UOS Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities (UOSJSSH)
ISSN (P) 2224-2341, ISSN (E) 2310-0249
Volume: 8, (1) 2024, Pages (124-136)
Journal Homepage: https://uosjssh.su.edu.pk/

Islamic Revivalism in Russia: Impacts on Russian Muslim Community

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Abstract

Islam has been a greatly professed religion in the Soviet Union for many centuries. However, despite years of reprisal and persecution in the Soviet Union by the Czar Russian policies, communist designs, and repressive policies under Lenin, Stalin, Gorbachev Islam has managed to preserve its spirit as a way of life that culturally defined every facet of the believer's existence. This was especially true of Islamic lifestyle rituals including, fasting, feasting, pilgrimages, polygamy, and the handing out of alms. In retrospect, the Soviet campaign against Islam had proved to be only partially successful. It managed to curb Islamic activity and perhaps contained Islamic sentiments in the region but it was far from eradicating the Islamic faith. Now Muslims enjoy freedom in practicing their religious obligations in Russia as protected and accommodated by the state constitutionally and legally. Islam is enjoying rebirth and revival in Russia with multiple impacts on Muslims in Russian society. This study will try to explore socio-demographic facts about the Muslim population in Russia, constitutional and legal protection to religious freedom of Muslims in Russia, Islamic revivalist movements, and their impacts on the Muslim community in Russia.

Keywords: *Islam, Revivalism, Russia, Impacts, Muslim Community*

Introduction

Russia has the largest Muslim minority of any country in the European West and provides a unique example of how over many centuries Muslim and Christian faith communities have accommodated one another, molding themselves around political upheaval and manipulation, ethnic rivalries, and external (political and religious) influences. In the year 2000, Russian Muslims commemorated fourteen centuries of Islam on Russian soil, not as a faith formed of postcolonial immigration or the current wave of globalization as well as cultural exchanges. Russia also provides an essential reminder that binary understandings of 'civilization' are rooted in notions of East versus West, Islam versus Judaeo-Christianity, or Europe versus Asia; which have little more than headline value. Russia lies between East and West, has a 'Eurasian' cultural identity and accommodates almost fifteen million Muslims within a federally organized state whose culturally dominant religion is Orthodox Christianity.

This paper has explored the answers to the questions: (1) To what extent the Soviet as well as Russian multi-ethnic context has impacted the growth of Islam within Russia?(2) How does Russia accommodate the Muslim community in its constitution? (3) How have Islamic revivalist movements shaped Russia's religious and cultural dynamics?

Theoretical Construct

The theoretical construct of the study will be based on the understanding of primordialism and essentialism to chalk out the legitimacy of Islam and Christianity being revealed religions and their boundary determination. Islam and Christianity both have coexisted in Russia for centuries being divine religions with essentialist underpinnings. Essentialism is the idea that an ideology or religion has a set of defining characteristics, being fixed and unalterable in time and space. In Islam, an innate recognition is part of man's primordial nature or *fitrah*. So in the cosmology of the Holy Qur'an, every human being is born predisposed to Islam, the primordial religion (*dinal-fitrah*), The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: [Bukhari, No.1358*"Each child is born upon the primordial nature, but it is his parents that make of him a Jew, Christin, or Magian"* (Yavus Akhmadov, 2001).

According to theologians, Islam and Christianity originated from God, who revealed Himself through prophets and divine books. Any addition or deletion is not allowed in Divine books which determine boundaries. The fixed canon is closed for both religions which are essentialist in nature (Ahmad, 2012). No one can cross boundaries otherwise one would be considered a disbeliever.

