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SLAVIC POWER AND TURKIC NATIONS: A SURVEY OF WESTERN SCHOLARSHIP ON THE HISTORY OF RUSSIAN CENTRAL ASIA

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SLAVIC POWER AND TURKIC NATIONS: A SURVEY OF WESTERN
SCHOLARSHIP ON THE HISTORY OF RUSSIAN CENTRAL ASIA

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the Graduate School of
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History

by
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ABSTRACT

This thesis surveys Western scholarship on the history of Russian Central Asia, from the Russian conquest of the region in 1867 through the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Special emphasis is given to how Western scholars have portrayed the Russian relationship with Islam, and to how the Islamic religion and Russian policy contributed to the development of nationalism and national identity in Turkestan. While there have been brief historiographical essays on scholarly trends on the topic, none have provided a comprehensive survey of the trends which have characterized the Western scholarship on the history of Russian Central Asia. This thesis examines those trends and understand how they developed in the historiography of the topic.

The introduction surveys the existing historiographical scholarship on the topic of Russian Central Asia and gives a brief overview of the history of the Russian relationship with the Muslims of the region from the conquest until the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Chapter One addresses how historians have portrayed Russian policy toward the Muslims of the region. Chapter Two examines how they have portrayed the development of Muslim nationalism in Central Asia. Chapter Three examines how historians have portrayed the cotton economy, the Basmachi revolts, and Soviet gender reform efforts. In the conclusion I discuss the overarching trends in the Western scholarship on Russian Central Asia and identify the most significant gaps in our understanding of the subject. I also offer my own conclusions as to the nature of the Russian relationship with the Muslims of Central Asia.

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INTRODUCTION: UNDERSTANDING A RELATIONSHIP

Since the conquest of Kazan' in the sixteenth century, the Russian state has had an intimate relationship with the Muslim peoples within its borders. For the three hundred years from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries, the Tatars overwhelmingly comprised Russia's domestic Muslim population. However, the Russian conquest of Turkestan by 1865 brought a large and ethnically heterogeneous new Muslim population into the Russian Empire. The Muslims of Central Asia, culturally and economically isolated from Europe since the dissolution of the Silk Road, presented an array of delicate policy issues to the Tsarist and, later, Soviet authorities. At the time of the conquest of Central Asia, policy toward the Muslims of the region was not on the top tier of St. Petersburg's domestic or foreign policy concerns. However, the central government in St. Petersburg, and later Moscow, would soon find that the symbiosis between religion and identity in Central Asia presented complex and durable challenges to Russian authority.

I. Previous Historiographical Surveys

The relationship between Russia and the Muslims of the Tsarist and Soviet empires has attracted a great deal of attention from Western academics. The purpose of this thesis is to survey the major trends in the scholarly treatment of this relationship. These historiographical trends have been analyzed before, but only minimally. In 1959, Serge Zenkovsky published an article in *The Russian*

Review titled “American Research on Russia’s Moslems.”¹ At that time, the Russian relationship with Islam was a relatively new area of historical study. Nineteenth-century and pre-World War Two American accounts of the Russian relationship with Islam were written primarily by travelers and diplomats rather than by specialists. America’s World War Two alliance with the Soviet Union allowed some scholars access to the Muslim regions of the Soviet Union, but the wartime-era sense of solidarity with the Soviets skewed their scholarly credibility on the subject. Zenkovsky finds that it was not until the early 1950s that historians began to seriously evaluate the Russian role in Central Asia.² He concludes that by 1959, American scholars had produced a credible body of work on “this young and heretofore unexplored sector of Russian history.”³

The most recent historiographical surveys on the subject have been written by Adeb Khalid, himself a significant contributor to the field. In an essay published in *Slavic Review*, Khalid agrees with historians who would characterize the Tsarist empire in Central Asia as a colonial state. However, he sees a sharp and fundamental break in the nature of Tsarist and Soviet rule where many other historians do not. According to him, failure to acknowledge this break leads to an inability to accurately understand either approach. He writes that,

in terms of both the scope and the nature of state action, the Soviet remaking of Central Asia makes sense only as the work of a different form of modern polity... The differences between these colonial empires and modern mobilizational states are substantial

¹ Serge Zenkovsky, “American Research on Russia’s Moslems,” *Russian Review* 18 (July 1959): 199-217.

² *Ibid.*, 201.

³ *Ibid.*, 217.

and confusing the two leads to a fundamental misunderstanding of modern history.⁴

Khalid argues that the type of governance and social transformation attempted by the Soviets is more comparable to the reforms attempted in the early Turkish Republic. He explains that while the Soviet and the Kemalist states had much of the developmental and intellectual “baggage” of European colonial states, they did not utilize it in the same way. In his view, both states “had at their disposal the baggage, common to modern European thought, of evolution, of backwardness and progress,... But it matters a great deal whether that baggage is deployed to exclude people from politics or to force their entry into it, whether it is used to assert inequalities or to preach world revolution.”⁵

In another essay Khalid reviews six recent books on the place of Central Asia and Islam in the early Soviet Union. The essay aims to understand what these books contribute to the scholarly understanding of the imperial nature of Soviet rule.⁶ The central point of difference among the books, he finds, is their attitude towards colonialism, with the six authors representing a broad spectrum of opinion on the subject, from those seeing clear and unbroken continuity from the Tsarist era to those who perceive the Soviets as following a fundamentally different approach toward governing a foreign land and people.⁷

Apart from the contributions of Zenkovsky and Khalid, research on the western historiography of the Russian relationship with Central Asian Islam has

⁴ Adeeb Khalid, “Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective,” *Slavic Review* 65 (Summer 2006): 232.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 251.

⁶ Adeeb Khalid, “Between Empire and Revolution: New Work on Soviet Central Asia,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 7 (Fall 2006): 865-884.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 883-884.

been largely limited to brief essays in the introductions to books on some aspect of that relationship. These essays tend to analyze the historiography of a specific and limited period, such as the formation of the Soviet Union. No scholar has identified and analyzed the intellectual trends which have characterized the broad scope of the Russian relationship with Central Asian Islam in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This thesis aims to fill that void.

II. Overview of the Thesis

This historiographical survey examines the Western scholarship written or translated into English on the modern Russian relationship with Central Asian Islam from three perspectives, each examined in its own chapter. The thesis will also address historical works on the Tatars, but only insofar as they influence or shed light on Central Asia. Chapter One examines how historians and other scholars have characterized Russian policy toward the region. The focus of this chapter is on how historians have portrayed the motivations and intent of Russian policy toward the Muslims of Central Asia. It further addresses how scholars gauge the degree of political autonomy which the Muslims of Central Asia may or may not have had under the Tsarist and Soviet regimes. The major scholarly debates examined in this chapter include the Tsarist policy of nonintervention, the Soviet policy of *korenizatsiia* (indigenization), and the idea of a “divide and rule” Soviet nationality strategy. “Nonintervention” refers to the stated Tsarist policy of minimal interference in Muslim institutions and societies. This thesis, long accepted by historians of Tsarist Turkestan, has recently been challenged and come under scrutiny from historians arguing that the Tsarist administrators in fact

had a much more active policy toward Central Asian societies and institutions than their official statements would indicate.⁸ The term *korenizatsiia* refers to the Soviet policy of promoting ethnic particularism among the Muslims of Central Asia and the other non-Russian ethnicities of the Soviet Union. The scholarly debate regarding *korenizatsiia* has centered on the degree to which the Soviets actually intended to foster the creation of distinct Muslim nationalities versus the opposing goal of creating the “new Soviet man.”⁹ Perhaps none of these debates, however, has been as vigorous or contentious as the debate over the idea of a Soviet “divide-and-rule” strategy of nationality management. The divide-and-rule thesis holds that the early Bolsheviks, in a cynical scheme to create reliance on Soviet power, deliberately highlighted ethnic differences among the peoples of Central Asia and elsewhere in order to create a state of constant ethnic tensions. At the core of the debates over *korenizatsiia* and the divide-and-rule thesis is the subject of imperialism. The degree to which the Soviet Union did or did not remain an imperial state has been the subject of a vigorous and politically contentious exchange among historians of modern Russia. In Chapter One I will examine how the scholarly argument over the idea of Russian imperialism has developed and attempt to identify how it has affected larger trends in Slavic and Muslim historiography.

Instead of focusing on scholarly treatments of Russian policy, Chapter Two examines historians’ positions on how those policies actually affected

⁸ This idea is the central thesis of Robert Crews’ *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006).

⁹ The most thorough study to date on *korenizatsiia* has been Terry Martin’s *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

Muslim societies in Central Asia and Tatarstan, in particular the question of Muslim nationalism. Here, I propose that the Western perception of Muslim nationalism dominates histories of Islamic societies in the Tsarist and Soviet empires, and Chapter Two examines how western historians have portrayed it. I propose in this chapter that the western perception of Muslim nationalism can best be understood through a matrix of people, faith, and progress. Historians have reached a broad consensus that these three elements were the essential ingredients of Muslim nationalism in the history of the Tsarist and Soviet empires. “People” refers to the idea that common ethnic and cultural bonds are the necessary foundations of a modern nation. “Faith” relates to the Central Asia’s common identity with the Islamic religion, which further unified them politically and strengthened notions that they should not be ruled by non-Muslims, be they Orthodox Christians or atheists. Finally, “progress” references the popular notion that social, economic, and even cultural progress was a necessary component of the development of Muslim nationalism in modern Russia. These are all important trends in the historiography of Muslim nationalism in Russia and in the broader understanding of nationalism in different regions of the world.

The third and final substantive chapter of this thesis will examine how western historians have portrayed three of the more significant recent foci of conflicts between Russian power and Muslim societies: cotton, the Basmachi revolts, and gender. For much of the nineteenth and throughout the twentieth century, cotton was the leading cash crop for much of Central Asia. While cultivation of the fiber was widespread before the Russian conquest, it increased

significantly afterwards. By actively promoting and, in some cases, demanding, the cultivation of cotton in Central Asia, the Tsarist authorities introduced capitalism into the region and fundamentally altered the way of life there. Cotton cultivation continued to expand during the Soviet period, to the point of effectively draining the Aral Sea in order to expand irrigation for the water-thirsty crop. The story of cotton cultivation in Central Asia provides historians with a case study with which to understand the economic relationship between the Russians and the Muslim peoples in their domain. The cotton economy is also closely related to the broader debate over the imperial nature of Soviet rule.

Soviet gender policy also had imperial implications, but in a cultural and social as opposed to an economic sense. In the late 1920s, Soviet authorities initiated a campaign in Central Asia to raise the status of Muslim women and destroy what they perceived as the misogynistic, patriarchal institutions in Muslim society. These activists perceived Muslim women's veil as being symbolic of feminine seclusion and oppression. Thus, the fight against the veil became the most public component of the larger Soviet campaign for gender equality. The history of Soviet gender policy is related to the larger controversy over the imperial nature of Soviet rule in that it can be portrayed as an example of a foreign power imposing its purported cultural values onto a subjugated society. But historians have alternately portrayed the gender equality initiatives of the 1920s and 1930s as a case study in the limits of Soviet power, an example of indigenous Muslim cultural reform as well as story of women's personal endurance.

While there is a wealth of scholarship on gender reform and the cotton economy, there has been comparatively little on the Basmachi revolts. Originally inspired by ill-advised Tsarist policy in Central Asia, the revolts eventually became the most serious threat to Soviet power in the region during the formative years of the Soviet Union. The Basmachi rebellion has been variously portrayed by Soviet historians, many of whom strove to portray the revolt as a brigand, criminal uprising instead of a genuine expression of resentment to foreign rule. In Chapter Three I argue that the decentralized, fractious nature of the rebellion has caused Western historians to inaccurately diminish the movement's relevance.

III. The Russian Relationship with Muslim Central Asia, 1867-1991

Before delving into the historiography of this subject, some background information is necessary. Located in the geographical center of the Eurasian landmass, Central Asia has been subject to conquest and invasion from both eastern and western powers since the time of Alexander the Great. The region is environmentally and geographically disjointed, spanning the deserts of modern-day Turkmenistan, the mountains of Kyrgyzstan, and the steppe of Kazakhstan. The region is bordered on the west by the Caspian Sea and on the east by the Tian-Shan mountains. The Aral Sea, a once-great inland body of water located in modern-day Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, is now largely drained as a result of a half-century of ecologically disastrous Soviet irrigation schemes.

Apart from the invasions of Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, and Tamerlane, Central Asia enjoyed a period of importance during the Renaissance as a major segment of the Silk Road. The Silk Road was not so much a road as a

general route through which merchants ferried goods between Asia and Europe. However, the road lost its previous importance for international trade with the discovery of quicker and more cost-effective maritime routes across Eurasia. Central Asia nevertheless remained important for Russia, both as a strategic buffer and an economic trading partner. During the eighteenth century, Russian settlers began moving into what is today northern Kazakhstan.

The reasons and motivations for Russia's conquest of Central Asia in the nineteenth century will be a major theme in this thesis. There were both economic and strategic incentives to the Russian expansion. In the mid-nineteenth century, Russia's rapidly growing textile industry was largely dependent on imports of American, Egyptian, and Central Asian cotton. However, the American and Egyptian sources were unreliable, as highlighted by the gross shortage caused by the blockade of Confederate ports in the American Civil War (1861-1865). The need for a reliable domestic source of cotton was likely one of the major considerations in the Russian decision to conquer Central Asia. However, there were strategic and political motivations as well, the most significant of which was the rapidly expanding British influence in the region. The conquest of Central Asia would give Russia a strategic buffer against British expansionism in the geopolitical contest that would become known as the "Great Game."¹⁰

The conquest of Central Asia was not a single, cohesive military invasion but rather a series of seizures, sieges, and raids. The subjugation of the khanates

¹⁰The idea that Russia's conquest of the region was motivated by a variety of factors is argued in Seymour Becker, *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865-1924* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968).

of Bukhara and Khiva, two formerly powerful Central Asian political entities, were probably the clearest indicator of Russian dominance in the region. After the Russians had achieved a satisfactory degree of military control in the region in the late 1860s, they focused their efforts on consolidating their gains. Konstantin von Kaufmann, the first Governor-General of Turkestan, directed this process. Towards Islam and Central Asian institutions in general, von Kaufmann professed to follow a strategy of non-intervention, meaning that it was his policy to interfere with Central Asian society as little and as rarely as possible while still maintaining security and free trade. How much von Kaufmann actually adhered to the policy of non-intervention is the subject of a current scholarly debate, one which will be examined in this thesis.

Consolidating power in Central Asia involved improving its infrastructure. The construction of irrigation systems created more arable land for the cultivation of cotton and other cash crops for export to Russia. Improving infrastructure also meant the construction of railroads between the major cities in the region. The construction of the Trans-Caspian Railroad was perhaps the most significant single infrastructure development in Central Asia during the Tsarist era. It provided a vital communication and economic link between Russia and Central Asia and solidified Russia's control of the region.¹¹

It is important to note that Tsarist policy towards the Kazakh steppe was dramatically different from that in inner Central Asia, or modern-day Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. While the steppe climate and terrain saved the Kazakhs from the introduction of the cotton economy, their way of life was disrupted in the

¹¹ The significance of the railroad is emphasized in *ibid.*, 175.

nineteenth century by large numbers of Russian settlers moving to the steppes in search of abundant, arable land. The routes along which Kazakhs would graze their herds were disrupted by settlers who claimed large tracts of the steppe as their own farmland. Land rights inevitably became one of the primary focuses of conflict between the Kazakhs and Russian settlers, igniting revolts and banditry.

Despite the widespread discontent among both the Kazakhs and the other peoples of Central Asia around the turn of the century, they did not take an active role in the Revolution of 1905. However, the revolution did provide a degree of stimulus to the burgeoning nationalist movements of Central Asia.¹² The Tatar *Jadid* reformers flourished during this period with a program of promoting a modern Muslim society guided by the traditional tenets of Islam. The Bolshevik Revolution, while initiated in Russia, had disastrous implications in Central Asia. The Russian Civil War quickly spread into the region, precipitating violence and famine. Having been converted into a near-absolute “cotton economy,” the people of Central Asia had been forced to forego grain production. When the Civil War disrupted grain shipments from other parts of the Empire, Central Asia was faced with a critical food shortage.¹³ Nomadic tribal groups aligned themselves with either Bolshevik or White Russian forces, with instances of these groups defecting more than once to opposing sides.

In the years during and immediately following the Bolshevik Revolution, the Muslims of the newly-formed Soviet Union enjoyed a brief period of courtship from Soviet authorities hoping to gain their support and sympathies.

¹² Andreas Kappeler, *The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History*, trans. Alfred Clayton (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2001), 234-236.

¹³ Becker, *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia*, 170.

The Bolsheviks suspended their advocacy of atheism and appealed to the Muslims' sense of a right to national self-determination.¹⁴ These concessions did not last long after the Bolshevik victory was secure, however, and Soviet authorities soon began challenging various aspects of the Islamic faith and culture. This involved a widespread anti-religious propaganda campaign as well as a concerted effort to close mosques. The most contentious Soviet initiative among the Muslims of Central Asia, however, was gender reform. Beginning in the late 1920s, Soviet authorities sought to raise and transform the status of Muslim women. Gender equality, an important tenet of communist social doctrine, was noticeably absent in Central Asia, perhaps most visually so in the persistence of the veil. The Soviet fight against female veiling and seclusion in Central Asia during the 1920s and 1930s was one of the first large-scale conflicts between Soviet power and Muslim societies.¹⁵

The Great Purge of 1936-38 was the next large-scale conflict, and Central Asian Muslims, like members of other ethnic and religious minority groups, suffered heavily. Many prominent Muslim communists and intellectuals were arrested and killed, imprisoned, or exiled on false charges of advocating separatist nationalism. During the Second World War the Soviet regime again backed off of the program of active persecution of the Islam to rally maximum support for the

¹⁴ Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, "Civil War and New Governments," in Edward Allworth, ed., *Central Asia: 130 Years of Russian Dominance: A Historical Overview*, 3rd Edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 235-247.

¹⁵ The two most significant books on this subject are Gregory Massell's *The Surrogate Proletariat: Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia, 1919-1929* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974) and Douglas Northrop's *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004).

war effort against the Germans. Shortly after the war ended re-Stalinization affected Central Asia as well as the rest of the Soviet Union.

Joseph Stalin's death in 1953 and the ascendancy of Nikita Khrushchev brought some relief to the Muslims in the form of allowing a modicum of religious expression. However, this relief was soon overshadowed by ill-conceived agricultural reforms and the disastrous decision to divert the rivers feeding the Aral Sea for irrigation, the consequences of which are still felt in modern-day Uzbekistan. The eighteen-year tenure of Leonid Brezhnev (1964-1982) witnessed the gradual decay of much of Central Asia's infrastructure and the gradual growth of nationalist sentiment among the Muslims of Central Asia.

