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Radical Islam in Russia. Myths and reality

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Information basis

1. Research of North Caucasus republics – 7 years,
Research of radical Islam – 4 years.
2. Main topics:
 - societal transformation in the North Caucasus from 1990-s (erosion of traditions, urbanization, globalization)
 - radical Islam in the context of this societal transformation

Information basis (continuation)

3. Main regions: Dagestan, Chechnya, Kabardino-Balkar Republic, Karachay-Cherkessia Republic

- urban areas: mainly Makhachkala
- rural areas: more than 20 rural settlements

4. Interviews with supporters of Islamic fundamentalism

- about 50 in urban areas
- about 60 in rural areas

Main myths

- 1) Myth about causes of radical Islam
- 2) Myth about relationship between radical Islam and Islamic terrorism

Myth about causes of radical Islam

- 1) influence of ideology of Russian enemies from abroad with the purpose to destabilize Russia
- 2) economic depression, unemployment, poverty of people in the North Caucasus

Reality



Societal transformation:

- anomie
- generation conflict
- clan and corruption roots of vertical mobility
- conflict and violent environment

Results:

- lack of order
- lack of justice
- need to find new explanations and new guidance in the world
- no immunity to violence

Dagestan in 1990-s:

- collapse of communist system and ideology
- erosion of traditions in rural areas
- Islamic globalization
- inflow of people from the mountains to the cities
- outflow of Russians and urban educated local people from Dagestan
- Chechen wars

Islamic fundamentalism as an ideology:

- strict rules and moral codes
- legitimization of generation conflict
- legitimization of protest
- global Islamic community

Myth about relationship between radical Islam and Islamic terrorism

All supporters of radical Islam are separatists and potential terrorists.

Islamic fundamentalist = islamist = jihadist = separatist.

Reality:

Variety of views:

- nonpolitical Islam
- moderate, legal political Islam
- jihadism

What determines the choice?

- Accident
- Socialization conditions
- Channels of vertical mobility
- Open or closed communities
- Balance of costs and gains



Thank you for your
attention!