Socio-Demographic Facts about the Muslim Population in Russia

According to demographic estimates, Muslims represent 8-12% of Russia's 160 million population; however, a survey conducted by the Public Opinion Research Center yielded a slightly lower proportion of 6%.According to Reuters, Russia has a Muslim population of 14 percent (Yemelianova, 2003) .Muslims comprise most North Caucasus nations, notably Adyghe, Balkars, Chechens, Ingush, Kabardin, Karachay, and many Dagestani peoples. Mostly Tatars and Bashkirs in the Volga Basin practiced Islam as their primary religion. There are almost 5,000 registered Muslim organizations in Russia making one-sixth of the total registered Russian Orthodox religious organizations of about 29,268 (Akiner, 1986).

Russia's Policy towards Muslims; Historical Perspective

Islam came to Russia from the South and was established in 685AD in the city of Derbend. By 922 AD, the Volga-Kama Bulgars had also accepted Islam. Over these 1,400 years of co-existence, Russia has developed distinctive relations with the world of Islam, which differ significantly from relations between the West and Islam.

The first distinctive feature of Islam in Russia is that it developed in complex interaction with ethnicity. It was never associated with a single ethnic group, as was Russian Orthodoxy. Thus, both the Khazar Khaganate and Volga Bulgaria, which played a central role in shaping the early Russian polity and society, were multi-ethnic and poly-confessional entities. This was made possible because Volga Bulgar Muslim scholars adhered to the principles of Tajdid and Ijtihad. This enabled them to play down the dogmatic differences between different schools of thought within Islam and to emphasize its moral and social values.

The second distinguishing feature of Islam in Russia emerged as a result of its long history of subordination. The suppression of Islam, accompanied by coercive Christianization

and Russification, was central to Moscow's policy of integrating non-Russian territories within a centralized Russian state. During the time of Peter the Great, authorities in Moscow began to fear the existence of so many Muslims only two hundred miles away from the capital. This suppression of Islam spans over various phases.

Russia and Islam under the Tsars

Islam arrived in Dagestan less than 20 years after it was first established in Saudi Arabia. In the 9th century, the Volga River (Tatarstan) people were converted. The Volga Bulgars, forerunners of the Tatars, embraced Islam around 922 CE. Islam did not show a significant foothold throughout Russia, till the Golden Horde brought Orthodox Russians and Mongols together. Mongols converted to Islam after a century of their initial conquests and spread it across the land they had taken over. Russia began to break away from Mongol domination in the sixteenth century as well as attacked and conquered traditionally Muslim territories.

Many Muslim tribes in Volga regions and Kazakhstan were mostly accepted by the tsars once they seized control of these regions. When it came to courting its local nobility, the tsarist administration displayed benevolence as well as support for Islam. Even money was set aside to build mosques as well as produce religious literature for Muslims (Markedonov, 2013).

Russia's relations with Muslims inside the North Caucasus became considerably more strained as the country strengthened relationships with Muslims all along Volga. Boris Godunov's annexation of the Caucasus in the 17th century was just the beginning of Russia's expansion into the region. The Russians used to have a difficult time conquering these Muslim people. Imam Shamil, Russia's last Sufi leader, was forced to forfeit in the southern Caucasus around 1856 after a thirty-year battle of colonial dominance" (Akiner, 1986).

Conquering people meant choosing how to treat them. Authorities in Moscow began to worry that many Muslims were barely two hundred miles distant from Moscow during the time of Peter the Great. When the Russian Tsar was concerned about Muslim converts, he encouraged them. The Tsars encouraged the forced conversion of the Muslims to Orthodoxy which was met with extreme resistance and soured the relations between the Tatar Muslims and Russians.

In the eighteenth century, Catherine the Great took a different approach to dealing with the Muslims. She created a Muslim Spiritual Assembly in Orenburg for religious training and publication in European and Siberian parts of the empire (Nurullina, 2014). Catherine's policies brought economic prosperity to the region and allowed the mass construction of mosques and the promotion of Islam with the support of the Russian state. These tolerant policies lasted until the communists took over.

