code, N. 63-F3. (ст 282 УК РФ, Уголовный кодекс, N 63-ФЗ)

The position of the authorities on the multi-confessional and multinational composition of the State is evidenced as a top interest and priority, we can merge both concepts into one, culture, as it includes religious and national aspects. The protection and growth of culture as well as the traditional Russian spiritual and moral values are part of the Strategy of National Security of the Russian Federation of 2015³⁸. The general provision no. 79 of the Strategy of National Security states the following:

The threats to national security in the field of culture, is the blurring of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values and the weakening of the unity of the multinational people of the Russian Federation by foreign cultural and informational expansion (including the spread of low quality products of popular culture), propaganda of permissiveness, violence, racial, national and religious intolerance...³⁹

This general provision proves one more time that, a key component of the Russian Federation is its multinational and multi-confessional people, after all, the country is not only made up of ethnic Russians or Orthodox Christians, though they are a majority in general, the Constitution protects all groups and recognizes their rights to the practice of their traditions and the Strategy for National Security even promotes the spread of other groups traditions, who are part of the Russian Federation. Analyzing these two official documents is crucial for understanding the role discourse has in the national affairs and that from here, other type of discourse is created based on the interests framed. Because of this, it is extremely difficult to find public discourse by politicians, academics or religious leaders promoting or expressing disdain against Islam or its followers. This does not mean this type of discourse does not exist, it just is not given access to the higher channels of spread of information, but this will be analyzed in chapter III.

To sum up and answer the question of how is the interest – discourse relation expressed in the Russian government context, it would be accurate to say through the official documents like the Constitution of the Russian Federation, as well as the constitutions of other subjects of the Federation and other documents like the Strategy of National Security of 2015, analyzed here for its relevance in stating the interests of the

³⁸ National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation. Approved by Presidential Decree RF of December 31, 2015. G. No. 683. (Стратегия национальной безопасности Российской Федерации. Утверждено Постановлением Президента Российской Федерации от 31 декабря 2015 G. No 683)

³⁹ General position 79. National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation. (Стратегия национальной безопасности Российской Федерации. Общие положения 79)

government. Other laws are also important as they are all the result of discourse and the understanding the people of the Russian Federation have of their surroundings and agree with, as they commit to follow these laws. But discourse is not only limited to the written laws and the government can use other means to spread its interest of maintaining the social stability of multinationalism and multi-confessionalism like the media and use of soft-power.

1.3.2 The role of discourse on Islam in the international context of the Russian Federation 2001 - 2017

Foreign policy is a reflex of national policy and as such, the discourse that is followed by Russia abroad should be a mirror of the one at home. With a population of over 16,000,000 Muslims⁴⁰, Russia is the European state with the largest followers of Islam and home to one of the largest Mosques⁴¹ in the continent. In comparison to other European states, Russia has an older relation with Islam due to political and geographical factors that have contributed to the integration of Muslims into the Russian society⁴². Though, discourse against this integration does exist, it is not part of the authorities' position and has limited access to the masses, part of this can be thanks to the measures the State takes like article 282 UK to fight hate speech and intolerance. 16,000,000 Muslims may seem like a huge number capable of influencing decision-making on Russian foreign policy in the Middle East for example, where there are other Muslim majority countries with even smaller numbers than that of Russia. Nevertheless, the reaction of this sector of the population is probably considered when taking decisions, especially military. After the NATO and US – led coalition “Operation Iraqi Freedom” incursion in Iraq in 2003⁴³, we witnessed how homegrown terrorism increased and even caused fatalities in England and Spain⁴⁴, as a response to the discourse (acts) of these governments and that of radical Islamic leaders (speech) that promoted jihadism, in and outside Europe.

⁴⁰ Semioshina, Viktoria. Why some Russian women embraced Islam? 26 January 2015 // RBTH. URL: http://rbth.com/politics_and_society/society/2016/01/26/why-some-russian-women-embraced-islam_562247 (date of retrieval 02.02.2017)

⁴¹ The Mosque in Morden, London has a similar capacity of 10,000 worshippers like the Moscow Cathedral Mosque

⁴² Hunter, Shireen T. P. 3

⁴³ NATO and the 2003 campaign against Iraq (Archived). Last updated 1 September 2015. NATO. Nato.int URL: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_51977.htm (date of retrieval 16.05.2017)

⁴⁴ Spain and the United Kingdom were part of the Multi-National Force - Iraq led by the United States in 2003. The train bombings in 2004 in Madrid were linked to an Islamist Moroccan group and the underground explosions in London in 2005 to terrorist cells supporters of jihadi terrorism.

Russia is also a major key player in the fight against international terrorism, and even cooperated with governments like that of the United States in situations like 9/11⁴⁵ and more recently the Boston marathon bombings⁴⁶. With more than 5 years of the Syrian Civil War, and the announcement of the Russian military operations in support of President Assad in late 2015, the Russian government sent a clearer message of joining the fight against international terrorism more actively. This decision could have also come as the means to prevent the activities of the so called Islamic State spread in the Northern Caucasus where still a few members of the group “Caucasus Emirate” operate. It is critical to remember that the Russian government has already fought and suffered the consequences of international terrorism in the decade of 1990 when Wahhabi followers and jihadi militias poured into Chechnya from regions like Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia to combat what they perceived as the “Russian enemy” and protect other Muslims. This is the reason why Russia has to demonstrate a tough position against jihadism, violent Islamic extremism and international terrorism but at the same time, keep a clear line between these problems and the Muslim population that follows their religious principles and values and agrees to comply with the laws, as any other confessional or ethnic group in the country, even cooperating in fighting non-traditional interpretations of Islam, like Wahhabism, in the Northern Caucasus and other parts of the country.

Wahhabism is the interpretation of Islam officially encouraged in Saudi Arabia and as will be analyzed in the following chapter, it keeps very close ties with the Saudi leaders. The modern Russian – Saudi relations extend to a variety of fields like economic and academic, and dates to the 1990’s⁴⁷ and today includes negotiations on oil prices, weapons and a resolution to the conflict in Syria. This bilateral relation is too extensive to be described in this research hence, attention will be given to the discussion on the ideological principles supported by Saudi authorities that put this country at odds with Russia. With public beheadings and lashes as punishment for infringement of the law, Sharia courts in Saudi Arabia are a reminder of a distant reality in Chechnya when Wahhabi militias managed to establish similar courts. Some analysts have gone as far as

⁴⁵ Dougherty, Jill. 9/11 a 'turning point' for Putin. 10 Sep. 2002 // CNN. URL: <http://www.edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/europe/09/10/ar911.russia.putin/index.html> (date of retrieval 03.02.2017)

⁴⁶ Putin Offers Help with Boston Bombings Investigation. 16 April 2013 // Sputniknews. URL: <https://sputniknews.com/russia/20130416180665766-Putin-Offers-Help-With-Boston-Bombings-Investigation/> (date of retrieval 03.02.2017)

⁴⁷ Madzhid, At-Turki. The Islamic Factor in the Saudi – Russian Relations // Scientific – analytic journal Observer. 2007. No. 4 P. 98 (Маджид Ат-Турки. Исламский Фактор В Саудовско-Российских Отношениях. Научно-аналитический журнал Обозреватель. 2007. № 4. С. 98)

comparing Saudi Arabia with the so called Islamic State for their literal interpretation of the Qur'an and hence, an extreme view of the religion. The Russian discourse towards the so called Islamic State is strong and blunt, leaving aside the geopolitical reasons it is the ideological values that are dangerous for the stability of the Northern Caucasus. These ideological values are similar to those of Saudi Arabia, and the Russian discourse here should be seen as more moderate as there are more variables at play like oil and gas prices, weapons and cultural, having Russian Muslims going to the annual pilgrimage in Mecca. Last, the heads of government of the Republics in the Northern Caucasus play their part in fighting a discourse that promotes a violent radical Islamic ideology, this will be analyzed in chapter IV. This subchapter analyzed how Russian discourse on Islam in the international context is affected by inner situations regarding the Muslim population and has been constant over the last sixteen years fighting international terrorism abroad, that includes jihadism, and at home with defensive and preventing measures.

1.4 Profiling

After analyzing the role of discourse in shaping our reality, the link between discourse and profiling should be clear. As explored in this chapter, our understanding of the surroundings becomes words that eventually will be part of a discourse we accept or reject. Our surroundings include an array of elements, among them, people. The way we perceive or understand people, is key in the way we interact with them. This understanding is also affected by the type of discourse other members of the group we identify with have of those who are not part of our group. To define profiling, first it is necessary to refer to the social identity theory and the mental processes that help create the "us" vs "them" system.

Henry Tajfel's social identity theory main proposition is about "a person's sense of who they are based on their group membership(s)"⁴⁸ and there are three elements in the process of evaluating others that makes easier for us to relate to them and understand what we should expect from them. These elements are: social categorization, identification and comparison⁴⁹. Social categorization occurs when we categorize people as we do with objects, for example nationalities or religions like Russian, Chechen, Dagestani, Christian, Muslim. This process is not only imposed on others but we impose it on ourselves too, if subject A identifies as Russian, then he or she will act as such,

⁴⁸ McLeod, 2008.

⁴⁹ McLeod, 2008.

adopting what is considered Russian traditions, customs, expressions and will look to be around other Russians. The previous is part of the second process or identification. These processes reinforce the idea of identity by Laklo and Muff who propose people acquire *treatment* through discourse depending on their subjective position⁵⁰. They also describe how the subject can be fragmented into different positions⁵¹, say subject A does not only identifies as Russian woman, but also as a mother when she is at home with her family and as a colleague at work. The last stage of comparison occurs when we have categorized people and given specific qualities that we consider better describe them for the group we have put them into, we compare our group to the others'. This process has advantages and disadvantages, if we voluntarily put ourselves into one group for the things we share and the identity we believe we have, this will contribute to the formation of groups that preserve their own language or traditions, for example, immigrant diasporas in Russia. On the other hand, if we are put into a group by the discourse of others because of the things we do not share and in the process of identification, these differences are enlarged by those who put us in it (the dominant), creating stereotypes that can be harmful for the relation between both groups as these could serve in the discourse of the dominant to increase its self-esteem by pointing out these differences as negative.

Profiling can be described as “a technique whereby a set of characteristics of a particular class of person is inferred from past experience, and data-holdings are then searched for individuals with a close fit to that set of characteristics”⁵² This technique can be equal to the mental process of evaluating others mentioned before, nevertheless, this technique should be considered outdated if we see it from a constructivist discourse and deconstruct the accepted reality based on stereotyping that can be wrong. An example could help better illustrate this, after the years that followed the second war between Russia and Chechnya, some violent acts were committed in Russian cities by supporters of jihad and a separate Islamic government in Grozny. In that time, it could have seemed logic for the authorities to profile all of those who fit the known physical characteristics of jihadists, like garments or facial hair. Nevertheless, we can refer to the events in Volgograd in 2013 where ethnic Russians took part in planning or committing terrorist acts⁵³, who did not fit the accepted profile of jihadists. This might not be a representative

⁵⁰ Phillips, L., Jorgensen, M. P. 80

⁵¹ Ibid. P. 81

⁵² Quoted in V. Ferraris, F. Bosco, et al. Defining Profiling. Protecting citizens' rights fighting illicit profiling.

⁵³ Foxall, Andrew. Russia's Homegrown Terror Threat. January 21, 2014 // The National Interest. URL: <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/russias-homegrown-terror-threat-9734>> (date of retrieval 17.02.2017)

number but it does show that the strategy of profiling individuals based on their physical appearance does not always match with the constructed ideas of how a jihadist should look and is even dangerous since the authorities might be failing to identify actual jihadists who manage to mingle within the authorities' group.

Chapter II will provide a historical approach to the relation between followers of Islam and Russians 1978 to 2017 with special attention to the conflicts that erupted between both sides. The wars between Russia and Chechnya in the 90's and the continuous fighting against separatists once the legitimate government was established, could have contributed to construction of a perception that *all* Chechens and therefore, Muslims or other nationalities from the Northern Caucasus are to be feared, since some of those separatist groups promoted their acts waving jihad and in their own interpretation of Islam or Wahhabism. This and other perceptions are constructed through discourse, intentionally or unintentionally, in this case separatist Wahhabi followers who promoted jihad and international terrorism against the Russian government and then the legitimate Chechen government, could be responsible for this perception. The result of this, could be the profiling of Islam and its followers in Russia, based on the information that was passed on the dominated through discourse in the time of the armed conflict, the aftermath and more recent days.

Unfortunately, international terrorism has increased in the European Union, the Middle East and the United States since the outbreak of the armed conflict in Syria and the proclamation of the so-called Islamic State, whose followers adhere to a similar discourse remnants of separatist militias in the Northern Caucasus do. This contributes to the reinforcement of profiling and a negative perception of all followers of Islam in non-Muslim regions, even having some authorities endorsing a speech of intolerance based on fear and wrong information. There is not sufficient academic evidence to prove that profiling individuals leads to extremization but this approach should be explored deeper and how it can undermine trust between different groups especially when the profiler and the profiled always belong to opposite ends that are or have been in conflict.

CHAPTER 2. HISTORY OF WAHHABISM IN RUSSIA

The collapse of the Soviet Union in the late XX c. left not only the problem of finding a new economic model for the republics that constituted it but an array of others like building a new political project and its legitimization as well as constructing a new national identity that was previously transformed by the Soviet one. It was in this process of finding a new identity that some nations clashed with what elements were to be considered as being Chechen, Estonian, Russian, Tatar, etc., that conflicts have their roots. This part of my research will cover a historical approach to the proposed issue that starts in 1978 with the armed conflict between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan and goes up to 2017 that explores the current conditions in the Northern Caucasus. The aim of this analysis is to provide a wide understanding of how Wahhabism made its way into Russia.

The Soviet government repressed religion and other components of national identity in an attempt to put into practice the project of the friendship of all the peoples and national unity. Same affected the notion of nationality as pointed out by Oommen⁵⁴ “the struggle of dominated nations against imperialism was recognized and given respectability, and the possibility of “nationalities” coexisting in the same state during the transitional period was conceded”. As the other former nations of the Union, the people of Chechnya looked for a new identity that kept their traditions and fill the blank space the Soviet ideology had left looking to religion as a factor of national identity⁵⁵. It is important to mention that even when part of it, the people of Chechnya did not completely identify themselves with a system that felt imposed and whose leader forced their people out of their historic land in 1944⁵⁶. This could have created a resentment against the system that not only targeted them but many other groups and nations, hence it is understandable the euphoria born from the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

To have a more accurate understanding of the reasons and means Wahhabism made its way into Chechnya, in this chapter the history of Wahhabism and its relation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia where it has the status of official religion and is enforced by the authorities will be explored. An analysis of the armed conflicts in Afghanistan

⁵⁴ Oommen. T.K. State, nation and ethnics: the processual linkages. “Race”, ethnicity and Nation. International perspectives on social conflict. UCL Press. 1994 P. 28

⁵⁵ Акаев, В. КН., Тесаева, КН. S. Stages of Development of the Religious – Political Conflict between Traditional Islam and Wahhabism (On the Example of the Northern Caucasus). // Journal Academy of science of the Chechen Republic. 2008. No. 1. P. 186 (Акаев В.Х., Тесаева Х.С. Этапы Развития Религиозно-Политического Конфликта Между Традиционным Исламом И Ваххабизмом (На Примере Северного Кавказа). Вестник Академии наук Чеченской Республики. 2008. № 1. С. 186)

⁵⁶ Chesnov, Yan V. The Chechen People // Ethnopolitical Review of the People. Moscow. 1994. P. 5.

during the Cold War period will follow to address the final part of this chapter with the introduction of Wahhabism in the northern Caucasus and the two wars against the Russian government, covering a period starting in 1978 through 2017 divided in two sections marked and separated by the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991. In the final section the introduction of Wahhabism, its effects and results in a period of 26 years will be explored.

