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The Complex North Caucasus Region from the Perspective of Polish and Foreign Scientists

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Abstract: The religion and the socio-political and cultural life of the peoples in the North Caucasus has always remained one of the central issues in the comprehensive study of this region. The team of Russian and Polish researchers, led by Professor Bodio Tadeusz of the Warsaw University, has made an extensive, three-part analysis in the author's series "Power-Elite-Leadership". The first part analyzes the religious and political situation in the North Caucasus. Special attention is paid to the policy of the Russian Federation in the field of religious relations; the activities of the religious associations in the regions; and the opposition of Sufism and Wahabism. In the second part, the researchers focus on the specifics of confessional elites and the security problems. In particular, the authors draw the attention to the processes of formation of Muslim elites in the region; the specificity of the spread of Islam in the North Caucasus; as well as the measures used by the federal and regional authorities to counteract the radicalization of Islam. The research is recommended to the authors dealing with the issues of the North Caucasus and the Russian Federation as a whole.

Комплексный Северо-Кавказский регион с точки зрения польских и зарубежных ученых

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Аннотация: Проблема положения религии в общественно-политической и культурной жизни народов Северного Кавказа всегда оставалась одной из центральных в комплексном изучении данного региона. Команда российских и польских исследователей под руководством профессора Варшавского университета Бодию Тадеуша подготовила достаточно обширный, состоящий из трех разделов анализ в качестве составной части авторской серии «Сила – элиты – лидерство». В первой части авторы анализируют религиозную и политическую ситуации на Северном Кавказе, особое внимание уделяется политике Российской Федерации в области религиозных взаимоотношений, деятельности религиозных объединений в автономных регионах и противопоставлению движений суфизма и ваххабизма. Во второй части исследователями делается акцент на специфике конфессиональных элит и проблемах безопасности. В частности, авторы обращают внимание на процессы формирования мусульманских элит в регионе, специфику распространения ислама среди жителей Северного Кавказа, а также предпринимаемые федеральными и региональными властями меры по противодействию радикализации ислама. Данное исследование было рекомендовано иностранным исследователям, профессионально занимающимся проблемами Северного Кавказа и Российской Федерации в целом.

Religion's place in the North Caucasus has long been debated among scholars. Since religion and politics have always fascinated researchers that is why these terms have been studied for thousands of years – still, studies about relations between religion, politics, and ethnical issues have not been completely investigated, until a team of scholars headed by professor Tadeusz Bodio undertook the task of bringing mentioned above problems closer. This book is the eleventh volume published as part of the editorial series Power-Elites-Leadership [pol. Władza-Elity-Przywódstwo]. It presents the results of the next stage of research carried out as part of the international scientific program implemented in the Department of Eastern Research of the Institute of Political Sciences in cooperation with the Department of Security Sciences, Interinstitutional Research Laboratory on Russia and the OCT countries of the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies of the University

of Warsaw, and the Institute of Sociology and Southern Regional Studies Federal University in Rostov-on-Don.

The book received the first prize in the 11th edition of the competition for scientific studies in the Caucasus and regional studies organized by the prestigious center of research on the Caucasus – Federal University in Rostov-on-Don. It is worth noting that 41 monographs and 5 other types of scientific studies were submitted for the competition.

The Authors of the presented book focused on problems related to religion, confessional, and political elites, and the security issues of the North Caucasus. It appears that this book is an original and ambitious position, making a significant contribution to the study of the region. The Authors undoubtedly take up difficult problems of the methodology of research on the Caucasian transformation and also they diagnose the most current political and religious phenomena, and processes in the region, among others, on the basis of empirical research.

The work structure consists of three parts. In the first part, the Authors present the religious and political situation in the North Caucasus. First, professor Andrzej Chodubski presents the religious diversity of the nations of the North Caucasus. The Author explains the specificity of religious denomination in the region and emphasizes religion as the essence that unites the diversity of nations and ethnic groups. In the next chapter, Magdalena Karolak-Michalska, PhD, analyzes the influence of religion on socio-political processes in the region. She analyzes the ethnic structure and denominational diversity that indicates the dependence between nationality and religion. The Author also analyzes the position of the Russian authorities towards the religious issues in the North Caucasus – they are considered as a threat, especially in the area of national security.

The third chapter, written by Jerzy Szukalski, PhD, is devoted to the analysis of legal regulations in the area of freedom of religion and the activity of religious associations in the autonomic republics of the North Caucasus. The Author emphasizes that the adopted legal acts at the federal level and the level of the autonomous republics limit the freedom of activity of local confessional associations and violate the subjective rights of followers of various religions, and especially the Muslims who are most represented there. He claims that this restrictive law will develop the radical Islam among the society and elites.