Russia and Islam under the Communism

a) Vladimir Ilyich Lenin's Era

The anti-Islamic campaign was initially put on hold during the Lenin era to re-establish faith among Muslims. Later, Lenin switched back to his earlier approach to combat Islam. For a long time, the Communists had little to do with Islam. Influential people who had converted from Islam to Communism urged Lenin to change his strategy in 1924 and Lenin's slightly changed its strategy. The anti-Islamic initiative was briefly suspended to restore Muslim trust. The application of Sharia law resumed, and mosques, Islamic schools, and waqf properties were all

reopened. After gaining some confidence and backing, Lenin resumed his long-standing anti-Islamic campaign. Several laws were passed between 1925 and 1927 to limit the power of Sharia courts. A large number of Muslim religious leaders were exiled, relocated, imprisoned, or even killed. Latin script was used to supplant Arabic for usage in publishing and education. Even though mosques were able to carry on with their operations, this ongoing harassment endured till1930.

b) Joseph Stalin's Policies

During Stalin's leadership, three important Islamic tenets—Zakat, Hajj, and fasting during Ramadan—were forbidden. Until World War II, the Soviet Union didn't drastically scale up its efforts to disparage all religions. During this war, the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims for Central Asia and Kazakhstan (SADUM) was established. The Mufti was responsible for selecting sermon subjects, allocating imams to mosques, and defining "correct Islamic practice." The Communist Party in power controlled, supervised, and integrated the official Muslim institution. According to Oliver Roy, the Muftiate was primarily established as follows:"*Endeavour to eradicate popular Islam, especially with linkages to national and religious identities, by creating a symbolic, officially appointed clergy to administer the very few surviving religious institutions as well as, after 1955, to improve relations with Muslim countries that were friendly to the USSR"*.

According to Wheeler (Wheeler, 1967), the Soviet Union's rise to international prominence, and its foreign policy goals of expanding its influence over Muslim-majority countries, both elements served to ease the constraints and pressures imposed on Muslim groups. Before and during World War II, the Soviet Union's utilization of religious support facilitated the effectiveness of these strategies, which ultimately lost momentum when the regime shifted away from religious alignment.

c) Nikita Khrushchev's Threefold Strategy

Khrushchev unveiled a three-pronged strategy to combat religious influence that focused on the clergy, religious regulations, and the implementation of harsh sanctions for religious breaches. This anti-religious campaign was revived under the leadership of the Communist Party, signifying a fresh push against religious practices. According to Khrushchev, communist education advocates liberating the mind from religious biases and superstitious beliefs that impede certain Soviet individuals from expressing their creative capacities (Deepa Kumar, 2011). His three-pronged approach was finally realized with the "Just on Strict Compliance of Religious Cult Laws" Decree, which was passed in March 1961. It started by concentrating on the clergy and then passed extensive anti-religious legislation. Lastly, penalties for religious transgressions were heightened. This remained the established standpoint on religion, particularly Islam, until the onset of Perestroika.

d) Gorbachev Period: Perestroika

In 1985, Gorbachev embarked on a transformative journey for Soviet society through the implementation of perestroika, involving radical economic restructuring and reform, and glasnost, a policy of openness designed to support the success of perestroika. These were among Gorbachev's initial endeavors shortly after assuming office. A consequential outcome of this

endeavor was the gradual resurgence of Islam in Central Asia. Gorbachev's initial years in power were marked by a cautious approach, limiting the reach of glasnost and perestroika to Central Asia and Islamic regions. However, as his reforms gained momentum, the consequences became increasingly unpredictable, setting off a chain reaction that would ultimately reshape the Soviet landscape. According to Mehrdad Haghayeghi, there were two distinct periods to the adoption of perestroika and glasnost in Central Asia, each with its distinct effects. "The first phase" was from 1985 to 1988, when anti-corruption campaigns and party purges were carried out during this time as Gorbachev attempted to strictly control the communities. The Soviet leader followed her predecessor's lead on religion, blaming Islamic culture for the region's economic and political woes. According to Rywkin, this policy had been an instrument of anti-nationalist as well as anti-Islamic strategy aimed at reinforcing central control in the face of Muslim population explosion as well as dreadful nationalist infection from unstable Iran and Afghanistan (Deepa Kumar, 2011).

