ISLAM AS A FACTOR IN RUSSIAN POLITICS: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL DIMENSIONS, 2001-2010

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DECLARATION

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Dedicated To

My Loving Parents

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABM	:	Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty
AIEA	:	International Atomic Energy Agency
APEC	:	Asia- Pacific Economic Cooperation
APEC	:	Asia-Pacific Economic Coperation
ATPC	:	All Tatar Public Centre
BPC	:	Bashkir People's Centre
BSES	:	Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation
ChRI	:	Chechen Republic of Ichkeria
CIS	:	Commonwealth of Independent State
CSBM	:	The Central Spiritual Board of Muslim
CSTO	:	Collective Security Treaty Organization
DUMER	:	The Spiritual Board of Muslim of European Part of Russia
DUMSK	:	Spiritual Direcotate of the Muslim of the North Caucasus
DUMTSER	:	Spiritual Board of Muslim of the Central Board of Muslim
ECRI	:	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
EU	:	European Union
FSB	:	Federal Security Service
FSB	:	Foreign Intelligence Service
FSU	:	Former Soviet Union
GCC	:	Gulf Coperation Council
HT	:	Hizb ut-Tahrir
IJG	:	Islamic Jihad Group
IJU	:	Islamic Jihad Union
IMU	:	Uzbekistan's Islamic Movement

IRP	:	Islamic Rebirth Party
IRPT	:	Tajikistan's Islamic Renaissance Party
ISESCO	:	Islamic Scientific and Cultural Organization
KGB	:	Committee for State Security
LDPR	:	Liberal Democratic Party of Russia
MHP	:	Turkish National Action Party
NATO	:	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OIC	:	Organization of Islamic Conferences
OPEC	:	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
OSCE	:	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe in Croatia and Chechnya
PKK	:	Mrxist-Moist Kurdistan Worker's Party
RCM	:	The Russian Council of Muftis
RSBM	:	Regional Spiritual Board
ROC	:	Russian Orthodoxy Church
RSFSR	:	Russian Federative Socialist Republic
SADUM	:	Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan
SCO	:	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SNO	:	School Number One
UAE	:	United Arab Emirates
UMR	:	The Union of the Muslims of Russia
UN	:	United Nations
USSR	:	United Soviet Socialist Republic
UTO	:	Unified Tajik Opposition

CHAPTER -1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Russia's interaction with Islam is not a recent one but thousand years old. This interaction started when Islam was introduced to the Caucasus region in the mid-seventh century AD as part of the Muslim conquest of Persia. Later, in course of time, these regions[1] were incorporated into Russia by the imperial Russian empire. In 685-6, Arabs conquered the city of Derbend (the modern-day Dagestan), which became the epicentre of the north-eastern Caucasus' Islamisation (Pilkington and Yemelianova 2003: 28). In 737, the Muslim army led by Marwan ibn Muhammad[2] defeated the Khazar[3] Kingdom, the region's largest military power. Most of what is now southern Russia, western Kazakhstan, eastern Ukraine, Azerbaijan, significant portions of the Caucasus, and Crimea were all under the control of the Khazar Kingdom. With Marwan II's victory, the Umayyad Empire[4] ruled the Northern Caucasus. Based on this premise, it is believed that Russia's encounter with Islam began much before the adoption of Orthodox Christianity as an official religion by the *Kievan Rus*[5] king Vladimir[6] (Hunter 2004).

Islam and Muslims were simply distant neighbours until the Mongol invasion[7] of *Kievan Rus*, and they were not part of Russia's religious and political landscape. The

[1] The conquest of the Sassanid Empire (also called the Empire of Iranians) brought Islam to the Caucasus region in the mid-seventh century. Later, after a few centuries, expanding Russian empire incorporated these areas into its territory.

[2] He later succeeded as Marwan II and was the final caliph of the Umayyad dynasty.

[3] The Khazars were semi-nomadic Turkic people that formed a powerful economic empire in the late sixth century AD that included the southeastern parts of modern-day European Russia, southern Ukraine, Crimea, and Kazakhstan. They built the most powerful state to rise from the disintegration of the Western Turkic Khaganate for the duration of its existence.

[4] The Umayyad Empire was governed by a caliph, or absolute king. Following the passing of Muhammad (570–632), the prophet and creator of Islam, this title, which meant "successor to Muhammad," was conferred upon Islamic leaders and was made a hereditary title under the Umayyad. To oversee their vast domains, which went as far as south of Spain, the Umayyad created a strong bureaucracy.

[5] From the late ninth century until the mid-13th century, East Slavic, Baltic, and Finnic peoples from Eastern and Northern Europe came together to form *Kieven Rus*, a loose federation. All three countries-Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine- cite *Kievan Rus* as their ancestor.

[6] Vladimir Sviatoslavich, commonly referred to as the Great, governed *Kievan Rus* as the Prince of Novgorod, Grand Prince of Kiev, and head of *Kievan Rus* from 980 until 1015.

[7] In the 13th century, *Kievan Rus* was attacked and subjugated by the Mongol Empire as part of its invasion of Europe.

expansion of Islam into Russia got triggered under the reign of the Tatar-Mongolian Golden Horde[8] when Uzbek Khan[9] adopted Islam as an official religion of the Golden Horde in 1313. Thereupon, the Turkic tribe expanding from Crimea to Siberia accepted Islam as a form of religion. This was crucial in the creation of Russia's Muslim viewpoint as the Mongol conquest and the period of the 'Mongol-Tatar yoke'[10] became synonymous with Islam (Pilkington and Yemelianova 2003). As a result, Muslims and Islam were perceived as invaders and oppressors by ordinary Russians. Also, a majority of Russians believed that the Tatar-Mongol dominance hampered their cultural and political development by creating a divide between Russia and the rest of Europe. Over time, the Golden Horde dissolved into many rival *Khanates*[11] by the 15th century, including the *Khanates* of Crimea[12], Astrakhan[13], the Siberian Tatars[14], and the Nogai Horde[15]. Except for the territory between Kiev and Moscow, these *Khanates* ruled all of modern-day Russia.

By the 16th century, the expanding imperial Russian empire incorporated a huge Muslim population into its territory by the annexation of Kazan, Siberian and Astrakhan *Khanates*. This marked the beginning of the annexation of Muslim lands into the Russian territory which culminated with the conquest of Central Asia in the 20th century. Consequently, the demographic structure of the Russian empire changed. Ivan the Terrible[16] adopted an intolerant policy towards its Muslim subjects which was reflected in the suppression of Muslims through coercive Christianization and Russification of Muslims of Russia (Pilkington and Yemelianova 2003). The Russian Tsar's divine and sacral authority over his multi-ethnic and poly-confessional

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[8] A kingdom established in the 13th century after the Mongol conquest of *Rus* in the 1240s spreading throughout the east of Moscow, north of Caspian and Black Sea, Eastern Europe, up to the Irtysh River in the east.

[9] Ozbek Khan was a Mongol ruler in the 14th century.

[10] From the 13th century through the 15th century, the Mongol-Tatar ruling classes ruled over Russian regions, aiming at systematic exploitation of the conquered territory through forced payments and aggressive raids. The Mongol conquests of the 13th century resulted in the establishment of the Mongol-Tatar yoke.

[11] A political entity ruled or governed by a Khan.

[12] The Crimean Peninsula and nearby steppes were part of the Khanate, which primarily corresponded to regions of South Ukraine between the Dnieper and Donets rivers.

[13] The Khanate ruled the territory around the modern city of Astrakhan, near the Volga river's mouth.

[14] The Khanate was a Turkic Khanate with a Turco-Mongol ruling class in southwestern Siberia.

[15] The Nogai Horde was a Nogai-led confederation that ruled the Pontic-Caspian steppe from around 1500 until the Kalmyks drove them west and the Russians drove them south in the 17th century.

[16] From 1533 until 1547, Ivan IV Vasilyevich was the grand prince of Moscow, and from 1547 to 1584, he was the first Moscow monarch to declare himself tsar of all Russia.

subjects was believed to be enhanced by Orthodox Christianity. The process of religious proselytization of Muslims was undertaken by using means such as material lures. The suppression of Muslims was one of the most essential components of Moscow's policy of bringing non-Russian areas into the centralised Russian state (Abdullin 1990: 6). From the conquest of Kazan in 1552 to Catherine the Great's accession to power in 1762, Russia's Muslims were subjected to systematic repression and the destruction of Muslim civilization within its borders. This was largely because Muslim rule was labelled as 'Tatar Mongolian Yoke'. The Mongol conquest and expansion of the Russian Empire into Muslim land developed as key elements in Russian national identity and are relevant in Russia's present political and cultural context.

Gradually, in the 18th century, Russian rulers reorientated their policies towards the Muslim subjects. In 1704, Peter the Great[17] allowed the translation of the Quran from French to Russian, while his successor Elizabeth Petrovna[18] and Catherine the Great adopted a more liberal policy favouring its Muslim population. To regulate the Muslim religion, Catherine the Great[19] issued a decree and removed restrictions on the construction of a mosque. Consequently, the official legal status of Islam was ensured in Russia (Crew 2003). She converted the Imperial regime into a patron of Islam and created a favourable platform for the cultural, religious and economic advancement of Volga-Tatar Muslims (Fisher 1978: 71). Also, Muslims were viewed as crucial promoters of Russian interests. She viewed her state as an empire along the lines of other European empires which led to the accommodation of people of different religions, especially Islam. Later, in the 19th century, the Imperial Russian Empire[20] annexed the Caucasus and Central Asia incorporating a large section of the Muslim population into its territory.

[17] Peter the Great presided over the Russian Tsardom and later the Russian Empire from May 7, 1682, until his death in 1725.
[18] She was Tsar Peter the Great's second-eldest daughter and reigned as empress of Russia from 1741 until her death in 1762.
[19] Catherine II, popularly known as Catherine the Great, was Russia's last empress, reigning from 1762 to 1796 and holding the record for the country's longest-reigning female ruler.
[20] When the Treaty of Nystad ended the Great Northern War, the Russian Empire, often known as Imperial Russia, succeeded the Tsardom of Russia and ruled over Eurasia and North America starting in 1721. The Empire lasted up until the Provisional Government, which took over following the February Revolution of 1917, proclaimed the Republic.

At the turn of the 20th century, Russia witnessed the political activism among its Muslim population largely due to the Russian defeat in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905[21]. The Muslims participated in the 1905 revolution under Islamic nationalism (Smirnov 1956: 12). The first all-Muslim Russian Congress was held in secret in 1905 which urged Muslims to unite and help in creating a constitutional monarchy. The second Congress was held in 1906, which concluded with the formation of the first Muslim political party named Union of Muslims based on liberal ideas. The Bolshevik revolution[22] provided ample opportunities for Muslims to achieve greater freedom in the sphere of religion, culture, and politics as Bolsheviks promised these freedoms before the revolution. The Bolshevik revolution of 1917 had a more profound impact on Russian society and culture due to the mobilisation of large sections of society, including its Muslim population.

The Soviet Union had about 45-50 million Muslims, establishing it as the fifth-largest Muslim inhabited country in the world after Pakistan, Indonesia, Bangladesh, India, Turkey and Egypt (Bennigsen and Broxup 1983: 1). The various types of freedoms promised by the Bolsheviks at the time of the revolution to the Muslims were never provided in practice. Consequently, the hostility of Muslims towards Bolsheviks increased.

The Soviet state as guided by Marxist-Leninist atheism[23], which considers religion as part of a superstructure, pursued the policy of atheism. As a result, once the Bolsheviks became well established, the Soviet state launched an attack on all the religions in Russia including Orthodox Christianity, Buddhism, Jews and especially Islam. The Soviet state ordered the closure and destruction of mosques, prohibition of

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[21] The Russo-Japanese War, which took place in 1904 and 1905, was a struggle between the Japanese Empire and the Russian Empire over competing imperial aspirations in Korea and Manchuria. Key military battlegrounds included the waters surrounding Korea, Japan, and the Yellow Sea, as well as the Liaodong Peninsula and Mukden in Southern Manchuria.

[22] The Menshevik group of the 1898-founded Marxist Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP), a revolutionary socialist political party, split out to form the Bolsheviks, a far-left, extreme, and revolutionary Marxist fraction. The Bolsheviks, who had founded their own party in 1912, ousted the Provisional Government of Alexander Kerensky in the Russian Republic during the October Revolution in November 1917, and they later came to dominate Soviet Russia and ultimately the Soviet Union as the only political force.

[23] The anti-clerical and irreligious component of Marxism-Leninism, the official state ideology of the Soviet Union, is known as Marxist-Leninist atheism, also known as Marxist-Leninist scientific atheism. Based on a dialectical-materialist understanding of how humans fit into the natural world, Marxist-Leninist atheism contends that religion is the people's opiate and, as a result, favours atheism over religious belief.

preachment by Mullahs, and dismantling of the Islamic educational framework (Arzt 1998). Though the state suppressed Orthodox Christianity, the aspect of the Soviet regime was most damaging to Russian Muslims and their religious and cultural heritage. Through its policies, the state tried to force out religion not only from the public and political discourse but also from its citizens' lives.

However, it is noteworthy that despite Soviet Union's continuous efforts to eliminate Islam for such a long period, Islam survived. Islam survived more successfully than Orthodox Christianity because it had the ability to function without any religious infrastructure. It survived in the private lives of the Muslims, Islamic rituals were observed in family gatherings and traditional Islamic funeral practices continued. This ensured the intergenerational transfer of Islamic tradition from one generation to the next. Women played a crucial role in transmitting Islamic beliefs and practices among the Soviet Muslim children (Kemper 2009). It is estimated that the collapse of the USSR separated around 15 million people inside Russia from their co-religionists living in Central Asia.

Islam is the second most significant religion in contemporary Russia, after Orthodox Christianity. The exact number of Muslims in post-Soviet Russia is impossible to estimate largely due to two reasons. First, there is no agreed criterion to identify who is a Muslim and who is not. While few supporters of the fact that strict adherence to Islamic rituals qualifies a person as Muslim, others tend to rely merely on cultural aspects. Second, for altogether different reasons Muslims as well as non-Muslim Russians tend to inflate the estimated number of Muslims within Russia. Muslim population in Russia has been stated to be as high as 30 million; however, most experts agree that an estimate of 18-20 million Muslims is a realistic projection. Nevertheless, what is important is not that rigorous adherence to religious form but rather, self-identification and the religious upbringing of a person.

It is noteworthy that the Muslim population of Russia is scattered among all the Muslim regions including the remotest area in the Kamchatka peninsula of the country. Muslims make up the majority of the population in the Volga Federal

District's[24] republics[25] of Ingushetia, Chechnya, Dagestan, Tatarstan and Bashkortostan. In the North Caucasian Federal District[26], which lies between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, Islam dominates among the nationalities. Tatars and Bashkirs of Turkic ancestry from the Volga-Ural region, as well as Muslims from various Caucasian ethnic groups from the North Caucasus, are the most important historical communities. In addition, big cities such as Moscow and St Petersburg have significant Muslim population. The most significant aspect is that despite being a minority, the Muslim community constitutes a very influential, assertive, forceful and active minority in the Russian Federation.

Post-Soviet Russia voluntarily adopted multiculturalism in 1993 and the opening lines of the Constitution of 1993 state, "We, a multinational people of the Russian Federation..." (Constitution, 1993). However, although the constitution of post-Soviet Russia provides under Article 26 that "everyone has the right of the native language user, right to voluntary choice of the language of relations, upbringing, education and creation", in practice it is not so. This precisely has been the root cause of inter-community and religious tensions. Islam is recognised as one of Russia's religions, along with Orthodox Christianity, Judaism and Buddhism. Politically and culturally, the Muslim minority is of considerable significance for Russia as it has been an integral part of Russia in the historical setting for many centuries.

Over the years, there has been a significant increase in the growth of the Muslim population. The increasing number of Muslims is not only due to the demographic growth of Islamic people but also because other groups including ethnic Russians are turning to Islam. This means that the Muslim population in Russia would play a significant role in the continuous culture and politics, given its increasing number and the political assertion that has been a trend in the post-Soviet era. Another contributing factor in this direction has been the trend towards religious revivalism and radicalization of religion in post-Soviet Russia. The Muslim people are turning

[24] One of the eight federal districts in Russia is the Volga Federal District. It is located in the southeast region of European Russia.

[25] Russia has 85 federal subjects, 22 of which are republics, according to its constitution. Republics are administrative units founded as nation states to represent non-Russian ethnic groups. Each republic has its own constitution, official language and anthem.

[26] One of Russia's eight federal districts is the North Caucasus, also known as the North Caucasus Federal District. It is in the geographical region of the North Caucasus, at the extreme south of Russia. The federal district split off from the Southern Federal District on January 19, 2010.

back to their Islamic roots. Consequently, a Muslim minority population that is both politically and culturally assertive has emerged. In the given situation, the Russian state finds itself confronted with a challenge that has far-reaching consequences for the state, both domestically and internationally.

1.2 Review of the Literature

A thorough review of literature available on the present area of study has been divided into the following themes.

1.2.1 Islam in Russia: Historical Background

1.2.2 Religious Policy in the Soviet Union

1.2.3 Religious Revivalism in the post-Soviet Union

1.2.4 State Policy Towards Religion in Russia

1.2.5 Islam as a Factor in Russian Politics

a) Internal Dimensions

b) External Dimensions

1.2.1 Islam in Russia: Historical Background

The literature available at present reveals that the relationship between Islam and Russia spans almost a millennium. The impact of Islam on the formation of Russian history cannot go unnoticed. In other words, Islam is an integral and essential part of Russian history. Many facets of Russia's national identity and perception of cultural uniqueness have been shaped by the relationship between the two. The central understanding is that Islam has deep roots in Russia. The root of Islam in Russia was strengthened by the Mongol conquest of Russia when people started adopting Islam. Moreover, the expansion of Russian imperialism into the Muslim populated regions led to the spread of Islam in Russia. It is noteworthy that the history of the interaction of Islam and Russia is not essentially of conflict and conquest rather it is also characterized by co-existence, cooperation, tolerance and accommodation for centuries.

Ravil Bukharaev in his book "Islam in Russia: The Four Seasons" narrates the early history of Islam in Russia up to 1800 emphasising the establishment and development of Islamic civilisation in the mainland of present-day Russia. The interaction between Russia and Islam is described by using four seasons or time periods. He begins with the spring season expanding till the 10th century with emphasis on Volga Bulghars' embracement to Islam during the period 922 to 1229. The second, summer season, from 1224 to 1400, narrates the proliferation of Islamic thoughts in Bulgaria with emphasise on the establishment of official religion. The third, autumn season, from 1400 to 1583, narrates the 'Golden Horde' explosion into different Khanates such as the khanate of Astarkhan, western Siberia and Kazan as well as the former Golden Horde's annexation into the Russian empire. The fourth, winter season, from 1583 to 1800 narrates the oppression of Muslim people and their forceful conversion to Orthodox Christianity by the Tsarist regime. In this part, there is a greater emphasis on Catherine the Great's policies towards the inclusion of Muslim people into the empire by providing legal status to Islam. It is noteworthy that Bukharaev stresses cordial relations and the existence of Russian Muslim Khanates and orthodox Christian people (Bukharaev 2000).

Shireen T. Hunter states that Islam came in contact with Russia around the seventh century. It is noteworthy that the Kingdom of Bulghar, on the banks of the Volga River, had adopted Islam in the 10th century. By the 14th century, the Mongolian conquers of Russia converted to Islam and at the same time Khan Uzbek, one of the local rulers under the empire declared Islam the official religion. During Tatar-Mongol rule, orthodox missionaries were not allowed to propagate their faith, yet Mongol rule was not fanatic because Russian principalities were given fairly wide autonomy (Hunter 2004).

Pilkington and Yemelianova argue that the Russian expansion into Muslim land started in the 16th century with the annexation of the Khanate of Kazan by Tsar Ivan IV in 1552. The Russification, coercive Christianisation and suppression of Islam were some of the major elements of Moscow's policy towards Islam. There, the Russian churches with oriental features were built which played an important role in the assault on Islam (Pilkington and Yemelianova 2003: 23). Tsar Ivan (IV) adopted the process of assimilation of Muslims because it was required for cementing of

natural homogeneity of the empire that was disturbed mainly due to the spread of Islam.

According to Shireen T. Hunter, Islam was regarded as a “alien body” even during the reigns of Tsar Feodor, Ramanove Tsar, Mikhail I, and Catherine the Great. (Hunter 2004: 8). Though, Alan Fisher emphasises that Catherine adopted a tolerant religious policy towards Muslims. She opted for collaboration rather than oppression of Muslims. Under her regime, Muslims were accepted as equals with the rest of the population. She viewed the exclusion of Muslims hampered social and political advancement (Fisher 1978: 71).

Robert D. Crews explains the function of ‘official’ Islam in the Russian Empire, with an empasise on the Orenburg Muslim Spiritual Assembly. Crews argues that the Tsar, who viewed himself as the patron of orthodoxy in the first place, attempted to subjugate and regulate the empire’s Muslim people through the usage of Islam. He offers a compelling case against the widely held belief that Russia, involved in so many conflicts with the Ottoman Empire and Iran, saw itself as the natural opponent of Islam, and that this attitude was expressed in Russia's treatment of its own Muslims (Crew, 2014).

By the beginning of the 20th century, argue Pilkington and Yemelianova, political consciousness had begun to appear within the Muslim section of Russia’s population largely due to Russia’s defeat in the Russo-Japanese war of 1905. Three All Muslim Russian Congresses were held in which the emphasis was given to Muslim unity. Other Islamic groups also rose, such as the Azeri National Party, the Islamic People’s Party, Musawat, Alash Orda, and the Kazak National Party (Pilkington and Yemelianova 2003: 36).

1.2.2 Religious Policy in the Soviet Union

The most important feature of Islam in Russia is that it has a long history of suppression, coercion, Russification and destruction, especially during the Soviet regime. However, Islam has always survived despite elimination and destruction efforts.

On the theme of the status of Muslims in the Soviet state, the existing literature points to the fact that the Bolshevik Revolution in October 1917 changed the foundational structure of society and the state. Marple, Hunter, and Artz describe that initially, the Bolsheviks provided religious freedom to the Muslims but once Soviet power became well established, a change of approach towards the people in the periphery became evident. By 1924, anti-Islamic measures such as the elimination of Muslim radicals and educational institutions, the destruction of Waaf, and anti-Islamic propaganda had already been put into practise (Hunter 2004: 24-25). Mosques were destroyed, Mullahs were forbidden to preach, and thousands of these were executed and exiled. A total of 14,000 Islamic religious schools were closed (Arzt 1998: 436).

Juliet Johnson mentions the main reason for the harsh treatment by the Soviet Union of its religions, which included Orthodox Christianity, Islam and others, was the nature of its regime. The Bolshevik regime was based on Marxist-Leninist doctrine. According to Marxist-Leninist doctrine, religious and ethnic identities are simply a dividing form of false consciousness that has stopped the working classes from connecting to root out their oppression. It implied that in the Soviet Union, the religious and ethnic bond would inevitably be replaced by the atheist, supra-national Homo Sovieticus i.e., Soviet man (Johnson 2005: 3).

Though, there was a change in the Soviet government's approach towards religion due to the challenge of the second world war to call upon its citizen to defend the country. Consequently, repressive laws were not enforced and many churches and mosques were reopened (Johnson 2005: 7). During the post-war period, the Soviet state adopted repressive measures again towards religion as the revival of religion was considered a potential threat to the existence of the Soviet Union (Taser 2012).

Islam in the Soviet Union can be divided into two categories: official Islam and unofficial Islam, according to scholars of Soviet affairs in the West. Official Islam was introduced with the establishment of four Muftiiats (spiritual directorates) in Tashkent, Ufa, Baku and Buinaksk in 1941 by the Soviet Union to foster state-controlled Islam. The term official Islam pertains to the restricted activities overseen by four spiritual directorates for the Soviet Union's Muslims. Though these Muftiiats were not very effective because they have no authority to protect Islam's interests,

i.e., to defend Islam from anti-Islamic attacks in society (Hayit 1980: Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay 1978: Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay 1967: Ro'I, 2000: Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay 1979). The Soviet government employs its officially elected Muslim leaders as 'travelling diplomats' and spokespeople for the Muslim world (Bennigsen and Broxup 1983).

The phrase 'unofficial Islam' refers to Soviet Muslims' activities that are conducted outside of the four spiritual directorates' jurisdiction. Fasting, prayers, the Zakat, burials, reading of the Quran from start to finish, wedding celebrations, circumcision rites and other basic Islamic traditions are recognised as most of the activities that are deemed unofficial Islam (Kocaoglu 1984).

The Soviet Union held a legal monopoly over the management of Muslim spiritual matters. For the objective of controlling Muslims, it used state-sanctioned ulama[27]. Anti-religious propaganda continued in the meantime. In Russia, the Soviet experience eroded Islamic beliefs and practically destroyed actual Islamic culture. Only the actions of tariqahs[28] could ensure the transmission of Islamic culture in the post-Soviet age (Abashin 2014).

The anti-religious policies were reduced under Brezhnev, who led the Soviet Union from 1964 to 1982. In October 1964, the leaders acknowledged the state's past wrongdoings and condemned the clergy's mistreatment. Oppression increased in the initial years under Mikhail Gorbachev, but anti-religious efforts failed to gain traction in the liberal environment. Glasnost reform undertaken by Gorbachev opened up the social sphere to religious activities (Johnson 2005: 8). The Supreme Council of the Soviet Union passed a new law on religions in September 1990, prohibiting religious persecution, guaranteeing 'freedom of conscience,' and allowing religious activities. This law helped revive Islam. As a result of this legislation, Soviet Muslims were able to practice their Islamic traditions and practices legally (Hunter 2004).

[27] A Muslim scholar.

[28] A tariqah is a Sufi school or order, or more precisely, a concept for the mystical learning and spiritual practices of such an institution with the goal of achieving haqiqa (one of the stages in Sufism), which means 'ultimate truth.'

1.2.3 Religious Revivalism in the post-Soviet Union

Malashenko and Johnson argue that the impact of Islam in post-Soviet Russia, particularly in the political sphere, was too profound to go unnoticed. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia focused on various kinds of freedoms in which religious freedom was one of them. In other words, there was religious revivalism, especially the revival of Islam. However, it is a matter of debate among scholars. Scholars like Malashenko described the development as the revival of Islam (Malashenko 1998). Sometimes the term ‘re-Islamisation’ is also used. On the other hand, some imams, theologians, and ideologues of Russian Islam disagree, arguing instead that it is more apt to talk about a restoration of the role of Islam in society or a ‘legalisation of Islam’ (Gainutdin 2004). These differences in interpretation and terminology all seek to name the same phenomena, which can be described as the restoration of the ‘adequate role’ of Islam.

As the Soviet Union fell apart, many Russian ethnic groups, including Muslims, proclaimed their political independence. Such ethnic-nationalist projects required the reconstruction of disappeared histories and identities. This required recreating national myths and rediscovering transnational ideals like pan-Islamism and pan-Turkism for Russian Muslims (Khurmatullin 2010). Islam seems to be less of a religion and more of a symbol of cultural and ethnic affiliation, according to surveys revealing Russian Muslims’ dissatisfaction with regular religious rituals (Lehman 1997). Russian studies of local communities have examined the significance of Islam as a significant social practise, underlining the capacity of Islamic traditions to foster social cohesion and their flexibility to fit into a variety of local circumstances. Many analysts in Russia and abroad believe that many local leaders are trying to influence popular religious feelings in order to maintain or expand their authority by emphasising their own Islamic identity (Laruelle 2009; Hunter 2004; Yuzeey 2005).

Musina and Shumilova try to explain what the revival or legalisation of Islam is comprised of. First of all, it includes changes in the consciousness of Muslim people such that the religious component becomes increasingly more important. Even by the 1990s, 67 percent of Tatars residing in different parts of Russia considered themselves Muslims, and in 1999, more than 70 percent of young Tatars identified themselves as

believers (Malashenko and Nuritova 2009). The statistics are significantly higher in the North Caucasian republics, where they are close to 100 percent in Dagestan, Ingushetia, and Chechnya. Mark A. Smith argues that another component of the revival is a rise in the number of mosques and Muslim communities. In 2004, there were 3,537 Muslim communities registered in Russia (unofficially, this number is considerably higher), which is 16.3 percent of the total number of religious communities (21,664), according to data from the register of the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation as of January 1, 2004. However, this number is still far from the 12,000 that existed in the territory of the current Russian Federation before 1917 (Smith 2006). The number of Russian Muslims performing the Hajj increased from 40 in 1991 to 13,500 in 2005 (Pipes 2006).

Because of separatists in the Caucasus who carry out terrorist attacks elsewhere in Russia, combine Islamic teachings with nationalist rhetoric, and are members of international organisations, many experts are investigating Russia's Islam from a geopolitical perspective. Investigations are being conducted into the alleged impact of Middle Eastern nations such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey on Muslims in Russia. Critics have also taken an interest in the rebirth of pan-Islamism and pan-Turkism, which may not necessarily have a rebellious purpose but do make space for 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1991), distinct from the Russian state. (Dannreuther and Luke 2010; Eickelman 1993; Hunter, 2004; Yemelianova 2010a, 2010b).

In the literature, the 'hot' regions of the Northern Caucasus (including Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan and other provinces) have a special place. A more comprehensive analytical framework has emerged as a result of the enormous number of works dedicated to the conflict in these locations. Despite popular belief, Islam is no longer seen as the lone or even primary source of strife. Rather, ethnic grievances, post-colonial realities, and economic hardships are all taken into account. Furthermore, the latter's importance has expanded to the point where it is now widely recognised as the primary source of terrorism in the region. This perspective is also supported by the Russian state, as evidenced by several official papers and informal statements (Eickelman 1993; Dannreuther and Luke, 2010; Yemelianova 2002; Maleshenko and Trennin, 2004; Hunter, 2004).

Furthermore, in the wake of 1991, the revival of pan-Islamism and particularly in Tatarstan, pan-Turkism has gained popularity. The assistance they frequently received from Iran and Turkey has been viewed as a foreign intervention into Russia's internal affairs by both state officials and observers. As this summary demonstrates, the same issues that concerned Russia's Muslims in the 19th century such as the character of Russia's Islam, ethnic vs. state identity, and state and ummah loyalty are now at the forefront of today's debate (Agadjianian 2001; Wertheim 2005).

1.2.4 State Policy Towards Religion in Russia

The Soviet Law on Freedom of Conscience, 1990, established a legal guarantee of "complete equality of all religious organisations" in accordance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Following the religious freedom given in 1990, the Russian Federation's new constitution, adopted in 1993, protected its citizens' right to free expression of their religious beliefs as well as freedom of conscience. Additionally, the Constitution guarantees that all religions have equal protection under the constitution and that church and state are kept separate. "No religion shall be established as State or obligatory," according to Article 14, and "religious associations shall be separate from the State and equal before the law" (Constitution 1993). Furthermore, Article 19 prohibits discrimination based on language, region, culture, social and religion. Thus, it establishes Russia as a secular state with no official religion (Maggs et al 2015: 879; Constitution 1993). Simultaneously, since the Soviet Union's demise, Islam has been recognised and deliberately incorporated into Russian religious policy.

Akhmetkarimov argues that religious communities experienced unprecedented levels of freedom and mobility for nearly a period of almost ten years under the new constitution. Various Muslim communities built mosques, organised into groups, built relations with their co-religionist abroad, formed publishing houses, and frequently operating independently of the official Muslim establishment. Such type of religious freedoms was never exercised in the history of Russia (Akhmetkarimov 2019). Many experts agree that these regulations have had a significant impact on post-Soviet Russia's religious revival (Bourdeaux 1995; Anderson 1994).

There are numerous ways to interpret the significance and meaning of religion in post-Soviet Russia. Criticism of official programmes may be seen as an inherent characteristic of any democratising state. But when a policy is formally adopted, there typically is a good justification for it. The government has defended its restrictive religious policies by claiming that they are vital to maintain peace and security, criticising Muslim extremists' deadly deeds and the development of militant religious ideologies (Filatov, 1998; Dannreuther and March, 2010; Guilano, 2005). Muslim organisations are expected to exhibit loyalty to the legally elected state authorities and strengthen patriotic feelings among Muslims towards the state (Hunter, 2004: 122).

Despite the constitution providing many religious freedoms, many scholars argue that the Russian state-regulated religious freedoms with the legislation at the end of the 1990s and 2000s. The implementation of the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Association in 1997 called into question the state's neutrality toward religion. The law essentially establishes a religious hierarchy, with Orthodox Christianity occupying the top tier, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism in the second, and 'other' smaller religions in the third (Lekhel 1999; Durham and Homer 1998).

In 2002, the Federal Law on Combating Extremist Activity was adopted. This regulation specifically targeted certain religious groups by making a variety of religious practises illegal. Furthermore, in 2006, the state implemented the Law on Public Associations, which required religious organisations to comply with additional reporting requirements. It was necessary to disclose information on planned events and activities as well as money brought in from abroad (Akhmetkarimov 2019).

With religious revivalism, Russia has also witnessed the radicalisation of Islam. This idea has been furthered in post-Soviet Russia by separatist movements in Chechnya and other parts of the country, as well as a number of terrorist attacks in the 1990s and 2000s. To address the need to condemn violent acts without trying to demonise Russia's entire Muslim population, the Russian government introduced a conceptual distinction between domestic "official" or "good" and foreign "unofficial" or "bad" extremist Islam in the mid-1990s. The latter was made a matter of national security (Herman 1996; Yemelianova 2010a, 2010b; Tsygankov 2006). This categorisation has been widely rejected as artificial and ineffectual, even though it has been

identified by various observers. In reality, it serves as a cornerstone, though not always obvious, of Russian views on security, diplomacy, terrorism and will have a multi-level impact on Russia's relations.

1.2.5 Islam as a Factor in Russian Politics

a) Internal Dimensions

With the revival of Islam, the most important part is Islam has a significant influence on Russia's political and social landscape. It started with the foundation of a political party like the Islamic Revival Party (IRP). Then in 1995, there appeared the All-Russian Muslim Movement Nur, the Islamic Committee of Russia, the "Union of Muslims of Russia" and in 1996 the Muslims of Russia movement emerged. In 1997, Abdul Vahed Niyazov, the head of the Islamic Cultural Center, attempted to create another federal party, the Muslim Union and invited famous politicians of Muslim origin to participate in it. Then in 1998, Niyazov founded the movement Refah.

A sociological study conducted in 2003 at the order of the CMR[29], 'Electoral Preferences of Russian Muslims', put forward a hypothesis that "the electoral preferences of Russian Muslims can be studied and later controlled". The study said that it is possible to determine 'the prospects of having a mechanism for CMR and the authorities to influence the electoral preferences of Russian Muslims' and suggested, "possible conclusions for religious leaders and power structures" (Gainutdin 2004).

Smith argues that 'Political Islam' looked hyperactive and at the same time loyal in 1995-1996 when there was a real struggle for the electorate and almost every secular politician tried to attract Muslim votes, at that time Boris Yeltsin in his Yaroslavl address to Muslim voters uttered his famous phrase: "Support me in the elections and I will not give you to the Communists" (Smith, 2006).

However, many scholars believe that the 'Islamic factor' during the election of Putin, the Duma election of 2007 and the presidential election of 2008 was of not much significance. According to religious scholar Sergei Buryan, "religious leaders are used only as extras, but for sacralization, the authorities need only one religion, "the most traditional one," especially since there are not enough privileges to go around"

[29] Muftis of Russia

(Buryan 2005: 51). The 'most traditional religion' refers here to Christian Orthodoxy, but even its role in the electoral process under Putin became less significant.

While it is noteworthy that Muslim associations continue to participate in social life at the regional level, scholars like Damir Muhetdinov and Longuet-Marx believe that Islam has become an official component of the political life of Dagestan and the number of other republics in the North Caucasus. Moreover, the mosque is a place of immense significance (Smith 2006).

"Now Islam has become one of the legitimate factors of the social and political life of the Chechen Republic" — these words appeared in the resolution of the seminar 'Islam in Chechnya: History and Modernity,' which took place in Grozny in 2008. The secular authorities refer to Islam's founding principles and values, and by doing so affirm their religious identity. The mosque, according to Vakhit Akaev, has become a 'centre of political enlightenment for youth' (Akaev, 2008: 64). The same trend is evident in Ingushetia.

There is a range of scholars who believe that the politicisation of Islam in Russia is not alarmingly high. In this regard, Smith argues that the revival of Islam in post-Soviet Russia has not yet been followed by the most of Muslims in the Russia and that their political leaning is not related to their religion. There have not been any noteworthy political movements. The Islamic revival was primarily limited to the cultural and religious domain, rather than to the political domain. Many scholars claim that Tatarstani Islam serves as an example of "Euro-Islam", which is a pragmatic non-political power which does not pose a threat to the Russian federation's constitutional order. This is somewhat close to the interpretation of Islam put forward by Ravil Gaynutdin. Rafael Khakimov established the idea of Euro-Islam (Malashanko and Trennin 2003).

Though, there are scholars who consider Islamic revival as a threat to Russia and the outside world. Some liberals, particularly those who identify as "pro-Westerners," are the leading proponents of radical viewpoints on the Islamic menace. Islam is seen by pro-Westerners as a barbarism that is encroaching on Western principles and attacking the globe of civilisation. Scholars in this range are Vasily Aksyonov, Gordon M. Hahn and others (Hahn, 2007).

Gordon M. Hahn compares Russia's security threat to the ethnic, cultural, and rapidly expanding population of Muslims. This is done against the backdrop of the Chechen War. Russia's Islamic threat is not limited only to the wars but also to the expansion of terrorist activities all through the North Caucasus, especially in the five main Muslim republics: Dagestan, Ingushetiya, Kabardino-Palkariya, Adygeya and Karachaevo-Cheressiya and might eventually expand to the republics of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan and even beyond. Under the influence of Al-Qaeda and the global Islamic militant, the Chechen-led network of Russia that has been labelled a "Islamo-terrorist" is not only growing but also becoming incredibly powerful and hostile (Hahn, 2007: 1).

In this regard, it is noteworthy that there are scholars who believe that Islam as a religion is growing rapidly. This is mainly due to two reasons. Firstly, Compared to ethnic Russians, Muslims have a higher birth rate and secondly, there is Islamic conversion among ethnic Russians. The Russian Orthodox Church is worried by the prediction that Muslims are expected to happen to be a steadily increasing minority and eventually resulting in to a majority by 2050. Daniel Pipe and Silantyev are of the opinion that Russia will turn into a Muslim country in the coming few centuries. Paul Goble predicted in 2006 that Russia will soon have a Muslim majority. A survey by the Carnegie Foundation concluded that as a result of migration and demographics by 2030, at least half of Russia's population will be Muslim in some way (Goble 2006; Mukhametov 2010).

While Aleksei Malashenko stated in 2005 that maybe by half of the 21st century, the world could see an unanticipated development in Russia regarding growth in the Muslim Population of Russia but it will not turn into a Muslim society in the near future. However, Russian demographer, Viktor Perevedentsev in a BBC interview disapproved of the idea that Russia could turn into predominantly a Muslim society and claimed that this idea is being deliberately promoted by politicians who lack demographic expertise. He further stated the birth rates of these demographic group is very high but maintained that it merely represents an early stage of growth and will eventually decline.

b) External Dimensions

Despite having a huge impact on both local and international affairs, the role of religion in Russian foreign policy has usually been overlooked. Curanovic has the opinion that "first, religious positions, beliefs, and identities of the major religious institutions are taken into account from the top (in the Kremlin) and factored into the different foreign policy positions and stances of the Russian political elite, particularly in regards to the 'near abroad'[30], the Middle East, and the West. Moreover, religion has influenced some of the political and intellectual movements of the Russian state, which include Imperialism, Neo-Eurasianism, Islamism, Nationalism, and the concept of Slavic identity; ideas such as 'orthodox nation', 'spiritual security', and anti-Occidentalism are some example tenets of these movements" (Curanovic, 2012).

According to many scholars, Russia has the advantage of exploiting Islam and maintaining international ties with the Muslim world, as opposed to the West (Maleshenko 2007: Merati 2017). It has been argued that "Islam is seen as a means of self-identification and a way to protect the community, as well as a means to demonstrate kinship with the global Muslim community, which shares border-transcending values. The return to religious practice also allows rallying around the anti-Western stance, with which Russia's Muslim population identifies" (Magen 2013: 25). Dzhemal emphasises the importance of Islam in re-establishing Russia's international ties when he makes the case that Islam allows Russia to once again be connected to forces at play in the world that could jolt the mainstream (Merati 2017: 176-177).

Shireen T. Hunter argues that the Islamic factor both as a geopolitical variable and a domestic factor has impacted Russian foreign policy. It has also influenced the evolution of Russia's relations with the Muslim world, the West, the Central Asian countries and China. The strongest impact of the Muslim factor has been felt in Russia's relations with Muslim countries, especially those on Russia's immediate periphery. However, because of Islam's rising political profile in the international arena and particularly, the emergence of militancy and extremism, Islam has been a determinant factor for both West and Russia. At different stages and at different

[30] The region, with the exception of the Baltic republics, that was historically regarded as the Soviet Union.

times, the Islamic factor has also significantly influenced Russian-Western relations. Hunter argues that since the 18th century, Islam has been an important factor in shaping Russian foreign policy. She further argues that Islam has been more of a challenge than an ally to Russia in countering Western dominance (Hunter 2004: 417).

However, a certain school of Russian political thought holds the opposite view. They argue that Islam and the Muslim world can serve as an ally to Russia to counter Western dominance, especially the US. Muslim foreign policy action helps to validate the argument that Russia has a specific position in global affairs, that it has an intermediate position as a Eurasian state that allows it to perform a significant role to bridge the gap between the West and the Muslim countries. It is also true that it is better for Russia to communicate with Muslims in certain situations. There are no sensitive problems between Muslims and Moscow (such as those arising in ties with the West) concerning regard for democratic values, the validity of their participation in the Big Eight and the actions of the European Parliament. The Islamic factor is a mess of theological and secular issues. This complexity is permanently affected by various internal and external circumstances of a social, economic, political, and of course, religious kind (Malashenko 2007b). While some scholars like Karina Fayzullina have opined that Islam as a factor plays a limited role in making foreign policy of post-Soviet Russia (Fayzullina, 2014).

1.3 Rationale and Scope of the Study

In the post-Soviet state, religion including Islam has registered its presence in a significant manner and played an important role in Russia's internal socio-political dynamics and external foreign policy formulation choices.

Islam, though a minority religion in Russia, is both assertive and active. This trend has become particularly noticeable after the Soviet disintegration in 1991. Within Russia, religious revivalism has come to dominate the political and social landscape of the country. A significant Muslim population, scattered across the territory of the Russian Federation, is certainly a pointer to Islam's importance as an individual and collective identity within Russia. The close connection between cultural and religious revivalism and the yearning for autonomy and even independence in some of Russia's

far-flung (inhibited by a significant Muslim population) regions, is a serious strategic threat to the unity and integrity of the Russian Federation. This has added to Russia's long-held fear of a real or potential Muslim danger to the country's territorial and national integrity. Given this background, the Chechen war for independence has strengthened Russia's old fear. The presence of Islam as one of the traditional religions has also established the Russian Federation as a 'soft power'. Also, Islam and the Muslim populace have a significant bearing on the process of evolution and formulation of Russia's identity as a 'new' Russia.

The fact that Russia's neighbourhoods in the south — immediate or distant — are mainly Islamic nations[31], only adds to the saliency of Islam as a critical factor in Russia's domestic and foreign policy calculations. In other words, Islam plays an important role in shaping Russian foreign policy choices. Due to the presence of its Muslim population, the Russian Federation has claimed several times that it is a Muslim country on the international front. This is largely due to utilising its Islamic factor to make cordial relations with the Islamic nations and to play a bigger role in international politics. Moreover, regarding international issues, Russia has been observed to take a lenient stand towards Muslim countries. For example, Russia did not support the Iraq invasion led by the US and its allies. In the case of Iran's nuclear issue, Russia gave only suggestions which were of no great importance. This is happening largely because Russia does not want to annoy its Muslim population at home. Russia also wants to become a connecting platform between the West (especially the US) and the Muslim world. Russia, thus, is both sensitive and vulnerable to developments in the Islamic world.

Within Russia, the Muslim question also generates a discourse regarding the accommodation of minorities in a multicultural state. Its impact on the nature and character of Russia's emerging democracy is bound to be profound. The real and perceived fear between the Muslim and non-Muslim Russians, given the development in the recent past, (particularly in form of the Chechen wars and continued terror attacks in the metropolitan cities), continues to be a factor that determines inter-

[31] Here, Kazakhstan and other four countries of central Asian namely Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Turkey and many others are considered as Russia's neighbourhood in the south- immediate or distant.

community ties within Russia. It has impacted many aspects of Russia's internal development, governmental system and its policies towards religious and cultural minorities and most important of all, the Russian state's orientation towards foreign policy.

Given the background, a scientific examination of current relations between the Russian state and religion, particularly Islam, is unquestionably relevant. From this perspective, it is necessary to examine the evolution of Islam in pre- and post-Soviet Russia, as well as the potential future trajectory of the development of Islam. This necessitates a careful examination of the developments in Muslim religious life during the past years and its interaction with the state and vice-versa.

The present research covers a particular time period from 2001 to 2010 in the Russian Federation. To analyse what is happening today with Islam in post-Soviet Russia, it becomes inevitable to consider not just its present position but also its past. Thus, the research has explored the policies of the Russian Empire, Soviet Union and Russian state in particular towards Islam and its Muslim population. It primarily focuses on the interaction between Islam and the Russian state with emphasis on the broader ramification of this interaction on the domestic and foreign policy choices of the Russian state.

The research is intended to aid policymakers in a scientific examination of the current situation of Islam in Russia, its historical connections, and the search for future development techniques. While considering Russia's long-term national interest, it can also provide for domestic and foreign policies regarding its Muslim communities. An attempt has been made in this research to develop new ideas and concepts that would be applicable in similar situations. Furthermore, by demonstrating the case of Islam in Russia and religion-related issues such as secularism, inter-religious faith, violence and terrorism, and international security, this study hopes to contribute to the subfields of religion and security at the domestic and international level.

While discussing the limitations of the present research, it is confined to a particular time period from 2001 to 2010. Due to a linguistic barrier, the original literature in the Russian language has not been thoroughly explored, albeit an effort has been made to address this gap using current technology such as Google Translator. Constitutional

provisions, speeches of prominent political personalities and relevant news in various newspapers and governmental official websites have been translated into English to reach a logical conclusion.

1.4 Objectives

The present study has the following objectives:

- Understanding the historical context of the role of a minority religion in the formation of the Russian state.
- To understand the role of Islam in the formation and evolution of Russian national identity.
- To understand how Islam is perceived in contemporary Russia.
- To analyse the role of religion, particularly Islam, in state policies.
- To understand the role of international players in the radicalization of Russian Islam.

1.5 Research Question

The present research raises the following research questions.

- Who are the minorities in Russia?
- What are the policies of the Russian state regarding religion?
- How does the Russian Federation perceive its minorities?
- In what ways has the presence of the Muslim minority within Russia impacted the political, social, economic and cultural life of the country?
- Given the trend towards religious revivalism and also radicalisation, can Russia transform itself into a pluralistic and democratic society?
- How do Russian Muslims perceive themselves vis--à-vis the majority religious denomination and also the larger Muslim world outside Russia?
- How prominent is Islam a factor in shaping Russia’s policy choices both internally and externally?

1.6 Hypotheses

- The politicisation of identity, mainly resulting from the radicalization of religion, has made Islam a critical factor in shaping the social, political and security dynamics of the Russian state.
- The 'Muslim Question' in Russia has a significant bearing on both domestic and foreign policy choices of the Russian state.
- Consolidation of democracy in Russia is heavily dependent on the ability of the Russian state to accommodate religious and cultural minorities within the larger framework of multiculturalism.

1.7 Research Methodology

The methodology adopted in this research is a combination of historical and analytical methods. The research has also employed descriptive and explanatory techniques. The data for the research is based on primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include the constitution of the Russian Federation, governmental documents such as the military doctrine of the Russian Federation, Foreign Policy Doctrine, the Russian Federation National Security Concept, Federal Law on the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Association, policy statements, survey and census, speeches of leading political personalities and news in various newspapers. These sources provide a framework for building an analysis based on the legal basis for religious organisations' functioning in Russia, as well as state actions conducted in the country's security and national interest. However, most of the information for the research has been procured from secondary sources that include books and research articles written by prominent scholars and researchers working in the area. Data along with government sources of information has been compiled together to throw light on the current situation. All data and information collected are compiled and presented in tabular form. All governmental documents such as census, constitution and constitutional amendments, texts of various acts and speeches have been thoroughly studied.

1.8 Chapterisation

This study has explored and analysed Russia's interactions with Islam and its impact on Russian society and polity and also on Russian foreign policy making. Each chapter in itself is an enquiry into distinct aspects of this engagement.

1. **Introduction:** This chapter is introductory in nature and reviews the existing literature based on primary as well as secondary sources. The chapter narrates the rationale and scope of the study. The chapter also focuses on research objectives, research questions and the hypothesis.
2. **Islam in Russia: A Historical Background:** This chapter begins with a description of Russia's religion in general, with special reference to Islam. The chapter traces Russia's interaction with Islam from the mid-seventh century to the Soviet Union, and finally to the Russian Federation presently. The chapter maps the state policies toward Islam during various historical time scales. It also explores who are minorities in Russia, how the Russian Federation perceive its minority, and what are the policies of the Russian state regarding Islam and its Muslim subjects. A detailed explanation has been made about the revivalism of Islam and its political and social ramification within Russia. It also gives a detailed version of the causes of the rise of political Islam and the radicalisation of Islam in post-Soviet Russia.
3. **The Islamic Factor in Russia's Internal Politics:** This chapter analyses in what ways the presence of the Muslim minority within Russia has impacted the political, social and cultural life of the country. Islam as a factor also influences Russia's formation and evolution of national identity, the framework of federal structure, military policies, etc. The focus is on the impact of Islam especially its politicised version on Russia's internal development. A detailed version of Islamic extremism and separatism is provided with special reference to Chechnya and Dagestan. In the preview of religious revivalism and also radicalization, the chapter explores how Russia can transform itself into a pluralistic and democratic society. The main thrust of the chapter is that the co-existence of Islam and Christianity is possible and, in this regard, Russia can emerge as a role model for the rest of the world.

4. **The Islamic Factor in Russia's External Relations:** This chapter revolves around how prominent Islam is a factor in shaping Russia's foreign policy choices both with the Muslim and non-Muslim world. The role of Islam in the foreign policy of the Russian empire, the Soviet Union, and finally the Russian Federation is explored in this chapter. The main emphasis of this chapter is on Islamic influence on the foreign policy formulation of post-Soviet Russia regarding the countries of Central Asia, Transcaucasia, Iran, the Arab world, Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the West.
5. **Conclusion:** Based on the deep analysis of the above findings, this chapter draws a conclusion accordingly. The chapter also verifies the hypothesis and provides answers to the research questions.

CHAPTER -2

ISLAM IN RUSSIA: A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes Russia's religion in general and gives a detailed explanation of Russia's historical engagement with Islam from the mid-seventh century to the former Soviet Union and finally to the Russian Federation. The period between Ivan (the terrible)'s reign (1533) and the beginning of Catherine the Great's reign (1762) is characterised by repression and assimilation of Muslims. It was Catherine the Great who adopted a tolerant policy towards Islam and provided equal status to Muslims along with the rest of the population. Further, the chapter explains the Russian empire's expansion in the Central Asia and Caucasus. It also discusses the modernisation of Islam and its reform. The chapter maps the Russian empire's state policies toward Islam and its treatment of the Muslim population. The basic element of the empire's state policy towards its Muslim population was Russification and assimilation.

The chapter provides a detailed version of the Soviet state and its approach to Islam. Initially, in the wake of the revolution, the Bolsheviks promised full religious freedom to the Muslims. Though, this promise was never fulfilled as the Soviet state was committed to develop a 'scientific atheism' under the broader framework of the Soviet model. The chapter analyses the religious approach of different political leaders starting from Lenin to Mikhail Gorbachev. Gorbachev's programme of *glasnost* and *perestroika* unleashed a new type of religious freedom and paved the way for religious revivalism. However, the most significant point is that despite so much repression and harsh treatment by the Soviet Union, Islam survived more successfully than any other religion.

The chapter also explores and tries to answer the below questions:

- How many Muslims live in Russia?
- Who is recognised to be a Muslim?
- Who are the minorities in Russia?

- How did the Russian Federation perceive its minority?
- What are the policies of the Russian state regarding Islam and its Muslim subjects?

The chapter also analyses the constitutional provision related to religion and the status of Islam in the Russia. The major thrust of the chapter is to explore Islamic revival in post-Soviet Russia. Islamic revival has been witnessed in the form of increasing the number of adherents, mosques, religious education, Islamic publication, Islamic media and so on. A detailed explanation has been made of the emergence of political Islam and the radicalisation of the religion. Further, the chapter explores the relationship between Islam and the Orthodox Church. The chapter ends with concluding remarks that the roots of Islam in Russia are quite deep. The relationship between the two has not inevitably been of war and conquest but for centuries it has been marked by toleration, co-existence and accommodation.

2.2 Religion in Russia

Religion is considered to have an integrated force that provides coherence and legitimacy to the power structure within the society. During the time of modernisation, societies were confronted with social changes. Thus, the relevance of religion was under serious scrutinization. However, towards the end of the last century, there was a significant rise in religious affiliations and the resurgence of Christianity in the US and the rest of the world. Therefore, intelligentsia around the world recognised the functional role of religion as an important factor in the social, political and cultural life of any community. In socialist countries, religion relegated from the preview of state and followed scientific atheism. However, the absence of mainstream religion does not mean the absence of religion or religiosity. Later it gave birth to the New Age Spirituality (Upadhyay 2018: 197). New Age Spirituality is based on the individualisation where a social segment failed to realise their spiritual goals in the conventional or prevalent religion. Thus, it further adds to the pluralism.

The role of religion is highlighted as an integrating force among the communities that profess shared beliefs and culture. On the other hand, religion also acts like a platform that often demarcates communities on the basis of different religious affiliations. Besides this, religion plays a dominating role in shaping the worldview and

legitimising a cultural preview in the society (Upadhyay 2018: 198). As a result, religion plays a significant role in forming ideological and symbolic attachments as well as beliefs that define the boundaries of a religious community (Hervieu-Leger 2000: 81). Hence, following a particular religion defines the national and cultural identity of a society. The existence of several religions defines the multicultural character of society. However, the presence of popular religion demonstrates cultural dominance, whereas subcultural groups split from mainstream religion. Thus, religion plays a vital part in the society's existing social, cultural, and political environment, and its culture and history.

Religion in Russia, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, has proven to be a crucial factor in regenerating the identity of a multicultural society. However, integrating the multi-religious state during this transitory phase was difficult. In the context of Russia, the notions of religion and religiosity are interconnected. Nevertheless, religiosity has progressed to the point where it is deeply established in the socio-cultural environment of a specific community and is intimately connected to religious institutions. Furthermore, religiosity is a collection of ideas, values, beliefs, and convictions aimed at a supposedly true world. Thus, religiosity is defined as ethnic self-awareness and the merger of political identities that is distinct from religion. In Russia, the state attempted to accommodate both inclusive and exclusive identities, with governmental intervention playing a key role. Religion is widely accepted as an integrating force in society. However, the re-emergence of Orthodox Christianity in post-Soviet Russia has deluged the minority religious identities that created ethnic tensions in the society which ultimately led to the politicisation of religion.

Religion was relegated in the Soviet Union. The Soviet state followed the atheist policy under the project of 'scientific atheism'. To make its citizens law obedient and foster rational thinking for the growth of socialism, the state made every effort possible to displace religious beliefs and identities. It replaced earlier religious ideals and values attached to religion and introduced a moral code which defines the ultimate existence of human life based on atheistic rituals and ceremonies. A thorough education programme dubbed 'atheist rearing' was established to meet the goals of this atheist agenda, yet its dictates were not dissimilar to those of religion. Every

section of society was required to participate in this programme, which helped to neutralise religion and shape social goals on a rational foundation. This agenda was further promoted by the use of media, new kinds of art, and posters to educate and socialise people. Following the Second World War, secularised trends replaced the atheist agenda.

Earlier to this, after the Bolshevik revolution, church properties were seized and advocates of religious values were violently attacked by the state. The churches in the Soviet Union were either seized or demolished, and later the space was converted into party offices, warehouses and museums glorifying the revolution (Upadhyay 2022: 182-186). This atheist programme is divided into different strands. First, immediately after the Bolshevik revolution, there were massive attacks on churches and Islamic establishments to neutralise religion which can create a possible threat for mushrooming of revolution in the Soviet Union. Second, the resurgence of this programme aimed at the imprisonment of spiritual and religious leaders. Further, it imposed very harsh restrictions on religious activities during the 'forced collectivisation' period. Third, after the Second World War, these severe conditions were smoothened after cherishing the ability of the church to raise patriotic sentiments and putting war efforts. Consequently, the friction in church-state relations were smoothened.

However, during the Khuushchev's regime, there were significant anti-religious trends. Later, there were some liberal trends during Brezhnev's period that consequently led to sanctioning of private practices in religion (Davis 1997: 46). Thus, variation in the atheist policies depicts contradiction in the 'scientific atheist' programme. The Soviet Union cherished building a strong foundation on the principles of Marxism and Leninism but on the other side, it restored monuments, artistic work and religious artefacts inspired by Christianity. As a result, despite anti-religious or neutralising policies of the Soviet Union, faith and religion remained alive in the heart of the people. The communist regime tried to establish 'new traditions' that replaced conventional religious ceremonies. The religious holidays were restored by celebrating revolutionary fervent of Communist regime like May Day, Bolshevik Revolution Anniversary and celebration of national glory of Soviet Union. Thus, the

idea behind 'New Tradition' was to invigorate atheistic socialisation that gradually resulted in detachment from religion (Upadhayay 2022: 183).

Despite substantial state efforts to promote anti-religious sentiments it failed in eradication of religion. However, state did appreciable steps to control religion. Consequently, there was a spark of religious revivalism in 1980s and 1990s that proved falsification of state-controlled public opinions about religion. People in their private space were professing spiritual believes, the attendance of church goers improved and pilgrimage to holy sites increased.

The forces of liberalisation, inspired by *perestroika* policies, unleashed religion in the public domain. This resulted in the thousand-year celebration of Eastern Christianity which served as a watershed moment in the revival of religion in post-Soviet Russia. These trends and reimagination of religion as a secular creed were fashioned all around the world, the trajectories of this revivalism are shaped by historical instances particular to that country. In the Russian context, there was a huge identity crisis with the demise of the Soviet Union. Therefore, people strived to regain identity from the cultural milieu and religion. The resurgence of religion in the post-Soviet Russia is classified in different stages. The first stage is marked by introducing radical liberal laws on religious freedom. After the state-imposed atheists' agenda of 70 years, it unleashed the restrictions on religious freedom in Russia. Besides this, these laws also emphasised equal rights for all religions and put an end to the restrictions on religious activities. In post-Soviet Russia, religion attained a special function in the process of nation building and to regain the glory of the great nation and its heritage. Religion and religious practices which had gone underground in the private sphere were revived in public space.