In the next chapter, Mustafa Bilalov (with post-doctoral degree) describes the contradictions in the interpretation of the Koran. The Author points out that especially in the last decades these interpretations have generated violence. He critically refers to the previous activities undertaken in a given area, including the education of future religious elites, in which quantitative criteria have dominated the quality of education.

Iwona Kaliszewska, PhD, describes the reasons and consequences of the dichotomy of `Sufism-Wahabism`. The Author refers to the ethnographic method and the results of field research carried out in 2004-2016 in Chechnya and Dagestan. According to the Author, the term `New Muslims` is closer to the actual identification of the majority of Muslims in the region – I. Kaliszewska underlines that this term does not force the residents to clearly define the boundaries between `we` and `they`.

Professor Asijat Buttajeva describes the sources and specific features of Islamic fundamentalism in the region, while analyzing cause-and-effect relations between the revival of Islam and the radicalization of non-traditional movements of the region and the Islamic organizations. He claims that the most radical is Islamism, and underlines that this movement is focused on changing the existing political order in the North Caucasus.

Then professor Maya Astvatsaturova describes qualitative changes taking place in the ethnoreligious sphere of the region. In her research, she points out that until recently ethnoreligious issues have determined the political situation in the region, while in the re-

cent period they have been clearly shifted into the background in the light of growing socio-economic problems.

The topic of the North Caucasus Islamic factor and Azerbaijan in 1991-1995, is presented by professor Piotr Kwiatkiewicz. He draws attention to the political crisis taking place in the 90s of the twentieth century and the visions of 'a new order' in Azerbaijan and the other republics of the region. P. Kwiatkiewicz claims that the 'new order' caused the return to religion – as the result many people of different nationalities began to restore the former umma.

Alicja Curanowicz, PhD, analyzes the genesis and the most important events of the missionary activity of the Church in the region. The Author notes that since the enthronement of the patriarch Cyril I, the Russian Orthodox Church became more active in the North Caucasus region. She indicates the specificity of the process of the foundation of its position among local communities.

The first part is closed by an article written by Andriej Bedrik, PhD, in which the Author focuses on issues related to the preservation of the identity and continuity of traditional religious minorities, such as the 'Don' Catholic Church. The Author analyzes these denominations referring to statistical data and empirical research carried out in 2015 by the Institute of Sociology and Regional Studies of the University of Rostov-on-Don.

The second part of the study is devoted to confessional elites and security issues. The first article written by professor Vahit Akaiev, presents the process of formation of Muslim elites in the region. He devotes much attention to sovietization, revealing poorly researched facts and consequences of the politics of atheism, terror, deportation, and total control of Muslim elites. He emphasizes that the classical type of Islamic elite formed a natural way to Russian expansion.

In the next chapter, professor Igor Dobaev analyzes the elites of radical Islamism – which he describes as complex and dependent on the ideological doctrines. The Author points to the creators of ideological doctrines of radical Islamism, he analyzes their evolution, and axiological and normative assumptions. The result of his research is the statement that after the generational change in the movement, the modern doctrines are being filled with more and more orthodox and aggressive content, especially in the North Caucasus.

Professor Vahit Akaiev analyzes the specific process of formation of Islam among the peoples of the Caucasus. The Author points out that it was a heterogeneous process and implied by the history, geopolitics, culture, and tradition of particular national-ethnic groups in the region. He presents the Wahhabi leaders' actions, violent and filled with extremism, the attacks on A. Kadyrow, and the role of confessional elites in the conflict between the followers of different Islamic groups.

Professor Igor Dobaev and Natalia Romanczenko, PhD, describe the process of progressing radicalization of Islam and point to the assumptions of the security policy of state authorities in the North Caucasus. The Authors focus on the analysis of security policy in the ideological sphere. The research shows that the federal and republican authorities were not able to develop effective methods of counteracting the ideological activity of religious-extremist movements.

In the next article, Natalia Romanczenko, PhD, explains the genesis and evolution of extremist religious and political organizations conducting terrorist activities. Based on the available data, she characterizes their network structure, strategy, and tactics of underground activity. The main focus is on the characteristics of the Caucasus Emirate and its connections with the so-called Islamic State.

Natalia Sedych, PhD, describes preventive anti-terrorist activity among young people. The Author analyzes information and psychological technologies of religious and political organizations addressed to youth communities in the region. The Author shows that the

digital technologies have influenced on the psyche of the young generations – this creates a perfect method to recruit young people into the ranks of terrorist organizations.

Part two is closed by article written by Przemysław Potocki, PhD, who analyzes selected areas of expert activity of two think tanks monitoring the political and religious situation in the North Caucasus in 2001-2016 (American Center for Strategic Research and the Polish Center for Eastern Research).