After the brief reigns of Yuri Andropov (1982-1984) and Konstantin Chernenko (1984-1985), Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost* allowed for the freer expression of these ideas and ideologies. Some scholars erroneously predicted that Muslims' nationalist ambitions would cause a major upheaval in the Soviet Union in the last decade of the twentieth century. However, as was the case in the 1905 and 1917 Revolutions, the Muslims of Central Asia played a relatively minor role in the final collapse of the Soviet Union. The governments of the Soviet Socialist Republics (SSRs) in Central Asia reluctantly declared their independence after it became clear that the Soviet Union was dead, bringing to an end one chapter in the continuing story of Russia's enigmatic relationship with Islam. How historians have written that chapter is another theme of this thesis

CHAPTER ONE
PRAGMATIC IMPERIALISM: THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF RUSSIAN
POLICY TOWARD CENTRAL ASIAN MUSLIMS

Russia has maintained political relations with Muslims in its realm since the conquest of Kazan in the sixteenth century. From then until the eighteenth century, relations with the Volga and Crimean Tatars constituted the bulk of Russian political interaction with adherents of Islam. The conquest of the Caucasus had a significant impact on Russian culture. Nevertheless, the subjugation of Central Asia in the second half of the nineteenth century brought Muslim affairs once again to the forefront of Tsarist imperial policy. Central Asia's geographical position on the periphery of the Russian empire, its economic potential, and its almost uniformly Muslim population compelled St. Petersburg to formulate a comprehensive approach to managing its political relationship with this region and its people. In the early stages of Russian involvement in Central Asia, politics were often closely wedded to military advances and developments. But the more enduring relationship between Russia and its Muslims was characterized in large part by political power-sharing arrangements during both the Tsarist and Soviet eras. The degree to which Muslims of the Russian empire were politically autonomous in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is an issue which historians have worked hard to gauge.

This chapter will review historical scholarship on the Russian political relationship with Muslims of the empire. With some notable exceptions, most

accounts of Islam in the Russian empire published before the 1950's were written by diplomats and travelers with little scholarly background. However, after the Second World War the Russian relationship with Islam became a major area of historical study for western scholars. Over the past sixty years, the most durable conclusion of this scholarship has involved the concept of pragmatic imperialism. This holds that Russian policy toward Islam was not guided by faith or ideology, but was made in the context of the central government's greater domestic and foreign policy goals. Accounts of the second half of the nineteenth century portray a Tsarist regime trying to maximize political and economic domination of Muslim regions while minimizing the resources devoted to their management. Histories of the early Soviet and Stalinist periods focus on the question of whether the early Soviet Union remained a colonialist power on the model of the Tsarist government. Histories of the post-World War II Soviet Union examine the destabilizing effect of Islam and Moscow's various attempts to counter it and preserve the political unity of the USSR.

I. Muslim Politics in Tsarist Russia, 1867-1917

Most studies of nineteenth-century Russian Islam address the origins of the Russian domination of Central Asia. With the conquest of that region, Muslims became the largest ethnic and religious minority in the Russian empire, and Islam became a major domestic policy issue for the Tsarist government. The standard account of Russian policy in Central Asia during this period is Richard Pierce's *Russian Central Asia, 1867-1917: A Study in Colonial Rule* (1960). Pierce's central thesis on the imperial governance of Muslim Central Asia is that

the relative peace earned from native co-operation was made possible by military subjugation. Russian authorities were able to complete worthwhile industrial- and agricultural-development projects in Central Asia because of the dominance they established during the initial conquest. In his first chapter, Pierce concludes: “The might exhibited in the Russian military operations, which planted the impression of absolute mastery in the minds of the Central Asians, laid the groundwork for subsequent rule.”¹ Pierce offers numerous examples of the application of this strategy to Russian political dealings with Muslims in Central Asian. He mentions how, after the final Russian subjugation of Bukhara, Russian Governor-General, Konstantin von Kaufmann, refused to allow the defeated emir to abdicate, rationalizing that “it was deemed important for Russia to have in Bukhara a ruler who had learned to recognize Russian supremacy and who had lost all taste for further hostilities.”²

Pierce offers three primary reasons for the Russian advance into the region: Russia’s historically unstable, sometimes violent relationship with the Kazakhs to the south of its Siberian territory; the lure of agriculturally rich, arable lands on the Kazakh steppe; and Russian fears of a growing British political and military presence moving north from India.³ Russia’s trouble with the Kazakhs was perhaps the most politically palatable motivation for expansion and was, predictably, the one which St. Petersburg presented to the international community. Pierce cites a Russian diplomat as explaining that Russia was

¹ Richard Pierce, *Russian Central Asia, 1867-1917: A Study in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), 45.

² *Ibid.*, 27.

³ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

expanding its borders for much the same reason that other great powers of the time were expanding theirs – namely, out of the need to “advance until they could establish secure frontiers.”⁴ Accepting this explanation for the venture into Central Asia essentially justifies Russian imperial expansionism *ad infinitum* since, obviously, each conquest required further expansion in order to secure what was just taken. Eventually the empire would become too large and unwieldy to effectively administer so, after the initial conquest of Central Asia, Tsarist officials in St. Petersburg directed their military commanders in Turkestan to cease further expansion and to focus on consolidating and securing the gains already made.⁵ How they proceeded with the consolidation of power in Central Asia would form the character of the Russian administration of the region.

Considering the generally negative connotations associated with the term “colonial,” it is significant to note that Pierce does not roundly condemn the Tsarist conquest of Central Asia. In the conclusion to his book, he finds that Russia’s various economic, strategic, and moral motivations for conquering Central Asia, “although not valid today, were adequate enough reasons” in the mid-nineteenth century.⁶ Pierce argues that Russian policy in the region, while generally inspired by national self-interest, nevertheless included an element of altruism. Pierce offers the abolition of Central Asian slavery as a policy that “served no practical end for Russia, but expressed humanitarianism and consciousness of the responsibility to be borne.”⁷ Pierce concludes that,

⁴ Ibid., 20.

⁵ Ibid., 21.

⁶ Ibid., 302.

⁷ Ibid., 303.

regardless of St. Petersburg's specific motivations, the Russian conquest of Central Asia had a dual effect on Central Asian Muslims: they gained modernity, but lost their freedom.⁸

The other standard narrative of Russia's political and military conquest of Central Asia is Seymour Becker's *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865-1924*, published in 1968. Becker's book draws primarily on original Russian archival sources and is often cited as a useful work on the early Russian involvement in Central Asia. Rather than chronicling the story of the Russian conquest of the whole of Turkestan, Becker focuses on Khiva and Bukhara, two regional powers situated in modern-day Uzbekistan. He follows the development of Russia's influence in these emirates from the Russian conquest until after the October Revolution. Like Pierce, Becker focuses more on the political and economic situation in the region than on cultural or religious matters.

Also similar to Pierce, the first major issue which Becker addresses is the question of Russia's motivations for its involvement in Central Asia. He makes the point that throughout its history, Russia had never been entirely disengaged from Central Asia, though the degree of that engagement increased substantially in the mid-nineteenth century. Regarding the scholarly historiography on the subject, Becker notes that he is somewhat at odds with the majority of Soviet historians of Central Asia. Up through 1968, there was a general consensus among Soviet historians that Tsarist Russia conquered Central Asia for purely

⁸ Ibid., 306.

economic gain.⁹ This consensus was inspired in part at least by the fact that it is very much in line with Marxist/Leninist theories on the role of economic forces in history. Becker writes that available archival evidence indicates that economic incentives were of little importance to military commanders and civilian policy makers. He argues instead that Russia became engaged in Central Asia for a variety of political and strategic reasons.

As a political narrative, one of the central themes in Becker's book is the policy of "nonintervention." This term refers to the Russian strategy of allowing indigenous rulers and institutions to continue to govern most of the local and provincial affairs of Russian Central Asia, similar to contemporaneous British policies in India and Egypt. Such a policy would lessen the economic and administrative burdens for the Russians while presumably promoting stability in the region by not giving the overt appearance of foreign rule. Becker's book follows the process by which the Tsarist government adopted, revised, and finally abandoned nonintervention. He holds that the demise of this policy was paralleled by a corresponding decay of Bukharan and Khivan sovereignty. The Tsarist state only abandoned nonintervention around the turn of the century when it became clear that indigenous leaders could not deliver the stability and security which was the policy's goal.¹⁰

Although Alexandre Bennigsen does not examine the subject nearly as thoroughly as do Pierce or Becker, his general portrayal of Tsarist Central Asia is largely similar. Bennigsen's *Islam in the Soviet Union* (1967) is a survey of

⁹ Seymour Becker, *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865-1924* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 21.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 234-236.

various aspects of the relationship between Islam and the Soviet state from 1917 until the mid-1960s. The section on the Tsarist era exists largely to provide background and context for his discussion of the Soviet Union. Bennigsen holds that Russian officials were largely unconcerned with the day-to-day functioning of Central Asian society: “Russian authorities... abstained from interfering in the internal affairs of the country, and contented themselves with maintaining law and order.”¹¹

In contrast with Becker and Bennigsen, Hélène Carrère d’Encausse suggests a largely economic interpretation for Russia’s involvement in Central Asia. Her book *Islam and the Russian Empire: Reform and Revolution in Central Asia* (1966) is an examination of social and political trends in Central Asia from the Russian conquest in 1867 until 1924. Carrère d’Encausse examines the interplay of nationalism, native reform movements, and the Bolshevik revolution in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Central Asia. She suggests that the introduction of Russian capitalism to Bukharan society was a profoundly consequential development that had marked social and political ramifications, namely that it destroyed Bukhara’s customary agrarian-based society. The title of her second chapter, “The Russian Conquest: Bukhara Face-to-Face with Capitalism and the West” suggests a conflict that was economic and social as well as military and political.¹² Carrère d’Encausse also discusses at length what she identifies as the development of a more class-stratified Bukharan social structure

¹¹ Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemerrier-Quellejey, *Islam in the Soviet Union* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 16.

¹² Hélène Carrère d’Encausse, *Islam and the Russian Empire: Reform and Revolution in Central Asia*, trans. Quintin Hoare (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 37.

in the wake of the Russian conquest. The section on this topic is titled “The Social Consequences of Capitalist Penetration,” and in it she emphasizes the destructive social impact that the Russian financial system had on Bukharan society.¹³ More significant, however, is her discussion of the development of a national bourgeois elite. She writes that “the appearance of capitalism in Bukhara brought with it a tragic crisis for the peasantry..., there was a corollary social phenomenon: the development and consolidation of a national bourgeoisie.”¹⁴ This purported tragic crisis disrupted the traditionally agrarian lifestyle of rural Bukharans and caused them to become a disenfranchised group in their own land. Carrère d’Encausse further develops this idea, adding a dimension of ethnic conflict to her analysis, writing that “as it developed and its resources increased, this commercial bourgeoisie – which depended directly on Russian capitalism – gradually thought of playing an economic role of its own; however, it then discovered the disadvantages of Russian competition.”¹⁵ While it does not necessarily negate the validity of her analysis, it seems clear that Carrère d’Encausse’s understanding of nineteenth-century Central Asia is at least in part influenced by theories of class struggle and capitalist development. This portrayal is consistent with her interpretation of the development of Muslim national identity, which will be examined in a later chapter.

In another essay, titled “Systematic Conquest, 1865-1884,” Carrère d’Encausse traces the series of political and military maneuvers that resulted in

¹³ Ibid., 44.

¹⁴ Ibid., 45.

¹⁵ Ibid., 46.

the first stage of the Russian conquest of Central Asia.¹⁶ Like many other scholars of Central Asia, Carrère d'Encausse argues that the Russian conquest of Turkestan was not defined by a single, climactic event but rather a methodical and, as the title of her essay describes, systematic effort on the part of the Tsarist government. In an interpretation slightly different from that argued in her book *Islam and the Russian Empire*, she concludes that the impetus for the Russian conquest of Central Asia may not have been entirely economic. Quoting a former Tsarist attaché to London, she suggests that the primary motivation for the Russian incursion may have been that Central Asia was the only place where Tsarist Russia could successfully check British imperial power.¹⁷ In another article she discusses the Tsarist policy toward Islam and the various Central Asian khans. She describes a Russian government that delegated most day-to-day governmental functions to native authorities. She explains that the “Russian intervention in local institutions was then very limited. For a long time the local and the Russian hierarchies coexisted with very loose ties.”¹⁸

The idea of the Russians trying to limit their direct involvement in Central Asian affairs as much as possible while still maintaining their dominance forms the core of Carrère d'Encausse's interpretation of the early years of the Russian presence in Central Asia. Since the influence of Islam and local rulers was different on the Kazakh steppe from what it was further south in Kokand and Bukhara, Russian authorities administered these areas differently. Nevertheless,

¹⁶ Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, “Systematic Conquest, 1865-1884” in Edward Allworth eds., *Central Asia: A Century of Russian Rule* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 129-150.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 149-150.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 154.

Carrère d'Encausse argues that Russian policy toward Central Asia in the nineteenth century was remarkably consistent. She summarizes her thesis in the middle of her essay on the political organization and administration of the region, writing that “the political organization of Central Asia was based on one definite principle: Manage the population without interfering in its affairs; above all, render the machinery of colonial domination progressively lighter and less costly.”¹⁹

Carrère d'Encausse is highly critical of General von Kaufmann during this period for approaching Islam with a strategy of neglect. She writes that “the rule to which von Kaufmann remained faithful all his life, (was that) he ignored Islam. He had a clear presentiment that Islam was the force around which the conquered people might unite, and he knew that the peace of the region was but relative.”²⁰ The figure of von Kaufmann in this period has been subjected to varying interpretations. Carrère d'Encausse portrays him in an overwhelmingly negative light, focusing on his neglect of Islam and his unwillingness to confront corruption among various Russian officials in Central Asia. She holds that although von Kaufmann made a concerted attempt at political and administrative reform in Central Asia, these efforts failed because of his reluctance to punish or dismiss corrupt Russian officials with whom he was well-connected. She writes that “when the Russian government took a hand in supervising local

¹⁹ Ibid., 159.

²⁰ Ibid., 162.

appointments, the system deteriorated. Men were chosen by virtue of their links with the Russian authorities and their alleged influence with them.”²¹

Pierce echoes this portrayal of von Kaufmann at the beginning of his chapter on “Administrative Reform and Development” in Central Asia. He presents an inept leader who was hardly aware of the criminality of his subordinates and associates:

Although the glaring defects in the Russian administration in Central Asia were evident, at first little could be done to improve the situation because of the obstacles von Kaufmann himself interposed. Loyal to those he considered to be his friends almost to the point of naiveté, he habitually overlooked all but the most insistent reports of wrongdoing.²²

While historians have criticized von Kaufmann’s corruption and nepotism, his strategy of neglect has become the central feature of his historical legacy. However, this legacy is not unanimously accepted, nor is the idea that the Imperial Russian relationship with Islam in general was characterized by non-interference. The non-interference thesis has been subject to a series of recent challenges, most thoroughly articulated by Robert Crews in his book *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (2006). In the book, Crews challenges the idea that the history of Russia and Islam is a reflection of a grand East/West “clash of civilizations.”²³ Instead, he argues that both the Russian state and Muslim religious leaders exploited each others’ unique authority to secure their respective interests.²⁴ He presents the idea that the

²¹ Ibid., 154.

²² Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 79.

²³ Robert Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 4.

²⁴ Ibid., 9-10.

relationship between Tsarist Russia and Islam was neither one of repression nor of neglect, but rather of mutually strengthening political and social relationships. If this argument is accepted, it bestows upon von Kaufmann and the other Tsarist authorities a more positive and enviable legacy. Instead of being incompetent and neglectful military bureaucrats, they become shrewd and pragmatic rulers, aware of the limits to their power and able to utilize indigenous institutions to achieve their goals of political stability and economic prosperity.

In Chapter Five of his book, Crews explains how this relationship shaped the Russian conquest and consolidation of Central Asia. In a historiographical discussion of the topic, he notes that Soviet as well as Western scholarship has stressed projects and initiatives which originated in and were directed by Moscow, and has portrayed Islam as “the chief impediment to the imperial integration of Central Asia.”²⁵ He asserts that historians to date have been too accepting of the Tsarist authorities’ attestations of non-interference. “Despite public pledges of non-interference,” he writes, “Russian officials recognized that to hold their territory in Asia they needed an Islam policy.”²⁶ This policy, Crews argues, was to use religious institutions as a means of consolidating and securing state control. Local religious leaders, in turn, used imperial institutions to more completely impose and enforce Islamic religious values. This newly-exploitable source of authority affected reforms within the Islamic religion itself. “The Russian approach to Islam served as a catalyst for religious change,” Crews

²⁵ Ibid., 243-244.

²⁶ Ibid., 245.

explains, “not apart from imperial institutions but squarely within them.”²⁷

Imperial Russian judicial and administrative institutions became forums for resolving religious disputes and preserving the moral fabric of Islamic society.

He argues that this intimate relationship between Islam and Imperial Russian institutions bolstered and solidified the power of Muslim religious leaders. He further explains that, in the eyes of the local religious establishment “the tsarist state remained the indispensable fountain of a just moral order, and thus of the authority of the men of religion.”²⁸

Those historians who do ascribe to the non-interference thesis tend to balance von Kaufmann’s corruption and nepotism with his record of developing the physical infrastructure of Central Asia. The construction of the Trans-Caspian Railroad was arguably the most significant Central Asian infrastructure development project to be undertaken by the Tsarist authorities. Historians of the region have reached a general consensus that the Trans-Caspian Railroad, also known as the Central Asian Railroad, was one of the main instruments of building Russian influence in Central Asia. Carrère d’Encausse’s section on “Capitalist Penetration” emphasizes the impact that the Russian Trans-Caspian Railroad had on the economy of the region.²⁹ The railroad “profoundly altered the entire economic life of Central Asia” and was, in her view, one of the primary tools the Russians used in opening Central Asia to capitalist penetration.³⁰ Becker also emphasizes the impact of the railroad, writing that “the catalyst of change, the

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 291.

²⁹ Carrère d’Encausse, *Islam and the Russian Empire*, 39.

³⁰ Ibid.

Central Asian Railroad, was the most important development in the region since the Russian conquest.”³¹ In an essay in Allworth’s *Central Asia: A Century of Russian Rule*, Ian Murray Matley also emphasizes the development of a rail transportation system in Central Asia, writing that “there is no doubt that the greatest Russian impact on the traditional economy of Central Asia was in transportation.” He continues to emphasize that the railroad allowed the Russians to develop Central Asia into a cotton-based economy and a new market for Russian manufactured goods.³² Pierce acknowledges the impact of the railroad, but discusses its limitations as well, namely that much freight still had to be shipped across the Caspian Sea.³³ Pierce, furthermore, sees the railroad as a vessel for the transit of ideas into Central Asia. In his chapter on the Revolution of 1905, Pierce mentions that the railroad “provided a ready avenue for the spread of revolutionary ideas.”³⁴ In his portrayal, therefore, the railroad becomes another example of a Russian-initiated and Russian-financed effort, such as the Central Asian public education system, in which the Tsarist state contributed to nurturing the social trends which would contribute to its own collapse.

The construction of the Central Asian Railroad was a large component of the overall economic development of the region. Various historians have suggested that Russia’s motivations for becoming involved in Central Asia were primarily economic. Becker notes that, regardless of whether or not this interpretation is accurate, there was a large gulf between Russia’s economic

³¹ Becker, *Russian Protectorates in Central Asia*, 175.

³² Ian Murray Matley, “Industrialization,” in Allworth, *Central Asia: A Century of Russian Rule*, 330.