The second phase, which lasted from 1988 to 1991, saw Gorbachev's policy shift to support more comprehensive economic liberalization across the whole Soviet Union. Moscow was forced to review its anti-Islamic attitude, which resulted in a retreat from this strategy, under pressure from reformists within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), most notably Alexander Yakovlev and the influence of "nationalists" within the communist parties of Baltic nations. The development of enlightenment was inextricably entwined with the emergence of nationalism, and the idea of national renewal came to be directly identified with Islam.

According to Deepa Kumar, Russia's democratic process resulted in a drop in the number of Muslims living there. This change called for the construction of new mosques, and the removal of administrative roadblocks made it possible to renovate existing mosques and build new houses of worship. By 1992, there were about 3000 mosques in Uzbekistan, 500 mosques were in use in Turkmenistan's highly populated Turkmenistan, and substantial city mosques in Tajikistan. The expansion of the Islamic Religious Boards' publishing initiatives led to a rise in the creation of books, calendars, and other widely used Muslim media. By giving the clergy consistent financing, the waqf's restoration—which had been nationalized in the 1920s—played a significant role. The local media and educators of young people in the humanities also took part in these activities. During the Enlightenment era, the fusion of nationalist sentiments with the concept of national rejuvenation became intricately intertwined.

e) **Post-Soviet Islamic Resurgence**

Islam underwent a remarkable comeback in the post-Soviet era (Donna E.Artz, 1998). Despite being suppressed, Islamic traditions in Russia were not only preserved but also quickly reemerged once the Soviet Union fell apart and people were once again free to practice their religion as they pleased. The Spiritual Directorate of Muslims for both Europe and Siberia, located in Ufa, as well as the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims once more for the Northern Caucasus, situated in Makhachkala, are now both under the control of the Soviets in terms of Muslim affairs. The number of distinct Spiritual Directorates has expanded to over forty since the collapse of Communism. In March 1996, a meeting was held in Moscow to examine how the Russian Muslim community might come together in the face of serious challenges and advance shared interests.

The Council of Russian Muftis has four main goals(Elise Giuliani, 2005):

- Consolidation of Muslim religious organizations in the Russian Federation.
- To compatibly decide the most important problems concerning Russian Muslims;
- Coordination and mutual aid in the operation of each other's organization;
- Work out positions in relations with the organs of the central and local government and the creation of necessary conditions for the observance of the rights and the protection of the interests of Russian Muslims.

Sixteen Muslim religious organizations in Russia make up the Muslim Spiritual Directorates, which also includes the Council of Russian Muftis (DUM). These directorates are responsible for managing Muslims living in Russia, and they must provide for a variety of local Muslim congregations. The Muslim Spiritual Directorate for Europe (DUMER) of Russia is the largest member of the Council of Russian Muftis. As of the beginning of 2011, DUMER houses a mufti secretariat and other departments in charge of managing all elements of Muslim life.

Constitutional and Legal Protection to Religious Freedom in Russia

a. The 1990 Soviet Law and Religious Freedom

Shortly before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev's reforms were put into effect, and a very tolerant law on religious freedom was written. In 1990, Russia established legislation governing both religious freedom and organizations, "guaranteeing full equality of any and all religious groupings" (Preston, 2001). Other treaty requirements, including the Global International Covenant on Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights, closely mirrored the language of their respective texts. In other words, the company's long-held position on religion as a matter of state mandate and stringent government supervision was profoundly altered by this decision.