2.1 Understanding Wahhabism

Wahhabism is a reformist and fundamentalist form of Islam that was born in Nedj in the XVIII c. from the Hanbali school of thought and whose founder Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab played an important role in its promotion and spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula by joining Muhammad bin Saud who would later start the ruling dynasty of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia⁵⁷. Both conquered the tribes of the peninsula and unified them under their stricter interpretation of Islam. Wahhabism is sometimes seen as the revolution of the Hanbali school from the IX c. as an attempt to purify it and is characterized by a literal interpretation of the Quran from which it could be possible to understand some of its followers' romanticized concept of jihad. There are different definitions of jihad among which we can find the one by Mark (2003) as the "effort of struggle each Muslim faces in the everyday trials of life, such as the effort to get better grades in school, or the striving to achieve better results from a job, or the struggle to avoid sinful temptations", he continues claiming that it "also can be applied to warfare; participating in jihad in Allah's cause was the third most important good deed listed in the Hadith..."⁵⁸. Bakker (2006) describes two types of jihad, the greater which "involves the effort of each Muslim to become a better human being, to struggle to improve him- or herself, as a result, to be a good Muslim". The second or lesser jihad "sanctions the use of violence against an unjust ruler, whether Muslim or not, and can become the means to mobilize that political and social struggle." Nurutdinov (2016) states that "in Islamic law, the principle that, jihad can only be declared by a legitimate ruler of the country"⁵⁹. For this study, Bakker's definition of jihad will be used to define jihadist as those who take a

⁵⁷ Blanchard, Christopher M. The Islamic Traditions of Wahhabism and Salafiyya // CRS Report Congress RS21695. 2008. P. 2

⁵⁸ Mark, Clyde. Islam: A Primer // CRS Report Congress RS21432. 2003. P. 4

⁵⁹ Nurutdinov, I. I. Experience and Perspectives of Countering Wahhabism in the Russian Federation // Journal of Kazan Judicial Institute MVD Russia. 2016. No. 1 (23). P. 57 (Нурутдинов И.И. Опыт И Перспективы Противодействия Ваххабизму В Российской Федерации // Вестник Казанского Юридического Института Мвд России. 2016. № 1 (23). С. 57)

literal interpretation of the combination of both lesser and greater jihad to pursue their personal and political agenda.

There has been research proposing a close cooperation between the Saudi government and the special services of England since the 50's last century to gain the hegemony of the region with the help of then, foreign and today national unlimited resources financing extremist opposition groups to destabilize adversary governments⁶⁰. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has a close relation with Wahhabism, being the religion enforced by the authorities⁶¹. With the political and economic support of England and the United States the Kingdom strengthened and reached stability enough to start an active participation in international affairs that would benefit the expansion of its influence and its position as a hegemon in the region. As argued by Popenkov (2014), this cooperation with western powers and the subsequent creation of the General Intelligence Directorate was not exclusively motivated by commercial purposes such as oil exploration but to identify and monitor Soviet activities in neighboring countries⁶². The same way some modern governments use the so called soft power in order to expand their influence and gain sympathizers around the world, Saudi Arabia arguably uses an approach that includes sending fighters to countries where the Muslim population is fighting against an oppressor, local or foreign. These fighters do not only take with them their strategic knowledge in the battlefield but also their religion and understanding of how a Muslim society should work. Once welcomed and settled by locals, during and after the fighting they start modeling their surrounds to their vision.

A second approach and one that could be easier to prove Saudi involvement in promotion of Wahhabism abroad is financing. This may come in two ways: one that goes to providing money to opposition groups or organizations⁶³ and the construction of mosques and religious schools or madrassas as well as economic resources for reparations after armed conflicts like occurred in Bosnia – Herzegovina after 1995⁶⁴. Nevertheless, both approaches cannot be proven entirely connected to the Saudi government as some

⁶⁰ Popenkov, O. N. Saudi Arabia: Theory and Practique of Wahhabism; the “Dreams” of Caucasian Separatists // Journal of Vorozhen State University. Series: History. Politology. Sociology. 2014. No. 4. P. 42 (Попенков О.Н. Саудовская Аравия: Теория И Практика Ваххабизма; «Мечты» Кавказских Сепаратистов // Вестник Воронежского государственного университета. Серия: История. Политология. Социология. 2014. № 4. С. 42)

⁶¹ Blanchard 2.

⁶² Popenkov, O. N. P. 42.

⁶³ Ibid. p. 42.

⁶⁴ Euronews reporter – Sarajevo a city under siege from its past? 26 March 2012 // Euronews. URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f0aH1OwJS_I (date of retrieval 12.10.2016)

fighters might be motivated by personal situations like the defense of other Muslims in their own interpretation of “jihad”, others looking for adventure or being recruited by influential individuals with no ties to the authorities. Same can be said about providing economic assistance, a variety of reasons that at the end all can be tracked to the same place, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

2.1.1 Afghanistan, foreign fighters and the Soviet Union (1978 – 1991)

The religious radicalization of individuals in the Northern Caucasus should be seen as a process that started developing in the early 90's with a revival of Islam in late 80's⁶⁵ and with roots that can be traced back to 1979 with the formal date of Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan as a result of the national political environment in that country and foreign threats with geopolitical interests. With Muhammad Daoud's presidency marked by a cautious approach to Moscow, as he believed in the principle of neutrality during the Cold War, he started distancing from the communist supporters in and outside of Afghanistan. Thus, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan whose fractions “Khalq” and “Parcham” leaders were Nur Taraki and Babrak Karmal⁶⁶ who initially backed the president, were key initiators of the Saour Revolution in April 1978 to overthrow the government and establish the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan of socialist base.

In less than ten years the state went from a kingdom with religious values and traditions to a republic in a path of liberalization of the economy and modernization of the society to finally embrace radical communist reforms. This process did not go unnoticed by the population in the villages and it created a shock in which those who considered tribal and religious traditions as a crucial part of who they were, found themselves in a situation where their identity was deconstructed, constructed and reconstructed to the desired secular one. This favored the welcoming of those who fled Afghanistan after the first coup d'état of 1973 and who were educated under the Wahhabi system in madrassas built with Saudi resources in Pakistan, one of Taraki's foreign threats that turned internal preoccupations. Taraki had repeatedly asked for Soviet intervention

⁶⁵ Musaykhanov, S. S. “Sharia State” in the Realities of Ichkeria (Chechnya) // *Sociology of Power*. 2009. No. 6. P. 72 (Мусайханов С.С. «Шариатское Государство» В Реалиях Ичкерии (Чечни) // *Социология власти*. 2009. № 6. С. 72)

⁶⁶ Melkumyan, E. Entering Soviet Troops in Afghanistan: Causes and Consequences // *Journal of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia. Series: International Relations*. (Мелкумян Е. Ввод Советских Войск В Афганистан: Причины И Последствия // *Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Международные отношения*). 2008. № 1. P. 56 – 57.

additional to the economic and military support already given to help stabilize and protect the country from both internal and external enemies, request that was continuously denied. With the assassination of Taraki by one of his fellow members of the party in 1978, Moscow recognized the threats and the army crossed the border on December 27, 1978⁶⁷. Islamic militants known as mujahedeen, arguably trained by Washington and financed and educated by Riyadh, started pouring into Afghanistan from the South gaining allies from the villages and the Soviet Army from the North protecting Kabul, turning an internal conflict into a proxy war between the two super powers of the time protecting their own geopolitical interests.

2.1.2 The Taliban and al-Qaeda

The mujahedeen, who claimed a religious obligation to defend their Muslim brothers and were first responders to the invasion of Afghanistan and who were initially seen as liberators and the only option for the followers of traditional Islam in the villages and mountains, ruled most the country after the Soviets retreated and the Union disintegrated in 1991 ending its support to the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. For more than 20 years the political situation of the country has been marked by profound changes in the socio-political system that started with the Taliban and its leader Mullah Omar, madrassa educated Pashtun students and scholars who took power from the mujahedeen in 1996 with the intention of establishing an Islamic state in combination with Pashtun traditions and free Afghans from the mujahedeen rule, who were seen as foreigners. In 1992 when they seized power, the mujahedeen proclaimed the Islamic State of Afghanistan. The new government was not only made up of local Afghans who fought against the Soviets but also of Arabs and other Muslims who attended the call of the Palestinian Sheikh Abdullah Azzam promotor of personal jihad as an obligation for every Muslim to fight the Soviet army. He worked together with Osama bin Laden in recruiting fighters from Arab countries until his death in 1989⁶⁸. Therefore, those who stayed after the war, intended to create the Islamic State that mimics the lifestyle and rule of Prophet Muhamad through their own interpretation of the scriptures.

The presence of foreigners dictating the rules and the fact that members of the Taliban, a group born in 1994 of majority Pashtun ethnicity – a minority in Afghanistan

⁶⁷ Melkumyan, E. P. 56 – 57.

⁶⁸ Bakker E., de Roy van Zuijdewijn J. Returning Western foreign fighters: The case of Afghanistan, Bosnia and Somalia // ICCT Background Note. International Center for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague. June 2014. P. 3

– could have motivated them to fight the mujahedeen. With Mullah Omar as its leader the Taliban ruled the country and even had international relations with the only three members of the international community that officially recognized them: Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates. The possible reason to the recognition given by these states could be attributed to the expansion of Wahhabi Islam Saudi Arabia and in minor part the United Arab Emirates promote, both state and private to keep homegrown radicals outside of the country and not represent a threat to the ruling class or simply to expand its geopolitical influence. As for Pakistan, with a considerable Pashtun population they could have preferred them fighting in the neighboring country than spreading their cause within their borders.

Over five years of ruling the State, the Taliban could have been perceived as the answer the Afghan people needed to protect their traditions and identity from alien components and therefore, initially they gave them their support. This is a key element to understand the process of changing of power in Chechnya and it is seen in other conflicts in the Middle East today where we see nations that perceive themselves and their identity under the threat of non-traditional elements. This process can also be found in other states outside of the Middle East and could be related to a radical change of the political system in which part of the people (liberal or conservative, depending on who see themselves affected) tend to choose the extreme opposite type of government when this is considered to have changed deeply the basis of their society. In this case, conservative traditional Afghans felt their identity was changed with the previous government so the “pendulum” moved to the opposite political extreme that favored the Taliban.

Al Qaeda was born as a response to fight the Soviet invader and once the war was over it kept active under Osama bin Laden’s lead. With other conflicts taking place in the Middle East, the Balkans and the Northern Caucasus many jihadists joined those battles bringing with them training, techniques, money and an unlimited network of veterans who advocated for a stricter form of Islam. During the Taliban regime Afghanistan became a training camp for jihadists who travelled from every continent. Taking advantage of a falling system and the growth of nationalism the euphoria of the dissolution of the Soviet Union created, the people of Chechnya ventured into the fight for their independence like other former republics of the Union did.

2.2. Chechnya and the Soviet Union

The Soviet Union left Afghanistan officially in January 1989 leaving behind not only almost ten years of fighting and economic and military losses but also a reputation of a non-interventionist actor that unlike its ideological rival, arguably ventured openly in regions like Latin America to stop the spread of Marxism. The biggest loss though yet to be seen was the establishment of the fundamentalist Taliban regime in Afghanistan that favored the growth of Islamist groups and followers who saw in the Soviet retreat a victory for jihadism. The military conflicts between Chechnya and Russia in 1992 cannot be explained without exploring the relationship Islam and the communist regime played since the creation and until the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Islam, unlike Christianity enjoyed certain level of tolerance reflected in the initial attitude Communist authorities shown towards Muslims declaring they would respect their traditions, beliefs and cultural institutions⁶⁹ with the intention to appeal to the “Muslim factor” when needed⁷⁰. For this research, this relationship is explored in the period of 1978 to 1991 with slightly considerable reference to previous events before that date.

2.2.1 Islam under Communism (1978 – 1991)

It is inaccurate to tacitly express that Islam was banned in its totality under the Communist government, as the attitude of the authorities changed and adapted through time accommodating to what they considered the necessities of the people⁷¹. On the other hand, ignoring the repression that came after Lenin’s death would be not recognizing the suffering and efforts some people did to protect part of their identity and that contributed to the emergence of the nationalist sense of unity under Islam of the 80’s. Under the communist ruling, schools of Islamic education were controlled by the State or ceased to exist as did Sharia courts and religious publications were banned and destroyed⁷². The previous as part of an initial plan of Stalin’s totalitarian regime measures against those who he considered the enemy and that included members of the army, the party and intellectuals⁷³.

⁶⁹ Koroleva, L. A., Korolev A.A. Islam in the USSR: Some Aspects of State-Religious Politics // Almanac of modern science and education. 2008. No. 6-1. P. 110 (Королева Л.А., Королев А.А. Ислам В Ссср: Некоторые Аспекты Государственно-Религиозной Политики. Альманах современной науки и образования. 2008. № 6-1. С. 110)

⁷⁰ Islam in the Soviet Union. 12 March 2015 // Islam.ru URL: <http://islam.ru/content/history/31050> (Ислам в СССР. 12 Мар 2015)

⁷¹ Koroleva, L. A., Korolev, A. A., P. 110-111.

⁷² Islam in the Soviet Union. 12 March 2015 // Islam.ru URL: <http://islam.ru/content/history/31050> (Ислам в СССР. 12 Мар 2015)

⁷³ Koroleva, L. A., Korolev, A. A., P. 110.

For the understanding of the separatist movement in Chechnya in the 90's it is crucial to make reference to the time after World War II when in 1944, the people of Chechnya were forced out of their historic land to Kazakhstan by the Soviet government being only able to return 13 years later adding a new element to their national identity and collective memory. According to Breakwell (1986), identity is "a process with biological, personal and social elements that develops in time, guided by four principles: continuity, distinctiveness, esteem and efficacy"⁷⁴, out of which the element of continuity played the most important role in the conservation of the Chechen identity. The element of continuity can be defined as the will a nation has to maintain their identity and their characteristics through time and this was also a key element for those who identified as Muslim and managed to keep their traditions and institutions to the point where the years the communist policies relaxed, they were able to constitute religious councils and continue with schools of Islamic teaching always under government control. Devine-Wright (2003) defines collective memory as being "socially constructed and reconstructed over time and intimately related to people's sense of identity..."⁷⁵ and by following his concept we can conclude that the characteristics we see today in the Muslim population of the Russian Federation and the former Soviet Republics are the result of a series of events, sometimes extremely dramatic, that through time and space, shaped their perception of themselves and the "other". From 1978 – 1989 some Muslim nations were socially and politically transformed creating in some the sense of a pan-Islamic identity equal to the Quranic Ummah or community that had to fight those who endangered the existence of the Muslim people. People who had different traditions and customs and even interpretations of Islam, but that under the freedom fighters liberated them, had to accept their vision of Islam and unify under an ideal Islamic State.

2.3 Chechnya and Russia

For over a decade the people of Chechnya experienced a mix of political instability with sporadic stability and euphoria caused by the sense of belonging to their own historical land and the constitution of their own separate state in 1991. For this work, a historical analysis of the recognized and non-recognized political structure of Chechnya

⁷⁴ Devine-Wright, P. A Theoretical Overview of Memory and Conflict. *The Role of Memory in Ethnic Conflict*. Palgrave Macmillan. 2003. P. 27.

⁷⁵ Devine-Wright, P. A. P. 11.

from 1991 to 2017 will be explored and divided into three stages: the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, the Chechen Republic and the Caucasus Emirate.

2.3.1 The Chechen Republic of Ichkeria

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the people of Chechnya supported a movement of independence with Dzhokhar Dudayev as first president from 1991 to 1996, who envisioned a secular democratic State in the constitution of 1992 but despite this intended separation of religion and government, the clergy played an important role in supporting the government during the first Chechen war in 1994 using the Muslim factor and calling for jihad against the aggressions⁷⁶. Taking into consideration that traditionally the people of Chechnya are followers of Sufi Islam together with a mix of other local values and traditions, when foreign fighters who participated in Afghanistan and new ones coming from the Middle East and Europe started pouring into the country importing a more radical interpretation of Islam like Wahhabism, it represented an ethnoreligious shock.