The third part is devoted to the confessional elites in the republics of the North Caucasus. The first article written by professor Malika Arsanukaeva treats about Muslim confessional activists in the socio-political life of Chechnya. The Author describes the most important stages of spreading and consolidating Islam among Chechens. She also indicates the role of religious leaders in this process. It is characterized by the works of Sheikh Mansur and Imams Kazi-Magomed, Gazamat-belka and Osman Shamil. As the result the Author claims that the Muslim clergy played an important role in the survival of culture of the Chechen people.

In the next chapter, the Author, professor Andrzej Chodubski, describes Dagestan and its national-religious specificity. He presents the spatial distribution of nationalities (Poles as well), and the ethnic conflicts disclosed in the 1990s. He also emphasizes cultural and civilizational uniqueness of Dagestan, where over one hundred nations and ethnic groups live in this small area.

Professor Rafał Czachor embraces the confessional elites and their role in the socio-political life in Dagestan in the neopatrymonial paradigm. He claims that neopatrymonialism is a tool (rarely applied) that allows tracking political processes in the region. He points to the stages of evolution of the Sufi-Salafi elites of Dagestan, beginning with the formation of these elites in the years 1980-1990 falling in the period of the revival of Islam, through their rivalry, and then the struggle in the next two decades, to reconfigure the elites in recent years. As the results of his research he states that the confessional elites use the violence to achieve their own goals; and the Salafism is the main destabilizing factor in Dagestan, which is not easy to liquidate.

Andrzej Szabaciuk, PhD, writes about the importance of Sufi Islam in the history and present-day political life of Chechnya and Dagestan. He claims that the traditional Islam, as well as all Sufi brotherhoods have played an important role in the formation of the state identity. In his article he presents the genesis, evolution, and main trends of Sufism. He also identifies sources of tension and conflicts among Muslim elites.

Yusup Dzhabrailov, PhD, describes the most important problems in state-religion relations and presents the importance of Muslim clergy in the social and political life of Dagestan. The Author is skeptical about the current state of the above relations. He also presents the role of the Islamic factor in political processes – he shows the forms of involvement of the confessional elites, such as charity, and education.

In the next chapter, Agnieszka Tomczyk describes the religious situation in the Republic of Adyghea. The Author refer to the history of the creation of two religions: Islam and Orthodoxy. She describes the unique phenomenon of aedygeism, which implies the specific religiosity of the Adyghe.

Professor Svietlana Lyausheva and Nadezhda Ilyinova, PhD, present the results of empirical and expert research that were carried out in 2015-2016. The objectives of this project were twofold: they attempted to develop effective instruments for analyzing ethnosocial and ethnoreligious processes, as well as methods of influencing these processes on the example of Adyghea, and verified the research methodology, referring to the rich statistical and empirical data. The research allowed to reveal qualitative changes taking place in relations between ethnoreligious groups, as well as within these groups.

Przemysław Sieradzan, PhD, presents the elite of traditional Tibetan Buddhism of Kalmykia from the 17th century to the present day. This religion remains the foundation of the ethnic identity of the Kalmuks, who consider the traditions of Tibetan Buddhism as an extremely important element of their heritage. Research shows that an important challenge for religious revival was the emergence of new religious elites.

This publication is a valuable source of knowledge about the North Caucasus, especially the political and confessional elites of the region. This position falls within the scope of considerations creating new fields of science – `elitology` and `religious political science`.

The methodological analysis included in it seems to be particularly important, taking into account the need to develop an efficient methodological workshop for the study of political and confessional elites. The work aspires to become an important reading and inseparable element of the bibliography of scientific works on broadly understood `elitology`, `religious political science`, and the Northern Caucasus studies.

The reviewed book is bilingual – as the result of cooperation of the Department of Eastern Research of the Institute of Political Sciences (University of Warsaw) with the Department of Security Sciences, Interinstitutional Research Laboratory on Russia and the OCT countries of the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies of the University of Warsaw, and the Institute of Sociology and Southern Regional Studies Federal University in Rostov-on-Don – articles are written in Polish and Russian, what makes the book original and shows the perspectives of foreign researchers.

The Authors managed to present the processes taking place during the formation and functioning of the confessional elites of this diverse region. The structure of the study is logical and consistent. The Authors presented the results of the research and came to important conclusions regarding the analysis of the political and confessional elites of the North Caucasus. Undoubtedly, the main concepts have been defined in this publication using an interesting methodological workshop. The subject of the thesis has been clearly delineated and narrowed to the North Caucasus region, however, we will not find a tendentious repetition of themes in any of the chapters. Each chapter is a separate analysis of problems selected by the Authors.

The publication is recommended by the Reviewer to researchers dealing with the North Caucasus region, and the Russian Federation. The reviewed work is a valuable source of knowledge, showing the unusual complexity of this region, the importance of Islam among the peoples of the North Caucasus, and the current international situation of extremism. This book presents the facts and gives the reader a basis for interpreting the religion in the North Caucasus region, and how it differs from other regions. It is an engaging read about this complex and unstable region that receives too little coverage.

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