

Abstract

Salafism is considered a powerful mobilising ideology used by many Islamist and terrorist movements worldwide. This ideology was also adopted by the Caucasus Emirate, a once influential terrorist organisation that used to operate in the mountains of Russian Northern Caucasus. This paper thoroughly analyses religious ideas and trends behind North-Caucasian Salafism, as the body of academic sources concerning this issue is quite limited up to now. The analysis deals with main topics and narratives of the Caucasus Emirate Salafist propaganda, but also considers religious authorities that grant theological legitimacy to these ideological concepts. Both Arab and North-Caucasian spiritual leaders and ideologues are under scrutiny of this analysis. Concluding part of this paper outlines shifts in the rhetoric, which are caused by the conflict between the Caucasus Emirate and the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Levant. Analysis of the rhetoric draws conclusions using previously published academic work as well as the authentic internet sources, i.e. jihadist websites and videos in the Russian language. The paper suggests that the rhetoric of North-Caucasian Salafists is generally similar to the rhetoric of any other jihadist movement, but at the same time it contains number of inconsistencies as it relies on ideologues whose ideas are often conflicting or contradictory. Simultaneously, we can observe conflicts and ideological rifts that define the attitude of Caucasus Emirate and al-Qaeda towards the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant.