YOUNG PEOPLE'S TRAJECTORIES THROUGH RADICAL ISLAMIST MILIEUS:
COUNTRY LEVEL REPORT RUSSIA

Urban second generation Muslims from the North Caucasus in St Petersburg and Moscow, Russia

DARE
Dialogue About
Radicalisation & Equality

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Contents

Executive Summary:

This report presents the results of the Russian case study on Islamic radicalisation. The milieu chosen for our study consisted of representatives of the urban second generation of youth from the North Caucasus. Specifically, this refers to the children and younger brothers of migrants who moved to large cities from the villages of the North Caucasus republics. Individuals in this milieu share experiences of restrictions on access to resources, loss of traditional social connections (distancing from relatives due to relocation), and discrimination. At the same time, they are the first generation of 'native Muslims' who grew up during the (re)Islamisation of the North Caucasus in the post-Soviet era. Combined, these factors can become a foundation for the spreading of radical ideas and calls for radicalisation among the participants of the given milieu.

The research methodology is a case study; the collected material is represented by in-depth biographical interviews and observations. In total, the database included 21 interviews with 20 informants; further, four observations were carried out. The collected interviews and observations were transcribed, anonymised, and coded using NVivo software.

It was difficult to determine clear trajectories of radicalisation as a definite sequence of events in this milieu. The informants were more likely to talk about the contexts of radicalisation, which they identified as tight control and pressure from power structures. Collision with these contexts can lead to cumulative radicalisation.

The turn to radical ideas can further represent an attempt to build an alternative model of self-realisation in a situation of double exclusion (from the family and socio-economic resources), which is faced by this group. In the ratio of ideological and extra-ideological factors of radicalisation, the latter predominate.

The informants note that the main networks of radicalisation include the family and inner circle, as well as sports communities. The role of religious spaces in this process is controversial. At the same time, the family and the inner circle are also considered by representatives of the urban second generation as the main institutions of de-radicalisation. They attribute the rejection of radical views and/or actions to a change in lifestyle during the process of maturation, or to an observed discrepancy between reality and jihadist propaganda.

The radicalisation of young men from the North Caucasus also represents a consequence of the assimilation of patterns of toxic masculinity, which are supported in society both from 'above' – by actions of social, political and economic institutions, and from below – through everyday practice.

1. Introduction

The milieu for this study constituted the urban second generation of youth from the North Caucasus. This urban second generation refers to the children and younger brothers of migrants who moved to large cities from the villages of the North Caucasus republics (Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia). We consider only men, as social circles in the North Caucasus are strongly gendered. The main destinations of their migration are the large agglomerations of the North Caucasus and neighbouring regions (Makhachkala, Rostov-on-Don, Volgograd, Stavropol), Moscow and St. Petersburg, as well as the oil cities of the North (Tyumen, Surgut, Salekhard).

We focus specifically on internal migration (within the country). However, despite this, the experience of our informants is comparable to that of migrants from Muslim countries to Europe. When moving outside of the North Caucasus region, this group enters a social and cultural environment of a different ethnicity and religion (with a predominantly Russian population and Orthodox faith), becoming 'visible' and identified as 'others'.

On the other hand, this milieu can be considered in the context of 'transnationalism' theory, which aims to overcome the rigid opposition between 'here' and 'there' in migrant studies. Transnationalism stresses that in the case of migration, a person continues to keep very close ties with the place of origin, maintaining both a remote connection with relatives and periodically returning 'home' to confirm his/her status in the community (Levitt, 2001; Vertovec, 2009). Our research participants maintain a similar connection to the North Caucasus region, so their narratives contain a reflection on both the experiences of young people in the North Caucasus, and on their experiences of living in the 'guest' region.

The choice of this group as the object of our study was motivated by several factors.

Researchers studying the processes of (re)Islamisation and radicalisation in migrant communities of the West highlight the paradox of the second generation: children and grandchildren of first wave migrants who grew up in a secular environment and who choose Islam as a key aspect of their cultural identity and started to support its politicised versions more often than their parents (Bizina and Gray, 2014; Ganor, 2011). In conditions of isolation and alienation, radical forms of Islam can become the basis for the search for new forms of identity (Murshed and Pavan, 2011; Lyons-Padilla et al., 2015). The increased interest in radical (politicised) versions of Islam among the urban second generation of migrants from the North Caucasus can be explained through similar reasons.

The North Caucasus, which is the historical homeland of the chosen group of young people, has a specific historical context for the existence of various forms of Islam. First, a long history of religious radicalism exists in the region, which combines the idea of establishing a theocratic Shariah state with the idea of political independence from Russia. This region, where Islam was first established in the sixteenth century, became part of the Russian Empire in the eighteenth century as a result of military actions. The Caucasian war (1817-1864), which the local population started in order to gain independence from Russia, almost immediately acquired religious connotations of liberation from the power of the 'infidels' (Zelkina, 2002; Kurbanov, 2004). In Soviet times, the state policy of propagating atheism combined with the reshaping of the traditional way of life of the local population, which ended in mass deportation, also provoked religious resistance (Polyan, 2001). The attempts to gain independence during the Chechen wars of the post-Soviet period also received the same ideological colouring (Dobaev, 2009; Yarlykapov, 2010; Souleymanov, 2015).

Secondly, active (re)Islamisation has also taken place in the North Caucasus in the post-Soviet period (Akaev, 1999; Rakityanskii and Zinchenko, 2014). In addition, there is a clear division between the 'new' Islam, stemming from a position of global unity of all Muslims; and traditional (Sufi) versions of Islam

institutionalised in the form of the official pro-government religious organisations (for example, the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Dagestan). At the level of state power, the 'traditional' version remains legitimate, while the 'new' forms are considered as a potential field for radicalisation. As a result, power and security structures carry out strict measures of control over forms of religiosity.

This conflict is compounded by a protracted fight against terrorism in the North Caucasus, which has been going on for the last 20 years. Regional and federal authorities consider 'new Muslims' a potentially dangerous social group, seeing them as a resource and mobilisation base for the armed Islamist underground. To emphasise that the 'new' Islam is situated outside of the legal field, the authorities call its supporters 'Wahhabists', since Wahhabism has been officially banned in Dagestan since 1999.

There are several reasons why the urban second generation of North Caucasian youth was chosen as a case of potential radicalisation. First, although it would be wrong to equate urban youth with 'new Muslims', the dominance of the urban second generation in this movement suggests this conflict is an intergenerational one. The practical consequence of this is that young men became the main object for state suspicion and control. Recently, in connection with the crisis in the Middle East and the appearance of Islamic State (ISIS), rhetoric on the 'Wahhabi threat' has gained a new meaning. In everyday life, certain young people face preventive registration, armed police raids ('*siloviks*') of 'unreliable' mosques, persecution for having the 'wrong' appearance and other legal restrictions. Such strict measures of institutionalised violence can create the foundation for growing discontent and the emergence of cumulative radicalisation.

Secondly, both in the North Caucasus and beyond, young people have limited access to resources – jobs, positions of power, careers, etc. In the region, this is due to the established system of limiting meritocratic mobility through the operation of tribalism and nepotism in the distribution of resources (Sokolov et al., 2017; Prichiny radikalizatsii, 2016). Outside of the region, restrictions are caused by ethnic discrimination, which limits young people's access to jobs, higher status positions, and rented accommodation (Prichiny radikalizatsii, 2016). As a result, these structural constraints can generate feelings of frustration and perceived injustice and thus become a potential foundation for radicalisation (ibid.).

The migration from villages to cities further challenges young people's established family and friendship networks. As a result, they fall outside of traditional social control, in which kinship and neighbourhood play a significant role. In such circumstances, young people are forced to establish new networks. In the context of migration to Russian cities located outside the North Caucasus, these new social networks often form on the basis of a common ethnicity – in groups of neighbourhood friends, in free-style wrestling sports clubs, in student ethnic fraternities, in clubs for the study of Islam, etc. Migration does not weaken, but often strengthens the Muslim identity of young North Caucasians. Young Caucasians face systematic discrimination in the labour market and in renting accommodation (Brednikova and Pachenkov, 2001; Kapustina, 2015; Shekera, 2020), prejudicial attitudes of police and officials (Silaev, 2020), everyday xenophobia (Borusiak, 2004; Arnold, 2015), and attacks by nationalists (Arnold 2015). Such attitudes are reinforced and legitimised by public narratives about North Caucasians circulating in the media, and in the rhetoric of politicians and influencers. These narratives exploit such stereotypical traits as fundamental cultural and psychological 'alienness', perceived to be exemplified by antagonistic attitudes towards the 'host' society, a tendency towards violence and crime, and religious fanaticism (Murtuzaliev, 2011; Yarskaya, 2012; Sotkasiira, 2013;). In these circumstances, Islam becomes the only solid foundation of 'normality'. In religion, young people who are trying to maintain a balance between the rural community and the big city see a global identity that provides them with a sense of belonging to a worldwide 'brotherhood', a set of transparent rules of behaviour and values as well as networks of support and trust (Prichiny radikalizatsii, 2016).

We deliberately limit ourselves to only male communities. This is due to the strict gender segregation that exists among North Caucasian youth. Since the culture of the North Caucasus supports the traditional patriarchal way of life (both in relation to family and gender models), it imposes strict requirements for public manifestations of masculinity. The radicalisation of young men from the North Caucasus may likely be a consequence of the assimilation of toxic masculinity (Ging, 2017) based on the expectation that boys and men must be active, aggressive, tough, daring, and dominant.

2. Setting the scene

2.1 Historical context

The North Caucasus is a historical and cultural region in the south of the Russian Federation which includes seven republics – Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Karachay-Cherkessia, Kabardino-Balkaria, and North Ossetia. The Islamisation of the North Caucasus began with the Arab conquests in the seventh and eighth centuries. Excepting North Ossetia, Islam was first established within the territory in the sixteenth century. During this time, the Shafi'i school of law and religion ('madhhab') was established in Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia, while the Hanafite school was set up in Karachay-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria (Yarlykapov, 2006; Shikhsaidov, 2010). There were also Shiite communities in Derbent and in some villages of southern Dagestan bordering Azerbaijan (Yarlykapov, 2006). Sufi brotherhoods ('*tariqas*') became widespread in Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia, the most influential of which were Naqshbandiyah and Qadiriyya (Matsuzato and Ibragimov, 2005).

Most regions of the North Caucasus joined Russia as a result of the wars waged by the Russian Empire with the Ottoman Empire and Iran for control of the region. This continued until the end of the eighteenth century, and then persisted with numerous highland communities and feudal entities (Tishkov, 2007).

The North Caucasus has a long history of religious radicalism, where positive attitudes towards building a theocratic Shariah state with ideas of political independence from Russia have come together. In the nineteenth century, the highland regions of Chechnya and Dagestan became the main arena of a protracted Caucasian war, which was waged by local Muslims against the Russian Empire under the banner of '*gazavat*' — a Holy war against infidels (Zelkina, 2002; Kurbanov, 2004).

Between 1920 and 1940, Soviet state policy designed to reshape highland people's traditional way of life and propagate atheism, caused outrage and desperate resistance amongst a significant part of the North Caucasus' population. In turn, such resistance led to increased regime repression. At the end of World War II, the authorities ordered the total deportation of Chechens, Ingush, Karachais and Balkars from the North Caucasus regions to Central Asia and Siberia (Polyan, 2001). Although these peoples were allowed to return to their former places of residence after the death of Stalin, the deportation was an important factor that led to increased hostility towards the Russian state and brought about a focus on violent confrontation.

This position in relation to the Russian state fully manifested during the Chechen conflict of the 1990s-2000s. This conflict consisted of two phases. The first Chechen war (1994-1996) was waged by the authorities of the unrecognised Republic of Ichkeria against the Russian Federal army under the slogan of ethnic separatism and calls for the secession of Chechnya from the Russian Federation. The second Chechen war (1999-2009) was characterised by the Islamisation of the conflict and its spread to other republics of the North Caucasus. At this stage, the Russian state was already opposed by the Pan-Caucasian jihadist movement (the 'Caucasus Emirate'), which sought to create an independent Islamic state on the territory of the entire North Caucasus (Dobaev, 2009; Yarlykapov, 2010; Suleymanov, 2015). The ideological basis of this movement, which quickly moved beyond the borders of the Chechen Republic,

included the ideas of Salafi Islam (Wahhabism). This sought to transcend the ethnic and religious divisions existing in North Caucasian society, and instead to promote the goal and rhetoric of a united Islamic 'nation' (Yarlykapov, 2010: 39). Salafi communities began to emerge throughout the North Caucasus after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Kurbanov, 2004) Some Salafis have radicalised and joined the jihadist insurgency, facing repressions from security forces and organisations of so-called 'traditional' Islam (Kurbanov, 2004; Sagramoso, 2012). In 1999, the Dagestani Salafists (Wahhabists) attempted to create their own Islamic state in the regions of Dagestan bordering Chechnya – the 'Kadar zone'. This attempt was suppressed by the military, the police and militia using heavy artillery. Subsequently, the radical wing of the Wahhabists underground adopted a network strategy, which then formed the basis of their activity. Following the example of Middle Eastern jihadists, the Islamists began to spread their forces over a large territory and create a network of cells to which they recruited local residents (Yarlykapov, 2010: 142). The age range of the radical underground also changed; people who fought in the army of the unrecognised Republic of Ichkeria were mostly between 30 to 40, while the age of the majority of militants in the 'Caucasus Emirate' was between 20 to 25. The fight moved mainly to major cities, mostly to the Republic's capitals (Polyakov, 2015). From armed clashes with relatively large units of the army and police, the 'Caucasus Emirate' shifted to tactics of individual terrorist attacks against police officers, authorities and 'collaborators' (Polyakov, 2015).

The Syrian civil war was an important driver of the radical mood in the North Caucasus, causing a split within the armed Islamist underground (Youngman, 2016; Souleymanov, 2015). The decrease in jihadist terrorist activity which has been recorded since 2010 in the North Caucasus, is primarily due to the departure of a significant number of radical young people to the Middle East, where they joined the ranks of the Islamic State (IS) and other groups.[1]

Generally, it can be noted that in relation to the new generation of militants, the project of the worldwide Caliphate turned out to be a more popular idea than the idea of North Caucasian independence which remained on paper (Stephens, 2016). In addition, researchers note the general disillusionment of the majority of radical North Caucasian Islamists in the activities of the 'Caucasus Emirate' and other jihadist groups that emerged during the Second Chechen war. There are several reasons for this frustration: First, the North Caucasus jihadists failed to establish an independent state. Secondly, over the years the jihadist structures have merged with the criminal world, moving to typical methods of self-sufficiency, including racketeering and looting of the local population. Thirdly, in the process of the regionalisation of the Chechen conflict, the jihadist underground was unable to overcome clan and ethnic particularism, splitting into many groups that competed with each other for control of territory and resources instead of fighting for the Shariah state (Yarlykapov, 2017). All this discouraged both romantics of 'Jihad', who considered the current situation as a collapse of their ideals, and those Muslims who initially saw the militants as defenders from the despotism of power structures and corrupt local authorities, from joining the jihadist underground. Taking these factors into account, a significant part of the North Caucasian jihadists reoriented themselves to new leaders and a new promising front for the military and ideological struggle for IS in Iraq and Syria.

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[1] Statistics on victims in the North Caucasus for 2010-2014 can be found at: https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/257445/

2.2 Contemporary context

The problem of Islamic radicalism is an important component of Russian public discourse. It has a significant impact on the Russian political system, the state of civil rights and freedoms, the general level of social tension in Russian society, and the state's foreign policy. Factors which actualise the agenda include the border position of Russia in relation to the Muslim states of Central Asia and the Caucasus (Bulkin and Moiseenko, 2020), the presence of problematic territories inside the country that have experienced several waves of radicalisation, a large Muslim population, (Dannreuther, 2010; Hahn, 2008; Zhukov 2012) and the Russian state's participation in conflicts in the Middle East (Youngman, 2016; Ratelle, 2016).