When the armed conflict started in December 1994 and the Russian army advanced to Grozny, Dudayev's government having called for jihad with the support of the clergy under mufti Akhmad Kadyrov, can be considered, according to Nurutdinov's described characteristics of jihad, a legal act under Islamic law. With Dudayev's death in April 1996, his vice president Zemlikhan Yandarbiev took power. Yandarbiev was himself a secular scholar, but with the armed conflict and foreign fighters pouring into the country to wage jihad against Moscow, he could have got in touch with Wahhabi leaders like Bagaudin Kebedov accused by mufti A. Kadyrov of introducing this strict interpretation of Islam in Chechnya^{77 78}. This armed conflict between Russian and Chechen forces became too bloody and casualties on both sides were considerable, with Grozny destroyed and opposition in Russia to a prolonged war both governments started negotiations for a cease fire agreement that would return the status quo and set the bases for the future relations between Moscow and Grozny. The Khasav-Yurtov agreement was negotiated by generals A. Maskhadov and A. Lebed in the summer of 1996 and finalized in August 31 same year⁷⁹. After the war was over, the conditions in the Chechen Republic

⁷⁶ Musaykhanov, S. S. P. 72

⁷⁷ Musaykhanov, S. S. P. 75

⁷⁸ Akaev, V. KH., Tesaeva, KH. S. P. 186

⁷⁹ Osmaev, A. D. To the Question of the Khasavyurt Agreements (From the History of the Russian-Chechen Political Relations in 1996) // Journal of the Academy of Sciences of the Chechen Republic. (Осмаев А.Д. К Вопросу О

of Ichkeria were inadequate to provide jobs, security and social stability that criminality hiked caused by local and foreign fighters who disagreed with the cease fire and saw the agreement as a victory for Moscow, many of those were Wahhabi followers who aligned with president Yandarbiev and were since then, a strong group that destabilized the future government and its efforts to bring peace.

The Khasav-Yurtov agreement did not grant the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria with independence but provided certain guarantees beneficial for both sides like the withdrawal of Russian forces from Chechen territory and the commitment to negotiate the status of the republic before December 31, 2001⁸⁰. With this agreement signed and coming elections next year, president Yandarbiev invalidated the Constitution of 1992 and its secular foundations creating the Supreme sharia courts in October that year with Sh. Batukaev as joint mufti of A. Kadyrov, having a vision of a unified Islamic state but little support from the people of Chechnya and the clergy who considered the nation was not ready for such a change⁸¹. With the elections of 1997, A. Maskhadov became third president of the republic and tried to limit the influence Wahhabis had in the government but at the same time, proclaimed the adoption of a sharia constitution as the growth of Wahhabism threatened the stability of his government and this may have been seen as a good concession to followers of Yandarbiev and Kebedov⁸². This is the moment when we can see the split that will cause inside rebellions and division of the nation since, as mentioned before the majority of Chechens and the Sufi clergy did not support Yandarbiev's actions on the path of islamization but now they had a new leader they could rally behind who was considered closer to Moscow, was fighting criminality and trying to reconstruct the country, and on the other side Yandarbiev was a very active politician who enjoyed the support of Wahhabi leaders and militias who stayed in the country after the war ended and some of them changed their considered "heroic" activities for criminal ones, like that of July 18, 1998 when members of the Sharia guard who worked as security prison helped escape 32 highly dangerous convicts⁸³, hence became the target of Maskhadov's actions. This situation can also be analyzed as the of struggle for power, where Sufi leaders may have considered Wahhabis a threat to their influence and control

Хасавюртовских Соглашениях (Из Истории Российско-Чеченских Политических Отношений В 1996 Г.) // Вестник Академии наук Чеченской Республики). 2012. № 2 (17). Р. 175.

⁸⁰ Ibid. Р. 175

⁸¹ Musaykhanov, S. S. P. 73

⁸² Акаев, V. КН., Tesaeva, КН. S. P. 190

⁸³ Musaykhanov, S. S. P. 76

on the region, mufti A. Kadyrov was the first and only one to have opposed the introduction of the Wahhabi ideology in the first half of the decade as he was one of the most educated men on Islam in Chechnya and considered they intended to establish a Caliphate with Arab traditions and customs pushing local culture aside⁸⁴.

A. Kadyrov became an important actor in the fight against the spread of Wahhabism in Chechnya by calling on meetings with the clergy of Ingushetia and Dagestan in the summer of 1998 to decide the actions to take for the protection of the youth, prohibition of propaganda pro-Wahhabi and proper religious education⁸⁵. We can distinguish a third line that is shaped on the direction the leadership took with mufti Kadyrov leading those who followed Sufi Islam with characteristics that included Chechen culture and traditions unlike Wahhabism, a “branch” of Sunni Islam, with Arab customs and a strict interpretation of the scriptures whose leaders and representatives supported Sharia courts with corporal punishments and violent jihad. Maskhadov’s government was in the middle of this religious confrontation with what initially was meant to be a secular government turned into one that supported and even employed Wahhabi members and the functioning Supreme sharia court, including a sharia constitution being worked out. A government that had to face a second armed conflict with Russia in 1999 due to continuous clashes jihadi militias of Saudi warlord Ibn al-Khattab and former vice-Primer Minister Shamil Basayev made up of Chechens, Arabs and other mujahedin had with the Russian army in the borders with Dagestan and Russia. Ibn al-Khattab and Basayev planned the incursion to Dagestan in order to provide support for Wahhabi followers there bearing the idea of a future consolidation of a Caliphate in the region.

2.3.2 Chechen Republic

For over nine months, the Russian Army managed to gain control of Chechnya in May 2000 and mufti A. Kadyrov was appointed interim head of government by President Vladimir Putin. A. Kadyrov is criticized by Chechen Islamic fundamentalist for being a traitor having turned to Moscow and not joined the fight in the second war ignoring his Muslim brothers, his decision could be explained by his position against a growing

⁸⁴ Mankiev, A. A., A.-H.A. Kadyrov On Wahhabism in Chechnya // Proceedings of the Grozny State Petroleum Technical University Academician M.D. Millionshchikov (Манкиев А.А, А.-Х.А. Кадыров О Ваххабизме В Чечне. // Труды Грозненского государственного нефтяного технического университета им. академика М.Д. Миллионщикова). 2011. № 11. P. 272-273

⁸⁵ Musaykhanov, S. S. P. 78

Wahhabi movement in Chechnya and the possible perception he had of Sufism losing influence in the region⁸⁶, as well as the atrocities committed against the people of Chechnya by the new Wahhabi authorities, sometimes made up of foreign members. On the other hand, ex-president A. Kadyrov is seen today as a figure of national pride by Chechen nationalist and Sufi leaders who see in him a strong man who fought a foreign agent that oppressed Chechens with a wrong interpretation of Islam, and after his assassination in 2005 by Islamic fundamentalists, his son Ramzan Kadyrov who is current head of government, allegedly has managed to provide stability to the country and continued the fight against Islamic fundamentalism and its criminal actions in the Republic. Maskhadov's government continued to exist but was not functional as the Russian forces occupied Chechen territory, created a new constitution replacing the one based on Sharia law, and legitimized A. Kadyrov as head of government. Until his death in 2005, Maskhadov led the insurgency aimed at ousting the Russian forces out of Chechnya as well as coordinated terrorist operations against civilians in Russian territory. Abdul Halim Sadulayev succeeded Maskhadov, and it was during his time that we see a tendency leaning towards a pan-Islamic movement attempting to unify Muslims of the Northern Caucasus. With his assassination in the summer of 2006, Dokka Umarov was given the position of president of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria with Akhmad Zakayev as Prime Minister.

2.3.3 Caucasus Emirate

New president Dokka Umarov was given a decaying government in war with Moscow that was also fighting opposition of Sufi leaders and their Chechen followers. The religious factor played again a relevant role in unifying fighters against the enemy, Umarov declared the creation of the Caucasus Emirate in October 31, 2007 and himself as emir of the new Islamic state in the region that was not limited to Chechnya but the entire Northern Caucasus. This could have come as a response to the weakening of their separatist movement under the Republic of Ichkeria, that lost the war, hence its government structure and its governed incapable of being called a state any longer. Prime Minister Zakayev went on exile to London⁸⁷ with the intention of giving continuity to their government but with no support from the recognized authorities under Ramzan

⁸⁶ Akaev, V. KH., Tesaeva, KH. S. P. 187

⁸⁷ Parfitt, T. The battle for the soul of Chechnya. 22 November 2007 // The Guardian. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/nov/22/chechnya.tomparfitt> (date of retrieval 27.11.2006)

Kadyrov's presidency, it ceased to exist. The Caucasus Emirate continued a campaign of terror in Russian soil and allegedly contributes with the radicalization of citizens of the Russian Federation. Both Russian and Chechen authorities have been fighting Umarov's project successfully with some critics against it like that of Muslim men who followers of a stricter interpretation of Islam but were not followers of Umarov's ideas were targeted by Chechen special forces due to their garments and particular beards that were considered traditional Wahhabi signs⁸⁸. Head of government R. Kadyrov has declared a victory on terrorism and minimized the existence of the Caucasus Emirate thanks to the elimination of its members. Nonetheless, a sect called "khabashity" is starting to be considered a new threat for Muslims in the region of the Northern Caucasus with some of its representatives using propaganda to spread its ideology⁸⁹. Additional to the khabashity, those who went to wage jihad in Syria and Iraq for the Islamic State of Ibrahim once they return, there is fear they might boost the dying jihadi fighters in the region.

Through the analysis of cross-cultural relations between Muslims and non-Muslims in Russia it is possible to say that this is better than the one in Western countries as the first is less perceived as "an invasion" of the other since arguably, most non-Muslims in Russia know there are republics part of the Russian Federation with a Muslim majority who are Russian citizens. Nevertheless, this relation has been shaped by a recent dramatic series of events during the end of the XX c. that affected both groups and contributed to the creation of a collective memory of mistrust and sometimes resentment. Stability has returned to the region of the Northern Caucasus but some members of the Caucasus Emirate continue their criminal actions, that combined with the constant threat of radical fundamentalism capable of spreading in the region, has given Kadyrov's government and the Russian intelligence services areas of opportunity to work on.

⁸⁸ Yaffa, J. Chechnya's Isis Problem. 12 February 2016 // The New Yorker URL: <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/chechnyas-isis-problem> (date of retrieval 27.11.2016)

⁸⁹ Anzor, A., Kudaev, R. Khabashity (Анзор, А., Кудав, К. Хабашиты) // Muslimka. URL: <http://www.muslimka.ru/blog/o-techeniyakh/2081-khabashity.html> (date of retrieval 13.11.2016)

CHAPTER 3. CIVILIAN DISCOURSE ON WAHHABISM AND ISLAM

This chapter will cover different discourses on the relation between Wahhabism and Islam and how it is presented by politicians, scientist (academics) and nationalist groups. These three groups are considered representatives of the society in this research as they do not follow a religious line and are supposed to attract followers of all groups. As explored in chapter I, discourse can be used to get power and control as well as to create and promote an ideology, hence this issue is approached through the analysis of groups with access to the dominated and not through the dominated themselves. This study is not conclusive and leaves room for further analysis from the approach of the dominated and their perception of Wahhabism and Islam. The chapter will be divided into three sections in which the available discourses given by representatives of each group are analyzed. Recognizing the difficulty to reach out to some groups like nationalists, this discourse will be the one available on their sites, social media, publications or news reports that, might not be conclusive but provide a crucial understanding of their position towards Islam in Russia.

3.1 Political Discourse

This section will include the analysis of fragments of interviews or declarations given by President Putin, Head of government Ramzan Kadyrov, Vice Chairman of the State Duma Vladimir Zhirinovskiy and Deputy of the State Duma Shamsail Saraliev, selected for their direct address to Wahhabism. Article 3 and 29 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation (1993) set the line that the official discourse follows on multinationalism and multi-confessionalism, dictating the position of the government and politicians on Islam, in this case. Provision 79 of the Strategy of National Security (see chapter I, subchapter 1.3.1) includes the protection of the multinational culture of the Russian Federation as a priority, of which Islam is part of it. The existence of Islamic universities in cities like Grozny, Kazan and Moscow, to mention a few, funded by the government and in close cooperation with it, can be considered an evidence of the authorities' position. But this discourse could not work if the majority of the people of the Russian Federation did not identify or recognize themselves as a multinational and multi-confessional State. This attitude could be the result of the Marxist vision of "the proletariat having no fatherland and nationalism as a form of false consciousness"⁹⁰ that

⁹⁰ Oommen. T.K. P. 28

was predominant during the years of the Soviet Union and the attempt to create a new Soviet identity.

Analyzed from a top to bottom structure, the position the President of the Federation sets on this specific topic is critical as his ideas and actions create a precedent for how other politicians who belong to the power structure, and accept the President's stance, will behave. It can be said President Putin has had a strategy of approaching religious leaders, in this case Muslim, in an attempt to create the conditions for dialogue that go beyond the traditional multi-confessional Christian – Muslim but also, giving recognition and a space in the Russian government to the representatives of a considerable part of the population. This might come with the necessity to acknowledge national differences like, Tatars, Chechens, Ingush and immigrants from the Post-Soviet space who also identify as Muslims, sometimes on the same level they identify as citizens or residents of the Russian Federation, having a Muslim Russian identity. Therefore, it is inaccurate to say that the Russian government has a tough position against Islam or its followers⁹¹, despite of being a country with historic roots in Orthodox Christianity and the usual realist Western approach of clash of civilizations in which Christianity and Islam are in confrontation. In the Federation, it is not unusual to see leaders of both major religions together in public events next to state authorities or the other way around, with state authorities present in religious events in representation of the government. This should not be seen as the Christianization or Islamization of the government but rather as the Russian approach to cultural relativism⁹² in which all cultures are equal but different and their characteristics are taken into consideration in the decision-making. This closeness of the Russian government can also be seen as the attempt to prevent radicalization of individuals on both Christian and Muslim circles, as proposed by Nurutdinov⁹³ in his measures to fight Wahhabism that should involve the support of the Russian government to the formation of religious scholars. Nevertheless, some groups could take advantage of this closeness to advance their political agendas.

⁹¹ Historical reasons of the relationship between Islam and Russia are mentioned in chapter II.

⁹² Puchebut, Lyudmila. Methodology of cross-cultural and ethnic psychology. Cross-cultural and ethnic psychology. The basic allowance. - St. Petersburg.: Peter, 2012. - Pp. 336:il. (Пучебут, Людмила. Методология кросс-культурной и этнической психологии. Кросс-культурная и этническая психологии. Основное пособие. - СПб.: Питер, 2012. – 336 с.: ил.). P. 15.

⁹³ Nurutdinov, I. I. P. 56

The law known as The Freedom of Conscience and Religious Institutions⁹⁴ can be seen as part of the political discourse that limited or controlled the actions of certain religious groups, some considered sects and non-traditional. It is crucial to understand this law was introduced after the first Chechen war and seems to be consistent with the position of the government to fight religious extremism of that time. As Dr. Natalia Kovalevskaia suggests:

The situation was becoming very uneasy because there were not only Protestants, Catholics or Baptists coming - there were lots of Religious sects. (like e.g. Aum Sernrike). And as we had freedom of Religious Beliefs (according to the previous law of 1990) it was difficult to regulate that. They went to schools and universities and started their aggressive missionary activity. So, this new law was introduced in order to eliminate the peril of foreign sects coming to Russia. It regulated how international Religious Organizations should be registered on the territory of the Russian Federation to start their activities. Moreover, in practice it highlighted the role of Russian Orthodox Church as "pre-dominant" Religious Institution in Russia naming other confessions too.⁹⁵

Having clarified that the government's stance on Islam is one of closeness and dialogue, we can move to the analysis of extremism as one of the motivations for this cooperation. In chapter II it was described how Wahhabism made its way to the separatist groups that fought in the Northern Caucasus, inspired by a call to wage jihad against what they perceived as the aggressor, after the conflict and with the measures the government of A. Kadyrov took against Wahhabi jihadists, the survivors were forced to go into hiding, under the intelligence services monitoring. In an interview for a French broadcaster in 2000 President Putin clarified some points, critical for the understanding of the relationship between the authorities and Muslims and the perception of it in France. This interview was given nine months after the second Chechen war was over and A. Kadyrov was appointed interim head of government by Putin himself, A. Maskhadov was still president of the separatist Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, that had no more control over the territory and had gone into hiding.

⁹⁴ Introduced on September 26, 1997 N 125 – F3 “On freedom of conscience and on religious organizations” (1997 N 125-ФЗ "О свободе совести и о религиозных объединениях"), this law intended to regulate the system of Religious Institutions in Russia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, lots of sects and international missionaries started to come to Russia with the idea that Communism had destroyed Russia's connection to Orthodox Christianity.

