

OFFICIAL ISLAM IN RUSSIA: AN ANALYSIS OF PAST AND PRESENT

A Master's Thesis

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September 2015

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **OFFICIAL ISLAM IN RUSSIA: AN ANALYSIS OF PAST AND PRESENT**

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In this thesis, the properties of the official Islamic institutions in Russia are analyzed. Starting from Catherine II, Russia developed a religious-centered approach towards its Muslim subjects. In this direction, Orenburg Spiritual Board brought about the employment of *ulama* by the state in 1788 and similar institutions have been utilized by the Soviet Union and the Russian Federations.

In this manuscript, through evaluation of primary and secondary sources, number of consequences, which was perpetuated by the initial policy change of Catherine II, were detected. The effects of this policy change have been seen through common dynamics in Muslims relations with the state from the foundation of Orenburg Spiritual Board until today. First, as expected and hoped by the state, the inclusion of *ulama* into the state bureaucracy contributed to the order in Muslim regions. Second, the state has always

supported the *ulama* figures it found close to the governments' aims and fiercely fought against the ones that prioritize the interests of their community at the expense of central government. Third, the more oppression the state put the more people appealed to unregulated Islamic institutions.

**Key words:** Orenburg Spiritual Assembly, Islam in Russia, Islam in the Soviet Union, state-society relations in Russia, religion-state relations in Russia.

## ÖZET

### RUSYA'DA RESMÎ İSLAM: GEÇMİŞİN VE BUGÜNÜN BİR ANALİZİ

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Bu tezde, Rusya'daki resmi İslami kurumların özellikleri incelenecektir.

2. Katerina'dan başlayarak, Rusya Müslüman tebaasına karşı din merkezli bir yaklaşım geliştirmiştir. Bu doğrultuda, Orenburg Mahkeme-i Şeriyesi 1788 yılında ulemanın devlet tarafından istihdamını getirmiş ve benzer kurumlardan Sovyetler Birliği ve Rusya Federasyonu tarafından da istifade edilegelmiştir.

Bu tezde, birincil ve ikincil kaynaklar değerlendirilerek 2. Katerina'nın başlangıçtaki politika değişikliğinin yol açtığı bir dizi sonuç tespit edilmiştir. Bu politika değişikliğinin etkileri, Orenburg Mahkeme-i Şeriyesi'nin kuruluşundan günümüze kadar Müslümanların devletle ilişkilerindeki ortak dinamikleri üzerinden görülmüştür. Birinci olarak, devlet tarafından beklendiği ve umulduğu üzere, ulemanın bürokrasiye dahil edilmesi Müslümanların

yaşadıkları bölgelerdeki düzene katkıda bulunmuştur. İkinci olarak, devlet daima yönetimin amaçlarına yakın bulduğu alimlere destek verirken, kendi toplumunun çıkarlarını önceleyen alimler ile şiddetle mücadele etmiştir. Üçüncü olarak, devletin baskısı arttıkça Müslümanlar devlet kontrolünün dışında kalan İslami kurumlara daha fazla yönelmişlerdir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Orenburg Mahkeme-i Şeriyesi, Rusya’da İslam, Sovyetler Birliği’nde İslam, Rusya’da toplum devlet ilişkileri, Rusya’da din devlet ilişkileri.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Orenburg Spiritual Board (hereafter OMDS)<sup>1</sup> was founded in 1788 within the framework of the new policy approach of Catherine II. In order to consolidate the Russian imperial order in Muslim inhabited regions as well as to extend the influence of the Empire to East and to South she aimed to utilize the authority of *ulama* figures. OMDS bureaucratized the authority of *ulama*. Accordingly their informal authority within their community has transformed into a formal one and their power was limited to the authority they acquired from the state. While it is possible to depict the religious life of a single village without much reference to Orenburg Spiritual Board, the function of it has pivotal importance in discussing the history of the Muslims under the Russian rule.

In order to detect the common features of the relations between the *ulama* and Russian rule, I focused on Tsarist, Soviet and post-Soviet eras. To demonstrate the nature of these relations, I elaborated on the Russian state's political aims, Muslims' attitude towards the Russian dominance in their social,

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<sup>1</sup> The official name for this institution can be translated from the original Russian as Orenburg Muslim Spiritual Board (*Orenburgskoe Magometanskoe Dukhovnoye Sobranie*). In this work I prefer to refer it either as 'Orenburg Spiritual Board' or as the OMDS.

political and religious institutions, and the gradual integration of Muslims to the Russian bureaucratic system with the foundation of Orenburg Spiritual Board.

This thesis is divided into six chapters. In each of these chapters the official part of the relations between the Muslim and the state is elaborated by taking the distinctive dynamics of the time period. In Chapter II, the root causes of the religious based conflicts between the Russians and the Turkic-Muslim peoples are analyzed. Then, I demonstrate the significance of the Spiritual Assembly in enabling the Russian Empire to make inroads to the Muslim communities. The history of Orenburg Spiritual Board under the Russian Empire should be analyzed by dividing it into two periods. The transformations within the Empire with the Crimean War and the Great Reforms affected Muslims' relations with the state to a large extent. Thus, I analyzed the relations between *ulama* and the Russian Empire in two chapters.

The Soviet era is divided into two chapters as well. In Chapter IV, I elaborate on the destructive effect of the Russian Revolution on material Islamic culture as well as the survival pursuit of the *ulama* under Stalin's dictatorship. In Chapter V, the roles of the Soviet era spiritual directorates that were founded following the WWII are analyzed with a focus on the properties of these institutions, their similarities and differences with their Tsarist era predecessors and parallel Islamic activities were analyzed.

In Chapter VI and Chapter VII, I discussed the dynamics within the Muslims' official relations with the Russian Federation in post-Soviet era. The demise of the USSR fundamentally transformed the relations between the Muslims and the state. With the new law on religious associations the state monopoly on Muslim's religious institutions ceased to exist. However, the state

increasingly has involved in Muslims' institutions by supporting the *ulama* figures, whose actions are in line with the government's objectives.

When it comes to discuss the official Islam in Russia, one could not avoid taking into consideration other trends that have had a major impact on the main actors. It was the Russian state that aimed to utilize the *ulama* in order to consolidate the domination of the state over Muslims. Therefore, the primary actors have been the state, the ordinary Muslims and the state sanctioned *ulama* figures in between. For the Russian state, since the foundation of Orenburg Spiritual Board, the rulers aimed to utilize the influence of the *ulama* for the benefit of the state in Russia's current and potential Muslim-inhabited regions. State has aimed to consolidate the Russian domination in Muslim-inhabited regions, an objective not necessarily shared by the *ulama* figures and the ordinary Muslims. If we exclude the Russian intelligence agents who have been placed within the Muslim community, the majority of Muslims, whether they were *ulama* or not, has aimed to benefit from these institutions. However, the appeal to parallel Islamic institutions demonstrates that the service and representation of state-sanctioned *ulama* has been inadequate. Both the Russian state and the Muslims have approached to the state-sanctioned *ulama* figures suspiciously, while aiming to utilize their function.

These aforementioned default dynamics have been under constant influence of a few secondary actors. These secondary actors are *Sufi* orders, the Muslim educated elite and the Russian ruling elite. *Sufi* orders have provided services that can be considered as an alternative to the state-sanctioned Muslim institutions. When the oppression of Islam became prevalent, especially under Soviet Union as shown in Chapter V, *Sufi* orders effectively manipulated the



power vacuum. When the oppression on Muslim communities relatively relented, the Muslim educated elite adopted a leading role in society. As shown in Chapter III (under Russian Empire) and Chapter VI (at the initial phase following the demise of the USSR), their activism contributed to the liberation of Muslims from the Russian domination in short periods. The attitude of Russian educated elite in bureaucracy and intelligentsia has shaped Russia's relations with Muslims as well. As mentioned in Chapter I, it was Baron Igel'ström that advised Catherine II to establish spiritual institutions for Muslims. Also, the activities of missionary Il'minskiy, as discussed in Chapter III, were very significant in providing an insight to the policies of Russia.

While evaluating the role of the state sanctioned *ulama* and their institutions, this manuscript takes these aforementioned actors into consideration within the framework of the major events that has shaped their relations with one another.

The role and function of the state sanctioned *ulama* has been transformed by the major global (modernization, industrial revolution and WWI, WWII etc.) and state level (Russian Revolution, regime changes, legal amendments, political breakthroughs etc.) phenomena. These phenomena are extensively analyzed in order for this thesis to be comprehensible for anyone who is not familiar with the literature. However, there is a wide literature on Russian Revolution, WWI, WWII and the process of the dissolution of the USSR that I avoided to delve into deeply. I also did not include the relevant Muslim spiritual institutions in post-Soviet countries and limited my research only to the Muslims of the Russian Federation in chapter VI and VII. The resources that

I used in the bibliography comprise materials that extensively analyze these issues.

Most geographical and individual names have been transliterated from Russian and Turkic to English language according to the Library of Congress' guide. I used the commonly accepted English forms for some Russian words such as *Perestroika* and *Glasnost*'. I also left some Turkic words that are used in English (*madrassa*, *imam*, *mahallas* etc.) in their commonly accepted forms. All errors are mine.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **ISLAM AND THE REFORMS OF CATHERINE**

For over a millennium, Islam has been a deeply entrenched cultural element in many parts of what is today the Russian Federation. The Turkic-Muslim civilization had been one of the dominant forces from Pacific Ocean to Eastern Europe until the rise of Muscovy in the 16th century.

One of the major factors that distinguished the Muscovites from their Turkic-Muslim neighbors was the conversion of the predecessors of Muscovites' to Byzantine Orthodoxy that began in tenth century. With the conversion, the Muscovites borrowed the church structure of Constantinople, which rendered the Muscovite rulers both the representatives and protectors of Orthodox Christianity. Muscovy is considered to rid itself from the vassalage of the Golden Horde in 1480 after two and a half centuries of exposure to the state system of Muslim Tatars, which left a lasting impact upon the Russian state system.

The invasion of Kazan and the eradication of the Kazan Khanate by the Muscovites in 1552 was one of the important turning points in Russian history. The victory against Muslims of Volga region shifted the balance of power in favor of Russia, against the Crimean, Astrakhan, Sibir Khanates and Nogay

Horde.<sup>2</sup> The expansion of the Muscovy at the expense of the areas inhabited by the Muslims that started with the invasion of Kazan gradually jeopardized the religious majority of the Orthodox population living under the rule of the Muscovy. At the initial phase of their expansion the Muscovy attempted to eliminate the non-Orthodox people under their domain using various methods ranging from forceful conversion to large scale massacres in order to preserve the Orthodox Christian character of the state.<sup>3</sup>

However, efforts to eliminate or transform the Muslim subjects have failed. The Muslims inhabiting the Volga region resiliently preserved their distinct identity thanks to their strong adherence to Islamic faith. Their religious institutions were consolidated and the Islamic practices had become an integral part of Volga Tatars' culture long ago. From the 18<sup>th</sup> century on, the repressive policies relented with the cooperation between the Muslim *ulama*<sup>4</sup> and the Russian state. This process began with overtures to Muslim community by Catherine II and culminated with the foundation of a loyal ecclesiastical structure of Islamic faith.

## **2.1. Orthodox Slavs and Muslim Tatars**

To the places that were not under the direct control of the *Caliphate*,<sup>5</sup> Islam was able to spread through migrations, wars, trade caravans or anything that would lead to intercultural exchange. Islam reached to the Caucasus with

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<sup>2</sup> Galina Yemelianova, *Russia and Islam: A Historical Survey* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 32.

<sup>3</sup> Alexander Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, *Islamic Threat to the Soviet State* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 24-25.

<sup>4</sup> *Ulama*: Originally an Arabic word, *ulama* means the learned one. It is used to define the group of people who are *madrassa* graduates handling tasks related to judiciary, education and religious service within Islamic societies.

<sup>5</sup> Caliphate: It is the state founded by the Prophet Muhammed following his *hijra* to Medina. Following the death of Prophet Muhammed the reach of the state were extended into North Africa and Spain as well. The Mongol invasions destroyed the caliphate in 1258.

Muslim Arabs in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. In Central Asia, especially in Bukhara and Samarkand, prominent centers of Islamic civilization emerged as early as ninth century. The Turkic mercenaries and statesmen began to break Arabs' power monopoly on worldly and spiritual affairs within the Abbasid *Caliphate*.<sup>6</sup> Ultimately, the Volga Bulgar Khanate became the first Turkic state in the region that accepted Islam as state religion in 922. Islam provided the Turkic peoples of Volga Bulgaria with a sense of togetherness and identity.<sup>7</sup> Until the Chingizid invasions in 13<sup>th</sup> century, which covered the territories from the Pacific Ocean to Central Europe, Islam had already permeated the culture of the majority of the Turkic peoples in the Volga Region, Caucasus and Central Asia.

Meanwhile, the ancestors of modern Russians were still pagans and surrounded by their culturally, politically and economically more advanced Turkic-Muslim neighbors. Orthodoxy was officially accepted by the Kievan Rus' during the reign of Vladimir in 988. Due to the high volume of trade with the Byzantines, the Slavs had already been exposed to Byzantine Orthodoxy. However, the Christianization of the Slavs was realized when Vladimir converted to Orthodoxy, married the daughter of the Byzantine Emperor and forcibly baptized the people under his rule.<sup>8</sup> Vladimir made the Orthodox Christianity as the state religion. He also established an ecclesiastical church system and strengthened his domination over people. Vladimir's action made Kiev not only a political but also a religious center.

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<sup>6</sup> Ravil Bukharaev, *Islam in Russia: The Four Seasons* (Richmond: Curzon, 2000), 25.

<sup>7</sup> Allen J. Frank, *Muslim Religious Institutions in Imperial Russia, The Islamic World of Novouzensk District & the Kazakh Inner Horde: 1780-1910* (Boston MA: Brill, 2001), 7.

<sup>8</sup> Akdes Nimet Kurat, *Rusya Tarihi: Başlangıçtan 1917'ye Kadar* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014), 34.

## 2.2. The Rule of Golden Horde

The invasion of the west of Ural Mountains by the Chingizid armies started in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Kiev was captured in 1240 and the march of Chingizid army into Europe stopped only when the army commander Batu, the grandson of Chingiz Khan, had to return to Karakorum after hearing the death of Ögeday Khan. Batu subsequently became the Khan of the Golden Horde.<sup>9</sup> Following the conversion of Berke Khan, the transformation of the Golden Horde to a Turkic-Muslim state began. By the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the rulers of the Golden Horde adhered to Islam and thoroughly turkified among the Turkic population, which constituted the majority within the Golden Horde. Islam flourished through Empire's deep contacts with Turkestan and Egypt, a process that began with Berke Khan.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, the cities of Golden Horde were soon filled with mosques, *madrasas*<sup>11</sup> and other Islamic institutions. Though initially the Chingizid invasions inflicted great harm to the material Islamic culture in the region, Islamic creed and culture in Volga region was thoroughly consolidated by the Golden Horde. Karpát points out the influence of the inheritance of Golden Horde also in instilling Muslims a sense of modern nation.<sup>12</sup>

The Tatars, as the rulers of the Golden Horde came to be named as such, granted the Russian princes with certain level of autonomy as long as they regularly paid their taxes and provided auxiliary troops. Golden Horde set up an

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<sup>9</sup> Golden Horde was one of the successors of the Chingizid Empire whose territories covered the vast lands from the Carpathian Mountains to the Siberia bordering Black Sea and Caucasus in the south.

<sup>10</sup> Bukharaev, 140.

<sup>11</sup> Madrasa: Arabic word for school, madrasa is the higher educational institution where students gain knowledge on Islamic as well as secular subjects.

<sup>12</sup> Kemal Karpát, *The Politicisation of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 276.

effective taxation, transportation and postal system, laying the foundation of the future Russian Empire.<sup>13</sup> The impact of Golden Horde's economic and political system is still visible within the Russian vocabulary. Russians borrowed from Turkic language several words such as *deneg* (money) and *tovar* (good). It was also under the Golden Horde that the importance of Muscovy has risen due to its proximity to trade ways and the loyalty of Muscovite princes to their Tatar rulers. These factors would make Muscovy the spiritual center of the Orthodox Christians as well. For Russians the era under the rule of the Golden Horde was crucial also for the strengthening of the Orthodox Church and the consolidation of Orthodoxy among Russians. The power and influence of the Church has risen as the inviolability of the Orthodox Church was put under guarantee of the Golden Horde. Under the rule of Golden Horde the Orthodox Church was also immune from taxation.

### **2.3. The Invasion of Kazan and Pervasive Repression of Islam**

Starting from the mid-fifteenth century, the Golden Horde was significantly weakened as a result of Black Death.<sup>14</sup> Ivan the Terrible utilized the power vacuum and declared Muscovy as Third Rome in 16th century in order to benefit from the legacy of the Byzantium after its conquest by the Ottoman Empire. He was also crowned as 'the Tsar of all the Russia', thereby claiming the domination over the entire alleged territory of the ancient *Rus'*. However, the lands that never had been under the domain of *Rus'*, such as Kazan and

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<sup>13</sup> Noriyuki Shiraishi, "Avraga Site: The 'Great Ordu' of Genghis Khan" in *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*, ed. Linda Komaroff (Boston: Brill, 2006), 83.

<sup>14</sup> Uli Schamiloglu, *Muslims in Russia* (Philadelphia: Mason Crest Publishers, 2006), 47.

Astrakhan, would be also included into Russian expansionist drive once they were invaded.<sup>15</sup>

Kazan Khanate was one of the strategic rivals of the Muscovy within the territories that fell under the umbrella of the Golden Horde after its disintegration. However, Muscovy's consecutive attacks on Kazan Khanate that took place throughout the first part of 16<sup>th</sup> century had religious patterns as well. It is noteworthy that in those times for an enlightened European, Islam was not a world religion but the religion of Turks.<sup>16</sup> The rise of the Ottoman Empire, conquest of Istanbul, frequent encounters with Turkic-Muslim peoples as well as the centuries of 'Tatar yoke' perpetuated a similar point of view towards Islam in the minds of Russians as well.<sup>17</sup>

Ivan the Terrible legitimized his advance to Kazan in 1552 with special reference to religion, while Orthodox clergy had encouraged him in his holy campaign with blessings, indicting the significant role of Orthodox Church within the Muscovy's state structure.<sup>18</sup> After the invasion, the initial agenda of Ivan was the Christianization of non-Orthodox peoples to preserve the religious uniformity of the population ruled by the Muscovy. The first significant step for this purpose was taken when the Kazan archdiocese was founded as early as 1555 to lead the Christianization initiatives. The invasion was followed by mass migrations of Muslims from the region, burning and looting of mosques and

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<sup>15</sup> Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), 79.

<sup>16</sup> Robert D. Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 47.

<sup>17</sup> For more information regarding the anti-Islamic messianism in Russia at that time please see: Jaroslaw Penenski, *Russia and Kazan: Conquest and Imperial Ideology (1438– 1560s)* (The Hague, 1974).

<sup>18</sup> İlyas Topsakal, *Rus Misyoner Kaynaklarına Göre Rus Çarlığı ve Türkler (1552-1917)* (İstanbul: Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı, 2009), 125-127.



*madrasas*, confiscations of *waqf*<sup>19</sup> properties and massive influx of Russian settlers to the Volga region.

During the Time of Troubles<sup>20</sup> the missionary activities reduced but it soon regained impetus following the restoration of the order within the Russian Empire. This time, some incentives such as tax exemptions or land grants was employed, which were ineffective as most Muslim Tatars converted just in name in order to get benefit from the economic support.<sup>21</sup> Under the rule of Peter I (the Great) Tatar boys from the Volga basin were educated as priests and expected to spread Orthodoxy. However, this attempt proved unproductive as well.<sup>22</sup> Some harsh measures were also put in order to prevent the forcibly converted Tatars from turning back to Islam. According to the famous *Ulozhenie* of 1649, the punishment for proselytizing in the name of Muhammed was burning at stake.<sup>23</sup>

In 1745, with the foundation of the Office of New Converts (hereafter KND)<sup>24</sup> the conversion activities intensified. Muslim villages were baptized at gunpoint and the Orthodox Church expected from Muslims, who were converted to Orthodoxy on paper, to get rid of their Islamic customs overnight. It is noteworthy that the same policy was applied to pagan Slavs when Vladimir converted to Byzantine Orthodoxy. However, Islam, which had been thoroughly solidified among the Turkic peoples, proved to be a far stronger opponent. It

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<sup>19</sup> Waqf: An important institution playing a major role within the social and religious life of Muslim communities. Originally an Arabic word, *waqf*, means to stand. Waqf properties were endowed by wealthy Muslims as charitable organizations. Any kind of land or institution can be considered as *waqf* property.

<sup>20</sup> Time of Troubles was a political crisis that comprised interregnum, wars and social disorder in Russian Empire between 1598-1613. As a consequence of the crisis the regency was passed from the Rurik dynasty to the Romanov dynasty.

<sup>21</sup> Topsakal, 159-166.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>23</sup> *Sobornoe Ulozhenie 1649*, (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskovo Universiteta, 1961), 70-71.

<sup>24</sup> Russian – *Kontora Novokreshchennykh Del* (KND).

was able to preserve its integrity even at the absence of mosques, as it would do under the ruthless atheist regime of the Soviet Union during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Yemelianova attributes this phenomenon also to the alienation of the state from society in Russia, where the authority typically did not go beyond the top or middle level of administration.<sup>25</sup> In despair, the Russian state eventually tried something new and attempted to turn the influence of Islam into its own advantage by offering collaboration to the Islamic institutions and *ulama*.

#### **2.4. The Reforms of Catherine the Great**

Two centuries under Russian rule, the Muslims lost their belongings, deprived of their property and were subjected to constant oppression by the Russian state and Orthodox Church. However, the centuries old Islamic civilization in the Volga region with mosques, *madrasas* and *waqfs* preserved the integrity within Muslim *mahallas*<sup>26</sup> and this core proved hard to be demolished.

From 1730s the Russian Empire began utilizing *ulama* figures as intermediaries in communicating with local population.<sup>27</sup> The Empire also began working on limiting the jurisdiction of Islamic courts' authority to family and inheritance law by offering them executive power in the cases related to these areas from the 1730s in Bashkiria.<sup>28</sup> In 1754, the first state sanctioned

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<sup>25</sup> Yemelianova, 39.

<sup>26</sup> Mahalla: A district within the city where Muslims live. Mahallas are supposed to be formed considering the religious needs of its inhabitants. Mosques, madrasas, mektebs and various waqf institutions can be considered as the columns of these districts ensuring the continuity of the Islamic civilization there.

<sup>27</sup> Crews, 51.

<sup>28</sup> Nathan Spannaus, "The Decline of the Akhund and the Transformation of Islamic Law under the Russian Empire," *Islamic Law and Society* 20-3 (2013): 221.

*akhund*<sup>29</sup> Mullah<sup>30</sup> *Batırşah* received special recognition from the Empire. However, he subsequently led a rebellion against the Tsar.<sup>31</sup> It should be noted that these measures cannot be considered as examples of Russian tolerance of Islam in the regions inhabited by Muslims as the oppression on Islam continued.

When Catherine II became the empress of the Russian Empire in 1762, she inherited a large sum of Muslim petitions complaining about the oppressive treatment of Muslims by the Tsarist bureaucracy and KND.<sup>32</sup> She would legitimize her following tolerant policies with regard to the Muslims by pointing out to the Muslim petitions.<sup>33</sup> Though her initial policies did not differ much from her predecessors, Catherine gradually adopted a more conciliatory approach to the Muslim population and the *ulama*.<sup>34</sup> One of her earliest acts was to abolish the KND, which largely antagonized Muslims. She permitted building mosques in provinces with at least 200 male inhabitants in Kazan, Simbirsk, Voronezh, Astrakhan and Nizhniy Novgorod.<sup>35</sup> She also convened the Legislative Commission of 1767-1768, in which the new empress listened the problems of non-Muslim representatives. Under Catherine the Holy Synod declared “Toleration of All Faiths Edict” by Holy Synod in the name of Catherine in 1773, which guaranteed non-interference of clergy into the construction of mosques.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Akhund: *Ulama* figures in Volga region, distinguished with higher Islamic knowledge and authority. *Akhunds* had sophisticated knowledge on Islamic jurisdiction to evaluate legal cases. It also means *imam* in Shia tradition.

<sup>30</sup> Mullah: It is the person who possesses a certain level of religious knowledge. In Volga region, *imams* are also called as *mullahs*.

<sup>31</sup> Crews, 51.

<sup>32</sup> Alan Fisher, “Enlightened Despotism and Islam Under Catherine II,” *Slavic Review* 27-4 (1968): 543.

