
MODERN RUSSIA: IDEOLOGY, POLITICS, CULTURE AND RELIGION

OLEG CHEREVKOV. ISLAMIC MODERNISM IN RUSSIA:
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*Abstract. In the 19th century, as a result of the policy of
colonialism and the political and economic expansion of European
empires, a number of Moslem educators and ideologists realized the need
to reform Islam in the face of the objective superiority of Europe over the
East. These processes have affected many Moslem countries and regions
of the world, including Russia. In the 19-20 centuries a group of
progressive-minded Moslems, the Jadids, conducted large-scale
educational work aimed at improving the level of education of the*

Moslem population and adapting Islam to modern socio-economic and political conditions.

At the present stage of its development, the world community, including the Russian part of it, is faced with the problem of increasing the level of extremist and terrorist threats. Despite the fact that the largest states of the world use enormous power and material resources to resist this threat, terrorist activity not only continues to exist, but also adapts to constantly changing conditions.

Extremist and terrorist activities today are mainly associated with the activity of followers of so-called "Islamic radicalism", "Islamism", "Wahhabism", "Salafism", etc. First of all, it is important to emphasize that Islamism is not a religion, but a religious and political platform that not only takes individual elements of the Moslem religion, but also interprets them in the way most favorable for the radicals. The vast majority of the most well-known terrorist groups that carry out their destructive activities in the Middle East, Central and South-East Asia, North Africa, Western Europe and Russia follow in the wake of the religious and political ideology of Islamism. All this, in turn, negatively affects the image of Islam and the perception of followers of this religion in the mass consciousness, the growth of xenophobia and the isolation of followers of Islam from the rest of society, the creation of closed social institutions and other negative consequences.

It should be noted that the existing identification of Islam and Islamism, Moslems and extremists is not only fundamentally wrong, but also dangerous from the point of view of promoting state and public security, the development of civil society and the formation of a unified all-Russian civil identity. However, it should be said that Islam is not inherently monolithic: there are several trends in it, the most famous of which are Sunnism and Shiism; each of these trends has its own theological and legal schools (mazhabs); In addition, in different regions of Russia and

the world, Islam has its own characteristics associated with the existing ethno-cultural complex on their territory. In addition to this division, there is also a typology of Islamic trends according to how its ideologists see the image of Islam, its place in society and the life of each individual follower. Within the framework of this typology, there are three types of trends in Islam: fundamentalism, traditionalism and modernism. The followers of the first type appeal to the “primordial” Islamic values of the “golden age” of Islam – the period of the life of the Prophet Muhammad and the first righteous caliphs; they want to “purify” Islam from the centuries-old layers introduced into it by other religions and cultures [1]. The second path is a path characterized by a certain synthesis, on the one hand, of Islamic spiritual practices and ethics, on the other hand, of elements of a particular ethnic cultural complex. It is the second type of Islam, which is called “traditional Islam” in the mass media, as well as in a number of academic works, that has the largest number of followers in the Russian Federation. “Traditional Islam” in Russia has a number of distinctive characteristics, first of all – a rich experience of free development in the conditions of multi-ethnic Russian society and the neighborhood with such religions as Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Buddhism, etc., a mandatory element of which was and remains mutual respect and the desire for peaceful coexistence.

However, in this article, we would like to pay more attention to the third type: modernism in Islam. Today, there is not a very large number of works on this direction, and little attention is paid to it in the mass media, and in the documentation regulating the main directions of the state religious policy in our country.

Islamic modernism as a phenomenon of development not only of Islam itself, but also of Eastern societies, became, in a way, a response to the expansion of European economic and cultural achievements, way of thinking and action. They began to penetrate into the countries and regions of traditional Moslem

residence along with the wave of colonization and political and economic expansion of the great empires – British, French, Russian, etc. To a certain extent, this reaction was due to the desire of Moslem ideologists to try to create a basis for the adaptation of the Moslem religion and society in relation to changing socio-economic and political relations, technological progress. From their point of view, the models of development of the state and society, social and economic relations that came from the West were perceived as certainly more progressive and developed than those that existed in the Moslem environment of a particular region.