A key role in this discourse is assigned to the North Caucasus, which is seen as a region that remains (or is considered to be) the most problematic region in terms of the escalation of Islamist violence. There are concerns that the current calm period related to the outflow of young people with radical attitudes to the war in Syria is temporary, since most of the factors fuelling the armed conflict in this region have not yet been eliminated (Yarlykapov, 2016; Yarlykapov, 2018; Sokiryanskaya, 2019). Research by sociologists (Abdulagatov, 2016) suggests that there is a persistent group of young people who see violent actions aimed at establishing Shariah governance as a way out of the regional crisis (Yarlykapov, 2018). In a survey conducted in the Republic of Dagestan in 2015 (Abdulagatov, 2016), 3.5% of young people expressed their willingness to join IS. Among the pupils and students of Islamic educational institutions in the republic, 10.3% expressed this willingness. About 20% of young people stated that they could not be patriots of a non-Shariah state. More than 70% of young people under 20 said they did not obey the laws of the state for religious reasons (compared to 64% for all ages).

The return of fighters who fought in the Middle East to their homeland is also a cause for concern (Polyakov, 2015; Yarlykapov, 2016). In addition, close relatives of participants in the three waves of the North Caucasus radical underground are seen as a potential risk group prone to radicalisation: the wives and children of Chechen nationalist fighters who were killed or convicted from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s; the wives and children of 'Caucasus Emirate' fighters (2007-2015); the wives and children of jihadists from IS and other groups who fought in the Middle East and the North Caucasus (2013-2017) (Sokirianskaya, 2019). There is no systematic work on the rehabilitation, deradicalisation and reintegration of this group. Moreover, after returning from the Middle East, many wives and widows are criminalised as members of illegal armed groups, which may contribute to their radicalisation.

Terrorist attacks in the North Caucasus between 2016 and 2018 demonstrated a new tactic of the jihadists: attacks carried out by small groups (two-to-three people) or individuals using improvised means — knives, axes and trucks (Situatsiia v zone konflikta na Severnom Kavkaze, 2018; Eksperty obsudili, 2019; Analitiki rasskazali, 2019). The age of the participants in these attacks did not exceed 20 years old (Chechenskoe podpol'e 2017), which confirms the long-term trend of rejuvenation of the radical underground (Polyakov, 2015; Pravozashchitniki rasskazali, 2019). Some research has shown that the catalyst for radicalisation is, to a certain extent, the activity of law enforcement agencies combatting a potential terrorist threat (Sokiryanskaya, 2019). Measures taken to prevent terrorism are particularly apparent in the Chechen Republic and Dagestan (OSCE Rapporteur's Report, 2018). Primarily, a mix of various control measures by the authorities is aimed against representatives of 'non-traditional' Islam, which is perceived as historically 'alien' to the given region and therefore dangerous (demonstrated by the so called 'preventive registration' carried out by the police) (Sokiryanskaya, 2019).

The strategy of maintaining traditional Islamic values is another aspect of the attempts to contain non-traditional Islam in the region. A striking example of this is in the Chechen Republic. This is demonstrated not only in the support of official religious organisations, but also, for instance, in restrictions on the sale

of alcoholic beverages and the establishment of bodies within the Culture Ministry which monitor the observance of traditions at Chechen weddings, etc. In other republics, political elites also demonstrate their commitment to the principles of Islam in public life. This leads to the spread of the influence of traditional Islam to secular aspects of society. For instance, in Dagestan, there is pressure from conservative groups to cancel certain cultural events – film screenings, festivals, concerts, and exhibitions. In Chechnya and Ingushetia, movements which protect Islamic norms of behaviour such as 'Carthage' and 'Anti-Lyrica', aim to promote Shariah morality (Sokiryanskaya, 2019).

The St. Petersburg metro explosion in 2017, which was carried out by a Kyrgyzstan national, as well as the involvement of Central Asians in a number of high-profile terrorist attacks, including the truck attack in Stockholm on 7 April, 2017, and the attack on a nightclub in Istanbul on 1 January, 2018, have added to the debates about the radicalisation of migrants from this region. There are different opinions on this issue both among experts and representatives of law enforcement agencies. While some see migrants as the main 'importers' of radicalism to Russia, others believe that they are embedded in already existing networks of radicalisation upon arrival in Russia (Kazmerkevich et al., 2017). While the former point to an increased number of terrorist attacks involving people from Central Asia, the latter point to the fact that only a small number of working migrants from this region are involved in violent terrorist activities (Elshimi et al., 2018).

Prisoners in Russian jails and colonies are also seen as susceptible to radical messages (Sysoev, 2014; Usmanov, 2014). According to the Federal Service for Corrections, the number of Muslim prisoners has increased several times in recent years. Prison '*jamaats'* (congregations) are formed in detention facilities, which, along with ethnic Muslims, are joined by representatives of the lower prison castes who are subjected to constant violence and pressure both from the prison administration and from prisoners who have a higher position in the criminal hierarchy. The new converts see an ideology in the radical version of Islam that legitimises their conflict with society and the state system. The solidarity emerging from this ideology provides prisoners with support and protection; it also allows them to challenge their position in the informal prison hierarchy.

Some researchers note that another group vulnerable to radicalisation are the so-called 'Russian Muslims' (Polyakov, 2014: Raditsenko, 2014: Suleymanov, 2015). Although Russians and representatives of other 'non-Muslim' ethnic groups have been present in the Islamist underground since the early 2000s, this phenomenon has gained a wider public response in connection with the departure of young females from Moscow's upper class to join IS.

Thus, groups potentially susceptible to radicalisation are considered to be young people subjected to various forms of exclusion and discrimination based on ethnicity (North Caucasian youth, migrants), low social and economic status (migrants), 'otherness' in terms of religion (North Caucasian youth, migrants, Russian Muslims), and those involved in radical networks (children and wives of militants).

2.3 Locating the milieu

The urban second generation refers to sons and younger brothers of migrants from the villages of the North Caucasus republics (Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Karachay-Cherkessia and Kabardino-Balkaria) who have settled in large cities. The main destination points for the migration are the large agglomerations of the North Caucasus and neighbouring regions (Makhachkala, Rostov, Volgograd, Stavropol), Moscow and St. Petersburg, and the oil cities of the North (Tyumen, Surgut, Salekhard).

In terms of religion, this milieu is the first generation of native Muslims born after the beginning of the (re)Islamisation of the North Caucasus, which was expressed in the rapid growth of religious Islamic

institutions and the spontaneous desecularisation of everyday life (Bobrovnikov, 2007; Kisriev, 2009). Compared to their parents and older relatives, who are predominantly adherents of traditional Sufi Islam, the urban second generation most often chooses 'new Islam' or Salafism (Yarlykapov, 2010; Sokolov et al., 2017). This is considered by researchers to be a response to the social anomie that accompanies urbanisation (Starodubrovskaya, 2015). Internet sheikhs, leaders of transnational communities, and field commanders of jihadist groups turn out to be more important for them than local leaders and representatives of the official clergy. The purity of Salafism, deprived of local cultural influences, is maximally suitable for young people. In a certain sense, it exists between the rural community and the large city, providing them with a sense of belonging to a global community with transparent values and norms. In addition, the religion provides ideological arguments for separation from the older generation, which still controls the lives of young citizens, but is not able to provide them with the resources for self-realisation. The urban second generation is considered as particularly sensitive to politicised versions of Islam, including its radical forms (Yarlykapov, 2010). According to existing data, people from this milieu predominate among young people who went to fight for IS in Syria (Defolt Rossiiskogo gosudarstva, 2018). Social networks connecting natives of the North Caucasus with each other and with friends / relatives / neighbours / fellow countrymen who have remained in the region are a medium for the spread of such ideas. As our research shows, representatives of the urban second generation, even those born outside the North Caucasus, prefer to join friendship groups with people from their 'home' region at their core.[2] In addition to religion, the 'glue' of such men's friendship groups are often common leisure interests. The main leisure activity for male youth from the North Caucasus are power sports. There is no alternative institution for male socialisation in this region (Solonenko, 2010). Their sporting interests tend to be concentrated in two closely related areas - freestyle wrestling and mixed martial arts (MMA) fighting. Due to the victories of Khabib Nurmagomedov and other North Caucasian MMA fighters over the past 15 years, a mass fan culture has developed among North Caucasian male youth in which interest in sport is closely intertwined with manifestations of regional (North Caucasian) and religious (Islamic) identity. Another basis for claiming the unity of the milieu is the ongoing interest in regional themes, events and personalities, which is largely sustained by the spread of social media and messengers.

Being from the same region, young men are united by a similar context of growing up and living conditions. They were raised in a region where religious oppression and the desire to fight for independence in the name of religion are part of their historical memory. At the same time, unlike their parents, they are the first generation of 'native Muslims' born after the re-Islamisation of the Caucasus in the post-Soviet era. They are united by common traditions of a 'strict' upbringing and the broadcasting of strict gender norms relating to masculinity, which suggest that boys and men must be active, aggressive, tough, daring, and dominant (Ging, 2017). Through their move to major cities, they share an experience of weakening family and neighbourhood social ties and the need to integrate into a new social environment. Thus, even in the absence of direct unifying relationships, the given group forms a milieu based on shared social and physical conditions that affect their subjectivity.

In our case study, the urban second generation is mainly represented by natives of Dagestan, the largest and most Islamised republic in the North Caucasus, which is also at the forefront of urbanisation processes and the main arena of confrontation between the regional and federal authorities and jihadists. Informants of other nationalities (Chechens, Ingush, Russians, Azerbaijanis) were recruited as part of North Caucasian networks around Dagestanis.

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[2] This conclusion is particularly true for natives of the multi-ethnic republics of the North Caucasus. Young people from mono-ethnic republics (Chechnya, Ingushetia) may base their membership in companies on both regional (North Caucasus) and ethnic principles.

3. Field Research

The collection of empirical data lasted for 11 months, from September 2018 to July 2019. The collected data mostly comprises interviews. A total of 21 interviews with 20 informants were collected (two interviews were conducted with one informant), along with four ethnographic observations.

3.1 Data collection

As part of the case study, four observations were carried out. Three were conducted in the cultural and educational 'Centre Dagestan', the activities of which are aimed at preserving the cultural traditions of Dagestanis and other nationalities of the North Caucasus. Observations were conducted in the following contexts in the Centre:

1. During Friday prayer;
2. During 'Mawlid' (a gathering of Muslims on various occasions where the recitation of prayers and religious chants take place. This is not mandatory from the point of view of Islam, but is often practiced in Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia);
3. During a meeting with Dagestani and Chechen religious leaders.

The fourth observation was made at a meeting of the Shariah court, which dealt with a business conflict between two people from Dagestan.

In addition, 21 interviews with 20 participants were collected. The duration of the interviews varied from 72 to 239 minutes. The total length of the collected interviews is 46 hours 16 minutes (2,776 minutes).

Table 1: Data set

	Number	Total length or brief description (as appropriate)	Average length
Respondents	20	n/a	n/a
Audio interviews	21	2,776 min (46 hours 16 minutes)	132 minutes
Field diary entries (total)	4	n/a	n/a

3.2 Access and researcher-respondent relations

The age, gender, ethnic and other identities of the researcher may have an influence on access to the field, the progress of work and the dynamics of relations with informants, as the field may demonstrate different degrees of openness depending on these identities. In the present case, the empirical data was collected by two researchers, one of whom is a representative of one of the ethnic groups of Dagestan and a Muslim, the second is an ethnic Russian and an Orthodox Christian; both researchers are men. Moreover, the first researcher is an active participant in a Dagestani community and previously worked in a public organisation for Dagestani youth.

Recruitment of participants took place via several channels. The first was an institutional channel – the Dagestan student association in St. Petersburg. One of the researchers had worked for this association for

a long period of time, and, therefore, could act as the main gatekeeper. The initial circle of informants came from his personal networks (eight interviews). The second channel was social networks, where we recruited those individuals whose profiles best corresponded to our set profile. We set a geo-filter (St. Petersburg) and the filter 'religious beliefs' (Muslim) to select our informants using the search system on the social networking site Vkontakte. We then searched for people who participated in several religious groups and invited them to take part in the research. We recruited six informants and conducted six interviews using this channel. The remaining six study participants were recruited using snowballing. It should be noted that this channel expanded the geography of participants, as we recruited people who live in other cities. One interview was taken with an informant who participated in an earlier study and had provided quite a lot of information on the topic of radicalisation at that time.

There were channels that did not work, including the local spiritual administration of Muslims in St. Petersburg, the organisation 'As-Salam' and the newspaper of the same name. These organisations initially agreed to cooperate, but the person recruited for an interview via these channels became wary of the researchers. The interview had to be interrupted, and after that, the channel was closed.

The establishment of good relations in the field progressed in an uneven manner. With the informants who came from the Dagestan student association relations were open, as one of the researchers was included in their networks of contacts. Relations with those who were recruited through social networks were less open, but trusting. Those informants then agreed to act as gatekeepers to other informants, because they were sure of guarantees of anonymity.

In general, the most closed structures turned out to be the official religious organisations and state-recognised clergy. In contrast, those groups expected to be the most closed – the Salafists – were very open to communication. According to them, they were interested in ensuring that their doctrine was not associated with terrorism and our study was of interest to them as a public platform to deliver this message.

The ethnicity and religiosity of the researchers were consequential in terms of positionality. As already noted, one of the researchers is a representative of one of the ethnic groups of Dagestan and a Muslim. He did not experience difficulties while working with informants as they perceived him as 'one of them'. The second researcher (an ethnic Russian and an Orthodox Christian) faced certain barriers. When recruiting via social networks, he was always asked about his nationality and religion. Often this question turned out to be a filter, after which many potential participants stopped communicating. However, although an Orthodox Christian, since the informants had a strong prejudice against atheists, a dialogue was easier to build with religious people (even those of a different faith).

3.3 Ethical practice

Informed consent for participation in the research was provided by the respondents in verbal rather than written form. Taking verbal rather than written consent is the most ethical way to conduct research in the Russian context where researchers frequently encounter wariness amongst the population regarding the signing of papers. The processing of documents is perceived by informants not as a guarantee of their anonymity, but rather on the contrary – as a threat to this anonymity. Therefore, it was decided to use verbal consent in this study, which was provided for in the ethical approval granted for the research. Questions about consent to the recording, anonymisation, and further work with the interview were discussed at least three times: when the researchers met with informants and arranged an interview; at the beginning of the meeting without a dictaphone; and when reading the consent sheet with the dictaphone switched on. All informants were briefed with an information sheet about the project. All were

provided with a link not only to the project website, but also to the website of the Centre for Youth Studies, National Research University Higher School of Economics (St. Petersburg), where there is information about the project in Russian, as well as information about the Russian project team. We also provided contact details for the head of the Russian team. Such measures allowed informants to get an idea of the researchers' professional experience and helped to build a more trusting relationship. We limited the lower age of potential participants to 18 (the age of majority under Russian law). This decision was made in order to prevent potentially unsafe situations, both for the study participants and the research team itself. Another potentially unsafe matter for study participants and researchers related to questions concerning the description of possible illegal actions that had been or were being committed by study participants. At the very beginning of every interview, the informants were asked not to give details of possible illegal actions that they may have committed in the past, so that the information told to the interviewer did not fall under Article 205.6 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and other articles of this code that are not described in the above mentioned article.[3]

In our case study, we encountered a difficult organisational and ethical situation with one of the researchers. At the end of the fieldwork phase, one of the two researchers in the case ceased contact with the rest of the team. After discussing the problem, the Russian team decided not to involve any new field researchers in the project, as this could disrupt the established recruitment networks in the case. We therefore extended fieldwork until August 2019. The second researcher conducted the two missing interviews and completed the transcription and anonymisation of the gathered data. Eighteen interviews were conducted offline in St. Petersburg, Moscow and Makhachkala. We chose locations for the interviews that allowed for privacy and anonymity: cafes with separate booths, restaurant halls in shopping malls during the lowest customer occupancy hours, benches in parks. In all cases, we asked respondents to decide for themselves where they would feel more comfortable to talk about the topic. Two of the interviews were conducted online via Skype.