b. The Russian Federation's Constitution of 1993 and Freedom of Religion

A new constitution for the Russian Federation was accepted by the electorate in a referendum in November 1993. The Russian government's policies are still being governed by this constitution, which has the status of the highest legislation. Conscience and religious issues are included under the constitution as well. Any organization that encourages religious hatred is prohibited by Article 14 of the Constitution. No religion can be made mandatory or state-mandated in the Russian Federation, according to this article. Article 14 further emphasizes religious organizations' equality before the law and their independence from the state. The separation of church and state established by the Russian Federation is based on these principles. Article 15 emphasizes the importance of the Constitution by confirming that it is the ultimate source of law in the nation and that no other laws or legal actions can be in conflict with it (Preston, 2001). The second chapter of the constitution outlines individual rights, including the guarantee of free speech. This freedom is curtailed, though, if it incites animosity or hatred among religious people. Notably, the right to religious freedom and conscience expression is the foundational aspect of the constitution.

c. The 1997 Federal Law on Religious Associations and Freedom of Conscience

In 1993, there was an attempt to place limitations on specific religious organizations operating within the Soviet Union. The Russian Supreme Soviet unveiled a draught law in July of that year to outlaw preaching and other religious activities by non-traditional faiths. A well-known Muslim cleric named Mufti Talgat Tadzhuddin supported this measure. President Yeltsin, however, vetoed the measure because it violated both the 1978 Constitution and Russia's duties under international treaties. In 1997, the same notion reappeared and gained more acceptance. The State Duma and the Supreme Soviet immediately authorized and ratified this updated legislation in 1997. Later, a revised version of the Law was put into effect which gave Orthodoxy special recognition while still recognizing other religions as part of Russian culture. This law's preamble stated:*"The special contribution of Orthodoxy to the history of Russia and the establishment and development of Russia's spirituality and culture; respecting Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and other religions and creeds which constitute an inseparable part of the historical heritage of Russia's peoples"*(Preston, 2001).

This new rule granted traditional religions full legal recognition, diverging from the Soviet Union's prior endorsement of obsolete ideologies. It's interesting to note that a prior version of the law would have placed Islam on an equal footing with the Orthodox Church. According to official documents from the Russian Mufti Council and the Muslim Spiritual Directorate for Europe, Muslims in the European region of Russia consider the 1997 legislation to be a great win. The "Drafting and Ratification of the Federal Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations (Lapidus, 1997)is regarded by the Council of Russian Muftis as an important indicator of their influence within the government. All of the muftis on the Council were consulted for feedback throughout the creation of this legislation. The Council of Muftis of Russia has steadfastly supported the 1997 legislation.

Islamic Revivalist Movements in Russia

a) Wahhabism in Russia

In Russia, where Wahhabism has existed for hundreds of years, it has recently gained popularity. In the eighteenth century, a theological and political movement was born out of Muhammad ibn Abd-el Wahhab's views. The group's mission is to restore Islam to its original state by obliterating all redesigns and rigidly upholding the customs that were in place during the lifetime of Muhammad. Muhammad ibn Abd-el Wahhab started his campaign to reclaim Muslims who had strayed from the core principles of Islam. All Muslims adhere to many of the same beliefs as the Wahhabites. Muhammad ibn Abd-el Wahhab proclaimed, *"It teaches the Muslims to follow the Sunna of the Prophet and be good, cautious, keep their promises, exercise patience, do not tell lies, spread slander or rumors, help those who need help, do not be stingy, envious, cowards or to perjure"*(Pilkington & Yemelianova, 2003).

However, it did encourage a ferocious hate of both non-Muslims and Muslims who adhered to other philosophical systems. The Russian government, and occasionally even Muslim organizations and communities, have expressed their unhappiness when Wahhabism's intolerance results in bloodshed.

b) **Salafist Movement**.

It is called just after Salaf ("predecessors" or "ancestors"), the earliest Muslims, whom Islamists see as models of Islamic behavior. The Salafist movement is a Sunni Muslim sect or movement. Although Salafists consider the label Wahhabi to have been disparaging, the movement is often described as a Wahhabi-influenced organization. Salafism is often seen as a mixture of Wahhabism as well as other groups that began in the 1960s. Westerners have come to associate Salafism with extremist interpretations of Islam like those of Salafi Jihadis, who advocate attacks on civilians as a legitimate expression of Islam, regardless of the fact that going to lead Salafi scholars have condemned such attacks as well as Salafis who endorse such attacks are in the minority.