Although the first attempts to comprehend and introduce Western intellectual achievements into the soil of Islam were made, or at least assumed, in the 17th century, the period of the most intense activity of the followers of Islamic modernism dates back to the 19th century. It was during this period, on the one hand, that the main part of the Moslem world was, to some extent, under the rule of European powers, and on the other there occurred events that were gradually changing the system of social relations, for example, the Great French Revolution and the War of Independence of the United States of America. Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion and capture of Egypt (at that time nominally part of the Ottoman Empire) led a significant part of the Moslem elite to understand the military-technical and socio-economic superiority of Europeans and to realize the need for large-scale reforms, including, and above all, in the field of Islam. The desire to free “dar al-Islam” from the control of the infidels, to stop the decline of Islamic culture, prompted the Islamic ideologists to act [2].

However, they understood that it was impossible to reform Islam, ignoring centuries-old customs and features of this religious complex, simply introducing Western standards and practices. Therefore, a characteristic feature of Moslem modernism was the selective borrowing of European economic, scientific, technical, cultural and other achievements, so that the

Moslem world, at least, reached an equal position with the Western world. The first sprouts of the idea of the need to reform Islam appeared in Arabic-speaking countries, where, on the one hand, the expansion of the Western powers was more aggressive, on the other hand, the inability of the existing institutions, including state institutions, to protect the population from this expansion was obvious. Moreover, there is a deepening of contradictions between the Turkic elite of the Ottoman Empire, which owned most of the lands inhabited by Arabs, and the leaders of the local intellectual stratum, who sought to separate themselves from their rulers and independently determine the vectors of socio-economic and spiritual development.

Speaking about the development of Islamic modernism in general, it is impossible to pass by the figure of the theologian, the ideologist of the reform of the Islamic religion, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-1897). Even then, his origin caused questions and gossip among opponents of the views that he preached: according to the *nisba* (the part of the name that indicates a certain regional, ethnic or other affiliation), he was of Afghan origin. There was some information about his Iranian origin and belonging to Shiism, which he always denied. Jamal al-Din al-Afghani traveled a lot, mainly in Moslem-populated areas: India, Persia, the Ottoman Empire. He also visited a number of European countries, in particular, the United Kingdom, France and Russia. However, he developed the main provisions of his concept of the development and improvement of Islam in Egypt and became a kind of founder of the ideology that in the twentieth century will be called "Islamic socialism". At the same time, the idea of uniting all the Moslems of the world within the framework of a confederate union for the sake of countering the predatory interests of the European colonialists occupied an essential place in his works. In this future confederate union, public life should be based on the principles of social justice, equality and freedom of expression, but with the obligatory reliance on Islam as the guiding moral and ethical complex. The

activities of Jamal al-Din al-Afgani were fiercely criticized by a number of theologians, primarily Sunni, for example, Mustafa Sabri [3].

Al-Afgani's ideas have influenced a wide range of Islamic public and religious figures. First of all, we are talking about Muhammad Abduh, an Egyptian theologian, a liberal Moslem reformer who developed the ideas of al-Afgani. His main work is considered to be "Risala at-Tawhid" ("Message to monotheism"). In this work, as well as in his statements, one can trace a very specific synthesis of European and Islamic cultural elements: for example, Muhammad Abduh advocated the introduction of the principles of parliamentarism and constitutionalism for the modernization of the Moslem community in Egypt and the world. He believed that these principles are already, in a certain sense, present in Islam, expressed through the institutions of the Majlis (legislative body), shura (advisory body), as well as through the dastur (charter, as a rule, regulating state and political administration). It is noteworthy that Muhammad Abduh very clearly identified the areas that, in his opinion, it was possible and necessary to reform, and those areas that could not be touched on in any case. Thus, the fundamentalist character in his revolutionary work contains the statement about the need to preserve the "usul" ("roots") - the basis of the Islamic religion, which contained the Koran and the Moslem dogma derived from the holy text. At the same time, it was extremely important to reform the models and system of social, economic, political and other types of interaction between people - "foru" ("branches"), since it seemed necessary to maintain a certain tone of the Islamic community in the face of the industrial and economic revolution, the development of transnational transport routes and the expansion of Western powers in Moslem regions [4]. Despite the resistance that Abduh met in the course of his activities, he managed not only to significantly spread his own views, but also to occupy an important post, taking under his leadership one of the oldest Moslem universities in the world - Cairo Al-Azhar,

founded during the Fatimid dynasty. Abduh had a decisive influence on the reform of the university structure, the modernization of the curriculum, and in fact shaped the modern image of the university. As a practicing theologian and mufti, Muhammad Abduh issued a number of fatwas, in the wording and main messages of which one can trace the process of adaptation of the Egyptian Ummah to changing social and cultural conditions: for example, fatwas were dedicated to the abolition of certain restrictions on food, allowing believers to wear European dress and hairstyles, to paint and sculpture, and to apply interest rates when borrowing money.