³³ Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 188.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 235.

intentions and its actual impact.³⁵ The greatly expanded cultivation of cotton was another significant component of Central Asian economic development. Becker and other historians of the region have noted that the sharp decline in American cotton exports caused by the American Civil War 1861-1865 gave Russia an excellent motivation to increase cotton production in Central Asia.³⁶ After the introduction of American cotton and cotton-milling techniques, cotton became Central Asia's chief cash crop, and this trend continued through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.³⁷ The Russian introduction of cotton into Central Asia had calamitous social effects. It caused the economic and political disenfranchisement of Turkestan's peasantry and led directly to the rise of a modern capitalist economy in the region. The cotton economy became the primary foundation of the economic relationship between Central Asia and the Tsarist and Soviet governments, and was a significant and durable source of conflict. The historiography on the story of the cotton economy in Central Asia is, therefore, significant, and will be examined in Chapter Four of this thesis.

Russia's victory in the war with Bukhara (1865-1868) made this economic transformation possible. It placed the Russians in the position of political authority necessary to overhaul the physical and financial infrastructure of Central Asia. It also meant that native leaders were necessarily relieved of a great deal of their political authority, and most historians regard that war as the first major assault on Central Asian sovereignty. Although the treaty concluded at the end of the conflict was ostensibly only a commercial agreement between two sovereign

³⁵ Becker, *Russian Protectorates in Central Asia*, 170.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 21-22. and Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 164.

³⁷ Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 165-166.

states, many historians agree that the treaty was brought about by the force of arms and the military subjugation of Bukhara. Pierce writes that “though nominally independent the emir was thereafter an obedient vassal of Russia.”³⁸ Becker explains that “Bukhara, like Kokand, had lost much of its independence of action. Both states were in fact at Russia’s mercy.”³⁹ Russia succeeded at imposing this dependency in part by disallowing the abdication of Muzaffar ad-Din, the Emir of Bukhara from 1860 until 1885. Bukhara’s defeat under his leadership had naturally hurt his credibility among the various other nobles in Bukhara. Muzaffar al-Din asked for permission to abdicate and to go on a *hajj* to Mecca, but the Russians compelled him to stay on the throne in Bukhara, because, in Pierce’s words, “it was deemed important for Russia to have in Bukhara a ruler who had learned to recognize Russian supremacy.”⁴⁰ Becker echoes this interpretation, writing that “Muzaffar was probably the most reliable ruler possible for Bukhara, because he was chastened by his defeats of the past three years and was dependent entirely upon Russia for the retention of his shaky throne.”⁴¹ This policy, however, was not durable and the Tsarist government spent the next half-century revising its policy in efforts to maintain dominance in Central Asia. Ironically, as Becker notes, the final Russo-Khivan agreement was signed less than a month before the Romanov dynasty itself ceased to exist.⁴²

³⁸ Ibid., 27.

³⁹ Becker, *Russia’s Protectorates in Central Asia*, 42.

⁴⁰ Pierce, *Russian Central Asia*, 27.

⁴¹ Becker, *Russia’s Protectorates in Central Asia*, 41.

⁴² Ibid., 236.

II. From the Bolshevik Revolution until the Death of Joseph Stalin

The period from the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 until the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953 saw Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the other Russian Muslim regions form into the political entities that would become independent, sovereign nation-states when the Soviet Union collapsed. Stalin dominates the story of the Muslim nationalities during this period, first as Vladimir Lenin's Commissar of Nationalities and later as General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). In his first post, Stalin was charged with managing Soviet nationality policy. In the early and tenuous post-revolutionary years this meant securing for the Bolsheviks the political and military loyalty of Russia's various ethnic and religious minorities. As General Secretary, Stalin devoted much of his energies to developing "forms of nationhood" and cultivating national intellectual elites among the Muslim ethnicities of the Soviet Union. Whether these efforts were an attempt at building actual Central Asian nations, or just a continuation of Tsarist colonial oppression in a new guise, is the central question which scholarship on this period of Soviet Islam tries to answer. The next few pages will examine how historians have variously approached this topic.

Richard Pipes' *The Formation of the Soviet Union* (1954) is one of the standard accounts of how the USSR took shape as a reconstituted empire, and this account necessarily includes much about the Soviet Muslim peoples in Central Asia and elsewhere. The majority of this discussion is contained in Chapter IV, titled "Soviet Conquest of the Moslem Borderlands."⁴³ The term "conquest"

⁴³ Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997), 155-192.

refers to the Bolshevik military campaigns in these regions as well as to their political and diplomatic efforts to assert Communist Party control. Pipes frames the history of early Soviet policy toward the Muslim nationalities as the interplay of two competing interests: a drive to establish unchallenged political dominance versus an effort to win the sympathy and support of Muslims. He summarizes this interpretation at the end of the chapter:

Toward the Muslims, the communists therefore pursued a dual course: on the one hand, seizure of power, overthrow of all native institutions which challenged or refused to recognize Soviet authority, and centralization of political power; on the other, a bid for the sympathies of all strata of Muslim society by economic or cultural concessions and an alliance with Muslim nationalists.⁴⁴

Pipes notes that the Soviets' "bid for the sympathies" of Russian Muslims involved co-opting pan-Turkism, pan-Islamism, and other Muslim nationalist tendencies which the Soviets would later forcefully suppress. He provides evidence of this tactic with a famous proclamation of the fledgling Soviet government promising to liberate Russian Muslims – Turkic Central Asians and Tatars alike – from the religious oppression of the old regime.⁴⁵ As part of the campaign to secure the support of the Muslim masses, Pipes discusses at length Stalin's brief association with Mustafa Sultan Galiev – a Tatar intellectual who in the early 1920s advocated the idea that for communism to succeed in Asia, it must adapt to Islamic cultural norms and an agrarian economy.⁴⁶

Muslim political participation during the First World War and Civil War was not limited to the Jadids and the Sultangalievists. By the beginning of the

⁴⁴ Ibid., 192.

⁴⁵ This particular proclamation is also cited by Bennigsen and Quelquejay in a discussion of the same idea in *Islam in the Soviet Union*, 82.

⁴⁶ Pipes, *Formation of the Soviet Union*, 168-170.

First World War, Russian Muslims were represented by a collection of nationwide Islamic organizations. Predictably, these groups were involved in shaping the extent and nature of Muslim political participation in the years during and immediately after the October Revolution and the Russian Civil War. Their work and influence is a major theme of Alexandre Bennigsen's *Islam in the Soviet Union*. The February and October Revolutions and the initial organization of the Soviet Union are covered in Part II of Bennigsen's book, titled "Revolution, Civil War, and Bolshevik Triumph 1917-1923."⁴⁷ The central theme in these chapters is the struggle for unity among the various Muslim political groups in the Russian empire during this time. Bennigsen presents a Muslim political movement that was fractured along ideological, geographical, and socioeconomic lines. These fractures are perhaps best illustrated in his discussion of the Volga Tatars. At the time, the Kazan' Socialist Committee existed as a nationalist umbrella organization representing a wide spectrum of Tatar political affiliations. The Committee was ostensibly associated with the Bolshevik Party and portrayed itself as such in its propaganda, but in actuality it conducted itself very much as a Muslim nationalist organization, working to create a Muslim "national" socialism and liberate Russian Muslims from European colonial hegemony.⁴⁸ Despite their many significant political differences, the Tatar elite were able to present a united front in their efforts to secure the interests of the Tatar people. Bennigsen explains that the Bolsheviks intended the Kazan' Socialist Committee and others like it to be a tool with which to indoctrinate the Russian Muslim intelligentsia

⁴⁷ Ibid., 65-119.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 75-77.

with Communist ideals, but that in effect it did more to ferment the development of a Muslim nationalist elite.⁴⁹ In his conclusion to Chapter V, Bennigsen observes that “it would seem that the Tatars, aware of the rapid decay of the Russian state, were pressing ahead... to protect their national interests in the storm which by this time was evidently brewing.”⁵⁰

Azade-Ayşe Rorlich presents much the same portrayal of the Kazan’ Socialist Committee in her book *The Volga Tatars: A Profile in National Resilience* (1986). The book is a survey of this Muslim ethnic group from the origins of the Kazan’ khanate in the fifteenth century through the post-World War Two period. Like Bennigsen, Rorlich describes the committee as a nationalist organization that “illustrated best the dynamics of unity in diversity.”⁵¹ Rorlich describes a Bolshevik party that tolerated the committee’s nationalist and religious tendencies because it viewed the organization as an instrument through which to communicate with the Tatar people. However, the Bolsheviks failed to appreciate that, for the members themselves, “Marxism was only secondary to allegiance to national goals.”⁵² The political relationship portrayed here by Rorlich is illustrative of her larger interpretation of the political relationship between the Tatars and the Soviets during this period. To Rorlich, the story of the Tatar people from 1917 through the beginning of the Second World War was the story of the competing, but not mutually exclusive, ideologies of Marxism/Leninism and Tatar nationalism. She holds that Tatar political

⁴⁹ Ibid., 77.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 80.

⁵¹ Azade-Ayşe Rorlich, *The Volga Tatars: A Profile in National Resilience* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1986), 126.

⁵² Ibid., 127.

organizations during this period espoused and promoted the Communist agenda in order to be able to exist and promote their most vital interests – the development of a strong Tatar nation.⁵³

Rorlich’s interpretation of the Tatars’ political relationship with Communism and with the early Soviet government is consistent with how many other historians have portrayed the broader Muslim political relationship with the Bolsheviks during this period. The political relationship between the early Soviets and Islam is concisely defined in Galina Yemelianova’s short book *Russia and Islam: A Historical Survey* (2002). At the beginning of a chapter titled “Muslims under Soviet Rule,” Yemelianova explains that “the initial Bolshevik policy towards Islam and Muslims was characterized by considerable flexibility, tolerance, and tactfulness.”⁵⁴ Yemelianova’s mention of Bolshevik “tolerance and tactfulness” is similar to Pipes’ mention of an early Soviet “bid for the sympathies” of Russian Muslims. Both historians, writing nearly a half-century apart from each other, understand early Bolshevik policy toward Russian Muslims to be a calculated attempt to consolidate power among a large and potentially volatile ethnic and religious minority. Yemelianova extends her portrayal of Russian political policy toward Islam to the more specific subject of the Russian conquest of Central Asia: the Russian advance in that region was, she writes, “inconsistent and determined by the political, ethnic, and ideological circumstances at a particular locality in a particular moment of time.”⁵⁵

⁵³ Ibid., 127-141.

⁵⁴ Galina Yemelianova, *Russia and Islam: A Historical Survey* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 103.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 109.

She credits this assessment of Russian policy in Central Asia to one of Hélène Carrère d'Encausse's essays in *Central Asia: 130 Years of Russian Dominance*. The essay, "Civil War and New Governments," discusses how Soviet leaders confronted the challenges to Bolshevik power after the 1917 Revolutions. Carrère d'Encausse argues that the Bolshevik strategy in large part consisted of compromising various communist principles such as class struggle and abolition of private property in the interests of securing Muslim support for the Bolshevik cause in Central Asia.⁵⁶

There as in other Muslim regions, the Bolshevik strategy to secure indigenous support also involved enlisting the vocal support of Muslim communists. Yemelianova explains how Sultan-Galiev and other Tatar communists made a concerted effort to downplay communist atheism and gender and class egalitarianism and emphasize parallels – actual or imagined – between Islam and communism. Chief among these parallels was the shared Muslim and Marxist principle of communalism, of putting the interests of the group above those of the individual. The viability of these efforts has been questioned by other historians, but Yemelianova concludes that "on the whole, Muslim communism provided a valuable framework for a productive relationship between the Russian center and the Muslim periphery."⁵⁷ She believes that the effectiveness of the strategy of the Muslim communists has been underrated, and that its effect was

⁵⁶ Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, "Civil War and New Governments" in Edward Allworth, ed., *Central Asia, 130 Years of Russian Dominance, A Historical Overview* 3rd Ed. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 235-247. This book was re-published every ten years with extra essays included in successive editions. The title of the first book was *Central Asia: A Century of Russian Rule*.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 103-104.

perhaps most significant in forestalling an alliance between anti-Bolshevik Muslims and White Russians.⁵⁸ The significance of the Sultan-Galievists and the Jadids, and the various other Muslim reform movements, have proven to be a significant area of historical inquiry in and of themselves, and the scholarship on these movements will be examined in a later chapter.

The degree to which the Bolsheviks tolerated Islam or cooperated with its leaders is widely disputed. In *To Moscow, Not Mecca: The Soviet Campaign Against Islam in Central Asia, 1917-1941* (2001), Shoshana Keller traces what she understands as an aggressive and vicious campaign against Islamic institutions, customs, and religiosity in Central Asia. Her first chapter provides the historical background of Islam in pre-Revolutionary Central Asia, and in it she portrays Russian authorities who were at once fearful, dismissive, and ignorant of Islam as a social force. What other historians have portrayed as neglect or non-interference, Keller presents as an utter lack of strategy or policy. “Imperial Russia never did resolve the place of Muslims in the empire,” she writes: “the actions of Russian officials were dictated by current needs and prejudices rather than any coherent policy, resulting in a muddle.”⁵⁹

What was a “muddle” during the Tsarist era became a concerted anti-religious campaign under the Bolsheviks. Keller believes that Soviet power in Central Asia was simply an ideologically-motivated reincarnation of the Imperial Russian Empire. A Russian-dominated government still imposed its will on the

⁵⁸ Ibid., 105.

⁵⁹ Shoshana Keller, *To Moscow, Not Mecca: The Soviet Campaign Against Islam in Central Asia, 1917-1941* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers), 27.

oppressed Muslim peoples of Central Asia.⁶⁰ *To Moscow, Not Mecca* discusses various aspects of the anti-religious effort, to include attacks on Islamic institutions, clergy, and belief in general. Keller portrays these attacks as Moscow-directed initiatives, with participation but little real leadership from Central Asian communists. She finds that most anti-religious agitation on the part of Central Asians was a symbolic gesture intended to appease communist authorities.⁶¹ The notable exception to this rule was the anti-religious efforts of Mustafa Sultan-Galiev, a prominent Tatar communist who supported the ultimate goal of the campaign but who disagreed with some of the specific tactics.⁶² Their motivations for this effort were clear and unequivocal: atheism was a central component of communist ideology, and the new state's fear of any competing institution or ideology.⁶³ Keller concludes that the Soviet anti-religious campaign in Central Asia was a success in that it severely damaged Islamic institutions and religiosity in the region, but that it failed to disarm Islam as a cultural identifier and social force.⁶⁴

III. From Khrushchev through Perestroika and Collapse

The period from the death of Stalin until the accession of Gorbachev and his perestroika reforms was until recently a neglected and understudied era of Soviet history. While there is a glut of historical and sociological studies on Soviet Islam from the 1980's, the same subject during the 1960's and 1970's was comparatively less well studied. Yaacov Roi makes reference to this

⁶⁰ Ibid., 67.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., 52-53.

⁶³ Ibid., 248-249.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 247-255.

historiographical gap in the preface to his book, *Islam in the Soviet Union: From the Second World War to Gorbachev* (2000). This 764-page tome is the most exhaustive study of the Soviet relationship with Islam during the post-war period, and it examines multiple aspects of the Russian relationship with Islam after World War II. Roi devotes much of the book to defining the role and relative influence of the Council on the Affairs of Religious Cults (CARC) and the other bureaucracies which influenced and enforced Soviet policy towards the Muslims. He also attempts to ascertain the specific level of Islamic religiosity practiced by the various Soviet Muslim ethnicities. In the introduction, Roi divides the history of post-war Soviet policy into four distinct phases that parallel the general trend of Soviet relations with other relations. The first, during and immediately after the Second World War, was characterized by a willingness to tolerate religion in an attempt to secure maximum support for the war effort. The period 1947-1954 saw a return to more repressive policies toward Islam and other religions. The first three years of the post-Stalin “thaw” saw a brief return to a policy of liberalization and religious freedom, but the years 1958-1964 experienced a reversal of this policy. Finally, the Brezhnev era (1964-1982) was characterized by a tacit toleration of Islam in the interest of stability and normalcy.⁶⁵

Part Five of Roi’s book is specifically focused on Moscow’s policy toward Islam and the Soviet Muslim peoples. Roi finds that it was not characterized by any consistent, identifiable trends. He argues that Soviet policy makers did not make an Islam-specific policy, but rather believed that a broad Soviet religious

⁶⁵ Yaacov Roi, *Islam in the Soviet Union: From the Second World War to Gorbachev* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1984), 10.

policy would be sufficient for managing Islam. He suggests that the Soviets' ambiguous stance on Islam was in large part descended from a similar "lackadaisical" attitude among the Tsarist administrators of Central Asia.⁶⁶ In this interpretation, there is an indirect political lineage between von Kaufmann's strategy of non-interference and the prevailing Soviet approach towards Islam.

The perception of intellectual lineage between the Tsarist and Soviet policies regarding Islam is also addressed in Geoffrey Wheeler's essay "Islam and the Soviet Union." The essay, derived from a lecture given at the Central Asian Research Centre in London, was published in *Asian Affairs* in May 1979.

Wheeler writes that "the Soviets' attitude towards Islamic culture resembled that of the Tsarist regime in the sense that they at first believed that it would quickly give way before the Russian culture and way of life."⁶⁷ However, Wheeler argues that the two regimes fundamentally differed in that the Soviets took a far more active and aggressive role in promoting social and economic modernization and the adoption of a uniquely "Soviet" form of existence. Wheeler's thesis is that an overly aggressive Soviet campaign of modernization and social reform caused resentment among the Muslim peoples and galvanized their resistance to the Soviet regime.⁶⁸ He offers three indicators to support this hypothesis, the most prominent of which is that the newly developed Soviet Muslim intelligentsia embarked on a "do-it-yourself modernization of Islam" – namely that the Soviet system educated and modernized Muslims to the extent that central Communist tutelage was no longer necessary. He also argues that the modern Muslim

⁶⁶ Ibid., 562-563.

⁶⁷ Geoffrey Wheeler, "Islam in the Soviet Union," *Asian Affairs* 10 (October 1979), 247.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 248.

resentment toward Soviet rule was not new, but that Central Asians and the other Russian Muslim ethnic groups “have always resented the Russian presence in their midst.”⁶⁹ Wheeler concludes that “Soviet hopes of achieving the cultural and biological function of its Moslems with those of the rest of the Union are not being realized, and are perhaps unrealizable, by the methods being used.”⁷⁰

Wheeler’s argument assumes that there was always an inherent, deep-seated Muslim resentment of Russian rule. He writes that “resistance to sweeping Soviet reforms has inevitably been passive and for many years there have been no overt signs of dissidence.”⁷¹ However, this argument does not allow for the Tatar *Sultangalievist* movement, the Kyrgyz *Basmachi* revolts, or the resistance to the Soviet unveiling campaign in Uzbekistan. While Wheeler’s neglect of the unveiling campaign could perhaps be explained by the lack of archival access, the other two challenges to Soviet rule were well documented in Western historiography when he wrote the essay.⁷² His argument also assumes that Soviet policy toward Muslims was made with the ultimate goal of cultural and even biological integration with the whole of the Soviet people.

That ultimate goal of Soviet policy towards Muslim Central Asians and other ethnicities of the Soviet Union has been the subject of extensive and sometimes contentious academic debate. One of the classic works on the subject is Yuri Slezkine’s article in *Slavic Review*, titled “The USSR as a Communal

⁶⁹ Ibid..

⁷⁰ Ibid., 251.

⁷¹ Ibid., 248.

