

THE POLITICS OF RELIGION:
STATE POLICY TOWARDS MUSLIMS IN POST-SOVIET RUSSIA

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Sümeyye Mine İltekin, certify that

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ABSTRACT

The Politics of Religion: State Policy Towards Muslims in Post-Soviet Russia

This thesis analyzes the state's Muslim policy in post-Soviet Russia with a focus on Putin period. The thesis aims to make a modest contribution to the analyses of the complicated relations between state and religion in post-Soviet Russia. Being the largest minority in the country with a vast number (approximately 20 million), Russia's Muslim politics is critical in capturing the complicated state-religion relations of the country. The indigeneity of the Russian Muslims as opposed to migrant minority Muslims of the Europe is another distinct pattern that makes important to understand Russian case and that will open the ground for interesting comparisons. The literature on managing religion as a governance strategy of authoritarian regimes constitute the theoretical backbone of the thesis. The data for the study is collected from secondary sources, press material, legal material and statements of political/religious actors. Though the focus is given to Putin period, the thesis covers the discussions of state's Muslim politics and religion-state relations from Imperial to Putin decade to present the continuities and conjunctures in the state's politics of religion. Being considered among the tools for "governance" of the Muslim dominated regions of the country, the state's Muslim politics discussed in relation to broader political dynamics such as regime change, authoritarianism, securitization and nationality politics. In this way, the thesis aims to present major patterns of state-religion relations in post-Soviet era specific to the Russian Muslim community and try to locate it within the broader political dynamics shaping Putin era politics.

ÖZET

Din Siyaseti: Post-Sovyet Dönem Rusya’da Devletin Müslümanlara Yönelik Politikası

Bu tez post-Sovyet dönem Rusya’da devletin Müslüman politikasını incelemekte ve bu politikaları rejim değişikliği, otoriterleşme, güvenlik ve milliyet politikaları gibi daha geniş siyasi dinamikler bağlamında tartışmaktadır. Tez, post-Sovyet dönem Rusya’daki karmaşık din-devlet ilişkileri etrafında oluşan literatüre ufak bir katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Müslüman nüfusun ülkenin en büyük dini azınlığı olması, Rusya’daki karmaşık din-devlet ilişkilerini çözmede devletin Müslüman politikasını anlamlandırmanın önemini ortaya koymaktadır. Ayrıca Rusya Müslümanlarının Avrupa’daki göçmen azınlık Müslümanların aksine yerli nüfustan olmaları, Rusya örneğini anlamayı önemli kılan ve yeni karşılaştırmalı çalışmalara kapı aralayabilecek önemli bir husustur. Tez, dini yönetim politikalarının bir unsuru olarak ele alan otoriter rejimlerde din siyaseti literatürünü esas almıştır. Çalışmanın verileri ikincil kaynaklar, basın kaynakları, kanun metinleri ve siyasi/dini aktörlerin medyada ve resmi sitelerinde yayınlanan konuşmalarından toplanmıştır. Tezin odak noktası Putin dönemi olsa da devletin Müslüman politikasındaki devamlılık ve kopuşları daha iyi ortaya koyabilmek adına Çarlık döneminden Putin dönemine kadar olan din-devlet ilişkileri ve devletin Müslüman politikasına da tezde yer verilmiştir. Din siyasetinin “yönetim” siyasetinin bir parçası olarak ele alındığı tezde devletin Müslüman siyasetinin din-devlet ilişkileriyle paralel olarak otoriter politikalar, rejim değişiklikleri, güvenlik ve milliyet politikaları çerçevesinde şekillendiği iddia edilmektedir.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CDUM- Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Russia

CIS- Commonwealth of Independent States

FOC- Fundamentals of Orthodoxy

FRS- Federal Registration Service

FSB- Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation

ICR- Inter-Religious Council of Russia

NGO- Non-Governmental Organization

NRM- New Religious Movements

OIC- Organization of Islamic Cooperation

ROC- Russian Orthodox Church

RSFSR- Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic

SDCM- Spiritual Directorate of Crimean Muslims

SMR- The Russian Council of Muftis

USSR- Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

GLOSSARY OF NON-ENGLISH TERMS

Madrasa – Islamic educational institution

Nomenklatura –Administrative elites having top-level government positions in

Soviet state

Siloviki – Man of power, working in the security services

Ummah – Global Muslim community

Waqf – Islamic charitable endowment

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1928, Soviet Union under Stalin, entered into a new phase with the introduction of anti-religious campaign with Stalin's critique of the party for failing to pursue more active anti-religious propaganda in the fifteenth party congress (Anderson, 1994). Taking glance to the sixty years later, Gorbachev in 1988, in a meeting with head of Russian Orthodox Church, acknowledging that past regimes have made mistakes on religious freedom, stated that "we are restoring in full measure now the Leninist principles of attitude to religion, church and believers" ("Gorbachev promises," 1988) and announced that there will be drafted a new law on the freedom of conscience which will take into consideration the interests of the entire nation and as well as religious organizations. After twenty years, in 2007, one encounters Putin's statements that "the state and the Church have a lot of scope for working together on strengthening morality and preserving spiritual and cultural heritage" ("The state," 2007). In Medvedev's term (2008-2012), the relations between the two began to be defined as the "symphony of the interests" and Medvedev himself manifested his astonishment over the rapidity of the change of the relations between the two

I could not imagine 15 or 20 years ago that the renaissance, the return to faith for a vast number of our compatriots will proceed at such a pace. It was very difficult to imagine, and in this sense it really is a miracle ("Meeting with," 2011).

As presented above via remarks of political leaders, Russia has passed through significant transformations in state-religion relations in recent century following the circular path of alliance in Imperial period, repression in Soviet era, toleration in the transition period and again alliance in Putin-Medvedev era. The

regime transition resulted in the radical change of the relations between state and religion in a short time as the latter turned from being an enemy to an ally of the state only within a decade. Given the framework of religion-state relations for the hegemonic religion above, what changed for minority religions in the wake of those transformations constitutes the major starting point of this thesis. As Muslims are the largest religious minority in the Russian state, this thesis will focus on the story of Russia's Muslims in the post-Soviet decade and will explore how those broader transformations in the attitude towards religion affected their conditions. With a focus on the state's policy towards Muslims, this thesis aims to make a modest contribution to the analyses of the complicated relations between state and religion relations in post-Soviet Russia. Though the thesis presents the historical advent of the state's Muslim policies, special attention is given to the Putin period. Based on political leaders' speeches, government documents, press material and secondary sources, the thesis examines state's Muslim discourse along with legal changes and government practices from the beginning of 2000s to the present. In this way, the thesis aims to delineate the major patterns of state-religion relations in post-communist era specific to the Russian Muslim community and try to locate it within the broader political dynamics of the Putin era.

1.1 Theoretical framework and literature review

The role of religion in international politics and the various ways states interact with religion has become a widely studied topic in the field of political science, specifically with the resurgence of identity politics in the aftermath of the Cold War. The increased role of religious institutions in the advent of international politics (Toft, Philpott & Shah, 2011) and the increased level of religiousness (Sarkissian,

2015) makes the study of religion one of the critical topics in political science.

Studies in political science consider the issue both within the context of basic rights and freedoms and within the scope of security studies given the existence of a set of religiously motivated movements in the international domain. Reviewing the literature on religion-state relations, one can see two main theoretical approaches in the field. First of them is the discussion of religion-state relations on the sociological ground adopting either the tenets of secularization thesis or of its critique. For long, the dominant paradigms in studies on religion in the social science disciplines has followed the secularization thesis which asserted a diminishing role of religion in the society through the flow of modernity. After the Cold war era, the developments through the world led academic circles to criticize the secularization thesis and there emerged tendencies of either revising the existing theory (Norris and Inglehart, 2007) or introducing alternative and opposite versions (Berger, 1999; Martin, 2011; Toft, Philpott & Shah, 2011). Hence, from there on, discussions on “desecularization” or “religious revival” become prevalent and there emerged new set of works based on them. Second major theoretical perspective is studies based on rational choice theory which bring the principles of economics into the religious domain and analyze the religion-state relations within that framework.

1.1.1 Secularization vs. revival?

Since the works that examine the role of religion through the lens of “secularization thesis” and alternative approaches emerging in response to that have a significant place in the literature, I will briefly point out to their major arguments. The first set of works examining the issue rely on the assumptions of traditional “secularization thesis” which has been the dominant approach from 18th century Enlightenment

scholars to the late 20th century. Secularization theorists, seeing religion as a functional aspect of the society, expect a gradual decline the importance of religion as a result of scientific developments, rationalization of individuals and modernization.¹ According to Luhmann, secularization involves “the differentiation of spheres of activity in modern societies between religion, the economy and the polity” (Turner, 2011, p. 150). David Martin, in his *A General Theory of Secularization*, indicates that the term secularization encapsulates four tendencies which are, “(1) the deterioration of religious institutions, (2) the decline of religious practices, (3) the erosion of stable religious communities, and (4) the differentiation of churches from other institutional spheres” (as cited in Froese, 2008, p. 23). While some scholars imply decline of institutional role of religion by secularization, other scholars refer it for decline of religiosity in the individual level. Having relative validity for the decline of institutional role of Church in Western Europe, the secularization thesis fails to explain developments in the late 20th century throughout the world, especially US and the Muslim world.² Given the increased support for revivalist religious movements, increased religiosity in those countries, the expectations of the secularization paradigm seems to be in the contrary. Hence, there has been immense critiques of the secularization thesis. David Martin, being among the first critics to the secularization thesis, proposed the elimination of the concept itself stating its ideological and polemical features rather than being functional and theoretical (as cited in Stark and Finke, 2000, p. 62). Seeing the developments in the contrary fashion expected by the secularization thesis, some previous proponents of

¹ For detailed theoretical discussions on secularization, see Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age*, David Martin’s *On Secularization* and Norris and Inglehart’s *Sacred and Secular*.

² There are also objections to the notion of declining religious participation even in Western Europe with the claim that religious participation has never been high in Western Europe (Davie in Stark and Finke, 2000, 62-3).

the theory like Peter Berger has abandoned their claims and introduced the contrary arguments through concept of “desecularization” as a synonym to counter secularization (Berger, 1999). The shift in Berger’s thought can be seen in an interview he gave in 1997:

I think what I and most other sociologists of religion wrote in the 1960s about secularization was a mistake. Our underlying argument was that secularization and modernity go hand in hand. With more modernization comes more secularization. It wasn’t a crazy theory. There was some evidence for it. But I think it’s basically wrong. Most of the world today is certainly not secular. It’s very religious (Berger quoted in Stark and Finke, 2000, p. 79).

There were also some works that do not fully abandon claims of secularization thesis, but bring revisions to it as in the case of Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart (2007). Their work introduce ‘the theory of existential security and secularization’ while criticizing both traditional secularization theories and religious market theory for their inability to explain the developments in the world.

In understanding the state policies towards religion, the secularization theorists analyze religious liberty based on ideational and structural explanations and regard the religious liberty as a natural result of secularization-modernization processes and as a product of ideas of liberal philosophers of the era (Gill, 2008). Hence none of the studies adopting the claims of secularization-modernization theory problematized the politics of religious liberty and explained the variations in religious freedom in equally “modern” countries (Gill, 2008). The approach’s inability to explain variations in the state policy, reasons for the triumph of the arguments in the intellectual debate between proponents of religious freedom and others and the missing agency in those explanations is criticized by the proponents of rational choice theory (Gill, 2008, p. 31-9).

1.1.1.1 Russia verifying the secularization thesis?

While majority of works define post-Soviet period as an era of religious revival, some set of works analyze religion-state relations in post-Soviet region through secularization theories (Norris and Inglehart, 2007). Kaariainen (1999) states that denoting the religious change in post-Soviet Russia as “religious renaissance” would be an exaggeration and mentions the eclectic nature of religion and low levels of church attendance in Russia. Borowik (2002) comparatively analyzes religious transformations in three post-Soviet countries (Russia, Ukraine and Belarus). Relying on statistical data and elite interviews; similar to Kaariainen, he claims the post-Soviet “religious revival” to contain eclectic elements from New Age religions and being characterized by low levels of religious practice. Hence, Borowik (2002) sees similar patterns of religiosity both in post-Soviet countries where atheism was imposed for long years and the Western European countries where secularization took place. Need and Evans (2001) examine church attendance and religious participation in ten post-Soviet countries through “multivariate analysis of large-scale national sample surveys” conducted in mid-1990s and reach results that support claims of traditional secularization thesis. In a later study, however, Evans and Northmore Ball (2012), relying on “seven wave national, stratified random sample survey covering 1993-2007”, reached increased level of Orthodox self-identification and church attendance and came to the conclusion that “resurgence of Orthodoxy in Russia provides a robust exception to secularization trends in Western Europe” (Evans and Northmore Ball, 2012, p. 795), yet seeing this resurgence as a “lukewarm religiosity” (Evans and Mankowska, 2011).

Norris and Inglehart (2007), on the other hand, expect “a long-term linear decline of religiosity” in post-Communist region; yet, according to them, this trend “would tend to be offset by short-term factors linked with the collapse of communism” (p. 114). Since they relate the process of secularization to human development and existential security, they predict this transformation to be only in post-Communist countries “that have experienced a long-term process of human development and economic equality” (p. 114). Based on the claims proposed in these works, is it possible to assume a diminishing role of religion and state’s disengagements from the religious sphere in the post-Soviet Russia? Does secularization thesis provide necessary tools for understanding advent of religion-state relations in Russia?

1.1.1.2 Russia’s religious revival?

Another set of scholars oppose the analysis of Russian case through the lens of “secularization thesis”, in the contrary, they see Russian case as an exemplar of religious revival. Greeley, basing his claims on the empirical evidence from events in post-Soviet countries, suggest that after a decade of militant secularization attempts of the state “St. Vladimir has routed Karl Marx” in post-Soviet Russia (Greeley quoted in Stark and Finke, 2000, p. 61). In contrast to secularization theorists’ claims; Greeley (1994), relying on survey of multistage probability sample of Russian speaking citizens of Russia conducted in 1991, states a substantial increase in belief and affiliation in the country. Karpov (2013), in a similar vein, building on Peter Berger’s thesis of desecularization, analyzes the Russian case as an example of desecularization from above.

Bacon (2000), while claiming “resurgence of religion in the politics”, admits ideological and institutional secularity of post-Soviet Russia. In identifying increased socio-political role of religion, Bacon (2000) uses the concept of “civil religion”. According to him, “civil religion is created when a state seeks to adopt an appropriate religious underpinning to its political behavior” as was in the example of the United States (Bacon, 2000, p. 197). Jeff Haynes states that “the development of civil religion in a polity is a strategy to avoid social conflicts and promote national co-ordination, especially in countries with serious religious or ideological divisions” (Haynes quoted in Bacon, 2000, p. 197). Parallel to that, Fox (2008), while admitting differences in each post-Soviet country, describes Russian governments’ official involvement in religion (GIR) as a form “civil religion” combined with implementation of “legal limitations”. In his categorization, Russia is counted among countries that have “preferred treatment for some religions” and “high restrictions on minorities” (Fox, 2008). Justification for this classification is provided through constitutional texts and other legal changes in Fox’s work.

Religious market theorists, examining the level of religiosity in the society through the effectiveness of the religious organizations and “the degree of state regulation of the church” (Norris and Inglehart, 2007, p. 115) predict that the future of religiousness in post-Soviet region depends on “the degree to which they develop a free market religious economy or (which is more likely) they revert to highly regulated and socialized religious markets” (Stark and Finke, 2000, p. 247). Froese (2004), through the lens of religious market theory, explains the failure of scientific atheism in Russia. Given the varied conceptualizations of religiosity and different definitions of the believer above, the divergence between proponents of secularization theory and religious revival seems to emerge from the variety in them.

Researches supporting claims of secularization thesis in Russia point out to the low level of religious practice; on the other hand, studies claiming religious revival refer to the religious self-identification, high levels of trust towards Orthodox Church and increased role of religious institutions in the social and political realm.

A set of works attribute the “religious revival” in post-Soviet era to the vacuum emerging as a result of dissolution of the Soviet regime and efforts to find a new identity. Hunter (2004) points out to Islam’s critical role in the identity formation process in Russia and talks about Russian Westernizers’ and Slavophiles’ discussions regarding the nature of the Russian identity. In a similar vein, Alkan Ozcan (2012) mentions the search for new identity in the post-Soviet context and religion’s key role in formation of it. In this sense, attempts to prevent dispersion of “foreign” sects both by state and “traditional” religious institutions can be interpreted in the intention to preserve harmony in the identity. The competition that emerged with new non-traditional religions and rival Christian sects has also been a point emphasized by Stan and Turcescu (2007) in case of Romania. David Martin (2012) states that after collapse of the Soviet Union; remnants of communist nationalism linked with ethno religion in order to restrict freedom of religion and prevent new faiths’ domination of the country. Krindatch (2004) also refers to the increasingly negative sentiments towards other religions with the rise of xenophobia in Russia. Warhola (2008), while recognizing increased role of xenophobia and extremism in the society especially by the eruption of conflicts in Chechnya, analyzes instances of interaction between Orthodoxy and Islam in mitigation of conflicts and points out to the critical role of religious and governmental leaders in it. The questions emerging from these works would be following: does the regime change in 1990s resulted in

the religious revival in Russia? If there is a religious revival in post-Soviet Russia, in which ways it is related to the ethnic and identity politics of the country?

1.1.2 Rational choice-religious market theory

Another set of works that emerged in response to demand side secularization theory, is named as supply side “religious market theory” (Norris and Inglehart, 2004). The theorists of this school, as opposed to previous ones, introduce a theory of religion based on rationality; that is, according to them, religious behavior contains cost-benefit calculations similar to other grounds (Stark and Finke, 2000). Seeing religious economy “as a subsystem of all social systems”, they claim that it “consist of a market of current and potential followers (demand), a set of organizations (suppliers) seeking to serve that market, and the religious doctrines and practices (products) offered by the various organizations” (Stark and Finke, 2000, p. 36).

For the scholars of rational choice school, state decisions on religious liberty and repression constitute one of the major themes of their studies. Hence, they examine the state policies towards religion through the question of how can the variety in state laws regulating religion can be explained and in relation to this, they try to capture why states establish religious monopoly or how they decide to introduce religious liberty³ (Gill, 2008; Sarkissian, 2015). While Gill (2008) examine the issue through the origins and development of religious liberty; Sarkissian (2015) focuses on the repressive practices of the states. Gill (2008), borrowing from rational choice theory, argues that although the religious liberty is usually presented as natural product of Enlightenment philosophy, interests have equally critical role in

³ Gill, borrowing from religious market theorists, also uses the term “deregulate the religious economy” as thesaurus of “introduce religious liberty”.

legislation towards religious groups. His approach in examination of religious liberty resembles the “classical economic view of the world wherein interests predominate over ideas” (p. 27); hence the study can be seen as an extension of the rational choice perspective into the study of religion (Gill, 2008). Sarkissian (2015), on the other hand, explores state’s repression of religion in non-democratic states as an instrument of its rule relying on both rational choice theory and authoritarianism studies. She attempts to constitute “a new theory of religious regulation and repression in countries governed by nondemocratic regimes” (Sarkissian, 2015, p. 14) considering the previous theories’ inability to explain varieties in state attitude towards religion⁴.

1.1.3 “Managing religion”: The politics of religion in authoritarian regimes

Linking religion-state relations to the authoritarianism studies is a relatively new phenomena in the literature. Though studies on authoritarian and hybrid regimes acquired popularity with the failed experiences of democratization in early 2000s,⁵ they mostly focused on the manipulation of state institutions and political processes in the authoritarian regimes. Only few works mention policies around religion as a manipulative tool of authoritarian leaders. Koesel (2014) and Sarkissian (2015)

⁴ Methodologically, Sarkissian (2015) relies on worldwide quantitative data similar to the works of Norris and Inglehart (2007) and Fox (2008) that classify states depending on their approach towards religion by creating indices on religious freedom. While Fox (2008) analyzes 175 governments regardless of the degree of freedom in them, Sarkissian (2015) focuses on nondemocratic regimes and explores effect of religious division and political competition in state’s determination of its policies towards religion.

⁵ With the failed experiences of democratization through the world, the literature on democratization began to be substituted for studies on authoritarianism and there has emerged different conceptualizations of the hybrid regimes combining both democratic and autocratic elements. In those works, scholars identified the current hybrid regimes which were mixture of democratic and authoritarian properties through various concepts, “including “illiberal democracy” (Zakaria, 1997) and “pseudodemocracy” (Diamond, 2002) and for more repressive regimes, “liberalized autocracy” (Brumberg, 2002), “competitive authoritarianism” (Levitsky and Way, 2010) and “electoral authoritarianism” (Schedler, 2010)” (Sarkissian 2015, 8).

explore the policies around religion as a tool of authoritarian states. The relationship between religious groups and the state in the authoritarian settings is tended to explain through domination-resistance because of competing over authority and mobilizing function of civil society and religious groups in the authoritarian settings (Koesel 2014, p. 2). According to Fox (2008), governments choose to restrict the religion either based on broader political concerns for restricting minorities or for the fear of expansion of minority religions threatening the hegemonic one or for its overall negative attitude towards religion in the ideational basis. Gill (2008) categorizes regulations on religious liberty into two; these are “negative restrictions” and “positive endorsement of select dominations” (p. 12). Both Fox (2015) and Sarkissian (2015), define various ways of state repression of religion within the categories of “repression of religious expression and association”⁶ and restrictions targeting the “political expression of religion”⁷.

While the previous works emphasize the conflictual relationship between the religion and the state, Koesel (2014), relying on rational-choice perspective emphasizes the innovative aspects of authoritarian rules, that is, according to her, rather than relying solely on repression, authoritarian regimes may utilize the path of cooperation with various actors to strengthen their power. Building an interest-based theory, Koesel (2014) claims that there is a room for unexpected partnerships between the state and religious actors even in repressive political settings as a result

⁶ This first subset includes restrictions on “individual or group observance of religious services, festivals, or holidays in public or private”, “restrictions on places of worship”, “restricting people’s ability to observe the laws of their own religion or forcing individuals to observe the laws of another religious group”, “restricting, forcing or otherwise coercing conversion”, “restricting proselytizing”, “restricting the formation of religious communities through discriminatory registration or monitoring requirements, including surveillance of or bans on groups”, “restricting or controlling clerical appointments”, “restricting religious speech”, “restricting printing or distribution of religious materials” or “restricting or banning private religious education” (Sarkissian, 2015, p. 28-36).

⁷ It contains “restricting or banning religious political parties”, restricting “nongovernmental associations that are affiliated with religious groups”, “restricting the political activities and/or speech of religious leaders and individuals” and so on (Sarkissian, 2015, p. 37-39).

of “a combination of uncertainty, pressing needs and transferrable resources” (p. 5). While state officials cooperate with religious communities “as a means of preserving political power, governing more efficiently, and diffusing local conflicts”; religious leaders seek partnerships with the state “to safeguard their survival, gain access to resources and promote their spiritual agenda” (p. 5). Relying on fieldwork conducted in Russia and China, Koesel (2014) explores the contexts in which decisions for cooperation or repression are made, the way those interactions take place and political consequences of them. On the other hand, Gill (2008) states that dominant groups seek government regulation of minority religions whereas the objective of minority religions would be achievement of religious liberty different from politicians whose main concern would be to minimize the cost of the ruling.

In a similar vein, Turner (2011), pointing out to the difficulty of governance in pluralistic environments, claim that “management of religion” is inevitable component of the secularization which is employed both in liberal and authoritarian states in multiple forms. According to Turner (2011), the global anxieties over security in post 9/11 world shifted the liberal states’ policy towards religion from “benign neglect to the active management of religious institutions”, primarily Muslims (p. 193). The importance of managing religions lies in state’s desire “to reassert its authority over civil society” and “to command the loyalty of its citizens over and above other claims of membership” (Turner, 2011, p. 193). Turner (2011) suggests that government in the West tried to reorganize liberalism to manage religions whereas authoritarian regimes “either promote traditional religion in the service of the state or to create religious leisure parks and religious tourism as lucrative state activities” (p. 193).

Werth (2002), in his historical study on the confessional politics in the Tsarist Russia, comes with a process-based explanation⁸ of the religion politics. Considering the politics of religion “as a matter of negotiation and interaction”⁹ (p. 4), he examines “the ways in which the imperial state sought to use confessional affiliation and religious institutions as tools in the governance of its ethnically and religiously diverse empire” and looks at “the ways in which local communities responded to these initiatives and shaped their own cultural identities in a process of interaction with representatives of the state” (p. 3). In this regard, it can be stated that “managing religions” is a dynamic process shaped through interactions between the state and the society; hence it takes different forms depending on time and place. In case of Russia, the managing of religions took different forms in different regions and evolved in time as a result of domestic and international socio-political developments.

1.1.4 Patterns of post-Soviet religion-state relations

The literature focusing on post-Soviet religion-state relations mention the positive effect of Gorbachev’s policies and the regime change on the religious liberty and increased role of religion in the public sphere (Dunlop, 1999; Bourdeaux, 2000; Krindatch, 2006; Karpov, 2013). In description of the role of religion in the political realm in post-Soviet Russia, studies point out that despite lack of religiously motivated parties, religion plays important role in politicians’ appeal to religious

⁸ According to him, religion politics is “a process whereby the state, confronted with the complex consequences of its own practices and principles, struggled with itself, its own local representatives”, but also with the targeted “subjects to establish a desirable religious order” (p.4).

⁹ According to Werth (2002), the confessional politics is a matter of interaction whereby the articulations and behavior of the certain group shapes “state perspectives and policies”, “just as state structures, practices and categories” influencing the “aspirations and forms of protest” of that group (p. 4). Though acknowledging the inequality of the two parties, he proposes that “state officials formed their perspectives and policies on the basis of interactions with the population they ruled and could never entirely control policies once they were implemented” (p. 4).

values and institutions in legitimizing their policies. Studies mention only two religious political parties having less than 1% vote (Bacon, 2000; Krindatch, 2004).

In identifying the patterns of the post-Soviet era, there has been made various propositions. A number of scholars define the current context through “the historical triad of autocracy, Orthodoxy, nationality” (Shroeder and Karpov quoted in Pankhurst&Klip, 2013) and claim that “to be Russian in a post-Soviet context is also to be Orthodox” (Philpott, 2015). Yet, scholars such as Luke March disagrees with it by stating that “the national idea is profoundly multinational and multiconfessional” in Russian state (March quoted in Pankhurst&Klip, 2013). Other scholars, on the other hand, stay in between and claim Putin regime building a “multi confessional coalition of politically loyal leaders to represent the religious community” (Fagan, 2003). For others, post-Soviet politics of religion in Russia resembles the return to the Imperial model of religion-state relations (Yemelianova, 2015).

According to Curanovic (2013), the newly established post-Soviet states adopt the policy of religion from each other; hence in the post-communist countries, there is a new patterned relationship between state and religious institutions which she defines as “post-Soviet religious model”. She mentions three characteristics in the relationship between state and religion; these are “the principle of the secular state; the state-recognised category of ‘traditional’ religions and the state given ‘licence to preach’” (Pankhurst and Kilp, 2013). In discussing her model, she points out to the critical role of social partnership and religious diplomacy (Curanovic, 2013). Hunter (2004) also talks about religious element in foreign policy and touches upon the religious establishments’ role in building relations with other countries.

Fagan (2014), in parallel to Curanovic’s mentioning of state categorization of “traditional, points out to the state’s setting of “traditional” religions. Fox indicates

that in the former Soviet bloc region, state has paternalistic attitude toward religion, in this sense, it ‘guides’ and ‘protects’ its citizens through “regulating and controlling citizens’ access to religion” (Fox, 2008, p. 140). According to him, one can follow threefold manifestations of this paternalism. First, state religions have to be registered in all countries. Second, the majority religions tend to be regulated more heavily and third, religions that are considered “dangerous or nonindigenous to the state are often restricted” (Fox, 2008, p. 140). Fox (2008) observes an increase set on minorities given the state’s attempts to protect their indigenous religions, in ex-Soviet countries.