Secondly, the constitutional provision of 1993 coincided with earlier legislation on religion. The new constitutional provision provided the principle of separating of state from the church. following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, religion was assigned a new role to build a distinct identity for Russia and to commence deeper engagement with the Western world. Third, in October 1997, it passed a "Federal Law on the Freedom of Concise and Religious Association" that gave a way to establish multicultural, multi-ethnic and multireligious country. It gave way to the acceptance

of four major religions in the cultural space of Russia — Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Judaism. These religions were considered an inalienable part of the Russian cultural history, however, the law offered a special role to orthodoxy in the history and culture of Russia. The federal law of 1997 managed to establish cultural pluralism, a religious heterogeneity cherished on the idea of Western values (Upadhayay 2022: 186).

During 2008-2010, there was a significant change in religious policy in favour of orthodox faith and bestowing a special role to implement modernisation programme of the state. The orthodox component was added to the school curriculum. Besides this, the Ministry of Defence filled the post of clergy to serve the armed people. Furthermore, necessary steps were taken by the state to return ecclesiastical religious property which was confiscated during the communist regime. The significant development of this phase lies in aligning spiritualism with patriotic fervent to achieve the state goals. Another distinctive feature of revivalism of religion was its identification with culture and history. The reason behind the popularity of orthodox religion was that it shared the cultural and historical roots with the common memories of its people. Consequently, orthodox religion had a privileged status among other ethnic minorities because it emanates from cultural and historical roots embedded in its civilisation. The privileged status that state has bestowed upon orthodox religion is the obvious cause of tension between dominating religion and other ethnic minorities.

Orthodox Christianity is the major religion in Russia. It is noteworthy that up to 20 million Muslims from various ethnic backgrounds live in the country, despite the fact that they are a minority and represent the second most popular religion. The role of Islam in the political structure of states both historically and in modern time has been frequently emphasised by Russian politicians and leaders. The future of Russia will be influenced by Islam in at least five different ways, all of which are complex, cross-cutting, and varied: general demographic balance of the nation; the strategy of 'normalising' the North Caucasus regions; immigration policies in Russia; The status of Russia in the world and the transformation of Russian national identity (Fayzullina 2014). Thus, Studying Islam as a religion in the context of Russia therefore becomes extremely important. I shall discuss Islam in the remaining sections of the chapter, beginning with its interactions with Russia throughout history.

2.3 Russia's Engagement with Islam: A Historical Background

Islam emerged over 1,300 years ago in the territory of modern-day Russia. The Islamic caliphate reached the regions of the Caucasus in the middle of the seventh century, conquering the city of Derbent in Dagestan in 642. These regions were annexed into the Russian empire's territory in the later parts of history. The origin of Islam in the Volga region[1] can be predominantly attributed to the interaction with this area and as well as the rest of the Muslim world. The Proto-Russians[2] settled in the lands between the Oka and Volga Rivers and their earliest contact with Islam was registered in Volzhkasaya Bulgharia[3] in the Volga region (Pogadaev 2012: 175). Proto-Russians had conflicts with the Muslim Bulghars[4] who resided between the Volga and Kara rivers (Smirnov 1956: 6). It is noteworthy that Islam appeared in Volga Bulgharia from Central Asia and Khazaria[5]. While, merchants played a prominent role in the grassroots Islamisation of Bulghar even much before they adopted Islam officially (Pilkington and Yemelianova 2003: 19). Bulgharian tribes decided to embrace Islam as the official religion after the efforts of Baghdad in 922 under the agenda of the proliferation of Islam in the region. It is important to note that the Bulghar Kingdom[6] in the Volga-Ural region adopted Islam by the 10th century, much earlier than the appearance of Russians in the region. The Bulghar nation advanced into a predominant Centre of Islamic civilization by the time Russians arrived. They had substantial ties with the Islamic world with a focus on Central Asia and Khorasan[7] particularly (Hunter 2004: 3). Further, due to adoption of Islam, the Islamic Bulghar kingdom emerged as a regional power as it could rely on the help of another Islamic kingdom. Later, Mongols defeated Volga Bulgharians in 1236 and incorporated their region into Golden Horde.

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1 Volga region represents the region of Russia that incorporates the territory surrounding the Volga River.

2 Ancestors of modern Russians.

3 Located at the bank of river Volga. It is not the same Bulgaria of eastern Europe. It is present day republic of Tatarstan.

4 People of Turkic origin that lived northeast of the Caucasus all through the fifth century of the Christian era.

5 It belongs to southeastern Europe's Turkic-speaking and seminomadic people. It is where Islam appeared during the war of 708-837 between Arab and Khazar, and subjects of Khazar Khaganat were forced to adopt Islam.

6 The Kingdom was positioned in a strategic place wherein rivers, Kama and Volga, merged into one stream.

7 Mainly include Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and north western Afghanistan.

After the Mongol conquest of Kievan Russia[8] in 1223, Islam became an important part of Russia's religious and political landscape. Furthermore, the adoption of Islam[9] as an official religion by Ozbek Khan of the Golden Horde in 1313 gave an additional thrust to Islam in the region. Thus, Islam in Russia has become mainly associated with the Mongol conquest of Russia. The Russian Orthodox Christian missionaries, on the other hand, were not permitted to spread their religion during the Tataro-Mongol rule[10.] Nonetheless, the Tataro-Mongol rule was not religious fanatics. The Russian principalities under their rule were given a reasonably huge autonomy, importantly the Orthodox Church were given legal recognition by Mongol rulers (Bukharaev 2000: 153). Ethnic Russians were not compelled to embrace Islam by the Tatar Mongolian. However, the Russians were confined to the zone of mixed forests[11] getting divided into a number of small states. The biggest military power in the region was Mongol Golden Horde (Sumner 1944: 23).

Therefore, Muslims and Islam were viewed as invaders and oppressors in the common Russian consciences. This common perception led to the raise of revolt from time to time, and engaged in a series of wars with the Tatars from 1376 to 1431. As a result of this prolonged war, by the 15th century, the Golden Horde disintegrated into the many rival khanates such as khanates of Crimea, Astrakhan, the Siberian Tatars and the Nogai Horde. Excluding the area between the cities of Kiev and Moscow all the areas of modern-day Russia were ruled by these khanates. As a consequence, until the Russian empire defeated these khanates, Islam dominated and established itself in the territory of modern-day Russia (Kumar 2009: 02).

In 1552, the defeat of the Khanate of Kazan by Tsar Ivan IV (the terrible) signalled the beginning of Russian expansion into Muslim areas in the 16th century by conquering and annexing Kazan[12] into the Russian state's territory. This marked the beginning of annexation of Muslim territory in the Russian empire. Middle Volga and Bashkirs region were soon annexed into the Russian empire and accepted Ivan IV's

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8 Concentrated around the town of Kiev, largely comprises most of modern-day Belarus and Ukraine and the area of northwest Russia.
9 The Golden Horde recognised Hanafi Sunni Islam as its official religion.
10 Rule by Mongolian conquerors over conquered areas of Russia from the conquest to till the early 16th century.
11 Plains stretching from the southern Dnieper Valley to northern Lake Ladoga.
12 Thereupon, Bulgharia became part of Russian territory known by the name of Tatarstan.

authority. The Tsar took this opportunity to build many churches in the newly annexed territory. It is noteworthy that the Russian church played an important role in attacking Islam. The coercive Christianisation, conservative Russification and repression of Islam were the most important elements of Russia's policy towards Islam. The closure of schools, the destruction of mosques and the education system played important role in lowering the notably intellectual Kazan society (Pilkington and Yemelianova 2003: 23). By virtue of these events, Islam fled to the villages.

As mentioned above due to the Mongol conquest Muslims and Islam were viewed as the 'hostile other'. The Muslim rule labelled as the Tatar Mongolian yoke lasted till the early 16th century. Mongol conquest and expansion of Russian empire developed as a key element in Russia's national identity and are pertinent in present Russia's cultural and political context. Consequently, Russians of the pre-imperial period were predominantly anti-Muslims. Russia considered itself as the defender of Christianity against Islam as it absorbed the shock of Mongol assault and protected Europe as a shield. This led Russia to evolve a self-assigned civilisational role for Asia, Europe and particularly among Muslim subjects of Russia (Hunter 2004: 5).

2.3.1 The Russian Empire and Islam

After the annexation of the Muslim land with the expanding Russian state, the condition of Muslims deteriorated in Russia. The period between Ivan (the terrible)'s reign (1533) and the beginning of Catherine the Great's reign (1762) is characterised by repression and assimilation of Muslims. Shireen T. Hunter notes that this period marks the annihilation of Muslim civilisation within Russia (Hunter 2004: 6).

Ivan's expansion into the Muslim lands was driven by the idea of preserving ethno-religious unity of Russia, as the spread of Islam was seen as a disturbance to the ethno-religious unity. Ivan saw the assimilation of the Muslims of the newly conquered lands as a way to achieve the ethno-religious unity. The process of assimilation was considered as a requirement for cementing natural homogeneity of the empire because earlier Muscovy State[13] was a religious state. (Bennigsen and Broxup 1982: 9). Thus, during Ivan (the terrible)'s reign some of the Muscovite

13 A former principality in west-central Russia which was founded in 1280 and later united with other principalities to form the centre of the Russian Empire. It was centred around Moscow.

state's important functions in destroying Islam were delegated to Orthodox Church of Russia.

Moscow as the "third Rome" and the Tsar as its celestial defender were concepts that had an impact on the Russian Orthodox Church. They started "equating Islam with Tatar atrocities and orthodoxy with Russianness" (Pilkington and Yemelianova 2003: 23). Ivan (the terrible) ceased this idea and influenced the clergies of the Orthodox Church to enforce his policy of spiritual annihilation of Islam. His policies saw to the destruction of the Tatar mosque and halted its reconstruction activities, impounding the Tatar's productive land and its redistribution among the orthodox religious community and Russian nobility, proliferation of orthodox Christianity and encouraged the conversion of Muslims into Christianity (Abdullin 1990: 6). As the consequence of Ivan (the terrible)'s anti-Islam policies, believers of Islam shifted to the villages and developed into a depot of spiritual and cultural uniqueness of Tatars. Hence, Ivan the terrible's rule can be characterized as the beginning of Russia's imperial thirst and orthodox missionary.

Though, Tsar Feodor[14] despite considering Muslims his loyal subjects, like his predecessor Ivan, continued with the policy of exclusion and oppression towards Muslims and continued on the same path that sought the destruction and devastation of Islamic civilization in Russia. Anti-Muslim activities intensified until the first half of 18th century. Islam was viewed as a 'alien body' even throughout the reigns of Ramanove Tsar, Mukhail I, and Catherin the Great (Hunter 2004: 8).

The Romonovs[15] (1613-1917), a new ruler dynasty that comprised the domestic ruling class of Russia. Tsar Peter the Great ruled over Russia (1682-1725) who initiated radical reforms with a more progressive Western path. During the course of these reforms, Peter the Great established the Russian Orthodox Church as an integral component of the Russian state. Historically, church and state were combined together in Russia and one of the important functions of the church was to support autocracy. Recognition to other Christian sects was provided on the basis of their proclamation of loyalty to the Tsar. For a longer period of time attitude towards Islam

14 Tsar Feodor was the successor of Ivan IV and ruled from 1584 to 1598 B.C.
15 Romonovs was the last imperial dynasty that ruled Russia from 1613 to 1917.

was totally unfavourable. Till the end of the 18th century, Muslims were repeatedly forced to converse. From 1740-1750, aggressive policy of proselytization was carried out (Kumar 2009: 4).

Catherine 'the Great' adopted a tolerant religious policy to address the discontent among the Muslims. Islam attained legal status during the reign of Empress Catherine the Great[16.] During her period in 1773, The Holy Governing Synod, the government branch managing religious affairs, passed an order on tolerance of all creed and offered some religious freedom to her subjects. Under this new order, Russian Orthodoxy continued to enjoy state patronage, while Islam, alongside with Buddhism, Judaism and 'foreign' Christian groups such as Roman Catholics and Lutherans, was categorised as 'tolerated' groups (Krasikov 1998: 2).

Under this rubric of tolerance, the first official Muslim institution named the Mahometan Spiritual Board in Ufa[17] was established which was later converted into Muslim Spiritual Assembly of Orenburg whose head was to be a Mufti[18]. However, Mufti's powers were limited such as supervising the clergy, dealing with family disputes, controlling exams for persons inclined to become Imams[19], among others. Despite the changing composition of population of Russia, its rulers did not consider it a multi-ethnic state; Instead, they kept believing that it was a country of Russian Orthodox Christians. This change in the attitude of the Russians is attributed to the state's conception in Catherine's mind. She conceptualised her state as an empire similar to any other European empires which led to accommodation of people of other religions, especially Islam.

It is noteworthy that her policy of tolerance put a rest to the Muslim revolt. Muslim Tatar[20] and Bashkirs[21] from the Ural, who actively participated in the revolt, started to

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16 The Russian empress Catherine the Great ruled the country from 1762 to 1796. She was also known as Catherine II.

17 The present-day capital of the Republic of Bashkortostan.

18 An Islamic scholar whose primary function is to interpret or expound Islamic law i.e., sharia.

19 Imam is an Islamic position, the person is considered the leader of a mosque and the community. The imam leads prayers at the time of Islamic gatherings.

20 From 1552 to 1610 there were repeated revolts by Tatar nobility. They participated in the Kazak rebellion.

21 The Bashkirs revolted in 1676 under the leadership of Seit, in 1707 under the leadership of Aldar and Kusyom, and the last revolt took place in 1735, which ended after six years.

collaborate in response to Catherine's tolerant policies. Her actions gained her the loyalty of the Muslim population. In response to the loyalty of the Muslims, she converted imperial regime into a patron of Islam and created a favourable platform for the cultural, religious and economic advancement of Volga Tatars. Muslims were viewed as crucial promoters of Russia's interest. Tatar traders were allowed to trade freely throughout Russian territory. As a result, they have become an important aspect of Russia's commercial interactions with the Muslim world. (Crews 2003: 57-58).

Catherine the Great also placed limits on the Orthodox Church and forbade interfering with the affairs of other religions. She also authorised local authorities to decide with regards to their day-to-day religious proceedings. Equals status was provided to Muslims with the rest of the population in her regime. Exclusion of Muslims, she believed, was an obstacle to social, cultural, and political development. (Fisher 1978: 71). She allowed propagation of Islam in the Russian territory, permitted Tatars to make mosques and Quranic schools in their villages and cities with the permission of government. Similarly, Muslims were allowed to get Islamic education from madrassas of Samarkand and Bokhara, which were isolated for many years from other centres of Islamic learning The establishment of publishing houses for the publication of Islamic literature in the Turkic, Ottoman Turkic, Farsi, Tatar, and Arabic languages was also permitted for Muslims (Olcott 1987: 47).

Her tolerant religious policies brought advancement in the cultural and economic lives of the Russian Muslims. Through accommodation, instead of following cultural and religious assimilation Catherine the Great created a solidarity and cooperation among the diverse people of her Empire. She as a farsighted ruler that understood that a multinational and polyethnic empire could survive only when all subjects were treated as equal despite their religious and cultural backgrounds. It particularly showed the feasibility of co-existence of people of different faith.

Russian Muslims benefited from the process of cultural and political modernisation led by Catherine. It enabled them to send their representative inside the elected bodies and other organisations. Religious reform introduced during this period facilitated

Hajj[22] and *Umra*[23]. Under Russian state council's announcement in 1887, a group of Muslim community comprising 300 members or more was permitted to make disparate mosques. The decree also put restrictions on the Orthodox Church to interfere in the life of the Muslim *Umma*[24]. Furthermore, in Baku Muftiyat[25] of the Trans Caucasus, with two another Muftayats in Bakchescray and Orenburg were established by Russian authority. In 1889, the Tsar government also acknowledged the legitimacy of *Shariat* (Muslim code of law) courts and allowed the publication of Islamic literature under a liberal publishing law. Consequently, expansion and opening of new publication houses got a thrust in Muslim areas (Yemelianova 2002).

The Russian state also introduced educational reforms which helped in the inclusion of Muslim population of Russia into the mainstream social and economic structure of the Empire. As a result, the government ended the supervision of Islamic *mektebs*[26] and madrassas[27] in 1874 and brought it under the direct jurisdiction of the education Ministry of Russia. The Russian Education Ministry made it mandatory to teach Russian in the Islamic school (Yemelianova 2002).

2.3.2 Russian Expansion in Caucasus and Central Asia

i) Caucasus

Russia's interests in Caucasus date back to the 16th century as a part of Russian conquest of Caucasus. Though, Islam appeared in Caucasus[28] in the early seventh century, many people of the North Caucasus[29] followed Orthodox Christianity which was introduced by missionaries and merchants from Byzantine Empire[30]. At ethnicity

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22 An annual pilgrimage to Mecca in Islam.
23 A small *Hajj*.
24 A universal community of Islam.
25 Chief of Muslim spiritual directorate in former USSR and Russia.
26 Islamic school at primary level.
27 Islamic schools at the secondary level.
28 Despite the fact that Islam appeared in the Caucasus in the early seventh century, Russia's interests in the Caucasus date back to the 16th century as a part of the conquest of Caucasus.
29 A region of Russia which includes the territory of Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Bakaria, Adyghea, North Ossetia, Karachai-Cherkessia, Stavropol Krai and Krasnodar Krai.
30 During late antiquity and the Middle Ages, the Byzantine Empire continued the Roman Empire in its eastern territories, with Constantinople as its capital. It continued to exist for another 1,000 years until the Ottoman Empire seized Constantinople in 1453, having outlasted the dissolution and fall of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century. The Byzantine Empire had an impact on numerous cultures because of its significance in the development of Christian Orthodoxy. The Eastern Orthodox Church is currently the second-largest Christian denomination worldwide. Orthodoxy plays a significant role in the history and societies of countries like Greece, Bulgaria, Russia, Serbia, and others.

level, North Caucasus ranges to Iranian, Turkic and Caucasus' linguistic groups. Aboriginal people of Iran were the Alans or Ossetians, Tats, Kurds, Talishes and Balkars, Kumyks, Nogais and Karachais were Turkic people of Caucasus. The Caucasians, despite their ethnic diversity, belong to a particular Caucasian culture.

It is noteworthy to mention that the political development of the Caucasian people deferred from region to region; such as Ossetians, Avars, Laks, Kabardians had an antique statehood tradition, whereas Ingush, Chechans, Balkans, Kumyks had no such traditions. Islam did play a major role in the cultural, political and social growth of the region. Though, the degree of Islamisation deferred from region to region considerably. The Dargins, Avars and Kumiks were highly Islamised ethnic groups whereas Turkic, Adygh were less Islamised.

The 16th century marked the beginning of the Russian interest in Caucasus. The conquest of khanates of Kazan in 1552 and Astrakhan in 1554-1556 brought Russia near to the Caspian Sea and thus, Caucasus became an important geopolitical neighbour for Russia. This prompted Russia to participate in regional politics and rivalry with neighbouring powers like the Ottoman Empire and Iran. Initially, Russia did not pursue an expansionist policy toward the South Caucasus.[31] However, during the reign of Catherine the Great, Russians took more interest in its southward expansion along the Muslim-dominant Crimea region. Catherine had launched a century old annexationist war against the Muslims of North Caucasus. In contrast to this, South Caucasus annexation was relatively easy.

North Caucasus was an ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous community. They were militarily less organised yet in the face of Russian expansionist agenda, they offered a stiff resistance to it. This resistance was possible as Islam provided a sense of unity to these ethnically and linguistically disparate people. Sheikh Mansur Ushurma (1785-1791) was one of the earliest leaders who attempted to unify the Caucasus Muslims to fight against Russians, and later Imam Shamil, a Dagestani united the Caucasus to fought against the Russian Army between 1825 and 1859.

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31 South Caucasus comprises Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Ushurma, a leader from Chechen, known as Imam Mansur (the victorious), was regarded as the first Naqshabandi militant Sufi Sheikh in the region. During Russia's peak authority, his jihad attained a significant military accomplishment. He is largely recognised for his role in popularising Islam among his followers. He instructed and motivated to maintain a calm and steadfastness while facing Russian onslaught. In fact, the Islamisation of northwest Caucasus is considered as his most important contribution (Dunlop 1998: 12). In 1791, when he was defeated and captured in Anapa, he was sent to St. Petersburg and imprisoned. His influence in the region waned away after his imprisonment. Mansur Ushurma was able to utilize Islam for the unification of North Caucasus for the first time in an ideological framework (Zelkina 2000: 66-67).

Imam Shamyle's name came to be associated with the free spirit and love for the freedom of the Muslim population of North Caucasus. Their refusal to accept Russian dominance led them to wage an open war against the Russian under Shamyle's leadership. This resulted in a major uprising. However, the struggle was mainly defensive to protect and preserve their territories. They defended the Aoul of Ashilta[32] in Central Dagestan. During 1839-1847, Shamyle fought bravely despite facing defeat. In 1858, there was a war between Russian and Shamyle's forces, in this battle theatre, Shamyle was captured and was imprisoned in a town near Moscow. After capturing Shamyle, Russian rule was established in North Caucasus. The selfless resistance by the people of the region during the conquest of North Caucasus proved extremely difficult for the Russian forces and costly in terms of economic resources and human lives. The forceful annexation of North Caucasus resulted in bitter relations between the Russian and North Caucasians. Relations among the Russians and Chechen and Dagestanis were worst (Hunter 2004; 11-12).

North Caucasian resistance acquired a religious dimension, causing harm to Russia. Muslim unity in the region and inside the Russian Empire grew and stood against the Russian ideology. Anti-Russian resistance in the region was constructed by Naqshabandi tariqahs who were oppressed badly in its aftermath. Many of them were either eliminated or they fled to the neighbouring countries. The North Caucasus

32 A place in central Dagestan.

emerged as the second-biggest Muslim conclave after the conquest of Caucasia, Volga-Ural being the first. St. Petersburg administration avoided the policy of Russification and Christianisation of the Islamic people of the region. Instead, it established two Muftiyats in order to supervise the local Muslim people (Kumar 2009: 8).

On the other hand, Russia's conquest of South Caucasus was not as much difficult as of North Caucasus, rather it was much easy. Because of Iran's weakness and collapse following Nadir Shah Afshar's killing during his war in Dagestan in 1747, Russia was able to take control of Georgia and the portions of Armenia that were not under Ottoman rule with ease. Georgia requested Russia's assistance in its fight against Iran. As a result, tensions between Russia and Iran arose, and Russia waged two wars with Iran between 1804 and 1828. The war ended with Russia's triumph and the Treaties of Gulistan and Turkmenchay, which resulted in Iran's loss of its Trans-Caucasian territories in 1813 and 1828, respectively (Hunter 2004; 11-12). As a result of these events, Russia gained control of the Caucasus region.

ii) Central Asia

Russian expansion in to Central Asian region was characterised by slaughter and devastation, as in the Caucasus. However, the powerful Russian army marched in with ease as the locals failed to unite and resist. The Russian expansion into Central Asia lasted close to 80 years, from 1820 to 1900. Following Russia's annexation of Central Asia, they came into contact with Central Asian Muslim nomads and urban centres with a rich history of Islamic culture (Smirnov 1956: 9). Three centres of power existed in 19th century Central Asia: the *Khanate* of Kokand, the *Khanate* of Khieva and the Emirate of Bukhara. All three states were formed on the basis of the medieval Islamic principles. State construction was founded on agriculture, trade and craft industry.

The "Great Game," which took place in the 19th century between Imperial Russia and Great Britain on the one hand and Alexander II (1855-81) bourgeois' reforms which led economic changes in Russia on the other, were responsible for advancement into the region of Kazakhstan and the Central Asia. The withdrawal of Russia from active politics of Balkan and the Middle East, due to Britain's activities in Afghanistan is

considered as another crucial event that led to Russian involvement in Central Asia. The *Khanate* of Kokand was annexed with the Russian Empire in 1867. In 1868, Russia extended the status of protectorate to the Emirate of Bukhara. Subsequently, in 1873, Russia invaded and annexed the Khanate of Khiva (Kumar 2009: 9).

In the Central Asian region, the Great Empire of the past had long since collapsed into autonomous Khanates such as Bukhara, Khira, Khokand, and many others. All khans in Kazak steppes were displaced by the Russians. The Kazak nobility could not use Islam as an instrument of unity like the Caucasians, because more than religion, Kazak ethnicity was significant. It was clear that their association with Islam was superficial. By and large the Kazak nobility were modernisers and saw Russian state, culture and language as modernizing instrument. The whole Muslim population of region was brought into Russian contact mainly as outcome of the occupation of the region. Russia conquered Julek, Tokamak, Pushpek and finally Zerafshan and Samarkand and Khieva and established its hegemony over the region. By 1854, the rest of the Kazak Hordes were compelled to accept Russian domination, a task made smooth by the fact that these Hordes did not formerly belong to any clearly defined state. Even in the urban centres of Samarkand and Bukhara, the loyalties of people were local. Therefore, there was lack of unity among the various local groups (Kumar 2009: 9).

2.3.3 Modernisation of Islam

Russia's economic and military backwardness was revealed in the defeat of Crimean war (1853-56). Consequently, there were acute needs for political liberalization and technological modernization. In 1861, Tsar Alexander II initiated 'the great reforms and modernization, among other goals, aiming at the unification of Russian Muslims in the mainstream political, social and economic system of the Russian Empire. Muslim representative of Russia reciprocated St. Petersburg idea of modernization through creating 'Jadidism' which focused on modern education for Muslims of Russia. Largely two trends emerged in the latter half of the eighteenth century. These were consensus for the acceptance of radical ideological transformation and the protection of a strong Islamic traditionalism (Pilkington and Yemelianova 2003: 33)

Tatar reformer accepted that besides Islam and the Tatar language, historical encounter with Russian was also a key element in the formation of Tater identity. Tatar and Russian habits, traditions, interest and belief were intertwined as they shared a common history and homeland. This amalgamation reflected in architecture, traditional medicine, costumes and superstition. Thus, they favoured an enlightened, powerful Russian state who would consider all its subjects alike, irrespective of their cultural and religious backgrounds. Tatar enlighteners also subscribed to the view that in a multinational and polyethnic empire, Russian was important as a lingua Franca.

The widespread reformist ideas had few limitations. One, Tatar enlighteners however, pave the way for the reform, but they had a small influence on the Muslim population. Another serious limitation was non-existence of Muslim mass media to disseminate the ideas. In 1880, when the new phonetic (Usul-Ul-Jadia) method of teaching Arabic was introduced by Ismail Gasprinski, the situation changed. New curriculum in schools, including secular subjects, geography, history, Russian language and arithmetic was introduced, ignoring the sectarian differences within Islam, reformer emphasised on the ethical and cultural aspects of Islam.

The new phonetic method evolved into a wider social, cultural and political phenomenon, which was also named as 'Jadidism' with a focus on pan-Islamism in the 19th century. The Arabic term 'Jadid' literally means modern or something new, emphasised on modernization of languages, education and culture and removal of superstition from Islam. Abdul Qayum Nasiri emphasized on language reform and observed that without having a popular language, backwardness among the Muslim people cannot be eliminated. Ismail Gasprinskii launched a newspaper named 'Terjuman' in 1883, used easy Turkish language and popularised 'Jadidism' among common Muslim people and promoted vision of a powerful, modern and multinational plural Russian state with a focus on Turkic unification. To promote these ideas, he made use of a simple language, Osmani Turk, in his newspaper and soon within a short span, this language dispersed all over Central Asia, Volga and Crimea. Gasprinskii emphasized on educational reforms and advocated modification in existing education system by incorporating knowledge of science and technology.

From the political perspective, Gasprinskii never envisioned self-determination for Russia's Turk, instead considered their common future inside the Russian state, as both had cultural affinity. Therefore, he emphasized on full-fledged participation of Russian Muslims in the modernization process of as it included solution to their economic and social problem. Tatar centrism was the primary restraint of Jadidism which created a sense of alienation among non-Tatar Muslim intelligentsia. Moreover, Jadidism did contribute significantly to how Muslims were integrated politically and economically during Russia's modernisation process. The impact of Jadid movement was visible in the political sphere, soon Muslim political parties were established under Jadid leadership (Pilkington and Yemelianova 2003: 34-35).

2.3.4 Muslim Activism During the Pre-Bolshevik Revolution (1905-1917)

Political and cultural consciousness began to appear within the Muslim section of Russia's population from the beginning of 20th century. One of the main causes of the Russian Revolution of 1905 was Russia's humiliating loss in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, as it revealed Russia's weakness. The democratic revolution of 1905-1907, which placed a strong focus on equal socio-political and economic rights, created more favourable conditions for Russia's Muslims' intellectual and socio-political development. As a result, Muslims' participation in the 1905 revolution was motivated by Islamic nationalism. The rural Muslim majority, on the other hand, did not take part in the revolution (Simirnov 1956: 12).

Under the influence of the 'Jadid' movement, political mobilisation of the upper-class Muslims increased considerably during the revolution of 1905. The first All Muslim Russian Congress was held in secret in August 1905 without the permission of the government. It called Muslims to join and work together to design a Russian constitution, as well as the establishment of constitutional monarchy in Russia. Equal rights and equality for Russia's Muslims were also advocated by the congress.

In 1906, the government granted permission for the second All Muslim Russian Congress. This meeting established the first Muslim political party, *Ittifaq al-Muslimin*[33]. *Ittifaq* was a liberal party which was in favour of the Russian state. The main objectives were achieving equality and non-discrimination policies between the

33 Ittifaq al-Muslimin means union of Muslims.

Muslim and non-Muslim within Russia. Leaders of the party were mainly bourgeoisie and belonged to the intelligentsia and the landowning nobility. It was not an umbrella party of Muslims because it did not represent most of Russia's Muslim communities. The second congress also decided to co-ordinate with Russia's Christian Democratic Party as it was much more sympathetic to Muslim's appeal.

In 1906, the third All Muslim Russian Congress eye bore the witness of the origin of other Islamic organizations including the Azeri National Party, the Islamic Popular Party, Kazak National Party Alash Orda and Musawat (Pilkington and Yemelianova 2003: 36). In comparison to the prior congresses, the third All Muslim Russian Congress was significantly better planned. The third congress gave Muslims in Russia a platform to participate in political actions geared toward obtaining more autonomy and equality. On the whole, all these events strengthened the position of Islamic reformers. They came up with the ideological framework for the process of nation building among a number of Muslim populations within Russia. However, this process was derailed when the country was drawn to a social turmoil due to Russia's engagement in the First World War.

Russian Muslims backed the Russian government during the First World War. However, when Russia had to fight with Turkey, Islamic nationalist sought to create disturbance but majority of ordinary Muslims remained passive. It is noteworthy to mention that in a war against Turkey, which was primarily a Muslim country, the majority of Russian Muslim soldiers fought bravely. (Yemeliaonova 2002: 472). Nevertheless, there were certain anti-Russian uprisings, such as Turkestani Muslim uprisings in Central Asia, which were put down. Many representatives of Muslims in Duma had sympathy with social revolutionaries. The cluster of left-wing Muslim deputies quit the radical Muslims in Duma in 1916 and tied up with the left-wing group of the workers. The view of Russia's radical Muslims represented a blend of Islamic and democratic socialist ideas.

The monarchy was abolished during the bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1917. This event sparked a debate among Russian Muslim intellectuals, with some fearing that the monarchy would be replaced by a more discriminatory type of administration. However, the bulk of reformers, including liberal Muslims and radicals, supported the

provisional government's establishment, with a view that irrespective of their religious and cultural origin, all citizens of Russia would hold an equal political standing for all Russian citizens (Pilkingtion and Yemelianova, 2003: 38). A number of assemblies were convened in Russia in 1917, thanks to the political action of the Muslim Congress of Republican Russia. The modernists among Muslim reformers believed that putting too much focus on Islam would jeopardise progress. The 1917 Muslim Congress opposed separatism and the federal form of governance, and favoured a unified Russian state.

The second meeting of All Muslim Russian Congress was held in July-August 1917. It resulted in the third All Muslim Russian Congress and the first All Muslim Russian Military Congress, despite the fact that it had a small number of delegates. During this time, there were plenty of other additional movements. In 1917, Muslim political activism in Russia reached its height. When the Bolsheviks challenged the provisional government's power, many radical Muslims either joined them or incorporated numerous Marxist principles into their own political platform (Kumar 2009: 11-12).

2.3.5 Muslims under the Russian Empire

The Russian empire in the early 20th century

Source: Book titled "For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia", pg. 5.

The basic element of Russian policy towards its Muslim population was of Russification. The Muslim population increased in the Russian Empire due to the annexation of Muslim territory namely The North Caucasus Central Asia and Azerbaijan. As per the 1897 census, 13 million or nearly 11 percent of the total population of 125.6 million were Muslims. Like all other religions of Russia, Islam was monitored by the state through institutions funded by the state. Four Muftiyats were established each supervising a particular region: North Caucasus in Makhachkala, Transcaucasia in Baku, Turkestan in Tashkent and the European part of Russia and Siberia in Ufa. Each Muftiyat was further subdivided into many Mukhtasibats[34]. Through these institutions the Russian government had tight control on the everyday functioning of Islam.

The Russian policy towards Muslim-majority Caucasus and Central Asia region can best be described as colonial and imperial. The main goals of Russian imperialist policy in these areas were political domination of the regions and economic exploitation. Moreover, the Central Asian and the Caucasusian Muslims were discriminated socially, politically and culturally. It is noteworthy that Muslims belonging to above areas were not considered 'citizens' of the empire. Such a cultural policy of Russian colonialism was clearly aimed at undermining Islam (Hunter 2004: 13-14).

It is significant that policies of assimilation and exclusion were practiced at the same time. For example, Russian authority established Russian-Kazak schools for Kazak nobilities' children to culturally influence them. Under the agenda of Russification, these institutions attempted to generate cultural inferiority among the Kazak children. However, the Kazaks were suspicious of such attempts and saw these institutions mainly as an instrument of St. Petersburg's imperial policies. The basic element of colonial policy was of Russification. There were also instances of massacre of Muslim population in the Russian Empire. This triggered resistance and periodic revolt by the Muslims in the Russian empire and contributed to the overall environment of disquiet. However, there are many instances that suggest there was co-operation on the Muslim side on the condition of religious and cultural freedom.

34 Local bodies of religious control, above the Muslim population (mahallas).

At some places, imperial government followed policy of non-interference such as Azerbaijan and Central Asia. Russia followed policy of non-interference for a long period.

According to Bennigsen and Broxup, from 1552 annexation of Kazan Khanate to 1917 Bolshevik revolution, Muslim subjects were ruled by Russian Empire using diverse methods and approaches which empowered Russia to maintain its colonial empire. From roughest to the softest, these can be categorized into eight categories as following (Bennigsen and Broxup 1983: 49):

A) Genocide by expulsion as a tactic was applied to the Abkhazian Muslims, western Cherkess tribe and partially to the Crimean Tatars, who in 1865, were expelled to the Ottoman Empire.
B) Genocide through bloodshed was applied to Turkman tribes, though it was unsuccessful. One example of such tactic was slaughtering of Gok-Tepe tribe in 1881.
C) Genocide through extinction was applied in Volga-Tatar to the Bashkirs of southern Urals in 16th and 17th century, respectively; in Crimea in late 18th and early 19th century; late 19th century in the North Caucasus and early 20th century in the Kazakh Steppes.
D) The process of assimilation through religious conversion to Orthodox Christianity, without Russification was applied to the Tatars of Volga in 16th century and later in 19th century and to the Kazakhs in early 19th century.
E) The process of assimilation through religious conversion to Christianity with a policy of cultural and linguistic russification was applied to the Volga Tatars in the 17th century and 18th century.
F) Policy of non-interference was applied to Azerbayjan in 19th century.
G) Non-interference in the life of the masses and acceptance of the elites as a policy was applied to Kabarda and Ossetia.
H) Economic and political partnership as a measure was used to treat the Volga Tatars by Catherine the Great and Alexander II in the 19th century.

2.4 The Soviet Union and its Approach Towards Islam (1917-1991)

The Soviet Union had 45-50 million Muslim population, establishing it as the fifth-largest Muslim inhabited country in the world after Pakistan, Indonesia, Bangladesh, India, Turkey (Bennigsen and Broxup, 1983: 1). Some scholars like Vitaly Naumkin (1992) postulate that the Muslim population in the then Soviet Union was 60-70 million (Naumkin 1992: 132). In the Soviet Union the term 'Muslim' had not only religious but cultural and national connotations. The 'term' Muslim is usually used to characterise a person who earlier than the revolution of 1917 pertained to the Muslim culture and religion. The culture penetrated the character, the behaviour, the psychology of Soviet era Muslims (Bennigsen and Broxup 1983: 1).

The Bolshevik Russian Revolution of October 1917 altered society and the state's underlying framework. Peace, land, and social justice for all were promised by the Bolsheviks. Muslims, on the other hand, were worried of Bolshevik atheism. As a result, the majority of Islamic traditionalists rejected Bolshevik power as legitimate and secretly or openly opposed it. They pushed for monarchy to be established. The Bolsheviks were also opposed by Muslims who were moderate liberals. Bolsheviks, on the other hand, were aided by a small number of Muslim intellectuals. However, Bolshevik leaders such as Lenin, Stalin, and others saw Russian Muslims as vital partner in the revolution. The Bolsheviks promised the country's Muslim population that all ethnic groups in Russia would be treated equally and that they would have the right to self-determination, including the freedom to secede. As a result, during the 1917 revolution, the Bolsheviks won the sympathy of Muslim populations (Marples 2002: 118).

Initially, the Bolsheviks gave Muslims religious freedom in order to secure their support, but subsequently, because the state was based on Marxist-Leninism, they tried to eliminate all religions including Islam. The 19 December 1917 proclamation by Lenin and Stalin sums up the Soviet policy toward Muslims. The following is an excerpt: "Muslims of Russia, Tatars of the Volga, and Crimea, Turks and Tatar of Transcaucasia, Chechen and Mountaineers of the Caucasus, and all you whose mosque and place of worship have been destroyed, whose customs have been trampled underfoot by the Tsars and tyrants of Russia, your belief and customs,

national and cultural Institutions are free and inviolable. Organize your life in all liberty. It is your right…” (Pipes 1917: 155)

In the 1920s, Lenin described the Communist Party’s role in relation to Islam and the people of Muslim countries as follows: (a) supporting the national freedom struggle of the bourgeois movement in colonized third world countries; (ii) fight against religious and other conservative and feudal components; and (iii) opposition to pan Islam and similar movements which were endeavouring to identify the movement for liberation from European and American imperialism. Lenin and Stalin, on the other hand, underlined the importance of taking care not to insult the Muslim peasantry’s deep-seated emotions by taking harsh measures (Smirnov 1956: 38-39).

With the consolidation of Soviet power, a change of attitude towards the people of the periphery emerged. The Soviet policy in regions with Muslim majority forced the Muslim women to abandon their traditional clothing. Muslim women by persecution or by force were asked to discard their face veils as they were seen as symbols of patriarchy. Without the preference of women, an attempt was made to liberate women (Kemper 2009: 7). The new basis for autonomy was economic and regional and a trend towards political centralization started in 1920s. As the Bolsheviks gained power, they broadened their religious and economic programmes towards Muslims. As a result, Muslim hatred for the Bolsheviks intensified. Thus, Soviet policy became repressive towards Muslims. By 1924, anti-Islamic tactics such as the extermination of Muslim radicals, the demolition of educational frameworks, the loss of clerical autonomy through the destruction of Waaf, and anti-Islam propaganda had been enacted (Hunter 2004: 24-25). This resulted into shut down and destruction mosques, prohibition of preachment by Mullahs, and thousands of Mullahs were either executed or exiled. About 14,000 Islamic religious schools were closed (Arzt 1998: 436). Roman and Russian alphabets letters were approved to be used instead of the Arabic alphabets used by Muslims. As a result, the current generation is unable to read Arabic-language Islamic literature. Orthodox Christianity was also persecuted. However, the most destructive feature of the Soviet system was to Russian Muslims and their religious and cultural legacy.

Soviet state pursued a hardline atheistic stand for several years since its inception. Through its policy the state tried to force out religion not only from public and political discourse but also from its citizen's individual life. The Soviet state and its machinery were rigidly secular, even religion was outside the framework of the state, the soviets restricted the transmission of religious knowledge. The state put restrains on the functioning of religious schools and prohibited the printing and publishing of religious literature. Along with the enforced disintegration of traditional lifestyle, rapid urbanization and industrialization further reduced the influence of religion in the life of all people of the USSR, including the Muslims (Naumkin 1992: 132).

2.4.1 The Stalinist Period (1928-1953)

Soviet's onslaught on religion continued even after the death of Lenin in 1924. His successor, Joseph Stalin, adopted a policy of 'socialism in one country'. This policy required the centralization and unification of the soviet state. It required stifling of dissent from the different sections of the society. The Muslim communities were unable to escape the rise of religious intolerance based on ideologies. Freedom of the religious institution eroded and institutional framework for regulating Muslim religious affair was introduced during Stalin's rule, ideological foundation for which was already led by Lenin (Hunter 2004: 28).

During Stalin's reign, Islam became the public enemy of the state. Muslims were blamed for several flaws such as conservatism, reactionary instrument of exploitation of workers, discrimination against women, emphasis on authority and so on. Islamic customs were regarded as barbaric and unhealthy (Hunter 2004: 28). Stalin unleashed several oppressive measures aimed at Islam in 1920 by closing down mosques. Further, In the late 1920s, several directions for an anti-religious campaign were issued by the Communist Party and the Soviet government. Thirty thousand Muslim clergy suffered during this campaign. Nearly all mosques, madrasas, maktabs, and other places connected to Islam were destroyed, shuttered, or transformed into secular institutions like a school, or public houses like clubs (Pilkington and Yemelianova 2003: 43). As a result, intellectual leadership of Islam was destroyed in the USSR. Moreover, the soviet's anti-religious campaign joined hands with the Tsars agenda of

Russification to establish unity Russia in Stalin's Soviet Union (Yemelianova 2006: 149-150).

The insurmountable challenge of the Second World War radically altered the Soviet government's approach towards religion. The Soviet government realised it could not ask citizens to protect their country while assaulting their most sacred religious institutions and beliefs. Islam and Orthodox Christianity both benefited from the war. Thus, restrictive regulations existed in the Soviet state after the Second World War, but they were not enforced. Many churches and mosques have now been built subsequently (Johnson 2005: 7).

2.4.2 The Khrushchev Period (1953-1964)

Nikita Khrushchev's consolidation of power in 1956, following Stalin's death in 1953, sparked an intensified state assault against religions in the Soviet Union. His approach to religious policy included harassing believers and coercing them into apostasy, propagandising atheism, denigrating the clergy and believers, increasing taxation on the clergy and church income and closing down religious institutions.

During Khrushchev's period the Soviet society was once again seeking an enemy to pass on their short comings. This time they targeted not just Muslims but others communities like Jews and other non-Russians, as well as 'misguided Russians'. The soviets feared the revival of religion and saw it as an important threat to the Soviet-communist ideology. Thus, the communist party passed a series of resolution that sought to eradicate and emancipate religiosity completely among Soviet people of various national cultures from religion. Based on the Khrushchev's new policy, numerous limitations were placed on religious institutions' social, cultural, and educational activities. Under this new policy, the opening of new mosques, madrassas and maktabs was prohibited (Ro'i 2000: 203-205).

Parallel to the onslaught of the popular Islam, the Soviet authorities fostered the growth of the state-controlled Islam. The established four Muftiyats in Tahkent, Ufa, Baku and Buinaksk, the Soviet State recognised the role of Sredne-Aziatskoe Dukhovnoe Upravlenie Musul'man in Spiritual Board of Muslims of Central Asia, Tashkent. Hence, Muftiyats of Ufa, Baku and Buinaksk were under the control of

Spiritual Board of Muslim of Central Asia. Tashkent had exclusive right to allow to open new mosques (Ro'i 2000: 60).

It is noteworthy that Khrushchev's presidency is best remembered for his strategy of de-Stalinization of the Soviet society, which included a reduction in social and political restrictions and a return to 'Leninism legalism', as opposed to Stalin's arbitrary ruling style (Hunter 2004: 31). It should be remembered that the anti-religious movement during this time period targeted the Orthodox Church more rather than Islam. Many monasteries and churches were closed by the government. Between 1957 and 1964, the number of churches and clerics substantially reduced under Khrushchev's government.

Due to Soviet state restriction on religion, the majority of Muslims could not observe many practices of their religion as observed by their co-religionists abroad. However, a majority of Muslims followed Islamic tradition in functions like wedding, divorce and funeral. Sahada was universally followed.

2.4.3 The Brezhnev's Period (1964-82)

During the presidency of Leonid Brezhnev, the Soviet state took a little more tolerant stance towards registered organisations and cooperative denominations. Rather than adopting his predecessors' ongoing extreme assault against religions, Brezhnev pursued a "attrition" strategy. Brezhnev wanted to "demystify" religion by watering down public attacks on it. By introducing scientific rationalism and the idea of atheism as publicity tools, he discredited the superstitious beliefs and exposed prevailing corruption in religious institutions. Simultaneously, the growing internal dissent and rebellious publications were dispensed and suppressed by the party leaders.

The Soviet authorities assumed that Muslims and Islam had been thoroughly absorbed into the Soviet system by the mid-1960s. As a result, it was assumed that Islam posed no threat to communist ideology and to the Soviet Union. Clerics and Muftiyats were allowed more autonomy. Despite this, mosques remained closed. During the Brezhnev era, the Soviet Union promoted atheistic philosophy rather than waging a

full-fledged war on religion. In general, a more relaxed attitude towards religion was progressively established during the Brezhnev period (Kumar 2009: 17-18).

2.4.4 The Gorbachev Period (1985-1991)

During Mikhail Gorbachev's presidency, the most significant changes in the status of religion in the Soviet Union occurred during the late 1980s *glasnost* and *perestroika* reforms. With the ultimate goal of reviving the communist system, he opened up the social sphere to religion-related activity. During his first year in office, Gorbachev's approach towards religions was not progressive. With the arrival of *perestroika* and *glasnost* reforms, however, the outlook towards religions shifted considerably. Long unpublished documentation on religious organisations began to be published as a result of the glasnost reform. He put an end to atheist education in schools (Johnson 2005: 8). The celebration of 1,000 years of Christianity in Russia in 1988 signified the beginning of changing relations between Islam and the state. After 1988, when a programme to build new mosques and renovate older mosques began across the country, there was a general relaxation of religious restrictions.

The Supreme Council of the Soviet Union passed a new law on religions in September 1990, prohibiting religious persecution, guaranteeing "freedom of conscience" and allowing religious activities. The rebirth of Islam was aided by this law. As a result of this law, Soviet Muslims enjoyed the legal rights for pursuing Islamic traditions and customs. The removal of barriers saw the growth of contact between Muslims within Russia and the Muslim world, which helped in garnering funds for Islamic missionaries. Turkey and Saudi Arabia contributed the most in these efforts. This greatly helped in the Islamic revival in the Soviet Union (Hunter 2004: 39).

Ramet observed that "as passed the law granted religious organisation full legal status, permitted religious education in public schools (after regular school hour) allowed religious organizations to own their places of worship and other property, allowed them to import literature from abroad and to engage in charitable activity and equalized the tax structure for clergy which had previously been higher than that for ordinary citizen. It also guaranteed freedom of worship, forbade the government to interfere in religious activities and ended the seventy-year-old policy of officially

backed atheism, proscribing discrimination on the basis of religious belief" (Johnson 2005: 9).

The main reason for the harsh treatment by Soviet Union to its religions which includes Orthodox Christianity, Islam and others was the nature of its regime. Bolshevik regime was based on Marxist-Leninist doctrine. Marxist-Leninist doctrine assumed that religious and national identities are purely a divisive demonstration of false conciseness that prevents the proletariat from joining the hands together to abolish their oppressors and the oppression. It implied that in Soviet Union, religious and ethnic attachments would sooner or later be discarded by the atheist, the supranational *Homo Sovieticus,* which means the Soviet man (Johnson 2005: 3). In this regard, Friedrich Engel's observation is significant that "All religion is nothing but the fantastic reflection in men's mind of those external forces which control their daily life, a reflection in which torrential forces assume the form of supernatural forces" (Engel 1978: 382). Religion, in the eyes of Soviet state, was to be attacked either by scientific persuasion or by force if required.

During the Soviet era, the attacks against Muslims proceeded on three main lines. Firstly, Muslim nationalism was weakened by administrative measures, which included the redrawing of the frontiers of the Transcaucasia and Central Asian republics. The steps taken to destroy the pan-Turanianism movement also affected the Muslims since a large proportion of the Muslims were Turks of one sort or another. Secondly, the Muslims were weakened by the Soviet economic policies. Though, policies were not against Muslims but it primarily affected them. This was mainly because a large proportion of Muslim inhabitants of Russia were nomadic or semi-nomadic. Moreover, the question of race and religion differentiated them from the rest of the population. It shows that the Muslim element was more acutely affected than any other by Soviet economic policies. Thirdly, the Muslims were attacked on ground of religion (Smirnov 1956: 17).

During the Soviet period, Islam survived more successfully than Orthodox Christianity because it had ability to function without any religious infrastructure. Even the Stalinist totalitarian regime failed to eradicate it from the region. It survived in private lives of Muslims. Islamic rituals were observed in family gatherings and

traditional Islamic funerals practices continued. This ensured the transfer of Islamic traditions from one generation to the next. The Soviet-controlled four Islamic institutions established the Muftis in Ufa for Europe and Siberia, Tashkent for Central Asia, Makhach-kala and Baku for the North and South Caucasus, respectively and lent further support to the survival of Islam in Russia (Kemper 2009: 7).

A soviet ethnologist, Sergei P. Poliakov, asserted that society of central Asia was predominantly Islamic and could preserve Islam despite Soviet Union's suppression. People of Central Asia lived in a parallel world, he pointed out. The traditional Islamic practices of the Muslims of this region went unabated and despite all attempts by the Soviets, children were socialized in a thorough Islamic spirit. Women played a crucial role in transmitting these believes and practices as Soviet schools were inefficient in their task of propagating rationalism and in re-educating youngsters. This failure could be attributed to the fact that many teachers and intellectuals of the region themselves were overwhelmingly believers. He further notes that every city neighbourhood and settlement had underground mosques which had tremendous influence on the people (Kemper 2009: 17).

Poliakov discusses the influence of the unauthorised Mosques and their authority in his work. He points out that the Imams and Shaykhs of the non-registered mosques and shrines had more influence than believed. These shrines as per his observation were well attended by the women, there they sought the blessing of the saints, dead and alive alike, for the good riddance of disease. There were women who passed on their religious beliefs to their offspring. Further he noted that the Soviet village councils of elders also supported and protected these traditional believes as they were popular among the public (Kemper 2009: 17).

Pilkington and Yemelianova document the spread of this underground Islamic activity in Central Asia. They point out that the mosques that were converted to public places like clubs, tea rooms and bakeries, or even other public places, except religious places, still displayed disguised qibla (leading to Mecca) and a mihrab (a niche leading to Mecca). They also documented the spread and depth of these unofficial mosques. "In the 1970s, in Checheno-Ingushetiia, alongside five official mosques, there functioned 292 unofficial ones. In Central Asia, 230 registered mosques co-

existed with at least 1,800 unofficial mosques. Unofficial mosques, as well as Sufi Islamic shrines, were guarded by mullahs, peers, sheikhs, ishans and khojas (reputed descendants of the Arab conquerors of Central Asia) who conducted the major Islamic family rituals" (Pilkington and Yemelianova 2003: 50).

While, according to Shireen T. Hunter, despite a long and extensive attack on Islam by the Tsarist empire and the Soviet state, there have been several factors which played a prominent role in keeping Islam alive. Firstly, Islamic civilization and Islam continued as peoples' cultural heritage accompanied by rich tradition. Islam has been the major source for administering ethical and moral values in Muslim-inhabited parts of Russian or Soviet state. Secondly, Soviet's intermittent relaxation to their campaign against religion and half-hearted official implementation of the anti-religious propaganda also led on to the survival of Islam. Thirdly, Sufi tradition and other network of brotherhood were more difficult to regulate. For instance, the Sufi brotherhood came to be more openly active in political and social affairs in the North Caucasus by the mid-1970s. Fourthly, political and intellectual development in the decade of 1970 in the Muslim world also contributed to the survival of Islam. The Iranian Islamic revolution helped in the renewal of political consciousness of Soviet Muslims (Hunter 2004: 35-36).

Another important aspect of the survival of Islam was the formation of political parties and organizations by Muslims. The Islamaskia Partiia Vozrozhdeniia[35] was the most famous among these as it resulted in the revival of Islamic political activism (Naumkin 1992: 140).

Moreover, Gorbachev's religious reform under the agenda of *perestroika* and *glasnost* further pushed the revival of Islam in the Soviet Union. Allowing the engagement in religious activities and expressing religious feelings, granting permission to Soviet Muslims to approach their co-religionists from the Islamic world and permitting Islamic missionaries specifically from Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Pakistan and other part of Muslim world, paved the way for revival of Islam (Hunter 2004: 39).

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35 It is the Islamic renaissance party formed in June1990 in Astrakhan.

2.5 Locating Islam in the Russian Federation

2.5.1 Muslim Population of Russia

The number of Muslim citizens in Russia exceeded 15 million by 2008 without taking into account legal or illegal migrants. If we add Azerbaijanis to this count, we get about 20 million, the number cited by Muslim leaders and referred to by President Vladimir Putin. Discussion about the number of Muslim people in Russia is ubiquitous but fruitless since a change of two to three million in either direction does not affect the analysis of the problems of Russian Islam (Malashenko and Nuritova 2009: 321). Generally speaking, the size of the Muslim population fluctuates in the range of 15-20 million. Yet 2010 Russian census, which asked only for nationality not religious affiliations, suggested that the country has closer to 14 million Muslims, or roughly 9 percent of the total population (Crew 2014: 126). Official statistics about the Muslim population show less than the actual data, because it takes into account only those who are registered in particular places in the Russian Federation.

During 1991-2010, many surveys were carried out to estimate Muslim population in Russia. Intellectuals of the Russian Academy of Civil Services, in 2001, asserted that Muslim population in Russia is 15 million (Ivanenko and Shegortsov 2001: 10**)**. A survey conducted in November 1999 by the "Institute of Socio-Political Studies of Russian Academy" put the number to 8.7 million, which is 6 percent of total population of Russia. An assessment according to official and semi-official Russian sources, Muslim population varies between 15 million and 20 million. The embassy of Russian Federation in Washington D.C. puts the Muslim number at 19 million. Russian council of Muftis (RCM) estimated 20 million Muslims on the basis of Russian quota for *hajj*. Taking into account the Russian women getting married to Muslims and their children, the number must have been closer to 20 million. Consequently, the number of indigenous Muslims is about 20 million in the Russian Federation (Mukhametshin 2001: 51). According to most of the Muslim leaders, Russia's Muslim population could be around 20 million. There are some Muslim scholars who assert that Russia's Muslim population could be 25-35 million, or even 45 million. The way Muslim minorities are considered in Europe, Russian Muslims are not taken to be outsiders as foreign immigrants. They inhabit their living place as

their own. Considering this, we can estimate that Muslim population figure between 18 million and 20 million is a realistic one.

At the same time, the Orthodox Russian Christianity (ORC), comprising of the Russian Federation population, is declining (Main 2006). Some analysts argued that by the end of 21st century Russia could become a Muslim majority state. In February 2006, Paul Globe, the advisor to James Baker who was then US Secretary of State on Soviet and Baltic affairs, commented on the issue of Soviet Nationality: "Within most of our lifetimes the Russian Federation, assuming it stays within current borders, will be a Muslim country". It is manifested that without having impact on the Russian foreign policy, Russia might have a Muslim majority. The notion that Moscow is a part of the European concert in Western Europe is inaccurate. The Muslim population, since 1989, remains staggering between 40 percent and 50 percent. Caucasus or Central Asia or Azerbaijan have majority of them through immigration. Contrary to this, Aleksei Malalshenko, a Russian expert on Islam, clearly said in 2005 that Russia is not going to be "a Muslim society in several years, although maybe in half a century we'll see something surprising" (Smith 2006: 1-2).

However, it is noteworthy to raise the question that who can be considered Muslim? If we define Muslims only as people who regularly follow the rites and prohibitions dictated by Islam, then according to various estimates there are only between eight million and nine million; some estimates even make it as few as two to three million. Yet, according to the Muslim press, 90 percent of people who consider themselves Muslims do not attend mosques. What is important is not the rigorous adherence to religious forms but rather one's self-identification and the religious setting in which one is nurtured are more significant (Malashanko and Nuritova 2009: 321).

Table 1: Ethnic composition of Russian Muslims in 2002 (in thousands)

1.	ABAJIN	37,942
2.	CHECHANS	1,360,253
3.	AVAR	814,473
4.	AGULS	28,297
5.	ADYGEI	128,528
6.	AJERIS	621,840
7.	ARABS	10,630

8.	CENTRAL AISIAN ARABS	181
9.	BALKARS	108,426
10.	BASHKIRS	1,67,3389
11.	BESREMAN	3,122
12.	AZHARS	252
13.	DARGINS	510,156
14.	DUNGANS	801
15.	INGUSH	413,016
16.	KABARDIN	519,958
17.	KAZAKHS	653,962
18.	KARAKALPAKS	1,609
19.	KARACHEV	192,182
20.	KYRGYS	31,808
21.	KUMIKS	422,409
22.	KURDS	19,607
23.	LAKTS	156,545
24.	LEZGIN	411,535
25.	OSSETIN DIGORTS	100,000
26.	PUSHTUNS	9,800
27.	TUTULTSI	29,929
28.	TABASARAN	131,735
29.	TAJIK	120,136
30.	TALLISH	2,548
31.	TATARS	5,554,601
32	CRIMEAN TATAR	4,131
33.	TURKS	92,415
34.	TIRK-MESKHETEN	3,257
35.	TURKMEN	33,053
36.	UZBEK	12,916
37.	UIGUR	2,867
38.	HEMSHIL	1,542
39.	TSAKHUR	10,366
40.	CHERKES	60,517
41.	SHAPSUTI	3,231

Source: Russian census 2002

Russian Muslims historically settled in two expanding geographical areas of the country. One part of it stayed in the Tataro-Bashkir, the North Caucasus or the Volga River basin, and constitutes of Tatars[36], Bashkir[37] and Chuvas[38]. Since 16th century, they were part of the Russian state, and these sovereign regions and states lie in the centre of the modern Russia. It is evident that they are the citizens of Russia and have always remained its integral part. The largest concentration of Muslims in Volga Ural region resides in the republic of Bashkortostan and Tatarstan which has estimated Muslim population of four million. Approximately, 3.2 million Muslims live in Central Asia. Additionally, between two million and three million Muslim live in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

The larger Muslim population inhabited in the area between both the Caucasus area, the Black and the Caspian Seas. According to R. Silantiyev, in the North Caucasus, Islam is a major religion in Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria Chechnya, and Karachaevo, Cherkessia, Ingushetia (Bendersky 2004).