⁷² In researching *Veiled Empire: Gender & Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), Douglas Northrop drew heavily on newly-available Soviet archival resources in Moscow and Tashkent.

Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism.” The essay is, in his words, “an attempt to recognize the earnestness of Bolshevik efforts on behalf of ethnic particularism.”⁷³ Slezkine argues that these efforts were indeed undertaken in earnest, and that they were largely aimed at overcoming the ethnic distrust and resentment prevalent among the oppressed ethnicities of the former Russian empire.⁷⁴ Furthermore, he disagrees with the popular consensus that Soviet nationality policy was a cynical attempt to keep Soviet ethnicities in perpetual conflict:

Bolshevik officials in Moscow saw the legitimation of ethnicity as a concession to ethnic grievances and developmental constraints, not as a brilliant divide-and-rule stratagem, and confidently asserted, after Lenin and Stalin, that the more genuine the ‘national demarcation’ the more successful the drive to internationalism.⁷⁵

While Slezkine’s article is not specific to the Muslim ethnicities of Central Asia and Tatarstan, the issues he addresses are clearly relevant to these peoples. The “divide-and-rule stratagem” that he references is a common explanation for the Soviet Union’s complex system of “national” political units, to include the five Soviet Socialist Republics (SSRs) in Central Asia.

Other scholars, too, have brought to light information showing that the Soviet government strove to make these new republics viable, self-supporting political units, and to do so it actively promoted the creation of national intellectual elites among the “backward” nationalities. The Soviet government’s method of achieving this goal was called *korenizatsiia* (“indigenization” or

⁷³ Yuri Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,” *Slavic Review* 53 (Summer 1994), 415.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 420.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 430.

“nativization”) and is the primary focus of Terry Martin’s book *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (2001). The book’s title refers to an important aspect of *korenizatsiia* in that the policy involved specific hiring and educational quotas for members of nationalities within their respective national republics. Aside from building national intellectual and professional elites, Martin explains, the overall goal of *korenizatsiia* and Soviet nationalities policy was to preempt the threat of ethnic nationalism. In his introduction, Martin sums up the logic behind Soviet nationalities policy: “nationalism will be disarmed by granting the forms of nationhood.”⁷⁶ Martin also squarely concurs with Slezkine’s characterization of nationalities policy as a genuine attempt at promoting the development of ethnic particularism, writing that “the Soviet Union did systematically promote the distinctive national identity and national self-consciousness of its non-Russian populations.”⁷⁷ He argues that, while in the mid-1930’s Soviet authorities came to elevate the status of the former “oppressor” Russians, along with their culture and their language, there was still never any attempt to Russify the Soviet Union. *The Affirmative Action Empire* ends with the conclusion that “the Soviet Union was not a nation-state. No attempt was ever made to create a Soviet nationality or to turn the Soviet Union into a Russian nation-state.”⁷⁸

Martin’s book and many others examined in this thesis were written with the primary purpose of establishing the historical legacy of some aspect of the

⁷⁶ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 8.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 461.

Russian relationship with Central Asian Islam. However, some of the scholarship on the topic aimed to provide historical context for understanding the current situation of Central Asian Muslims. Shortly after Leonid Brezhnev's death in 1982, two books were published which attempted to place the Soviet Union's contemporary relationship with Central Asian Islam in historical context. Michael Rywkin's *Moscow's Muslim Challenge: Soviet Central Asia* (1982) examines briefly the political, economic, and social place of Central Asian Muslims in the Tsarist and Soviet empires during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Rywkin argues that the rise of Islamic nationalism and the geopolitical importance of Central Asia would cause the region to become the Soviet Union's "number one internal occupation by the last decade of our century."⁷⁹ Alexandre Bennigsen's and Marie Broxup's short survey, *The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State* (1983), concisely examines the development of this threat and analyzes the various strategies which the Tsarist and Soviet states employed to confront it. Much of the last chapter, titled "Soviet Islam in Perspective," is devoted to predicting the future of the coexistence between Islam and the Soviet state. The authors conclude that, on balance, communism was a workable ideology for Russia's Muslims, but that these groups could not be indefinitely denied their national self-determination. The last paragraph in the book is particularly apt: "barring a major crisis...the present status quo in the Soviet Union will be

⁷⁹ Michael Rywkin, *Moscow's Muslim Challenge: Soviet Central Asia* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1982), 153.

uncompromisingly preserved.... The final, inescapable, violent crisis will be delayed, but for how long?"⁸⁰

Conclusion

Few historians have chosen to write on the specific subject of Tsarist and Soviet political policy towards the Muslims. The topic is difficult to isolate and leads seamlessly into discussions of Islamic nationalism, revolts, and various other facets of the relationship between Islam and Russian rule. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify and isolate some general trends in how Western historians have portrayed the Russian political relationship with Islam in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. First, there was until recently a general agreement that during the nineteenth century Tsarist administrators approached Islam with a policy of official apathy. Neither suppressing nor supporting the religion and its associated customs, the Tsarist administrators were chiefly concerned with maintaining stability in Central Asia and elsewhere in order to maximize strategic and economic returns. Recently, however, Robert Crews has strongly challenged this thesis, and either the affirmation or rejection of his challenge is likely to become a significant trend in the historiography of the topic. Second, there is no consensus regarding the issue of whether and to what extent the early Soviet Union remained a colonial state. This question is important to those attempting to judge the legacy of the Soviet Union since much of the propaganda, and indeed the core ideology of the state, emphasized the necessity of national self-determination. Arguing that the Soviet Union remained colonialist, as does Richard Pipes, for example,

⁸⁰ Alexandre Bennigsen & Marie Broxup, *The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 152. It is worth noting that Broxup is Bennigsen's daughter.

undermines one of the key justifications for the state's legitimacy. Martin emphasizes this dynamic in *The Affirmative Action Empire*, writing that the Soviet Union defined itself as "an anti-imperial state." Soviet leaders "were not indifferent to the word 'empire.' They rejected it explicitly."⁸¹ Lastly, the scholarship on the political nature of Russian Islam since the death of Stalin tends to focus on how much the religion challenged the authority of the Soviet state and ultimately contributed to its collapse. Histories of the subject published before 1991 tend to focus on nationalism and the potential destabilizing effect of Islam, while works published after the collapse attempt to determine to what extent Islam contributed to the dissolution of the Soviet state. The most significant of these phenomena was Islamic nationalism. Through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Islamic nationalism grew from a weak and transient social phenomenon to one of the most significant threats to Moscow's power. The next chapter will examine how Western historians have portrayed this powerful and fluid force.

⁸¹ Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 19.

CHAPTER TWO

A HISTORY OF PEOPLE, FAITH, AND PROGRESS: WESTERN UNDERSTANDINGS OF ISLAMIC NATIONALISM IN RUSSIA

In the aftermath of the breakup of the USSR, nationalism has become a point of fascination for scholars of modern Russia. In a parallel trend, the nations and peoples of the Tsarist and Soviet empires have also provided numerous case studies and models for scholars of nationalism. Most studies of Islam in the Tsarist and Soviet periods include significant sections about nationalism. Indeed, in many instances the development of nationalism is the overarching theme. The story of this movement in Central Asia and Tatarstan is necessarily closely tied to other historical developments such as official policies and the intellectual and social development in these regions. The central debate surrounding nationalism during the Tsarist era centers on the extent of national consciousness that existed among Russia's Muslims, if at all. Historians of the early Soviet era have focused much of their effort on trying to understand the actual purpose and ultimate effect of Stalin's nationalities policy. Histories examining the post-Stalinist period until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 have attempted to gauge the destabilizing effect of Islamic nationalism in a stagnating imperial polity. One of the chief ironies in the story of Islamic nationalism in all of these eras is that Russian authorities believed that the social and economic modernization of the Muslims in their midst would dissuade them from insisting on greater national autonomy. In

reality, these efforts had much the opposite effect, and this irony has been noticed and examined by many historians.

In telling the story of Islamic nationalism in the Tsarist and Soviet empires, Western scholars have written a history of people, faith, and progress. These three factors are the overarching themes in the Western historical understanding of Islamic nationalism in Russia during the Tsarist and Soviet periods. In their emphasis on social bonds and shared cultural practices, historians have cast the idea of a single, unified people as the foundation for notions of nationalism. The Islamic faith has been portrayed as the most important identifier which made Central Asians and Tatars different from their Russian rulers. Finally, historians have found that social progress – namely literacy and technological modernization – has been the catalyst which has ignited and enabled nationalist drives for self-determination. This chapter will examine how Western historians have portrayed the balance and interaction between these factors in their studies of the development of Islamic nationalism in Russia.

I. Finding the Genesis of Muslim Nationalism in the Russian Empire

“It cannot be too strongly emphasized,” wrote Geoffrey Wheeler in 1964, “that in Central Asia there was nothing whatever in the way of national sentiment or state loyalty” before the Russian conquest.¹ Here, Wheeler takes an absolute, unqualified position on the status of nationalism and national identity in Tsarist Central Asia. He argues that loyalties in the region during the mid-nineteenth

¹ Geoffrey Wheeler, *The Modern History of Soviet Central Asia* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964), 65.

century were almost entirely to family, tribe, and other sub-national units.² While not a professional historian, Wheeler's interpretation of this topic is representative of that of many scholars of Muslim nationalism in the Russian empire. If there was indeed "nothing in the way of national sentiment or state loyalty" among Russia's Muslims at the time of conquest, one of the most significant questions on the subject is: When did it begin to develop? There are two general scholarly consensuses regarding the genesis of Islamic nationalism in the Russian Empire: that the 1905 Revolution provided energy and stimulus to burgeoning national movements, and that the Tatars were at the forefront. The primacy of the Tatars and the significance of the 1905 Revolution is emphasized both in general surveys of Russian imperialism as well as in more specific studies. In *The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History* (2001), Andreas Kappeler discusses the development of Tatar national identity in his chapter on "The National Challenge." The Tatar national movement, he explains, was fueled by an educational and literary rebirth among that ethnic group, and was closely associated with the *Jadid* reform movement. A small cadre of Tatar intellectuals, led by Ismail Bey Gaspirali, provided the impetus for the movement.³ Through a dual program of social reform and religious revival, these elites began to build the foundations of a Tatar nation. Kappeler's emphasis on the social reforms of the Jadids illustrates his belief that social progress – in this case the development of a Tatar literary tradition – was a necessary precondition for the rise of a full-fledged national movement.

² Ibid.

³ Andreas Kappeler, *The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History*, trans. Alfred Clayton (Essex: Pearson Education Limited, 2001), 234-236.

Recent works on the development of Muslim nationalism in Central Asia have taken issue with the idea that there was “nothing whatsoever in the way of national sentiment” in pre-colonial Central Asia. These works have argued that there were indeed elements of national identity among the peoples of Central Asia prior to the Russian conquest. This challenge has been argued most convincingly by Adrienne Edgar in *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (2004). Although most of the book is about the early history of Turkmenistan as a Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR), in her introduction and first chapter she argues that many of the foundations necessary for a modern nation were actually present among the Turkmen people long before Soviet nation-building commenced. Edgar writes that “although Turkmen identity had few concrete political or economic manifestations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the idea that the tribes shared a glorious ancestry and history – and the hope that they might one day unite – has long been a staple of Turkmen discourse.”⁴ Here, Edgar is emphasizing the importance of common ethnic bonds – the idea of a single, unified “people” – in building the foundations of a modern nation.

Perhaps no Muslim ethnicity has had more collective experience with Russian policy than the Tatars. As the first Muslims to become subjects of the Tsar in the sixteenth century, the Tatar people have had a long and intimate relationship with Russian rule. In studies of the Russian relationship with Islam, historians have consistently portrayed the Tatars as the ethnic group at the forefront of Muslim social, cultural, and political developments in Russia and the

⁴ Adrienne Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 7.

Soviet Union. The primacy of the Tatars and the significance of the Revolution are perhaps most clearly articulated in Richard Pierce's book, *Russian Asia: A Study in Colonial Rule* (1960). In his chapter on "The Rise of National Consciousness," Pierce explains that, while Central Asians were not directly involved in the events of the 1905 Revolution, they did draw a degree of inspiration from the it. Despite the best efforts of the Tsarist administrators, "some elements of native society slowly assimilated new ideas and influences brought by the conqueror."⁵

Some societies assimilated these ideas more quickly than others, and among the Muslims of the Russian Empire, "the Volga Tatars took the lead."⁶ In his discussion of the growth of national sentiment among Muslim Central Asians, Pierce also hints at a pan-Islamic component to this phenomenon:

Central Asians receptive to new influences found kindred spirits among other Moslem peoples of the empire. During the second half century of the nineteenth century a stirring began among all these peoples, a distant reverberation of the contemporary nationalism of Europe, a restlessness at living under infidel rule, a growing awareness that while the rest of the world moved on, they had been standing still.⁷

His reference to "a restlessness at living under infidel rule" suggests that, to some degree, Muslims in the Russian Empire had begun to absorb and accept the concept of a right to national self-determination. It also suggests that there was a distinctly religious component to this stirring, that the Muslims of the Russian Empire felt they were entitled to be ruled by native leaders, or at least by Islamic coreligionists. Hélène Carrère d'Encausse as well stresses the significance of the

⁵ Richard Pierce, *Russian Central Asia: A Study in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), 249.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁷ *Ibid.*

Tatars and the 1905 Revolution. In her discussion of reform movements in Bukhara, Carrère d'Encausse explains that the movements were led and inspired by the Tatars, who, "as throughout Turkestan, furnished the new ideas."⁸ In her chapter on "National Awakening in Turkestan," d'Encausse writes that from 1905 onward,

Russia's Muslims envisaged a possible end to colonial domination. All the rancours and problems which racked the empire's Muslim periphery were linked to the dream that was suddenly taking shape: the dream of independence. The 1905 revolution further accelerated this awakening of national consciousness among Russia's Muslims.⁹

The language that the aforementioned scholars use when describing the genesis of Islamic nationalism in the Russian empire is noteworthy. There is a distinctly triumphant undertone to much of their generalizations and conclusions regarding the topic. This voice is present in Pierce ("a distant reverberation... a restlessness at living under infidel rule") and Carrère d'Encausse ("the dream that was suddenly taking shape: the dream of independence"). Their tone is instructive in that both Pierce and Carrère d'Encausse first published their books in the 1960s, a decade when the peoples of various colonies in Africa and elsewhere were agitating for their own independence. It is possible that in the Muslims of the Russian empire, scholars saw an inspirational historical model for contemporary struggles for national self-determination. It is equally likely that the references to dreams of independence or resentment of infidel rule were

⁸ Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, *Islam and the Russian Empire*, trans. Quintin Hoare (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 78.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 71.

intended to be antagonistic towards the contemporaneous “foreign” rulers of Central Asia’s Muslims: the Soviets.

The Kazakhs provide an interesting case study in the history of Muslim nationalism in the Russian empire in that, unlike the sedentary societies of Kazan’ and Bukhara, Islam enjoyed only a marginal presence in Kazakh society before the late nineteenth century. In *The Kazakhs* (1987), Martha Brill Olcott argues that the rise of Islam was affected and paralleled by the creation of a Kazakh national elite. Among their other goals, these young Kazakh intellectuals “were committed to the merging of Kazakh culture and Islam.”¹⁰ The idea that the Islamic religion and Central Asian nationality have a dependent, even symbiotic relationship is an important concept in the history of Islam in Russia and is echoed in the historiography on later periods in Russian and Soviet history. Azade-Ayşe Rorlich devotes an entire chapter to “The Religious-Secular Symbiosis” in *The Volga Tatars: A Profile in National Resilience* (1986), a history in the same Hoover Institution series as *The Kazakhs*.¹¹ Rorlich credits Tatar educational reforms as well as the burgeoning indigenous publishing industry with contributing to the growth of a religious-secular symbiosis and, ultimately, the development of a Tatar nation.¹²

In *The Kazakhs*, Olcott is careful to distinguish between this new Kazakh elite and the previous generation of Muslim reformers. The most significant difference between the two groups of intellectuals, she argues, is that the new

¹⁰ Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 101.

¹¹ Azade-Ayşe Rorlich, *The Volga Tatars: A Profile in National Resilience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), 65-83.

¹² *Ibid.*

generation of Kazakh intellectuals had a real and significant impact on the lives of ordinary Kazakhs, whereas the earlier reformers' significance was comparatively limited in terms of popular impact.¹³ In general, Olcott presents the spread of Islam among the Kazakhs as a phenomenon that simultaneously contributed to the development of a Kazakh nation and fuelled resentment and resistance to Russian rule. She characterizes the turn-of-the-century Kazakh nation as such:

During these decades straddling the turn of the century, the Kazakhs increasingly thought and acted as a homogenous community. This was partly because of the Russian policy of secular education, which led to the development of a self-aware Kazakh elite, and partly a product of the spread of Islam.¹⁴

Olcott, like many other historians of Islam in the Russian empire, identifies the Russian-sponsored secular education system as a direct stimulus to the development of Muslim national consciousness. This characterization is significant because it implicates the Russians themselves in contributing to Kazakh resentment to foreign rule. The fact that the Kazakhs were becoming more resentful of Russian rule did not eliminate internal political and social disagreements but, as Olcott explains, "most Kazakhs felt that such rifts should be bridged when presented to the outside world."¹⁵

The place of the native intelligentsia in the origins of early Kazakh nationalism is an important subject in Olcott's book and is the central subject in Steven Sabol's *Russian Colonization and the Genesis of Kazak [sic] National Consciousness* (2003). In his book, Sabol examines the historical role of three

¹³ Ibid., 107.

¹⁴ Ibid., 112-113.

¹⁵ Ibid., 113.

key members of *Alash Orda*, an early Kazakh political party and nationalist organization. Sabol uses his treatment of these three Kazakh leaders to support his thesis that a genuine and viable national intelligentsia did not develop until after the turn of the twentieth century.¹⁶ Their agenda was two-fold: on the one hand, modernization and education; on the other, preservation of Kazakh traditions and values. The intelligentsia's central challenge was subordinating regional, clan, and other sub-national identifiers to a broad new Kazakh national identity. This would be accomplished, Sabol explains, by celebrating those cultural practices that were common to the whole of the Kazakh people. He explains their goal in his conclusion:

The nineteenth and twentieth century intelligentsia conceptualized Kazak national identity around unifying cultural and social symbols of the Kazaks' nomadic pastoral past. To accomplish this the Kazak intelligentsia had to overcome centuries of traditional social structure whose principal sources of strength and history relied upon smaller sources than any specific national persona.¹⁷

They faced a difficult paradox, one similar to those faced by ambitious nationalists in other nations: modernize too much, and the people lose national distinctiveness; retain too many distinctive traditions and customs, and they are unable to become a modern, progressive nation.

The paradox of progress and nationalism is not unique to Sabol's interpretation and is generally accepted by most scholars of modern nationalism.

The distinctive feature of Sabol's book is that it emphasizes the historical significance of a Kazakh political party in creating Kazakh national

¹⁶ Paula Michaels, review of *Russian Colonization and the Genesis of Kazak National Consciousness* by Steven Sabol, *Slavic Review* 63 (August 2004), 645-646.

¹⁷ Steven Sabol, *Russian Colonization and the Genesis of Kazak National Consciousness* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 151-152.

consciousness. Kazakh nationalism was not an inevitable historical trend, but rather the result of a concerted initiative conceived by a specific group of intellectuals and activists who understood that, in order for Kazakhstan to enjoy independence from modern nation-states it had to itself become a modern nation-state.

