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Introduction

Jihad (Arab.) is a commitment to the spread of Islam and securing its victory. Originally, jihad meant a war for religion ([Arab.,] *ghazawat*), prescribed by the Qur'an. Those who stood out in jihad are called *ghazi*, while those who perished are *shahids*, i.e. martyrs. According to Muslim belief, after their death the martyrs obtain a guaranteed place in paradise. Initially [i.e., in the 7th and 8th centuries], calls for jihad promoted the political and religious unity of the Arab tribes. In the Arab Caliphate, and later in the Ottoman sultanate and other Muslim feudal states, jihad was used for purposes of aggression [against other states] and for suppressing popular movements [in the Muslim realm]. After the October Revolution, counter-revolutionaries in Daghestan, Chechnya and Central Asia called for jihad against Soviet power. [But] already since the ninth and the tenth centuries, the concept of a spiritual jihad was promoted, encompassing a self-perfection on the path to Allah and differentiating between four types of jihad, namely the jihad of sword, of the heart, of the tongue, and of the hand. Sometimes jihad became a means of the popular struggle against the [European] colonizers (for example, in nineteenth-century Sudan, in Libya, Iraq, Iran, and Oman). In our days some religious figures explain jihad as the struggle for the progress of Muslim nations.¹

This is how jihad was defined in the 1985 Moscow edition of *the Atheist Dictionary*. This booklet was meant to provide basic knowledge of Islam to Soviet ideological workers, in particular in the context of the Afghan war. What we find here is a secularized interpretation that marginalizes the Islamic discourse, that is, the Islamic legal discussion on the definition and functions of jihad.² Such a Marxist understanding of jihad reveals the heritage of Soviet Orientalist discourses on Islam. In this view, Muslim resistance in Russia, against the Soviet authorities, must be seen as a counter-revolutionary activity headed by feudal oppressors, while jihad in the Middle East and North Africa camouflaged the struggle of the working masses for the liberation from European colonialism. Ultimately, this view originated in the early Soviet discourses on Islam of the 1930s, which resulted in the Stalinist assertion that

¹ *Ateisticheskii slovar'*, edited by M.P. Novikov (Moscow: Politizdat, 1985), 127-128.

² See: "Jihad," in: *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*, edited by John L. Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 159-160; J. Sourdel-Thomine, "Ghazw", in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition*, edited by B. Lewis, Ch. Pellat and J. Schacht (Leiden-London: Brill, Luzac & Co, 1965), 1055; El. Landau-Tasserou, "Jihād", in: *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, edited by J. D. McAuliffe (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2003), 35-43.

Islam is a feudal religion supporting the oppression of progress,³ and in later reformulations that allowed for a more positive engagement with Islam when it suits Soviet foreign interests.⁴ Clearly, this Soviet definition of jihad as a reactionary ideology, elaborated upon in the context of the USSR's war against *mujahidin* in Afghanistan, has little to do with the religious concepts found in the works of Islamic authors. Jihad is shown here as a global political phenomenon that has different functions in colonial settings and in socialist contexts.

This particular late Soviet understanding of jihad, and its post-Soviet transformations, is emblematic for the central quest presented in this dissertation. How are we to explain the advent of Muslim military resistance on the ruins of the Soviet empire, in a setting where the future jihadists were socialized in thoroughly Soviet, secular ways, and shaped by an understanding of Islam that they derived from Russian-language literature – like the encyclopedia for atheists from which I quoted above?

The primary goal of my dissertation is to analyze the intellectual environment that gave birth to the propaganda of jihad in post-Soviet Russia. This approach transcends the narrow realm of Islamic studies, and requires an engagement with post-Soviet cultural, literary, and political phenomena, including broader trends that at first sight have nothing to do with Islam. In particular I am interested in the methods and tools appropriated by the ideologists of jihad, i.e. the individuals who publicly articulated and actively propagated the ideas of military struggle under the banner of Islamic military resistance. This propaganda expressed itself in a body of texts that I scrutinize in my thesis, as well as in a plethora of interviews that these ideologists gave at various points to the Russian media. Here the proponents of jihad elaborated their arguments in manners that allow us to draw conclusions on their sources of inspiration. My analysis of these sources thereby has the ambition to provide a characterization of the particular nature and commonalities of a broad post-Soviet Jihadi movement in the years up to ca. 2010. In this introduction, I will introduce the topics, symbols and semantic fields covered by the Jihadist propaganda.

The central argument of this thesis is that the discourses of jihadism in Russia's North Caucasus, and their offshoots in other parts of the Russian Federation, are not just reflections of jihadi ideologies that came from abroad. I thereby provide an alternative reading to the

³ M. Kemper, "The Soviet Discourse on the Origin and Class Character of Islam, 1923-1933", *Die Welt des Islams* 49/1 (2009), 1-48.

⁴ H. Jansen, M. Kemper, "Hijacking Islam: The Search for a New Soviet Interpretation of Political Islam in 1980", *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, edited by Michael Kemper and Stephan Conermann (London: Routledge, 2011), 124-144.

mainstream explanation of jihad in Russia that we find in Russian as well as Western literature on this topic. Rather, the trajectories of Islamic activists that this thesis analyzes reveal the primacy of a distinctly post-Soviet background. Reflections of jihad came into being in a period of extreme instability in the region when old securities were eroding and new paradigms were coming up, in a complex interplay.

I argue that the post-Soviet manifestations of jihadi ideology emphasize not an embedding in global discourses but in regional (and even sub-regional) specifics: calls to jihad were dressed in the histories of particular Muslim minorities and their ethnic identities. There is thus a persistent tension between the understanding of jihadism as a common duty of the global *umma*, of every Muslim in the world, and particular reference points to historical identities. In this field of tension, regional jihad differs markedly from the global branding of jihad.

At the same time, in this thesis I also transgress the regional embedding by offering an extra dimension that has so far gone almost unnoticed. I argue that post-Soviet jihadism in the North Caucasus is a phenomenon that is best understood when placed in the broader cultural environment in which it emerged – namely, in relation to particular post-Soviet trends of making arguments that has shaped the public discourse not only in the North Caucasus but in the whole of Russia, and beyond. Many of these symbols, discursive tools, interpretational frameworks and dissemination strategies are shaped by the immediate Soviet past as well as by the broader trends in post-Soviet society and culture. From this perspective, the chapters of this dissertation transcend the boundaries not only of the North Caucasus but also of religion; I demonstrate that jihadism is part of a broader post-Soviet bricolage, with Islam being one potent paradigm next to many others. Next to ideological texts that reveal the well-known patterns of Soviet/Marxist thinking, the present work also studies how Russian academic writings on Islam, sometimes very similar in spirit to the atheist dictionary cited above, shape jihadist thinking; and in one chapter⁵ I go into post-Soviet popular culture to explain the attraction of jihadi songs.

The Regional Embedding of Global Jihad

Since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, we have been used to regard jihadist atrocities as local emanations of one and the same global phenomenon.⁶ In fact, jihadi

⁵ This is chapter 7 “Timur Mutsuraev: Russophone Jihad Songs as a Post-Soviet Phenomenon”.

⁶ See: G. Denoex, “The Forgotten Swamp: Navigating Political Islam,” in: *Middle East Policy Council*, 9, 2 (2002), 69–71; D. Rhodes, *Salafist-Takfiri Jihadism: the Ideology of the Caucasus Emirate* (Herzliya: International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, 2014) [e-Book],

activities – whether they occur in Europe and Russia, in Iraq and Syria, in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, but also in Israel, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India – all use the same instruments of terrorism: targeted assassinations of policemen and army officers,⁷ the killing of innocent civilians by mass shootings and bomb attacks (often by assailants who thereby commit suicide),⁸ as well as a “highjacking industry”, either for achieving ransom or for enslaving men and women.⁹ Among the most outrageous crimes committed by jihadists are the use of airplanes and trucks to kill large groups of people;¹⁰ but equally appalling is the public execution of individual prisoners.¹¹ In the Russian context, jihadists like Shamil Basaev are held responsible not only for targeted attacks but also for the hostage-taking of schools, hospitals and theaters in Russian cities, with each action leaving hundreds of innocent people dead.¹²

We are also used to understand global jihadi activity as organized by extended networks and cells, with sophisticated communication to remain secret. Through the internet and mobile phones, individuals that have so far not been associated with jihadism can suddenly reveal themselves, by murderous acts commissioned by a group or movement that is located at a distance of thousands of miles.

URL: <https://www.ict.org.il/UserFiles/ICTWPS%2027%20-%20Salafist-Takfiri%20Jihadism.pdf> (last accessed 02 February 2018); Daniel Pipes, “What is Jihad?”, *Daniel Pipes Middle East Forum* (31.12.2002) <http://www.danielpipes.org/990/what-is-jihad> (last accessed 02 February 2018); “A history of modern jihadism”, *BBC news* (11.12.2014) <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-30436486> (last accessed 02 February 2018).