3.4 Data analysis

The strategy of data analysis generally corresponds to the commonly agreed requirements for the case studies developed in the framework of this work package. However, for a more detailed analysis of the case, some additional themes were included, namely:

1. Two new Level Two nodes were included – 'Locality' and 'Sports'.
   a. 'Sports' represents an essential component for this group which goes beyond the framework of a hobby and becomes a lifestyle or a possible choice for a career which is closely related to religious belief.
   b. 'Locality' - since everyone in the milieu has experience of migration (in family history), they talk a great deal not only about migration, relocation, etc., but also about the

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[3] The given article is defined as 'failure to report a crime' (205.6) of a past, ongoing or impending crime that falls under the articles 'Terrorist act' (art. 205), 'Assistance to a terrorist act' (205.1), 'Public calls to carry out terrorist activities, public justification of terrorism or propaganda of terrorism' (205.2), 'Training for the purpose of carrying out terrorist activities' (205.3), 'Organisation of a terrorist community and participation in it' (205.4), 'Arranging the activities of a terrorist organisation and participation in the activities of such an organisation' (205.5), as well as articles 'Hostage-taking' (article 206), etc. Failure to report these types of crimes that fall under the above articles is punishable by a fine of up to one hundred thousand rubles, correctional labour for a period of one year or imprisonment for the same period.

relationship between their home region and the cities in which they live now, and the relationship between the city and the village from which they come.

2. 28 Level Two nodes were encoded and analysed in NVivo, including 416 Level One nodes. The carcass of the coding tree meets the requirements for encoding and data analysis; the Level Two nodes have not been changed; the Level One nodes were based on the empirical data obtained, taking into account the specifics of the case.

3. In the process of analysis, we did not deviate from standard procedures.

3.5 Socio-demographic portrait of the respondent set

The study involved 20 respondents aged 21-30 years; young people aged 24 and older predominate (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Distribution of respondents by age
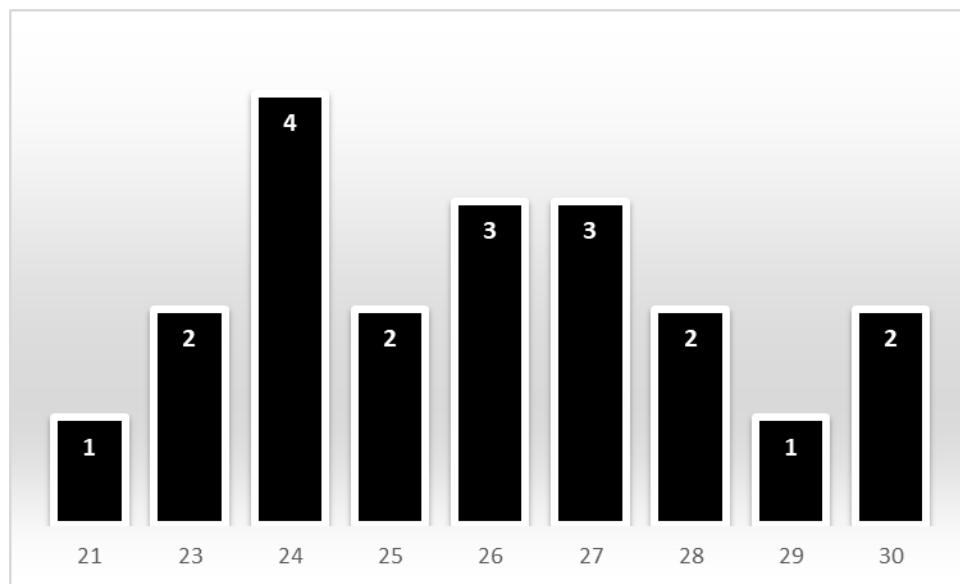
Nineteen respondents were born in Russia, one in Azerbaijan, and one in Kyrgyzstan. Currently, 15 respondents live in St. Petersburg, two in Makhachkala, one in Surgut, one in Moscow, and one in Prague. The majority of respondents (17) identify with one of the many ethnic groups of Dagestan: five said they were Avars, two said they were Tabasarans, two were Lezgins, two were Kumyks, two were Azerbaijanis, two were Dargins, one was Lak, and one respondent refused to name his nationality. Of the remaining respondents, one was Chechen, but grew up in Dagestan, one was Ingush and one was Russian (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Distribution of respondents by nationality (ethnicity)
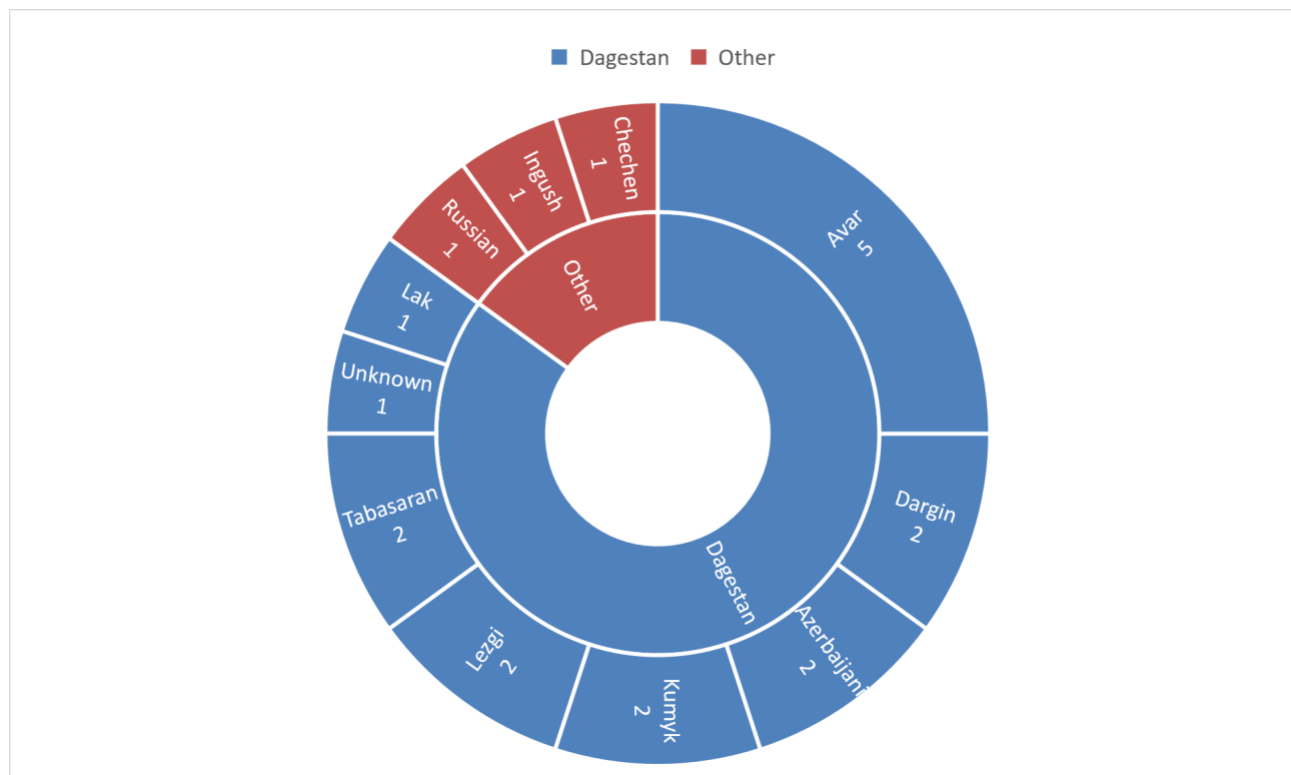
All respondents profess Islam, with the vast majority describing themselves as practising believers. The following Islamic self-identifications are present in the sample – Salafi, Sufi, Shi'a, and 'just Muslims'.

Half of the respondents (ten) were graduates (had completed undergraduate studies), one respondent was currently studying for a postgraduate qualification and one had completed postgraduate study. Three respondents are currently in higher education, four have completed general academic secondary education, and one has completed vocational secondary education (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Distribution of respondents by education level
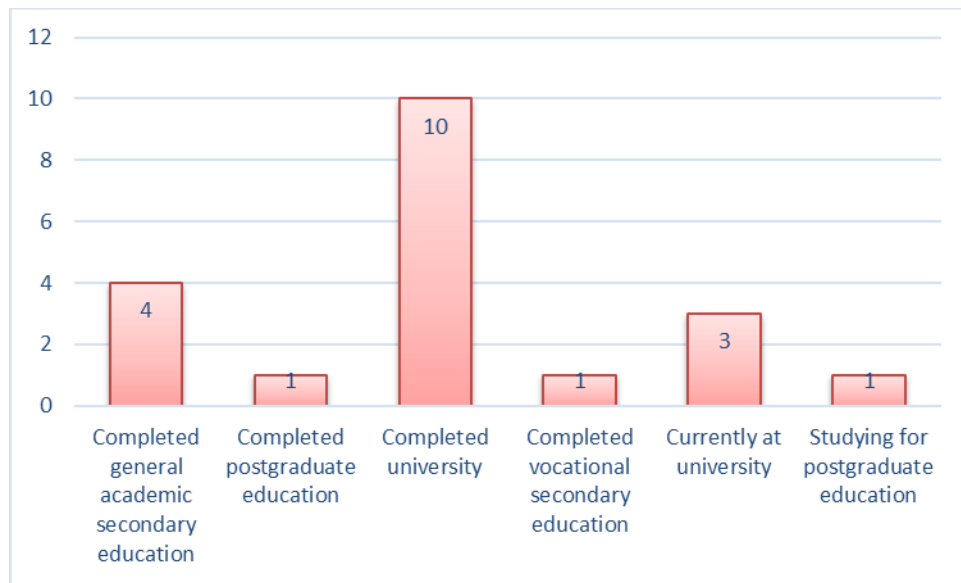
The majority of respondents (17) have already completed their main educational track and are in full-time employment, one informant is in full-time education, one combines university education with part-time employment, while another is studying part-time and looking for work (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Distribution of respondents by employment
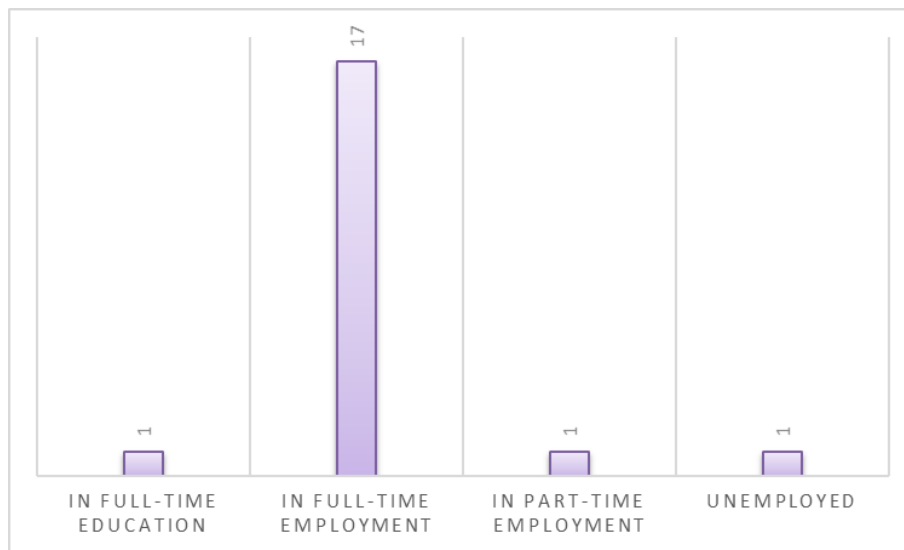
Thirteen respondents are single, seven are married, and four respondents have their own children (one has two children and three respondents have one child each). Seven respondents live with parents, six live with their partner and/or children, two live with friends, and two still live at home with relatives (see Figure 5). The number of people living with respondents in their household varies from one to five people. Eighteen of the informants have siblings.

Figure 5: Distribution of informants by residence status
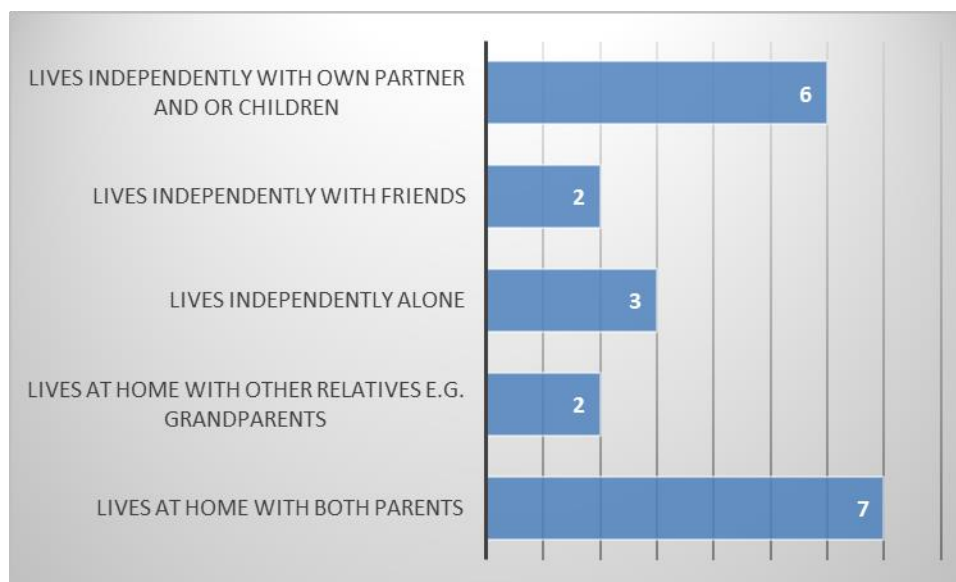
4. Key Findings

This section presents the main conclusions of the case study of the urban second generation of youth from the North Caucasus.

The structural factors of radicalisation, especially how sustained inequalities (objective inequality) and perceived injustice (subjective inequality) impact upon radicalisation, are considered in sections 4.1 and 4.3. Section 4.1 describes the impact that the situation of violence and legal nihilism[4] in the North Caucasus has on radicalisation. Perceived as unfair and focusing on male youth, it provokes retaliatory violence and leads to cumulative radicalisation.

Section 4.3 addresses radicalisation as an alternative path to self-realisation in the context of a lack of resources, social exclusion and discrimination. For young people living in the North Caucasus, the push factor for radicalisation is limited access to social mobility which is controlled by local corrupt elites. Young people living in cities outside the North Caucasus face dual pressures: discrimination in the labour market and housing due to ethnic and religious xenophobia, as well as pressure from authoritarian families to control the life careers of younger members.

The role of ideology in radicalisation is discussed in Section 4.2. The main discourses and narratives that explain and legitimise joining radical organisations or radical violence are highlighted: the political-military and value conflict between the West and the Muslim world, the victimisation of Muslims and the spread

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[4] By 'legal nihilism' we mean the rejection of the law as a social institution and a system of rules of behavior demonstrated by negative attitudes towards the law.

of conspiracy theories that emphasise the targeted hostile activities of Western elites and particular groups (Jews) against Muslims.

It was difficult to determine clear **trajectories of radicalisation** as a certain sequence of events. The informants rather talk about the context of radicalisation, which they identify as the strict control and pressure from the army, police and Federal Security Service (FSB – Russian acronym), focused on religious youth. At the same time, the family and the inner circle are also considered by representatives of the urban second generation as the main institution of **deradicalisation**. They further attribute the rejection of radical views and/or actions to a change in lifestyle during adulthood, or to an observed discrepancy between reality and jihadist propaganda (see Section 4.8).