Many historians believe that the Soviets encountered resistance in their mission of social change in Central Asia because Central Asians perceived them as foreign subjugators, the embodiment of infidel rule. While this argument is accurate in many respects, the Soviets were not the first group to meet resistance in their goal to modernize the region. Beginning in the 1880s, the *Jadids*, a Muslim reformist group originating among the Tatars, initiated an agenda to modernize what they perceived as a stagnant and backward Central Asian establishment. Originating with a fairly limited program of modernizing and reforming Muslim schools, the movement soon expanded into a more ambitious mission of wholesale reform of Muslim society in Central Asia. Essentially, the Jadids wanted to modernize Muslim society while leaving intact, or even strengthening, its Muslim foundations.

One of the first major western studies of the Jadid movement is contained in Carrère d'Encausse's *Islam and the Russian Empire*. In a section on "The Jadids and the Struggle for Reforms," she explains why initial Russian attempts to modernize Central Asian society failed, writing that "one feeling was rooted in the people – perhaps the only conscious feeling it had – hostility to Russia. The

reforms had failed precisely because they came from the Russians.”¹⁸ The Jadids had the advantage of being Muslim and not being Russian. For forty years prior to the Revolution, the Jadids had labored to reform Muslim society in Turkestan with limited success, mainly because of their position outside of the official institutions of Central Asian society. During the Russian Civil War, the Jadids were incorporated into a provisional government with the help of the Bolsheviks, who were willing to share power with Muslim leaders in order to bring stability to the region. However, as Carrère d’Encausse explains, the revolution that finally gave the Jadids official power also created economic conditions that made their social reforms unlikely:

Even if the Jadids succeeded in expressing the problems of the masses, the masses were incapable of following them; tradition kept them tied to their religious leaders. The conquest, by aggravating their economic difficulties, did not help to hasten their political maturity; on the contrary, it drove those wretched masses, obsessed with the sole problem of survival, back towards the traditional order, towards stability... At the same time that they wanted an absolute change in their material situation, the masses remained attached to the conservative Islam of their ancestors. Therefore, to gain an audience among them, it was necessary to move in the direction of religious orthodoxy, which ultimately put a brake on social transformations. It was this isolated position within Bukharan society that constituted the tragedy of reformism and the basic reason for its collapse.¹⁹

In the crisis of the Civil War, the “wretched masses” of the Bukharan peasantry sought the stability and familiarity of Islam and traditional institutions. In this interpretation, Islam stands out as a very real obstacle to social change and, more importantly progress. The Jadids, for their part, could only make headway among

¹⁸ Carrère d’Encausse, *Islam and the Russian Empire*, 134.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 190.

this population by abandoning the agenda and principles which unified them as a social movement.

The most significant work on the Jadid movement has been done by Adeb Khalid, a scholar of Central Asian cultural and intellectual history. His book, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (2000) is the first comprehensive English-language survey of the topic. Khalid believes that despite being a historically significant social reform effort, the Jadid movement has gone largely unstudied by scholars of both Russian and Muslim history. His book is in part an effort to place the Jadid movement in the context of Muslim cultural reform movements in other regions of the world, to including North Africa and the Middle East.²⁰ Khalid explains that the Jadid movement was inherently contentious in that it explicitly aimed to supplant and replace what it perceived as antiquated and inhibitory institutions. In the introduction to his book, he writes that “the Jadids, in diagnosing the ills of their society and prescribing the cure... were usurping the moral and cultural authority of the established religious-cultural elites.... Not surprisingly, the Jadid project provoked considerable opposition.”²¹

In its discussion of how the Jadids shaped the development of Muslim nationalism in Central Asia, Khalid’s book is also about Central Asian distinctiveness. In Chapter Six, titled “Imagining the Nation,” Khalid notes that the major existing historical portrayals of Central Asian identity all cast that identity as a component of or reaction to some greater identity or movement, such

²⁰ Adeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 4.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

as Pan-Turkism or hostility to Russian rule.²² The purpose of his chapter is to “rescue history from the hegemony of the nation by showing how the nation itself is the product of history.”²³ Here, Khalid is taking part in one of the most fundamental questions in the modern understanding of nationalism: Are nations innate, timeless entities, or are they the cumulative product of specific events, ideas, and leaders? Khalid makes a convincing case for the latter, arguing that the Jadids had a very specific vision of their Muslim nation. The Jadid movement was closely wedded to the development of modern Muslim nationalism in that its supporters believed that Islamic Central Asian civilization could only be preserved *through* social progress, not in spite of it. Khalid’s book and the recent scholarly interest in the Jadids are perhaps the latest incarnation of the idea that social progress and religious faith were necessary ingredients in the development of Muslim nationalism in Central Asia.

Carrère d’Encausse and Khalid both portray the Jadids as conducting a complex political balancing act: securing Muslim support while not straying too far from their modernizing agenda, and promoting that modernizing agenda while not abandoning what they felt should be the Islamic foundations of their Central Asian society. Both historians also portray the Jadids as being in constant, inherent conflict with the Tsarist authorities who regarded them as a dangerous nationalist movement. However, this portrayal has recently been questioned by Robert Crews in his book *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (2006). The main argument in Crews’ book is that conflict between

²² Ibid., 186.

²³ Ibid., 186-187.

Tsarist Russia and Islam has been overemphasized in the existing historiography of the subject, and that the Tsarist government and indigenous Muslim institutions in fact cooperated and used each others' resources to advance their own interests. Although the Jadids are not the main subject of *For Prophet and Tsar*, Crews' examination of their historical role is very much in line with his broad thesis. The Jadids, he suggests, often worked closely with Tsarist institutions in order to advance their modernizing agenda. He also notes that both the Jadids and more conservative groups used the Tsarist judicial and administrative system to fight their common battle against what they perceived as the moral decay of Muslim society in Central Asia.²⁴

II. Islamic Nationalism in the Empire of Nations

While the Tsarist government and indigenous political parties did make advancements in their respective efforts to modernize Central Asia, none of these initiatives were conducted on anywhere near the scale as were the projects of the next government. The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 brought to power a regime obsessed, for better or worse, with the proper place of nations and nationalism in its new order. Leninist ideology entailed a firm belief in the rights of nations and oppressed peoples as a necessity for the creation of a classless society. The legitimacy of the Soviet regime rested in large part on its ability to promote these rights. However, this early obsession was in large part an outgrowth of a fear that repressed nations and unrealized national ambitions could also preclude the

²⁴ Robert Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 297-300.

achievement of Soviet goals. In fact, Lenin and the early Bolsheviks perceived nations as an obstacle to the creation of a true communist state.

The scholarship on Islamic nationalism in the early Soviet era has centered around two broad questions. The first has sought to determine the intent and motivation of early Soviet nationalities policy. Was Soviet nationality policy a genuine attempt at helping nationalities work through their phases of national development on the road to a true communist society? Or was it, more cynically, an attempt at repackaging the Russian ethnic dominance of the Tsarist era? The second question has been this: Regardless of motivation or intent, how did Soviet nationalities policy actually influence the development of national identity among the Muslim peoples of the Soviet Union? In answering these two questions, historians have identified the policy of *korenizatsiia* (“indigenization”) and the campaign against the veil as issues which, intentionally or otherwise, affected the emergence of nations and nationalism among the Muslim peoples of the early Soviet Union. There were many contradictions inherent in the policy of actively promoting national identity within an empire. The most striking of these contradictions was the problematic conflict between promoting a form of national identity closely wedded to the Islamic faith even as the Communist Party insisted on promoting atheism. Historians have disagreed on the extent to which Soviet authorities actively fought Islam and persecuted believers, and this chapter will address these debates. Much attention has also been paid to the concepts of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism as ideologies that the Soviets at once feared and tried to co-opt. Finally, as with most other subjects relating to the early Soviet Union,

Joseph Stalin is a significant and omnipresent figure in the discussion of nationalism in this era.

Stalin indeed looms large on the cover of Terry Martin's book *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (2001). In the photograph, Stalin is enthusiastically meeting with Turkmen and Tajik collective farmers, all adorned in traditional ethnic dress. The picture is a graphic allusion to Stalin's policy of cultivating and nurturing the development of separate national identities within the Soviet Union. Although the book is not exclusively about the Muslim nationalities, the issues it addresses are directly related to understanding the nature of Muslim nationalism in the early Soviet Union. Martin argues that Lenin and Stalin perceived nationalism and national identity as an obstacle to the attainment of a pure socialist state. However, they believed that by promoting the development of nations, class divisions would become more obvious. Oppressed classes in these nations would then support the socialist agenda.²⁵ By actively guiding the development of nations, the new communist state could preempt the perils of nationalism, or as Martin explains, "nationalism would be disarmed by granting the forms of nationhood."²⁶

The risks of nationalism were more hazardous in some parts of the Soviet Union than in others, and Martin devotes much of his book to understanding how nationalism and the Soviet reaction to it varied between various territories. In a discussion of "National Soviets and Ethnic Conflict in the Soviet East," Martin examines the differences in ethnic conflict among the Tatars, the Kazakhs, and the

²⁵ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

Uzbeks. Ethnic conflict varied in these regions due to differences in the economic situation, the duration of the Imperial Russian presence there, the contentiousness of agricultural collectivization, and so forth.²⁷ The purpose of Martin's comparison is to provide case studies for understanding the various situations and conditions under which nationalism and ethnic conflict could develop. The comparison illustrates that, even in a state as authoritarian as the Soviet Union, there could nevertheless be a great deal of variation in how ethnic nationalism develops.

Much of Martin's examination of nations and nationalism in the early Soviet Union involves Stalin's policy of *korenizatsiia*. The policy involved the active creation of distinct Soviet nations through various ethnicity-specific linguistic, cultural, and territorial policies that were an integral part of the campaign to "grant the forms of nationhood" to culturally "backward" ethnicities. The Soviets soon discovered that it would be nearly impossible and not at all desirable to grant the forms of nationhood to *all* Soviet nationalities. Martin himself points this out in his chapter on "The Great Retreat." He describes *korenizatsiia* as "a prophylactic policy designed to defuse and prevent the development of nationalism among the formerly oppressed non-Russian colonial peoples through the provision of national territories, languages, elites, and cultures."²⁸

This process was most difficult in Muslim Central Asia and in other less-developed regions of the USSR, because in those areas national identities were

²⁷ Ibid., 57.

²⁸ Ibid., 126.

less concrete, and any attempt to form an “Uzbek” or a “Kyrgyz” nation necessarily involved “the consolidation of disparate local identities into a larger national identity.”²⁹ The “consolidation” to which Martin is referring was the Soviet process of bringing together various small clans and tribes in order to form an actual “nationality” capable of warranting and sustaining its own Soviet Socialist Republic. Martin’s idea that the Central Asian nationalities were largely Soviet creations is partly in conflict with the thesis presented by Adrienne Edgar. She believes, regarding the Turkmen people at least, that many of the essential ingredients of nationhood were present in the pre-Soviet and even pre-colonial periods.³⁰

Martin denies that Soviet nationalities policy was an attempt to create a Soviet nation-state, writing that “the Soviet Union was not a nation-state. No attempt was ever made to create either a Soviet nationality or to turn the Soviet Union into a Russian nation-state.”³¹ *The Affirmative Action Empire* was an important contribution to the western understanding of the Russian relationship with Islam in that Martin’s thesis challenged a long-standing scholarly interpretation of Soviet behavior in Central Asia. In *Soviet Empire: The Turks of Central Asia and Stalinism* (1967), Olaf Caroe presents a much more cynical portrayal of Soviet nationalities policy. The book has no footnotes and draws overwhelmingly from secondary sources, but it is nevertheless a well-argued example of the “divide and rule” thesis of Soviet nationalities policy towards the Muslims, which Martin denies. Caroe portrays nationalities policy and other

²⁹ Ibid., 73.

³⁰ Edgar, *Tribal Nation*.

³¹ Ibid., 461.

facets of the Soviet Union's relationship with its Muslims as a scheme to ensure ethnic conflict, political disenfranchisement, and a state of perpetual dependence on Soviet power. He describes the Russian partition of Central Asia as "cantonization, conceived with the object of working against any conception of the unity of the eastern Turks and bringing the *disjecta membra* under the influence of overwhelming forces of assimilation from without."³² He credits this characterization largely to Zeki Velidi Togan, a Turkic nationalist who fought against the Bolsheviks in Central Asia during the Russian Civil War. To Caroe, Togan's first-hand experience with Soviet rule gives him an enhanced degree of credibility.³³

However, Togan's personal antipathy to the Soviets presents an obvious challenge to his scholarly objectivity. In Caroe's chapter on nationalism and colonial empire, he paraphrases Togan's characterization of the political partition of Central Asia:

The Russian object was first, under a cloak of separate race-consciousness, to break down and weaken the natural ties joining the limbs of Turkestan, and then to bring each severed part not into relation with other parts but into subjection to the outside force, Russia.³⁴

This passage clearly insinuates that the Soviet insistence on ethnic particularism was a Machiavellian strategy designed to neutralize any national unity in Central Asia. Caroe's language also portrays the Soviets as devious ("a cloak of separate race-consciousness") and almost grotesque ("each severed part" of "the limbs of

³² Olaf Caroe, *Soviet Empire: The Turks of Central Asia and Stalinism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967), 149.

³³ *Ibid.*, 7-9.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 148.

Turkestan”). Caroe also demonstrates a tendency for dramatic metaphor at other points in the book, describing the consolidation of Soviet power as an apocalyptic flood³⁵ and concluding his book with a plea for “the burning spirit of a light at the heart of a people.”³⁶

By the end of the Brezhnev era, those Muslim Central Asian identities became increasingly worrisome to a Soviet leadership hoping to maintain power and legitimacy after eighteen years of political and economic stagnation. Michael Rywkin’s book *Moscow’s Muslim Challenge: Soviet Central Asia* (1982) discusses the status of Central Asian nationalism at the beginning of what would be the death throes of Soviet power. The book is a collection of essays giving historical, economic, and sociological context for the issues facing late-Soviet Central Asia. It is also a more specific treatment of how Islam affected the rise of nationalism in a Muslim region of the Soviet Union. While the book does focus on this situation in Central Asia, the issues it addresses are pertinent to the other Muslim regions of the USSR as well. Throughout the book, Rywkin emphasizes that Islam had a direct and profound affect on nearly every aspect of public and private life in Soviet Central Asia. It is the “indispensable ingredient” that colors all facets of Muslim life in Central Asia.³⁷ Chapter Six is titled “The National-Religious Symbiosis” and is focused on explaining the relationship between Islam and national sentiment in Soviet Central Asia. Rywkin argues that this omnipresence of religion resulted in “a merging or overlapping of ethnic and

³⁵ Ibid., 161.

³⁶ Ibid., 259.

³⁷ Michael Rywkin, *Moscow’s Muslim Challenge: Soviet Central Asia* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1982), 84.

religious sentiments and loyalties that reappears in all aspects of Central Asian existence. It is this symbiosis that so frustrates Moscow in its attempts to integrate the growing Central Asian masses into a common mold as part of the ‘Soviet people.’”³⁸ The last sentence of this passage is significant in that it assumes, contrary to Martin’s thesis, that “Moscow” (the Soviet government) did indeed intend to integrate Muslim Central Asians into something more homogeneous and culturally suitable for the Communist government.

Rywkin extends his concept of a national-religious symbiosis to the personal level as well. He argues that Islam is a central and fundamental component of Central Asians’ personal identity and that they cannot be non-“Muslim” and nevertheless retain their identity as an Uzbek or a Tajik.³⁹ If Rywkin’s personal-level national/religious symbiosis is an accurate characterization of how Central Asians perceived themselves, it indirectly suggests that, in the early 1980s at least, Moscow was at once promoting two mutually exclusive initiatives: the development of national consciousness and the destruction of religion. Missing this important link between national, religious, and personal identities, Soviet officials promoted initiatives that directly countered each others’ possibilities of success.

Rywkin identifies another pair of self-defeating Soviet policies in a brief discussion of the relationship between “the Muslim-based, modern, nationalist spirit” and socioeconomic progress in Central Asia.⁴⁰ This new Muslim nationalism was “an unplanned by-product of Soviet nationality policy and a

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 89.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 85

direct result of Soviet socioeconomic achievements in the area. Moscow is learning that progress fosters nationalism instead of curtailing it.”⁴¹ While Rywkin was not the first scholar to make this observation, he presents it clearly and unequivocally. Soviet nationalities policy was based on the idea that by granting the “forms of nationhood” – to include generating socioeconomic progress – an ethnicity’s national identity would develop within, and only within, the framework of the Soviet state and Marxist/Leninist ideology, thus preempting the threat of nationalism. Rywkin’s thesis argues that this very progress, financed and promoted by Moscow, would inevitably lead to the rise of nationalism and the fracturing of the Soviet Union. The conclusion leaves Soviet leaders and theorists with an unenviable historical legacy, as those who burdened the USSR in order to support policies that would cause its premature demise. In the book’s conclusion, after a discussion of various policy options in Central Asia, Rywkin offers a specific and ominous prediction for the future of Soviet power in the region: “whatever Moscow’s ultimate choice, Soviet Central Asia is bound to become its number one internal occupation by the last decade of our century.”⁴² While the collapse of the Soviet Union did not begin in Central Asia, and it barely lasted into the last decade of the twentieth century, Rywkin’s book represents a thorough, mature understanding of Muslim nationalism in the Soviet Union. Rywkin emphasizes the significance of the Islam as a social identifier rather than as a specific set of religious beliefs and practices. His book also emphasizes the

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 153.

significance of social progress in fermenting and strengthening nationalism in Central Asia.

Published fourteen years earlier and at the beginning of the Brezhnev era, Alexandre Bennigsen's and Chantal LeMercier-Quelquejay's *Islam in the Soviet Union* comes to some of the same conclusions as Rywkin's book. In their conclusion, the authors suggest that "it is probable that the years ahead will put the Muslims in the Soviet Union in the forefront of events."⁴³ Part IV of the book is a discussion of the character of Russian Islam as it was during the mid- to late 1960s. Nationalism and national consciousness comprise a significant portion of this discussion. Bennigsen and LeMercier-Quelquejay, like many of their contemporaries, identify what was a strong and mutually strengthening relationship between Islam and nationalism in the Muslim regions of the Soviet Union. In their chapter on "Islam as a Religion," the authors explain that Islam survived as a strong and potent social identifier even among entirely secular Soviet "Muslims." At the conclusion of the chapter, they write that "above all, Islam survives as a social bond of union which enables the Muslims to differentiate themselves from the Russians."⁴⁴

A strong "social bond" is of course an important component of nationalism, and the authors discuss in depth the face and future of Muslim nationalism in the Soviet Union. Like many western historians of the 1960s, they argue that Soviet nationalities policy was conceived with the ultimate goal of achieving the cultural assimilation of the Muslims. Tellingly, chapter fourteen of

⁴³ Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal LeMercier-Quelquejay, *Islam in the Soviet Union* (London: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1967), 230.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 183.