Thus, according to the 2002 census, the largest Muslim community in Russia is Tatar, Chechan, Avars, Kazakhs, Ajeris, and Ingush. Muslims rose to be a big force in seven territories of the Russian Federation. And these regions were Ingushetia, Chechnya, Dagestan, Kabardino Balkariya, Karachaevo Cherkesiya, Bashkortostan and Tatarstan. Significant numbers reside in Adygeya, Astrakhan province, North Ossetia, Orenburg province, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region, Ulyanovsk province, Chelyabinsk province, Tyumen province and Kalmykia.

Table 2: Muslim Population in various regions of Russia (in %)

1.	REPUBLIC OF INGUSHETIA	98.0
2.	CHECHNYA	96.0
3.	DAGESTAN	94.0
4.	KABARDINI BALKARIA	70.0
5.	KARACHAEVO-CHERKESIA	63.0

36 The majority of the Turkic Tatar population lives in the westernmost region of the Ural Mountains.
37 The Bashkirs are also Turkic people, who live in Russia mostly in the republic of Bashkortostan. Some also live in Tatarstan, Perm Krai and other parts of Russia.
38 The Chuvas are Turkic people too.

6.	BASHKORTSTAN	54.5
7.	TATARSTAN	54.0
8.	ADYGEI	27.0
9.	ASTRAKHAN DISTRICT	26.0
10.	NORTHERN OSSETIA	21.0
11.	ORENBURG DISTRICT	16.7
12.	KHANTI MANCISKI REGION	15.0
13.	ULYANOVSK	13.0
14	CHELYABINSK DISTRICT	12.0
15.	YAMALO NENETSKI REGION	11.5
16.	TYUMEN DISTRICT	10.5
17.	KALMIKIYA	10.0
18.	UDMURTIYA	7.6
19.	ATAI REPUBLIC	7.4
20	STAVROPOL KRAI	7.0

Source: As cited in Mohanty, Arun (2016) “Russian civilization and Islam” pg. 27

The Muslim population of Russia is multi-ethnic. Islam includes 38 multicultural faiths of native Russians. Each group, mentioned above, the Tartars and the Bashkir, had their different religious customs and historical traditions having diverse connections with the centre (Moscow and the Kremlin). The chairman of the Council of Muftis of Russia, Ravil Gainutdin divided Russian Muslims in three distinct groups depending on the region of their residence. The first region, Siberia and the Far East, is remote from the centre; the second is in central regions along the river Volga, the Urals, and Moscow; and the third region is the North Caucasus (Gainutdin 2004).

2.5.2 Constitutional Position and the Status of Islam in the Russian Federation

The Constitution of the Russian Federation rewritten after the fall of Soviet Union in 1993, envisioned a secular state. Article 14 of the new constitution makes the

provision that state has no official religion and adoption of no religion can be made compulsory for its citizens. In contrast to the previous states, all religious institutions in the new Russian federation have been detached from the state. All religion are treated equally as per the constitutional law (Constitution 1993). Further, the constitution ensured individual freedom of conscience and religion. It assured right for the professing or not to profess any religion or belief. Similarly, it provided right to dissemination of religious literature, which were banned by the earlier states, and have now been freed up and ensured through Article 28. Moreover, the constitution through Article 19 also prohibited discrimination based on linguistic, regional, cultural, social, religious or national identities (Constitution 1993). In the Russian Constitution, there is no such thing as a favoured or privileged religion. There is no mention of religion as a source of state law or as a foundation for it. Although there is no explicit reference to the state's neutrality on religious matters, there is a constitutional clause ensuring that all religions are treated equally before the law.

Though, along with the above-mentioned constitutional provision, in 1997 the Russian Federation passed a supplemental law on the Freedom of Conscience. This law identified Islam with Russian Orthodox Christianity, Judaism, and Buddhism as "traditional religions" of the Russian people but does not recognise any of them as state official religion. This law further makes a special note of the role the Russian Orthodox Christianity in the establishing the spiritual and cultural framework of Russia. The Russian Federation's recognition of Islam as a traditional religion confirmed its status as integral part of the Russian society.

On 15 July 2009, Dmitry Medvedev in his address at the Grand Mosque, Moscow, laid out the state's favourable support for Islam by recognising the importance of Islam to Russia's development. In his speech he declared that "we are a nation of many ethnicities and faiths, and the Muslims of our nation have due respect and influence in our country. He further affirmed that Muslim religious organisations make important contributions to supporting civil order, to providing spiritual and moral guidance to an enormous number of people, and to fighting extremism and xenophobia. After all, about 182 different ethnicities live in Russia (the exact figure depends on how one counts, since this is a complicated process, especially when counting ethnicities in the Caucasus), of which 57 identify themselves with the

Muslim faith; this fact itself is an important indicator of the importance of Islam in our country" (Medvedev's speech 15 July 2009).

The Russian federation was entitled with 'Observers' status in the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) in June 2005. Kamil Ishakov, the Representative of Russia at the organisation claimed that Russia's aim is gaining a full membership status in the near future. Since its inclusion as an observer, Russia has claimed to be a part of the Muslim world.

On 12 December 2005, Russian President Putin in his address at the Parliament of the Republic of Chechnya, announced that "Russia has always been the most loyal, reliable, and consistent defender of the Muslim world's interests. Russia has always been the best and most reliable partner and ally of the Muslim world" (Putin's speech 12 December 2005).

Two years later, at the 11th OIC Summit, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov, declared that "Russia is a part of the Muslim world". Similarly, Dmitry Medvedev, the president of Russia, during his official visit to Egypt, while giving speech on 23 June 2009 at the headquarters of the Arab League, said about Russia to be "an organic part" of the Muslim world. He also strongly thwarted Western attempts to bring about democratic reform in the Middle East. He told his audience that "Islam is an inalienable part of Russian history and culture, given that more than 20 million Russian citizens are among the faithful". He proclaimed "Russia does not need to seek friendship with the Muslim world: Our country is an organic part of this world".

2.5.3 Islamic Revival in Post-Soviet Russia

The disintegration of Soviet Union and the relatively new liberal climate paved the way for revival of Islam. The disintegration also brought an end to the official state policy of atheism. As mentioned above, the newly formed Russian federation's assurance of the religious freedoms further played a considerable role in the resurgence of Islam. Thus, in the new Russian federation, religions including Islam gained legitimacy and social and cultural recognition.

Post-Soviet Russia's Islamic rebirth has been characterised differently by different scholars. One of the popular one that is used to describe the rebirth of the Islam movement at the time of Soviet's disintegration and in the first decade of the Russian federation is 'revival of Islam'. Many scholars, including Malashenko, use this term for this movement, but sometimes the term 're-Islamisation' is also used. However, some Islamic theologians and ideologues disagree with this description and instead analyse this phase as the restoration of Islam. Some of them even described it as 'legalisation of Islam' taking cue from the recognition of Islam as Russia's 'traditional religion'. All these different terms are based on different interpretations of the phenomena, which at best can be described "as the restoration of the 'adequate role' of Islam" (Malashenko and Nuritova 2009: 324).

The revival of Islam took place at several fronts and it can be observed in multiplying the number of mosques and prayer houses, in education, media, halal industry, publication houses and many more. The revival of Islam can be analysed under the following heads:

i) Change in the perception of the Russian Muslim people

Alexei Malashenko in his work observed that the perception of the Islam has changed among Muslims of Russia, he noted that this played a major part in religious revival. He cites a survey from the North Caucasus Centre of the Institute of Social and Political Studies, when asked 'What role should a religion play in society? Sixty percent of Chechens, 41 percent of Ingush, 30 percent of Dargin, 27 percent of Avar, 20 percent of Kumyk, 30 percent of Karachaev, and 48 percent of Balkar answered that it should define "all spheres of social life". In comparison, only 21 percent of Chechen, 31 percent of Ingush, 13 percent of Dargin, 33 percent of Avar, 43 percent of Kumyk, 34 percent of Karachaev, and 48 percent of Balkar answered that "religion should have a substantial influence on social life" (Malashenko and Nuritova 2009: 324-325).

Does the feeling of belonging to Islam dominate the religious consciousness of Russian Muslims in general, or is it that Islam is seen within the context of ethnic culture or even fused with it? Surveys conducted in the eastern parts of the North Caucasus showed that 56 percent of Avar, 50 percent of Dargin, 43 percent of

Chechen, 41 percent of Ingush, and 48 percent of Lezgin consider themselves Muslims in general, paying little attention to affiliation with a particular Muslim group. For the rest it was more important to belong specifically to the Islam of the Caucasus, either to the Hanafi or Shafi mazhabs (religious juridical schools) or one of the Sufi tariqats[39]. In Western regions of the North Caucasus, 88 percent of Adyg, 94 percent of Cherkess, 86 percent of Kabardin, and 80 percent of Karachaev consider themselves Muslims in general (Malashenko and Nuritova 2009: 324-325). According to a report by Chatham House, "Since the opening of culture and religion after the fall of the Soviet Union, there has been a rise in the visual displays of piety among Muslims, now that they are able to express their faith more openly" (Tony Blair Institute Report 2014: 5).

ii) Increase in the number of mosques

Another aspect in which Islamic revivalism was evident was the visible increase in the number of mosques after the inception of Russian federation. When Gorbachev initiated liberalisation, there were only 94 mosques in the now Russian federation territory. Sergei Ivanenko and Alexander Shegortsov observed that by the year 2000, the number of officially registered mosques grew to 7,000 (Hunter 2004: 64).

The largest mosque in Russia and Europe was opened in 2008, in Grozny, the capital of Chechnya. Tatarstan's number of mosques grew to 1,100 in 2008 from 700 in 1997; in Bashkortostan there were 470; in Ulyanovsk province number of mosques grew to 160 from 50; in Samara province there were 60 (up from 41); in Orenburg province there were about 80 (up from 75); in Perm province there were 78 (up from 33); in Penza province there were more than 70 (up from 35); in Turnen province about 70 (up from 35); Nizhegorod province about 60 (up from 35); in Chelyabinsk province there were 57 (up from 36); in Sverdlov there were about 40; in Astrakhan there were 56; and in Volgograd there were 16 (Malashenko and Nuritova 2009: 327).

Mosques in Russian Federation, like elsewhere in the Muslim world have come to be the centre for social and political life of the locality where it is located. It is a familiar scene to find young believers deeply engaged in the sermons of Imams during Friday prayers. This sight is common everywhere be it Makhachkala, Moscow, or Kazan.

[39] Brotherhoods.

Similarly, prayers are attended by people of all strata alike. Businessmen and politicians use these prayers as an avenue to assert their faith in the eyes of the believers. The sermons in mosques cover a widerange of subjects and expose the Russian Muslims to heartfelt commentaries, and insightful interpretations on day-to-day events in Russia, Middle East, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Iran. Apart from this, Russia's relationship with Islamic world also finds place in these sermons.

Mosques' active role in Muslims' life raised to a desire to 'Islamise' their everyday environment. This can be observed in the many shops opened by mosques to sell halal products, religious artefacts and literature. Similarly, one can note that many gas stations opened up prayers place at their venue to facilitate namaz and fashion shows portraying Islamic clothing have become more frequent. Head scarves have come to be firmly in fashion in many cities like Kazan, the wearing of scarf is encouraged by religious leaders and has now come to express religious belonging among Muslim women. Even in Moscow one can more often see women dressed according to Muslim tradition. (Malashenko and Nuritova 2009: 327-328).

iii) Islamic religious education

One of the major components of Islamic revival was the revival of Islamic religious education. The Soviet era almost decimated the religious education. The Bukhara madrassas and Tashkent madrassas were the only places where Muslims could receive training to become Imams. Further the Bukhara and Tashkent madrassas fell in independent countries after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and hence these places were not easily accessible to Russian Muslims. And the then strength of religious scholars in the new Russian Federation could not even meet 5 percent of the hundreds of new mosques that were coming up. During this crucial period, Arab countries extended their support and offered to train Russian students for free. However, these efforts had their problems. Teachings of the Arab institutions were not compatible with Islamic traditions in Russia. They became a source of major tensions when some teachings merged "a Muslim identity with a new type of Islamic ideology" (Tony Blair Institute Report, 2004: 5).

One of the major tensions that resulted because of this external intervention was the creation of division among Muslims in Russia. During the 1990s, thousands of

believers sought religious knowledge and training outside Russia. They went to West Asian countries, Turkey and Pakistan. Some of these people went on Mufti administration's sponsorship and others went on their own, but all those who went abroad for training were funded by foreign sources. The knowledge and experience gained from those Islamic nations was in fact higher and better than that could be obtained in Russia. However, after returning to Russia, they preached and became missionaries of a different Islam, one close to the countries they attended their training in. While, missionary activities, both domestic and foreign, encouraged religious enlightenment, at the same time, they created division within the Muslim community.

Despite all the difficulties, by the beginning of the 2000s, the clergy from Russian Federation managed to establish the foundations of an Islamic educational system which nevertheless required major improvement. According to the rector of Moscow Islamic University, Marat Murtazin, there were only 108 registered Islamic religious educational institutions, even though majority of which were formally categorized as institutions of higher religious education, in reality, they were only secondary schools. Islamic institutions slowly began to gain prominence through all this while, the Higher Islamic College in Moscow gained some significance as the total number of its students reached 218 by 2006. Apart from this, there were 16 Islamic higher education institutions in Dagestan. By then the Imam Sharif Islamic University was opened in Makhachkala. A total of 6,000 young men and women came to study in these newly established Islamic institutions in the republic. From zero Islamic institutions, these grew to 1,410 regular madrasas and 324 primary schools. In 2006, the Council on Islamic Education was established, and standards for an Islamic Religious Education major and a number of educational programs were developed. However, the level of teaching remains far from good enough (Malashenko and Nuritova 2009: 327-328).

In 2002, the Russian federation extended its formal support through two decrees related to religious education on 21 May and 16 June. Through these decrees, the state extended organisational, material, and methodical support for the development of religious education. This made way for the opening of Islamic University at Moscow with a secular character. This further supported the revival of Islamic education and

the Ministry of Education was accorded with this responsibility. In 2006, a host of other measures were introduced for overcoming the crisis in the Muslim education system. These measures aimed at the opening of five universities that would constitute the backbone of Islamic education in the country. These universities were to be opened in Moscow, Kazan, Ufa, Makhachkala and Nalchik. Four to seven madrassas would be affiliated to these universities, with a total number of madrassas reaching 30, while other Muslim educational institutions were to be closed. The fund aiming to promote Islamic science, culture and education, was formed for implementing this massive program. If this huge program would be successfully implemented, Islamic education in Russia would receive a new lease of life and would reach a near world level (Mohanty 2016: 52).

iv) The Islamic publications

Since 1991, the number of publications has increased and various radio and television has broadcasts dealing with Islamic issues. As of 2002, there were about 40 newspapers and magazines of a Muslim character in Russia.

In Moscow, the following are the most important publications: (1) Islam Min-bare, a monthly newspaper published by DUMER that reflects the views of the RCM; (2) Tribuna Islama (The Tribune of Islam), published by DUMER since 1994, with a circulation of 10,000 copies; (3) Islamskiy Mir (The Islamic world); (4) Zam-Zam, published by the charity fund of the same name; and (5) Al Fiqr, a monthly bulletin published by the Islamic Congress of Russia.

In Tatarstan, North Caucasus, Bashkortostan and other regions, following are the principal Muslim publications: (1) Din Va Magyyshat, a Tatar-language publication of the SBM of Tatarstan; (2) Iman (The faith), both in Tatar and Russian; (3) Muslima (A Muslim woman), a magazine for Muslim women with a circulation of 5,000 copies; (4) Islam Nury (The light of Islam), published in Tatar in Naberezhnie Chelny; (5) Risalyat (The message), a monthly publication by the SBM of the Republic of Bashkortostan in Bashkir and Russian; (6) Mu-sul'manskiy Vestnik (The Muslim Herald), published in Saratov, Volga District; (7) Iman (The faith), a newspaper published by the Religious Society of Muslims of Vologda; (8) Solntse Islama (The sun of Islam), published by the SBM of Penza Oblast; (9) Kibla, a

newspaper published by the Religious Society of Muslims of Novocherkassk in southern Russia, close to Rostov-on-Don; and (10) Azan (Call to prayer), a newspaper published in Samara.

Dagestan has the largest number of publications in the North Caucasus, including the following: (1) Mezhdunarodnaya Musul'manskaya Gazeta (International Muslim newspaper), an independent publication not affiliated with any religious board or other social and/or political organizations; (2) Put' Islama (The way of Islam), a monthly newspaper published by the Islamic Democratic Party; (3) Nur-e(ul)-Islam (The light of Islam), published by Russian Muslim social movement Nur; (4) Assalam (Peace), published twice a month by the SBM of Dagestan; and (5) Islamskiy Vestnik (The Islamic Herald), a weekly newspaper circulated throughout the North Caucasus. The newspaper Minaret is published by the Islamic Cultural Centre in North Ossetia-Alania (Hunter 2004: 75).

The objective of the above-mentioned publications was to disseminate the knowledge of Islam to its followers in Russia. Some publications have an agenda of spreading extremist religious literature. Not just government, but also traditional Muslim organisations, were concerned about the dissemination of extreme religious literature. A criminal action was initiated against the Badr publishing business in Moscow in 1999 for publishing some offensive material. In 2003, the case was closed due to lack of evidence. A list of extremist literature published by Badr, Umma, and other publishing firms was released by the Dagestan Muslim spiritual authority in 2004. A list of extremist material was also published by the Council of Ummas of the central Muslim spiritual authority in 2005. In May 2007, a local court in Koptevski declared 14 works by Turkic writer Said Nursi to be extremist literature (Mohanty 2016: 59).

v) The Islamic media

DUMER, with the initial support of the Russian Federation, from 1992 has created a number of radio and television programs on Islam including 'Minaret,' 'Now,' and 'Ruhi Miras' (Spiritual heritage), which is a radio and television program in the Tatar language. 'A Thousand and One Nights: An Encyclopaedia of Islam' has appeared on the television channel Rossiya (Russia) every Friday since 1998. This program hosts relatively well-known Muslim clergy, Islamic studies experts, and scholars of the

Quran discussing Islamic philosophies. Two government-controlled radio stations, Voice of Islam and Islamic Wavelength, serve to popularise the activities of DUMER. The following are radio and television programs in other Muslims regions of the Russian Federation: (1) 'Din Va Tor-mysh'(Life and religion), a program on the local television in Kazan sponsored by the SBM of Tatarstan; (2) 'Ihlas,' a weekly television program in Ufa, Bash-kortostan; (3) 'Allahu Akbar,' an informational and educational programming channel for Muslims as part of Saratov Tele-Radio Center; and (4) 'For Unity and Stability' and 'Peace to Your House,' two radio and television programs in Dagestan that explain federal laws about the freedom of conscience and feature Muslim clerics (Hunter 2004: 77).

In May 2007, the Council of Muftis of Russia reached an agreement for cooperation with TV 'Russia Today' or *Russia al Ayum* for broadcasting in the Middle East. The council along with Televideo company Islamic Mir founded the site 'Islamic Television'. In July 2007, Saudi Arabia with the support from the Mufti Raivil Gainutddin, declared its intention of broadcasting a language version of Mecca with the objective of informing viewers.

vi) Adoption of Islamic economic principles

The revival of Islam can also be observed in implementing Islamic economic principles too. The adoption of Islam on relations within a society can be seen in banking principles: Islamic banks do not take a percentage in banking transactions. Although there is currently only one bank in Russia permitted to operate according to Islamic banking principles, the Badre Forte Bank, it is quite possible to foresee the appearance of other similar financial institutions. Islam is penetrating the insurance business as well. In Tatarstan the 'Idei Hajj' program helps Muslims to accumulate funds to make the *hajj*. Similarly, there have been many attempts to partially restore the Islamic tax system. Tatarstan introduced methods to pay Islamic tax through the secular banks Tatfondbank and Ak Bars from the beginning of 2005. Another such example of revival of Islam in economy sphere can be taken from taxi services. Safar, the first taxi service in Russia to be organized on Sharia (Islamic law) principles, opened under the patronage of the mosque of the city of Baymak in Bashkortostan.

What distinguishes it from other taxi services is that its drivers never consume alcohol (Malashenko and Nuritova 2009: 327-328).

The birth of halal industry, too, must be regarded as a manifestation of Islamic revival in the post-Soviet Russia. Along with network of selling Halal products, special canteens and restaurants serving food made out of halal meat have also become common. In 2007, there were negotiations for introducing halal menu in catering services on some trains. Gradually, there was a demand for sharia style restaurant. In 2007, the International Center for Halal Standardization and Certification was opened on the initiative of Russia's Muftis Council.

2.5.4 Political Islam in post-Soviet Russia

Islam plays a major role in several aspects of Russian politics. First, the most direct are the political organisations that are formed to defend Islamic principles and its way of life and demand for the creation of conditions suitable for all Muslims leading to the Islamic way of life. Secondly, civil society of Muslims demands for the involvement of the Muslim clergies in politics. Thirdly, strong Muslim lobby groups that urge secular politicians to move towards Islam. Fourthly, the use of Islam in political movements and opposition parties, extending to the separatist organisations and finally taking Islam into account for matters such as foreign policy.

Political Islam in Russia first emerged with the founding of the Islamic Rebirth Party (IRP) in the Soviet Union in June 1990. Since then, Islamic political organisations openly participated in political activities as followers of Islam. IRP never intended to become Russia's heavily religion-based party, yet it gave a major push to the politicisation of Islam during the remainder of Soviet period and it continued to exert influence after its disintegration.

As of the early 1990s, IRP was estimated to have 3,000 to 5,000 members. Most of these members were concentrated in North Caucasus and specifically in Dagestan. Besides, In several Russian cities where Muslims were a minority, IRP cells were created. These were Tyumen, Chelyabinsk, Penza, Saratov, Astrakhan, including Moscow and St. Petersburg. From its beginning, IRP tried to stay clear of the Islamic fundamentalist image. Their leadership confined their party activities to the field of

culture, spiritual and religious education. In the meantime, IRP was steadfast in its commitment to Islam and Muslims assertion in politics. IRP took an active role in organising Islamic political movements across the former USSR. This culminated in 1993 in Tajikistan where IRP transformed itself into the most powerful oppositional force (Ro'i 1995: 43). The IRP also claimed to be an "all union party" that was active in most of the Soviet Union's Muslim communities. IRP has operated in Makhachkala (Republic of Dagestan), the Republic of Karachai, and a few oblasts of the Volga Ural area, as well as in Moscow. By 1991, these centres had evolved into the epicentre of the Muslim political movement.

The IRP's role among Russian Muslims is significant. Their formation sets precedents for the formation of future Islamic political organisations in the new Russian Federation. Further being an officially registered party helped them garner support of many early Muslim politicians and ideologies. Many of these community leaders went on to become important public figures and some of them held the key position such as party's Chairman Ahmed-Kadi Akhtaev, an outstanding Islamic journalist; head of the Islamic Committee Geidar Jemal, and the ideologue of Islamic radicalism in the North Caucasus Bagautdin Muhammad (Kumar 2009: 26-28).

IRP played an active role in uniting Muslims under their religious and political organisation. They took upon themselves the role of disseminating Islamic teachings including economic system on the basis of Shariat[40] rules. They rejected modern social development schemes as the devoid of humanity (Ro'i 1995: 43). IRP had two main factions, one of which was Jemal who head the IRP's Independent Centre of Information 'Tawhid' and Sergei Dunaev, the coordinator of spiritual contacts. Both these leaders represented the fundamentalist fraction which some time sought a separate Islamic state. The other moderate faction was represented by the party press secretary, Valiahmed Sadur.

Even though IRP was the first Islamic party in the USSR and the new Russian federation, it did not last long in the political arena. The party was confined to organising press conferences and giving voice to the Muslims in their movements of the post-USSR member states. Apart from this, they published speeches of their

40 The code of law based on the Quran.

leaders in the media. However, no party assemblies were held during this time except the one wide reaching conference of 1992 that can be mentioned. IRP also lacked popular support. IRP attempted to run a newspaper called *Al Wahdat* (Unity) but it failed very soon. The newspaper used to print merely a few hundred copies of their first two issues before being shut. IRP's debacle started right from the beginning, very early on split occurred amongst its founding members, their goals and means never had a common path, leading to the fall of IRP by 1994 (Kumar 2009: 27).

The fall of IRP did not mean the withdrawal of Islam from politics in the Russian Federation. Islamic Cultural Centre established in Moscow during the final phase of USSR came to fill the vacuum. Despite being an official body, the Islamic Cultural Centre was politicized. Abdul-Wahed Niyazov, the leader of the centre, founded powerful Muslim political organizations. By the mid-1990s, across Russia, many Islamic organisations with scopes at both regional and national appeared as a successor to IRP.

The Union of the Muslims of Russia (UMR) and the Muslim Public Movement "Nur" (Light) were two such significant successors established in 1995. The Tatar party 'Ittifak', 'Iman' the Youth Centre of Islamic Culture, the Muslims of Tatarstan movement, Islamic Democratic Party of Dagestan', 'Jamaatul Muslimi' and the Islamic Centre "Kavkaz" were popular regional groups. Few smaller associations like Makhachkala founded in 1998, and International Muslim groups like the Muslim Brothers were founded in great part on ethnic ideas, had strong ideological affiliation to Islam. Other small Islamic groups operated all over Russia, three of them were operational in Chechnya, ten in Dagestan, two each in Ingushetia and the Karachai-Cherkess Autonomous Region. The strength of these organisation varied widely, some of them had few members while others had several hundred (Kumar 2009: 28).

It was a difficult task to strictly categorize the Islamic political associations. The remarkable features of the UMR and 'Nur' lay in the aspiration of getting established as national political parties that were protectors of the interest of the Muslim communities of Russia. The purpose and goal of all these organisations varied widely. The UMR and 'Nur', however, unlike IRP, had well-established desire to participate in the establishment at the national level. Both wanted to establish themselves as the

defenders of the rights of Russian Muslims. They stood with local, regional and national parties on various issues and attempted to influence the national and regional governments to secure the rights of Muslims. Unlike the IRP, both had a well-built organizational set-up. They had party cells that were spread all-across Russia and particularly in those regions where Muslim communities were settled. Besides, they had good reach within mass media.

The time in which these organisations entered the Russian political landscape was highly aggravated. Both parties, despite their claim for independence, have always aligned with secular parties. UMR leader Ahmet Khalitov and 'Nur' leader Khalid Yakhin have been associated with Vladimir Zhirinovsky[41] and Alexei Mitrofanov, an LDPR (Liberal Democratic Party of Russia) member famous for his nationalistic mission. Both of them were sacked from their positions later. During this time, Grigory Yavlinsky started a democratic movement Yabloko and Nur became a part of it. After concluding that Muslims lacked bureaucratic know-how and efficiency, UMR was refused political registration. As a result, the party decided to collaborate with the "Russia, Our Home" campaign, led by Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin of the ruling party. During 1996 Presidential elections, UMR supported Boris Yeltsin's candidacy. Further, they actively took part in the political election process and aggressively campaigned under the leadership of Nadirshakh Khachilaev and A. V. Niyazov, the head of the Islamic centre. This participation in Russian political process was recognised by Kremlin and Muslims received more support financial assistance. Through their active participation, Islamic political organisations legitimised their role in Russia.

Political Islam was hyperactive in 1995-1996. In 1995 parliamentary elections, Islamic political organisation had garnered considerable vote share: 'Nur' got 0.58 percent votes in the whole Russia, getting 393,500 votes. In Chechnya and Ingushetia, it received 23 percent, in Bashkiria 1.25 percent of the votes and in Tatarstan 5 percent (Malashenko and Nuritova 2009: 141). Considering it to be the newly formed party of religious minority, this was not a bad achievement. During the Yeltsin period after the 1995 parliamentary elections and 1996 presidential elections, the activities of

41 Very popular and famous leader and head of the Liberal Democratic Party.

these Muslim organisations began to decline. From Kremlin's point of view, the reason could be attributed to the fact that they had achieved their main purpose of assimilating Muslims into the Russian political system, and the government did not need their services any further. Both UMR and 'Nur' did not face much success after this as they did not receive any seat in Duma. An additional election in Dagestan that occurred in 1996 established Nadirshakh Khachilaey as a member of the Parliament of Russia.

However, despite adjusting to the existing state of affairs, obedience to the authorities, and simply falseness, many Islamic organisations did fulfil their mission of awakening and stimulating civic activity among Muslims. The Islamic factor in the political game played according to Kremlin rules is becoming less and less important. When Vladimir Putin came to power, real political intrigue started to disappear, and the only thing demanded of Muslims was approval of a set course. The significance of the Islamic factor during the Duma elections in 2007 and the presidential elections of 2008 was incredibly small. According to religious scholar Sergei Buryan, "religious leaders are used only as extras, but for sacralisation the authorities need only one religion – 'the most traditional one', especially since there are not enough privileges to go around". The 'most traditional religion' refers here to Christian Orthodoxy, but even its role in the electoral process under Putin became less significant. Despite the disappearance of Islam from politics on the federal level, Muslim associations continue to participate in social and political life at the regional level (Malashenko and Nuritova 2009: 336).

2.5.5 Radical Islam in Contemporary Russia

Islamic radicalisation is a pertinent socio-political aspect of Russia which has its roots in the final years of the Soviet Union. A large-scale Muslim population has further contributed to the ethno-political conflict with the existent non-Muslim Russian people. It must be pointed out that the concept of radicalization has been an issue of debate in the intellectual arena. The term has been used in multiple contexts and has changing connotation vis-à-vis time and space. Nevertheless, the word 'radicalism' is still useful in defining political violence-related dynamics (Mark, 2010: 480-494). Charles E. Allen's definition can be used for the purpose of understanding the process

of radicalisation. He defines it as a "process of adopting an extremist belief system, including the willingness to use, promote or facilitate violence, as a method for effecting societal change" (Charles 2007: 4). The academicians and politicians have also differentiated between cognitive and violent radicalization. Cognitive radicalization is associated with people who do not succumb to the norms and reject the established socio-political institutions' practises. They emphasise on reassessing the age-long worn-out traditions and attempt to replace it with a new system of belief more relevant as per time's need. On the other hand, violent radicalization happens when people use violence to explain and establish the process of cognitive radicalisation (Mark 2010: 480-494).

Galina Yemelianova claims that there are numerous patterns of Islamic radicalisation in Russia. She conflates that after fall of Soviet Union, extreme Islam has grown in strength in Russia's Muslim regions. But the nature, scope, and political ramifications of Islamic activivism have greatly differed from one Muslim region to other Muslim region. Two major aspects of the post-Communist Islamic dynamic may be seen in the Volga-Urals and North Caucasus regions as advancements in Islam. The process of Islamic radicalization can be traced largely in the Volga-Urals doctrinal and academic debate. It is characterised by relatively high standards of living, excluding Tatars and Bashkirs which constitute the majority of traditional Muslim population of the region. Another factor leading to Islamic radicalisation is the slippery substitution of the conventional Hanafi Madhhab to the more rigid one. It was more appropriate and well suited to the homogeneous Muslim state only and led to the dismantling of peaceful co-existence of Muslims in the non-Muslim states (Yemelianova 2010: 133-134).

In the 1990s, Russian Islam became increasingly diversified and, in a competitive and contradictory way, various Islamic traditions evolved and coexisted. According to A. Malashenko, Russia's Islam can be categorised mainly under two branches. These are traditional or local and non-traditional or transnational Islam (Malashenko 2000). The traditional Islam is thoroughly based on the age-long practises and preaching of theological schools. It is also regionally segmented into Hanafism and Shafism. It can be noticed that where Bashkirs and Tatars observe Hanafism, the Muslims of North Caucasus have adhered to Shafism. In the North Caucasus, various branches of

Sufism, such as Tariqatism, also constitute local Islam. The non-traditional Islam includes certain Islamic philosophies which travelled to Russia when the Soviet Union got dissolved and unlocked the borders of Muslim dominant territories. As a result of this new found exchange of thought, the non-traditional groups of Islam such as Salafism, fundamentalism and Wahhabism have evolved. The term ‘Islamism’ is commonly, rather loosely, used to describe all these non-traditional sects of Islam. New Islamic groups erupting and amalgamating with the Middle East and South Asia have claimed to bring an authentic or real Islam to Russia. Both diplomatic and violent means have been used by these groups to fulfil their aim in establishing supremacy as major Islamic force in Russia, like the terrorist attack in the North Caucasus by the Salafi jihadists which resulted into widespread bloodshed and massacre of Muslim population of Dagestan and Tatarstan.

The uprising of Wahhabis, the name given to the Islamic groups who became part of these movements, soon started being reported in the contemporary media. It must be pointed out that the idea of ‘transnational Islam’ is a heterogeneous and diversified movement worldwide and must not be tagged along radicalism and extremism. The members associated with the movements have significantly contributed to the growth and advancement of Islamic communities effecting the “official Muslim Community Policy of various countries” (Anna 2014: 2-3).

The nationalist revolt which was started in places like Chechnya and Dagestan was given a religious colour by the Jihadist and radical Muslims. Caucasus Emirate[42] had a symbolic significance in the struggle which was indicted for targeting and attacking Russian army as well as common people. The bomb blast incident of Moscow Metro in 2004 is an example of the radical insurgency. In fact, the Caucasus Emirate is not limited to a region but has expanded as a global jihadist movement and its links are associated with terror groups like Al-Qaeda (Hahn 2014).

Thus, the Islamic socio-political organisations’ involvement, rooted mainly in the insurgency, took place in Chechnya which turned a nationalist struggle to the radical

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[42] A terrorist Jihadist organisation called the Caucasus Emirate was active in Russia’s North Caucasus. Its objective was to remove Russian control from the North Caucasus and install an independent Islamic emirate there in its place. The state that the gang aimed to establish was known as the Caucasus Emirates. It was formally founded as a partial successor to the separatist Chechen Republic of Ichkeria on October 7, 2007, by Dokka Umarov, the former president of Ichkeria and the country's first emir.

and fundamentals religious conflict of jihadist. It is noteworthy that Islamic extremists in Russia's Muslim neighbouring states in Central Asia are becoming increasingly involved. The influence exercised by the countries of the Middle East on Russian Muslims also promoted the politicisation of Islam and the Islamic radicalisation can be traced in people's growing discontent towards the inefficiency of authorities in solving the increased economic crisis in these areas. These officials earned riches and performed immoral practices. These corrupt officials did not want people to take part in problem-solving mechanism on a regular basis.

The widespread economic, political and religious insecurity among the Muslims resulted in social protest. They felt compelled to defend their religious beliefs, as well as their social and political positions. On the part of Muslims, these protests took on a religious colour. The instance before us was the demand for self-determination in the republics of North Caucasus. The North Caucasus had a greater degree of Islamic radicalisation in comparison the other Muslim-populated regions of Russia. In the eastern part of North Caucasus, Islam had a relatively large impact on people's lives. The outcome of Moscow and Chechnya's war could be one of the reasons for spread of radical Islam in the area. The peculiarities of the ethno-confessional development of tradition were very strong in these areas. They felt a sort of self-sufficiency in the Muslim 'sub-civilization'.

Apart from Chechnya, the several years of violence led to the economic crisis in the region. Dagestan and Ingushetia are among Russia's least developed regions. In the late 1990s, unemployment in Ingushetia reached a high level of 32.4 percent and in Dagestan, it was at 8.1 percent. Meanwhile, Islam, as a regions tool, was started being used by the local opposing forces for their political advancement (McFaul and Nikolai 1998: 137-160). The idea was to alter the religious configuration of the region which was already blended socially and economically within historical sense and present crisis.

Consequently, in October 1991, Chechnya cut its cord from Russia and declared itself independent. The Chechen Republic of Ichkeria got its first president, elected through a plebiscite named Djohar Dudayev. The country later gained de facto independence and Russia's troops left Chechnya within three years (Wood 2004: 22).

Other Muslim regions in Chechnya were tremendously affected by self-determination movements. There was a referendum on independence from Russia in 1992. Of the overall turnout, 62 percent voted for independence. Then there was the next referendum in Tatarstan's capital city Kazan. The first Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, made a remark to the various regions of Russia, "Take as much sovereignty as you can swallow" (Akhmetova 2013).

The First Chechen War (1994-96) put an end to the independence movement among the nations of the Volga and North Caucasus, "leaving 7,500 Russian military casualties, 4,000 Chechen combatants and no less than 35,000 civilians, a minimum total of 46,500, although others cited figures ranging from 80,000 to 100,000" (Wood 2004). Tatarstan's independence was not recognised by the international community. A Treaty on the Delimitation of Jurisdictional Subjects was signed on February 15th, 1994 by the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tatarstan. Leaders of Tatar freedom movements, such as 'Ittifaq', have accused the Tatarstan government of delaying Tatarstan's independence for the sake of cheap sales. Despite heavy opposition from national independence organisations, all articles referring to Tatarstan's sovereignty were removed from its constitution (Akhmetova 2013).

The Islamic alternative has gained popularity in the northern Caucasus region. This Islamic alternative is conceptualised as a project. The project presented proposals for organising the region's social and political structure. The four levels of the project were: 1) North Caucasus; 2) national-republican: Chechnya, Dagestan; 3) to a certain degree sub-regional: Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia; 4) local, i.e., suitable for small enclaves, mainly rural (Malashenko 2001: 137-164).

The first three stages of the proposal appear to be completely unworkable, even in Chechnya, where the idea of massive Islamisation of social, political, and national life has been roundly condemned. The efforts to build an Islamic state proved to be futile under these oppositions. In Dagestan also, the idea was turned down by the people. The lack of mass support became one of the primary reasons for the unsuccessful combining of Dagestan and Chechnya as one Islamic nation in the late 90s. Secondly, the intellectual groups of Dagestan reckoned the unification would implicate adverse economic consequences on the people of Dagestan due to the inevitable power shift

which would be more favourable to the Chechens. The project of Islamic state has not been successful across the region. Even in North Caucasus, only Islamization that took place was in the Western parts, among people on a small scale, and they have less affinity with Shariat than that to the people of Chechnya and Dagestan. In these regions, Islamic fundamentalists have not been supported much. Their entreaties were unable to elicit a positive response to the formation of an Islamic state. Though, Sharia law has been partially applied at the local level. For example, there are a few territories in Chechnya and the Kadar district, which comprises four villages in Dagestan, who have favoured the implementation of Shariyat. The Pankisskoye Gorge region at Georgia was proclaimed by the Chechen refugee leaders as an Islamic territory. Few political leaders and academics have adopted Sharia law on a small scale, but their supremacy has still been maintained by secular federal laws.

Leonid Syukiyainen, Russia's leading expert on Muslim law, therefore, argues that the prospect of introducing Sharia as Law of land should not be looked down as an imposed system but as an inevitable organic development reinstating the legal practises that has been exercised in the North Caucasus for several centuries (Syukiyainen, 1997: 129). The radicalisation of Islam in the late 1990s exposed limitations to create an Islamic state. Though, the Islamic element was used in the Chechen separatist war against Moscow, but the majority of Muslims viewed the appeals to create an Islamic state sceptically. They demanded that Caucasians should give up their age-long religious practise of Tarikatism — a Caucasian variety of Sufism. Subsequently, the different traditional value systems and beliefs within Islam created a division amongst the Muslims community of the North Caucasus.

In the rest of Russia, there were similar kinds of differences between Muslims, especially in regions such as Tatarstan and Siberia, or even Moscow. The problem of accommodating Muslims who have become accustomed to Shariat and their treatment in the secular state is a matter of deliberation and debate in intellectual as well as political domain.

Imams and madrassas teachers graduating from colleges and institutes in Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Kuwait, Morocco and Egypt have disseminated radical Islam in Tatarstan, Bashkir, and South Ural, according to local authorities. At times they take

extreme stance in expressing their unity with the Chechens in open. Mosques and madrassas were ruled by those extremists who trained militants to fight in Chechnya. The reality about militant training has been debunked in various press accounts by the Muslim authorities. In response to such reporting, local administration usually takes authoritarian action. In 2001, for example, The Yulduz Mosque in a city called Naberezhnye Chelny in Tatarstan was shut down as a result of a Russian Federal Security Service investigation by the authorities. Teachers and students were responsible for training and disseminating Wahhabism among militants.

International Islamic organisations engaged in the promotion of Islamic fundamentalism popularised the perceptions of religious and socio-political issues among Russian Muslims. Headquartered in Saudi Arabia, the World Assembly of Muslim Youth, the Ibrahim al-Ibrahim Charitable Foundation, Al-Haramein Saudi Organisations, the Sudan International Islamic Appeal Group, the Kuwaiti Da'ava al-igasa Association, among other organisations, are most active in this regard. The Muslim population of Russia to a large extent is liberal and follows Hanafite Madhhab, the religious law school. Some Islamic missionaries came from abroad and taught their followers 'pure Islam'. They objected to any other methods applicable to Madhhab's teaching. In comparison to Hanafism and Tarikatism, which were popular among Russian Muslims, this was a Salafi school, often referred to by the Russian establishment and mass media as Wahhabism (Kumar 2009).

2.5.5.1 Factors behind radicalisaiton

Radicalisation due to international intervention in the North Caucasus and other areas of Russia has been frequently portrayed by the Russian government. However, an overview of the ties between external combatants and native rebellious groups in the region reflects that the external radical ideas have entered within the local members. On the other hand, the study of recruitment texts revealed the relevance of other variables as well. The following are the variables that played an important role in Islam's radicalisation:

i) Outside influence

One of the significant factors that played important role in radicalisation of Russia was outside influence. It is evident that the Chechen War in the region of North

Caucasus paved the way for the Afghani and Arabic Mujahedeen to declare jihad against Russians. The initial arrival of these Mujahedeen in Grozny was reported in 1995. They settled down in different regions of Russia during the first and second Chechen wars. The existence of international Muslim jihadists in the region has been attributed to Wahhabi radicalisation by many observers. Ibn-al Khattab started running the training camps for newly joined Mujahedeen in the region of Kavkaz and Serzhen-Yurt. Nevertheless, his task was focused mostly on the tactical planning and not on the religious instruction. He admitted that he communicated with numerous local people and community: "What you have in your mind, you will answer about it before Allah. I'm just worried about praying five days in the camp, training and practice, fasting Ramadan and the morning Quran session, that's the most important thing for me" (Pokalova 2017: 10-11).

Foreign militants brought with them important tactical skills as well as foreign funding to the North Caucasus. However, it is noteworthy to mention that their influence on local Wahhabis, on the other hand, was limited. Foreigners were initially viewed with distrust by local Wahhabis. Local insurgent commanders also defended their ideology against outside Wahhabi radicalism in order to maintain the North Caucasus jihad's regional characteristics. Therefore, in comparison to the other factors, the influence of foreign fighters on Wahhabi radicalisation was minor.

ii) Moscow's response to Wahhabis

Russia has a suspicious attitude towards Revivalist Wahhabism. Many Wahhabis have struggled to have their religious organisations formally registered with the state in place of traditional Sufi Muftiyats-aligned institutions. Following the Chechen War, many authorities in the North Caucasus prohibited Wahhabism completely, forcing it to operate from hiding places. In an effort to control Wahhabi activity in the area, the local authorities have teamed up with provincial Muftiyats. As a result, Wahhabism has become more radicalised. With the implicit help of local administration, they started to marginalise Wahhabis as the Sufis consolidated control. For instance, Said Efendi Chirkeisky, a Sufi made an effort to expand his command to the Dagestani Muftiyat go back to conflicts in Dagestan between Sufis and Wahhabis. At that time,

the Wahhabis were accused by the Muftiyat of having a large number of reserved arms and pursuing foreign interests that were hostile to Dagestan.

The demand to ban Wahhabis' activities became more pronounced in the second conflict of Chechen in which the Wahhabis participated with resentment and hostility. In 1997, Chechen President Maskhadov suppressed his opponents by banning Wahhabism.

A Congress of North Caucasus Muslims met in Grozny in July 1998, delivering a resolution requesting the governments of Dagestan, Ingushetia, and Chechnya, to ban Wahhabism. In response, Ingushetia's President Ruslan Aushev made Wahhabism illegal in the country. In September 1999, the authorities in Dagestan followed suit (Pokalova 2017: 12).

As mentioned above, prohibitive acts against Wahhabi groups have led to their radicalisation. Islam's persecution was viewed as a valid justification for the jihad of the oppressors. The prohibition of Wahhabism has, therefore, offered Wahhabis additional reasons for supporting extremism and violence to fight out a repressive regime.

iii) Undue intervention of security services

Another factor that played important role in the radicalisation of Islam is the undue intervention by the security services. Russia's advanced security service has not only dedicated itself to monitoring Wahhabi activities in the North Caucasus but assisted the administration's oppressive measures. The enthusiastic counter of Russian military force in dealing with the terrorist activities in the region, which have been carried out since 1999, has led to grievances among the people of these regions.

The harsh measures taken to run these anti-terrorist operations have filled the people with fear and discontent. The human rights abuse has been reported from these areas. Extortion, illegal abduction and extrajudicial killings were exercised in the name of anti-terrorist operations. Counter-terrorism forces were involved in 'sweep' campaigns including imprisonment of Wahhabi terrorist suspects and conducting arbitrary search Additionally, detainees were kept in filtration camps for questioning. In order to collect information, security forces arrested relatives of alleged Wahhabis

in the name of counter terrorism. Consequently, many moderate Wahhabis lifted arms in self defence. At the same time, security service personnel have also been targeted from time to time by extremist Wahhabis.

The Wahhabi justifications for turning to violence are due to the security services' unlawful actions and targeting of commoners. As per the Dagestan survey of 2011, 49.4 percent responded that they were convinced to join the radical force due to the illegal and unjust attitude of security services towards them. In an article, a Dagestani scholar made an observation: "There are many scoundrels, many police thugs, some are total crooks. And one of the reasons why people are being driven into the forest is that. The resulting sense of helplessness has led some to join radicalised groups" (Pokalova 2017: 13-14).

iv) Economic decline

Historically, the North Caucasus has been a less developed region of the Soviet Union or earlier Russia. The economic condition of the North Caucasus further rapidly deteriorated after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. This was largely due to the lack of federal aids for the people of this region to deal with depravity and scarcity of daily needs. The issues of unemployment, high inflation, poverty as well as social maladies like alcoholism and drugs had become more prominent. In this context, the Wahhabis began to see armed jihad as a solution to combat society's collapse. Moreover, the financial support which people received from the radical Wahhabis allowed them to voluntary participate in the movement. They saw this as an opportunity to overcome the economic crisis which looked impossible under the state's affair.

Apart from the overall recession in Russia in 1990, the Chechen wars impacted the economy of the region adversely. During the Chechen wars, the flow of refugees especially affected Dagestan and Ingushetia. Unemployment in 1995 hit 25 percent in Dagestan, 14 percent in Kabardino-Balkaria, 42 percent in Ingushetia, and 23 percent in North Ossetia 27 percent in Karachaevo-Cherkessia. In contrast, in the nearby Stavropol area, unemployment was 9 percent only. The scenario changed marginally in the mid-2000s. Unemployment was 67 percent in 2006 in Chechnya (Europe report 2015: 4). Poverty and unemployment have been cited as one of the reasons for leading people to the rebellion. Furthermore, weak economic situations have aided in the

recruitment of jihadists by offering financial assistance. The Wahhabis, on the other hand, have denied that they offer monetary assistance in converting people to Wahhabism.

v) Corruption

After the disintegration of Soviet Russia, the North Caucasus and other parts of Russia has long struggled with corruption. Across the country, The Federal Centre has adopted several anti-corruption measures to improve the situation but it continues to prevail at multiple levels. Wahhabis encash this issue and campaign to bring out social justice through Sharia. Also, the issue of corruption aggravates anger and resentment among the Muslims against the authorities. Subsequently, Wahhabis have widely enchanted the widespread corruption to be dealt with violence to re-establish social justice in the area provoking and justifying the cause to join Wahhabism.

Russia ranks 136th out of 175 nations according to Transparency International's corruption perception index. The rating projects Russian government agencies as one of the most corrupt institutions in the world: 71 percent of the population claimed that corruption was prevalent among state civil servants; 48 percent saw police corruption; 48 percent saw traffic police corruption; 46 percent reported police corruption among local civil servants (Pavlova 2017: 13-14).

The issue of corruption in the republics of North Caucasus is recognised by the Russian government. The region was described by President Medvedev in 2009 as Russia's most corrupt. When President Putin came back to Kremlin, he announced corruption as the greatest impediment to the growth of the North Caucasus. As a result, several state governments have endeavoured to introduce various anti-corruption programmes as it has proved to be an important factor in the process of Islamic radicalisation in Russia.

These were essentially the variables in the post-Soviet Muslim regions that contributed towards the radicalisation of Islam. Western and Russian scholars expressed the opinion, in the months following 9/11 that a new, permanent alliance will be established between the US and Russia on the basis of the popular threat of Islamic militant fundamentalism.

2.5.6 Islamic Radicalism and post 9/11 Developments

The terrorist attacks in the US on 11 September 2001 manifested the lack of serious measures and response by international bodies towards growing Islamic fundamentalism all over the world. Even though Russia had experienced extremist attacks prior to that date on its soil. President Putin saw this as an opportunity to declare a state of emergency, citing national security as a threat from a terrorist attack, and he immediately went to work without constraint or authority (Agamben 2005). To fight against international terrorism, Moscow has employed severe legislative and military measures to curtail inside extremist activities.

In the aftermath of 9/11, many Western and Russian commentators projected a considerable change in Russian attitudes and policy towards the Islamic world, particularly the Middle East. Russia has attempted to put US and Israel's policies into context. As a result of the Chechen War, Russia was too concerned with the foreign ramifications of terrorism. Two years before 9/11, Russian leaders had warned their Western counterparts about the threat of terrorism emanating from an arc of chaos stretching from Philippine hotbeds of Islamic fundamentalism across Afghanistan, dominated by the Taliban, to Central Asia, Chechnya, the Middle East, and Kosovo in Europe. The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 fundamentally redirected Russia's political leadership's direction in order to forge a new cooperation with the US in the worldwide battle against terror. This reorientation had far-reaching implications for Russia's domestic political environment, affecting relations between opposing Muslim clerics and governmental institutions (Hunter 2004: 111)

Russian scholar Dmitry Glinsky-Vasiliev predicted at the beginning of 2002 that Russia would support a US war against Iraq that had already been on the cards. There were a number of significant signs pointing in that direction, to be certain. Putin thought that suddenly a window of opportunity had opened for an overall political understanding with the US. He supported the opening of military base of US in Central Asia and contributed significantly to the success of the US-led effort to overthrow the Taliban regime in Afghanistan by improving Russian relations with Israel. Yet a robust new strategic US-Russian partnership failed to materialise (Montreal 2008).

The Russian administration has been attempting to strike a balance in its relations with the country's Muslim community. On one hand, the government criticises Islamists and Islamic fighters. Foreigners of Arab origin, for example, are responsible for a slew of large-scale, violent attacks on Russian soldiers and civilians in Chechnya and the surrounding areas. On the other hand, it reassured its Muslim population of their religious freedom and full integration into all aspects of life in the Russian Federation.

Before 1991, neither international opinion nor Muslim countries around the world had evaluated the Russian state's actions towards its own Muslim population. Moscow cannot ignore the fact that its substantial Muslim population has been prohibited for decades for Islamic teachings and customs. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Muslim activities in the name of Islam increased significantly. The young Muslim generation is becoming increasingly interested in Islam as more extreme Islamic teachings have become possible as a result of post-1991 religious freedoms (Bendersky 2004).

President Putin warned in 2000 that if Islamic fundamentalism gained a foothold among the Caucasus' Muslim population, it could easily spread to the Volga area, resulting in the country's Islamisation or split into multiple autonomous regions. Both cases were disastrous for Russia, and as a result, the process of closing several mosques and schools began on the basis that they were disseminating extremist beliefs. This happened despite the fact that the state had strongly backed Islam in its moderation and had incorporated Islamic parties into its ruling regimes (Kumar 2009).

Since 2003, an official list of terrorist organisations has been declared. At the request of the Prosecutor General, supported by the State Duma, the Supreme Court ruled on 14 February 2003 that 15 organisations were terrorist operatives and banned their operations in the territory of Russia. Two more were added later in 2006 to the list.

Now a days, declaring a terrorist organisation is routine work as part of national security. FSB (Federal Security Service) collects evidence about Islamic organisations and, in case any of these organisations is established as terrorist group posing threat to the national security in the Federation of Russia, it would ask the Prosecutor General to disallow functioning of these organisations. With the supporting data provided by

the FSB, the Public Prosecutor could appeal to the Supreme Court. It is up to the court to ban the functioning of an organisation for its terrorist activities on the basis of the evidence provided to the court by these agencies.

Despite the 2003 ruling of Supreme Court, the list of illegal organisations was initially made public in the government newspaper *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* only in 2006. A few conditions for an organisation to be considered a terrorist organisation are: first, to engage in activities which could potentially alter the framework of constitution through violence. Secondly, the list does not include organisations which, unless expressly threatening the stability of the Russian Federation, are considered to be terrorist organisations.

Table: Terrorist organisations of Russia banned in 2006

1	"The Supreme Military Majlis ul-Shura of the United Mujahedeen Forces of the Caucasus (the organisation to which Hattab and Shamil Basayev belonged, renamed the GKO Majlisul Shura ChRI)"
2	"The Congress of the Peoples of Ichkeria and Dagestan"
3	"Al-Quaïda"
4	Asbat al-Ansar
5	"Holy War (Al-Jihad or Egyptian Islamic Jihad)"
6	"The Group of Islam (Al-Gamaa al-Islamia)"
7	"The Muslim Brotherhood (Al-Ikhvan al-Muslimun)"
8	"The Party of Islamic Liberation (Hizbut-Tahrir al-Islami)"
9	"Lashkar-i-Taïba"
10	"The Islamic Group (Jamaat-i-Islami)"
11	"The Taliban Movement"
12	The Islamic Party of Turkestan (formerly the Islamic Movement of Turkestan)

13	“The Society for Social Reforms (Jamiat al-Islakh al-Ijtimaï)”
14	“The Society for the Revival of Islamic Heritage (JamiatIkhya at-Turaz al-Islami)”
15	“The House of the Two Saints (Al-Haramein)”
16	“Islamic Jihad (Mujahedeen Jamaat)”
17	“Jund ash-Sham”

Sources: Radicalisation of Russian Islam or Civic Assistant Committee report, https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/Russian_society_under_control.pdf , pg. 8-9.

2.5.7 Muslim Spiritual Boards in post-Soviet Russia

In the new Russian Federation, two important Muslim organisations played a vital role in organising Islamic activities: Russian Council of Muftis (RCM) and Central Spiritual Board of Muslim (CSBM). In this section, we discuss their and other two organisations’ contributions.

i) The Central Spiritual Board of Muslim (CSBM):

The Central Spiritual Board of Muslim (CSBM) of Russia and European and Countries of the Commonwealth Independent states, emerged as leading force to the Soviet-controlled European Spiritual Board of Muslim functioning in Serbia and the USSR. In the aftermath of Soviet disintegration, sea of liberal reforms swept the Russian federation, these reforms as we saw above led to the revival of Islam on various fronts. The evidence of this revival is clear in the rise in the number of officially registered Muslim communities under the jurisdiction of CSBM. In 1998, there were only 142 officially registered communities, which rose to 868 in July 2001 (Hunter 2004: 56).

Thus, CSBM by 2001, emerged as the largest centralised Muslim organisation in the new Russian federation. Its networks of Regional Spiritual Boards (RSBMs) helped CSBM to maintain a dominant position among Muslim communities in Russia. Silantiyev in his study pointed that Regional Spiritual Boards united between 70 and 100 percent of Russia’s Muslim communities excluding those Muslim communities in Tatarstan and oblast of Moscow, Rostov and Penza, Tadzhnuddin’s. Even in those

communities, he pointed that CSBM still maintained a relatively strong position where it controlled between 30 and 50 percent of Muslim communities (Kumar 2009: 24).

ii) Russian Council of Muftis (RCM):

The Russian Council of Muftis (RCM) was created under the influence of Mufti Ravil Ganutdin, one of the most prominent figures and also the leader of the Spiritual Board of Muslims of European region of Russia.

RCM, in contrast to CSBM, is organised less hierarchical and contained more lateral internal organisations. This structure of council reflects closer to that of consultative body than to a centralised administrative body. The most important arm of the council was the Spiritual Board of Muslims of European region in Russia (DUMER) (Kumar 2009: 24).

iii) The Spiritual Board of Muslims of European part of Russia (DUMER):

DUMER united under its jurisdiction, the Muslim congregation and organisation in the following regions: Moscow, St. Petersburg, Nizhny, Tver, Vologda, Kostroma, Kursk, Vladimir, Sochi, Penza, Kaliningrad and Yaroslav. The DUMER is the successor to Spiritual Board of Muslim of the Central Board of Muslim of the Central European Region of Russia (DUMTSER). DUMTSER was established in founding mejlis which was organised on the initiative of Ravil Ganutdin in 1994. On 23 February 1994, DUMSTER was officially registered with Russian Ministry of Justice.

iv) The Spiritual Board of Muslims of the Asian part of Russia:

Nafigulla Ashirov[43] played a major role in the formation of Spiritual Board of Muslims in the Asian part of Russia. It was established on August 1997 and was registered under the Ministry of Justice in 1998. About 100 Muslims organisations and congregation came under its jurisdiction (Kumar 2009: 25).

In the new Russian Federation one can notice that there are numerous Muslim spiritual boards. In contrast to the present times, the Soviet era institutions were characterised by over centralisation. In the post-Soviet period, this had been undone,

43 Nafigulla Ashirov is a mufti and chairman of Spiritual Board of Muslim of the Asian part of Russia.

and there was administrative and institutional fragmentation of Muslim institutions. Scholars have recorded more than 40 independent spiritual administrations which operated in Russian federation. An estimate by Alexander Ignatenko, in September 1999, claimed that there are 51 spiritual boards of Muslims in Russia. Another estimate by Mukhametshin and Dubkov claimed that there are 60 spiritual boards in 2000 (Abdullin 1990: 28). It is evident from these numerous spiritual boards that institutional structure of Russia's Muslim community has experienced considerable degree of fragmentation following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

2.5.8 Islam's Interaction with Orthodox Church in Russia

The resurrection of Islam in Russia, particularly Muslims' ambition for greater cultural self-determination and efforts to achieve official acknowledgment of Islam's status as the country's second religion, has changed the dynamics of Islam's relationship with the Russian Orthodox Church. The nature of interactions between the two has been complicated in many areas, involving both competition and collaboration. The most essential reason for this situation is that the Orthodox Church has gained a powerful social and political role in the post-Soviet Russia and a good deal of power in the decision-making circle. As mentioned above, the Russian Federation is, according to its 1993 constitution, a secular state and does not have an official religion. In its preamble, the 1997 law "on freedom of faith and religious affiliation" acknowledges the unique contribution of orthodox convention in the history and culture of Russia as well as the expansion of the culture and spirituality of Russia (Hunter 2004: 117).

Through attending church services and including the leader of the Orthodox Church in official ceremonies, the post-Soviet leader from Yeltsin to Putin has stressed the unique position of the Orthodox Church within Russia. Orthodoxy has been an important intellectual force that has dominated the debate about the national identity of Russia and its fundamental underpinnings. With the renovation and rebuilding of existing churches, as well as the establishment of new ones, the church has grown significantly in size (Hunter 2004: 117).