When discussing the role of **social relations** in possible radicalisation, the family and inner circle, as well as sports communities, are the main networks of radicalisation. The role of religious spaces in this process is controversial. The critical attitude of representatives of the urban second generation to the official Islamic clergy may encourage them to get acquainted with alternative points of view, broadcast on the Internet and within social networks, which then leads to self-radicalisation (see Section 4.5.).

Emotions and affects are identified as key drivers of radicalisation. Such emotions can be triggered both by facts in the young man's individual biography (e.g. damage inflicted on him, his family or friends by state law enforcement agencies) (Section 4.1) and derive from an awareness of his belonging to the global Islamic Ummah (Section 4.2). Radicalisation can also be driven by a sense of dissatisfaction arising from the relative deprivation in the context of a lack of career options (Section 4.3). At the same time, strong emotional ties between sons and mothers, and siblings can be a factor in deradicalisation (Section 4.5).

Section 4.4 discusses the Islamisation of two youth milieus in which violence, confrontation and aggression are cultivated. There is a relatively strong trend amongst the many Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) practitioners and fans in the North Caucasus towards violent defence of Islamic morality in public space and to fight against the violators of the moral order. In addition, as a highly competitive environment, MMA and other martial arts have produced a large segment of 'outsiders', people forced to leave their sporting careers but with no experience of socialization outside of that environment. For many of these people, joining radical organizations becomes an alternative self-realization. Another case of the Islamisation of radicalism is the mass conversion to Islam of representatives of the criminal subculture that took place at the turn of the 2000s.

The significance of the gender dimension in radicalisation processes is evident in the operation of cultural mechanisms of so-called namusian society, which link masculinity to an obligation to avenge the damage done to the honour of a man or his family (Section 4.1). Homophobia and anti-feminism are an integral part of anti-Western rhetoric legitimising a violent response (Section 4.2). North Caucasian norms of male socialisation that encourage violence, aggression and confrontation as the normal trajectory of adolescence into manhood and which brutalise relationships between young men are examined in section 4.4.

In relation to **young people's own understanding of 'radicalisation'**, it is worth mentioning that the urban second generation seeks to remove itself from the scope of definitions of 'radicalism' and 'extremism', or problematises these categories by treating them either as empty categories, or placing them in the broader context of any deviation from standards. The boundary between extremism and radicalism is the possibility of violence. At the same time, radicalism has a positive connotation – consistency and persistence in defending religious views and behaviour (see Section 4.7).

4.1. Violence and legal nihilism in the North Caucasus as conditions for radicalisation

The problem of radicalisation and extremism in the narratives of the urban second generation of North Caucasian youth is considered within the context of the atmosphere of omnipresent violence and fear which exists in the North Caucasus. Admittedly, this situation is largely provoked by the fact that security agencies (army, police, FSB) have been given unlimited jurisdiction in the fight against the jihadist insurgency. The dominance of the security forces in the public life of the region underlies the picture that our informants are providing of the North Caucasus today as an unfair society. The informants reiterate this attribution of the situation, which has been repeatedly noted by researchers and human rights activists (Sokiryanskaya, 2019; Starodubrovskaya, 2015; Prichiny radikalizatsii, 2016): that the so-called 'war against terrorism' is being waged with mass violation of human rights and the use of excessively harsh methods. Legal institutions for the protection of human rights function poorly, and investigative bodies face barriers when investigating the actions of the Republican authorities and law enforcement agencies. In the views of informants, any open criticism of the actions of power structures can lead to severe responses from the latter. This situation is often described by informants as 'lawlessness':

> Yes, after this incident, one of my close friends […] When you broke the law and they convict you — it's one thing […] They just planted some bullets on him, they put the man in jail, and he spent four months in a detention facility while the case was going on. They gave him a year's probation. There are many examples of this in society. Another old friend of mine; they also attacked him, he had been registered; he had a fight with an employee; he hit him, forced him to open the house and planted something there. In Dagestan, everyone faces this. Anyone has an acquaintance, someone who is in prison; it's just lawlessness, and we have this lawlessness all too often. (Omar)

'Lawlessness' refers to an extreme form of violence that offends a person's individual dignity and/or group identity of a religious group, family, or clan. This word has a clear sense of local resonance in the narratives of informants – it describes systemic violence by law enforcement agencies in the North Caucasus:

> INT: Do you think that Russia is a just state where people are treated fairly, whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims?
>
> Mamuka: Yes, except for Dagestan and Chechnya, because the Russian government has no power there, and they live completely separately there […] I mean, I have nothing against these people, of course, I consider them my brothers, but the police; they speak openly – 'What law? What law of the Russian Federation? I am the law!' (Mamuka)[5]

The 'lawlessness' of the security forces in the North Caucasus is often interpreted by informants as being directed specifically against Muslims. The study participants explain this by pointing to the way in which federal and local authorities consistently protect the interests of supporters of Sufi Islam ('*tariqas*') - which is largely considered to be a quietist version of Islam - in their conflict with representatives of 'Wahhabists' or 'Salafists'. The latter are considered by the authorities as accomplices and reserves of the radical underground, so strict control measures are applied against them. Thus, security forces systematically detain young people who visually fit the description of 'Salafists'. The most common reason for detention is having a beard without a moustache. As Omar notes, 'starting even with that, the Police Patrol and Checkpoint Service stopped someone, took him in the department because of his beard.'

In Dagestan in 2016, the Republican Ministry of Internal Affairs introduced the so-called '*profuchet*' [preventive registration] of religious extremists, which is popularly called 'wah-registration' indicating the

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[5] Hereinafter the names of respondents are pseudonymised.

registration of Wahhabists (Sokiryanskaya, 2019). Citizens who are registered in the *profuchet* are regularly detained when crossing administrative borders, brought to the police, and their employment in state institutions is de facto restricted. According to human rights organisations, although the *profuchet* was officially abolished in 2017, it still exists behind the scenes. This is confirmed by our informants. In addition, the authorities of Dagestan shut down Salafi mosques and detained many believers after Friday prayers 'as a precaution':

> They registered me, but to be honest […] I've never been a part of anything extremist, I am against extremist activity in general. They registered me – I was said to attend the wrong mosque. Well, you know how they registered me; I just came in as usual, did the prayers, left, and they asked me to go to the district department. Law enforcement agencies approached me, asked me to go to the department, so I did. That's all. We just talked, they asked if I had relatives in Syria, if I had relatives among terrorists, I said 'no'. (Said)

In informants' representations, the Chechen Republic stands out for its particular harshness in the prosecution of 'Wahhabists'. Even the slightest sign of deviation from the official version of Islam, *'tariqa Qadiriyya'* (one of the directions of Sufi Islam), which is the religious doctrine dominant in Chechnya and Ingushetia, can cause suspicion on the part of the authorities and may lead to prosecution. The source of such suspicions may be, for example, a refusal to celebrate secular holidays:

> It is him [name of the leader of one of the republics] who infringes and expels Muslims. Well, according to Islam, it is forbidden to celebrate New Year, and this is not even a Christian holiday, you see, yes, while in Islam it is forbidden to celebrate New Year. The situation was the following – my friend, he is 38 years old, lived in Grozny, then he moved to Germany. And why did he move? There were many factors, but the last straw was when they just came to him and registered him because he just did not celebrate New Year. (Mamuka)

It is important to emphasise that representatives of the urban second generation do not see a legal solution to the problem within the existing political system. Decades of rule by the security forces in the public life of the North Caucasus have taught them that peaceful protest is ineffective and dangerous for its participants:

> INT: can Muslims hold a rally in support of something?

> Khabib: I think not. Why, because you don't know what's going to happen. Maybe, the blood of an innocent man will be spilled. And blood cannot be shed.

However, it is obvious to informants that the risks of professing to Islamic radicalism are extremely high. Informants consider the transition from the ideological to the behavioural stage of radicalisation to be an extreme and partly forced measure that requires a strong emotional impulse. Most often an obvious conflict or a series of conflicts with the 'security forces' provides such an impulse:

> Because at the time, they visited them in the same way, beat them, although many of them simply did not do anything really bad. The fact that he has something on his mind, well, he does not do anything bad to other people, does not beat anyone, does not force anyone to do anything. So you see, and they came, just tortured them, beat them; I think, it also has an impact on the angriness of a person, and the person, on the contrary, starts to see only bad things in everything. Maybe it has some impact, I'm not sure. He begins to see his enemies in everyone. (Ivan)

Such conflicts generate a complex mixture of counter feelings and emotions – defencelessness, irritation, anger, hatred, resentment, despair and desire for revenge, which quickly spreads from individual to individual and acquires a social aspect:

But imagine, for example, in a certain circle, if a religious young man, who is fair, who is really honest, who does not cheat, does not steal and does everything fairly, well, he is just a fair guy, plus a religious one, and they see harassment of him from law enforcement agencies. Naturally, he has some authority among a certain circle of people; this circle is already beginning to dislike the police; if you just detain a couple of such guys in the district, and the whole district starts to dislike the police. (Said)

Ultimately, radicalisation uses extreme forms of political Islam as an ideological base. The main way of legitimation is due to the fact that religion today is the main discursive and symbolic space in which representatives of the urban second generation articulate their ethical, political, and social demands, requests and ideals. This is the result of the deep re-Islamisation of North Caucasian society in the post-Soviet era, when religion filled the vacuum created after the collapse of Communist ideology. Due to the collapse of democratic institutions and repressions against the secular opposition, human rights defenders and activists in society, wider society actually lost its secular 'wing' that could oppose both the state and Islamists. This collapse facilitated re-Islamisation. As a result, secularism became associated with the Federal centre imposing its will on the regions by bribing local elites, as well as sanctioning the 'lawlessness' of security structures.

For respondents, the reciprocal nature of radicalisation is evident (Moghaddam, 2018): repression of religious youth triggers attacks on police officers and the FSB, which in turn provoke a new round of repression:

In Dagestan and Chechnya, the killing of traffic police officers was popular at one time [...] well, there was that time. They said it was jihad, but I think it was a stupid war. Because the point of shooting road policemen? And then a couple of days later they were killed during special operations. Because of this, Islam had no use at all for the fact that they were killing cops. (Said)

At the same time, respondents emphasise that the arbitrary nature of police violence, which results in mistakes and abuses, prevents the conflict from stabilising at the level of the 'security forces-radicals' confrontation. Resonance with the public means that more and more actors become involved. The killing of two young herdsmen – the Gasanguseinov brothers— in the village of Goor-Hendah, Shamil district of Dagestan on 23 August, 2016[6] by security forces is indicative of this, and has become the symbol of 'lawlessness'. According to the official version, the brothers opened fire in response to the security forces' demand to show documents, and were killed during the clash. The relatives and fellow villagers of the victims claim that the young men were grazing rural cattle and had no connection to the jihadist underground. The murder caused a great public outcry in the Republic. In some interviews, as well as in numerous other studies, this case was explicitly named as one of the reasons for radicalisation:

This is just a security agencies' craze. The lads were killed, many lads like them are killed in Dagestan, but the problem is that these are neighbouring villages, and there have never been any Salafists or anyone else in this village, and everyone knew these shepherds, because they grazed the whole village herd, that is, every resident of the village knew these guys, knew their family, just because of this there was a deep resonance. We have probably hundreds of such dead people though.

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[6] Two suspected militants (2016) were killed in Dagestan, Caucasus Hub.: https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/288103

> The top officials at first said that they eliminated the militants; then they refused when people 'stood up' and it became known that they were killed simply because of lawlessness; they already began to refuse, that is, they also dug a hole for themselves. (Omar)

In this case, the informants are particularly outraged by the fact that even despite the evidence collected and the recognition by the security forces that the shepherds were killed by mistake, none of the perpetrators have been punished, and the protests organised by relatives were suppressed.

In some situations, reactive violence is directly sanctioned by local social standards. The North Caucasus belongs to the so-called 'namus' societies, in which the concept of honour plays a key role in regulating social relations. Honour is considered to be 'an attribute/possession of a lineage, upheld or diminished by individual lineage members' (King, 2008: 324). According to customary law standards ('*adats*'), especially serious crimes against honour, such as murder or rape of a family member or relative, demand compulsory payback to restore individual or collective honour (Ratelle and Souleimanov, 2017).

In the context of the confrontation between the security forces and the 'Salafis', and the 'Salafis' and '*Tariqatists*', retaliation functions as a cultural mechanism that sanctions reactive violence. It widens the circle of its potential participants, as the duty of revenge is assigned to sons, brothers and nephews.

According to respondents, the most likely candidates to join the jihadist underground and become involved in radical violence are close male relatives of former or active combatants, or those injured or killed in military and police operations: 'For instance, there were those who got caught up on the quiet. They killed their brother or father, of course, the son went to avenge his brother or father. We had such people as well.' (Omar).

In this case, the need for retaliation is reinforced by a shared traumatic experience. Family and friends of members of the jihadist underground are often seen by the police and security services as legitimate targets of repression and also experience violence and discrimination.

Also in the North Caucasus republics, a significant part of the repressive apparatus is recruited from the local population. The police, prosecutors, and security officers may also be members of Sufi *tariqats* in conflict with Salafis and jihadists. They and their relatives are part of a society for which revenge is a legitimate response to a crime against honour.

Among the peoples of the North Caucasus, the institution of blood revenge is still widespread, which in its original version allows for attacks not only on the immediate perpetrator, but also on members of his family (Ratelle and Souleimanov 2017; Bobrovnikov, 2000; Albogachieva and Babich, 2010). In Dagestani society, the custom of blood feuds has largely eroded due to urbanisation and modernisation. Despite the persistence of the concept of male honour and the need to protect it, targeting a person's relatives is generally considered a socially unacceptable practice (Ratelle and Souleimanov 2017: 575). On the contrary, in Chechnya and Ingushetia, where clan identity has retained its significance in the lives of ordinary people, this institution still functions in 'pure form'. In our study, blood feud is mentioned by respondents from these North Caucasian republics:

> How old was I then? Thirteen, maybe, fourteen years old. I saw a man get shot. A blood feud, it turned out. We didn't understand at first. It was a distant relative of my mother's. I heard a clap, we were at school on the first floor, I looked, someone in a mask shot a car. We came out of the school, we looked. And I saw a man sitting behind the wheel and he had half his head missing, his brain was dripping on the floor. (Jafar)

As Sokiryanskaya (2019) notes, in the Chechen Republic, blood feuds are instrumentalised by the Kadyrov regime, which encourages relatives of murdered policemen to take revenge on relatives of murdered

militants. The personal interest in revenge on the part of police officers increases the already high level of violence against real and perceived 'radicals'.

The respondents thus underline the mutual and cumulative nature of radicalisation in the North Caucasus: unlimited police and FSB violence, targeting mainly religious youths, provokes a strong emotional response and leads to reciprocal violence, which entails a new round of repression. The cultural mechanism of retaliation sanctions mutual violence and involves new actors - family members of fighters or police officers.

4.2. Ideological factors of radicalisation

The study shows that a strong emotional response among young people of the urban second generation is caused not only by the situations and contexts that affect them personally, but also by the global agenda – what is happening to Muslims outside the North Caucasus and Russia. Thus, according to many informants, the mass outflow of North Caucasian youth to join the ranks of IS was caused by the desire to protect Syrian Muslims who found themselves in a situation of terrible humanitarian disaster:

> Well, I would say, 70% of those who left there were just those who saw what was happening there. Sometimes when you see how much brothers, women and children are suffering there, sometimes you just want to go there yourself, leave everything, because you just can't look at it calmly, sitting at home, when you see that the whole world just doesn't care about it all. And the only thing that the whole world does is bombing for its own interests there. Just out of desperation that you can't just sit at home and watch this. You just want to leave and just be there. (Issa)

One can say that events taking place thousands of kilometres away from the Caucasus and Russia are perceived as vicarious trauma; they become part of the construction of group identity and solidarity, which extends to the Ummah of the whole world. Taking part in this solidarity is supported not so much by the unity of beliefs, but by the general character of the total threat – 'we are being killed' – which is fuelled, among other things, by individual experiences of religious discrimination. The informants note that this threat can cause radical action on the part of Muslims back home. For example, Said states: 'And how many of our innocent people are killed in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, and Palestine? That is, they begin, they believe that it's also normal that innocent people are killed here for the innocent killed there'.