⁹⁵ Kovalevskaya, Natalia. Email interview. 14 October 2016

To the interviewer's question asking if he considered French authorities were not fully aware of the fact that Islamic fundamentalism in Chechnya, Central Asia and the Arab world were a threat not only for Russia but also for Europe his answer was:

...But if someone in the world or in Europe does not notice - or for some reason tries not to notice - the danger of international terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism and extremism of another religious sense, I'm convinced, this is a mistake...⁹⁶

Here he mentioned three concepts, *international terrorism*, *Islamic fundamentalism* and *extremism of other religious sense*. The previous can be part of the speech technique known as the rule of three in which we group three related words or points of view, as things that come in three are more persuasive and easy to remember since we use patterns to process information. It is necessary to remark that these three concepts are not entirely focused on Islam or its followers but rather to a wider range of possibilities that could include international actors not necessarily Islamic or Muslim and other religious groups. Additionally, in his answer he put weight on Islamic fundamentalism and considering the historical events of the 90's, this can be observed as moving the Western discourse that links terrorism to Islam in general, onto fundamentalism in this case Wahhabism and deliver a message to the French people, with a considerable Muslim population, that the Russian government was not fighting Islam, like he mentioned in the same interview:

Because of that, when they say that Russia fights against Muslims, - it's a shameless lie! Russia protected Muslims in Dagestan, protected from fanatics and religious extremists, in this case under the slogan of Islam. Not to see this, is an illusion, a mistake and a harmful error.

Next, he addressed the situation in Chechnya after the second war with a clear and direct answer on who was to blame for the violence in the region.

...we had a determinate ideological aggression from so-called Wahhabism, a stream of Islam, alien to the population of our Northern Caucasus. At the end, Chechnya turned into a foothold for attacks on other Russian territories under the

⁹⁶ Interview with French TV channel "TF-1" and "France - 3" 23 October 2000 (Интервью французским телеканалам «ТФ-1» и «Франс-3» 23 октября 2000 // Президент России // President of Russia. URL: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/21643> (date of retrieval 16.05.2017)

slogan of the creation of the so-called new state formation of - The United States of Islam - from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

According to Russian dictionaries, we can observe as minimum two meanings of так называемый (so-called) construction: 1) “Именуемый, носящий название” or named, having X name, and 2) “мнимый” or false⁹⁷, with this, Putin seems to be trying to minimize the importance and legitimacy of this group. Finally, he concluded with:

The important for us is - to exclude any possibilities of using the territory of Chechnya as a foothold to launch attacks on Russia. That's the first interest. The second - to free the Chechen people from fundamentalism and give them the right to determine themselves their own life with the help of democratic political processes.

The first interest, demonstrates the necessity the Federal government considered critical to secure stability in other regions of the country, as it was happening in neighboring regions like Dagestan with Wahhabi groups committing violent acts and then hiding in Chechnya, and the decade of 2000 with attacks in Moscow and Volgograd, to mention a few, where despite the major military operation was over, some small active groups continued their activities. The second interest insists on fundamentalism being the enemy but this time he shows it is not only for the Russian government but also for the people of Chechnya, and they had to be liberated from it, which happened in May that year. The last two paragraphs analyzed, also give the perception the government sees Wahhabism as something foreign like it does with other actors or elements, usually cultural and chooses to exert tight control on them or ban them at all.

The current Head of government of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov has developed a pertinent role as both, a religious and political leader in the Northern Caucasus since he was first designated president of the Chechen Republic in 2007. Some of his declarations as political leader are included in this section, since this could be more valuable for the purpose of this research. Nevertheless, his political activities are intrinsically related to religion and hence, these declarations may have taken place in such events. In a working meeting between Putin and Kadyrov in March 2007, Putin announced he had proposed Kadyrov's candidacy for President of Chechnya and recognized the steps taken for the

⁹⁷ Rogozhnikova, R. P. Explanatory dictionary of combinations, equivalent to words. М., 2003 (Рогожникова Р. П. Толковый словарь сочетаний, эквивалентных слову. М., 2003)

development of the republic. He also asked him to continue the rehabilitation of Chechnya in all aspects. Kadyrov's answer included a short reference to Wahhabism and international terrorism in the same sentence, demonstrating that for him and his workgroup, both are related.

...I will do everything in order to adequately continue the work that was started by my father and you. For the people of our republic, for our citizens to live with dignity, like others. For them to feel safe. And that in our country there will be no further manifestations such as international terrorism and Wahhabism. (...)⁹⁸

One year later and with less than one month of becoming Prime minister, V. Putin was interviewed by *Le Monde* on various issues, among them the Northern Caucasus and the operations taken over 10 years back⁹⁹. To the question about what were the main problems, from his point of view, in Ingushetia and Dagestan after Chechnya had stabilized, his answer included a short historical reference to the reasons the region first destabilized, this included a mention of Wahhabism but this time in a different manner even making clear, that Wahhabism is simply another current in Islam and in itself, exist extremists.

The situation in the Chechen Republic has really improved. And it has improved due to several circumstances. The main one is that the Chechen people made a choice for themselves. And this choice in the direction of the development of their republic within the Russian Federation. And we see it, we know. We saw the reaction of the Chechen people to the attempts to introduce non-traditional forms of Islam in the minds of the local population first of all. Now, this is where it started. Wahhabism, in its original form is a normal current in Islam, nothing terrible here. But there are extremist movements within Wahhabism itself. These are the directions they tried to introduce in the consciousness of the Chechen people.

⁹⁸ Beginning of the working meeting with acting President of the Chechen Republic Ramzan Kadyrov March 1, 2007 // President of Russia. (Начало рабочей встречи с исполняющим обязанности Президента Чеченской Республики Рамзаном Кадыровым, 1 марта 2007 // Президент России) URL: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24061> (date of retrieval 16.05.2017)

⁹⁹ Putin interview by the newspaper *Le Monde*. Full text, VIDEO. 1 June 2008 // *Vesti* (Интервью Путина газете *Le Monde*. Полный текст, ВИДЕО. 1 июня 2008 // *Вести*) URL: <http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=185265&cid=1> (date of retrieval 14. 03.2017)

In this paragraph, it is evident the attempt to demonstrate the Chechen people were capable enough of identifying their future and their enemy, and then, those who did not agree with the extremist Wahhabi groups, opted to join the Russian troops in the fighting. This interview and the one previously analyzed of 2000, also for a French broadcaster, may show how critical some were in France, and probably in other Western countries, of the military measures the then, President Putin took in Chechnya. Even today, some analysts like to compare the Russian military operation in Grozny with the one in Aleppo¹⁰⁰. Back to Putin's more moderate approach to Wahhabism as Prime Minister in 2008, that can be explained by the fact that more information on the issue was available eight years after the second war, closer cooperation with Muslim leaders in the region, and the knowledge and expertise of former head of government Akhmad Kadyrov who was a prominent scholar on Islam could have been essential in this new understanding.

In a 2013 meeting with the leaders of parliamentary factions with President Putin at the State Duma, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's speech included the following reference to Wahhabism and the situation with national security:

National security is a problem of Islamization, Wahhabism. We saw the action in Surgut. It is also necessary here to strengthen our internal security organs precisely in terms of combating religious extremism. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, other countries allocate huge funds. There is a construction of certain religious institutions, training in the Arab countries in their universities of preachers and the organization of Muslims - every Friday all the men in a certain place gather. It unites them, aura such, community. This is a certain threat.¹⁰¹

Zhirinovskiy's speech is relevant because he explicitly blames Saudi Arabia and Qatar for funding extremist groups and somehow indoctrinating Muslims through education in Arab countries, a similar approach that former President of Chechnya, A. Kadyrov had proposed (this will be analyzed in chapter IV).

¹⁰⁰ Bullough, Oliver. "Putin in Syria: Chechnya All Over Again" 11 October 2016 // The New York Times. URL: https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/12/opinion/putin-in-syria-chechnya-all-over-again.html?_r=0 (date of retrieval 14.05.2017)

¹⁰¹ Meeting with the leaders of the parliamentary factions on May 15, 2013. // President of Russia. (Встреча с руководителями парламентских фракций 15 мая 2013 // Президент России). URL: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/18120> (date of retrieval 17. 02.2017)

Later that year, in an op-ed for Izvestia online, Deputy Shamsail Saraliev¹⁰² wrote how in recent years, crimes of religious character have increased, and Russian citizens by default consider Muslims the main perpetrators¹⁰³. This vision could also describe the attitude in the European Union and the United States where, whenever a crime on religious basis occurs, the media is the first to suggest Muslims were involved.

For any reasonably intelligent person, it is obvious that considering all Muslims the enemy, is a big mistake. Because there are Muslims and there are so-called Kharijites (from the Arab rebels, schismatics) - a radical sect, which has nothing to do with Islam. These "Shaytans" profess an extremist ideology - Wahhabism imposed by false preachers in the lost minds and consciousness of the followers of this current.

Islam and Wahhabism are opposite concepts, far from each other in their essence. Islam - the religion of peace, good and tolerance, is a traditional culture and a high morality, where there is no place for chaos and violence...Because of the brutality of the acts committed by them in all corners of the world, and the false beliefs diverging from the provisions of Islam, Wahhabis cannot be considered Muslims. Embraced in the religious shell ideology, which they impose, sows hatred and fear.

He considers an international network of Wahhabis are trying to destabilize the country in regard to interethnic and interfaith grounds and compares it to fascism. He concludes writing "Wahhabism is the main threat to Russia's stability, and this terrible disease must be urgently treated. The misanthropic ideology should not have the right to exist neither in the world, nor in our country!"

In February 2016, R. Kadyrov, being one of the participants in the clergy meeting that gathered representatives of neighboring Dagestan and Ingushetia to Grozny, delivered a speech to the crew attending the meeting at the Akhmad Kadyrov Mosque¹⁰⁴.

¹⁰² Deputy Saraliev is a Chechen politician, Muslim and member of United Russia Party, and served in the sixth and seventh convocation for the State Duma.

¹⁰³ Shamsail Saraliev. Islam and Wahhabism are different concepts. 27 December 2013 // Izvestia (Шамсаил Саралиев. Ислам и ваххабизм — это разные понятия. 27 декабря 2013 // Известия) URL: <http://izvestia.ru/news/563297> (date of retrieval 17.02.2017)

¹⁰⁴ Uspanov, Beslan, Magomed Edilsultanov. "We will fight against Wahhabis everywhere: in Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan ..." 03 February 2016 // Kavpolit (Успанов, Беслан, Магомед Эдилсултанов. «Мы будем бороться с ваххабистами везде: в Чечне, Ингушетии, Дагестане...» 03 февраля 2016 // Кавполит) <http://kavpolit.com/articles/my_budem_borotsja_s_vahhabistami_vezde_v_chemne_i-23179/> (date of retrieval 30.03.2017)

In this speech, he slashed against Wahhabis and Salafists. It is important to mention, the clergy of the three republics, Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia concluded a resolution on Wahhabism with some measures to counter its expansion and influence in the region. This document will be analyzed in chapter IV.

...We all remember how in 1998-99 Akhmat-haji called muridov and stated about the need to stop Wahhabism in the republic. If we do not stop them, it will get worse, another war will begin.

He challenged the Wahhabis in the most terrible time, when they killed everyone who did not share their ideology without ceremony. They killed many descendants of the prophet and followers of the righteous. Scoffing, saying: "Well, I pray for my own wish for salvation, where is he? (...)

...We are afraid that they will bring trouble on us. I declare to you responsibly, in December 1999, I, my comrades - Ruslan Alkhanov - swore on the Koran that until our death we will fight with the Wahhabis.

We do not care where they (Wahhabis) are in Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan or even in North Africa. If these pests cannot be stopped on the ground, and if they do not come to their senses and repent, they will find what they are looking for. Everyone will find what he is looking for...

In the first paragraph, like president Putin's interview of 2008 Kadyrov starts with a historical reference and here referring to his father and his call to stop Wahhabis who were part of Maskhadov's government. This could help to gather not only Chechens behind the figure of his father but also Ingush and Dagestanis who see in religious extremism today a threat, similar to the one faced by A. Kadyrov almost 20 years ago. This strategy serves well to create an identity that goes well beyond nationality and unites them under a single Muslim identity. In the second paragraph, he draws a clear line between "them" and "us" when he says, "they killed everyone who did not share their ideology" and "they killed many descendants of the prophet and followers of the righteous", as he is discrediting their beliefs by calling it an ideology and differentiating the "murderers" from the true "descendants of the prophet". Next, he creates a perception that he and his people have been in a constant battle against Wahhabis (since 1999) protecting Islam in Chechnya and giving continuity to the struggle his father led until his death. The last paragraph can be seen as a show of strength very similar to the one made by Putin as Prime Minister of Yeltsin in 1999 on terrorism:

We are going to pursue terrorists everywhere. If they are in the airport, we will pursue them in the airport. And if we capture them in the toilet, then we will waste them in the outhouse. ... The issue has been resolved once and for all.¹⁰⁵

The fragments of speeches, interviews, and written contributions to newspapers presented here by some politicians are an example of the discourse on Islam and Wahhabism prominent in the federation. Nevertheless, this analysis of political discourse is not conclusive since, this research is not only about political discourse on Islam and Wahhabism, and the extension of this work is limited but it is possible to say that this approach from politicians is the mainstream tendency, following the Constitution of the Federation articles 3 and 29 and the official government position of national unity. The President's discourse focuses more on calling out extremism and international terrorism than accusing Islam or Muslims for the crimes committed by jihadists. R. Kadyrov's discourse is more specific and overwhelming as he identifies Wahhabis as the enemy of the Chechen people and Muslims in the Northern Caucasus. Deputy Saraliev is also tough and decisive in making the difference between Muslims and Wahhabis, but we have to consider that both Kadyrov and Saraliev are Muslim and therefore, they also have a second identity besides the "politician" one, and because of that, their discourse is more detailed and emotional than that of Putin or Zhirinovskiy.

3.2 Academic Discourse

This subchapter will cover the analysis of some Russian scholars who have studied Wahhabism and its relationship with Islam in Russia, how to prevent and fight radicalization, Islam and models of politics, and of course, the Northern Caucasus. These scholars were chosen for their knowledge based on the articles found in the Russian online academic database "elibrary.com" when entered the keyword "Wahhabism", and not strategically selected to demonstrate the superiority of one point of view over the other. Arguably, with more critical thinking skills, academics have a wider perspective and understanding of social issues in this case, which could have a direct effect on the result of the research these Russian scholars performed.

¹⁰⁵ Putin on "wasting terrorists in the outhouse": wrong rhetoric, right idea. 15 July 2011 // RT
<<https://www.rt.com/politics/putin-honesty-president-magnitogorsk/>> (date of retrieval 30.03.2017)

M. A. Suchkov provides a structured analysis of the similarities between the Islamic State and the Caucasus Emirate that demonstrates his knowledge on security issues and terrorism, this is not what makes his work relevant but his comparison between these two actors¹⁰⁶. Though he does not explicitly mention Wahhabism as the origin of the Caucasus Emirate, this was covered before in this research with Musaykhanov's historical approach explaining how Wahhabis made their way to the Chechen government and created a Sharia constitution¹⁰⁷, that later during the war, separated from the moderates and tried to establish the Emirate. In his work "The influence of ISIS on the Russian Northern Caucasus", Suchkov at all times mentions the "Caucasus Emirate" to address the groups of jihadists who follow similar values to those of the Islamic State fighters, he even includes Dokka Umarov who in 2013, provided funding to the Islamic State¹⁰⁸. Suchkov does give a crucial reference to understanding the reasons, from a security approach, the Russian government decided to participate in fighting the Islamic State in Syria:

...the fight against international terrorism does not guarantee security for the country. For the Kremlin, the conclusion was analogue: the suppression of internal challenges does not mean that they will not emerge in other regions and will not come back stronger and more dangerous¹⁰⁹.

Since the Islamic State shares an ideology based on Islamism and jihadism to gain political control and legitimacy, using Sharia as the legal model to shape the society's values in the Caliphate and Emirate, the Kremlin considered crucial to join the fight in Syria against this group to preserve the stability achieved in the Northern Caucasus and prevent the re-strengthening of paramilitary Islamist groups.