⁷ “Lee Rigby murder: Map and timeline”, *BBC news* (26.02.2014) <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-25298580> (last accessed 01 February 2018).

⁸ Caroline Mortimer, “Global Terrorism: Less than 1% of victims killed in Western Europe”, *Independent* (24.08.2017) <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/global-terrorism-victims-western-europe-victims-less-1-per-cent-islamist-domestic-a7910981.html> (last accessed 02 February 2018).

⁹ “Jihadi attacks - November's 5,000 deaths broken down by country, victim and terror group”, *The Guardian* (11.12.2014) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/11/jihadi-attacks-killed-more-than-5000-people-in-november-the-vast-majority-of-them-muslims> (last accessed 02 February 2018).

¹⁰ Caroline Mortimer, “Nice attack: 84 confirmed dead after lorry crashes into crowd at Bastille Day celebrations in France”, *Independent* (14.07.2016) <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/bastille-day-lorry-truck-crash-crowd-nice-france-panic-run-a7137791.html> (last accessed 02 February 2018); Samuel Osborne, “Berlin attack: Isis claims responsibility for Christmas market massacre that killed 12”, *Independent* (20.12.2016) <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/berlin-isis-claim-responsibility-christmas-market-latest-updates-a7487746.html> (last accessed 02 February 2018).

¹¹ Ruth Halkon, “Is this the new Jihadi John? ISIS release sickening video showing beheading of 'Russian spy'”, *Mirror* (02.12.2015) <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/new-jihadi-john-isis-release-6943049> (last accessed 12 February 2018).

¹² See: M. C. McDaniel, C. M. Ellis, “The Beslan Hostage Crisis: A Case Study for Emergency Responders,” in: *Journal of Applied Security Research*, 4 (2009), 21-35; J. B. Dunlop, *The 2002 Dubrovka and 2004 Beslan Hostage Crises: A Critique of Russian Counter-Terrorism* (Hannover: ibidem-Verlag, 2006).

Equally, we are accustomed to understand global jihadism as a transnational phenomenon.¹³ Islamism seems to ignore national identities; the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has been a conscious attempt to extinguish the borders of the Arab national states¹⁴ that had resulted from the carving-up of the Ottoman Empire. The trans-locality of jihadism is furthermore emphasized by travelling jihadists: Arab “volunteers” who started their jihadi career in their lands of origin moved to Afghanistan, Chechnya, Bosnia, Kashmir, and other places, to relocate again once their military endeavor failed. This mobility also feeds from labor migration to Europe, or within the Muslim world.¹⁵ After the defeat of ISIS, Europe fears the “return” of native European Muslims who underwent military training and jihadi employment in Syria and Iraq.

Finally, we are used to regard jihadism as an ideology against the West;¹⁶ citizens of the United States, Israel,¹⁷ and EU¹⁸ are among the prime targets of jihadism, next to many others. At the same time most victims of jihadism are locals¹⁹ – ordinary Shii pilgrims²⁰ who visit a shrine in Iraq at the moment it explodes; Sunnis,²¹ Alawis²² or Orthodox Christians²³ who die in the Syrian war. Equally horrific is the targeted terror – including sexual violence – against

¹³ See: R. Aslan, *Global Jihadism: A Transnational Social Movement* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2010); M. Crenshaw, “Transnational Jihadism & Civil Wars,” in: *Daedalus, the Journal of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences*, 146, 4 (2017), 59-70.

¹⁴ B. Lia, “Jihadism in the Arab World after 2011: Explaining its Expansion,” in: *Middle East Policy Council*, 23, 4 (2016), 74-91.

¹⁵ About this mobility cf. the new book by the French orientalist and sociologist Olivier Roy, see: O. Roy, *Jihad and Death - The Global Appeal of Islamic State* (London: Hurst, 2017).

¹⁶ See: M. Sedgwick, “Jihadist Ideology, Western Counter-ideology, and the ABC model,” in: *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 5, 3 (2012), 359-372.

¹⁷ Michael Whine, “Terrorist Incidents against Jewish Communities and Israeli Citizens Abroad, 1968-2010”, *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs* (01.07.2011) <http://jcpa.org/article/terrorist-incidents-against-jewish-communities-and-israeli-citizens-abroad-1968-2010/> (last accessed 03 February 2018).

¹⁸ Duncan Walker, “Who was behind the jihadist attacks on Europe and North America?”, *BBC news* (30.08.2017) <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-40000952> (last accessed 02 February 2018).

¹⁹ Ruth Alexander, Hannah Moore, “Are most victims of terrorism Muslim?”, *BBC news* (20.01.2015) <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-30883058> (last accessed 02 February 2018).

²⁰ “Nassiriya, an ISIS double attack: at least 74 victims, including Iranian pilgrims”, *AsiaNews* (15.09.2017) <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Nassiriya,-an-ISIS-double-attack:-at-least-74-victims,-including-Iranian-pilgrims-41789.html> (last accessed 03 February 2018).

²¹ “Islamic State 'kills 322' from single Sunni tribe”, *BBC news* (02.11.2014) <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29871068> (last accessed 03 February 2018); Raymond Ibrahim, “How Muslims Justify Killing Other Muslims”, *PJmedia* (01.08.2016) <https://pjmedia.com/homeland-security/2016/08/01/how-muslims-justify-killing-other-muslims/?singlepage=true> (last accessed 03 February 2018).

²² “150,000 Alawites killed in 6-year Syria war”, *Middle East Monitor* (20.04.2017) <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170420-150000-alawites-killed-in-6-year-syria-war/> (last accessed 03 February 2018).

²³ “Syria's beleaguered Christians”, *BBC news* (25.02.2015) <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-22270455> (last accessed 03 February 2018).

national or religious minorities, such as the Hazaras in Afghanistan²⁴ and the Yazidis in Iraq.²⁵ And there are also cases when jihadi groups fight each other, as reportedly in Syria, where two Sunni organizations that both originated in al-Qaida – ISIS and the so-called Nusra Front – are engaged in a war against each other.²⁶

While radical Islam and jihadist practice are thus definitely a global phenomenon, the ideological justification of jihad is often enrooted in thoroughly local or regional contexts. This embedding can be understood as a process of acculturation; broader ideologies need to be adapted to concrete circumstances to produce a powerful tool for mobilizing people to take up weapons. Central to this thesis is therefore the assumption that any apology of jihad has the goal of convincing a real or imagined audience of its legitimacy, necessity, and practicability; and this legitimacy is produced by portraying jihad not as something alien, “imported” from other countries, but as an instrument that is available in the ethnic and regional identities, and that corresponds to the interests of post-Soviet society. These apologies of jihad come in a language and in symbols that are accessible to these audiences; this is what I call the post-Soviet acculturation of jihad. In the first place, this acculturation includes references to the regional history of Islam – in particular, earlier experiences when Russian/Soviet oppression was successfully countered by resistance under the banner of Islam. These historical reference points in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century history of the respective region provide important anchor points; they counterbalance the abstract character of jihad for the global *umma*. Furthermore, this historical argumentation in place of religious arguments also circumvents the problem that after 70 years of Soviet education and urbanization, the level of religious education, and arguably of belief, was low in most “Muslim” parts of the former USSR. This regional or local embedding also eases the tension between the overarching religious identity that jihadists claim to maintain, and the ethno-national identity of the society or community to which jihadism is supposed to appeal. As my thesis will explain, this produces a wide diversity of contents that ideologists proposed to fill the empty vessel of jihadism.

²⁴ Rohullah Yakobi, “Afghanistan’s Hazaras resist ISIS’s sectarian war”, *Human Security Centre* (24.11.2016) <http://www.hscentre.org/latest-articles/afghanistans-hazaras-resist-isis-sectarian-war/> (last accessed 03 February 2018).

²⁵ Raya Jalabi, “Who are the Yazidis and why is Isis hunting them?”, *The Guardian* (07.08.2014) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/07/who-yazidi-isis-iraq-religion-ethnicity-mountains> (last accessed 03 February 2018).

²⁶ Richard Wheatstone, “Dozens of ISIS and al-Qaeda jihadis killed as terror groups fight each other in Syria”, *Mirror* (02.04.2016) <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/dozens-isis-al-qaeda-jihadis-7676803> (last accessed 03 February 2018).