The feeling of a deadly threat to the very existence of the Islamic 'nation' is also associated with a sense of defencelessness and humiliation. The current state of the global Ummah is perceived very pessimistically – it is torn apart by internal divisions and is experiencing a deep ideological and moral crisis, the result of which is a power gap with the 'enemies':

> But the Islamic Ummah is not ready for that state to be formed, because we have serious problems in the Ummah itself. This is the fact that many Muslims have left religion, moved away from it, moved away from religion. And the reason for the humiliation of Muslims today is just, it is not the military weakness, it is primarily that they are renegades themselves. (Adam)

According to respondents, the Islamic world is in a long-term military and political confrontation with 'the West', which seeks to establish political and economic control over Muslim states and their resources. This motive is emphasised in all conflicts affecting the Middle East and the Muslim world: the Arab-Israeli confrontation; the Iraq war and the downfall of Saddam Hussein's regime; the intervention of Northern Coalition troops in Afghanistan; the overthrow of political regimes in Libya and Egypt; and the war in Syria.

It is also mentioned that 'the West' uses provocations against Muslims living in the US and Europe to 'demonise' them and legitimise their oppression and discrimination:

> INT: The attack on the editorial board at Charlie Hebdo in France, the magazine. Well, I can give you a bit of background, they were drawing cartoons and it caused an attack on the editorial office with murders. What's your position on all this?
>
> Jafar: Yes, yes, there's the Prophet, I know. I watched those clips, it seemed to me like it was all set up.
>
> INT: What exactly?
>
> Jafar: These killings, attacks. To undermine the whole situation with Muslims, to take harsher measures.
>
> INT: Who would benefit from that?
>
> Jafar: Well it was in France, wasn't it? I mean, Macron was president at the time.

'The West' refers to countries that recognise the political and economic hegemony of the United States. The United States is seen as the main actor, mastermind and beneficiary of the confrontation with the Islamic world:

> Maybe, of course, I'm not good at it, again, we learn from the media [...] But there is a clear instruction, there are already facts, how they have done it before, starting with Iraq, Libya, how they know how to do it all. They are very good at staging coups. But I think it is the people themselves who should choose who should be the head of state. You cannot interfere in other countries [...] and establish order there. I think the Americans have no right. (Abdul)

Israel is highlighted as a relatively independent actor with its own, different goals from those of the US. Whereas the US primarily targets political and economic interests, Israel is viewed primarily from the perspective of religious anti-Semitism, as the institutionalised will of an inherently hostile religious group to Islam (and other religions):

> They are enemies of Islam because they betrayed all the prophets. Abraham came and they acknowledged him. Although the Torah says that there will be many more prophets and new ones will come, but they became proud that their religion corresponded to their nation, became proud and killed all the other prophets. (Mamuka)

Criticism of political Zionism and Israeli actions in Palestine is combined with anti-Semitic narratives portraying Jews as economic predators and powerful conspirators behind political and military conflicts around the world:

> Rasul: With what? Here is the situation in the world. I am convinced that Israel, i.e. the Israeli authorities, are involved in this mess.
>
> INT: In what mess?
>
> Rasul: In all this, in that ISIS, everything, this is all that is going on in the world, all Israel is involved.
>
> INT: A Zionist conspiracy?
>
> Rasul: That too. Everything, everything. There's nowhere without them, I'll tell you that.

At the same time, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is largely perceived as having a regional character. Representatives of Sufi Islam express unconditional support for the Palestinian resistance, while Salafists view it as a nationalist movement that is far from the goals of true Islam.

The scale set by the attitudes 'for or against' America defines the imaginary boundaries of what informants consider to be the political 'West'. Thus, although the Gulf monarchies belong to the Islamic world, they may be seen as political satellites of the United States, so that the Islamic character of their political regimes may be questioned:

> Well, first of all, it's just that some Arab countries are just puppets of the US, as I would put it. Take for example the dynasty of these Saudis which is Saudi Arabia. They are the protectors of two Muslim sacred places but they are puppets of the USA. (Idris)

Yet Turkey, a member of the Western politico-military bloc, is not included in the so-called 'West' due to the anti-American rhetoric of its president, Recep Erdoğan, and his demonstrative attempts to build a policy independent of the US in the Middle East.

Alongside the political confrontation, the existence of a value gap between the Islamic Ummah and 'the West' is mentioned, which arose as a consequence of the deep moral decline of Western civilisation. This is primarily reflected in the radical transformation of the norms governing gender and sexuality. Respondents consider the equality of rights for men and women, the liberalisation of extramarital sexual relations, the recognition of the right to choose gender identities, and the legalisation of same-sex relationships and same-sex marriages to be unacceptable. The main trigger here is the increased visibility of LGBTQ persons in the public space:

Well, they [LGBTQ people] are demanding to hold rallies there, to fight for their rights, although no one is violating their rights: they can get any job, they have their own places there. I think their behaviour is inherently inhumane. God created woman and man for each other, he did not create man and man. If you are like that, you think you are right, multiply then, create a separate state and multiply and we will see what comes out of it. (Khabib) It is important to note that these transformations are viewed through the prism of conspiracy theories - as a result of the deliberate activities of Western elites (political, economic, cultural) to control the actions and consciousness of the populations of Western countries:

> Well, what bothers me at the moment is the total, total control that's already there, but it's just going to become much stronger [...] I have all these films that Hollywood is making before my eyes, it's like they're shooting what people are going to have soon. It's like they're telling people what to expect. Well, at the same time population growth is being restricted - all sorts of genetically modified products, practically the entire market of the world is already full of these genetically modified products. Already today 40% of people are infertile, well, I'm talking about the West. If not even on that side, there is homosexuality, same-sex marriages. At the same time, there's a propaganda for the equality of men and women. And in America, for instance, what is going on at the moment? When children go to kindergarten, there are places where they do not mark the sex of the child. So, in school, even children will soon be forbidden to call a girl or a boy, as it may be an insult to someone. That is, they are simply destroying the generation that is growing and it is frightening what will happen next. (Issa)

'The West' is accused of seeking to spread false values beyond its geographical boundaries, mainly through mass culture and the media, which is seen as a direct threat to the Muslim world and countries with dominant conservative values. The external nature of the threat is actively emphasised by the appropriate vocabulary of 'imposition', 'propaganda', 'pressure':

> Yes, of course, there is complete influence and propaganda towards homosexuality. And those who start to oppose it are accused of violating democracy and freedom of choice, speech and everything else. Although they themselves impose all these values. (Issa)

The understanding of 'the West' as a hostile US-led political bloc and existential threat influences how Russia's place in this confrontation is seen. On the one hand, the latter is criticised for intervening in Syria's war on the side of the Assad regime, which is seen as unequivocally hostile to the Sunni majority. On the other hand, the Putin regime's markedly anti-American foreign policy and conservative turn in domestic politics, give grounds to exclude Russia from 'the West' and not to consider it a principled enemy of the Islamic world.

The perception of the military, political and existential threat posed to Muslims by the West makes projects that promise to overcome the political and religious fragmentation of the Muslim world and provide an effective response to Western expansionism attractive to North Caucasian male youth. In this regard, their attitude to the terrorist group the Islamic State (IS) is ambivalent. While criticising the brutality of IS's methods, they nevertheless state that its political programme - the unification of Muslims under the flag of pure Islam and the construction of a global Caliphate based on Shariah principles - corresponds to the ideal of the majority of Muslims. They admit that the proclamation of the Islamic state was an act of great symbolic significance and played an important role in attracting Muslim youth to it, putting it in the vanguard of the jihadist movement:

> They have an image [...]: Yes, the Shariah state, everything according to Shariah, all the laws, everything is completely according to Shariah. This is what they have on their mind. They, for instance, just started to listen to *nashids* on Vkontakte and Instagram, all that – they see everything through rose-coloured spectacles, their view changes. They don't look at it through the prism of religion, they look at it through the prism of emotions, that there is Shariah there and they start going there. (Adam)

As Atran shows (2015), similar feelings are shared by many Muslims around the world. He writes about the 'subliminal joy' that even those Muslims 'who reject the Islamic State's murderous violence yet yearn for the revival of a Muslim Caliphate and the end to a nation-state order' experienced in the Muslim world with the entry of IS on the global stage.

Most respondents distance themselves and condemn IS as criminal and inconsistent with Islamic norms, but emphasise the good intentions of Caucasian youth who have gone to fight for IS in Syria. To articulate their ideal of political unity, they turn to safer examples of anti-Western Islamic consolidation projects, such as the Ottoman Empire in the past and the neo-Islamist regime of Recep Erdoğan in the present. As Idris states: 'I also like Erdoğan, that he is a real ruler, a ruler not from the point of view of, how should I say, if you look from the point of view of Islam, he is the ruler of the faithful, I believe.'

The discussion of anti-Western feelings and attitudes inevitably raises the question of the perception of the urban second generation towards the liberal project, which is clearly associated with Western society and the Western way of life. In this respect, there is a clear contradiction. On the one hand, respondents recognise such achievements of Western societies as the high level of civil and political freedoms, the development of democratic institutions, tolerance for religious and ethnic minorities, and the general atmosphere of well-being and security. It is these features of liberal democracies which, according to respondents, ensure the relatively comfortable and secure existence of the numerous Muslim diasporas in Western European countries:

> Abdul: Well, one Uzbek brother came from there; he praised America very much, really much, he started comparing Russia and America, he says it's night and day.

INT: What is night and day, from his point of view?

Abdul: Security and attitudes to it, they have mosques where they can pray, many mosques, for instance. That is, there is a place to pray, although there are no Muslim republics, yes, but Muslims live quietly there.

But at the same time, respondents do not consider democratic institutions as guardians of these freedoms. In general, liberal democracy is rejected primarily for the inconsistency of the ideal with the concrete practice in which it is embodied. Omar is '[…] against democracy in its pro-Western form, it is not democracy but a real authoritarianism, if you judge by the leaders.'

This gap, according to respondents, is not accidental and stems from the utopian nature of the project itself, which is based on equality of opinion among all citizens:

Still, I don't think democracy is a very useful thing when you consider all people's opinions. Based on logic. First of all, opinions can change [...] and those opinions are built around others, influenced by them [...] (Magomet Ali)

Respondents associate democracy with the danger of social and political disintegration, which they label as 'chaos' and 'anarchy':

Is it wrong to live like this - everyone is on their own - is that a democracy? No, no, it is not right. That would make a mess. There has to be a ruler, there has to be a man. Without it, everyone will be by himself, there will be anarchy. One person will say "I will do this", the other will say "I will do that". This is not right. (Adam)

The main reason for this is due to the unambiguously negative perception of the institutional changes that took place in Russia in the 1990s. These were accompanied by a drop in the standard of living of the population, the establishment of the power of the clans and the growth of violence. Through their parents, informants interpret these changes as the 'democratisation' and 'liberalisation' of public life. In addition, the negative experience of the 'Arab Spring', which demonstrated the short time it took from demanding democratic reforms and the dismantling of tyrannical regimes to a full-scale civil confrontation, does not provide the grounds for a person to believe that by himself, without external control, he is able to follow the principles of morality and justice.

The above explains why the political ideals of the urban second generation are linked to Shariah-based religious authoritarianism, which can take various forms: a theocratic monarchy, the populist regime of a charismatic leader, the collective authority of Islamic scholars, and an Iranian-style theocracy.

Thus, it is possible to identify common components in the worldview of the urban second generation of North Caucasian youth, which, under certain conditions, can be seen as ideological factors that favour radicalisation. These include the perception of global politics as a permanent conflict between 'the West' and the Muslim world, with the latter acting as a victim under attack; the interpretation of the West as an enemy threatening the political sovereignty, well-being, way of life and morality of the Islamic Ummah (Bartlett, Birdwell and King, 2010). Of further importance is a commitment to conspiracy explanations of social and political processes, expressed as belief in the existence of a Jewish conspiracy and a conspiracy of Western elites against Muslims (Bartlett and Miller 2010). The popularity of Islamic political solidarity projects aimed at defending against Western expansionism, disappointment and mistrust in the institutions of liberal society, and consequent sympathy for religious authoritarianism constitute other significance components. The 'enemy-victim' paradigm may legitimise outbreaks of radical violence as

acts of a just resistance to Western expansion and aggression, removing responsibility for possible excesses from the 'defending' side. For example, against the backdrop of 'total Western violence' committed with the latest technological innovation, acts of terrorism, including against civilians, may appear as mere episodes of an already ongoing war. Sympathy for authoritarian projects of Islamic unity targeting the West increases the likelihood of joining radical and terrorist organisations with a corresponding organisational culture and declared goals. These ideological factors are reinforced by frustrations over mass violations of Muslim rights, a sense of vulnerability that arises from the respondents' association with the Islamic Ummah, and empathy for the suffering 'brothers'. Moral panics about the transformation of gender and sexual regimes in Western countries are also common among members of the urban second generation. The sexism, heteronormativity and homophobia that fuel these panics can justify and inspire violence against women and LGBTQ persons.

4.3. Radicalisation as a social elevator and means for self-realisation

Empirical research (European Monitoring, 2006) conducted among Muslim men of the second- and third-generation in Europe confirm that this group regularly faces discrimination in the labour market, is underrepresented in public and political life, and experiences hostility and distrust towards their cultural and religious background (Roy, 2016). For them, a gap between the requirements of their parental culture and the culture of the host society is typical (Andre et al., 2015; Roy, 2016). All this causes 'status frustration' and confusion of identity of the mentioned group (Cottee, 2011).

Our case can be considered as a special case of the situation described above, which has its own country and regional specifics. The North Caucasus experienced deindustrialisation in the 1990s, which impinged upon the region's economic potential (Sokolov et al., 2017). The main sources of income of the republics are federal transfers, but in conditions of a fairly high level of corruption, these transfers do not sufficiently improve the living standards of the population (Sokolov et al., 2017; Aligadzhieva, 2019). This leads to the appropriation of state institutions by elite groups acting in their own interests, blocking meritocratic social mobility. A system of access to jobs based on illegal monetary rewards has formed in the republic (Yarlykapov, 2017). In addition, access to prestigious positions is mainly based on the principle of clannishness. As a result, most informants mention the widespread disillusionment in terms of life prospects which exists among young people in the Caucasus.

In Moscow, St. Petersburg and other Russian cities outside the North Caucasus, the discrimination that people from the North Caucasus face when searching for housing and employment is the 'glass ceiling' that prevents professional self-realisation (Prichiny radikalizatsii, 2016):

> And there was a case when I was looking for a job in law enforcement, and there was an organisation, an energy organisation right next to them. And at the same time, I thought I would look for a job in parallel and get a job there. And I was refused there. In a conversation with employees of law enforcement I once mentioned that I wanted to get a job there; I submitted documents, but it seems that I will not be given a reply. They called there and were told that "no, we don't want" and all that… And there was a reason; they made it clear to me that the reason was that I am a Dagestani. And my friend, who graduated from, let's say, a law academy and got a job in St. Petersburg, was given an official paper saying that there is an unspoken agreement not to take people from the North Caucasus. (Khabib)

In the contexts described, radicalisation can be seen as a way to realise professional ambitions and to make claims to social status.