Islam in the Soviet Union is titled “The Problem of National Consciousness,” suggesting that Muslim national self-awareness was indeed a challenge to the Soviet state.⁴⁵ At the beginning of this chapter they present a spectrum of possible minimum and maximum objectives of Soviet nationalities policy, the “maximum, ultimate objective” being “the merging... of the various nationalities of the Union into a single ‘Soviet nation.’”⁴⁶ However, in their conclusion to the chapter, Bennigsen and LeMercier-Quelquejay present a conventionally pragmatic assessment of Soviet attitudes toward Muslim national consciousness, explaining that “it is approved when it can be played off against pan-Turkic or pan-Islamic consciousness, but it is stigmatized when it runs counter to Soviet supranational patriotism.”⁴⁷ The authors’ analysis is in part a variation of the classic divide-and-rule thesis, in that they portray individual Muslim ethnicities’ sense of identity as a focus of loyalty that the Soviet government hoped to utilize to trump larger, more politically hazardous identities.

The majority of *Tribal Nation* is in part a response to the two predominant western portrayals of Soviet nationalities policy: that it was either a cynical “divide-and-rule” stratagem (most thoroughly argued by Richard Pipes and Olaf Caroe), or that it was a genuine attempt at nation-making (argued more recently by Yuri Slezkine and Terry Martin). At the beginning of her book, Edgar makes the important point that a Central Asian nation created by Soviet policy is a nation nonetheless, noting that most nations are at least in part the product of some

⁴⁵ Ibid., 196-207.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 196.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 207.

political process.⁴⁸ This concept is a point which is also emphasized by other historians, not the least of them Alexandre Bennigsen, who writes that Central Asian national consciousness, “although originally artificial, is now tending to become real.”⁴⁹

Edgar’s chief criticism of both the divide-and-rule and the nation-making theses is that they both assume that the resulting nations were overwhelmingly the creation of Soviet policy-makers, ignoring or negating the role of Turkmen culture and the Turkmen people themselves.⁵⁰ Her thesis is that “the discourse of Turkmen nationhood in the 1920s and 1930s was shaped in large measure by the intersection of indigenous concepts of identity with the new understandings of nationhood introduced by the Bolsheviks.”⁵¹ She therefore suggests that Turkmenistan is a hybrid creation of Soviet policy and traditional culture.

Whereas challenging the divide-and-rule thesis is an important part of Edgar’s book, it is the central focus of Anne Haugen’s *The Establishment of National Republics in Soviet Central Asia* (2003). Haugen, a Norwegian historian of Central Asia, re-examines aspects of the established scholarly consensus about Soviet nationalities policy in Central Asia. Haugen argues that in creating the five Soviet Socialist Republics (SSRs) in Central Asia, Soviet authorities were genuinely attempting to bring together unnecessarily disjointed nations. She explains that the Soviet authorities “perceived a deeply fragmented Central Asia,” and that “the delimitation should be seen as an attempt to unite rather than break

⁴⁸ Edgar, *Tribal Nation*, 3.

⁴⁹ Bennigsen and LeMercier-Quelquejay, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, 207.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

up the region.”⁵² This argument is a large component of her overall thesis and is a departure from much of the historiography on Russian policy in Central Asia. Haugen recognizes its contentious quality, and chapter four of her book is devoted to this topic. An important component of her argument is that there is a distinct break in the Soviet approach to Central Asia between the 1920s and the later Stalinist era, that the ideas and strategy that guided the delimitation of Central Asia were fundamentally different from that which guided Stalin’s consolidation of power and the Great Terror in the late 1930s.⁵³ Whereas political insecurity caused Stalin to rely on terror in the 1930s, the Bolsheviks of the 1920s believed that they could win the genuine support of the various nationalities. Part of her objection to the divide and rule thesis is that in the framework of this idea, “the notion of an ‘omnipotent regime’ and a ‘victimized population’ has been central.”⁵⁴ She doubts the accuracy of these characterizations, citing revisionist portrayals of the Great Terror presented in a now discredited essay by J. Arch Getty.⁵⁵ Haugen’s certainty that the Soviets did not perceive a united Central Asia is perhaps best illustrated in her discussion of the Soviet attitude and response to the Basmachi revolts (1916-1931). Despite the Basmachi leaders’ vocal calls to Muslim and Turkic unity, Haugen doubts that the Soviets perceived the insurgency to be a genuine Muslim nationalist challenge to Soviet rule:

In spite of the *appearance* of national slogans, they did not represent the *essence* of the phenomenon. At least, that was the interpretations of the Soviet authorities. However pragmatic and power-oriented the Soviet

⁵² Anne Haugen, *The Establishment of National Republics in Soviet Central Asia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 7.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 75-76.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

regime was, elements of Marxian thinking are here clearly present. National and religious aspects were merely guises for the true, economic nature of the Basmachi rebellion.⁵⁶

The second major argument of her book is that indigenous Central Asian elites played an important role themselves in the process of delimitation. These elites “exerted considerable influence on important decisions of the Soviet authorities.”⁵⁷ In Haugen’s interpretation, the combination of the Soviet drive for unity, the pre-national sources of identity, and the influence of local political elites meant that the republics that emerged in Central Asia were to a large extent accurate representations of nationhood in the region. “It is a main argument in this study,” she writes, “that the nationalization of political discourse and ultimately the entities that were established as a result of the delimitation process to a great degree corresponded to historical divisions in Central Asia.”⁵⁸ These “historical divisions,” she acknowledges, did not exist in pre-colonial Central Asia and did not begin to develop until the turn of the century with the appearance of an indigenous Muslim intelligentsia. Reformist intellectuals, most notably the Jadids, began to distinguish themselves apart from one another in terms of nationality, based on language, ethnicity, and a sedentary vs. nomadic mode of living. Haugen argues that the process of delimitation was guided by these relatively new identities.⁵⁹

Chapters six through eight of Haugen’s book examine how the process of delimitation affected the development of Muslim nationalism and national

⁵⁶ Ibid., 84.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 5.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 7.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 47-74.

identity in Central Asia. She argues that the Soviet partition of Central Asia magnified the relevance of existing but insignificant conflicts among the ethnicities of the region: “when the establishment of political entities based on national affiliation appeared on the agenda, previously relatively unimportant differences assumed heightened political significance.”⁶⁰ Haugen provides evidence for this assertion with the examples of the disputes that followed the establishment of the Kazakh SSR, the Kyrgyz SSR, and the Karakalpak Autonomous Oblast.⁶¹ These conflicts are important in her greater discussion of nationalism in that they are manifestations of the idea that Muslim nationalism in Central Asia was a hybrid of indigenous identity and Russian policy.

Recently, many scholars of the Russian relationship with Islam have, like Haugen, focused on either the Tsarist era or on the early Soviet period. Significantly fewer have focused on the same relationship in the postwar Soviet Union. Yaacov Roi notes this trend in the introduction to his book *Islam in the Soviet Union: From the Second World War to Gorbachev* (2000).⁶² The book is in part an effort to fill this gap. Roi, an Israeli historian of Central Asia, traces the history of Soviet Islam from World War II through the fall of the Soviet regime. Due to the book’s considerable scope and length (764 pages), Roi is able to thoroughly examine policy toward Soviet Muslims, their reaction toward that policy, and indigenous social patterns. The last chapter, titled “Islam and Nationalism,” examines how the Islamic religion and ethnic nationalism

⁶⁰ Ibid., 166.

⁶¹ Ibid., 166-179.

⁶² Yaacov Roi, *Islam in the Soviet Union: From the Second World War to Gorbachev* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

buttressed each other in the years leading up to the Soviet collapse. Roi illustrates how in Soviet Central Asia and in other Muslim regions of the USSR, for much of the population Islam remained more as an identity than a religion. This distinction was particularly true for the Muslim intelligentsia. Ironically, the educated classes in the Muslim republics were at once the most overtly secular and the most strident defenders of Islam as an identity. Roi explains that “although [the Muslim intelligentsia] had for the most part become alienated from Islam as a faith... they genuinely perceived it as a necessary component of their national culture.”⁶³ The leading role of the Muslim intelligentsia in shaping notions of national identity is also emphasized by Bennigsen and Carrère d’Encausse, among others.

The idea that the intelligentsia protected Islam as a “necessary component” of their culture is very similar to the “national-religious symbiosis” expressed by Rywkin and others. Most of these writers emphasize that a lack of overt Islamic religiosity did not diminish the power of Islam as a foundation of national identity. Discussing the role of Islamic nationalism in the waning years of the Soviet state, Roi writes that “it was only thanks to the fact that Islam and national sentiment had had a symbiotic relationship... that their coincidence, or collaboration, became so worrisome to the regime in the late 1980s.”⁶⁴ Thus, we are brought full circle. Roi is, in effect, portraying an imperial state concerned about the same ingredients of Muslim identity as historians of the Tsarist era or those of the early Soviet period. The idea of a “symbiotic relationship” between

⁶³ Ibid., 687.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 712.

people, faith, and nation forms the foundation of the western historical understanding of Muslim nationalism in the Russian and Soviet empires.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined how western scholars have understood the history of Muslim nationalism in modern Russia. It has proposed that this historiography can be best understood through a matrix of people, faith and progress. Historical portrayals of Muslim nationalism in Russia and the Soviet Union must begin with understanding the origin of the nation and national identity in the Russian empire. Historians such as Wheeler assert that Central Asia was entirely devoid of national identity in the years before the Russian conquest. Scholars such as Edgar, Haugen, and others have attempted to understand the social bonds and historical circumstances which formed the basis for the nations that later emerged. They have argued that, while nations per se did not exist in Central Asia before the Russians, many of the essential elements of national identity did. They have argued moreover that the nations that emerged after Stalin's nation-building were not exclusively foreign creations, but rather hybrid Soviet/indigenous entities. However, this emerging historiographical canon is still small and will need to be further developed and argued if it is going to replace the established scholarly consensus of Pipes, Conquest, and other Cold War-era historians.

The same is true of the question of Soviet motivations for the partition of Central Asia. On this question, the emerging consensus is larger and well-formed. The re-evaluation of Soviet nationalities policy broached by Slezkine in

“The USSR as a Communal Apartment” has been continued and developed by historians such as Terry Martin and others. This trend was recently noted in the historiographical survey contained in Haugen’s *The Establishment of National Republics in Soviet Central Asia* (2003). However, this new portrayal of Soviet nationalities policy has its own flaws, chiefly that it fails to sufficiently emphasize the persistent Soviet anxiety over pan-Turkic and pan-Islamic ideologies, and the repressive measures used to fight these movements. The idea of a clear break between Soviet intent and motivations of the Bolshevik Revolution and those of the later Stalinist era is also flawed in many respects, not the least of which is that Stalin himself was the chief architect of nationalities policy during the revolutionary era.

Thus far, this thesis has surveyed the historiography on Russian and Soviet policy toward their Muslims, and on the development of Muslim nationalism and national identity. The next chapter will examine how Western scholars have perceived the interaction and, in some cases, conflict between these two forces. First and foremost will be the various reform movements, the Jadids at the turn of the century and the *Sultangaliyevists* in the 1920s. Equally important will be the overt assaults on Russian power, chiefly the Kyrgyz *Basmachi* revolts. It will also analyze some special themes in the historiography of the Russian relationship with Islam, including the issue of the cotton economy and the growing historiography on the conflicts between Russian and Muslim attitudes towards gender.

CHAPTER THREE

CHARACTERIZING CONFLICT: COTTON, REBELLION, AND WOMEN

In attempting to understand the relationship between two powerful entities, historians typically analyze a specific conflict or series of conflicts as case studies to better understand the power dynamics of that relationship. At the intersection of Russian policy and Muslim response, historians have identified cotton cultivation in Central Asia and Soviet gender equality initiatives as a pair of conflicts that are uniquely well-suited to understanding the power dynamics of the Russian relationship with Islam. They have also utilized various approaches to understanding these responses. Early treatments of cotton cultivation, for example, tend to examine the issue almost exclusively from the Russian and Soviet perspective, focusing on agricultural policy and its comparative successes and failures. More recent treatments of the issue tend to focus on how cotton cultivation affected the peoples of Central Asia. This trend also holds true for studies of Soviet gender-equality initiatives. Earlier studies, such as Gregory Massell's *The Surrogate Proletariat* (1974), examine how gender reform fit into a larger Soviet strategy to consolidate power among the Muslim peoples of Central Asia. Later studies center on how these efforts affected Central Asian societies and Muslim women themselves. This chapter will trace the scholarly shift from Russian policy to Muslim agency in histories of cotton cultivation and gender policy, and examine how these issues themselves have impacted the scholarly understanding of the Russian relationship with Islam as a whole. The Basmachi

revolts, armed rebellions against Tsarist and later Soviet authority during the revolutionary and early Soviet era, stand out as series of conflicts that have the potential to add to the scholarly understanding of the early Soviet approach to Muslim resistance. However, compared with the degree of scholarly attention given to the cotton economy and gender policy, they have been largely neglected by the scholarly community, despite being perhaps the most significant threat to Moscow's power in the early Soviet period.

I. Cotton & Colonialism

Perhaps no aspect of the Tsarist or Soviet presence in Central Asia was more explicitly “colonial” in nature than the institutions, policies, and politics surrounding cotton production. Cotton, first grown in Central Asia to alleviate shortages caused by the Union blockade of Confederate cotton during the American Civil War, quickly became the chief Russian economic interest in Central Asia. The cotton economy also endured, albeit in drastically different form, from the Tsarist conquest of Central Asia until the collapse of the Soviet Union. Consequently, it has attracted much attention from scholars. Many have used it as a case study to understand the basis of the economic relationship between Russia and Islam, and more specifically whether these ties were exploitative or mutually beneficial.

The first scholarly treatments of Central Asian cotton cultivation are largely unconcerned with the industry's effect on Muslim societies, focusing rather on cotton's role in motivating and spurring the initial Russian conquest of the region. This issue is at the forefront of Seymour Becker's discussion of cotton

cultivation in Central Asia in *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia, 1865-1924* (1968). In his book, Becker emphasizes the importance of cotton to Russia's burgeoning nineteenth-century textile industry, but cautions against historical interpretations that implicate cotton – or any economic incentive – as the sole or even primary motivator for the Russian conquest of Central Asia. Instead, as we have seen, he argues that the invasion was spurred by a variety of strategic, political, and economic motives.¹ “Although Central Asian cotton had acquired a new importance for Russia on the eve of conquest, and considerable sentiment existed for an advance into Central Asia to protect and promote Russian manufacturing and trading interests,” Becker writes, “the influence of these factors on policy-making was minimal.”² He further finds that Russian reliance on and interest in Central Asian cotton was inversely related to the availability of cotton elsewhere. The two greatest stimuli to Central Asian cotton production were foreign wars – the American Civil War and the First World War – which disrupted Russia's supply of American and Egyptian cotton.³

The focus on the Russian side of the cotton trade is also evident in John Whitman's 1956 article “Turkestan Cotton in Imperial Russia.” The article traces the development of cotton cultivation in Central Asia, from the primitive, labor-intensive and small-scale methods of the early nineteenth century to the large-scale, industrial-style production that became characteristic shortly before the 1917 Revolution. While Whitman examines Russia's technological and

¹ Seymour Becker, *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia, 1865-1924* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), 23.

² *Ibid.*, 22.

³ *Ibid.*, 181.

methodological improvements in cotton cultivation in Central Asia, the article is decidedly a history of the economic development of the region and its people. Whitman argues that cotton, more so than any other Russian innovation in Turkestan, was responsible for transitioning Turkestan from a traditional agrarian economy to a modern, capitalist one.⁴ He is careful to point out that Russian “cotton policy” in the region was not designed to directly enrich the Tsarist government but rather to create political and economic conditions favorable to private Russian companies and entrepreneurs. Infrastructure projects such as the Trans-Caspian Railroad and irrigation, financed by the Tsarist government, served to make Turkestan a more favorable environment for Russian investment in cotton cultivation.⁵ Vibrant private enterprise in the region would solidify Russian power and justify the costs of administration.

Whitman’s article discusses Central Asia exclusively in terms of how the cotton economy impacted its relationship with Russia and vice-versa. David MacKenzie’s 1974 article “Turkestan’s Significance to Russia (1850-1917)” examines the broader nature of Central Asia’s relevance to the Russian empire and how it changed in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. He discusses Russia’s strategic, political and economic interests in the region and attempts to understand how they each shaped and influenced Russian policy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. By the late nineteenth century, cotton was, MacKenzie contends, overwhelmingly Russia’s chief economic interest in Central Asia. By 1910, he writes, the Tsarist government “regarded Turkestan as

⁴ John Whitman, “Turkestan Cotton in Imperial Russia,” *American Slavonic and East European Review* 15 (April 1956), 195.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 199.

a giant cotton farm.”⁶ However, he also argues that, in the middle of the nineteenth century, the Tsarist government was less concerned with acquiring a domestic cotton farm than it was with countering the growing British strategic and military presence in the region. He suggests that cotton gained real significance in Central Asia only after the Tsarist government sought to counter a domestic perception that the region was an unproductive drain on Imperial resources after the geopolitical threat posed by Britain began to dissolve. The capitalization of Central Asia worked. “By 1914 Turkestan was paving its way,” MacKenzie writes, “bringing Russia strategic and economic benefits far exceeding the costs of conquest and administration.”⁷ MacKenzie concurs with Becker in part in that both historians deny that cotton or any other economic incentive was at the heart of the Russian decision to conquer Central Asia. However, MacKenzie portrays cotton as a commodity that quickly gained relevance in the policy-making process, whereas Becker posits that the crop remained on the second tier of concerns for Russian imperial policy in the region.

Though their portrayals vary, MacKenzie, Whitman, and Becker all discuss cotton as a commodity around which Russian economic policy was or was not formulated. They disagree on the significance of the crop to Russian policy. In *Soviet Empire: The Turks of Central Asia and Stalinism*, Olaf Caroe presents cotton not as the subject of Russian policy but as a means of creating and enforcing a specific economic relationship. In his discussion of pre-Soviet Central Asia, Caroe argues that the Tsarist regime encouraged the creation of a

⁶ David MacKenzie, “Turkestan’s Significance to Russia, (1850-1917),” *Russian Review* 33 (April 1974), 182.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 188.

single-crop agricultural system in order to reinforce Central Asian dependence on the greater Russian economy.⁸ If Central Asians devoted a sufficient portion of their agricultural resources to a cash crop such as cotton while neglecting grain, they would be dependent on Russia and other parts of the empire for food. “It was not only cotton that the Russians needed,” he writes; “they sought to impose a measure of economic dependence.”⁹ Explaining why St. Petersburg encouraged Central Asians to cultivate cotton in lieu of grains, Caroe writes that “this policy could not fail to set Turkestan in economic tutelage to Russia in the elementary matter of food supply.”¹⁰ This interpretation of the cotton economy presents the interaction between Imperial Russia and its Muslim subjects as a distinctly cynical, adversarial relationship. Russia used Central Asian cotton not only to fuel its burgeoning industrial economy, but also as a tool with which to ensure the region’s dependence on and subjugation to the Empire.