According to Ali Shaukat (Ali, 1998), Salafis defend the view that the Qur'an, Sunnah, scholarly consensus and Salaf us-Salih (pious ancestors) are sufficient sources of guidance for Muslims. Salafis have roots in several Sunni jurisprudential schools, including Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali, and Hanafi, and they support the teachings of all four if they are supported by convincing and authenticated Sunnah evidence. Expert scholars are urged to practice ijtihad as long as explicit evidence from the Qur'an or Hadith favors it over blind imitation (taqlid). They adhere to an Athari religion and reject theological dialogue (kalam), dialectics, and speculative philosophy. This viewpoint encourages intellectual freedom and the free interchange of ideas.

c) **Jadidism in Russia**

This group was called Jadidism, which is the Arabic word for "new" and the name of the reformist movement that emerged in the area in the late 19th century. In terms of Islam, Jadidism was about challenging preconceptions and rejecting scholasticism in its entirety (Liliya Karimova, 2010). A wide range of religious and secular subjects was taught in mektebs and madrasas Under Jadidism's rule. Jadidism placed a strong priority on education in the secular arena. Women were consequently encouraged to participate more actively in politics and society. In modern theological debates and efforts to institutionalize Islam in the area, Tatar religious leaders and a few other public figures cite Jadidist ideals. Islam had a great impact on how the community was educated. Till the late nineteenth century, the Tatars had two different kinds of Islamic schools: mektebs, which were primary schools, and madrasahs, which were high schools, both of which were supported by the local rural and urban populations. With an estimated 84,000 students, there were 232 madrasahs and 1,067 mektebs in the region of Kazan alone in 1912.In 1897, only a small portion of Tatars could read in their tongue. By 1913, there were more books printed in Tatar than in any other language inside the Russian Empire.

d) Islamic Revivalist Party

The Islamic Revivalist Party (IRP), the only well-known Muslim political group, was founded in 1990. Before the fall of the Soviet Union, the number of Islamic Renaissance (or Revival) Party members in Central Asia, including the Caucasus, the Volga Valley, and the Urals, was estimated to be between 10,000 and 30,000.Its activities were banned in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, even though its leadership, the Chairman of the Party, Abdullah Uttah, was imprisoned. Because they did not represent a secessionist movement, the firm's leaders eschewed terrorist and extreme measures. He stated, “There is no intention to form a state of our own, its leaders said. To protect the Soviet Union's Muslim minority, which even the state-appointed

imams as well as mullahs are unable to protect, we're solely concerned with protecting their interests" (M A Karim, 2005)**.**

Tajikistan was the only place where the IRP was recognized as a mark in the political arena of the republic. Unfortunately, the communist and Russian ploy defeated the democratic alliance in Tajikistan in 1992s. Had a free democratic system been allowed after the downfall of Communism, Tajikistan would have been the first democratic state in the former Soviet Union with a major role played by IRP. The 'defeated' leader of IRP, in fear of persecution, crossed the border and sought refuge in Afghanistan. The leaders--Mohammad Sharif, Abdullah Nuri, Uslam Daulatov, Turadzonzadah, and others have vowed to continue the jihad from across the border. Valiakhmed Sadur, a member of the Party's council of theologians, stated in an interview in Izvestia, *"Islam should be revived in locations where it's been expelled as well as promoted to areas where it would be either unknown or misinterpreted. Furthermore, we aim to safeguard true Muslims against persecution, and those who deliberately spew lies about our religion and those that have an inadequate knowledge of Islam"* (M A Karim, 2005)**.**