<sup>33</sup> *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii* (Hereafter PSZ), vol. XVI, (St. Petersburg, 1830) No. 12126 (April 6, 1764), 704-707.

<sup>34</sup> Fisher, 543.

<sup>35</sup> Allen J. Frank, *Islamic Historiography and Bulghar Identity Among the Tatars and the Bashkirs of Russia* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 31.

<sup>36</sup> PSZ, Vol. XIX, No. 13996 (June 17, 1773), 775-776.

Catherine II hoped to bring Muslims closer to the imperial structure and decrease the conflicts between the state and its Muslim subjects. Apart from this, at a time when the Empire was in war with the Ottoman Empire and it aimed to swallow the Crimean peninsula, the loyalty of Muslims became more important.<sup>37</sup> These steps, however, did not make the desired impact on society as proved by the support given to the Pugachov rebellion<sup>38</sup> by Muslims. This incident revealed the urgency of reform on imperial policies with regard to Muslims and accelerated the toleration process.<sup>39</sup>

Catherine II took her first step towards the foundation of Orenburg Spiritual Board (OMDS) by utilizing Baron Osip Igel'ström who had recommended the Tsarina to recognize the religious institutions in Crimea and pay the clerics'<sup>40</sup> salaries.<sup>41</sup> Igel'ström, who was the Governor of Sibir when Catherine II deferred to his opinion<sup>42</sup> had an administration experience in the Crimea as well as attended to the diplomatic relations with the Ottomans,<sup>43</sup> was appointed as Governor General of Simbirsk and Ufa provinces in 1785. He successfully convinced Catherine II that the native merchant population in Bashkiria could be integrated into the imperial system by making use of *ulama* figures.<sup>44</sup> Igel'ström appointed numerous *imams*,<sup>45</sup> *akhunds*, *muazzins*<sup>46</sup> and

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<sup>37</sup> Garipova, 44.

<sup>38</sup> Pugachov rebellion indicates a series of rebellions that took place following the Catherine's seizing power. Initially a Cossack rebellion led by Yemelian Pugachov, which found supporters among the dissatisfied elements within the Empire including Muslims.

<sup>39</sup> Frank, 34.

<sup>40</sup> I use the term 'cleric' to refer *imams*, *muazzins*, *mudarrisses*, *akhunds* etc. It should be noted that Islam does not have a clergy similar to the Christianity. In Sunni Islam, these Muslim clerics do not compose a distinct social class.

<sup>41</sup> Hakan Kırımlı, *National Movements and National Identity Among the Crimean Tatars (1905-1916)* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 14.

<sup>42</sup> İsmail Türkoğlu, *Rızaeddin Fahreddin: Rusya Türkleri Arasındaki Yenileşme Hareketinin Öncülerinden* (İstanbul: Ötüken, 2000) 81.

<sup>43</sup> Crews, 52.

<sup>44</sup> Fisher, 548-549.

<sup>45</sup> Imam: Person who leads Muslim prayers and is responsible for the mosques.

*mudarrises*<sup>47</sup> to the mosques within the Kazakh lands.<sup>48</sup> He also enabled the funding of religious service, paid the salaries of *imams* and construction expenses for new mosques.<sup>49</sup>

In 1788, Orenburg Spiritual Board was founded in Ufa.<sup>50</sup> It was created as a court of appeal.<sup>51</sup> The OMDS would handle the communication between the Tsarist bureaucratic institutions and Muslim clerics. At this juncture, Ufa had only a few dozen of Muslims but it was at a close proximity to Bashkir lands and adjacent to the Kazakh<sup>52</sup> tribes. Orenburg Spiritual Board was moved to Orenburg in 1792 but relocated to Ufa in 1802.<sup>53</sup> Muhammedcan Hüseyinov became the first Mufti<sup>54</sup> of Orenburg Spiritual Board. Before his appointment, Hüseyinov was sent by Igel'ström to Kazakhs to stop the Kazakh uprising.<sup>55</sup> Two years after the foundation of the OMDS Alexandr Peutling replaced Igelstrom and played an important role in consolidating the place of OMDS within the Russian bureaucratic system.<sup>56</sup> In 1810 the Main Administration of the Religious Affairs of Foreign Affairs, which in 1817 became the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Education, was founded. This bureaucratic office would be

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<sup>46</sup> Muazzin: Originally an Arabic word, *muazzin* means the one who calls. It is the person who calls *adhan* (call to prayer) in mosques.

<sup>47</sup> Mudarris: Originally an Arabic word, *mudarris* means the one who teaches. They are *imams* with a licence to teach in *madrasas*.

<sup>48</sup> Frank, 35.

<sup>49</sup> Fisher, 549.

<sup>50</sup> PSZ, Vol. XXII, No: 16711, 1107-1108.

<sup>51</sup> Garipova, 39.

<sup>52</sup> At that time the ancestors of what is today the Kazakh people used to be called as Kyrgyz. In this work, I use Kazakh when referring the northern neighbors of what is today the Kyrgyz people.

<sup>53</sup> Mustafa Özgür Tuna, *Imperial Russia's Muslims: Islam, Empire and European Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 42.

<sup>54</sup> Mufti: The person who has an authority to give *fatwas*. The head of Muslim religious community is also called as *mufti*.

<sup>55</sup> Spannaus, 216.

<sup>56</sup> Danil Damirovich Azamatov, *Orenburgskoe magometanskoe dukhovnoe sobranie v kontse xviii-xix vv.* (Ufa: Gilem, 1999), 43-44.

responsible for the officially recognized non-Orthodox spiritual bodies.<sup>57</sup> It is also noteworthy that, the OMDS was not only subordinate to the Imperial Government but also to the provincial administration in Ufa.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, Orenburg Spiritual Board used Russian in its communications and the personnel were mostly Russian.<sup>59</sup> From the beginning to the collapse of the Russian Empire, the tsarist regulation of the spiritual affairs remained undecided and the pressure of the Tsarist authority on Orenburg Spiritual Board wavered. Eight Muftis have served as heads of the OMDS between 1788 towards the end of the Russian Empire.

## **2.5. *Ulama* within the Imperial Bureaucracy**

The Russian Empire had experience of dealing with the religious communities. Peter the Great created the Holy Synod in 1721 and this organization became the highest authority in dealing with the confessional affairs of the Orthodox community. From then on, Holy Synod replaced the relatively autonomous Moscow Patriarchate and the Orthodox were put under strict state control.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, Orenburg Spiritual Board was an official apparatus to control the religious life of Muslims and to integrate the Muslims to the bureaucratic structure of the Empire. According to the early Soviet era Mufti Rızaeddin Fahreddin, one of the aims of Catherine II was to make inroads into Central Asia through peaceful methods.<sup>61</sup> The Empire aimed to replace the informal status of the *ulama* with a formal one where the *ulama* figures would

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<sup>57</sup> Crews, 23.

<sup>58</sup> Spannaus, 220.

<sup>59</sup> Türkoğlu, 91.

<sup>60</sup> Garipova, 50.

<sup>61</sup> Türkoğlu, 77.

have whatever power they would acquire from the state. The state became the main authority in appointments of religious personnel as well as it provided executive power to the sharia courts in cases limited to family and inheritance. The *ulama* and *imams* provided their service to the Russian state by working in Kazakh lands as the representatives of the Russian state as well as by keeping civil registry books.

### 2.5.1. The Appointment of *Imams*

Though the appointment of *ulama* to certain mosques by Russian authorities was not uncommon before the foundation of the OMDS, Igel'ström directly put the Muslim religious figures into the state payroll.<sup>62</sup> Before the emergence of Orenburg Spiritual Board, the members of a Muslim community within a certain *mahalla* used to gather and elect *imams* and *muazzins*. After 1788 Muslim clergy needed the approval of the imperial administrative unit of the region they would serve for their appointments. The candidate should then travel to Ufa to take an oral exam in order to receive a certificate, which would finally be used for his final appointment by the authorities.<sup>63</sup> Without state certification, no *ulama* could perform Islamic rites.<sup>64</sup>

The certification would put the Muslim clergy under state control, and in turn it would provide some opportunities such as job security and exemption from military conscription.<sup>65</sup> *Ulama* were put on the payroll and became dependent on imperial authorities.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, getting a state license became a

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<sup>62</sup> Frank, 35.

<sup>63</sup> Türkoğlu, 88-91.

<sup>64</sup> Garipova, 92.

<sup>65</sup> Tuna, 45.

<sup>66</sup> Garipova, 53.

source of prestige for *ulama* figures in a Muslim community.<sup>67</sup> The adjustment to the new regulations was gradual and the appliance was not universal. For a long time most Muslim clergy did not bother traveling to Ufa. For instance, as Allen Frank points out, in Osinov Gai township within the Novouzensk district, the first *imam* traveled to Ufa for examination as late as 1840.<sup>68</sup> Apart from this, some anti-Mufti movements that were against the state involvement to Muslim affairs impeded the spread of Russian bureaucracy within the Muslim religious figures.<sup>69</sup> Neither of these factors, however, posed a serious and persistent threat to the state's attempt in registering the *imams* and *muazzins*. Within a century, in parallel to the consolidation of Russian domination the registration became more or less a common practice among Muslim *ulama*.

### 2.5.2. Sharia Courts

Another important function of the OMDS was to oversee the judicial duties of the *ulama* within the Muslim inhabited territories. Before the establishment of the OMDS, the local sharia courts headed by *mullahs* operated as judicial organs within the Islamic communities. The Empire attempted to decrease the power of these courts from the first half of the 18th century. As early as 1740, the Empire founded a judicial tribunal headed by Bashkir elders to hold civil judicial matters.<sup>70</sup> Upon the foundation of Orenburg Spiritual Board the Russian Empire incorporated Islamic scholars into the Russian bureaucratic structure as well.<sup>71</sup> Igel'ström gave the authority of handling only the cases

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>68</sup> Frank, *Muslim Religious.*, 105.

<sup>69</sup> Frank, *Islamic Historiography.*, 37-38.

<sup>70</sup> Spannaus, 212.

<sup>71</sup> Tuna, 46.



regarding family and inheritance law as well as crimes against religion to sharia courts, while the imperial courts would evaluate other cases.<sup>72</sup> In parallel to this, the Empire also tried to strengthen local laws by codifying *adat*<sup>73</sup> and limit the influence of Islamic law by replacing it with alternative legal systems.<sup>74</sup>

The new regulations caused a dilemma for the *ulama* as the state sanction strengthened their position with executive powers while it restricted judicial power of *ulama* to cases only related to family and inheritance.<sup>75</sup> In general, most scholars negotiated a more subtle position and they neither offered unconditional support to the regime nor rejected the status of state as arbitrary power in the name of Islam.<sup>76</sup> This way most *ulama* figures found an area to maneuver under state sanction. Additionally, the state bureaucracy introduced a new hierarchical structure to Muslim religious figures. Most drastically affected from this novel hierarchy were *akhunds*, who were once the most influential authority in judgment and issuing *fatwas*.<sup>77</sup> The introduction of OMDS placed them in an intermediate position within the religious hierarchy as their responsibilities were shared between *imams* and the Muftis.<sup>78</sup>

### 2.5.3. Religious Diplomacy

The location of The Spiritual Assembly was not a coincidence. It was at a steppe frontier rather than at a center of significant Muslim community such as Kazan. This proves that the Russian state was interested more in consolidating

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<sup>72</sup> Spannaus 221.

<sup>73</sup> Adat: Turkic local customs that were not necessarily originated by Islamic culture.

<sup>74</sup> Garipova, 266-7.

<sup>75</sup> Tuna, 46.

<sup>76</sup> Crews, 89.

<sup>77</sup> Fatwa: Legal opinion based on Islamic Law.

<sup>78</sup> Spannaus, 204-205.

its power in Muslim regions than providing a support to the *ulama*. Contrary to the Muslims in Volga region, the Muslim Kazakh population was largely indifferent to the norms of mainstream Islam, such as praying five times a day.<sup>79</sup> The Kazakhs, who lived in Orenburg and the east of Ural Mountains, appreciated the service of Russian backed *mullahs* from Volga region in the first place. However, the indifference of *ulama* to the cultural norms of Kazakhs ultimately led to the dismissal of *ulama* from the most of Kazakh region in 1867.<sup>80</sup>

The collaboration between *ulama* and Russian state later became a controversial phenomenon within the Russian bureaucracy. The Russian conquests of vast Muslim lands and the end of battles in the Caucasus against mountaineers generated a fear of Islamic threat during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>81</sup> Starting from the second quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as the Russians began to take direct control of the Kazakh lands, some portion of Russian bureaucracy seriously criticized Catherine's policies claiming that instead of Islam, Christianity might as well had been introduced into Kazakhs.<sup>82</sup> Subsequently, the Russian bureaucracy remained divided between supporting *ulama* and tolerating Islam in the region, staying away from the internal issues of Kazakhs and fighting the Islamic way of handling affairs in the region during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>79</sup> Chokan Laumullin and Murat Laumullin, *The Kazakhs: Children of Steppes* (Kent: Global Oriental LTD, 2009), 122.

<sup>80</sup> Türkoğlu, 99.

<sup>81</sup> Vladimir Bobrovnikov, "Islam in the Russian Empire" in *The Cambridge History of Russia, vol. II: Imperial Russia 1689-1917*, ed. Dominic Leuen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 211.

<sup>82</sup> Crews, 195.

#### 2.5.4. The Civil Registry Books

The imperial bureaucracy utilized *imams* in keeping civil registry books. This duty had been conducted by the Orthodox Church for the Orthodox population from the rule of Peter I.<sup>83</sup> Starting from 1828, the *imams* would receive two empty books in which they would register births, marriages, divorces and deaths of Muslims in their region.<sup>84</sup> With this duty, the Muslim clergy were put under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior.<sup>85</sup> *Imams* would fill these books, send one of them to the regional authorities and keep one for themselves. These records were indispensable sources for legal reference. Issues related to military conscription or inheritance was dealt with reference to the records kept by *imams*. The medical conditions of the Muslims such as congenital disorders were also noted to these books.<sup>86</sup>

The *imams* could collect information about the Muslims, whose records army or the police were not able to obtain adequately.<sup>87</sup> This function of *imams* provided the Russian state with an opportunity to monitor Muslims, which otherwise persist their certain level of social autonomy. Tuna points out to the inadequacy of *imams* for such a duty. He suggests that often *imams* did not write important events right away and forgot to keep the records afterwards. Moreover, the handwritings of most *imams* were mostly not legible and some of them even did not know how to write.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>84</sup> Tuna, 48.

<sup>85</sup> Garipova, 54.

<sup>86</sup> Türkoğlu, 94.

<sup>87</sup> Tuna, 48.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

## 2.6. Spiritual Boards in Other Regions of Russia

The Russian Empire expanded its reach into the Caucasus and the Crimea through the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Empire applied a similar policy to these regions as well by founding two spiritual boards in these regions. The Crimea and Caucasus had different historical backgrounds with regard to their exposure to the Russian rule. Accordingly, the spiritual organs of the Russian state took different shapes. The Russian Empire did not set up Muftiates in North Caucasus and Central Asia. Instead of doing such, they entrusted the regulation of spiritual affairs to Muslim self-governments.<sup>89</sup>

In 1794, Taurida Directorate for Spiritual Affairs was founded in the Crimea.<sup>90</sup> Unlike the Kazan Khanate, the Crimean Khanate was at a close proximity to the Ottoman lands and had had well-established relations with the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, Catherine II could not afford putting oppression on Muslims there in order to keep the peninsula in her hands. In fact, the very foundation of OMDS was also part of the project of spreading Russia's influence to other Muslim lands. Taurida Directorate for Spiritual Affairs was founded immediately after the invasion of Crimea. Accordingly, the *ulama* in the Crimea received more benefits and their responsibilities were wider. Local authorities in this new directorate were made nobles and put in a payroll by the Russian authorities.<sup>91</sup> The clergy preserved most of the privileges they had before the annexation and received extra benefits in exchange for their service to the Russian state, most of the religious figures in the Crimea did not resist to

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<sup>89</sup> Kimitaka Matsuzato and Fumiko Sawae, "Rebuilding a Confessional State: Islamic Ecclesiology in Turkey, Russia and China," *Religion, State and Society* 38-4 (2010): 336.

<sup>90</sup> *PSZ*, Vol. XXXIII, No:17174, 482.

<sup>91</sup> Kırımlı, 15.

Russian state in that respect.<sup>92</sup> Similar to the OMDS, Taurida Muftiate did little to foster the religious life of Muslims. Kırımlı notes that Taurida Muftiate did not construct any mosque, *madrasa* or fountain and did not publish any kind of religious pamphlets.<sup>93</sup> He also points out to a very unfortunate incidence in which Mufti Seyid Celil Efendi ordered to confiscate and destroy all Islamic manuscripts and books, inflicting an irreparable harm to the Islamic heritage there.<sup>94</sup>

In the Caucasus, the Russian Empire started employing *ulama* in order not to represent the conflicts between the Russian army and local resistance as a Muslim-Christian conflict.<sup>95</sup> In 1872, Transcaucasian Muftiate began working with two offices.<sup>96</sup> A Mufti headed the Sunni branch of Transcaucasian Muftiate, while the other Shia branch was headed by a *sheikh-ul-Islam*.<sup>97</sup> The foundation of the Transcaucasian Muftiate caused a clash of interests between the Ministry of War that used to administer Muslims in 1860s and 1870s, Ministry of Internal Affairs that founded the Muftiate and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that defended broad toleration in the region.<sup>98</sup> The Muftiate continued to work but under the effect of the agendas of other ministries. Decades of armed clash between the Russian Army and the local resistance forces required the imperial organizations to be more controllable. Transcaucasian Muftiate had a more rigid

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<sup>92</sup> Alan Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1987), 77.

<sup>93</sup> Kırımlı, 15.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Roman Silant'ev, "Evolutsiya sistemy vneshnykh snosheny dukhovnykh upravleny musul'man Rossii: sravnitel'no-istoricheskiy analiz (konets XVIII v. – nachalo XXI v.)" (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Moscow State Linguistic University, 2014), 68.

<sup>96</sup> *PSZ*, Vol. XLVII, No: 50680, 379.

<sup>97</sup> Their official titles were: Zakavkaznie Magometanskie Dukhovnoye Pravleniia Shiitskogo i Sunnitskogo Ucheny (ZMDP).

<sup>98</sup> Crews, 23.

chain of command from the Russian viceroy to local mosques.<sup>99</sup> The official status of the clergy was also higher than the ones in Ufa and Crimea.<sup>100</sup> On multiple occasions, the activities of *Sufi* orders<sup>101</sup> transformed into resistance movements and produced open rebellions against the Russian Empire throughout the nineteenth century, seriously hindering the Russian authority in the region. The more rigid control of the *ulama* in Transcaucasia can also be considered as an attempt to balance the influence of *Sufi* orders.

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<sup>99</sup> Bobrovnikov, 214.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 214-215.

<sup>101</sup> *Sufi* chains are Islamic disciplines that involve physical, mental and spiritual practices for their followers.

## CHAPTER III

### MODERNIZATION OF MUSLIMS IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE

The defeat in the Crimean War (1853-1856) revealed the backwardness of the Russian Empire vis-à-vis its European rivals. In the following process the educated elite of the Russian Empire began seriously pondering on the socio-political problems of the Empire that had made Russia a weak rival to the European Empires. Tsar Alexander II executed fundamental social reforms including the emancipation of serfdom and the opening of Russian market to foreign investment. These reforms were of top-down character but their effect did not remain superficial and ultimately increased the social mobility and print volume as well as it enabled the awakening of nationalism within Russian and various non-Russian peoples of the Empire.

Amid these transformations that deeply affected the Empire in its entirety, the effective ways of communication and transportation, especially the spread of railways towards major Muslim cities, opened new horizons for the Muslims. Among the Volga Tatars, the Crimean Tatars and Azerbaijani Turks a social class of Muslim merchants was exposed to the Russian version of modern life while retaining their Muslim identity.<sup>102</sup> At this juncture, the *Cedit*<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Karpat, 281.

movement, which sought for progressive reforms within the Muslim societies of the Russian Empire, emerged. Although their focal point was education, *Cedidists* targeted the ultimate modernization of the Muslims and the revitalization of Islamic values.

The increase in free trade and relative press freedom as well as the inroads of Russian bureaucracy into the Muslim regions helped a Muslim bourgeoisie class to emerge. Especially the higher social stratum of Volga Tatars preserved its Islamic identity while seeking to revitalize Islamic civilization by utilizing the progress that happened in the West during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. With the support of this group, the *Cedid* movement increased its influence to a tremendous level over the Muslim educational institutions. This development reflected on political sphere as well. As the collapse of the Russian Empire approached, independent Muslim political movements emerged and effectively influenced the destiny of the Muslims within the Empire.

### **3.1. The Transformation Muslims, State and the *Ulama***

The tumultuous political atmosphere under the intensive period of reform and reaction within the Empire throughout the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century caused substantial transformations for the Muslims as well. The Muslims began taking part in elected bodies within the Empire with the reform process initiated by Alexander II. The conditions for hajj was ameliorated and Muslims for the first time acquired official right to profess Islam so long as they do not proselytize in the name of Muhammed. Islamic literary activity increased

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<sup>103</sup> *Cedid* means new in Arabic. *Cedidism* is an intellectual and socio-political movement of Muslim people in Russian Empire in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.



following the liberalization of publishing law in 1865.<sup>104</sup> These factors all together contributed to the development of distinct modern Muslim identity. This trend gained an impetus with the *Cedid* movement, which started off as a reform in education, yet its spillover effect increased the Muslims' sense of identity and political power.

### **3.1.1. The Reputation of the *Ulama***

The Russian Empire never completely trusted the state sanctioned Muslim religious class and The Spiritual Assembly, fearing that an Islamic clergy at the expense of the Orthodox Church might be created. The Empire aimed to keep a weak and subservient body of religious figures. Though, for instance, Muftis of Orenburg Spiritual Board were supposed to be elected by the Muslim community, in practice all the Muftis were appointed by the state.<sup>105</sup> The fourth Mufti Salimgerey Tevkelev, served between 1865 and 1885 did not even have sufficient religious knowledge, as he had been a military officer in the Russian Army.<sup>106</sup>

The only difference between the state backed Muslim *ulama* and the Orthodox clergy was that the former did not have as much privileges as the latter had. Islam was utilized for the benefit of the state but was not embraced as a native religion by the Empire. Unsatisfied with the situation, *ulama* figures from different cities in Volga region organized a petition campaign in 1841 in order to bring their privileges to the level of the Orthodox clergy, on the

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<sup>104</sup> Yemelianova, 70-71.

<sup>105</sup> Danil Damirovich Azamatov, "Russian Administration and Islam in Bashkiria (18th-19th centuries)," in *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia from the 18th to the Early 19th Centuries*, vol. 2, ed. Michael Kemper and Allen Frank (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1998), 368-369.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 376.

grounds that the *ulama* fulfilled similar obligations as a religious organ of the state with the Orthodox Church including praying for the Tsar. The conditions of the *ulama* were improved partially as late as 1851, though the new privileges were limited for to exemption from military conscription.<sup>107</sup>

### **3.1.2. Muslim Merchants in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

With the reforms of Catherine II, Muslims began to familiarize with the institutions of the Russian Empire. Muslims began to appeal to the Tsarist institutions, whenever they were not satisfied with the verdict given by sharia courts.<sup>108</sup> To pursue their interests, Muslims did not refrain from petitioning Orenburg Spiritual Board, provincial authorities and even the Tsar.<sup>109</sup> To have a thorough knowledge of the judicial system of the Russian Empire and ability to understand and use Russian was always an advantage in sophistically defending their cases in the judicial courts. Crews points out to the importance of these petitions in linking the Muslims family disputes to local courts, central ministries and the Tsar.<sup>110</sup>

Following the invasion of Kazan, Volga Tatar merchants gradually replaced the deprived nobles.<sup>111</sup> The initial oppressive policies decreased the trade between Transoxania and the Russian Empire. In order to rebuild this trade route, the Russian Empire needed mediators to conduct trade with the Muslims of the East. The Volga Tatar merchant community proved to be an able

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<sup>107</sup> Crews, 106-107.

<sup>108</sup> Tuna, 47.

<sup>109</sup> For a series of similar cases please see Crews, 143-191.

<sup>110</sup> Crews, 190.