Toft, Philpott & Shah (2011), in their comparative analysis of the relationship between religious and political authority, categorize Russia under “consensually integrated states” where “the independence of religious and political authority is low” and they have a close relationship in which “the state affords the dominant religious community extensive legal prerogatives, while the religious body legitimates the authority of the state” (p. 41). Yet, the writers acknowledge that in “consensually integrated states”, different religious communities may have very different relations with the government as in the case of Russia where “the Orthodox Church is consensually¹⁰ integrated while the Muslim minority is conflictually¹¹ integrated” (p. 41).

1.1.5 Church-state relations in Russia

While differ in their approaches to the issue, majority of the studies on post-Soviet region maintain the improved position of Church in comparison to Soviet past.

¹⁰ They define the consensual relationship as “one that both religious actor and state regard as legitimate; each party is happy with the status quo” (p. 39).

¹¹ A conflictual relationship is “one that at least one party wants to revamp; any consent it gives is either prudential and provisional or elicited by the other party’s coercion” (p. 39).

Specifically, Russian Orthodox Church's increased role in the politics seems to be one of the major themes in studies of religion-state relations in post-Soviet period. Knox (2004) analyzes relations between state and Orthodox Church in post-Soviet Russia. Rather than seeing the church as a monolithic body, she acknowledges multivocality of it differences between traditionalist and reformist factions of the church. While distinguishing between official and unofficial Church, Knox (2004) questions whether their stances and relations with state are conducive to the emergence of civil society. Relying on government decrees, Church publications, leaders' statements and press material; she explores official Church's stance, dissident activities and church-state relations in Russia and lastly, lay activism's contributions to the emergence of the civil society. Bacon (2000), similar to Knox, mentions church's not being a monolithic body, rather containing varieties within it. Papkova (2011) also acknowledges various factions within the church categorizing them as liberals, traditionalists and fundamentalists. Rosati and Stoeckl, borrowing from Eisenstadt's "multiple modernities", understands peculiar relation of ROC with the state (Papkova, 2013). Yet, Papkova (2013) criticizes the multiple modernities paradigm for its limitedness and for not being able to overcome accusations of being sophisticated version of Huntingtonian thesis of 'clash of civilizations'. In its application to the case of Russian Orthodox Church, the theory doesn't say much more from the familiar statements that: "There are both modern and anti-modern forces within the Russian Church, which means that the position of the Moscow Patriarchate vis-à-vis modernity and the proper relationship of religion with the state is ... a complicated one." (Papkova, 2013, p. 45).

Studies point out to the different occasions presenting the close church- state relations. A point of engagement between religious establishment and political actors

emerge in Patriarch's attendance in several state occasions at the highest level and pastoral support, blessing for construction projects at the local level (Bacon, 2000). The relations between state and church is not confined to the symbolic realm; state also grant tax concessions for Church which makes some scholars to question state's *de jure* being "free of official ideology and religion" (Bacon, 2000). To show church's increased effectiveness in the social field in post-Soviet Russia, writers mention results of opinion polls declaring Orthodox Church as the most trusted institution (Bacon, 2000; Krindatch, 2004). Yet, according to Krindatch (2004), the popularity of Church does not mean religious establishment's direct involvement in the politics. Sarkissian (2009) remarks adversary effects of church-state cooperation in the democratic consolidation of post-Communist countries. In a similar vein, Koesel (2014) sees the cooperation between government and religious institutions as a tactic of authoritarian leaders.

Alkan Ozcan (2012), in her comparative study on religion, identity and politics in Russia and Poland, describes the church-state relations in the former through the concept of "unholy alliance". She discusses state-religion relations in Russia within the framework of Orthodox Church's and Muslim religious institutions' relations with the state and relate it to the discussions on search for new identity in post-Soviet context. Turner (2013) similarly points out that in Russia along with other countries "religious membership is more or less equivalent to citizenship, especially where state institutions are weak or corrupt" (p. 119). While mentioning close relations between state and church in Russia; studies also indicate independence of each from the other; to exemplify it, Bacon (2000) mentions disagreement between Church and state over military action during Chechen conflict of 1994-6. In a similar vein, Papkova (2011) challenges the wide held notion of

church as a strong political actor in post-Soviet Russia justifying it through Church's failure in promoting its political agenda in the legal domain other than the 1997 law, its inability to bring Orthodoxy courses to the state schools and failure in retrieve of its seized properties during Soviet era. Yet, she retreats from her arguments in an article published in the following years given the developments of Medvedev era which strengthened ROC's position in the political domain (Papkova, 2013).

Overall, the literature on religion-state relations can be examined in three categories. First set of works propose an idea based explanation to the evolving politics through de/secularization theses. Second approach comes with an interest-based explanation of the advent of religion-state relations relying on rational choice and religious market theory. The third set of works, having a more state-centric approach, focus on the state efforts to control/manage religious sphere. The studies merging the rational choice perspective with studies on authoritarianism present the politics of religion in the post-Soviet Russia as one of the manipulative tools of the authoritarian government and point out to the innovative aspects of this new policy which merges repression with cooperation rather than relying solely on the former. The studies also assert the different ways of government's "managing religion" with an aim to minimize the cost of governance in the country and mention the dynamicity of this management that is shaped through interactions between the state and the society. In addition to the works that see the post-Soviet religion politics as continuation of the Imperial decade, the literature comes with a three disparate explanations of the post-Soviet Russian religion-state relations: while the first group define the relations as multi-confessional coalition, the second group see it as a triad of Orthodoxy, autocracy and nationality, the third group define it as a coalition of politically loyal representatives of the "traditional" religions coupled with state

paternalism. Taking into account the previous theoretical propositions presented in the literature, my study will examine the dynamics of state's Muslim policy in post-Soviet Russia and explore the specificities of state's "managing" of the Muslim politics.

1.2 Russia as a hybrid regime in an identity vacuum

The political scene throughout the world experienced radical changes in the last quarter of the twentieth century from authoritarian rule to more liberal and democratic ones. Though differing greatly from each other, the scholars tended to see the transitions as a part of global democratic trend that is named as "third wave" of democracy by Samuel Huntington. So, a vast transition literature emerged analyzing the processes and dynamics of democratization in various countries. Yet, when it became apparent that direction of change is not towards democracy but towards a new form of authoritarian rule in most of the cases, there emerged calls to move beyond transition paradigm through the statements that the core assumptions of it do not reflect the reality of the field anymore (Carothers, 2002). Hence, the works based on transition paradigm began to be replaced by works exploring various forms of hybrid regimes that contain both democratic and autocratic elements simultaneously. Works exploring the "gray zone" between democracy and autocracy produced various definitions for those hybrid regimes which are "semidemocracy, virtual democracy, electoral democracy, pseudodemocracy, illiberal democracy, semi-authoritarianism, soft authoritarianism, electoral authoritarianism" (Levitsky and Way 2002, p. 51). Yet these denotations are criticized for containing democratizing bias (Levitsky and Way, 2002; Carothers, 2002) and for glossing over critical discrepancies between regime types through adjectives of "semi" (Levitsky and Way,

2002). Hence, the later works make emphasis to the newly authoritarian aspects of those regimes rather than seeing them as cases of democratization. After collapse of the Soviet regime, the countries emerging out of this breakdown took the path of democratization. Yet, in most of the cases, attempts for transition towards democracy failed and there emerged new forms of authoritarian regimes. Russian state is also began to be considered among the new hybrid regimes in early 2000s.

1.2.1 Authoritarianism in Russian politics

The weakness of the pluralist institutions and mass-based interest groups, lack of strength and independence in institutions that check and balance the political power such as parliament and judiciary constituted major challenges to the democratization of Russian state (McFaul, 2000, p. 31). Majority of the works exploring the hybrid regimes throughout the world consider Russia within the scope of those regimes combining the democratic rules with authoritarian policies. In his discussion of “illiberal democracy”, Zakaria (1997) refers to Yeltsin’s Russia in exemplifying his arguments. Levitsky and Way (2002) consider Russia under Putin as a “competitive authoritarian” regime in which formal democratic institutions are seen only as a means for acquiring and using political authority. The powerholders in those regimes violate rules to such an extent that the regime ceases to meet conditions for democracy (Levitsky and Way, 2002). According to them, Russian case constitutes the example of a “collapse of an authoritarian regime, followed by the emergence of a new, competitive authoritarian regime” (Levitsky and Way, 2002, p. 60). On the other hand, Carothers (2002) define Russia among a “few transitional countries” that fall just to the side of dominant power syndrome yet facing the danger of drifting toward it.

For Shevtsova (2004), understanding Russian case through “the prism of ‘democracy with adjectives’ can lead to oversimplified and even dangerously wrong practical conclusions” (p. 70). Rather, relying on Larry Diamond’s conceptualization, she sees Russian case in the “twilight zone”. According to Shevtsova (2000), Russian regime under Yeltsin can be defined as a “constitutional electoral autocracy” which is characterized by “a constant conflict between the democratically elected and legitimated government and a leader whose powers are authoritarian in their scope” (p. 37). According to her, Russian presidential regime contains a monarchical aspect and characterized by “the weak separation of powers and the reliance on personalistic leadership rather than democratic institutions” (p. 37). She states that Putin, retooling Yeltsin’s ambivalent electoral autocracy, created “a more sober and systematic bureaucratic-authoritarian regime” (Shevtsova, 2004, p. 70) which relies both on personified power and bureaucratic structures. Schedler (2015), categorizing Russia under “electoral authoritarian” regimes, states this form of authoritarianism to be “grown out of processes of democratic erosion” in Russia (p. 4).

1.2.2 Identity politics in Russia

The struggle around national identity have been very critical in understanding the religion-state relations in post- Soviet Russia as the literature frequently points out to the intermingling of nationalist and religious identities among people living in the region. Apart from that, as Prizel (1998) suggests, the identity politics is crucial in shaping of foreign policy of a country. Affirming its truth, Russian case presents that identity politics not only affects the foreign policy of a country, but also decisive in its domestic and minority politics. In discussion of Russian national identity, scholars point out to the empire effect which impede the development of a Russian ethnic

identity (Hosking, 1998; Tolz, 1998). Some scholars closely associate the development of Russian national identity with Russians' conversion into Christianity in the second half of the tenth century and consider the Church having critical effect in shaping of Russian national identity (Prizel, 1998). Apart from its close relation to Church, what characterizes Russianness is its view of itself as "civilization" rather than a mere ethnicity. Until 1960s the persistence of imperial structure was an unquestioned fact both for nationalist Slavophiles and liberal Westernizers (Prizel, 1998, p. 154). Yet, one can see the critiques of imperial mentality after 1960s which questions burdens of empire and attempts to focus on Russia's distinct needs and interests (Prizel, 1998).

Although, historically, Russians have strong belief in their civilization, the question of Russian national identity remains to be uncertain and contested. Especially, with the dissolution of the Soviet state, the question of Russianness became a hotly debated topic in Russia. According to Prizel (2008), the preference of an imperial-religious identity over a national identity¹² is based on "the traditional notions of divine rule" in majority of the empires and "the non- Russian ethnicity of the Russian court and the Romanov family" (p. 164). In parallel to rise of nationalist ideologies throughout the world, nationalism rapidly spread among minorities within Russian empire in the beginning of twentieth century, yet Russian national identity itself remained vague and unready to the challenges (Prizel, 1998). Since Russia became an empire before being a state, it appealed to the "great power politics" and

¹² Presenting historical debates on origins of Russia between Westernizers and Slavophiles, Prizel (1998) shows, although differing on number of issues, how both sides agreed on avoiding issues of national identity and nationalism. In parallel to this, he states that both right wing and left wing educated class hold on to "denationalizing ideologies" in Russia (p. 163). The differences derived due to the fact that while Westernizers consider Russia as an integral part of the West; for Slavophiles, there is "a reinforcing relationship between Orthodoxy, autocracy and pan-Slavism" (Prizel, 1998; p. 162).

the processes of nation building and state building is never completed in Russia which led to cling on the empire rather than Russian nation due to the feelings of insecurity and fear for the unknown and its being far from a nation state in the current sense (Hosking, 1998) despite the efforts of Yeltsin's efforts for building a civic Russian identity cementing all of the citizens (Hosking, 1998).

Apart from constituting an example to the hybrid regimes and representing an interesting merge of religion and identity, understanding Russian case has a specific importance due to its number of peculiarities. First of them is Russia's experience of a regime change in the recent decade. In the last century, Russia has experienced two major regime changes. One of them is the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the subsequent Soviet rule and its dissolution in 1991 and establishment of the new Russian state. With these radical shifts in the state structure, Russia has also experienced significant transitions in the religious liberty (Gill, 2008). While being a vigorous advocate of atheism and significant restrictions on religious liberty during the Soviet decade, it has experienced liberalization of the religious domain along with others during Gorbachev period and turned into "non-sacred alliance of church and state" in Putin era.¹³

There are number of reasons for the focus of the thesis on the Muslim population of Russian state. Firstly, in examination of the religion-state relations in the Russian case, the discussions mainly revolve around the relations between the Orthodox Church and the state whereas the policies targeting the minority religions find few space in the works (Knox, 2005; Froese, 2008; Fagan, 2013; Koesel, 2014;

¹³ Toft, Philpott & Shah (2011) also mention the radical shifts in the relationship between religious and political authority in Russia. They state that with the demise of the Soviet state in 1991, "Russia traveled from conflictual integration (the Soviet state's sharp control of religion) to the opposite corner, consensual independence (religious freedom for all), but then moved toward consensual integration as the government began to restrict activities of non-Orthodox churches and Muslims in the mid-1990s" (p. 42).

Alkan Ozcan, 2012; Sarkissian 2015). While the works of Hunter (2004), Yemelianova (2003), Malashenko (2009) and Hahn (2007) give the general framework of Islam in post-Soviet Russia, the literature lacks the systematic examination of Putin's overall Muslim policy. Systematic examination of the Russia's Muslim policy is critical to understand Russian state-religion relations given that Muslims are the largest minority religious group in the country with an approximate 20 million.

Apart from that, the indigeneity of Russian Muslims as opposed to migrant Muslims minorities of the Europe constitutes another significant aspect of understanding Russian state's Muslim policy. While the studies focusing on Muslims of Europe discuss state policy towards Muslims within the framework of migration policies, the Russian case opens a new comparative ground for discussions around Muslims as non-migrant minorities. Before focusing on the state's policy towards Muslims in Russia, the following section will present a brief overview of Islam in Russia.

1.3 A background information on Russian Muslims¹⁴

Expansion of Islam in today's Russian soil dates back to 7th century before expansion of Christianity there. Arabs are entered Daghestan and eastern Caucasia in 7th century and gradually the territory became Islamized, the process of which lasted until the 12th century (Bennigsen and Wimbush, 1985). Islam expanded in Volga basin via Arab merchants and ambassadors in 10th century as in 922 it became the official religion of the Bulgars (today's Tatarstan territory) and then spread in 11th.

¹⁴ In the thesis, I use the term "Russian Muslims" as an overarching term including all Muslim population from different ethnic backgrounds living in the Russian Federation (Tatars, Bashkirs, Chechens, Dagestanis etc.).

12th century it spread into the Urals (today's Bashkiria) (Bennigsen and Wimbush, 1985). On the other hand, Kievan Russia adopted Orthodox version of Christianity in 988 "following the baptism of Prince Vladimir 1, ruler of the Eastern Roman Empire" (Gill, 2008, p. 170). Between the years of 1200-1500, Russians came under the domination of Golden Horde, that is, "Tatar yoke" which make them "only Christian nation of Europe, apart from the Spanish and Balkan peoples, to have experienced a long Muslim domination" (Bennigsen and Wimbush, 1985, p. 8). In the mid-1500s, however, important Muslim territories are conquered by the Russian state, "including Kazan (1552), Astrakhan (1556) and Western Siberia (1598); by the end of the seventeenth century, the Russian advance had reached the North Caucasus" (Bennigsen and Wimbush, 1985, p. 8). Paradoxically, Russian expansion in the region could not prevent spread of Islam there as at the end of 18th century via activities of the Sufi Naqshbandi brotherhood, Islam came to the Chechen mountains and Sufis pioneered the resistance movements against the Russian conquest which turned the Chechen region into one of the fortresses of Islam in the North Caucasus (Bennigsen and Wimbush, 1985; Lemerrier-Quelquejay, 1992).

The multi-ethnic and multi-religious composition of the Russian state which has its roots in the Imperial Period is continued both in Soviet and post-Soviet periods. In this multiplicity, while the Orthodox community has constituted the majority religious group; Muslims have been the second largest religious community with an approximate 20 million. During Soviet period, Muslims have predominantly lived in Central Asia, Caucasia and Volga-Ural region¹⁵. After dissolution of the

¹⁵ The number of people from Muslim nationalities in the Soviet Union, according 1979 census figures, reaches 44-45 million which is distributed in three major region; more than 30 million in Central Asia, about 10 million in the Caucasus and 7million or more in Volga , the Urals and Western Siberia (Bennigsen, 1985). Schamiloglu (2006), based on results of the 1989 census, states that 51 million out of total 286.717.000 people belong to traditionally Muslim ethnic groups.

Soviet Union in 1991, with the independence of Central Asian states, Muslim population in the newly established Russian republic are centered on Volga-Ural regions and North Caucasia along with metropolitans of Moscow, Petersburg etc. Among Muslims, Tatars are the largest minority and Muslim community in Russia “making up 3.8 percent of the population, 20 percent of the non-Russian population and over one-third of the ethnic Muslim population” (Hahn, 2007, p. 8).

Although controversial, in today’s Russian state, the number of Muslims are estimated to be around 20 million constituting the 8-10% of the overall population.¹⁶ The statistical data on number of Muslims and other religious groups is a controversial aspect of the works dealing with religion-state relations in post-Soviet region. This quantification problem is derived from the definition of the believer, in more concrete terms, the distinction between “self-identified believer” and “regular attender” (Bacon, 2000). The problem of qualification of the believer, that is, the discussions on the religion as a cultural identity or an active belief, results in the significantly different statistical data on the level of religiosity and religious demography also in case of Russia. Apart from the conceptual differences of the believer, another problematic point of the works on state-religion relations in post-Communist states is interchangeable use of ethnicity and religion, namely, equalizing being Tatar to being Muslim¹⁷. In this sense, the boundary between politics of ethnicity and religion becomes blurred in them. Despite the controversial numbers on Muslim population of Russia, it can be stated that Muslims constitute the significant

¹⁶ The number of Muslims in Russia have controversial feature. While inclusion of migrants or “ethnic Muslims” in statistics inflate the number of Muslims, the exclusion of non-observant Muslims decrease the number significantly. Putin and government officials uses the number of 20 million in their statements. Pewforum’s Global Religious Landscape report 10% of Russia to be Muslim. The number of practicing believers are estimated to be around 3 million. For detailed overview of other estimates regarding the number of Muslims, see Hunter, Islam in Russia, p.43-44.

¹⁷ The estimates on the number of Muslims based on the census numbers is mainly made through ethnicity as they did not contain questions regarding religious affiliation.

part of Russia's population. Hence, the politics of religion towards Muslims living in the Russian state stands as one of the critical topics in discussion of the state-society relations and exploring the relation between politics and religion in Russia. Though sharing the fate of living under Russian colonialism for long years, the story of state-society relations in the Volga Ural region and the North Caucasus region differed from each other greatly as the former integrated into the empire as a result of state's "governance" strategies whereas the relations between the two is shaped through years of bloody wars the details of which will be presented in the following chapters.

The literature on Russian Muslims presents the multiple facets of Islam in the country. Bennigsen and Wimbush (1985) point out to the distinction between official and parallel Islam in the Soviet state. In a similar vein, in his comparative work of Central Asian countries, Olivier Roy (2000) distinguishes between official Islam and parallel Islam where the former contains state supported muftiyyas and the latter containing local sufi brotherhoods and solidarity groups. Similarly, Malashenko (2009) understands Islam in Russia through the division of official Islam and sufi Islam. Khalid (2007), on the other hand, finds binary divisions between "good" and "bad"; "moderate" and "extremist" unconvincing. Rather, he sees Islam having many faces; all existing simultaneously and being "the product of time and place and of concrete historical circumstances" (Khalid, 2007, p. 202). Another point that majority of works on Muslims in post-Soviet region is the growing power of the political Islam and Wahhabism in the region in the post-Soviet decade (Roy, 2000; Malashenko, 2009; Hunter, 2004). Apart from that, the close relationship between ethnic and religious identifications which is conceptualized as religious nationalism" (Sabirova, 2011) was a frequently mentioned topic in studies regarding Muslims of Russia (Hunter, 2004). Yavuz (2008) mentions the state's consideration of Islamic

identity as an ethnic marker to differentiate between Russians and non-Russians in the Soviet system.

1.4 Questions-hypotheses

This study analyzes the state's Muslim policy in Putin's Russia. The focus will be given to the state's efforts to manage religion and Muslim community. The success of these efforts or how the Muslim community responded to them (which groups are resisted, which ones are conformed etc.) are the topics for another research. This study did not assume the full success of the state's policies as the legal changes and political pressures does not always produce successful outcomes.

The review of the literature on religion-state relations in the broader terms and the specific religion-state literature on Russia bring new questions to examine. In light of the presented literature, the main questions of the thesis will be following:

- 1- Secularization thesis predicts the declining role of religion in the society and gradual disengagement between religion and state. Does post-Soviet Russian case verify or challenge the claims of the secularization thesis? Does the theory provide necessary analytical tools in explaining the advent of religion-state relations in Russia? To put in other words, does idea-based explanations suffice to understand advent of Russia's politics of religion?
- 2- Religious market theorists assert that the regime change results in the significant shifts in the religion-state relations (Gill, 2008) as the radical shifts in the state structure also affect the regulations over the religious marketplace. Given that assertion, the second set of questions would be: what is the effect of regime change on Muslim community in Russia? Is

there an Imperial or Soviet legacy over state's Muslim politics? To what extent Putin's Muslim policy is the continuation of the previous decades and to what extent it contains innovations specific to Putin period?

- 3- Scholars combining rational choice perspective with authoritarianism studies, taking into account the interests' crucial role in state decisions to introduce religious liberty or repression, present the politics of religion as one of the tools of the authoritarian leaders. In this respect, is Putin's policy towards Muslims specific to the religious realm or does it contain repercussions of his broader authoritarian politics as suggested by the literature?

Having those questions in mind and reviewing the literature on post-Soviet religion-state relations, the initial hypotheses of the thesis are the following:

- 1- "In contrast to claims of the secularization thesis, the initial transition to the post-Soviet period increased the religious liberty of Muslims along with other religious groups and religious revival among Russian Muslims is occurred in the post-Soviet decade"
- 2- "The transition to post-Soviet decade resulted in significant liberalization of the religious realm. Yet, during the second term of Yeltsin and Putin, re-control and repression over the religious groups are established as the state adopted back the Imperial model of religion-state relations"
- 3- "Putin's policy towards Muslims is formed by the dynamics of his broader authoritarian politics".

1.5 Methods

In this research, I examine the complex state policy towards Muslims in Putin's Russia. In the examination, I adopted the historical case study as it is an approach that provides ground for examination of complex phenomena and application of the theory through utilization of a variety of data-gathering segments (Berg, 2007). The case study method has been classified into three types according to purpose of the researcher in studying cases; these are intrinsic, instrumental and collective case studies (Stake quoted in Berg, 2007, p. 291). Intrinsic case studies are conducted for researcher's desire to understand that particular case rather than a major aim "to understand or test abstract theory or to develop new or grounded theoretical explanations" as present in instrumental case studies (Berg, 2007, p. 291). The intention in the intrinsic case study is "to better understand intrinsic aspects of particular [case]" (p. 291) which is the aim of this research either.

In obtaining data for the study, I used both qualitative and quantitative data derived from secondary sources and primary sources. I consulted primary sources such as legal documents, newspapers and the speeches and interviews of politicians and representatives of religious organizations and surveys. For the legal documents and press materials, I utilized the data that has been published by *Religlaw* (International Center for Law and Religious Studies) and Stetson University. Apart from that, newspapers of *Kommersant* and *Izvestiia* are used as sources for capturing the play of events and policy changes. These two newspapers are chosen for being widely circulated ones in Russia and for being accessible through Internet. Apart from that, I followed the news published in RIA Novosti and RT as they are the main international news agencies in the country that are supported by the state. Apart from those, I followed the news appearing in the international media on Russia's religion

politics. I used official Kremlin Website for the transcripts of the speeches of the President Putin and for the texts of the new legislations. In addition to that, to reach “alternative” coverages of state policies towards Muslims and other religions, I used reports and data provided by non-governmental monitoring groups of religious freedom, namely Forum 18 and SOVA Center. Apart from referring to the statistical data reached in secondary sources and newspapers, I appealed to Levada Center surveys for finding the popular opinions on the political developments in the country.

1.6 Organization of the thesis

This thesis aims to present a comprehensive analysis of state policies towards Muslims in post-Soviet Russia with a particular focus on Putin-Medvedev decade. The organization of the thesis will be in the following way. After having discussed the theoretical and methodological features of this study and presenting the literature on the field with a background information on Russian Muslims in the first chapter, I examine the state policies towards Muslims in Imperial and Soviet decades along with nationalist and religious upsurges in the Muslim dominated regions in these periods based on secondary sources in the second chapter. Then, in the third chapter, I explore the patterns of transition to the post-Soviet Russia during Yeltsin decade and examine the critical events along with changing relationship between religion and the state based on secondary sources and primary sources such as press materials and legal texts. The fourth chapter aims to give the main features of politics in Putin era and will discuss the broader framework of religion-state relations during Putin-Medvedev period, The fifth chapter will focus on state discourse towards Muslims (as manifested in the statements of political leaders), legal changes around religion and will present the debates revolved around contested issues in Putin-Medvedev

period due to the fact that state discourse coupled with legal/policy changes reveal main dynamics of the state-religion relations. However, the sole text of the laws or the speeches of leaders give us a limited understanding of the context of those relations. To see, how the legal changes and state's Muslim discourses transfer into action, I examine the government practices that are shaped within this legal framework and the discursive scene. Based on primary sources, I cover the responses of the government officials, representatives of official Muslim organizations and the public opinion revolved around these two contested matters. The last part of the thesis is assigned to the discussion of state's Muslim policy in the broader framework of political environment of Putin era and will try to locate the continuities and conjunctures of the state's Muslim policy in the Putin decade in the light of theoretical perspectives and the literature presented in the first chapter.

CHAPTER 2

ASSESSING STATE POLICY TOWARDS MUSLIMS IN IMPERIAL AND SOVIET DECADE

Before focusing on the post-Soviet decade, which will be the focus of this thesis, a brief overview of history of relations between state and Muslims in Imperial and Soviet period will be beneficial in capturing the continuities and breakdowns in post-Soviet state policy towards Muslims. For this aim, this chapter turns to the discussions of major transitions in state-religion relations and policies towards Muslim population in Russia. For the purposes of this study, when discussing the policies towards Muslims of Imperial and Soviet period, the focus will be given to the Volga-Ural region and the North Caucasia because only these two geographies continue to be part of the Russian state currently. While the early encounters of Russians with the Muslims have been with the annexation of Volga-Ural basin in the midst of 16th century; later, with the conquest of Caucasia in the first half of 19th century and of Central Asia in the second half of it the number of Muslim subjects within the empire increased greatly.