e) Union of Muslims of Russia

The establishment of numerous autonomous national political organizations is a new phenomenon garnering attention and potentially having significant implications in modern Muslim Russia. Imam Khatyb Mukaddas from Tatarstan headed a program launched in 1995 by the newly formed Union of Muslims in Russia that sought to promote interethnic harmony and debunk Russians' residual prejudices about Islam. Another well-known organization works closely with Muslim imams to protect the political, economic, and cultural rights of Muslims and other minorities in Russia. The All-Russia Muslim Public Movement was founded in the post-Communist era.The Islamic Cultural Centre in Moscow, which includes a madrassa (religious school), opened its doors in 1991. There was an increase in Islamic publications during the 1990s. The newspapers "ссалам," "Assalam," and "урулслам," which are published in Makhachkala, Dagestan, as well as Russian-language magazines "слам," "о авкаа," and "сламскивестник," all contribute to this tendency (M A Karim, 2005).

The Union of Russia's Muslims was established in 1995 in Moscow by more than 100 representatives from 63 Russian Federation states. The name is derived from a Duma party that existed before the revolution. Despite posing as a social movement, its main goal is to put forth a full slate of candidates for every parliamentary constituency. Only 26 Muslim Deputies, or 3% of the total, are currently represented in the Russian Duma. Most of them are members of the "Russia is Our Home" Party. The Islamic Revival Party is subjected to recurrent but unsupported claims that the Union is financially supported by Middle Eastern countries, The Union mission statement declares: *"We wish to underline our group's secular nature. We see the Muslim community in Russia as a multi-ethnic and also a single confessional, historical, as well as cultural group. It is hoped that what a strong, revived Russia would protect the interests of all of its inhabitants, including even Muslim countries, in the years to come"* (Donna E. Artz, 1998).

Increased government spending and the introduction of Arabic language instruction in all Russian high schools are suggested for Russia's Muslim regions. Public monies would be allotted for Haj pilgrims traveling to Mecca, and scholarships would be offered to encourage young Muslims to study abroad. The Chechen problem is to be resolved diplomatically in order to

preserve Russia's strong federal system. Abdul-Vakhed Niyazov, co-chairman of the Union, emphasizes the belief in constructive engagement with the government in order to refute criticism of the Islamic community's role. He stresses that Russia should recognize its historical position as a nation where Christians and Muslims have coexisted for many years. Russia's foreign policy should develop a more thorough strategy for mediating disputes like Bosnia, expanding beyond its obvious backing for the Serbians, with an emphasis on Muslims. Niyazov asserts that despite the violence in Chechnya's impact on Muslims throughout Russia, it has led to a rise in social consciousness (Ali, 1998).

A third political group called the Muslims of Russia has developed, illustrating the modern vibrancy of Russia's Muslim population. The group supports a static worldview. Imam Mukaddas Bibarsov, chairman and imam of the Volga region, declares, "Our commitment to a united Russia is resolute." Russian Muslims were saddened by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Currently, Muslim leaders from around the world warn against promoting discord within Russia as it could lead to more disintegration. It is suggested that Russia maintain its cultural unity to balance off Western influence. A domino effect of events could result from Chechnya's impending independence from Europe.

Impacts of Islamic Revivalism on the Muslim Community in Russia

Depending on the region, the Islamist reformation has had a varying effect on Russia's stance regarding religious freedom and interest in Islam. Islam is establishing itself as a cultural and educational force in Russia. For instance, there are different numbers of mosques and madrasahs—religious schools—in different parts of Uzbekistan. In the USSR, 400 mosques were constructed during the Soviet era (Nurullina, 2014).

The majority of new mosques, madrasahs, and Islamic institutes are built by local Muslims. It is true that contributions from Muslim organizations are frequent. A few other Muslim nations, including Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan, also made major contributions. Students from Muslim-majority countries may also apply for this scholarship from Central Asia. In Turkey, there are thousands of students registered in various institutions. Students from Central Asia are frequently admitted to Al-Azhar University and, consequently, the Islamic Universities of Pakistan and Malaysia. In either scenario, the university or other organizations provide help for these students. For some students, Libya, Morocco, and other nations are preferred study destinations.

