

## **Abstract**

Under the Chechen President, Ramzani Kadyrov, Islamic discourse is being diffused throughout an ever-expanding array of political and social domains, knitting the Chechen polity into a social order that is regulated by Sufi Islam. Using Laclau and Mouffe's 'Discourse Theory', this research project analyses that diffusion of Islamic discourse within Chechnya. The research finds that there is a comprehensive effort by the regime to construct a political order that draws upon, but also subverts, formerly hegemonic understandings of Islam within Chechnya. Through embedding governance and the Chechen subject within its Islamic discourse, Kadyrov's government articulates a political landscape that establishes its authority by positioning itself as the guardian of 'authentic' Chechen Islam. Here, the regime draws upon a powerful discursive resource - traditional Chechen Islamic identity - to naturalise its own authority by associating itself with a historically potent source of Chechen unity, Sufi Islam. However, the regime's discourse silences the traditional understanding of Sufi Islam as embedded within an ethno-nationalist, separatist discourse. Such restructuring marginalises the Islamist resistance - which the Kadyrov dynasty was installed to destroy - and also marginalises resistance that the pro-Kremlin government may encounter from its subjects, who have historically resisted, and greatly suffered under, Russian sovereignty.