In Tsarist Russia, the close alliance between the Orthodox Church and the state shaped the religious sphere. As the religion was the central defining element of Russianness; hence the Orthodox Christianity considered as the aggregate identity of Russians. That is, “to be Russian was first and foremost to be a Russian Orthodox” (Khodarkovsky, 1997, p. 17). In this regard, the Orthodox Church had an exclusive position and a leading role in the political sphere in Imperial Russia. While Orthodoxy was the defining element of the Russianness, Islam had a decisive impact for some other non-Russian subjects of the empire (Tatars-Bashkirs, Chechens,

Daghestanis etc.) which made the politics of religion as an element of governance of citizens living in Muslim dominated regions. Hunter (2004) explains this in the following way:

Historically, Islam and its role have been closely linked to the desire of Muslim populations to gain greater cultural and political autonomy, if not outright separation and independence from the Soviet/Russian empire. As such, therefore the question of how to deal with Islam always have been related to the issue of how to manage the non-Russian populations of the empire and their aspirations for cultural and political self-determination, both under the tsars and during the Communist period (p. 26).

2.1 Between assimilation, segregation and cooptation: Muslims in Tsarist Russia

Russian nationality policy towards the Muslim peoples of the empire was not uniform since the conditions of the Muslim dominated regions were too different to permit a single approach (Kappeler, 1994). The Russian state exercised variety of policies to subjugate the non-Russian, non-Christian peoples of the empire.

According to Bennigsen (1985), Tsarist Russia conducted two extreme methods with regard to its Muslim population; these are assimilation on the one side and the “apartheid” on the other. That is, while it practiced a systematic policy of conversion and Russification in the Volga- Ural region between the 16th-19th centuries; “complete intellectual and political isolation-segregation” (p. 5) is pursued in the northern Caucasia after its conquest. Apart from that, settlement of Russian peasants, expulsion and deportations, destruction of the religion and cooptation of elites were other Russian strategies in its policy in conquered Muslim lands of North Caucasus and Volga-Ural (Bennigsen Broxup, 1992; Yemelianova, 2015). In addition to these, keeping Muslims out of politics and segregating them from international Muslim community was another policy implemented during Imperial era (Yemelianova,

2015). An overall assessment of state policies in the imperial period can lead one to a conclusion that there is a positive trend between state power and coercion. That is, whenever the state attains the upper hand, it adopts coercive policies for conversion of Muslims, yet in troubled periods, the state policy towards Muslims becomes more tolerant and focuses on opportunities of cooptation.

2.1.1 Assimilation attempts in the Volga-Ural region

The early encounters of Russian state with Muslims occurs within the context of conquest of Khanate of Kazan in 16th century by Ivan the Terrible. The capture of Kazan Khanate had a special significance as it was the “first major non-Russian and non-Christian territorial acquisition” (Werth, 2002, p. 6) of the Russian state which contributed to its account as a multi-ethnic, multi-religious empire (Prizel, 1998). When Ivan the Terrible captured the Tatar city of Kazan and other few cities which were non-Orthodox and non-Russian in 1552-56, there began the long decade of Russian colonialism that dominate and suppress the Muslim residents of the captured places. Many of the Tatars are displaced from Kazan after the conquest and the fertile lands that are taken from them are granted to the Kazan Archiepiscopate (Bennigsen and Quelquejay, 1981). Ivan the Terrible banned the construction of new mosques and ordered the destruction of existing ones and building of the churches in their place (Khodarkovsky, 1997). Apart from closure down of mosques, the state authorities closed religious educational institutions (*madrasas*), appropriated Muslim’s property and exiled the scholars from the Muslim community (Hunter, 2004)

In this early period of encounters, religious conversion was the main policy tool of the state towards the residents of the newly conquered regions (Khodarkovsky, 1997). In this vein, the state pursued policy of Russification and Christianization towards Muslims with an aim of assimilation of the Muslim population (Hunter 2004). Despite state campaigns for conversion, there were few conversions in the 16th century partly because of ongoing uprisings in Kazan and corruption of local governors. Hence, the issue is raised in early 1590s and the tsar issued a new decree which ordered resettlement of converts to the places where Russians live, prevention of the converts' intermarriage with Muslims and jailing of them if they do not follow Christian laws (Khodarkovsky, 1997). Though the state used force and threat in its missionary policy in the territories where the Russian control is strong; in the borderlands, it tried to win the hearts of non-Christians by "love" (Khodarkovsky, 1997).

The forced Christianization policy that began with establishment of Kazanian Archiepiscopate for conversion in 1555, continued until the Time of Troubles (early 1600s). As the state was going through other serious problems in the political sphere, the policy of the forced conversion is recessed in the early 17th century. Yet, the Christianization campaign is reinstated by Peter the Great (1682-1725) in a stronger way.¹⁸ While the missionaries' concern was "saving the souls of non-Russians and making them good Christians"; for the state, these campaigns aimed at "securing the political loyalty of Moscow's non-Russian subjects"¹⁹ (Khodarkovsky, 1997, p. 19). Russia's strategic interests was another reason for the new conversion policy as the

¹⁸ The aggressive missionary policy that targeted not only Muslims but also animists continued between the years of 1740-55 (Kappeler, 2001).

¹⁹ For instance, among the Bashkirs, Islam was an important element of Bahkir cause and provided a bridge between them and Ottomans which resulted in establishment of Ufa Religious Administration in 1721 by the state with an aim of converting Bashkir Muslims to Orthodoxy (Donnelly, 1968, p. 153).

state “feared the emergence of an Islamic axis- a united front of the various Muslim peoples under the Ottoman umbrella- against Russia” (Khodarkovsky, 1997, p. 19). In addition to that, the reports that indicated non-Russian subjects’ conversion to Islam triggered the reinstatement of the missionary policy. Consequently, Peter the Great ordered teaching of native languages to missionaries and sending them to preach for non-Russians (*inorodtsy*) (Khodarkovsky, 1997). Within this context, several edicts are issued to trigger the conversions which include converts’ exemption from the taxes, demolition of mosques. According to Khodarkovsky (1997), although the Christianization campaigns increased the number of converts on paper; in reality, “the conversions were only nominal, and converts remained ignorant of Christianity and did not observe any of its precepts” (p. 19-20) as for the converts, conversion was least of all religious; rather, it “promised tangible economic benefits and a hope of social and economic mobility” (p. 20) and enabled their incorporation into the state.

As presented above, during reign of Peter the Great, the main strategy was to ensure the cohesion of the state through imposition of social and religious conformity. As conformity to the Orthodoxy was as a tool for subjugation of the all subjects of the empire, during his reign (early 1700s), the Orthodox Church became a state church “where the secular rulers generally getting the upper hand” (Gill, 2008). By that time, Russian Orthodox Church enjoyed extensive privileges that “it was supported financially by the government and was defended by law against its religious rivals; it alone had the right to proselytize” (Walters quoted in Gill, 2008, p. 171) but also suffered from serious restrictions lacking the institutional autonomy from the state (Gill, 2008).

The special position of the Orthodoxy and the close alliance between the state and the Orthodox Church become more prominent aftermath of the adoption of “the Triad of Official Nationality”. The triad that is adopted during reign of Nicholas 1(1825-55) was consisted of “Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality”²⁰ which made the Orthodoxy as one of the inseparable part of Russianness in the official sense. While the state was officially consolidating Orthodoxy’s role in the country, there were demands for reversions that are expressed through petitions to Emperor Nicholas 1²¹(Werth, 2002). The demands for reversions resembled the weakness of Orthodoxy among non-Russian converts of the Volga region which led the state to consider the need for consolidation of Orthodoxy among converts²². In this vein, with a directive coming from the Emperor, a new missionary wave is initiated in the 19th century which began to be pursued via educational institutions²³. Despite long lasted efforts, the assimilation policy that is pursued specifically in the Volga-Ural region, remained inefficient²⁴ and only resulted in “a deep and lasting xenophobia of the Muslims towards the Russians in general” (Bennigsen, 1985, p. 5).

²⁰ The original name of this ideological doctrine is “Pravoslaviye, Samoderzhaviye, Narodnost”. Although Narodnost is usually translated as Nationalism, it should not be understood as ethnic nationalism in the narrow sense, rather encompasses subjects living in Russia.

²¹ As Werth (2002) states that : “in early 1827 baptized Tatars from a series of villages in the Volga-Kama region submitted petitions to Emperor Nicholas 1 requesting that they be allowed to confess Islam” (p.1) with a claim that their ancestors are converted forcibly. The state subsequently rejected the demands and ordered the local authorities to investigate the issue.

²² For the detailed presentation of the confessional politics in Volga-Ural region, see Paul Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy: Mission, Governance and Confessional Politics in Russia's Volga-Kama Region, 1827-1905*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002.

²³ This innovative project of native-language schools that is proposed by Ilminskii targeted non-Russian subjects and promoted Christianity as part of their curriculum. The Ilminskii schools were mainly active between years of 1863-90 (Kappeler, 2001). For detailed information, look at: Dowler, Wayne. *Classroom and empire : the politics of schooling Russia's Eastern nationalities, 1860-1917*. Montreal; Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001.

²⁴ Only small number of converts which are known as Kreshen Tatars were product of this three century long policy.

2.1.2 Segregation and exile

Similar to the earlier periods of the conquests of the Volga-Ural region, the North Caucasian Muslims are imposed to the systematic imperial policy of suppression and exile (Yemelianova, 2015) with an increased degree during early 19th century. The picture in the Volga-Ural region differed very much from the North Caucasia at that period as the Volga-Ural Muslims were incorporated to the state structure through reforms during Catherine rule. The situation in the Caucasus region was completely disparate as the expansion of the Russian state into the south was accompanied with massive exiles²⁵ and military struggles. In the North Caucasia, Russians mainly adopted ‘Ermolov²⁶ system’ which is based on the premises that fear and greed are the two mainsprings in the events taking there and the only policy for the people of the region is force (Gammer, 1992). However, according to Gammer (1992), the Russian insistence on that policy “generated an enormous hatred of the Russians among Mountaineers²⁷” and “made them immune to terror” (p.49). Apart from that, it triggered the spread of the Naqshbandi order all over the region which united them and opened a path for their long years of struggle (Gammer, 1992). In response to

²⁵ For instance, when Russian state annexed the Crimea on 18th century, “as many as 300,000 Muslims left the hands of the former khanate for Ottoman Turkey” (Jersild, 1997; p. 102). In the Caucasus, the exile of Muslims is continued in the 19th century either in the form of voluntary emigration from infidel rule or by force of the Russian military to take ships going to Ottoman Turkey, “as occurred during the massive exile of the Adyge tribes (the “Cherkess”) from the west Caucasus in 1861-4”, the number of which is estimated to be roughly 500,000 people (Jersild, 1997, p. 103). This forced exodus of Cherkess had tragic consequences as none of them remained in the Caucasus and are dispersed in Turkey and other Middle Eastern countries (Bennigsen Broxup, 1992).

²⁶ The naming of the system is made after Aleksei Petrovich Ermolov who is nominated as Governor and Chief Administrator of Georgia and the Caucasus in 1816 and become famous with his cruel and brutal policies in the region.

²⁷ The term that is used for North Caucasians during Imperial period. Though consisting of different tribes and having different languages, they had common history which had its reflections in their united struggle for independence “best exemplified by the State of Mansur (1780-91), the State (‘Imamate’) of Shamil (1834-64), the Republic of the North Caucasian Mountaineers (1918-19), the North Caucasian Emirate (1919-20) and finally the Soviet Mountain Republic (1920-4)” (Avtorkhanov 1992, 149).

Russian colonial policy of conquest and exile²⁸, Caucasian mountaineers under the leadership of Sufi leaders²⁹, initiated “ghazawats”³⁰ against the Russian state. The Sufi resistance movement, which is known as Muridism, succeeded for a long time to stand against Russian colonial rule. This led the state, to take measures to combat the Sufi brotherhoods in the region. In contrast to Sufi brotherhoods that had the capacity for outbreaks of unrest, “the Russian authorities encouraged the spread of official mosque-based Islam, as more likely to promote law, order, and economic enterprise” (Hosking, 2001, p. 325).

2.1.3 Toleration and cooptation during the Catherine the Second period

While the dominant policy in the Imperial era was to foster the unity and subordination of non-Russian subjects through promotion of religious conversions; in some instances, the state used the toleration of differences as another strategy for governing the diverse polity in the country (Werth, 2002). In this vein, the state take the path of cooptation of the feudal or the religious elites. In the sixteenth century Kabarda and Dagestan, the Russian state pursued policies for the cooptation of the feudal aristocracy, yet in achieving the policy objectives, it become moderately

²⁸ Jersild (1997) explains the exile policy in the southern borderland based on religious factor: “Faith was an important part of imperial identity, and Muslim mountaineers might naturally seek refuge among those of similar faith in the lands of Ottoman sultan, the spiritual head of Sunni Islam. Religion seemed to Russians to distinguish one imperial identity from the other, in particular in a region that bordered the great empires of Islam” (p. 102).

²⁹ For a detailed account, see *Moshe Gammer. Muslim Resistance to the Tsar: Shamil and the Conquest of Chechnia and Dagestan*. London: Frank Cass, 1994.

³⁰ Chechens and Dagestanis under Sheikh Mansur initiated a guerilla war between years of 1785-91. Later, the military struggle resurged in the early 1800s. During the war that lasted from 1829 until the 1864, Sheikh Shamil and his Murids, established the Caucassian Imamate and struggled against the Russians; yet defeated by the Russians. The national liberation wars under the leadership of Sufi leaders continued until 1920s. For a detailed account of last ghazawat in 1920, see Marrie Benningsen Broxup, “The Last Ghazawat: The 1920-1921 Uprising” in *The North Caucasus Barrier*. London: Hurst&Company, 1992.

successful.³¹ On the other hand, the cooptation of the religious elites in the Catherine 2 period enjoyed a tremendous success (Bennigsen Broxup, 1992). The toleration and cooptation policy towards the Russian Muslims in the period of the Catherine the Great was in harmony with her broader reformist and policy around the empire³² (Hunter, 2004). Under Catherine 2 (1762-96), “the government constructed a system of administration that subordinated ‘foreign faiths’ to state supervision, even as it endowed their hierarchies with substantial spiritual authority within their respective communities” (Werth, 2002, p. 3). As part of this new strategy, during this period, Muslims of Russia are granted several rights with famous “Imperial Edict” in 1788 and a central official Muslim organization (Muftiate) is established in Orenburg which is later transferred to Ufa. The institution continued to function during Soviet decade and it is still functioning as Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Russia (CDUM)³³.

After that step, the Romanov dynasty gained “the loyalty and cooperation of the Tatar elites for more than a century” (Bennigsen Broxup, 1992, p. 6). The decree had a critical importance in the history of Russian Muslims, as for the first time, Islam is officially recognized as part of Russia’s religions by the Tsarist authorities. The decree granted Muslims a legal status in the country and they are permitted to build mosques and madrasas in some major cities (Hunter, 2004). But also enabled control of religious leaders and Muslim population by their integration into state

³¹ For detailed information on the issue, look Chantal Lemercier-Quelqujay, “The Cooptation of the Elites of Kabarda and Daghestan in the Sixteenth Century”, *the North Caucasus Barrier*. London: Hurst&Company, 1992.

³² The change in the state policy came aftermath of the several large rebellions(the most famous was the Pugachev rebellion) that revealed anger of subjects towards the state; hence can be seen as the result for need to placate this anger

³³ The abizs (non-official imams) actively struggled against the newly established organization fearing that it would control all of their activities and purge the previous religious structure. In the early 19th century, Abizs are replaced by official clergy (Kamalov, 2007).

structure and allocation of their religious representatives (Hunter, 2004). While the Catherine the Second was the first who implement the policy of cooptation and control systematically, the earlier versions of it can be traced in Kirillov's policies in 1730s Bashkiria. In this period, in response to mullah's and mosques' role in anti-Russian rallies, the government appointed a representative of the Muslim clergy for each district who "were to swear for an oath of allegiance to the Empress" (Donnelly, 1968 p. 77). In addition to that, the construction of mosques and madrasas and relations with the Kazan Tatars are made subject to authorization of the government (Donnelly, 1968). Werth (2002) states that the state's success in the creation of Islamic institutions and clergy to perform functions³⁴ similar to Orthodox Church presented that Orthodoxy was not an absolute must for good governance; yet, the state's favor for conversion policy remained the same as the Orthodoxy was considered as the indispensable part of Russianness and "presumed to be intrinsically related to enlightenment, civic-mindedness (*grazhdanstvennost*)" (p. 5). The legalization and cooptation of the religious elite during Catherine 2 resulted in creation of the phenomena of official and non-official Islam which is continued to exist till the present Russia. Though being non-official, the Sufi brotherhoods retained their religious authority in the North Caucasus (Bennigsen Broxup, 1992) and were stronger actors than official religious establishments.

³⁴ According to Werth (2002), the religious institutions are crucial in the processes of "state-building, administrative modernization and social order" as they represent indispensable tools for "inculcating respect for authority and compliance with state directives" along with promoting education and literacy especially in the rural areas (p. 4).

2.2 Nationalist upsurge among Russian Muslims

The shift in the state's approach towards Muslims, during Catherine period, affected the political developments around Volga-Ural Muslims in the following decade.

Firstly, the relatively liberal environment enabled the strengthening of Tatar merchant class and elites. Apart from that, it has been predicted that the basis of the religious-nationalist revival that occurred in early 19th century dates back to the repercussions of Catherine the Second's policy approach towards Muslims. The more tolerant environment towards Muslims and allowances for building of mosques and religious schools allowed Russian Muslims to create their own independent educational institutions and spreading of new ideas among Russian Muslims that led to the establishment of new social movements in the beginning of 20th century (Bennigsen and Lemerrier-Quelquejay, 1967).

The attempts for Russification after 1881 met by the growing nationalist opposition (Smith, 1999) as the nationalist wave that spread throughout the world had also repercussions in the Russian geography. In late 19th century, national consciousness among the minority nationalities awakened significantly in Russia. Among the Muslims, the Jadidism movement³⁵ that is emerged in the 1880s in the Volga- Ural region, had a critical role in the organization of Russian Muslims in the later years. The first signals for the nationalist revival are manifested through publications the first of which was a journal *Tercuman* founded by Ismail Gasprali³⁶

³⁵ Jadidism was originally a movement promoting reforms in the Muslim educational institutions by incorporating religious sciences with secular ones. The leading thinkers of which were Ismail Gaspirali, Musa Carullah, Ziya Kemali vs. In the beginning of 20th century, there are established number of Islamic educational institutions (madrasa) based on this new method (usul-i cedid) which are closed in the Soviet period. For detailed information on Jadidism, see Ahmet Kanlidere, *Reform within Islam : the tajdid and jadid movement among the Kazan Tatars (1809-1917) conciliation or conflict ?* Istanbul: Eren Yayincilik, 1997.

³⁶ The nationalist-reformist movement led by Tatar Muslims effectively used press to spread their ideas through variety of Tatar periodicals and newspapers that are published at that time.

(Kappeler, 2001). The Tatar bourgeoisie merchants have a leading role in emergence of great reformist and nationalist movement among Tatars and Russian Muslims in general during the early years of 20th century and later in the alliance between Bolsheviks and Muslims (Bennigsen and Wimbush, 1979). Although their method tactically evolved from “jadid democratism to national socialism”, the essence of the nationalist doctrine remained same (Bennigsen and Wimbush, 1979).

The modest program of political liberalization emerging after 1905 revolution enabled the minority nationalities to organize among themselves and Russian Muslim’s engagement in political activism in the beginning of the twentieth century³⁷ (Hunter, 2004). In April 1905, the state issued a declaration for religious toleration which deprived the Orthodox Church of full state support and obliged it to compete with other faiths on fairer conditions (Dowler, 2001). As in 1905 revolution, the constraints over religious and political organizations are lifted. Muslims of Russia, for the first time in their history developing a common platform, organized Muslim Congresses in which the efforts to make Muslims united and to achieve their equality with Russians are initiated; because Russian Tsars, though allowing the Muslims of Central Asia to maintain their religion along with other non-Russian (inorodtsy) communities, treated them inferior to Russians and they were far from having equal rights (Smith, 1999).

As a product of these congresses, a political party of Ittifaq-al Muslimin³⁸ (Union of Muslims) is established which had “a liberal democratic character and placed it in the mainstream of the reform movement” (Hunter, 2004, p. 18) being

³⁷ Hunter (2004) mentions that the Russian defeat in Japanese war, constitutional revolution in Iran and the series of worker-peasant uprisings during 1905 revolution affected the increase of political activism among Russian Muslims.

³⁸ In the Second Duma, the Muslim Union had 31 deputies among the 453 seats (Hosking, 2001).

inspired by the ideas of Jadidist scholars and which had mainly relied on “middle-class political base of the Muslim leadership” (p. 20). The party demanded “the abolition of discrimination against Muslims” and supported “the constitutional aspirations of the Russian liberals” (Hosking, 2001, p. 326). Despite its pan-Islamic name, “the focus of its program was the creation of a Turkestani nation within the Russian empire... enjoying the rights promised by the liberals” (Hosking, 2001, p. 326).

Indeed, the religious and nationalist aspirations of the Russian Muslims were largely intermingled during this time with the effect of Jadidist efforts for returning to “real” Islam and reforming the Muslim institutions. In political terms, the agenda of the movement is summarized as

(1) defense of cultural, educational and religious rights of Muslims peoples of Russia; (2) mobilization of popular support among Muslims for political, economic, and social reforms to guarantee equality for Muslims in Russia; and (3) promotion of a democratic regime in which non-Russian nationalities would be represented by elected officials (Hunter, 2004, p. 20).

After collapse of the Tsarist Russia, this legacy evolved into a new movement³⁹ which was more tended “to explore the limits of political autonomy within a postimperial Russian state” (Hunter, 2004, p. 20) which will be presented in detail in the following section.

³⁹ Indeed, the new movement that operated under the roof of the All-Russia Congress of Muslims, that held in 1997, represented a wide political spectrum ranging from centralists to autonomists, from ethnocentric nationalists to pan-Islamists, from traditionalists to modernists (Hunter, 2004).

2.3 Soviet era

2.3.1 Bolshevik nationalities policy and Muslims

The Russian national identity maintained its weakness during the Soviet period as Lenin and Bolsheviks were strong believers of materialist conception of history and proletarian internationalism (Prizel, 1998) and building the Soviet state with the ideal of international socialism. So, they made no reference to Russia in its name and any other ethnic and geographic denotation (Hosking, 1998). Yet, for dissolving the imperial regime and to enlarge their power base, in the early years of Soviet state, Bolsheviks adopted rhetoric on “the rights of self-determination and separation of minorities” and attacked ‘Great Russian chauvinism’ (Pritzel, 1998, p. 182) and in a way “downgraded the Russians from their superior position in Tsarist Russia” (Szporluk, 1990, p. 8). During the early revolutionary years, Bolshevik’s approach to the nationalities question had critical effect in their relations with non-Russian (*inorodtsy*) communities living in Russia among which Muslims (from Volga-Tatar, Caucasia and Central Asia) constituted a significant part. At that time, Lenin and Bolsheviks were successful to attract minority nationalist groups through their support for right of self-determination. As they were promoting right for self-determination for the minority nationalities, they had positive relations with Muslim nationalist groups. Right after October Revolution, conscious of the importance of the national factor, the Soviet government, with signatures of Lenin and Stalin, issued a special appeal “to all the Muslim workers of Russia and the East” on 24 November 1917 which condemned the religious and national oppression under tsarist regimes and promised:

Muslims of Russia, Tatars of the Volga and the Crimea, Kirgiz and Sarts of Siberia and Turkestan, Turks and Tatars of Transcaucasia,

Chechens and Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus, and you all whose mosques and prayer houses have been destroyed, whose beliefs and customs have been trampled upon by the tsars and oppressors of Russia: Your beliefs and usages, your national and cultural institutions are forever free and inviolate. Know that your rights, like those of all the peoples of Russia, are under the mighty protection of the Revolution and its organs, the Soviet of Workers, Soldiers and Peasants (Bennigsen and Lemercier Quelquejay, 1967, p. 82).

At first instance, it may seem interesting the positive attitude of Bolsheviks towards nationalist groups since in the Marxist tradition nationalism is regarded as a bourgeoisie ideology that should be confronted with internationalism of the working class⁴⁰. Yet, in the midst of an ongoing struggle between different political groups in Russia, there were admissible reasons for both sides to support each other. Hence, in this period, the Bolsheviks were largely successful in galvanizing the Muslim support. The Muslims, in the course of the Russian Civil War, had to choose between Whites and Bolsheviks and it seemed rational for them to side with the Bolsheviks, “who at least held out the promise of national rights and certain degree of self-rule” as the commanders of the Whites “openly declared their intention to restore the Russian Empire in its old form” (Smith, 1999, p. 3) which offered them nothing. The support of Jadidists for Bolsheviks stemmed from the view that “Muslim revival would be achieved more easily under the Bolsheviks” (Hunter, 2004, p. 23). The

⁴⁰ For Marx and Engels, nationalism is “a product of the growth of capitalism and of competition between the bourgeoisies of the various national states” (Smith, 1999, p. 3). They see it as “an ideological weapon which would tie workers to an illusory common interest with their own ruling class” (Ibid 3). Indeed the national question was one of the hotly debated political questions among Marxists and Bolsheviks. Smith (1999) identifies four major positions on the national question emerging after Marx. First is the “right of nations to self-determination” which is supported by Lenin, the “national nihilism” proposed by Rosa Luxemburg and number of leading Bolsheviks, “extra territorial national autonomy” defended by the Austrian Marxists and the Jewish Bund and “state federalism” promoted by number of socialist and nationalist Russian parties (Smith, 1999, p. 7). Although differing in their positions, most of the Marxists held the basic premise of nationalism as a product of capitalism which will disappear with the socialist revolution (Smith, 1999). Hence, the debate for them was “whether the national movements could help or hinder the revolutionary movement in the short term” (Smith, 1999, p. 10). One of the major reasons that led to the hot discussions of the Marxists and Bolsheviks around the nationalities question was the First World War that showed the power of nationalism. In contrast to expectations of Marx and Engels for an international unity of the working class, the working classes strived against each other during the First World War (Seidemann cited in Erkilet, 2015, p. 59).

most important ally of Bolsheviks among Muslims was “the Muslim National Communists, led by Mirsaid Sultan-Galiyev⁴¹, a Tatar nationalist and Marxist who became active in the antitsarist opposition in 1905 and joined the Communists in 1917” (Hunter, 2004, p. 23). Despite these supports, the Muslims of Central Asia and the South Caucasus remained more sceptic towards Bolsheviks which resulted in the harsher treatment of the Muslims than claimed by Lenin in the following decade.

Bolsheviks’ support for nationalist movements were mostly tactical. As at the wake of civil war between Whites and Bolsheviks, the manner of different communities living under Russian Empire had crucial effect and the promotion of this principle by Bolsheviks attained wide support of minority communities including Russian Muslims. In this sense, they viewed this nationality policy favoring the rights of non-Russians as “a temporary solution only, as a transitional stage to a completely centralized and supra-national world-wide Soviet state” (Szporluk, 1990, p. 8). In this early years, as part of these tactical moves, the principle of “the right for self-determination including separation” for all nationalities is accepted as part of the party program. In line with this principle, at the interim period, Muslims of Central Russia and Caucasia established their own independent states. Yet, after building of Soviet State, these independent states are forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Socialist Republic of Russia⁴². In 1921, “Stalin was forced to pledge full autonomy for the Soviet Mountain Republic, accept local Islamic laws and return lands granted to the Cossacks” (Wood, 2004, p. 11), yet

⁴¹ For more information of Sultangaliyevism, see Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Quelquejay, *Sultan Galiyev ve Sovyet Müslümanları*. İstanbul: Hürriyet Yayınları, 1981.