The strong and dominant upholding of the Russian Orthodox Church in various ways, including its number of followers, administrative system, property caused insecurity

among the Islamic institution related to their place in contemporary Russia. The Muslim population of Russia has expressed their concern over the issue of developing ties in public sphere of life in the over dominance of the Orthodox Church of Russia. After the Russian Orthodox Church's attempts to add a new obligatory topic to the school curriculum, the Basis of Orthodox Culture, harsh criticisms were expressed (Curanovic 2010: 517).

The issue of state symbols and national holidays appears to be a minor one, yet it has the potential to produce enormous tensions in the future. Muslims who are backed by representatives of other 'traditional faiths', blame the officials for not recognising Russia as a democratic, multi-cultural, multi-denominational and multi-ethnic society. For Muslims and other religious groups such as Buddhist and Jews, the political leaders impartially favoured the Orthodox Church tradition as an emblem of Russian national identity. This is one of the most publicly echoed disagreements among the non-Christian people of the Russia. Mufti Nafigulla Ashirov, known for his provocative remarks, demanded that the logos at all public offices be stripped of Christian symbols (Curanovic 2010: 518).

The issue of religious extremism should also be taken into account when examining the reasons for Orthodox-Islamic tensions in Russia. Elena Lisovskaya and Vyacheslav Karpov conducted a public opinion survey which reflects that "Orthodox-Muslim bigotry is quite prevalent in Russia. Heavy Christian-Muslim intolerance is shown in the war-torn North Caucasus". What is remarkable is that the data reveals that most Russian Orthodox and Muslim citizens accept public manifestations of the individual religions, but not of their neighbours. Furthermore, the majority of Orthodox Christians have a few Muslim neighbours, but it is exclusively in this community that the greatest religious bigotry towards Muslims can be noticed (Vyacheslav and Lisovskaya 2007: 361-367).

ECIR (The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance), issued an important "Report on the situation of Muslims in Russia" in 2009. It has also articulated its apprehension about the increasing religious bigotry in Russia. Interestingly enough, this letter distanced itself from all the representatives of the Russian Ummah, saying that it had been manipulated. A large number of muslims of

Russia will agree Ravil Gainutdin's assertion that, amid all the tensions listed, Russia is a popular land for both follower of Islam and Orthodox Christians. On the contrary, there was a debate on the position of Russian religious institutions between organisations on both sides, their effect on political and social life, their legitimacy as members of the Russian people, and, finally, on the mechanism of positive coexistence between religions.

The Council for Cooperation with Religious Organizations with the President of the Russian Federation and the Interfaith Council of Russia are the main forums for cooperation. Social issues are the perfect setting to promote Orthodox-Islamic collaboration for both of these goals. Healthcare, prostitution, sexually transmitted diseases, deteriorating living standards and schooling are concerns that many Russians, regardless of their religion, are facing because of economic hardship. Considered key to the social system, maintaining traditional families is promoted and upheld as a basic concept by both the Orthodox Church and Muslim organisations.

Drawing a relationship between Islam and Orthodoxy, which are common religions in Russia, is not so easy. A constant dialogue takes place between politicians and writers, the churchmen of both confessions. In the socio-political and religious life of Russia, the official mass media, such as radio and television, recognise dialogue as a competitive and imminent factor. Such an opinion is hard to refute in formal terms: it is accompanied by various declarations in favour of dialogue like this, by the continuous attempt of the members of both religions to facilitate harmony, and by organising large number of symposiums, seminars and talks for the exchange of dialogues and viewpoints. Such dialogues are relevant in the process of nation-building in a multi-ethnic country like Russia.

However, this particular debate is not easy to explain. The concept of inter-faith discourse has many features, and each of them is so imperative that it appears difficult to define their objectives. Shared understanding and tolerance among Muslims and Orthodox believers are some of these things. Islam is growing faster than Orthodox Christianity, in Daniel Pipes' view. He further argues that this is due to the higher birth rate among Muslims compared to ethnic Russians, and not because of large scale conversions to Islam. Moreover, Daniel Pipes also underscores that the Muslim

population in Moscow recently is only next to Istanbul in European nations. The rapid growth of the followers of Islam is a major cause of worry of the Orthodox Church of Russia. It is believed that by 2050, Islam would likely to be in majority in Russia. Though numerous Muslim reports have claimed the rapid growth rate and conversion of Islam in Russia, Roman Silantyev, the executive secretary of the Russian Interfaith Council, has denounced it as misconception (Goble 2005).

Notably, in recent time, approximately two million Muslims from various ethnic backgrounds, including Tatars, Azeris, Ingush and Kazakhs, have converted to Orthodox Christianity in Russia. Silantyev says although the number of ethnic Russians who have converted to Islam ranges from 2,000 to 5,000. Most of the converts, however, by birth, are non-practicing Muslims, while Muslims who regularly attend the mosque rarely convert. Conversions occur not so much because of proselytization, but because of the effect of the dominant Orthodox Christian culture of Russia[44].

Silantyev has noted the conversion to Christianity takes place after almost every terrorist attack in Russia by the Islamic fundamentalists. Many Muslims sources also confirm this fact. For instance, Silantyev points out that after the Beslan School Massacre[45] in North Ossetia, the proportion of Muslims in North Ossetia decreased by 30 percent, while in Beslan the Muslims population which had ranged between 30 percent and 40 percent of the population had been reduced by half (Goble 2005).

As per a report of Russian Interreligious Council, roughly 400 Russian Orthodox clergies originally come from some of traditional Muslim ethnic community. Moreover, 20 of the Tatars are Christians and 70 of the inter-religion marriages lead to the conversion of the Muslim partner to Christianity. Simultaneously, for the small number of ethnic Orthodox individuals who have adopted Islam since 1990, it is said that among other things, 'Russians seem more likely for some reason to join sects other than Islam'. After the tragic incident of Beslan, the North Ossetian security

[44] "Islam in Russia" Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia [Online: web] accessed 12 October 2019, URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_Russia.

[45] On September 1, 2004, the Beslan school hostage crisis, also known as the Beslan tragedy, occurred in the city of Beslan, in the North Caucasus, when more than 1,100 people, including 777 children, were abducted at School Number One by a group of armed terrorists who demanded an end to the Second Chechen War.

officials have tried to crush all self-regulating Muslim bodies in the area. Many Muslim leaders of the area have been arrested in some cases by planting evidence against them for imprisoning them. As a result, many Muslim preachers have stopped religious teachings to avoid prison[46].

Moreover, many members of historically Muslim nationalities were baptised expressing their repulsion towards the radical measures on the name of Islam or to evade state's persecution. Russian newspaper *Nasha Versiya* has reported the after-impact of the incident that several children who could survive the terrorist act and the parents of those who were not baptised, despite the fact that they previously considered themselves Muslims, converted to Christianity. And those who died in this incident were ritually buried as per the custom of Christian Orthodox Church including the deceased Muslims and no one even protested. However, the majority of conversions to Christianity are not believed to be sincere as many break away from the new found faith and return to the older faith.

2.5.9 Islam in the Contemporary Russian State

Under state laws banning discrimination against people, preventing religious disputes and allowing members of religious groups to engage in discussions related to legislative and other governmental proposals that would affect the interests of believers, the Russian State is obliged to ensure the equality of all religions. Muslim organisations are expected to accept that the law of the Russian Federation is valid. They are expected to exhibit loyalty to the legally elected state authorities and strengthen patriotic feeling among Muslims towards Russia (Hunter 2004: 122).

President Vladimir Putin has sought to ensure that in coping with Islam and eradicating any political resistance that has emerged in religious form, thus, Muslims remain faithful to the state. In Muslim-majority areas, local officials still uphold Islamic customs and use their relationship with the religion to increase political power. However, the federal authorities are also sponsoring the use of religious values in fostering peace in the usually unstable North Caucasus. However, the authorities appear to exercise rigid mechanism over what they suspect as an Islamist separatist group. Sometimes, the federal authorities use draconian tactics to take on the

[46] "http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/09/8295114f-9a3d-4ed9-97c7-5a15a0d66fa4.html"

Islamists, causing distrust among the Muslims. Traditional Islamic types are now being politicised and has given a fresh identity to the Muslims progressively by disassociating themselves from the North Caucasus and focusing on political loyalty at large. In post-Soviet Russia, authorities made maintaining power over Islam a priority. This power, in reality, involves (Malashenko 2008: 2):

- Demanding that the Muslims do not engage in separatist movements
- Subordinating to the state the Muslim leadership
- Supervision on the happenings of political and religious group including religious educational institutions
- Observing of international connections in order to combat their inner influence

Post-Soviet Russia's political, social and economic background greatly affected the state's relationship with Muslim communities. The Russian approach to handling the problems of multiple cultural, religious and ethnic diversity has been conservative. It has mostly projected the authoritarian element which can further be traced in the policy of assimilation. State's commitment with Muslim population basically implies controlling the ethnic exhibitions of Muslim identity, and territorial and ideological expansion (Braginskaia 2012: 599). This anxiety of Islam in Russia stems out from the fact that the claim for uniform and unrestricted state allegiance by the authorities is difficult to achieve, "because Russian Muslims are part of the global Islamic community and exposed to external powers that have used Islam as a means of social and political agitation against the ruling system" (Malashenko 2014: 176-189). It is important to consider, however, that relations with Muslim communities have been liberal in the history of the Russian state, welcoming Muslim population in Russia and promoting their civil and human rights as minorities (Braginskaia 2012: 599).

The geographical dispersion and traditional diversity are two important features to be taken into account while researching on the Muslim cultures in the Federation of Russia. As mentioned above the government policies in Russia are also based on the process of assimilation at various levels. The degree of radicalising Islam also varies from place to place. For example, while in the Northern Caucasus, there is a significant existence of radical Islamic sects, Muslims in the Volga region are largely

associated with the local Islamic culture. The rapid immigration, particularly from Central Asia, and the increasing nationalism of the Russian ethnic population, however, have become an impediment in establishing interfaith coexistence (Dannreuther and March 2010: 2).

In deciding the new policy of the Russian government towards Islam, the Chechen conflict and the two wars fought there (1994-1995 and 1999-2000) have played a major role. Putin's strategy is considered to be crucial and justifiable against war on terror. Three distinct approaches of the Russian State to Muslim communities can be described by studying the history of Russia: the first approach is to assimilate, via a top-down process, Russian and migrant Muslim populations; the second approach is to respect and liberalise Muslim institutions for ethnic diversity of various local Muslim identities; the third approach is to abolish those radical Muslim ideologies that are potential threat to the national security of Russia (Braginskaia 2012: 599).

2.6 Conclusion

To conclude, the argument is that the relationship between Islam and Russia is long enough ranging through nearly a millennium. The contribution of Islam is immense in shaping Russian culture. However, there have been several instances where the Russian national identity and a sense of cultural uniqueness could not remain unaffected due to the relationship between both. It must clearly be borne in mind that the root of Islam in Russia is quite deep. When people began embracing Islam, the origin of Islam in Russia was reinforced by the Mongol conquest of Russia. In addition, the extension of Russian imperialism into the populous Muslim regions contributed to the spread of Islam in Russia. The most important aspect of Islam in Russia, especially during the Soviet regime, is that it has a long history of repression, oppression, russification, Christianization and destruction. After such an attempt of removal and death, however, Islam has been surviving. It is primarily due to Islam's ability to operate without infrastructure. In spite of this, the history of Islam and Russia's relationship is not essentially of war and conquest, but for centuries it has also been marked by co-existence, collaboration, tolerance and accommodation.

It is clear that Islam has undergone quantitative and qualitative expansion in post-Soviet Russia. Muslims are experiencing more religious freedom today than ever.

There is a lot of evidence on official reconciliation in Russia against Islam in the decade of 1990s. A large number of Muslims were allowed to perform *Hajj* to Mecca. It has increased dramatically since the Soviet era's virtual embargo ended in 1990. Copies of the Quran are widely accessible. A significant number of mosques are built in the Muslim populated areas. Yet, Islam is not entirely applicable to the cultural structure of Russia. There are many negative developments in Islam, such as the two Chechen wars, the propagation of some extremist ideologies, and the migration to Russia of refugees and Caucasus and Central Asian immigrants to Muslim republics. Islam will continuously impact the political and social life of Russia, however. In addition, Russian political and cultural growth will come under the sway of the search for its self-determination. In no circumstance, it is to be ignored that rising situations among Russian tendencies would not just influence the political centralisation, cultural homogenisation and the Muslim search for self-determination but also prove Islam to be a reckoning force in the transformation of political and cultural advancement of Russia.

CHAPTER -3

THE ISLAMIC FACTOR IN RUSSIA'S INTERNAL POLITICS

3.1 Introduction

At present, Russia is going through one of the most complicated times in its history. The transition that began in the 1990s also transformed all aspects of life in both state and civil society. The most important of these changes is the religious revival in Russia (as discussed in the previous chapter in detail). Religious revival has been reflected in various ways such as the increased number of believers and the positive development of the public opinion of religious organisations which are now functioning under the state purview. The religious culture has changed to the extent of forming political parties on religious lines and demanding greater autonomy and even the right to self-determination under the agenda of full-fledged sovereignty.

This chapter focuses on the impact of Islam, especially its politicised version on Russia's internal development. It provides a detailed analysis of Russia's demographic structure and its changing dynamics due to the increase in population of Muslims and its impact on Russian society. The chapter explores and explains the impact of Islam, the second major religion in Russia, on the formation and evolution of the national identity of post-Soviet Russia as the interaction between the two has been centuries old. The national identity of post-Soviet Russia can be considered religious, ethnic, civic and ethnoreligious. Further, the chapter discusses the Islamic influence on the evolution of the Russian Federation as Russia, historically, has been a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional nation, which is reflected in its federal framework. The chapter also deals with the Islamic extremism and demand for separation in the republics of the North Caucasus namely Dagestan and Chechnya. Differentiation has been made between conventional or 'official Islam and unconventional or 'unofficial Islam.' Chechnya's and Dagestan's demand for self-determination has had a significant effect on the internal growth of Russian politics. Chechnya has already fought two secessionist wars against Moscow under the agenda of self-determination. The exploitation of the Islamic factor by various political forces

is a significant background to the conflict of Chechnya or Dagestan, and thus, the demand for self-determination finds a very distinct voice. Also, the peripheral status of Islam is often being used by many socio-political organisations to their advantage as they feel by giving Muslim people their due, they can make political gains. Further, the chapter finds out the Muslim factor and its impact on the formation of military doctrines starting from the Russian empire to post-Soviet Russia. The chapter also explores Russia's Islamic threat in the wake of Islamic revivalism. Some experts on Russian Islam equate Muslim culture and the fast-growing population with Russia's security threat in the context of Islamic extremism and two Chechen wars. The chapter also explores state policies and their role in the integration of Muslims into the mainstream society and polity of Russia. Russia's approach to Muslim integration reflects the country's unique historical and political evolution. The Russian state is legislating different laws and policies which enable the involvement of Muslims in the state for the sake of harmony, permanency, and security in the social order. The chapter discusses the co-existence of Islam and Christianity and the creation and maintenance of a multi-religious ecosystem. The chapter ends with a concluding remark that the Islamic factor had a considerable impact on the formation of Russia's post-Soviet identity, culture and value system, as well as its governance structure.

3.2 Demographic Structure of Muslims in post-Soviet Russia

Though I have discussed the Muslim population in Russia in the previous chapter but in this chapter, it becomes inevitable to elaborate from a different perspective. The 2002 Russian Census documents about 10 percent of the Russian population is Muslims. It is believed the Muslim population has increased to more than 15 million by 2008, though this does not consider the legal and illegal migrants that were in Russia at the time. Malashenko argues that a change of two to three million population on either side does not change the direction of analysis of their concerns in Russia (Malashenko and Nuritova 2009: 321). Taking the migrant Muslim population from Azerbaijan into account would make the total to be about 20 million, a number usually referred to by the Muslim leaders and cited by President Vladimir Putin.

The 20 million figure is also based on the Russian Council of Muftis (RCM) as the quota considered for *hajj*. Russian women are marrying Muslims and the children

born from these mixed marriages has also led to an increase in Muslim population and it is about 20 million (Mukhametshin 2001: 51). Some Muslim scholars even go to the extent of stating that the Russian Muslim population could be 25-35 million or estimate it to the extent of 45 million. In a speech at the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit in Kuala Lumpur in 2003, Vladimir Putin estimated that there are about 20 million Muslims in Russia (Akhmetova 2013: 46). Most of these Muslims are native citizens of Russia and unlike other European nations where Muslims are primarily migrants.

Most of the Russian Muslims have their habitation in the Volga-Ural region as well as in the Northern Caucasus. Even the larger cities of Russia like Moscow and St. Petersburg still have an assertive Muslim community. Muslims have certain dominance and are a majority in seven republics of Russia: in the Volga-Urals area, these are Tatarstan and the Republics of Bashkortostan, and in the Northern Caucasus, these are the Republics of Ingushetia, Dagestan, Chechnya, Karachay-Cherkessia, and Kabardino-Balkaria.

Moreover, it is to be noted that the Muslim population is rapidly increasing in Russia due to many reasons. This is making people not only take note of the situation but also think about their role in the Russian cultural and political order. Consequently, the influence of Muslims is increasing and it is being assumed that Muslims will have a much greater impact on the internal socio-political dynamics and national development.

According to Marlene Laruelle, Russia is turning more and more into a Muslim nation. About 15 million individuals have a Muslim origin out of a total population of over 146 million (including two million in the occupied Crimea), albeit not all are believer and few practise the religion. According to the most conservative forecasts and the most “alarmist” projections, Muslims would make up between one-third and half of the Russian population by the year 2050 as a result of upcoming demographic shifts. In the medium and long term, Russia’s domestic situation and international policy will be affected by this “Islamization” of the country- not in terms of extreme Islam, but rather the expanding number of citizens self-identifying as Muslims. Russia’s future will be shaped in at least five key ways as a result of Islam’s growing

influence in that nation: “the overall demographic balance of the country; the strategy of ‘normalizing’ the regions of the North Caucasus; Russia’s migration policy; Russia’s positioning on the international front; and the transformation of Russian national identity” (Laruelle 2016: 1). Along with these, the conversion to Islam is another important factor to be taken into consideration.

According to Paul Goble, the recent conversions of the traditional ethnic Russians who follow Orthodox Christianity to Islam is a concerning matter. Journalists and commentators have often given various explanations but the concern is serious and needs a much deeper thought. A scholar of sociology of religion, Andrey Ignatyev, is trying to find out why ethnic Russians are dreaming of converting to Islam and doing so in practise. These conversions are usually in a high-pitched rhetorical language, but Ignatyev makes a discourse in a common language without much exaggeration. He provides four reasons for the conversion of ethnic Russians to Islam (Goble 2009).

The first reason for such conversion is marriage as many people get converted to Islam because of marital relationships. They convert before they marry and thus remain faithful to their newly acquired religion. In most cases, it is found that in these inter-religious marriages, it is perceived that the women, as well as men’s parents and relatives, often have conversion as a necessary precondition for the wedding to take place.

The second reason is Sufism. It is perceived that many Russians are attracted to Sufism for its mysticism. Ignatyev states many who are in love with Sufism often convert to Islam though there is no compulsion to do so. There is a relation between Sufism and Islam, but they are not necessarily the same. Yet there are many who feel that conversion to Islam will make them realise the mystic quality of Sufism in a far greater depth. Ignatyev gave an example of a Russian who was attracted to the Sufi order and then accepted Islam as a religion, even though it was not a requirement and states that “in the Moscow section of the order, there are Muslims but no Eastern people”.

As a third reason, he talks about people who are seriously attracted to Islam as a religion for its different manifestation at different levels whether it be cultural, ethnographic or historical. These people give serious thought about Muslim culture

and religion and then convert to Islam as they feel that by doing so, they can achieve spiritual and cultural as well as material wellbeing. Some of these are so serious that they even go to the extent of studying their languages and travel to Muslim countries to get necessary instructions on Islam.

Ignatyev points out that there is a special group of Muslims who he considers to be "white Muslims" similar to that of "Louis Farrakhan's 'Black Muslims' in the US", as the fourth reason. The people of the group are those who can synthesise Islam with their "Russian nationalism, neo-paganism and racism or with left-radical doctrines" (Helm 2009).

Apart from the four stated reasons, Ivanenko (2004) also talks about various other reasons why many Russians feel they should convert and profess Islam as their way of life. Some of the reasons are:

First, due to theoretical clarity in Islam, some people convert to Islam mainly because compared to Orthodox Christianity, Islam provides a clearer notion of God. They are also attracted to Prophet Isa and the Islamic conception of life as well as death and the evils that are there in religious parameters. The lack of clarity in Christianity, as opposed to Islam, often makes spiritually inclined people think of converting to Islam.

Second, Russian Christian orthodoxy preaches hypocrisy and creates problems for people to practice the same, as compared to Islam. The convenience and ritual easiness of Islam in many cases attracts people. There is only one kind of fasting in Islam, which is in the holy month of Ramadan, when Muslims do not eat during the daylight. As opposed to it, there are many fasts in Orthodox Christianity. Even the initiation, wedding and burial rituals of the Muslims are comparatively easier. The lack of religious intermediaries, clerics, etc. also appeals to many people. All these makes it convenient for people to practise Islam and as a result, conversion to Islam.

Third, the lack of bureaucratic rigidity also sometimes works in favour of Islam. Russian Tsarina Catherine the Great made an immunization of that essence by the archetype of the Synodal church. In 1778, Empress Catherine II instituted the Orenburg Mohammedan Clerical Assembly of Muftis regulated by Muftis, which were paid out of Catherine's treasury. Despite several changes, the Mohammedan

Clerical Assembly retained Kremlin's instrument of power over Muslims. Although overall, the pecking order of Ummah, the Islamic community, was held together by the divine authority.

Fourth, the anti-systemic framework of Islam is another significant explanation for the conversion to Islam. It is the only religion in the world to provide an alternative to the emerging market culture and market value where the publicity of sex and violence is becoming the custom of the social order. The degradation of morals often leads people to turn to Islam as they feel the traditional system of Islam is still a much more powerful medium of gaining spiritual upliftment (Ivanenko 2004).

Moreover, the Quran is considered as a text which provides positivity to life as an alternative to the modern political scale. Also, it does not think in terms of mindless profiteering and thinks in terms of social justice without oppression. Russian Islam seems to be a promising sensibility for the people and thus many often feel attracted to it. The market forces (capitalist) which are dominating every aspect of Russian life in the current times are often creating problems for people who are not accustomed to it otherwise. They feel that the market reforms are extremely crucial in terms of the change in Russian culture, leading to the loss of traditional values and culture, which Islam still holds on to.

Market reform within Russia has added to economic difficulties of the people and it is observed that personal disaster as well as economic adversities are also playing an important role in converting ethnic people to Islam, as being highlighted by many media reports. It is noteworthy that Islam has praiseworthy capacity to sustain and protect its followers from economic adversity. This is because of the fact that the Muslim community in Russia has provided them community support, leading them to convert to Islam. Vassiliev states that there are certain groups of society in the middle of a frightened and suppressed minority, which is an important reflection of Russianness, leading to many anti-Muslim campaigns. Against this repression, there seems to be some sympathetic people who are internally favouring Muslims and Islam. They feel that Islam is much more fair than that of the Orthodox Christianity in Russia (Vassiliev 2001).

In the period dealt within the present study, one can find more and more reports that indicate Islam is spreading far and wide within ethnic Russia. There is some evidence of semi-official anti-Muslim propaganda. Often newspapers have reported that many Russian youths, mostly from Muslim populated areas, have the tendency to adopt Islam and many have already taken the step. This kind of tendency of conversion to Islam can be seen in territories such as Tatarstan as it is in direct contact with the Islamic ways and is often influenced by the same. However, the interesting case is that of Karelia. According to the information in *Obshchaya Gazeta* and *Nezavisimaya Gazeta,* the Muslim community in Karelia was founded by people of Russian ethnics. It presently comprises around 20,000 of the total 700,000 population, with about 6,000 people living in the metropolitan capital of Petrozavodsk. An Arab student is the imam of the Karelian community "appointed by the Islamic authorities of the European part of Russia and has successfully campaigned for permission to build a mosque, in spite of threats from local Russian nationalists" (Vassiliev 2001).

Another significant case was the conversion of Vyacheslav Polosin, a former Christian orthodox priest. His early 1990s findings provided accompanying signals for observers who believed the present growth of Muslim population among ethnic Russians is happening at least partially, if not significantly, at the cost of the Orthodox Church (Vassiliev 2001).

In terms of migrant intake, Russia is ranked second in the world, just after the US, and third if the region of Persian Gulf is taken into account. Russian figures fluctuate between seven million and 12 million, based on the source one considers. Migration from Central Asia and the Caucasus, logically, has a greater impact on Russian demography as the migration process has made it so that the Russian-speaking people who were dominant in the first half of the 90s, are not so in the second half. In the decade of this study, the main migration flows are not related to the Russian and the orthodox population but rather to the Islamic population. One of the reasons for increased migration is or largely due to the violence in the bordering states of Russia in the 1990s and the 2000s and the increasing economic opportunities in Russian labour market for poor citizens of the former Soviet republic. Thus, the number of Muslims in Russia has unavoidably increased due to various demographic, migration processes and other reasons (Matthew 2012: 195-226).

3.3 Islamic Factor in the National Identity Formation in post-Soviet Russia

The Islamic factor plays a crucial role in the identity formation of post-Soviet Russia as the interaction between the two has been century old. Both have influenced each other historically in their growth and evolution. The Muslims are the major group of non-Russians and Islam has a belief system and culture which is coherently organized as a way of life. Therefore, in the post-Soviet political formation, Islam has a significant role to perform. In making the political and social identity of the post-Soviet Russia, thus, Muslims play a dominant role in identity formation as well as political formations.

A central part of the discussion about the creation of a Russian identity should be religious, ethnic, civic or even ethnoreligious in post-Soviet period. The result of this discussion mainly defined Russia's complete political development and fundamental cultural propensities. The debate has been affected by many factors such as the growth of Russia's Muslim communities, the construction of the post-Soviet identity, the present behaviour of the Muslim community towards ethnic Russians and the structure of the federal government and the appeal and degree of their pursuit for self-determination. Now, the developments in regions where Muslims are in majority in Russia, especially during the Chechen War, have had a noteworthy impact on Russian politics.

The collapse of the erstwhile Soviet state has created the space for a political and identity crisis in Russia. Before the dismantling of the erstwhile USSR, it was a primarily "multinational and multicultural state" which had the ideological task of being the guide and a model of a wide-reaching Communist revolution. This multiculturalism was not something which recently developed in Russians. Even through the supremacy of the Czars, it was primarily a "multicultural empire". Subsequently, Russians tried to figure out their identity, their ideology and how they can fit internationally (Kolsto 2017: 18-45).

The contemporary status of Russia as an important economic, military and geo-political power internationally to some extent got affected by the continuing challenge

to form identity of new Russia. Russia, at present, is facing multi-ethnic and political challenges and largely due to these it must make a series of adjustments and maladjustment as a nation to achieve its lost status and power. The breakdown of the Soviet Union resulted in such situation in which the Russian privileged section, the intellectuals and even the common people observed a sense of identity crisis. Such an identity crisis may be related to unsolved problems with three dimensions:

The first aspect is related to the accommodation of the legacy and heritage of the historical past, which was a major concern. Russians have the legacy of maintaining a large nation without being imperialist strictly and at the same time keeping the multinational spirit and character intact. It was thought that Russia as a nation was more concerned with nation-building than with the destruction of nations (Suny and Martin: 2001). The erstwhile USSR permitted a certain kind of sovereignty in the formation of the republic (Brubaker 1994). The consequence of the Soviet policy to form nations based on ethnically distinct ethnic groups of non-Russian resulted in the rise of the non-Russian nationalism in the 1960s. This non-Russian nationalism emerged due to the strict Russian policy of formation of new Russian nationalism which was non-imperialist in character and reacted against the imperialistic tendencies. They tried to draw a clear-cut mental distinction between the non-Russian areas and "Russia proper". This led to a demand for autonomy. It can be said that it is the Russian history which made the formation process of national identity a problem in the present Russian Federation (Ismailov and Ganieva 2013 366-367).

The second aspect is about creating harmony between ethnic and civic identity (*Rossiiskiy*). Civic identity is based on a notion of citizenship featuring inclusion at its core. While, ethnic identity (*Russkiy*) is based on exclusive identities such as language, religion and culture. Thus, this ethnic identity created ethnic territories. Consequently, it became another problem in the process of nation-building. This problem again has its roots in the Soviet Union's conceptualisation of the nation as in an ethnic cultural sense (Tishkov 1997: 230). Ethnic identity became more prominent than civic identity and led to the problem of coherence as many regions felt that they should get autonomy. In the post-1991 scenario, though a kind of national identity was slowly gaining a concrete shape, the ethnic identity still was very significant (Hosking 2001).

The third aspect is that the dichotomy between the East and the West is also a concern for Russia. This is largely due to the geographical location of Russia that it can be termed as a Eurasian continent. It is noteworthy that it has an important role in the identity formation process in the Russian nation. It is often thought to be based on Western ideology and discourse, but at the same time, it has a multi-ethnic character which is very different from that of the West. Therefore, in the post-communist era, people have constantly raised doubts about Russian-Western relations. In this context, it is to be reminded that the US has been the "other" of the USSR which also is a problematic construct. (Ismailov and Ganieva 367, 368). This dichotomy was clearly visible in post-Soviet Russia's foreign policy when the leadership claimed that Russia is a Western country and emphasised 'Atlanticism' in the foreign policy choices. Later, Russian foreign minister Primakov sidelined 'Atlanticism' by claiming that Russia's identity is Eurasian and subsequently appeared to change the foreign policy.

The concept of Eurasianism was developed by the advocates of Eurasianism — a radical political crusade that developed in Russia in the 1920s. Discussing the branches of Eurasians, Nikolai Trubetzkoy, ironically said that there were "as many Eurasianism as Eurasianists". Regardless of all their variances, there were many ideas which were common among Eurasianists. For example, these people believed that the empire of the Czar as well as the notion of the Soviet Union is a construct which is bound to disintegrate as did the Western empires. But Russia has a completely different set-up, a different mentality and a different cultural ethos. If there are traditional Christians, then there are the Tatar-Mongols too, who had a very symbiotic relationship in the evolution of Russia. And they also thought that the West should not only be criticised but should be given adequate punishment for being unjust with Russia (Shlapenntokh 2020). The advocates of Eurasianism recommended that "for those who positively memorialised Russia's history as a civilizing force for backward peoples, the assimilation of a multitude of peoples into a multinational Eurasian empire capable of harmonising East and West lent Russia a distinctive, if not unique, path of development that ruled out full assimilation into the West" (Clunan 2009: 57).

Dugin, a proponent of Eurasianism highlights the geographical features of nations as central to their cultures and even their motive. In the early 1990s, Dugin introduced his idea of Eurasianism, stressing the role of Russia's strategic position at the centre

of Europe in deciding Russian culture and politics. Dugin's opinions are tied up with geopolitical determinism. He maintains that geographic conditions create civilizations with totally different values, aspirations, and dynamics.

In Dugin's opinion, the two most characteristic and at the same time, opposite prototypes of geographically determined civilisations are continent or land-based and island. In their final forms, they represent two types of empires: the continental and the island. The best examples of the latter are the UK and the US. The island civilisation's ideology, which Dugin calls Atlanticism, is based on instability, rootlessness, and materialism. In contrast, the continental empire is an integrative, spiritual, and non-exploitative civilisation with an ideology of Eurasianism. Dugin believes that since ancient times, these two civilizations have been in competition. Dugin wrote that the Atlanticist's discovery of different parts of the world under the formula of globalism is with a mission to undermine and subdue the traditional cultures of Eurasia. In his initial works, Dugin found out that Russia's main duty was to "unite the anti-Atlantic, anti-globalist powers of Eurasia into a new colonial coalition" (Allensworth 1998: 259-298).

A big step toward Dugin's political role was the creation, on 21 April 2001, of the All-Russia Political and Social Movement 'Eurasia' and its registration with the Russian Ministry of Justice. In its manifesto, the movement laments the fact that the early Eurasianists were not appreciated. But in the late 1980s, a new version of Eurasianism emerged and laid the basis of modern Russian geopolitics. The manifesto states that Russia's current conditions, and its new administration, have developed a favourable environment for turning the Eurasianist theory into concrete policies. The movement defines itself as a progressive middle, neither leftist nor rightist and neither compliant to the authorities nor oppositionist at any cost. It expresses support for President Putin till he acts for the sake of State control, for the sake of the people. The manifesto described five priorities for the movement:

(1) Constructive interchange among the traditional Russian faiths;

(2) Introduction of the public principle above the individual and subordinating economic policies in solving tactical social complications;

(3) Restoration of Russian people's tradition and the re-establishment of ethnic Russian demographic growth;

(4) Eurasist federalism, a mix of practical solidarity and ethno-cultural sovereignty that allows for different modes of life at the local level alongside rigid centralism linked to the need of the interest of the people; and

(5) Reconstruction based on the CIS of a strong Eurasian federation (equivalent to the Soviet Union) on a modern ideological and administrative basis.

Dugin advocates four fundamental objectives in terms of Russia's relations with the outside world. First, he emphasizes the need for strategic integration of the internal spaces of the CIS to a wider area including the countries of the Moscow-Tehran-Delhi-Beijing axis. Such a Eurasist policy will play an important role in entry and exit of Russia towards the warm sea, not through war and suffering, but through peace and open and friendly cooperation. Second, Dugin believes that at the same time Russia should promote a close relationship with Europe largely because, in the contemporary international system, Europe no longer represents the source of world's evil. This view contrasts with the time of the early Eurasist movement. Instead, it is the US that has assumed this role. According to him, "Eurasist Russia should play the role of deliverers of Europe, but this time from American political, economic, and cultural occupation." Third, Dugin emphasises promoting active cooperation with the countries of the Pacific region, especially Japan. "The economic giants of this area should see in the Eurasist policies of Russia the orienting point for a self-supporting political system and also for a strategic potential of resources and new markets". Finally, Dugin stresses the need for active and universal opposition to globalization because "Eurasianism defends the blossoming complexity of peoples, religions, and nations. All anti-globalist tendencies are intrinsically Eurasist".

A diverse variation of Eurasianism is presented in Alexei Kara-Murza's theory of Russia's dual identity. According to Kara-Murza, Russia had a dual identity consisting of two halves:

(1) A European civilizational identity because Russia's ethno-cultural core belongs to the Eastern branch of the European Christian civilization, and

(2) A Eurasian geopolitical identity.

The latter, nevertheless, is developed and derived from the historic chance of Russia's position on the European platform. The firmness of this individuality is founded on the cultural-political Union of Slavic, Finno-Ugrian, and Turkic peoples, who have established the capability of mutual coexistence instead of losing their uniqueness. Roughly, Kara-Murza believed in the cultural Westernisation of Russia while at the same time retaining its prominent status in its traditional realm of influence. In other words, Eurasianism can be said to be an ideological explanation for the spread of Russian encouragement rather than one of a true synthesis of Russian and non-Russian (Turko-Muslim) cultures. Therefore, Kara-Murza too is a geopolitical nationalist, although with Westernizing qualities (Murza 2019: 270-280).

In the Soviet period, the notion of capitalism and liberalism in the West was the biggest enemy. Extreme hostility developed towards western Europe and North America due to this factor. This high-pitched partition of the world was re-examined during Mikhail Gorbachev's time period when he introduced policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost*. This was replaced by the idea that the Soviet Union or Russia was undoubtedly a part of Europe and that Russia would suffer if it were to be isolated from Europe (Tolz 2005: 130-140). In the initial years of the 1990s, Boris Yeltsin and members of his government followed the same approach. They regarded Russia's incorporation into Western security, politics and economic structures as one of the main goals. The emerging passionate association between the new Russian headship of President Yeltsin with the West especially with the US was seen as a Russia's zeal to transform itself on the western line. It was observed that new Russia found itself closer to Europe than to Asia.

By trying to leave behind the Soviet legacy, Yeltsin's regime tried to rethink Russia's post-communist picture. It was considered as Yeltsin's answer to critics of Russia to a particular degree, who thought Russia's tradition that of autocratic and authoritative which cannot be controlled by democratic institutions such as parliament and the law. The initial years of change in post-Soviet Russia has led to a continuous serious economic crisis, a collapse of public and civic order morality, as well as a general sense of the loss of identity. The slogan "democratisation, market economy, and the

rule of law," far from establishing a modern sense of reality based on the West's factual development, influenced what was commonly felt to be civil chaos in Russia (Nation and Trenin 2007).

As a result, when in 1999, Vladimir Putin came to power, the Russian political elites realised that the instability of the society, state and the calamity of Russian identity were the key difficulties faced by the nation. In his article named "Russia at the Turn of the Millennium", Vladimir Putin equated situation in the 1990s with that of post-October 1917 arguing that Russian state and culture was in a condition of rupture. It was crucial to bridge this gap by bringing people together behind a single notion of Russianness. Putin has demonstrated a stronger understanding that his predecessors have shown a kind of empathy that would be better for Russia's ethnic minority. Putin stressed the fundamental ideals of civilization and a kind of patriotism that spoke about the country's pride, its past and accomplishments, and the progressive reforms that Russians recognised to revive the notion of 'Eurasia' as part of Russian sensibility (Humphrey 2002: 272).

The renewal of the 'Eurasianism' under Vladimir Putin's headship can be described by explaining foreign and domestic policies. Internally, there was a need to consolidate the Russian social order after the chaotic state that his predecessor like Boris Yeltsin left Russia to be, Vladimir Putin had to carry forward many reforms. It can be said that the idea of Eurasia allowed Putin to deal with the internal problems of Russia and put together a coherent nation of Russia by integrating the needs of the non-Christians. The Muslim republics such as Tatarstan, Bashkiria, and Bashkortostan, comprised Kalmyk, Buryat, Tuva, Sakha-Yakut, and Altai Republics and in this area, the acknowledgement of their interests and identities led to coherence (Ismailov and Ganieva 380-386).

The foreign policy during Putin's leadership was dominated by the Eurasianist ideas. For example, the 2007 survey of the Foreign Policy of Russia specified the need to bring about a new relationship with the newly autonomous states as it "is the first priority of Russian foreign policy". While on a tour to Brunei for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, or APEC, meeting in 2000, Vladimir Putin said, "Russia has always considered itself to be a Eurasian country. We have never forgotten that a

greater part of Russian territory lies in Asia. But frankly speaking, we have not always used that advantage" (Loughlin 2000: 6).

It can be said that a large portion of studies related to Russian national identity in the post-1990 era is in opposition to the Boris Yeltsin's ideas of assimilating Russia to the Western idea of economy, culture and polity. This has driven the Russians to oppose the communist 'other'. Under President Vladimir Putin's administration, Russia experienced a rebirth of the idea of Eurasianism as a kind of national awareness. Even if Eurasianism has not been the fundamental ideology of the Kremlin so far "it has found its place within the new patriotic doctrine, whose exceedingly vague theoretical contours highlight the Putin regime's striving for social consensus". Many scholars also feel that Putin's Eurasianism is "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century and asserts that Russia had a special mission in the Eurasian continent" (Laruelle 2008: 222).

Putin was driven to supremacy by his stern stance towards Chechnya and his willpower to end Islamic fundamentalism, violence and terrorism in the North Caucasus and other parts of Russia. Putin had been not willing to forgive in arguments against these extremists (Mcgeary Time 3 April 2000). Nevertheless, he was able to distinguish between Muslims and extremists. Putin's official views on Islam were not that different from those shared by other Russian political leaders. For instance, Putin believed that Islam is a traditional Russian religion with a place in society, and Muslims and Christians have coexisted peacefully in Russia for generations. Interestingly, during a call-in interview on television, in response to a question from a Muslim viewer in Kazan, Putin attributed Christian-Muslim harmony to the fact that in Russia, "the majority of Christians are Orthodox Christians, which is eastern Christianity, and we have a great deal in common with Islam". In the same interview, Putin also stated that "Islam, as a traditional Russian religion, merits the support of the state". In practice, however, Putin's approach has been a mixture of the overthrow of the radicals, control of Muslim institutions, the restriction of activities of Muslim clerics, and the "co-option of the Muslim population" (Solovyov 2001).

Furthermore, Putin also views the global network of radical Islam, which spans from the Caucasus to Southeast Asia, as an existential threat to Russia. Vladimir Putin has

shown no objection to strategic cooperation with some Muslim countries. However, notwithstanding some of his earlier statements addressed to Muslim audiences, he recognised no spiritual similarity between Islam and Orthodox Christianity. Culturally, Putin can be said to be more of a Westernizer, but also a pragmatic leader, as he realised the need of showing obligation for Russia's deeply held values and traditions.

Russia's post-Soviet identity has been centred on three thematic questions:

(1) What is the role of Russian culture?

(2) Where does Russia belong culturally?

(3) Should Russia emulate the West or find a unique Russian path?

The first question principally concerns the role of the Russian language and Orthodox Christianity as the main foundations of a post-Soviet Russian individuality. The important question is whether Russia should be an essentially Russo-centric and orthodox society and culture in which other ethnic groups can be accepted, provided they undergo a large degree of Russification. This does not automatically mean total assimilation, but it does mean the acceptance of the supremacy of the Russian culture. In other words, should Russian identity and hence its nationalism take on a primordial cast with elements of civic nationalism? Or should Russia move towards a more multi-ethnic and multicultural individuality and henceforth a civic understanding of nationalism?

The second question deals, as mentioned above, with the age-old topic of whether Russia is a fragment of the West or an exclusive Eurasian thing, culturally and geopolitically, that has coordinated within its underlying Russian-Orthodox civilization with various cultures, religions, and ethnic collections. This assessment of Russia was hurt primarily, but not completely, by the Muslim appeal for self-determination and autonomy, which unfortunately brutal at times, as in Chechnya, had been violent. This radicalisation has destabilised the cultural entitlements of Eurasianism as a pleasant-sounding amalgamation of Russian and other cultures, as Sergei Stankevich put it.

The inquiry of whether Russia should imitate the West or seek an independent pathway of social development is a dominant matter in Russian self-perception, as it had been in earlier periods. In the post-Soviet era, Russia engaged with a similar problem that it had confronted since the time of Peter — does modernisation mean abandoning all that is specific to Russia, or can Russia modernise without losing its authenticity or its soul? In confronting this dilemma, Russia is like other countries that have wanted to benefit from the material advantages of modernism without abandoning their authentic cultures (Hunter 2004: 202-204).

The primary challenge for multi-ethnic and multireligious Russia is to guarantee that the confirmation of the centralised national sensibility of Russianness and Russian culture's assertion cannot be done at the price of giving up the identity of the Muslims and other ethnic groups. Developing a broad-based democratic and civic Russian identity is not an easy affair as Russian Muslims have dissimilar notions of communal identity that contest for loyalty. Nevertheless, the effort must be made if Russia is to achieve political stability and interethnic accord, avoid further narrowing the parameters of ethnic, cultural, and political self-determination, and prevent the loss of democratic gains of more than a decade.

3.4 Islamic Influence on the Evolution of the Russian Federation

Historically, Russia can be termed as a multi-confessional and multi-ethnic nation which is reflected in its federal framework. Bolsheviks granted the right to self-determination to minorities and soon after giving the right to self-determination, they speedily and heavily started a significant drive so that the former territories of the previous Russian Empire could be reunited. There were many reasons for this fragmentation in the empire such as the demise of the central authority, the end of the Tsar's rule as well as the consequent civil war. All these factors played a significant role and paved the way for the demand for self-determination among the different subjects of the Russian empire, specifically among the Muslim subjects. Taking advantage of such circumstances, many ethnic territories declared independence from the empire.

The federal structure of the Soviet Union has its own uniqueness which can prove as a model for various nations across the world. This federal uniqueness can be observed in the sense that it provides not only a guarantee of self-determination to its nations but the right to secession. The Soviet Union had always recognised the right of people to freedom and individuality as well as national development.

More importantly, one needs to understand that the Soviet federation is not just a federation of states, but is a federation of national states. In other words, it means that each nation-state of the Union Republic is predominantly people belonging to a particular nationality and thereby have a distinct identity of their own. Thus, under the USSR, which was a kind of a socialist federation, each nation has its own sovereignty and had the freedom to develop in its own way. Though, they are also linked together by their federal character to the centralized federation. Developing fraternal cooperation in all sphere is the main goal of the federation. In addition, each union republic had the right to have its constitution and the freedom to enter any kind of foreign relations with any state that they deem fit. Moreover, the agreements and diplomatic meetings and exchanges were based on their own will even to the extent of having their own republic military establishments (Tewatia 1975: 177).

This uniqueness of the Soviet federation is the result of the October revolution of 1917. After the revolution, the governments which came up in the countries on the periphery of Russia as the non-operational Czarist regime declined to accept so much centralisation. They rejected the unitary structure of the government and thought that it is better to insist on their national issues and build their own national states. Thus, the process of disintegration was undergone whereby the peripheral states become independent and led to marked progress in the disintegration process. Because of these kinds of circumstances, it happened that the Bolsheviks had to admit the demand for a federation and the right to self-determination of the nations. For the first time, in the "Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia" on 16 November 1917, "the right of self-determination, including secession and formation of an independent state" was legitimately recognised. The elementary provisions of the Declaration were then merged into the Soviet Constitution (Damletshin 1966: 22).

In 1923, however, Stalin proposed the creation of an autonomous republic for all non-Russians in the Soviet Federation of Socialist Republics (RSFSR). The Bolsheviks started to have a constitutional scheme of governing relations between the federal Centre and the regions much before the creation of the USSR in 1921. The first Constitution of the nation was adopted in 1918 and it was declared that the Russian Soviet Republics were to be formed on the formula of the "union of free nations", as part of the Federal structure. The second constitution, which was promulgated in 1924, stated that "the Soviet Union is a voluntary association of Sovereign republics which have the right to secede from the union and adopt their own constitution" (Feldbrugge 1979).

So, it can be observed that there is an effort for the unification of the people on the one hand and to provide as much autonomy to the people as it can be on the other. This may seem to be contradictory, but it continued in this fashion. Stalin emphasised more on the centralisation of the nation-states when the drafting of the constitution carried on. As a result, there was harsh opposition to this idea. Mirza Sultan Galiev, a Muslim Communist opposed this idea very vehemently. But soon, Galiev was arrested and expelled from the party which was done with the intention that no such dissent or opposition will be allowed. Thus, such harsh action cleared the ground for the accession of the republic forcefully to the Russian federation giving the indication that lies with Moscow.

The 1924 constitution significantly emphasised the centralising tendencies previously manifested in the 1922 contract on the formation of the USSR. An appeal to the council of peoples Commissars of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) is important in this regard which is read as "To all the toiling Muslims of Russia and the east dated 20 November 1917, which said from today onward your faith and traditions, your national and cultural institutions are declared as free and cannot be touched. Build your national life freely and without any obstacles. Be aware that you are right just like rights of all people of Russia are defended with all the force of the revolution and its organs — Council of workers, soldiers and peasants' deputies" (Gainutddin 2004).

This plea along with real measures for its execution were crucial in bringing the political feeling of the Muslim community towards the newly established state and its strengthening in the areas of conventional Muslim surroundings. However, afterwards, Soviet strategy towards sections, as well as Islam, underwent many ups and downs.

The political system of Soviet Russia, initially organised as multi-ethnic and multinational in character, was functioning as a unitary state with a federal character having a strong tendency for centralization. But at the same time, it was very careful of its national and cultural identities and promoted a kind of local nationalism as well as socialist internationalism. The state tried to promote the local identities as by doing so it used to show respect to the local cultures and people's feelings. The strategy of the Bolsheviks to a greater extent reflected this ideology. The soviet state followed a policy of atheism and anti-religion throughout its existence, though varying in degree at different time periods.

This policy with some degree of variation was continued till the time of Mikhail Gorbachev's adoption of *perestroika* and *glasnost* in the second half of the 1980s, after which political reforms in Russia started with greater intensity. The political reforms initiated under *perestroika* and *glasnost* gave new energy to a national separatist movement under the agenda of gaining independence across the erstwhile USSR from the Baltic to the Caucasus. The Republic which declared its independence from Moscow first was Lithuania. Thereafter, it became a tendency and continued with much speed though it can be said that with the declaration of sovereignty by Estonia in 1988, the momentum gained. The process of disintegration of the USSR was thus achieved with a greater impetus when Boris Yeltsin was the head of the Russian Federation, in June 1990.

As the USSR disintegrated, Russia emerged as a successor state of the USSR and at the same time, there was the emergence of the secessionist movement within Russia under the agenda of gaining independence. It was at this time that the notions of national self-determination and regional self-rule became stronger in Russia and threatened the very existence of Russia. Boris Yeltsin made a call to these regions that "they can take as much sovereignty as much as they can swallow". In other words,

Boris Yeltsin indirectly opened the floodgates for the centrifugal forces inside Russia. Consequently, several ethnic groups within RSFSR started making demands for national and cultural self-determination. It is noteworthy that by the end of 1990, 14 sovereign Republics and three autonomous districts within Russian Federation declared themselves independent and sovereign Republics.

This secessionist tendency was carried over in the post-Soviet Russian federation. The autonomous Russian Federation reserved a dual system of federalism which was categorised by 57 non-ethnically demarcated (mostly Russian) regions and 32 national homes for ethnic minorities. According to the Russian Ministry of Justice, 19 of Russia's so-called ethnic republics had adopted their own constitutions which went to violate the requirements of the Federal constitution. Several ethnic Russians got different sovereign statuses for being national minorities and it led to a superior regional autonomy. In this process, many ethnic Russian regions proclaimed their right to self-governance, including some that insisted on control or demanded the sovereignty as a republic (Lapidus and Walker 1995: 98).

It is noteworthy to mention that a significant reason behind this regional aspiration was an economic requirement. During this time period which is characterised by economic and political chaos and disorder, many of Russia's Muslims were amongst the most active in looking for a greater degree of self-determination. It was observed that in many cases, Muslim nationalities were demanding for more cultural and administrative self-government rather than absolute freedom. For instance, the Republic of Ingushetia even went to the extent of legalising certain traditional and religious activities that disrespected federal laws, for example, "polygamy for men and the abduction of women by their prospective bridegrooms" (UPI Archive 1999). Another example is the Republic of Adygea while implementing a constitution demanding that the republic's President necessarily speaks the Adygei language and that 50 percent of the posts in the republic's governing bodies be fixed for ethnic Adygei, even though the titular nationality had only 22 percent population of the Republic of Adygea. This demand was a violation of the federal constitution. It is worth mentioning here that a different degree of sovereignty was demanded by all eight of Russia's Muslim republics taking a model of USSR in the mind (Caucasus Report 23 March 2001).

Ethnic Muslims are in majority in Russia's seven federal units. These are Republics of Ingushetia, Chechnya, Dagestan, Kabardini-Balkaria, Karaachaevo-Cherkesia, and Bashkortsrn. It was observed that a very high centrifugal propensity existed in all these federal units. Moreover, in the other 13 federal constituents, the Muslim populace is about 7 percent to 27 percent.

Table: Muslim Population in the Federal units of Russia (% of total population)

1.	REPUBLIC OF INGUSHETIA	98.0%
2.	CHECHNYA	96.0%
3.	DAGESTAN	94.0%
4.	KABARDINI BALKARIA	70.0%
5.	KARACHAEVO-CHERKESIA	63.0%
6.	BASHKORTSTAN	54.5%
7.	TATARSTAN	54.0%

Source: As cited in Mohanty, Arun (2016), Russian Civilization and Islam, p-27

In Bashkortostan, the main factor for the rise of nationalism is intra-Muslim ethnic competition between Tatars and Bashkirs which started in 1989. There was a rise of numerous Tatar nationalist assemblies in the republic such as the Tatar Social Centre, the Tatar Democratic Party 'Idel-Ural,' and the Bashkortostan branch of the Tatar youth movement *Azatliq* (Freedom). Principally in reply to the Tatar activism, the Bashkir People's Centre 'Ural' (BPC) had its formation Congress in December 1989 and wanted that Bashkortostan should be raised to the position of a union republic in the USSR. In February 1991, the BPC's second Congress fascinated roughly around 1,200 representatives from Bashkortostan as well as across Russia. Allied groups such as the Bashkir People's Assembly, the Bashkir People's Party, and the Bashkir Youth League supported the creation of an independent Bashkortostan, while Bashkir radicals called for the exclusion of non-Bashkirs to safeguard a Bashkir majority in the republic (Neumann 1999: 187-188).

Taking advantage of the situation, Bashkortostan's government which was led by republican President Murtaza Rakhimov, thought that this increased nationalist emotion is the right time to upsurge the republic's administrative self-sufficiency. Under Rakhimov's headship, Bashkortostan accepted a constitution which declared the republic's dominion, authority and sovereignty and required the president to speak Bashkir. The constitution further ensured Bashkortostan's right to "freely leave the Russian Federation". The Bashkir Minister of Education advanced a nationalist agenda in 1993 which required obligatory training of the Bashkir language and literature by all schoolchildren in first to ninth grades, irrespective of their linguistic background. In August 1994, Bashkortostan got its sovereignty in an arrangement which was negotiated with the Russian federal government (Holmes 1995: 259).

It was observed that in a few cases, Muslim nationalist movements encouraged additional radical measures to protect their national rights. In the dual-ethnic Republics of Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachaevo-Cherkessia, nationalist movements were aimed to break the republics into different homelands. Various nationalist actions characterised distinct ethnic groups in the multi-ethnic Republic of Dagestan. One of the most remarkable examples is that of Lezginstan, a Lezgin nationalist movement that demanded the formation of a self-governing Lezginstan on traditional Lezgin territory in Dagestan and neighbouring Azerbaijan. This movement also supported the formation of larger multi-ethnic homelands, including Adyge Khase, which demanded to unite the Circassian individuals of the North Caucasus region, and the Confederation of Peoples of the Caucasus, which gave support to the formation of an independent multinational Caucasian Republic. At times, rising nationalist sentimentality among Muslims also led to inter-ethnic conflicts, including dangerous confrontations between Chechens and Laks in Dagestan and between Ingush and Ossets in North Ossetia. These conflicts serve as examples of the limits of Islam in stopping the ethnic differences in the post-Soviet era. These examples also indicate the failure of earlier Muslim attempts to achieve better self-government and unity.

Nonetheless, during the last decade of the USSR (and the RSFSR) as well as during the decade of Boris Yeltsin's Presidency, national awareness in Russia was brought about by the emergence of nationalism in the Muslim Republics, especially in Chechnya and Tatarstan. An increase in Islamic awareness is the most important part

of mutual identity among Tatars and Chechens. It is particularly important for those looking to emphasize their uniqueness from the adjacent to Russian culture. This significantly contributed to the rise in nationalist sentiment. The quest for Muslim national self-determination which is combined with growing religious awareness and the response of federal authorities played determining roles in the evolution of Russian federalism throughout Yeltsin's rule. It also defined some of the most important issues in centre-periphery relations faced by his successor (Hunter 2004: 214-217).

In Tatarstan, nationalism took the form of a powerful political force in January 1989 when representatives from Tatar communities across the USSR decided to establish the All-Tatar Public Centre (ATPC). They asked for a necessary decrease in the migration of ethnic Russian into the republic of Tatarstan. They insisted that Tatar be made Tatarstan's official language. The ATPC also articulated the aim of raising the status of Tatarstan from an independent republic to a full union republic of the USSR. Thereafter, moving progressively towards complete independence. By October 1989, the ATPC assessed and came to the conclusion that it has one million members across the Soviet Union (Kondrashov 2000: 120-121). The following year, several other nationalist organisations joined the ATPC, including Azatliq and the Sovereignty Committee. Moreover, the political party Ittifaq (Unity) rose as the most anti-Russian of Tatar nationalist organizations and adopted a predominantly severe anti-colonialist and anti-Russian stanch.

It is noteworthy that religion did not play a leading role in the development of the Tatar nationalist movements. Tatar nationalist movement nearly and consistently encouraged the formation of a secular autonomous or independent republic. As an essential constituent of Tatar identity, however, Islam served as a merging cultural symbol even for secular nationalists. In its 1991 political program, the ATPC praised enthusiastically Jadidism, a reformist understanding of Islam prevalent in Tatarstan. ATPC considered Jadidism as a modernizing force and emphasised the revival of Jadidism among Tatars as one of its primary purposes. The centre also declared that the republic should have its own Muslim religious board headquartered in Kazan. The ATPC later restated its pledge to Islam as a part of Tatar national culture in the following official statement: "The history of Tatar culture and enlightenment, the

entire way of life, is closely connected to Islam. Therefore, Islam cannot be separated from national policy or from the national movement and is closely connected to and cooperates with them".

The Islamic Democratic Party of Tatarstan, a nationalist party founded in 1991 sought a secular independent state and appealed to Tatars' desire to reassert their Islamic heritage (Hunter 2004: 218). In December 1997, at Ittifaq's fourth party congress, party leaders issued a pronouncement stating, "We declare the national liberation struggle we are waging against the Russian empire to be henceforth known as jihad aimed at liberation from the infidels' slavery. We, Muslim nationalists, are launching a struggle for the creation of an Islamic state in Tatarstan" (Yunosova 1999).

In March 1992, four months after the demise of USSR, Tatarstan held the proposed referendum, which asked voters, "Do you agree that the republic of Tatarstan is a sovereign state, a subject of international law, building its relations with Russia and other republics and states on the basis of equitable treaties?" Despite threats by the Yeltsin administration to bring criminal charges against officials conducting the referendum, Tatarstan's residents responded positively by a wide margin: with 81.6 percent of the electorate participating, 61.4 percent voted in favour of sovereignty. In November 1992, Tatarstan's parliament ratified a new constitution reiterating Tatarstan's status as "a sovereign state, subject to international law" (Moukhariamov, 1997: 219). This statement of self-rule made a provision making Russian (along with Tatar) an official language of the republic and guaranteeing equal protection for all citizens regardless of their ethnicity. In other words, the constitution, without directly declaring Tatarstan's independence, implied that the republic was outside the legal jurisdiction of the Russian federal government (Hunter 2004: 219-220).

In addition to the growth of Tatar nationalism, the independence movement of Chechnya also stood as another challenge to the federal centre. In November 1990, a self-proclaimed Chechen National Congress met in Grozny, the capital city of the then dual-ethnic Republic of Chechnya-Ingushetia. In its meeting, the congress elected Soviet air force general Dzhokhar Dudayev to lead its executive committee and to lead newly established Chechen National Guard (Lieven 1998: 58).

As in Tatarstan, Islam played a secondary role in the early years of Chechnya's demand for greater national self-determination. Although Dudayev associated his rule with Islamic institutions traditional to Chechnya, at first, he did not use religion openly as an instrument to get support. He encouraged the revival of the traditional clan framework and religious community's characteristics of Chechnya's version of Sufi Islam. He also tried to revive the Council of Elders and other Islamic institutions and traditions of pre-Soviet Chechnya. However, he remained a secular nationalist in the first years of his rule and supported a secular government for Chechnya. It is noteworthy that he did not use Islam until the first Chechen-Russia war in 1994. Later, Dudayev linked Chechen independence directly with Islam. Once hostilities began, he appealed to Islamist sentiment in Chechnya, the Caucasus, and even beyond Russia's borders to encourage opposition to Russian intervention in Chechnya and to consolidate his power in the republic. In response to Dudayev's rejection of federal authority in 1991, Yeltsin three years later relied on military force to resist separatism in Russia (Hunter 2004: 218-221).