<sup>111</sup> Christian Noack, "State Policy and its Impact on the Formation of a Muslim Identity in the Volga Urals," in *Islam in Politics in Russia and Central Asia (Early Eighteenth to Late Twentieth Centuries)*, ed. Stéphane A. Dudoignon, Hisao Komatsu and Kegan Paul London (London: Routledge, 2001), 6.

tool for this task. They shared a linguistic affinity with the Turkic peoples at the east of Ural Mountains and they were not bound by the restrictions put upon Russian merchants by the authorities there.<sup>112</sup> Just like setting up Orenburg Spiritual Board at Orenburg to reach out to Muslim communities in the east of Ural Mountains, the Russian Empire used the Volga Tatar tradesmen as an economic bridge to the Kazakh lands. However, just like the Volga Tatar *ulama* spread Tatar influence over other Islamic parts of the Empire, imperial policies made the Volga Tatar Muslims the most urbanized Muslim people within the Empire and strengthened their economic dominance in other Muslim parts.<sup>113</sup>

Muslim merchants profoundly benefited from the bundle of developments took place in the Russian Empire at the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They managed to accumulate wealth and became aware of different cultures with trade relations. With the wealth they accumulated, Muslim merchants financially supported the literary activities, *waqf* endowments and students through various channels. The reformist movements within the Empire's Muslims also received its share from financial opportunities. Volga Tatar merchants, including the Huseyinov brothers, Ramiyev brothers, Nimetullah Hacı and Akçura family, actively contributed to the reform efforts in Muslim education that started by Ismail Gaspıralı in Bahçesaray.<sup>114</sup>

### **3.1.3. Imperial Policies Towards Muslims Within the 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

Defections to the Ottomans during the Crimean War, the bitter resistance in Caucasian mountains, baptized Tatars' turning back to Islam and the

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<sup>112</sup> Tuna, 128.

<sup>113</sup> Yemelianova, 70.

<sup>114</sup> Türkoğlu, 108.

rejuvenation of Islam within the Empire by the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century worried the Russians. An increasing portion of the Russian society attributed the root causes of these developments to the reforms of Catherine II. She was accused of relying on Muslim religious fanatics in Empire's relations with the Muslims by developing a policy of toleration.<sup>115</sup> Indeed Islam, in a way Volga Tatars adopted it, had spread effectively within Volga region as well as towards the Kazakh lands following the foundation of The Spiritual Assembly.<sup>116</sup> Despite the centuries of domination over Turkic Muslim communities, the integration of Muslims into the imperial structure remained problematic. At first, the conversion campaigns and the cooperation with the *ulama* were considered to be counter-productive.

Just like the proponents of the *Cedid* movement, the Russians attempted to reform the education of Muslims, but in order to impose the influence of the Empire. In 1860s a Russian missionary named Nikolay Il'minskiy made one of the most prominent attempts towards analyzing and criticizing the imperial policies within the Muslim regions. His study began with a journey to Volga region in which he observed the situation of baptized Tatars. He detected that the baptized Tatars' conversion remained nominal under heavy influence of the Muslim Tatars.<sup>117</sup> The baptized Volga Tatar community did not seem to understand the translations of religious texts as they were written in a bookish language.<sup>118</sup> In order to integrate this community into Orthodox Christianity, he formulated a reform program for the education of Volga Tatars. Il'minskiy

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<sup>115</sup> Silant'ev, 75.

<sup>116</sup> Crews, 195.

<sup>117</sup> Elena Campbell, *The Muslim Question and Russian Imperial Governance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 37.

<sup>118</sup> Mustafa Özgür Tuna, "Gaspıralı V. Il'minskiy: Two Identity Projects For the Muslims of The Russian Empire," *Nationalities Paper* 30-2 (2002): 268.

affirmed the importance of the Russification of the *inorodtsy*,<sup>119</sup> but he advocated that the medium of instructions in schools could be the respective languages of the peoples.<sup>120</sup> Il'minskiy's agenda also tacitly included the modernization of local languages to the point where they can absorb Orthodoxy. Il'minskiy's reform program created a widespread interest and opposition.

The Russian bureaucracy and intelligentsia considered Islam as a unified regressive force that should be eliminated.<sup>121</sup> They demanded the abandonment of the indirect governance of Muslim lands through cooperation with the imperial bureaucracy and Muslim *ulama*. The Orthodox Church resumed the missionary activities in Muslim regions. Moreover, when the Il'minskiy put forward his reform program Muslims in Volga region, Muslims had already begun to develop an effort to re-Islamize forcibly converted Turkic people.<sup>122</sup> The oppression of Islam and paucity of reconciliation efforts prevented the integration of Muslims into the Empire. The imperial institutions, including The Spiritual Assembly, gradually lost their grassroots influence. In this regard, the preference of the continuation of oppression can be considered as one of the factors that increased the influence of the *Cedid* movement.

### **3.2. The *Cedid* Movement**

The centuries of Russian domination permeated almost all institutions of Muslims by the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One of the few exceptions to this occurrence was

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<sup>119</sup> The term *inorodtsy* can roughly be translated to English language as aliens. The term was primarily used to define the judicial status of non-Russian peoples living in the Russian Empire as some ethnic groups retained their local customary laws in varying degrees. *Inorodtsy* was also used pejoratively to refer to the all non-Russian peoples within the Empire.

<sup>120</sup> Yemelianova, 73.

<sup>121</sup> Karpat, 279.

<sup>122</sup> Garipova, 290.

the Islamic education that traditionally continued in *maktabs*.<sup>123</sup> These institutions ensured the continuity of the Islamic civilization in its simplest form. The education provided in *maktabs* was limited to basic religious knowledge, literacy and memorization of a portion of the Quran. *Maktabs* proliferated with the convenient circumstances provided by the OMDS, which was actually supposed to accommodate Muslims into the imperial structure.<sup>124</sup> The most prominent reform program of the Muslims within the Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century would revolve around these *maktabs*. The attempt to introduce the *usul-i Cedit*<sup>125</sup> system into the literacy learning in *maktabs* would evolve into the collective socio-political modernization effort called “*Ceditism*.”

### 3.2.1. The Emergence of *Cedit* Movement and Gaspıralı İsmail

*Ceditism* began as an attempt to reevaluate the Islamic premises taking the current dynamics of modern life into consideration.<sup>126</sup> A portion of the upper social strata of Volga Tatars, Azerbaijani Turks and Crimean Tatars managed to adapt into modern life without ridding of their religious values within the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This class included Muslim merchants, *ulama* figures and the Muslims who were trained in Russian or European institutions. *Ceditists* would become the main actors in generating and conducting the idea of a renovation within the education program of Islamic institutions.

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<sup>123</sup> *Maktabs* were the primary Islamic schools where Muslim children take education a year or two. During their time spent in a *maktab*, whose building mostly attached to a mosque, Muslim children gain literary skills and learn the basic pillars of Islam.

<sup>124</sup> Alper Alp, “Kazan Tatarları’nın Siyasi Konum ve Yönelişleri (1905-1916)” (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Gazi Üniversitesi, 2010), 18.

<sup>125</sup> *Usul-i Cedit* means the new method. It used the phonetic way in Arabic reading instruction. Gaspıralı, who actually was not the one invented the method, campaigned for the usage of *usul-i Cedit* throughout the *maktabs* within the Russian Empire.

<sup>126</sup> İbrahim Maraş, *Türk Dünyasında Dini Yenileşme: 1850-1917* (İstanbul: Ötüken, 2002), 35-36.

The most influential reform program for Muslims of the Russian Empire was put forward by Gaspıralı İsmail, an intellectual of Crimean Tatar origin, through the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Gaspıralı admitted that the Islamic civilization fell well behind the achievements of the western civilization.<sup>127</sup> He proposed that Muslims should be open to the new ideas and ready to learn from the achievements of other civilizations.<sup>128</sup> To this end, he suggested to decrease the number of religious classes that is being taught in traditional Muslim schools. The curriculum would be supplemented with secular subjects, such as history, physics, chemistry, logic and accounting.<sup>129</sup> Additionally, he promoted the usage of *usul-i Cedid* for faster literacy learning. The *maktabs* and *madrasas* that used *usul-i Cedid* had already been present from the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century. They quickly mushroomed all over the Empire after the campaign of Gaspıralı in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>130</sup>

Gaspıralı considered education a starting point for his wider reform program. He aimed at the reform of the Muslims by transforming *maktabs*. Through his newspaper *Tercüman*, he aimed to spread his ideas for the revitalization of Turkic communities through reforms such as: European type of education, a common script for Turkic peoples, emancipation of women, reorganization of spiritual institutions and proliferation of charitable organizations.<sup>131</sup> Aside from reforming the Muslim community within the Empire, he also promoted the idea of the unification of Turkic peoples with his

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<sup>127</sup> Edward Lazzerini, "İsmail Bey Gasprinskiy and Muslim Modernism in Russia" (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Washington, 1973), 153.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>129</sup> Ondrej Klimes, *Struggle by the Pen: The Uyghur Discourse of Nation and National Interest* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 71.

<sup>130</sup> Nadir Devlet, *İsmail Gaspıralı: Unutturulan Türkçü, İslamcı, Modernist* (İstanbul, Başlık: 2011), 49.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

motto: 'Unity in Language, Thought and Deed.' The language Gaspıralı used in his newspaper, *Tercüman*, was intelligible to all Turkic peoples from Eastern Turkestan to Balkans. His newspaper managed to find thousands of subscribers not only from the Muslims within the Russian Empire but also from other corners of the Islamic world and Gaspıralı's reform program became widely popular.

### 3.2.2. Muslim Response to the *Cedid* Movement

Reaction to the *Cedid* movement found supporters among conservative Muslims. The ones who opposed and criticized *Cedid* movement were called *Qadimists*.<sup>132</sup> They supported the *status quo* in Muslims' relations with the Empire and opposed to any kind of reforms towards Muslims' social, religious and educational institutions. The primary concern of the opponents of the *Cedid* movement was preserving the patriarchic structure of Muslim society, hindering reform in religious education and preventing any amendment on the scholastic methods of teaching in *madrasas* and *maktabs*. *Qadimists* were intimidated by the secular pan-Turkic and modernist components within the ideology of *Cedidists* and saw these as a threat to the resistance they have shown against Russian Empire for centuries.<sup>133</sup>

Ironically enough, *Qadimists* opposed to *Cedidists* more than they did to the Russian rule and even collaborated with the Russians and later with the Soviets against *Cedidists*. In 1905, *Cedidists* almost entirely dominated the political arena, while the *Qadimist* effect was visible over The Spiritual

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<sup>132</sup> *Qadim* means old. It is the antonym of *Cedid* in Turkic.

<sup>133</sup> Galina Yemelianova, "Volga Tatars, Russians and the Russian State at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century: Relationships and Perceptions," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 77-3 (1999): 457.



Assembly.<sup>134</sup> This rift between two camps would continue until the fall of the Empire it would become one of the main impediments to the unification of Muslims as a political force against the Bolshevik forces.

### **3.3. Muslims' Road to Self-Determination**

The deep-rooted transformations within Russia slowly prepared the final collapse of the Empire. The defeat against Japan and the failure in WWI caused the deterioration of the Tsarist authority. In parallel to this process, a power vacuum emerged and widened gradually. The authority of Orenburg Spiritual Board went down with the Russian Empire, opening new maneuvering areas for progressive-minded Muslims. However, Muslims were caught unprepared to these opportunities, as they did not have a unified and well-rounded political agenda.

#### **3.3.1. The 1905 Revolution**

At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the effects of the transformations within different segments of the society of the Russian Empire began to surface. In January 1905, a group of demonstrators led by a priest were massacred by the Cossack troops on orders from the Tsar. This harsh measure led to the heightening of protests, strikes and riots throughout the country. A portion of workers and soldiers set up committees called Soviets in order to take a collective action against the Tsar. Under these circumstances, Nicholas II was

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<sup>134</sup> Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemerrier-Quelquejay, *Islam in the Soviet Union* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1967), 36.

forced to open the First Duma<sup>135</sup> with the October Manifesto. 12 deputies in this first State Duma represented Muslims, though the quantity would gradually decline in consecutive terms.

In April 1905, Muhammedyar Sultanov, the head of OMDS, held an official gathering with the *ulama* after consulting with the Prime Minister<sup>136</sup> Sergei Witte.<sup>137</sup> Considering the circumstances, it can be suggested that what he aimed was to preserve the power and influence of The Spiritual Assembly. The gathering took place in Ufa and accepted petitions from prominent Muslims to be conveyed to Witte. Although many important matters are evaluated by prominent figures such as Yusuf Akçura and Rıza Fahreddin, it is hard to tell that the gathering bore any significant conclusion. Witte encouraged this initiative, as it would likely exacerbate civil and more exclusive Muslim gatherings and would keep the matters under the government control.

The following congresses were far more effective than the top-down initiative led by Sultanov. In 1905-1906, Muslims held two unofficial and one official gathering. The first such significant congress met in Nizhniy Novgorod in 15 and 28 August 1905. The most important achievement of this congress was the reconciliation between Shias and Sunnis. The second congress met in January 1906, in St. Petersburg, which was presided by Gaspıralı.<sup>138</sup> The third congress was convened in August 1906, in Nizhniy Novgorod with an official

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<sup>135</sup> Duma was the council of assemblies in Russian Empire. It was opened by Nicholas II. The assembly was thought as an advisory board. The legislations of the assembly were not binding and Tsar would retain his absolute authority. Although their influence remained limited within the four terms between 1906-1917, the very existence of an elected board that comprises major political factions within the Empire

<sup>136</sup> Witte, who is referred here as the Prime Minister, served as the Chairman of Committee of Ministers in August 1903-April 1905 and served as Chairman of Council of Ministers in November 1905-May 1906.

<sup>137</sup> Giray Saynur Bozkurt, *1905-1917 Yılları Rusya Müslümanlarının Siyasi Kimlik Arayışı* (İstanbul: Doğu Kütüphanesi, 2008), 128.

<sup>138</sup> Jacob Landeau, *Pan-Turkism* (London: Hurst & Company, 1995), 11.

permission by the Tsarist authorities. In this congress, Muslims demonstrated a common will for the unification of Muslim spiritual assemblies within the Russian Empire<sup>139</sup> and for the introduction of a new method of teaching in Muslim schools in a common Turkic language.<sup>140</sup> The reverberations of *Cedit* ideology were quite visible. These resolutions were not binding but the congresses constituted significant milestones for the Muslims in the Russian Empire.

### **3.3.2. Muslim Congresses After the February Revolution**

The decline in the power of Russian Empire gained impetus with the outbreak of World War I. In February 1917, Nicholas II abdicated. The state authority was passed on to Provisional Government in March 1917. The Provisional Government could not fill the power vacuum and the authority of the state declined. Decades of oppression on political groups relented and various radical factions found a golden opportunity in political quagmire.

Muslims did not miss the opportunity. In March 1917 Duma Delegates of Turkic and several other Muslim groups established a Provisional Central Bureau of Russian Muslims in St. Petersburg, to convene a general congress of Muslims in Russia.<sup>141</sup> First All-Russian Muslim Congress (hereafter May Congress) met in May 1917. May Congress convened with a great enthusiasm and delegates presented unanimity in almost all points.<sup>142</sup> The congress bore a significant result with regard to the Muslim religious administration as well.

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<sup>139</sup> Nadir Devlet, *Rusya Türklerinin Milli Mücadele Tarihi (1905-1917)* (İstanbul: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014), 114.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>141</sup> Landeau, 15.

<sup>142</sup> Bennigsen and Lemerrier-Quelquejay, 78.

The congress led to the reorganization of the OMDS and separated the Muftiate from the state supervision with a new elected board and leader. In an election that took place during this congress, Alimcan Barudi, an influential *Cedidist* and the founder of the largest *Cedid madrasa*, was elected as the new Mufti of TsDUM.<sup>143</sup> It was also during the congress that the Siberian and Kazakh lands were put under the authority of TsDUM, hence the name change.<sup>144</sup>

Differences of opinions on issues ranging from emancipation of woman to federalism under the Empire perpetuated hot debates during the May Congress. Consequently, an unbridgeable gap emerged between the Volga Tatars and Muslims from other regions. This political rift can be explained by making reference to the strength of *Cedid* movement in Volga region, though the economic differences and respective experiences under the imperial governance also played a significant role. In short, the division in 'language, thought and deed' within the Muslims of the Russian Empire remained. The Central Asians and Azerbaijani Turks would cease to attend the Volga Tatar sponsored congresses after the May Congress.<sup>145</sup> As the Russian Empire was about to collapse, the Muslims remained segregated. During the Revolution, this division would enable the Bolshevik forces to swallow fragmented Muslims.

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<sup>143</sup> After this reorganization the OMDS was named as Central Spiritual Affairs of the Muslims of Inner Russia and Sibir (*Tsentralnoe Dukhovnoye upravleniye musul'man vnutrennei Rossii i Sibiri – TsDUM*).

<sup>144</sup> Silant'ev, 102.

<sup>145</sup> Ayşe-Azade Rorlich, *The Volga Tatars: A Profile in National Resilience* (Stanford:Hoover Institution Press, 1986), 112.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **COOPERATION AND CONFLICT BETWEEN THE CRESCENT AND THE HAMMER&SICKLE**

The inefficiency of Provisional Government, which was founded in March 1917 following the abdication of Tsar, led to a political and social quagmire across the Empire.<sup>146</sup> After an interesting set of events that pitted the army and the government against one another, the long desired opportunity for the Bolshevik faction of Russian Social Democratic Labor Party arose. The Bolsheviks overthrew the Provisional Government and seized power in major imperial state institutions in months.

In order to stay in power, the Bolsheviks needed the support of numerous political, social and ethnic factions, whose political objectives overlap one another. Additionally, introducing communism to the remnants of the Russian Empire did not have a suitable ground. Despite these hardships, the Bolsheviks managed to become the strongest political, economic, bureaucratic and military power in a few years as Russia was engulfed by economic catastrophe and war conditions. Following the Brest-Litovsk Agreement in March 1918, that left Russia out of the WWI, the Bolsheviks turned their face

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<sup>146</sup> The name of St. Petersburg was amended to Petrograd following the outbreak of the war with Germany.

into the domestic issues and successfully dealt with the Civil War.<sup>147</sup> The Bolsheviks founded a one-party-state in 1922 by engulfing the established Soviet republics. With extreme ruthlessness the Soviet state forced numerous communities with different aspirations into a union under a totalitarian communist rule.

The Bolsheviks' distaste of Islam was no secret. However, in order not to antagonize Muslims, whose support they desperately needed against their foes, the Bolsheviks avoided frontal attacks against Islam at the initial phase. They made tactical alliances with the Muslims against other enemies. An open battle against Islamic institutions and prominent Muslim figures that refused to become subservient to the Bolsheviks would take place from the mid-1920s on. This repressive policy prolonged until the Second World War when once more Bolsheviks would need Muslims' support against Nazi invasion when the Soviet state resorted to Muslim support against a foe in exchange for reopening their Muftiates.

#### **4.1. The Seizure of Power by the Bolshevik Party**

The Provisional Government inherited the convoluted political dynamics of Tsarist Russia. It was nearly impossible to satisfy various portions of the society. Following the return of Vladimir Lenin from exile in Switzerland in April 1917, the Bolsheviks utilized every opportunity to achieve more power and became the most powerful political group after placing a coup d'état on

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<sup>147</sup> The forces that opposed the Bolshevik rule took up arms and began struggling against the Bolshevik rule following the fall of the Provisional Government. The Bolsheviks set up the Red Army under the command of Lev Trotsky. The clashes between multiple forces, including foreign nationalists, monarchists, the Socialist Revolutionaries and Red Army, continued through the end of 1922. The time period when the lands of the Russian Empire were engulfed by military clashes between various groups at that time is called the "Russian Civil War."

Provisional Government. The Bolsheviks quickly occupied governmental positions in months and founded the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, (hereafter USSR, Soviet Union or simply Union) five years after the coup.

#### **4.1.1. Applying Bolshevik Marxism to Russia**

The actual sequence of events during the October *coup d'état* was far from what *Oktyabr'* of Sergei Eisenstein magnified. The day after the 'Revolution' took place, people went on with their usual businesses being little aware of what just happened in Taurida Palace.<sup>148</sup> The inhabitants of the Russian Empire were not even informed about the Bolshevik agenda, far from embracing it.

Once they toppled the government, the Bolsheviks realized the extreme challenges of ruling Russia, where soldiers wanted peace, peasants wanted land and workers wanted rise in their salaries.<sup>149</sup> Complying all these dynamics and remaining on power seemed miraculous considering the initial forces of the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks proclaimed a declaration on behalf of the workers' councils (Soviets), without taking full responsibility as party.<sup>150</sup> However, even the Soviets did not provide Bolshevik party with the full support.<sup>151</sup> Richard Pipes points out that for a long time the Soviet authority remained limited to its 'bastions' in the cities on the European part of Russia in the midst of hostile neighbors, just like it had been during the Norman invasion a thousand year

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<sup>148</sup> Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1990), 493.

<sup>149</sup> Service, 55.

<sup>150</sup> *Dekrety Sovetskoi Vlasti*, Vol.1 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1957), 2.

<sup>151</sup> Pipes, 507-508.

earlier.<sup>152</sup> The power vacuum, which emerged after the abdication of the Tsar, was so huge that the Bolsheviks, a small yet astute group, managed to lead the foundation of the Soviet Union.

If it were not for the intelligent tactical alliances and timely compromises, the Bolsheviks would fail in their efforts. They expected the 'October Revolution' to stir up new revolutions throughout Europe.<sup>153</sup> However, ultimately the Bolsheviks agreed on an urgently needed peace settlement with Germany. The agreement came with such a great loss of lands that the capital was moved to Moscow. Similarly, Marx had seen the peasants as an impediment to the progress and as 'bulwark of the old society.'<sup>154</sup> However, peasants constituted at least 80% percent of the population Bolsheviks aspired to rule. With a land decree that introduced a land reform for peasants enabling them to confiscate the lands they occupied, Bolsheviks managed to keep the peasants occupied with looting.<sup>155</sup> With the absence of another major authority, the Bolsheviks one by one circumvented their enemies and ultimately consolidated their authority.

#### **4.1.2. The Muftiate During the Revolution**

Similar challenges were faced in dealing with the issues regarding the Turkic-Muslim minorities under the Russian Empire. A policy conduct under the guidance of the exclusivist nature of Marxist doctrine, which considered religion

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<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 504,715, 730.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 569.

<sup>154</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol.1, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin Books, 1982), 637.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 512.



as the ‘opium of the people,’<sup>156</sup> would antagonize the Muslims.<sup>157</sup> Lenin was aware of the need to win over or at least to secure the neutrality of the Muslims.<sup>158</sup> Accordingly, for a few years frontal attacks against Islam was avoided and TsDUM managed to preserve its integrity.

Right after the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks issued the ‘Declaration of Rights of the Peoples of Russia’ in which they guaranteed nationalities’ self-determination demands.<sup>159</sup> In December 1917, Bolsheviks proclaimed another declaration that directly addressed to the Muslims as ‘All you, feel free to live according to your religious beliefs, your national and cultural institutions are independent and inviolable.’<sup>160</sup> The Bolsheviks also transferred the *Söyembike* Tower of Kazan to the control of Volga Tatars<sup>161</sup> and returned the original Quran, written at the time of the third *Khalifa* Osman, to Tashkent.<sup>162</sup> The Bolsheviks beguiled the Muslims with such declarations and minor compromises until they managed to accumulate power enough to consider sacrificing the support of Muslims.

Under Provisional Government, Muslims had reached a certain level of autonomy. Taking advantage of the situation after the *coup d’état*, multiple national communities attempted to initiate new national governments. The declarations of independence proliferated towards the end of 1917. In All-Russian Muslim military congress, All-Russian Muslim Military Council (*Harbî*

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<sup>156</sup> Karl Marx, “A Contribution to Hegel’s Philosophy of Right: Introduction,” in *Marx: Early Political Writings*, ed. Joseph J. O’Malley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 57.

<sup>157</sup> For a good analysis regarding the intellectual debates on Islam within the first ten years of the Soviet Union please see: Michael Kemper, “The Soviet Discourse and Class Character of Islam, 1922-1932,” *Die Welt Des Islams* 49 (2009): 1-48.

<sup>158</sup> Yemelianova, 99.

<sup>159</sup> *Dekrety Sovetskoi Vlasti*, 39-40.

<sup>160</sup> *Sobranie zakonov i rasporiazheny pravitelstva za 1917—1918 gg.*, (Moscow: 1942) 91-96.

<sup>161</sup> Rorlich, 131.

<sup>162</sup> Türkoğlu, 267.