⁴² For instance, Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was founded in 1920 by the Politburo. It has been claimed that in the time of creation of this republic, Bolsheviks gerrymandered its borders to leave three quarters of the Tatars outside the borders of the new ethnic republic and gave it the “inferior status of an ‘autonomous’ republic status (without the right to secede) as opposed to a ‘union’ one (with rights of secession)” which led to the problems aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Daulet, 2003, p. 41).

within a year backed down from that and sent army to disarm and pacify the Chechens through bombardment of mountain villages (Wood, 2004).

Soviet nationalities policy at its early period promoted diversity alongside with demanding conformity (Faller, 2011) as the state granted non-Russian nationalities various rights through its policy of *Korenizatsiia*⁴³ in the period between years of 1919-1928. Within the scope of this policy, the territories are named on the basis of ethnicity, there trained indigenous Soviet elites and the languages of nationalities are used in education, propaganda and culture (Pritzel, 1998; Hosking, 1998). Tishkov, the minister of nationalities of Yeltsin era, names the early nationalities policy of the Soviet period as “ethnic engineering” (Tishkov quoted in Hosking, 1998, p. 452). In this period, the state’s favor of non-Russian nationalities resulted in emergence of phenomena of “Muslim national communism”⁴⁴ as a synthesis of socialism, nationalism and Islam. In this period,

Muslim leaders who are joined the Communist Party remained partial to Islamic culture, and exercised authority in all the Muslim republics. Islam was left relatively unhindered, but various administrative measures were adopted by the Bolsheviks to weaken the economic and cultural power of the clerics. These measures included the liquidation of the *waqfs*, which were the basis of clerical economic power; the suppression of the religious (*shariat*) and customary (*adat*) courts; and the elimination of the confessional school system (*mekteps* and *medressehs*) (Bennigsen and Wimbush, 1985, p. 11).

Although the state favored non-Russian nationalities for pragmatic reasons in the first years, seeing the dangers of this policy in triggering the cultural separatism, in the long run, the state retreated from the early nationalities policy which led to

⁴³ In every bureaucratic operation, Soviet citizens were using an internal passport that indicate their nationality and in this way they received “constant reinforcement of themselves as members of a particular nationality” (Faller, 2011, p. 9).

⁴⁴ For detailed information on the issue, see Alexandre A. Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union: A Revolutionary Strategy for the Colonial World*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979.

political and physical purge of non-Russian political and cultural elite in 1930s (Prizel, 1998). Yet, in both circumstances, Russians were seen as victims of Soviet policy as they are frustrated in building a distinct sense of national identity, rather is redefined through its relation to universal Soviet state (Prizel, 1998). On the other hand, according to Hosking (1998), since the communist project itself was a Russian one and the state pursued great power politics and “international millenarianism” similar to imperial era, Russian sense of national identity is strengthened during Soviet era (p. 453). Despite all these, he explains the lack of emergence of nation-state partly through the fact that “some Soviet nationalities, for historical reasons, never accepted the ‘big brother Russia’ syndrome” and partly through Soviet state’s failure “to create civic institutions which could embody and give expression to the emerging inter-ethnic solidarity” (Hosking, 1998, p. 455).

With the onset of collectivization in 1929, “in response to arbitrary arrests and confiscations”, there began armed resistance again which resulted in heavy losses, along with arrest of thousands of Chechens and oppression on the local intelligentsia in the following years (Wood, 2004). The refusal to comply with the Soviet authority resulted in mass deportations of the thousands of North Caucasians in 1944. They returned to their homes in the period of de-Stalinization. In early 1960s, the Soviet state began to discourage national particularism, instead promoted the overarching Soviet citizen (Faller, 2011) and attempted to establish the ideology of the Soviet state as a voluntary “friendship of peoples” (Schamiloglu, 2006). The efforts to create a Soviet citizen not only affected the state’s ethnic policy; it had also critical repercussions on the state approach towards religion.

2.3.2 Soviet policy towards religion

While in the Imperial period, close alliance between Orthodox Church and state was the main pattern of the religion-state relations; in the Soviet decade, policy of forced atheization became the main dynamic of the state approach towards religious groups. Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 had critical effect on the religion-state relations in Russia; as almost overnight the relations between the two turned upside down. The decree in 1918 stating the separation of Church and state can be seen as the first legal step in state's changing attitude towards religion (Dickinson, 2000) which is continued with the closure of thousands of churches and appropriation of religious property. Though at the beginning, the policies simply separated state and church affairs with an aim of establishing secular state; it turned into "forced secularization" attempts targeting believers. In the North Caucasus, during Civil War period and 1920-1 war, Bolsheviks were able to play religious card in line with advices of Caucasian communists and able to divide Naqshibandiya brotherhood by attracting some of the Sufi leaders for a short time (Bennigsen Broxup, 1992). Yet, being the strongest competitors of the Communist Party, the Sufi brotherhoods were considered as a major threat to the state authority and the fight with them considered as essential by the state. In this regard, the anti-Islamic campaign in the North Caucasus started in 1924, earlier than the start of the campaign in the overall Soviet state in 1928 because of this dominant role of Sufi brotherhoods in political and social life of the region (Bennigsen Broxup, 1992).

Though, the Muslim national communist leaders were not in favor of the brutal and primitive methods used in implementation of this policy, they are overruled in this (Bennigsen Broxup, 1992). The religious institutions have very strong presence in the North Caucasus as "in 1925 there were still 1500 religious

schools functioning with 45000 students after four years of solid communist ‘construction’, as opposed to only 183 state schools” (Bennigsen Broxup, 1992, p. 7). In this regard, a national communist from North Caucasia, Najmuddin Samurskii, stated that

To close the madrasahs is impossible. They will continue to exist whatever oppressive measures are taken against them. They will hide in the canyons, in the caves, and will then form a people who will be fanatical opponents of the Soviet power which persecutes religion (Samurskii quoted in Bennigsen Broxup, 1992, p. 7).

Despite this strength, after Stalin’s mass deportation of the Chechens and Ingushes in 1944⁴⁵, the institutional presence of Islam was destroyed totally (Bennigsen Broxup, 1992). Aftermath of the incident, all existing mosques are demolished in Chechnya and no permit for the construction or reconstruction of even a single mosque in Checheno-Ingushetia is given until 1978 and in Grozny until 1988 (Lieven, 1998, p. 24). Hunter (2004) presents the three components of Soviet’s anti-Islam strategy that began to be implemented in 1924 in line with campaigns against other religions:

(1) eradication of the Muslim judicial and educational infrastructure; (2) the elimination of the clerical establishment’s financial independence by dismantling the *waqf*; and (3) anti-Islam propaganda (p. 25).

The purpose of Soviet leaders in pursuing the anti-religious campaigns can be traced from Khrushchev’s statements in the midst of the Soviet experience

It is the function of all ideological work of our Party and State to develop new traits in Soviet people, to train them in collectivism and

⁴⁵ In contrast to Cherkess exile of 1860s, Chechen and Ingush remained more resilient to the exiles. Aftermath of the Stalin’s deportation, in which half of the population died; they returned to their homes during de-Stalinization period and in later years, a demographic increase in the region was remarkable (46.5% increase in eleven years) (Bennigsen Broxup, 1992, p. 10). Their extraordinary survival and recovery in a short period of time is explained through strong presence of the Sufi brotherhoods in their community (Bennigsen Broxup, 1992).

love of work, in proletarian internationalism and patriotism, in lofty ethical principles of the new society, Marxism-Leninism (Khrushchev quoted in Froese, 2008, p. 23)

To reach this utopian state and achieve their political and ideological goals, Soviet leaders saw all former ethnical and religious loyalties as an impediment that needs to be eliminated.⁴⁶ Russian state's attempts to create a new Soviet man and eliminate religious and national identities had repercussions in its negative attitude towards all religious groups that become apparent in anti-religious campaigns initiated by Stalin (Anderson, 1994). Some scholars (Szporluk, 1990; Bennigsen Broxup, 1992) see parallels between conversion policies in Tsarist period and Sovietization attempts in the later decade. While in the Tsarist period, the assimilation of non-Russians is tried to achieve through religious conversion either with or without Russification, the Soviet state adopting the second version "merely replaced Orthodoxy with Marxism, with the slogan of 'national in form and socialist in content'" (Bennigsen Broxup, 1992, p. 5).

While the dominant policy during Soviet decade seems to be the repression and conversion efforts to atheism since Stalin period, in some troubled periods, the state also utilize opportunities for cooptation of the religion. During the Second World War⁴⁷, the state needing the support of all segments of the society released the harsh pressure upon the religious groups. In return for that, the religious leaders and organizations took an active role in mobilization of the society for the War.⁴⁸ After

⁴⁶ To achieve this end, during Stalin period, there has been established a volunteer organization named League of Militant Atheists which consisted of Party members, Komsomol youth organization members, workers etc. The organization propagated principles of scientific atheism and led antireligious propaganda at factories, educational institutions and collective farms (Anderson, 1994).

⁴⁷ In Russia, the term Great Patriotic War is used for marking the war between the Soviet and Nazis.

⁴⁸ The Russian Muslims' support during the War is also acknowledged by Putin in his speech at a celebratory event of the founding of the Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Russia: "During the difficult years of the Great Patriotic War, here in Ufa, at the congress of Muslim spiritual leaders, Mufti Gabdurakhman Rasulev spoke of the sacred duty to defend the motherland. He said, "Muslims remember firmly the Prophet's words: love for the motherland is part of your faith."

the war, in 1945, inspired by the Catherine's example, Stalin established the Muslim Religious Boards and ensured establishment of a Soviet Islam with a cooperative and obedient Muslim administration (Bennigsen Broxup, 1992). In this vein, to direct official Muslim activities in the country, with consent of Soviet state, there have been installed four muftiates in "Central Asia and Kazakhstan; European Russia and Siberia; Azerbaidzhan; and the North Caucasus" aftermath of the Second World War⁴⁹ (Bociurkiw, 1990, p. 157). The newly established institutions are functioned to limit the religious fervor of believers within the Soviet laws (Bociurkiw, 1990) and "used for the support of Soviet doctrine and creation of the Soviet version of Islam" (Yavuz, 2008, p. 113).

Yet, with the resurgence of anti-religious campaigns in Khrushchev era⁵⁰, the official institutional presence of Islam also decreased significantly⁵¹ as "the number of registered mosques declined from about 1500 in 1959 to 300 in 1976, with some 700 existing outside the law" (Bociurkiw, 1990). It is estimated that Khrushchev's anti-religious campaign aimed "to prevent religion from filling the ideological

And Muslims were true to these sacred commandments and to their love for their homeland. From the first days of war they joined the ranks of those defending our common homeland, our land, starting from the Brest Fortress, and together with our other peoples and ethnic groups followed the wartime roads all the way to Berlin" ("Speech at," 2013). In a similar vein, the Supreme Mufti Tadhuzddin, presented the participation of Muslims of the Soviet Union in the Great Patriotic War as the highest example of an armed jihad (Batuev, 2001).

⁴⁹ In 1962, the Department of International Relations with Foreign Countries is created in Moscow in order to coordinate the relations of these four muftiates with the Muslim World (Bennigsen and Wimbush, 1985).

⁵⁰ The campaign involved closure of churches and appropriation of their belongings, prohibition of religious publications, anti-religious propaganda and promotion of atheism through educational, administrative and legal tools (Anderson, 1994). In its struggle with religion, the party has also become concerned with religious rituals aiming to replace it with new Soviet ones (Froese, 2008; Anderson, 1994). Froese (2008) explains aim of Soviet leaders in bringing new rites in the following way: Communist Party leaders hoped to connect Communist symbols and ideology to experiences of "collective effervescence." The end result would be a population that no longer worshiped God but instead revered the Soviet system with religious like devotion. In actuality, Soviet elites hoped to realize something that Durkheim only believed to be true. Namely, they were going to replace the false object of ritual activity, God, with the true object, Society. In this way, rituals would continue to promote social solidarity but no longer under the guise of a false ideology" (p. 28).

⁵¹

vacuum that developed in the wake of de-Stalinization by radically reducing the points of contact between the clergy and the population” (Bociurkiw, 1990, p. 152). While the campaigns mostly targeted the hegemonic religion and harassed the institutional power of the Orthodox Church, the Muslims and other minority religions are also affected significantly which is apparent from the significant decrease in the number of mosques presented above. As a result of campaigns, the Russian Orthodox Church, although allowed to survive, lost much of its power during the Soviet period (Gill, 2008). In a similar vein, being exposed to repression similar to other religious groups, Muslims institutions’ strength decreased considerably, nevertheless they are maintained their legal status in the country (Alkan Ozcan, 2012). The muftiates, along with other officially recognized religious centers of the Soviet state, are employed by the Kremlin for

external propaganda among Muslims abroad in support of Soviet foreign policy objectives, ... (they) have provided theological rationalizations for Soviet restrictions on Muslim religious practices, as well as for the many contradictions between Islam and Soviet norms and policies. By helping to adapt Muslim doctrines and practices to Soviet conditions, however, they also facilitated the survival of Islamic values in modernized form (Bociurkiw, 1990, p. 157).

As a result of intensive atheization campaigns, Islam in Soviet Russia lost its sociocultural status as the ties between religious institutions and the people weakened significantly in this period. Along with other religious institutions, the number of officially registered Islamic institutions decreased significantly⁵². The remaining few mosques were far from being active and for many of the Muslims, Islam become

⁵² For instance, in Kazan (capital city of Tatarstan), while there were 152 mosques in 1917, it decreased to 19 in 1988. In the overall Soviet state, there were only 337 registered Muslim organizations (Kamalov, 2007) which led people to conduct religious ceremonies in non-official terms. Through the end of 1980s, the only formal place of worship in Grozny (capital city of Chechnia) was a Orthodox Church which would have been demolished if it was in the Russian heartland yet left in place for being on the ethnic frontiers of the country (Lieven, 1998).

fulfilling largely a ceremonial function only during feasts, marriages and burials (Lieven, 1998; Kamalov, 2007). In a sociological survey conducted in 1980, 43.5% of the whole respondents related being Muslim to fulfill certain ceremonies (Kamalov, 2007). While being successful in certain aspects, the strength of “unofficial” religious networks in the North Caucasia during 1990s presents the limits of this policy as the territory today preserves its unique strong Muslim position not only in Russian territory but in the overall Muslim world (Bennigsen Broxup, 1992). The Sufi brotherhoods of North Caucasia able to operate underground and constituted a challenge to the state as they “condemn Soviet Russian policies towards Islam and charge the muftiates with betrayal of the basic tenets of the faith” (Bociurkiw, 1990, p. 157). Indeed, the full subservience of the Muftis to the Soviet state damaged their credibility in the eyes of believers which appears in the expulsion of loyal Muftis of North Caucasia and Central Asia through popular demand (Bennigsen Broxup, 1992). This incident presents the constraints of the inherited policy of cooptation of the religious leaders in the long term.

Through the end of the Soviet period, the anti-religious campaigns, facing several challenges⁵³ is softened first during Brezhnev era (Bociurkiw, 1990; Anderson, 1994); yet the deeper change is initiated in Gorbachev period. During Gorbachev period, there occurred a sharp change in the politics around religion which determined the future of all religious groups in the country. Through the end of 1980s, Soviet state’s policy of promotion of militant atheism transformed towards cohabitation of different religions including Islam. Gorbachev’s political

⁵³ The emerging religious dissenters, strengthening relationship between religion and nationalism, election of Pope from Poland, Iranian revolution came as challenges to the continuation of previous strict anti-religious campaigns and the state reoriented its policy towards religion in Brezhnev period which can be seen in state’s more flexible attitude in registration of religious organizations and (Bociurkiw, 1990; Anderson, 1994).

liberalization policy go about with freedom to religion and permission to its return to the public space (Krindatch, 2006). The change in the Gorbachev era was not restricted to the domain of the religion, rather, it was part of a larger phenomenon of “glasnost” and “perestroika” that was initiated in the mid-1980s and resulted in great transformations of the state structures, economy and politics of the country.

Two critical events were remarkable in presentation of the sharp change of state-religion relations in Russia. First is the visit of representatives of Orthodox Church to Gorbachev and Gorbachev’s admitting of previous mistakes in the meeting⁵⁴ and the second is state sponsorship of the celebrations of the Millennium of the Baptism of Kievan Prince Vladimir and declaring it a national one in 1988 (Bociurkiw, 1990; Bourdeaux, 2000; Krindatch, 2006) which were significant considering state’s previous “militant atheist” policies. The shift in the legal domain is occurred with the introduction of a special law in 1990 “on freedom of belief”⁵⁵ (Bourdeaux, 2000; Krindatch, 2006)⁵⁶ that granted freedom of conscience and religion above the expectations and fostered religious diversity in the country (Bourdeaux, 2000; Dunlop, 1999). The law enabled “pluralistic expression of various faiths as well as of atheism”⁵⁷ (Karpov, 2013).

⁵⁴ In 1988, Gorbachev hosted “a group of leading bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church in Kremlin” and in the meeting, he admitted the mistakes made towards church and believers in previous state policies (Bourdeaux, 2000, p. 9) which seemed to be the first signal for the change. The meeting also implied Russian Orthodox Church (ROC)’s recognition in the status of a legitimate public institution (Pankhurst and Kilp, 2013). A similar festival held by Russian Muslims in the following year, 1989, for the adoption of Islam by the peoples of Volga and the Urals and the 200th anniversary of the CDUM (Klin, 2006).

⁵⁵ Gorbachev’s second promise was “the introduction of a new and just law to replace Stalin’s law of 1929” (Bourdeaux, 2000, p. 10) which was the legal product of the antireligious campaign in the Soviet state attacking all kinds of religious activities and disseminating atheism. (Bourdeaux, 2000; Krindatch, 2006).

⁵⁶ “Both the USSR under Gorbachev and the RSFSR under Yeltsin in 1990 adopted new law. For details of the law, see “O svobode sovesti i religioznykh organizatsiyakh”, *Pravda*, 9 October 1990.

⁵⁷ 1990 law’s grant of freedom of conscience and religion is seen as a critical juncture in the transformation of religion-state relations and re-legalization of religious institutions (Anderson, 1994; Bourdeaux, 2000).

CHAPTER 3

RUSSIA IN TRANSITION:

STATE, RELIGION AND NATIONALISM IN YELTSIN PERIOD

Despite the reform attempts of Gorbachev era, the Soviet Union could not maintain its power and the process of demolition began with the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and subsequently the Soviet Union came into the final stage of collapse by 1991. The unexpected collapse of the Soviet state resulted in a vacuum in all previous Soviet Union countries. The countries began for efforts not only to consolidate the new state structures and institutions, but also to find a new identity that will keep together their societies. Yet, these processes of reconstruction had been painful in Russia as well as in other post-Soviet countries since they faced serious crisis in political, economic and social realms. The “shock therapy⁵⁸” that is implemented in all post-Soviet states resulted in economic recession and hyperinflation which reach to the degree over 2000% (O’Neil, Fields & Share, 2010). As *nomenklatura* directors and the ones that had strong political and economic relations took the largest share from the privatized institutions, the wealth of the country is concentrated in the hands of few people (O’Neil et al., 2010). As a result, an oligarch class who have control over economy, media and politics have emerged, while the poverty became an enormous problem in the society at the wake hyper inflated prices even in the basic needs. During Yeltsin period, having very close ties to his administration, oligarchs enjoyed enormous arbitrary power over state

⁵⁸ That is, rapid marketization.

resources where corruption and bribery became a widespread phenomenon in almost in all political institutions (O'Neil et al., 2010).

In the grip of the regime crisis along with economic and political crises, Yeltsin tried to exercise its control over the country despite the challenges of the former communist parties in the electoral arena, the legislation, the judiciary and the media (Levitsky and Way, 2002). While the country was going through transitions in the state structures and the institutions through the 1990s, Yeltsin faced with "recalcitrant parliaments" majority of which was constituted by former communist and leftist parties (Levitsky and Way, 2002). While in the early years of his political life, during failed coup attempted of 1991, he championed the flag of democracy and declared that

The Russian state has chosen freedom and democracy, and will never be an empire, nor an older or younger brother. It will be an equal among equals (Hosking, 2001, p. 605).

Two years later, Yeltsin himself tried to shut down the legislative arena through a self-coup in 1993. The political contestation had also reflections in the judicial domain when Yeltsin in a 1993 decree attempted to disband parliament. Aftermath of the Constitutional Court's designation of the degree as unconstitutional, Yeltsin "cut off the courts phone lines and took away its guards" (Levitsky and Way, 2002, p. 56). Yeltsin, in his attack of the parliament, suspension of the constitutional court, dismantling of the system of local governments and firing of several governors, decisions on Chechnya war and economic programs passed over the constitutional procedures and limits and created a system of super-presidency (Zakaria, 1997, p. 34). Despite his attempts to limit the democratic competition, during the elections of 1996 that came after the defeat in the First Chechen War, his

party continued to face serious electoral challenges from former communist parties (Levitsky and Way, 2002).

3.1 The politics of religion during Yeltsin period

The newly established Russian state under the leadership of Yeltsin has maintained the liberalization policies initiated by Gorbachev in its early years. In the religious sphere, the continuity of the policy can be captured from the fact that both the USSR under Gorbachev and the RSFSR under Yeltsin in 1990 adopted new law⁵⁹ that granted freedom of conscience and religion above the expectations and fostered religious diversity in the country (Bourdeaux, 2000; Dunlop, 1999). The law enabled “pluralistic expression of various faiths as well as of atheism” (Karpov, 2013). Subsequently, in the 1993 Constitution, religious rights were maintained in harmony with the 1990 laws through which religious organizations, including minor sects, enjoyed the free exercise of their activities and expanded their communities.

Yemelianova (2015) sees this period as a significant break from imperial model of religion-state relations which had also direct implications for the Muslims of Russia. With an exception of the short-lasting free setting of the early 20th century, for the first time, Russian Muslims were able to exercise their liberty and freely interact with the global Muslim community during this decade. While Yeltsin tended to establish liberties in the first term of his rule, in the second term, he was more prone to bring restrictive measures. Hence, in second term of Yeltsin, the free environment that become possible with the changes in Gorbachev decade left its place to the restrictive measures with the 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience and

⁵⁹ For details of the law, see “O svobode sovesti i religioznykh organizatsiyakh”, *Pravda*, 9 October 1990

Religious Associations. This shift is interpreted as return to imperial model of religion state relations by Yemelianova (2015). In a similar manner, Papkova (2013) sees a significant continuity in church-state relations of Imperial Russia and today's Russia, hence stating that

in order to understand the ROC today one should have a profound understanding of its history, since the legacies of the church's relationship with both the imperial and Soviet states continue to influence its positions vis-à-vis the present Russian regime. The same goes for the relationship of the ROC with Russian society writ large (p. 252).

The change in the policy, to a large extent, resulted from the inconvenience of both political actors and the Moscow patriarchate from excessive freedom of various religious actors and the increased competition over religious sphere since the dissolution of the Soviet regime. Seeing the new situation as "Western religious dominations' invasion of Russia and brainwashing of its younger generation" (Dunlop 1999, 29) the Communist Party and group led by Zhirinovskiy coupled with Moscow patriarchate began lobbying for a restrictive legislation. In April 1996, the Moscow Patriarchate proposed an amendment to the 1990s religious law to forbid the foreign religious organizations' independent activity in Russia (Uzzell, 1996). The new proposal allowed foreign religious organizations' activity only if they are invited by Russian religious organizations and channeled all their activities through them. In contrast to this proposal, the 1990 law was stating that "'foreign citizens' and 'persons without citizenship' along with Russian citizens have the right to exercise their freedom of conscience by creating either religious or atheistic organisations" (Uzzell, 1996, para. 2).

The Moscow Patriarchate's support for the restrictive regulation can be seen as the propensity of religious monopoly to preserve its powerful position and

supporting higher barriers in entry to the religious market (Gill, 2008; Koesel, 2014). As the proponents of rational choice theory suggest, “weakened state churches that have been co-opted by the state can only maintain their hegemonic position in a religiously pluralistic society by gaining the coercive support of the state in restricting religious liberty” (Gill, 2008, p. 173). Hence, the level of religious liberty is determined both by secular political leaders’ willingness to comply with the demands of dominant religion and the returns provided by hegemonic religion to political leaders (Gill, 2008). In the case of Russia, adoption of the 1997 Law presents that the dominant religion’s efforts to maintain its monopoly have been substantially successful.

Apart from the intensive lobbying coming from the political actors and Orthodox Church, the discontent of the society over increased activities of new religious movements (NRMs) and the state’s demand to reestablish control over the religious movements that it lost in 1990 with the abolishment of Council for Religious Affairs⁶⁰ (Papkova quoted in Sarkissian, 2015, p. 214) affected the passing of the new legislation. The concerns over spreading of foreign Christian sects coupled with the religious mobilization during Chechen War further increased discomfort over liberty to the Muslim groups either. All these factors affected the perception of religious groups as a threat to the state authority and resulted in a considerable change in the policy towards religious organizations. The first product of the policy shift was the 1997 Federal Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations. The restrictive measures mostly targeted non-Orthodox

⁶⁰ Council for Religious Affairs (CRA), originally named as the *Soviet Po Delam Religii*, was a government body that dealt with religious activity in the Soviet state. The council is established in 1965 and is abolished with the demise of the Soviet state. For detailed information on the Council, see John Anderson, “The Council for Religious Affairs and the Shaping of Soviet Religious Policy”, *Soviet Studies*, Vol.43, No.4 (1991), pp.689-710.

Christian denominations and sects such as Roman Catholics, Protestants, Baptists, Jehova's Witnesses, Mormons, Adventists, as well as foreign Muslim organizations. In September 1997, the new law passed.⁶¹ Aftermath of the legislative change, the adherents of the restricted groups organized protests (Sergeeva 1997). The US government reacted against the new law and the Congress voted to cut off US aid to the Russian government if it will implement the law that restrict certain religious sects ("Congress would," 1997).

The 1997 law is seen as first systematic restriction attempt in the fundamental freedoms of conscience since the dissolution of the USSR (Bacon, 2000). The new law introduced the concept of "traditional religions"⁶² for the first time; in its preamble it stated special contribution of the Orthodox Church to Russian cultural heritage and also admitted Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism among the integral part of the Russian people's heritage.⁶³ By setting distinction between religious organization and group and seriously restricting the rights of the latter,⁶⁴ by putting a requisite of registration for all religious groups and fifteen years prerequisite for that⁶⁵ and by banning the usage of words 'Russia' or 'Russian' if that

⁶¹ With such great support, the new restrictive law passed by majority vote in summer 1997. Yet, facing an international pressure, Yeltsin vetoed the law stating that the new law contradicts the Russian constitution and international human rights agreements that Russia is a signatory (Dunlop 1999). Though, in September, Yeltsin approves the same law that it had rejected previously and the critiques to the new law from international domain remained limited this time interestingly.

⁶² The "traditional" four religions that is recognized by the Russian state gathered round an institution named Inter-Religious Council of Russia (IRC) in 1998 under the honorary chairmanship of Patriarch Kirill which reflects the hierarchical supremacy of Orthodoxy over others. For the detailed info on the Council, see <http://interreligious.ru/>

⁶³ For the detailed provisions of the law, see ("Federal'nyy," 1997).

⁶⁴ Under the new provision members of unregistered religious groups could "not own any property", "not free to disseminate their faith in public meetings or through the printed word" (Dunlop, 1999, p. 34). The only right they had is to hold religious services in private apartments unless the neighbor found it disruptive. In this sense, the new law on religion is likened to that of Brezhnev era.