Post 1991, there has been significant growth in the demand for self-rule in Russia's republic from the federal centre. Though decentralisation is said to have an important role towards the deepening of democratic political structure as well as the change to a more liberal market economy. But many scholars observe that Russia decentralisation increased regional demands of self-determination. Thus, the weak hold of the centre resulted in violation of the federal laws. Also, regional leaders gained agency to assert their political muscle and be autonomous. It is to be understood here that the powers of the regional leaders increased to such greater extent that they significantly became a problem in the ways of implementing the presidential policies (Ryabov 2000). Many of these areas, instead of becoming more democratic became more authoritative and autocratic (Hale 1998). Some regional leaders even went on to become the "brokers of Russia's political future" (Huskey 1999: 182).

As Putin came to power and even before that he thought that it is his prime task to take this growing power of the regional leaders away so that the status quo can be brought back. Therefore, there have been many significant changes since 2000. This led to Putin's federal reforms whereby Russia was divided into seven federal districts and on 19 May, the reforms also changed the Federal Council where the president got

the right to dismiss any regional leaders. This was done with the aim of having more power to the centre and so that the implementation of the presidential policies can become easier (Solnick, 2000).

In May 2000, he announced the formation of seven large administrative federal districts. Each federal district included a subset of Russia's 89 federation subjects. Putin then appointed a presidential representative to each new federal district and tasked these new representatives with overseeing the performance of federal agencies in the provinces and monitoring the implementation of federal policy. In assigning these representatives, who replaced the regional envoys introduced by Yeltsin, Putin chose experienced persons from Russia's military and security services, with all but two being former officers in the armed forces, Ministry of Internal Affairs, or Federal Security Service. The new representatives to the provinces were made ex officio members of the Russian Security Council and were granted authority to attend cabinet-level meetings of the federal government (Russian Regional Report 31 May 2002).

Parallel to this legislation, Vladimir Putin also announced various administrative measures to declare his authority over the provinces. During the summer of 2000, he passed numerous decrees removing local laws and policies which were in contradiction to the federal guidelines. In the course, Putin without consulting others, annulled legislations as well as governmental edicts in the Muslim republics of Adygea, Bashkortostan and Ingushetia.

A re-evaluation and restructuring of the pattern of relations between the federal centre and various regions had become necessary because, a decade after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation had failed to construct a coherent system to manage these relations. Thus, Islam has been a crucial factor in the origin and development of federal structure of the Russian Federation.

3.5 Islamic Extremism and Demand for Separation in the Republics of the North Caucasus: Chechnya and Dagestan

To understand Islamic extremism and separatism, it becomes inevitable to have a proper understanding of Russian Islam which can be categorised as traditional and

non-traditional Islam. An attempt has been made to differentiate between the two in this section of the chapter.

3.5.1 Conventional Vs. Non-Conventional Islam in Russia

In the Soviet Union, the practice of Islam was often not allowed and in some time periods, the state made efforts to wipe out Islam. Official Islamic boards such as Ufa, Makhachkala, Baku and Tashkent existed in Soviet-Union. Though they were thoroughly connected with the state and under constant supervision by the state securities. Their prime task was to dominate Muslims by controlling them and they in some ways or the other did not serve as religious institutions. The Communist state was not efficient enough to completely wind up the Islamic practices. However, the state tried hard to eliminate religion from the society and efforts were made to delink the Soviet Muslims from the other Islamic world. The aim was to dismantle entirely the system of religious education and to stop public religious practices. All these led to a decline in the customs and tradition practiced earlier, very few of these could persist in form of cultural traditions (Falkowski and Lang 2015: 11-12).

Later, together with factors such as the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the impact of *perestroika* and *glasnost* and the internal challenges of the Soviet society helped in the development of the Islamic institutions which had a certain autonomy. Russia allowing Muslims to study abroad in Islamic educational institutes brought a lot of foreign Islamic religious books and literatures into Russia and in a short span of time, the Russian Muslims came to know about the Islamic disputes of the 20th century of the Islamic world.

Perestroika, Gorbachev's policy allowed non-traditional and extremist Islam to penetrate Muslim-dominated regions of Russia. Wahhabism, a collection of teachings advocated by Mohammed Ibn Abdul Wahab, has been the most influential among the schools. This radical school has an especially strong presence in the North Caucasus. Because Wahhabists have been involved in terrorist acts, and because the Russian authorities have blindly applied the term Wahhabi to all those who use violence as a means to an end, some scholars have stopped using the term Wahhabism. Wahhabists themselves prefer to use a different name for self-identification. Salafiyya or Salafi is a term used by many of these non-traditional Muslims. Salafiyya refers to individuals

who strictly adhere to the Quran's precepts, such as the prophet and his companion — 'the righteous one', and the two or three generations after them.

In post-Soviet Russia, two types of Islam compete with one another. While the first is conventional, mild, and peaceful, the second is militant and politicised. The militant Islam and its adherents believe that Russian Islam has been corrupted and must be restored by reinstating authentic Islamic principles of behaviour and thought. The lifestyle of Russian Muslims, according to extremist fundamentalists, is incompatible with the original teachings of Islam. They had a very critical attitude towards the Muslim spiritual leadership. The fundamentalist or Wahhabi, on the other hand, were following the wisdoms of fundamentalist. They were not compatible with the existing traditional Russian Muslims and often contradicted the practicing local culture. The main goal of fundamentalist was to use Islam for meeting their political ambitions.

At the same time, the Russian Muslim leadership lacked a united strategy for combating fundamentalism. While some of the Muslim spiritual leadership disapproved the fundamentalist character of the movement and the resulting destructive operations against the state, it nonetheless considered it to be a part of Islamic religious philosophy. The opposite wing of the leadership sees activities in Wahhabism as departure from the original true Islam and demands their prohibition. The struggle between the two streams of Islam in Russia is mirrored in the Muslim spiritual leadership. While traditional Muslims are loyal to the state, fundamentalists believe in the establishment of specified state authority in order to establish 'pure Islam'.

A split in Russian Islam, based on its various explanations, became an incentive for the aggressive missionary activities of the Wahhabis. It would be more fitting to call these Salafist. Salafi Islam is a significant part of Sunni Islam which was inspired by the 'pure Islam'. Salafism wanted practitioners to go back to their historical and ideological roots. This rejected all ideas and thoughts which were not based on the Hadith or Quran. Salafism, while "a current phenomenon is very heterogeneous" as it is both "apolitical and peaceful" and at the same time a different group is very "political and militant" (Falkowski and Lang 2015: 9).

There was no one coordination centre for the different Salafi factions, and they were divided along ideological lines. Wahhabis were the name given to all their adherents. In Russia, Wahhabis are defined as persons who identify as Salafi, Sufi, or clean Islam followers, as well as Hanbalism, Habashism, Tabligism, nurism, Islamic Jamaats, Militant Shiism, Hizb Ut-Tahrir, and other clans. Intolerance of dissenters, other believers, and efforts to establish a Shariat State, faith in the ability to wage jihad against godless government, and a willingness to employ force in missionary activities are all characteristics of such organisations. Many Wahhabi organisations understand that terrorism is the most efficient way to achieve their goals.

Muslims who follow a too rigid and reductionist understanding of Islam and are dedicated to establishing the reign of Shariat differ in their methods and ways of achieving their goals. Jihadists think that these goals can be achieved through violent means or by waging a holy war. The Jihadist movement spread fast throughout Russia's Muslim-populated regions, due in part to the Soviet Union's Afghan war and Russia's two Chechen wars.

Both the Muslim world and the Western world have called Russia's Afghan war a jihad. Mujahideen, or Holy Warrior, was the name given to the Afghan resistance movement. Volunteers from the Middle East and Central Asia, as well as Muslims from Arab countries, fought the Soviet Union. After the fall of the Soviet Union and the subsequent ethnic struggle in the Caucasus, some Afghan soldiers were drawn into the region's deadly conflict, particularly the Chechen war.

Shahidism is a jihadist branch that has lately emerged in Russia, especially in the North Caucasus. The movement's members saw martyrdom as a way to accomplish their goals. The takeover of the Dubrovka theatre in Moscow, the hospital in Buinatsk in Dagestan, and a slew of suicide bombs are all examples of Shahidism philosophy in action. The increased participation of women in suicide bombings reflects a new trend in Russia's radical Islam. A Chechen lady suicide bomber is suspected of being responsible for the deadly Moscow automobile explosion. Women are also suspected of carrying out suicide strikes on the bus in North Ossetia and at the rock event at the Tushino airfield. The threat of an extremist version of Islam in Russia is ascribed to several factors, which are discussed in detail in the previous chapter of this thesis.

The entry of the region's major Islamic powers into former Soviet territory supported the Wahhabis. With varying degree of success, Saudi Arabia, Iran, the Gulf Emirates and Turkey poured money, teachers, and religious literature into the hands of Russian Muslims. Additionally, they regularly promised to send young Muslim Russians to the Middle East's most famous Islamic institutions for training. Foreign instructors were quickly classified as revolutionary agents, and Russians returning to Russia after studying in Egypt or Saudi Arabia faced opposition when seeking to correct what they saw as a flawed type of Islam. Nonetheless, Saudi variants of Islam started expanding in Russia, particularly in the regions of North Caucasus, where they were more conservative and less tolerant of pre-Islamic customs. The most famous of these was Wahhabism, which, because of its violent nature and widespread dissemination, came to be used to refer to any form of Islamic extremism in Russia. In other words, Wahhabism was the most ill famous largely due to disseminating extremism in Russia and was popularly known as Islamic extremism in Russia (Merati 2017: 107).

Evgenii Primakov's appointment as Foreign Minister in 1996 and the then Prime Minister in 1998 represented a turning point in Russian foreign and security policies (Tsygankov 2006: 34-39). Primakov was an educated Orientalist who was aware with Russia's past diplomatic connections in the Middle East. As Foreign Minister, he made the decision to shift Moscow's area of interest away from the untrustworthy West and into a zone where Russia where it could exert more influence. The issue of Russian Muslims became a top priority in this new policy. Primakov emphasised on the Russia's historical divide between authorised and unauthorised Islam in the light of both religious affinity and the possible strategic significance of Russia's Muslim in dealings with Muslim world.

He acted in response to existing circumstances: Sufi Islam and Sunni Hanafi, as practised inside Russia, include a large element of pre-Islamic practices and rituals. Furthermore, by prohibiting the correct transfer of religious knowledge between generations and state boundaries, Soviet suppression produced new developments such as strong shrine worship and formal inconsistencies in the execution of ceremonies. As a result, Russia's Islam took on a unique and distinct character, formally extremely very dissimilar from Islam as practised in Arab nations (Herman 1996: 271-316).

Primakov saw the advantages of having a 'Russian version' of Islam. He established a theory emphasising the contrast between traditional Islam in Russia and 'foreign' religious schools. Foreign Islam was denounced as essentially hostile and accused of promoting the social and political breakdown of Russia, while the former was deemed the only type of Islam legally authorised in Russia. Fighting against foreign influence on native religions has been a key component of Russian foreign policy in general and anti-terrorism policy in particular since the mid-1990s.

For several reasons, Primakov's conceptual paradigm was successful. Firstly, it gave the means to frame the real security threat posed by Islamic terrorism without criticising Russia's significant Muslim community. Secondly, by siding with the government, it provided 'official' Islamic organisations with the option to participate in public life. As their power grew, Muslim leaders were able to create a secure haven for moderate Muslims to follow their own religion. Additionally, the government could ensure the loyalty of official Islamic organisations by maintaining control over the legitimising requirements for all approved religions (Merati 2017: 107-109)

3.5.2 Chechnya:

Mikhail Gorbachev who took initiatives to launch new programs such as *perestroika* and *glasnost*. As mentioned above, the new freedoms and liberties under *perestroika* and *glasnost* brought about significant changes in the society as religious groups and organisations could apply for registration. This affected the Muslim populace in several ways and led to various cultural changes in the society.

It is noteworthy to mention that the Islamic extremism in the Caucasus was one of the significant concerns of the government and at the same time it was the regime under which Caucasus was given a greater measure of autonomy leading to changed circumstances for the Muslim population. In this regard, it is to be understood that Chechnya's sovereignty was something which was a great development for the Islamic state as the doing away with the political structure of the erstwhile USSR led to the declaration of independence of these states. In Boris Yeltsin's address, it became clear when he stated that "take as much sovereignty as you can stomach!"

Just before the dismantling of the USSR, Dzhokar Dudayev, a military officer of the army was chosen as the President of Chechnya in 1991 with more than 80 percent vote share. On November 1, he attempted to form the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria (ChRI) and led to a division of the republic of Chechnya and Ingushetia within the Republic of Russia. Chechnya could not make a contract on federalism with Moscow as it was asymmetric, as done by Tatarstan and Bashkortostan (Hughes 2007).

Chechen rebels had not been very religious in their ethos and when the first war began in December 1994, the Islamic organisations from the Persian Gulf region as well as people from there took part in a very dominant way about the borders to think of an image of the nation where the Chechens can have their say. Dudayev and his associates made a strong confrontation with the Russians and they understood that if religion was taken up as an ideology for grouping people together then it will become more successful. Thus, *Gazawat*, the notion of the 'holy war' became a significant mobilising force during that time in Chechen. Tishkov writes, "attitudes toward Islam among Dudayev's close followers and himself were cautious and uncertain, and they essentially remained non-believers. Dudayev was never seen praying; there were no Islamic symbols in his home or offices; and he never went to the mosque" (Tishkov 2004: 169). Thus, in the liberation of Chechen, the role of religion, often the radical one, is of immense significance as it is thought that "Dudayev's use of Islam was often correlated with moments of extreme urgency, when his leadership (or the independence were) seriously threatened" (Hughes, 2007: 276-279).

In December 1994, the First Chechen War was launched in an effort to implement the "constitutional order" in the Chechen republic. The war proved fatal as 35,000 people got killed and 50,000 suffered directly or indirectly (Dunlop and Menon 2006) and this is merely a conservative estimate. The mufti of Chechnya, Akhmad Kadyrov, and future President of Chechnya, had given a call for the 'holy war' against Moscow.

Dudayev was killed in April 1996, by a Russian missile and this further led to a certain kind of Islamic radicalisation as his death worked as a catalyst. Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev after Dudayev's death, took office in an acting capacity until the 1997 presidential election. Yandarbiyev also attempted to set up an Islamic state by imposing the Sharia law though it was opposed by the local populace to a greater

extent. The ideology of socialism had already ended, and Islam was becoming the way of life and thought which was meant to liberate the Muslims who had long been oppressed. Islamic fighters had already made a significant influence on the warlords such as Shamil Basayev, Arbi Barayev, Ruslan Gelaev and Salman Raduyev and mobilising the local people was gaining greater importance. The Chechen War was very infamous in Russia when the consultations ultimately achieved the Khasavyurt Agreement in 1996, but they did not address the problems of Chechnya. After the conclusion of the First Chechen War, the problems were not addressed and opened the way for the Second Chechen War in 1999. When elections happened in 1997, Aslan Maskhadov was elected new President of Chechnya defeating Shamil Basayev and Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev. Representative of OSCE Tim Guldimann acknowledged that election was 'exemplary and free'. While, other global viewers described the election as 'legitimate and democratic' (Evangelista 2002: 48-50).

The Russian government on the other hand "failed to deliver the economic and reconstruction aid promised and returned to its pre-invasion policy of blockade and subversion in Chechnya, and of securing its international isolation" (Hughes 2007: 93-95). At that time, the Chechen government had a greater responsibility which was meant to rebuild the industries which can lead to an economic revival without any support from Russia or from any other nation. The funds arriving from Moscow were done away with because of the corruption. The economic hardships of the people thus led to a situation when the youths were easily attracted to extremist activities as Islamic organisations were using money to attract the youths. (Sakwa 2005: 4-11). From 1997 to 1999, military had more power in Chechnya than the governance of the newly autonomous nation. From 1998 to 1999, Ilyas Akhmadov confirms the fact that "most of the government's affiliates had their own personal militias and were former military commanders" (Akhmadov and Lanskoy, 2010).

This lawlessness in every sphere of life — whether political or social or economic or cultural led to a situation when the commanders of the army such as Basayev, Khattab and Raduyev had become the most vital part of the political machinery. And thus, their views on political and religious matters were very significant in the formation and governance of the Chechen Republic's central political actors. General anarchy in Chechnya was primarily fashioned by field commanders for the purpose of

destabilising the process and re-establishing the oil pipelines, as well as the Maskhadov government in general (Evangelista 2002: 46-62). At the same time, foreign Islamic organisations were also at work in tandem. They were very influential as they were close allies of the President and there was a fear of an eminent Civil War. Hughes felt that "the struggle for power in the aftermath of the First Chechen War was framed around the sectarian tensions between moderate and radical Islamists" (Hughes 2007: 94-95).

Following Aslan Maskhadov's election as Chechnya's president in January 1997, the Islamisation process continued. Maskhadov stated his ambition to Chechnya into an Islamic state and rename the republic the 'Islamic Republic of Ichkeria' during a visit to Turkey. He also signed an order extending Sharia to all parts of the state and establishing a panel of religious leaders to prepare a constitution based on the Quran and Sharia (McDaniel 1996: 179).

The early secular Mashkadov government faced growing opposition from a diverse fusion of radical Islamists, including ethnic Chechens such as Salman Raduyev and Shamil Basayev as well as foreign militants like Khattab, during the interwar era (1997-1999). As Schaefer correctly points out, the delicate coalition between Sufis, Chechen nationalists, and extreme Islamists immediately collapsed when the First World War ended, as is typical after a civil war. (Schaefer 2010: 172-175). Maskhadov chose Basayev to lead the government from 1997 to 1998 as Vice-Prime Minister in order control the radicals. But Basayev could not bring about the desired social order. Maskhadov was unenthusiastic to command a crackdown on widespread unlawful activities across Chechnya, for the anxiety of infuriating a civil conflict.

The Second Chechen War lasted from 1999 to 2009, with the Russian government legitimately broadcasting the termination of the counter-terrorist operations. The Second Chechen War was tossed by using the excuse of counter-terrorism operations against radical Islamists in Chechnya. Putin at that time from Moscow was trying to control the situation by military intervention. He thought that the global networks of the Salafi networks along with Chechen insurgents and other terrorists groups need to be put in order. Thus, many steps were taken with the help of the intervention of the army.

The approaches of the administration of Russia during the Chechen War pursued the following primary goals:

(I) Branding the insurgents and the Chechen government as terrorists.
(II) Promoting a policy of divide and defeat in the Republic to splinter the martial antagonism and aggravate a civil war-like situation in Chechnya.

This was the first policy intended to delegitimise the Chechen government for creating political management favourable to Russia. To carry on with this approach, the Putin government had to come up with means to which the allies in the Chechen social order can be used in a desirable manner by the puppets to govern the republic. The Russian government not only were provoking a civil war but also tried to make a gulf between the traditionalists and the radicals to rule by dividing people. This approach was called as 'Chechenisation' of the conflict. Russell describes 'Chechenisation' "as the delegation of power (including countering separatist insurgents) from the federal centre in Moscow to approved officials in Chechnya who support Kremlin policies" (Russell 2007).

Thus, they tried to have their attention on Akhmad Kadyrov as he was in opposition to the Wahhabists in the period between the wars. The aim was to have a regime of puppet rulers who can be controlled easily. Other moderate leaders, like the Yamadayev brothers and Said-Magomed Kakiyev were taken into consideration too and soon Kadyrov was terminated from the position of Mufti in August 1999 and was later killed in 2004. His son Ramzan then took control of the Chechenisation process started by his father and gathered the resources necessary to form a paramilitary force for insurgent purposes and bring about order in the society. Alu Alkhanov said that 7000 people in his squad, or 40 to 50% of his force were ex-insurgent fighters (Kramer 2005). Kadyrov integrated the disparate elements of Islamic law to strengthen the economy and autonomy of the administration. He even made the youths wear headscarves and skullcaps as was the norm in Islam. But at the same time, he was "against the use of black hijabs, chadors, niqabs or other Islamic outfits, arguing that they are not part of the Chechen culture" (Vatchagaev 2012).

On the other hand, Putin radically suppressed the terrorist activities within the country. September 1, 2004, was a significant day in this regard as it was the date on

which the Russia- Chechen relationship underwent changes that dramatically changed the course of the movement with a three-day incident when a group of armed Chechen and Ingush Islamic radicals took control of SNO (School Number One) in Beslan, North Ossetia, an autonomous republic in Russia's Northern Caucasus. Their confrontation carried on for three days in which 385 people died and 186 among them were children whereas thousands were taken hostage. They demanded independence of Chechnya as well as the departure of all Russian troops stationed there. Many were killed in the process of retaliation and what was significant was that it led to a situation when Kremlin consolidated power and Putin said that it was a result of "direct intervention of international terrorism" (Radio Free Europe 7 September 2004). Putin decided on the path of combating the Chechen demands and looked only at the aspect of international terrorism. What is essential to understand here is that Putin's these kinds of remarks showed that they were unable to understand the demands and were trying primarily to look at the matter from a global perspective rather than a local one.

Thus, the retaliation was given the tag of "counterterrorist operations" (Hughes 2007: 107-110). Putin justified his policy as a step to deal with the anti-Chechen war policy which was meant to deal with the terror world over than just to look at the problem of Chechen. He tried to explain in his interview in 2001 in Focus magazine, "it is not an issue of Chechnya's membership, or non-membership of the Russian Federation. Chechnya was a gangster enclave" (Putin, 24 September 2001).

Consequently, it was thought that military interventions were the only solution to the problem as envisaged by Putin (Hughes 2013: 111) and a "global war on terrorism" became the forefront of the issue rather than Chechnya as Putin made it through his declaration that "Chechnya was a platform for the expansion of terrorism into Russia, hotbeds of terrorism, an outpost of international terrorism, a bandit enclave for foreign-sponsored Islamic fundamentalists, a medieval world". (Putin 26 May 2004). This kind of rhetoric is central to Russia's understanding of the Chechen problem at that time. Thus, though there were many terrorist activities between 2002 and 2004, till about 2009, after that Chechnya was relatively peaceful in all aspects leading to an end in counter-terrorist operations.

Thus, Islam was a device for the rise of Chechen nationalism which aggravated the professed hazards to Russian national integrity by developing ethnic and irreconcilable differences that disconnected ethnic Russians from Muslims. The 1994-1996 Chechen War was a compound phenomenon, with numerous grounds that are even presently discussed and debated. To a large extent, the war was an indicator of Chechen longing for self-government, and it was comparable to other wars of national independence as it was engrained in two centuries of Chechen's confrontation with, and insurgence against, Russian command rather than being a religiously inspired conflict. However, it is also true that the Chechen separatist leadership employed Islam to adopt a sense of Chechen national identity, exceeding family and clan allegiances, and to gather hostility to continued Russian rule. The use of Islam by the Chechens as a tool of separatism, united with the rise of nationalist movements among other Muslim minorities, including the Tatars, strengthened the apparent menace posed by the Muslim people to the Russian Federation's provincial and national integrity.

3.5.3 Dagestan:

Dagestan is the easternmost North Caucasian republic, yet it is the most ethnically diverse. There are few places in the former Soviet Union, and indeed few places in the world now, where such a vast number of small nations exist in such a small region, speaking distinct and mutually incomprehensible languages, as Dagestan does. There are at least 30 languages spoken in Dagestan, and yet it is a place which is very religious. It is thought that Islam had taken root here much before it did in other parts of Russia. Imam Shamil, a person from Dagestan had, therefore, led the 19th-century anti-Russian movement. Presently, there are more than 1,700 Islamic associations in Dagestan which consist of more than 50 percent of what is there in Russia (Igor 2002: 111).

There are few prominent ethnic groups in Dagestan. these are Dargins, Kumyks, Laks, Avars, and Lezgins. Dargins and Avars are the two major political groups. While Kumyks typically live in the lowlands, Dargins, Avars, and Laks typically live in the highlands. Even though the Avars are the majority ethnic group in the republic, ethnic

Dargins have held most key governmental positions. If the Dargins oversee Dagestan's political life, the Avars are in charge of the country's religious life.

The disintegration of the USSR and its policy of 'state-atheism' had a great impact on Islam in Dagestan. Ware and Kisriev talk about how the Islamic revival happened in Dagestan and emphasise three consequences: firstly, a rapid rise in the adherence to traditional Islamic rites; secondly, a resurgence and speedy growth of *tariqah* orders; and thirdly, the spread of Wahhabi fundamentalism as an alternate Islamic trend (Ware and Kisriev 2010: 90).

By 1989, the extremists and radicals in Dagestan were already very active. Therefore, DUMSK (the Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of the North Caucasus) was formed and was asked by the state to control the Muslim populace. But the radicals openly opposed DUMSK and formed their own religious organisations that looked forward to having a much "purer" variant of Islam in the republic of Dagestan. Akhmed-Kadji Akhtaev established the religious organisation, Islamia, in Dagestan (Ware and Kisriev 2010: 90-100). Roschin records that "by the mid-1990s, Dagestan became the ideological centre of fundamentalism in the Northern Caucasus, while Chechnya became its testing ground" (Roschin 2012: 167-169). The Salafist missionaries had an increasing impact in Dagestan which was strengthened by the entry of foreigners in Chechnya and when the First Chechen War finished in 1996.

Kebekov and Akhmed-Kadji Akhtaev quickly emerged as vital leaders in the Salafist crusade in the North Caucasus and Dagestan. Roschin described "Akhtaev as a reasonable figure in the fundamentalist movement and a supporter of non-violent propagandising of Islam" (Roschin 2012: 168). Despite his criticisms of polytheism and Sufi devotion of saints and sheikhs, he favoured learning above subjugation. As a result, he did not advocate overthrowing the secular republican government (Roschin 2012: 168-69). Akhtaev had an unswerving effect on the radicalisation of Islam in Kabardino-Balkaria. When Akhtaev died, probably poisoned, a deep-seated fundamentalist thought emerged as a group of Salafists started *jihad* against the unethical leaders as well as the government. In 1998-1999, they capitalised on the Dargin-Avar tensions and reinforced a religious and military opposition.

The Second Chechen War changed the future of Islamic extremism in Dagestan as they were in the process of restructuring in September 1999. The regime in Dagestan supported the prohibition of Wahhabism within Dagestan which gave more and more power to police as well as the clerics. These impacted lives of common people too as there were arbitrary arrests to control people and this spread all over Caucasus. Wahhabism was predominantly reinforced by "young educated men, who were frustrated by a lack of economic opportunities, or whose education invited a critical attitude towards political realities" (Ware and Kisriev 2009: 113-116). A vital inquiry that prompted from this situation was: why Islam became attractive to so many young minds and why insurgent violence was taken up to raise their protests against the government as well as the religious leaders? Though the immediacy of the second Chechen War and the occasion it created helped the expansion of extremist Islamic thoughts and actions, the causes of these were induced locally.

After Vladimir Putin emerged victorious in the Presidential election in 2000, the political restructuring foremost sought the re-centralisation of power. During the Yeltsin era, federal impact on politics in Dagestan was nominal. This detachment under the Putin government was considered a significant reason for the expansion of radical Islam in the republic and its mounting variability. In addition to having the only collegial executive in the Russian Federation, Dagestan was the only republic with a non-elected executive chief (Ware and Kisriev 2009: 163-168). Thus, a chain of changes followed which led to a presidential system of governance in Dagestan and the legislative process of electing representatives was done away with. The centralisation process after the Beslan event in 2004 led to a situation where the leader was appointed from Moscow.

There were vast changes, with Putin's reforms, in the political and cultural domain as the consensus was replaced by competition and there were efforts to get as many resources as possible. Corruption became more prevalent and so did nepotism, and personal economic gains became the way of utilising the nation's funds (Ware and Kisriev 2009: 212-213). There were also heavy crackdowns on the opponents of the political and economic order, especially by the Magomedov's circle which was primarily made up of Dargins from his own clan. This led to a situation when the political power in Dagestan was primarily a matter of the state apparatus, rather than

of the support of the people. This further led to various kinds of tensions and instabilities, sometimes political and sometimes religious, and much violence in the social order. It was primarily done to suppress Islamic extremism so that the Wahhabi followers cannot find a strong foot anymore. Human rights violations in the form of torture and abuses were used to a greater extent to suppress any kind of radicalism.

It was the time when the Salafists found that they needed to organise themselves in a stronger way. They did so in their underground state leading to many terrorist attacks including one that left 42 people dead and more than 150 injured in Kaspiysk, Makhachkala on 9 May 2002. Between 2004 and 2006, it was a violent period with Chechen insurgency strategy and high insurgent activities. Gordon Hahn says that the rebel group "is said to have been responsible for the killings of some 30 Dagestani police officers and appeared to be behind a series of assassination attempts against various officials". Furthermore, it also "targeted economic objectives such as the gas and oil industry" (Hahn 2007: 118). In 2005, Dagestan turned into a republic with the greatest number of terrorist acts in the North Caucasus and about 2,500 activists were active and working in a coordinated manner by challenging the police forces (Dunlop 2012: 57).

As terrorist activities were very much prevalent, many people started opposing Magomedov, as the primary problem with Dagestan was that a small group of influential people had taken over Dagestan. They were using it for their own benefits and therefore seized the political and the economic powers. In such a situation, radicalism was the answer to solve the social problems of Dagestan for many as they thought it was the only way left. This led to a situation where people thought they should run a parallel society which should be based on the Sharia. In other words, for replacing the corrupt system of Dagestan, they thought radical Islam is the only answer (Ware and Kisriev 2009: 205-206).

Muslims joined extremism as abuses by state apparatuses were uncontrolled and happening under the command of the local influential people. Dunlop shows from a survey done in 2005 "that 88 percent of the residents in the republic did not have faith in the Dagestani police" (Dunlop 2012: 57-59). The study by Mendelson and Gerber on Dagestan shows that no one trusted the government and the legal system. As

people were easy targets of the security forces, common people, intellectuals and even pious Muslims joined radical groups. Some even went to the extent of using violence to get their dues. For some, violence was also the norm by which they could voice their opposition to the non-devout Muslims or 'infidels' (Gerber and Mendelson 2009).

The Shariat jamaat became a common ideology and the norm of the Caucasus Emirate (CE), based on which it was established. Small insurgent cells had gained momentum by then and they carried on with their insurgencies. As the CE was established, during the same time, Khalilov was killed in September 2007. But as the Emirate came into existence, the violence did not subside and many leaders came into purview, like in 2008 Abdul Madzhid, in 2009 Omar Sheikhulayev and Umulat Magomedov, in 2010 Magomedali. These leaders were killed but the insurrection gathered momentum more than before 2007 (Gerber and Mendelson 2009).

Mukha Aliev in his years of presidency, from 2006 to 2010, was not successful to do away with corruption or radicalism. He even could not bring the economy to regularity and thus instability became the norm. A new president Magomedsalam Magomedov was choosen in February 2010 by Aleksandr Khloponin. They wanted to bring about a strategy by which they can do away with radicalism in Dagestan.

Magomedov challenged the militants to surrender or to bear penalties. He supported repression and military to control violence. The Russian federal government moved its military there but it increased militant activities 2010 onwards. The North Caucasus served as the focal point of these activities and their leaders were Khasavyurt, Makhachkala, Kaspiysk, Kizlyar, Derbent, Sergokala, Tsumada and Untsukul.

In the regions of North Caucasus, the formation of CE was the most significant event in the jihadist movement. In 2007, CE declared its rule over most of the North Caucasus nations, adopting hardline Islam as its political doctrine. Terrorist attacks were carried out by CE in Ingushetia, Dagestan, Chechnya, and Kabardino-Balkaria, as well as elsewhere in the Caucasus. Although radical Islam has existed as a populist movement since the First Chechen War's end. Islam became more extremist when CE was founded. By making extreme Islam a political force, the CE increased the

extremist tendency. As opposed to the First Chechen War, which was primarily fought by local recruits and was based on a nationalist ideology, the rebel leaders of the Second Chechen War were motivated by religious radicalism in order to expand the insurgency across the North Caucasus. Although there was no formal structure in place until 2005, cooperation between regional extremist organisations started in Chechnya and Kabardino-Balkaria (Zhemukhov 2019: 2).

In early 2005, Anzor Astemirov, the commander of the Kabardino-Balkaria insurgents, proposed uniting all anti-Russian religious groups in the North Caucasus, but the plan was rejected by the President Abdul-Khalim Sadullayev. Following Sadullayev's death in the summer of 2006, Doku Umarov, the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria's (ChRI) new president, accepted Astemirov's offer and established CE. Six vilayats were included in the CE (administrative divisions). In October 2007, CE formed a new ideology based on radical Islam without nationalism at its core. CE terrorist operations have become Russia's domestic security forces' greatest challenge. Beginning in 2010, the total number of terrorist strikes decreased due to strong actions taken by the Russian government. However, Bombings in Moscow in 2010 were carried out by CE, who also carried out a number of other terrorist attacks across Russia (Zhemukhov 2019: 2).

3.6 Islamic Factor and Its Impact on the Formation of Military Doctrine in post-Soviet Russia

Most Muslim soldiers in the Russian empire were from the Volga-Ural region. The region was under subjugation of Moscow since the 16th century. Muslim population from the region used to be regular recruits in the army for a long time and since the 18th century they were regularly recruited. The beginning of compulsory recruitment in 1874 for military service supplementary raised the number of additional applicants for military service. Even until 1874, most of the Russian Empire's culturally and ethnically diverse Muslim population was excluded from conscription, and only a small number of them served in separate 'ethnic units'. The Muslim people of Central Asia, the Northern and Southern Caucasus, and Crimea were among those affected. Reasons of their rejection were diverse: for the Crimean Tatars, the administrators were anxious that putting them to military amenity would lead to one more mass

flight to the Ottoman Empire; for Caucasus Muslims the government remained unsure about their commitment to Russia despite their attraction for military service; and for Central Asians the reason was the government's poor organisational structure (Davies 2017: 1).

Until the First World War, the Russian Empire had a policy of not requiring Central Asians to serve in the military. This programme, which was primarily motivated by an ethnic bias, was a component of a control plan to ensure the stability of the Empire's non-Russian territories. The need for manpower did not necessitate the deployment of Muslims from the North Caucasus and Central Asia prior to the First World War. However, to a large extent, these Muslim battalions typically served on a regional basis or were used as support troops in remote places, releasing Slavs for fighting tasks at the front (Curran and Ponomareff 1982: 6).

Several Muslim divisions were founded during the First World War, with the so-called 'wild division from the Caucasus' establishing a reputation in Russia and abroad for its brutality and bravery. Nicholas II, Emperor of Russia (1868-1918), ordered that the men of Central Asia be recruited into labour battalions on the front lines in the summer of 1916, triggering a massive rebellion in the region. The big numbers of Muslims served in the ranks of the army. Prior to the start of World War one, there were only about 300 Muslim officers in the Russian Army, 10 of whom had risen to the rank of general. As a result of St. Petersburg's policy of very selective social integration in the empire's Muslim peripheries, the bulk of these officers were from the local elite in their individual communities and had risen to the higher levels of the military hierarchy.

During the First World War, the armed force was by and large positive about the faithfulness of Muslim armed forces. This did not alter even after the Ottoman Empire came in for the war and the Sultan declared a 'Holy War' against the allied forces and asked the Muslim people of the Russian, British, and French kingdoms to upsurge against their governments. Before the commencement of the First World War, nine posts for Muslim military chaplains were created by the Russian War Ministry between 1914 and 1917, which is being increased to about 40 posts. This was especially significant for the Volga-Ural region, as for the Muslim public and

especially for the Muslim soldiers, the chaplains were sufficient in number. It can be seen as a proactive policy for the Muslims by the centralised government. But the Muslim population was still dissatisfied as there was some lack in the arrangements, as the burial rites and the food available were not according to the Muslim sentiments. Moreover, the charities which were prevalent for the wounded army men and their families, especially in the Volga-Ural region, were not happy with the arrangements for them which led to dissatisfaction among many ethnic groups, especially among the Muslims (Davies 2017: 4).

As early as 1915, the Muslim politicians especially from the Muslim regions raised significant concerns and emphasized the contribution of the Muslims in the war. They also told in more positive voice that the Muslims were much loyal to the Russian nation. The Muslim Press of the Volga-Ural region also made it a point to state the contributions of the Muslim community especially in the war as they gave their service to the army and perished in the war front, showcasing their loyalty to the Russian nation. But they also felt that the Russian centralised power was not taking enough care of the Muslim community as they accused the centralised government and were much critical towards their policies. They accused that the Muslim population was discriminated in comparison to the other communities and they should be given an equal footing in every course of the Russian nation.

The imperial government had to face the dissatisfaction of the Muslim soldiers of the Volga-Ural region often. They often were more likely to see the call to army as a tragedy than as a show of their loyalty to the nation. Even then they continued to serve the nation loyally. But their discontent became visible when during the Russian Revolution they emerged as a more vocal and organised group. They formed Soldier's Council and presented their political demands during the revolution. These political demands largely included reorganization of the army to allow Muslims to have their own units. This was also supported by the Provisional Government (Davies 2017: 4).

The distinctions between "Slavic" and "Muslim" soldiers were considerably more obvious during the Soviet era because a sizable portion of Central Asians and Caucasians were a part of the Soviet Union. The Russian Army, however, is more

Russian or Slavic than "Soviet" under the current conditions, and thus the multi-ethnic configuration is much more slanted against Muslims.

The Red Army had tried to recruit the Muslim population and other people from different ethnic communities within the ranks of the military service. These initiatives were a component of the Soviet Union's *Korenizatsiia* Policy (the programme for educating and advancing non-Russians) which was done with the mission of incorporating more and more non-Russians from every sphere and different ranks of the society. The efforts were visible first in the military formations which started in the 1920s and carried on till 1938 (Harmstone 1978: 4).

In the Second World War, the Soviet Union deployed Muslim units due to a shortage of manpower. Nevertheless, Muslim soldiers' performance in the battle was mixed. On the one hand, certain mostly Muslim forces distinguished themselves in conflicts like the defence of Stalingrad, Moscow and the Caucasus. However, a significant number of Muslim combatants who joined German Anti-Soviet forces (estimated to be between a quarter of a million and 1.4 million) increased Soviets' worries about their Muslim soldiers' efficacy and political trustworthiness (Curran and Ponomareff 1982: 24).

Following the World War two, the army was renamed the Soviet Army and it was much more multi-ethnic in character. Though a rivalry for the ranks within the army was visible on ethnic lines. It was a very significant phenomenon as there was a kind of racism which was against the Central Asians of the Slavic region. This is somehow a continuation of the stereotypical view of the Muslims prevalent in the pre-Soviet era. But in the period from the 1950s till the disintegration of the USSR, these racist biases were much more institutional in manner. The Muslims were subject to continuous and systematic discrimination within the army. This problem of the Soviet Army got complicated as it was figured out that the number of Muslims in the army was increasing day by day in comparison to ethnic Russians. The lack of Russians in the army was becoming a problem in terms of having a say in military affairs. The rising birth rate of the Muslim communities as against the falling one of the Slavs led to consistent progress of Muslims in the army (Mather 2003: 17-18).

The Islamic factor has an impact on the country's military doctrine, political strategies, and decisions. The Islamic factor has had a considerable impact on the content of Russia's military doctrine, national security concept and foreign affairs. The Russian Federation's military policy states that radical religious, nationalist, terrorist movements, and separatist have a destabilising effect on Russia's military security. The formation, alerting, and draining of armed units and organisations on the territory of other states with the goal of dispatching them to act on the territory of Russia and its allies are major external threats. The major internal threats, according to the doctrine are religious separatist, illegal activities of extremist nationalist and terrorism directed against the Russian Federation's unity and integrity, destabilising domestic atmosphere, and the creation, alarming, training, and functioning of organised crime and terrorism. The Islamic component is also considered in military-political strategies and related issues. It concerns military law, the military conflict involving the Russian armed forces, future wars and military conflict plants, comprehension of correction, and future war forms (Mohanty 2016: 123).

In post-Soviet Russia, the rules of the military realm were updated keeping the Islam factor and its effect in the mind. For instance, the Federal Law on how to deal with terrorism was introduced in 1998, primarily due to the influence of the Islamic element. First time in Russian history, the anti-terrorism legislation has aimed to describe counter-terrorism activities, which have been identified by the Ministry of Defence, and the other federal authorities, as the focus of counter-terrorism operations. The experiences of the Afghan conflict and the two Chechen wars, in which the Russian army participated, are considered to be serious when taking decisions and making any military and political plans and policies. The experiences of military actions against Islamic revolutionaries have been considered by the defence and the interior ministries. The result of the research has been conveyed to the troops. All these conclusions were used when making the military doctrine as well as the foreign policy doctrines (Mohanty 2016: 123).

The Islamic factor is also a deciding factor in the plans of military actions against Islamic organisations within the Russian territory. It, thus, brings about the changes in thoughts, plans and future decisions about the nature and forms of war. The appearance of the Muslim question in the international field, which has no links with

national and state formations, gives assistance to this process. They do not have strong military forces like the states. However, their military structure is not very static.

It is necessary to understand that in future the Russian military plans and strategies will have to be such that they help sort out conflicts in different countries of Islamic world and in the Muslim dominates regions in Russia. During the Second Chechen War, in 1999, the state of Tatarstan implemented a policy to stop employing people for the Russian army. This was done with the objective that the Tartar soldiers from Dagestan were fighting against their own brothers from the Caucasus. Thus, a ban was made effective according to which volunteers from the territory of Tatarstan were not to be recruited for army fighting in North Caucasus. (Mohanty 2016: 124).

The coalition component of the Russian defence strategy is promoted by the Islamic factor. The Russian President emphasised that Russia needed to prevent the spread of Islamic fundamentalism in Russia and other parts of Europe. At the same time, Russia should search for partnerships to tackle increasing Islamic terrorism. The Islamic factor, thus influenced various angles of military planning and choices. Issues influenced by the Islamic factor included the freedom of conscience in the armed forces, recruitment of soldiers from Islam-oriented regions, fight against illegal military formation, training of specialists on Islam for troops, development of coalition, territorial locations of troops and arsenal, countering influence of religious organisation in the armed forces, countering discreditation campaign against armed forces, participation in anti-terrorist operations, and the use of military actions against Islamic militants.

It is noteworthy that the situation related to freedom of conscience in the armed forces of Russia is fundamentally different from that of Soviet armed forces. According to social logical surveys done in the armed forces, the number of believers in the armed forces has expanded considerably, requiring military leadership to maintain contact with associated religious leaders. While providing military training, it is necessary to consider a shift in the serviceman's value orientation system. The increase in the number of believers in the armed troops heightened the possibility of religious conflict within the forces. However, the issue of religious harmony among servicemen

of many confessions, particularly orthodox Christianity and Islam, is growing more relevant. It appears that the essential prerequisites for safeguarding the right of service for the freedom of conscience and faith have not been created.

Islamophobic beliefs are not common within the army's ranks, according to sociological studies. According to the research, only 3.2 percent of people have a negative attitude toward Muslims. However, 34.2 percent of those polled had a bad attitude about Chechens, 30 percent against the Degastanis, and 21.3 percent for Azeris. Thus, 24.3 percent of people have a negative opinion about Caucasians. (Mohanty 2016: 125).

The presence of a Muslim spiritual representative in an army unit is a point of contention in Russia. The Russian defence ministry had secured an arrangement with the Russian Orthodox Christian church to have a priest in army units. There have been numerous reasons in favour of reaching a similar arrangement with the Muslim spiritual board. However, unlike the Orthodox church, the Russian Muslim community lacks a centralised leadership, making signing such an agreement problematic. That is a good idea; perhaps the army's leadership should meet muftis at the military district level.

The presence of priests in military units is a key component of the agreement between the Ministry of Defence and religious organisations. Priests can be considered to have replaced the Soviet Army's political section. However, it appears that Orthodox church priests stationed in army units read sermons, engage in religious team discussions, and occasionally execute religious rituals during the launch of new missiles, ships, and submarines. When the Muslim spiritual leadership demands some sort of alliance with Orthodox Christianity, they ask for authorisation for the mullahs to meet with Muslim soldiers and organise Friday prayers in army units where there are numerous Muslims.

The armed forces and other military structures, which include a considerable number of Muslims, are fighting religious extremism and separatism. The number of army personnel from Muslim-majority republics, where the population is much younger, is steadily increasing. In Muslim-dominated republics, the percentage of people rejecting to serve in the army is lower than in Russia as a whole. So far, religious

differences in the armed forces have not caused any conflict. However, when servicemen's religious awareness rises, the possibility of a foundation for tension build-up cannot be ruled out. The growth of Orthodox Christianity's influence in the army could lead to an increase in Islam's influence in the military. In the Muslim-dominated region, the Islamic factor influences the military recruitment process. According to social logical studies, Muslim servicemen's religious understanding is influenced by national tradition. This helps to explain why the Volga-Ural area and the North Caucasus have a higher proportion of believers.

Mathers argues that some scholars believe that "Muslims in the Russian Army today face systematic institutional discrimination in relation to their ethnic Russian counterparts. This ethnically based subjugation of Muslims in the Russian army is a continuation of discrimination that existed in the Soviet and Tsarist eras. It is kept alive today through persisting attitudes and prejudices among the Russian military leadership, almost all of whom served alongside Muslims in Soviet times, particularly in Afghanistan. In the search for a post-Soviet ideology, the Russian army was subjected to both official and unofficial attempts to give it a Russian-Christian character. Though reconciliation attempts continue, Muslims are greatly underrepresented in the Russian army, and this poses a larger risk to the welfare of the Russian state as a whole" (Mathers 2003: 12).

On the above basis, it can be concluded that the Islamic factor played an important role in the Russian Military policy formation and registering its presence in the Russian military. According to Professor Bella, an expert on Russia, the Islamic factor in the military policy of Russia will be on the rise in future and will heavily influence the policy decisions. As stated, there is a direct link between the demographic profile which leads to inter-ethnic and interfaith relations. Religious radicalism, which is on the rise in Russia as in other parts of the world, will heavily determine the policy decisions and will be a security threat for Russia (Laruelle 2016).

3.7 Russia's Islamic Threat in the Wake of Islamic Revivalism

The pro-westerners felt that the radical views of Islam are a threat and these liberals view the Islamic threat from the point of the view that the people practising Islam are suspicious of certain radicalism. These pro-westerners often think of Islam as barbaric

and think that this barbaric culture is encroaching upon Western values and civilization (Sergei 2005). The backwardness and barbarism are put as a binary opposite to that of the West which promotes democracy, liberalism and modernisation. Vasily Aksyonov's article named "No More Wagging of the Tail: Islamic Terrorism and Intelligentsia's Position" Written in 2001, it is a compelling illustration of this pro-Western perspective. Though Aksyonov's later writings also specify that his opinion continue to be the same. Aksyonov states that the war against terrorism has has been going on for more than 20 years and is the same as the war on Islam (Sergei 2005). Aksyonov begins by stating that not all Muslims, and certainly not all Muslim countries, hate Western democracies and principles. Terrorism was developed and propagated by some believers, including Wahhabis, radical Islamists and insane loons who have organised a worldwide hate organisation. Islam and the so-called definite core are, in his opinion, the enemy (Sergei 2005).

The same kind of views were also fashioned in Gordon M. Hahn's book titled 'Russia's Islamic Threat' where he equated Muslim ethnic, cultural and sizeable fast-growing populace with security threat of Russia underneath the context of the Chechen war. Russian supposed Islamic hazard is not only limited to Chechen War. But its strange characteristic lies in disbursing terrorist doings in the whole regions of the North Caucasus predominantly to the five other Muslim republics of Ingushetiya, Kabardino-Palkariya, Dagestan, Adygeya and Karachaevo-Cheressiya. This had the potential to rapidly spread to Tatarstan and Bashkortostan and elsewhere. The Russian Chechen-led network of "Islamoterrorists" is increasing not only in size but also in sophistication and power under the guidance of Al-Qaeda and the global jihadist movement (Hahn 2007: 1).

The western borders of Russia also saw many social and political tensions during this time as ethnic conflicts were on the rise, especially in the Karelian town of Kondopoga where Islam-based fundamentalism was on the rise and became a concern for Russia. The organized violence of the Islamic fundamentalism was thus the problem and the ethnic groups with the issue of social justice were becoming less tolerant and were asserting their ethnic and religious differences. This exhibition and expression of religious identity came from a notion of preservation of ethnic identity and was disturbing the peace of the social order (Kumar 2009).

Ethnic conflicts are taking place around the world in the present circumstances and there is much political violence related to it. In this wake, Islamic fundamentalism needs to be studied to understand its manifestation. Islam is believed to possess both tolerance and extremism (Schwartz 2003: 32). The challenges must be handled in the context of social justice; yet, the true Islamic state gets its strength from the integration of religious and secular power, which Muslim liberals aggressively oppose (Trenin 2004: 71). Islamic radicals wanted to create nations based on Islamic ideals and beliefs, but Islamic fundamentalism also involves ethnocultural and religious relations in the Caucasus, as well as the expansion of Islam in post-Soviet Russia (Trenin 2004: 71-72).

Radical Islam is thought to be manifested in the traditions of Salafiyya and Wahhabism. Wahhabism is thought to be a conventional form of Sunni Islam, or jihadism. (Herd 1998: 21) It is a local Caucasian endorsing radical movement, which confronts Sufi tradition. This fundamental variant in Islam aims to attain its social and political objectives through violence or through holy war. But, the general plea of extremist Islam in Russia is usually accredited to social and economic issues, cultural and political reasons as well as institutional weaknesses (Hunter 2004: 85).

Gordon M. Hahn contemplates a few factors to be important for understanding Islamic radicalism — 'economic stagnation' among Muslims, 'institutional decay' and 'ideological de-legitimisation'. These factors, together with the rapid growth of the Muslim population in Muslim-populated areas, are anticipated to increase demands on the Russian government, particularly with regard to financial support for the North Caucasus economy. If ties between Russians and Muslims remain unchanged, Muslim demography in the North Caucasus will change the existing slow, restricted influx of young Muslims into jihadism. At the same time, Russia, like the previous USSR, has other issues that threaten its stability, and it may eventually fall into the failed state category. A huge and diverse northern realm requires massive defence, communication, and transportation expenditure. Non-Muslim minorities in Karelia, the Volga region, Siberia, and Kaliningrad, as well as tens of thousands of illegal Chinese immigrants, pose a danger to Moscow's control of the Russian Far East (Hahn 2007: 29).

Simultaneously, as a result of Putin's counter-revolution, more radical political demands have emerged. It heightened communal politicisation among Russia's Muslims and provided jihadist beliefs with a voice. The emergence of mass Muslim or pan-Islamic groups in Russia is being hampered by divisions among Muslims based on location, ethnicity, clan, theology, organisation, politics, and philosophy (Hahn 2007: 29)

Recently Islamophobia is something that Muslims are facing all over the world and because of this, they are also facing harassment of different kinds. In the pre-9/11 era, the human rights abuses in Chechen had the attention of the worldwide media, but now things have changed when one is thinking in terms of how Chechen is the hotbed of terrorist activities and how it is creating problems for the world. So, in the aftermath of 9/11 and international terrorism, Muslim Russians' ethnic, racial, and economic problems, as well as their activities, are viewed through the lens of jihadism.

3.8 State's Role in Integration of Muslims

The state has the power to make policies that promote religious communities' political participation, civil society activities, and their socio-economic development. The secular state must play a significant role in organising religious governance and institutionalisation of the region, while preserving the secular atmosphere of the state. The state must resolve the differences, not only between several religions but also within a specific religion. Overall, the state's accountability is to assimilate individuals of specific beliefs with it for the sake of security, permanency and harmony in the social order.

Russia's strategy to integrating Muslims is affected by its own historical and political circumstances.. The overwhelming importance of religion and its history, as well as the necessity to safeguard the cultural originality of the Muslim community while integrating them into the state for national security reasons, have all had a significant influence. In Russia, multiethnicity, confessionalism, multinationalism, and cultural variety are all factors that influence the integration process. The Russian state, because of the country's long historical relationship with Islam, has a complicated and unique connection with this religion. Not only Muslim migrants but also ethnic

Muslims who have lived on Russian soil for generations, even before the arrival of the dominant religion, Orthodox Christianity, have been interrogated as part of Russia's integration process.

Russia's Muslim populations have significant regional differences largely due to different ethnic, political, and theological characteristics. This ranges from extremist Islam in the North Caucasus to moderate Islam in the Volga area. In terms of integration, the most noticeable difference may be seen between Muslims in the Volga region and Muslims in the North Caucasus. The integration process in the Volga area has been more effective whereas there is a separ atist feeling in the North Caucasus against the Russian state. As a result, in order to resolve the integration issue, the state must pursue different strategies in different regions (Knysh 2007: 503-530).

The Volga and Ural regions have a stronger sense of belonging to the state. Therefore, the state's efforts to centralise regional administration are more accepted in the Volga-Ural region than in the North Caucasus. While separatist movements are essentially non-existent in the Volga-Ural region, but the North Caucasus has become a hotspot of terrorism, extremism, and separatism, which has become a major concern for state security (Sagramoso 2007: 681-705). The state does not endeavour to enforce central authority in the North Caucasus as much as it does in the Volga region, as it is aware of the separatist spirit and rebellious corrector. The state should stop trying to undermine local and religious authorities through traditional means. Instead, it strives to build its authority there with their assistance and the careful application of tradition. In the name of national security, the government safeguards the cultural peculiarities of Muslim populations while integrating them. The uniqueness of Russian semi-authoritarian system stems from a combination of 'multiethnicity,' 'multi-confessionalism,' and cultural variety that defies any one label of narrowly defined multiculturalism or assimilation (Braginskaia 2010: 49).

In order to protect the interests of Muslims in Russia, a delicate balance has been struck between top-down assimilation and the preservation of multi-cultural self-sufficiency. In reality, suppression of Muslims and their traditions have followed brief liberal periods of respect for Muslims and their religious institutions. This was in the

tradition the state security concerns as well as the state's ideological concerns. The historical interaction and development in the relationship between the state and Islam is characterised by "forced assimilation" and "liberal accommodation". This reveals that Russian strategy of Muslim integration have been of semi-authoritarian nature.

Catherine the Great established formal Muslim representational institutions to ensure Russia's internal stability by ensuring secular and effective control over Muslims. The Muslim Spiritual Boards, which were founded in 1788, can be seen as a precursor to some of the secular orders that are currently in place to control Muslim representation. A programme of "Russification and Christianization" of Muslim people in the Volga Region in the 19th century was driven by an excessive emphasis on Tsarist goals of "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality."

The Soviet Union's suppressive approach to intergrate various ethnic groups and developing a "scientific atheism" undermined Muslim institution greatly. Russian politics have been distinguished by constantly re-evaluating its approach towards identity and religion since the fall of the Soviet Union. The emphasis during the Yeltsin era was on respect for individual identities, religious resurgence and more institutional independence. Whereas, Vladimir Putin has been more engaged in crafting unique and synthesised identity of Russia. Russia has always been a powerful multi-religious, multicultural and multi-ethnic country. Initiatives by the state to improve ties with its "traditional religions" and the creation of social and religious organisations that could aid in promoting world peace and spiritual rejuvenation are current examples of this. (Braginskaia 2010: 50).

An effort by the Kremlin to reformulate and re-appropriate the national unity narrative based on Russia's complex past has been made in response to Putin's aim to turn Russia into a powerful sovereign nation (Laruelle 2008). Government officials and United Russia party spokespersons use public statements to emphasise that Russian statehood was achieved by inner strength, spiritual revival and the necessity to assemble and preserve the peaceful coexistence of various people and confessions. A narrative that emphasises the value of interfaith harmony as a brand-new form of interreligious cooperation is evident in Putin's 2007 speech to Muslim leaders. This, in Putin's view, is the foundation of Russia's inner strength as a significant global

power. (Putin 8 November 2007). The idea of spiritual resurgence, offered as an appealing blend of secular and religious principles, is symptomatic.

State discourse on Muslim integration is based on the same concept of inter-faith dialogue and multi-ethnic strength. Following Putin, new President Dmitry Medvedev repeated several times that Russia's success depends on national unity, inter-religious harmony, patriotism and socio-economic stability. As a result, the state's involvement becomes crucial in creating this new, complex Russian identity. To support Russia's claim of unity in diversity, a separate Muslim identity is used. Russia's inclusive conception of its identity serves as further motivation for the state to influence and promote Islamic education in order to create a Muslim generation dedicated to interreligious dialogue.

Moreover, it serves security interests to train imams within the institutional framework of the state to ensure that they are sufficiently conversant with the state's agenda of "national cohesiveness." Few critics argue that big financial support of Islamic education provides Muslim communities with an unfair edge. However, the Orthodox Church enjoys a distinct status and political benefit. Russian Islam is a perfect example of the state's push for integration of Muslim to be regulated on a secular basis (Braginskaia 2010: 50).

Vladimir Putin tried to foster a relationship with the Muslim community. As he recognised controlling methods of headship in the state, he was involved with the impression of establishing an 'Islamic vertical of power' with a single head and organisational centre. Putin's approach has striking similarities to the Russian empire's treatment of Islam, when authorities attempted to establish a 'Russian Islamic Church'. At the same time, the state clearly denies the Islamic opposition's legal existence and brutally suppresses any appearance of political dissent in religious form (Malashenko 2008: 2).

The excessive central control over Muslim communities is a negative consequence of this process. Nevertheless, it has some beneficial aspects also such as political changes required to reconstruct Muslim institutions and need to systematise financial flow of the resources. It is debatable whether this is a sufficient justification for restraining the rise of more independent, unofficial Muslim self-organization. This

close relationship looks to be a mixed benefit in Russia, where unofficial organisations are less developed. On one hand, it helps to consolidate Muslim institutions from the top down. On the other hand, official Muslim figures become over bureaucratised. They run the risk of losing religious authority in the eyes of some Muslims if they ally themselves too closely with the government, and they also run the risk of being charged with advancing the interests of the government rather than the interests of Muslim communities.

Even those unauthorised Muslim organisations, which charge their official counterparts with being very close to the government, are compelled to communicate with the government in order to secure funding for their operations. One commentator claimed that the state permeates everything in Russia, which is a characteristic that makes it distinct from other states. State officials and official Muslim leaders agree that the consolidation of Muslim administrative structures is necessary for the country's internal harmony and spiritual renaissance. Only by working closely with the government, this can be successful. Russian state officials, muftis, and the Council of Ministers concur that a vertical framework for interaction is preferable to a horizontal one. A member of council of ministers stated "This is our state model. It makes dealing with the authorities easier. A village imam does not have access to the authorities. So, he must contact the Council for assistance in resolving local concerns" (Braginskaia 2010: 51-52).

Malashenko contended that in post-Soviet era, the established order tried to urgently regulate Islam and it involved the following:

- Attempts to think that the Muslim populace has a certain allegiance to the state
- That the Muslim leadership is subordinated by the state
- That the organisation whether religious, social or educational, is controlled strictly and,
- Contact with foreign elements is also monitored.

Malashenko felt that the state may function as the building where the Muslims need to do a constructive role in nation-building. Vladimir Zorin, the Russian Minister of Nationalities Policies, is of the view that there should be "active interrelations

between the state and religious organizations" as it would be highly beneficial. (Malashenko, 2008: 2).