*Şura*) was founded with an authority to create independent Muslim military units. At the Second All-Russian Muslim Congress, the fundamental basis of an independent Muslim state had been established in Kazan with *Millî Şura* (executive organ), *Millî Meclis* (National Assembly) and *Harbî Şura* (Military council). This core proclaimed independence in December 1917 as the Idel-Ural state.<sup>163</sup> In this meeting, military, clerical and religious autonomies of Muslims were officially proclaimed.<sup>164</sup> This led to a foundation of a state-like entity, with its national assembly, army and territory. This new entity would have authority over TsDUM as well.

The Bolsheviks were also active in the lands inherited by the Russian Empire, where the population was predominantly Muslim. In January 1918, Stalin, as the head of Narkomnats,<sup>165</sup> founded the Central Commissariat of Muslim Affairs in Inner Russia and Siberia (Muskom). Stalin recruited left-wing Volga Tatars to this organization in order to manipulate the fate of Volga region with inside support. Stalin initially planned to merge Muskom with *Millî Şura* by entrusting the management of the former to the head of *Millî Şura*, Ahmed Tsalikov.<sup>166</sup> However, Tsalikov declined this offer and Stalin then recruited another prominent figure Sagid Engalychev, who was later replaced by Mullanur Vakhitov.<sup>167</sup>

Considering the extent Lenin was willing to share power with fellow socialist parties (all other political parties would be eliminated in 1918) one

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<sup>163</sup> Rorlich, 132.

<sup>164</sup> Zenkovsky, 157.

<sup>165</sup> Narkomnats: Russian - *Narodny kommissariat po delam natsionalnostey RSFSR*. People's commissariat for nationality affairs was founded in July 1917 by the Provisional Government to handle the varying demands of nationalities within the Empire. The Bolsheviks then took over the rule of this office and entrusted the management of it to Stalin.

<sup>166</sup> Rorlich, 132.

<sup>167</sup> Zenkovsky, 162.

could envision how long the initial Bolshevik toleration and even encouragement towards nationalities' right of self-determination would last. In January 1918, Sovnarkom<sup>168</sup> issued the Declaration of Rights of the Working and Exploited People in which federalization was embraced.<sup>169</sup> This declaration was the harbinger of the upcoming totalitarian regime. Right after this declaration the Bolshevik troops took control of Orenburg and in March liquidated *Harbî Şura*. *Millî Şura* was also destructed on orders of *Narkomnats* carrying the signature of both Stalin and Mullanur Vakhitov. The declaration specifically underlined the protection of the inviolability of TsDUM.<sup>170</sup> Stalin acted with caution and preferred not to touch TsDUM at the initial phase in order to avoid reaction from the Muslim community.

The Muftiate faced a dilemma with the Bolshevik invasion of Ufa. Barudi protested the Bolshevik control of the city and eschewed giving support. Instead he put together an opposition regiment, which allied with the Whites<sup>171</sup> against the Red Army.<sup>172</sup> The Bolsheviks were initially expelled from the city but the Red Army took full control of Ufa through the end of 1918. Barudi had to flee to Petropavlovsk and met with other expelled members of the *Millî Şura*. At this juncture Rizaeddin Fahreddin, prominent *Cedidist* scholar and a friend of Barudi, remained in Ufa and started collaborating with the Bolsheviks. This could be considered as a tactical move that would ensure the functioning of the Muftiate under any situation. In 1919 when the defeat of the White Army in

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<sup>168</sup> Sovnarkom: Russian - *Sovet narodnykh kommissarov*. Council of People's Commissariat, the Soviet version of Council of Ministers.

<sup>169</sup> Roberts, 17.

<sup>170</sup> Aydar Yuriyevich Khabutdinov, *Rossiiskie muftii ot Ekaterininskoi orlov do yadernoi epokhi (1788-1950)* (Nizhny Novgorod: Mahinur, 2006), 41.

<sup>171</sup> Hailed by Southern Russia under the command of Admiral Alexander Kolchak, the White Army soon became the most significant force opposing the Red Army. Their exclusivist language as well as their Tsarist attitude caused their alienation from the society.

<sup>172</sup> Yemelianova, 100.

Volga region became apparent, Barudi returned to Ufa and recognized the Bolshevik regime.<sup>173</sup> From then on TsDUM would operate alongside the Bolshevik state apparatus.

#### **4.1.3. The Bolshevik Consolidation of Power and Muslims**

The Bolshevik rule consolidated its power in the Volga region with the help of the Volga Tatar Bolsheviks. Subsequently, many prominent former Volga Tatar nationalists joined the Bolsheviks.<sup>174</sup> Among them Mullanur Vakhitov and Mirsaid Sultangaliyev played a direct role in preparing the aforementioned Bolshevik declarations with regard to Muslims.<sup>175</sup> They hoped that Stalin would honor the promises given to the minorities. Under such enthusiasm the Tatar left was even dreaming about stirring up revolutions in the East and freeing the latter from European colonization.<sup>176</sup>

Volga Tatars, once again after the May Congress, attempted to take the lead of the Muslims with an alliance with the Bolsheviks. Volga Tatar Muslims tried to manipulate the Bolsheviks into helping them unify the Turkic-Muslim peoples. Most Volga Tatars who supported the Bolsheviks had little idea about the Marxist literature. It was the Bolshevik slogans that promoted modernization, self-determination and the denouncing of the Tsarist era.

Muslims were caught unprepared to the sudden collapse of the Empire. When the opportunity arose, Muslims did not have time to put together a comprehensive unified political agenda. The Muslim communities' agenda diversified. At that time in Volga region, Azerbaijan, and the Crimea, the Muslim

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<sup>173</sup> Silant'ev, 101.

<sup>174</sup> Zenkovsky, 179

<sup>175</sup> Yemelianova, 102.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

communities were rapidly evolving into modern nations but in Turkestan or Kazakh lands, tribal allegiance was still more important.<sup>177</sup> In Azerbaijan, the political elite hoped for unification with Turkey and had little interest in the politics of Russian Muslims.<sup>178</sup> In North Caucasus, Kazakhstan and Turkestan the regional dynamics mattered more than Volga Tatar promotion of Pan-Islamism. Most importantly, the *Cedit-Qadim* rift among Russia's Muslims was still alive and it was the most significant barrier to a political union.

In the Volga-Ural region, prominent Muslims collaborated with the Bolsheviks while North Caucasus and Azerbaijan sporadic resistance prolonged a few years more. The disparities between the agendas of the *Ceditists* and the Bolsheviks would come to light towards the mid-1920s when the *Ceditists* would be one of the first groups to be liquidated in Stalin's purges. One of the most prominent Muslim thinkers who initially acted with the Bolsheviks, Mirsaid Sultangaliyev would be executed in 1940. Throughout the 1920s the armed resistance against the Bolshevik regime continued sporadically in North Caucasus and Central Asia. Outside of Soviet Turkestan, where Bolsheviks consolidated their power centered on Tashkent, *Basmachi* revolt<sup>179</sup> transformed into a popular resistance movement against the Bolshevik rule in Central Asia and survived until late 1930s.

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<sup>177</sup> Bennigsen and Lemerrier-Quelquejay, 24-25.

<sup>178</sup> Roberts, 27.

<sup>179</sup> Having its roots in the Tsarist era, armed reaction to the Russian forces in Central Asia gained real ground in 1916 when the Russian Empire attempted to include the people in the region to forced labor. The opposition continued and gained strength when the Bolsheviks seized power in Petrograd. *Basmachis'* power gradually declined after the death of Enver Pasha in 1922 although the resistance continued until as late as 1940s.

## **4.2. Oppression of Islam under the Soviet Regime**

Secularization in the Soviet Union aimed not only to the marginalization of religion in the social sphere but also to the eradication of religion from the minds of its citizens. The Soviet Union was the first state to wage an open war against religion. This policy was aimed at Muslims along with all the religions including Orthodoxy. The Russian Revolution inflicted a massive harm to the institutions of the Orthodox Church as well. In that sense it not only had atheist or secular but also an anti-religious character. During the Civil War, hundreds of clerics were killed and churches became the target of Red Army.<sup>180</sup> Towards Islam, the Soviet state was initially relatively tolerant to avoid reaction. Mosques, *waqf* endowments, madrasas and most importantly the Spiritual Assembly in Ufa were under constant pressure but preserved their integrity. The Civil War ended in 1922, when the Bolsheviks started to put their revolutionary ideas into action.

### **4.2.1. Bolshevik Nationalities Policy and Muslims**

Bolsheviks prevented the nationalities self-determination demands while they promoted the local languages and folk cultures so long as it did not drive the communities against the Bolshevik rule. Lenin engineered this policy and Stalin sloganized it as 'national in form but socialist in content.' Kreindler argues that Il'minskiy, who was a friend of Lenin's father, was the one who influenced the language related parts of Lenin's nationalities policy.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> For more information please see: Anna Dickinson, "Quantifying Religious Oppression: Russian Orthodox Church Closures and Repression of Priests 1917-1941," *Religion, State and Society* 28:4 (2000): 327-335.

<sup>181</sup> Isabelle Kreindler, "A Neglected Source of Lenin's Nationality Policy," *Slavic Review* 36-1 (March 1977): 87.

Il'minskiy aimed to spread Christianity by fitting it into the local cultures, while Lenin would aim to do the same for the Marxist ideology. The Bolsheviks projected that the flourishing of nationalities (*rassvet*) would be followed by their rapprochement (*sblizhenie*), which ultimately realized the culminating of their merger under the communist state.<sup>182</sup>

The political and administrative delimitation of the territories of Muslim inhabited lands were drawn so as to prevent any kind of future consolidation of power under an umbrella of an ethnicity, religion or clan-based affiliation.<sup>183</sup> The borders separated homogenous ethnic bodies and left out a significant portion of the members of Muslim communities. In Volga region, the Bolsheviks promoted and brought about an autonomous Bashkir Republic, whose only one quarter of population is Bashkir.<sup>184</sup> The Volga Tatars ended up with the territory that excluded a significant portion of Tatar population. In North Caucasus, the Karachay and Cherkess people were merged into an autonomous body, though these groups' languages and ethnic identity was different. In Central Asia the final delimitation put sizable portion of Tajik population under the control of Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic. Under these circumstances, it was impossible for the Muslims to generate a trans-regional threat against the integrity of the Union.

#### **4.2.2. The Bolshevik Anti-Religious Campaign**

Stalin succeeded Lenin following his death in 1924. Stalin would soon begin eliminating any party or group that disagreed with his opinions. Stalin

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<sup>182</sup> Şener Aktürk, *Regimes of Ethnicity and Nationhood in Germany, Russia and Turkey* (New York: Cambridge University Press 2012), 199.

<sup>183</sup> Yemelianova, 117.

<sup>184</sup> Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay, 127.

preserved the main tenets of Leninism and continued to cling upon the principles of one-party state and centralized economy. These were the principles that would ensure the state authority over the country. What Stalin amended was the policies of Lenin era that promoted the freedom of Soviet citizens such as the limited free economic initiative and limited religious toleration.

In 1925, League of Militant Atheists was founded on Stalin's orders. Stalin entrusted this institution to his obedient yet incompetent henchmen.<sup>185</sup> Under the name of *Allahsızlar*, *Dinsizler*, or *Hudasızlar*<sup>186</sup> this organization spread to the Muslim lands as well.<sup>187</sup> These organizations managed to gather millions of members and opened thousands of offices throughout the country, where antireligious campaign were extended to all corners of the state. The antireligious campaigns would gain impetus in parallel to Stalin's further consolidation of power.

#### **4.2.3. *Ulama* under the Soviet Regime**

Following the *coup d'état*, the Bolsheviks did not terminate the activities of TsDUM. Following the death of Barudi, Rızaeddin Fahreddin was elected as the head of TsDUM in 1921. At this juncture, the Muftiate was considered as an able tool for ensuring the loyalty of Muslims.<sup>188</sup> The Bolsheviks permitted the performing of *hajj*. For a few years, Eid al-Adha (*Kurban Bayramı*) remained

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<sup>185</sup> Yemelianova, 114.

<sup>186</sup> All three mean 'godless' in Turkic.

<sup>187</sup> Bennigsen and Lemerrier-Quelquejay, 150.

<sup>188</sup> Khabutdinov, 50.



official holiday and the personnel of the Muftiate worked with little or no hindrance.<sup>189</sup>

The campaign against Islam gradually intensified and soon became an official state policy right after Stalin came to power. In 1925, the Soviet government liquidated all *waqf* institutions situated outside towns and the remaining *waqf* institutions were swept away in 1930.<sup>190</sup> In 1926, Party organs in Tatarstan prohibited religious education; Politburo followed the suit in 1928.<sup>191</sup> Fahreddin attended the permanent gathering on religious belief in All-Russian Central Executive Committee in 1930 where he presented the hardships Muslim communities faced. The figures were indeed dreadful. According to his statements more than 10000 mosques out of 12000 were closed and 90%-97% of Muslim clergy were banned from performing their duties.<sup>192</sup> As the head of TsDUM, Fahreddin tried in vain to resist the anti-religious campaigns and purges of the *ulama*.

Though in mid-1930s *ad hoc* arrangements between the local governments and the *imams* took place, the oppression would regain impetus with the Great Terror<sup>193</sup> of Stalin. Under the dictatorship of Stalin, the Soviet state aimed at the ultimate eradication of Islam from the territories of the Soviet Union. Within the framework of this, nearly thirty thousand Muslim clerics perished and thousands of mosques were either destroyed or used as publishing houses, social clubs or even as wine-refineries. Thousands of Muslim

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<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> Bennigsen and Lemerier-Quelquejay, 145.

<sup>191</sup> İl'nur Rafaelyeviç Minnullin, "Politika sovetskogo gosudarstva po otnosheniyu k musul'manskomu dukhovenstvu v Tatarstane v 1920–1930-ye gg." (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Kazan State University, 2003), 24.

<sup>192</sup> *Khabutdinov.*, 52.

<sup>193</sup> The Great Purge is Stalin's attempt to eliminate his political rivals with ruthless and oppressive methods such as imprisonment, sending to labor camps and executions in 1936-1938.

scholars fled to Iran and Afghanistan for survival.<sup>194</sup> This trend inflicted a great harm to material Islamic culture within the Soviet Union.

Fahreddin passed away in 1936 leaving his post to Rasul Abdurrahim. Abdurrahim would serve during the most grievous years of Stalin regime as well as during the Second World War when he would reach an accord with Stalin regarding the rejuvenation of the spiritual boards. The Bolsheviks utilized TsDUM for their political ends and achieved significant domestic and foreign policy successes by avoiding Muslim's opposition. When the Soviet Union gathered enough power and needed the support of TsDUM less, large-scale oppression against Islam began. Consequently, the Muslim political and intellectual elite was almost entirely destroyed. TsDUM continued to operate but it was put on the brink of destruction.

### **4.3. Islam During the Second World War**

The Eastern Front was an important component of the Second World War. The attack of Nazi Germany that began in June 1941 significantly changed the socio-political dynamics of the region along with the damage the war inflicted. Part of the population that inhabited the areas Nazis invaded founded themselves collaborating with the occupying forces, while Soviet state had to reconsider its oppressive policies on believers, including Muslims.

#### **4.3.1. Islam under Nazi Occupation**

Three months after the attack on Soviet soil began Hitler shared the statistics of Operation Barbarossa with Germany. It was revealed that the

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<sup>194</sup> Yemelianova, 114.

Third Reich managed to take approximately two million prisoners of war.<sup>195</sup> Rather than making use of the prisoners, Nazis initially chose to let them die out of malnutrition or disease and very frequently chose to kill them at will.<sup>196</sup> On the other hand, NKVD<sup>197</sup> was ordered to hunt the escaped soldiers from the camps.<sup>198</sup> The war conditions were indeed cruel in the occupied areas. The prisoners of war and the local population were virtually left with no opportunity for survival and most of them simply sought their survival. The Nazis resorted to the help of the population in the invaded territories, when it is realized that the excessive brutality to Muslims is destructive for the Nazi military objectives.

The chief reason for Nazi's engagement with Islam was that their military conditions deteriorated.<sup>199</sup> Nazis began to reconstruct the lost Islamic heritage and institutions in occupied Muslim inhabited regions. Within the framework of this policy, Nazis reopened dozens of mosques in Crimea, reintroduced religious education into the curriculum of Crimean Tatar schools and restored number of *madrasas* and other *waqf* institutions.<sup>200</sup> This process was overseen by the 'Muslim Committees' placed within the Nazi bureaucratic system. Subsequently, Germans centralized the work of these committees by founding a Muslim Central Committee in Simferopol.<sup>201</sup> Nazis' Muslim Central Committee oversaw all the reconstruction activities in the peninsula. The local

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<sup>195</sup> Richard Overy, *Russia's War* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 94.

<sup>196</sup> W. J. Spahr, *Zhukov: The Rise and Fall of a Great Captain* (Novato, CA, 1993), 261- 3.

<sup>197</sup> NKVD: Russian - *Narodnyy kommissariat vnutrennikh del*. People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs. Though sounds like a typical ministry for internal affairs, NKVD was actually the successor of *Cheka* and the predecessor of *KGB* and *FSB*.

<sup>198</sup> Overy, 82.

<sup>199</sup> David Motadel, "Muslims in Hitler's War," *History Today* (September 2015): 20.

<sup>200</sup> David Motadel, *Islam and Nazi Germany's War* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 153.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

communities elected the clergy but the Muslim Central Committee, similar to how it was for the OMDS, checked the suitability of these clergy.<sup>202</sup> It should be noted that the Crimean Tatars had had such institution until the late 1930s, when the Taurida Directorate was disbanded. Such bureaucracy provided the Nazis with stronger control over the Muslim communities in Crimea as well as provided support to the Nazi occupation from the Muslims.

The toleration of faith in the occupied territories provided the collaboration between the Nazi forces and Muslims. The collaboration took three forms: the help of local population to the Nazi troops in mostly menial works, *émigré* involvement to the Nazi policies on the ground and erecting Muslim troops serving for the Nazis. First, the Soviet citizens who served to the Nazis as cooks, mechanics, drivers etc were named as *Hilfswillige* (volunteers). They eventually start wearing Nazi uniforms with a distinguishing mark that says '*Im Dienst der Wehrmacht*' (In the service of the German Army) on it.<sup>203</sup> Second, *Abwehr*<sup>204</sup> and *Auswartiges Amt*<sup>205</sup> (hereafter AA) employed some of the *émigré* nationalists who took refuge in Europe for intelligence purposes against the Soviet Union. In July 1941, *Ost Ministerium*,<sup>206</sup> began sorting the POWs<sup>207</sup> according to their nationalities to employ them under Nazi service for military purposes as well. For this task various prominent Turkic *émigré* figures such as Veli Kayyum Han, Mustafa Çokay and Ahmet Temir were invited to Berlin and subsequently a visit was arranged for them to the Eastern

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<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>203</sup> Oleg V. Roman'ko, *Musul'manskie legioni vo vtoroi mirovoi voine* (Moscow: Transkniga, 2004), 19.

<sup>204</sup> *Abwehr*: Nazi Germany intelligence service.

<sup>205</sup> *Auswartiges Amt*: Nazi Germany Foreign Service.

<sup>206</sup> *Ost Ministerium*: The Nazi Ministry for handling the affairs of the occupied territories within the USSR.

<sup>207</sup> Prisoners of War.

Front. On their guidance, number of regiments was founded in accordance with the nationalities of the local population.<sup>208</sup> Third, in 1943 *Waffen SS* started forming legions out of foreign volunteers. Though one would have to be racially pure to join the *Waffen SS* in the 1930's, the war conditions gradually enabled the recruitment of men, who by any stretch of the imagination be considered German.<sup>209</sup>

The collaboration between the Nazi occupation forces and Muslim minorities was a consequence of the repressive policies of Stalin era and the war conditions. Nazis initially considered the Turkic Muslim peoples as racially inferior. Their national and religious aspirations were of little value to the Germans. Similar to Russia, after a period of oppression on local population, Nazis the discovered the benefits of conciliatory policies were and gradually applied in the occupied areas. The Muslims, as with others, took benefit from the chance of survival offered involuntarily by the Nazi Germany.

#### **4.3.2. Soviet Policy on Islam During the War and the Reemergence of the Muftiates**

In September 1941, the Volga Germans became the first minority nation to be vindicated by the Soviet Union in the beginning of the occupation. Hundreds of thousands of Volga Germans were deported to Siberia and Kazakhstan *en masse*. The initial oppressive policies were then replaced by relative toleration. The Soviets realized that if a certain level of toleration would be shown to minorities it might be useful in their struggle against the Germans.

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<sup>208</sup> Romanko, 132-135.

<sup>209</sup> George H. Stein, *The Waffen-SS: Hitler's Elite Guard at War 1939 -1945* (London: Cornell University Press 1986), 179.

Consequently, the infamous atheist propaganda apparatuses were dissolved and relative religious tolerance was applied.

The Soviet Mufti Abdurrahman responded to this overture with loyalty, following the footsteps of Orthodox Church, and called Muslims in the Soviet Union to arms.<sup>210</sup> Abdurrahman declared that the invader should be killed wherever one finds him.<sup>211</sup> Mosques were reopened across the Muslim inhabited regions and filled with *imams* that preached Muslims to join the holy war against the invader. Subsequently, the authority of TsDUM increased and three more spiritual centers were opened on the Soviet soil. This call and the measures of Stalin strengthened the loyalty of Muslims as well as inhibited the strengthening of alliance of them with Germans. By securing the loyalty of Muslims, Stalin made an important contribution to the Soviet identity of Muslims. During the war millions of Muslims fought against Nazi Germany in line with their non-Muslim compatriots.<sup>212</sup>

Following the victory, number of nations were accused with treason attributing to the inside support given to the Nazi forces. In 1943-44, Kalmucks, Balkars, Karachays, Germans, Chechens, Ingushes, Crimean Tatars, Ahıska Turks, Greeks, Bulgarians, Kurds, Ingushes, were deported *en masse* to the Central Asia and Siberia. The number of deportees has surpassed one milliob. Many of them died on the road out of illness, hunger and brutalities of Soviet soldiers. This treatment was not particularly towards Islam or Muslims as various non-Muslim peoples were also affected. However, the deportation inflicted an irrevocable harm to the Turkic-Muslim culture around the Black

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<sup>210</sup> Bennigsen and Lemerrier-Quelquejay, 152.

<sup>211</sup> Motadel, 175.

<sup>212</sup> Yemelianova, 121-122.

Sea region. Moreover, it was an unjust treatment even when it was considered within the Soviet rationale. The Crimean Tatar nation was among the ones to be accused of treason. However, the Crimean Tatars who joined the Soviet Army against the Nazi forces was more than the ones who did vice versa. Moreover, eight Crimean Tatars earned the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.<sup>213</sup> The security oriented and ideologically driven Soviet policy on minorities did not take these facts into consideration.

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<sup>213</sup> Isabelle Kreindler, "The Soviet Deported Nationalities: A Summary and an Update," *Soviet Studies* 38-3 (1986): 391. Two more Crimean Tatar would receive the title of hero afterwards.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **OFFICIAL AND PARALLEL ISLAM IN THE SOVIET UNION**

The Soviet Union emerged as a super power after the WWII. USSR's achievement in the WWII would be used for the legitimacy of the Soviet regime both within the country and on the world sphere. The treatment towards the spiritual affairs of Muslims relatively eased during the wartime. This Soviet tolerance on Islam during the WWII led to the opening of the four spiritual directorates that would work in parallel with the atheist Soviet agenda and unauthorized Islamic activities.

The Soviet state attempted to create its own version of Islam through spiritual directorates. This official Soviet Islam would be under strict supervision of the state and would not supposed to pose any threat to the integrity of the regime. Muslims accommodated to the regime and started to make use of its benefits while the majority of the state bureaucracy did not approve of the spiritual directorates. Atheist and anti-religious propaganda continued and oppression on Islam remained in its place. Lack of sufficient religious service caused the increase of unregulated parallel Islamic activities.



### 5.1. Spiritual Directorates of the Soviet Union

During the war, millions of Soviet Muslims lost their lives fighting on both sides. Regardless of the side they fought for, the Muslims around the Black Sea were forcibly relocated to Central Asia and Siberia. At some point during the war, the Soviet state collaborated with the Muslim *ulama* in order to secure the support of Soviet Muslims against the Nazi forces. This collaboration set the ground for the foundation of four Spiritual Directorates in Soviet Union. The Spiritual Directorates were supposed to provide the spiritual needs of the Muslims. At the same time, the Soviet state would expect them to put the Muslims under the control of the state, which had an anti-religious agenda.