It is a truism that Islam is not a monolith. The variety of Islamic movements in the contemporary world ranges from traditional scholarship within the accepted frameworks of the Islamic schools of law and theology, over reformist theology, Sufi (mystical) movements, to pious movements that mobilize the lay Muslim for purposes of community-building, education, or piety.²⁷ Also, there is an abundance of ways how Islam has been mobilized by individual states, and how it is introduced into government and administration. Prominent examples include Saudi Arabia (with its Wahhabi establishment of Islamic preachers and scholars),²⁸ the Islamic Republic of Iran (with a highest Islamic authority standing above government and parliament),²⁹ Turkey (with the Diyanet, in practice a ministry of Islam),³⁰ and Bosnia (with a Mufti – the Reis-ul-ulema – presiding over the Islamic Community),³¹ but also Pakistan³² and Indonesia,³³ to name but a few. In contemporary Russia, Islamic life is organized by some 80 local, regional and central Muftiates (“Spiritual Administrations of Muslims”), which often compete with each other for Islamic authority, but which ultimately all depend on recognition and money flows from the Kremlin.³⁴ Also in Russia, specific interpretations of Islam are promoted as “traditional” to the nation/region in question, and thereby justified as worthy of state support; and vice versa, in all countries mentioned above, the central Islamic establishments usually support the policies of the state, whether the latter understands itself as religious or as secular.

Radical jihadism, in its regional, national, or local manifestations, thereby engages not only with the common Islamic tradition but also with the ways how Islam is identified on the spot. Radicalism is shaped by, and part of, the domestic political discourse, and directly challenges the Islamic establishment in the country of origin. Here the prime example is Osama Bin Laden, the Saudi-born organizer of internationalist terrorism who saw the toppling of the

²⁷ For examples, see: M. Moaddel, *Islamic Modernism, Nationalism, and Fundamentalism: Episode and Discourse* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); *An Introduction to Islam in the 21st Century*, edited by Aminah Beverly McCloud, Scott W. Hibbard and Laith Saud (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).

²⁸ F. E. Vogel, *Islamic Law and the Legal System of Saudi: Studies of Saudi Arabia* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

²⁹ H. Omid, *Islam and the Post-Revolutionary State in Iran* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).

³⁰ *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Global Impact of Fethullah Gülen's Nur Movement (Contemporary Issues in the Middle East)*, edited by M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003).

³¹ *Islam and Bosnia Conflict Resolution and Foreign Policy in Multi-Ethnic States*, edited by Maya Shatzmiller (Montreal & Kingston, London, Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002).

³² Jayshree Bajoria, “Islam and Politics in Pakistan”, *The Council on Foreign Relations* (20.04.2011) <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/islam-and-politics-pakistan> (last accessed 02 February 2018).

³³ M. van Bruinessen, “Islamic State or State Islam? Fifty Years of State-Islam Relations in Indonesia,” in: *Indonesien am Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts*, edited by I. Wessel (Hamburg: Abera-Verlag, 1996), 19-34.

³⁴ “Fond podderzhki islamsloi kul'tury vydelil islamskim uchebnym zavedeniam 130 mln. rublei”, *Tatar-inform* (14.03.2011) <http://www.tatar-inform.ru/news/2011/03/14/261467/> (last accessed 13 February 2018).

Saudi government as his ultimate goal.³⁵ This fight against what is portrayed as a manifestation of “unbelief” in a given “Muslim” country is situated into a broader geopolitical entanglement, especially if the regional regime is supported by an outside force. The intervention of non-Muslim superpowers thereby plays a significant role in elevating regional or ethnic conflicts to the level of global jihad. To take an example, when in 1978 the USSR invaded Afghanistan to support a failing socialist regime, the local opposition forces turned into *mujahidin*,³⁶ and with the help of al-Qaida and others their struggle turned into the prime example of global Islamic militancy. Yet after the Soviet troops left Afghanistan a decade later,³⁷ the various warlord regimes (including the Taliban) again relapsed into factions that emphasized the ethnic, regional, and 'traditional' notions of Pashtu Islam.³⁸ Similar processes towards internationalization, followed by a return to regional and national interpretations of Islam, apply to the Bosnian case, where international *mujahidin* played a role in one phase of the atrocious war but were subsequently severely curtailed, and marginalized by the Bosniak government.³⁹

In recent years we have seen the “franchising” of al-Qaida, with Islamist groups that emerged in particular regions (such as Libya, Mali and Nigeria) “joining” the broader conglomerate of ISIS as its new and distant “fronts”. In how far these groups are indeed connected to any center is a matter of speculation; what is obvious is that they draw their strength, and recruit the bulk of their fighters, from the particular communities where they are active. There is thus good reason for stressing the regional, sub-regional, and even local foundations for jihadism. My case study on the North Caucasus jihadists and their adepts in other parts of Russia will argue that the rhetoric of global jihad is insignificant if compared to the successful establishment of regional jihadi groups; and once this regional/local jihad is defeated, also the internationalist cover dissipates quickly.

³⁵ “Bin Laden Hates Saudis, too”, *The Economist* (22.04.2004) <http://www.economist.com/node/2618253> (last accessed 13 February 2018).

³⁶ O. Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 172-215.

³⁷ A. Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011).

³⁸ See: A. Giustozzi, *Decoding the New Taliban: Insights from the Afghan Field* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

³⁹ See: L. S. Lebl, *Islamism and Security in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Carlisle: Army War College Press, 2014); “Bosnia's Dangerous Tango: Islam and Nationalism” (International Crisis Group, 2013) [e-Book], URL: http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/7825~v~Bosnias_Dangerous_Tango_Islam_and_Nationalism.pdf (last accessed 13 February 2018).

The importance of local embeddedness in jihadi organizations is not new. The prime case is the struggle for the so-called liberation of Palestine,⁴⁰ which figures prominently on the agenda of almost any Islamic movement, whether Sunni or Shii. But also jihadi hot spots like Kashmir,⁴¹ Afghanistan and the bordering areas of Pakistan,⁴² are maintained not only by geo-political thinking (“Islam against the West”) but by local identities, including traditional societies that represent customary arrangements between tribal cultures and Islam, and that cannot easily be subsumed under the well-known global categories such as “Salafism” or “Wahhabism”. Even ISIS, famous for its absorption of foreign fighters, has an abundance of local and regional elements,⁴³ not the least through the Sunni tribes in Iraq that supported it.⁴⁴ The attempt to establish an Islamic state through violence must appeal to local and regional constituencies if it is meant to be durable. Islamism and jihadism must give space to distinct pre-existing identities.

As this thesis will demonstrate, the North Caucasus region (with its sub-regions of Chechnya, Daghestan, and Kabardino-Balkaria, next to others) has seen the production of a huge corpus of Islamist writings in which the global aspiration for an Islamic state, and for jihad as the only logical way towards it, has been coupled with a strong regional embedding. In fact, the North Caucasus appears as a microcosm in which several of the general and global tendencies found their reflection. In Chechnya, in the first half of the 1990s the sub-regional national separatist movement started to toy with jihadi rhetoric as a tool for military recruitment and motivation, and it is exactly this period that saw the basis of how jihad was to be enrooted in local traditions. The Chechen separatism then underwent a thorough process of Islamization, also by integrating foreign ideologists, and turned into a full-fledged jihadist movement that, in addition to the Russian forces, silenced the secular nationalists of the first hour.⁴⁵ And when after a second Russian invasion, this jihadist movement was defeated by the early 2000s, Chechen concepts of jihadism spread to the neighboring republics like Daghestan and

⁴⁰ See: S. Bartal, *Jihad in Palestine, Political Islam and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016); T. Hegghammer, J. Wagemakers, “The Palestine Effect: The Role of Palestinians in the Transnational Jihad Movement,” in: *Die Welt des Islams*, 53, 3-4 (2013), 281-314.

⁴¹ S. M. D'Souza, B. P. Routray, “Jihad in Jammu and Kashmir: Actors, Agendas and Expanding Benchmarks,” in: *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 27, 4 (2016).

⁴² “Jihad in India, Kashmir and Afghanistan: A Boost to Pakistan?”, *Afghanistan Times* (17.08.2017) <http://afghanistantimes.af/jihad-in-india-kashmir-and-afghanistan-a-boost-to-pakistan/> (last accessed 02 February 2018).

⁴³ Harith al-Qarawee, “ISIS exploits weak Iraqi, Syrian states”, *Al-Monitor* (29.11.2013) <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/11/isis-al-qaeda-iraq-syria-weak-state.html> (last accessed 02 February 2018).

⁴⁴ “Sunni tribes in Iraq's Anbar province pledge support to ISIL”, *Aljazeera* (04.06.2015) <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/6/4/sunni-tribes-in-anbar-iraq-pledge-support-to-isil.html> (last accessed 22 February 2018).

⁴⁵ J. Hughes, *Chechnya from Nationalism to Jihad* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

Kabardino-Balkaria, where they met with pre-existing trends of radical Islamism. Eventually, this new conglomerate renounced the fight for a national republic of the Chechens but declared, in 2007, the establishment of an Islamic state, the so-called Caucasus Emirate, that was supposed to transcend all national and ethnic boundaries and unite the whole region in a radical interpretation of Islam.⁴⁶ It was jihadists from the neighboring republics that pressured the Chechen jihadists to make this move. As we will see, with the continuing anti-terrorist operations conducted by the Chechen and Russian Federal forces, jihadi fighters from the North Caucasus and other parts of Russia eventually turned into travelling *mujahidin* active in many other places of the world, including Afghanistan and, most recently, Syria. Again, the push towards global jihad comes first with the success and then with the failure of jihad at home.