3.9. Coexistence of Islam and Christianity: Creation and Maintenance of a Multi-Religious Ecosystem

Russia can be thought to be a nation where Islam within the state of Russia can serve as a specimen for the rest of the world, especially the Western world. Russia can serve as an example in the fight against radicalism and for multi-religious existence that challenges the leading Islamophobic discourses in Western nations. The problem of coincidences in Western European nations lies in their scientifically established notion that Islam is an enemy of the Christian faith. Recently articulated American discourse against Islam is an ideologically negative way of destroying the world. However, the effective paradigm of the national structure of the Russian Federation is made up of a multi-confessional culture. In this multi-confessional culture, Islam and conventional Christianity have cohabited for eras.

In addition to having a sizable Muslim population that identifies with Russian national identity, Russia, a European state, also has a well-established Islamic clergy, Islamic teaching universities that train religious leaders. In this context, Russia has a significant advantage since it has accepted Islamic identity. Russia has benefited from this in its fight against terrorism and extremism. The nations of Western Europe may also profit from it. Through a historical comparison of how Western Europe and Russia have viewed Islam, this section of the study seeks to demonstrate how successfully Russia has integrated and accepted its Islamic identity, as well as the potential advantages it may provide.

In contrast to the other countries of Europe, due to its geographic location, Russia had a variety of relationships with Islam. Islam interacted meaningfully with the 'Rus' states ruled by the Golden Horde. Nevertheless, despite living under Islamic control, the people of Russia were not put under obligation to change their religion to Islam. After many centuries, the expanding Russian empire spread towards the East, meeting nations that had Islam as a prominent religion. These regions were ultimately merged with the boundaries of the empire. Among them were Chechnya, Dagestan and Tatarstan. Their religions and identities were incorporated into the developing

Russian identity by incorporating these lands. When Empress Catherine II ordered the printing of the first Arabic translation of the Quran in St. Petersburg in 1787, the integration of Muslims into the Russian empire was evident. (Cedillo 2018: 98).

In the 1990s and early 2000s, Russia was vulnerable to Islamic extremism. In the Northern Caucasus, the Russian authorities battled deadly separatist movements. However, the original separatist movements were not motivated by religious considerations. Later, radicals utilised religion as a unifying tool to strengthen their cause and exploit Chechen people's identity. The Russian government, on the one hand made local people its partner who opposed Wahhabism and Islamic extremism, and plainly opposed people and organisations who adopted Islamic extremism on the other.

Russian authorities were successful in establishing conditions for a supranational model identity. There, the Russian Federation's peoples' national identities, including their religion, are honoured and maintained. As mentioned above, the Russian Empire incorporated identities and religion of the peoples who became part of it. Official members of the Russian Islamic clergy were already operating as authorities when Chechnya was included in the 17th century. There are now Islamic organisations operating on behalf of Russian Muslims with full state recognition. These institutions while providing Islamic education promotes patriotism among the Muslims of Russia. This is extremely important for maintaining a secular and moderate state as well as a dedication to civic principles that unify all citizens. In a multi-confessional state, this should always be the goal of religious education.

However, this appears to have failed in Western Europe. When preachers promote Islamic extremism or try to impose other cultures' norms and customs on European Muslims after having their religious education abroad, there is sometimes little that can be done to stop them. A. Kadyrov made a same remark in Chechnya in the 1990s, when the first Wahhabis from outside the republic started moving in with the intention of killing in Chechnya. At this juncture, having an Islamic identity and embracing it as such gives Russia a clear edge over Western Europe. It is so because Muslims in Russia may recognise foreign cultural elements that are a part of other

countries' Islamic identities but do not fit with Russia's traditional Islamic practises with ease. (Cedillo 2018: 99).

An Islamic identity may serve as a deterrent to extremism. The two regions with the greatest concentrations of Muslims in the Russian Federation are Tatarstan and the North Caucasus, each of which has its own distinct characteristics. Tatar secularism can respond to Western Europeans' questions about how to integrate Islam into their own cultures without losing many of its distinctive features while also allowing for an exchange of traits that will strengthen both identities. However, if the acceptance of Islam as a part of Europe does not happen first, this secularism- which is the result of centuries of Russian and Tatar coexistence- could be a significant challenge to achieve in Western Europe. Chechnya and Dagestan's traditionalism can be viewed as a characteristic that has served as a front and a natural barrier against extremist Islamist groups in the Northern Caucasus. These areas have produced significant figures who have influenced Russian academia, politics, athletics, music, the arts, entertainment, and more. It was only conceivable that by creating conditions necessary for everyone's progress- regardless of their ethnic or religious identities- to be freer and safer. People from these provinces also have a strong sense of self-identification and connection to the Russian Federation.

To avoid future ethnic and confessional fragmentation in the Federation, it was necessary to reintegrate impacted societies in the Northern Caucasus after the conflict. Following the separatist movements of the 1990s, President Putin's military activities in the republics of North Caucasus to combat radicalism and restore peace in the region required social cohesion and integration policy. This social integration removed the perception of inter-ethnic struggle in Russia. Furthermore, the provision of cash for the reconstruction of destroyed cities like Grozny avoided the creation or aggravation of feelings of retaliation against the Russian government or ethnic Russians, which could have led Chechens to extremism. Additionally, infrastructural investment was necessary to convey that Chechnya was a part of the Russian Federation and that Islamic extremism, rather than Russian authority, was the enemy (Cedillo 2018: 100).

3.10 Conclusion

On the above basis it can be concluded that in Russia, the Muslim population is continuously increasing in comparison to the Orthodox Christian which is certainly a pointer to the saliency of Islam in Russia. It can be easily observed that Islam and the Islamic factor have a considerable impact on the procedure of development of Russia's post-Soviet identity, ethos and scheme of values, culture, politics, society and governmental structure. Islam has influenced the evolution of the federal structure of the Russian federation. Also, the state has played a very significant role in the integration of Muslims into the mainstream society through various means and mechanisms. The Russian Federation as a state is functioning in such a way that Muslims are performing an important role in nation-building. Thus, despite so many challenges, this peaceful co-existence is creating and maintaining a multi-religious ecosystem.

The revival of Islam as a religion and as a culture, on the other hand, has been seen as a threat to Russia's cultural integrity and authenticity. Islamic terrorism in Chechnya and other parts of the North Caucasus intensified anti-Muslim sentiments and encouraged demands for a more Russo-centric national culture to be established and nurtured. As a result, new laws restricting the formation and activity of religious organisations and political parties have been passed. Because these organisations were attempting to establish a high level of autonomy, the development in Russian Muslim regions influenced several aspects of the country's evolution. In the post-Soviet period, Russia's Muslims, even though they are directly affected, have relatively little influence in setting national policies. This is demonstrated by the fact that Muslim political organisations were employed to acquire Muslim votes, but these groups were generally disbanded following the elections. The rise of a highly politicised and extremist Islam hampered the development of a less ethnocentric and religion-based sense of identity, as well as a concept of Russianness based on citizenship and loyalty to a Russian state ruled on the democratic principle of equal treatment for all citizens and cultures.

CHAPTER – 4

THE ‘ISLAMIC FACTOR’ IN RUSSIA’S EXTERNAL RELATIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the impact of the Islamic factor in the formulation of foreign policy choices of the Russian Federation. It is noteworthy to mention that Russia’s fate in the past and the future cannot be described without the Islamic element. The present chapter begins with the influence of Islam in determining the foreign policy of the Russian Empire. The Islamic factor influenced the shaping of Russian foreign relations in largely two ways. One, it provided a missionary aspect to Russian imperial expansion. Second, it served as a policy tool for domestic consolidation and competing with other imperial powers.

The chapter also explores the Islamic factor in the foreign policy of the Soviet Union as the Soviet Union was the fifth-largest Muslim inhabited country in the world after Pakistan, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Turkey. The chapter discusses the relative role of Islam in either promoting or obstructing Soviet ambitions at the international level. The main emphasis of this chapter is to explore the Islamic influence on the foreign policy formulation of post-Soviet Russia. The influence is natural in Russia not only because Islam arrived on Russian soil before Eastern Orthodox Christianity, but also because it has become an inseparable element of society. From the beginning of its history, Russia has had interactions with Islam, both domestically and internationally.

The chapter explains the Islamic factor in the relationship between Central Asia and the Russian Federation. The chapter analyses that Central Asia, as a distant neighbour in the south of Russia and part of former Soviet Union territory, is geopolitically important for Russia and can endanger Russia’s security if it gets radicalised. Further, the chapter observes the Muslim factor in Russia’s relation with Transcaucasia, Iran, the Arab world, Turkey, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

This chapter also analyses the role of the Islamic factor in Russia’s relationship with the West. It explores that due to the indigenous Russian Muslim population, compared

to the West, Russia has an advantage position to use Islam at the international level in maintaining ties with the Muslim world. The last section of the chapter explores the Islamic factor in Russia's entry into OIC (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation), not as a full-fledged but a member with 'observer status'. Finally, the chapter ends with a logical conclusion.

4.2 Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire: The 'Islamic Factor'

Islam has historically influenced Russia's external relations in essentially two ways: as a missionary dimension to Russia's imperial expansion and as a policy weapon for domestic consolidation and rivalries with other imperial powers. These functions of Islam were essentially the same during the Tsarist and Soviet times. From the conquest of Kazan in 1552, which marked the beginning of Russia's imperial expansion, worldly objectives of security and territorial gains were mixed with religious and messianic goals. According to Ivar Spector, Russia's advancement into Muslim lands would culminate in the conquering of Constantinople and the city's freedom from the Muslim rule, which began with Byzantium's defeat by the Ottoman sultan Muhammad II on 29 May 1453. After losing the Crimean War in 1853-1856, Russia had to abandon this aim (Spector 1959: 6-7).

Russian ambitions, on the other hand, were disrupted by counterclaims from other major European powers. It was so because, in addition to the religious mission, the Russians believed they had a 'civilising' role to play in the East. Thus, they were annoyed by the obstacles that European powers, particularly Britain, had raised in their way. Europe had assigned the Russians the task of being the bearers and propagators of its civilization in the East. Despite this fact, Nikolai Danilevsky, a Russian nationalist and the originator of scientific Slavophilism, noted that British hampered Russia's efforts in Turkey, Persia, and even China.

However, where the circumstances permitted, Russia and other imperial powers were willing to partition Muslim lands into zones of influence or recognise special advantages for one another, as the Russian-British Pact of 1907 demonstrated. The Anglo-Russian Entente was formed to resolve problems between the two empires in Central Asia, Iran, and Afghanistan. While the two biggest contenders for Muslim world dominance were negotiating an amicable agreement, social and political

upheavals in Russia, the Islamic world, and Europe dramatically altered the structure of international politics and the power balance (Gillard 1977).

The Islamic element was also used in Catherine the Great's selection of Mufti Mohammedan Guseinov as head of the newly formed Ufa spiritual assembly. He was sent to Bukhara and Kabul by the Russian Foreign Ministry on a secret mission, where he identified himself as a student wishing to obtain a higher spiritual education.

The role of establishing ties with members of Kazakhstan was assigned to Guseinov. He headed the Russian mission to Kazakhstan several times. The primary aim of this mission was to put the Kazaks into the Russian Empire's orbit. In 1797, the *Khan Council* was set up at the behest of Guseinov to rule Mali Zhuz. Aichubak, who was loyal to Russia, was elected Khan on Mufti's recommendation, and Hussein's daughter married Zhangir, the last Khan of Bukeiveskoi. Gabdrahimov, Imam of the Orenburg Mosque, succeeded Horde Mohammedan Guseinov. He was also assigned by the Russian government, like his predecessor, to diplomatic as well as secret missions in Central Asia (Mohanty 2016: 182).

The two major events, i.e., Russia's defeat in the 1904 Russo-Japanese War and the 1905-07 Russian Revolution linked to Russia, led to Iran's 1905-1906 Constitutional Revolution in the first decade of the 20th century. The former shattered the idea of European as unattackable and encouraged the belief that Eastern people could learn the knowledge and skills needed to fight European expansion. Some Muslim countries, particularly Iran, have experienced significant socio-political changes as a result of the latter. The Bolsheviks' claim that the Revolution of 1905 was the "beginning point for all the national liberation struggles in Asia and the pivot around which all of them revolved". Despite this, the revolution of 1905's political leadership primarily represented Russia's rising bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, socialist ideas were inspired by many of the ideals and objectives embraced by the revolutionaries, especially during the workers' strikes in St. Petersburg and Moscow and the peasant uprisings in the countryside. In some Muslim countries, these ideas have found a certain degree of mainstream support. For example, in parts of northern Iran, which had near contact with Muslim parts of the Tsarist Empire, the socialist movement from the beginning of 1900 was strong (Spector 1959).

Thus, on the above basis, it can be concluded that Islam as a factor was influencing the foreign policy of the Russian Empire.

4.3 The 'Islamic Factor' in Soviet Foreign Policy

The impact of the Islamic factor continued in the foreign policy choices of the Soviet Union. Lenin and Stalin, the founders of the Bolshevik revolution, thoroughly manipulated the theme of European colonialism in their joint appeal to the Muslims of Russia and the Muslims of the East. The Bolsheviks also declared that "the liberation of the Orient, in particular the Muslim Orient, was the main objective of the revolution". The attempts of the Bolsheviks were not limited to anti-European propaganda, but gave real concessions to Muslim countries. The "Appeal to the Muslims of Russia and the East" declared: "The treaty for the partition of Persia is null and void. As soon as the military operations cease the armed forces will be withdrawn from Persia and the Persians will be guaranteed the right of free determination of their own destiny...We declare that the treaty for the partition... of Turkey is null and void" (Spector 1959: 37).

The Bolshevik government needed not only internal but external recognition following the October revolution in 1917. Because the First World War was still going on, the warring nations were forced to hunt for sympathisers in the East. First and foremost, the Russian interim administration was the first to consider incorporating the Islamic factor into its foreign policy. They decided to take advantage of the fact that some Russian Muslims were sympathetic to Turkey.

The Bolsheviks followed a similar strategy with respect to Iran, announcing that the Persian Division Deal had been annulled and demolished. As a result, in 1917, Iran accepted the Bolshevik government. In June 1918, the Soviet government sent a letter to the government and the citizens of Iran promising to cancel the total amount of Iranian debt owed to Russia, avoid all regulation of Iran's state revenues, and hand over all roads and telegraph lines under Russian control to Iran.

The friendly policies of Russia towards the East produced immediate results. Following Afghanistan's independence in 1919, Amannula Khan wrote to Russian President Mikhail Kalinin, expressing his desire to establish cordial relations with the

Soviet Union. In the summer of 1919, diplomatic connections were established between the two countries, which is why Yakov Surits was appointed as the Soviet ambassador to Kabul.

A delegation of young Turks arrived in Moscow at the beginning of 1918 in order to negotiate the fate of Turkish prisoners of war and to develop diplomatic ties between Turkey and the Soviet Union. The delegation included Yusuf Akchurin, a Russian-born Muslim official, who headed the Red Cross operations and carried out the delicate tasks assigned by the Turkish government (Mohanty 2016: 184).

As a consequence of the revolution, Mustafa Kamal Atatürk came to power in Turkey in April 1920. His government immediately expressed a desire to establish diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union and form a military alliance. Soviet Foreign Minister Chicherin sent a supportive response to the request, and a friendship and brotherhood was signed in March 1921 under the Soviet-Turkey treaty. As the Bolsheviks supplied it with arms to protect its territorial integrity, this treaty was in Turkey's interests. By then, Yusuf Akchurin had already risen to become Kamal Atatürk's advisor on cultural and political affairs, serving his mission quite effectively in Russia.

A two-pronged approach towards the Muslim world was implemented by the Soviet Union and continued until the fall of the Soviet Union. This policy was based on an evaluation of Islam's relative role in either helping or hindering Soviet ambitions and on the conduct of relations at two levels: state-to-state and party-to-party. The signing of friendly and non-aggression treaties was an essential feature of this strategy. On 26 February 1921, the first such treaty was concluded between Iran and the Soviet Union. It gave some concessions to Iran and returned several of the assets previously taken over by the Tsarist government. Iran was also given the right to free navigation on the Caspian Sea as per the treaty. The two sides decided to refrain from intervening in the internal affairs of each other and to prohibit hostile groups and movements from functioning in each other's territory (Gromyko and Ponomarev 1980: 133-152). As mentioned above, another example of this technique is the Turkish friendship treaty.

The Baku Conference held on 15 August 1920, to which "the enslaved peoples of Persia, Armenia and Turkey" were invited, in the words of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, was another significant step towards attracting

Muslims. During verbal attacks on English imperialism, Grigory Zinoviev, president of the Comintern[1], even summoned the Muslims to a holy war (jihad) against the British-Muslim delegates" (Spector 1959: 48-49).

Soviet Muslims were living in a poor situation during the Second World War (1939-45) when Hitler invaded the Soviet Union. All the Muftis who protected the interests of the State were annihilated, or went through the persecution of Stalin. The leaders of the Bolsheviks were once again supportive as they were in the dark. Nevertheless, the invasion of Hitler forced the government to mobilise all resources, including Muslims, to protect the motherland from the fascist assault. In addition, the Fascists did all they could to lure the Muslim community to their side, promising them religious rights and right to self-determination.

The position of Turkey was the other unpleasant surprise for the Soviet government. According to Soviet historians, Britain and France, through their diplomatic channels, sought to make Turkey their ally at the beginning of the Second World War in 1939 by endorsing pan-Turkism, so that they could launch an attack on the Soviet Union. Western countries urged Turkey to pay attention to the precarious situation in which the Turkish citizens of the Soviet Union were living and awaiting their liberation from the Soviet yoke. Following the outbreak of the war, Turkey was hesitant to take part in military operations and thus succeeded in preventing German occupation. After the defeat of France and Britain at the hands of Germany, Turkey changed its foreign policy, making an alliance with the winning side. At the Sickert meeting in Berlin in March 1941, Hitler subsequently declared that the Caucasus would be given to Turkey (Mohanty 2016: 192).

By 1942, it was evident that fascists were successfully exploiting the religion aspect against the Soviet Union, and that they were actively involved in propaganda initiatives such as masks and shrines, as well as a variety of countermeasures. Recognizing that, despite years of anti-religious propaganda, the religious factor remained strong and might play a key role in victory. The Soviet leadership decided to ease religious restrictions. Muslims and Orthodox Christians were both given

[1] Also known as Communist International, an international organization that was founded in 1919 and advocated world communism, headquartered in Moscow.

permission to open their places of worship. The Russian Orthodox Church was given permission to operate their spiritual administration system. Its effects were instantly noticeable (Mohanty 2016: 192).

In August 1941, the Allied invasion of Iran provided an opening for the USSR to invade northern Iran and revitalise its Communist movement. The Soviets used their Muslim subjects to control the Iranian population, in a trend that later became more pronounced, and promoted cultural contacts between Iranian intellectuals and Soviet Muslim republics (Spector 1959: 196). The traditional clergy remained anti-Communist, but Arab socialists tried to demonstrate Islam's progressive and revolutionary dimensions. This tendency and pro-Soviet sentiments were the strongest in Arab and other Muslim countries that had experienced Western but not Russian colonialism. Following the formation of the state of Israel and the pro-Israel stand of the West, the Soviet Union also manipulated Arab and Muslim hostility towards the West. The Soviet Union adopted a policy of realpolitik towards the Islamic world (Enayat 1982: 148-152).

Thus, the suppression of communist parties by Muslim states barely influenced their official relations with Moscow. In this time, the pattern of Soviet relations with the Muslim world was unequal because, even though they tended to remain neutral, the East-West rivalry forced Muslim states to take sides. Despite the attempts of Arab and Muslim intellectuals to point out parallels between communism and Islam, the latter proved to be more of an obstacle to the expansion of Soviet power than a facilitator. Rather, Soviet success resulted from Muslim disappointment with Western policies (Hunter 2004: 320-321).

The post-war world has witnessed the Soviet Union emerging as a powerful nation. The Western world was anxious about this growing power and felt an urge to contain and monitor its power. The Soviet Union on the contrary wanted to work for its reputation abroad as one of the two superpowers, which was tarnished by the alleged militant atheism practised in the region. On the other hand, the contribution of Orthodox Christianity and Muslims to the war effort had been favourably measured by Stalin, and so the country's revolutionary atheism began to relax. The de-Stalinisation drive by Khrushchev also strengthened the religious freedom situation.

The Middle East, Russia's old friend, was very crucial facet of Soviet foreign policy. However, once the Soviet Union played a constructive role in the founding of the Jewish state of Israel, its relations with the Muslim world, particularly the Middle East, became strained. Evidently, the Arab countries did not appreciate the Soviet position in Israel's development. The Soviet Union had to resolve the problem by many means and strengthen the situation, including using the Soviet Muslim factor. It was determined at the outset to include the Soviet Muslims in the world peace movement and the process of disarmament.

In 1945, Tashkent hosted a Central Asian and Caucasus conference of Muslim theologians, who wanted to develop close contact with foreign Muslims. This strength of Soviet Muslims' international activities demanded a permanent body for the coordination of national-level activities. Under the Council of Religious Affairs of the Soviet Union, which became an autonomous body, the Foreign Relations Department of Muslim Organizations of the USSR was set up in July 1962. In the context of their foreign diplomacy, Muslim spiritual leaders were required to fight for world peace and counter Soviet propaganda in international media and demonstrate to the outside world the real situation with Soviet Muslims (Mohanty 2016: 194-195)

Soviet Muslims responded strongly in 1967 to the Six-Day War of Arab Israel, during which the USSR broke diplomatic ties with Israel. Soviet Muslims took part in protests to condemn Israel's violence against countries in the Middle East. The "Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan" (SADUM) organized the International Conference on Muslim Solidarity and World Peace Cooperation, dedicated to Middle East issues. Delegates from 25 countries representing Asia, Africa and Latin America attended the meeting. Mufti Babakhanov arranged an international conference in Tashkent in 1973 in support of the struggle for democracy, national independence and social change. Theologists from Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, Kuwait and other Muslim countries also took part in support of the brothers of Arab countries struggling for unity, freedom and national sovereignty.

In its resolution, the International Conference organised by SADUM in 1974 at Samarkand, urged for the prompt departure of all soldiers from the occupied Arab territory, the establishment of conditions for the return of refugees and the granting to

the Palestinian citizens of self-termination rights. In response to caution on equal rights of Muslims with Christians in the USSR in 1978 at the Asian Islamic Conference held in Karachi, Mufti Babakhanov said Muslims in the USSR enjoy completely equal rights with Christians (Mohanty 2016: 196).

In Soviet foreign policy, the attention from increased pragmatism was shifted to focusing on protecting the strategic concerns of the Soviet Union. This made ideological priorities secondary and, in many instances, insignificant to the Soviet approach to Muslim countries. The extent of Muslim states' hostility towards the West and their ability to accept the USSR rather than their political ideology or their domestic politics were the key criteria for extending support. In fact, pursuing this strategic goal culminated in the favour of every willing Arab government to follow an anti-Western foreign policy, regardless of its domestic programme. Nevertheless, a so-called non-capitalist, if not orthodox socialist, direction of development was followed by many Muslim countries, which generated some ideological affinity with the USSR. Thus, once again, the Soviet Muslim population and the government-controlled Muslim establishment were commonly used by Soviet diplomacy in penetrating the Arabian Islamic world (Hunter 2004: 321-322).

1978-79 was a momentous time in terms of the political history of the Middle East and South Asia, as well as East-West relations. Islam, reaffirming its role as a strong political force, was thrust into the forefront of regional and international politics. Iran's Islamic Revolution of 1979 was the most dramatic manifestation of Islam's rebirth. Although this revolution posed the greatest threat to the West at the time, it also presented the Soviet Union with new difficulties. However, through mobilising resistance to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Islam emerged as a significant impediment to Soviet objectives. The Soviet-Afghan War has had the most far-reaching impact on the internal growth of the Soviet Union and its foreign policy outlook. The long crisis in Afghanistan began with the April 1978 coup d'etat by the People's Democratic Party (the Afghan Communist Party) that overthrew General Mohammad Daoud Khan's government, which had taken power in 1971 after removing his cousin. The majority of Soviet sources claim that there is no compelling proof that the USSR was behind the coup. By the mid-1970s, however, Daoud Khan had stepped away from the USSR, partly due to prodding by Iran and Saudi Arabia,

leading Selig S. Harrison to blame the coup on the Shah's attempt to wean Afghanistan away from the USSR with the ultimate aim of establishing the ancient Persian Empire's modem version (Hunter 2004: 322-323).

Soviet-Iranian relations followed an unequal path until the fall of the USSR because of the Iran-Iraq War and the ideological divide within the Iranian leadership. The aim of Islamists had always been to establish an Islamic structure; irrespective of the affinity some of them felt for socialism. The slogan of the Islamists in the 1980s, 'Neither East nor West, only Islam' symbolises their interpretation of Islam as an alternative to the Soviet and imperialist structures. The changes in Afghanistan have mirrored the trend in the Muslim world towards Islamic revivalism. Whether the resistance of the Mujahideen or the change in Soviet thoughts and priorities under Gorbachev led to the withdrawal of Soviet troops is debatable. Regardless of the relative weight of these claims, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan was seen in the region and internationally as a major setback for the USSR. In the post-Soviet era, Russia's relations with Pakistan, Afghanistan, and major Arab states were carried over and affected by mutual hostility. The Afghan conflict also influenced the approach of these nations, like the Chechnya conflict, towards post-Soviet Russia.

Furthermore, the Islamic Revolution in Iran presented the Soviet Union with a more difficult intellectual problem in judging Islam's potential as a progressive force and potential ally in its struggle with so-called global imperialism, or as a revolutionary opponent. Several essential elements of the Islamic Revolution contributed to this potential problem. First, while Islamists eventually took leadership of the revolutionary movement and established an Islamic republic, the movement that overthrew the monarchy was much larger in scope. The left, in particular, particularly the Tudeh Party, played a crucial role in organising oilfield strikes. Second, communist ideas had infiltrated Islamic circles, particularly madrassas, and many leftists had recognised Islam's revolutionary potential. Third, from the perspective of the Soviet Union, except secular nationalists and Islamic nationalists, such as Mehdi Basargan, the Iranian Revolution was vigorously anti-Western and thus fundamentally progressive. Fourth, the slogans of the revolution reflected traditional leftist concepts in their Islamic language and, in the light of these themes, explained the foreign situation and class and social disparities within Muslim societies.

As a result, the Soviet Union first viewed the Iranian Revolution as a significant milestone in terms of Islam's progressive potential, albeit as a stepping stone on the way to socialism. The writings of Yevgenii Primakov represent this viewpoint. He saw the rise of Islamist movements as a sign of dissatisfaction with and rejection of the capitalist development paradigm. The Tudeh (Iran's communist party) and the Soviet Union had given up optimism that the Iranian Revolution would quickly turn socialist. Credit goes to the actions of Soviet Union Muslim organisations that could establish good relations with the Muslim world.

During the time of Gorbachev's *perestroika*, under the new paradigm of thought, foreign policy of Soviet Union went through a dramatic shift. Despite the fact that the new thinking idea did not directly address Islam, the Islamic factor did play a role in defining Gorbachev's foreign policy, particularly in light of the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan. After all, the resistance to the Soviet military occupation was led by Muslims. The West's response to the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan was developed in close cooperation with a number of Muslim nations. This was a fear among Soviet leadership that radical Islamic ideas could spread to various parts of the Muslim-inhibited Soviet state and could increase the moment of pro-independence (Mohanty 2016: 1198-1199).

4.4 Islam as a Factor in post- Soviet Foreign Policy Making

It is now becoming explicitly obvious that the role of Islam can no longer be avoided in global politics as a factor to be taken into account in decision-making at the strategic level. Madeleine Albright, former US Secretary of State, believes that "Faith-based diplomacy can be a useful tool of foreign policy…the resurgence of religious feeling will continue to influence world events" (Albright 2006: 9). International policy has not been separate from religion for a long time. When resolving conflicts, the factor of inter-confessional connections is considered. Finally, theological justification is frequently given to a country's foreign policy direction, making it more understandable in the eyes of the public (Malashenko 2009: 299).

It is important to mention that without the Islamic element, there is no way of describing Russia's fate in the past and the future. It is normal in Russia, not only because Islam emerged earlier than Eastern Orthodox Christianity on its territory, but,

more importantly, because it has become an inalienable part of society. Russia has had experiences with Islam, both at home and abroad, since the very first years of its existence (Khakimova 2008: 56).

In Russia, Islam as a religion, plays a very prominent role in the formulation of foreign policy choices, both due to its geopolitical variable and domestic factor. The evolution of ties with main Muslim countries with Russia such as Central Asia, the West and China has also been affected. Russia's relations with Muslim countries, especially those on the immediate periphery of Russia, have felt the greatest impact of the Muslim factor. However, Islam has been a decisive element for both the West and Russia because of the growing political profile of Islam in the international arena and particularly the rise of militancy and extremism. The Islamic element has also greatly affected Russian-Western relations at various levels and at different times. Since the 16th century, Islam has been an important element in Russia's foreign policy choices. In fact, Russia has a long history of involvement in the Islamic world, which still affects both Russia's and Muslim countries' views and policies in relation to each other.

Many factors influence how the Islamic variable affects Russia's security and foreign policy, including economic and financial considerations, the nature of the international system, competing strategic concerns and interests, geographical location, historical experiences, and national and elite value systems. Russia's foreign policy decisions are determined by the interaction of several elements. Since 1991, these elements, together with those specific to Russia, have shaped the growth of foreign policy approaches.

Collective identity and psychology, worldview, threat perception, and foreign policy have all been shaped by geography. The vastness of Russia is the major geographical determinant, which stems mostly from its territorial growth and attempts to break out of its semi-landlocked state. This reality, according to Sergei Medvedev, has defined a sense of entitlement to great power status and has positioned Russia as a part of many continents and a neighbour to a variety of civilisational zones (Medvedev 1999: 95). The southern neighbour of Russia belongs to the Islamic civilisation of South and Central Asia, the Caucasus of the South and the Middle East. Important strategic

interest in Russia has been highlighted in these regions and one of the major determinants has been the Muslim factor.

The past becomes a subject of reinterpretation, especially when, under the impulse of a new philosophy, a country experiences a revolutionary change. Examples of such reinterpretation are given in Russia's past in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. The creation of a post-Soviet identity and its view of the outside world have always been influenced by Russia's history. Russia's historical experience involves a Muslim nation within and outside Russia. The shaping of national identity has been affected by many aspects such as geography and history, which is obviously not a static term and is constantly formed by many factors. At different periods, different elements have gained greater or less importance, such as race, faith, ideological affinity, and citizenship. The debate about national identity politics at present has had sheer influence on the Russia's foreign policy.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union marked the end of an era in which ideology dominated international politics. Conflicts, on the other hand, are caused by diverse value systems both within and between states. These value systems have become more defined and multidimensional. Civilisational struggles, according to Samuel Huntington, are replacing earlier ideological battles. According to this view, religious beliefs influence the state's internal and exterior structure by determining the value system of various civilisations (Huntington 1997: 205). In reality, value and belief systems, including religion, play many of the same functions as ideology did in the past.

Malashenko claims that, compared to the West, Russia has the benefit of using Islam and maintaining ties with the Muslim world at an international level. For Russia, a significant reason to pay attention to the Islamic factor is that its final geopolitical civilisational option has not yet been made. To begin with, Russia has been unable to integrate itself into the Western Christian society. It has not got its due position in the Western political system, and in the 2000s, it abandoned any attempt to do so. As a result, Russia pursues a geopolitical search towards the South and the East, emphasising its 'bi-civilizational' identity. However, such a search is riddled with difficulties. Russia is basically foreign to both the South and the East. Here, the

Russian philosopher Pëtr Chaadaev's nearly 200-year-old remark comes to mind, that "we have never moved in concert with other people. We are not a part of any of the great families of the human race; we are neither of the West nor of the East, and we have not the traditions of either" (Malashenko 2009: 300).

The Western-Eastern intermediate location offers convenient grounds for the declaration of special ties with the Muslims. It is easy for Moscow to deal with them than to deal with Europeans and Americans. There are no ticklish problems of the kind that occur between Muslims and Russia in their relations with the West, such as those relating to the compliance of their political structure with widely agreed democratic norms, the validity of their membership in the G8, or their behaviour in the Euro-Parliament. Therefore, during Vladimir Putin's tour of Muslim countries in 2007 resulted in "a totally different scenario that was being played out around the Russian President as the Arab world opened its doors to him. There were no unpleasant issues, and the friendly ones were numerous: energy cooperation without confrontation, without overtones of mistrust or recrimination; arms trade..." In this connection, as the Moscow liberal newspaper *Kommersant* wrote sarcastically "It is time to admit what political subgroup Russia belongs to in the world. It is Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Jordan. Not the 'Big Eight" (Malashenko 2009: 300-301).

The presence in the country of a nearly 20 million-strong Muslim community gives additional importance to the Islamic element in Russian foreign policy, which the Kremlin cannot afford to neglect.Also, given the danger of religious extremism, the Islamic factor is important. Terrorist attacks have occurred often in Russia, with the perpetrators identifying themselves as mujahideen. Consequently, the Islamic factor has, therefore, turned out to be a cause for Western cooperation (Malashenko 2009: 301).

According to Aleksandr Dugin, Russia's geopolitics positions it as a Eurasian power from a theoretical-philosophical standpoint. According to him, Russia's historical destiny is to serve as an important link between Western and Eastern civilisations. Neo-Eurasianism, of which Dugin is an associate, is characterised by Russian Christian messianism. However, President Putin's policy to support a "multi-ethnic, multi-religious" model and to recognise Islam as an integral part of Russian identity

has expressed somewhat an ambiguous religious basis of Russian nationality (Dugin 2013).

In the post-Soviet state, the development of Russian foreign policy was governed by Euro Atlanticism, which followed a primarily European-centric foreign policy. They largely ignored the Muslim world, a situation that was not common with Russian Muslims. The Eurasian school firmly criticised the European-centric foreign policy followed by the Euro-Atlanticist, which made Russia a junior Western partner. Russia's connection with the Islamic nations underwent fundamental changes soon after the fall of the USSR and could no longer be linked to the Soviet Union's relations with it. In reality, Andrei Kozyrev, who then headed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, considered it inert and insignificant, while stating the significance of the Muslim path, having been adopted from the foreign policy of the Soviet Union. Any negotiations on the establishment vis-a-vis the Muslim world would have been out of position in a situation of rapprochement with the West. Moscow has given up adopting independent actions in its Near Eastern policy and has removed support for national movements from its foreign policy doctrine in favour of fully relying on its US and European allies (Malashenko, 2009: 301).

In the 1990s, the Eurasianists blamed Russia for its foreign policy as it did not pay enough attention to its Muslim neighbourhood, the former Soviet republics. Stressing the importance of the geopolitical element, the Eurasianists argue that the geopolitical reality of Russia needs a multi-vector approach that does not overemphasise Western relations and the expense of other relevant regions. Within the Eurasian school, there are differences regarding the position and value of Islam. In Russia, at least three strands of Eurasianism can be traced: one, after the civil war in Russia, Eurasianism of the 1920s; two, Gumilev's theory of ethnogenesis and Eurasia; and three, neo-Eurasianism that was in vogue in the 1990s and some would say contributed to the formation of the Eurasian Economic Union. They are all theories of Russian nationalism that are aimed at explaining Russia's history. The Eurasianism of Gumilev focuses in particular on the multi-ethnic nature of the Russian population, which he calls a mixture of Slavs, Finno-Ugric tribes and Tatars. He focuses on Eurasia's special geographical, climatic and topographical nature, which he regards as defining the history of Russia.

However, they have been unanimous in emphasising the strategic imperatives of Russia in order to pay sufficient attention to the Muslim world. They claim, with an emphasis on a long history of Russian ties with the Muslim world, that this asset should not be squandered. They are pleading for a more dynamic, rational and careful approach towards the Muslim world. Russian scholars argue that, qualitatively, the Russian approach to the Muslim world should vary from that of the US policy. They recommend that, in building an anti-Muslim front, Russia should not join the West. Eurasian argues that Russia should take advantage of the friction between the West and the Islamic world (Mohanty 2016: 199).

The true reason for the spread of Islamic terrorism, according to Evgenii Primakov, is the disruption of civilisational dialogue. According to Primakov, mutual understanding of cultural and social aspects promotes reciprocal respect and may help to defuse the terrorism threat. It might dissolve the danger of extremist activities. Primakov gave an example of dialogue on civilisation within the Russia-Islamic World Strategic Vision Community, the meeting was held twice before 2009, in Russia (referred as the Primakov meet). It comprised Russians and Muslims from around the world, including Iranians. At the Group's meetings, Muslim leaders of Russian praised the Russian Federation as a model of inclusion and integration (Wahab and Samir 2008). President Mintimer Shaimiev of Tatarstan bragged that the Muslim communities in Russia relatively exercise more religious freedom and security. Primakov has acknowledged that the Muslims belong to the original Russian population and have significantly helped in bridging a gap between Saudi Arabia and the West in 2008 (Merati 2007:177-178)

One of the key foreign policies of Russia is to build a multipolar world and the Muslim world has commonly been considered to be a partner in trying to create such a global order. While Russia regards the Muslim world as a partner in the struggle to create a multipolar world, it perceives Islamic radicalism and terrorism as a serious challenge to its security and stability. Although battling Muslim terrorism, this dualism is expressed in Russian foreign policy and it attempts to follow a fair policy towards Muslim countries within its territory. The state seeks to maintain good ties with them, mindful of the fact that the Muslim community will have a strong interest in Muslim countries (Mohanty 2016: 199-200).

Nonetheless, Russia's lack of interest in the Muslim countries did not imply that its foreign policy was without an Islamic dimension. Following the demise of the bipolar system and the Soviet Union, Islam became totally entrenched in the global political panorama. The forces operating under Islamic flags became a subject of global politics. For Russia, this was particularly important. It is precisely in relation to the Islamic dimension that consistency is to be found in its foreign policy, since a 'Muslim front' appeared in Russia itself very soon: A Chechen jihad broke out just after few years of the end of the Afghan jihad. Within the southern frontier of Russia, an enraged Muslim enclave was developed without a Soviet identity and has occasionally manifested religious extremism. Russia can no longer afford to disregard the region's Islamic component (Malashenko 2009: 302). Thus, the foreign policy of Moscow has taken Islamic concern into account. Similar to Afghan war, the war in Chechnya has influenced Russia's external strategy and its role in international community.

Islam has been fully assimilated into international politics after the collapse of the bipolar world system, and religiously driven organisations have now entered the world of politics. The religious leaders so far chanting scripture, now become political leaders influencing international community. Paul Goble, on the other hand, explains that the rapid increase of the Muslim community in Russia is a demographic development that will radically alter the nature of the country in coming future. He concludes that "Russia is going through a religious transformation that will be of even greater consequence for the international community than the collapse of the Soviet Union". He puts forth a simple presumption that Moscow will associate with the West "is no longer valid". Particularly, the Islamic demographic boom is expected to "have a profound effect on Russian foreign policy" (Goble 2006).

Scott Thomas argues that religion plays a decisive role in determining various aspects of global politics. A number of developments, such as demographic changes, urbanisation, and the global religious shift, suggest that religion would shape up the dynamics of present and modern emergent of major powers. The transformative impact of globalisation on religion will be crucial to observe the predominance of worldwide radicalism, ethnic struggle as well as other international security threats. In

fact, the impact of globalisation can largely be seen among religious or ethnic diasporic communities (Thomas 2010).

During the 1990s, Russia developed somewhat similar strategy towards Islam. Moscow pursued a policy of mediation without adding great expectation to it. Russia has expressed respect for Muslim countries, their leaders and especially Islam on several occasions, along with the significance of encouraging peace between different cultures and civilizations. Moscow's ties with those countries is primarily based on the presumption Russia as a multi-confessional republic, predetermining its right to exist simultaneously in two mainly Christian civilisations and Muslim civilisation (Laqueur 2009).

Usually, the foreign observers consider the Muslim population in Russia as a threat to the security of the country. Nonetheless, Putin's office recognises this situation as more of a diplomatic opportunity than a problem in establishing its link with the Middle East and other Islamic communities across the globe. President Putin has overtly stressed the common universal ideals of Russians and attempts to associate the 'traditional' values of Russia with those of the Middle East, Asians as well as with other non-Western communities. Russian tempered relations with the West has compelled it to make diplomatic ties with other regions to establish its own place within international communities. President Putin has been particularly keen on this and has been working for Muslims to strengthen the bond since he joined the office (Sanders 2014).

Though, President Putin recognises Russia as predominately a Christian country, his attempt is to draw a line between traditional shared believers in many multi-ethnic societies and the "decadent secular West" to establish the value system of the Western world as an obligation than an asset for their governments (Sanders 2014). As per the new policy, the Islamic countries are natural allies of Russia in its conflict with the Western countries (Laqueur 2009). However, many people in the Middle East, including the government, find it problematic and an invasion on liberal Western ideals which are associated with the globalised world (Sanders 2014). This could be Russia's major effort to date in developing a soft power strategy to counter Western influence in the Middle East and the Islamic world. Russia's admission to the

Organization of the Islamic Conference as an observer nation with a Muslim minority was one of the events that helped to develop these particular ties (Sanders 2014).

Russia's interaction with the Muslim world has multiple dimensions and interests including social, political and economic relations. The Islamic world is not the 'other' as inhabitants of shared physical geography in the context of Eurasia, and Muslims do not represent anything foreign and unrecognisable in turn. Muslims have been an integral part of the Russian worldview for many decades. Muslims have traversed Russian lands throughout history, have been subjects of the Russian Empires, then of the Soviet Union, and are present today as people and neighbours. A long and expansive friendship between present-day Russia and Muslim communities around the world is shared. Russia has been one of the oldest multicultural societies in the world. Hence, engaging with the broader Islamic world, it is guided by both internal and external influences. Economic relations with the Muslim realm have formed a good deal of Russia's relationship with the Middle East, and other African and Asian countries (Sputnik International 2016).

Soon after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Russian government made a concerted effort to solidify its ties with the Islamic world. Russia's plurality of ties with the Islamic world signifies its adherence to inclusiveness and represents its attempts to connect with the larger international arena. It has been part of a number of organisations since the 1990s and has concluded treaties with a number of Muslim countries around the world.

4.4.1 Russia and Central Asia

The republics of Central Asia, after cutting its cord from the Soviet Union, have tried to consolidate their independence, diversify their foreign policy and establish a pragmatic and non-exclusive collection of ties with post- Soviet Russia. However, a critical element in the continued salience of Russian-Central Asian relations has been the 'Islamic factor'. Since 1991, Central Asian republics have emphasized and distinctively maintained their ethnic identities (Malashenko 2007).

Initially, the leaders of Central Asia expressed their unwillingness to sever their relation with Moscow which provided security troops in the region also due to the

economic exchange between Russia and newly formed republics in Central Asia. A feeling of attachment on the basis of race and Islamic faith was another factor. But in in mid-1990’s, the former republics of Soviet Union significantly dissociated themselves from Russia. The fall in the power of Russia in the former Soviet republics helps to understand two significant events. The first war of Chechnya in 1994-95 is noteworthy in the development of new power equation in Russia. Despite possessing an immense technical warfare and resourceful advantage, the once strong Russian military struggled to battle with less advanced and equipped but more zealous rebellious. The defeat of Russian army proved to be highly expensive created uncertainty for the leadership of Central Asia as to whether Russian troops deployed in the area could provide them any security (Johnson 2001: 96).

Secondly, the crash of the Russian economy in 1998 created financial insecurity in Central Asia, whose economic activities were largely associated with Russia. The crash had a resounding economic impact on Central Asia. It implied that Russia could no longer provide monetary support to the newly formed republics which was needed for the expansion of infrastructure and strong security deployment. Under such circumstances of increasing economic crisis as well as a national security threat, the republics of Central Asia gradually turned away from Moscow to establish their distinctive identity on their own on global platforms.

Moreover, the influence of the Atlanticist school of thought on Russian leadership in devising foreign policy can be noticed during this period. According to this school of thought, Russia is basically a Western country and has more similar Western ways of life. Influenced by this view, the Russian leadership stressed a better relationship with the West and re-established close ties with the West. As a result, Russia gave Central Asian countries and others less priority. According to Dmitri Trennin, “the main national security objective was to join NATO and European Community, rather than restore the Soviet Union”. The Western dominion on the world view of Moscow cannot be discounted. Moreover, this ‘Western centrism’ drew its inspiration from the US as a primary source of influence. It must be noted that in the Yeltsin regime, the US embodied a major outside influence on Russian foreign policy on the issues of its relation with the International Monetary Fund, the policy of demilitarisation, or in shaping up intellectual views on its national and cultural identities (Trennin 1996).

There were three major classes within the Duma during the period of Yeltsin. The first was the Atlanticists, who believed Russia to be an integral part of Western civilisation and should strengthen its relationship with the US, were on one end of the continuum. The Atlanticists emphasised maintaining a soft diplomatic relation on the subject of Russian foreign policy towards newly formed neighbouring countries and its Western counterparts. Further, they promoted privatisation and rapid reforms in economic policies (White 2000).

The second was the Eurasianists who were at the forefront in the political sphere of Russia. They advocated balanced and well-adjusted foreign policies with European countries as well as with the Middle East and far Eastern countries. They supported an assertive policy on the question of ties with the near abroad so that Russia could be a pervasive international power. In the economic field, the Eurasianists supported gradual reform and privatisation more than the Atlanticists.

During this period, the unusual combination of ultra-nationalists and unapologetic Communists in the Russian Duma represented the extreme end of the political spectrum in Russia. This group was vocal in their condemnation of America and Israe. They voiced for the Russia hegemony in world, particularly in the near abroad[2]. They felt that Russia should be a powerful, centralised state. However, on the issue of privatisation, they appeared divided. Between 1992 and 1999, the Russian Duma significantly moved to right. During this time, in Russian foreign policy, Yeltsin took extreme policy measures in the matters of external affairs specifically on the issue of Near Abroad and Middle East. In April 1998, for a brief period, the moderation in foreign policy could be seen during the tenure of prime minister Sergei Kiriyenko. He was replaced by Yevgeny Primakov in August of the same year and Russia went back to its original hard-line foreign policy. Putin's image as a strong nationalist leader and his aggressive policy against Americans in the Middle East has been supported by Duma at least in his initial regime

Central Asia is one of the most important regions in which the dominance of the Islamic factor has been crucial in the implementation of Russian policy here. In the

[2] The 14 states that succeeded the Soviet Union besides Russia are referred to by the Russian Federation as the "near abroad."

wake of Soviet disintegration, Central Asian nations were forced to the bottom of Russia for a political agenda. The Russian authorities, however, quite quickly realised the wrong premises of this strategy and developed the idea of 'near abroad.' One of Russia's main foreign policy goals soon became the establishment of relations with its Near Abroad Muslim countries of Central Asia. The significance of the Muslim factor in Moscow's policy towards Central Asian nations can be primarily assessed by two variables. First, apprehension of the spread of radical Islam to the Muslim-dominated region of Russia from this territory. Second, the increasing power, to the geopolitical disadvantage of Russia, of major Muslim countries such as Turkey, Iran and China in Russia's own strategic yard (Mohanty 2016: 203).

Russia has increasingly perceived that the intrusion of Islamic extremism into its Muslim populated region poses an existential threat to its own stability. In addition, the prevailing view in the Russian leadership, as with the Central Asian elites, has been that this challenge originates and gets ideological and material from the South. Central Asia is an important part of this "danger rhetoric" because it serves as a crucial buffer zone between Russia and nations with a radical Islamic government, such Afghanistan and Iran. As Russia's political and economic situation deteriorated in the 1990s, Central Asia was perceived by intellectuals as the source of radical Islam in that country (Trennin 2007: 75-78).

For practical and philosophical reasons, the near abroad, including Central Asia, had risen to the top of Russian leaders' agendas by late 1992 and early 1993. Meanwhile, events in Central Asia, particularly the Tajik Civil War that overthrew Muhammad Najibullah's regime in Kabul in April 1992, compelled the Russian Federation's 'Concept of Foreign Policy' to be expanded. Various commissions were formed to generate blueprints for a new Russian foreign policy concept, with competing ideas pushed by Russian political analysts. (Hansen 1997: 1502).

Muslim communities of Central Asia experienced a process of revival of religion in the post-Soviet period. The Islamic radicalism of Central Asia puts together an incredibly complex variety of groupings. Some advocate radical change through violence, such as IMU (Uzbekistan's Islamic Movement), IRPT (Tajikistan's Islamic Renaissance Party) and IJG (the Islamic Jihad Group). While some such as Hizb ut-

Tahrir, HT oppose the use of violence in the face of violent language and want to work inside formal political boundaries. In a nutshell, radicalisation of Islam in Central Asia is hard to categorise and classify. It is also worth noting that the increase in Islamic radicalism has not been evenly distributed throughout the region. Due to the much less severe effects in Turkmenistan and, to a lesser extent, Kazakhstan, the so-called "Islamic threat" has received less attention in official discourse. In contrast, occasional insurgencies have affected Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. However, some regions have been more severely affected than others, particularly in the bordering Ferghana valley. These three nations have made the idea of a "Islamic threat" a fundamental part of their security rhetoric and have continued to portray Islam as posing a threat to Russia (Fumagalli 2010: 195).

The 'Renewal of Tajikistan's Islamic Youth' was one of first Islamist organisation in Tajikistan. This organisation originated in the early 1970s as an underground network and promoted a pure version of Islam (Khalid 2007: 147). In 1990, in Astrakhan, several members of the local Islamic movement took part in the founding of the All-Union Islamic Renaissance Party. The leadership of the party expressed a preference for the establishment of an Islamic republic in Tajikistan. Though, the population was not particularly supportive of the proposal. The same time, cultural and political discussions were very much at the forefront of debates about the role of Islam in society. UTO (The Unified Tajik Opposition) was comprised of liberals, democrats and urban intellectuals. UTO fought against government forces supported by Russia and Uzbekistan during the 1992–1997 civil war and was a widely diverse opposition that the Islamic groups gradually joined.

Initially neutral in the war, Russian troops stationed in Tajikistan took a role, but quickly shifted their backing to the government-supporting groups. Russia was essential in ending the conflict, and after several years of talks, a peace accord based on a division of power between the government and the opposition was reached in 1997. After the wat, a large number of former warlords returned to their country to assume government positions. The accord was hailed as a success, where in Central Asia's first and only instance, an Islamic party was made legitimate and accepted into the mainstream political system as part of a power-sharing arrangement (Fumagalli 2010: 196-197).

Tajikistan's civil war has aggravated the fear that Islamic extremism could sweep through the region of Central Asia and infect the Muslim population in Russia. The activist and politicised or militant brand of Central Asian Islam was seen by many in the security and political circles of Russia as potentially destabilising because it sought to establish Islamic states (Hansen 1997: 1503-1504).

The fact that the near abroad had gained increasing relevance in Moscow's foreign policy agenda by mid-1992 aided the Russian military in Tajikistan in its goal of shifting Moscow toward a policy favouring the Communist-era power structure. The main issues of Russia in the near abroad were (1) to safeguard the territorial integrity of Russia by curtailing and monitoring armed conflicts in its vicinity and preventing their spill over into Russia; (2) to establish a 'belt' of good neighbours around it; (3) to establish Russia as the legitimate guarantor of military and political stability in former Soviet Union territories (FSU), thereby asserting Russia's 'special security responsibilities in the FSU'; (4) to defend the Russian and Russian-speaking population of the FSU by all means, including military force; and (5) to promote the integration of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and to transform it into both an effective collective security system and an economic organisation similar to the European Union (Shashenkov 1994: 168-187).

Russia was enabled by the Tajik Civil War to achieve certain wider regional strategic and political objectives. This was facilitated by the collapse of Najibullah's Russian-supported Afghan government in April 1992 to the forces of Tajik Commander Ahmad Shah Masoud and the creation of a new government by the Soviet Union forces. Following these events, Russia effectively announced that its external borders were identical to those of the CIS. As a result, the defence of these borders was crucial for Russia's defence. Due to the Tajiki Civil War, a new CIS joint agreement on peacekeeping policy was introduced in September 1992. In solidarity with the decision, the Joint Command of CIS Peacekeeping Forces was introduced. Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan contributed troops to the peacekeeping forces in Tajikistan, which were deployed in 1997, thus giving the legitimacy of collective operations to Russia's military presence (Hunter 2004: 332-333).

In Uzbekistan, along with the more general resurgence of religious identities and sentiments, the breakdown of state institutions and public order gave birth to opposition to the government from unofficial radical organisations like Adolat and Islom Lashkarlari. Islamic militants have repeatedly demanded establishment of an Islamic state and the imposition of Shari in Uzbekistan over two winters (1991-1992 and 1992-1993). An assassination attempt against President Karimov was staged by members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). The IMU was established in Kabul in the year 1998 by Uzbek militants, the two most important of them were Tohir Yo'ldash and Juma Namangani. Following Karimov's persecution, they had escaped from Uzbekistan into Tajikistan, participated in the Tajik War, and later found asylum under Taliban rule in the Afghanistan (Fumagalli 2010: 197).

By mid-1994, Russia realised that Uzbekistan was a possible competitor in the region's management for control rather than a 'junior partner'. Growing cooperation between Uzbekistan and the West, along with the cooling down of Russian-Western relations, has led to a shift in Russia's view of the position of Uzbekistan. The visit of US Defence Secretary William Perry to Uzbekistan in April 1995 was a significant watershed in the US-Uzbek cooperation. US-Uzbek relations grew closer afterwards, while Russian-Uzbek ties became strained.

In the second part of the 1990s, it was also unclear what role, if any, Central Asia played in Russia's foreign policy. Russia was lacking in a clear vision, prioritised goals. For the local republics, it was an unappealing partner. The situation only started to improve under Yevgenii Primakov, who was the foreign minister before becoming the prime minister. Primakov sought to reaffirm Russian control, although within the region's current political, economic, and military restraints. Under Primakov, Pragmatism altered the pro-Western ideological stance, and Central Asia came to be seen as the 'normall' place to begin for Russia to resume relations with the post-Soviet regions.

Nevertheless, also under Primakov, it was normal to exaggerate the Islamic threat to the interests of Russia in Central Asia. As declared by Primakov: "Islamic extremism has been gaining strength as a movement with the aim of spreading Islam by force and suppressing all who oppose this, and of changing the secular character of the

state. A ‘current’ of this extremism appeared in Tajikistan and in the Caucasus conflict zone. Furthermore, the problem of the spread of Islamic extremism is not a local phenomenon” (Fumagalli 2010: 200).

From the year 2000 onwards, Russia demonstrated a resurgence of its hegemony and projection of power, as well as a rise in the Central Asian republics’ trust in Russia’s reliability as a partner in addressing their insecurity problem. Vladimir Putin's election as president of Russia in 2000, as is generally known, played a significant role in improving the country’s situation. As the decade went on, the Kremlin supplied the means to reassert state control and power both domestically and internationally, despite an economic boom brought on by rising oil prices. The strategic re-conceptualization found in the 2000 National Security Concept and the 2000 Military Doctrine was made possible by Putin’s “power vertical,” which strengthened the president and clarified the previously disorganised formulation of Russian foreign policy. The goal for a multipolar international system and to restrain foreign influence in the former Soviet Union were clearly recognised as the country’s strategic objectives here (Sakwa 2008).

President Putin warned about the dangers of uprising extremism and Islamic fundamentalism at the beginning of his tenure in office. These alerts also caused security concerns in Central Asia and drew a positive response from its leadership. When President Putin was cautioned by the threat of growing extremist activities, regarding the threat of terrorism, the Russian army was validating its capabilities to give security to Central Asian leaders with anti-terrorist support. Commonwealth Southern Shield 2000 is a large-scale military exercise involving “about 10,000 Russian, Tajik, Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Uzbek troops…specifically rehearsed an anti-terrorist operation” (Stein 2019: 32). A significant drill of this scale established that Russia still has the power and potential to provide security in this region and convinced its leadership in Central Asia that Russia will be their natural ally.

The events of 11 September 2001 and subsequent developments gave Russia, both in Central Asia and internationally, opportunities as well as challenges. At the sight of the disaster inflicted upon the US, despite some discordant notes sounded by a few Communist and nationalist leaders, the Russian public and government appeared

genuinely shocked and dismayed. Russia also thought that it had vindicated its views on the existence of the Taliban and the interconnectedness of the Islamist terrorist network. By joining the anti-terrorist alliance, the US efforts to form a coalition against international terrorism gave Russia the opportunity to reform its relations with the Americans and Europeans in this new context. Hoping to receive economic and other concessions from the West in return, as well as more sympathy for the situation in Chechnya (Hunter 2004: 339).

Nevertheless, the US decision to strike Afghanistan's Taliban-dominated regions and its demand for cooperation in Central Asia, including the use of its airfields, raised a number of dilemmas for Russia. Should Russia become militarily active in Afghanistan? Members of the Russian government, at least in the legislative branch, were also concerned about the effect on the Muslim population of Russia's support of military operations in Afghanistan. Mikhail Prusak expressed that "Russia's participation could lead to more Islamic radicalism inside the country and such a turn of events should not be disregarded. Chechnya alone is enough for US". Ultimately, Russia opted for a strategy of 'collaboration without military participation'. After some difficulty, Russia agreed to allow the US to use the airfields of Central Asian countries (Hunter 2004: 340).

The question of the length of the US military presence was left unclear during the early part of the war against the Taliban, but with an apparent expectation that it would be short in duration. This participation was opposed by important elements of Russia's political and military system and was seen as weakening CIS collective security structures. In the wake of the "war on terror," Putin initially supported the stationing of US troops and the establishment of US air bases in Central Asia; however, as Russia's economy recovered and the focus moved from internal restoration to global power projection. 20 miles away from Manas, in Kant, Russia also established a military base. In 2009, this strange circumstance became even odder. Despite the base's lease being renewed in 2006, the US was asked to leave the base in February 2009 and do so within 180 days (Fumagalli 2010: 201).

In addition to Russia, the regional organisations to which the Central Asian Republics belong, whose stated objective is to support international solutions to economic and

security concerns, also played an important role. The CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization) was the most important among them. The CSTO is a joint defence alliance between Russia, Armenia, Belarus, and three states of Central Asia — Tajikistan Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan — formed a group called CIS.

Russia's goal was always to turn the CIS Collective Security Treaty into a NATO-like multilateral regional security organization. However, policy disagreements with key countries such as Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Georgia have made it difficult to achieve this objective. Indeed, the CIS Collective Security Treaty has become a very weak tool for either advancing Russia's security interests or maintaining regional stability. Notwithstanding this context, Russia revived this old project and created the CSTO in its efforts to regain lost ground and consolidate its position in post-9/11 Central Asia. The decision to do so was taken at the meeting of the collective security council in Moscow on 14 May 2002.

Another important organisation is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which came into existence during a meeting in Shanghai on 26 April 1996 as the Shanghai Five, consisting of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Its priorities vary from defence to economics. Any of the problems related to security relate to Sino-Central Asian relations. The establishment of the Shanghai group brought China into the Central Asian security equation and acted as a tool for the region's Sino-Russian cooperation. It has also promoted the settlement of several security-related problems in China's Central Asian ties. A major impetus behind the group's formation was the spread of Islamic extremism, but the SCO also represented the ascendancy of the multipolar strategy of Russia. The linchpin of a new multipolar world was to be a Russian-Chinese alliance, as illustrated by Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov's statement during the forum's 1999 summit in Bishkek: "In the world today, there is an active struggle to establish a new world order. As you know, Russia, China, and many other states want to see a multipolar world" (Hunter 2004: 337).

