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The Securitisation of Sufis and Salafis: Explaining Russian State Narratives on Russia's Muslim Communities

Shifting global security realities have brought Russia's 20 million Muslims under increased scrutiny in the past 25 years. How Russian state authorities at the federal and republic levels speak about Islam in various regions of Russia provides insight into the Russian Federation's historical relations with and normative objectives for Russia's diverse and discrete Muslim communities. This paper considers four Muslim-majority republics, comprising two case study regions of Russia, to examine in depth Russian state narratives of Islam: the Volga-Urals republics of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan and the North Caucasian republics of Chechnya and Dagestan. Qualitative discourse and content analysis is applied to a source body of nearly 200 articles drawn from the main newspaper publications of each republic to isolate and track state narratives concerning Islam in the Volga-Urals and the North Caucasus over the period 2008-2016. Delineation of these narratives by region is situated in the framework of securitisation theory, with concluding analysis arguing that the state narratives of Islam being propagated in the North Caucasus reflect an overarching discourse of desecuritisation, while the concept of countersecuritisation is introduced to explain the contemporary state narratives of Islam in the Volga-Urals.