⁶⁵ That is, the prerequisite of a registration of a religious association depended on the document proving that it had "legally existed on a given territory for at least fifteen years" (Dunlop, 1999, p. 34). Considering the fact that, the fifteen years ago corresponds to the Brezhnev era, there were few religious organizations that could enjoy legality for the fifteen years. During the "waiting period", the members of those groups denied their basic rights that the 1993 constitution guarantees.

association exists less than fifty years on that soil (Dunlop, 1999), the 1997 Law confined the freedom of conscience to the “limited pluralism with a hegemonic role of one confession” (Karpov, 2013) and introduced measures that contradict the constitutional principle on the “equality before the law” (Bacon, 2000; Dunlop, 1999; Karpov, 2013). Stark and Finke (2000) see the new law on religion as an attempt of “outlaw of Western groups as ‘ungodly sects’” result of which may be “the imposition of a quite lax state church, along the lines of the Scandinavian churches, while millions of Russians –those most actively religious- are forced once again, into semi-secret worship” (p. 247). Koesel (2014), on the other hand, states that by creating list of acceptable faiths and “setting parameters of religious activities”, the state tries to ensure religious groups’ alignment with regime interests (p. 8).

The framework initiated by the law set the precedents of the future policy choices. Yemelianova (2015) asserts that the religious model put forward with the law is very much parallel to that of imperial era which contains mixture of repression, control, legalization, isolation and apoliticization. According to Fox (2008), government’s introduction of requirement of registration for all religious organizations and its restriction of religions that are considered “dangerous or nonindigenous to the state” (p. 140) resembles its paternalistic attitude toward religion. In this sense, Russian state ‘guides’ and ‘protects’ its citizens through “regulating and controlling citizens’ access to religion” (Fox, 2008, p. 140). According to Curanovic, the religious model in post-Soviet decade consists of the state-recognised category of ‘traditional’ religions and the state-given ‘licence to preach’” (Pankhurst and Kilp, 2013) which also constitutes the major elements of the 1997 law.

Though the regulations introduced at the federal level by the state commission have a significant place in understanding policy towards religion, it is notable to mention here that; it is at local level where the relation between religion and state can be captured fully. Hence, the regulations introduced at federal level may have different repercussions in different geographies of Russia. In the legislation and implementation of policies in the realm of religion, the lack of a “centralized body dealing with religious affairs” and “bureaucratic arbitrariness” result in the variation in the state policy in the local level depending on “the political agendas and personal loyalties of the politicians” (Fagan, 2003). The attitude towards particular groups are determined either by “Putin’s general ideological statements” or by the visibility of that group in the region⁶⁶ (Fagan, 2003). The aforesaid category of “traditional religions” in the 1997 law resulted in hierarchical approach towards religious groups also at the local level and bureaucrats’ discrimination of other religions and denying of their constitutional rights (SOVA, 2006).

Adoption of the 1997 law constituted the early signals of the new era of religion-state relations in post-Soviet Russia. In this new framework, the Orthodox Church regained its pre-Soviet power with full protection and subsidies granted by the state. The “traditional religions”⁶⁷, on the other hand, are granted secondary access to state subsidies and legal protection whereas all other religious groups are denoted as “foreign religions” facing marginalization both from the state and the protected majority (Koesel, 2014). The strengthened and privileged stance of the Orthodox Church becomes more apparent with a symbolic instance in December

⁶⁶ Instead of belief of the particular group, the dynamicity constitutes a more decisive factor in state policy. If the group is dynamic and visible, the regional officials are more tended to restrict its activities (Fagan, 2003).

⁶⁷ Muslims (only “traditional” ones), Jews and Buddhists. By “traditional” Islam, the official

1999 with Yeltsin's unexpected resignation and Putin's going to Orthodox Church and asking for blessings of Patriarch before coming to power (Krindatch, 2006).⁶⁸ From there on, during Putin and Medvedev era, Orthodox Church gradually consolidated its influential position in the politics of the country and became source of legitimacy for the politicians especially during the election periods. This will be presented in a detailed way in the following chapter.

3.2 Russian Muslims during Yeltsin decade: Revival?

The liberalization policies that are initiated by Gorbachev enabled Muslims, similar to other groups, to enjoy the relatively liberal environment. Aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet state, different Islamic institutions and clerical bodies are established and a kind of post-Soviet Islam is developed in the country. While the CDUM which continued to exist since the Catherine period remained as the main official Muslim institution under the chairmanship of Talgat Tadzhuddin, an alternative official Islamic institution is established under the name of the Russian Council of Muftis. Apart from official clerical bodies, unofficial Islamic communities and brotherhoods are prevailed through the Muslim dominated regions of the country.

Given the relatively liberal environment, in this period, Russian Muslims had opportunity to have more frequent interactions with other parts of the Islamic world which allowed them to integrate into the *ummah* and international Islamic movements (Yemelianova, 2015). The interactions with international Muslim

⁶⁸Krindatch (2006) was specifying two symbolic events in the transition to post-Soviet period of state-church relations. While the first was celebration of a religious festival with state's sponsorship in 1988, the second symbolic instance is this. When Yeltsin resigned, "Putin went to the head of the Orthodox Christian Church, Patriarch Alexei 2, to ask for his blessing to serve as the temporary leader of the country until the next proper presidential elections took place" (Krindatch, 2006, p. 272)

community that became possible by incoming adherents of the different religious groups, by free spreading of the religious literature and by Russian Muslim students' going to other Muslim countries for religious education, Russian Muslims met with different movements of thought within the Islamic world. Specifically, Salafism spread among Russia's Muslims rapidly from two ways. Firstly, it has been stated that the influx of foreign Islamic funds especially from Saudi Arabia resulted in establishment of private education centers, mosques etc. promoting Salafi ideology (Yemelianova, 2015). Secondly, the foreign Muslim fighters that came to Russia for Chechen war had considerable effect upon Russian Muslims especially that live in Caucasian parts of the country. Another way of interaction between Russian Muslims and the Islamic world happened through their university education in Muslim countries as there were only two *madrasas* in Uzbekistan⁶⁹ for taking the religious education during the Soviet decade. While the number of madrasas increased in the 1990s, the lack of qualified teachers and organized curriculum made the Muslim universities abroad more attractive for the Russian Muslims who want to receive higher religious education.

After the dissolution of the Soviet state which promoted atheism as part of its state policy, the presence of the religion in the public sphere increased significantly which led to the discussions over religious revival in general and Islamic one in particular (Greeley, 1994; Froese, 2004; Malashenko, 2009; Karpov, 2013). Indeed, the debate over Islamic revival in Russia has been part of a broader discussion around Islamic revival that reached its peak aftermath of the 1979 Iranian

⁶⁹ As part of anti-religious campaigns all maktabas and madrasas were closed before 1928. In 1945, the medium level madrasa of Mir-i Arab in Bukhara was opened and in 1971, higher level madrasa of Ismail al-Bukhari in Tashkent was founded (Bennigsen and Wimbush, 1985, p. 19). Given that there were only two religious educational institutions in the overall Soviet Union, there were many students going to Al-Azhar, University of Damascus or other Muslim universities abroad to receive higher religious education (Bennigsen and Wimbush, 1985).

Revolution. While the Islamic Renaissance in Russia could be verified through the sharp increase in the number of religious organizations⁷⁰ and believers⁷¹; some scholars question the magnitude of Islamic renaissance in the post-Soviet decade (Varzanova, 1996b). Based on surveys conducted between 1993-6 in Moscow, it is argued that the number of practicing Muslims in Russia do not exceed the 4% of the overall population despite the fact that the number of Muslims are stated to be more than 20 million, constituting nearly 15% of the population⁷². In a similar vein, a study conducted by Kaariainen and Furman supports the arguments on the religious renaissance as a myth (Kuriyazev, 1997). According to figures presented in the study, while people mostly have positive attitude towards religion, it does not translate into action making the percentage of practicing believers very few⁷³ (Kuriyazev, 1997). Based on those statistics, it is stated that the extent of Islamic revival in Russia is not as huge as it is predicted.

Though the number of practicing religious believers remains less, there was a sharp increase in the institutional presence of the religion in the public sphere and the number of self-identified believers through the 1990s. The construction of new

⁷⁰ While there were only 871 registered religious organizations in 1991, the number increased to 2294 in 1995, 2494 in 1996, 2738 in 1997 and 3072 in 1999 (Kamalov, 2007).

⁷¹ For example, in a survey conducted with Tatars living in Russia in the early 1980s only 15.7% considered themselves believers while 59% of them were indifferent (Hahn 2007). In the subsequent years, the number of believers among Tatars living in Russia increased gradually. While the number of Tatar believers living in urban was 34% in 1990, it increased to 66.6% in 1994 and 81% in 1997. Among rural population the percentages were higher as it was 47% in 1990, 86% in 1994 and 93% in 1997 (Kamalov, 2007).

⁷² For the discussions over the number of the Muslims, see section on Russian Muslims in Chapter 1.

⁷³ The controversial arguments around religious revival in post-Soviet Russia is also presented at the literature review section of the Chapter 1 in the thesis.

mosques⁷⁴ and *madrasas*⁷⁵ and increase in the religious publications⁷⁶ were major manifestations of the increase of the institutional presence of Islam in this decade. For instance, in Chechnya, after 1991, a great number of mosques are built and the mosque-construction became “one of the chief ways in which Chechen ‘businessmen’, whether from Grozny or Moscow, displayed their wealth and their attachment to their communities, and boosted their prestige” (Lieven, 1998, p. 24). Another pattern around Muslim politics in this decade is the lack of state mechanism for the control of activities of religious organizations and publications in the early 1990s (Kamalov, 2007). As presented in the previous section, the control over religious organizations is established by 1997 law which is legislated in second term of Yeltsin. The control mechanism and strict restrictions over the religious publications is systematized with the introduction of Federal List of Extremist Materials in 2007 within the scope of Extremism Law.

3.3 Identity politics in Yeltsin era: Efforts to construct civic Russianness

After fall of Soviet Union, all of the post-Soviet states had to enter into the road of state building and nation building as the collapse of states meant collapse of the

⁷⁴ For instance, in 1996, 50 new mosques are opened most of whom are built solely by contributions of Muslims themselves without any state support. At that time, there were about 1500 mosques and 2000 parishes that belonged to the Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Russia (CDUM) (Varzanova, 1996a). According to remarks of Tadzheddin, there were only 94 mosques in 1989 and by 2006 it become nearly 2000 though not reaching the number in pre-revolutionary period which was 7500 (Klin, 2006).

⁷⁵ While in 1993, the number of religious were 69, it increased to 96 in 1995, 103 in 1997 and 114 in 1999 (Kamalov, 2007). For instance, in Tatarstan, the madrasas of Tanzilya and Yildiz combined secondary education with religious curriculum whereas the Muhammadiya madrasa was providing a higher Islamic education. In 1998, in Kazan, there opened the Islamic University (Kamalov, 2007) which is followed by construction of Islamic universities in Moscow and Ufa. Although increasing in number, the lack of experienced staff, organized curriculum had prevented their affectivity (Kamalov, 2007). Later, some of the madrasas such as Yildiz are closed for accusations of promoting Wahhabism (Idiatullin, 2002).

⁷⁶ In early 1990s, there began first periodical Islamic publications in Russia though many of them cannot continue due to financial difficulties. The number of published religious books also increased during early 1990s (Kamalov, 2007).

cementing identity of the society. The discussions on Russianness and just borders of the new state became one of the central topics. The main question in these debates was the ways of conciliation of the ethnic and civil identity as the Russian state preserved its multi-ethnic multi-religious structure even after the fall of the Soviet. Tolz (1998) identifies five notions of Russianness⁷⁷ based on intellectual debates on Russian nation building in the post-Soviet era. While the first group define Russianness based on supranational union identity⁷⁸, the second group have an account of ethnic Slavism⁷⁹, on the other hand, the third group base its definition to the language by equalizing Russianness to speak Russian⁸⁰. The fourth group, however, have a racial account of Russianness⁸¹ whereas the fifth group conceptualize Russian nation in a civic sense.⁸² Tolz (1998) mentions the fact that both proponents of “ethnic Slavs” and “Russian speakers” emphasize the role of Orthodoxy as the main symbol of Russianness through references to Slavophiles. On the other hand, Eurasianists, further developing Pan-Slavist ideas, claim emergence of “a new Russian multi-ethnic Eurasian nation” as a result of centuries of interaction

⁷⁷ Hosking (1998), similarly, mentions four definition of Russian nation; one mentioning its “imperial mission”, the other seeing it “as a community of East Slavs, the third as “a community of Russian speakers” and the last definition encompassing “all the citizens of the Russian Federation” (p. 457).

⁷⁸ Proponents of the notion of “Union identity” regard Russians as peoples of empire having common history. Seeing both Russian empire and Soviet state as a “unique civilization”, the defenders of this idea demand continuation that “supranational state”. This view is supported by Eurasianists along with Communists and nationalists, but also by some who consider themselves as liberals (Tolz, 1998).

⁷⁹ This second group perceive Russianness to contain all eastern Slavs that have common ethnic and cultural background; hence, they consider Ukrainians and Belarussians within the Russian nation. The proponents justify their claims through the historiography attributing origins of the three to the Kiev Rus; while some Ukrainian historians disputing this claim (Tolz, 1998).

⁸⁰ According to them, speaking Russian, regardless of ethnicity, is the main marker of Russianness; so the ties with Russian speaking population in the “near abroad” should be strengthened

⁸¹ This group, based on racial accounts, define Russian national identity through blood ties; only the extreme right, anti-semitic groups such as “Black Hundred” have such a notion of Russian identity. These groups define Russianness in opposition to non-Russians living in the country and see Muslims of Caucasia and Central Asia as a major threat to the survival of Russians. The proponent of this is “two main racist groups in post-Communist Russia N.N. Lysenko’s National Republican Party of Russia and A.P. Barkashov’s Russian National Unity (Tolz, 1998, p. 1004).

⁸² The civic conception of Russian nation encompasses all citizens of Russia, regardless of ethnicity or culture. Tolz (1998) mentions effect of Western theories of nationalism in development of this last notion of national identity.

of people from various ethnic origins in the geography (Tolz, 1998). Some of them, going further in their claims, try to “define the role of Orthodoxy for all the people of their ‘Russia-Eurasia’, claiming that even Muslims were ‘potentially Orthodox’” (Tolz, 1998, p. 997).

According to Tolz (1998), the discussions on the national identity itself has practical impacts on the politics of nation building in the country and states that, following the fifth conception of Russianness, what Yeltsin tried to achieve in his early years is creation of a de-ethnicised state and strengthening of civic national identity in Russia. To overcome the identity crisis of the post-Soviet period, Yeltsin called for a new Russian national idea in 1996. Distancing himself from the traditional Russian nationalists, Yeltsin pursued “the concept of Russia as a democratic state, in the Western sense, as one among a confederation. Pointedly, he used the civic term *rossiiskie* rather than the ethnic *russkie*” (Hosking, 2001, p. 587). Lieven (1998) explains the reliance on a civic notion of Russian identity rather than an ethnic through Russian desire for hegemony in the region, stating that

Russian ambitions for leadership or hegemony within the former Soviet Union have a very important impact both on popular attitudes and on state policy. For as noted, such a hegemony cannot today or for the foreseeable future be based mainly on coercion; it has to have a genuine element of consent and mutual interest. It would be impossible for a Russian government on the one hand to have such a programme, and on the other hand to take up an ethnic chauvinist position at home, and foster a narrowly ethnicist version of the Russian identity (p. 380).

Although Yeltsin tried to build a civic Russian identity, due to its weaknesses in grounding the policy historically and awkwardness in the presence of ethnical autonomous states within the Russian territory, his attempts in building symbols for this civic identity is failed (Hosking, 1998; Duncan, 2005). Apart from that, he could

not propose a solution to the dual problem of Russians living outside Russia and autonomous non-Russian ethnic republics within Russia (Hosking, 2001). For the latter, he promised that they could take independence as much as they can handle (Hosking, 2001, p. 587).

3.4 Nationalist struggles in Volga-Ural and North Caucasian regions

As stated in the previous chapters; the repercussions of Gorbachev's liberalization attempts not only resulted in freedom in economic and religious realms; but also it triggered political mobilization of ethno-nationalist groups⁸³ in Soviet Russia.

During the process of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the countries attempted to use their rights of self-determination that has been in their agenda since the beginning of the 20th century. In this vein, Tatarstan declared its sovereignty in 1990 and conducted a sovereignty referendum at 21 March 1992 which resulted in acceptance of the sovereignty by 61% of the residents of the Republic ("Russia worried," 1992). In a similar vein, Chechens declared their sovereignty after Dudaev's victory in the presidential elections of 1991. At that time, the Russian state is established as a federal state and the new state adopted a similar manner with Soviet Russia to incorporate autonomous republics into the federation through federation agreements. Yet, countries that declared their sovereignty unilaterally (among them Tatarstan and Chechnya) rejected signing the federation agreement.

The difference of the political dynamics in both region resulted in the different paths in the advent of their freedom struggle. While the separation of Chechnya turned into armed conflict, separatist policies of Tatarstan government are

⁸³ The nationalist revival goes hand in hand with religious revival in post-Soviet Russia. Fallor (2011) points out that Islam has been considered as a crucial element in Tatars' national sovereignty movement in the post-Soviet decade.

accommodated with a power sharing treaty (Sahiner, 2002). Tatarstan's rejection of the signing of the federation agreement led to the signing of a power sharing agreement between Tatarstan under Shaimiev and the Russian Federation under Yeltsin in 1994. The agreement resulted in Tatars voluntarily give up of the struggle for independence and uniting with Russia in return for rights and autonomy guaranteed under the terms of the 1994 treaty (Daulet, 2003) and in a way, enabled a peaceful solution to the ethnic demands of Tatars. While Tatar demands for greater autonomy is negotiated successfully with a treaty, Chechen's attempt for independence resulted in the outbreak of a war in December 1994 with Russian launch of a military attack to the region (Schamiloglu, 2006). The reason for different outcomes of similar demands in the same state is explained in Toft (2003)'s well-grounded theoretical study on ethnic violence, in which she argues that

Settlement patterns influence capabilities and legitimacy claims. With the notable exception of urbanites, concentrated ethnic groups (especially concentrated majorities) are engaged in rebellion more often and at higher intensities because they have greater capability and legitimacy than dispersed or urban groups. Further, out of fear of setting precedents, states are most likely to directly (and one might predict, aggressively) engage those groups considered most likely to set off a series of secessions, regardless of the state value of the territory (p. 44).

The launching of the war to the region stemmed from state's fear of spreading of insurgencies to other regions and aimed to impede separation of the countries. Though the state aimed to preserve its inner unity by launching attack to the Chechen region in 1994, the public support for the war was very low. So, the lack of support for the war coupled with approaching elections resulted in Yeltsin's call for ceasefire in April 1996 and Russian failure in the First Chechen War (1994-6) which allowed Chechnya to become a de facto independent state during the 1990s.

The role of religion in the Chechen conflict and its effect on the advent of state policy towards Russian Muslims is important to understand as the conflict has been one of the major incidents in the Russian politics in post-Soviet era. While Islam had major role in Chechen society (despite being ceremonial since Soviet period), at early years of the declaration of the independence, rather than adopting a religious language, the Chechens were defending their position within the nationalist-democratic discourse. For instance, in his pre-election program of 1991, Dudaev made almost no reference to Islam and to religion in general, rather adopting “the language of human rights, pluralism and democracy”⁸⁴(Lieven, 1998, p. 363). Under the heavy pressure, dissolving the parliament, he began to shift from this position in 1993 and relied on traditional and with the beginning of the war a rhetoric of political Islam began to be adopted (Lieven, 1998). Even at that time, to gain the international support⁸⁵ and to deter the Russian attack⁸⁶, they were using the fear of “Islamic threat” (Lieven, 1998). Erkilet (2015) explains this shift from nationalist-democratic discourse to the Islamic one, through the disappointment of the leaders of the new state with the international community for remaining silent in the conflict and non-recognizing the newly established state. The incoming Salafi foreign fighters were also crucial in the switch from the nationalist discourse to an Islamic one. The shift

⁸⁴ In a similar vein, Lieven (1998) points out to little reference to Islam in President Yandarbiyev’s Soviet style memoir despite utilizing the symbolic possibilities of political Islam in his politics.

⁸⁵ For instance, in his interview with Lieven in 1992, Chechen Information Minister states that Dudaev government tries to create a democratic constitutional government with people’s support. But if Moscow by creating terrorist acts blames Dudaev, there may be civil war which can lead to the victory of fundamentalists and emergence of the Afghan situation there. So, he states that it is to Russia’s or West’s interest to support Dudaev as the leader of a democratic secular state following the model of Turkey.

⁸⁶ In November 1994, in his speech to Council of Elders, Dudaev says that “one way to fight against Russian aggression would be to introduce the Shariat, but that if the Russians will stop the aggression, we will take away this Islamic constitution” which is presented as an example to his instrumental use of Islam as political and national end rather than for its own sake (Lieven, 1998, p. 364).

in Chechen case occurred hand in hand with a global trend of the surge of the religious element in the international politics in the post-Cold War world.

Lieven (1998), in his study on Chechen conflict, explains the relationship between nationalism and religion in the following way:

Some form of ethnos, and of ethno-cultural identity, usually with one formal religious allegiance, emerges over centuries... This ethnos then comes under attack from an empire, or national group, with another religion. The threatened ethnos develops a stronger and stronger allegiance to its own religion and, in particular, to those forms of which will help strengthen its military and/or cultural powers of resistance. In the struggle, it may also generate new religious forms and institutions. For long periods, it may appear – and it may even to an extent to be true – that the struggle is a religiously inspired and not an ethnic or proto national one. Then, in the modern era, the specifically religious identity and forms of resistance are supplanted by those of secular nationalism – but a nationalism whose symbols and rhetoric are thoroughly permeated with religious metaphors and language (p. 356).

For Russia, the major reason for increased role of religious factor in the politics was related to its conflict with Chechnya and rise of Islamism both among Russia's Muslims and other post-communist Central Asian countries. The help coming to Chechens from the international Muslim community was determinant in the transformation of the Chechen resistance discourse. The war towards imperial Russia began to be denoted as jihad and the fighters adopted the Islamist discourse instead of the nationalist one in the later years of the conflict. As the religious discourse obtained a dominant role in fight of Chechen separatists, state began to perceive its overall policy towards Muslims as a security issue and associated Islamism with extremism and terrorism which led to significant shifts in its policy towards Muslims. In line with the global "war on terror" that is launched aftermath of the World Trade Center attack in the US and the growth of the radical movements, Russia could able to present its operations in the region as part of the fight against

terrorist groups by labelling Chechens as terrorists. This was one of the decisive turning points for the relations between state and Muslims in the region as the discourse over rights and liberties shifted towards discourse of the security.

According to Lieven (1998), Russia, from the beginning on, tried to brand the political conflict in the region as a religious one and Chechen separatists as “Muslim fundamentalists” with an intention

to appeal to Western audiences with the line that the war has been a sort of Western crusade against a common Islamic enemy; to argue that the Chechens are too ‘primitive’ to have developed a modern nationalism and a sense of national identity; and to suggest that as simple, primitive people, they have been misled by religious propaganda into acting contrary to their own best interests (p. 357)

The weakness of the state both politically and economically in the Yeltsin period enabled the minorities to take independence as much as they can handle. During this period, Tatarstan enjoyed special privileges as a result of the treaty signed in 1994 and with Russian inability to stop Chechens during the First War, Chechens were able to establish their state and enjoy their relative independence. In this sense, the political system in the Russian federation is described as asymmetric federalism “where power is devoted unequally across the country and its constituent regions, often the result of specific laws negotiated between the region and the central government (O’Neil, Fields & Share, 2010). Yet, the privileged stances of these republics completely changed during Putin era as he pursued rigorous policy of centralization in his reign.

CHAPTER 4

PUTIN IN POWER:

AUTHORITARIANISM, RELIGION AND POLITICS

The change in the government and the beginning of the Putin period had taken place with Yeltsin's resignation and Putin's appointment for his place in the 1999-2000 elections. When Putin is assigned to Presidency at the end of 1999, being a former KGB officer, Putin hardly cared for consolidation of democratic principles in the country (McFaul, 2000); rather, he aimed to create a strong Russian state with strong economy having hegemony in the region. So, instead of promoting pluralist politics, he pursued policies for reestablishing a central authority in the country. To achieve these aims, putting an end to the Chechen problem was his first and foremost target. In this vein, in early days of his rule, he initiated a second military campaign to the North Caucasia.

While the First Chechen War did not receive sufficient public support from the Russian society and resulted in the failure of the Russian side, the political climate during the Second Chechen War was rather very different. Being after attacks on civil places in Moscow and elsewhere, the Second Chechen War received huge public support (McFaul, 2000). Another reason for the increased support was the employment of new tactics through usage of air forces and media propaganda for the war. The war resulted in the victory of the Russian side which boosted the popularity of Putin and led to his success in March 2000 presidential elections (McFaul, 2000). Some scholars argue that the launching of the second Chechen campaign was actually aimed to boost Putin's popularity in the elections (Shevtsova, 2000; McFaul, 2000; Schedler, 2002) because when Yeltsin assigned Putin in his

place, everyone thought that he would fail in his political career as Yeltsin left behind a country suffering from economic and political crises leading to the growing social discontent with his policies. Yet, Putin's successful campaign to Chechen region attained a widespread public support and allowed Putin to consolidate his power (Turner, 2011).

Putin, who has done much to curtail human rights, undermine foreign non-governmental organisations, silence opposition and restore centralised power, has enforced the ideology of the Great Power and the doctrine of *derzhavnost* – the view that the state is a superior mystical being that every citizen must serve without question. The good citizen is a *derzhavnik* who is indifferent to the fate of other citizens and who accepts state crimes as necessary and justified (Turner, 2011, p. 191-2).

4.1 The onset of centralization and authoritarian measures

Apart from launching the Second Chechen War, to achieve his aim of “preserving Russia's territorial integrity at any cost” (McFaul, 2000 p. 28), he introduced policies of centralization in his first weeks in power and “created seven new supra-regional district administrators who will report directly to the president” (Ibid, 28) which will undermine power of regional governors. Instead, making these districts to be run by general governors appointed by Putin and “taking control of finances, taxation, and police and security services in the 89 regions” (Dunlop, 2000, p. 45). In addition to these measures, he announced “plans to introduce direct elections to the Federation Council, the upper house of parliament” (Ibid, 28). These changes downgraded the minority republics' autonomous status significantly and disaffected the minorities of the Russia. Among them was the state of Tatarstan which had exclusive rights with the power sharing treaty of 1994 for which Putin stated his discontent. In the Chechnya, after the end of war with Russian victory, he created a powerful Chechen

government that is completely subordinated to Moscow with appointment of Ramzan Kadyrov as the president of the region (Turner, 2011). These centralizing, authoritarian measures was another significant dynamic shaping the state's policy towards its Muslim population.

Gorbachev decade was mainly associated with liberalization and democratization, whereas Yeltsin's policies contained mixture of democratic and autocratic elements. On the other hand, Putin era is defined as a period of "de-democratization" in which "economic and political power has been consolidated in the executive branch, one party has a monopoly on political institutions, opposition is rarely tolerated, elections are orchestrated rather than competitive, elected officials take their cues from the Kremlin, and civil society is kept on a short leash" (Koesel, 2014, p. 9). Hence, in early 2000s, Russia began to be classified among hybrid regimes that preserve democratic elements combined with authoritarian measures and began to be denoted as "competitive authoritarian" regime (Levitsky and Way, 2010) and various similar denotations as mentioned in the first part of the thesis .

Although it appears that Putin comes to the office through elections, some scholars like Shevtsova (2000) sees the elections merely as a legitimization of autocracy since the decision was already made by elites through designation of the Yeltsin's successor and neutralization of the potential competitors. According to her, Putin came to power as a "Arbiter-Stabilizer" whom the oligarchs expect to perpetuate the rule of the games initiated by Yeltsin (p. 37). McFaul (2000) similarly points out to Putin's being chosen by Yeltsin and his oligarchs as a loyal successor that would preserve the system they created in the country. While Shevtsova (2000) and McFaul (2000) predicted the continuation of the oligarch's power during Putin era, Putin divested oligarchs from power which resulted in either oligarchs' leaving

of the country or facing of the imprisonment (O'Neil, Fields & Share, 2010). In his struggle against oligarchs, Putin attained widespread public support. In place of the purged elite, Putin created a new economic elite from *siloviki* who were close to him (O'Neil, Fields & Share, 2010) which resulted in the increased effect of the security discourse in the politics.