‘Glocal’ Jihad in the North Caucasus

Paradoxically, also the scholars who argue for the global character of Islamism and jihadism usually start from local or regional perspectives. To take an example, in Gilles Kepel's monograph on “the trail of political Islam”, Islamism becomes a global phenomenon through the accumulation of several regional cases and their interactions and mutual influences.⁴⁷ The regional embedding allows for the study of internal dynamics within Islamic military resistance movements, as for instance in Laurent Bonnefoy's work in the jihadist movement in Yemen.⁴⁸ However, most studies still describe regional peculiarities in the light of an assumed global jihadist ideology.

This is also true for scholarship on jihadism in the North Caucasus. Domitilla Sagramoso explained the jihadist radicalization of the North Caucasian resistance with the impact of global Salafi jihadism,⁴⁹ which supposedly found its way to the region through students trained in Arab countries. A similar stand is taken by Roland Dannreuther, who emphasizes

⁴⁶ D. Rhodes, *Salafist-Takfiri Jihadism: the Ideology of the Caucasus Emirate*; G. Hahn, *Getting the Caucasus Emirate Right* (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2011).

⁴⁷ G. Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 464.

⁴⁸ L. Bonnefoy, “Jihadi Violence in Yemen,” in: *Contextualising Jihadi Thought*, edited by Jeevan Deol and Zaheer (London: Hurst, 2012), 243–258.

⁴⁹ D. Sagramoso, “The Radicalisation of Islamic Salafi Jamaats in the North Caucasus: Moving Closer to the Global Jihadist Movement?” in: *Europe-Asia Studies*, 64, 3 (2012), 567.

the integration of North Caucasus jihadists in transnational jihad.⁵⁰ Similarly, Ben Rich and Dara Conduit point out that the Chechen resistance was exposed to the foreign Salafist framing.⁵¹ Both Sagramoso and Dannreuther do admit that the resistance emerged out of local social and political constellations, but this is just seen as the feeding ground for full-fledged international jihad. This approach is also central in Yossef Bodansky's work, who portrays Chechnya simply as "al-Qaeda's training ground".⁵²

One approach to tackle the interaction between the global and the local is jihadist language – a field that is taken less into consideration by political scientists but prominent in the works of scholars trained in Islamic Studies and Islamic history. Alexander Knysh, a professor of Islamic studies at the University of Michigan who received his training in Islamic and Arabic studies in Leningrad in the 1980s, pioneered this field by analyzing the articulation of Islamic terminology and Arabic loan words in the propaganda of the "Caucasus Emirate", on the basis of the materials published on the North-Caucasus jihadist website Kavkazcenter.com, and in the speeches of some of the ideologues of this movement, such as Doku Umarov, Anzor Astemirov and Movladi Udugov.⁵³ From this perspective, the ideology of jihadists in the Caucasus can be brought into connection with ideas first formulated systematically in the works of the Egyptian radical Islamist Sayyid Qutb (executed 1966), or of the Pakistani Abul A'la Maududi (d. 1979).

Of course, numerous similarities can be drawn between North Caucasus jihadists and protagonists of extremism elsewhere. To take an example, the ideologists of the "Caucasus Emirate" performed a break with the idea of fighting for a national state of the Chechens, and instead opted to integrate their project into the global struggle for the liberation of the Muslim community around the world. The leaders of the "Caucasus Emirate" opposed not only Russia, the federal power, but also the remaining secular Chechen nationalists. Another feature shared with global jihadism was the fierce rejection of all forms of government perceived as "Western" in nature, and the critique of Sufi groups (as propagandists of "idolatry") who cooperated with the Russian authorities. Knysh points out that in addition to

⁵⁰ R. Dannreuther, "Islamic Radicalization in Russia: an Assessment," in: *International Affairs*, 86, 1 (2010), 109-126.

⁵¹ B. Rich, D. Conduit, "The Impact of Jihadist Foreign Fighters on Indigenous Secular-Nationalist Causes: Contrasting Chechnya and Syria," in *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 38, 2 (2015), 4.

⁵² Y. Bodansky, *Chechen Jihad: Al Qaeda's Training Ground and the Next Wave of Terror* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008).

⁵³ A. Knysh, "Islam and Arabic as the Rhetoric of Insurgency: the Case of the Caucasus Emirate," in: *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 35, 4 (2011), 315-337.

the theme of global jihad, the North Caucasus jihadists also introduced Arab and Islamic terminology, which also brings them closer to foreign jihadists.

Modifying Knysh's point, Michael Kemper drew attention to the limited scope of Islamic terms used in the texts of terrorists, which largely serve as mere markers of the militants' discourse. A grounding in Islamic sciences was not a prerequisite in the jihadist discourse.⁵⁴ Kemper also identified a clear influence of the Russian journalist tradition and Soviet military songs from the Second World war on the jihadist discourse in contemporary Russia.⁵⁵ The discursive platforms of the well-known Islamists from the North Caucasus – including Umarov, Astemirov, and Udugov – will be analyzed in the first part of the present dissertation, where I juxtapose Knysh's argument by a discussion of the regional and post-Soviet frames of references, and modes of expressions, that we find in these men's jihadist writings.

North Caucasian jihadism as part of the global jihadist movement is also the central approach of the volume *Russia's Homegrown Insurgency: Jihad in the North Caucasus*, edited by Stephen S. Blank.⁵⁶ The contributors to this volume stress the ideological similarity of North Caucasus jihadism with the international jihadist movement.⁵⁷ For Gordon Hahn – a long-time observer of Russia's jihadist scene at the Monterey Institute for International Studies – the ideology of the “Caucasus Emirate” is similar to the Salafi “theo-ideology” advanced by al-Qaida and other groups in the global jihadi revolutionary alliance.⁵⁸ Hahn believes that the key elements of this theo-ideology are such Islamic concepts as *tawhid* (monotheism), *takfir* (accusation of unbelief), *jihad*, and martyrdom.⁵⁹ Gordon Hahn also describes in detail the educational, political and military ties between the leaders and ideologues of the Caucasus Emirate and the various international jihadist organizations, al-Qaida being the largest of

⁵⁴ M. Kemper, “Jihadism: The Discourse of the Caucasus Emirate,” in: *Islamic Authority and the Russian Language: Studies on Texts from European Russia, the North Caucasus and West Siberia*, edited by Alfrid K. Bustanov and Michael Kemper (Amsterdam: Pegasus 2012), 265-293, here: 293.

⁵⁵ Kemper, “Jihadism”, 273.

⁵⁶ *Russia's Homegrown Insurgency: Jihad in the North Caucasus*, edited by Stephen S. Blank: (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2012) [e-Book], URL: <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1116> (last accessed 22 November 2016).

⁵⁷ D.C. Lovelace, “Foreword,” in: *Russia's Homegrown Insurgency: Jihad in the North Caucasus*, edited by Stephen S. Blank: (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2012), v.

⁵⁸ G. Hahn, “The Caucasus Emirate Jihadists: The Security and Strategic Implications. The Caucasus Emirate Jihadists: The Security and Strategic Implications,” in: *Russia's Homegrown Insurgency: Jihad in the North Caucasus*, edited by Stephen S. Blank: (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2012), 4.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

them. Hahn also briefly mentions Said Buriatskii,⁶⁰ in his opinion the most efficient propagandist of the Caucasus Emirate. Since Buriatskii was a convert from Buriatia, Hahn cautions that the popularity of jihadism cannot directly be reduced to a result of bad governance in the North Caucasus region;⁶¹ in many articles and in some monographs, he emphasizes the all-Russian dimension of North Caucasus jihadism. My thesis shares this approach; yet while Hahn largely employs a dissemination model (jihad is imported to the North Caucasus and from there radiates into other regions of Russia), my approach is to study post-Soviet jihadism as a trend that feeds from common discourses and social developments pre-existent in all regions. In addition, it should be mentioned that Hahn's approach – and that of most other observers – is predicated upon security issues,⁶² whereas my interest is with the intellectual genealogy of jihadi expressions.

However, not all authors emphasized the external sources of the ideology of North Caucasus terrorists. For example, Georgi M. Derluguian from Northwestern University (Chicago), in a 1999 article pointed out that during the first half of the 1990s, the ideology of the rebels preserved features reminiscent of socialist thinking.⁶³ Derluguian compared the image of the well-known Chechen militant Shamil Basaev with that of the leader of the Cuban revolution, Che Guevara (1928-1967). In his 2005 monograph *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus*, on the trajectory of the Kabardinian activist (and one-time chairman of a Pan-Caucasian organization flirting with Islamism) Musa Shanibov, Derluguian equally emphasized the significance of pre-war Soviet education and socialization of native post-soviet intellectuals, also including the ideologist of jihad Zelimkhan Yandarbiev (1952-2004).⁶⁴ The present thesis follows this biographical approach, in order to reconstruct the context in which jihadist propaganda appeared and unfolded.