The uncertainty, even ambiguity of the views expressed by Muhammad Abduh, led not only to opposition to him during his lifetime, but is also reflected today: the desire, on the one hand, to build a Sharia state based on the oldest Islamic principles, on the other – to introduce European rules and norms into Islam, led to the fact that his works become sources of views not only for modern supporters of the modernist trend, but also for adherents of radical fundamentalism and the “purification” of Islam.

Among other followers of Islamic modernism, I would like to single out such people as Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid – a public figure, an opponent of colonialism, the first rector of Cairo University and one of the founders of the “People's Party”; Abd al-Rahman ibn Ahmad al-Kawakibi – a Syrian theologian and reformer, an opponent of the Ottoman regime, one of the founders of the ideology of pan – Arabism; Mustafa Kamil was one of the main ideologists of the national liberation movement in Egypt against the British occupation, an orator and journalist, etc.

The Russian Empire was seen in a different way. On the one hand, numerous Moslem peoples traditionally lived in fairly large territories and had a certain degree of autonomy, including implementation of justice, organization and implementation of trade and economic activities, had their own educational institutions and religious buildings, often subordinated to the central government quite formally. On the other hand, the

19th century was not only a century of expansion and Western European empires' conquests in Africa and Asia: Russia also conducted a consistent, rather aggressive foreign policy, expanding its borders to the south, in the Caucasus and Central Asia, i.e. territories inhabited by a significant number of Moslems. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that although the policy of the Russian leadership may not have been characterized by such extensive exploitation of the local population, it was based on the idea that the peoples who inhabited these lands were still more "barbaric" than "civilized". Russia, Russian soldiers and colonists seemed to be bringing enlightenment and culture to these lands, a kind of "burden of a Russian man". The response to this was resistance, primarily from the local Moslem intellectual elites.

In the former Russian Empire, Islamic modernism was associated primarily with the ideas and activities of the Crimean Tatar educator and public figure Ismail Gasprinsky (Gasparaly) (1851-1914). He became the founder of a specific trend in Islamic modernism, characteristic only for Russia and its neighboring territories - Jadidism. This term comes from the Arabic "Jadid" (new), although the people who attributed themselves to this trend preferred to call themselves progressives or intellectuals.

Jadidism contained provisions on the need to improve Islam on the basis of not only purely Moslem values, but also universal (European in origin) philosophical ideas about humanism. Its distinctive features in comparison with the parallel Middle Eastern modernist concepts were the following: 1) the bulk of the followers and ideologists of Jadidism in Russia were originally Turks (Volga, Crimean and Caucasian Tatars, Kumyks, etc.), while in the Middle East, modernism was joined mainly by Arabs, who resisted both European and Ottoman dictates and therefore formed not just a Moslem, but an Arab-Moslem ideological complex; 2) the followers of Jadidism lived and defended their rights within the framework of a predominantly Christian, Orthodox state, whose colonial ambitions were in a

certain way linked to the spread of the light of civilization and Christianity in the lands of the Caucasus and Central Asia; 3) the followers of Jadidism were characterized by a large cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity; 4) a more tolerant attitude of the Jadids to mystical trends in Islam, the affiliation of some followers of Jadidism to the Sufi orders, etc. [5].

Among the main areas of activity of the Jadids, which have received the most extensive coverage and distribution, one can distinguish, first, Islamic education. The followers of Jadidism not only proposed to implement a new system of organizing the educational process in the predominantly Moslem regions of the Russian Empire, opened new schools (primarily in rural areas), but also advocated that Moslems should not just memorize the lines of sacred texts, but analyze them, interpret them, and translate them into their native languages. The Jadids sought to introduce secular standards of education in schools that operated at places of worship, including, first of all, in villages. Secondly, the followers of this trend of Islamic modernism advocated the distribution of books, the development of book printing, and greater openness of the Moslem community of Russia to ideas developed in other, including Moslem, regions of the world. The Jadids paid great attention to business activities, opened new bookstores, which presented the works of both followers of Islamic traditionalism and modernist trends from Egypt and Syria. The works of the ideologists of Jadidism themselves were also presented in them.