Musaykhanov differentiates two currents of Islam in the Chechen Republic of the early 90's when Yandarbiev established Sharia courts with followers of Wahhabism: "The traditional clergy (leaders of Sufi brotherhoods) did not support the idea of creating an Islamic State and Sharia courts in Chechnya..."¹¹⁰ Sufism, together with local traditions, is seen as the accepted interpretation of Islam in the Northern Caucasus and

¹⁰⁶ Suchkov, M. A. The influence of IGIL On the Russian North Caucasus. Islam in the Near and Middle East (Сучков М.А. Влияние Игил На Российский Северный Кавказ. Ислам на Ближнем и Среднем Востоке). 2015. № 9. P. 480

¹⁰⁷ Musaykhanov, S. S. P. 79

¹⁰⁸ Suchkov, M. A. P. 482

¹⁰⁹ Suchkov, M. A. P. 483

¹¹⁰ Musaykhanov, S. S. P. 73

Wahhabism, as the foreign addition that tried to take over, and Musaykhanov makes sure this is well understood. The constant of a perceived foreign threat is also present here with Sufi – local, Wahhabi – foreign, and there is a need to be protected from it by the State¹¹¹.

Popenkov gives also a historical approach to the understanding of Wahhabism in the Northern Caucasus, with a throwback to the foundation of the modern Saudi Kingdom with the help of the United Kingdom in 1932¹¹² but goes even further to establish Saudi responsibility for the chaotic situation in the Northern Caucasus:

The Kingdom only expanded over the past decades, the range of its tasks with regard to our country, including in them, the support to the Taliban movement in the time of the USSR war in Afghanistan, the development and financing of projects to destabilize the situation and former Soviet republics of Central Asia after the disintegration of the USSR, and in especial in the Caucasus.¹¹³

Popenkov clearly links Saudi Arabia to Afghanistan and the Soviet Union, with support that may have included financing and arming the mujahedeen, concluding in Chechnya and Dagestan. He also proposes a theory in which British, Turkish and Arab special services had a plan to divide Russia and create an Islamic State in the 90's¹¹⁴. Popenkov's article is an analysis of the Saudi – Wahhabi relation and its involvement in the Northern Caucasus, he does not mention any reference to stating that Sufi Muslims were responsible for the destabilization of the 90's but rather an outside ideological force pushed into the region by the West with the clear objective of weakening Russia.

Nurutdinov and Safin, after a historical review of the roots of Wahhabism, quote Dzutsev and Pershchits who mention, Al-Wahhab considered Islam, “needed a holy war ("jihad") against the unfaithful”¹¹⁵. Their analysis gives an idea of how they perceive Wahhabism as a “religious deviation”¹¹⁶ apart from Islam when they state that “the ideological basis of Wahhabi teachings provides a passive support to terrorist activities, committed in the name of Islam”¹¹⁷. With this, they make the point that Wahhabism is

¹¹¹ General provision 79 of the Strategy of National Security of the Russian Federation of 2015.

¹¹² Popenkov, O. N. P. 41

¹¹³ Ibid. P. 42

¹¹⁴ Popenkov, O. N. P. 42

¹¹⁵ Nurutdinov, I. I., Safin RR Wahhabism: Features of Occurrence and Development Factors. Science and modernity. (Нурутдинов И.И., Сафин Р.Р Ваххабизм: Особенности Возникновения И Факторы Развития. Наука и современность). 2012. № 16-1. P. 271

¹¹⁶ Ibid. P. 269

¹¹⁷ Ibid. P. 271

some type of ideology different from Islam, in this analysis they mention Sufism repeatedly to compare both currents, that has to be "spread on Muslim countries"¹¹⁸.

In his article "Experience and prospects of countering Wahhabism in the Russian Federation", Nurutdinov approaches Wahhabism from a security perspective with special attention to discourse and rhetoric, and well-defined groups: Wahhabis and Muslims. He repeatedly he uses the construction "the fight against Wahhabism" to refer to the activities the Federal and Muslim authorities have taken against extremists. Nurutdinov mentions some steps taken by the Muslim clergy to de-Wahhabize Tatarstan like deposing imams who had Islamic foreign education and the stimulation of patriotism among Russian Muslims¹¹⁹. The last can be proved in some education programs part of Islamic universities in the country. In his research, he recognizes the role social media has in fighting the Wahhabi ideology, "Proceeding from the fact that, the rhetoric, that deconstructs a negative image of Wahhabism, is presented, first of all, in Internet, major efforts should be taken in the virtual world."¹²⁰ He also understands that discourse can be used to neutralize the Wahhabi - jihadists rhetoric online but it will only work on those who are open to participate in a discussion on what jihad really is and throw away the propagandist idea given by Wahhabis¹²¹. Finally, Nurutdinov, Safin and Salagaev with an analysis of Russian printed media, conclude "Wahhabism as a religious deviation is constructed, basically, with the help of discourse on terrorism and the opposition of Wahhabism to traditional Islam"¹²². Attempts were made to reach out to Nurutdinov through email for more details on his perception of Wahhabism as a deviation from Islam but unfortunately, they were unsuccessful.

Tsurkan identifies five political models in Muslim countries that differentiate the relation between the state and Islamic radicalism: "harmony of Wahhabism and the state powers, Islamization of politics in a Shiite state, coordination between secular powers and Islamic radicals, moderate Islamism in the political system and confrontation between secular powers and Islamic radicals."¹²³ The first model, "harmony of Wahhabism and the

¹¹⁸ Ibid. P. 275

¹¹⁹ Nurutdinov, I. I., P. 55

¹²⁰ Nurutdinov, I. I., P. 56

¹²¹ Ibid. p. 57

¹²² Nurutdinov, I. I., Safin R. R., Salagaev A.L. Designing the Image of Wahhabism in Printed Media // Journal of Economics, Law and Sociology. (Нурутдинов И.И., Сафин Р.Р., Салагаев А.Л. Конструирование Образа Ваххабизма В Печатных СМИ // Вестник экономики, права и социологии). 2012. № 2. P. 234.

¹²³ Tsurkan, A. A. Classification of Political Models of Islamic Countries with Accounting for the Factor of Islamic Radicalism // Islamic Studies. (Цуркан А.А. Классификация Политических Моделей Исламских Стран С Учетом Фактора Исламского Радикализма // Исламоведение). 2013. № 2. P. 24

state” she mentions Saudi Arabia as the perfect example of this and calls it an “Islamic state of radical fundamentalism”¹²⁴. She describes how this country lives under Sharia and applies punishments that may include death for violations of religious laws¹²⁵ and also provides a description of other states like Palestine or Morocco where the relation between the authorities and Islam differs to the Saudi model and does not include Wahhabism.

Radzhabov explores the contradictions between Sufism and Wahhabism¹²⁶. He refers to the dissolution of the Soviet Union to mark the start of religious confrontation between traditional Sufism in Dagestan and the outsider Wahhabi ideology.¹²⁷ According to Radzhabov, “both trends on the fundamental principles of the Quran and the Sunnah, have serious contradictions”, including practices like the visits to cemeteries or the celebration of the Prophet’s birthday¹²⁸.

Through a content analysis of the work of some Russian academics, it is evident there are specialists (men and women) who know and study the differences between traditional Islam in its Sufi current and a more radical form or Wahhabism. They know the historical roots of Wahhabism and how it made its way into Russia and have sufficient knowledge on the topic and those whose works are included here, never relate traditional Islam with international terrorism. Some of these academics portray Wahhabism as a foreign element of destabilization and even a deviation of Islam, and some go as far as saying it is the result of a Saudi plan in coordination with the West to destroy what was left of Russia after the Soviet Union. It is relevant to mention some of these academics might be Muslim but this is not possible to demonstrate.

3.3 Nationalist Discourse

This section includes the thoughts and ideas of nationalist groups or organizations and individuals who have made reference to Wahhabism or Islam in any of their public discourses. Nationalists can be defined as those individuals who abide “the tendency on the part of the dominant nation/ethnie to establish hegemony over the smaller/weaker

¹²⁴ Ibid. P. 25

¹²⁵ Ibid. P. 25

¹²⁶ Radjabov, R. A. Basic Confessional Contradictions Between Sufism and Wahhabism // Islamic Studies. (Раджабов Р.А. Основные Конфессиональные Противоречия Между Суфизмом И Ваххабизмом // Исламоведение). 2009. № 2. P. 106

¹²⁷ Ibid. P. 106

¹²⁸ Ibid. P. 107

nations and ethnies”¹²⁹. Gathering information from nationalist individuals or groups on Islam and Wahhabism was extremely difficult because there are not many sources available. This can be due to the current legal frame against extremism, and hence there are not many publications or websites. Also, in the information that was available, nationalists never mention Wahhabism as the reason of extremism in Islam, and tend to generalize all Muslims pose a danger.

Konstantin Poltoranin who in his multiple works that can be classified as “non-fiction” books, put all followers of Islam into one big group that is simply mentioned as “Muslims”, ignoring the canonical and cultural differences between Sufi Muslims in Russia and Wahhabis who in some cases, radicalize and commit violent crimes. Another constant in Poltoranin’s work is the status they intent to give to migrants with followers of Islam as proved by the following fragment where he interviews Vyacheslav Postavnin¹³⁰:

(Poltoranin) - In Russia today, we have basically Muslim immigrants, and this calls for a grow in xenophobia.

(Postavnin) – Today, to us come basically young migrants from villages, they absorb, like a sponge, all negative delights of the “urban civilization” and forget the beautiful traditions of their country. It is this, and not belonging to the Muslim world that irritates others¹³¹.

In his book, he does not mention Wahhabism or extremist Islamists and this is exactly the reason his work is included. Analysts, writers and commentators who follow a nationalist ideology, usually within the frame of Christianity and Eurocentrism, see themselves in a constant war against Islam and immigrants. Due to the lack of knowledge or the commitment to an agenda, they fail to understand the real issue and that Muslims, also have an enemy which is extremism, and happens to be the same nationalist take as the center of their campaigns. With this discourse, nationalists continue to perpetuate the stereotype that all non-European or non-Christian immigrants in Russia are Muslims and all Muslims pose a danger.

¹²⁹ Oommen, T. K. P. 33

¹³⁰ Vyacheslav Postavnin is president of the fund “Migratsia XXI vek” and ex – deputy director of the Russian FMS.

¹³¹ Poltoranin, Constantine. *Russia is not for Russians? Kosovo scenario in Moscow*. - M.: Yauza - catalog, 2014. 320 С. (The power of crooks and thieves). (Полторанин, Константин. *Россия не для русских? Косовский сценарий в Москве*. – М. : Яуза – каталог, 2014. (Власть жуликов И воров)). P. 51

Alexandr Kyzmich Ivanov is the founder and leader of the National Party of the People (NNPR) and a promoter of Rusizm, an ideology of race supremacy that longs for the day all other peoples of Europe, as culturally different as they are, will join Russians for the only reason of being "white Europeans"¹³². Usually, a nationalist and anti-Islam discourse is accompanied by elements like pro-Christianity, anti-immigration and superiority of the European "white" race, reaffirming the supporters' belief in a clash of civilizations. In the NNPR website, there is an interview by The Guardian to Ivanov, but the legitimacy of it cannot be proved as there are not archives available online. In this interview, Ivanov makes clear his personal and party position on Islam, and like Poltoranin, omitting extremists and grouping all Muslims into one group with one intention:

In the future, I am sure a confederation of the White nations of the earth should appear, which include the Russian peoples (Belarusians, Ukrainians, Great Russians and other Slavs), and they will be obliged to control the Islamic states in order to survive together with other European peoples.¹³³

In another paragraph, he does mention "Islamists" are the enemy, which is a correct term that is applied to those who support an ideology of radical fundamentalist views to achieve political goals, a position not shared by all Muslims: "We digested them. But now a new Bolshevism - Islam. And so, we understand that our primary enemies are the Islamists."¹³⁴

Considerable difficulties were encountered gathering additional information on nationalist groups or individuals who have a blurry discourse on Wahhabism and Islam that may affect the perception of Muslims in Russia. Two searches online were run with the same keywords in English and Russian, when entering "nationalist groups against Islam" the results showed Pegida, the Stop Islamisation of Europe group (SIOE) and some articles by news media in the US reporting of far-right groups rallying against Islam in Europe and Australia. When entering the same keywords in Russian, "Националистические группы против ислама" (Natsionalisticheskiy gruppy protiv

¹³² Ivanov, A. K. (Sukharevskiy) Civil Society – The Basis of the Future Russian State. Transcript of the interview to head of NNP in the English newspaper "The Guardian" // NNP (А. К. Иванов (Сухаревский). Гражданское Общество - Основа Будущего Русского Государства. (Стенограмма интервью Главы ННП английской газете "The Guardian") // Новый Национальный Путь.) URL: <http://www.nnpr.su/stat/iv/grazhd.htm>

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

islama) the results showed descriptions of what Russian Muslims are, Islamic terrorism, Islamic movement in Uzbekistan and the Nation of Islam, as well as one article about right wing nationalist in Europe and metal bands that include lyrics anti-Islam in their songs in the same way some do against Christianity. It is important to mention the settings on the search engine of the computer used are set to show results among websites in the Russian Federation. Since discourse is not only limited to text, and pictures can be analyzed too, a second search was ran using the word “Wahhabis” and “Muslims” in English and Russian and the results showed that for Wahhabis in Russian, pictures of Chechen militias were common and in English, the results show a wider spectrum where terrorist groups like the Islamic State are frequent. For “Muslims” in Russian, pictures of praying men were dominant but also those that show Muslims as a threat intending to dominate the world. In English, the results for “Muslims” were similar. Since there is no way to confirm those pictures depicting Muslims as a threat were created by individuals or groups with a nationalist ideology, their analysis cannot be deepened.

In Russia, the main political discourse on Wahhabism and Islam has drawn a line that separates both terms from each other, one being considered an extremist movement or ideology and as such, is subject to ban or control by the authorities. Discourse by politicians relating Wahhabism to Islam is non-existent according to the information gathered and presented here. There are Russian academics who contribute with their works on Wahhabism to areas like history, politics and specially, security studies. These academics do a good job by demonstrating that followers of Wahhabism and Sufi Islam do not share the same canonical principles, pursue the same goals or use similar means to achieve them. Unfortunately, academic discourse is not very likely to reach out to the masses the same way a political or nationalist discourse can.

A nationalist discourse on Wahhabism and Islam was more difficult to find for this research and for two probable reasons: 1) it is the result of article 282 UK RF punishing any incitement of hatred towards religion, among others, that demotivates individuals or groups from speaking out their ideas, and those who do like 2) the discourse that exist by individuals like Alexandr Ivanov and his National Party of the People does not differentiate between Islamists or extremists and Muslims, for him, all Muslims are extremists according to the discourse analyzed here. There is also a discourse that links immigrants to Muslims and could have a bigger impact in the society, especially with

what is seen in the European Union and the flood of refugees and migrants from the Middle East.

CHAPTER 4. RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE ON WAHHABISM

This chapter will be divided in two sections, the first analyzes the Muslim discourse on Wahhabism and the second the Orthodox discourse on Wahhabism and Islam. Though information was available from both perspectives, it is necessary to mention that there is more information on Muslim discourse on Wahhabism than Orthodox. This could be the result of traditional Islam fighting Wahhabism through the spread of information by Russian scholars and religious leaders and, hence, Orthodox leaders have little participation on this public discourse. The information presented in the first section was retrieved from the website Islam Today, elibrary.ru, Islamvera and The Spiritual Administration of Muslims of St. Petersburg and the North-West of Russia website. Some attempts were made to get the opinion of Ravil Seyfedinov, Plenipotentiary representative of the mufti sheikh Ravil Gainutdin in the North-West Federal District, First Deputy Chairman of the Spiritual Board of Muslims of St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region (St. Petersburg Mukhtasibata) but unfortunately, he did not provide any answers to the questions given through private message in social media. The information on the second section was retrieved from the website Pravoslavie. The methodology in this subchapter also included the search online using keywords both in English and Russian “Wahhabi, Wahhabism in Russia, Christianity on Wahhabism in Russia, Orthodox on Wahhabism”.