#### 5.1.1. The Properties of Four Spiritual Directorates

With the Russian Revolution, the spiritual directorates experienced major breakthroughs. TsDUM was the only Muftiate that could survive Stalin's dictatorship. The Spiritual Center in Tbilisi was first moved to Baku and then closed down.<sup>214</sup> Taurida Muftiate was liquidated on the eve of the WWII.<sup>215</sup> When the Soviet Union was facing an existential threat under Nazi attack, Stalin approached to the *ulama*. In exchange for their support to the Soviet state against Nazi Germany, *ulama* could hold a meeting and found the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan (hereafter SADUM).<sup>216</sup> Following their footsteps, Muslims of Transcaucasia held a conference in Baku and found the Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of

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<sup>214</sup> Yaacov Roi, *Islam in the Soviet Union* (London: Hurst & Company, 2000), 101.

<sup>215</sup> Silant'ev, 42.

<sup>216</sup> Russian – *Dukhovnoye upravleniye musul'man Sredney Azii i Kazakhstana*.

Transcaucasia (hereafter DUMZ).<sup>217</sup> Muslims of Northern Caucasus who would bring Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of the Northern Caucasus (hereafter DUMSK)<sup>218</sup> followed the suit.

Following its foundation, SADUM became the largest and most influential Spiritual Directorate. It was based in Tashkent and responsible for the religious affairs in five Central Asian Soviet republics.<sup>219</sup> Its official language was Uzbek. The spiritual affairs of Muslims in five Central Asian republics remained under the control of SADUM. It was the only Muftiate that had two *madrasas* under its jurisdiction. SADUM was also authorized with publishing activity.

The Muftiate in Ufa, TsDUM, hereafter DUMES,<sup>220</sup> was responsible for the spiritual affairs of the Muslims in Volga Region, Siberia and the European part of the USSR. Its official language was Volga Tatar. Following the war Siberia was included into its zone of authority. Having lost its dominance over the *ulama* in Central Asia, DUMES held a secondary position regarding the affairs of the Muslims within the USSR.

Unlike its Tsarist era predecessor, DUMZ regulated the religious affairs of the Muslims of both *Sunni* and *Shia* rites.<sup>221</sup> DUMZ was based in Baku and its official language was Azeri Turkic. Following the reconciliation of the Muslims between these two rites the opening and functioning of such Muftiate made possible.

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<sup>217</sup> Russian - *Dukhovnoye upravleniye musul'man Zakavkazya*.

<sup>218</sup> Russian - *Dukhovnoye upravleniye musul'man Severnogo Kavkaza*.

<sup>219</sup> Alexandre Bennigsen and Enders Wimbush, *Mystics and Commisars: Sufism in the Soviet Union* (Berkeley LA: University of California Press, 1985), 15.

<sup>220</sup> The Muftiate responsible for the Islamic affairs of the Volga region was referred as DUMES. Russian – *Dukhovnoye Upravlenie Yevropeiskoi Chasti SSSR i Sibiri*.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15.

The most conservative of all these Muftiates was DUMSK. The center of this Muftiate was based in Buinaksk (*Temirhan-Şura*) and then was moved to Makhachkala, both in Dagestan ASSR.<sup>222</sup> Its official language was Arabic. DUMSK was filled with Dagestani Arabists, which multiple times accused the operations of SADUM and DUMES for being modernist. Notwithstanding its representation of all Muslims in Northern Caucasus, DUMSK remained under strong influence of the *ulama* of the Dagestan region.

It should be kept in mind that these spiritual directorates were parts of the Soviet bureaucracy. Accordingly, direct attacks towards the spiritual directorates never appeared on Soviet press, in contrast to the 1930s when the *ulama* figures were labeled as traitors and parasites.<sup>223</sup> In turn the Soviet religious leadership appeared to be loyal to the state; preached such loyalty to Muslims, and never protested against the anti-religious propaganda.<sup>224</sup> These Muftiates were the institutionalized version of the collaboration between a portion of local *ulama* figures from particular regions and the Soviet government.

### **5.1.2. The Functions of Spiritual Directorates within the Soviet State**

The main difference between the Soviet era spiritual directorates and their predecessors in Russian Empire was the confessional character of these two entities. The Russian Empire held the aim of spreading Christianity while the Soviet Union pursued an anti-religious policy. Notwithstanding this significant difference, the spiritual directorates conducted similar duties with

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<sup>222</sup> Taşer, 25

<sup>223</sup> Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay, 175.

<sup>224</sup> Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal-Lemercier Quelquejay, ““Official” Islam in the Soviet Union,” *Religion State and Society* 7-3 (1979): 156.

their imperial predecessors. In Soviet Union, the major activities of the Muftiates were the regulation of the limited number of mosques and *madrasas*, diplomatic initiatives towards Muslim world and the publication of a few religious materials.

#### **5.1.2.1. Regulation of Mosques and Madrasas**

The four spiritual directorates were the only legal institutions to regulate the religious life of Muslims. Therefore, in theory, all mosques and *ulama* should be registered to one of these authorities. Unregistered religious activity in Soviet Union was strictly forbidden. Only a minor portion of the working mosques had survived the antireligious campaign and the World War II. The remaining ones were under the heel of Soviet regime. Bennigsen suggested in 1979 that only 450 registered working mosques remained comparing to 25000 mosques that existed before the Revolution.<sup>225</sup> One should consider the unofficial mosques and religious gathering places in countryside while evaluating this number.

SADUM was the only spiritual directorate to have *madrasas* under its command. One of the most prestigious *madrasa* in Central Asia was Mir-i Arab. Constructed in 16<sup>th</sup> century, this *madrasa* continued to operate almost ceaselessly until the Revolution. In 1945, it was reopened and put under the auspices of SADUM. Mir-i Arab was only instructing Quran reading and basic knowledge of Islam, which was very modest comparing the education in the 17<sup>th</sup> century Muslim *ulama* received. Graduates of this institution could go on with their studies in Ismail Al-Bukhari *madrasa*, which offered higher education, in

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<sup>225</sup> Bennigsen and Lemerier-Quelquejay, "Official" Islam in the Soviet Union, 151.

Tashkent.<sup>226</sup> Opportunity for Islamic education abroad was permitted for the graduates of Mir-i Arab *madrassa* as well.<sup>227</sup> It is noteworthy that in late Soviet era the head of DUMES Talgat Taceddin and the head of DUMZ Allahşükür Paşazade were graduates of Mir-i Arab *madrassa*.

#### **5.1.2.2. *Ulama's Foreign Contacts***

As early as the first years of Revolution, Muslim communists planned to export socialist revolution to the Islamic world.<sup>228</sup> The Soviet government developed friendly relations with Afghanistan, Turkey and Iran under Lenin. Stalin's coming to power in Soviet Union as well as the developments in aforementioned countries complicated the improvement of the relations. The strategy that prohibited the alliance with bourgeoisie-nationalist parties replaced the strategy of fighting against British Imperialism and this policy track was followed until the end of the World War II.<sup>229</sup>

Following the end of the WWII, the Soviet rule rediscovered the potential and attempted to make alliances in the Middle East. For this purpose, the USSR also utilized its Muslim spiritual directorates. The USSR aimed also to undermine the strategic domination of the USA within the Muslim regions by making alliances with the Muslim countries.<sup>230</sup> Khrushchev's policy was contradictory considering the simultaneous intensification of the anti-religious campaigns at home. Following the departure of European powers from the region, the USSR actively supported the movements it considered close to the

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<sup>226</sup> Bennigsen and Wimbush, 19.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>228</sup> Roberts, 83.

<sup>229</sup> Bennigsen and Broxup, 101.

<sup>230</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, "Soviet Islam and World Revolution," *World Politics* 34-4 (1982): 489.

Soviet ideology and pro-Soviet regimes in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, South Yemen and Libya emerged. The USSR tried to advertise that Soviet Muslims were living peacefully and tried to sustain its alliance with the pro-Soviet regimes in the Middle East. For this purpose, the Soviet *ulama* were exclusively used by the Soviet state. This policy was conducted by holding conferences in the Soviet Union, inviting prominent Muslim figures to Soviet Union and publishing activities.

Significant representatives from Pakistan, Egypt, and Singapore visited Soviet Union within the framework of this policy. The visiting foreign delegations would start their visit in Tashkent, they would visit the Mir-i Arab and Ismail el-Bukhara *madrasas* and finish their trips with a reception by Muslims of Leningrad and Moscow.<sup>231</sup> Especially the tomb of Imam Al-Bukhari was the point of interest for the foreign Muslims who visited Soviet Union.<sup>232</sup> The visits of the religious personnel would take place smoothly as the Soviet *ulama* were very fluent in Arabic.<sup>233</sup>

The Soviet religious personnel met with numerous high profile bureaucrats and politicians in the Muslim world during their visits. The Soviet hosts usually included Ziauddin Babakhanov, the head of SADUM between 1957 and 1982, and a few of his assistants.<sup>234</sup> Babakhanov was also the head of the Department of Foreign Relations of the Muslim Organizations of the USSR, which was founded to coordinate the international ties of the Soviet *ulama*. These initiatives were supplemented with various media organs in multiple

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<sup>231</sup> Bennigsen and Broxup, 104-105.

<sup>232</sup> Silant'ev, 123.

<sup>233</sup> Eren Murat Taşer, "Soviet Policies Toward Islam Domestic and International Considerations," in *Religion and Cold War a Global Perspective*, ed. Philip Muehlenbeck (Nashville TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2012), 170.

<sup>234</sup> Bennigsen and Broxup, 106.

languages spoken by Muslims around the world. These publications generally condemned capitalism, preached the benefits of Soviet rule and the harmony between Soviet rule and Islam.<sup>235</sup>

The influence of the diplomatic activities of religious figures within the Islamic world remained limited. The Soviet Muftiates could not create an influence neither on the USSR, nor on the Muslim countries. The foreign *ulama* that contacted the Soviet Union were either under tight control of the pro-Soviet regimes or they were marginal figures in their own country.<sup>236</sup> Following the Afghan War, the Soviet Union lost the minimal grassroots support it had from the Muslim World. It was only the official *ulama* of the USSR in the Muslim World that took a position in favor of the invasion.<sup>237</sup> Despite the ostensible position of the official *ulama*, Yemelianova argues that the majority of Muslim *ulama* in Soviet Union disapproved the invasion. She also points the inefficiency of Muslim soldiers who fought in Afghanistan for the Soviet Union and the defections to the *Jihadist* side.<sup>238</sup>

#### 5.1.2.3. Religious Publication

As a rule, publication in the Soviet Union was strictly under the state control. This strict control was even more pervasive on religious publication. The only Muftiate to have such authority was SADUM. It published the *Journal of the Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan* in Uzbek language. Later, the journal was also published in Arabic, English, French,

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<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>236</sup> Eren Murat Taşer, "Soviet and Muslim: The Institutionalization of Islam in Central Asia, 1943-1991" (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 2010), 341.

<sup>237</sup> Olcott, 493.

<sup>238</sup> Yemelianova, 131.

Persian and Dari.<sup>239</sup> The proliferation of the language options was directly linked to the religious diplomacy attempts of the Soviet Union. SADUM also published a few editions of Quran, a compilation of *fatwas* issued by Ziauddin Babakhanov, a religious calendar and an album of Islamic monuments in Soviet Union.<sup>240</sup> TsDUM have also published a religious calendar and a book named *Islam and Muslim Faith*.<sup>241</sup>

## **5.2. The Soviet Religious Policy and Islam after the WWII**

The foundation of the Spiritual Directorates was spontaneous and conjectural. From the mid-1920s until the war, the Soviets by and large managed to curb the influence of Islamic institutions and the *ulama*. Under war conditions the regime had to make some compromises to the Muslims. The war caused the emergence of yet another strong dynamic in the Soviet attack on Islam. Once the Box of Pandora was opened, the dominant trend became the Soviet attempt to manipulate the Muftiates for the benefit of the state.

### **5.2.1. Atheist Propaganda**

Just like it had ultimately happened in Tsarist Russia after the 1905 Revolution, 1936 constitution recognized the freedom of worship while it permitted antireligious propaganda within the Union.<sup>242</sup> This law limited the practicing of any religion. The Orthodox Church, for instance has faced an extensive terror of the state from the beginning. Its properties were confiscated

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<sup>239</sup> Bennigsen and Wimbush, 19.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>242</sup> *Konstitutsiya Soyuza Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik*, (Moscow: Izdanie TsIK SSSR, 1937), Statya 124, 30.



by the state and the oppression on Orthodox clergy was severe. For Islam, the Soviet state framed the authority of the four spiritual boards in order to extensively limit this freedom of worship. The most effective policy of the Soviet Union in fighting religion was the rapid modernization. The official Islam gradually moved back to the urban area after the Revolution but Islam continued to be practiced more freely in faraway villages and *mahallas*.<sup>243</sup>

Despite the relative liberal climate following the *Destalinization*,<sup>244</sup> anti-religious campaigns gained impetus during Khrushchev era especially between 1959 and 1964. In this era, the state intensified its efforts against the religious institutions and clergy using various state institutions.<sup>245</sup> In October 1964, the regime acknowledged the past wrongdoings of the state and condemned the mistreatments applied to the clergy.<sup>246</sup> Under Brezhnev, who served between 1964-1982 as the leader of the USSR, the anti-religious policies eased. Under Gorbachev, the oppression was intensified but under the liberal climate, the anti-religious policies could not secure a solid ground.

One of the core institutions of Islam was the family. It was the environment where the upbringing of Muslim children in accordance with Islamic principles took place. The Soviet state aimed to take precautions in order to prevent the upbringing of children as Muslims at home. The Soviet style houses were constructed without courtyard halls and apartments were

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<sup>243</sup> Sergei Abashin, "A Prayer for Rain: Practising Being Soviet and Muslim," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 25-2 (2014): 179.

<sup>244</sup> Following the death of Stalin, the new leader of the Soviet Union unleashed a reform process aimed at bringing a certain level of liberalization to the Soviet totalitarianism. The reforms included the improvement for the conditions of the prisoners and the ending of the personality cult of Stalin.

<sup>245</sup> Taşer, 159.

<sup>246</sup> Shireen Hunter, *Islam in Russia: The Politics of Identity and Security* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2000), 32.

promoted.<sup>247</sup> Ultimately, however, people were able to follow their cultural inclinations by erecting a wall around the plot.<sup>248</sup> The intensive efforts in bringing equality between sexes within a family failed as well. Father remained the authority over the children.<sup>249</sup> In addition, the Soviet state could not prevent polygamy. Many Muslim men registered his first marriage according to the civil law, while solemnizing the second in front of a mullah.<sup>250</sup> Secular wedding rituals were compulsory, but they were unable to replace the religious ones. The *Komsomol*<sup>251</sup> *nikah*<sup>252</sup> was generally supplemented with a religious one.<sup>253</sup> The Soviet Union also banned the payment of *kalym*,<sup>254</sup> which was initially effectively followed but the tradition reemerged during the 1960s.<sup>255</sup>

The Muslims' clothes and dietary were also considered as the patterns that were in need of secularization. As early as 1930s, the attack against *hijab*<sup>256</sup> was unleashed. The state went as far as to demand the party leaders' wives to burn their *hijabs*.<sup>257</sup> Though, pork meat is regarded as impure and its consumption forbidden according to Islamic principles, it was served in the canteens of the factories in Muslim regions. Bacon states that pig breeding was in direct ratio to the Russian population in the Central Asian republics.<sup>258</sup> Considering this, it can be suggested that the introduction of pork meat to the

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<sup>247</sup> Elizabeth A. Bacon, *Central Asians under Russian Rule: A Study in Cultural Change* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 161.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>249</sup> Bennigsen and Lemerrier-Quelquejay, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, 188.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>251</sup> Komsomol': Youth branch of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. In order to compete the religious wedding ceremonies, this organization engineered a ceremonial practices for the atheist couples starting from the mid-1950s.

<sup>252</sup> Nikah: Wedding ceremony.

<sup>253</sup> Alexandre Bennigsen, "Unrest in the World of Soviet Islam," *Third World Quarterly* 10, 2: (April 1988), 774.

<sup>254</sup> Kalym: The payment to be paid by the groom-to-be to the parents of the bride.

<sup>255</sup> Bennigsen, 775.

<sup>256</sup> Headscarf of Muslim women.

<sup>257</sup> Bacon, 171.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

Muslim dietary routine failed. Muslims preserved their internal network through periodical getting together as a social routing. Such custom had a long history in Central Asia and helped Muslims to preserve their Muslim consciousness through socialization in between Muslims.<sup>259</sup> The introduction of alcohol to the Muslims, on the other hand, achieved more success. However, vodka drinking, a practice which was introduced during the Soviet era, permeated these social gatherings.<sup>260</sup>

Soviet authorities paid special attention to prevent the fulfilling of the five-pillars of Islam. Both the children and the workers faced persecution by food offers during *Ramadan* month, when Muslims have to fast during the day, while their daily prayers, which Muslims have to perform five times a day, were prohibited.<sup>261</sup> Most Muslims would overcome this with *taqiyya*.<sup>262</sup> A portion of Muslims therefore prayed whenever possible and did not refrain from denouncing their religious beliefs making harder for the Soviet authorities to combat religion.

### **5.2.2. The Bridge Between the Muftiates and the State**

In order to strengthen its control over the religious institutions, which regulated the religious life of the citizens, a bureaucratic institution was set up. The Council for the Affairs of Russian Orthodox Church was founded in 1943 and the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults (CARC) in 1944. These two

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<sup>259</sup> Adeeb Khalid, *Islam After Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia* (Berkeley LA: University of California Press, 2007), 101.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, 176-177

<sup>262</sup> *Taqiyya*: In Islam what matters is not the tongues says but what the heart believes. *Taqiyya* is the concealing of the faith under the fear of persecution or death.

were merged into Council for Religious Affairs in 1965.<sup>263</sup> The council was segmented into various divisions for three divisions: 1) Armenian Greek Catholic, and Lutheran Churches 2) Islam, Judaism and Buddhism and 3) Old Believers and evangelical congregations.<sup>264</sup> The main objective of this organization was to transmit the interests of Moscow to the religious institutions. This institution conducted a duty, which was nearly impossible to fulfill considering the haphazard Soviet bureaucracy and the discrepancy between the image of believers in the eyes of Communist party members and the real conditions.

Despite the decades after its foundation, as of 1950s, the Soviet Union still had not had an established policy with regard to religion. From the very beginning the Soviet Union aimed to transform the society. Religious leaders were executed, the schools were flooded with anti-religious material, a belief system called 'scientific atheism' that offered a world paradise was introduced, and propagated.<sup>265</sup> On the other hand, the state had to recognize toleration to some extent to religious belief in order to sustain the peace between the Muslim citizens and the state. Additionally, the Soviet local authorities were mostly unwilling in imposing the central doctrines in their regions and often preferred to collaborate.

CARC was in charge of implementing opaque doctrines of the Soviet regime. From its foundation until Khrushchev's return to the anti-religious campaigns, CARC also provided certain support to official religious

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<sup>263</sup> Riho Altnurme, "Religious Cults, Particularly Lutheranism, in the Soviet Union in 1944-1949," *Trames* 6-1 (2002): 4.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>265</sup> Paul Froese, "Forced Secularization in Soviet Russia: Why an Atheistic Monopoly Failed," *Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion* 43-1 (2002): 35.

institutions.<sup>266</sup> The NKVD officers determined the Soviet religious policy throughout the 1920s and 1930s. In fact the first head of CARC, Ivan Polanskii, was a “former” NKVD agent.<sup>267</sup> The mandate of CARC over Muftiates sometimes prompted the state sanctioned *ulama* to guide Muslims in contradiction to Islamic principles.<sup>268</sup> The Soviet era *fatwas* declared that fasting in Ramadan, sacrifice of livestock in *Kurban Bayramı* and collection of alms to the poor is no longer obligatory for Muslims.<sup>269</sup> NKVD officers, along with the Central Committee Department of Propaganda (*Agitprop*) would always intrude into the policy making by the CARC representatives.<sup>270</sup> Consequently, CARC remained as a secondary actor playing a minimal role in making of the religious policy and its role remained dependent on other dynamics.

### 5.3. Grassroots Parallel Islamic Activities

Despite the limited tolerance towards religion as well as the existence of four spiritual assemblies, the oppression continued. The Soviet state had many apparati in hand that would restrict the influence of Islam. However, introducing a brand-new and human-engineered materialistic culture to Muslims and expecting this to replace the old ones was a long shot. Under these circumstances, the role of *Sufi* orders and unregistered activities of itinerary *mullahs* have increased with the increase in Muslims appeal. During the Cold War, many academicians foresaw that the parallel Islam phenomenon was widespread and constituted a threat to the Soviet Union. However, many

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<sup>266</sup> Taşer, 165-166.

<sup>267</sup> Roi, 17.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, 140-146.

<sup>269</sup> Khalid, 111.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

Muslims who conducted illegal Islamic activities did not make political claims. Moreover, not all unofficial Islamic activities are against or in opposition to the officially regulated Islam.<sup>271</sup> As Islam does not require a clergy for its believers, the phenomenon of unregistered Islamic activity is much older than Islam's official regulation. In Soviet era it had a grassroots character through which the Soviet Muslims could stay as believers while they could simultaneously become the proponents of the official ideology.

The paucity of religious institutions led Muslims to unregistered activities. The emergence of such phenomenon dates back to centuries ago. Following the destruction of the *Khalifat* in Baghdad by the Mongols, the appeal towards the *Sufi* orders had increased. *Sufis* adopted the role of defenders of Islam, especially in Central Asia and North Caucasus, where the Islamic civilization is under direct threat from multiple sides.<sup>272</sup> This occurrence shows a direct correlation between the popularity of *Sufi* orders and the paucity of religious institutions. As the Soviet state intensified its policies against religion starting from the Khrushchev era, *Sufi* orders gathered strength.

### 5.3.1. *Tariqahs* of Soviet Muslims

*Tariqah* –*Sufi* orders- are based upon the relationship between *murid*<sup>273</sup> and *murshid*.<sup>274</sup> In *tariqahs*, *murshid* acts as a spiritual guide to his *murids*. Throughout his/her life *murids* follow a complicated path, during which he/she recite *zikr*<sup>275</sup> in order to preserve his/her spiritual enthusiasm. *Ziyarat*<sup>276</sup> to

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<sup>271</sup> Khalid, 112.

<sup>272</sup> Bennigsen and Wimbush, 2-3.

<sup>273</sup> Murid: Sufi adept.

<sup>274</sup> Murshid: Head of a Sufi chain.

<sup>275</sup> Zikr: Repetition of the name of God.

shrines and *mazars*<sup>277</sup> can also be considered as the activities of *Sufi* orders. In Soviet Union, where fulfilling the obligatory duty of *hajj* was nearly impossible, such *ziyarat*s gained prominence.

The *Sufi* orders had different backgrounds in different regions of the Soviet Union. Along with the oppression on religious life, in North Caucasus, where *Sufism* was associated with resistance to Russian rule, the allegiance was also of political character. Two of such mystic doctrines had strong roots within the Muslim regions occupied by the Soviet Union were *Naqshbandiyya* and *Qadiriyya*. *Yasawiyya* and *Qubrawiyya* were also popular in some areas relatively less than the former two. These orders differ in observing of the *zikr*. There were some differences emanating from the geography they operated.

The most important *Sufi* lineage in the Soviet Union was *Naqshbandiyya*. Founded by Bahauddin Naqshbandi Buhari in 14<sup>th</sup> century, the order quickly spread in Central Asia and the North Caucasus. Adepts of *Naqshbandiyya* observe silent *zikr*. In Soviet times, this order was particularly active in the Volga Region and Central Asia.

*Qadiriyya* was the second important *Sufi* order within the Soviet Union. Founded by Abdulkadir Geylani in 11-12<sup>th</sup> century in Baghdad, *Qadiriyya* expanded its influence following the Mongol invasions. Lack of *khalifat* brought about a proliferation of the adepts of this order. In the Caucasus, *Qadiriyya* became associated with the resistance to Tsarist Russia in 19<sup>th</sup> century. Kunta Hacı, who led a resistance movement, was also the *murshid* of the Caucasus branch of *Qadiriyya*. The order also played a major role in spreading Islam to

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<sup>276</sup> Ziyarat: Literally means visit in Arabic, *ziyarat* means paying a pilgrimage visit to the tombs and shrines.

<sup>277</sup> Mazar: Tombs of deceased prominent Muslim figures, or *Sufi* leaders.

Chechen and Ingush lands during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. *Qadiriyya* movement was especially popular in North Caucasus during Soviet times. More often than not, the lineage was also associated with clans.

*Yasawiyya* movement was established by Ahmed Yasawi in 12<sup>th</sup> century. This movement was especially significant for the consolidation of Islam in Asia Minor. The *murids* of Ahmad Yasawi migrated to Asia Minor from the Central Asian steppes to sow the seeds of Islam. In the Soviet Union, its effect was limited to Ferghana Valley. This order was by and large subdued by *Naqshbandiyya* later on.