The main role in spreading the ideas of Ismail Gasprinsky was played by the newspaper "Terjiman-Perevodchik", which was published in Bakhchisaray until 1918 and was distributed in the Crimea, the Volga region, Central Asia, as well as many foreign countries: France, the United States, the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, Bulgaria, Switzerland, etc. This newspaper became the central mouthpiece of the Jadids in Russia and abroad, the first Turkic-language newspaper in the Russian Empire, and the first major victory of the Jadids. Thanks to the translation activities of

the Jadids, the works of European philosophers became available to a wide range of Moslems of the Russian Empire. A notable aspect of the activity of the Jadids was the spread of a fashionable trend in the world at that time -feminism, with Moslem specifics: so, in 1891, a new appendix to the "Terjiman" appeared under the name "Kadyn" (in Russian - "Woman"). Among other things, the Jadids advocated the unification of all Turkic peoples in a confederate format (which echoed the ideas of al-Afghani, but for Moslems in general) on the basis of Islamic reformed values and the desire for progress and change. Such a confederation was to cover large Eurasian expanses, from the Crimea to Dzungaria, from Eastern Thrace to the territories of Southern Siberia [6].

The views of the Jadids were relatively popular in the Caucasus, in particular, in the territory of modern Azerbaijan, where the main follower of Ismail Gasprinsky was Ali-bey Huseynzade (1864-1940), a doctor and philosopher, as well as in the lands of Daghestan, inhabited mainly by Kumyks, where Nuhai Batymurzayev (1865-1919), a journalist, writer and educator, the founder of Kumyk written prose, acted as a conductor of the ideas of Jadidism [7].

A powerful impetus for the activity of the Jadids in Russia was given by the defeat of Russia in the war with Japan in 1904-1905. It was one of the first victories of a non-European power over one of the largest European empires of the time, and gave confidence to the leaders of many national liberation and reform movements in Asia. The events of the First Russian Revolution allowed the Jadids to become actively involved in Russian politics. The Jadids tried to promote their views by participating in the activities of the Moslem faction of the State Duma of Russia. Then, with the establishment of the Russian Republic and the further disintegration of the unified state, the Jadids hurried to take an active part in the work of the bodies of the newly formed states on the ruins of the former empire: Azerbaijan, Turkestan, Bukhara, Bashkiria, Idel-Ural, etc.

The events that unfolded after the end of the First World War were not entirely favorable for the development of Islamic modernism as a whole. In the Middle East, the reformers were faced with an even stronger expansion of Great Britain and France in the territory of the former Ottoman Empire, which led to even greater pressure from the colonial powers, who sought to form a loyal support from local political and religious figures, on the other hand, to the rejection of European cultural and civilizational attitudes by the local population. The often brutal and manipulative policies of the colonial authorities led to a growing number of adherents of fundamentalism in its aggressive forms, rather than followers of modernism, as well as supporters of violent resistance to Europeans and the national liberation movement for the rights and freedoms of the Arab and Moslem populations.

In Russia, the situation was different. The civil war created a certain power vacuum, for which various political groups began to fight. The Jadids, as already noted, began to take part in the construction of new state entities. However, gradually the Bolsheviks, who consistently expanded the geography of the territories under their control, began to take power into their own hands. Despite their often aggressive anti-clerical rhetoric, the Bolsheviks viewed the Moslem population as part of the previously oppressed strata of the population that had suffered from the tyranny of tsarism. In turn, the Jadids managed to establish control over some territories, particularly in Azerbaijan and Central Asia, and then allied themselves with local and visiting communists against anti-Bolshevik forces, most of which were associated with the old tsarist regime.