4.1 Muslim Discourse

This section is disproportionately longer than the second part and this could be as the result of Muslim authorities interested in fighting and eliminating extremism in its ranks. As we explored in chapter III, there are some academics who have dedicated their studies to the analysis of Wahhabism and some of them could be Muslim, which contributes to the religious discourse against it from the highest levels in the Islamic tradition. Unlike academics, religious men support their discourse through the Qur’an and Sunnah, as well as other books like the Hadiths to teach how Wahhabism is a deviation of Islam that should be prohibited in the Russian Federation for its extremist canons. It would be appropriate to start this analysis with the clergy meeting that took place in Grozny in February 2016 and gathered the representatives of Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan a resolution against extremism in these three republics was adopted.¹³⁵ The

¹³⁵ Uspanov, Beslan, Magomed Edilsultanov.

participation of the Head of the Chechen government Ramzan Kadyrov was relevant as a religious man. In this meeting, the discourse of "us vs them" was a constant, like the words by Ibrahim Belkhoroev who is a clergy authority of Ingushetia and referred to those who in 1991 took part of extremist demonstrations in Chechnya (Wahhabis) as "the people who are trying to drive a wedge between our nations, and we will not allow them to do this."¹³⁶. Arbi Habziev, imam of the central Mosque "Heart of Chechnya" in Grozny also gave some words on this:

...Those who are enemies of the Highest, of our prophet and of our statutes are enemies of Islam, thereafter our enemies. We should not even sit next to them, nor even to glance in their direction. If one of our kind dares to contact such - we renounce them.¹³⁷

This declaration is relevant because Wahhabis differentiate from Shi'ites in some statutes like the worship of the prophet or saints¹³⁸, leaving no room for doubts on who the "enemy" here is. It is also evident the decisiveness of some clergy members to make clear the line between radicals and the rest of Muslims in the region and the will of these, to fight extremists. R. Kadyrov, as a Muslim leader and the son of ex-Mufti of Chechnya Akhmat Kadyrov, gave some declarations that are direct and effusive:

What were these people (Wahhabis)? At first, they showed themselves as generous good-hearted people who would not leave the mosque. As soon as they started crowding, immediately began snapping, and then killing. (...) I brought him (Chumakov) here. When you say "brought" - he also does not like. I was offended at him after his statements that it is not possible to perform *dua* at the tombs of the saints, supposedly this is pointless. I asked him for an explanation.

Kadyrov referred to the conflicts with imam Khamzat Chumakov and Isa Tsechoev¹³⁹ who have been related to Wahhabism in Ingushetia¹⁴⁰. Both imams have been accused of having an extremist ideology and spreading it in the region.

Today in our republic there are people who listen to their speeches, believing that this is true. The Chechens never used the expression "Ahlu sunna valma jama'a."

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Radjabov R. A., P. 111

¹³⁹ Khamzat Chumakov and Isa Tsechoev are imams of the mosque Ali-Yurt in Nazranovsky, Ingushetia

¹⁴⁰ "Isa Tsechoev" 15 March 2017 // Kavkazkiy Uzel ("Иса Цечоев" // Кавказский Узел) <<http://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/299102/>> (date of retrieval: 18.04.2017)

We follow the sunnah, the tariqa. A person who does not know either the Sharia, or the Tariqa, is a vain person. Why am I saying this? You, the descendants of Quraysh and the followers of our regulations, are here today, and you have a logical question: "Will there be such situation in Chechnya?"

I will reply: "I swear to you, Isa Tsechoev is a demon who is funded by the Muslim Brotherhood." And if one of his supporters tries to preach in one of our mosques, one time, maybe, he will, but for the second-time, his head will fly off his shoulders.

With the previous statements, we see that not only Kadyrov is a political leader but also, he positions himself as a prominent Muslim figure in the region of the Northern Caucasus who, using historic references to the armed conflict against radicals in Chechnya in the 90's, promotes zero tolerance to Wahhabism or other extremist current of Islam foreign to the region. Moving on to the analysis of the resolution adopted in this meeting, it can be divided in the three sections, the first one that is an introduction, body and conclusion:¹⁴¹

In the name of the Merciful and Merciful Allah!

Praise be to Allah Almighty for the innumerable benefits, among which is that He created us, His slaves, Muslims and followers of the Sunnah of the greatest of the people - Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

Glory be to the Lord of the Worlds, who sent down to our Caucasian land the righteous and God-fearing Sufis and Sheikhs, thanks to whose high moral and religious principles and deep faith in Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia, true Islam spread and survived.

We should always be grateful to our elders and awuiyas for their religious way - tarikat Kadariya and Naqshbandiyya, for the spiritual heritage, the blessings of which we now have the opportunity to enjoy.

Our righteous sheiks dedicated their lives to the cause of religion, its reports in the purest form. Everything that contradicts the truth of this path is an innovation that is inadmissible in Islam.

¹⁴¹ Uspanov, Beslan, Magomed Edilsultanov

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) left behind the Sunnah, which the Muslims should adhere to. And innovations cannot be embedded in the basis of Islam and its canons.

The introduction of five main paragraphs gives recognition to God and the prophet, complying with some of the basic precepts in Sufism, it then identifies those main regions (or actors) that agreed to protect religious principles and faith in their traditional form. The fourth paragraph starts to show the direction of the resolution by calling any “innovation” contradicting what regional sheikhs proclaimed, inadmissible. Wahhabism can be considered an innovation in two senses, first, Wahhabism part of the fourth Islamic Hanbali school, that emerged in 855, in contrast with the Hanafi school established in 767 that is mainly more popular in this region¹⁴² and the second, as Wahhabism was imported by jihadi fighters in the 90’s. The fifth paragraph continues with the rejection of any innovations.

We Muslims are obliged not only to avoid innovations in religion, but also to resist their development. For Islam - a whole religion, not requiring additions or changes, is the religion of Allah.

We, Muslims, followers of the Kadariya and Naqshbandi tariqas, condemn terrorism in any of its manifestations, recognize Wahhabism as a terrorist movement acting in the pursuit of its ideology directed against the basic laws of the Sharia for the purpose of secession of the Muslim community and weakening of the unity of Muslims around the world, acting with the name of Allah in the name of preserving the true values of Islam and follow the pious Sunnah of the Messenger of the Most High (peace and blessings be upon him).

We affirm that Wahhabism, like other currents, aiming to crush the shipyard of Islamic norms and the integrity of the Muslim Ummah, which do not recognize the seriousness and compulsion to observe certain important aspects of the religious course, including the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) Welcomes) as part of the Sunnah, are extremist-terrorist in nature and cause tangible harm to the Islamic world.

We, the Murida of Kadariya and Naqshbandiyya of the tarikat, are unanimous in the opinion that Wahhabism is dangerous for Muslim society; that in the Russian

¹⁴² Radjabov R. A., P. 112

Muslim ummah there is no place for those ideologies that contradict religion and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), Islam, its foundations and those who truly follow it, target the truth of religion, trampling on its values.

As for individuals or organizations that directly or indirectly sympathize with or support Wahhabism and similar trends, we openly declare that we are ready to fight against this threat to Islam in every way.

In this section, the body, we see five paragraphs in which four start with “we”, two of them with the construction “we Muslims” that reinforces the adopters’ of this resolution position against Wahhabis or “the others”. In the first paragraph the word “innovation” is repeated and the insistence of rejecting any changes to Islam. The second paragraph is clearer to recognize Wahhabism as a terrorist movement, that uses the name of God to pursue their objectives and the third paragraph, exposes it as extremist for its aim at destroying Islam through the rejection of basic religious principles. The fourth and fifth paragraphs demonstrate unity in the Russian Muslim society and its communal rejection to any ideology that contradicts or harms Islam, continuing the “us vs them” construction.

In connection with the foregoing, we, the followers of the Kadariya and Naqshbandi tarikat:

1. Condemn:

- terrorism and extremism in the face of Wahhabism;
- any decision regarding religion and its canons, taken without due consideration of prominent Islamic scholars;
- Any innovations that contradict the basis of religion and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him);

2. Do not recognize:

- the actions of the pseudo-Salafist councils (Wahhabis), carrying out its activities in any region of the world, in particular in the territory of the Russian Federation, which takes any decisions on religion and religious terms, even if this council includes at least one pseudo-Salafist;

- as well as decisions taken with regard to Islam and Islamic norms by the religious council of pseudo-Salafist (organization), we will consider invalid;

3. Deny:

- decisions, decisions and general provisions on religious values, religious beliefs, Sufism and Tariqa,

And religion in general, adopted by the religious council of the pseudo-Salafist (organization) operating in the world, including the Russian Federation, without considering the opinions of scientists, descendants and followers of the Kadariya and Naqshbandi tarikat;

4. Condemn:

- Representatives of virids who enter the religious council, where members are pseudo-Salafist (Wahhabis) or at least one of them, then after the adoption of this resolution, he is not from us, and we renounce any of his affairs;

5. Recognize:

- only debate and discussions with pseudo-Salafist (Wahhabis), in order to prove their erroneous ideology in the Sharia, and to call them to account according to Sharia law;

Based on the above arguments, we, the undersigned, fully support this resolution!
May Allah strengthen us on the true path!

The conclusion lists five actions that include the condemnation of decisions involving religion and canons that ignore Islamic scholars, representatives who take part of councils where some or all members are Wahhabis and the not recognition of Wahhabi councils and their decisions. In these five actions, the words "decisions" and "councils" are constant and part of the discourse that promotes its denial. Perhaps, to understand this strong position against Wahhabis in the region, to the already analyzed history of the two Chechen wars, we have to add the perception and knowledge Akhmat Kadyrov had of them and that very likely influenced what Ramzan Kadyrov today stands for.

Mankiev mentions A. Kadyrov had great knowledge of Islam and its history, having studied in the madrassa Mir Arab and the Tashkent Islamic Institute, hence “he knew very well the danger Wahhabis, their ideology and political goals posed”¹⁴³ and he numbers three goals A. Kadyrov considered Wahhabis had in the region:

¹⁴³ Mankiev, A. A. P. 272

1) rejection of the Northern Caucasus from Russia, 2) the liquidation of the Chechen Republic by being absorbed by an Islamic state from sea to sea, they intended to create, 3) de-chechenization of Chechens, the deprivation of their national – cultural and religious traditions, their Arabization, the way Wahhabis understood it.¹⁴⁴

The issue of a Chechen identity was relevant for A. Kadyrov, this is understandable by crossing the historic information previously analyzed and see how during the first Chechen war the fighting was more motivated by nationalism and the search of a Chechen identity after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, ideas A. Kadyrov shared with Dudayev. He was appointed Mufti of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria in 1995, and from this date up to 1999 when the second conflict started, the fighting had taken a different direction thanks to the mujahedeen who came to the region from abroad, stayed and intended to establish a Caliphate, situation he noticed as Mankiev proposes, “In every possible way, they promoted an Arab lifestyle, invented for Chechens by I. Umarov, M. Udugov, Khattab and others. The Taliban Afghanistan was taken as a reference of Islamic statehood”¹⁴⁵, also “the Heads of Chechen Wahhabis established close contact with Usama bin Laden, who generously financed all projects to transform Chechnya into the tip of a spear aimed at the heart of Russia”¹⁴⁶. But maybe one of A. Kadyrov’s the most controversial quotes in Mankiev’s work is “they (Wahhabis) considered (the Chechen nation) as cattle, as herd” putting in evidence the supposed religious supremacy Wahhabis consider they have over other Muslims who do not adhere to their principles, therefore, must be changed. This is directly linked to his thought of ignorance and fanaticism as a tool they used to maintain their power over Chechens, “ignorance and fanaticism was imposed on our people. Because the ignorant and fanatics are easy to manage”¹⁴⁷, words that can be seen as an attempt to delegitimize Wahhabism by naming it “ignorance and fanaticism” and the relationship between the dominant and the dominated.

Finally, Mankiev concludes with A. Kadyrov’s description of Wahhabism¹⁴⁸ as follows:

Wahhabism has multi-faces. It is dressed in clothes of “pure Islam”, jihad, *gazavat*, the world Islamic brotherhood. But, in fact Wahhabi “scientist” are

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. P. 272

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. P. 273

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. P. 274

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. P. 273

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. P. 274

political adventurists and religious extremists, a hotbed for international terrorism and banditry. The core of Wahhabism is religious intolerance and the ignorance of all national aspects of any nation in favor of an Islamic International.

With this analysis, we can conclude that A. Kadyrov's discourse on Wahhabism managed to identify the danger it posed in that moment for Chechnya and the neighboring republics. His discourse puts the national identity of Chechnya and its' people's traditions in the center of his defense, and this has been kept and reproduced by the current Head of government R. Kadyrov.

Another figure to take into consideration in the discourse against Wahhabism is the role of Sheikh mufti Zhafar Ponchaev. who was the chairman of the organization Spiritual Board of Muslims of St. Petersburg and North-Western region of Russia and mufti of St. Petersburg Cathedral Mosque until his death, among other positions, according to information from the Spiritual Board of Muslims of St. Petersburg and North-Western region of Russia website he "led an irreconcilable and principled struggle against the reactionary current "Wahhabism" and its followers. He repeatedly conducted mass events, explaining the perniciousness and fallacy of the theory of Wahhabism."¹⁴⁹. Unfortunately, his speech against Wahhabism and its followers was not available online but that does not invalid his inclusion in this study as his position according to one of the organizations he presided, was of antagonism to Wahhabism. The current Mufti of Saint-Petersburg Ravil Pancheev when asked about the explosion in the metro of Saint-Petersburg in April 2017, and how the suicide attacker had links to extremist groups through recruiters he answered:

The recruiters do not go to the Mosque. We are their competition and enemies. Just remember, how many imams and muftis have been killed in the fight against Wahhabis. We cannot know them all. We do not have a network of agents. We are not a punitive body and cannot reach out to every street, house or basement. Here it is necessary a comprehensive work with law enforcement agencies.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Mufti Ponchaev Zh. N. // The Spiritual Administration of Muslims of St. Petersburg and the North-West of Russia (Муфтий Пончаев Ж.Н. // Духовное управление мусульман Санкт-Петербурга и Северо-Западного региона России.) <<http://dum-spb.ru/muftij-ponchaev-zh-n>> (date of retrieval: 22.04.2017)

¹⁵⁰ Oleksyuk, Ivan. "St. Petersburg mufti about the" bearded "from the metro Ilyas Nikitin: What he wanted, he also found" // Komsomolskaya Pravda. (Олексюк, Иван. "Муфтий Петербурга о «бородаче» из метро Ильесе Никитине: Что хотел, то и нашел" // Комсомольская Правда) <<http://www.spb.kp.ru/daily/26664.7/3685159/>> (date of retrieval 22.04.17)

In this declaration, it is possible to see many similarities to the resolution adopted in February 2016 in Grozny with the repetition of “we” several times. This construction and style only reinforces the attempts to differentiate followers of traditional Islam from Wahhabis. Though, the words by Mufti Pancheev are not as sharp as those by R. Kadyrov, he does create a cloud of negativity around Wahhabis by labeling them as the “enemy” and “competition” as well as using an indirect wording to “murderers” by saying “how many imams and muftis have been killed in the fight against Wahhabis”. Three of the seven sentences in this paragraph state how they (the Muslim traditional authorities) cannot do much the fight against extremism and Wahhabism, therefore, cooperation with the government is necessary. This proves that, the previously analyzed relationship between Muslim leaders and politicians does not represent the Islamization of Russian politics but rather a closer cooperation that benefits both sides as, preventing extremism and radicalization of Muslims is crucial in fighting discrimination against the entire Muslim population and for the State, in preventing the growth of far-right nationalist movements that promote ethnocentrism.

Mufti of Moscow, Albir Krganov, has written about Wahhabism in his work "Some misconceptions of Wahhabis - the history of emergence"¹⁵¹, unfortunately, this material was not available online as any other declarations similar to those by Mufti Pancheev. Though he has not made any considerable statement on Wahhabism, Mufti of Tatarstan, Kamil Samigullin made clear his position towards Islamists, in 2013:

We will never dialogue with those, who advocate terrorism, we will not dialogue with them...my task is to unite Muslims and develop science. In our library, there are books on all sciences. We can solve any question with a cup of tea¹⁵².