The main focus of the activities of the forum since 1998-1999 has changed to the fight against religious extremism, separatism and international terrorism. Russian policy makers, including President Putin, and analysts believe that Islamic extremism in the CIS and the so-called arc of chaos pose an existential threat to Russia. The latter

applies primarily to the activities of Muslim militants in the CIS because Islamic extremists are attempting to reclaim the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Crimea, and the Volga-Ural region and because "anti-governmental and intrinsically sectarian extremist forces are ready to turn the entire continent into a zone of chaos" (Hunte, 2004: 337-338).

As a matter of fact, Russia has controlled regions of South Caucasus and Central Asia for over 150 years. However, in recent times a certain decline of Russian control in these areas can be noticed. Today, the dominance of the traditional power of the region, Russia, is challenged by modern and unconventional power like the US and China in the region. In order to work out the long overdue project of Eurasian Union, Moscow seeks to counter this impact and to fulfil its interest in Central Asia without any resentment and has used verity of means to protect its interest such as economic exchange, multilateral talks, appeasement policies for diaspora, re-introduction of Russian culture in education, energy dependency to coercive means when needed. Despite the more dynamic and multipolar international system that is evolving, Russia retains a more multi-faceted involvement in Central Asia and other surrounding regions than anyone else at the moment. This may be its utmost tactical advantage in which the role of Islam is paramount.

Terrorism is an additional incentive for Russia to watch Central Asia closely. Even in one or two of these nations, extreme Islam may become the dominant political force, it would be a big calamity for Russia, which views this enormous territory to be a vital element of its 'privileged zone of influence'.

4.4.2 Russia and Transcaucasus

It has been overtly discussed that the disintegration of the USSR in 1991 into independent states was a significant event in the world's history that, since then, has changed the existing political equation in Russia. The Caucasus region which previously was the offshoots of the politics of the world, has instantly appealed to the interest of both neighbours and powerful leaders across the globe. In due course of time, the disintegrated republics of former Soviet became nation-states of international significance and enjoyed their new identity as sovereign nation-states by prioritising national interests in their foreign policies.

Russia has played a significant role in the politics of the Caucasus and its effort cannot be overestimated in the area. Moscow shows special strategic interest in the region also because Russia itself is known as a Caucasian state. The North Caucasus is at the heart of all Russian republics which include Adygea, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Circassia, North Ossetia, Chechnya, and also Krasnodar and Stavropol territories. These states are either a part of the North Caucasian or the Southern federal districts.

Over time, the tension either open or latent has increased in the Russian Caucasus mostly due to the independent republics of the Soviet and vice-versa. The Georgia-Ossetian dispute had substantially impacted the Ossetian-Ingush clash. Another such Georgia-Abkhazia disagreement has created a lot of tension in the area. The series of conflicts between these groups have hampered the ethnopolitical growth of the Russian Caucasus more evidently towards the West which includes areas such as Adygea, Karachay-Circassia and Kabardino-Balkaria. Additionally, the condition at Pankisi Gorge is decisive in determining the security condition of Dagestan and Chechnya. Furthermore, the issue of people like Avar and Lezgin who share ethnic ties but are separated and spread out in both part of the territorial borders of Russia and Azerbaijan. This has a major impact on the religious dynamics of the region as well as the Moscow-Baku relations. Therefore, the Transcaucasian policy of Russia largely depends on the internal security environment of these regions and it provides all possible support for an improved security situation in the North Caucasus yet it remains the most conflicted and disturbed region of Russia (Markedonov 2014).

In the case of Transcaucasia, the main goal of Russia has been to avoid developments in the Caucasus from adversely affecting its security. Some of the similar factors that have determined Russia's approach towards Central Asia have also influenced its policy towards the Caucasus. In fact, in view of Russia's problems in the North Caucasus, especially in Chechnya, the security dimensions of the Caucasus are of greater importance than those of Central Asia. The Transcaucasus region is also one of the important to Russia from an economic perspective due to Azerbaijani gas and oil reserves and the debate over pipelines that would transport these resources through Georgia to global market.

Fascinatingly, the Islamic factor has had a slighter impact on Russian policy towards the Trans Caucasus than towards Central Asian states. To that extent the Islamic factor has played an important role, it has been through its connection with the Chechen conflict. Two factors are responsible for this situation. First, while Muslims outnumber non-Muslims in Azerbaijan, two of the three countries in the region — Georgia and Armenia — are Christian, but Islam is the majority religion in Central Asia. Second, unlike Central Asia, which has primarily been influenced by Afghanistan and Pakistan, where militant Islamic groups and tendencies have been strong for the past 25 years, the two Muslim countries bordering the Transcaucasus, Iran and Turkey, have played down the Islamic factor, particularly its extremist versions, in their approaches to the region for various reasons (Hunter 200: 342-343).

Turkey unconsciously facilitated the infiltration of extremist ideas into Azerbaijan by undermining Azerbaijanis' traditional faith and enhancing Azerbaijanis' susceptibility to Wahhabi and other Islamist ideologies. It, thus, created opportunities for groups like Hizb-ul-Tahrir and Osama bin Laden's followers to establish grips in the country. Since a substantial number of Azerbaijan's minorities in the north of the country bordering Dagestan are Sunnis, religious extremism has become intertwined with ethnic resentment.

The North Caucasus has been a channel for the infiltration of non-traditional and radical versions of Islam into the Transcaucasus and has predominantly impacted the progress of Azerbaijani Islam. The growth of Muslim extremist movements has introduced an Islamic dimension to Russia's relations with Azerbaijan, creating a linkage between such groups and Chechen rebels leading Russia, at one point, to accuse Azerbaijan of having become a 'hotbed of Islamic radicalism'. The inclination of some South Caucasian countries to allow Chechen separatists to use their territories, or their incompetence to prevent such linkages, has affected Russia's approach towards them.

The Chechen War, which started on 11 December 1994 added a new source of discord to the already worsening relations between Russia and the Transcaucasian states, with the exception of Armenia. The Chechen conflict created occasions for Azerbaijan and Georgia and their regional allies, such as Turkey, to limit Russian

influence in the South Caucasus. The extent of support of these countries' active backing for Chechen independence is hard to establish. But due to the constant support by many groups in Azerbaijan and in Georgia were certainly sympathetic to the Chechen cause and they provided help to Chechen separatists.

Initially, during the First Chechen War (1994-1996), the Islamic factor did not emerged as an important inspiration for helping the Chechens for Muslim Azerbaijan. But the more important object was to weaken Russia. The Russian sources, however, referred to all those who supported the Chechens as Muslim guerrillas. Among these groups suspected of helping the Chechens were the Grey Wolves, an extremist faction of the Turkish National Action Party (MHP). The late leader of MHP was Alpaslan Turkey, who harboured Pan-Turkist ideas and had some considerable followers in Azerbaijan and Central Asian countries. The director of the Russian Federal Border Service, Andrei Nikolayev, accused the Grey Wolves of acting as mercenaries in Chechnya. To thwart such infiltrations, Russia closed its borders with Azerbaijan immediately after the start of the war. Azerbaijan denied helping Chechen nationalists, and President Aliev argued that Azerbaijan, itself was suffering from separatism and terrorism (Kohen 1992: 17-18).

With the escalating influence of the UN, extremist groups in Azerbaijan between 1994 and 1999 terrified Azerbaijani authorities, with the authorities sternly warning them through actions and cracking down on their activities. With the outbreak of fighting in Dagestan and the resumption of the Russian- Chechen conflict in 1999, Azerbaijan became more worried about the risks of provoking Russia, especially when Russia's second campaign in Chechnya appeared more systematised and promised victory. Therefore, by late 1999, Russian- Azerbaijani relations began to improve, albeit asymmetrically.

In Georgia's case, the conflict in Chechnya and allegations of active Georgian support to the Chechen rebels, especially during the second Chechen War (1999-2009), adversely affected bilateral relations of Russian and Georgian. Russia has consistently accused Georgia of supporting Chechen rebels. Evidence indicates that many Chechen refugees during the Second Chechen War who arrived in Georgia were active combatants, and some were treated in Georgia's hospitals. In view of the

worsening state of relations between Russian and Georgian, it is also feasible that Georgia tried to use the Chechen card as a bargaining chip in its relations with Moscow, notably reducing the incentive for Russia to militarily support Abkhaz separatism or allow Abkhazia to join the Russian Federation on the basis of a law passed by the Duma in June 2001 (Hunter 2004: 350).

In short, Russia's Caucasus policy is largely based on economic, geostrategic considerations and rivalry among its interest groups in the region. Nevertheless, the Islamic factor has also had some influence, especially through the Chechen connection. Furthermore, the relative influence of these factors was diverse during different stages of the evolution of Russian policy towards the region.

4.4.3 Russia and Iran

The Iranian Revolution in 1979 opened a new chapter for the world power as during that time relations between Soviet Union and Iran were tense. Moscow provided equal military assistance to Tehran and Baghdad throughout the eight-year Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988) and worked to end the conflict, but the war escalated till 1988. The new phenomena emerged when the Cold War ended and the Soviet Union disintegrated. An initiation of Russian-Iranian relationship promised new opportunity for strengthening and advancing their relations further, which reflected their significant shared interests and proximity. As mentioned earlier, the Atlanticist and pro-Western viewpoint dominated Russian foreign policy of new Russia. Iran was thought to be the focal point of the Islamic threat (Koolaee 2006).

Since early 1994, Russia and Iran have formed close and principally friendly relations. The document, published in 2000, cites outlining the Russian concept of foreign policy and the expansion of relations between Russia and Iran as a principal goal of the Russian Federation's foreign policy. Some Iranian officials, even Russian and Western observers have termed Russian-Iranian relations as a 'partnership'. This partnership consists of Russia's arms supply to Iran and assistance in rebuilding the Iranian nuclear power plant in Bushehr. Western sources, especially the US, claim that Russian scientists have helped Iran develop its missile technology, but this claim is denied by Russia.

The massive victory under the able leadership of Vladimir Zhirinovskii of the Liberal Democratic Party in 1993 elections, and in 1995 under Gennadii Zyuganov of the Communist Party, gave them even more impetus to change their approach. It made it very evident to the Kremlin's top officials that big changes needed to be made to Russian foreign policy (Crow 1994: 3-4). When Yevgenii Primakov was appointed foreign minister in 1996, he had a significant role in formulating and enacting these measures. He was an expert on foreign affairs, especially those pertaining to Middle Eastern. As previously indicated, he had a tendency toward Eurasism and sought to support a more autonomous Russian foreign policy that would strengthen its ability to exert influence on world politics due to its geographic spread from Europe to Asia. He did this in an effort to define a role that was more equal and less subordinate to the US. He also stressed the significance of Russia's relations with its neighbours and the necessity of viewing this "post-Soviet space" as being of essential relevance to Russia throughout his tenure. He recognised Russian interests in pursuing an open and dynamic Middle East strategy that would be crucially dependent on both Iran and Iraq (Koolaee 2010: 210).

As the 1990s continued, Russia was confronted with alleged external threat posed by NATO's Eastward advance, as well as internal pressure from the West over its military operations in Chechnya. As a result, in an effort to forge a more independent and Eurasianist stance, Russia focused more on Iran.

Primakov's other important step was calling for a civilisational dialogue that echoes the 'Dialogue of Civilizations'. It can also be linked to Mohd Khatami, president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and his 1997 speech in the UN General Assembly. Khatami argued that he has never been against the development and supported the dialogue between the civilisations. Although the speech of Khatami came out around the same time when Primakov envisioned a new foreign policy of Russia emphasising the necessity of dialogue between the civilization, it is yet doubtful that either of them had an influence on each other on the matter at hand. However, both of them exhibited a similar concern over the need for such dialogues and need not culminate in the slandering of one's civilisation by the other. instead, it should promote the reciprocal exchange of culture and value systems to build trust on both sides. In fact, it is interesting to observe that both the leaders belonging to such diversified traditions

were on the same page in the matter of civilisations dialogue as part of their foreign policy (Merati 2017: 181).

Khatami and Primakov's visions of civilisational connections reflect not just a common hope about the advantages of dialogue as well as a potential for competition. The Iranian president Khomeini, openly elaborated that the main goal of Iran's Islamic paradigm is to provide epistemological, existential and ontological model for the mankind. Their mutual interest on regional issues further strengthened the ties between Iran and Russia. They mutually agreed on curbing the US control on the region and the increasing drug trafficking in the area. In every respect, the countries shared similar strategies than that of other Western countries to control the region. Iran's long-standing conflict with the US also provided a fertile soil in expanding Iran's relation with Russia (Merati 2017: 182-183).

Furthermore, in the 1990s, an institutional dialogue on cultural and ethnic issues was struck between Russia and Iran to cease an ongoing Western cultural dominance all over the world. Both of these countries emphasised the need to promote their ethnic diversity through dialogue to contain the Western cultural influence in the region. For this purpose, Tehran and Moscow underwent an intercultural and religious dialogue in 1997 which took place between the official clergy of the Islamic republic and the officials of Russian Orthodox Church. Every other year a bilateral meet takes place between Tehran and Moscow for the same purpose (Thereme, 2019: 22). According to Alexey Malashenko, Russia's indulgence in the inter-religious dialogues with Tehran is a part of its strategy to build an image among the Muslim community, an image which went negative, especially during the Chechen wars (Malashenko 2007: 157-170).

Due to this convergence of a new policy, Iran's foreign policy became less ideological and Russia abandoned its pro-Western position, the two countries' bilateral relations significantly increased. As Iran's foreign policy grew more pragmatist in the 1990s, these two countries' relationships expanded. As a result of these ties, Iran was reluctant in its criticism of Russia's suppression of the Chechen separatists, in contrast to other Muslim nations like Saudi Arabia or other Arab Gulf governments that were more outspoken in their disapproval. The Russian leadership received unequivocal

statements from Iran about the seriousness of its desire for improved ties. Iran made it quite clear and emphasized that it had no desire to advance an Islamic agenda in Russia's domestic affairs. Despite this, Iranian leaders frequently emphasised the necessity for a peaceful resolution to the Caucasus crises. To demonstrate the pragmatic and non-ideological focus of Iran's foreign policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia, Iranian leadership supported Russia's position on the Chechen crisis by taking a supportive stance against it. The positive role Tehran played in putting an end to the civil war in Tajikistan was a blatant indication of the Kremlin's desire to promote bilateral cooperation. The impetus for a significant improvement in relations was boosted by the Taliban's win in Afghanistan, which was viewed unfavourably in both Tehran and Moscow (Koolaee 1997: 96-103).

Russian and Iranian ambitions and strategies have been progressively converging as a result of the turmoil in the former Soviet Union republics, as the Tajik civil war made clear. There were numerous conflicts in Central Asia and the Caucasus that directly affected Iran and Russia. In the early 1990s, Iran itself attempted to mediate the Armenian-Azeri conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, but soon realised that this required coordination with Russia (Cornell, 2004). The geopolitical vacuum left in Central Asia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which was thought to be filled by an increasing number of other external influences, like Turkey and the US, to keep an eye on Afghanistan and Russia, particularly troubled Russia and Iran.

The Central Asian republics were landlocked, limiting their ability to discover other routes that did not involve Russia or Iran to the north or south. Despite focusing on being part of the world's political and economic system, Russian officials have begun to pay greater attention to their own geographic region. Russia's interest in the Middle East has changed as a result of the rising relevance of geopolitics in the Russian foreign policy and Iran has become more significant in Russian foreign strategy (Mesbahi 1993: 210-215). The Shanghai Forum which includes Russia, Kazakhstan, China, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, was established in 1997 as a result of this broad increase in interest. In 2005, Iran was granted membership as an observer after Uzbekistan joined the organisation in 1991 (Rasizade 2002: 49). The SCO has said that it favours multi-polarity and advocated for a deadline for US soldiers in Central Asia in 2005 (Oldberg 2007: 17).

An essential indicator of the improvement of relations between Russia and Iran is the anti-American sentiment present in the area. Iran's significance to Russian foreign policy has always been emphasised by Aleksandar Dugin. He has always emphasised that in order for Russia to enhance bilateral relations and turn Islam into a beneficial force in Eurasia, which limits the spread of Western imperialist invasion in the area, cooperation with Iranian fundamentalists is necessary. The main issue in Russia was the eastward expansion of NATO. Iran's rhetoric grew more appealingly anti-American. In the disappearance of the Soviet Union, both nations increasingly perceived the threat posed by US unilateralism, which sought to construct a hegemonic global order. The strengthening of ties with Iran was seen by Russia as a sign of a return to nationalist foreign policy (Koolaee 2010: 13-21).

President Putin has described Iran as a long-term partner and trustworthy friend of Russia at an international security conference in Munich held in 2007 (Adomeit 2007: 11). Russia has refused to consider and opposed the US view that Iran is a supporter of terrorism at international level, particularly regarding Hamas in the Palestinian and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Moreover, both countries were eager in seeing foreign soldiers leave Afghanistan until the Afghans can fully take responsibility for their own security. According to Russia, Iran can help stabilise Iraq.

In the process for close bilateral relations, several Iranian officials visited Moscow, and Russian President Putin visited Tehran in October 2007 to be part of the second summit of the five Caspian states. This is the first Russian leader visit to Iran since Stalin in 1943. The presidents decided to establish an institutional structure for regional cooperation on the Iranian initiative, starting with frequent meetings on economic, legal and some security-related concerns. More importantly, the summit stated that the states will not engage in conflict with one another or permit their territories in attacks on other riparian states. This phrase appears to be aimed to prevent the US from utilising Azerbaijan as a base for an attack against Iran (Putin, 2007).

According to Shireen T. Hunter, "Since 1992, Russia's approach towards Iran has been neither consistent nor in the spirit of true partnership wherein there is a balance of benefits between the partners. Rather, Russia has been the main beneficiary,

making the Russian-Iranian partnership highly unequal. Russia has used Iran to advance its geopolitical agenda in Central Asia (notably in Tajikistan), in the Caucasus (to balance Turkish-Azerbaijani influence), and in Afghanistan. It has used Iran as a bargaining chip in its dealings with the West and other countries to Iran's disadvantage whenever it has suited Russian interests. Iran has also been helpful to Russia by calling the Chechen crisis an internal Russian affair and, while Iran held the presidency of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1997-1998, moderating that organization's response to Russian policy towards Chechnya. This approach has had minimal benefits for Iran and, in fact, has entailed substantial costs: it has damaged Iran's position within the OIC and has eroded Iran's Islamic credentials and overall image in the Muslim world" (Hunter 2004: 371).

The most significant reality is that Iran has been extremely helpful to Russia in the Chechen conflict, particularly in the OIC environment. Initially, Iran denounced Russia's invasion of Chechnya. Iran's foreign minister Ali-Akbar Velayati's tour to Moscow in 1996 marked the beginning of an active relationship with Russia and from the Russian perspective, positive Iranian involvement in the Chechen issue. Iran was particularly helpful to Russia within the OIC. During the OlC's 1997 summit in Tehran, Iran kept the Chechen question off its agenda. Anatolii Kulikov, the Russian minister of interior expressed gratitude to Tehran for its circumspect position on the Chechen issue and also acknowledged that it was Iran's stance that prevented Turkey from putting Chechnya on the agenda of the OIC summit (BBC 1997).

To resolve the Chechen problems, Iran further created a Special Committee to discuss and consult with Russia on the conflict of Chechnya within the OIC. Consequently, in 1999-2000, several delegations from the OIC visited Moscow to de-escalate relations within Russia. After one visit to Moscow in January 2000, the OIC issued a press release that set out the principles for resolving the Chechen conflict. Among these principles was freedom to practice Islamic Sharia, already promised by Russian authorities. Iran consistently and openly supported Russia's territorial integrity, even in the case of Chechnya. In 2001, on the eve of President Muhammad Khatami's visit to Russia, the value of Iran's support has been recognised by some Russian analysts. Vladimir Sazhin wrote, "For Russia, the support of Moscow's Chechen policy and its

anti-terrorist campaign from such an authoritative Muslim state as Iran is extremely valuable" (Hunter 2004: 373-374).

The 11 September 2001 attacks in the US dramatically altered the context and dynamics of Russian and American relations, leading to a much more cooperative relationship, whereas infrequently also created friction in the relationship between the two countries. When Putin moved closer to Washington after 11 September 2001, and acquiesced to the deployment of US military force in Central Asia, Iran disapproved this move. Tehran also warned that the foreign policy of the US is going to "expand its sphere of influence in Central Asia and the Caucasus and...to lessen Russia's traditional influence in the region" (Radio Iran 2001).

In January 2003, during the visit of an Iranian delegation to Moscow, Russian deputy foreign minister Vyacheslav Trubnikov stated, "Russia regards Iran as an important regional partner...(Iran) not only condemns international terrorism, but has also proved this by concrete action, especially in Afghanistan" (Associated Press 2003). Russian approval of the draft of a long-term program (extending to 2012) for enhancing economic, trade, industrial, and technical-scientific ties between Russia and Iran. Both countries further indicate that despite better ties with Washington, Russia does not want to burn the bridge with Iran under any pressure. The crisis of Iraq is now over, culminating in the US and the UK war against Iraq, which formed a kind of security threat to all Middle East countries, and even increased Iran's strategic value to Kremlin, which led to a warming of their bilateral relations. As an indication of this warming trend, Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov visited Tehran in March 2003. Numerous problems relating to the economy and security were addressed. during this meeting. Among security-related issues, in addition to the Iraq crisis, were those concerning the Caucasus region. According to a report in *Online Pravda,* Iranian foreign minister Kamal Kharazi expressed Iran's readiness to cooperate with Russia to resolve its conflict with the North Caucasus to bring stability and peace in the region including Chechnya (Hunter 2004: 378-379).

Nevertheless, the main contentious issue between the two countries was Moscow's constant delay in completing the work on the Bushehr nuclear station due to the US pressure on Moscow and the unclear developments in Iran itself. Russia had to

footfall a thin line between negotiating and negotiations, but its credibility in Iran was often put into doubt.

In May 2002, during his meeting with President Bush, President Putin defended Russia's role in building the Bushehr plant (Agence France Press, 2002). Other Russian officials denied that Moscow was helping Iran with military uses of nuclear energy and dismissed the idea that Iran posed a threat either to Russia or the US in any form. By early 2003, although there was no dramatic shift in Russia's approach towards relations with Iran, the passion generated by Khatami's visit had disappeared. The relations were described by contradictory signals and a creeping chill. The Bushehr reactor, originally scheduled for completion in 2004 got delayed and was expected to be completed now by the end of 2008 and deliver its maximum capacity to the country's power grid one year later (CNN International, 2007).

Russia began delivering nuclear fuel to the plant on 18 December 2007, as part of a compromise effort to calm concerns about Iran's nuclear goals while recognising the country's right to a nuclear energy programme (Washington Post, 2007). To address the Western concerns about Iran and their allegations of Iranian nuclear threat, President Putin stated, "We have no evidence of Iran's intention to produce nuclear weapons. Therefore, we proceed from the premise that Iran has no such plans. But we share the concern of other partners and believe that Iran's programs must be transparent" (Kreutz 2017: 88).

In the Iranian case, it sees itself as a decisive and powerful force in the territory and evidently, Russia is apprehensive of Iranian ambitions in Central Asia, where it still has a significant presence (Sanaie 2007: 1). During changing scenario, since new leaders took office in Turkmenistan, Iran's relations with the country have strengthened. Iran recommended in early 2007 that Iran and Russia cooperate in order to maintain peace in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Furthermore, Because of its close ties to Israel and its participation in the Quartet, which also includes the US, the EU, and the UN, which seeks to mediate disputes between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, Russia disdains President Ahmadinejad's threats to destroy Israel (Oldberg, 2017: 285-286).

From the strategic and political point of view, Russia and US relations are crucial. Simultaneously, its economic relations with the EU continue to improve. An American analyst's opinion that "Putin stands perfectly ready to betray the Iranian's confidence for a price" seems to be the unfounded. As Carnegie Foundation expert Dimitri Trenin indicates, "Russian flexibility has its limits", and "Russian leaders will not subscribe to anything at the UN Security Council that would sanction the use of force against Iran" (Trennin 2007: 102). The talks of artilleries of mass destruction and the imposition of agreement by the UN watchdog AIEA and the chief of that agency, Hens Blix, was working for the US power. As in the case of Iraq before, open the way for US, or its allies, military intervention and occupation of this country.

As Trenin notes, "Looking at Iran and Afghanistan, Russians are sceptical about the US staying powerful and its effectiveness. They suspect that the US might try to disarm Iran, fail, and have to withdraw leaving others in the neighbourhood, including Russia, to inherit the mess". In such a scenario, whatever way the events could turn out, in the case of the US attack on Iran, Russia certainly will not be in 'a win-win situation,' and its international and domestic security will be seriously challenged (Trennin 2007: 102).

Putin offered a strong warning against attacking Iran in his speech at the Second Caspian Sea Summit in Tehran on 16 October 2007, saying that the five littoral nations "must not let any outside powers use their territories for attacking neighbours". (International Herald Tribune, 2007). At the end of the Caspian Sea Summit, the final declaration adopted and stated that "the Caspian Sea should be used only for peaceful purposes" and that each signatory "will under no circumstances allow their territories to be used by other countries for acts of aggression or other military actions against any of the signatories". Russia and Iran have thrived for inclusiveness of these provisions and has not just documented it but are determined to make it a In addition to documenting these rules, Russia and Iran have worked hard to make them part of a potential permanent treaty governing the legal status of the Caspian Sea (Kreutz 2017: 89-90).

In the Caspian area, Iran is the only nation which shares its border with Russia and Moscow's position that the Caspian Sea should preserve its lake status and that non-

regional countries should be kept away from its basin. The 1921 and 1940 treaties between Iran and the Soviet Union are the only accords that exist regarding the Caspian Sea's legal status. They recognise the Caspian Sea as a lake that belongs to and is divided equally between Iran and the Soviet Union. The Republics of Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan do not consider themselves parties to these treaties (BBC Monitoring 2007).

Despite the fact that Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan seek to divide the Caspian seabed into national sectors based on post-Soviet international borders and shorelines, Iran wants the seabed divided equally, giving it a larger portion (BBC Monitoring, 2007). Some differences aside, using ecological arguments both Russia and Iran oppose the building of Trans-Caspian pipelines. Putin's office claimed that pipelines should be built only with the consent of all five littoral nations (Associated Press, 2007). The UN was against the US and the EU's aim to construct additional pipelines to bypass Russian territory and transport oil and gas from Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan to Azerbaijan and further west over the Caspian Sea.

The Islamic factor has also played a reasonably limited role in shaping Russian-Iranian relations. Its impact has been somewhat contradictory, but as a whole, it was a positive move. In fact, this is a unique feature of Russia-Iran relations in this crucial time, as opposed to Russia's ties with most other Muslim countries. Iran and Russia both have been the object of bitterness of various Sunni extremist groups, notably the Taliban and followers of various shades of Wahhabism who consider the Shias to be the non-believers and are active in Russia, especially Chechnya and Central Asian countries.

4.4.4 Russia and the Arab World

The Islamic factor has played a significant part in Russian relations with the Arab world, owing to the involvement of certain Arab states and their non-governmental groups in the Chechen War and the Afghan civil war. The violence in Bosnia, on the other hand, despite being an annoyance for Russia, had no meaningful impact on Russian relations with the Arab world. Though later in the conflict, Russia became concerned about the potential impact of its assistance for the Serbian side on its own Muslim communities and territories, the Islamic factor played a secondary role in

deciding Russia's response to the Bosnian issue. The Islamic element, on the other hand, had a significant influence on Russia's approach to the Kosovo crisis, partly because Russia's Muslim community got more involved in the issue, and partly because Russia saw links between the Chechen conflict and the events in Kosovo (Hunter 2004: 381-382).

Even before the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russia's policy toward the Arab world had changed dramatically. During the Soviet era, Russia had the strongest ties with anti-Western Arab governments like Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Egypt, which was led by Gamal Abdul Nasser. These countries were drawn to the Soviet Union because it served as a counterweight to the US, especially during the Arab-Israeli conflict. Following the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, the Soviet Union backed the Arab position and broke diplomatic ties with Israel. The Soviet approach in this regard radically shifted under Gorbachev's 'New Thinking,' because the basic concept of New Thinking dictated that the USSR unburden itself of useless Third World allies whose goals were solely mercenary (Kuvaldin 1994: 193).

In the meantime, Gorbachev expanded relations with pro-Western and traditionally anti-Soviet regimes like Saudi Arabia. In 1991, the Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan and support for US-led military operations against Iraq opened up new diplomatic opportunities. The Soviet Union's policy shift was partly driven by the country's economic problems. The Soviet Union could no longer afford to provide military and economic aid to nations like Syria and Iraq, which had amassed massive debts to the Soviet Union by the late 1980s (Nizameddin 1999: 53).

According to Naumkin, Russia evolved a balanced and pragmatic stance towards all Middle Eastern countries by the end of 1992, with a renewed focus on Russia's Eurasian nature, contacts with Arab moderates, diplomatic and trade activity, and Russia's potential position as a mediator (Rubinstein, 1995: 264). Its foreign policy towards the Islamic world has primarily been diplomatic and economic in nature. Russia's primary objectives have been to stabilise the region and maintain economic stability (Zviagelskaya and Naumkin, 1994: 335).

Putin has shown a notable economic interest in the Arab Gulf states, especially in Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which are supposedly the three richest states. He

has always sought to establish a good relation with the Gulf countries for investment opportunities and market exchange. Moscow has realised that Gulf countries could be a hub of investment in Russia. Recently, they have become allies in re-enforcing the price of petroleum. For Russia and Arabic Gulf countries, this has been a major source of revenue generation as they are also members of OPEC. Russia's strong ties with Gulf countries have been helpful in fostering President Putin's geopolitical goals in the Middle East and the rest of the Islamic world. It is pertinent for Russia to give its cooperation to Moscow in Afghanistan despite their different stands over Iran and Syria. Another reason for Putin to make strong ties with Arab is due to its own internal factions with the Muslim population, especially in Chechnya (Katz 2019: 18).

Since the 1990s, one of Moscow's top priorities has been to make sure that wealthy Arab Gulf states do not, as they did in Afghanistan in the 1980s, support Muslim opposition to Moscow's dominance in Chechnya and other Muslim territories. After so many years of ups and downs, at present Moscow shares a friendly bond with the Arabic Gulf countries. None of these Gulf countries are ready to challenge Moscow's autonomy over the republics of the Russian Federation. Instead, the Arab Gulf states share a cordial relationship with controversial Chechen leaders like Ramzan Kadyroy. Besides, the economic exchange between Russian Muslim republics and Arab Gulf nations helps to complement Russia's economic assistance to the Muslim republics (Hauer 2018).

Although it has not always been smooth. During 1990s and early 2000s, a number of regional conflicts involving Muslim populations unfavourably affected Russia's relations with several important Arab states. In the war between the Serbs and Bosnian Muslims, one such conflict during which Russia supported the Serbs that annoyed most of the Muslim World, especially the Arabians. But the conflict that has had the most adverse and long-lasting impact on Russian-Arab relations has been the Chechen conflict. For several reasons, the Chechen conflict has been the most damaging impact on Russia's relations with Saudi Arabia.

First, among Muslim states, Saudi Arabia has been the most outspoken in denouncing Russia's actions in Chechnya. Saudi Arabia showed concerns about the destiny of Chechen Muslims even before the start of the Russia-Chechen military war. As

military hostilities began in December 1994, Saudi Arabia took the lead in bringing the Chechens' plight to the attention of the Muslim world. Saudi Arabia's government took initiatives, and urged the United Nations Security Council, in January 1995, to halt the wars in Bosnia and Chechnya immediately. Saudi Arabia was even more vocal about the Chechen problem within the OIC. In Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the OIC meeting from 27-30 June 2000 was held in which the Saudi delegates referred Russian military operations "an inhumane act against the Muslim people of Chechnya", and referred to terms such as the right of self-determination, which could be interpreted as support for Chechen independence (Russia Today 2000).

Second, Saudi Arabia, while giving verbal support to Russia's territorial integrity, provided a great deal of material and moral assistance to the Chechen rebels. Russian officials often claimed the Muslim rebels and Chechens in Russia receive financial and military aid from Gulf states. As per Russian sources, Al-Qaeda was operating from Chechnya and accused Saudi Arabia of backing Al-Qaeda in the region. The claim, however, was out rightly rejected by the Saudi government saying they have helped not the rebels but the refugees in Chechnya. It is also observed the refugees were turning into rebels in the area (Katz 2019: 18).

Third, the flow of private financial assistance from Saudi Arabia to Chechnya caused disharmony in Russian-Saudi relations. It is difficult to evaluate the magnitude of Saudi assistance to Chechen rebels, especially since most of the information on this subject is based on Russian sources, which might not be a hundred percent true.

Fourth, certain personalities involved in the conflict with alleged links to Saudi Arabia, have been in direct touch with Chechnya and Dagestan. The most prominent of these personalities are the notorious Khattab and Osama bin Laden. The Saudi origins of Khattab have not consistently established Riyadh relations with bin Laden, which have been strained since the end of the Soviet-Afghan War. The Russian linking of Saudi Arabia with bin Laden, therefore, derives from the connection between him and the Taliban regime and the latter's support for the Chechen rebels (Hunter 2004: 384-385).

In addition to the Chechen conflict, with its Islamic dimensions, and other sources of Saudi-Russian discord that have an Islamic component, a number of economic and

political disputes have tended to strain Russia with Saudi Arabia relations. Some of these are the oil and energy competition within the OPEC is one of them which diverges perceptions of regional players, another is Russian-Israeli relations.

The condition improved for Russia in the Gulf only when President Putin came to power and took some initiative to change policy. Several other factors would lead the Russian Muslims and Chechens to become less of pain in Russia's relations with the Arab Gulf during Putin's tenure. Some Saudi Arabian officials, prior to 9/11, observed that Riyadh would hardly be benefitted from poverty-stricken and unstable Muslim republics being independent of Russia. After 9/11, Riyadh was pressurised by both Moscow and Washington to restrain itself from the issue of Chechens. The US intervention in Iraq and its withdrawal from the ABM treaty spoiled US-Russia relations (Katz 2001: 614).

They became aware that sympathising with the Chechens or any other Muslim separatist force working in Russia would be hazardous in building a sound relationship with Moscow. On the contrary, displaying a good bond with Moscow has been advantageous to Chechen's leadership and other Muslim republics of Russia which have served to strengthen Moscow's ties with the Arab Gulf countries. (Sim 2019: 26-55).

Russian-Saudi relations took on a new, unexpected vigour in the middle of 2002. This was sparked by a resurgence of US-Saudi tensions, as well as rumours that the US was thinking of substituting Russian oil for Saudi oil in the creation of strategic reserves. As a result of the uncertainty in its relations with its main partner, Riyadh opted to protect itself by threatening the US with the potential of expanding its cooperation with Russia. A multilateral cooperation pact was signed in the autumn of 2002, a Saudi-Russian 'business club' was formed, and a number of high-ranking Russian officials were given invitation to visit the Kingdom (Malashenko 2009: 315-316).

Moscow has not confined itself to the oil and gas sectors in developing relations with Gulf countries. In 2007, on the eve of Vladimir Putin visited the region, the Kremlin recommended the establishment of a regional security system. That was impossible to achieve. In the military-technical domain, Russia continues to bet on expanding

collaboration. During a visit to the Kingdom in 2007, Vladimir Putin talked about the possibility of sale of 150 modern T-90 tanks to the country. Cooperation in the field of space activity is growing slowly but steadily. A small Iranian satellite was launched in 2005, while Saudi Arabia has launched seven satellites with the assistance of Russia (Malashenko 2009: 315-319).

Vladimir Putin was the only Russian President who visited Saudi Arabia in February 2007. During this visit, Putin discussed contracts for the construction of nuclear plants in Saudi Arabia. He also offered arm supplies to the region and proposed policies for the production and export of crude oil. As part of soft diplomacy, President Putin urged the crown to increase Russia's quota for its Muslim community to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. Consequently, in the year 2007, more than 6,000 pilgrims could go to Hajj (Levesque, 2008: 8).

In the Chechnya conflict, the Islamic factor has played out and also adversely affected Russia's associations with the Gulf countries of Arab and Jordan too. Among all these states, Russia's relationship with the UAE received a severe blow due to Emirates' open sympathy and financial support for Chechens. After a meeting with the leaders of the UAE in June 1995, Viktor Pasuvalyuk, Russian deputy foreign minister noted that the UAE had a "somewhat different understanding" of the conflict (BBC 1998). Anti-Russian propaganda by Chechen elements stationed in the UAE and other Gulf states was frequently reported in Russian media.

There were no official visits by Chechen leaders to Kuwait, but Kuwaiti citizens fought in the Chechen War, and Kuwaiti Islamists supported the Chechen cause. Thus, when a Kuwaiti volunteer, Salem al-Ajmi, was killed in Chechnya, an Islamist member of the Kuwaiti parliament called him "a hero who sacrificed his life on the fields of jihad". Nevertheless, Russia maintained diplomatic ties with the UAE and other Gulf states, notably Kuwait, which had been the only Gulf state with ties to the Soviet Union. Officially and smartly, Jordan has avoided confrontation with Russia over Chechnya by characterising Chechen events as Russia's internal affair and upholding Russia's territorial integrity. The two countries also maintained active official contacts. In June 1995, King Hussein received a Russian presidential envoy to

discuss developments in the Arab-Israeli conflict and bilateral relations (Hunter 2004: 387-388).

However, the Chechen conflict has hardly impacted relations with Egypt because President Hosni Mubarak was against the Islamists in Egypt and elsewhere. According to Alexander Shumilin, "Egypt never periodically denounced Moscow's policies because it did not want to be seen as giving support to those who want an Islamic republic in Egypt itself".

In devising the foreign policy for Egypt, the religious factor is not an important determinant, and Chechens' fate had little impact on Egypt's approach towards Russia. Historically, Russia's potential role in Suez Crisis in 1956 and in resolving the ongoing conflict between Arab and Israel is of paramount importance. A delegation led by Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa visited Russia in 1996 and was the first minister from a major Muslim country to visit Moscow after the beginning of the Chechen War. The diplomatic word of Amr Musa articulated Egypt's belief that the Chechen problem should be resolved by peaceful means and noted that any peace settlement should safeguard Russia's territorial integrity. On the other hand, Egypt's general population, especially Islamic groups, have been very critical of Russian policies in Chechnya due to the Muslim question. The Muslim brotherhood called the Russian operation in Chechnya "deviant savagery". Mufti Sheikh Wassel appealed to Islamic countries to boycott Russia politically and economically.

In the Middle East, the Arab-Israeli conflict continued and there was a growing possibility of US-led military operations against Iraq. The Iraqi leader Saddam Hussain's refusal to cooperate with the UN weapon inspectors offered an opportunity to Russia to reassert its presence in the region. A number of key Arabic states including Saudi Arabia, and other GCC members, even Egypt and Jordan, sought Russian assistance to restart the Arab-Israeli peace process and to find a non-military solution to the Iraq crisis. Thus, beginning in 2001, Moscow witnessed the arrival of a steady stream of high-ranking Arab officials and even the head of state. Jordan King Abdulla visited Moscow to discuss the Arab-Israeli conflict in November 2001, and the part Russia played in ending the cycle of war between Israel and Palestine.

Between 2003 and 2008 there were many official visits to Egypt, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the UAE and Qatar. A Memorandum of Understanding between Russia and the League of Arab States was signed in 2003 (Kozhanov 2014: 89). Since 2005, Russia has been a member of the OIC as an observer, which is the second-largest inter-governmental organisation after the UN and is a collective Muslim organisation to safeguard and promote Muslim voices. After 1991, Russia has enlarged its relationship with the Islamic world with the inclusion of relations with Saudi Arabia, "Putin's unprecedented visit to Jordan and Saudi Arabia in early 2007, the first-ever by a Russian or Soviet leader, was part of a readjustment of Russia's behaviour in the region". On the same visit, Putin was awarded Saudi Arabia's highest award, the Abdul-Aziz Order for Service to Islam. Russia enjoys long-standing business and strategic partnerships with Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and Egypt (Nizammedin 2013: 234-248).

4.4.5 Russia and Turkey

The animosity between Russia and Turkey can be traced historically to the first encounter some 400 years ago. Russia did much towards the fall of the Ottoman empire. In the 19th century, the Russian army extended to Istanbul twice in 1829 and again in 1877. Later, they established the famous monument of Stefanos at the border area as a mark of their farthest advancement in Turkey. After the end of the First World War, a short-term peace period is exceptionally notable with the Kemalist-Bolshevik alliance and treaties of trade cooperation during Turk's War of Liberation from 1919-1920. But Turkey's comparatively good terms with Nazi's Germany during the World War added fuel to fire and the hostility between Soviet Union and Turkey continued during the Cold War. However, after the Cold War period, the relation between Russia and Turkey has witnessed a marked improvement. According to Dmitri Trenin, since the collapse of tsarist of both Ottoman and Russian Empires, the relation between Russian and Turks has been an ambiguous one and has reflected on its 'schizophrenic character' (Trenin 1997).

In the post-Soviet era, the relations between Turkey and the Russian Federation revolved around Russia's war with Chechnya and Turkey's conflict with the Kurdish independence movement between 1995 and 1999. Subsequently the issue of

extremism has been of utmost priority for both the states in their official meets. Turkey pursued a dual policy toward Chechnya, as Moscow claimed. Unofficially, Turkey was far more supportive of the Chechen cause than its official stand indicated. The official and unofficial phases of Turkey's Chechnya policy coincided between 1994 and 1996. However, when "the Russian Foreign Ministry called the ambassadors of Afghanistan, Iran, Jordan, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, as well as the Turkish ambassador, in January 1995 and asked their governments to stop the unofficial recruitment of mercenaries to fight in Chechnya", the Turkish envoy was the only one who did not characterise the Chechen War as a Russian internal matter. Turkey, on the other hand, demanded a swift ceasefire and condemned Russia's military participation" (United Press International 1995).

Accordingly, in 1996-1997, during the official meeting of Turkish Foreign Minister Tansu Çiller in Moscow, the Chechen war was at the top of the agenda. In a meeting with the Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov and the then-Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, she stated that for both the Russian Federation and Turkey it is paramount to maintain their territorial integrity and that they both are respectful to each other on the issue. Nonetheless, Russia suspected Turks of selling arms to Chechens and had warned them on the same. Later, in 1997 both leaderships acknowledged that it is important to work together in the areas where both the states have common interests to build strong diplomatic ties (Markurshin 1997: 2).

Consequently, in 1997, Viktor Chernomyrdin visited Turkey in December 1997 to reflect on the improvised relationship between Russia and Turkey. It proved to be a solid diplomatic move and both the states indulged in economic and political ties after this visit. Relations between Turkey and the Russian Federation have frequently placed the Chechnya and PKK (Marxist-Maoist Kurdistan Workers Party) issues at the top of the list. However, the problem was not viewed as preventing the development of close relationships. In fact, after the second Chechen war, the diplomatic and economic relations between Russia and Turkey have significantly improved (Reynolds 2002: 60).

In 1996, both Turkey and Russia signed a Memorandum on Cooperation Against Terrorism and announced the wilfulness to eradicate terror activities from the regions.

The then Prime Minister of Russia Vladimir Putin severely condemned international religious radicals including the happenings in PKK and vouched to support Turkey against all kinds of terrorism. Furthermore, Turkey's Prime Minister, Bulent Ecevit, and Vladimir Putin met and signed a joint Declaration of Cooperation in the Struggle against Terrorism in 1999. Even when in early 2001 Russia was complaining of Turkish groups' support to Chechen rebels and Turkey was expressing its disapproval of 'the heavy retaliation of Russia against Chechens', Turkish foreign minister Ismail Cern visited Moscow in April, and Igor Ivanov paid a return visit in June, stating, 'Turkey is an important partner for Russia' (Foreign Broadcast Service 2001).

Against this background of the uninterrupted enmity and conflict, General Tuncer Kılınç, in March 2002 made a public speech seeking Russia and Iran's military support against the security threat of the EU. With the support of ongoing dialogues and mutual territorial respect for each other, the economic activities between Russia and Turkey have flourished in recent times and Russia is the second-largest trading partner of Turkey today. More strikingly, Russia and Turkey established military support at a time when US and European nations were hesitant to support Turkey's national security with advanced military equipment. The weapons were needed to eliminate separatists like Kurdish and PKK in 1990s. Hence, in the post-Cold War era, a revived relationship between Russian Federation and Turkey can be traced. They are called "strategic partners", now in the matter of forming an alliance against the EU. Furthermore, a new intellectual movement favouring the coalition between Russia and Turkey known as 'Turkish Eurasianism' allowed Russians to flourish in Turkey and compete against three traditional transnational ideologies in Turkey's intellectual domain namely, Islamism, Turkism and Westernism (Akturk 2013: 2).

Despite Turkey's pro-Chechen stance, Russia has taken a more cautious approach to Turkey than other countries due to its strategic location on the Black Sea and NATO membership. Russia's access to the Black Sea could be severely hampered if Turkey remains unreceptive. Because Turkey is a member of NATO, Russian-Turkish relations are inextricably linked to Russian-Western relations.

Turkey also used Islam in post-soviet spaces as an instrument of Turkish policy. The power struggle in Transcaucasus and Central Asia leading to the collapse of the

Soviet Union established Turkey as a stable regional power to fill the vacuum. Turkey recognised this as an opportunity to build strong diplomatic ties in the regions with the newly formed states. Quickly responding to the situation, Turkey was the first country to send a diplomatic delegation and expressed its desire to create respectful and close relations with these states (Henze 1993: 86).

However, the fact remains that Russia's Western foreign policies also significantly contributed in determining the policies of Turkey. Turkey announced itself as a natural bridge connecting the independent republics of the Soviet Union and other part of the world, and motivated other countries to provide help in these areas (Carley 1995: 185-186). Nonetheless, the issue of integrating with the Western world and Turkey's historical dilemma as an Islamic country in the non-Arab world as well as its huge foreign trade deficit kept Turkey under pressure to associate itself with northern region i.e., not with Russia only, but with Caucasians and Central Asians regions as well (Ataov, 1992: 88-110).

The West's view the role of Turkey in the post-Soviet region that of the organiser of a progressive and secular model of governance in a Muslim country. Turkey has tried to export its secular system to the former Soviet republics. In addition, it has adopted religious factors providing Islamic infrastructure to penetrate the Muslim populated territories of CIS and Russia.

In short, the Turkish government's interest in establishing influence in the post-Soviet region has merged with the aspirations of nationalist, Pan-Turkist, and Islamist forces. The acts of Turkish Islamists and nationalists have caused anxiety among many Russians. Because of its modern facade and gentler image, some Russian intellectuals and officials regard Turkish Islam as more threatening. Some speculated that Turkey was attempting to encircle Russia with a ring of Turko-Muslim nations spanning the Adriatic Sea to the Great Chinese Wall, as Turkish President Suleyman Demirel once claimed (Hunter 2004: 365).

The post-9/11 period witnessed a positive effect on Russo-Turkic ties in the view of close linkage for Russia-West relations. In light of the Russia's own experience as a victim of terrorism, Vladimir Putin claimed that his country fully understood the tragedy in the US. Putin's willingness to join the US on "War on Terror" was a direct

outcome of the Russian Federation's own experience in September when Chechen militants exploded an apartment building (Trennin 2003: 123).

President Vladimir Putin gave an interview with UK newspaper *Guardian* and declared that "though they believe in Russia, time heals everything, there are things that Russians cannot forget and which must not be forgotten, making clear once again that any terrorist act, not only on its territories but also behind their territories will not be allowed" (Guardian 12 September 2002). The Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer expressed his solidarity with the US in combating global terrorism, feeling the pain of the tragedy of the Americans. Turkey's own encounter with PKK terror activities in the region since 1980s has been tiresome. Thus, Turkey's stand on 9/11 was similar to Russia and both Russia and Turkey appear to be on the same page of terrorism being a global issue and not just a local threat. This has allowed them to come together after the Cold War to work together in their anti-terrorist missions. The 21st century has shown some promise to the realities of Eurasia as a mutual enhancing power relation between Turkey and the Federation of Russia. They have been trying to achieve it through economic partnership and new areas of cooperation to fight out the separatists' forces in their areas (Moustaki 2002: 431).

Another significant development in this area that could be traced post 9/11 is signing of the document of "The Plan of Action to Develop Cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Turkey" on 16 November 2001 in New York. This involves Turkey's and Russia's cooperation on multiple fronts and also an action plan in forming a more stable Eurasia in the coming future. In the agreement, Turkey and the Russian Federation are urged to work together on a number of topics, such as stabilising Eurasia and preventing international terrorism from producing friction between the two nations. This has been crucial progress in suppressing international terrorism as well the extremist activities sponsored by Chechens and Kurdish leaders.

Russian-Turkish interests further appeared to converge in the UN meeting of 2003 during the Iraq War. Russia and Turkey overtly stood against the US disposition to invade Iraq. Both Russia and Turkey invariably tried though to withhold the war, though unsuccessfully. In the Security Council, Russia openly condemned US' actions. Turkey, on the other hand, denied the US plea to deploy its troops for

invading Iraq from the northern front. Both the states also disapproved of ethnic division in Iraq. Russia's opposition to Chechen separatists and Turkey's to Kurdish has been the most significant aspect of their foreign policies. They have worked together on this issue e.g., Turkey in 2002 announced to eliminate Movladi Udugov, the Chechen separatist, if he would be found in their territory. Such approaches worked in favour of Russia-Turkey cooperation ties in mutual enhancement as they took a strong stand against ethnic fundamentalists in their respective regions (Akturk 2013: 3).

Moreover, both Russia and Turkey favour a multipolar world order than a unipolar one for disseminating ideas and decision-making on significant international matters and on the issues of surrounding regions. Together Russian Federation and Turkey have co-founded many cooperation and organisations in the region. In 1992, a similar organization called Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) was formed. Another such organization was BLACKFORSEA established in 2001. Furthermore, Russia acquired the membership of OIC as an observer in 2005 when it was headed by Turkey's Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu. Another notable recent development is where Turkey's Prime Ministers have given statements saying that they are considering the Membership at SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) if their EU membership is not renewed (Akturk 2013: 3).

The Islamic factor has played a significant impact on the Russia-Turkey association. The factor of Islam has been greater than is generally admitted. This is due to Turkey's support of Chechen separatists, the extensive involvement of private Turkish organizations in rebuilding Russia's Muslim infrastructure, and Turkey's extensive cultural and educational networks in the Russian Federation, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. However, because of Turkey's economic and strategic importance, especially its position as a favoured and vital Western ally and its position in NATO, Russia has overlooked the other dimensions of its policy.

4.4.6 Russia's Relation with Pakistan and Afghanistan

Historically Russia was a 'great power' and had vast geographical areas which connected Asia to Europe. Moscow has utilised its power against its opponents i.e., the British army during the colonial era and the US at the time of the Cold War to

protect its interest in Afghanistan. With the fall of the USSR in 1991, the geopolitical condition of the region altered again. Since then, Russia's own "War on Terror" has been the primary driver behind its interest in Afghanistan. Politicians in Russia have a history of portraying their nation as one that is battling Islamic extremism, which has spread throughout the former Soviet Union through Afghanistan.

Russian relations with Pakistan and Afghanistan have been determined by and adversely affected by the Islamic factor. This is hardly surprising given the various ups and downs in the assessment of the legacy of the Soviet-Afghan War and Pakistan's policies in Afghanistan following the Soviet withdrawal. Russia was concerned about Taliban's plans to spread its brand of hardline and fundamentalist Islam over Central Asia. Tajikistan was on the front lines in this situation. Some Tajik Islamists got support from Pakistani and Afghani organisations, particularly the Taliban. This aid included Tajik Islamists being trained in madrassas (Islamic schools) and military camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan, particularly after the Taliban forces took control of Kabul on 26 September 1996. Pakistani missionaries also established themselves in the Russian Federation (Reetz 1999: 1-37).

Today, Russia sees Afghanistan primarily through the lens of security concerns for itself and its Central Asian neighbours, where Moscow seeks soft supremacy. Hence, Russia thrived to be US' strategic partner in 2001 in the 'War on Terror' when the US invaded Taliban. According to Natasha Kuhrt, Russia was hopeful that with the support of the US, it could suppress the Islamic fundamentalists in Central Asia and so NATO allowed it to be based in its backyard in Central Asia. Furthermore, Russian leadership soon enough comprehended the US tactic was to stay in the region for economic goals. As Natasha Kuhrt states, "the US had established bilateral relations with the Central Asian states with oil in mind, not Islamic fundamentalism" (Kuhrt 2010: 5; Duncan 2013: 129-132;).

On a broader level, Pakistan emerged as a big ally of the US and a potential geopolitical rival for Russia by providing an alternative for the export of some of Central Asia's oil and gas. Pakistan and Russia also competed for reshaping Afghanistan's political future. Their rivalry became severe after the rise of the Taliban. Because Russian and Pakistani political, economic, and strategic interests

diverged, some level of tension between the two was inevitable, but these tensions were worsened because of the Islamic factor. The linkage with Chechnya as a triangular relationship emerged between the Taliban, Chechen rebels, and Pakistan, particularly after the First Chechen War. The Taliban and Pakistan both manipulated Russia's problems in Chechnya in order to depress the Russian government from supporting the anti-Taliban forces in Afghanistan.

With Taliban's occupation of Afghanistan provided a base for Islamic radicals to organise training camps for the rebels of Chechnya. Russia is apprehensive that the emergence of radical rebels in the region might revive the rebellious forces in Uzbekistan as well as in Kyrgyzstan. It has not shown confidence in either the firmness of Central Asian regimes to deal with the ongoing radicalism or in its own capabilities to protect the region from the influence of the Taliban. Moreover, Russia internally differs on the subject that how serious the threat of radicalism can be and its effect on its territory (Trenin and Malashenko 2010: 13).

Russian defence minister Sergei Ivanov graphically explained that Chechnya and Afghanistan were branches of one tree (terrorism), whose roots are in Afghanistan. The discovery following the US attacks on Taliban that a possibly significant number of Chechens were fighting on the side of the Taliban further strengthened the Russian position (Carroll 2001).

It has been observed that the socio-political composition of Pakistan is more complex than that of Afghanistan. There is a wide division between Pakistan's educated, westernised, confident urban intellectuals on the one side and Muslim fanatics and tribal worriers on the other. Since its independence in 1947, Pakistan has not been stable. The Pakistani society comprises an enthusiastic urban middle class who believes in progress and democracy, while another type includes religious fundamentalists who are involved in creating jihadists in their training camps. The strong military power in the country works as a self-regulatory agency and takes part in the internal decision-making process. It also keeps the nuclear resources under its custody. In fact, there has been a saying that Pakistan is governed by three As — Allah, Army and America. The Pakistani military has been supporting Taliban militants, who in return time and again, attack India in the name of Kashmir.

Pakistan's position is of immense importance like that of Afghanistan in determining the future strategic global ties (Trennin and Malashenko 2010: 12).

Pakistan played a crucial role in establishing the Chechen-Taliban connection, and it could not have been possible without the active backing of Pakistan, or at least influential elements within the Pakistani political and military leadership. The role of influential Islamist groups such as the Jama'at-i-Islami also should not be underestimated. The Jama'at-i-Islami sponsored Zelim Khan Yanderbiev's visit to Pakistan before his trip to Kandahar. Several anti-Russian demonstrations were held.

The Russian government and military talked time to time about Pakistani nationals' involvement in Chechnya during the First Chechen War. The spokesman of the Command of the Russian Federal Army Group in Khankala announced in October 1996, that 200 well-armed missionaries had arrived in Chechnya from Pakistan. More seriously, President Boris Yeltsin stated that Pakistani nationals were involved in hostage-taking operations by Chechen rebels under the command of Salman Raduev in the Dagestani city of Kizlyar and the village of Pervomaiskoe, a claim rejected by Pakistan. While, to what extent Pakistani citizens are involved in Chechnya is impossible to determine, there is no doubt that a Pakistani-Chechen link existed (Hunter 2004: 357-358).

In spite of problems caused by the Chechen-Taliban connections, Pakistan's close links with the Taliban, and the involvement of Pakistani nationals in Chechnya and as missionaries in other parts of the Russian Federation, both Pakistan and Russia avoided a complete rupture in relations. Pakistan's alliance with the US can be traced to the past too when it provided a base to US intelligence to operate against the Soviet Union. Equally significant was the Afghani base to resist the Soviet forces in the region. Nevertheless, Russia does not want to avoid nuclear-equipped Pakistan at the moment, especially when the Pakistani population has significantly increased, in fact, has topped the Russian population. Carefully, Russia would not like to damage its long-standing diplomatic ties with India. It has been trying to maintain a balanced stance with Pakistan too by expanding its connection with the Pakistani government and military forces. Still, Russia is aware of the fact that they have no knowledge of

Pakistan's internal dynamics within the country and mostly reckon it as an ally of the US and China first (Trennin and Malashenko 2010: 23).

The end of the Taliban regime affected Russia's associations with Afghanistan and Pakistan. In the case of Afghanistan, the ousting of the Taliban regime offered Russia an opportunity to re-establish its lost ground, Russia approved the establishment of a new government headed by Hamid Karzai. Nevertheless, the Islamic factor in the post-9/11 period has acted as an incentive for the Afghan-Russian cooperation. The relations were also shaped in the form of a struggle against the remnants of extremist forces in Afghanistan and a fight against international terrorism. Thus, the main challenge for Moscow is asserting its presence in Afghanistan to counter the US competition and financial restrictions.

The general prevailing notion among Russians is that the US base in Afghanistan is a strategic move to penetrate into the region to control the mainland of Eurasia. Russian commentators, such as Alekei Dundich, Aleksander Kanyazev, Dmitrii Popov, General Anatolii Kulikov, Gennadii Chufrin, Yurii Krupnov, and Vladimir Paramanov have frequently reflected that the basis of US and NATO presence in Afghanistan is to establish a geopolitical, geo-economic, geostrategic "bridgehead in the heart of Asia deploying a powerful network of military bases in Afghanistan and the Central East and Middle Asia as a whole". In fact, they have used the excuse of "The War on Terror" in search of Laden to deploy their military troops and state machineries in the region to secure their presence for future oil resources and other geopolitical goals (Krupnov 2008: 16).

General Leonid Ivashov, a veteran Russian strategist and specialist, stated that the "US occupation of Afghanistan is not intended to protect democracy and restore order, but rather to utilise Afghanistan as a strategic bridgehead to put pressure on China, Central Asia, Iran, and Pakistan" (Sangar 2016: 65).

Since 2001, not only in Russia but there has been an insurgence of various extremist communities inside Central Asia, mainly within Fergana Valley. These groups are not directly part of a bigger organisation like Al-Qaeda or have an association with the Uzbekistan movement of banned cult Hizut-Tahrir (Duncan 2013: 129-31), or Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) but there are also tiny, more independent groups, like Adolat

Uyushamsi (Justice Society), Tabligh (Mission), Islam Lashkarliary (Warriors of Islam), Noor (Ray of Light), Toyba (Repentance), and Uzun Sakal (Long Beard). Although these are movements of lesser impact and therefore do not currently pose a threat but these groups are adequately extremist and have the potentials to someday take up arms (Malashenko 2007: 94-95).