In 2011, Dmitry Shlapentokh of Indiana University identified a clear influence of Russian cultural and political traditions on Russia's jihadist movement that had so far largely gone unnoticed.⁶⁵ Shlapentokh suggested that Russian jihadism underwent a transformation,

⁶⁰ Ibid., 28.

⁶¹ Ibid., 27-28.

⁶² Gordon M. Hahn, *Russia's Islamic Threat* (Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 2007).

⁶³ G. Derluguian, "Che Guevaras in Turbans: the Twisted Lineage of Islamic Fundamentalism in Chechnya and Dagestan," in: *New Left Review*, 237 (1999), 4, 11.

⁶⁴ G. Derlug'ian, *Adept Burd'e na Kavkaze: Eskizy k biografii v miroisistemnoi perspektive* (Moscow: Izdatel'skii dom "Territoria budushchego", 2010), 21, 407; Derluguian G., *Bourdieu's Secret Admirer in the Caucasus: A World-System Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

⁶⁵ D. Shlapentokh, "Jihadism in the Post-Soviet Era: The Case of Interaction of Theoretical and Practical Aspects of the Revolutionary Struggle," in: *Iran and the Caucasus*, 15 (2011), 276.

whereby Russian Marxism, Eurasianism and even messianic thought were influential in the first phase of the military conflict in the Caucasus, while the foreign ideas found spread only at the later stage. Shlapentokh thereby undertook a radical departure from the generalized discussions of global terrorism. His observation largely coincides with the overall argument of my thesis, in which I develop his argument further by differentiating between the various toolkits available for jihadists to enroot their ideology in post-Soviet society and culture, and by widening our discussion of the ideological strands from which the jihadists feed.

My work also follows Shlapentokh in his argument that the actual Islamization of Russian jihadism took place only on the later stage; in what follows I will exemplify this by making a differentiation between a first generation of Soviet-educated jihadi ideologists (mostly discussed in part I of this thesis) and a younger generation that had enjoyed conventional or even academic Islamic education (analyzed in part II). Building on Shlapentokh's argumentation, I add emphasis on the fact that right after the fall of the Soviet Union, Russian jihadism also built upon the legacy of Soviet Orientalism and the whole range of available ideologies current in the Russian society of those days. Only later, these ideas and concepts were brought closer to the standards of the global Islamic discourse. Still, striking is that also in later jihadist writings, references to the rich Arabic-language tradition of jihadi writing is very scarce.

Another aspect of Soviet and post-Soviet influence on Russian jihadism was observed by Vladimir Bobrovnikov, a senior scholar at the Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences who specializes in the history of the North Caucasus. Bobrovnikov noted that the genre of Islamic polemical documentary has been heavily influenced by the Islamic missionary tradition on the one hand and by the Soviet anti-Western and anti-Semitic connotations from the Cold War era. Moreover, the influence of (post-) Soviet popular culture is evident in the internet clips on Muslim “martyrs” such as Said Buriatskii,⁶⁶ a central protagonist in chapter 6 of this thesis.

The Prague-based political scientists Emil Souleimanov and Ondrej Ditrych are also among those experts who have critically examined the global character of jihad in the North Caucasus.⁶⁷ Contrary to the usual emphasis on the external factors, these authors consider the

⁶⁶ V. Bobrovnikov, “‘Ordinary Wahhabism’ versus ‘Ordinary Sufism’? Filming Islam for Postsoviet Muslim Young People,” in: *Religion, State & Society*, 39 (2011), 281-301.

⁶⁷ E. Souleimanov, O. Ditrych, “The Internationalisation of the Russian–Chechen Conflict: Myths and Reality,” in: *Europe-Asia Studies*, 60, 7 (2008), 1199-1222.

possible role of traditional blood revenge in the motivations of young jihadists in Chechnya, those who lost close relatives in the military campaigns. However, this viewpoint also implies that there are certain national traditions that continue to define the human behavior of the mountaineers. As Vladimir Bobrovnikov has demonstrated, little is left of traditional society in the Caucasus, especially after all the modernist experiments of the Soviet era.⁶⁸

Some of the internal factors in the formation of jihadism in the Caucasus have been studied by Irina Starodubrovskaja.⁶⁹ Here – as well as in the studies of many other scholars – the emphasis is put on social and economic factors that drive the Muslim youth into jihadi organizations.

Also Ahmet Yarlykapov, a scholar from the region working at a major diplomatic university in Moscow, even argues that the militants in the region did not fight for the establishment of “a global caliphate” because they had no idea about what such a caliphate would stand for.⁷⁰ In his studies on the politicization and radicalization of the Muslim youth, Yarlykapov hesitates to characterize the resistance either as “Salafi” or “Wahhabi”, for these terms do not appear as meaningful designations. I also share this view, since I believe that at least before the Russian jihadists discovered the global dimension of terrorism, the ideological weight of Salafism in their texts accounts to a minimum. Salafism (understood as a movement that emphasizes and idealizes the community of the first Muslim generations, *al-salaf al-salih*) or Islamic fundamentalism (as an approach that advocates the direct recourse to the Qur'an and the Sunna, as the two major source bodies of Islam, bypassing or rejecting the later traditions of theology, law and Sufism) are little helpful in a discourse that is rather eclectic in its use of sources. This is especially obvious if we compare the contemporary output of jihadists with the sophisticated legal discourse on jihad in the North Caucasus Arabic manuscripts composed in late Tsarist and Soviet Russia.⁷¹ Of course, “fundamentalist” approaches can be identified in almost any Muslim society, next to “traditionalist” attachment to particular schools of theology and law, and to Sufi brotherhoods. But the contemporary jihadists, while rejecting the “traditionalists” cooperating with the state, do not necessarily promote only

⁶⁸ V. Bobrovnikov, “Withering Heights. The Re-Islamization of a Kolkhoz Village in Dagestan: a Micro-History,” in: *Allah's Kolkhozes*, edited by Stephane Dudoignon and Christian Noack (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2014), 375-379, 390-391.

⁶⁹ See: *Istoki konfliktov na Severnom Kavkaze*, ed. Irina Starodubrovskaja and Denis Sokolov (Moscow: “Delo”, 2013), 277.

⁷⁰ A. Yarlykapov, “Islam i konflikt na Kavkaze,” in: *Bol'shoi Kavkaz dvadtsat' let spustia : resursy i strategii politiki i identichnosti*, edited by Gasan Guseinov (Moscow: NLO, 2014), 215.

⁷¹ M. Kemper, “The Daghestani Legal Discourse on the Imamate,” in: *Central Asian Survey*, 21 3 (2002), 265-278.

distinctly “fundamentalist” approaches. In my dissertation I demonstrate the flexibility in the argumentation of jihadists, and the individual character of the various projects they propose.

In this regard the observations of Adeb Khalid are relevant. Khalid, professor at Carleton College and a leading expert on the history of modern Central Asia, argues that like al-Qaida and Hamas, also the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and several groups in Pakistan have in fact no obvious political agenda beyond taking control.⁷² Their ideological output does not provide a clear idea about which version of Islam they want to become dominant, at the expense of which others.⁷³ According to Adeb Khalid, expressions of Islam in the region are strongly shaped by the seventy years of Soviet power in Central Asia.

The Post-Soviet Embedding

Jihadists produce a growing body of jihadi writings, in which they set out their goals, strategies and methods, negotiate their hierarchies, discuss legal and theological issues of jihad, and denounce other interpretations of Islam. My research project started with the task of identifying the ways how “foreign” Islamic elements are brought into the Russian-language discourse of jihad, and how local activists employ the theological and legal apparatus of the Islamic tradition. I was therefore actively searching for “Arabism”, that is, the variant of Islamic Russian that integrates Islamic concepts, in particular through the introduction and codification of Arabic loanwords.⁷⁴ Within our joint research group (“The Russian Language of Islam”, funded by the Dutch Scientific Organisation), the phenomenon of “Russism” -- that is, the enrooting of Islam in the Russian language and in Russian historical and cultural symbols – has been the central topic of another PhD project, conducted by Gulnaz Sibgatullina, who has been examining the language of Russia's official Muftiates and of the Orthodox Church.⁷⁵ This division of tasks was designed with the expectation that jihadists stress the difference to Russian culture, avoid references to Russian symbols, and therefore integrate Arabic (“alien”) elements, in forms that appear to be undiluted by the symbols and

⁷² A. Khalid, *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 16.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁷⁴ M. Kemper, “Comparative Conclusion: ‘Islamic Russian’ as a New Sociolect?”, in: *Islamic Authority and the Russian Language: Studies on Texts from European Russia, the North Caucasus and West Siberia*, edited by Alfrid K. Bustanov and Michael Kemper (Amsterdam: Pegasus 2012), 403-416; A. K. Bustanov, M. Kemper, “The Russian Orthodox and Islamic Languages in the Russian Federation,” in: *Slavica Tergestina: European Slavic Studies Journal* 15 (2013), 258-277.