> Religion is something that can be used to lure a person. Young people in the Caucasus are such, they are potential, and guys want to do something special. Within the framework that Dagestan currently has, there is no work, no place for self-realisation. And, for instance, they begin to get acquainted with religion, and someone takes them to the wrong place. And they boil inside, they want to do something good; it seems to them that they are going there to do something good. (Musa)

The informants' narratives confirm the conclusions of the World Bank (Devarajan et al., 2016) that the most reliable indicator predicting susceptibility to radical views is the relative, but not absolute, deprivation and socio-economic isolation of an educated part of the population. Our respondents emphasise that it is not poverty, but rather the strive for recognition, respect, and status, which is blocked by the corruption in the North Caucasus, and the xenophobia of the host community outside the region, that motivates them to leave to join IS or to join local networks of radicalisation. This explains the evident paradox that we face in interviews. On the one hand, almost all narratives about trips to Syria include young people who before leaving were employed in the unskilled and low-paid service sector (security guards, salesmen, sales representatives). Abdul describes how some he knew had '[...] worked as a security guard at McDonald's, lived with his sister, with his mother, yes, he was a young handsome guy, 20 years old, he went there. And immediately he was killed there, and that's all.'

On the other hand, we also noted that often young people who embark on Jihad come from wealthy families and therefore do not need money:

> After the interview, he said that even though his family is quite wealthy, he does not want to take money from his father, who is engaged in the construction business. But his older brothers, both the one who works in the police, and the other, a businessman, do not hesitate to do this (Mamuka, recorded in Field diary).

This is confirmed by other studies. For example, Starodubrovskaya (2016) notes that if the territories that have become (or were) centres of radicalism in the North Caucasus are examined, these are the richest villages. It is obvious that we are dealing with frustration caused by the gap between the social status of the family and low individual status. Underemployment in this case is only a marker of this status, an indicator of the inability of a young person to build an independent professional career.

Sometimes the desire to overcome the frustration felt with one's social status fits into a broader picture of age-related socialisation during the transition from childhood to adulthood. Participation in the armed underground or a trip to Syria offers young people the potential of a life or career full of opportunities where they can experience vivid emotions associated with risk, adventurism, and freedom. These emotions are in opposition to parental authoritarianism and the dullness of everyday existence:

> In the end, they just take advantage of the foolishness of young people. And young people, how can I explain to you [...] I mean, I was at this age myself – 16-17 years old, blood boiling, I wanted to find adventures. Let's say, my parents don't allow me something at home, I wanted to stand out somehow [...] (Musa)

These incentives can be interpreted within the context of intergenerational relationships that are undergoing a significant transformation. The fragmentation of the traditional 'extended family' and territorial community that began in Soviet times and its replacement with a nuclear family has been accelerated by the mass migration from villages to cities. This threatens the foundation of the power elders hold over the younger generation, consecrated by the '*adats*' (Starodubrovskaya, 2016). The older generation, used to a rural life and not having the necessary connections, does not always manage to adapt to the new conditions. Their children, often more educated, have to find their own values and meanings in a culturally heterogeneous urban environment and develop their own ways and methods of

adaptation. They construct their own spaces free from the control of their elders. These spaces include, for example, wrestling and MMA clubs, Salafi youth '*jammats*' and religious clubs. This could also include online communities, both religious and sporting.

At the same time, as we can see from the interviews, the authoritarian style of parenthood remains dominant in families, which is described through the categories of 'rigour', 'discipline', 'obedience', 'fear' and 'shame':

> Well, it is clear that if your parents are at home [...] you will be softer, make different jokes, you will not laugh out loud, hit someone – this is clear, it is just simple things. With parents, you still try to behave, firstly, obediently, and secondly, politely, that is, you cannot, well... (Idris)

The informants emphasise two characteristic features of 'traditional' parenthood: a) high demands in terms of formal indicators of loyalty and success ('good' behaviour, academic performance, achievements in sports) while completely ignoring the child's own interests and desires and b) a lack of emotional closeness and trust in the relationship between parents (fathers) and sons:

> Probably, our family relations are again the traditional ones, as is customary in Dagestan. I call my father now, and basically, while living in Dagestan, we communicated; we always had a good relationship, but my father never talked to me if it wasn't necessary. Somehow, we always talked about important things. That is, he never started a conversation with me on any side topics, well, generally, maybe, at some points he didn't pay the necessary attention to how my life was going. I'm not speaking only about my studies, even sports, he often wasn't interested in my sports life either. (Khabib)

It is also evident that even at later stages of life, the family tries to maintain control over its younger members in relation to important decisions. Choices about education, a life partner, a place of work and a career are often taken by the older generation for the young person:

> And why did I choose to study to be a customs officer? Well, this is also a question […] Most likely, probably, it wasn't me who chose it, it was my father. As in most cases, when you are 17 years old, you graduate from school, you do not particularly know which education path to choose, you are simply told, and you obey. Well, I am such a person that if I was told, for instance, if they set a certain goal, I pursue this goal, just not to let my parents, my relatives down. (Hamzat)

When a family moves to another city, often outside of the North Caucasus, it affects North Caucasian youth in two ways. On the one hand, life in a big city, especially outside the Caucasus, erodes the resources and ideological foundations of parental authority – in their desire to control their children's behaviour, parents cannot rely on the resources of the extended family (grandparents, uncles and aunts), or on the support of the neighbourhood environment, which is often indifferent or hostile to ethnic 'outsiders', or on the authority of religious institutions. This becomes an impulse for identification processes of 'self-searching' to be activated by young people and leads to a critical reflection on social, political and religious institutions:

> Let's say there is a village where the 'tariqa' and 'muftiate' are widespread, and there is a village where Islam comes from the 'muftiate', where people listen more to the 'muftiate', there are usually fewer radical guys. Where guys come to religion more or less by themselves, there are more radical Muslims there. Those from the 'muftiate' don't think much about it themselves, they are told, and they take something simple, but they didn't take the rest. Well, such people are a little stupid with respect to Islam, but there are few radicals among them,

since they do not think much about religion; so, their parents said that they are Muslims, they are therefore Muslims. (Said)

At the same time, migration does not weaken, but strengthens the Muslim identity of young North Caucasians. Religion becomes the only solid foundation of 'normality' in a situation where everything else serves as an indication of an individual's 'strangeness', 'otherness' and even 'deviance'. Islam is the 'door' to a globalising project in which a young person with his starting opportunities, socialisation features, and social and cultural capital is guaranteed greater equal membership than in a global world organised on the principles of Western liberal secularism. In addition, as noted by a number of researchers (Yarlykapov, 2010; Starodubrovskaya, 2015; Starodubrovskaya, 2016), the popularity of 'conflict' (i.e., confrontation-oriented) versions of fundamentalist Islam among urban North Caucasian youth is due not least to the fact that young people see it as an ideological basis for challenging generational hierarchies preventing self-realisation. The idea that the word of the Supreme Authority is higher than the word of the father, in fact questions the very foundation of the family:

> Mamuka: I am a Sunni, and for Shiites this is the number one enemy […] And, of course, I had problems with my father, mother, and brothers.

> INT: What did they tell you?

> Mamuka: They said that I was born a Shiite and should be a Shiite. I say no, the Most High has denied it. God forbids us to follow our fathers if they are in error. God forbids it in the Quran.

The emphasis on individual rather than collective responsibility, that is characteristic of Islam, also contributes to the erosion of traditional relationships, and the formation of an individual identity as opposed to the fusion of the individual in the collective.

From life narratives, we can understand that in reality, authoritarian families are often unable to cope with even the simplest manifestations of non-conformity of their children. For instance, many informants recalled that if they often fought with their peers during their childhood or did not do well at school, their parents simply sent them to live with relatives in a Dagestani village for one to two years, since they themselves could not provide a 'strict' education. Parents found out the fact that their son was attracted to radical ideas later than friends and even younger relatives. As a rule, parents did not react to this information, which, apparently can be considered as an argument in favour of so-called 'parental uncertainty' (Sikkens, 2018).

Thus, radicalisation can be considered as a response to the situation of double exclusion – from society where social elevators are blocked by ethnic and religious xenophobia as well as by the appropriation of public institutions by elite clans, and from parents and families seeking to control their youngsters and imposing their own ideas about self-fulfilment and careers. The transition to radical ideas and joining communities with such ideas allows the young men to build alternative models of self-realisation and social mobility.

4.4. Islamisation of radicalism

Two significant cultural spaces are highlighted by respondents as sensitive to radical ideas and radical propaganda: sports (martial arts) and criminal subculture.

Martial arts is a male socialisation institution in the North Caucasus that promotes patterns of traditional masculinity by creating a social environment in which hundreds of children and young people spend long periods of time together and are subject to gender-normative practices. Almost all boys and young men

in the North Caucasus go through sports clubs. In the last decade, there has been a change in the sports environment – freestyle and classical wrestling gave way to the so-called mixed martial arts (MMA) or 'ultimate fighting' – a commercial sport that is not burdened with formal rules and is characterised by an extreme level of entertainment and brutality.

The qualities fostered by martial arts - physical strength, competitiveness, aggressiveness, and pain disdain - correspond to the local culture of male upbringing, according to which the status of a real man has to be earned through power competition with other men (Solonenko, 2012). Respondents note that athletes' training regimes are generally consistent with the home-based upbringing of boys and young men in the North Caucasus. Together, 'home' and 'gym' form a common socialising environment in which fighting prevails in both and has a meaningful value:

> And here in Dagestan, it turns out; the child should be hit in the face. Living in the Caucasus basically, they are the ones to hit you in the face. This is normal and manly. Such a wild stereotype. A wild concept, that he is young, and he is hit in the head, and that's all. (Said)

This environment brutalises relationships between young men, encouraging them to confront and use violence, even outside the gym. The media culture around martial arts works to reproduce the most toxic stereotypes of masculinity through trash-talk, staged clashes between fighters before matches, and an emphasis on the visual spectacle of fights. In addition, respondents also mention the problem of 'downed pilots' - former athletes with advanced violent skills who have been forced to leave sport due to injury, disability, loss or age. Such athletes constitute a fairly large part of the male population of the North Caucasus. As there are no programmes for their re-socialisation in non-sporting life, this group responds to the demand that the criminal world and/or the radical underground have on their power resources. There are numerous cases of North Caucasian sportsmen participating in terrorist activities as part of the 'Caucasus Emirate', IS and other Islamist groups. In May 2009, Beslan Chagiev, a two-time winner of the World Cup in Greco-Roman wrestling, conducted a suicide bombing attack in Grozny. Ramazan Saritov, a bronze medalist in the Russian freestyle wrestling championship, led a group of militants and was killed in a shootout with police in 2012. In 2016, an American drone strike killed Chamsulvar Chamsulvarayev, the 2009 European freestyle wrestling champion and a member of IS.[7]

Dagestan sport in the post-Soviet period has undergone intense Islamisation. The mass conversion of young athletes to Islam in the early 2000s was encouraged and sometimes directly initiated by Islamic organizations and movements, which are trying to gain the power and reputational support of the sports community. Famous athletes demonstrate piety and make statements about the need to respect Islamic morality and to fight against immorality. According to respondents, this has resulted in the norms characteristic of the fighting subculture (including aggressiveness, conflictuality and a desire for violence) becoming identified with religion in the mass consciousness of young people. For Khabib, '[…] people have come to perceive my group as some kind of semi-religious [group], because they associate the fighters with the ideal image of a Muslim, yes. But that's not always the case.'

In this context, respondents most often recall resonant cases in which athletes were the initiators and promoters of religiously motivated violence against phenomena or individuals who do not conform to Islamic morality,– such as representatives of subcultures (anime, goths, gay-pop), theatre performances, nightclubs, popular artists:

> I'll even say more: they had a group on WhatsApp, Khabib and all the athletes took part in it. They were in favour of morality in Dagestan. They weren't openly active, but they were

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[7] Militants in Iraq reported death of bronze medalist of European championship in wrestling Chamsulvaraev, Kavkaz-uzel – available at: https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/290096/#.V-y6LH30nQ4.twitter

catching all kinds of singers who were, in their opinion, introducing all kinds of debauchery [...] They caught them saying, "If you perform again, we'll hit you in the head," and they calmed down. (Said)

In the 1990s and early 2000s, a significant proportion of young people were either part of criminal groups or interacted with them in one way or another. They internalised the values and norms ('*ponyatia*') of criminal subculture, which are in many ways similar to those of political radicalism: nihilism towards society and its values, rejection of the state and its institutions (especially the organised violence apparatus), the cult of force, tolerance for violence, and ruthlessness in dealing with enemies. In almost every North Caucasian Republic, there was a time when young criminals converted to Islam on a mass scale, bringing these values and norms to Islamic communities (Starodubrovskaya, 2016):

> Omar: I'll tell you, you know, I'll tell you what they can come from. There is a Dagestani Islamic radicalism, Islamic Dagestani radicalism, these are tramps from the blocks who were opposed to the police, but there was this cult against the police, and they went to Islam, and just found in Islam, not really Islam, near Islam, let's say, some direction that is against it and for war.

> INT: So this is a connection of crime and …?

> Omar: Yes, this is a connection of such internal, I don't know how to say, such popularisation of crime — well, it's cool to be bad among young people — and they just come to Islam and find there, how can I describe this picture, if they remain the same bad guys.

The perception of the principles of religious radicalism by representatives of criminalised youth is also facilitated by the symbiotic relationship between organised crime and the jihadist underground, which is forced to maintain its existence through racketeering, shadow economic activity and interactions with mafia groups (Dobayev, 2009; Sushchy, 2010).

Both cases - MMA and criminality - can be seen as examples of the Islamisation of radicalism (Roy, 2016), where Islam is accepted in groups that cultivate the value of violence and confrontation. However, it is clear that the thesis of 'violence nihilists' (Roy, 2016) is more applicable to the case of the criminal environment, while the MMA fighter and fan communities see themselves as defenders of the dominant moral order in the North Caucasus.

4.5. Networks and radicalisation spaces

There is a consensus in the academic literature that suggests social connections play a key role in radicalisation, facilitating the spreading of relevant views and involvement in violent actions through mutual emotional support, the development of a common identity, and encouragement to adopt new views (Sageman, 2004; Bakker, 2006; Asal, Fair and Shellman, 2008; McCauley and Moskalenko, 2010; Hafez and Mullins, 2015). As Sageman states , social connections 'are more important and relevant to the transformation of potential candidates into global mujahedin than postulated external factors, such as a common hatred for an outside group. […] As in all intimate relationships, this glue, in-group love, is found inside the group. It may be more accurate to blame global Salafi terrorist activity on in-group love than out-group hate' (2004: 135). Atran comes to a similar conclusion, noticing that 'predictors for involvement in suicide attacks are, again, small-world aspects of social networks and local group dynamics rather than large-scale social, economic, and political indicators, such as education level and economic status' (2015: 49).

Family and kinship relations that potentially lead to radicalisation, according to Bakker (2006) mostly consist of siblings, cousins, and kinship relatives through marriage – and only in a few cases parent/child

relationships. Young people and teenagers from the urban second generation maintain relations with numerous first and second cousins, but moving to a large city often leads to the weakening or breaking of these relations. Within the family-kinship network, the most solid trusting relationships are formed with relatives of the opposite sex – sisters and female cousins, less often aunts. As far as we can understand from the stories, the emotional closeness that accumulates in such relationships compensates for its absence in the relationship between children and parents. Often it is the older sisters and female cousins who become guides and mentors in religion:

> I started fasting while I was in Dagestan, and I have a female cousin, well, not really, I will explain the situation now. Our house burned down in 1997, and it so happened that we were left homeless, and our aunt, my mother's sister, took us in, she even raised us, called me her son. And so her daughter grew up, you can say, she brought me to Islam and showed me how to do '*namaz*' and taught me everything, and from that moment to this day, I am in Islam. (Idris)

Sports communities are another priority area for forming strong and lasting emotional ties. They are made up of sportsmen who are personally familiar with each other, united around their club and a common leader. Within such communities, values such as courage, fraternity and unconditional mutual assistance are cultivated, and the individual is provided with basic means of social security and protection, which are particularly relevant for teenagers and young people who live outside the North Caucasus and face hostility from the local population or far-right groups:

> Ramzan: Well, I went to school, I constantly had problems with all sorts of skinheads, harassment against me, and so I had to practice sports to…

> INT: Did you take part in sports?