The lack of a tougher and more precise position against Wahhabism in Tatarstan could be criticized as there have been reports of a “Wahhabization” of Tatarstan in the last years.¹⁵³ In this short sentence, Samigullin presents two different contradicting ideas, the second deviates the attention on the first. In the first sentence, he follows the same construction seen in other discourses analyzed here, “we” and “them”, with the difference

¹⁵¹ What happens in the Muslim Ummah of Russia? 15 April 2016 // Biznes Online. (Что происходит в мусульманской умме России?) // Бизнес Online) URL: <https://m.business-gazeta.ru/article/307847> (date of retrieval 22.04.2017)

¹⁵² Karimova, Karina. "Kamil Samigullin:" Any question we can solve for a cup of tea (Каримова, Карина. Камилль Самигуллин: "Любой вопрос мы можем решить за чашкой чая) 18 April 2013 // Tatcenter URL: <http://www.tatcenter.ru/article/124377/> (date of retrieval: 23.04.2017)

¹⁵³ Ivshina, Olga. Radical Islam raises tension in Russia's Tatarstan. August 9, 2012 // BBC. URL: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-19179399> (date of retrieval 08.05.2017)

that he does not mention Wahhabis but “those, who advocate terrorism”. In the construction “to unite Muslims and develop science”, the message should be seen as uniting those two parts he addressed first, “we” and “them” as he probably perceives the other, as lost in their faith and through science (the proper study of Islam and Russian Muslim academics) they can “get back on track”. The last sentence, “we can solve any question with a cup of tea”, gives the impression he is open to dialogue to educate those who are willing to be educated, which can mark the difference between terrorist (not entitled to dialogue) and radicals (who can still be changed).

In August 2016 took place the World Conference of Muslim Scientists in Grozny and mufti of Chechnya, Salakh Mezhiev commented to some Russian media about the religious order achieved in the conference where Wahhabism was one of the topics:

We adopted a fatwa (religious order) and final resolution, as well as an appeal to Russian President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin that on the basis of these documents and our common consent Wahhabis were recognized as sectarians and banned at the legislative level.¹⁵⁴

This declaration follows the same discourse used in the resolution adopted in the clergy meeting in Grozny in February that year in which Wahhabism is referred to as a “current, ideology, terrorist movement”. Hence, based on the definition of extremism provided in the Federal law to Counter extremist activities in article 1, one of the characteristics of extremism is the public justification of terrorism and other terrorist activities¹⁵⁵, like Wahhabis do according to the declarations of some religious leaders and scholars and so it should be banned. Additionally, in an attempt at de-attaching the concept of jihad from a negative perception in the media, that relates it to terrorist activities of Wahhabis, mufti Mezhiev mentioned to Interfax:

I would urge all of them (the media) not to do it, because otherwise, firstly, we recognize that these people are on the path of true jihad, and this is not so.

¹⁵⁴ The Mufti of Chechnya called for the legislative prohibition of Wahhabism in Russia. 4 October 2016. (Муфтий Чечни призвал законодательно запретить ваххабизм в России) // INTERFAX URL: <http://www.interfax.ru/russia/531075> (date of retrieval 20.04.2017)

¹⁵⁵ Federal Law of July 25, 2002 N 114-FZ "On Counteracting Extremist Activity" (In the Editors of the Federal Law No. 236 of July 21, 2014) // The National Antiterrorist Committee. (Федеральный Закон От 25 Июля 2002 Г. N 114-ФЗ "О Противодействии Экстремистской Деятельности" (В Редакции Федерального Закона От 21 Июля 2014 Г. № 236) // Национальный Антитеррористический Комитет.) URL: <http://nac.gov.ru/zakonodatelstvo/zakony/federalnyy-zakon-ot-25-iyulya-2002-g-n-114-fz-o.html> (date of retrieval: 30.04.2017)

Secondly, jihad is a means to an end, and our goal is to adhere to the norms of Islam. So, these people should be called "Shaytans" (demons).¹⁵⁶

This is a constant topic of discussion among Muslims and non-Muslims in the West as confusion created especially by the media in using the word jihad as a reference to an "Islamic Holy war" gave it a negative meaning.¹⁵⁷ Bakker's definition of jihad has been explored in chapter I, additionally Nurutdinov also stresses equating jihad and terrorism does not lead to dialogue, as they are unrelated.¹⁵⁸

Moving on to the analysis of discourse on Wahhabism in websites of Muslim organisms and groups, we see in the website of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Tatarstan, Wahhabism is described as a "Muslim Protestantism", where the author also addresses the necessity of recognizing Sufism as the alternative to stopping the spread of Wahhabism in Russia¹⁵⁹. It is relevant to notice the comparison with Protestantism as it started as a movement in the Catholic Church that sought to make drastic changes to ecclesiological structures and theological principles but ended up breaking from it.¹⁶⁰ Because Protestants considered the Catholic Church had deviated from Biblical teachings and fallen into corruption, example of this is the selling of indulgencies that benefitted the wealthy, they can be considered a radical current in Christianity in the sense it intended to go back to Biblical roots.¹⁶¹ This comparison is inaccurate and should be done carefully as, Protestantism emerged in response to corruption practices in the Catholic Church and today, is one of the major religions in countries like Germany and the United States, and state religion in others like Norway. These countries have high levels of human development and functioning economies; therefore, this comparison would give Wahhabis the tools to legitimize their ideology portraying it as a path to development. The website "Islamvera" has a more detailed description of Wahhabis stating:

¹⁵⁶ The Mufti of Chechnya called for the legislative prohibition of Wahhabism in Russia. 4 October 2016. (Муфтий Чечни призвал законодательно запретить ваххабизм в России) // INTERFAX URL:

<http://www.interfax.ru/russia/531075> (date of retrieval 20.04.2017)

¹⁵⁷ Hassan, Amin. What Is This Thing Called Jihad or Islamic Holy War? 12 November 2015 // Huffington Post. URL: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/imam-hassan-a-amin/what-is-jihad_b_8535930.html (date of retrieval 20.04.2017)

¹⁵⁸ Nurutdinov, I. I. P. 57

¹⁵⁹ Bakhrevsky, Evgeniy. "Sufism Against Wahhabism. Traditional Medicine Against Radicalism or Another Type of Radicalism?" (Бахревский, Евгений. "Суфизм Против Ваххабизма. Традиционное Лекарство Против Радикализма Или Другой Вид Радикализма?") 16.02.2012 // DUMRT URL: http://dumrt.ru/ru/articles/mm-islam/mm-islam_1314.html (date of retrieval: 23.04.2017)

¹⁶⁰ Religion Library: Protestantism. // Patheos. URL: <http://www.patheos.com/Library/Protestantism> (date of retrieval: 30.04.2017)

¹⁶¹ The Reformation. // History. URL: <http://www.history.com/topics/reformation> (date of retrieval: 30.04.2017)

A Wahhabi is a member of the Wahhabi sect with a known conviction, that Allah has physical attributes, as well as other deviations from the truth. They, for example, claim that Allah is a body (let the Almighty save us from such a delusion!), that our Creator has hands, feet and sits in the Throne. They interpret the verses of the Quran in their own way, ignoring the interpretations of the greatest scientists. And many non-Muslims, deciding that Wahhabism is an Islamic dogma, turn away from Islam.¹⁶²

Breaking this definition in three parts makes clearer the intentions of the author. The first two sentences put in a simple way the believes Wahhabis worship, according to the author, here also is visible the intention to make a mockery of it by stating it is a “delusion!”. The third sentence is more moderate than the first two in its language and coincides with the resolution adopted in the clergy meeting in Grozny in February 2016, where it is stated they (the clergy) will deny any decisions made by Wahhabis "without considering the opinions of scientists, descendants and followers of the Kadariya and Naqshbandi tarikat" and condemn "any decision regarding religion and its canons, taken without due consideration of prominent Islamic scholars”, reinforcing the fact Wahhabis in the pursue of their own interpretation of the verses, ignore scholars and scientist. The third sentence is a very simple explanatory assertion that Wahhabism is not part of Islam. As a conclusion, we can say this definition is targeted at non-Muslims or recent converts because of its simple language that tries to delegitimize Wahhabism.

The same discourse continues in other descriptions of Wahhabis in this website with phrases like "the main strategy of Wahhabis is to present their delusions as a true Islamic faith, like those who sell wine grape juice disguised as wine.”¹⁶³ And to the precept of the materialization of God following a literal interpretation of the verses, it states:

It is the assimilation of Allah to objects (claiming Allah has hands). Sometimes they add: “this hand, is worthy of His greatness”, or: “He has a hand, but how is it: big or small, what color or how it looks like, we don’t know”. This is stupid. If you say: “He has a hand”, this is already an assimilation.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Who are Wahhabis? (Кто такие ваххабиты?) // Islamvera. URL: <http://islamvera.ru/islam/rasskazhi-mne-ob-islame/mankhadzh/kto-takie-vaxhabity/> (date of retrieval 30.04.2017)

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

This paragraph not only exposes one of the differences in the interpretation Wahhabis and Sufis give to the verses but it also is explicit in what the author thinks of the Wahhabi believe. The website “Islam Today” describes Wahhabism as a “radical religious – political movement” with five basic dogmas:

(1)Strict adherence to tawhid - unconditional faith in one God, which they represent in anthropomorphic form (in the form of a creature occupying space in space, having organs and parts of the body), (2)complete denial of any innovation in religion, (3)criticism of collective taklid - following a single madhhab (School of recognized, traditional theologians who explain the Quran and the Sunna), (4)understanding of the Salaf in the interpretation of the names of the Almighty and (5)all Muslims who do not share their beliefs, Wahhabis consider stray.¹⁶⁵

The first dogma proposed in this website reinforces the definition of Wahhabi in “Islamvera” that includes physical attributes to God. Denial of innovations and the ignorance of scientists or scholars, experts in Islam are a constant element here that is present in other pieces of speeches, definitions and resolutions analyzed in this work. In this definition, in contrast with the one in Islamvera, the believe of Wahhabis that all those who do not align with their ideology, are wrong.

This subchapter can be summarized by concluding that among the Muslim population in Russia, it is well-known what Wahhabism and its followers are thanks to the work of religious leaders, scholars and scientists. Wahhabism is considered an ideology, deviation or current of Islam that is based on dogmas that contradict Sufism and the traditional religious schools. They give a literal interpretation to the verses in the Quran and the Sunna, and do not recognize the knowledge of Muslim scholars and scientists, which may portray them as unwise and together with their opposition to innovations in religion, makes the perfect combination to be considered radicals. According to Muslim religious leaders, it is this radicalism that leads to extremism as they think of those who do not follow their dogmas as sinners or infidels.

4. 2 Orthodox Christian Discourse

The information available on Orthodox Christian discourse on Wahhabism was very limited. Only one source of information can be considered reliable, hence it is

¹⁶⁵ Wahhabism in the Islamic world (Ваххабизм в Исламском мире) // Islam Today. URL: <http://islam-today.ru/radical-movements/> (date of retrieval: 01.05.2017)

included in the analysis, the author and creator of the website “Pravoslavie”, Alexandr Apadshakhov, has written an article displayed on the section "Analysis of global problems", titled "Wahhabis - Jihad against Russia". As an introduction, Apadshakhov considers Wahhabism is a current of Islam that is coordinated with the West to achieve the final goal of converting all the Post-Soviet space population to Islam and at the same time, reduce it to 20 - 30 million. He includes some descriptions on the similarities between Orthodox Christians and Wahhabis, perceived by the first and traditional Muslims.

"Orthodox Christians who have met with "Wahhabis" always notice certain customs, outwardly similar to Christian, distinguishing "Wahhabis" from traditional Muslims. This is also noticed by traditional Muslims, who often take Orthodox for "Wahhabis" in their homes. So, one Caucasian Muslim traditionalist, having heard that Orthodox greet each other by touching their right cheeks, that Orthodox priests wear long hair, and that it is considered unbecoming for Orthodox Christians to play cards, smoke, etc." ¹⁶⁶

It is possible to observe some of these similarities in other even more conservative religious denominations outside of Russia that, in an attempt to “go back on track” to the origin of their creed, look into the "roots" of it to find a purer interpretation of their beliefs. Some of these may fall into extremism, intolerance or a perceived superiority towards other religious and non-religious people, example of this can be the Faithful World Baptist Church in and the Westboro Baptist Church whose leaders openly speak against sexual minorities and other religious groups like Catholics, Muslims and Orthodox Christians. On a local and more recent case, the Supreme court’s decision to declare Jehovah Witnesses an extremist organization and forbid their practices and activities in Russia came as a response to fighting extremism, as according to the words of experts from the legal center for the protection of human rights and dignity of the individual of the Russian Association of Centers for the Study of Religion and Sects (RATSIRS),¹⁶⁷ “the Methods of suppression of people's will (by Jehovah Witnesses), overt mental

¹⁶⁶ Apadshakhov, Alexandr. Wahhabis - Jihad against Russia. Analysis of Global Problems. (Ападшахов, Александр. Ваххабиты - джихад против России. Анализ глобальных проблем) // Pravoslavie. URL: <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/analit/global/vah.htm> (date of retrieval 08.05.2017)

¹⁶⁷ RATSIRS (РАЦИРС) // Antisekta.ru URL: <http://www.antisekta.ru/Menu-01/Region/01-region.html> (date of retrieval 08.05.2017)

manipulation, are similar to those used in openly terrorist organizations.”¹⁶⁸ This resolution may also come as a response to the Strategy of National Security of the Russian Federation of 2015 in its task of protecting the Russian people from foreign religious intolerance groups (subchapter 1.3.1).

Apadshakhov’s article is divided into six sections, each of them provide an analysis of Wahhabism in Russia through a historical approach, highlighting a military preparation more characteristic of the mujahedeen. On the first section, “*Wahhabi dogmatic*” he describes very superficially some of the precepts of Wahhabism like monotheism and the belief in Sharia. The second section “*The standard scheme of their actions*”, he offers an approach to understanding how Wahhabis work their strategy to gain adepts stating first that they will “gradually seize territory with simultaneous separation of small parts in different places”. In the third section, “*Who created the Wahhabis*” it is crucial to notice Adapshakhov’s version of a conspiracy between some Middle Eastern governments and the West, specifically England, to destabilize the Soviet Union through the use of the Muslim factor in the 70's, similar to Popenkov's thesis analyzed in chapter III.

The most widespread non-communist force of the Soviet empire was Islam. It was decided the control of the post-Soviet reality was possible through a controlled Islamization. After that, experts developed a programme for the movement of international fundamentalism to the Middle East, the territory of the USSR satellites, the Balkans and the Soviet Union itself. The main requirements for the new movement were manageability, ease of distribution and self-financing. For several years, the group together with representatives of the Arab elites developed the program.¹⁶⁹

He suggests in the fourth section, “*Training course - where and how are these Wahhabis made*” Wahhabi recruiters will be discreet with propaganda and give financial support Islamic organizations, create a network of supporters with this economic impulse and studies abroad (on Wahhabi camps or Jamaats). He gives special dedication to the

¹⁶⁸ Sectologists called the ban on "Jehovah's Witnesses" an act of justice and humanity (Сектоведы назвали запрет "Свидетелей Иеговы" актом справедливости и гуманности) // Interfax. April 24, 2017. URL: <http://www.interfax.ru/russia/559742> (date of retrieval 08.05.2017)

¹⁶⁹ Apadshakhov, Alexandr. Wahhabis - Jihad against Russia. Analysis of Global Problems. (Ападшахов, Александр. Ваххабиты - джихад против России. Анализ глобальных проблем) // Pravoslavie. URL: <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/analit/global/vah.htm> (date of retrieval 08.05.2017)

description of these camps, as on his view, military training in Jamaats is the means that will help Wahhabis win the battle against government forces (Russian) sometimes, with the assistance of NATO. By excessively focusing on the description of "jamaats", the author excludes all other canonic and sociopolitical aspects of Wahhabism. He does not specify not all Wahhabis receive camp training, hence for him, all Wahhabis are trained in Afghanistan, Algeria, Libya, Lebanon and other countries. Fifth and six sections, "*Recruitment*" and "*From rookie to emir - training*", Apadshakhov stresses all the levels of "academic" preparation of what he considers, is the path all Wahhabis go through. He mentions the Islamic Institute "Kavkaz" in Serzhen-Yurt as one of the locations this education starts. His conclusion is not very clear as he relates Wahhabism with the Islamization of the country, and how it could release terrible consequences for Orthodox Christians:

For so many residents of Russia, completely indifferent to the Faith, "Wahhabism", oddly enough, may seem a boon - a substitute for the "order" that was under the Communists. But for Orthodox Christians, the very real prospect of Islamization of Russia can only mean new monstrous persecution.¹⁷⁰

Apadshakhov's analysis is limited to the explanation of only one part of Wahhabism, in the world not in Russia, which is the military training some warlords receive and the process of educating recruits into the ideology. If Apadshakhov's intention is to inform Orthodox Christians what Wahhabism is, it would serve him well to provide a more exhausting analysis of the canonic differences between Wahhabis and followers of traditional Islam in Russia, focus his analysis in the Russian context and broaden his comments on the target of Wahhabis, who are not only the Russian security forces or religious groups but also other Muslims who are also fighting against the spread of this extremist ideology.