In the Muslim-majority regions of Russia, organizations including the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), SAAR Foundation (named after its founder, Saudi patriarch Sulaiman Abdul Aziz Al Rajhi), and Islamic Development Bank(DB) actively support educational and other activities. With the legal sanction of local governments, several of these organizations have formed local branches in Moscow and a few other Central Asian cities (Brenda Shaffer, 2000). These groups provide loans to those in need to fund orphanages, hospitals, and philanthropic causes. Notably, the Islamic Development Bank has already contributed more than $4 million. These initiatives have assisted thousands of people who have been displaced as a result of ethnic and regional conflicts, including those caused by the conflicts in Chechnya, Tajikistan, Abkhazia, and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Despite political and economic barriers, Muslim children's education is prioritized to support the resurgence of Islam. Islamic beliefs are eagerly instilled in young children by their families. Madrasahs that are open on weekday evenings can be used for this purpose. In many places, there aren't enough certified Islamic teachers. Many Turkish educators are actively involved in the teaching of Arabic and Islamic courses in Kazakhstan and Tatarstan. According to Dr. Aidar Youzeev, certain Muslim countries have responded to parental requests to include Islamic courses in their children's education(Dr. Aidar Youzeev, 2015).Russian and other local languages have been used to translate works from English, Turkish, and Arabic due to the recent demand for Islamic literature. The demands of the readers are also taken into account in the translated books. International organizations like WAMY, IIRO, and the SAAR Foundation, all have made substantial contributions to the nation's output of Islamic literature. Known as "Sant-Lada," WAMY's publishing division in Dagestan specializes in translating Islamic literature. The amount of literature available for the 70 million Muslims in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is still small despite the linguistic diversity, with at least 7 to 8 main languages spoken by them(Elise Giuliani, 2005).

The significance of female education has sparked extensive debates within society. There are only a limited number of institutions dedicated exclusively to educating females within the Islamic tradition. Currently, there exists a female section within the Mir-Arab Madrasah in Tashkent, which is the sole Madrasah to have received state support since the Soviet era. A privately funded women's Madrasah named 'Fatimat-uz-Zaharah' has recently been established in Tashkent, attracting over 1,000 students of varying ages. A similar madrasah catering to female students from the Caucasus region has been inaugurated in Dagestan. The practice of wearing the hijab is now widespread among Muslim women; however, during Soviet times, it was considered unacceptable due to the focus on female Islamic education (Yavus Akhmadov, 2001).

Scholarly writing on Islam is becoming more and more necessary as the demand for Islamic education rises. Some believe that this could lead to a rewrite of Central Asia's history. The importance of Islam in the history of Central Asia may not be sufficiently emphasized in the historical writings about the region written by Soviet researchers before the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Both independent and institutionally-based specialized centers have employed academics and Islamologists to write publications that cover a range of aspects of Islam. However, there are still not enough of these intellectual contributions available to satisfy the public demands.

Conclusion

The idea of essentialism is deeply ingrained in the revealed religions of Christianity and Islam and is required to sustain the fundamental characteristics of these religions, which are founded on divine revelation. Even during the Soviet era, despite the fuzzier lines, religious identities have persisted as different faith systems. Islam was able to preserve its unique character as a religion, unlike Orthodox Christianity, which was suppressed and persecuted during the Tsarist and Communist eras. Islam was formally recognized as a widely practiced religion in the 1993 Constitution during the post-Soviet era. Though Ijtihad and a purification procedure are meant to preserve rather than merely copy it, several Islamic organizations have revived the real spirit of Islam. Due to the rising demand for Islamic education, particularly among women, social and cultural changes are taking place in Russian Muslim communities.

Islam is experiencing resurgence within Russia, facilitated by the government's tolerant stance, which has cultivated a unique model of coexistence between Islam and Orthodox Christianity. Russia should recognize its historical significance as a place where Islam and Christianity had coexisted peacefully for many years. It should maintain its position as a cultural counterpoint to Western influence and adopt a fair attitude towards Muslims.

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