⁷⁵ G. Sibgatullina, “Daniil Sysoev: Mission and Martyrdom,” in: *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 28, 2 (2017), 163-182.

expressions of their Russian and Muslim pro-Kremlin opponents. Paradoxically, in the course of my work I realized that also the jihadists embed their discourse in frameworks derived from Russian culture, and shaped by Soviet experience and education.

In whatever languages they use, jihadist manifestos employ a basic lexicon of Islam. Also in the North Caucasus, the rulers whom jihadists want to topple are described as *taghut*, “idol worshippers”; whoever does not subscribe to the jihadi ideology is accused of being a *kafir*, “unbeliever”, or at least a *munafiq*, “hypocrite”. But I soon found that the Russian jihadi texts that I studied employed only a very limited pool of such loanwords and concepts; and in fact, the authors are usually quick to explain them in plain Russian. From this I concluded that there are other mechanisms at work than just the adaptation of ready-made concepts from abroad.

The study of how jihadism is “enrooted” therefore entails an engagement with local cultures, and with local historiographies; in this thesis, this boils down to an analysis of how jihadists reference the nineteenth-century jihad in the North Caucasus, and in particular the Imamate of Imam Shamil (1797-1871, r. 1834-1859) in Daghestan and Chechnya. This historical jihad provides many opportunities to construct continuities, through which contemporary jihad is given legitimacy.

However, I also soon found out that this construction of historical legitimacy is conducted in very particular ways – namely in discursive forms that place the jihadi discourse into the fold of general post-Soviet discourses. With other words, my analysis of jihadism develops along a vertical/chronological axis that brings us into regional history, but also along a horizontal axis that requires us to situate jihadist rhetoric into broader trends of thought not only in the Caucasus but also in Russia. My horizontal axis leads us primarily not to the South, to the Middle East, but it makes us turn to the North, to Russia. In the course of this thesis, I pay particular attention to reflections of Russian culture and history, to Soviet modernity, and to post-Soviet trauma. It is in this approach that my work fundamentally differs from the existing studies of jihad and Islamism in the Caucasus. I transcend the conventional framework also by arguing that the emanations of jihadi rhetoric from the North Caucasus have a palpable appeal to non-Muslims, including Russian Orthodox Christians as well as radical left- and right-wing nationalists. North Caucasus Jihadism, seen from this perspective, is also part of a broader framework that I broadly define as “post-Soviet”.

The Post-Soviet Context: In Search of New Ideologies

The Russian/post-Soviet background of Russia's jihadists has so far largely escaped scholarly attention; jihadi thinking is usually depicted as just being a copy of what is offered on the market of global jihadism. It is certainly true that influences from the Middle East have increased in the course of 2000s (with the expansion of the Islamic internet and Islamic education). However, the distinctly “Russian” and post-Soviet components are still persistent; so much that even Russian intellectuals have begun to perceive the Russian Islamic “scene”, including the jihadists, as no longer completely alien to the Russian intellectual tradition.

In this part, I would like to identify those phenomena of post-Soviet cultural and intellectual life that might have shaped the ideology of Russian-language propaganda. The key historical factor here was the period of Perestroika and the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991.

In a famous article, David Chioni Moore attempted to widen the boundaries of postcolonial studies by integrating the former Soviet Union into discussion.⁷⁶ This attempt caused a debate among the historians of the former Socialist realm on how to relate the post-Soviet to the post-colonial, and how to employ post-colonial theory to the societies that once were part of the USSR.⁷⁷ Madina Tlostanova has provided a critique of Moore’s view by arguing that Russian scholars themselves did not elaborate a post-Soviet conceptual thinking that could match up with the creative approaches developed by scholars reflecting on the post-colonial situation in former colonies of the West.⁷⁸

This lack of a critical tradition of post-Soviet post-colonialism from within meant that post-colonial positions remained the field of post-Soviet authors writing from nationalist positions – while in the western/English-speaking discourse, postcolonial theory had leftist origins, and was anti-nationalist in spirit.⁷⁹ Postcolonial thinking, inspired by the works of such left-leaning intellectuals as Michel Foucault, Frantz Omar Fanon, Jacques Derrida, Edward Said and Homi K. Bhabha, focused on the critique of inequality, cultural colonialism and capitalism. As Vera Tolz has recently demonstrated, at least partially this western critique of colonialism had its intellectual roots in the early Soviet anti-imperialist rhetoric, articulated

⁷⁶ D.C. Moore, “Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Post-colonial Critique,” in: *PMLA*, 116, 1 (2001), 111-128.

⁷⁷ Svetlana Sirotna, Klemens Giunter, “Mezhdunarodnaia konferentsia “Otzvyki imperii. Postkolonii kommunizma””, *Zhurnal'nyi zal* (2017) http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2017/2/mezhdunarodnaya-konferenciya-otzvuki-imperii-postkolonii-kommun.html#_ftn1 (last accessed 01 February 2018).

⁷⁸ M. Tlostanova, “Can the Post-Soviet Think? On Coloniality of Knowledge, External Imperial and Double Colonial Difference,” in: *Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics*, 1. 2 (2015), 38-58.

⁷⁹ Sirotna, Giunter, “Mezhdunarodnaia konferentsia”.

by Orientalists and their “native” co-workers in the national peripheries.⁸⁰ It is therefore not entirely surprising that the nationalist discourses of the post-Soviet realm – whether arguing from Russian, Uzbek or Chechen positions -- largely employ anti-imperialist arguments familiar from previous decades. As Shoshana Keller observed in her study of textbooks in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, the form of Soviet historical narratives largely remained the same and were simply filled by other contents.⁸¹

To be sure, various national historiographies challenged the established Soviet historical framework.⁸² In particular, nationalists attacked the colonial hierarchies between the imperial center and its national peripheries. Some of these national histories received official recognition, while others, formulated by intellectuals alien to Moscow and local elites, remained marginalized.⁸³ These processes were accompanied by the construction of new traditions, “realms of memory”⁸⁴ and symbols of nations.⁸⁵ This has much in common with how nationalists behaved in other regions of the world: it is crucial to enroot nation on a given territory.⁸⁶ After the fall of the Soviet Union national movements emerged in most of the former national republics. In Russia, there were many such movements: Russian, Tatar, Chechen, Chuvash, Yakut, Avar and other national movements insisted that each nation has the right to self-determination and to create new state entities on behalf of the nation. If, in the case of Russian nationalism, one of the versions of this self-determination was the slogan “Russia for Russians!”, nationalist movements of other peoples of Russia voiced the ambition to create sovereign national republics - Tatarstan, Daghestan, Chechnya, Bashkortostan and many others within the Russian Federation. Some nationalist movements in the post-Soviet space led to deadly wars, such as in Chechnya, Nagorny Karabakh and Trans-Dniester. In others cases, such as Tatarstan or Bashkortostan, nationalist movements accompanied the

⁸⁰ V. Tolz, *Russia's Own Orient: The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press: 2011).

⁸¹ S. Keller, “Story, Time, and Dependent Nationhood in the Uzbek History Curriculum,” in: *Slavic Review*, 66, 2 (2007), 276-277.

⁸² See: *Natsional'nye istorii v sovetskom i postsovetskom gosudarstvakh*, pod redaktsiei Karl Aimermakher i Gennadii Bordiugov (Moscow: Fond Fridrikha Naumanna, AIRO-XX, 2003).

⁸³ In terms of Michel Foucault or Thomas Abercrombie the intellectual product of the latter are a counter-memory: T. Abercrombie, *Pathways of Memory and Power: Ethnography and History Among an Andean People* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998); *Language, Counter-memory, Practice. Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, edited by Donald F. Bouchard (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1977).

⁸⁴ The term of the French historian Pierre Nora. See: P. Nora, *The Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

⁸⁵ See: G. Bykovskaia, A. Zlobin, I. Inozemtsev, “Kontseptsiiia “mest pamiatii”: k voprosu o russkom istoricheskom soznanii,” in: *Vestnik Tomskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta*, 1, 13 (2011); *Natsional'nye istorii v sovetskom i postsovetskom gosudarstvakh*.