Wahhabism is a constant part of the discourse in clergy meetings in the republics of the Northern Caucasus with Chechen religious leaders at the top of the discussions, this probably thanks to the unfortunate events of the 90's to which they were the first front, hence gained experience and knowledge of it before other regions. Despite news reports of a growing Islamic radicalism in Tatarstan, prominent Muslim leaders in the region have not made considerable public declarations on the topic. In other cities, outside

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

of Muslim majority republics, Muslim leaders are well aware of what Wahhabism is and the dangers it may pose to the Muslim community and take measures to counter-balance their expansion and influence. There is a lack of information on Wahhabism by Orthodox Christian sources as during this research no declaration by prominent religious leaders was found. This could be positive as it will not contribute to religious conflicts by giving inaccurate information on the other side, without completely understanding their canons, structure and problems. It can also be negative as some Orthodox Christians may only listen to the media's discourse on Islamic radicalism, put all Muslims into that label and themselves into the identity of Christianity in conflict with Islam, something Orthodox leaders could prevent.

CONCLUSION

As seen throughout this analysis, three out of the five sectors of the Russian society with access to spreading their discourse and shape reality do not consider or relate Wahhabism to Islam, of the other two, one has limited possibilities thanks to the existent legislation to protect the multinational and multi-religious composition of the State and against extremism and the other, lacks any reference to Wahhabism and Islam probably as the lack of knowledge on either concept and not to interfere in issues that may cause inter-religious conflicts. Discourse not only serves the function of communicating people on their basic needs as part of society, but it also shapes reality around us in an always evolving cycle that creates new understanding and ways to see life and human interactions. What we express, and what we omit, through text, pictures, and behavior delivers a message to the others, and depending on our intentions can bring closer or get farther individuals to make them part of our group or push them away to be the antithesis of ourselves. This contributes to the emergence of labels or stereotypes of those who were pushed, shaping the perception we have of them (the other). This relation was explored and demonstrated with considerable sufficient academic material that supports the idea of discourse as the source of every perception constructed by society. Perception leads to profiling, as in the process of identity formation, once the dominant group who pushed away the undesired individuals, has completed their self-identification they will reinforce the known and unwanted attributes of the dominated and use them to single them out in a crowd. This is where the importance of discourse lies in the process of profiling, as in order to improve this technique in security practices, it is necessary to understand that some of the socially constructed attributes of the profiled, might be inaccurate as they respond to the perception the dominant have of the dominated. These socially constructed attributes may be exaggerations of reality as the result of the process of identity formation.

As explored in chapter I, media has the most important role in disseminating the socially constructed perception or profile the dominant want on the dominated thanks to the access they have to propagate their discourse. The intentions could be many but since the relation between discourse and power is crucial for those who use it as a tool of change or continuity, it is evident that using discourse to profile the dominated can help boost the identity of the dominant and get support from those he or she see as equals and who perceive themselves as part of that group. As discourse is the result of social legitimization of understanding and knowledge, it gives new meanings to the known

reality that can be used for policy making. When the dominant understands and takes advantage of this, an ideology is born, that can be consecrated if the dominant hold or gain political power.

The previous knowledge can be useful in understanding the presidential campaigns in the United States in 2016, and France and the Netherlands in 2017, where in all, the immigrant and Muslim population were a target of the anti-system dominant candidates with political power. Discourses by Donald Trump, Marine Le Pen and Geert Wilders contained elements of identity formation and profiling of the other based on primitive physical and non-physical attributes socially constructed through the perception of immigrants and Muslims in the American, Dutch and French collective memory. The theory of extremization through discourse can be implemented in the analysis of the rise of nationalism or the far-left in the United States in this same period, as the words current president Trump would give in his rallies, pushed "undesired" individuals out of his and his supporters' utopian society forcing them into hiding or join a counter-movement of resistance. With presidential election in Russia in 2018 it is yet to be seen if the group identity formation formula used by the anti-system candidates in France, the Netherlands and the U.S. will be replicated, if so, it will be worth of analysis how successful it will be among all groups of the society in Russia and how much acceptance or rejection it will have among the ethnic majority groups.

Without knowledge of the social composition of the Russian population and the role Muslims of all origins play in it even in the highest political spheres, and the proper analysis of the references to them in public political, academic and religious discourses, non-Russian analysts would fall for the reality presented in the American, Dutch and French scenarios previously exposed. Not only this, but also knowledge on the existence of legal tools and an active fight against extremism from all types and denominations, can provide early signs of the success this discourse can possibly have as studied in chapter I, there are limitations to public expression of messages that promote superiority of ethnic or religious groups. The intention of these laws should not only be seen as to protect a socially responsible freedom of speech by limiting offenses or attacks on other individuals or groups but aimed at protecting a moderate speech and peaceful coexistence without the intervention of foreign actors or models of policy making where a underregulated speech can result in hate speech, physical and verbal attacks, extremization, radicalization and violent crimes with bloody outcomes. Additionally, we should not ignore the

possibility of some actors using these legal frameworks on their favor to censor a speech or discourse that is not positive to their interests, nevertheless, since this was not the direction of this research, it was not included here. This legal framework has demonstrated its applicability in fighting extremism in Russia with the recent outlaw of the Jehovah Witnesses' activities, criticized by Western governments but that complies with the Russian law and accepted definition of extremism and extremist organizations and activities, which on the same basis, Muslim leaders have asked the Russian authorities outlaw Wahhabism.

The Russian Federation, as an multinational and multi-confessional state, is composed of over 200 national groups whose major religions are considered to be Buddhism, Islam, Judaism and Orthodox Christianity, among others, including non-religious affiliations. It is because of this that the legal framework in the Federal Constitution and other documents part of this analysis are important in dictating how a good relation between so many different groups could maintain peace. In regard to this, and because of the constructed idea of Islam being an enemy of Western civilization, characterized by Christian European values, that its understanding takes higher relevance. With this not only we understand that in Russia unlike countries like France, the Netherlands or the U.S., it is not usual to find politicians or religious leaders of other denominations openly attacking Islam or its adepts, but we can also understand the relation between Russia and Muslim majority countries in the Middle East. Definitely, geopolitical and economic factors play a huge part in the relationship between every state but also the perception of having a shared identity plays an important role in the closeness of states in the Middle East have towards Moscow. As seen throughout the chapters, the Northern Caucasus and Tatarstan are regions of Muslim majority with institutes educating religious leaders, providing learning of the Arab language and organizing pilgrimage to Mecca every year. In some Middle Eastern states where the division between religion and the state is still thin, this has created the conditions to position Russia as a positive partner to cooperate in fighting extremism and Islamic radicalism, like it is done at home. This cooperation is very likely to continue and strengthen, if the official discourse on Islam in Russia does not change, as other states who claim are also fighting extremist Islamist groups in the region, but continue to profile and suspect every Muslim as an imminent danger to their national security. Example of this was seen with the travel ban imposed by the government of the U.S. in early 2017 and that undermined trust from Muslim

majority countries towards that government and may have pushed moderate Muslims to a more extremist and defensive attitude towards the “*American other*”, supporting the proposition of extremization through discourse.

We can say that, it is the lack of a discourse that relates Islam to Wahhabism and generalizes Muslims as “the enemy” who pose a danger to Russia and the decisiveness in the official discourse Russia in fighting international terrorism given by the president, that attracts countries in the Middle East to a partnership with Moscow. This could have been one of the directrices the Syrian government considered when welcomed the Russian military in 2015 to help fighting Islamist groups like Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (previously known as al-Nusra) or the so-called Islamic State. Back to Russia, with constant messages on mass media portraying terrorist attacks in European cities, and the explosion in Saint-Petersburg subway in April 2017, the threat of international terrorism seems to be higher than what it actually is, but focusing merely on the public’s reaction we did see a case of profiling where the socially constructed attributes of what the dominated have been taught to believe a terrorist looks like was present. Ilyas Nikitin was profiled as the responsible of the explosion as situationally he was riding the metro at the time of the events, and the constructed physical attributes of an Islamist extremist present in the Russian collective memory made him an easy target. Of all other men, Nikitin was singled out, supporting the proposition in this research that through perception and profiling, the dominant will start pushing out individuals they do not identify with, with a possible result of the individuals pushed out taking extreme positions to protect from those who rejected them. This case also demonstrated how perception and profiling are outdated methods in security issues and more energy and resources should be put on prevention and identification of extremist individuals and groups online and working in cooperation with risk populations. But, can we say the case of Nikitin is the result of a discourse in Russia that relates Islam and Muslims to Islamist extremist? From the information found and presented here, it is hard to demonstrate the discourse in Russia that speaks of Islam or Muslims is responsible for this socially constructed relation since interviews or qualitative analysis of the dominated Russians was not part of this research. It would be worth of analysis of how Western discourse on Islam and Muslims has influenced the perception and profiling of these among the Russian population.

The information presented in chapter II helps us understand the previous interrogation before taking the initiative to do research on Western discourse on Islam

and Muslims and its influence on Russians. The 90's was a decade of change in every aspect after the Soviet Union disintegrated and the origin of almost every interethnic conflict in the Post-Soviet space can be tracked back to that moment. The case of Chechnya is not the exception, though this conflict did not start out of interethnic differences, but rather as part of the independent movement and evolved into a interethnic and inter-confessional conflict throughout the years that the two wars lasted. During this period of time, Islamist groups carried out attacks against civilians in the region of the Northern Caucasus and other cities in Russia, especially Moscow and because of their own interpretation of the scriptures, part of the Wahhabi current, they presented themselves with the physical attributes of the group they considered they belong to, long beards and traditional religious clothes as a marker. With this, can we say those extremist Islamist groups are responsible for the perception and profiling of Islam and Muslims in Russia today? The information gathered in this research suggests extremist Islamist groups that were active in Russia in the 90's, through their actions, may be a factor that in today's Russians collective memory, Muslims from the Northern Caucasus or those who share the installed physical attributes mentioned before, should be subjected to profiling as they perceive them as threat. Nonetheless, since this study focused specifically on the perception of the dominant because of their capacity to shape the perception of the dominated through discourse, in a vertical manner, more research is needed to understand if the dominated is actually influenced by the perception of the dominant and their discourse in Russia on this topic.

The result of a Western military and political discourse against Muslims contributes to the continuous extremization of individuals by sending the message that they are not desired. Extremist Islamist groups will take advantage of this and with the use of propaganda as sophisticated as that of the West, capitalize feelings of anger against the Western aggressor that is bombing Afghans, Iraqis, Syrians, etc. This discourse on Islam seems to have been ignored in the West where the media, politicians and some religious leaders continue to publicly relate Islam and Muslims to extremist Islamist groups. Adding points to that anger that will eventually transform into violent actions with bloody results. The Russian government has had a different approach to fighting international terrorism, understanding better that what is done abroad will have repercussions inside. Additionally, Russia has had a longer relation with Islam than many Western European states or the U.S. which has provided a better understanding on the

possible conflicts. To this matter, we can also say that the republics of the Northern Caucasus with a Muslim majority and Tatarstan have been major players in the relationship between Russia and the Middle East. With their own governments, traditions, culture and language, yet part of the Federation, their status has also contributed to creating legal framework that regulates extremism and profiling of Islam or Muslims in the country. Chapter III puts into evidence the identification of Wahhabism as the problem that according to politicians, is a threat for international peace and stability and for the unity of the Russian Federation and its people. In two out of the three groups analyzed in this chapter the relation of Wahhabism to international terrorism and national criminal activities is frequent. Academics were the group with the largest amount information on Wahhabism, demonstrating that work has been done on studying and understanding the real threat for the Russian government stability and the peace of the population. It would be interesting to compare the amount of work on Wahhabism carried out by academics in Western countries where Islam as a unique and homogeneous entity is blamed for the actions of individuals following this extremist Islamist ideology. The third group, nationalists, had very little information available opposed to what was originally thought during the conception of this research. After having analyzed the different legal frameworks, it was understandable why this nationalist discourse was almost inexistent online or print. Nevertheless, it is relevant to stress the fact that one site with information on Islam through a nationalist group's perspective was available but because the site is not hosted in a Russian domain but rather in a Soviet one. Also, offensive pictures can be found in search engines and Russian social media accounts where Muslims are related to terrorism, but since it was not possible to identify whether the creators belong to a nationalist group or identify as such, this cannot lead to conclusive results. Here we can propose two conclusions: 1) academic discourse on Wahhabism is very well developed and with sufficient information to help understand the difference between traditional Islam and this extremist Islamist ideology, 2) the existent legal framework has created the conditions for a responsible public discourse on Islam and Muslims where their beliefs are respected and the fight against a wrong perception of this religion and its followers is considered of interest for the authorities.

Nonetheless, the first frontline in the fight against Wahhabism and terrorist activities it promotes in the region is among Muslims themselves, the clergy meetings and Muslim scientists' conferences that take place in the country are evidence of this. The

fight against extremism and terrorism are usually a central part of these meetings, that together with the activities Muftis are involved to talk to the youth about the dangers and falseness Wahhabi recruits tell to lure them into their groups. Also, imams have been murdered by followers of Wahhabism in Chechnya and Tatarstan for their activities against them. It is evident the efforts done by Muslim leaders to de-attach what Wahhabism is from Islam, unfortunately, this discourse may not reach non-Muslim audiences. Orthodox Christian sources on Wahhabism were scarce, hence little information can be given on their perspective on this issue, but the only available source was focused on the description of Wahhabis military preparation and no mention of the difference between them and followers of traditional Islam, which could create confusion among Orthodox Christians and contribute to the profiling of all Muslims. Focusing on this lack of information by Orthodox Christian sources, we can say that what is omitted contributes to the eternalization of misunderstanding but abiding by the Russian law and to avoid any interfaith conflict, out of misinterpretation of canons, it is understandable why this discourse is scarce.

With this information, it is clear that Muslims who follow the considered traditional Islam in Russia, are an ally in preventing and fighting extremist groups as they know better how to identify them by their canons, customs and traditions, sometimes contrasting the capacity of government agencies or non-Muslim Russians who would fall for profiling all Muslims depending on the discourse they have been exposed to. This gives a broad perspective of the fight against Islamist extremism and international terrorism in Russia for researchers abroad, clearing preconceived and socially constructed ideas of Russia being an entirely Christian Orthodox state that is in direct conflict with Islam, adding more criticism to Huntington's clash of civilizations theory as Orthodox Christians and Muslims do coexist and their leaders respect each other recognizing they have a common ground on issues like family and traditional values. This also sheds a light on the issue that bringing Muslim leaders closer to government officials and institutions could help facilitate the fight against international terrorism in the European Union and the United States without meaning a process of Islamization of politics is underway. Taking into account that all states have different history and values, what works in Russia may not work in other state but it is worth the analysis of the strategy implemented by the authorities once Wahhabism was identified as a danger to the stability of the federation after the first Chechen war. This strategy is not the result of one specific event but of a

series of events in over twenty years that evolved according to the national and international necessities. It is not accurate to grade the strategy as perfect or imperfect but to judge the conditions of security in Russia in the same period of time and see how major terrorist attacks decreased in contrast with Western European states or the U.S. where the population was victim of international terrorism more often, committed by extremist Islamists. Correlation does not mean causation but in Western European countries like France and the Netherlands, as well as in the U.S. it is not unusual to have a politicians, academics and other religious leaders' discourse relating extremist Islamists to Islam and Muslims, definitely a comparative analysis that needs special attention. The five approaches to how discourse on Wahhabism in Russia contributes to profiling of Islam analyzed, prove that three of these discourses in Russia does not contribute to this profiling and the two approaches that would be believed to do so, are almost non-existent due to the legal framework to fight discrimination and extremism. This does not mean there is not such profiling in Russia, but since this only covered a vertical study of discourse focusing on those on the top of the structure, it will be necessary to do more research covering those at the bottom to understand what discourse is shaping their perception of Islam that contributes to profiling of Muslims.

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