> Ramzan: Yes, I took part in sports, free-style wrestling, and when you take part in sports, you have many friends who are sportsmen, and it is not so terrible – you can fight back.

Such relationships often take on the character of a quasi-family, which, as already noted, is often cemented by religious ideology and daily rituals. Social affiliation with gym friends is commonly the starting point for an increased interest in religion, especially for those informants who grew up in secular families:

> A guy trained with me, he is my best friend now, and we worked out together, and I saw that he prays, goes out and prays during training, I liked it, something like that. So at the prayer stage I became a Muslim, he taught me to pray, I became interested in religion, then [inaudible 0:02:39] religion, then I took the Koran and read it in Russian, and I came across a 'sura' from the Koran that God created people and 'jinns' only for them to worship him. And I realised that I should devote my life to the worship of the Most High. (Mamuka)

The desire to imitate role models plays an important role in awakening and maintaining an interest in religion. Most of these role models openly declare their religiosity. Some informants point directly to the fact that famous athletes were original role models of the 'fashion' of radical Islam among North Caucasian youth. Khabib notes that 'At first it was sought after. All the sportsmen had a beard, it became fashionable, in short. Youth fell for it, but some to a greater degree, some to a lesser degree.'

The breaking of strong friendships and the desire to fill the vacuum of trust and support may also push young people to radicalism. For example, one of the informants, Mamuka was born in a non-religious family. He was introduced to the basics of Islam by a friend in a judo club. After a serious injury, he was forced to stop participating in sport, which is why friends at the gym began to gradually move away from

him. In search of a new social circle, Mamuka began to actively study the content of Salafist communities on the social media platform VKontakte and eventually contacted members of IS located in Syria.

The role of religious spaces in the process of radicalisation remains debatable. On the one hand, the informants talk about 'dangerous mosques' where radical ideas are allegedly openly propagated, and until recently recruitment to IS occurred. However, our data suggest that the very nature of mosques and other places of worship impede the formation of the type of social connections that may become the basis for radicalisation. Young people, especially those who live in Moscow and St. Petersburg, often choose mosques and prayer rooms that are local. These mosques are used exclusively for prayer, but not for communication or increasing social capital. As Musa describes, '[…] I do not like starting to talk to someone new in mosques. I usually come with the guys to Friday '*namaz*' and leave quietly.'

In the North Caucasus, the division of mosques into 'Salafi' and '*tariqa*' does not automatically divide those who attend. Young people can perform Friday prayers in a '*jumah*' mosque, which belongs to the Spiritual administration, and on another Friday go to the 'Salafi' mosque. However, those who have had the experience of visiting these mosques relate that they have not faced any calls to violence or calls to join a jihadist underground:

> I believe that if there is a mosque, it is possible to get a law enforcement person there dressed in civilian clothes, who is a law enforcement officer […] Let him visit and see if there is something extremist there, let him close this mosque. You can understand when an Imam says something extremist. If he says something extremist, they can close it. If he doesn't say anything, just says, 'Don't drink, don't smoke, don't kill', then why should this mosque be closed if, on the contrary, he promotes a good way of life? (Said)

As it is stated in the academic literature (Picart, 2015), the Internet (especially social media) nowadays provides the means through which the representatives of the urban second generation may first self-radicalise through some imaginary or actual link with an organised terrorist network. Our data suggests that representatives of the urban second generation are critical towards official religious institutions and prefer to get their basic knowledge about religion from the Internet – from Internet Imams who post their videos on YouTube, on Islamic online communities and accounts in social networking sites like Vkontakte, Instagram and Telegram, or on the pages of fellow countrymen studying in Islamic universities in the Middle East:

> I liked people like Khalid Yasin and Ahmad Didat more, one is an American, the other is from South Africa. Well, I often watched YouTube videos of Ahmad Didat and Khalid Yasin, they present everything in a more interesting way, it's more understandable for me. Let's say you are learning there, it will be difficult for you to understand many things from Dagestani people, there is such a highland accent there, it is mixed with its local flavour, and not everyone will understand it. Namely, what Khalid Yasin, Ahmad Didat say, everything is understandable. (Said)

The issue of the impact of jihadist propaganda discussed above (Chen et al., 2008; Sageman, 2004) is resolved in this case. Our informants note that IS's propaganda videos and audio materials, filmed at a professional level and distributed through social networks, using messenger and video hosting sites, played a key role in mobilising North Caucasian youth for the war in Syria:

> INT: And what in this case, these guys who are fighting there in Syria, why is it not Jihad?
>
> Adam: Because [...] well, a lot of them are sincere, probably the guys went there because they saw – Muslim children are supposedly killed there. Although you see, they just went

because of this provocation, there are different videos on YouTube, there is a child being killed, stepped on, trampled.

However, those who have encountered such propaganda are unlikely to agree to define it in terms of 'a subculture steeped in violent defiance, a delight in breaking taboos and ridiculing civilised norms' (Cohen, cited in Cottee, 2010: 736). Rather, on the contrary, its 'normal' sentimentalism is emphasised, placed in the context of Hollywood's 'economy of impressions', or an appeal to the image of a 'bright future':

> They have an image […] even girls go there […] I mean an image, yes, the Shariah state, everything according to Shariah, all the laws, everything is completely according to Shariah. This is what they have on their mind. They, for instance, just started to listen to '*nashids*' on Vkontakte and Instagram, all that – they see everything through rose-coloured spectacles, their view changes. They don't look at it through the prism of religion, they look at it through the prism of emotions, that there is Shariah there and they start going there. (Abdul)

The Internet and social networks act as enabling factors that reduce the distance between ideological and behavioural radicalisation. Such platforms provide a wide range of activities and 'jobs' with relatively low risk and resource costs, which do not require full dedication but create a sense of belonging to a common cause. Key examples include participation in the distribution of video and audio content, discussions with opponents of radical ideas in public and thematic forums, fundraising for warring militants, etc. Due to social networks, young people have the opportunity (or think they have) to communicate directly with recruiters and direct participants in terrorist organisations:

> INT: I wonder, did you have such an experience that you got close, then moved away, tell me a little more about where you are in general? [...] As for me, I have never met in my life a situation where I have received a call to go to ISIS on my page or something like that.

> Mamuka: It happened on Vkontakte, they wrote to me – 'I'm in Syria', and so on. I asked – 'what are you doing there?' They told me what they were doing, that they were fighting. But they explained it differently, you see, they explained that it was for their own good.

Thus, the priority areas of radicalisation for the urban second generation are the family and inner circle, and sports communities. The role of religious spaces in radicalisation is controversial. Also, the critical attitude to the official Islamic clergy of representatives of the urban second generation may encourage them to get acquainted with alternative points of view, broadcast on the Internet and social networks, and then progress through this to self-radicalisation.

4.6. Understandings of 'radicalism' and 'extremism'

The informants live in a society where radicalism and extremism are not only concepts describing reality, but also ideologically and emotionally rich categories of practice that are used by various political and social actors to defend their interests. There is a widespread view among informants that radicalism and extremism are 'empty categories' that interested power and political structures randomly use to achieve their own goals. For Issa, '[…] there is no such thing as radicalism, because all this kind of radicalism that exists – it is totally invented by the secret services of all countries. I mean all sorts of terrorists and everything else [...]'

Participants, such as Idris, emphasise that this rhetoric in modern society only focuses on Muslims. He says: 'Basically, in our state, the extremists who exist, I will tell you – 100 percent, an extremist is a Muslim. That's all, there is no one else among the extremists, they are Muslims. In fact, when you say, "extremist", you mean "Muslim".'

The informants note two key actors responsible for producing this rhetoric. The state (which primarily refers to power structures), produces 'radical' and 'extremist' rhetoric to legitimise the right to use all-out violence against residents of the North Caucasus and all 'unwanted' Muslims in general. This position is broadcast via television, which is seen as the main medium for the transmission of this agenda:

> Well, now I hear it less and less often, but in a stupid way. You sit at home with the TV turned on: "A special operation was carried out in Dagestan, two bandits were killed in a special operation, among them Shamil Magapov, the alleged leader of such a terrorist group; he took an oath to ISIS", and everything like this. What kind of nonsense is this? Every day someone is killed. (Idris)

Those who consider 'extremism' and 'radicalism' as meaningful concepts assign a wide range of meanings. Firstly, radicalism (and less often extremism) is associated with the concept of standards. In one case, the point of comparison is some generally accepted standards, and in this case, the 'radical' view deviates from these standards. One of the informants explains:

> [...] well, radical is something that goes beyond what is generally accepted, something shocking, and an extremist is something related to the use of weapons. I may have radical views, but I don't want to fight. I can be radical, but not an extremist – my wife must wear a headscarf and that's it, end of story. (Ramzan)

Musa uses his own standards as, the reference point in relation to which another person's views or behaviour may be 'extreme', 'immoderate', or 'excessive': 'Well, from Latin, extremism is "excessive", "extreme", right? These are some extreme, excessive views, some actions, and some excessive calls. While radical is about the same thing, "radical Islam" - that's what it means now [...].'

Secondly, radicalism and extremism are associated with indiscriminate violence, mainly in the political sphere. Mamuka argues that 'Radical, in my opinion, is a person who is more [...] I don't even know how to say it, this is a person who doesn't even need a reason to kill a person, to arrange some kind of coup, revolution, and so on.'

At the intersection of the two previous meanings, a narrow understanding of radicalism/extremism is formulated, suggesting the crossing of a border of convention, a 'fine line', which is crossed by the use of violence. For Omar, 'Radicalism is a crossing of a certain line […] parents may be radical, they are somehow radical towards their children, let's say, they beat them. That is, away from some norms in the direction of some kind of force, that is, some kind of aggression.'

At the same time, the border between permissible and unacceptable (excessive, extreme) violence is constructed based on two logics at the same time: 'common humanistic' and 'utilitarian'. The 'common humanistic' approach is based on ethical concepts of good and evil – violence directed against civilians, especially women and children, is unacceptable. Only military targets can be legitimate targets:

> Well, they, let's say, American soldiers bomb and kill innocent people. It is clear that when they carry out the bombings, a lot of innocent people die, that it is not good, they don't care. But if you feel hatred, at least feel it for these soldiers, do not love them. Why don't you like an ordinary Russian, an ordinary American, even if they did something in Afghanistan or in Chechnya? I mean soldiers there. This is the moment when it's hard to explain to them that you can't hate those who themselves are innocent for killing innocents. Because there are civilians that never touched anyone, they don't deserve these terrorist attacks. (Said)

However, this approach also has its limitations. The informants allow the use of violence against civilians in cases of violation of Shariah norms on Shariah territory, for example, homosexual relationships. In addition, the informants consider the violence directed against people or organisations that deliberately

desecrate the sacred symbols of Islam as acceptable, which in fact equates to physical aggression. In this case, the principle of equal payback applies:

> INT: Okay, do you remember the situation with the cartoons in Charlie Hebdo? What do you think about this? Are they legitimate?
>
> Said: They got what they deserved, that's all.

The 'utilitarian' principle considers violence from the point of view of the connection between the goal and the means. In this approach, violence that can harm or does not lead to the achievement of the goals of the Ummah, is considered excessive:

> INT: Well, what about 'Hamas' and other guys, are they engaged in Jihad?
>
> Salekh: No, no, they are engaged in nonsense, that is, they are people who harm the Muslims of Palestine. They only kill people, and Israel kills more Muslims.

Finally, extremism (rarely radicalism) is associated with internal contradictions within the Islamic Ummah. Those informants who refer to themselves as Salafi most consistently defend this position. They understand that to a large extent they, and their opponents from IS, al-Qaeda and other terrorist organisations, rely on a common doctrinal heritage and operate with the same concepts. For the state and religious competitors, this is the basis for the accusation that Salafism is an ideological space for extremism. Therefore, the Salafists have developed their own criteria for discursive separation from 'others'. In general, this border runs along the line that separates 'purists' from 'low politicians' and 'jihadists' (Wiktorowicz, 2006).

Firstly, 'purists' defend the purity of Islam in the face of ideological enemies (the West, Christians, Jews, 'sects' within Islam). They view the participation of Muslims in political activities and their opposition to rulers (revolutions, overthrows, coups) as Western innovations that have no precedent in the time of the Prophet. Hence, they demonstratively reject those Islamic groups that participate in politics as 'low politicians':

> For instance, they get involved in politics. Why do we need politics? There are people who understand politics, they walk and talk, 'The ruler said so', and they do not divide them into these and those, at their *minbars*, where they stand in the mosque, they say loudly about someone: 'They are such and such'. This is not allowed, it is 'they are such and such' which is not allowed, this is not according to the Sunnah, this is the way of a sectarian. (Adam)

In the current political context, this criticism is directed against the revolutionary wave generated by the Arab Spring and the activities of the so-called '*Ikhwans*' (Muslim Brotherhood). However, in Russian conditions, it is also used by informants to manifest their own political reliability and distance themselves from political practices that risk persecution by the authorities.

Secondly, extremists are those who often and unfairly accuse other Muslims of disbelief ('*Takfir*'). Takfirists are called '*Kharijites*' in accordance with the tradition established in the Hanbali Saudi theology. They are identified with members of jihadist groups – al-Qaeda, IS, al-Nusra Front, etc. Violence committed by jihadists is assessed not in terms of its ethical unacceptability, but as bringing turmoil ('*fitnah*') to the Ummah.

For Salafists, the '*Ikhwans*' and '*Kharijites*' represent two stages of radicalisation – the introduction of politics into religion leads to the emergence of parties and factions (*Ikhwans*), and their struggle among themselves generates *fitnah* and *Takfirism* (*Kharijites*). Salekh outlines: 'That is, there are *Kharijites*, and there are *Ikhwans*, this is the Ikhwan al-Muslimin party, i.e. the Muslim Brotherhood. You know, people slowly become *Kharijites* from *Ikhwans* [...] in Islam, all the kinds of party activities they do, are forbidden.'

The line between 'radicalism' and 'extremism' is very blurred – often both concepts are perceived as synonymous. When trying to rationalise the difference, radicalism is defined as an ideology or as views, and extremism is defined as actions resulting from these views. At the same time, radicalism has two positive meanings that extremism does not have:

(i) Radicalism as a return to the roots – this interpretation is given in the context of the Salafi discourse on the purification of religion and a return to the religious experience of righteous predecessors:

> Extremism means [...] what does extremism mean? Extremism means something bad, while 'radical' [...] I read that this is generally a return to the roots, fundamentalism, radicalism is going back to the roots, that is, we Salafists, we go back to our roots, to the origins of Islam, yes, that is how originally it should be. (Salekh)

(ii) Radicalism as consistency and persistence in defending religious views, behaviour, etc.:

> Yes, in some matters I can be radical, I am radical in the matter that, let's say, my wife does not go around the city alone. I believe I am a radical on this issue. I know the reality of what is happening on the streets [...] well, at certain points I can be radical. (Said)

Thus, the urban second generation seeks to remove itself from the scope of the definitions of 'radicalism' and 'extremism' or to de-problematise these categories. Firstly, these concepts are described as empty categories that are used by political actors for their own purposes. Secondly, radicalism and extremism can be associated with a violation of standards both in everyday life and in politics. A special case of such violation is the use of unmotivated violence. Extremism and radicalism can also be used as labels for ideological opponents within the Islamic Ummah (in relation to '*Ikhwans*' and '*Kharijites*' on the part of Salafists, in relation to Salafists – on the part of Sufis). Radicalism also has a positive connotation – consistency and persistence in defending religious views and behaviour.