*Qubrawiyya*'s sphere of influence was limited to Amu-Darya River. This order was almost completely absorbed by *Naqshbandiyya*, which replaced the loud *Qubrawiyya zikr* with silent one. In Soviet Union *Qubrawiyya* did not have much influence.

### **5.3.2. Appeal to Sufism**

The revival of *Sufi* orders was directly related to the oppression of Islam by the Soviet rule. The Soviet government strictly prohibited unregistered religious activities and these orders operated clandestinely. Their recruitment process and activities were carried out secretly. Why Muslims appealed to *Sufi* orders? What kind of lacunae the *Sufi* orders filled within the Soviet state? *Sufi* orders experienced a revival within the Soviet Union starting from the 1960s. As they were not subject to the supervision of state apparatuses, *tariqahs* were free to determine their own agenda. *Sufi* orders offered a secluded place for the Muslims who demanded to live according to their faith.



The inefficacy of official Islamic establishments, the oppression on Islam and Atheist propaganda were major reasons why *Sufism* experienced a revival in the Soviet Union. Most Soviet Muslims joined to the *Sufi* brotherhoods out of their pursuit of a place where they can live according to the Islamic principles. Neither the pompous scientific atheism nor the service of the Islamic establishment were adequate to satisfy the spiritual needs of Muslims. The secular Soviet rituals have been unable to replace the old traditions. The few working mosques were far from meeting the need.

The established *Sufi* tradition, which had an intellectual and cultural background in Muslim regions that fell under the domination of Soviet Union, was ready to satisfy the needs of Muslims. *Sufi* rituals, often borrowed some elements of the local culture addressed to the needs of the Muslims, underrepresented by the state bureaucracy. The *Sufi* places for gathering became the religious centers replacing the strictly overseen officially registered mosques. Muslims, who were not able to perform their religious duties and ceremonies, utilized unregistered institutions. The ones who wanted to perform their marriage, circumcision, and burial ceremonies properly according to Islamic customs resorted to *Sufi* adepts.<sup>278</sup> *Sufi* orders even clandestinely provided Islamic education.<sup>279</sup> The monopoly of the Soviet Union in regulating the religious activity of the citizens was put under judicial guarantee. For instance, the punishment for citizens who engage in religious teaching ranged from 2-3 years.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> Bennigsen and Wimbush, 86.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>280</sup> Taşer, 461.

In North Caucasus and Turkmenistan in particular, where the traditional extended families brought about clans, it was not uncommon that the clan members became *ipso facto* adepts of *Sufi* orders.<sup>281</sup> The *Sufis* has also infiltrated into the Soviet institutions. On some instances the *Sufi* activities were joined by the *kolkhoz*<sup>282</sup> chairman or local Communist Party authorities. Potential *murids* were approached in factories and recruited to the orders.<sup>283</sup>

Its association with resistance to Russian rule was also a strong parameter for the appeal. *Sufi* adepts saw in *Sufism* the historical resistance to Russian rulers by the *Sufi* leaders such as Sheikh Shamil in the Caucasus, Ishan Madali in Fergana Valley, and Kurban Murad in Turkmenistan.<sup>284</sup> However, the *Sufi* orders led no strong open resistance movement against the Soviet Union. Considering this, it can be suggested that the main role of the *Sufi* movements became providing a breathing space for Islam in the Soviet Union. The message of Islam was transmitted to the post-Soviet era through *Sufi tariqahs*.

### **5.3.3. The Attitude of Official *Ulama* Towards Unregistered Activity**

As the official representatives of the Soviet Union, the state sanctioned *ulama* did not collaborate with the Soviet bureaucracy in their efforts to eradicate Islam to a large extent. In other words, although the official Islam in the Soviet Union was the systematic rival of parallel activities, it sometimes turned a blind eye to their activities and on some instances even supported them. Some members of official *ulama* were simultaneously a *Sufi murshid*. Such phenomenon was almost impossible to prevent considering that *Sufism* even

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<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>282</sup> *Kolkhozes* were Soviet style collective farms.

<sup>283</sup> Taşer, 65.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

infiltrated to these apparatuses as well. The support of official *ulama* to the Soviet state's battle against underground Islamic activities remained limited and reluctant. The control over the official conduct of Islamic life was so severe that the parallel activities remained multiply stronger than the official ones. Despite the rare mention of the intensity of unofficial Islam, it was the unregistered collective activities that protected the Islamic conscious during the Soviet era.<sup>285</sup>

The institutionalization of the official Islam has widened the gap between parallel and official Islam.<sup>286</sup> However, at the same time the relations between *Sufi* orders and official Islamic institutions have become so convoluted that it was often not possible to draw a fine line between these two. The informal links between official and unofficial Islam made the line between these two quite blurry. For instance, Ziauddin Babahanov was an adept of *Naqshibandiyya*,<sup>287</sup> while simultaneously he worked as the head of SADUM for decades. Though he would sometimes criticize the activities of *Sufi* adepts, his critics never went as far as to accuse them as unbelievers.

#### **5.4. The Dissolution of the Soviet Union**

The Soviet Union was weakened and ultimately dissolved in 1991. The oppression on Islam was severe and Islam was a strong social dynamic that had a potential to organize the Muslim communities within the Soviet Union. This led many to foresee that Islam would become the cause of ultimate dissolution of the Union. Islam and Muslim political and social dynamism could not be at the

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<sup>285</sup> Abashin, 188.

<sup>286</sup> Yemelianova, 127

<sup>287</sup> Bennigsen and Wimbush, 2.

forefront of the events that led to the demise of the USSR. However, both the grassroots Islam and its official regulation were fundamentally transformed in the process.

#### **5.4.1. Gorbachev Reforms**

Thoroughly analyzing the dissolution process of the USSR is well beyond the scope of this research. The debate on what was the real reason behind the collapse of the Union is still incomplete. Regardless of this, at least giving a short account upon the parameters of the ultimate dissolution would be useful to understand the transformation of the official and unofficial institutions of the Muslim communities. Especially the transformation within the Union following the reforms of Gorbachev was important with its role in the final dissolution and its contribution to the Muslim activism.

The weakening and the deterioration of the Soviet regime as well as the reform calls within the system of the Union was finally considered by Mikhail Gorbachev who became the leader of the USSR in 1985. He introduced a domestic reform package, which included two major steps related to country's economy and democracy. The economic reforms were named as *perestroika*<sup>288</sup> and the reforms on issues regarding free speech, and general democratization attempts were named as *Glasnost'*.<sup>289</sup> The preeminence of the USSR decreased following the lingering of war in Afghanistan. Feeling the need, Gorbachev planned to overcome through these reforms in order to secure the sustainment of the USSR in the long run.

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<sup>288</sup> *Perestroika* means reconstruction.

<sup>289</sup> *Glasnost'* roughly means openness in Russian.

#### 5.4.2. Revival of Islam Towards the End of the Regime

Following the beginning of the war in Afghanistan and the begrudging support to the cause from the Muslims, the pressure upon Islam was once more tightened starting from 1981.<sup>290</sup> Gorbachev era did not fundamentally alter the relations between the Muslims and the regime for the better. Instead, as the country leaned more on to the West with liberal reforms, the Union needed the Muslim world and the domestic Muslim support to the USSR's foreign policy agenda less. While the country was on the path of liberalization, the anti-Islamic activities were once more intensified.<sup>291</sup> This was not the first time the Soviet Union or its predecessor Russian Empire tried to handle contradictory policy objectives. The relative freedom instigated by the reforms enabled the different political groups to obtain maneuvering areas in openly pursuing their political agenda, not necessarily in line with the principles of the regime. As a result of this, progressive movements from the Muslims within the Soviet Union emerged.

The relaxation of the strict pressure over the social and political institutions affected the social, political and bureaucratic institutions of Muslims. Islam appeared alongside the rising nationalism in different regions of the USSR. The religion was once again discovered as the strongest dynamic in people's heritage and identity. Muslim religious leaders' aim to familiarize the ordinary Muslims with the Islamic heritage played a major role in this process.<sup>292</sup> Through the end of the 1980s, political parties with Islamic lineages

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<sup>290</sup> Yemelianova, 132.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>292</sup> Alexei V. Malashenko, "Islam Versus Communism: The Experience of Coexistence," in *Russia's Muslim Frontiers: New Directions in Cross-Cultural Analysis*, ed. Dale Eickelman (Bloomington IN, Indiana University Press, 1993), 67.

were founded such as the Islamic Party of Dagestan, Islamic Party of Turkestan and Islamic Renaissance Party, which added into its program the aim of organizing Islamic schools, lecture series and special interest circles.<sup>293</sup> Islamic Renaissance Party remained loyal to the regime while the Islamic Party of Turkestan behaved more audaciously and leveled up its demands to the point of secession.<sup>294</sup>

This activism affected the Muslim *ulama* and the Spiritual Directorates as well. In 1980s the spiritual directorates gained a wider maneuvering area both in domestic and international sphere. The Soviet media portrayed the Islamic festivals as national form of Soviet culture and the directorates enjoyed more freedom in education and publishing.<sup>295</sup> In 1985 the authority of the Department of Foreign Relations of the Muslim Organizations of the USSR was significantly expanded.<sup>296</sup> As the authority of the Soviet state began to deteriorate, following the lifting of the troops from Afghanistan in 1988, a new generation of imams emerged. The Mufti of DUMES Talgat Taceddin and Allahşükür Paşazade of DUMZK supported them while the North Caucasian *ulama* did not deal with them.<sup>297</sup> The appointment of Muhammed Sadık Yusuf to the SADUM, whose leadership had been dominated by the Babakhanov family for the past decades, was made possible only when a group of student from Mir-i Arab demanded from the party head of Uzbekistan the removal of Şemseddin Babakhanov with protests in 1988.<sup>298</sup> In 1978, for the first time a non-Dagestani Mufti Mahmud Gökiyev was elected as the head of DUMSK. When he

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<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>294</sup> Yemelianova, 134.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>296</sup> Silan'tev, 133.

<sup>297</sup> Yemelianova, 170.

<sup>298</sup> Silant'ev, 130.

was removed from the post in 1989, DUMSK was divided into separate Muftiates and remained as such until 1998.<sup>299</sup> On the other hand, under the leadership of Allahşükür Paşazade, DUMZK remained as the only Spiritual Directorate after 1992 that widened its authority.<sup>300</sup> The head of DUMES, Talgat Taceddin, also managed to protect his post as well.

In 1990, Gorbachev amended the law on religion, which guaranteed the freedom of conscience in the Soviet Union.<sup>301</sup> As a consequence the people who confessed their Islamic faith rose from 12% to 50%.<sup>302</sup> A relative relaxation gave way to the demonstration of Islamic faith by the Soviet Muslims. Islamic holidays and religious days began to be observed without hindrance. Especially the young Soviet Muslims, who did not live in the most repressive eras of the Soviet state appealed to Islam. The role of the Afghan war and the relative easiness in reaching out to the outside Islamic communities were undeniable factors in realizing such climate.

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<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>301</sup> "Zakon RSFSR Ot 25.10.90 N 267-1 O svobode veroispovedanya," *Zakoni Rossii*, [http://www.lawrussia.ru/texts/legal\\_913/doc91a947x905.htm](http://www.lawrussia.ru/texts/legal_913/doc91a947x905.htm).

<sup>302</sup> Galina Yemelianova, "Islamic Radicalization: A Post-Soviet or a Global Phenomenon," in *Radical Islam in the Soviet Union*, ed. Galina Yemelianova (New York: Routledge, 2010), 25.

## CHAPTER VI

### ***ULAMA* IN POST-SOVIET ERA**

The consequences of the disintegration process were generally positive for the Muslims that benefitted the relatively liberal climate. The new law on Freedom of Conscience that was promulgated in 1990 enabled the proliferation of spiritual boards.<sup>303</sup> As a result of this, the new generation of *ulama* that had a chance to get their education abroad found chance to pursue their agenda. The Muslim *ulama* in Russia spent much of their energy to outwit rival figures throughout the 1990s.

The disintegration process began with the reforms of Gorbachev. As a consequence of the demise of the USSR, the Russian Federation emerged as the successor of the Soviet Union, with 14 other independent states. The oppression on Muslims relented and Islam in Russia experienced a spontaneous revival. Within the first decade, following the disintegration of the Union, Islam was once more visible at social and political life. Mosques were reconstructed, Islamic publishing activities increased, the younger generation appealed to their Islamic roots and Islam was once more realized as a strong component of Muslims' identity.

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<sup>303</sup> "Zakon RSFSR ot 25.10.90 N 267-1 O svobode veroispovedanya," *Zakoni Rossii*, [http://www.lawrussia.ru/texts/legal\\_913/doc91a947x905.htm](http://www.lawrussia.ru/texts/legal_913/doc91a947x905.htm).



## **6.1. The Disintegration of the USSR and Its Consequences for Muslims**

The fall of the Soviet Union was a surprising phenomenon. Neither the Soviet citizens were prepared to the transformation, nor the international system was ready to handle such a massive shift the demise of the USSR entailed. Following the disintegration, the Russian Federation, along with other new independent states, faced an existential crisis. Russia needed to construct a new identity that could embrace the peoples that inhabited its territory. One of the challenges Russia faced was its Muslim population that particularly inhabited North Caucasus and Volga region.

### **6.1.1. The Unexpected Collapse of the Union**

The reform attempts of Gorbachev aimed at strengthening the Soviet state and at increasing its competency in global arena. Some of his predecessors held similar aims. Stalin, for instance, made the USSR an overly centralized state, while Khrushchev denounced Stalin's acts. Ultimately, none of those attempts had brought the disintegration of the Union and the USSR preserved its integrity. However, Gorbachev's reform attempts ended up causing the dissolution because his reforms were fundamental and the Soviet state was weak.

The Muslims' demand for self-recognition was not the primary cause of the ultimate disintegration of the Union. The strongest dynamics were the decline in central authority and. This trend began with the economic stagnation,

which bewildered the Soviet officials who were accustomed to rapid growth.<sup>304</sup> To reverse this trend, Gorbachev initiated his reform package, which did not produce the results he hoped. In 1989, the Berlin Wall was destroyed and the Eastern European countries declared their political independence from Moscow. In its turn, Gorbachev neither protected the old institutions against the challenges, nor he managed to introduce substitute bureaucratic authority to handle the situation.<sup>305</sup>

Once the Pandora's Box was opened the authority in the USSR quickly deteriorated and the second half of the 1980s witnessed multiple tensions that threatened the central authority. Jeltoqsan events that took place in 1986 in Kazakhstan, demonstrations in Tajikistan demanding the use Tajik language, and the movements that aimed the recognition of national identities in Tatarstan and Uzbekistan took place as a result of the power vacuum, which enabled the nationalist and identity based tensions to arise.<sup>306</sup>

In order to restore the trust of the Soviet citizens to the reform process, a referendum was held in March 1991, in which the citizens were asked whether they want the retention of a reformed Soviet Union or not.<sup>307</sup> The referendum also included separate questions designed for certain member republics. For instance, it inquired the citizens of Russia Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) on their attitude towards the establishment of a new post for the President's Office. As a consequence of this referendum, an energetic figure Boris Yeltsin was elected as the President of Russia in the following elections. In

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<sup>304</sup> David M. Kotz and Fred Weir, *Russia's Path from Gorbachev to Putin: The Demise of the Soviet System and the New Russia* (New York: Routledge), 45.

<sup>305</sup> Service, 479.

<sup>306</sup> Schamiloglu, 92.

<sup>307</sup> In Estonia, Georgia, Armenia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Moldova referendum did not take place.

August 1991, the hardline communist faction within the Party staged a *coup d'état* against Gorbachev. However, the coup has failed and gave an opportunity to Yeltsin to outlaw the Communist Party. Fearing for another *coup d'état*, 10 member republics declared their independence from the Soviet Union towards the end of 1991.

Through the Minsk Agreement that took place in December 1991, the leaders of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus declared that the Soviet Union ceased to exist and a looser organization named Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) would replace the USSR. Yeltsin shrewdly outwitted his remaining political opponents and rose to become the most powerful leader of the biggest chunk of the disintegrated Union. He even moved to the old office of Gorbachev, following his resignation. Yeltsin, who posed to media on tanks against the *coup d'état* in front of the parliament in 1991, would order the army to fire the same Soviet era parliament when the members resisted dissolving it in 1993. His authority would be supplemented legally as well. When the first constitution of the Russian Federation was written in 1993, the President would obtain the right to dissolve the State Duma<sup>308</sup> with extensive rights in country's governance.<sup>309</sup>

Yeltsin employed 'shock therapy' to enable the transformation to market economy. The government implemented an uncompromising stance towards the existing economic system to provide an impetus for the liberal economy to emerge automatically. However, the Russian society was not prepared for constructive measures and *Perestroika* could not provide a solid preparatory

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<sup>308</sup> *Konstitutsiya Rossiiskoi Federatsii* (hereafter KRF), (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Yuridicheskogo Literatura," 2011) Glava 4, Statya 84b, 36.

<sup>309</sup> KRF, Gl. 4, 33-41.

ground for further reforms.<sup>310</sup> Chaotically, the power was transferred from the Soviet officials to informal networks of influence. These networks had financial resources to benefit from the economic chaos.<sup>311</sup> The birth of oligarchs, which became Russia's inherent phenomenon later on dates back to Yeltsin's mishandling the economic transformation.

### **6.1.2. The Fate of Soviet Muslims**

During the disintegration process, the Muslims found new opportunities. The central authority, which had used to limit Muslim's freedom, was much weaker *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Kremlin. However, Muslims also had a number of disadvantages. Muslims values were eroded within during the long rule of the Soviet Union. Moreover, the Russian Federation was more homogeneous than the Soviet Union, hence the danger of being a minority under a nation-state. The Russians in the USSR was around the 50% of the population, while this ratio reached to 80% in the Russian Federation following the disintegration. The proportion of Muslims in the Soviet Union comparing to the Russian Federation, however remained between 10-15%.<sup>312</sup> Moreover, just like it happened during the Russian Revolution, the Muslims was not prepared to react to the sudden developments.

The five Central Asian Republics, as well as Azerbaijan founded independent republics. Two very significant Muslim-inhabited regions, namely

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<sup>310</sup> Peter Murrell, "What is Shock Therapy? What did it do in Poland and Russia," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 9:2 (1993): 131.

<sup>311</sup> Peter Rutland, "The Oligarchs and Economic Development," in *After Putin's Russia: Past Imperfect Future Uncertain*, ed. Stephen K. Wegren and Dale R. Herspring (Lanham MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 162.

<sup>312</sup> This is a contested ratio. In Russia no official data on how many Muslims lives in Russia was promulgated. The estimates vary between 3 million and 30 million or in other words roughly 2% and 20%.

the Volga Region and the North Caucasus remained under the rule of Moscow. Home to a consolidated Islamic civilization, the Muslims in these regions had showed resilience against the Russian occupier for centuries with different methods.

## **6.2. The Revival Of Islam and the *Ulama***

Following the demise of the USSR, Islamic parties were founded, publishing activities boomed, mosques mushroomed across Russia. Thousands of people that were liberated from the Soviet oppression freely went to perform *hajj*. In 1998, the number of mosques exceeded 5000, comparing to 179 in 1980. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the quantity of registered *ulama* rose from 30 to 5000 and the quantity of official institutions providing Islamic education rose from only 2 to hundreds.<sup>313</sup>

The aim of creating the *homo-sovieticus* ultimately failed, but the decades of Soviet experience caused erosion in Islamic values and nearly annihilated the material Islamic culture. The regulation of all social and political affairs of Muslim regions was conducted from the center in the Soviet Union. This made the Soviet state the legal monopoly in regulation of the spiritual affairs of Muslims. Lack of such authority was the primary factor that caused the proliferation of religious authorities and rifts within the *ulama*.

Younger generation of *imams*, commonly referred as *young imams*, began to challenge the authority of the old imams who owed their authority to the Soviet authorities. The *young imams* adapted to the new conditions that arose following the dissolution of the Union. They actively sought support from

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<sup>313</sup> Yemelianova, 138.

foreign countries, local businessmen, and politicians. With the absence of the Soviet state, *young imams* utilized newly emerged political authorities. Consequently, starting from the late 1980s, the Islamic centers and Spiritual Boards, often claiming authority on overlapping regions, skyrocketed.

### **6.2.1. Taceddin's Pursuit of *Status Quo***

Along with DUMSK, Taceddin's DUMES remained under the authority of Moscow. Under the leadership of Talgat Taceddin, DUMES sought for retaining its Soviet era monopoly it used to enjoy over the territories of European part of Russia. In 1990 the Fifth All-Russian Muslim Congress took place in 6-8 June. Prominent Muslims met in Ufa to discuss the challenges faced by Muslims and the possible opportunities. Within the institutional framework of DUMES, the regulation of religious life was projected to differ not much from how it was in Soviet era. Its charter indicated that DUMES would preserve rigid vertical authority from the Mufti to the local mosques.<sup>314</sup>

Though Taceddin continued to claim spiritual authority over the Russian Federation, in practice his authority greatly diminished along with the central Soviet authority. The disengagements began as early as August 1992 with the secessions of Muslims in Tatarstan and Bashkiria.<sup>315</sup> In 30 September 1992, an interethnic conference, which led by the Muslim Religious Board of the Republic of Tatarstan (hereafter DUMRT)<sup>316</sup> and Muslim Spiritual Board of the Republic of Bashkortostan (hereafter DUMRB) was summoned.<sup>317</sup> In this congress, an

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<sup>314</sup> Hunter, 52.

<sup>315</sup> Roman Anatolyevich Silant'ev, *Noveishaya İstoriya İslama* (Moscow: Algoritm, 2007), 54-55.

<sup>316</sup> Russian – *Dukhovnoye upravleniye musul'man Respubliki Tatarstan*.

<sup>317</sup> Russian - *Dukhovnoye upravleniye musul'man Respubliki Bashkortostan*.

opposition bloc against Talgat Taceddin was established.<sup>318</sup> In October 1992 an umbrella organization that comprised several spiritual organizations from Volga region was formed in First Coordinating Council of Regional Spiritual Administrations of Muslims of the European part of the former USSR and Siberia. This council led to the foundation of the Higher Coordination Center of the Muslim Spiritual Boards in Russia (hereafter VKTsDUMR)<sup>319</sup> which would be headed by the Mufti of DUMRT Abdullah Galiyullin.<sup>320</sup>

In its turn, DUMES was once more reorganized and it claimed the authority to regulate the spiritual affairs of the Russian Federation and European parts of the former Soviet republics such as Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Belarus, in the Sixth Extraordinary Muslims of European Part of the CIS and Siberia Congress that took place in November 1992. In this congress, a resolution towards preserving the unity of the Muslims under the umbrella of a single bureaucratic organ was adopted and Taceddin acquired the title 'Supreme Mufti.'<sup>321</sup> Meanwhile, in March 1994, DUMES was renamed as Central Spiritual Assembly of the Muslims in Russia and European States of CIS (hereafter TsDUM)<sup>322</sup> and registered to the Ministry of Justice. In the following Seventh Extraordinary All-Russian Muslim Congress, which took place in November 1994, Taceddin was removed from the post. However, the congress was reconvened in January 1995 and reversed all the resolutions against Taceddin.<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> Silant'ev, 58.

<sup>319</sup> Russian – *Visshiy koordinatsionnyy tsentr dukhovnykh upravleny musul'man Rossii*.

<sup>320</sup> Silant'ev, 58-59.

<sup>321</sup> Hunter, 52.

<sup>322</sup> Russian - *Tsentral'noye dukhovnoye upravleniye musul'man Rossii i Yevropeyskikh stran SNG*.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

Taceddin managed to preserve his authority to a large degree until the mid-1990s. However, the Russian Federation did not prefer to follow a policy of favoring a loyal figure by supporting Taceddin and taking an opposing stance against other Muslim religious leaders. Instead, the state enabled the proliferation of religious authorities within the state. Russia's policy can be accounted as logical one as the *ulama* remained weak and divided without capacity to produce any substantial threat to Russia.