Shevtsova (2004), with Putin's second term in power, defines Russia's regime as "a remodeled form of authoritarianism" (p. 67). According to her, in post-communist Russia, there emerged "a full-fledged bureaucratic-authoritarian regime" (p. 75). While Yeltsin period was characterized by an ambiguous mixture of democratic and autocratic elements, Putin regime did not experience such an ambivalence since "he has decisively turned his back on the liberal side of Yeltsin's legacy and opted for a made-over authoritarianism" (p. 67). Describing the current regime as "Putin's new model authoritarianism", Shevtsova (2004) points out concentration of power in presidency and reliance on personalized power as the main patterns of this new regime. Putin's policies aiming to "find a way out of Yeltsin's oligarchic capitalism" (Shevtsova, 2004, p. 75)

Schedler (2002) argues that incumbents, in order to attain popular support, may construct "social cleavages through the deployment of either external violence (international war) or internal violence (terrorism or civil war)" (p. 108). To justify his argument, he presents example of Putin of Russia that use both internal and external violence to boost his popularity in his early years. In constructing his argument, Schedler (2002) relies on McFaul (2000)'s explanation of Putin's victory in 2000 elections through the war in Chechnya. According to McFaul (2000), war on Chechnya is seen by political elites as an opportunity to boost Putin's popularity to get him elected. In parallel to that, Shevtsova (2000) sees launching of the war on

Chechnya as a Soviet-style tactic which pursues to trigger “wartime patriotic sentiments” and to consolidate the society against a common enemy (p. 37). Apart from that, Putin’s victory is explained by being a new, young and energetic leader, lacking previous records in politics which enables people to project onto him their expectations for the future (McFaul, 2000). But also weakness of the political opposition and early elections were other factors contributing to Putin’s success according to McFaul (2000). In addition to these, Putin’s purge of the oligarchs and the improvement of the country’s economy in his decade were other factors that boosted his popularity in the following terms.

4.2 Identity politics during Putin period

In terms of identity politics, as presented in the discussions around identity during Yeltsin period, Russian nationalism (either in ethnic, civic or civilizational form) gained the upper hand in post-Soviet Russia in the absence of a unifying communist ideology of the Soviet decade. While Yeltsin unsuccessfully promoted the idea of “civic nationalism” in place for the collapsed communist ideology, Russian state’s ideology under Putin is described as “Russian imperial nationalism with accretions of pan-Orthodox Slavism” (Dunlop, 2000, p. 46). In this new situation, the political legitimacy is ensured through reliance on the ideas of patriotism and nationalism, restoring “great Russia” and emphasis on the Russia’s difference from the West (O’Neil, Fields & Share, 2010). At the same time, the new regime used the symbols of Soviet regime coupled with appealing to the nostalgia for the Soviet as great power (O’Neil, Fields & Share, 2010).

The state ideology of Putin may also be described as “civilizational nationalism” that have its roots in the early 20th century Eurasian school which also has an effect on the state’s perception of its Muslim population. While radical Russian nationalist groups, though having a negative sense of Islam stemmed from xenophobic attitudes, are fairly indifferent and insensitive to the religious identities; the promoters of “civilizational nationalism” make special emphasis to the role of Orthodox Christianity in construction of the Russian identity hence become concerned about “Islamic threat”, considering extremism mainly as an Islamic one (Verkhovsky, 2010). On the other hand, the neo-Eurasianists⁸⁷ under Dugin⁸⁸, see possibilities of engagement with Islam in an alliance against the West (Verkhovsky, 2010). It is not a coincidence that the chair of CDUM, the supreme Mufti Talgat Tadzhuiddin is also member of Dugin’s International Eurasian Movement (Verkhovsky, 2010).

4.3 The politics of religion in Putin decade

The close relationship between the church and the state that is initiated during Yeltsin decade become more consolidated during Putin era. Rational choice theorists suggest that in the alliance between government and religious institutions, religious organizations aim to increase and ease their activities in the public ground in exchange for providing legitimacy for the leaders in the office. The theory of rational

⁸⁷ The Eurasian school emerged in early 1920s and come with arguments of a civilization accompanied by the Orthodoxy. Although having similarities with Slavophiles in being “politically conservative and viewing Orthodox Christianity as the ideal philosophy for the state”, Eurasians differed from Slavophiles as the former “rejected pan-Slavism as being too European and too confining for Russia’s young and vigorous culture, preferring instead the *assimilatsionnyi kotel* (melting pot) of the European landmass, with its blend of Orthodox and Muslim culture, as the basis for a new and pure culture” (Prizel, 1998, p. 187).

⁸⁸ Alexander Dugin who is one of the main theorists of the neo-Eurasian movement currently serves as an advisor of Putin in Kremlin which shows his effective role in the construction of state ideology during Putin era.

choice provides a substantial explanation for the advent of church-state relations in post-Soviet Russia. In the rapprochement between church and the state that began in Yeltsin era and consolidated during Putin-Medvedev decade, one can capture many instances of symbolic support presented by the leaders of official religious organizations in response for the state's preferential treatment of their activities. Patriarch Kirill's complimentary remarks for Putin, describing him as "miracle of God" in 2012 shortly after number of yielding real estate rulings favoring the church (Bennetts, 2015) can be a representative example for such instances. Given that the Orthodox Church emerges as one of the most trusted institution in the polls overall Russia (Bacon, 2000; Krindatch, 2004), these symbolic gestures have crucial importance for maintaining the legitimacy of state actors. The consolidation of the relations, which can be captured from the legal regulations and remarks of the officials, has also repercussions on the cooperation agreements between state officials and religious institutions on the realms of education, military and other state institutions⁸⁹ (Fagan, 2003; SOVA 2006).

4.3.1 Chaplaincies in the army

The debates over presence of religious service in the Armed Forces resulted in the drafting of a bill that introduce a system of chaplains in the army in 2006 (SOVA, 2006). The members of the Inter-Religious Council of Russia⁹⁰ (ICR) which is composed of the representatives of the traditional religions while welcoming the

⁸⁹ The earlier roots of cooperation agreements between the Church and the state dates back to Yeltsin decade as in 1996, Ministry of Social Defense and the Church signed agreement for social protection of the citizens and restoration of the moral norms of the social life. (Krymskii, 1996).

⁹⁰ The Inter-Religious Council of Russia (ICR), originally named as *Mezhreligioznyy Sovet Rossii*, was founded on 23 December 1998 at the initiative of representatives of four traditional religions in Russia in which Moscow Patriarch maintains the highest position. The Council serves as a coordinating body between four traditional religions of the country. The representatives manifest their common positions on the critical social issues by publishing statements. For detailed information on the Council, see its official website; <http://interreligious.ru/>

resolution suggested that the adherents of other faith should enjoy equal liberty with Orthodoxy in accessing the religious services. Despite that, ROC maintains the monopoly in the armed services as they are invited to official events, lecturing the servicemen and blessing their equipment. Less often than ROC visits to the army, the Muslim officials make visits to army units in Muslim dominated regions where they give lectures to the servicemen under the cooperation agreements signed between official Muslim organizations and law enforcement authorities (SOVA, 2006). However, the legalization of the presence of chaplains in the Army is fulfilled during Medvedev era in 2009.

The primary role of Orthodox Church in the army manifested itself in ceremonies of blessings by priests to the Russian troops that go to Syria (Tharoor, 2015). Coupled with that, Russian Orthodox Church's supportive remarks on Russian involvement in Syrian war and defining the fight with terrorism in Syria as a "holy war" presents another instance of symbolic support in the military steps taken by the state ("Russian church," 2015). During the war in Syria, Russian state's rhetoric of the need to protect Middle East's Christians to legalize its active policy in the region⁹¹ presents another instance of instrumentalization of religion in foreign policy ambitions.

4.3.2 Debates around religion course in schools

The debates over introduction of a religion course in the schools has been one of the pressing ones in the post-Soviet decade. Despite lack of a legal regulation over teaching of the course, in 2006, teaching of the FOC course expanded

⁹¹ A spokesman of the Patriarchate of Moscow in 2013 also mentioned that "no other country would look after their [Middle East's Christians] interests in the same way Russia would" (Tharoor, 2015).

geographically⁹² and formally thought in some regions as part of mandatory curriculum with no alternative. For instance, in Belgorod Oblast, parents could avoid such classes only by moving to another region (SOVA, 2006). In 2007, in his visit to Belgorod, Putin publicly rejected the mandatory teaching of the Orthodoxy course by referring to the secular nature of the state

"Our Constitution says that the Church is separate from the state. You know how I feel, including towards the Russian Orthodox Church. But if anyone thinks that we should proceed differently, that would require a change to the Constitution. I do not believe that is what we should be doing now" (as quoted in Fagan, 2007a).

The situation in Belgorod region is corrected in 2007 as Oblast Department of Education made the religion course optional and subject to parental consent (SOVA, 2007). In a similar manner, Minister of Education and Science Andrei Fursenko warned against the teaching of the Fundamental of Orthodoxy (FOC) course and instead advocated for a world religions course, yet complained about his lack of power over local educational institutions who choose to introduce FOC as part of their regional curriculum (SOVA, 2006). To prevent the variations in the local levels, the state adopted policy of termination of the regional component of the school curricula in 2007 aftermath of these incidents (SOVA, 2007) which resulted in the slow-down in expansion of FOC courses⁹³. The proponents and opponents of the FOC course presented their arguments through open letters, protests and appeals to various authorities (SOVA, 2008).

⁹²Not all regions focused on teaching of Orthodoxy, rather many of the regions chose the teaching of few traditional religions rather than a sole focus on the Orthodoxy. On the other hand, republics with Muslim majorities offered Islamic courses (SOVA, 2007).

⁹³ According to the findings of the Ministry of Education and Science, the courses related to religious culture is taught in 79 regions, particularly is widespread in the Central and Southern Federal Districts. While courses on Orthodoxy predominate with 70%, courses in the history of religion constitute 30%. On the other hand, courses on Islam taught to 0.2% of students particularly in Chechnia and Ingushetia regions.

In 2009, Medvedev, unlike Putin, took decisive steps around religious instruction in schools and legalization of the concept of “traditional religions”. He announced his support for the teaching of the Fundamentals of Religious Culture and Secular Ethics courses in schools together with the creation of an army and navy chaplains’ institute in the Armed Forces (“Opening remarks,” 2009). In his talk on the introduction of pilot religion courses in July 2009, he made special emphasis to voluntary choices and parental consent stating that

Students and their parents will have to choose the subject of study... it could be the fundamentals of Orthodox culture, the fundamentals of Muslim culture, the fundamentals of Judaism or Buddhism... It may turn out that there are those who want to explore the diversity of Russia's religious life. For such students we could have a general course on the history of our country's traditional major faiths. And all of these questions can be put into one programme so that the same manuals may be used... Those who have no specific religious beliefs, who have not chosen a faith, should have the right to study the secular basis of ethics. In this way we should be able to satisfy all those who have different perceptions of what needs to be taught, something consistent with students' views and of course consistent with their parents'. It is important that for students and their parents the choice of such a programme be absolutely voluntary. Any coercion on this issue is not only illegal but will be absolutely counter-productive (“Opening remarks,” 2009).

Another point that Medvedev mentioned in his talk was the secularity of the teachers:

Secular teachers will be charged with these subjects, but of course in the preparation of teaching and learning aids we need to be guided by several considerations. The main consideration is simple: we must nurture upright, decent, tolerant, honest citizens who are interested in the world and who respect the views and beliefs of their fellow citizens. As a result of this work, as a result of this experiment, it would be possible to extend this system to the entire country, perhaps, for example, from 2012. We'll see how it goes, as they say (“Opening remarks,” 2009).

The emphasis on the “secular” aspect of the religion course is in line with Curanovic’s (2013) mention of “the principle of the secular state” as one of the patterns of the post-Soviet religious model. So, despite the close alliance between the

state and religious institutions, the state representatives are careful to maintain the “secularity” of the state in Russia.

In November 2009, the government approved a plan for pilot courses in the Fundamentals of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics in 2009-2011 and a curriculum is developed with the input of number of academic, educational and religious institutions. Unlike course material used by regional initiatives, the federal scheme mostly approached the religion as part of culture (Fagan, 2012). Neither the supporters nor the opponents are satisfied with the changes. While the opponents collecting signatures appealed to Medvedev to express their concerns over ‘clericalization of general schools’; pro-Church activists were unhappy with the choice for secular ethics in most of the regions rather than the Orthodoxy course⁹⁴ (SOVA, 2009). In 2012, a decision is taken to make pilot courses on the fundamentals of religions and ethics compulsory which resembles the further increase of institutional religious presence in the public domain (SOVA, 2012). Apart from the introduction of religion courses, the presence of religion in the schools increased through the cooperation agreements made between schools and religious organizations in the regional basis⁹⁵. The collaboration between the two is also reflected in Patriarch Kirill’s statements in the meeting with Putin

Four years have passed since the Lord called me to this service. It is just a short time, and yet so many events have taken place in the Church’s life. I particularly note how the dialogue between the state and the Church has developed over this time. This dialogue has helped us to resolve many issues that have a direct bearing on the lives of the people you spoke of just now. This dialogue is not about abstract matters after all, but is about what directly concerns people’s lives: the

⁹⁴ Based on survey of Russian Civil Academy, while 42.1% of students studied Fundamentals of Secular Ethics course, 30.6 % chose the Fundamentals of Orthodox Culture, 20% the Fundamentals of World Religions, 5.2% the Fundamentals of Islamic Culture, 2% the Fundamentals of Buddhist Culture and 0.1% the Fundamentals of Judaic Culture. 78% of the students’ parents had a positive perception of the course whereas only 14% were against it (SOVA, 2010).

⁹⁵ For the details of the collaborations, see SOVA Freedom of Conscience in Russia Reports.

state of their souls and level of their morals. Most important of all is that quality of life cannot be measured in material terms only, but has a spiritual dimension too. I think that the church-state relations in Russia show that the Church can carry out its service in full and support our people in their spiritual life, help them materially too where needed through charity work and through care for young people, people with disabilities, senior citizens, and everyone in need of this kind of help and support I therefore thank you, as President, for the cooperation that we are carrying out with many state institutions (“Meeting with,” 2013).

4.3.3 State patronage of religious institutions

As presented in the previous chapter, the preamble of the 1997 law resembled the advent of religion-state relations in post-Soviet Russia. The ROC, being at the top of hierarchy enjoyed formal and informal privileges in the access to state sources. On the other hand, the adherents of “traditional religions”, Muslims, Buddhist and Jews are granted secondary access to the state sources whereas the followers of “non-traditional religions” are deprived from utilizing state sources and faced additional discriminations in conducting their activities in the public realm. The support is given through government financing of various projects of religious organizations, the restoration of worship buildings used by religious organizations (SOVA, 2006). The state subsidies and support, rather than being based on an established policy, is based on “random and subjective perceptions concerning the relative importance of certain faith groups” (Ibid, 6). While the ROC receives most of the official subsidies, the remaining part of the official subsidies goes the adherents of ICR (that is, “traditional religions”) (Ibid). Apart from financial support, the state provides real estate support⁹⁶ to religious organizations. In this sense a law on transfer of property

⁹⁶ The real estate allocation turns into real estate reallocation in some instances as in the case of seizure of Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church’s (ROAC) property and handing them over to the Moscow Patriarchate in Vladimir oblast in the summer of 2006 (SOVA, 2006).

is introduced for the return of the properties to the religious organizations that is seized during Soviet era. In the processes of transfers, there emerges conflicts especially between the museums and the Orthodox Church which is resolved in favor of the Church in most of the instances⁹⁷.

4.3.4 Struggle with the “non-traditional” sects

The close relations between Russian state and the Orthodox Church; and the state’s introduction of the category of “traditional religion” resulted in the discriminatory attitude of the state and local authorities towards the adherents of “alternative” religious groups. The state’s drawing categories of traditional and non-traditional Islam and perception of the latter spreading through foreign agents, led to the introduction of the set of laws in the legal domain that bring restrictions to the activities of the non-governmental organizations, particularly if they rely on foreign funding. In this vein, the denial for registration, the liquidation of the religious organizations,⁹⁸ the intimidation of religious rituals, impediments in allocation of buildings and places of worship, arbitrary ID checks constitute varieties of the negative policies implemented towards Muslims, Protestants, followers of NRMs etc. Koesel (2014), relying on rational choice theory, explains the restrictions over “alternative” religious groups as a product of the hegemonic religions’ tendency to restrict its competitors in alliance with the state that have security concerns against the foreign groups.

⁹⁷ For instance, the conflict between Ryazan Kremlin Historical and Cultural Museum and the Ryazan Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church over the museum buildings could not be resolved since 2004.

⁹⁸ As an example, court proceeding for liquidation of the Salvation Army in 2006.

The legitimization of the repression of the alternative groups is provided within the content of struggle with extremism as it dominated the post-2000 Russian politics of religion. The usage of anti-extremism, rather than targeting the groups adopting violence, is directed towards other “alternative” Muslim groups operating outside the Muftiate along with non-Orthodox Christian groups and NRMs changing from region to region depending on the arbitrary decisions of the regional authorities. The discriminatory approach towards these groups is legitimized through denotation of these groups as “totalitarian sects”, “destructive cults” etc. As part of struggle against these groups; the officials and members of “traditional religions” co-organized anti-sectarian conferences to discuss the threats posed by “non-traditional” groups to the spiritual security. For instance, in the conference “Totalitarian Sects: the Threat of Religious Extremism”, the discussions revolved around the “dangerous Christian sects” and new age movements (Cherkasova and Alexeeva, 2002). In the concluding declaration a list of destructive sects⁹⁹ is created and teaching of the Orthodoxy and religious culture at schools is proposed as a solution as the introduction of the religion courses was a hotly debated topic at that time and the pro-Church activists were trying to achieve their own agenda utilizing the struggle against sects. This becomes apparent in the speech of a Professor Kuraev who states that:

We came to the conclusion that the best means of resisting any sect is the development of religious culture. All kinds of fanaticism come from lack of culture. First off it is necessary to train children. The subject of religious culture should be in the schools and the level of its teaching should be controlled by both the church and the state. State

⁹⁹ The list consists of nearly 300 groups in which Muslim groups are mentioned in one place as “Radical Islamic organizations and groups; (Muslim brothers; Islamic jihad; etc.)”. The remaining names consisted of Christian sects, new age movements, “astrological and UFO cults, neopagan and nativist cults, witchcraft, wizardry, neoshamanism, Luciferism and satanism” etc. For detailed list, look at “Appendix To Concluding Document Of The International Applied Science Conference ‘Totalitarian Sects: The Threat Of Religious Extremism’”, <http://www2.stetson.edu/~psteeves/relnews/destructivesects.html>

standards for the subject are needed. Mr. Latyshev completely agreed that in relations with sects there must not be any roadblocks. It is simply necessary to create a leading position for traditional confessions in informational activity. The church must be represented in the schools, prisons, army, and hospitals. In this regard I intend to raise at the conference the question the attempts of the Jehovah's Witnesses to win over physicians and nurses as their apostles so that these people will preach to patients the Jehovahists' ideas. The state must expose these plans and warn the medical workers." (Cherkasova and Alexeeva, 2002)

Another strategy to combat the “non-traditional” religious groups was to restrict the activities of non-governmental organizations having ties to the foreign countries and state’s accusation of its members of espionage. In this vein, the 2006 Law on NGOs brought new requirements on NGOs which had constricting effect on the activities of particularly foreign religious organizations (Warhola, 2008). In addition the 2012 law on foreign agents brought new measurements and restrictions on the registration and activities of foreign non-governmental organizations¹⁰⁰ (“Russian Federation,” 2012). At the local level, policy of visa denials¹⁰¹ and deportations of foreign missionaries were common to impede coming of foreign missionaries (Fagan, 2003; SOVA, 2006). In addition to these, legal regulations bringing additional requirements and restrictions for the non-governmental organizations particularly those received foreign funding aimed to impede activities of NRMs and other “non-traditional” religious groups.

The close alliance between the church and the state led to the growing of anticlerical movements in the society which presents itself in the protests of local

¹⁰⁰ The NGOs acting as foreign agents include the NGOs that receive funding and other sources from foreign sources and engage in political activities. The law states the annual financial reports, activities and personnel will be subject to routine control, but also unscheduled inspections. The publications of these NGOs indicate that the material is published by an “NGO acting as a foreign agent”. For detailed information on the law, look at “Law regulating the activities of NGOs acting as foreign agents”, *Official Internet Resources of the President of Russia*. 21 July 2012. Retrieved from <http://en.kremlin.ru/acts/news/16034>

¹⁰¹ Visa denial of Dalai Lama without sufficient reason can be an example to such policy.

residents against the construction of religious buildings and incidents of vandalism towards religious properties and personalities. The anticlericalism on the one hand and the growing power of the church on the other hand revealed itself in the deep division emerging in the Pussy Riot protests¹⁰².

¹⁰² For the detailed discussion on the Pussy Riot case and other instances of anti-clericalism, see: Rachel L. Schroeder & Vyacheslav Karpov (2013) "The Crimes and Punishments of the 'Enemies of the Church' and the Nature of Russia's Desecularising Regime", *Religion, State and Society*, 41:3, 284-311.

CHAPTER 5

STATE POLICY TOWARDS MUSLIMS IN PUTIN’S RUSSIA: LAWS AND DEBATES

While Orthodox Church has acquired a superior position especially with the Putin era, the policy towards Muslims in post-Soviet Russia contains two paradoxical elements putting collaboration and repression together. The hybridity of the state policy also stems from the variety of the Muslims groups operating in the Russian soil. On the one hand, aforementioned among the “traditional religions” of Russia in the preamble of 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience and reinstated by the statements of political leaders as part of the Russia’s historical heritage, Islam enjoyed a state patronage, though a secondary decree in comparison to Orthodoxy. The collaboration between the two particularly manifests itself in the realm of education and foreign policy which will be presented in the following pages. On the other hand, “alternative” Muslim groups, specifically those prefer the Salafi interpretation of the religion, faced several exclusionary and repressive ranging from restrictions over registration, ban on their literature, convictions etc. In its fight against the “alternative”¹⁰³ Muslim groups, the state adopted the anti-extremism discourse as they are considered as a threat to the state and society.

The roots of this dichotomous policy can be traced back to the 1990s. As presented in the second chapter, during early 1990s, there was a growing national and religious consciousness among Muslim dominated parts of Russia. During this time the number of religious groups, publications, institutions increased significantly;

¹⁰³ The connotation of “Wahhabi” used as a catch-all term for all of the undesirable religious communities, regardless of their ideology.

yet there was not any state-driven control mechanism regulating the activities of those groups. The “religious renaissance” coupled with growth of national separatist movements in the Muslim dominated regions resulted in state’s perception of the developments in the region as a threat to its authority, which resulted in its adoption of a multi-faceted policy consisting of cooperation and repression along.

As presented in the overview of policies during Imperial and Soviet period, the policies of conversion and repression has not been successful in the long run; the only successful policy in the long run had been the cooptation of the religious elite in Volga-Ural region during Catherine the Great and the distinction set between official and non-official Islam that enabled successful integration of Tatars into the Russian society. The success of the Catherine’s policy can be traced in the long running presence of her institution of Muftiate which is established in 1788 and persists in the present day under the name of CDUM. The success example of Catherine the Great is also adopted by Stalin aftermath of the Second World War in the establishment of the Muslim Religious Boards which ensured establishment of a Soviet Islam under the administration of obedient and cooperative Muslims (Bennigsen Broxup, 1992).

In the wake of economic and problems of the transitional state, it was rational for the state to adopt a policy that is tried and applied successfully in the previous decades. Hence, relying on historical experience, the state adopted a double policy of cooptation and repression. The double discourse employed by the state aimed to distinguish the acceptable and non-acceptable groups and create a new version of domesticated, tamed Islam based on “traditional”, “patriotic”, “Russian” values. Similar to the official/non-official distinctions employed in the Imperial period, in the new dichotomous categories of “traditional vs. non-traditional”, “good vs. bad”, “real vs. deviant”, “domestic vs. foreign” are introduced in which the

former ones are praised by political authorities for being part of the Russian historical heritage (“Beginning of,” 2007), while the latter ones are condemned for being alien to the Russian tradition and for being brought by foreign enemies.

This double discourse towards Islam is also reflected in the statements of leaders; in this parallel, one can recognize the state’s mission to “save” Russian Muslims from foreign hands and distorted Islamic teachings. Both political leaders (Putin, Medvedev) and representatives of the official religious organizations frequently refer to the “traditional” and “Russian” Islam in contrast to teachings inspired by the Arabic culture. Yet, to what extent their understanding of traditional Russian Islam overlaps with each other remains vague. The differences in the visions of that appears in some of the cases that will be discussed in the following parts. For instance, in a controversy around hijabi girls in the schools, Putin described it as something alien to traditional Russian Islam; yet the religious representatives defended it appealing to same “tradition”. Appeal to “tradition” and “patriotism” seems to be the two major elements both in the legitimization of the state policies towards Muslims and official Muslim organizations’ voicing of their demands. One can easily recognize the compliments and supportive remarks for Putin and the Russian political authorities in speeches of the official Muslim representatives in return for state patronage granted to them in achieving their agendas. For instance, before 2007 elections, Putin, in the meeting with leaders of Muslim organizations, after mentioning the state funds for Muslim educational institutions and Hajj, mentioned his expectations for Russian Muslims’ exercising of their voting rights. In response to that call, Gaynutdin stated that

Dear President, I would like to say that, yes, just like all Russians, we are preparing for the elections to the State Duma. And Russian Muslims have always been patriots: they have always been politically

active and participated in elections. We can assure you that our imams and our spiritual leaders on location call on our Muslims to participate actively in the elections and to perform their civic duty. I am sure that Russian Muslims will participate actively ("Beginning of," 2007).

Overall, it can be stated that the close relationship between Muslim authorities and Putin very much resembles that of between Orthodox Church and political powers; yet in a secondary degree. This chapter will cover the discourses and policies revolved around Russian Muslims in the Putin decade. Appealing to the government documents and press material, it will explore the instances of cooperation and controversies emerging between state officials, official Muslim institutions and the society and present the specific features of state's managing of Islam in Russia.

Indeed, the post-Soviet Russian policy towards Muslims is not something specific to the Russian state. Turner (2011) suggests that many of the states including liberal and autocratic ones in the recent decade entered into managing of religion in multiple forms to ensure their security and sovereignty over the population¹⁰⁴. However, the strategies of management varies depending on the general political patterns in the country as well as on the historical experience of the each country in the religion politics. In this sense, it can be stated that, Russian state's Muslim policy, though containing parallels with other countries' measures, is a primary product of the specific patterns of the broader politics of Putin era. It also reflects the features of religion-state relations in Russia along with containing the historical legacy derived from Imperial and Soviet decades.

¹⁰⁴ Turner (2011) gives examples of managing Islam in authoritarian countries such as China, Singapore in parallel to Russia. The integration policies of the Russian state towards Muslims is also compared to the Britain and France (Braginskaia, 2010).

A general overview of the statements of the political leaders and representatives of official Muslim organizations during Putin-Medvedev era will lead one to the fact that while extremism, Wahhabism and foreign-based religious groups are constantly negated and presented as the major problems of the post-Soviet Muslim society; traditionalism, patriotism and Russianness are mentioned among the essential features of the Russian Islam. In all of the policies adopted in this decade, one can see the traces of this double discourse.

