Course Overview

This eight week directed research course is designed to introduce the student to Russia’s past and present encounters with radical Islamist movements. Much of this interaction has complex social, economic, religious and political roots. The course is broken into eight weekly sections that feature: (1) a historical, ideological and organizational survey of the global jihadist movement; (2) an overview of Russia’s violent clashes with Islamist movements and states during the Czarist period; (3) an examination of Russian state policy toward Muslims and the jihadist movement during the communist period; (4) an analysis of contemporary Russian policy toward radical Islam and extremist movements; (5) an assessment of the jihadist insurgency in the North Caucasus including two Russian directed wars in Chechnya; (6) a survey of violent Islamic extremism in Tatarstan; (7) an examination of the progressive radicalization and internationalization of the Russian jihadist movement underscored by the participation of thousands of its fighters in the Syrian conflict; and (8) an assessment of Russian domestic and global counter-terrorist policy during the Putin era.

Course Objectives

- Examine the historical roots of jihadist insurgency in the former Soviet Union
- Provide an overview of Russia’s past and present encounters with radical Islamist movements
- Assess the efficacy of Moscow’s current domestic and global counterterrorist policies

Course Texts

The course has two main texts. These are:


Student Responsibilities

The student will write one 10 page midterm paper due at the end of the fifth week on the historical cultural and religious roots of Russia’s conflicts with radical Islamist movements. At the end of the course the student will write one 25 page paper looking at jihadist insurgency in the Post-Communist Russia and the movement’s transformation from a nationalistic insurgency into an internationalist jihadist network that challenges regional and global security. This final project is due the end of the eight week.
Weekly Topics and Readings

Week One: The Global Jihadist Movement: Ideology, Organization and Strategy

This lesson surveys the global jihadist movement, its historic origins and progressive radicalizations. It is devoted to the dissection of jihadism’s ideology and strategic evolution. Among the organizations featured are Al Qaeda and the Islamic State and the role that Russian jihadists have played in extremist Islam.

- **Jihadism’s Historic, Theological and Political Foundations**

- **The Global Jihadist Movement**

- **The Ascension of the Islamic State**

- **The Progressive Radicalization of the Global Jihadi Movement**

- **Russian Jihadists Role in the Global Jihadist Movement**
  - Hahn, “Jihadization and the Caucasus Emirate”

Week Two: Russia and Islam: A Historical Overview

This lesson examines Russia’s past interaction with Islam. It focuses on the Czarist period and the wars the Empire had with the Ottomans and its imperial experience with fighting native Islamist and jihadist movements when its occupied Muslim territory. The lesson underscores that historic origins of a permanent conflict between Slavic and Islamic civilizations that continues into Russia’s Communist and Post-Communist periods.

- **The Czarist Period**

- **Imperial Wars against the Ottomans**
Week Three: Soviet Russia and Islam

This lesson assesses the interaction of the Soviet state with USSR’s Muslim population and its policies vis-à-vis the Muslim world. Among the case studies prominently featured are Stalin’s deportation of Crimean Tartar populations and the Soviet Union’s war against Afghan and Arab jihadists during the 1980’s. The Afghan war and the USSR’s subsequent collapse play a pivotal role in the development of the global jihadist movement that has spread across Central Asia challenging the state sovereignty of the regional state system.

- *The Communist State and Islam*

- *The Afghan War 1979-1988*

Week Four: Modern Russian Policy toward Muslims and Islamists Movement

This weekly lesson looks at how Russian policy has changed toward its Muslim population after the USSR’s 1991 disintegration. Of special note is the impact of democratization and marketization of the Russian economy and how this has affected hundreds of millions of Muslims living in Russian federation.

- Post- Soviet Policy toward Islam and Islamist Movements
  - Dannreuther and Luke, Chapters 2-3, 6

Week Five: Jihadist insurrections in the Post-Soviet Era: The North Caucasus Region

This lesson looks at jihadist insurgencies in Chechnya, Dagestan and throughout the North Caucasus Region. Brutal suppression of the Chechen population by the Post -Soviet State has contributed to the radicalization and Islamization of the insurgent movement. Once nationalistic and secular the insurgency has increasingly been dominated by an extremist Islamist caste tied to the global jihadist movement. Wars in the region have increasingly given Al Qaeda and the Islamic State a foothold in the region.

- The Radicalization North Caucasian Muslims
  - Dannreuther & Luke, Chapter 9

- *The North Caucasus Emirate*
  - Hahn, Chapter 4-5 (Chechnya)
Week Six: Jihadism in Tatarstan

This lesson examines the expansion of the regional jihadist movement into Tatarstan and how a nationalist insurgency has been transformed into a violent religious movement. This is especially true in regard to the expansion of the Caucasus Emirate (now aligned with the Islamic State) into Tatarstan. Increasingly Russian jihadist networks have expanded once localized insurgencies into a radical Salafi global movement.

- **The Nationalist and Islamist Insurgency in Tatarstan**
  - Dannreuther & Luke, Chapter 7

- **The Caucasus Emirate Expands into Tatarstan**
  - Hahn, Chapter 9

Week Seven: Globalization of the Russian Jihadist Movement and the Syrian Civil War

This class lesson examines the internationalization of the Russian jihadist movement into the Syrian conflict and their unification into the ranks of Al Qaeda and the Islamic State. It features the role of Russian foreign fighters in the Syrian civil war and how their decades of combat experience have assisted their elevation into the upper echelons of the Islamic State. One such regional jihadists Georgian Abu Omar al-Shishani was a top commander within the Islamic State’s Shura Council. The lesson assesses Russian jihadist’s impact on the Syrian conflict and the potential that returning foreign fighters may have in reigniting dormant insurgencies in the North Caucasus.

- **Global Connections of the North Caucasus Emirate (CE)**
  - Hahn, Chapter 4

- **Role of Al Qaeda in the Russian Jihadist Movement**
  - Hahn, Chapter 2-3

- **Turmoil in the Arab World**

- **Russian Foreign Fighters in Syria and Blowback**
Week Eight: Putin’s Counter Terror Strategy and the Jihadist Movement

The final week of the class examines Putin era counter insurgency policy against domestic and global jihadists. Among the case studies prominently featured are Russian policies suppressing the North Caucasus jihadist movement and Putin’s military intervention in Syria and how this has impacted Al Qaeda and Islamic State operations in the Levant. The future of Russian counter terror policies is assessed.

- **Domestic Counter Terror Policy in Chechnya**
  - Dannruether and Luke, Chapter 11
  - Hahn, Chapter 11

- **International Policy**
  - Dannruether and Luke, Chapters 12-13
  - Markus Kalm and Oliver Tamminga, “Russia’s Military Intervention in Syria” SWP Comments 48 (November 2015)

*Final Paper Due Sunday of Eight Week*