### **6.2.2. Russian Council of Muftiates in Opposition**

In 1994, Spiritual Board of the Central European Parts of Russia (hereafter DUMTSER)<sup>324</sup> was founded as a branch of TsDUM.<sup>325</sup> Ravil Gainutdin was appointed as the head of DUMTSER. An exceptional figure, Gainutdin was an actor and radio-TV programmer who had lately graduated from Mir-i Arab and had subsequently been appointed to Nur Islam mosque in Kazan.<sup>326</sup> He founded the Russian Council of Muftiates (hereafter SMR)<sup>327</sup> in 1996. SMR would begin to act as a rival organization to TsDUM. At the initial phase, he was loyal to Taceddin, though Silant'ev argues that he had betrayed Taceddin even before he founded SMR.<sup>328</sup>

In contrast to TsDUM, which pursued to put all the Muslim organizations under its swift control, SMR adopted a loose organizational structure. In contrast to TsDUM, Initially, the authority of SMR was only limited to the Central European region. In time, spiritual boards of other regions became

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<sup>324</sup> Russian - *Dukhovnoye upravleniye musul'man Tsentral'nogo-Evropeiskogo Regiona Rossii*.

<sup>325</sup> Silant'ev, 61.

<sup>326</sup> "Biografia," Musul'mane Rossii: Ofitsial'ny sait dukhovnovo upravlenya musul'man Rossiiskoi Federatsii, <http://www.dumrf.ru/dumer/mufti>.

<sup>327</sup> Russian - *Soviet Muftiyev Rossii*.

<sup>328</sup> Silant'ev, 61.



members of SMR. The expansion of membership to SMR transformed the organization from a branch of TsDUM into an organization that appeals to all the territories of Russia. SMR also made attempts to strengthen its relations with the Muslims of other CIS countries. From the beginning, Gainutdin largely benefitted from the location of SMR, which has provided him with easier access to financial and political support in Moscow.<sup>329</sup>

In a few years, SMR managed to unite a strong opposition to Taceddin. At the initial phase, the leaders of the VKTsDUMR, the strongest spiritual authority in North Caucasus, was merged with SMR in 1998. Abdullah Galiyullin and Nafigullah Ashirov became co-chairs of SMR.<sup>330</sup> In February 1999, Gainutdin signed a cooperation agreement with the Islamic Center of Tajikistan. By then, he had already made similar arrangements with the Muslims of Ukraine, the Crimea, Belarus and Latvia.<sup>331</sup> As opposed to Taceddin who claimed the authority of the spiritual regulation in these countries, which never realized following the demise of the USSR, Gainutdin acted more realistically and preferred to cooperate with these institutions with respect to their due authority.

### **6.2.3. Coordinating Center of Spiritual Board of Muslims in North Caucasus**

The disintegration of *ulama* in North Caucasus stemmed from the opposition to Mahmud Gökiyev.<sup>332</sup> It was indicated before that Gökiyev was the first non-Dagestani Mufti to serve as the leader of DUMS, which ceased to exist

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<sup>329</sup> Yemelianova, 161.

<sup>330</sup> Silant'ev, 88.

<sup>331</sup> Silant'ev, *Evolutsiya Sistemy*., 144.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

in 1989. After almost ten years of hiatus, KTSDUMSK was founded in 1998 as an organization, which served as an umbrella to more than 2000 Muslim congregations in North Caucasus region.<sup>333</sup> Through KTSDUMSK, Dagestani *ulama* would once more take the lead of Muslims within in North Caucasus region. KTSDUMSK is the third significant spiritual board in Russia. Though, KTSDUMSK operates under SMR, it retains a certain level of autonomy.

### **6.3. The Muslim Regions of Russia**

The communities whose autonomous body had the status of a 'union republic' were granted the right to secede from the Soviet Union. Despite Yeltsin's famous statement that promised the minorities 'as much as sovereignty they could grasp,' the central government ultimately grew unwilling to compromise the integrity of Russia. Both Tatarstan and Chechnya had demonstrated their will for acquiring the status of a 'union republic' before the dissolution but they failed to do so. Subsequently, these two regions became the only ones that did not sign the Federation Treaty offered by Boris Yeltsin in 1992. Tatarstan later agreed to reach a separate accord with Moscow in 1994 with a power sharing treaty. In Chechnya, the armed conflict prolonged until 2000s. The pursuits of independence of these nations are very instructive in comprehending the main dynamics of the relations between Islam and Russia.

#### **6.3.1. Tatarstan's Quest for Independence**

Centuries after its invasion by Ivan the Terrible, the Volga Tatars (or Kazan Tatars as they were called in Soviet era and after) found a chance to

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<sup>333</sup> Hunter, 62.

revive their national heritage with the collapse of the Soviet Union. As indicated extensively above, Kazan had a rich Islamic, as well as national, heritage. As the authority in Soviet Union deteriorated, Kazan Tatars were among the first to voice their self-determination demands starting from the second half of 1980s. In January 1989, Kazan Tatars from all over Russia convened and founded the All-Tatar Public Center (hereafter VTOTs).<sup>334</sup> Through VTOTs, they launched a campaign to raise their status to that of a union republic. By October 1989, the membership to VTOTs reached a million.<sup>335</sup>

Tatarstan was geographically disadvantaged in its pursuit of independence, as it was not neighboring a foreign country or a coast. At the initial phase before the dissolution of the USSR, instead of openly proclaiming independence, Kazan Tatars put their effort on increasing their sovereignty. Only after when they were no longer bound by the limitations of the Soviet system, they dared to hold a referendum for the independence in March 1992, in which Kazan Tatars were in favor of secession.<sup>336</sup> Despite these efforts, the 1993 Constitution boldly underlined that the sovereignty of Russia applies to its entire territory.<sup>337</sup> Kazan Tatars' continuing insistence led to a power sharing treaty between Tatarstan and Russia that was signed in 1994. As a consequence, Tatarstan was declared as a state within Russia having the right to participate in independent international relations. The agreement also gave Kazan limited opportunity to promote Tatar culture and language.<sup>338</sup> The power sharing treaty between Tatarstan and Russia motivated other regions to pursue similar

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<sup>334</sup> Russian – *Vse-Tatarskii obschestvennyy tsentr*.

<sup>335</sup> Hunter, 217.

<sup>336</sup> Katherine E. Graney, *Of Khans and Kremlins: Tatarstan and the Future of Ethno-Federalism in Russia* (Plymouth UK: Lexington Books, 2009), 33.

<sup>337</sup> KRF, Gl. 1, St. 4.

<sup>338</sup> Schamiloglu, 106.

aspirations and consequently more than half of the federal subjects made similar agreements with Moscow.

Hunter argues that religion did not play a dominant role in Tatarstan's quest for self-determination.<sup>339</sup> The educated elite among the Kazan Tatars had acculturated themselves to the Soviet cultural dominance and their Islamic consciousness was weak. However, Islam was a major component of Kazan Tatar identity and widely utilized for political ends. The grassroots support to Tatarstan's independence was garnered by putting Islam forward as the 'faith of the ancestors.'<sup>340</sup> Additionally, the earlier opposition to the monopoly of TsDUM by DUMRT was inherently related to Kazan Tatars' political aims. DUMRT represented the independence of the religious affairs of Kazan Tatars. TsDUM, on the other hand represented the idea of the unification of Muslims under the dominance of Moscow. VTOTs also supported the idea that Kazan Tatars should have their own spiritual board in Kazan. Additionally, VTOTs also aimed at the revival of *Cedid* ideology among Kazan Tatars.<sup>341</sup>

Though, at the initial phase, Kazan Tatars utilized Islam in order to break the ties between Tatarstan and the rest of Russia including its Muslims. Towards the end of the 1990s Kazan Tatars would attempt to take the lead of the Muslims. In the beginning, Tatarstan leadership under Shaimiev could not forge an alliance with Taceddin and did not act against the challenges of *young imams* against Taceddin.<sup>342</sup> In 1998 Tatarstan led an initiative, which can be considered similar to the stance taken following the collapse of the Russian

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<sup>339</sup> Hunter, 218.

<sup>340</sup> Liliya Sagitova, "Islam v Postsovietskom Tatarstane," *Rossiia i musul'manskii mir* 2-212 (2010): 31.

<sup>341</sup> Hunter, 218.

<sup>342</sup> Yemelianova, 154.

Empire. The President of Tatarstan Mintimer Shaimiev led the Unifying Congress ostensibly to put an end to the divisions within the Kazan Tatar *ulama*. The real motivation of Shaimiev was to ensure his control over the spiritual boards of Kazan Tatars. At that moment in Tatarstan, the Muslims were represented by DUMRT, which was backed by Shaimiev, and the representative of TsDUM in the region: Spiritual Board of Muslims in Tatarstan (DUMT).<sup>343</sup> As a result of the Unifying Congress, DUMT broke its ties with TsDUM and joined to DUMRT.<sup>344</sup> This action further consolidated Shaimiev's authority at the expense of Taceddin.

### **6.3.2. Crisis in Chechnya**

One of the gravest challenges of Moscow within the first two decades after the disintegration of the Soviet Union was the war in Chechnya. It was a test for Russia's military power as well as its national integrity. Unfortunately, the Russian Federation made an example of Chechens to all other minorities by brutally . Colonized at the second half of the nineteenth century by the Russian Empire, the authority in the North Caucasus region has been sustained with a vertical line of command. During the Soviet era, the region was dependent on subsidies from the center. Therefore, the sudden dismantling of Soviet economic system was devastating for the economy of the region.<sup>345</sup>

Resistance to the Russian occupation was not a novel phenomenon in the region. After some of the Chechens returned from exile, they demanded to be represented in their homeland with mass demonstrations in 1973.

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<sup>343</sup> Russian – *Dukhovnoye upravleniye musul'man Tatarstana*.

<sup>344</sup> Silant'ev, *Noveishaya Istoriya*., 92-93.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

Consequently, the Chechens were given a bigger share in government positions.<sup>346</sup> Following the introduction of *Glasnost*' reforms, Chechens would begin intensifying their demands.

The dissolution of the USSR provided an opportunity to the Chechens for pursuing their secessionist demands. The resistance to Russian occupation not only had historical roots among the Chechens, but also the very idea of resistance to authority had positive connotations in the Chechens' culture.<sup>347</sup> In other words, the Chechen resistance was based on historical continuity and cultural realities. The post-dissolution conjunctures also significantly reinforced Chechen resistance. The *Wahhabi*<sup>348</sup> warriors that accumulated power following the Afghan War as well as the emergence of charismatic leaders among the Chechens' society became major dynamics of Chechen resistance. It is important to note that, while the *Sufi* phenomenon has been a strong parameter in the history of Chechen armed resistance, the Wahhabi ideology gained prominence in overcoming the differences between numerous Chechen tribes at the subsequent phase of the resistance.<sup>349</sup>

Following the refusal of Chechens in signing the Treaty of Federation in 1992, Russia chose to initiate a war and Yeltsin sent his troops to Chechnya. Under the leadership of Jokhar Dudayev, who had been elected as the president of self-proclaimed Chechen Republic of Ichkeria in 1991, the Chechens fought against Russia. In 1995, Dudayev appointed Ahmed Kadyrov, a guerilla

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<sup>346</sup> Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: The Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 322.

<sup>347</sup> John Russell, *Chechnya: Russia's War on Terror* (London: Routledge, 2007), 13.

<sup>348</sup> Originated from the remote Arabian city of Najd, Wahhabism became the main component of the political and religious ideology of the Saudi Arabia. The influx of warriors from all around the world changed the course of Afghan War. These warriors cling upon the cause in following terms and significantly altered the dynamics of confrontation between Islam and West by their contribution to Chechen war, and their role in 9/11 and Syrian Civil War.

<sup>349</sup> Schamiloglu, 110.

commander as the Chief Mufti of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. Meanwhile a number of foreign volunteers joined the Chechen forces. With the assassination of Dudayev, Kadyrov gained prominence along with the army commander Shamil Basayev and Dudayev's predecessor Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev.

Chechens' independence pursuit has influenced the politics within the *ulama* of the region as well. In November 1991, following the separation of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR, the spiritual board in the region was once more separated. The Chechen *ulama* set up their own Muftiate as Spiritual Board of Chechen Republic (hereafter DUMChR). This institution was not under the direct control of Dudayev. Accordingly, in October 1991, Dudayev set up an alternative Spiritual Board named as Chechen Islamic Center. In July 1994, Dudayev's Islamic Center of Chechens declared the dissolution of DUMChR. DUMChR naturally did not recognize this but the division within the *ulama* in Chechnya further aggravated. Furthermore, the tribal lines and *ulama's* allegiance to different *tariqahs* were also a major part of the politics within the *ulama* as well.<sup>350</sup> The activism of foreign fighters and the *Wahhabi* threat was not visible at the initial phase. Yemelianova argues that the role of unofficial underground Islam, which was adopted by *Sufis* in post-Soviet era, was transferred to *Wahhabis*. However, the disintegration of *ulama* as well the general catastrophic situation would provide a ground for *Wahhabis'* activities.

Following a bloody war in which thousands of civilians was killed and hundreds of thousands internally displaced, Aslan Maskhadov (the successor of Yandarbiyev) and Boris Yeltsin reached an agreement that ended the war, though without the independence issue. Subsequently, the war was spilt over to

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<sup>350</sup> Silant'ev, 41.

Dagestan and Putin initiated the Second Chechen War. As a consequence of the brutalities of the Russian troops tens of thousands of Muslim civilians in the region lost their lives. Buildings were razed to the bottom and the infrastructure of Chechnya was greatly damaged. At this juncture, having been critical of foreign fighters and *Wahhabism* from the beginning, Ahmed Kadyrov made a U-turn and supported the Russian forces. The victory of Russian troops in the war had him appointed as the First President of Chechnya in 2003 by the then President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin. Ramzan Kadyrov, who is the son of Ahmed Kadyrov is the current president of Chechenya.

#### **6.4. Putin's Ascendancy into Power**

The citizens of Russia were initially hopeful about the country's future when Gorbachev came to power and initiated reforms. Their disappointment increased the popularity of Yeltsin, who would aim at destructing all Soviet economic, social and political institutions without providing proper replacements. His actions brought about a power vacuum and the public support to Yeltsin steadily declined. The Communist Party, which was re-opened in 1993, achieved majority in the 1995 elections and Yeltsin won the 1996 presidential elections hardly and under suspicions of fraud.<sup>351</sup> As of 1999, Yeltsin seemed unsuccessful in managing the transition from Soviet system. In 1999, he appointed the little-known figure Vladimir Putin as Prime Minister. In the following parliamentary elections that took place in December 1999, Putin managed to garner enough support to continue serving as the Prime Minister. Yeltsin retired in December 1999 and called for early Presidential elections,

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<sup>351</sup> Kotz and Weir, 264.



which was scheduled in June 2000. Putin took his seat. In the 2000 Presidential elections, Putin managed to be elected as the new president of Russia with a landslide victory.

## CHAPTER VII

### ISLAM UNDER PUTIN

Yeltsin could not prevent the 1999 economic crisis and the Chechen War weakened the central authority for a decade. Under these circumstances Putin emerged as a promising figure. In 1999, he was appointed the President of Russia following the retirement of Yeltsin and in the 2000 elections he was elected to the office. A determined personality with a KGB background, Putin has quickly become and then almost ceaselessly remained as the most powerful man in Russia. Under Putin, the ambiguousness of 1990s in Russian politics was replaced by Putin's authority.

The 1993 Constitution had already provided the President's Office with extensive powers. Putin keenly attached to the principle of the centralization of power, a typical practice in the Russian history. He considered the dissolution of the Soviet Union as the greatest catastrophe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in 2005<sup>352</sup> and accordingly put country's economy, civil society and politics under tight control of Kremlin through a series of reforms, ultimately ushering in a new era quite reminiscent of Soviet Union at all aspects.

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<sup>352</sup> Vladimir V. Putin, "Poslanie Federalnomu Sobranuyu Rossiiskoi Federatsii," *Prezident Rossii*, 25 April 2005, Accessed at August 7, 2015, [http://archive.kremlin.ru/appears/2005/04/25/1223\\_type63372type63374type82634\\_87049.shtml](http://archive.kremlin.ru/appears/2005/04/25/1223_type63372type63374type82634_87049.shtml).

Following Putin's coming to power; Russia's religious policy has also been adjusted to a rigid state control. Although there have been dozens of Muslim spiritual boards claiming influence over overlapping regions, two most significant organizations stood out: Taceddin's TsDUM and Gainutdin's SMR. Both TsDUM and SMR quickly adjusted to the Putin's governance and preserved their authority by relying upon the support of central government, regional authorities and outside sources. The relations within these spiritual boards were by no means friendly but comparing to 1990s they cooperated more often.

### **7.1. The Characteristics of Putin Era**

Putin was elected as the President of Russia in 2000. From the beginning, he has distanced himself from all kind of party organizations, when he served as the President and Prime Minister. He has been hesitant to limit his maneuvering area by pledging to an electoral body. Instead of acting like a political figure and relying on a party, he formed his own bloc within the Russian politics. Acting like a true *gosudartsvennik*,<sup>353</sup> he relied on the state and its prestige in garnering support from the Russian society.<sup>354</sup> That's why, his ascendancy into power was rather the accumulation of state power than a typical rise of a political figure in politics. Throughout the 1990s, oligarchs had gained substantial economic power they freely enjoyed, the civil society had found a maneuvering area and republics had received autonomies at different levels. Following his election to the Presidency, Putin prioritized the restoration of Russia's place within the international arena and the reconstruction of state power and institutional

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<sup>353</sup> Russian word for people who has the authority to use state power.

<sup>354</sup> Hans Oversloot, "Reordering the State (without Changing the Constitution): Russia under Putin's Rule, 2000-2008," Review of Central and East European Law 32 (2007): 43-44.

order.<sup>355</sup> He considered the 'dictatorship of law' and 'power vertical' in governance as a remedy to the illnesses of Russia. Apparent inconsistencies in Russia's state system provided a climate where Putin easily garnered support for his agenda. Under Putin's Russia, the economic means were put under state control, the civil society found little area to maneuver and regional autonomy gradually declined. This trend continued increasingly until today.

#### **7.1.1. Elimination of Disloyal Oligarchs**

The failure of 'shock therapy' and the economic crisis of 1999 damaged the Russian economy to a large extent. Apart from the fact that the governmental institutions and society could not handle it, Russia ended up having an economic crisis in 1999 as a result of the failure of 'shock therapy.' The by-product of this chaos was the emergence of oligarchs that suddenly became billionaires at the expense of the country's welfare. Putin adopted an adamant stance against the oligarchs only to whom that opposed his political agenda. Just a few months after he became the President, Putin hosted prominent oligarchs in Kremlin and conveyed his will to curb their political power. The message was clear, the oligarchs could continue making fortune so long as they do not oppose to the agenda of Kremlin. Subsequently, Putin initiated a crackdown on oligarchs who criticized the President and opposed Kremlin's policies. The first victim was Vladimir Gusinsky whose channel NTV carried critical coverage of the Chechen War. Later, the insistence of Michael

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<sup>355</sup> Service, 548.

Khodorkovsky and Boris Berezovsky in not complying with Kremlin's agenda was concluded with their exile abroad.<sup>356</sup>

Despite their rather positive image in the West, the oligarchs who subsequently happened to be Putin's adversaries made their fortune through quite questionable methods. However, Putin's policies were not particularly directed at how oligarchs made their fortune. Instead, his policy stemmed from his pursuit of power monopoly. Putin singled out the oligarchs who crossed the line and threatened his authority while the ones who stayed loyal to him remained untouched.

The Russian state had lost its control over the economy following the disintegration of the Union. Starting from Putin's ascendancy into Presidency the state began to extend control over the most economic sectors either as a monopoly or having representatives in companies' board of directors. *Wall Street Journal's* 2015 Index of Economic Freedom ranks Russia number 143<sup>rd</sup> in the world below Comoros.<sup>357</sup> Additionally, Russia is ranked the 143<sup>rd</sup> among 175 countries in Transparency International's corruption perception index, which measures how corrupt countries' public sectors are perceived.<sup>358</sup> In Russia, opening a business requires an arduous process. The ones, who are willing to make profit in Russia by setting up their own company, are required to follow average 11.2 procedures and wait for average 4.4 days.<sup>359</sup> These arduous procedures also ensure tight government control in market and provide benefits for larger companies close to Kremlin.

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<sup>356</sup> Kotz and Weir, 276.

<sup>357</sup> "Russia," *2015 Index of Economic Freedom*, <http://www.heritage.org/index/country/russia>.

<sup>358</sup> "Russia," *Transparency International*, <https://www.transparency.org/country/#idx99>.

<sup>359</sup> "Starting a Business," *Doing Business Project, International Finance Corporation and The World Bank*, <http://www.doingbusiness.org/data/exploretopics/starting-a-business>.

### 7.1.2. Government Control on Civil Society, Politics and Media

Under Soviet Union, political, social and economic life used to be strictly supervised by the state. At the immediate aftermath of the dissolution, along with the free market economy and democratization, a considerable freedom in civil society was observed. This had made the state vulnerable to foreign influence. The beginning of 1990s witnessed a liberal climate in politics and media, which persisted until Putin's presidency. Putin's staunch attitude towards the oligarchs would demonstrate itself in media and politics as well.

Starting from the 1990s, western oriented professionals of all sorts rushed to Russia as well as to the other post-Soviet countries.<sup>360</sup> Additionally, Muslim countries, especially Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, actively aided to the Muslims within Russia and in the CIS countries.<sup>361</sup> The influence of *Kmara* in Georgia's Rose Revolution and *Pora* in Ukraine's Orange Revolution influenced Putin's decision on taking a tougher stance with regard to foreign financed civil society organizations.

Putin aimed at opposing voices, which was employed through TV channels and sponsorships to opposing politicians. If we borrow the definition of civil society from Cohen and Arato who defined it "a sphere of social interaction between economy and state,"<sup>362</sup> then we can argue that civil society is quite weak in Russia as the boundary between the state and economy has

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<sup>360</sup> Byron T. Scott, "Press Freedom In The Post-Soviet Slavic World: Civil Society And The Quicksilver Question," in *Cultural Identity and Civil Society in Russia and Eastern Europe : Essays in Memory of Charles E. Timberlake*, ed. Andrew Kier Wise, David M. Borgmeyer, Nicole Monnier and Byron T. Scott (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 172.

<sup>361</sup> Silant'ev, *Evolutsiya Sistem.*, 143.

<sup>362</sup> Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1992), IX.

been blurred. The influence of state has been felt in almost every sphere of social activism. Just like the oligarchs, journalists and politicians as well face a pervasive persecution. Anna Politkovskaya, a journalist critical to Kremlin's policies who was assassinated 2006, Boris Nemtsov, a politician who was assassinated in February 2015, often cited together as the victims of Putin.

Following the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2005, Duma adopted a controversial law that significantly constrained the independence of NGO's.<sup>363</sup> Subsequently, the electoral threshold was raised from %5 to %7.<sup>364</sup> Considering the effect of young generation in Colour Revolutions, Putin also supported the foundation of a loyal youth organization similar to *Komsomol. Nashi*<sup>365</sup> was founded in 2005 with a ceremony attended by high profile visitors from Kremlin. The founder of *Nashi*, Vasilli Yakemenko would later serve as the head of State Committee for Youth Affairs between 2007 and 2012. According to a bill that passed in 2012 the non-commercial organizations that receive foreign funding have to register as 'foreign agents' to the Ministry of Justice.<sup>366</sup>

Today the civil society seems more like how it was in the Soviet era than in a modern democratic country. The Freedom House rated Russia quite poorly in its 2015 report. On a scale from 1 to 7 in which 7 point is the worst, Russia was rated with 6.0 in freedom rating, 6 in civil liberties and 6 in political

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<sup>363</sup> Evgeny Finkel and Yitzhak M. Brudny, "Russia and the colour revolutions," *Demokratizatsiya* 19-1 (2012): 17.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>365</sup> Russian: Ours.

<sup>366</sup> "O vnesenii izmeneniy v otdel'nyye zakonodatel'nyye akty Rossiyskoy Federatsii v chasti regulirovaniya deyatel'nosti nekommercheskikh organizatsiy, vypolnyayushchikh funktsii inostrannogo agenta," *Ofitsial'ny internet-portal pravovoi informatsiy*, July 18, 2012, Accessed at August 15, 2015, <http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&nd=102158302&rdk=&backlink=1>.

rights.<sup>367</sup> That means the state leaves little or no place for unsupervised social activism similar to Soviet era. The civil society organizations that support the Kremlin agenda are promoted as the true representatives of the people while others are degraded.<sup>368</sup>

### **7.1.3. Diminishing of Regional Autonomy**

Putin defined the spontaneous negotiations with autonomous bodies that took place following the power-sharing treaty with Tatarstan as flawed and considered that the decentralization was poorly fit to Russia's political culture and administrative needs.<sup>369</sup> Accordingly, with series of regulations, Putin increased the power of center at the expense of the maneuvering area the autonomous bodies achieved.