It has been pointed out by Ted Donnelly in his strategic analysis of Central Asia and the surrounding region that they are fundamentally associated with Afghanistan operationally as well on strategic levels. Hence, it is pertinent that the strategic success in Central Asia is imperative to Afghanistan and vice-versa (Donnelly 2011: 12-14). Thus, it is even more crucial for Russia to establish stability in Central Asia and its neighbouring territory. According to Marlene Laruelle, Russia desires a stable Central Asia. She argues that "control of energy resources and maintaining regional security are Russia's two major goals in the region". Thus, the security concern in Central Asia is paramount for Russia also because the territorial security is directly related to Russia's own internal security, so Moscow's presence in the region becomes all the more necessary (Laruelle 2009: 7).

For Pakistan, the fall of the Taliban opened new opportunities for improved relations by eradicating a major irritant in Russian-Pakistani relations. Pakistan's weakened regional position and serious internal problems, meanwhile, prompted its government to seek a reconciliation with Moscow. Again, Pakistan used the lure of economic gains to elicit a more positive and accommodating response from Russia. President Musharraf even delinked Russian-Pakistani relations from the Kashmir issue and Russia's close partnership with India. During a Russian parliamentary delegation's visit to Islamabad in April 2002, Musharraf said, "Relations between India and Pakistan have their own value and shall not be linked to the relations between Russia and India" (BBC Monitoring International Report, 2002).

However, three factors have prevented significant improvement in Russian-Pakistani relations: (1) the continued Russian mistrust of Pakistan's regional intentions, notably in Afghanistan; (2) Russia's uncertainty regarding both Pakistan's willingness and ability to rein in and eventually eliminate militant Islamist groups, including those active in Kashmir; and (3) close Indian-Russian relations, such as Russia's

unequivocal support for India's position regarding Kashmir and their military cooperation. India and Russia both expressed apprehension at Pakistani interference in the post-Taliban political process in Afghanistan.

4.4.7 Russia and the West

Since the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and the Communists' call for Muslims to rise up against Western imperialism, Islam has had a significant influence on Russia's relations with the West. Both have exploited Islam to destabilise each other's positions and win Muslim support. In the 1980s, Afghanistan provided the best example of using Islam as an ally in the battle against communism and the Soviet Union. The fact is that the West supported a call to jihad against the Soviet Union and succeeded with the help of Pakistan and their Ulemas. During the Afghan War, the West and several of its regional allies visited the Muslim population of the Soviet Union. The finest thing about Soviet Islam is its extraordinary ability to survive as a potentially powerful instrument to undermine the USSR.

Russia's internal debate and the nature of the role played by Islam have been closely linked, including its foreign policy, and the impact of external events. Thus, during the first two years of the post-Soviet era when pro-Western European Atlanticists were dominant, the concept of threat from the 'South', an understatement for Russia's Muslim periphery, acted as a unifying force in Russian Western relations. The Euro Atlanticists believed that Russia should cooperate with the West in dealing with the threat from the South (Hunter 2004: 401).

In short, during this period a perceived common threat of Islam helped strengthen Russia and the West relations and led the US to act moderately towards Russia, despite its obvious wrongdoing against its own Muslim population and its Muslim and non-Muslim southern neighbour. This satisfaction began to change with the rise of the nationalist movement in Russia, coupled with the general mood of disappointment with the West and increasing pressure on President Yeltsin to act more strongly in the so-called 'near abroad'. However, the intensity of the reaction to these developments in Russia differed within the Western, most notably the US, policy-making community.

According to Anatol Lieven, the often contradictory policies followed by the US towards Russia during the pivotal years of 1994-2000 were the result of a process of accommodation between conflicting perceptions of what he called 'Russophiles[3]' both within the US administration and outside (Lieven, 1999: 308). As late as May 2001, Fiona Hill, not known as 'Russophobe[4],' argued that the West should not join Russia in fighting Islamic extremism nor support Putin in his goal to become 'the gendarme of Eurasia'. In at least two instances Afghanistan and Chechnya, the West used Islam to check Russian influence and advance its own and its regional allies' goals and the interests of Western Energy companies at Russia's expense (Hill 2001).

In addition to Chechnya and Afghanistan, there were three others cases where the Islamic factor came to play a contentious role in the evolution of Russian-Western relations, although its significance was secondary. These were 1) Bosnia, 2) Kosovo, and 3) Russia's relation with Iran and Iraq, especially Iran (since the Iraqi Ba'athist regime, despite Saddam Hussain's manipulation of Islam was a secular state).

Bearing in mind the brutality of the two Chechen Wars, the official Western response in both cases was principally muted. Despite the supposed influence of the Russophobes, no serious pressure was brought to bear upon Russia. There was some verbal criticism, at times harsh of Russia's policies towards Chechnya, but these were not backed by strong action (Tarnhill 1995). Indeed, Western policies on Chechnya were a clear example of realpolitik.

However, there were certain symbolic acts intended at showing that the Russian actions in Chechnya would not leave relations with the West unaffected. In January 1995, President Clinton declined an invitation from Boris Yeltsin to visit Moscow in May (Williams and Devroy, 1995). Yet neither the US nor Europe was ready to pressurise Russia too much on the Chechen conflict. It was Russia's domestic dynamics, namely, the unpopularity of the First Chechen War with the Russian population and Russia's electoral calendar that forced a change in Russian policy.

Several reasons account for Western nations' disregard of the Chechen war in deciding their policy towards Russia. Most prominent was the 'Yeltsin factor'.

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[3] Someone who takes interest and likes Russian culture, the Russian language and Russia.
[4] Someone who dislikes Russian culture, the Russian language and Russia.

Notwithstanding US' official statement that American policy towards Russia was not 'Yeltsin centric'; the fact is that from the West's point of view he was the best person they could hope for to lead Russia at a time in the pro-Western direction (Williams and Devroy 1995). Second, by the time the Chechnya war broke out, Russian-Western relations had already become tense over issues ranging from Bosnia to the planned eastward expansion of NATO and differences over Iran and Iraq. Under these conditions, it was feared that too strong a Western reaction to the Chechen problem could seriously endanger relations. Third, following Russia's October 1993 parliamentary elections, nationalist and communist forces had made gains in the State Duma. Thus, it was feared that Western overreaction on Chechnya could further strengthen these forces and possibly even threaten Boris Yeltsin's re-election. Russian response to the Western response was a mixture of defiance and the pursuit of 'business as usual'.

Certain Russian foreign ministry statements were also harshly critical of the West's attitude toward Chechnya. The foreign ministry published a statement in January 1995 "attacking what it described as the West's unwarranted and rushed" condemnation of its military intervention in Chechnya (Hiatt 1995). Russia's failure to combat the separatist and criminal regime (in Chechnya), according to the ministry's spokesman Grigory Karasin, might result in a repeat of Russia's Yugoslav situation.

In Chechnya, the West, for the most part, was hesitant to take Russia seriously. In addition to the previously mentioned considerations, the fact that Chechnya was a part of the Russian Federation at the time and that its split could have resulted in further Russian instability played a role. Furthermore, unlike the case of Bosnia, there was no continuous and consulted effort on the part of the West to pursue its Muslim ally to doctrine a firmer position on Chechnya. But even if they had, it would have been to avail because, unlike Bosnia, Chechnya was not located in the heart of Europe.

West's reaction to the Second Chechen War was more negative, although still cautious. Certainly, there was little willingness in the West to go beyond symbolic gestures such as postponing IMF loan or suspending Russia's membership of Europe. Western criticism was voiced against Russia by the US. As reported in the 'Christian Science Monitor', it was only after the fighting "drove more than 170,000 residents

from their homes and a rocket attack on the market killed more than 100 people" that US official called the war deplorable and ominous (Brown 1993).

The severer Western rhetoric towards Russia reflected differences that were increasing between the two sides since 1996, when Primakov became Russian Foreign Minister. Primakov favoured a multi-polar strategy and a less West-centric approach for Russia. As a result, Russia strengthened connections with China and aided Iraq in its dispute with the UN over weapons inspectors, actions that the West saw as potentially unfriendly. Meanwhile, the conflict in Kosovo had put a strain on Russian-Western relations, which explains the harsh tone.

In addition, during the Second Chechen War, three factors made the adoption of tougher attitude towards Russia more problematic.

a) The Russians justified their activities in Chechnya in terms of fighting Islamic extremists who they claimed receive help from US allies. By August 1998, the Taliban adventure had gone wrong, Osama Bin Laden, the Saudi-born extremist with links to the Taliban, had launched terrorist attacks against US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and had become a major problem for the US.

b) The Kosovo war, as Russia never tired of saying, had weakened the West's moral authority. Regardless of whether this Russian claim is justified with Russian-Western tension over Kosovo, the West was cautious about Chechnya.

c) The question of Chechen war and US policy towards Russia became inseparably linked with US domestic politics, especially Putin and the 2000 presidential election in the US.

Both Russia's contention that there were linkages between the Chechen rebels, the Taliban, bin Laden, and their supporters, and Russia's position that these groups pose a threat to both the West and Russia, were vindicated by the events of 9/11. Despite continuing claims of grave human rights violations by Russian soldiers in Chechnya, this has further weakened European and US readiness to exert pressure on Russia.

While in Afghanistan, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Yeltsin government did not pay much attention to developments in Afghanistan. Even when

the Moscow-supported Kabul government of President Muhammad Najibullah was removed by Afghan mujahedeen forces led by Ahmad Shah Masood in April 1992. Until 1994 and the appearance of the Taliban, Afghanistan as a policy issue was missing from Russian-Western relations. Until August 1998, the West looked favourably toward the Taliban, and ultimately it was disagreement over bin Laden that caused a change in the Western assessment of the Taliban. Therefore, from 1994 to 1996, Afghanistan and its new breed of Muslim leaders became a cause for disagreement between Russia and the West. But in December 2000, Russia and the US worked together in the UN to impose economic sanctions on the Taliban regime.

Moscow's and Washington's diverging views of Iraq and Iran have been a major source of tension in the Russian-US relations, even at the time of their honeymoon. Until the outbreak of the dispute between the US and Britain, on one side, and the overwhelming majority of UN members, on the other, over the decision to initiate military action against Iraq, the lack of support and disagreement on Iran was the greatest cause of disagreement in the US-Russian relations. Major US complaints against Russia were the sale of Russia military equipment and building of a nuclear plant in the southern Iranian city of Bushehr. Russia decided to help Iran rebuild the Bushehr plant. The US objected to this cooperation on the basis that it would enable Iran to build nuclear weapons. Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the US House of Representatives, declared that the US would cut off all aid to Russia if it helped in building weapons of mass destruction to Iran. The Clinton administration also made it clear that such a deal would damage relations with the US and would not be cost free. The involvement of Russia's gas giant Gazprom was another source of irritation (Hunter 2004: 410).

In the early 2000s, Moscow positions itself ever more often as an intermediary between the Islamist extremists, on one side, and Europe and the US on the other side. It can be seen in the example of Iran. In the dispute over Iran's nuclear program, Russia was self-assured that they would be successful in persuading Iran to take its proposal of uranium enrichment in Russian land and to impose a strict control over dual-purpose materials. Moscow hoped to play a major part in the dispute, and appeared as a "patron" of Iran. Several times it seemed that its goals could be achieved. In 2006, a number of Russia-Iran meetings were held, on the eve of which

Kremlin assured everyone anxious that Tehran would, in a little while, agree to a compromise; these hopes, however, proved to be groundless (Chatham House Report, 2006: 40).

Three major conclusions emerge from this examination of the impact of Islamic reason on the post-Soviet Russian-Western relations. To begin with, the Islamic component in Russian-Western ties played a minor role until 11 September 2001. This element has had an impact to the extent that it has, but only at regional levels and in the context of specific regional disputes or concerns. The Islamic component, however, has had an impact on the overall character of Russian-Western relations since 9/11. Second, the West has exploited Islam as a tool of influence and a means of achieving its goals more successfully than Russia has. Third, Islam has served as a divisive as well as a unifying force in Russian-Western ties, while its unifying potential may be greater as long as both Russia and the West are targets of Muslim frustrations. Russia also sees itself as a bridge between the West and the Islamic world in terms of resolving the conflict.

4.4.8 Russia and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in an international organisation established in the year 1957. At present, it has 57 Muslim states as its members. The organisation has declared that it is “the collective voice of the Muslim world” and works to “safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony”.

Russia’s Muslim minority has a significant influence on foreign policy decisions and on Russian leadership’s approach to special relations with the Muslim world. These interactions are predicated on the idea that Russia is a multi-cultural nation (predominantly Christian and Muslim), which predetermines its right to coexist in two civilizations at once (Kumar 2009: 86).

President Putin was the first leader of Russia who could identify the concerns of Russia’s large-scale Muslim population. Historically, no Russian leaders or emperors have ever realised this aspect of the territory. Putin has declared the rights of Muslim communities in Russia as part of global Ummah forming a geopolitical alliance with

Islam. In a television program, Putin has reiterated that: “Islam has always been one of the foundations of Russian statehood, and, of course, the state authority in Russia will always support our traditional Islam”. The comment is valuable in manifesting a historical step Russia has taken to accept Islam as an integral part of the socio-political aspect of the country (Mukhametov 2012: 17).

The state’s Duma had a parliamentary session in 2004 titled “Russia and the Islamic World: Strategic Dialogue”. The main goals, according to Shamil Sulanoy, a member of the State Duma, were: “Legislative support of the development of Russia’s relations with Muslim countries and international Islamic organizations, above all with the OIC, advancement of initiatives aimed to ensure participation in the integration processes of the Islamic world, creation of conditions for a constructive dialogue between the political and economic elites of Russia and the Islamic world” (Malashenko 2009: 307).

Yevgeny Primakov, a well-known politician, advocated for Russia’s admission to the OIC on several occasions in the mid-1990s. He worked hard to persuade international Muslim politicians, many of whom admired him, of the mutual benefits of such a move. Nadirshakh Khachilayev, the head of the Muslims’ Union of Russia and a popular Muslim politician at the time, raised the possibility of Russia joining the OIC in 1997. Khachilayev emphasised the importance of Russia joining the OIC by stating that Russian Muslims would get better rights and status as a result. Khachilayev undertook negotiations in the OIC’s structures and attended its events, however, he did so on behalf of the Union of Muslims of Russia, a public political organisation that he led, rather than as a representative of Russia (Kumar 2009: 87).

President Putin in 2003 said that “Millions of Muslims live in Russia who consider it their homeland which to a certain extent allows us to call it a part of the Muslim world”. In 2003, Putin argued to justify Russia’s membership as an observer in the OIC: “Almost 20 million Muslims living in Russia have every right to consider themselves a part of the Muslim world” (Kosach, 2019: 6-7).

Further in 2003, October, Putin attended 10th OIC summit in Malaysia He was accompanied by Muslim federal officials and also Akhmat Kadyroy, an influential Muslim leader of Chechnya. While addressing the delegates, Putin categorically said

that Russia does not associate terrorism with Islam or any other religion. He had reiterated that “Islamophobia” is a divisive ideology and must be condemned. Furthermore, Putin declared that country like Russia’s association with OIC is an important one which is “interwoven with the Islamic world” (Putin Speech, 2003). In the 32nd Conference of OIC, Russian foreign minister took part and expressed explicitly their concern for Muslim communities. Russia became a member of the organisation as an observer at the 32nd OIC Foreign Ministers Conference in June 2005. Similarly, Russia attended the meeting in Baku the next year.

Moscow believed that Chechen issue could be resolved once the external intervention in Northern Caucasus was restricted. In June 2004, in another convention of OIC in Istanbul, Sergey Layrov, the Foreign Affairs Minister, declared that OIC and Russia had “mutual pulling power”, suggesting solidarity “can do a great deal to prevent a split of humanity on religious or civilisational grounds” (Ministry of Foreign Affair, 2004). In one of his official visits to Saudi Arabia in 2007, Putin went further ahead and announced that the Russia has a “unique” experience of “mutual enrichment of cultures and traditions” (the idea was prompted towards King Abdullah Abdulaziz’s “dialogue of religions and civilizations”). He, further, argued that the “dialogue of civilizations” is key to “create a more just international device system”. He emphasised that “Russia intended to implement this policy in the vast space of the Muslim world” (Kosach 2019: 7).

However, the ‘Chechnya issue’ was not the main reason why Russia was determined to join the OIC; rather it was Russia’s search for its place in the world and its desire to compensate in other areas for its deteriorating relations with the West that propelled its effort. The development of the Muslim vector was entrusted to the Ministry of Foreign Relations. However, the President himself was always ready on juncture to mention the desirability of and need for a Russian-Muslim rapprochement.

Although Russia’s position in OIC and its willingness to become its member has not been welcomed by all Muslim countries. Pakistan took a negative stand. It believed that Russia is essentially a Christian country culturally as well as politically. It was also pointed out that Russia’s own recent history is marked by series of wars against Muslims in various regions. Hence, these countries do not support the idea of giving

Russia a membership in Islamic organization as its presence as a member can alter the entire dynamics. As a matter of fact, however, there was still another, perhaps the most essential, reason for Pakistan's opposition: Islamabad feared that Russia's admittance to the OIC would open doors for Pakistan's enemy, India.

However, Russia's policy with respect to the Muslim world is not limited by declarations about the specific character of their mutual relations. Its presence to special relations with the Muslims increasingly looks like an attempt to revive its fuller-fledged presence in the Muslim world. It reflects Moscow's intentions to restore its status as a state having the right to its own many-sided interests in various parts of the world. It has more than that, having the role of a key player, if not the status of a superpower by enhancing its significance in the global security system. The Southern Muslim direction is becoming one of the main directions. Moscow is trying to formulate a community out of its own and its Muslim partners' interests. This approach, on one hand, seems exceedingly ambitious. On the other hand, considering the mutual coldness between Western and Muslim worlds, (the phenomenon is known as an "inter-civilizational conflict",) Russia believes that it has an opportunity to establish itself as non-Western in the eyes of Muslim world (Malashenko 2009: 312).

Significantly enough Russia's concern for its Muslim population and its desired identity as a non-Western world established it as an observer in OIC's ISESCO (Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization) in 2007. Furthermore, Kamil Ishakov, a former mayor of Kazan, was appointed as permanent representative of Russia to OIC's Jeddah headquarters in July 2008.

4.5 Conclusion

On the basis of above discussion, it can be concluded that 15-20 million Muslim minority of Russia play an important role in its foreign policy formulation and its relation with the Islamic world. The impact of Islamic factor can be witnessed not only in the post-soviet Russia but even before and during Soviet Union. Islam as a factor also influences the Russian-Western relations.

The Islamic factor, in the form of a common threat of Islamic extremism, has helped Russia merge its position in many post-Soviet spaces, specifically in Central Asia and

developed a network of a security cooperation. Russia has shown a consistent approach towards the Islamic world which has focussed on expanding, reviving and resuming centuries old interaction. While Russia's foreign policy differed from the Soviet Union, Russia's Muslim population and historical interaction in neighbouring countries in Central Asia, Middle East and beyond, gives it a real sense of continuity as well. It not only defines the expansive remit of Russia's role with the bulk of the Muslim world but also highlights the fundamental similarity and common interests that are shared.

Relationships across the Muslim world are crucial for Russia's security and economic concerns. The eastward trend in Russian foreign policy with "…a growing emphasis on and investment in Russia's relations with Asia…" is noteworthy (Cadier and Light 2015: 209). In international relations, a relationship which mutually benefits all parties is more attractive and stable. Looking beyond *realpolitik*, Eurasia offers a formidable example of the advantages of cooperation above competition. The natural connectedness of the Eurasian space brings to the fore centuries long interactions which have allowed for disparate cultures and people to live together and is a model for development which dates back to a time before European colonialism and imperialism. Russia's unique position and array of relationships, past and present, with the bulk of the Muslim world, is in tune with the rhythms of globalisation today. A Eurasian perspective is essential in order to "…navigate across this vast geographical space with diverse populations, ethnicities, religious affiliations, customs and traditions" (Kalra 2018).

Thus, Russia's relations, interests and interactions in variety with the Muslim world include: economic, political and social aspects. As inhabitants of a shared physical geography in the form of Eurasia, the Islamic world is not the 'other' and Muslims in turn do not represent something alien and unrecognisable. As has been described above, Muslims, within and without, have been part of the Russian worldview for many centuries. Throughout history, Muslims have traversed Russian lands, have been subjects of the Russian Empire and then the Soviet Union, and are present as citizens and neighbours today. There is a long and expansive relationship shared between present-day Russia and Muslim societies across the globe. Russia represents one of the oldest multicultural societies in the world and it is guided by internal as

much as external factors when interacting with the wider Islamic world. Due to the economic exchange with Islamic nations, Russia's association has strengthened with countries of Middle East, North Africa and other Muslim populated Asian countries.

CHAPTER – 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

In this concluding chapter, I have attempted to highlight the crucial findings of the research and draw some conclusions from these. Besides, an attempt has been made to justify the title of the research and the rationale behind this study. It discusses the research methodology employed in the study to reach a logical conclusion. Further, the summary and major findings of the main chapters are covered. The chapter also discusses various research questions addressed by the study and verifies the hypothesis of this research. An attempt has also been made to explore the new areas related to the present study. Lastly, the chapter ends with some concluding remarks.

Religion, notably Islam, has left a considerable mark on post-Soviet Russia and has been crucial in shaping both Russia's internal socio-political dynamics and decisions about its foreign policy. A sizable number of active and assertive Muslims spread across the Russian Federation's territory is undoubtedly evidence of the significance of Islam as a source of both personal and societal identity. The resurgence of Islam in Russia has prompted the Muslim community to call for a greater voice in the society, culture, and politics of the country. In addition, the radicalisation of Islam has led to the quest for independence and sovereignty in the Muslim-dominated republics of the Russian Federation. Consequently, this seriously challenges the unity and integrity of the country and establishes Russia as soft power. A significant Muslim minority has affected many areas of Russia's internal growth, its political system and policies towards religious and cultural minorities, and most significantly, the Russian state's focus on foreign policy. Islam is increasingly important in Russia's calculations for its domestic and foreign policies, especially given that most of its southern neighbours, whether nearby or far away, are Islamic countries. Moreover, the issue of Muslims in Russia also sparks discussion on how to accommodate minorities in a heterogeneous society. It will undoubtedly have a significant impact on the nature and character of

Russia's evolving democracy. In this context, it is unquestionably relevant to conduct a scientific analysis of the contemporary interactions between the Russian state and Islam.

The research methodology used in this research is a combination of historical and analytical methods. Descriptive and explanatory methods have also been used in the research. Primary and secondary sources were employed to gather data for the study. Primary sources include the constitution of the Russian Federation, governmental documents such as the military doctrine of the Russian Federation, Foreign Policy Doctrine, the Russian Federation National Security Concept, Federal Law on the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Association, policy statements, survey and census, speeches of leading political personalities and news in various newspapers. However, most of the data used in the study has been taken from secondary sources, including books and journal articles produced by well-known academics and experts in the field. Most of the official documentation, including the census, the constitution and its amendments, the wording of several legislation, and speeches of leading political personalities, have been carefully examined to reach a logical conclusion.

The present research attempted to provide answers to the following research questions:

- Who are the minorities in Russia?
- What are the policies of the Russian state regarding religion?
- How does the Russian Federation perceive its minorities?
- In what ways has the presence of the Muslim minority within Russia impacted the political, social, economic and cultural life of the country?
- Given the trend towards religious revivalism and also radicalisation, can Russia transform itself into a pluralistic and democratic society?
- How do Russian Muslims perceive themselves vis--à-vis the majority religious denomination and also the larger Muslim world outside Russia?

- How prominent is Islam a factor in shaping Russia's policy choices both internally and externally?

5.2 Summarisation and Key Research Findings of the Main Chapters:

Chapter 2 explores that Russia's relationship with Islam has a millennia-long history. This relationship with Islam began in the seventh century, long before King Vladimir of *Kievan Rus* made Orthodox Christianity the country's official religion. During the 13th and 14th centuries, the reign of the Tatar-Mongolian Golden Horde provided a tremendous impetus to the spread of Islam in *Kievan Rus*. In addition, the Golden Horde's Ozbek Khan's adoption of Islam as an official religion in 1313 boosted Islam's popularity in the region. As a result, a large number of Turkic tribes from Crimea to Siberia converted to Islam. Thus, Russia's religious and political environment became more dominated by Islam. Despite this, it is noteworthy that the Tataro-Mongol monarchy was not based on religious fanaticism. The Tatar Mongolians did not force ethnic Russians to convert to Islam.

By the 15th century, the Golden Horde had fragmented into a number of rival *Khanates*, including the Crimean *Khanates*, Astrakhan *Khanates*, Siberian Tatars, and Nogai Horde Khanates. The conquest of Kazan, Astrakhan, and the Siberian *Khanate* in the 16th century led to the absorption of this vast territory, with its Muslim population, into the Russian Empire. This was the start of the Russian empire's annexation of Muslim lands. The most essential parts of Russia's policy towards Islam were forceful Christianisation, conservative Russification, and repression of Islam. In common Russian conscience, Muslims and Islam were considered as the 'hostile other' due to the Mongol conquest.

The policy of Russian monarchs towards their Muslim subjects changed in the 18th century. To alleviate the unrest among the Muslims, Catherine 'the Great' implemented a religious policy of tolerance. In Ufa, the Mahometan Spiritual Board was established as the first official Muslim institution and thus official legal status to Islam was ensured. Consequently, she gained the loyalty of her Muslim subject and in

return, she transformed the imperial state into an Islamist patron and established a favourable environment for the progress of the cultural, religious, and economy of Volga Tatars. In her administration, Muslims were treated equal to the rest of the population. Later, the Caucasus and Central Asia were also annexed into the Russian imperial state by the Tsars resulting in an increase in the Muslim population of the empire. Russification and assimilation of Muslims were at the heart of the Russian Empire's policy towards its Muslim community.

At the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, initially, to gain Muslim loyalty, the Bolsheviks promised religious freedom among other rights to Muslims in their famous "Appeal to All Toiling Muslims of Russia and the East". Once Bolsheviks captured the power, the Soviet state — which was based on Marxist-Leninist philosophy that believes religion is opium for masses — followed the atheist policy under the project of 'scientific atheism'. The Soviet state attempted to displace religious ideas and identities in whatever way it could to develop rational thinking for the growth of socialism. All religions including Orthodox Christianity and Islam were suppressed and prosecuted by the state. The state attempted to eliminate religions not just from public and political discourse, but also from the private lives of its citizens, through its policies. Propaganda against Islam had been put in place. This was followed by the destruction and closure of mosques, the restriction of Mullah preaching, and the execution or exile of thousands of Mullahs.

Later, during Brezhnev's reign, there were some liberal tendencies that led to the approval of religious rituals in private life. Rather than conducting a full-fledged assault on religion, the Soviet Union supported atheistic philosophy during the Brezhnev era. In other words, a more permissive attitude towards religion was gradually established. The most significant changes in the status of religion in the Soviet Union happened under Mikhail Gorbachev's presidency, specifically during the late 1980s under *glasnost* and *perestroika* reforms. As a result, a thousand-year celebration of Eastern Christianity was held, which marked a turning point in post-Soviet Russia's religious resurgence. In September 1990, the Soviet Union established a new religious law that prohibited religious persecution, guaranteed "freedom of

conscience", and permitted religious activities. This marked the beginning of the revival of religion, especially Islam, in the Soviet Union. It is noteworthy to mention that despite the Soviet Union's anti-religious or neutralising measures, faith and religion remained alive in the hearts of the people due to various reasons.

In post-Soviet Russia, after 70 years of religious restriction under the agenda of state atheism, the new constitution of 1993 stipulated various new freedoms including religious freedoms to profess and propagate one's religion. The new constitution provides for a secular state based on the principle of separation of state and religion. At the same time, religion was assigned a special role in nation-building and establishing a new identity of post-Soviet Russia. In 1997, the state passed the "Federal Law on the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Association", which paved the path for the country to become multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious. It accepted four religions as traditional religions in Russia namely Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism, with a special contribution of Orthodox Christianity in the history and culture of Russia.

The Russian Federation is home to more than 20 million Muslims who proved to be a very influential minority. The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the emergence of a new liberal climate prepared the ground for the revival of religion, especially Islam, in post-Soviet Russia. The revival of Islam can be evaluated in form of changing the perception of Russian Muslims, the increase in the number of mosques, Islamic religious education, Islamic publication and mass media, halal industries and adoption of economic principles.

Moreover, in various aspects of Russian politics, Islam is playing a significant role. The first and most direct are political organisations founded to defend Islamic beliefs and their way of life, as well as to demand the creation of conditions conducive to the Islamic way of life for all Muslims. Second, Muslim civil society demands that Muslim clergy be involved in politics. Third, powerful Muslim lobby groups pressurise secular leaders to embrace Islam. Fourth, the inclusion of Islam in political

movements and opposition parties, as well as separatist organisations, and finally, the consideration of Islam in subjects such as foreign policy.

With the revival of Islam, Russia has witnessed and experienced the radicalisation of Islam since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Islamic radicalization has been a relevant socio-political issue in Russia. The presence of a substantial Muslim minority has intensified the ethno-political tension with non-Muslim Russians. Islam's popularity has grown in Russia's Muslim regions, particularly of radical Islam. However, the nature and scope of Islamic engagement, as well as its political impact, differ substantially from one Muslim region to the other. The Islamic radicalisation level in the North Caucasus is higher than in other Muslim-populated regions of Russia. Jihadist and extremist Muslims gave a religious flavour to the nationalist revolts that erupted in regions like Chechnya and Dagestan. The Caucasus Emirates played a symbolic role in the conflict. In reality, the Caucasus Emirates is no longer confined to a single region but has grown into a global jihadist movement with ties to terror organisations such as Al-Qaeda. The factors behind radicalisation are foreign influence such as Afghani and Arab Mujahedeen, the undue intervention of security forces, economic decline or underdevelopment of Muslims, corruption and so on. However, the scenario changed after 9/11, Russian state under Putin's presidency suppressed terrorism under the project of 'War on Terror'.

While analysing the interaction of Islam with Orthodox Christianity, the nature of interactions between Islam and orthodoxy has been complex, involving both competition and cooperation. The most important reason for this position is that the Orthodox Church has gained a significant social and political role in post-Soviet Russia, as well as a significant influence in decision-making institutions. As mentioned above, the 1997 law stipulates for the unique contribution of Orthodox Christianity to Russian history, culture and evolution of the identity of the Russian state, which appears problematic for the follower of other traditional religions, especially Islam. They are concerned about the increasing appearance of Orthodox Christianity in the public domain. They accuse the authorities of failing to recognise Russia as a democratic, multi-ethnic, multi-denominational, and multicultural society

and favouring Orthodoxy. Islamic radicalisation and rapid growth in terms of a high birth rate among Muslims, which will lead to demographic changes, are some worrisome issues for the Orthodox Church. However, the Interfaith Council of Russia and the Council for Cooperation with Religious Organisation are the key forums for cooperation and to develop peaceful coexistence between Islam and Christianity.

Chapter 3 explores the Islamic factor in Russia's internal politics. Many experts and scholars on Islam conflate that Russia is becoming increasingly a Muslim country. This is largely due to the fact that Russian demography is changing and resulting in the 'Islamisation' of Russia as there is a rising number of citizens self-referring to Islam. This will have an impact on Russia's domestic and foreign policy decisions, as well as the country's long-term prospects. There have been a number of factors that have contributed to Russia's Islamisation. The most crucial factor is that Muslims have a higher birth rate in comparison to ethnic Russians. Apart from higher birth rate, conversion due to marriage, attraction to Sufism and Islam, dogmatic clarity, convenience and ritual easiness, lack of bureaucratic rigidity in Islam and alternative to economic adversity are some of the other factors.

The Islamic factor plays a key role in the construction of post-Soviet Russia's identity largely due to the fact that interaction between the two has been centuries old. Both have traditionally influenced each other's growth and progress. Russia, like the Soviet Union and the Russian Empire, is predominantly a multinational and multicultural country. The breakup of the former Soviet Union has left Russia with a political and identity crisis. Russia is currently confronted with multi-ethnic and political issues, forcing it to undertake a series of adaptations and maladjustments as a nation in order to regain its lost status and authority. This identity crisis has three dimensions: accommodation of legacies and heritage of past; creating harmony between civic/inclusive and ethnic/exclusive identity; and the dichotomy between the East and the West. When Vladimir Putin came to power in 1999, it was realised that state instability and the crisis of Russian identity were two of the most pressing issues confronting the country. It was critical to bridge this gap by uniting people around a single vision of Russia. Putin focused on resolving Russia's internal issues and

assembling a cohesive Russian country by incorporating non-Christians' concerns. The recognition of the interests and identities of the Muslim republics resulted in cohesion. On a tour to Brunei for the APEC meeting in 2000, Vladimir Putin said, "Russia has always considered itself to be a Eurasian country. We have never forgotten that a greater part of Russian territory lies in Asia. But frankly speaking, we have not always used that advantage".

The Islamic factor plays a significant role in the evolution of the federal structure of Russia. Russia has always been a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional country, which is reflected in its federal structure. The Soviet Union's federal system is unique. This federal distinctiveness may be seen in the fact that it guarantees not just self-determination but also the right to secede from its constituent nations. This uniqueness of the Soviet federation lies in the disintegration process after the October revolution of 1917 where in the absence of the centralised power of the tsar peripheral states build their own national states. Thus, Bolsheviks succumbed to the demand for Soviet federation with a right to self-determination. The Soviet Union was disintegrated largely due to secessionist tendencies and these were carried out in post-Soviet Russia. During this time, many Muslims in Russia were among the most engaged in their quest for greater self-determination. In many cases, Muslim ethnicities demanded greater cultural and administrative autonomy rather than complete freedom. In Russia's seven federal units, ethnic Muslims make up the majority. All of these federal entities were found to have a very high centrifugal propensity. For example, the Republic of Ingushetia, Adygea, Bashkortostan, Tatarstan and Chechnya disrespected the federal laws in many ways. Islam and Islamic awareness created nationalism in the Muslim republics, especially in Chechnya and Tatarstan. In the formation of Russian federalism, the desire for Muslim national self-determination, together with increasing religious awareness and the response of federal authorities, played a significant role. This resulted in Putin's federal reforms, which divided Russia into seven federal districts and modified the Federal Council, giving the president the power to replace any regional leaders.

The Islamic factor also had an impact on the military doctrine, strategies and decisions of post-Soviet Russia. The Islamic component has influenced Russian national security concept, military doctrine, and foreign policy significantly. Extreme nationalism, religion, separatism and even terrorism have been very problematic aspects of the military policy of Russia. In fact, sometimes the laws of the military are updated keeping the Islam factor and its effect in mind. One such example is the federal law on terrorism which was introduced in 1998, the first-ever law in Russian history describing counter-terrorism activities. Freedom of conscience in the Armed Forces, recruitment of soldiers from Islam-oriented regions, fight against illegal military formations, training of specialists on Islam for troops, development of coalition, territorial locations of troops, arsenal, countering influences of religious organisation in the Armed Forces, countering discreditation campaign against Armed Forces, participation in anti-terrorist operations, use of experience of military action against Islamic militant, all these issues are influenced by the Islamic factor. According to Bella, a Russian specialist, the Islamic dimension in Russia's military policy will become more prominent in the future and will have a significant impact on policy decisions (Laruelle, 2016).

The chapter also explores the Islamic threat to Russia in the wake of Islamic revivalism and radicalism. Pro-Western equates Islam, especially radical Islam, the Muslim minority, and the fast-growing population of Muslims as a threat to Russia. The alleged Islamic threat posed by Russia is not restricted to the Chechen War. However, its peculiar feature is that it also targets the five other titular Muslim republics of Ingushetiya, Dagestan, Kabardino-Palkariya, Karachaevo-Cheressiya, and Adygeya in the North Caucasus. Russia's Chechen-led network of 'Islamoterrorists' was spreading. As a result of Al-Qaeda and the worldwide jihadist movement, it is getting more sophisticated and effective. Salafiyya and Wahhabi lineages are regarded to represent radical Islam. Wahhabism, or jihadism, is regarded to be a traditional form of Sunni Islam in Russia. This fundamental Islamic variety seeks to achieve its social and political goals through violence or holy war. At the

same time, Russia, like the former USSR, has other problems that threaten its stability, and it could end up as a failed state.

As mentioned above, the Islamic factor has impacted internal political and security dimensions due to Islamic extremism and demand for separation in the republics of the North Caucasus, especially in the republics of Chechnya and Dagestan. Two types of Islam exist in Russia, a conventional/official one and an unconventional/unofficial Islam. Conventional Islam is peaceful and Russia's original Islam, while unconventional Islam is aggressive, politicised and extremist which is a product of foreign Islamic influence, characterised as 'Wahabism'. Conventional Islam is respected and allowed to be professed and propagated whereas, the Russian state is not at all tolerant of the unconventional Islam which is the root cause of secessionist tendencies in the Muslim republics of the North Caucasia. In the first Chechen War initially, Islam played a secondary role. Later on Islam became a prominent factor as the mufti of Chechnya, Akhmad Kadyrov had given a call for 'holy war' against Moscow. Zelimkhan Yandarbiev, interim president of Chechnya, tried to establish an Islamic state by enforcing Sharia law. Thus, Islam was a tool of Chechen nationalism's emergence, increasing the perceived threat to Russian national integrity by fostering ethnic divisions and irreconcilability that separated the ethnic Russian mainstream from Muslims. Similarly, Islam played a significant role in the secessionist movement of Dagestan. It is noteworthy to mention that foreign factors and foreign Muslim international organisations working within Russia, played a very prominent role in spreading radical Islam. They preach Muslim fundamentalism and teach Russian Muslims a non-traditional version of Islam. Muslim missionaries from other nations attempted to propagate a version of Islam that differed significantly from the traditional Islam practised in Russia.

Further, the chapter also explores the role of the state in the integration of its Muslim population. The process of integration of Muslims was initiated by Catherine the Great by giving equal religious freedoms and status to its Muslim population. The unique historical and political circumstances in Russia have impacted Russia's approach to Muslim integration. Multiethnicity, confessionalism, multinationalism,

and cultural diversity all have had an impact on the integration process in Russia. Muslims in the Volga region and Muslims in the North Caucasus have the most visible differences in terms of assimilation. In the Volga region, the integration process has been more successful, whereas in the North Caucasus, there is a separatist sentiment against the Russian state. As a result, the state must pursue diverse tactics in different regions in order to overcome the integration problem. The state in the integration process aimed to urgently regulate Islam by attempting to believe that the Muslim populace has a certain level of allegiance to the state, that the Muslim leadership is subordinate to the state, and that religious, social, and educational organisations are strictly regulated, and that contacts with foreign elements are also monitored (Malashenko 2008: 2).

The chapter also discusses that the coexistence of Islam and Christianity is possible and Russia can serve as an example for the rest of the world. Russia can set an example in the battle against radicalism and for multi-religious coexistence, challenging Western nations' leading Islamophobic views. Russia acknowledges its Islamic identity which is valuable for Russia as a European state with a Muslim society that respects a Russian national identity. Islamic extremism did not spare Russia. In the Northern Caucasus, the Russian authorities faced violent separatist groups. The Russian government was clearly opposed to people and organisations that had adopted Islamic extremism, or Wahhabism, and partnered with local Muslims who saw Wahhabism as a threat to their community. The conditions for a transnational model identity were successfully established by Russian authorities. The national identities of the Russian Federation's people, including their religion, are respected and preserved there. On behalf of Russian Muslims, there are currently Islamic institutions with full state recognition. These organisations not only provide religious education but also instil a sense of patriotism among believers.

Chapter 4 explains the role of the Islamic factor in determining Russia's foreign policy with the Muslim and non-Muslim world. Historically, Islam has been a critical factor in influencing the foreign policy of the Russian empire and the Soviet Union as well. In the Russian empire, Islam had an impact on the Russian Empire's foreign

policy as a missionary component to its imperial expansion as well as a tool for domestic consolidation and rivalry with other imperial powers. During the Tsarist and Soviet eras, these functions of Islam generally remained the same.

Due to its geopolitical influence and domestic component, Islam as a religion is heavily weighted in the Russian Federation when deciding on foreign policy. It has also had an impact on how Russia has developed its relations with major Muslim nations including Central Asia, the West, and China. The Muslim factor has had the biggest influence on Russia's relations with Muslim nations, particularly those that are on its immediate border towards the south. It is noteworthy to mention that Kremlin cannot neglect a nearly 20-million strong Muslim community which is an additional impetus to Islam's saliency. Compared to the West, Russia is in an advantage position to use Islam, largely due to its indigenous Muslim population, in maintaining ties with the Muslim world on an international front. Apart from the dangers of Islamic radicalisation in form of violent movements and terrorist attacks, the securitisation of Russia becomes pertinent in the foreign policy of Russia. Russia's accession as an observer with an Islamic minority country in the Organization of Islamic Conferences exemplifies strengthening its ties with the Muslim community globally.

The Islamic factor has played a very important role in Russia's relations with the Central Asian countries. Initially, the leaders of the Russian Federation and Central Asian countries maintained distance from each other. Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russian foreign policy was controlled by the Euro-Atlanticist school, which strongly emphasised building positive relations with the Western world. Later, leaders of both sides understood their importance to each other and devised many policies, mechanisms and treaties to improvise cultural, economic, political, and military ties. Two factors should be used as the main yardsticks for evaluating how significant the Muslim component is in Moscow's policies towards the Central Asian nations. The first is the concern that radical Islam may spread from this territory to the Muslim-dominated areas of Russia. Because of the spread of radical Islam among the Muslim minority in Russia, Russia has come to believe that there is an existential

threat to its own security. Since the area is seen as a crucial buffer between Russia and countries having radical Islamic ideologies like Afghanistan and Iran, Central Asia is at the centre of this "discourse of danger". Second is the growing influence of major Muslim countries like Turkey, Iran, the US and China in Russia's own strategic yard, to the geopolitical disadvantage of Russia.

The Islamic factor cannot go unnoticed in Russia's relations with Transcaucasian countries. Russia has played a significant role in the politics of the Caucasus and its efforts cannot be overestimated in the region as Russia considers itself a Caucasian state. The North Caucasus is at the heart of all the Russian republics, which include Adygea, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Circassia, North Ossetia, Chechnya and so on. Russia's Transcaucasian strategy is largely focused on assisting with and enhancing the security situation in the North Caucasus, which continues to be Russia's most difficult territory. Russia's principal objective has been to stop negative developments in the Caucasus, which undermine its security. The rise of Muslim extremist formations has given Russia's relations with Azerbaijan an Islamic component, establishing a connection between these movements and Chechen insurgents, and at one point causing Russia to accuse Azerbaijan of being a "hotbed of Islamic radicalism". Regarding Georgia, the struggle in Chechnya and suspicions of Georgia's active support for the rebels, particularly during the Second Chechen War, harmed bilateral relations between Russia and Georgia. Georgia has allegedly been helping the Chechen rebels, according to Russia.

The Islamic factor has played a reasonability limited role in Russia's relation with Iran largely because the relationship is characterized more on a pragmatic basis. Since the beginning of 1994, Russia and Iran have had close, largely amicable relations. The relationship between the two countries got strengthened as the leaderships from both sides emphasised "Dialogue of Civilization". Also, the development of relations with Iran is listed as one of the main objectives of the Russian Federation's foreign policy concept of 2000. Iranian leaders and some Russian and Western commentators have referred to Russian-Iranian relations as a "partnership". In this collaboration, Russia provides Iran with arms supply while also helping Iran repair its Bushehr nuclear

power plant. Iran's long-term conflict with the US also provided a fertile ground for expanding Iran's relations with Russia. Iranian-Russian relations appear to have been improved by shared interests on regional issues considerably more than previously thought. Further, Russia's indulgence in the interreligious dialogues with Iran is a part of a strategy to build an image in the Muslim world. Visits of Iranian official to Moscow and Putin's visit to Tehran in 2007 has further strengthened the bilateral relations. Iran has been very helpful to Russia on the Chechen issue with special reference to OIC. Iran and Russia both have been the object of the bitterness of various Sunni extremist groups, notably the Taliban and followers of various varieties of Wahhabism who are active in Russia, especially Chechnya and Central Asian countries.

The Islamic dimesion has played a bigger role in Russia's relations with the Arab world largely due to the fact that certain Arab countries were directly or indirectly engaged in the separation movement of Chechnya and the civil war in Afghanistan. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, one of Moscow's main priorities has been preventing affluent Arab Gulf states from supporting Muslim opposition to Moscow's control in Chechnya and other Muslim regions. The Chechen conflict has been the most important factor in damaging Russia's relations with the Arab world. For example, Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries not only condemned Russia's military action in Chechnya but provided moral and financial assistance to the rebels. Saudi Arabia raised the Chechen issue at several international platforms such as the UN and OIC and called Russia's operation in Chechnya "an inhumane act against the Muslim people of Chechnya". Similarly, the relationship with other Arab countries such as UAE, Kuwait and Qatar were adversely affected due to the Chechen issue. However, the Chechen conflict hardly influenced Russia's relations with Egypt. However, President Putin tried to improve relations with Arab countries especially with Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE largely due to economic interest and to satisfy its Muslim population at home. In 2003, Russia made an agreement with Arab States. Between 2003 and 2008, there were many Russian official visits to Egypt, Jordan, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE Qatar.

The Islamic factor is very much visible in Russia's relations with Turkey. Russia's relations with Turkey were heavily influenced by the Chechen war and Turkey's struggle against Kurdish secession. At the formal talks between Russia and Turkey, the topic of terrorism has typically been at the top of the list. Turkey claimed that Chechnya is not an internal matter of the Russian Federation. Despite this, the issue was never a hurdle to establishing close ties and both countries realised to work together on common interest. They signed many memorandums to fight against terrorism. Despite Turkey's pro-Chechen position, Russia has viewed Turkey with greater caution than other countries due to both its strategic location on the Black Sea and its membership in NATO. However, Turkey used Islam to establish it as a regional power in Central Asia and Transcaucasia by making ties with new states which emerged on the world map after Soviet Union's disintegration. It is noteworthy to mention that Russia got membership of the OIC in 2005 when it was headed by the general secretary of Turkey.

Russia's relations with Pakistan and Afghanistan have been negatively impacted by the Islamic factor. After the fall of the USSR, the geopolitical landscape of the area underwent another upheaval, and from the early 1990s, Russian primary interest in Afghanistan has been linked to its own "War on Terror". The Russian leaders have claimed that Russia is ever struggling against the Muslim fundamental forces which trespass through Afghanistan to the region of the former Soviet Union. The Taliban's objective to export their brand of terrorism into Central Asian countries was viewed with apprehension by Russia. In this context, some Tajik Islamists took training in military camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Hence, Russia became a strategic partner of the US in 2001 in the 'War on Terror'. Pakistan played a crucial role in establishing the Chechen-Taliban connection. Despite this, both Pakistan and Russia avoided a complete rupture in relations. In the case of Afghanistan, the ousting of the Taliban regime offered Russia an opportunity to re-establish its lost grounds. Nevertheless, the Islamic factor in the post-9/11 period has acted as an incentive for the Afghan-Russian cooperation.

Islam has also played a large role in shaping Russia's relations with the West. Some experts on Russian Islam argue that compared to the West, Russia is better able to utilise Islam and forge relationships with the Muslim world largely due to the Russian Muslim population at home. Though, both have used Islam to undermine each other's position and win Muslims to their side. It is noteworthy to mention that the perceived common threat of Islam has brought the West and Russia closer. However, Russian military action in Chechnya affected Russian relations with the West. West's reaction to the Second Chechen War was more negative. With the arrival of Primakov, who advocated a less West-centric approach, Russia emphasised strengthening ties with non-Western countries. Also, Russia considers itself an intermediate to resolve the issue between the West and the Islamic world.

The Muslim minority in Russia has a considerable impact on foreign policy choices and the Russian government's strategy for developing special ties with the Muslim world. It was President Putin who could identify the concerns of Russia's large-scale Muslim population in terms of his desire to join OIC (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation). In August 2003, Putin argued to justify Russia's observer status in the OIC: "Almost 20 million Muslims living in Russia have every right to consider themselves a part of the Muslim world". Finally, Russia became a member of the organisation as an observer at the 32nd Conference of the OIC in 2005. However, Russia's ambition to join the OIC was not primarily motivated by the Chechnya issue, rather it was driven by a desire to find its position in the world and to make up for its worsening relations with the West in other ways. Russia's involvement in improving relations with the Muslim world increasingly suggests that it is making an effort to resurrect a more substantial presence there. It shows Moscow's ambitions to reclaim its position as a state with the right to pursue its own multifaceted interests across the globe. Thus, it can be conflated that Islam plays a very important role in Russian foreign policy making.

Based on the deep analysis of the main chapters of the research, the key research findings of this thesis are:

- Almost 1,300-year-old Russia's interaction with Islam establishes Islam as one of the oldest and most traditional religions of Russia. Islam is an indigenous and native religion of Russia, and thus the contribution of Islam is immense in shaping Russian culture and civilisation. It has had a considerable impact on Russia's culture, society and politics, and the process is still on.

- The most essential characteristic of Islam in Russia, particularly during the Soviet era, is that it has a long history of persecution, Russification, Christianisation, and destruction. Islam, though much theological knowledge was lost, had the capability to survive against all odds. Despite this, the history of Islam and Russia's relationship has been distinguished for centuries by coexistence, collaboration, tolerance, and accommodation, rather than conflict and conquest. Consequently, the Russian Federation is going to experience mutual coexistence of Russia and Islam.

- The new constitution of post-Soviet Russia is secular, multicultural and multi-confessional in nature, which provides various religious freedom. The law of 1997 on "Federal Law on the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Association", accepted Islam as one of the traditional religions with Christian Orthodoxy, Buddhism and Judaism with the acceptance of Christianity's unique contribution to Russian history and culture. Today, Muslims have much more religious freedom than ever before.

- The post-Soviet Russia has witnessed Islamic rebirth in terms of changing perception of Russian Muslims, an increase in the number of mosques, Islamic education, mass media and so on. Due to the religious revival, the Muslim minority has become an influential minority as well as assertive for achieving their rights. Muslims have organized various movements and formed Muslim political parties to participate in the political and social life of the country. These parties contest elections at national and local elections.

- The post-Soviet Russian has also experienced Islamic radicalisation reflected in Muslim quest for self-determination such as Chechnya. In Russian Muslims' imagination and memories, they are incorporated through conquering and conquest. Further, they were persecuted and assimilated forcefully under the agenda of Christianisation and Russification in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. Thus, as they got religious freedom under the new liberal climate, the Muslim community, especially in the North Caucasus, started seeking self-determination.

- The Islamic factor is a very influential and prominent in Russia's internal decision-making process. Given the fact that the Muslim community continues to grow at a faster rate than the ethnic Russian population, the role of Islam in Russian culture, society and politics will become more profound and substantial sooner or later.

- Islam and the Muslim community of the Russian Federation have been key factors in the construction of identity in the post-Soviet period. The development which took place in the Muslim majority regions in Russia, particularly the Muslim quest for greater cultural, administrative, and political autonomy, has had a significant impact in the making of Russia's post-Soviet identity and governmental structure.

- The Islamic factor also played a considerable role in the evolution of the Russian federal structure. The challenge offered by the growth of Islamist nationalism movements in Russia's Muslim republics impacted the evolution of post-Soviet Russian federalism and contributed to the recent trends of recentralisation. As a result, the future structure of post-Soviet Russia's federalism appears to be more unitary in nature.

- The radicalisation of Islam in the form of violent separatist movements in the Republic of the North Caucasus, particularly in Chechnya, and elsewhere is a threat to Russian sovereignty, integrity and security. If the state does not devise a

method to combat Islamic extremism, radical Islam will be capable of growing once again in Russia. This can further lead to the possible disintegration of the Russian Federation.

- Russia is a multi-ethnic, multi-confessional and multicultural state, to consolidate democracy under the agenda of multiculturalism, the Russian state formulated different types of strategies and policies to integrate its Muslim population right from the regime of Catherine the Great to the present. The prime focus of such integrative efforts is to create harmony in the society and securitisation of the country by making its Muslim population loyal to the state. Thus, making the coexistence of Islam and Christianity possible, of which Russia is the best example.

- Historically, since its interaction with Russia, Islam has played a very important role in shaping foreign policy not only of the Russian empire but of the Soviet Union also. Islam had an impact on the foreign policy of the Russian Empire as a tool for both domestic consolidation and rivalry with other imperial powers. It was also a missionary element of its imperial expansion. This influence of Islam essentially remained the same throughout the Tsarist and Soviet regimes.

- Approximately 20 million Muslim minorities of post-Soviet Russia play a crucial role in the formulation of foreign policy choices and relations with the Islamic world. Islam has been an important factor in shaping the Russian worldview. The Islamic factor is easily visible in Russian relations with the Central Asian countries, Transcaucasian counties, the Arab world, Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan and so on.

- The Islamic factor has not only impacted Russia's relations with the Muslim world but the non-Muslim world also, especially the West. Any development that takes place in the Muslim world affects Russia's relations with the West. Russia, due to its significant Muslim minority at home, considers itself closer to the Muslim world in comparison to the West. Also, Russia is in an advantage position to play the role of an intermediator to resolve the issues between the

West and the Muslim world. Muslims do not represent something foreign and unrecognisable, and the Islamic world is not the 'other'. Muslims, both internal and external, have long been a part of Russian culture and thought.

- The Islamic factor, in the form of a shared threat from Islamic extremism, has assisted Russia in consolidating its influence in many post-soviet regions, particularly in Central Asia, and developing a network of security cooperation. Russia has consistently taken a stance toward the Islamic world that has been centred on enhancing, renewing, and continuing centuries-old engagement. It underlines the fundamental commonality and shared interests as well as the broad scope of Russia's relationship with the majority of the Muslim world.

This research has three major hypotheses. An attempt has been made to testify the following hypothesis:

- The politicisation of identity, mainly resulting from the radicalisation of religion, has made Islam a critical factor in shaping the social, political and security dynamics of the Russian state.

- The 'Muslim Question' in Russia has a significant bearing on both domestic and foreign policy choices of the Russian state.

- The consolidation of democracy in Russia is heavily dependent on the ability of the Russian state to accommodate religious and cultural minorities within the larger framework of multiculturalism.

The present research finds that Islam, especially its radical version, has played a very important role in shaping the social, political and security dynamics of the Russian Federation. This has been proved in the key research findings of the thesis. Unlike European countries, Islam is an indigenous religion of Russia which has played a crucial role in the formation of the culture and civilization of Russia. Islam has also influenced the process of Russia's identity formation since centuries. Following seven decades of religious repression, Islam has been revived in post-Soviet Russia. As a

result, the country's Muslim minority is now not only actively engaged in social, cultural, and political life but also calling for more voice. Islamic extremism, which emerged in post-Soviet Russia, poses a serious security threat to Russia. The demands for independence and sovereignty in the republics of North Caucasus and other parts of Russia, especially in the context of two Chechen wars, have posed a serious challenge to Russia's unity and integrity. This has sometimes resulted in increased tension between the Russian ethnic population and the Muslims.

The present research reveals that the 'Muslim question' has a significant bearing on the internal and domestic policy formulation of the Russian Federation. The key research findings of the thesis have demonstrated this. The Islamic factor has influenced Russian state formation, its constitution, identity formation (as mentioned above), the evolution of federal structure and crucial internal policies due to the radicalisation of Islam in post-Soviet Russia. Islam has also influenced military strategies and decisions in Russia. The Russian state has played a significant role in devising various policies to integrate its Muslim population since the Russian empire.

The key research findings of the thesis show that the 'Muslim question' has a significant bearing on the foreign policy choices of the Russian Federation. Russia's relations with the Arab world, Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and other nations, as well as Transcaucasia, Central Asia, and other regions, are all clearly impacted by Muslim factors. Russia's relations with the non-Muslim world, particularly the West, have been touched by the Islamic factor in addition to those with the Muslim world. Russia's relationship with the West is impacted by any changes in the Muslim world. It is clearly visible that Russia could obtain membership of the OIC as an observer largely due to its sizeable Muslim population which has helped Russia to be a leading power in the Muslim as well as the non-Muslim world at an international level. While delivering a speech in 2003 at the platform of OIC, Putin candidly admitted that Russia wanted to join the OIC because Russia sees itself as a Muslim country. Thus, Islam as a factor has considerably influenced Russia's external goals and ambitions in a new domestic and international context.

The study also reveals that the consolidation of democracy in Russia is heavily dependent on the ability of the Russian state to accommodate religious and cultural minorities within the larger framework of multiculturalism. Russia is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multicultural state. As a contemporary modern and secular state, the Russian Federation does not adhere to the Soviet doctrine of 'scientific atheism', but rather accords equal liberties and rights to all religions. Thus, it is important to point out, as mentioned above, that Russia develops various types of integration techniques and policies for its Muslim population in order to strengthen democracy within the framework of multiculturalism. Thus, the present study finds all its hypotheses verified and valid.

5.3 Research Areas to be Explored

The present study has examined Islam and Islamic factor in Russia generally. Though there are many areas to be explored yet in the context of Islam in Russia. One such particular area is the diversity of Russia's Islam. The Muslims in Russia are divided into nearly 40 different ethnic groups, including the Siberian Tatars, Volga Tatars, Ingush, Chechens, Bashqorts, Balkars, Dargins, Karachays, Avars, Kabardins, Lezgins, and so on. They primarily adhere to two Sunni schools of Islamic law: the Shafi'i and Hanafi madhhabs. Muslims population in the Volga-Urals region, as well as the Karachays, Balkars and Nogais, in the Northern Caucasus, adhere to the Shafi'i madhhab, whereas Muslims in Ingushetia, Chechnya and Dagestan follow the Hanafi madhhab. Shi'ites are a tiny minority that is almost entirely restricted to the Caucasus, where they can be found among Azeri Turks and among the Lezgins, a small Muslim ethnic group in Dagestan. It is an important area to be explored; that is how this diversity affects or limits the influence of Islam in Russia. Another area is intra-Muslim rivalry in Russia. How intra-Muslim conflicts and contradiction impact their bargaining power within the Russian society and the state needs to be explored. Apart from this, the present study has a particular time period from 2001 to 2010. A lot of development has taken place during the last decade which is yet to be examined.

5.4 Some Concluding Remarks

Islam has had a long history of engagement with Russia, and throughout that time, it has had a significant impact on defining Russian history. It has had a profound impact on Russian culture, society, and politics, and the process is currently ongoing. Without Islam, there is no way of describing Russia's fate in the past and the future. It is not because Islam emerged earlier than Orthodox Christianity in some parts of Russian territory, but, more importantly, because it has become an inalienable part of the Russian society. Russia has had experience with Islam, both at home and abroad, since the very first year of its existence. Recently, in 2019, the grand mufti of Russia, Ravil Gainutdin has estimated that within the next 15 years, given demographic trends, approximately 30 percent of the country's population will be Muslims. The Russian Orthodox Church's Archpriest Dmitry Smirnov agreed with Gainutdin's prediction (Gainutdin 2019). This points to the saliency of Islam in Russia. In other words, the Islamic factor is going to be more profound in affecting Russia's identity, culture, society and civilisation as well as domestic and foreign policy choices in the future.

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