⁸⁶ E. Hobsbawm, T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, New York: Verso, 2006).

political struggle between the elites of these republics and the federal center in Moscow, pressuring both.⁸⁷

In the early 1990s national republics of Russia started to declare their sovereignty with a hope to get more independence from Russia.⁸⁸ In parallel, Islam re-entered the public space, and each national movement strove to develop also its religious wing. All this led to the rapid growth of the number of local, regional and “central” muftiates.⁸⁹ This fragmentation of the national and religious field has been accompanied by the creation of national historical narratives from new positions.

Nationalists reinterpreted the past of the people on behalf of whom they spoke and constructed mythologies to legitimize their projects.⁹⁰ The different versions of the past in the post-Soviet context engendered what is now called “wars of memory”.⁹¹ Debates about the past were of course directly related to the current political agenda and inserted into the then-contemporary ideological debate about how to respond to the political challenges that followed from the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In addition to the particularistic national/ethnic historiographies, many broader ideological projects gained ground in post-Soviet Russia, such as Neo-Eurasianism, the concept of a “Russian word” transgressing the boundaries of the Russian Federation, Pan-Slavism, monarchism, *rodnoveri* (Slavic neopaganism) and political Orthodoxy.⁹² These encompassing

⁸⁷ On nationalism in the North Caucasus, for example, see: C. Bram, M. Gammer, “Radical Islam, Traditional Islam and Ethno-Nationalism in the Northern Caucasus,” in: *Middle Eastern Studies*, 49, 2 (2013), 296-337; *Ethno-nationalism, Islam and the State in the Caucasus: Post-Soviet Disorder*, edited by Moshe Gammer (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007); G. Yemelianova, “Islam, Nationalism and State in the Muslim Caucasus,” in: *Caucasus Survey*, 1, 2 (2014), 3-23; On nationalism in other regions of Russia, for example, see: E. Giuliano, “Who Determines the Self in the Politics of Self-Determination: Identity and Preference Formation in Tatarstan’s Nationalist Mobilization,” in: *Comparative Politics*, 32, 3 (2000), 295-316; D. Gorenburg, “Regional Separatism in Russia: Ethnic Mobilisation or Power Grab?” in: *Europe-Asia Studies*, 51, 2 (1999), 245-274; H. L. Humphries, B. K. Conrad, L. Salakhadinova, I. Kouznetsova-Morenko, “New Ethnic Identity: The Islamization Process in the Russian Federation,” in: *International Review of Modern Sociology*, 31, 2 (2005), 207-231; S. A. Oushakine, *The Patriotism of Despair: Nation, War, and Loss in Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

⁸⁸ On the factor of the idea of sovereignty in the disintegration of the USSR, see: E. W. Walker, *Dissolution: Sovereignty and the Breakup of the Soviet Union* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003).

⁸⁹ By 2016 in Russia there were 82 muftiates. See: “Igor’ Barinov: 82 muftiata – eto slishkom mnogo dlia Rossii”, *IslamReview* (20.04.2016) <http://islamreview.ru/news/barinov-predlagaet-ukrupnit-muftiaty/> (last accessed 15 February 2018).

⁹⁰ See: *Natsional’nye istorii v sovetskom i postsovetskom gosudarstvakh*.

⁹¹ V. Schnirel'man, *Voiny pamiati. Mify, identichnost' i politika na Kavkaze* (Moscow: Akademkniga, 2003), 245.

⁹² The term was coined by Russian political analyst Aleksandr Verkhovskii in his book *Politicheskoe pravoslavie. Russkie pravoslavnye natsionalisty i fundamentalisty, 1995-2001 gg.* (Sova: Moscow, 2003). Political Orthodoxy can be called a religious ideology (A. Mitrofanova, “‘Politicheskoe Pravoslavie’ i problema

ideological trends can be understood as attempts to fill the ideological niche left vacant by Communism, and as new versions for restoring the greatness of the Russian state. By constructing historical myths and deconstructing the ideology of their opponents, ideologists of the abovementioned projects employ various pseudo-scientific or quasi-scientific theories to reinforce their arguments.⁹³

The great fascination with conspiracy and quasi-scientific theories produced a new genre – folk-history⁹⁴ – that flourished in Russia in the mid-1990s. Here amateur historians challenged the science of history by approaches that appealed to a broad public. In post-Soviet Turkmenistan, such approaches that prioritize mythology over scholarly analysis even became state dogma, and were enforced by school curricula.⁹⁵

The popularity of these works was an indirect result of Soviet policy toward the humanities and social sciences.⁹⁶ The firm state control in this area of knowledge censored all works and ideas that did not follow the official Marxist-Leninist ideology, and pushed such alternative histories underground.⁹⁷ After the end of Soviet ideological control, the Russian society obtained access to all kinds of 'alternative' literature, and lost faith also in the control mechanisms provided by the guild of historians.⁹⁸ The rejection of Marxist paradigms and the debunking of Soviet myths during the Perestroika and the post-Soviet eras resulted in a widespread mistrust to humanities at large. As Russian journalist Stanislav Dmitrievskii once wrote, many Soviet citizens asked:

If almost everything we had been taught by historians about Soviet power turned out to be untrue, then maybe most of what they covered in school is also a falsehood: now we could think that Tutankhamun, Ancient Rome, or Ivan the Terrible might have never existed.⁹⁹

In consequence, works stating the most unconventional and even scandalous content, but still pretending to argue from a scientific point of view, attracted significant popularity.

religioznosti,” in: *Filosofia i obshchestvo*, 1, 42 (2006), 79), which uses Orthodox Christianity for political goals as a struggle for power.

⁹³ One of such pseudo-scientific approaches, for example, the theory of passionarity of Lev Gumilev.

⁹⁴ Dmitrii Volodikhin, “Fenomen folk-histori”, *Skepsis* (2000) http://sceptis.net/library/id_148.html (last accessed 5 March 2017).

⁹⁵ A. Bouma, “Turkmenistan: Epics in Place of Historiography,” in: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 59.4 (2011), 559-585.

⁹⁶ Dmitrii Volodikhin, “Fenomen folk-histori”.

⁹⁷ Stanislav Dmitrievskii, “Kuda idut mastera folk-history? Chast’ 1”, *Free press* (07.05.2010) <http://svpressa-nn.ru/2010/139/kuda-idut-mastera-folk-histori-chast-1.html> (last accessed 5 March 2017).

⁹⁸ D. Volodikhin, O. Eliseeva, D. Oleinikov, *Istoria Rossii v melkii goroshek* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Edinstvo, 1998). Internet version: <http://janaberestova.narod.ru/goroshek.htm> (last accessed 5 March 2017).

⁹⁹ Stanislav Dmitrievskii, “Kuda idut mastera folk-khistory? Chast’ 1”.

Here we should mention the observation of the Russian-American historian and linguist Mark Lipovetsky, who argued that the post-Soviet liberal movement was shaped by the special discourse of engineering-technical workers (ITR-discourse).¹⁰⁰ The fact that democratic transformations in Russia were designed and implemented mainly by the scientific and technical intelligentsia,¹⁰¹ who sometimes took a skeptical view of the humanities, added to the popularity of works that revised many provisions of the historical sciences.

If we want to employ the terminology of French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard, the new large projects in post-Soviet Russia can be called meta-narratives.¹⁰² These large projects seem to function as *ersatz*-ideologies that are meant to unite the people and give them great goals. While Lyotard wrote about the failure of such large projects in the Western world, the post-Soviet society was strongly shaped by popular ideologies competing with each other, each seeking to establish a unifying belief system in opposition to postmodern diversity. The state authority either used one or the other ideology depending on the situation, or ignored or even banned some of them.

Disappointment with the Soviet ideological system and disorientation on the new market of political and religious ideas also provoked a counter-trend, namely a new quest for sincerity, which scholars of Russian literature understand as a bulwark against the encroaching postmodern situation. This “new sincerity” movement expresses dissatisfaction with postmodernist irony, with the feeling that every idea is just an “imitation”, and with the perception that “everything is relative”.¹⁰³ This sincerity is meant to bring about a return to real humanity, and to bring texts closer to the actual living situation of the reader, to “reality”. “New sincerity” is not an ideological trend, but a widely-shared rejection of the postmodern relativity game.

The paradox of the post-Soviet situation is that, in the end, this struggle for large ideological projects as well as for sincerity and honesty is itself part of the post-industrial pluralization

¹⁰⁰ M. Lipovetsky, “The Poetics of ITR Discourse: in the 1960s and Today”.

¹⁰¹ See: M. Lipovetsky, “The Poetics of ITR Discourse: in the 1960s and Today,” in: *Ab Imperio*, 1 (2013), 109–131.