The policy of the Bolsheviks at that time was characterized by sympathies with the political and social trends of the marginal peoples of Russia, and in some aspects the views of the Communists and the Jadids were similar. The Jadids, like Bolsheviks, directed their efforts to overcome the consequences of tsarism, to introduce progressive views in the Moslem

environment, including on the gender roles of men and women in the emerging communist society. The educational and cultural activities of the Jadids in the field of theater development in Moslem regions are noteworthy. A prominent place in this process was occupied by the followers of Jadidism from Azerbaijan: Said Reza Alizadeh, Mirza Habib Akhundzadeh, etc. Russian textbooks on exact sciences were translated into local languages, modern versions of the Tajik and Uzbek alphabets were created, primers and pamphlets were produced that promoted not only education and openness to progressive ideas and views, but also adherence to the communist ideology as an instrument for the liberation of Moslem peoples and their development. In the academic literature, there appeared articles about the development of Jadidism, its role in countering Russian tsarist expansionism and the attempt to impose an anti-people type of socio-economic relations. The activity of the Jadids at this stage was perceived as the activity of "interpreters" between the Bolsheviks and the local population of the Moslem regions of the country.

It should be noted that the Bolsheviks had a more positive attitude towards Moslems and to the formation of their own religious and educational organizations. In 1922, one of the leaders of Jadidism, Rizaitdin Fakhretdinov (1859-1936), took the post of Supreme Mufti. The Moslem clergy, inspired by the revolution and supported by local party bodies, re-formed their own bodies of religious authorities - spiritual administrations, the largest of which was the Central Spiritual Administration of Moslems (CDAM) (1920). In terms of the number of believers, it was the largest of its kind, and its jurisdiction extended to the entire territory of the RSFSR, with the exception of the Crimea and the North Caucasus. The CDM tried to expand this sphere to Central Asia, taking advantage of the fact that there were no large and centralized Moslem administrations in this territory. However, attempts to create an analogue of the CDM in Central

Asia failed, and until the mid-30s, scattered organizations in the largest Moslem centers of the region continued to exist.

Nevertheless, the alliance of communists and Jadids, who received posts in Moslem and national structures, was a short-term phenomenon. The anti-clerical and anti-religious nature of the Bolsheviks' activities led to the closure of many mosques and religious educational institutions. There were also some contradictions in the Moslem community of the USSR at that time. For example, the opposition of the Moslem clergy of Bashkiria to the CDAM, the resistance of local activists and religious figures to the policy of the CDAM in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan is noteworthy. The Soviet government not only did not prevent, but also supported this split, which caused an even greater decline in the authority of the CDAM. The persecution of Moslem religious and political figures, which had been intermittent until the late 1920s and early 1930s, intensified. The failure of the attempt to spread revolutionary ideas to the East, to the Moslem-populated countries, led to an even greater reduction in support for the spiritual administrations, their further fragmentation, and then to large-scale repressions against the finally politicized supporters of Jadidism. The largest trials, including those involving the Jadids, were the "CDAM Case" and the "Chain of the Koran" case of the late 30s [8].

Thus, the actions of the Soviet government to destroy the influence of the spiritual administrations of Moslems on the community of the USSR led to actual eradication of Jadidism as an idea. The adaptation of Moslem society to modern conditions continued through cultural and ideological channels completely different from religious ones. The collapse of the USSR, the construction of new states in the Caucasus and Central Asia, and the aggravation of inter-religious and inter-ethnic contradictions caused a wider interest on the part of Moslems in the ideas of fundamentalism, the "purification" of religion from centuries-old cultural and ideological layers. At the same time, Islamic modernism in general and Jadidism in particular have been

almost forgotten in our country: little is known, spoken and written about it, it is perceived only as a kind of “ghost of the past”, and historiographical issues related to its appearance, development and evaluation of its past achievements are analyzed.

The main focus of the Russian authorities that manage religious and national policy in Russia in the field of countering Islamism and other destructive religious and political trends of an Islamic nature is related to the support of “traditional” Islam with local ethno-cultural specifics. It seems very doubtful that the ideas of Islamic modernism in our country will gain at least some of their former influence in the short and even medium term, and will be able to become any reliable basis for countering the radicals.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that despite the often controversial and even interpreted as anti-Russian nature of the activities of Russian Islamic modernists (especially with regard to the idea of pan-Turkism and the creation of the “Great Turan”), these people were among the most progressive adherents of the Islamic religion, not only in our country, but also in the world, and had a significant impact on the further history of entire peoples, on the formation of their modern culture and moral and ethical complex, the current system of Islamic education in Russia and many other aspects of the activities of the Moslem Ummah of our country.

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