5.1 Anti-extremism discourse

While the discussions around extremism in 1990s mainly revolved around the activities of radical nationalist groups and the anti-extremist measures are mostly associated with anti-fascism; the focus began to shift towards “religious extremism” in late 1990s by concerns over NRMs which were regarded as “totalitarian sects” (Verkhovsky, 2010). The “Islamic” element in the religious extremism came into the picture only with the increased presence of Salafi tendencies among Russian Muslims (“Wahhabi activity,” 2001; “Kabardino-Balkaria,” 2001) in late 1990s and with number of attacks undertaken by radical groups during Second Chechen War (Verkhovsky, 2010). Yet, it began to be considered as a top threat aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, in parallel to the international framework¹⁰⁵.

In this period, Russia’s war in Chechnya had critical effect in Russia’s policy of combatting extremism and its treatment of its Muslim population.¹⁰⁶ For Putin, the

¹⁰⁵ Verkhovsky (2010) states that “this is a typical situation in Russian society, when changes of public attitudes in the West legitimize and even trigger changes of public attitudes in Russia” (p.30).

¹⁰⁶ The start of the Second Chechen War had resulted in state’s negative policy towards all Muslims, especially those in the Southern regions as they began to face more hardship in registration of new religious communities and more check-ups and interrogations in the mosques (Fagan, 2004).

threat of terrorism and extremism was an internal threat rather than being an external one, hence his approach towards the problem differed from the United States (Hill 2002). While the latter led military campaigns to armed groups in fighting extremism, the former gave precedence to the prevention of “radicalization of Russia’s Muslim communities by foreign influences” (Hill, 2002, p. 35). To pursue this aim, Russia focused on “providing financial, material and political support to traditional Muslim groups and marginalizing and forcing out foreign groups” (Hill, 2002, p. 35). So, although seeming to be contradictory at first glance, Russia’s policies towards Muslims in Putin period is consistent in its alliance with traditional groups both in realm of education and foreign policy and its marginalization of the “non-traditional” ones through the discourse of extremism.

The approach of the state described above also had reflections in the legal domain. As presented in the previous chapters, the first signal to that was the adoption of 1997 Law on Religion. In the later years, as a product of discussions of various proposal and bills, to combat extremism, Putin introduced a bill about struggle with extremism to the State Duma at April- May 2002 (“Putin vnes,” 2002) and the law on extremism is ratified¹⁰⁷ in July 2002¹⁰⁸ (Krasnov, 2002) and in harmony with the law, Russian state outlawed Wahhabism in 2003, declared the various other political Islamist groups such as Hizbut Tahrir¹⁰⁹, Muslim Brotherhood, Jamaat-i Tabligh and later to the Nurcular movement as terrorist

¹⁰⁷ The law proposes that, if the government denotes an activity “extremist”, it first warns the group and the group has to cease its activity. Otherwise, it would face penalties such as fine, imprisonment or total liquidation of the group (“Russian Federation,” 2012).

¹⁰⁸ The original name of the law is “On Combating Extremist Activity”. The law is opposed by the deputies of the State Duma with a claim that the law secretly intends to purge political opposition, not extremism. Despite opposition, “the law was adopted by the дума on 27 June 2002 and approved by the Federation Council on 10 July” (Krasnov, 2002).

¹⁰⁹ The trials against adherents of Hizbut Tahrir (Party of Liberation) began in 2002 not only in Russia but also in neighbouring Central Asian countries (“Tajikistan,” 2001).

crossing out the line between the extremism and terrorism. In a way, through the counter-extremism law, Russian state began its fight with all forms of political Islamist groups and began to suppress the activities of minority religious groups even though they expressly reject the violence. This involved the religious-political organization of Hizb-ut Tahrir which aimed to establish caliphate through non-violent means and also Nurcular, the adherents of the Turkish theologian Said Nursi (SOVA, 2006; 2008). “Of particular concern is the apparent tendency to involve the government with its anti-extremist policies in essentially theological disputes within Islam” (SOVA, 2008, p. 5). In the later years, the extremism law is used for the allegations of blasphemy to some of the art groups and for the repression of social and political activists.

So in a way, extremism laws, rather than targeting political-religious groups that adapt violence, is used “as a pretext to suppress human rights- in particular to limit the freedom of conscience” (SOVA, 2008, p. 1). As the law defines “extremism” vaguely and broadly, the officials frequently misuse the allegations of extremism in an arbitrary way and the courts take decisions solely based on “expert” testimony, the human rights organizations and the international groups expressed their concerns over the implementation of the law (Sova, 2012; Venice Commission, 2012).

The broad and arbitrary usage was not restricted to the term “extremism”, rather the state officials and the mass media, in a similar manner, used the term Wahhabism as a catch-all discourse for all of the unwelcomed Islamic groups, regardless of their theological stances (Knysh, 2004). In some cases, the definition of extremism or Wahhabism expanded in such a way that there have been accusations

of extremism for “praying regularly”¹¹⁰ or “having hijab” etc. The government officials justified the restrictions to the freedom of conscience such as hijab ban on the schools on the grounds of combatting extremism which enabled for religious censorship and suppression of unpopular and minority groups¹¹¹ (“Russian Federation,” 2012). State’s justification of its persecution in the name of fighting extremism is not specific to Russia, as Khalid (2007) represents, the same phenomenon can be found in other Central Asian countries.

Another ground of state struggle with extremism emerges through restrictions over publications as become apparent in the introduction of the federal list of extremist materials in 2007. While in the 1990s the control mechanism for the religious publications was lacking, the CDUM created a special commission¹¹² for control over “wahhabi” publications (“Glavnyye musul'mane,” 2002). At the early years, the control mechanism over Islamic publications was at the hand of official religious organization; later, the state itself dealt with the issue and in 2007, published a federal list of banned extremist materials¹¹³. In this way, the state take the law of control over publications in its own hands and systematized the process of control over religious publications. Published by Ministry of Justice, the list has been

¹¹⁰ SOVA Center’s 2006 Freedom of Conscience Report indicated an instance in which “local police in Kabardino-Balkaria, started compiling a list of: Wahhabis; simply by going to local educational institutions and noting the names of those students who prayed regularly.” (Verkhovsky and Sibireva, 2007, p. 15).

¹¹¹ Forum 18 Religious Freedom Survey (Fagan 2005) presents that, with the introduction of the extremism law, FSB security service officials not only violated religious freedom of suspected Muslim extremists, but also constant FSB control and restrictions over Pentecostals, Baptists, Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and Old Believers increased significantly.

¹¹² The aim of commission is portrayed as “preventing the ideas of extremism, Wahhabism and calls for violence and incitement of the interreligious hostility to enter into Islamic literatures”. The list prepared by commission included 100 publications from 20 authors 5 of which were Russians (“Glavnyye musul'mane,” 2002).

¹¹³ The list not only includes Islamic books, but also materials of Christian sects and new age religions etc. Among the banned Islamic publications, the list includes books of Said Nursi and Osman Nuri Topbas from Turkey. Last decision being at 30.03.2017, the list contains 4074 materials. For detailed list look at, <http://minjust.ru/ru/extremist-materials>

updated based on court decisions and have contained more than three thousand materials currently.¹¹⁴ The ban on extremist literature usually appeared on the press through news on confiscation of certain religious publications or fines imposed to the holders of those materials. The materials that were deemed as extremist were either belonged to the Islamic community or alternative Christian communities such as Jehova's Witnesses or Baptists.

Yet, the decisions attained wider media coverage when, in 2011, prosecutor of Orenburg district declared "collections of hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad, classics of Tatar theology, and works of the leaders of Russia's Muslims" to be extremist and the responses coming to that decisions by Muslim community ("Prosecutor bans," 2011). Aftermath of the reactions and discussions appearing in the press for inclusion of writings and translations of major religious texts of Quran and Bible among "extremist" literature by a regional court (Kalder, 2013), a new legislation preventing the allegation of the sacred texts of extremism is introduced ("Amendments," 2015).

In the struggle against extremism and against foreign influences, the main collaborators of the state were the "traditional religions" whose representatives constitute the members of ICR. In this sense, the anti-Wahhabite, anti-extremist rhetoric of the state and mass media is vigorously adopted also by the representatives of CDUM (Knysh, 2004). This also had repercussions in the joint conferences (Batuev, 2001)¹¹⁵ organized by the political officials along with representatives of official religious organizations around the roots and solutions to the problem of

¹¹⁴ The list currently contains 3451 materials, last decision taken in 25.02.2016. For detailed list, look at: <http://minjust.ru/ru/extremist-materials>

¹¹⁵ In the previous chapter, in the section on the discussions around struggle with non-traditional sects, other examples of such joint conferences are given.

extremism and “totalitarian sects” in Russia. For instance, in the international conference “Islamic threat or threat to Islam?”, Mufti Talgat Tadzhuiddin stated that these heretical organizations ¹¹⁶ violate the Islamic norms itself and claimed that “today it is not Islam that threatens the world community, but on the contrary, Islam is under threat” (Batuev, 2001). Similar statements favoring the ban on Wahhabism may be found in the statements of other official religious leaders.¹¹⁷

The crucial role of cooperation between the two in the fight against radical tendencies is emphasized almost in all of the events gathering political and religious representatives together. For instance, Putin, in his speech at the 225th anniversary of CDUM, stated that “the Muslim communities’ and Muslim religious leaders’ work has great importance. It is our task to educate young people in a spirit of mutual respect based on feelings of being fellow citizens, patriotism and a shared national identity.” (“Speech at,” 2013). In another speech, he acknowledged the efforts of official Muftiate in fight of the radical tendencies

I note the big role that Muslims and above all their spiritual leaders playing strengthening interethnic and interfaith harmony. Their rejection and condemnation of all forms of fundamentalism and radicalism have made a major contribution to the fight against nationalism and religious extremism. Work in this area is all the more important today, when we see attempts to cynically exploit religious feelings for political aims. We see what is happening in the Middle East (this has been mentioned here today too), where terrorists from the so-called Islamic State are compromising a great world religion, compromising Islam, sowing hatred, killing people, including clergy, and barbarically destroying monuments of world culture. Their ideology is built on lies and blatant distortions of Islam. They are trying to recruit followers here in Russia too. Russia’s Muslim leaders are bravely and fearlessly using their own influence to resist this extremist propaganda. I want to express my tremendous respect for these people who carry out their work heroically and have suffered

¹¹⁶ He clarifies the heretical organizations in his speech through examples of Wahhabis, Basaevites, Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-i Tabligh.

¹¹⁷ For example, last year, Mufti of Chechnia declared the necessity for legal ban over Wahhabism throughout Russia (“Muftiy Chechni,” 2016).

losses. I have no doubt that they will continue to educate the faithful in the spirit of humanism, compassion and justice (“Moscow’s Cathedral,” 2015).

Though dismissing Wahhabism as being “foreign” and contrary to the “traditional” Islam of Russia’s Muslim community, some other Muslim religious representatives of Russia disapproved state’s ban of Wahhabi Islam due to vagueness of the term and its possible impact on purge of “all ‘suspicious’ Islamist groups, Wahhabi or not” (Knysh, 2004 , p. 20). In a similar vein, as opposed to state officials’ and media’s widespread usage of Wahhabism equal to terrorism/extremism, Putin, in a press conference declared that “Wahhabism in itself does not carry any threat, but the distortion of the norms of Islam, the perversion of Wahhabism, they, of course, cannot be interpreted in any other way than appeals to terrorism. I repeat, perversions” (“Prezident Rossii,” 2006).

In another press conference, Putin, mentioning the need to distance the usage of Islam and terror together, declared he would not prefer to use "Islam" next to "terror" (“Islam should,” 2016). In 2013 meeting with Muslim religious leaders, aftermath of the suicide bombing in the city of Volgograd¹¹⁸, Putin blamed foreign political forces for using radical currents of Islam to weaken the Russian state and “create conflicts on Russian soil that can be managed from abroad” (Anishchuk, 2013). Against the attempts of foreign foes, he urged official Muslim institutions to help integration of Muslim immigrants to Russian life and to diminish the possibilities of such violence (Anishchuk, 2013).

¹¹⁸ The suicide attack happened at 21 October 2013, killing 7 civilians. The day after the attack, Putin attended the celebratory event marking the 225th anniversary of the founding of the Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims in Russia.

5.2 Anti-foreign discourse and patronage of education

The isolation of Russian Muslims from the effect of foreign groups and the establishment of a pure “Russian Islam” has been constantly emphasized both by the state officials and official religious officials since the foreign organizations are regarded as the main root of the extremism problem. Another reason for this emphasis stemmed from the influx of foreign religious groups to the country after the dissolution of the Soviet regime which created anxiety both among Orthodox Church and nationalist political leaders and led to the discussions over “spiritual security” in the political sphere. In January 2000, when Putin make explicit his National Security Concept, one recognizes his remarks on negative impacts of foreign missionary groups and the danger¹¹⁹ they impose to the overall security of the country. Hence, the state’s strong emphasis on the preserving of “traditional Russian Islam” in the post-Soviet decade can be interpreted as part of this concern. Both the restrictions set on foreign religious groups and the attempts to create state-controlled religious educational institutions presents the state’s paternalistic attitude towards its citizens that aim to guide and protect them from the outside dangers in parallel to Fox’s (2008) analysis of the state policy in the post-Soviet region.

Specifically, the state’s perception of the danger of the foreign groups is resulted in state’s taking of measures in fighting extremism in the realm of religious education. As a result, the official Muslim institutions enjoyed significant state patronage for the establishment of religious educational institutions in the Russian soil. The anti-foreign discourse is also reflected in the legal scheme in the state’s

¹¹⁹ Although going through number of wars in Chechnya and Abkhazia, it has been claimed that dominant discourse of danger revolved around non-military grounds in post-Soviet Russia (Musayev 2010). Societal and political security concerns overrun the military ones and preserving ethnic, cultural and religious characteristics of the society has become among the main concern of Russian politicians

introduction of new laws restricting the activities of foreign-funded institutions and bringing extra reporting measure to them through 2006, 2012 and 2015 NGO and “foreign agent” laws.

The education’s critical impact on the formation of the ideology of the youth led the state to take the primary measures to combat the effects of International Islamic movements and foreign tendencies in the realm of education. In this parallel, the state set restrictions for higher Islamic education of Russian Muslim students abroad¹²⁰, it has been considered as one of the roots of extremism problem. The restrictions over sending students abroad is also backed by the representatives of the official religious institutions. For instance, in the interview in newspaper *Izvestiia*, the supreme Mufti Talgat Tadzhuiddin, in response to question regarding young Muslims exposure to extremism propaganda in studying abroad, stated that he would support the proposition on concluding bilateral agreements with Arab countries over the issuance of student visas only on the proposal of the Russian muftiats (Klin, 2006). While setting limitations for religious study abroad, the state promoted religious education within Russia and took supportive measures for flourishing of state-controlled religious educational institutions as part of its policy of bolstering “traditional” (Farizova, 2009).

The state support for religious higher education in the country constitutes another point of collaboration between the state and the official religious organizations which can be captured in the statements of the both sides as well as in the measures that have been taken in the legal and political spheres. As presented in the third chapter, the closure of religious educational institutions during Soviet era

¹²⁰ For instance, in southern Karachai-Cherkessia, Muslim representatives state that there are “restrictions on sending students abroad for religious education, receiving foreign funding for mosque construction and registering new communities” (Fagan, 2005).

resulted in the presence of only two *madrasas* in Uzbekistan for taking the religious education during the Soviet decade¹²¹ which resulted in the Russian Muslims' pursuance of higher Islamic education in other Muslim countries. Though the number of *madrasas* increased in the 1990s, the lack of qualified teachers and organized curriculum prevented the flourishing of a high quality education in Russia and led to the sustaining of the system of getting Islamic education in foreign Muslim countries even in the post-Soviet era. In the wake of increased institutional presence of Islam with the increased number of mosques, the shortage of preachers and religious cadres became a more pressing issue for the Muslim community.

Given the official religious representatives' interest in assuring the state patronage in constructing the religious infrastructure and the state's objective in minimization of the cost of governance by overcoming the perceived threat foreign groups and extremism, the cooperation between the two in the realm of higher Islamic education has been inevitable. The collaboration would contribute both to the establishment of a religious cadre which would be to the interest of the former and prevent the radicalization of the Muslim youth which was a concern for the both sides. The words of a government representative, in an official visit to Russian Islamic University in Kazan, reveals the primary concern over of the state's fighting of extremism on the cooperation between the two: "We have broad enough potential to counter threats and challenges of extremism within religious and national grounds" (Volkov and Nikolayev, 2002).

¹²¹ Russian Supreme Mufti Talgat Tadzhuddin states that while all of the educational facilities are closed at the early periods of Soviet era in Russia, the first religious educational institution in the Russian soil is established in 1989, during perestroika, which named as Russian Islamic University of Ufa. In 2006, the institutions had 600 students, while during USSR, the only higher education madrasa in Buhara had 50 students from overall Soviet (Klin, 2006).

The solution to the overcoming the radicalism threat was seen in return to the authentic Russian Islam and diminishing the effects of Arab culture. As an output of the cooperation between the two, the Kremlin announced its allocation of a “fund to support Islamic culture, science and education”¹²² in the end of 2006. The intended results of this funding is expressed by Gaynutdin in the meeting with Putin in the following way:

Thanks to this support, today our Muslim organisations and our Islamic schools are actually beginning to feel the tangible results of this support. And this will certainly help us train members of the clergy and help instill feelings of patriotism in them. It can also help the process of educating worthy members of the Islamic clergy in the Motherland, who can then resist the spread of alien ideologies and fight against extremism and radicalism (“Beginning of,” 2007).

In 2007, the state allocated fund for teaching of Islamic culture, supported the accreditation of Russian Islamic Universities that operate in cooperation with CDUM and the government declared a plan for preparation of specialists in Islamic culture and history between 2007 and 2010 aiming to develop loyal specialists of Islamic culture for working in Muslim religious educational institutions. In this period, the Russian Council of Muftis created a council on Islamic higher education and aimed to standardize it by establishing a concrete curriculum in all Islamic educational institutions for accreditation of the programs to the state standards. The state funding of the education is went in an increasing trend during Medvedev era as he doubled the funding for Islamic education from 400 to 800 million rubles (Verkhovsky, 2010). The state’s financial sponsorship enabled the onset of new projects of educational institutions such as Bolgar Islamic Academy aiming to raise specialist in traditional Islam within Russia (“Muftiy RF,” 2017).

¹²² For more information on the fund, see its official website; <http://islamfund.ru/index.php>

In addition to these measures, the state try to follow and control the state of extremism among youth consistently, in this vein, last year, it has been announced a project of surveys that will be conducted in high educational institutions for control of youth extremism (Gornostayeva, 2016). In the speeches of political leaders, the emphasis in preserving the spiritual, cultural and moral values inherent to Russian traditional Islam and resolving the current problems through active management of the youth education has been a common theme:

It is important to educate Muslim youth in traditional Islamic values and prevent attempts to impose on us world outlooks that are alien to us and have nothing to do with genuine Islam. Let me say that the authorities will continue to assist in reviving Russia's system of Islamic theological schools and religious education. As you know, I supported the Tatarstan authorities and the principal Muslim spiritual bodies on the issue of establishing the Bulgar Islamic Academy, thus reviving this ancient Russian Muslim centre of religion and learning. ("Moscow's Cathedral," 2015)

In fact, controlling religious education is not a policy specific to Russia as Fox (2015) states in 2001, earlier than in Russia, "the government of Yemen began a process in which it took control of all Islamic education in the country to eradicate teachings encouraging religious extremism and sectarianism. In 2003, it started dismissing religious figures who preached against the regime" (p.1).

5.3 Impediments in local level: Problems in mosque construction

Although, enjoying state patronage in certain realms, Muslim community, along with other religious organizations¹²³, the relations in the regional level were fluctuating changing depending on the arbitrary decisions of bureaucrats and FSB officials. In response for requests of regional muftiates for the construction of religious facilities,

¹²³ Along with Muslims, Protestants and new religious movements face such restrictions more often.

refusals for land allocation¹²⁴, withdrawal of the permission for construction that had been granted previously, demolition decisions for the semi-constructed mosques without sufficient justification and other foot-dragging measures¹²⁵ has been the problems frequently faced by the Muslim representatives in several regions.¹²⁶ Yet, the problem with local officials is not limited to the Muslims, rather, as presented in the previous chapter, the local officials implemented similar discriminatory measures for the adherents of other beliefs (Fagan, 2007b).¹²⁷ These measures happened in contrast to welcoming remarks of political leaders in the federal level as Putin, in the state-sponsored opening ceremony of the Moscow Cathedral mosque, stated that

Of course, we must continue expanding the network of Muslim cultural and educational centres. Their aim is to bring Muslims together, impart to them the spiritual, cultural and moral code inherent to traditional Islam in Russia, help to resolve common problems, and take part in youth education.” (“Moscow’s Cathedral,” 2015)

While mostly stemming from arbitrary inhibitions of local governors, the societal reactions also play part in the impediments that Muslims face in the local level as the negative perceptions towards Muslims are emerged as a result of both ethnic xenophobia and Islamophobia that become prevalent aftermath of the Second Chechen War. After the Second Chechen War, not only Chechens but all minorities in Russia began to be considered as a potential danger and labelling of them as

¹²⁴ In some instances, the refusal of the building of mosques comes with an argument that Islam is not a traditional religion for that part of Russia (Varzanova, 1996a). In other instances, bureaucratic reasons or local residents’ opposition are presented as justification to the rejections.

¹²⁵ Though, the bureaucratic measures prevent the construction decisions, through the long years, in some cases, the courts’ decisions favorable to the Muslim community or the transfer of the problem to the federal level may lead to resolution of the conflicts in favor of the Muslims community. For instance, the long running conflict over the construction permit of a mosque in Kostroma is resolved in favor to Muslims community and the mosque is opened with participation of delegates from Turkey and Indonesia (Skudayeva, 2017).

¹²⁶ For the detailed information on the issue, see section on “Problems Relating on the Places of Worship” in SOVA Center’s reports on “Problems Relating to Freedom of Conscience in Russia”, 2006-2016.

¹²⁷ Fagan (2005) lists “Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, Hare Krishna devotees, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Molokans and the Russian Orthodox Church” (p. 1).

terrorists began. As the Russian-wide poll¹²⁸ presents that, 43% of the population perceive non-Russian (inorodtsy) minorities in Russia threatening Russia's security (Dunlop, 2000). Another poll presents that 80% of Russian young respondents consider Islam as a bad thing (Dunlop, 2000). In a poll conducted between 1993-6 in Moscow, there were only 5.3% who had negative attitude towards Islam and Muslims (Varzanova, 1996b)¹²⁹. The statistics present how political developments and the rhetoric adopted in mass media in Russia affected the image of Muslims among the society. Stigmatization of the Chechen community and hijabi girls have become prevalent among the Russian society.

5.4 Clothing as a domain of struggle

Issue of clothing has been one of the central themes in state's control of religions. While the struggle mostly centers on clothing of woman, there occurs rare instances that the control mechanisms affect man either.¹³⁰ In post-Soviet Russia, the issue of clothing became a space of struggle and acquired public attention when number of women appealed to court in 2002 because of the prohibition of head scarves in passports (Kondreva, 2002). The resulting Supreme Court decision favored women and permitted passport photographs with head covering for Muslim women in line with constitutional guarantees of freedom of religion ("Russian Muslim," 2003). Yet, the ministry sent a judicial complaint to the court stating that the decision challenges the instructions of the ministry in May 2003 ("Russian MVD," 2003). Then, in May

¹²⁸ The poll is conducted by the Russian Center for Public Opinion and Market Research (VCIOM)

¹²⁹ The poll is conducted by the Center for Sociological Research of Lomonosov Moscow State University.

¹³⁰ The regulations and ban on dress code centers on the issue of headcovering, yet, it sometimes affects men as in the restriction to men's beards to "prevent radicalization" in Tajikistan ("Tajikistan shaves," 2016).

2003 Interior Minister of Russia Boris Gryzlov held a meeting with top officials on the issue and in June 2003, he signed an order permitting Muslim women to use photographs with their veils in the passports (“Russia allows,” 2003). Gryzlov stated “Russia's further development as a multi-faith country, and the construction of a state based on the rule of law and a civil society require human rights to be fully observed, in this case freedom of religious beliefs” (“Russia allows,” 2003).

Then, the issue reacquired public visibility after ten years subsequent to the headscarf ban in a village school in the Stavropol region and consequent court struggles of several Muslims from 2012 to 2015 for permission to headscarf in educational institutions and ban’s expansion to the federal level. When parents of several Muslims began to complain about restrictions their children face with hijab in a school of Stavropol and the territorial Muftiate reported those complaints, the issue began to be publicly discussed (“V stavropol'skom,” 2012; Savel'yeva, 2012a). Russian Minister of Education Dmitry Livanov suggested that “schoolgirls' wearing hijabs in Stavropol territory does not violate either the rules of that educational institution or generally accepted standards” (“Putin o,” 2012).

Subsequently, the issue began to be discussed at the state level. In October 18, 2012, in response to question on the issue, Putin expressed his views in a meeting with Popular Front (“Meeting with,” 2012). After stating that “people’s religious convictions” must be treated with great respect, he emphasized that Russia is a “secular state” and have to act upon it. He suggested to look at examples of European countries in resolving the issue, yet taking measures “in an acceptable fashion, one that does not offend anyone and in dialogue with representatives of various faiths” (“Meeting with,” 2012). In the speech, he expressed his favor for the practice of

obligatory uniform in schools and suggested the introduction of it (“Meeting with,” 2012).

Aftermath of the Putin’s remarks, Stavropol governor ordered “a territorial rule that would regulate the required clothing of pupils” (Levshakova, 2012; “V stavropol'skom,” 2012). Then, in November 2012, Ministry of Education of the Stavropol region announced that there will be introduced a uniform in the territory schools starting from December 20 (“V stavropol'skom,” 2012; “Minobr,” 2012; Savel'yeva, 2012b) while stating that the reason for introduction of the uniform is sustaining equality of students (“Shkol'naya,” 2012). The decree on school dress code introduced ban for religious clothing along with ban on clothes with symbols and paraphernalia.¹³¹ The deputy of Stavropol, who asked Putin about issue in a meeting in October 18, expressed her opinions in following way:

I still believe that the point here will be set when we finally understand everything, regardless of faith, from religion, that the school is a place where we come for knowledge. This is not the place we come to show our religiosity (Savel'yeva, 2012d).

When the ban is introduced in territory of Stavropol, Minister of Education in the Stavropol region, Irina Kuvaldina met with representatives of regional Muftiate and stated that students have to conform to the rules or they may look for “alternative” forms of education (Savel'yeva, 2012c; “Stavropol,” 2013)¹³². On the other hand, representatives of the Muftiate stated that the conflict will be resolved in

¹³¹ The order of the government of Stavropol territory of 31 October 2012 "On approval of basic requirements in school clothes and appearance of pupils". The order states that “clothing must be of classical style: for girls, without low waist, without cleavage and exposed navels. Schoolgirls are not forbidden to wear pants of classical style and they are permitted to wear jumpers, sweaters, and pullovers during the cold part of the year. Use of large accessories, body piercing and other elements characteristic of informal youth fads are strictly regulated. The regulation also introduces a direct ban on the use of religious clothing, symbols, and paraphernalia” (“Sud na,” 2013; Savel'yeva, 2012c)

¹³² She also stated that ban on headscarves is also motivated by the fact that it has negative impacts for students’ health since it adversely affects brain blood vessels and visual ability of students (Savel'yeva, 2012c). She, then resigned in 7th February (Savel'yeva, 2013).

the court and expressed their unwillingness to enter into conflict with authorities with following remarks

We do not want to enter into an open conflict with authorities, yet we also want to help Muslims. For us, the state authorities are doing so much, so we will think about how to get out of the situation, and find solution for this situation (Savel'yeva, 2012c).