4.7. Trajectories of deradicalisation

The informants are sceptical about the deradicalisation activities of the state and its affiliated organisations for several reasons. Firstly, in their opinion, the state is one of the agents of radicalisation itself, creating an atmosphere of hatred and intolerance towards religious nonconformity:

> I believe that [...] well, I don't see that we have any kind of terrorism [...] All that, all that was in the 90s – it was the fruit of the state itself; it was their creation, all these terrorist attacks, everything that was, it was the fruit of their actions. (Idris)

Secondly, the state is perceived as an external 'alien' towards Islam, which is unable to find convincing counternarratives, because it uses propaganda in its attempts and not religious arguments. Therefore, anti-extremist propaganda is characterised as ineffective:

> This is basically nonsense, spiritual people should go there. I'll stand up and say: 'Comrade Colonel, answer me from the point of view of Islam, why is extremism bad, how do you understand "extremism"? Give me reliable Hadiths for something'. He will stand up and say (imitating): 'Do you know what the situation is?' You can't do that. Spiritual people who know should go there, they can support their knowledge, their arguments from the point of view of Islam. (Idris)

According to the study participants, individual cases of successful state activity only confirm the common rule – the state prefers to refrain from attempts to regulate the religious sphere and prefers to respond only to manifestations of violence:

It was in Kabardino-Balkaria, I guess, or in Karachay-Cherkessia, I don't remember exactly which republic. [The official's name] said in one of the videos that they solved the problem with radicalisation in five seconds. Just the head of Internal Ministry went to the main Salafi Imam of their Republic, to the one who has the most authority, the Imam of the mosque, and said: 'I don't care what kind of beards you have, even to the knee, or anything, and it doesn't matter what you're talking about. But if any of you take up arms', he says, 'we will simply destroy you. That's it, you have freedom of religion, you will get it. Here you freely profess it; we do not touch you, we do nothing. But just do not take up arms.' (Said)

Due to their close affiliation with the state, the efforts of the so-called 'court imams', i.e. representatives of the official clergy, are also given a low rating. At the same time, the informants emphasise that spiritual leaders and communities that are not affiliated with the corrupt and incompetent elites in the North Caucasus and are not their 'servants' are able to successfully 'reach' radicalised youth:

INT: And if you met them, if you happened to be with a person who, for instant, professes such views?

Jafar: I would have explained it to him. But if he didn't understand, I would have done everything I could to make him understand. How would I do it, I would call people, the Imam, the first, the second, the third. To the Sheikh, let's say, he has more authority than the Imam. There is no problem finding a phone number and I would ask to meet or talk on the phone. To make a person understand that he is wrong.

Members of Saudi Arabia-oriented Salafi *jamaats* believe that the best way to counter the spread of radical ideas is to promote 'pure' Islam, which is the official Islamic discourse of Saudi theologians. It is characterised by a distancing from political involvement and a disapproval of any opposition to the ruling authorities:

INT: And did you take part in any of the actions that you did?

Salekh: Here?

INT: Yes, here.

Salekh: No. We're not allowed to do that: rallies, movements, demonstrations of all kinds, revolutions and things like that.

This is consistent with observations previously made by Atran (2015), who emphasises that doctrinal closeness allows conservative fundamentalists (Salafists) to converse with takfirists in 'their' language and thus deter them from violence:

He [Mamuka] was previously involved, but today he is actively working in the field of radicalism, contacting, even if virtually, people who have left for a radical organisation. He sees saving Muslims from the organisation as kind of his life mission (Mamuka, recorded in Field diary).

Social connections based on strong emotions, trust, and/or respect can also be a factor in deradicalisation. There is a general consensus that a person's radicalisation can be reversed by 'intercepting' them at the 'search' stage. If a radical young person is already included in the system of social ties (i.e. has joined a group), as a rule, he is no longer considered a victim of radicalisation, but as a threat from which you need to distance yourself. At the same time, it is recognised that the main burden of communication with radicals is borne by friends (real or virtual) or 'brothers'.

In deradicalisation narratives, the 'Elders' never appear as interlocutors, they act solely as a coercive force that can physically prevent an undesirable action (for example, leaving for IS), so their help is only sought when other means are exhausted.

At the same time, in comparison to self-radicalisation, the possibility of self-deradicalisation is not denied. There is a widespread view of radicalisation as a 'disease' of adolescence and youth, which takes place in the process of growing up. Important events in the life cycle (marriage, birth of a child, death or illness of a relative) can contribute to a change of mind:

> Now I'll tell you how the Almighty stopped me. I was about 16-17, I guess I was going to go there the other day, I was sitting with my mother, my mother had high blood pressure; I was sitting next to mum, mum had a near-death experience, I realised – I can never leave my mother. (Mamuka)

Disillusionment with the goals and methods of the radical movement, caused by the blatant discrepancy between reality and the ideal that is purely based on propaganda, can also become the basis for self-deradicalisation:

> Well, they say that people here, 'Muslims, are being oppressed, and we have come to free them from all this. We are good people; we protect people' and so on. I ended up being influenced by it, and then I met a person who was there, who took part in it all [in IS]. Well, he participated but he didn't kill people, he was just in this system, he said what was really happening there. What's really going on there? They say that they are establishing an Islamic state, in the end, they legalised prostitution there [...]. They invented a new kind of Jihad – sex Jihad. I will say my word – this is a frat mat for the pseudo-mujahids. And when it was Syria, and Russia brought in troops, they ran away, leaving their wives and children there. Well, that is, they just acted as cowards. (Mamuka)

Thus, the family and the inner circle are considered by representatives of the urban second generation as the main institution for deradicalisation. They also attribute the rejection of radical views and/or actions to a change in lifestyle during adulthood, or to the observed discrepancy between reality and jihadist propaganda.

5. Conclusions

Initially, we were uncertain whether the urban second generation of young people from the North Caucasus in major Russian cities constituted a 'milieu' by the criteria set for the project. At first glance, the selection seemed somewhat mechanistically derived on the basis of social demographics (age and generation), while the social connections between the study participants were not self-evident. However, the findings of the research indicate that the urban second generation youth from the North Caucasus constitute a milieu as envisaged in the DARE project in as much as they shared 'the people, the physical and social conditions, the significant events and networks of communications in which someone acts or lives and which shape that person's subjectivity (identity), choices and trajectory through life'[8]. Being from the same region, the young men are united by a similar context of growing up and living conditions. They were raised in a region where religious oppression and the desire to fight for independence in the name of religion are part of their historical memory. At the same time, unlike their parents, they are the first

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[8] See definition of 'milieu' in Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary:
https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/milieu

generation of 'native Muslims' born after the re-Islamisation of the Caucasus in the post-Soviet era. They are united by common traditions of a 'strict' upbringing and the promotion of strict gender norms relating to masculinity, which suggest that boys and men must be active, aggressive, tough, daring, and dominant (Ging, 2017). Through their move to major cities, they share an experience of weakening family and neighbourhood social ties and the need to integrate into a new social environment. Thus, even in the absence of direct unifying relationships, the given group forms a milieu based on shared social and physical conditions that affect their subjectivity.

The data from our case show the importance of accumulation in the processes of radicalisation. However, the data do not fit into a binary model of cumulativeness based on the confrontation of Islamist and anti-Islamist groups and movements (Eatwell, 2006), but confirm the multi-layered nature of this process and the diversity of its actors (Busher and Macklin, 2015: 897). We can note two main aspects of the cumulative effect. Firstly, in their narratives, respondents broadcast the idea that the radicalisation of religious youth becomes a kind of response to strict control and harassment by official power structures. The main actors 'provoking' a response are the power structures and the media. The respondents claim that the extensive powers initially obtained by the security forces to fight the jihadist underground are beginning to be used to control Muslim youth as a whole, which leads to abuse and unjustified harassment in the name of the 'war against terrorism'. This situation is supported by the media, which broadcast the image of Islamic radicalism and extremism as the only form of existence of radical movements. This situation creates a sense of injustice and becomes a justification for the possibility, and sometimes the inevitability, of rebellion. In the context of 'domestic' radicalisation (i.e. in the republics of the North Caucasus), another factor driving cumulative radicalisation is a cultural mechanism that forces men to make violent restitution for damage done to their family or their honour.

The second important source of radicalisation, named by the respondents, has a global character and concerns the oppression of Muslims worldwide. The perceived victimisation of fellow Muslims around the globe is key to this representation (Whine, 2009; McCauley and Moskalenko, 2008). Events taking place thousands of kilometres away from the Caucasus and Russia are perceived as a personal trauma and become part of the construction of a group identity and sense of solidarity, which extends to the Ummah of the entire world. Membership in this 'solidarity' is supported not by a unity in beliefs, but by a common sense of total threat, which is fuelled by, among other things, individual experiences of discrimination based on religion.

Our case does not provide a straightforward explanation of objective or subjective inequalities in the processes of radicalisation. On the one hand, there are objective structural limitations that young people experience. Both in the North Caucasus and beyond, young people have limited access to resources – jobs, positions of power, careers, etc. In the region, this happens due to the established system of limiting meritocratic mobility by the principles of clannishness and nepotism in the distribution of resources. However, the data show that, paradoxically, the most widespread radicalism exists not in the poorer, but in the richer areas of the region. This suggests that life careers in the Caucasus are not only related to income and economic well-being. Social capital in the form of family and friendly relations is perhaps more significant. Economic capital provides a potential opportunity that cannot be fulfilled without the existence of social capital. Therefore, considering purely economic factors may be incorrect. Within the region, we should talk instead about perceived inequality and perceptions of limited life chances. A situation where even the availability of economic resources does not guarantee life chances creates a sense of injustice amongst young people.

Outside the region, young people also experience economic inequality, which is caused by ethnic discrimination, and related restrictions in relation to access to jobs, higher status positions, and rented accommodation (Prichiny radikalizatsii, 2016). In this context, social connections become an even more

important resource, allowing people to get a job or apartment only through friends. This can generate the feeling of 'no future', as well as a clear polarisation in the minds of young people between 'others' (sources of injustice) and 'ours' (the only ones who can help). As a result, we can say that despite the existence of real structural limitations, they are significant as potential grounds for generating feelings of frustration and perceived injustice and they become a potential foundation for radicalisation (Doosje et al., 2016; Moghaddam, 2005; Webber and Kruglanski, 2018).

One possible trajectory of Islamic radicalisation is the Islamisation of youth cultural milieus with a high tolerance for violence and aggression. The study highlighted two such milieus - martial arts fighters and fans and (near) criminal youth. However, it is only in the latter case that we can speak of 'violence nihilists' (Roy, 2016). Islamised groups of fighters and martial arts fans fit into the dominant moral and gender order in the North Caucasus and see their activities as aimed at strengthening rather than destroying society.

When considering the networks and spaces of radicalisation, it is worth noting that in our case, the role of religion turned out to be multifaceted. Radical messages are distributed among peers, from the immediate environment, among colleagues, and, more specifically, in wrestling clubs. The principle is that the most significant networks and channels are those that are built on emotionally trusted connections. In family networks, sisters and cousins rather than parents are the conductors of radical ideas. We would like to emphasise that our case confirmed the role of sports clubs as possible channels for spreading religious ideas, including radical ideas (Testa and Amara, 2015). Relationships within such communities acquire the character of quasi-kinship ties, built on the ideas of closeness, fraternity and unconditional mutual assistance, which makes belonging to sports clubs meaningful and emotionally coloured.

Our respondents noted the significant role of the Internet in spreading religious messages, not in the form of direct recruitment (which was mentioned very rarely and exclusively as a supposed experience of others), but in the form of an information field, providing an opportunity to independently search for information. Moreover, according to respondents, the Internet is becoming more important than direct religious contacts with representatives of the Islamic clergy. Young people are searching for new ideas and explanations in a situation of uncertainty. They also clearly feel disillusioned with the 'traditional' forms of Islam, as well as distrustful towards official religious structures. Perhaps this is because the institutionalised forms of religion rather perform a legitimising function, justifying the 'normality' of the current situation and the logic of accepting God's plan. They do not contain the idea of the possibility of change that young people seek in other, more radical forms of Islam. Thus, our case confirms the idea that the Internet (and especially social media) nowadays provides the means by which representatives of the urban second generation may first self-radicalise through some imaginary or sympathetic connection with an organised terrorist network (Picart, 2015).

Our research suggests the difficulty, indeed fundamental impossibility, of identifying a single model of radicalisation. Neither linear models (Moghaddam, 2005) nor multi-factor models of radicalisation (Doosje et al., 2013) worked in our case. Moreover, it is also hard to identify and classify patterns of trajectories of radicalisation in terms of individual pathways shaped by structural, group and individual factors that may lead individuals towards extremist attitudes or behaviours but also to non-radicalisation and de-radicalisation. Analytically and retrospectively tracing such paths through individual biographies proved beyond the scope of this study. At the same time, individual trajectories are unique and, as such, difficult to systematise. For example, the same channels and factors are mentioned as both contributing to radicalisation and preventing it. On the one hand, the inner circle is referred to as a channel of radicalisation, since it is through horizontal networks that radical calls spread. On the other hand, it is those within the inner circle that can be seen to act as a deterrent to radicalisation or contribute to de-radicalisation.

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7. Appendices

Appendix 7.1: Socio-demographic data of respondents

Name (pseudonym)	Age	Country of Birth	Education	Employment	Ethnicity	Family status	Gender	Religion	Religiosity	Residential Status	No. in Household
Abdul	30	Russia	Completed university	In full-time employment	Avar	Married or living with partner	Male	Islam	Believer and practising	Lives independently with own partner and or children	3
Adam	28	Russia	Completed general academic secondary education	In full-time employment	Unassigned	Married or living with partner	Male	Islam	Believer and practising	Lives independently with own partner and or children	4
Ivan	21	Kyrgyzstan	Currently at university	Unemployed	Russian	Married or living with partner	Male	Islam	Believer and practising	Lives at home with both parents	4
Machmud	27	Russia	Completed university	In full-time employment	Avar	Single	Male	Islam	Believer and practising	Lives independently alone	1
Salekh	29	Russia	Completed general academic secondary education	In full-time employment	Avar	Single	Male	Islam	Believer and practising	Lives at home with other relatives e.g. grandparents	3

Ali	24	Russia	Completed general academic secondary education	In full-time employment	Kumyk	Single	Male	Islam	Believer but not practising	Lives at home with both parents	5
Anvar	26	Russia	Completed general academic secondary education	In full-time employment	Lezgin	Single	Male	Islam	Believer and practising	Lives at home with both parents	4
Hamzat	25	Russia	Completed university	In full-time employment	Lezgin	Single	Male	Islam	Believer and practising	Lives at home with both parents	5
Idris	24	Russia	Completed university	In full-time employment	Tabasaran	Single	Male	Islam	Believer and practising	Lives at home with other relatives e.g. grandparents	2
Issa	26	Russia	Completed university	In full-time employment	Avar	Single	Male	Islam	Believer and practising	Lives at home with both parents	4
Jafar	30	Russia	Completed university	In full-time employment	Ingush	Single	Male	Islam	Believer and practising	Lives independently alone	1
Khabib	27	Russia	Completed postgraduate education	In full-time employment	Avar	Married or living with partner	Male	Islam	Believer but not practising	Lives independently with own partner and or children	4

Magomet_Ali	24	Russia	Currently at university	In part-time employment	Kumyk	Single	Male	Islam	Believer and practising	Lives independently with friends	5
Mamuka	23	Azerbaijan	Completed vocational secondary education	In full-time employment	Azerbaijani	Single	Male	Islam	Believer and practising	Lives at home with both parents	5
Musa	23	Russia	Completed university	In full-time employment	Tabasaran	Single	Male	Islam	Believer and practising	Lives at home with both parents	4
Muslim	27	Russia	Studying for postgraduate education	In full-time employment	Dargin		Male	Islam	Believer and practising	Lives independently alone	1
Omar	25	Russia	Completed university	In full-time employment	Lak		Male	Islam	Believer but not practising	Lives independently with own partner and or children	2
Ramzan	28	Russia	Completed university	In full-time employment	Chechen		Male	Islam	Believer and practising	Lives independently with own partner and or children	2
Rasul	24	Russia	Currently at university	In full-time education	Azerbaijani		Male	Islam	Believer and practising	Lives independently with friends	4

| Said | 26 | Russia | Completed university | In full-time employment | Dargin | | Male | Islam | Believer and practising | Lives independently with own partner and or children | 3 |