¹⁰² See: J.-F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

¹⁰³ See: A. Yurchak, “Post-Post-Communist Sincerity: Pioneers, Cosmonauts, and Other Soviet Heroes Born Today,” in: *What Is Soviet Now? Identities, Legacies, Memories*, edited by Thomas Lahusen and Peter H. Solomon (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2008), 257-276; E. Rutten, “Strategic Sentiments: Pleas for New Sincerity in Post-Soviet Literature,” in: *Dutch Contributions to the Fourteenth International Congress of Slavists*, edited by Sander Brouwer, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), 201-217; E. Rutten, *Sincerity after Communism* (New Haven and London: Yale university press, 2017).

where the ideological field is a market for a huge number of large projects. In that situation, the average person or even the state authority can either easily change their ideological preferences moving from one ideology to another or even combine different ideas – for example, by considering oneself an Orthodox atheist or a left-wing Islamist. This ambiguity, in particular, of the contemporary Russian political system is also expressed by political scientists who emphasize the ambiguities in the Russian political system, be that Richard Sakwa's concept of a “Dual State” (in which the constitutional order is constantly undermined by the actual practice of the prerogative regime),¹⁰⁴ or Oksana Shevel's claim that the Russian federation's nationality policy is “purposefully ambiguous”, with civic and ethnic concepts maintained in parallel.¹⁰⁵

It is against this background of experiences of ambiguity, relativity, fluidity, and of the search for “sincerity”, that I analyze the output of jihadi ideologists. I argue that the broad array of ideological constructs and of (pseudo-) scientific approaches feeds into the discourse on jihad, and results in a surprising scope of possible combinations. These jihadi products can easily be related back to the broader phenomena of which they form part.

Method and Design of the Thesis

The methodological toolkit of this thesis is pretty conventional. I attempt at tracing the genealogy of Islamist thinking over roughly fifteen years – for the North Caucasus, particular troubling years, with two major wars and continuing waves of violence – by analyzing the arguments that Islamists made in their propaganda: in journal articles, books, blogs, video productions, and even songs. This analysis is accompanied by the study of the available “literature” on the subject. I put this term into quotation marks because on most of the protagonists, there is almost no academic literature to speak of; rather, what we have at our disposal are news reports, opinion pieces, and interviews, all of which provide some background information. These items need to be read with caution; authors might not disclose their sources, and many news items are tainted by political views. To put it bluntly, most of what has been written on Russia's jihadism is in one way or another partisan, and must be linked back to the position of the author in the broader field. One major source that any expert

¹⁰⁴ See: R. Sakwa, “The Dual State in Russia,” in: *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 26, 3 (2010), 185-206.

¹⁰⁵ O. Shevel, “Russian Nation-Building from Yel'tsin to Medvedev: Ethnic, Civic or Purposefully Ambiguous?” in: *Europe-Asia Studies* 63:2 (2011), 179-202.

and observer uses is the propaganda industry of the Islamists themselves, the most well-known digital archive being the accumulated items at kavkazcenter.org, the news agency of the so-called “Caucasus Emirate” terrorist organization, and similar sites. Naturally, also the official Russian sources on jihadism need to be read with caution; and finally, the writings of Russian and Western scholars need to be understood as products of an environment that equally operates under certain political pressures, from positions shaped by the Sovietological Cold War tradition of scholarship, and with a limited access to reliable information.

Given these limitations, the ambition of this thesis cannot be to give a trustful record of the emergence and development of jihadism. The purpose of this work is to not collect facts; rather, my thesis has the goal to delineate, and then to characterize, a discourse of propaganda. Propaganda is here defined in broad terms, as a systematic and conscious manipulation of selected images and narratives that are supposed to have an effect on a target audience, in issues of power relations. As to the techniques of propaganda dissemination, the period under investigation marks a shift from the use of pamphlets and books to the active use of electronic media.

My arguments about images, symbolical languages, perceptions, and specific reference points come out of the texts of the protagonists, in the form that the latter shaped their public appearances. In other words, I study jihadism as a text corpus, with an eye to how constructs are shaped by a broader post-Soviet condition.

I concentrated on what methods protagonists of jihadism have employed, what made their texts understandable and comprehensible to a potential audience. Intertextuality therefore has central stage. I tried to identify the ideas and the concepts, texts and references that informed and united this jihadist discourse. Equally, my goal is not to classify the protagonists of jihadism into externally-imposed categories, such as “Salafism” or “Wahhabism”; rather, my analysis starts with the actual reference points mentioned in the texts. I thereby follow Norman Fairclough, who pointed out that any text relies on the elements and discourses of previous texts.¹⁰⁶ Equally, Louise Phillips and Marianne Jorgensen established that one cannot avoid using words and phrases that were formerly used by others.¹⁰⁷ The object of discourse analysis is the interaction of different texts. My focus on intertextuality allows me to uncover

¹⁰⁶ N. Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 117-118.

¹⁰⁷ M. Jorgensen, L. Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publishing, 2002), 73.

the intellectual roots of this ideology, to discover the sources that supplied the jihadist propaganda in the post-Soviet North Caucasus with ammunition.

To reconstruct the context in which ideas were formed and spread I follow the life paths of the jihadist writers. I start from assumption that jihadists who participated in the military actions could easily use the texts of like-minded jihadists in the region and beyond. Special attention is to be paid to the non-Muslim sources of inspiration, from the Russian literary tradition and the cultural sphere more broadly defined. In the end I hope to arrive at a general qualification of the interconnectedness and flexibility that characterized the jihadist writing in Russia.

A text analysis is always based on a selection process: which Islamists/jihadists should be studied, and which of their statements should my analysis focus on? To arrive a representative picture I selected authors active in different stages of the confrontation in the North Caucasus, and personalities with various educational and professional experiences. Eventually, my corpus covers most of the best-known jihadist/ terrorists, in addition to some others whose work is less-known in the West, but who represent additional facets of legitimizing and “enrooting” jihad.

The first task that I set myself has been to investigate these divergent paths, to document the individual trajectories (as expressed in the available materials), and to analyze the writings produced by jihadists against these personal backgrounds; each chapter is therefore composed of sections that trace individual lives that culminated in jihad (and in almost all cases, to the death also of the protagonist). These chapters are organized chronologically; I start with the famous ideologists of the Chechen separatist movements and their embrace of Islam as an overarching ideology, and then move on to neighboring Daghestan, where we observe a similar fusion of Islamic and non-Islamic elements into a powerful discourse of jihadism. Two more cases deal with Islamic ideologists who were born and raised not in the North Caucasus but in other parts of the Russian Federation.

At the same time these individual sketches are organized in a manner that is supposed to systematically enlarge our understanding of the strategies, reference points, symbolic languages, and technicalities of the Russophone jihadist discourse propaganda. All chapters thereby contribute to the tentative elaboration of a common but distinct profile of jihadism in Russia, which I present in the Conclusion of this thesis.

In the first part of this study the reader will find some well-known names, in particular the first president of Ichkeria, Dzhokhar Dudaev (1944-1996); his successor Zelimkhan Yandarbiev (1952-2004); as well as Movladi Udugov (b. 1962), the creator of *Kavkazcenter*, and Shamil Basaev (1965-2006), who for many years was Russia's most-wanted terrorist. These men all belonged to what I call the first generation of Chechen Islamists; individually and as a group, they shaped the emergence of a modern discourse that enrooted jihad in Chechnya and the North Caucasus. These are the most well-known figures of the movement in their time, and they all were avid writers who experimented with practical and theoretical justifications of jihad. These jihadi ideologists of the first generation are dealt with in the three chapters that form the first part of this thesis.

The second part of the present work mainly focuses on a younger cohort of actors that, I argue, brought about important changes and innovations in the discourse of the propaganda of jihad. For neighboring Daghestan, my analysis starts with Nadirshakh Khachilaev (1958-2003), who – like Dudaev, Udugov and other Chechens of the first generation – oscillated between politics and militancy. The chapters of this second part of the book then analyze in more detail the life and works of Iasin Rasulov (1975-2006), who received notorious fame as the ideologist of the Daghestani “Sharia” movement; Anzor Astemirov (1976-2010), leader of the Kabardino-Balkarian jama'at (Islamic community), and subsequently Sharia judge of the “Caucasus Emirate”; Said Buriatskii (Aleksandr Tikhomirov, 1982- 2010), probably the most prominent speaker of the Caucasus Emirate; as well as the jihadi singer/songwriter Timur Mutsuraev (b. 1976), who still has a significant fan community in Russia. The final chapter presents Airat Vakhitov (b. 1977), a Tatar Islamist whose jihadist career brought him to Chechnya, Afghanistan, Guantanamo Bay, and Turkey; Vakhitov is also the only person whom I had the occasion to interview. All of these men gained utmost prominence in Russia, by their writings and their actions. They all actively participated in military actions and contributed to the spread of violent ideologies.

Finally, a last statement of caution is in place. Unlike the dominant discourse on jihadism from the security viewpoint, the approach taken in this thesis might be seen as a dangerously slippery path leading to a romanticization of jihad warrior culture. Such romanticism is absolutely not in place – we are talking about terrorists. To include jihadi literature into the field of Russian or post-Soviet political and popular culture may not render these texts harmless.