The idea that Russia deliberately used cotton to ensure the economic and political subjugation of Muslims is a plausible but debatable historical argument. Far more well-established is the assertion that cotton transformed Central Asian economic life permanently and irrevocably. As Whitman suggests, the development of large-scale cotton cultivation in Central Asia was a major factor in bringing a modern capitalist economy to a largely traditional, agrarian society. This thesis is advanced by scholars writing on the early economic history of Russian Central Asia, most notably H el ene Carr ere d’Encausse. More so than

⁸ Olaf Caroe, *Soviet Empire: The Turks of Central Asia and Stalinism* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1967), 86.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

other scholars of the 1960s, Carrère d'Encausse examines how the advent of the Imperial Russian cotton economy affected the way of life in Central Asia. In her section on "The Social Consequences of Capitalist Penetration," she explains how Central Asians were wholly unprepared for the social and economic implications of modern finances.¹¹ As her book is focused more specifically on the Islamic religion than on Central Asia in general, the author explains how Islam's prohibitions against money lending contributed to native Muslims' naiveté regarding the Russian credit system.¹² Uninitiated into the realities of modern financial credit schemes, Central Asian Muslims were quickly trapped in an exploitative cycle of debt and poverty, disrupting lives and fueling resentment against the Russians. It was this resentment and frustration, Carrère d'Encausse explains, that led to the banditry and rebellion of the period.¹³ However, as credit and the cotton economy ruined the peasants, it benefited merchants and even created a social class previously non-existent in Turkestan: the intelligentsia. "At the same time that the appearance of capitalism in Bukhara brought with it a tragic crisis for the peasantry, and to a lesser degree the artisans," she writes, "there was a corollary social phenomenon: the development of a national bourgeoisie."¹⁴

However, on balance, the "tragic crisis" of the peasantry was probably the more significant social phenomenon, and the one on which the Bolsheviks were later able to capitalize. Whitman makes this point in the conclusion of "Turkestan

¹¹ Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, *Islam and the Russian Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 39-46.

¹² *Ibid.*, 45-46.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Cotton in Imperial Russia”: regarding the economic disenfranchisement of the Central Asian peasantry caused by the Russian cotton economy, “from the Soviet standpoint there was only one encouraging aspect: the native population was exhausted and in misery, willing to accept any system which promised order, peace, and a chance at survival.”¹⁵

For many Central Asian Muslims, that chance at survival did not come until well after the Bolsheviks had securely consolidated their power in the region. As Ian Murray Matley explains in his essay on agriculture in *Central Asia: A Century of Russian Rule*, the First World War and the 1917 Revolution disrupted the Russian grain supply upon which Central Asia had relied during the late Tsarist era. The war in Europe, the Revolution, and the Basmachi revolts all combined to produce a drastic decrease in agricultural production in Central Asia, both of cotton and the remaining indigenous grain production.¹⁶ While the Bolsheviks did eventually bring a degree of order and peace to Central Asia, cotton nevertheless remained a central aspect of Russia’s relationship with Central Asia and its people. Cotton was one of Central Asia’s main contributions to the Soviet centralized command economy. As MacKenzie points out, Imperial Russia built much of the infrastructure that would allow the early Soviets to capitalize on Turkestan’s inclusion in the USSR.¹⁷ Indeed, Matley notes that one of the Bolsheviks’ first agricultural initiatives in Central Asia was to halt the

¹⁵ Whitman, “Turkestan Cotton,” 205.

¹⁶ Ian Murray Matley, “Agricultural Development,” in *Central Asia: A Century of Russian Rule*, ed. Edward Allworth (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 284.

¹⁷ MacKenzie, “Turkestan’s Significance to Russia,” 188.

reversion of cotton fields to grain cultivation that had begun during the chaos of Revolution.¹⁸

As is consistent with many aspects of the scholarly discussion on the Russian relationship with Islam, one of the chief questions regarding the early Soviet cotton economy is this: Marxist/Leninist ideology notwithstanding, how much did the Soviet cotton economy fundamentally differ from that of its predecessor? The general consensus on this question is that there was a direct and deliberate continuation of Tsarist cotton and broader economic policies toward the Muslim regions of the newly-formed Soviet Union. In *The Modern History of Soviet Central Asia* (1964), Geoffrey Wheeler presents Central Asia in a distinctly subservient and secondary economic situation in the years after the 1917 Revolution, writing that “the Soviet Government now concentrated on what it conceived to be its primary task of bringing Central Asia back to its pre-War function as a source of technical crops and raw materials for the industries of Great Russia.”¹⁹ During the years immediately following the Revolution, Soviet authorities were more concerned with restoring agricultural and economic output than they were with collectivization, and tolerated private enterprise at some level until large-scale production had been restored.²⁰ The agricultural policy followed in Central Asia during the immediate post-revolutionary years was largely consistent with that for the rest of the Soviet Union.

Wheeler’s portrayal of the Soviet cotton economy in his book is in line with his treatment of Soviet economic policy in many of his other works,

¹⁸ Matley, “Agricultural Development,” 285.

¹⁹ Geoffrey Wheeler, *The Modern History of Soviet Central Asia* (New York: Praeger, 1964), 158.

²⁰ Ibid.

emphasizing the strategic and political motivation for Soviet policies in Central Asia. In a 1955 article published in *International Affairs*, Wheeler postulated that “the primary object of Soviet policy in Central Asia is to raise the productivity and economic potential of a region which is not only rich in natural resources but is also relatively remote from Western striking power.”²¹ Wheeler’s emphasis on the strategic importance of Central Asia is perhaps influenced by the fact that he was a professional soldier in the British Army, and would perhaps be more cognizant of the military utility of the Soviet Union’s economic resources.

The history of early Soviet cotton policy is closely wedded to the broader history of agricultural collectivization.²² Collectivization – the process of violently and coercively transferring land, livestock, and other property from private to state ownership – was a very contentious issue and is often characterized as one of the first significant tests of Soviet power after the Bolshevik Revolution. Adrienne Edgar discusses the Soviet rationale and challenges surrounding collectivization of the cotton economy in Turkmenistan in her book *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (2004). Chapter Seven of *Tribal Nation*, titled “Cotton and Collectivization,” addresses Soviet efforts to collectivize Turkmen agriculture and the resistance and revolts which this initiative spawned.²³

In the chapter, Edgar explains, like Wheeler, that the Soviet state put off attempts at large-scale agricultural transformation in Central Asia until after its

²¹ Geoffrey Wheeler, “Soviet Policy in Central Asia,” *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs)* 31 (July 1955), 317.

²² Adrienne Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 206.

²³ *Ibid.*, 197-220.

power in the region was more secure. Soviet agricultural policy involved not only collectivization, but also centrally-directed production, guided by the Communist theory that the new Soviet state could capitalize on massive economies of scale by devoting entire geographical regions to the production of a single crop – in Central Asia’s case, cotton. However, Edgar explains, this strategy forced the Bolsheviks to commit one of the sins they had accused the Tsarist state of committing: depriving nationalities of their right to national self-determination. “Thus, despite the Bolsheviks’ harsh criticism of the Tsarist regime for turning Central Asia into a ‘cotton colony,’” Edgar writes, “Soviet economic interests ultimately forced the same role on Central Asia.”²⁴

II. Revolts

Cotton in particular and economic policies in general were clearly contentious policy issues for both the Tsarist and Soviet regimes, and they figured significantly in the popular revolts which challenged the authority of those governments in Central Asia. During the early twentieth century, decades after the Tsarist regime had consolidated its control of the region, a series of rebellions in Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and elsewhere threatened the hegemony of the Imperial government in those regions. The most significant rebellion to occur in Central Asia during the Tsarist era was the Revolt of 1916, which was centered in, but not limited to, the Fergana Valley and modern-day Uzbekistan. The first English-language publication to discuss the rebellion in depth was Edward Dennis Sokol’s *The Revolt of 1916 in Russian Central Asia* (1954). In his introduction, Sokol suggests that the topic had been neglected by western scholars. Having

²⁴ Ibid.

occurred during an especially tumultuous time in Russian and world history, the revolt essentially competes for scholarly attention with the First World War and the Bolshevik Revolution.²⁵

Sokol himself argues that the rebellion was the cumulative result of Muslim resentment against foreign rule and Tsarist mismanagement, involving political, social, and economic factors. In his introduction, Sokol frames the conflict in racial and religious terms, writing that the rebellion “provides an elementary expression of that revolt of Asia against the rule of the white man which is occupying so much of our attention presently. A close corollary to this is the age-long struggle of Islam against the infidel; this also finds expression in the revolt of 1916.”²⁶ Sokol’s reference to an “age-long struggle against the infidel” suggests that the rebellion was, in part at least, a manifestation of a broad and continuing struggle against those whom Muslims perceived as the enemies of their faith. While this idea may find parallels in contemporary conflicts, the “revolt of Asia against the rule of the white man” is almost certainly a reference to the French, British, and Dutch colonial conflicts of the 1950s.

Despite the importance which he assigns to religious and racial aspects of the conflict, Sokol argues that the economic disenfranchisement of Muslim Central Asians was the *casus belli* of the rebellion. He writes that “in few revolts... does the economic factor play so conspicuous a role as in the Revolt of 1916.”²⁷ Sokol, as would many scholars after him, emphasizes the plight of the

²⁵ Edward Dennis Sokol, *The Revolt of 1916 in Russian Central Asia* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1954), 13.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

Central Asian peasant in the economic upheaval caused by the advent of the cotton economy, the credit system, and competition for employment from the influx of Russian unskilled labor.²⁸ The revolt failed, in his estimation, because of overwhelming Russian military superiority, but also due to a lack of coordination and leadership on the part of the rebels.

Throughout his book Sokol is generally sympathetic to the rebellion. He describes the Tsarist conquest of Central Asia as part of “the great expansion of the West at the expense of Islam”²⁹ and takes note of a double standard applied to Christian and Muslim religious fighters.³⁰ Sokol believes that the revolt is evidence that the Russians failed in their civilizing task in Central Asia. In their more than half century of rule in the region, the Tsarist government “effected no significant influence intellectually or culturally upon Asia.”³¹ The ultimate reason for their failure had to do not with any specific resistance or intransigence on the part of the Muslims, but rather with Tsarist Russia’s own stage of development. He expresses his opinion on this subject through the words of another historian, Hans Kohn, who wrote that “the Russian Tsarist regime was itself far too Asiatic to be able to influence Asia.”³² Kohn and Sokol are essentially suggesting that Russian culture was too far removed from the main current of Western civilization to make any appreciable contribution to modernizing the peoples of Central Asia.

²⁸ Ibid., 30-31.

²⁹ Ibid., 19.

³⁰ Ibid., 20.

³¹ Ibid., 178.

³² Hans Kohn, *A History of Nationalism in the East* (NY, 1929): 128. quoted in Ibid.

The suppression of the revolt of 1916 would not bring peace to Central Asia. Although the February and October 1917 revolutions were largely Russian affairs, the Civil War would quickly spill over into Central Asia and intimately affect its people. As soon as Bolshevik forces began to make headway in the region, they were confronted with a series of native rebellions known as the Basmachi revolts. These revolts continued after the defeat of the Tsarist forces and comprised the greatest challenge to Soviet power in Central Asia during the formative years of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, as is the case with the Revolt of 1916, the Basmachi rebellion has received relatively little attention from western scholars.

The most serious scholarly attention the rebellion received during the otherwise prolific 1960s was a chapter in Olaf Caroe's *Soviet Empire: The Turks of Central Asia and Stalinism* (1967). The chapter is a brief survey of the revolt from the Russian Civil War to its final defeat in the late 1920s. To Caroe, the Basmachi rebellion represented both specific policy grievances and a broader desire for national self determination. He explains that the rebellion was

a movement of double inspiration. It was on the one hand a revulsion on the part of the supporters of the old governments... and on the other a more idealistic struggle for national freedom, giving expression to the aspirations of the educated and ignited by conditions of famine and horror which threatened to deprive all of everything they knew, material and spiritual.³³

The aspirations of the educated, namely the Young Bukharan reformers, however, were not synonymous with the goals of many of the rural, uneducated Basmachi fighters. While the Civil War period created the conditions necessary for unlikely

³³ Caroe, *Soviet Empire*, 121.

partnerships, it did not foster the development of stable, durable alliances. There was an inherent tension between the Jadid-inspired urban intellectuals and the agrarian, rural component of the movement.³⁴ This tension was one of the chief challenges of the Basmachi movement, and one that Caroe identifies as an important reason for its failure.

The next major western work on the Basmachi revolts is Martha Brill Olcott's article titled "The Basmachi or Freeman's Revolt in Turkestan, 1918-1924" (1981).³⁵ Olcott is aware of the dearth of western scholarship on the subject, and she makes note of it at the beginning of her article. Indeed, in M. Holdsworth's 1952 article in *Soviet Studies*, "Soviet Central Asia, 1917-1940," published two years before Sokol's book, the entire span of Soviet involvement in Turkestan from the revolution to WWII is surveyed with hardly any reference to the Basmachi revolt.³⁶ In Alexandre Bennigsen's *Islam in the Soviet Union* (1967), the Basmachi movement is quite literally a footnote.³⁷ Seymour Becker's *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia* (1968) contains two pages about the revolt and includes no specific discussion about the motivations for the rebellion or the role of religion. In *Tribal Nation*, Edgar portrays the Basmachi in Turkmenistan as a fractious collection of marauders, fanatics, and discontents. Arguing that the rebellion was in large part motivated by Soviet cultural insensitivity and oppressive economic policies, she does not discuss the rebellion as a genuine

³⁴ Ibid., 120-122.

³⁵ Martha Brill Olcott, "The Basmachi or Freeman's Revolt in Turkestan, 1918-1924," *Soviet Studies* 33 (July 1981): 352-369.

³⁶ M. Holdsworth, "Soviet Central Asia, 1917-1940," *Soviet Studies* 3 (January 1952): 258-277.

³⁷ Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal LeMercier-Quelquejay, *Islam in the Soviet Union* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 85.

reflection of Central Asian identity.³⁸ The one aspect of the rebellion on which most of these authors agree is that it compelled the early Soviets to make social and political concessions to establish order in the region. Part of the reason why the Basmachi rebellions have received little scholarly attention is obvious: they failed. By the early 1930s the movement was, with the exception of a few isolated bands, largely defeated. However, Olcott takes issue with this rationale, rather emphasizing the movement's longevity, explaining that despite overwhelming Russian military superiority, the Basmachi rebellions remained a threat to Soviet power in Turkestan for most of the 1920s.³⁹

She perceives the Basmachi rebellion as a religiously-driven conflict.

Indignant at what they perceived as an assault on their Islamic identity and way of life, Muslims from across the social and economic spectrum of Central Asian society united in rebellion against the atheist Soviet forces. "One cannot over-emphasize the role of Islam," she writes, "in the genesis and maintenance of the Basmachi resistance."⁴⁰ Islam served as the unifying force of the resistance not because its supporters were fanatically religious, but because it was so closely tied to Central Asian identity. Olcott explains that Islam served to buttress together an otherwise fractious and heterogeneous movement, writing that "all elements of Turkestani society were agreed on one, and possibly only on, issue: Islam and Turkestan were unquestionably linked. Even if the understanding of Islam was varied, religion was a fundamental part of the self-identity of the Turkestanis."⁴¹

³⁸ Edgar, *Tribal Nation*, 38-39.

³⁹ Olcott, "Basmachi," 362.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 364.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 363-364.

Here, Olcott presents the same portrayal of the role of Islam in Central Asian society as she does in her 1987 book, *The Kazakhs*. Her argument is that, regardless of the level of overt religiosity, Islam is a central component of personal and collective identity for the peoples of Turkestan. This idea is consistent with much of the Western scholarship on the topic of Muslim nationalism in the region. The main thrust is that Islam retains its strength as a source of identity for a people even in the absence of specifically Islamic behavior and customs.

III. Gender

Conflict, cooperation, and co-optation in the Russian relationship with Islam were not limited to the most direct realms of politics, economics, and nationalism. Over the past thirty years, various historians have demonstrated that competing perceptions of appropriate gender roles were also an important component of the interaction between Islam and the Russian and Soviet states. Earlier treatments of the Russian political and social relationship with Islam usually contain very few references to the status of Muslim women in the Russian empire or of Tsarist attempts to influence gender roles in Islamic regions of the empire. For example, neither Richard Pierce's *Russian Central Asia* nor Seymour Becker's *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia* address the topic. The same holds true of books written by Caroe, Carrère d'Encausse, and other 1950s- and 1960s-era historians of Islam in the Russian empire. These books reflect scholarly trends of the time in that they do not regard gender, women, or families as a noteworthy aspect of Tsarist or Soviet policy towards Islam.

By most later accounts, the first and most significant conflict over gender roles in Russian Central Asia occurred in the 1920s, with the Bolsheviks' attempt to cast women as a "surrogate proletariat" in lieu of sufficient class distinctions in Russian Central Asia. The first and most exhaustive account of this phenomenon is Gregory Massell's study by the same name, *The Surrogate Proletariat: Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia, 1919-1929* (1974). The work was one of the earliest scholarly attempts at understanding the role of gender in Soviet policy in Central Asia. While some scholars have challenged his thesis, most recognize the significance of Massell's book in suggesting gender as a major category of analysis in the treatment of Soviet policy in Central Asia. The book includes elements of gender, political, and legal history in its study of the Soviet effort to foment sexual conflict and transform the place of Muslim women in Central Asian society. However, Massell also uses gender conflict as a lens through which to gauge the general feasibility of deliberate political efforts to engineer social change in societies. He lays out his goals in the introduction to *The Surrogate Proletariat*, explaining that he aims to understand "how, and to what extent, political power may be deliberately used in the revolutionary transformation of societies...; conversely, how, and to what extent, traditional structures and life styles may serve as obstacles to engineered revolution."⁴² In this sense, the book is a sociological case study to understand a more general social and political dynamic.

⁴² Gregory Massell, *The Surrogate Proletariat: Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia, 1919-1929* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), xx.

Massell sees Soviet strategy as based on two central and flawed assumptions, namely that “the key to undermining the traditional social order was in the destruction of traditional family structures, and that the breakdown of the kinship system itself could be achieved through the mobilization of women.”⁴³ In order to justify these very consequential initiatives, the Soviets had to illustrate how Muslim women were subjugated and oppressed by the “traditional social order.” Massell devotes an entire chapter to this effort, noting that the Soviets had an obvious vested interest in highlighting the unpleasant aspects of female lives in Central Asia. He writes that the Soviet perception of gender roles in the region was viewed “through the spectacles of revolutionary elites frustrated by the resistance and resilience of traditional society.”⁴⁴

This frustration caused the Soviet approach toward transforming gender to be modified and adapted in fits and starts. An important theme of his study is that Soviet gender policy in Central Asia was inconsistent and was guided more by trial and error than by any set, static strategy. This theme is also discussed in his introduction, where he writes that “the use of Moslem women affords an understanding, on a special dimension, of the trial-and-error progression from one revolutionary approach to another.”⁴⁵ The idea of Soviet policy as being guided by circumstance is actually consistent with recent interpretations of Soviet history, which stress the importance of adaptation and pragmatism over rigid, ideologically-driven policy formation.

⁴³ Ibid., xxii.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 96.

⁴⁵ Ibid., xxiv.