When asked about regulation introduced in Stavropol in a large press conference in Moscow, Putin claimed that hijab is not part of traditional Islamic Russian culture

In our culture—and when I say "our" I have in mind our traditional Islam—there are no hijabs at all, ...in the Islamic world itself, state authorities say that this is not necessary to do. So will we in our country introduce traditions alien to us? Why?¹³³

Complaining about the regulation, Muslims in the territory appealed to court with the demand of withdrawal of the regulation claiming that it is violating religious freedom and right for education (Savel'yeva, 2012c). Their request was based on the previous Supreme Court decision in 15 May 2003 on a dispute of some believers with the Ministry of Internal Affairs about passport photos favoring the applicants. Yet, their case is declined by the territorial court.¹³⁴ Afterwards, they went to the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation. The court decision was in favor of the decree; hence “the appeal of a number of citizens to declare this act illegal and

¹³³ At the same conference, he also referred to the speech he participated in a session of the Islamic Conference Organization mentioning Russia's observer status in the organization. Trying to legitimize the ban based on words of a Muslim leader regarding girls' education, Putin stated that: “One of the recognized authorities on Islam stated in his public speech: what are we doing? We are prohibiting our girls and women to be educated, we are dressing them in burqa, and we ourselves are creating conditions to delay our development; this is a mistake (“Putin o,” 2012).

¹³⁴ The court stated that “the lawsuit, acting on behalf of a number of citizens, does not conform to a number of established rules. The declaration filed by M. Musaev was not accompanied by a copy of the contested regulatory legal act, or a document confirming payment of the state fee, and it is not indicated how the given order was published or made public in mass media” (“Stavropol court,” 2013a).

invalid was dismissed” (“Stavropol court, 2013b; “High court,” 2013). While attorney of the applicants declared the decision to be politically charged and to be derogatory to the religious rights; the representative of the Stavropol Governor expressed their satisfaction for the court decision. The court stated that the decree is in harmony with the secular nature of the law on education (“High court,” 2013).

Then, the debate over headscarves been transferred to the federal level¹³⁵. In April 2013, when Putin is asked about wearing hijab in school, this time he answered more harshly stating that:

There is nothing good in it. Of course there are distinctive features of ethnic republics, but what you were talking about is not an ethnic distinctive; it is a manifestation of a well-known attitude toward religion... In our country there never has been such a tradition in the Muslim regions... (According to V. Putin, in some Muslim states wearing hijabs is prohibited by law) I think that in our country one could and one should go the way of a return to school uniforms. Such work is already underway, and I suspect that it will not be forgotten or abandoned but will be actively implemented in the regions (“Putin: Nothing,” 2013).

After few months from that speech, the ban spread to the federal level with the legislation of new law on education in September 1, 2013; which introduces requirements for school uniforms including ban on religious clothing in schools (“School Uniforms,” 2013). In response to ban, the Supreme Mufti, Head of CDUM Talgat Tadzheddin, in line with state discourse, reflected that:

Muslim girls are not obliged to cover their heads, while Muslim women are just required to observe the proprieties and to cover their bodies only... Allah does not look at faces or clothes, he looks at deeds and hearts (“Russia’s Supreme,” 2015).

¹³⁵ Before transfer into federal level, another instance when hijab problem occurred in the media was with expulsion of a woman from Krasnoyarsk State Medical University for having headcover and a conflict in Tatarstan over headscarf of Tatar teacher and students in a government school.

The statements of Tadzhuddin, however, remained marginal in comparison to open criticism of the representatives of the other religious institutions. When Russia's Supreme Court confirmed ban on hijab in schools of Mordovia in February 2015 ("Supreme Court," 2015), top Russian Mufti Ravil Gaynutdin criticized court's decision of hijab ban and sent letter to Putin demanding the lift of hijab ban in schools

This is not a sign of any confession and not a "challenge to society." The same traditions for ages adhered to all the "children of Abraham": Jews, Christians, Muslims of all directions. And more broadly - all the peoples of Russia with their traditional cultures ... Moreover, in our country for many years officially allowed photographing on a passport in a scarf ("No threat," 2015; Lipich 2015).

In a similar manner, Mufti of Chechnya defined the ban as infringement of human rights ("Muftiy Chechni," 2017). Parliament of Chechnya, in contrast to Supreme Court resolution on the federal ban on hijab, take a decision permitting use of hijab in schools.¹³⁶ Ramzan Kadyrov, who is a pro-Kremlin appointed president of Chechnya, though being fully subservient to the central authority, ratified the decision taken by the Chechen parliament ("Kadyrov," 2015). When asked about decision taken in the parliament, the press-secretary of Kremlin responded that the Kremlin does not have a unified position on the issue of wearing hijabs in Russian schools and pointed to the necessity to solve the issue either at the federal level or at the regional level ("V Kremle," 2017). In his statement, he also mentioned secularity of the Russian state: "Of course, Russia is a multinational, multi-confessional country, and the president has repeatedly said that Russia's strength is in our multi-

¹³⁶ Though the law does not contain any mention of hijabs or other specific clothing of Muslims, Christians or Jews; it states that the requirements for schoolchildren's clothing must guarantee the constitutional rights of the students and respect people's tradition and religion if this does not contradict federal legislation ("Parlament Chechni," 2017).

confessional and multi-ethnicity, but at the same time, Russia is a secular state, it is fixed in our Constitution” (“V Kreml,” 2017).

Given the discussions regarding Muslim head covering in the media, a famous poll center of Russia, Levada Center, conducted an opinion poll in June 2015 to capture how Russian society perceive the headscarf ban. The poll reached that hijab ban is considered favorably by the Russian society given that 74% of Russian society disconfirm hijab in schools (“Three-quarters,” 2015) which is in line with the negative views on Muslims in the society that can be seen in the results of the other polls presented in the previous section.

The struggle over clothing and appearance also constitutes a major element in state’s relations with Muslims in post-Soviet Central Asian countries. Yet, the measures taken to prevent “radicalization” and restrict “foreign influences” seems to be more extreme in comparison to Russia. For instance, in Tajikistan, it has been reported that police has shaved approximately 13000 men’s beards and ‘convinced’ more than 1700 Muslim women to remove their head coverings in its fight against ‘radicalism’ (“Tajikistan,” 2016). In a similar manner, China set ban on “abnormal” beards and veils to curb extremism in its Muslim region of Xinjiang-Uighur (“China bans,” 2017; “China Uighurs,” 2017). The case of struggle over clothing in Russia presents how the state can restrict basic rights and liberties through the discourse of fighting “extremism” and promoting “traditional”.

The discussions around hijab ban in post-Soviet Russia manifests the limits of cooperation entered between the state and the official Muslim institutions in a seemingly secular state. It also presents the ambiguity of the concept of the “tradition” as in the conflict of the over hijab, both sides, having different

perceptions of “tradition”, defended their position relying on the same rhetoric.

While the policies over Muslims are discussed in the domestic level until this point, the following section will discuss the state’s Muslim policy in relation to its foreign policy.

5.5 Russia’s Muslim policy at the international level

The foreign policy of a country is very much related to the state and society’s changing notion of itself¹³⁷. Hence, the transition towards post-Soviet era and the changing religion-state relations had also repercussions in the diplomatic realm. While the Russian state adopted measures for isolation of Russian Muslims from foreign Muslims in the domestic level, it urged the support of official Muslim organizations in its foreign policy towards Muslim world. Curanovic (2013), emphasizes the critical role of social partnership and religious diplomacy in the new patterned relationship between state and religious institutions in the post-communist countries which she names as “post-Soviet religious model”. Her argument can be exemplified in Putin’s utilization of official Muslim institutions and constant references to Russia’s remarkable Muslim population in its relations with Muslim countries. Russia’s efforts in entering the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) resembles an example of religious diplomacy. In 2003, in a speech in Malaysia where Russia is invited as a guest to the OIC summit, Putin emphasized the large Russian Muslim community and expressed his wish to expand relations with the Muslim world (“Speech by,” 2003) and expressed his demands to be part of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. In expressing this demand, Putin mentions

¹³⁷ Prizel (1998), relying on Russian case and few other East-Central European countries, presents that the foreign policy of any country is seriously affected by a society’s changing notion of itself.

Russia's entrance into OIC as an opportunity to create "a channel for communication between Russian Muslims and authoritative international Muslim organizations, giving Russia's Muslim population a chance to feel itself a part of the wider Islamic world" ("Meeting with," 2003). In the implementation of this "religious diplomacy", state cooperates with the "traditional" religious institutions in the country.

As opposed to expected rivalry of hegemonic religion¹³⁸ in Russia's entrance to OIC, one sees support of it and subsequent appreciation of this by president of the country, Putin. As he states that: "the Russian Orthodox Church's support for Russia developing closer relations with the Organization of the Islamic Conference is a sign that the tradition of cooperation between the different religions in Russia is alive and well" ("Meeting with," 2003). Later in 2006, Russia is granted observatory status in the Organization and the state creates "group of strategic vision Russia-Islamic world" which is consisted of state leaders of Muslim autonomous republics, academicians working on Islamic world, Muslim representatives of the Russian state.

Russia's efforts to join OIC and to develop better relations with the Muslim world can be interpreted as part of his policy to return to great power politics and increase its influence in the regional and international level. Through the end of 90s, Russia was trying to achieve the "reintegration of Post-Soviet space" as Putin strongly favored the idea of reintegration of Russia with former Soviet states (Dunlop, 2000). In this regard, in 8 December 1999, through a treaty with Belarus a new Union State is created. At the time of ratification of the treaty at the Federation Council, Putin expressed his hope for the enlargement of Union with the newly independent states which have large Russian-speaking minority which is interpreted

¹³⁸ Rational choice theorists claim the hegemonic religion to restrict activities of minority religions.

as “the neo-imperial and neocolonial sentiments present within Russia’s top political leadership” (Dunlop, 2000, p. 44). Another attempt for reintegration of the post-Soviet space and Russian attempts to increase its regional power was the Commonwealth of Independent States which is initiated during Yeltsin era (O’Neil et al., 2010).

Apart from signing cooperation treaties with the neighboring states, Russia tried to increase its power through expansionist military policies that presented its first signals during the Second Chechen War. In the following years, Russian control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia aftermath of the war with Georgia in 2008, annexation of Crimea in 2014 and active military involvement in the Syrian conflict resembles the Russian state’s neo-imperial, neo-colonial ambitions in the region. To achieve its expansionist aspirations in the region, the Russian state did not refrain using the religious discourse and collaborate with the Orthodox Church and official Muftiates. In the previous chapter, we have already mentioned the presence of Orthodox Church in the armed forces and priests’ blessings of the troops and equipment that go to Syria and the Church’s praising of the war decision declaring it sacred. In a similar manner, the ICR issued a supportive statement for the Russian airstrikes in the region (“Mezhreligioznyy,” 2015).

Apart from the supportive statements issued by “traditional religions”, the Russian state legitimized its intervention in the region with a claim to neutralize the militants coming from Russia and Central Asia that fight for ISIS. Since 2015, while the estimates of citizens fighting for ISIS in Syria was 2500 from Russians and 7000 Central Asians (Balmforth, 2015; Ersen, 2017), Putin pronounced that among 20000 foreign fighters, 9000 are from CIS countries which constitute a serious threat to the country (“Vladimir Putin,” 2017). In this sense, Russian state tried to legitimize its

military involvement in the Syrian war through presenting it as a “preemptive action” to prevent effects of the problem on its domestic politics.

While it was estimated that the Russian involvement in the Syrian crisis will disaffect the Russian Muslims (Ersen, 2017) as majority of them adhere to the Sunni branch of Islam, interestingly enough, the survey conducted by Anti-Corruption Foundation with 1,200 people who were randomly sampled from republics of Tatarstan and Dagestan¹³⁹ presents that no serious reaction exists among them.¹⁴⁰ This may be the result of the auto censorship stemming from the respondents’ fear to express their opinions in surveys or the effect of state-controlled media presenting the political developments in favor of the Russian state or it may be the due to the perception of the war as a fight against terrorism rather than consideration of it as a sectarian conflict (Lazarev and Biryukova, 2016). Another factor contributing to the seeming non-reaction of the Muslim community may be the positive remarks of the official Muslim organization regarding the intervention and Mufti Ravil Gaynutdin’s statement (“Obrashcheniye,” 2015) on not to politicize the issue and not allow it to trigger intra-Muslim conflicts.

Another instance of involvement of religious organizations in the foreign policy can be traced during the annexation of Crimea. As Crimean Tatar Muslims were concerned about infringement on their rights during the annexation, Russian Mufti Ravil Gaynutdin made frequent visits to Crimea playing a conciliatory role in

¹³⁹ Both of them are autonomous Muslim-majority republics within the Russian Federation.

¹⁴⁰ The survey results presents that more are pro than anti-war. While 24% of Muslims in Tatarstan oppose the war, 22% of Dagestani Muslims were anti-war. On the other hand, while 29% of Dagestani Muslims supported propping up Asad, 23% of Muslims living in Tatarstan supported Russian involvement. For the details of the survey see Lazarev and Biryukova’s article (2016).

guaranteeing the protection. In one of such trips he stated his intention in the following way

I went to Crimea not as a politician or a diplomat, but as a spiritual pastor...I wanted to meet my Muslim brothers, to hear their concerns and fears, and discover why they don't want to be part of Russia and its 20-million strong Muslim community. I have a certain status... I can take your hopes and fears, and any questions you want to ask, right to the top, and I shall do my best to help you if Muslim's rights in Crimea helping to gain their approval to become part of Russia (Insafli, 2015).

These visits, in a way, aimed to establish ties of friendship with the religious directorate of Crimean Muslims and to ensure the Spiritual Directorate of Crimean Muslims' (SDCM) loyalty to the Russian authority. Religious factor in diplomacy was also apparent in Putin's invitation of Turkish President Erdogan and Palestinian President Abbas to the opening of the mosque in Moscow in September 2015. Other such instances of the collaboration between political and religious officials in the international domain and political leaders' presentation of a religious factor in legitimization of their interests exists in post-Soviet Russian foreign policy; yet for the purposes of this thesis, the examples presented above will be enough to show the close relation between religion and the politics in the international level.

CHAPTER 6

LOCATING MUSLIM POLITICS IN PUTIN'S RUSSIA:

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This thesis tried to present Russian state's efforts to manage Muslim community in post-Soviet decade and reached that post-Soviet Russian Muslim policy is a product of number of political dynamics. Firstly, the state's Muslim policy is related to the state's governance strategies in the Muslim dominated parts of the country and is shaped as a product broader processes of liberalization/authoritarianization and securitization. Secondly, the thesis resembles that the "regime change" has a tremendous effect on state-religion relations, though the newly established relationship maintains some of the patterns of the previous era. Thirdly, the study manifests the nationalization of the religious identities in the Russian case and the close relationship between nationalist and religious revivals in Russia. Lastly, it is shown that no uniform policy is adopted towards Muslim population in Russia as the Muslim community itself is diverse, containing multiple tendencies.

Historically, the state policy towards Muslims during Imperial and Soviet era is largely formed in relation to the issue of "how to manage the non-Russian populations of the empire and their aspirations for cultural and political self-determination" (Hunter 2004, p.26). That is, the determinants of the Muslim policy is not limited to the religious realm, rather it is formed as a product of concerns over minimization of the cost of the governance in the Muslim dominated regions. In this sense, it can be stated that, for the state, the ultimate function of the politics of religion is its being one of the effective, though limited in some instances, tools for governance. From this point, the interest-based explanations of the religion politics introduced by

the proponents of the rational-choice theory seem to be more relevant than the idea-based explanations that proposed by the defenders of the secularization thesis. Though the rational choice theory provides more plausible explanations for the state's Muslim policy in post-Soviet Russia, it has shortcomings in explaining the changing interests and subjectivities over time.

6.1 Authoritarianism

The broader developments in the political sphere has also effects on Russian state's policy targeting the Muslim population. During early 1990s, the relatively free conditions which Muslims enjoyed were the part of the broader phenomena of granting of the religious and political liberties in the country. In a similar vein, the controls and restrictions introduced in the second term of Yeltsin's reign and Putin decade was related to the shift to the control paradigm towards all religious organizations and the civil society. In the recent decade, Putin's objectives of making the country politically and economically a strong, centralized state in the domestic level and ambitions to return to the great power politics and make Russian state a regional hegemonic power in the international level shaped his Muslim policy along with his broader policy towards religious institutions.

Putin's establishment of a "full-fledged bureaucratic authoritarian regime" which mostly relied on personalized power of the president (Shevtsova, 2004) enabled him to purge media and civil society along with non-conformist religious groups. The repressive policies against undesirable non-governmental organizations and opposition groups are legitimized through anti-extremist, anti-foreign discourse. The authoritarian state implemented its repressive policies with the support of co-

opted actors. In this sense, in the religious realm, the state's restrictive policies towards non-conformist religious groups are supported by "traditional religions"; in a similar vein, the state owned media and pro-Kremlin organizations (such as *Nashi*) backed the authoritarian measures adopted towards opposition groups.

During Putin's term, the Orthodox Church restored its previous power significantly and enjoyed the generous state patronage and have privileged access to the state institutions ranging from schools to the armed forces. Being the dominant religion in the country, the Orthodox Church become the main collaborator of the state both in the fight against non-conformist groups within the state and bolstered the state's aggressive foreign policy in the international arena. As a result of the partnership between the two, while the former enjoyed special privileges in access to the state sources, the latter ensured more effective governance and preserved its power in the domestic and the international arena, as Koesel (2014) suggested. On the other hand, the state adopted a complicated double-folded policy towards its Muslim population merging the repression and cooperation simultaneously. Indeed, the duplicity of the policies targeting Muslims stems from the multiplicity of the "religious subjects" that have varying approaches to conform the state policies.

Though the Russian state historically considered the politics of religion as part of the governance strategies of Muslim dominated regions (Hunter, 2004) and adopted innovative authoritarian tools of mixing cooperation with repression; (Koesel, 2014) the current policy should not be understood in sole reference to the authoritarian features of the Russian state or in relation to its specific historical experience. As Turner (2011) suggests, managing religion has become a global phenomenon adopted both by liberal and autocratic regimes, though in different forms as a result of the global anxieties over security in the recent decade. The state

desire to reassert its authority over civil society and ensure loyalty of its citizens resulted in the prevalence of the managing of religions a way of which in the authoritarian contexts may be the promotion of the “traditional religion in the service of the state” (Turner, 2011, p. 193) as in the case of Russia. The policies similar to Russian state’s promotion of the “traditional four” and collaboration with them in the realm of education, security, social services and foreign policy can be found also in other cases. For instance, in Yemen, the state took preventive measures in sending of the students abroad to combat extremist tendencies in a similar manner with Russia (Fox, 2015). The regulations around clothing is not only introduced in post-Soviet Central Asian countries but also in France and in the previous years of Turkey. In a similar vein, the local impediments to the construction of mosques is not specific to authoritarian Russia, rather it can also be found in the liberal state of Switzerland manifested in the minaret ban introduced in 2009.

6.2 Securitization

The domination of the security elite (*siloviki*) in Putin decade in place of the oligarchs of Yeltsin led to the domination of the security discourse in the state policies. The Chechen War has been another reason for the securitization of the religious sphere in late 1990s. While in the early years of post-Soviet era the Muslim politics was part of the religious freedom agenda, after the wars in the region, it began to be considered as part of security politics and shaped through the state’s evolving security approach. Specifically, considering the dominant Muslim population in the region and the insurgents’ employment of a religious discourse during the conflict, the ongoing Second Chechen War had a significant impact on the

evolving of the state's Muslim politics and introduction of the new strategies of governance in the Muslim dominated regions of the country.

Though the Chechen Wars had crucial impact on the securitization of the Muslims politics, it has been claimed that dominant discourse of danger revolved around non-military grounds as societal and political security concerns for preserving ethnic, cultural and religious characteristics of the society has become among the main concern of Russian politicians (Musayev, 2010). For instance, in the anti-sectarian conferences that are co-organized by the representatives of traditional religious organizations and the state as part of struggle against "alternative" Muslim groups operating outside the Muftiate along with non-Orthodox Christian groups and NRMs; frequent references to the spiritual security are made and the "non-traditional" groups are presented as dangers posing threat to the "spiritual security".

In a similar vein, Putin also referred to foreign missionary groups as dangerous entities posing threat to the country's overall security in his National Security Concept issued in January 2000. In this period, Salafi groups, the Protestant groups, Jehovah's Witnesses, Falun Gong practitioners are deemed as extremists and they faced persecution of the state which is bolstered by the coopted representatives of the "traditional religions" as they were seen as dangers to "spiritual security". State's anti-extremist and anti-foreign policies and the promotion of the establishment of patriotic, loyal "Russian Islam" by the powerholders are shaped as part of this security concern. The post-Soviet Russian state, having a paternalistic attitude (Fox, 2008), aimed to guide and protect its citizens from the outside dangers posed by foreign religious groups and took measures to restrict the activities of foreign-funded organizations and gave material support for the Muslim educational institutions established by the official Muftiates that are coopted by the state.

6.3 Regime change

The assessment of the state's policies in the Imperial, Soviet and post-Soviet decades resemble the effect of the "regime change" on state's Muslim policy. In this sense, one can follow the repercussions of the radical changes in the state structure and of the consequent significant transitions in the religion-state relations and the state's policy towards Muslims. While the Imperial period is characterized by the close alliance between the Church and the state for the hegemonic religion; for the Muslims this period involved mixture of policies of assimilation, repression and cooptation. The transition to Soviet state resulted in the state's hostility towards overall religions with harsher policies towards the hegemonic one. The dissolution of the Soviet state resulted in the reestablishment of the close relationship between the Church and the state. For the Muslims, the policies of co-optation are implemented along with repressive measures during post-Soviet decade. The post-Soviet state's Muslim policy involves continuities and shifts from the previous policies of the state aimed at the Muslim dominated regions of Volga-Ural and North Caucasia.

The historical legacy in Putin's politics of religion can be found in the Catherine the Great's reign as her successful policy of cooptation of the religious elite is maintained even in Stalin period despite the conjunctures occurring in other realms. The success of the legalization and cooptation of the Muslim institutions in the late 18th century Russia in contrast to the failures of policies of assimilation and repression led to the state's choice over the former in the post-Soviet decade. Though the policy of repression is also continued in the all periods, the main governance strategy of the state is shaped through policy of collaboration with the official Muslim representatives and resulted in the introducing of restrictive measures

towards non-conformists jointly with the co-opted parties. Within this context, the two-folded state policy towards Muslims in Putin's Russia may be seen as the product of the long-running distinction set between official and non-official Islam in the Imperial decade. Indeed, according to Yemelianova (2015), Russia's overall Muslim policy in the post-Soviet decade can be seen as a continuation of the Imperial policy except for a break period during Gorbachev era and Yeltsin's first term.

In this sense, the roots of the state's double policy which incorporated loyal and patriotic Muslims into the state structure and considered them as inalienable parts of the Russian state whereas excluded and repressed the non-conformist ones through the rhetorical tools of extremism and Wahhabism can be found in the Imperial decade. What constitutes the major difference between the two is the fact that while the target of the Imperial Russia was the Sufi brotherhoods which were the pioneers of the resistance movements; in the post-Soviet decade, the major enemies became the Salafi, Wahhabi groups¹⁴¹ that promote "Arab Islam" alien to the Russian one. In the current state, the Sufi groups that were leading the resistance to the colonial policies of the Imperial Russia turned into a co-opted movement under Kadyrov's Chechnya which exemplifies the changing subjectivities over time. In the current context, establishment of a traditional, patriotic, Russian Islam that is isolated from the foreign effects and made subservient to the state authority is the main goal of the state's Muslim policy. In harmony with this objective, the state distinguishes between good and bad Muslims in which the test paper between the goodness and badness lie in the full conformity to the state authority.

¹⁴¹ I am grateful to Prof. Mehmet Ali Buyukkara for discussing his comments on the issue with me as that helped me to realize this paradoxical shift between Sufism and Wahhabism in Chechnya.

6.4 Nationalism and religion

The major motive for the state's sensitiveness about the control of Islam and creation of patriotic Russian Islam lies in the political developments of the 1990s occurred in the Muslim dominated republics of the Russian Federation. In the 1990s, aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the ethno-nationalist survivals in the North Caucasia and Tatarstan region are prevailed with demands for separation and greater autonomy through references to Lenin's unrealized promises of self-determination which made during the early years of Bolshevik rule for non-Russian subjects of the Tsarist Russia. These ethno-nationalist survivals accompanied with religious ones seriously threatened the integrity of the Russian state given its multi-ethnic, multi-confessional demography. After coming into throne, to overcome the challenges posed by separatist movements, Putin introduced a number of policies the first of which has been the launching of a second war against Chechnya. Putin, rather than relying on mere military solutions, introduced alternative measures in the administrative realms; then expanded his policies to the spheres of identity, security, religion and education

In the administrative terms, he introduced centralizing measures by creating seven supra-regional districts under the direct control of the president as the selection of its leaders would be through appointment, rather than elections which undermined the powers of regional authorities significantly. Apart from that, he withdrew concessions given to Tatarstan during Yeltsin era and created a new Russian political system that can be defined as a super-presidential one with the collection of the most of the authority in the center. These measures are accompanied with the purge of oligarchs who were enjoyed enormous authority during Yeltsin decade. As a result of

all these policies, Putin has been successful in undermining the potential threats to his authority and re-establishing a strong Russian state.

His new political project that is shaped in response to the growing ethnic separatism along with religious revival in non-Russian dominated regions of the country needed an unifying ideological basis as with the collapse of the Soviet state, the cementing ideology of the communism dissolved resulting in an identity vacuum in the society. While Yeltsin tried to overcome this challenge through his efforts to build a civic Russian identity that will keep all citizens together, he failed in that. On the other hand, Putin was able to introduce a new form of imperial-civilizational nationalism in which Orthodox Church along with other “traditional religions” have played an important part. The neo-Eurasianists which became effective in construction of the new state ideology presented the West as the “other” of the Russia and saw Muslims as potential partners against the West which may be another dynamic leading to collaboration of official Muslim institutions with the state. In this sense, it can be stated that mere interest-based explanations of the religion politics cannot give us the full picture. Though having limited effect in relation to interests, ideas also have been constructive in formation of the state’s Muslim policy.

In the international domain, presenting itself as a Muslim country brings the Russian state a major asset in its aim to return to the “great power politics” and the “regional hegemony” especially in its relations with the Middle East and other Muslim countries. Russia’s joining to the OIC, Muftiate’s efforts to build relations with Crimean Muslims after the annexation, ICR’s supportive statements on the Russian military involvement in the Syrian crisis constitute the international aspects of the cooperation between the state and official Muslim religious institutions.

To conclude, this study aimed to present state efforts to manage and control Muslim community in Russia. It can be stated that in the project of coopting the traditional/loyal and excluding others, the state aims to monopolize the religious discourse and establish a paternalistic control over the religious institutions. In this way, in the domestic level, it intends to ensure an effective strategy of governance over the Muslim dominated regions of Russia which experienced the rise of separatist movements in the recent decade. However, to what extent this double-folded policy will achieve its goals is questionable and can be a topic for further research. The controversy around hijab ban between Kremlin and official religious establishment presents the limitations of the policy of cooptation. Even though if the full cooperation is achieved between the two, the state suppression of the non-conformist¹⁴² religious groups with collaboration of the official religious establishment may only serve the diminishing of the legitimacy of the official religious institutions in the eyes of the Muslim society and further alienation/disintegration of these “alternative” Muslims from the state.

Another implication of this study is its presentation of the politics of religion as a dynamic entity articulated by the broader processes of authoritarianization, securitization and ethnic politics. The multiplicity and dynamicity of the state’s Muslim policy and the changing subjectivities of its actors over time presents the limitations of the theories that propose either idea-based explanations or interest based explanations and projects the need to adopt more complicated theories considering the role of ideas and interests along.

¹⁴² I refer to the non-violent opposition groups

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