Under Soviet state, the autonomous bodies functioned under tight supervision of Kremlin. This restricted the Union's numerous republics' maneuvering area. On the other hand, the iron fist of the Kremlin ensured the stability across the Union. With the disintegration process state subsidies from center diminished and central authority waned. This trend created a power vacuum and destabilization and caused anarchy and war in Chechnya. Tatarstan's power-sharing treaty ushered in an era of series of power sharing treaties. Although these dozens of treaties aimed to address each region's specific needs, the agreements were influenced by the concerns of regional

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<sup>367</sup> "Russia," *Freedom House Freedom in the World 2015*, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2015/russia#.Vcd3U3rMKMI>.

<sup>368</sup> Sergej Ljubownikow, Jo Crotty Peter and W. Rodgers, "The State and Civil Society in Post-Soviet Russia: The Development of a Russian-style Civil Society," *Progress in Development Studies* 13-2 (2013): 160.

<sup>369</sup> Dmitri Mitin, "From Rebellion to Submission: The Evolution of Russian Federalism Under Putin," *Problems of Post-Communism* 55-5 (September/October 2008): 49.



threats.<sup>370</sup> Seeing that more belligerent and aggressive regions ultimately obtained more autonomy, Kaluga, a small oblast situated at the southwest of Moscow, in a rhetorical fashion, once declared its independence.<sup>371</sup> The agreements enabled the regional governments to act independently from the federal laws, an opportunity they sometimes used arbitrarily.<sup>372</sup> Putin's disturbance would be well established, if his only solution would not aim towards increasing the control of center over the peripheries, an attempt reminiscent of the Soviet era.

From the beginning, Putin aimed at strengthening the federal institutions at the expense of the regional authorities. In his television address to the citizens following the beginning of his first term as President, he underlined the need to restore the 'power vertical' to implement a 'dictatorship of law' for all citizens of Russia.<sup>373</sup> Consequently, he began a campaign to accommodate the regional charters and republican constitutions to the Russian Constitution. He also created seven federal super districts and granting himself the authority to dismiss regional government and regional assemblies.<sup>374</sup> Putin appointed representatives to these districts with extensive legal powers and began to arbitrarily use his presidential power to ensure the control of center over

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<sup>370</sup> Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, "Whither the Central State? The Regional Sources of Russia's Stalled Reforms," in *After the Collapse of Communism: Comparative Lessons of Transition*, ed. Michael McFaul and Kathryn Stoner-Weiss (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 134.

<sup>371</sup> Mitin, 58.

<sup>372</sup> Gordon M. Hahn, "Putin's Federal Reforms Reintegrating Russia 's Legal Space or Upsetting the Metastability of Russia 's Asymmetrical Federalism," *Demokratizatsiya* 9-4 (Fall 2001): 489.

<sup>373</sup> Cameron Ross "Putin's federal reforms and the consolidation of federalism in Russia: one step forward, two steps back!," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 36 (2003): 31-32.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

periphery.<sup>375</sup> In June 2000, the Constitutional Court ruled that the 1992 Federation Treaty is at odds with the Constitution, thus invalid.<sup>376</sup>

In spite of the new regulations the republics initially continued to violate the federal law. However, it was soon realized that Putin was determined to follow his course of action and the regions' policy shifted to resistance. The staunchest opposition was received from Tatarstan, which was included in the Volga district (*okrug*). President Shaimiev, persistently opposed to Putin's regulations using different instruments. First, he pursued to reverse the trend on legal arena but it did not work.<sup>377</sup> He then tried collaborating with VTOTs, which was in fact politically in opposition to Shaimiev. VTOTs was also critical of Putin's regulations as it demanded to preserve the Latin alphabet and the requirement that presidents be bilingual in Tatar and Russian.<sup>378</sup> Ultimately, Tatarstan along with other regions would have to accept most of the new regulations while disagreement in some areas persisted.<sup>379</sup> Putin's federal regulations would achieve a substantial success in curbing the republics' autonomy.

## **7.2. Spiritual Assemblies Under Putin**

In today's Russia, Islam continues to persist within the legal framework that has passed through a transformation following the disintegration of the USSR. The new legal framework broke the legal monopoly of state. Additionally,

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<sup>375</sup> Hunter, 229-231.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

<sup>377</sup> Hahn, 512.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*, 520.

<sup>379</sup> Stergos Kaloudis, "The Institutional Design of Russian Federalism: A Comparative Study of Three Republics; Tatarstan, Dagestan, and Chechnya," *Demokratizatsiya* 15-1 (Winter 2007): 144.

the relative liberal climate in Russia that weakened the central authority rejuvenated number of dynamics that threatened disintegration within the *ulama*. Besides all these, the grassroots Islam have experienced a new awakening.

Putin's ambition in centralizing power and controlling country's all social, economic and bureaucratic institutions reflected on his meddling in the spiritual affairs of Muslims. Putin supports the activities of the spiritual boards as long as they serve to his agenda, while he tightened government control over *ulama* with legal regulations. Putin also benefitted from the rising Islamophobia following the 9/11 events. The rising *Wahhabi* influence in particular Muslim regions of Russia was also used as an excuse to oppress Islam and Muslims in Russia.

### **7.2.1. Legal Framework of *Islam* and Religious Associations**

Following the Law on Freedom of Conscience in 1990, the 1993 Constitution guaranteed the citizens of the Russian Federation with freedom of conscience as well as their right to disseminate religious views.<sup>380</sup> Additionally, any kind of limitation of human rights on religious grounds is banned.<sup>381</sup> The religious convictions of citizens can even be considered as an excuse to replace military service with an alternative.<sup>382</sup> Unlike how it was during the Soviet Union, the religious organizations are separated from the state and equal before the law.<sup>383</sup> The freedom of conscious was guaranteed during the Soviet era as well, when government's oppression on grassroots Islam along with its

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<sup>380</sup> *KRF*, Gl.2, St. 28.

<sup>381</sup> *KRF*, Gl.2, St. 19-1.

<sup>382</sup> *KRF*, Gl.2, St. 59-3.

<sup>383</sup> *KRF*, Gl.1, St. 14.

domestication attempts through bureaucratic institutions was a common practice. This practice carries similarities to Soviet Union, though the oppression is lighter and limited to favoring the loyal Islamic organizations while putting pressure on others. The Russian government puts pressure on Islamic groups on allegations of their connections with extremism. The legal ground for that is the relevant article of the Russian Constitution that bans religious hatred and propaganda of religious supremacy.<sup>384</sup>

The part of Russian Federal Law, which deals with the Religious Associations, was lastly amended on 8 July 2015.<sup>385</sup> According to this law, the Russian Federation is a secular state that recognizes the special role of Orthodoxy in the history of Russia while respecting Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and other religions as an integral part of the historical heritage of the peoples of Russia.<sup>386</sup> According to Russian Federal Law, the religious associations are voluntary associations to be formed in order to disseminate faith with appropriate methods such as commission of worship and other rites and celebrations as well as teaching of religion.<sup>387</sup> The law also regulates the activities of religious associations and classifies them. Religious associations in Russia can be established in the form of religious groups (*gruppa*) or religious organizations (*organizatsiya*).<sup>388</sup>

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<sup>384</sup> *KRF*, Gl.2, St. 29-2.

<sup>385</sup> "O vnesenii izmeneniy v Federal'nyy zakon: O svobode sovesti i o religioznykh ob"yedineniyakh," *Ofitsial'nyy internet-portal pravovoi informatsiy*, <http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&firstDoc=1&lastDoc=1&nd=102376020>.

<sup>386</sup> *Sbornik Zakonov Rossiiskoi Federatsii s Izmeneniyami i Dopolneniyami Na 15 Oktyabr 2011 Goda* (hereafter *SZRF*) (Moscow: Eksmo, 2011), 240.

<sup>387</sup> *SZRF*, Gl. 2, St. 6-1, 241.

<sup>388</sup> *SZRF*, Gl. 2, St. 6-2, 241.

Religious groups are small-scale voluntary associations that operate without state registrations and acquisition of state property.<sup>389</sup> They have the right to conduct worship services and other rites and ceremonies as well as the right to conduct religious teaching.<sup>390</sup> In order to obtain more extensive rights, religious groups are obliged to form religious organizations.

Religious organizations have more extensive rights such as establishing religious buildings and facilities, exporting-importing and distributing religious material, carrying out charity activities, establishing religious educational institutions for the training of the clergy and inviting foreign citizens for religious activities.<sup>391</sup> However, the registration procedure for religious organizations is more arduous. The religious organizations are divided into two as the local and centralized religious organizations. Ten Russian citizens who have reached eighteen years of age and residing in the same locality or in a city or rural settlement can found local religious institutions.<sup>392</sup> This article also used to require the founding members to reside in the same territory for 15 years, but the last version of the law, whose latest amendment took place on 8 July 2015, no longer requires this.<sup>393</sup> Centralized religious organizations can be formed with the initiative of three regional religious organizations.<sup>394</sup> With the amendments of 2002, the law gives Federal authorities to ban or liquidate religious organizations. The grounds for liquidation include vaguely defined

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<sup>389</sup> *SZRF*, Gl. 2, St. 7-1, 241.

<sup>390</sup> *SZRF*, Gl. 2, St. 7-3, 241.

<sup>391</sup> *SZRF*, Gl. 2, St. 16-20, 244.

<sup>392</sup> *SZRF*, Gl. 2, St. 9-1, 242.

<sup>393</sup> "Federalny zakon ot 13.07.2015 g. No: 261-f3," *Prezident Rossii*, July 13, 2015, Accessed at August 10, 2015, <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/39928>.

<sup>394</sup> *SZRF*, Gl. 2, St. 9-2, 242.

actions such as violation of public security and carrying out extremist activity.<sup>395</sup>

With the introduction of Law on Freedom of Conscious and Religious Organizations in 1997, the Russian state achieved legal ground for regulating and domesticating the religious organizations. The following regulations, in line with Putin's agenda, enabled the securitization of Kremlin's religious policy. For instance, in 2008, the Turkey based *Nurcular* was declared by the Russian Supreme Court as extremist and their activities were banned. *Wahhabism* is also prohibited in number of regions across Russia.

#### **7.2.2. The Consolidation of the Disintegrated Structure of *Ulama* in Russia**

The demise of the USSR was the major cause of the disintegration within the *ulama* of Russia. The following liberalization and the diminishing of central authority accelerated the disintegration trend. Following Putin's election to the presidency, this trend continued but Putin's power and authority kept the *ulama* under control. Four major factors can be counted as the prominent dynamics of the disintegrated structure of *ulama* in Russia: the judicial regulations, emergence of new political and economic authorities, ethnic issues and the opposition to Taceddin.

The primary cause of the disintegration of *ulama* was legal. The Law on Freedom of Confession that was adopted in 10 November 1990 permitted Muslims to organize among themselves and create their own spiritual boards.<sup>396</sup> During the time period between the dissolution of the USSR and Putin's becoming the President of Russia, the state supervision on Muslims disappeared

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<sup>395</sup> SZRF, Gl. 2, St, 14-2, 243-244.

<sup>396</sup> Matsuzato and Sawae, 346.

and the number of spiritual authorities unexpectedly proliferated and their number reached to forty.<sup>397</sup>

The proliferation of *ulama* is also related with the proliferation of authorities that found opportunity to support the group of *ulama* they found close to their agenda. Every political or economic authority wanted to have its own pocket spiritual authority. Among these authorities have been foreign Muslim countries, autonomous bodies that have significant Muslim populations and newly emerged Muslim businessmen.

The *ulama* were also divided along ethnic lines. The tensions between Kazan Tatars and Bashkirs were the most prominent dynamic in Volga region in this regard.<sup>398</sup> As opposed to the Volga region where the tensions between only two communities on ethnic backgrounds were determining, in North Caucasus the situation has been much more complex. In this region, not only the *ulama* of Dagestan, Stavropol, Chechnya and others competed with each other, there have been divergences within the Dagestani *ulama* that influenced the region's spiritual affairs to a large scale.<sup>399</sup>

The opposition to Taceddin, who represented the Soviet state in the eyes of many, was another strong dynamic of the proliferation trend. TsDUM consistently demanded to persist its monopoly over the spiritual affairs within the Russian Federation. However, in post-Soviet era its claims do not represent the current reality. The state does not favor Taceddin as the loyal figure.

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<sup>397</sup> Galina Yemelianova, "Russia's Umma and Its Muftis" *Religion State and Society* 31-2 (2003): 140.

<sup>398</sup> Roman Silant'ev, *Etnicheskiy aspekt raskola islamskogo soobshchestva Rossii* (Moscow: Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 2002), 3.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

Instead, it seems that the Muslim spiritual authorities were pitted against one another.

The disintegration serves to the interests of the state, as the Muslims are not able to gain a strong voice and challenge state authority. Since 1998, over a hundred Muslim religious leaders were either assassinated or survived assassination attempt. The *Wahhabi* groups were held accountable for their distaste of traditional Islam in Russia. However, amongst those who were targeted there were numerous Muslim religious leaders who were vocal in their opposition to Kremlin's policies or attempt to act in a more independent manner. Latest example to this was the assassination of Zamirbek Makhmutov, a deputy imam in Stavropol *krai* known as a proactive religious leader in the local Muslim community. In that respect, the unsolved murders of proactive Muslim religious leaders in Russia should be considered no different than the assassination of Anna Politkovskaya or Boris Nemtsov.

### **7.3. Grassroots Islam**

Aside from the official Islam that visualized itself in Kremlin's relations with the *ulama* as well as the diplomatic and bureaucratic relations of *ulama*, Islam is a cultural and social phenomenon. It is a complete way of life that preaches its adherents' actions and way of thinking. Today, Muslims can freely utilize communication means to convey their message to the world. In Russia as well, the grassroots form of Islam is quite prevalent and in fact it is often the understudied part of the issue. In parallel to this, the state uses the Wahhabi threat to put pressure on Muslims.



### 7.3.1. *Wahhabi* Threat and Islamophobia in Russia

From 1994 on the Chechen War has influenced Kremlin's policies with regard to Muslims in Russia. Especially under Putin, it was used as an excuse to employ a more security-oriented policy approach towards Muslims. The media reinforces anti-Islamic sentiments by promoting Islamophobia within the country, a trend started from Chechen War. With regard to this, the large Muslim presence in Russia, centuries of Tatar rule over Russians, terrorist attacks in Russian cities by extremist groups reinforced the Islamophobic approach in Russia. Under the effect of the 9/11 events and the following USA-led campaign of war on terrorism the Russian oppression on Muslims went unnoticed.

*Wahhabism* had never gained a real ground in the territories of neither of Russia, nor those of the Soviet Union. In Russia, the dominant Muslim culture has been Islam that adapted to regions' cultures with a certain influence of *Sufi* orders. The negative connotations attached to *Wahhabism* that was not considered as a homegrown ideology emerged in Soviet Union when *Sufi* leaders accused the young reformer *Sufi* adepts with *Wahhabism*.<sup>400</sup> In other regions, the situation was not different. *Wahhabism* entered into North Caucasus through foreign mercenaries that came to fight in Chechnya. Even after the war, *Wahhabism* remained as a strong dynamic in North Caucasus. Today, the terrorist ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Sham) organization manages to find recruits from Russia, which creates anxieties, as the people who are trained in ISIS camps can constitute a threat to Russia in the future.

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<sup>400</sup> Ahmed Yarlykapov, "The Radicalization of North Caucasian Muslims," in Dannreuther and March, 138.

The murder of the Mufti of DUMKB in 2010 and the attack on second Mufti of DUMRT 2012 have been attributed to *Wahhabi* groups. Such events further increased the *Wahhabi* paranoia in Russia. Terrorist attacks on Russia's moderate *ulama* also increase the authority of federal authorities over the *ulama*. By playing the *Wahhabism* card, Russia has effectively curbed the Islamic-oriented dissidence and has controlled its official *ulama*.

In this regard, the way Kremlin handles the Muslims in Russia is very much similar to how it perceives the civil-society organizations. The links with foreign Muslim countries are not tolerated.<sup>401</sup> Kremlin supports what it considers 'traditional Islam' in Muslim regions. A euphemistic term, 'traditional Islam' refers not necessarily to the Islam as most Muslims in Russia came to adopt, but it indicates the tamed version of Islam, which is based on the 'gentleman's agreement' between *ulama* and Kremlin. The attitude of the officially approved representatives of Muslims perceived *Wahhabism* pejoratively as well.<sup>402</sup> Moreover, accusing one another with supporting *Wahhabism* has been a common practice within rival *ulama* figures.

### **7.2.3. The Islamic Media**

Benefitting the liberalization of government's attitude towards Islam, Muslims rediscovered their Islamic heritage. Internet, radio, TV and print provided the Muslims with opportunities to disseminate their faith. The official spiritual boards utilize these opportunities as well. As mentioned earlier, SADUM had the authority to publish religious material within the framework of

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<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>402</sup> Galina Yemelianova, "Divergent Trends of Islamic Radicalization," in *Russia and Islam: State, Society and Radicalism*, ed. Roland Dannreuther and Luke March (New York: Routledge, 2010), 127.

the strict regulations of the Soviet state. Today, spiritual boards operate without these strict regulations in media, though their publications are not in opposition with the government's agenda. Apart from this, Russia's Muslims now have access to domestic and foreign financial resources through which number of Islamic publication facilities, radios and websites came into being. Additionally, Muslims countries directly involves in publication of print media towards Russia's Muslims through official and unofficial channels.

The official spiritual boards are actively involved in publishing activities. Both SMR and TsDUM have monthly journals. SMR's monthly issue *Minbar Islama* provides information about the organization's activities and a yearly issue that includes information about the activities of SMR. TsDUM has similar newspaper named *Malumat Al-Bulgar*. *Minaret Islama* is another monthly issue, published by the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Nizhegorodsky Region (hereafter DUMNO)<sup>403</sup> that operates under the umbrella of SMR. DUMNO also publishes an encyclopedic dictionary named 'Islam in the Russian Federation' as well as a quarterly Islamic almanac. The spiritual assemblies also publish number of Islamic books about the Islamic culture in Russia, history of Islam in Russia's regions, the books of old Soviet and Tsarist era Muftis.

The Islamic media activities that are not under the supervision of a spiritual assembly can be divided into two according to their financial resources. First, there are number of homegrown newspapers and publication houses as well as a few radio stations. Second, within the framework of their soft-power initiatives in the region, Muslim countries get involved with Islamic media in Russia. In Russia where the state supervision over media is tight, the

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<sup>403</sup> Russian – *Dukhovnoye upravleniye musul'man Nizhegorodskoy Oblasti*

influence of Islamic media is also limited comparing to Western European or North American democracies. Though Russia is a country where any idea or action that are not in line with the government's agenda is put on the target and Muslims' voice are not heard sufficiently comparing to their demography, media is still an important mean for the dissemination of Islamic ideas.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

Islam has played an immense role in Russian history and it is still a part of the Russian culture. The period of a millennium in Russian-Muslim relations are obscured by the conflicts between two civilizations. The atrocities of the Russian government to its Muslim subjects and Muslim neighbors as well as the wars between two sides occupied a pivotal place in narratives depicting the relations between the Russians and Muslims.

At the understudied part of the issue lays the cooperation and coexistence between the Russians and the Muslims. Both of these communities has exchanged ideas, transformed each other and largely influenced the identity of one another. Religion always played a central part in these relations whether it included confrontation or cooperation. The influence of Islam over the Muslim communities at some point prompted the Russian imperial authorities to utilize the influence of Muslim *ulama* in reaching out to the Muslim communities. Despite the fact that this attempt stemmed from the imperial desire to extend the imperial influence to the current and potential Muslim subjects of the Empire, this cooperation channel has quickly become and almost ceaselessly remained as a major area of cooperation between the Russian government and the Muslim subjects.

Starting from the Tsarist era until today, the Russian rulers benefited this channel in order to keep the Muslims under the control of the state. Despite the vicissitudes, the form of Islam, which has been engineered and tightly controlled by the Russian rulers, has constituted a major part of the culture of Muslims. The common Muslims and *ulama* have benefitted from the mandate provided by the Russian state. However, this official Islam could not become the monolithic confessional and social dynamic within the Muslims, as hoped by the Russian state. Muslims have remained wary of the clergy class, which has been sanctioned by the Russian states that assumed Orthodox, atheist and secular characters. The centuries old unofficial Muslim institutions and Muslim culture have been preserved also with the help of parallel institutions.

To keep it simple, two major trends prevailed over the centuries in Russia's relations with its Muslim subjects on a confessional axis. They are Russia's demand to preserve the order in Muslim areas by manipulating *ulama* and Muslim's struggle to preserve the Islamic component in their identity. The first trend includes Russia's desire to assimilate Muslims into its domain through convincing Muslims that the Russian yoke is the only chance for the Muslims to advance their civilization. Accordingly, the state sanctioned *ulama* have not only preached Islamic principles to the Muslim population but also they represented the Russian civilization in every sense. On the other hand, Muslims have not completely surrendered to the state domination in their religious life. In varying degrees, a portion of *ulama* figures never obtained state sanction. Additionally, the state could not entirely dominate the Islamic activities of its Muslim subjects. When the state sanctioned *ulama* and Islamic institutions fell short of providing Muslims with religious service Muslims

resorted to parallel networks. Apart from the *Sufi* orders that have had their own organizational structure, Muslims continue to practice their religion through unofficial networks. Only this way, it was possible for the Muslims to be circumcised, make a proper farewell to their deceased ones, and organize religious ceremonies for weddings.

Russia's Muslims greatly varied within themselves. This variation stems from their experience of Russian rule and their cultural, ethnic and geographical patterns. Due to these differences, Muslims could not constitute a strong and united front against imperial authorities and Bolsheviks. Another reason for the failure of Muslims in forming a united front has been that they have been caught unprepared to the opportunities like the Russian Revolution and the dissolution of the USSR.

Islam has been the most significant common ground they shared and the *ulama* networks transcended boundaries. The *ulama* of different Muslim communities had the widest common ground within themselves. However, when the opportunity for self-determination arose, the *ulama* have been subjected to power struggles between different national and political agendas.

Following the demise of the USSR, the Muslims began to benefit from the liberal climate. They rediscovered and invest on the Islamic part in their identity. They almost freely utilized foreign assistance and began to identify themselves as a part of broader Islamic world. The break up of the Soviet Union paved the way for the birth of six new republics with significant Muslim populations. More importantly, two significant Muslim regions –middle Volga region and North Caucasus- ended up within the territories of the Russian Federation. These regions produced serious challenges to the territorial

integrity of the Russian Federation throughout the 1990s. However, the *ulama* in these regions could not lead the society and their disintegration mirrored the political and social composition of Muslims.

Islam has become a profoundly important component of the identity of Muslim communities in Russian Federation. However, the Muslims in Russia's regions have varying experiences, culture and political interests that hinders their ability to pursue common interests. Instead of forming a union within themselves, the *ulama* in Russia are disintegrated along ethnic, geographical and national lines. The grassroots Islam is alienated from the power struggles within the *ulama*. Moreover, they compete with each other in garnering the support of the Kremlin. There are particular figures that continue to act as the envoy of Kremlin in Muslim regions. As a result of these, *ulama* are seemed well below its potential to lead the Muslims of Russia. Thus, it is not expected in the near future that the official Islam in Russia and the state-sanctioned *ulama* figures will play a critical role in Muslims' political and social life so long as they manage to rid themselves of the state's control.



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## **APPENDIX: A CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF THE MUFTIS OF PROMINENT SPIRITUAL AUTHORITIES**

### **I) Muftis of Orenburg Spiritual Board**

1. Muhammedcan Khusainov (1788-1824)
2. Abdusselam Abdurahimov (1825-1840)
3. Abdulvahid Suleimanov (1840-1862)
4. Salimgerey Tevkelev (1865-1885)
5. Muhammedyar Sultanov (1885-1915)
6. Muhammed-Safa Bayazitov (1915-1917)
7. Alimcan Barudi (1917-1921)
8. Rızaeddin Fahreddin (1921-1936)
9. Abdurrahman Rasuli (1936-1950)

### **II) Muftis of TsDUM (Spiritual Directorate of the European Part of Russia)**

1. Shakir Khiyaletdinov (1951-1974)
2. Abdulberi İsaev (1974-1980)
3. Talgat Taceddin (1980-Current)

### **III) Muftis of SADUM (Spiritual Directorate of Central Asia and Kazakhstan)**

1. Ishan Babakhan ibn Abdulmacidkhan (1943-1957)

2. Ziyauddin Babakhanov (1957-1982)
3. Shamsuddinkhan Babakhanov (1982-1989)
4. Muhammed Sadiq Muhammed Yusuf (1989-1993)

#### **IV) Mufti of SMR (Russian Council of Muftiates)**

1. Ravil Gainutdin (1996-Current)