Massell concludes that the Soviet attempt to portray women as an oppressed class was not successful. He explains that “women may be said to have failed to function as a social class, a stratum with a shared sense of identity, with a distinct, clearly perceived, community of experience, interest, purpose, and action.”⁴⁶ In short, women disappointed the Soviets, who at once sought to liberate them and to use them as an oppressed class – a critical element necessary for the creation of a Marxist/Leninist society in Central Asia. The core of this “failure to function” as a stand-in proletariat was the fact that an identity – gender, national, or religious – could not be translated for political convenience. Massell explains that in their campaign to restructure and co-opt gender relations in Central Asia, the Soviets found that “sexual identity could not readily serve as a basis for class identity; sexual politics could not be reduced to class politics.”⁴⁷

The Soviet effort to revolutionize gender relations – referred to in Central Asia as the *hujum*, derived from the Arabic term for “attack” – involved many aspects of women’s lives. This effort included securing women’s property rights, ending the custom of female seclusion, increasing women’s and girls’ educational opportunities, and reforming divorce laws. However, none of these efforts were as publicly visible as the issue of the veil. The campaign against the veil was one of the most contentious components of the *hujum* and is the focus of Douglas Northrop’s *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (2004). In the book, Northrop examines the social and political consequences of the Soviet campaign against the veiling of Muslim women in Uzbekistan during the 1920’s

⁴⁶ Ibid., 397.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

and 1930's. The Bolsheviks saw the veil as symptomatic of the subservient position of women in Uzbek society, and symbolic of social backwardness.⁴⁸ A large part of Northrop's discussion of the campaign against the veil involves determining the nature and extent of Soviet power in Central Asia. Northrop argues that, while different from the Tsarist empire in many important respects, the Soviet Union nevertheless behaved as a colonial power in Central Asia.⁴⁹

In an article published in 1996 about the unveiling campaign, Northrop explains that the Bolsheviks, frustrated by what they perceived as a lack of conventional class distinctions in Uzbek society, instead substituted gender equality as the primary arena of social progress. This understanding of Soviet policy originated with Massell's *The Surrogate Proletariat*, and Northrop acknowledges Massell as a significant influence in his own work.⁵⁰ Northrop's article expands upon this idea by exploring the unintended and harmful effects of the *hujum* to the Soviet cause. Northrop explains that the all-out assault on traditional Uzbek gender relations politicized Uzbek private life, inserted Soviet authority into family relations, and consequently opened a new arena in which to challenge Soviet rule.⁵¹ He presents the unveiling campaign as evidence of the imperial nature of Soviet rule and the veil as an adopted symbol of resistance to it. In his introduction, Northrop explains the political significance of the veil, writing that "wearing a veil became more than a narrowly religious or moral matter; for

⁴⁸ Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 25-26.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 14-24.

⁵⁰ Douglas Northrop, "Languages of Loyalty: Gender, Politics, and Party Supervision in Uzbekistan, 1927-1941," *The Russian Review* 59 (April 2000): 179-200.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 179-181.

many people it also became an act of political and national resistance to an outside colonial power.”⁵² In effect, the Soviets inadvertently managed to transform a mundane and routine manner of dress into a symbol of Muslim independence and identity. While the veil did eventually fade away in Central Asia, the *hujum* of the 1920s and 1930s nevertheless endured as an example of the limits and inadvertent effects of Soviet power.

While the veil became a symbol of Muslim identity due to Soviet efforts, there is no consensus among scholars that the Islamic religion was in fact the primary source of identity in Central Asia during the early Soviet era. The most enduring indigenous concept of identity, according to Adrienne Edgar, was the individual’s tribe. More so than Islam, the tribe was the primary social institution around which Turkmen society was organized. However, there were many Turkmen cultural practices that derived as much from Islamic law as from Turkmen culture. The most obvious and consequential of these was the place of women in Turkmen society. Soviet authorities, as they did elsewhere in Soviet Central Asia, embarked on a long and contentious struggle to restructure gender roles in Turkmen society, and this initiative is the subject of Chapter Eight of Edgar’s book, titled “Emancipation of the Unveiled.” Deciding where these efforts should be directed was initially difficult for the Soviet Union because the Turkmen were perceived as being less “oppressed” than their contemporaries elsewhere in the Muslim world. Because they were neither veiled nor secluded – due to the impracticality of these practices among a nomadic people – Soviet gender activists focused their efforts on eradicating both female illiteracy and the

⁵²Northrop, *Veiled Empire*, 13.

payment of the bride-price. Both of these efforts met massive resistance within Turkmen society. Much of Edgar's discussion of gender in early Soviet Turkmenistan centers on understanding the intent of Soviet policy and its ultimate effect on the new Turkmen nation. Contrary to many other scholars of the subject, she rejects the notion that Soviet gender policy was a simple, "colonial"-style assault on Turkmen culture.⁵³ Edgar argues that Soviet gender-reform efforts were part of a genuine, concerted attempt to modernize and strengthen Turkmen society. They failed because, having originated from and being directed by Moscow, the Turkmen inevitably perceived the campaign as an effort to undermine their native culture. Edgar concludes that "because the Soviet regime carried the taint of alien rule, communist authorities were unable to persuade most Turkmen that the emancipation of women was essential to their future as a nation."⁵⁴

National resistance to an outside colonial power was certainly not unique to the Bolshevik experience in Central Asia. Edgar's article "Patriarchy and the Nation: The Soviet 'Emancipation' of Muslim Women in Pan-Islamic Perspective" is an attempt to understand how the Soviet *hujum* in Central Asia was fundamentally similar to or different from gender-reform efforts undertaken by European colonial powers and by indigenous Muslim governments.⁵⁵ Edgar specifically examines French and British efforts in their Muslim colonies and

⁵³ Edgar, *Tribal Nation*, 258.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 260.

⁵⁵ Adrienne Edgar, "Patriarchy and the Nation: The Soviet 'Emancipation' of Muslim Women in Pan-Islamic Perspective," *Slavic Review* 65 (Summer 2006): 274-293.

Iranian, Turkish, and Afghan government initiatives in their own countries.⁵⁶ In a brief historiographical discussion of the idea of Soviet empire, Edgar notes that many recent characterizations of the Soviet Union have portrayed the state as a European empire in the classic sense of the term. Without rejecting the idea of Soviet empire wholesale, Edgar proposes that the Soviet/Central Asian relationship cannot be characterized as imperial without differentiating between Soviet intent and Central Asian reaction. She argues that whereas the Central Asian response to Soviet gender-reform efforts was characteristic of a colonial state, Soviet motivations were not.⁵⁷ While the early Soviets used much the same language as Europeans in their condemnation of what they perceived as repressive gender reform efforts in the Islamic world, their approach to transforming them was fundamentally different. “If one considers state actions rather than rhetoric,” Edgar writes, “it becomes clear that Soviet policy toward Muslim women in Central Asia differed substantially from the policies of the French and the British in the Middle East and North Africa.”⁵⁸

These Soviet state actions included a sincere desire to elevate the status of Muslim women and to include real investments in women’s and girls’ education, literacy, and employment programs, as well as the campaign against the veil.⁵⁹ In these concerted initiatives to improve the lot of women, Edgar finds parallels with indigenous gender reforms in Muslim states. However, she finds that Central Asian Muslims reacted to these efforts in a manner typical of indigenous

⁵⁶ Ibid., 254.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 255.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 257.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 258-259.

resistance to colonial-style oppression. Despite their best efforts, Russian Soviet authorities were perceived as foreign, and their attempts to transform Central Asian family and gender relations only caused these traditional relationships to be perceived as vessels of resistance to foreign domination. Thus, traditional relationships were reinforced and antipathy toward Soviet rule intensified.⁶⁰ Edgar emphasizes that while national authorities in Muslim states may or may not have been any more “native” than the people they governed, they were more successful than the Soviets because they were perceived as such. Regardless of the reality of distinctions of “foreignness,” Edgar explains, “it was the popular impression of Moscow’s foreignness that mattered.”⁶¹

Edgar’s article, like many other studies of gender in the relationship between Islam and the Soviet Union, examines the issue from the perspective of the Soviet government or indigenous Muslim institutions. *The Surrogate Proletariat* examines gender policy almost exclusively from the perspective of the Soviet authorities, whereas Northrop focuses more on the involvement of local reformers. In her book, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling Under Communism* (2006), Marianne Kamp examines Soviet gender reform in the Muslim world from a largely heretofore unexamined perspective: that of Muslim women. Drawing on oral interviews of Uzbek and Tatar women, Kamp writes a history of the *hujum* from the perspective of those whom it most affected. Consistent with much modern gender history, “agency” is an important theme in Kamp’s book as she explains in her introduction, writing that “this is a

⁶⁰ Ibid., 268.

⁶¹ Ibid., 269.

book about Uzbek women and is based on the words of Uzbek women. This is a quest for agency in a context of coercion and limitation.”⁶² However, in her quest for the agency of Uzbek women Kamp does not challenge the importance or distinctiveness of Soviet policy. Rather, she suggests that the Soviet authorities were the first government in Central Asia to expect or require participation from Muslim women.⁶³ She explains that “from the beginning of Bolshevik power in Turkestan, citizenship was gendered, Party membership was gendered, and expectations for citizenship participation were gendered.”⁶⁴

Conclusion

Historians and other scholars have used the development of the cotton economy, the Basmachi revolts, and Soviet gender initiatives as prisms through which to view and understand the power dynamics of the relationship between Russia and its Muslims. The continued existence and, indeed, the expansion of the Central Asian cotton economy during the Soviet era is convincing historical evidence that, in economic terms at least, the Soviet Union was a colonial power on the model of its Tsarist predecessor. Not only did the Soviets exploit Central Asia for economic gain, but, in mandating collectivization and the cultivation of cotton and a sedentary, agrarian lifestyle, they also disrupted nearly all aspects of traditional modes of living for Central Asia’s nomads. In this historical framework, the Soviets become both economic and cultural imperialists, effectively undermining many of the original justifications for Soviet power.

⁶² Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 12.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

The charge of cultural imperialism is one that the early Soviets are particularly vulnerable to in regards to their gender policies as well. The history of this subject gives scholars the opportunity to gauge how capable the young Soviet government was at projecting power not only into public institutions, but into more private identities – the family and, indeed, the self. In the growing body of work on this subject, most historians have concluded that while the Soviets did indeed manage to alter how Central Asians perceived gender, it nevertheless demonstrated the limits of Soviet power and had negative unintended consequences for the Soviet regime. Since notions of gender identity in Central Asia are closely associated with the Islamic religion, studies of gender policy can also serve as a historical case study through which to measure the effectiveness of Soviet power against the influence of religious institutions.

Whereas historians have effectively used the cotton economy and gender reform as historical tests with which to gauge the power dynamics of the relationship between Russia and Islam, the Basmachi revolts have been largely neglected in the English-language scholarship on the revolutionary and early Soviet periods. In focusing too much on the rebellion's fractious organization and lack of central leadership, historians have been overly dismissive of the movement. A more thorough examination of the Basmachi rebellion and its legacy would likely add much perspective on the Russian response to Muslim resistance and the Muslim reaction to foreign rule.

CONCLUSION: THE BALANCE OF BURDEN AND BENEFIT

How have historians in the West perceived the Russian relationship with the Muslims of Central Asia? Answering this question has been the central goal of this thesis. It is a difficult question to answer in part because the topic flows so seamlessly into other important topics in the history of Slavic and Islamic civilization. The debate over Soviet nationalities policy, for example, clearly includes the Muslim nationalities of the Soviet Union, but by no means is it an exclusively Muslim issue. What begins as a thorough study of ideas and perspectives on nationalities policy as it relates to Soviet Muslims can quickly become a more general study on a much broader canon of work.

That said, we can identify a few distinctive trends in the study of this specific topic, the Tsarist and Soviet relationship with Islam from the conquest of Central Asia until the dissolution of the Soviet Union? First, the question of the imperial nature of Soviet rule is and will continue to be the most contentious one in the study of the Russian relationship with Islam. This trend can be partially attributed to the fact that the historical legacy of the Soviet Union is still a politically volatile issue in Europe and America. Characterizing the Soviet Union as an imperial state both undermines one of the central foundations for its existence and justifies Western efforts to contain the influence of the USSR during the Cold War. However, it is nevertheless difficult to challenge the reality that the Soviet Union was indeed an imperial state. The peoples of the Soviet Socialist Republics (SSRs) had national self-determination only to the extent that

the ethnically Russian-dominated Soviet central government allowed it. Even seemingly inclusive policies such as *korenizatsiia* mainly served to dissuade resentment at what was, essentially, subjugation by a foreign power.

The second trend is that there has been a general shift away from the Soviet and Russian perspective and toward that of the Muslims. Earlier treatments of the relationship between Russia and Islam tend to approach the issue almost exclusively from a perspective of Russian policy. Tsarist administrators and Soviet authorities were once portrayed as the primary agents of change and power in Soviet Central Asia. The idea that the Muslims might have played a more active role in this relationship – that they had “agency” – has developed only gradually over the past twenty years. The concept of Muslim agency in the relationship between Russia and Islam is consequential in that it challenges the assumption that the Muslims were an entirely oppressed and subjugated minority. The more control and self-determination the Muslims had in Tsarist and Soviet institutions, the more responsible they become for how those institutions affected their communities, both positively (widespread literacy, development of infrastructure) and negatively (lack of civil rights, economic collapse). This new emphasis on Muslim agency can be seen as an extension of the broader historiographical trend toward post-colonial and subaltern studies. It can also be understood as an example of a generational evolution of scholars’ interests, wherein earlier historians of the topic studied the center and their intellectual successors shifted their attention to the periphery.

There has also been a decreased emphasis on the relevance of governmental institutions themselves. Until recently, many scholars assumed that official institutions were the primary power brokers in the relationship between Russia and Islam. However, recent work on Soviet gender policy has demonstrated that extra-governmental institutions such as the family and personal, informal relationships may in some cases be as powerful, or even more powerful, than the presiding government. This trend has supported the development of the idea of Muslim agency in that it provides a solution for how Muslims could control their own lives and communities while still being disenfranchised by Tsarist or Soviet authorities.

Despite the large body of work on the Russian relationship with Islam, there are nevertheless some significant gaps in our understanding of the topic. The most significant of these relates in part to the continuing development of the idea of Muslim agency. Western scholars have, for the most part, neglected studying the role of the Muslim intelligentsia during the Soviet period. However, most of the work on the Muslim intelligentsia has focused on the Jadid reformers at the turn of the century or on the Sultangalievist Muslim communists. While studies of these groups are significant, they do not go far enough toward explaining the influence of Muslim intellectuals outside of these specific and short-lived movements. Intellectuals are regarded as a key element in the development of nationalism in studies of the topic in other regions of Imperial Russia, Soviet Union, and elsewhere. In his book, *Ethnic Nationalism and the Fall of Empires: Central Europe, Russia, and the Middle East, 1914-1923* (2002),

Aviel Roshwald demonstrates that intellectual elites consistently played an integral role in shaping notions of national identity during and immediately after the First World War.¹ Many of the most notable Russian dissidents of the Soviet era were academics and intellectuals, such as Andrei Sakharov and Roy Medvedev. However, few scholars have explored the topic as it relates to the Muslims of Central Asia. In writing this thesis, I originally intended to study the role of the Muslim intelligentsia in the broader development of Muslim nationalism. However, the idea soon proved unfeasible for a study of this scale, because there was simply very little previous research on the subject outside of the context of the Jadid and Sultangalievist movements. The closest scholars have come to examining the role of Muslim intellectuals in the development of Central Asian nationalism has been literature reviews of Soviet Muslim authors, such as the Kyrgyz poet and novelist Chingiz Aitmatov.² In order for historians to have a more thorough understanding of Muslim nationalism, they must study the society's most prolific source of ideas and ideologies – the intellectual dissident and non-dissident elite. It is likely that a more focused treatment of Central Asian intellectual circles and academic establishments will add much to our understanding of the development of Muslim nationalism in the Soviet Union.

In a trend related to the neglect of Muslim intellectuals, there is a parallel neglect of Muslim dissent against the Soviet regime. *Samizdat*, underground publishing of the dissident community, is regarded as a key component of

¹ Aviel Roshwald, *Ethnic Nationalism and the Fall of Empires: Central Europe, Russia, and the Middle East, 1914-1923* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

² Chingiz Aitmatov, *The Day Lasts More than A Hundred Years*, trans. John French (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1983). Aitmatov is widely published outside of the former Soviet Union.

resistance against the Soviet regime in Eastern Europe and in Russia itself. It is also regarded as an important vehicle for the transmission of notions of ethnic and religious nationalism in those regions as well. *The Samizdat Register*, a compilation of translated samizdat writings smuggled into the West, is widely regarded as an invaluable source on Russian dissidence against the Soviet regime. However, the *Register* contains very little in the way of Muslim samizdat and despite the marked interest in the development of Muslim nationalism in Central Asia, there has been little inquiry into the samizdat of the region or other written expressions of Muslim dissent. There seems to be a perception that the diffusion of nationalism in Central Asia happened by some means apart from those that were responsible for the trend in Russia and Eastern Europe. Future scholarly inquiries into the development of Muslim nationalism in the Tsarist and Soviet empires would do well to focus more intently on both the role of the Muslim intelligentsia and the presence of samizdat in the Muslim republics of the Soviet Union.

The most striking gap in the historiography of the Russian relationship with Islam is the lack of studies of Central Asia in the years leading up to the Soviet collapse. In the 1970s and early 1980s, there were a number of scholars who predicted that the Muslims of Central Asia would soon become a major destabilizing force in Soviet politics, demanding more autonomy and perhaps even independence, severely challenging Soviet power. While the specific causes of the Soviet collapse are still being debated, it was not initiated by a Muslim revolt in Central Asia. While there were certainly unsettling ethnic disturbances

in Central Asia during the years leading up to and immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union, they were, as a rule, not part of the sequence of events which caused the collapse. In fact, while the Berlin Wall fell and the streets were filled with demonstrators in the Baltic states, Central Asia took a surprisingly passive role in the collapse of the Soviet empire. There is almost a sense that some scholars were disappointed at the non-pivotal role that the Muslims assumed in the final days of the Soviet Union.

Central Asia's Muslims did not rise up in revolution to throw off the Soviet yoke. Statues of Lenin and Marx were not toppled in Central Asian cities the way they were in Central and Eastern Europe. In fact, it was not until 2004 that the government of the Kyrgyz Republic removed the statue of Lenin from Ala-Too square in Bishkek, quietly and with no ceremony, quite literally under the cover of darkness. With such an anticlimactic end, how then can we best characterize this span of the Russian relationship with Islam, from the Tsarist conquest of Central Asia to the collapse of the Soviet Union? I propose that it was a mutual relationship of burden and benefit.

Both the Tsarist and the Soviet regimes wanted to harness the vast economic and strategic resources of Central Asia and its people. Many Central Asians understood the benefits of such a partnership with a world power such as Russia – security, commerce, infrastructure, and social progress. However, both parties were saddled with significant burdens as well. The Tsars and the Soviets were faced with an expensive empire and a people whose loyalty they were

always unsure of. Both regimes felt compelled to transform aspects of Central Asian society.

Revolts during the early Soviet era and the growth of nationalist sentiment during the Brezhnev years, combined with Central Asia's underwhelming economic return, contributed to a general doubt as to whether Central Asia was, in a sense, worth it. For their part, the Muslims of Central Asia, having benefited from the modernization brought by the Russians, began increasingly to wonder whether the advantages of Soviet rule were worth the continued denial of national self-determination. Until 1991, the Soviet Union provided Central Asia with just enough economic and security benefits to ward off the strengthening tide of national discontent. When both parties decided that their respective burdens were not, in fact, worth it, the relationship collapsed. Having brought an isolated and undeveloped region of the world into modernity, Soviet power became obsolete in Central Asia. Five independent nation-states were born and historians were left to ponder a new and puzzling chapter in the history of ethnicity, faith, and empire.

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