Chapter 1

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The phenomenon of violence and conflict, which exists in the North Caucasian region, has its roots in the past. Present day Russia is known as the Russian Federation, this state in many ways is a successor state to the erstwhile Soviet Union, just as the Soviet Union was to the Russian Empire. Hence to understand the present phenomenon of Islamic militancy in Russia it is essential that we look into its historical antecedents, which lie in the former Russian Empire and subsequently the Soviet Union.

A political History of Islam in Russia

Advent of Islam in Russia

Islam started knocking at the doors of Russia almost as soon as its birth in the VII cent A.D. However the, Muslim Arabs were not able to conquer any significant territories
either in East Europe or Russia due to mountain and maritime boundaries. They had to be content with the conquest of the border city-fortress of Derbent (situated in present day Dagestan), which they did in the early 8th century A.D.¹ For a long time, Derbent remained a base for protecting Muslim states from Khazar invasions and for raids of Muslim detachments on their non-Muslim neighbors. During this period it was the Khazars who controlled the coastline between the Main Caucasian Range and the Caspian Sea, which was the only gateway to present day Russia from the Asian side, it was therefore inevitable that there be a confrontation between the Muslims and Khazars first. The Kazars checked further advance of Muslims to their north i.e. present day Russia for more than two centuries. Only once, in 737A.D, military leader Marwan bin Muhammad, the future caliph, after having defeated the Khazar Khakan (leader of the Khazar Kingdom), undertook a campaign north of Derbent and

captured the Khazar capital\(^2\). By late 8th century A.D., though the aristocracy of the Khazar Kingdom or Khazaria adopted Judaism, Christianity also continued to exercise its influence in Khazaria. Even still majority of the people of the Caucasian and North Caucasian region (the area of Caucasian mountains) preserved their pagan beliefs. Converting the peoples of the North Caucasus into Islam took centuries. A fortification system was built northwest of Derbent where Arab soldiers from Syria and Iraq were first settled. Gradually these soldiers began to preach and spread Islam actively among the native population, but mountain communities adopted it slowly and with difficulties. Here it was the Sufi Islam, which was more successfully introduced, since it absorbed elements of local cults and beliefs, but even so the conversion process took a few centuries. Derbent continued to serve as a key base for Muslim preaching and together with the fortifications that surrounded it, it turned into a Sufi teaching center. Overall, it was in a peaceful way that Islam managed to become

\(^2\) Ibid.
established and widespread in North Caucasus, one of the primary reasons being the incessant exchange of goods and people. The ways and method of the early Sufi saints in preaching Islam and their identity is not quite clear, since the process is poorly covered in sources.

Meanwhile the other region of Russia, the Volga-Ural region got converted to Islam in 922 A.D. during the period of Bulgar Civilization also known as the Eastern Bulgars, which existed during the 9th and the 10th Century A.D., before the conversion of the Russians to Orthodox Christianity. This too occurred peacefully. The Bulgar Civilization’s population was the Turkic speaking Kypchak tribes that migrated across the Urals in the ninth and the tenth century and mixed with already present Finno Ugric and Slavic people living there. The other population, which inhabited the Volga-Ural region, was of the people called Volga Tatars. After the Khazar state had disappeared from the East European political arena,

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Islam's presence in the North Caucasus, the Kypchak steppe and the Volga region, thus increased gradually. With time Islamic Bulgar Empire grew and emerged as a powerful state.

On the other hand the Russian princes officially adopted Christianity in the late 10th century A.D., so the two world religions (resting on the power of the Caliphate and Byzantium) launched latent competition in the region. Yet the Muslims and Christians in Eastern Europe seldom met on the field of battle throughout the 11th and 12th century A.D., more frequently they conducted peaceful trade and communication.

The story of Islamisation of the Tatars the other population of the Volga-Ural region is slightly different. Following the Yasa imperial code of Genghis Khan the Tatars (Mongols) preferred none of the three world religions, although they readily accepted their adherents' services and patronized their ministers.4 In spite of it time achieved what could not have been achieved otherwise. Having settled in the steppe on the border of Europe and Asia, with the capital in

4 Bernard Pares, no.1, pp.82
Sarai on the lower Itil, the Tatars found themselves being surrounded by a compact Muslim, Bulgar-Kypchak population. They gradually began to switch to the Kypchak (Turkic) language and adopted Islam and practically dissolved leaving the name Tatars to the entire population of this region. The roots of the people living in the Volga-Ural region and known today as the Volga Tatars are therefore contested. Some historians argue that Tatar culture was strongly influenced by the Mongol of the Golden Horde (the Tatar population of that time, referred to as Horde generally and the state which came up during this time and which was comprised of the Tatars came to be called as The Kingdom of the Golden Horde5), which conquered the region in the 13th century. Others, including most Tatar nationalists argue that despite the conquest, the Turkic speaking people of the Volga-Ural region retained much of the pre-existing culture of the Bulgar civilization. Amongst the rulers of the Tatars the earliest to become a Muslim was Berke Khan (1257-66), he had alliance with Egypt's Mamluk sultans, and as a result he

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warred against non-Muslim Tatars that held Iran. The region was completely converted to Islam under Uzbek (1313-42AD).  

Contemporaries pointed out Golden Horde khans were encouraged to adopt Islam by Egyptian ulema but folk tales later attributed this achievement to Sufi saints. The cardinal change in the religious orientation of the ruler and elite thus became favorable to the Muslims in the region and also there was an improvement of cultural connections between Muslim states in the north and the kingdom of the Golden Horde. This was the period of maximum expansion of Islam as it spread into the northern Black Sea area and Crimea. There was further increase in the number and area of peoples and territories that adopted Islam in the North Caucasus and the Don, Volga and Ural areas, as well as the appearance of a Muslim enclave in Lithuania. In this way, by the 14th century A.D., Islam reached a maximum spread in Eastern Europe and Russia and the number of its adherents increased accordingly. 

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6 I. Smirnov, no3, pp. 32
7 Bernard Pares, no.1.,pp.84
At the same time, the Kingdom of the Golden Horde was not intolerant to other religions the Muslim authorities of the Kingdom did not force people of a different religion to convert to Islam. They were even particular not to encourage Muslim missionary work. They were loyal adherents to the principle of religious tolerance and supported the Orthodox Church just as well, granting it a series of privileges. By the time of the collapse of Golden Horde a distinct Tatar culture had emerged in the region and by the 16th century a distinct Tatar literary language using Arabic script had developed.

By the end of 14th century A.D., the principality of Moscow had grown strong enough to challenge the Horde khan, having got the ideological support of the Orthodox Church, it defeated the Horde army in 1380 A.D. In a year though the Moscow prince was forced back to submission, but the desire to free itself from the control of the Horde resulted in a conflict between Moscow and the Kingdom of the Horde, which took shape as Christian-Muslim opposition. However

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8 Ibid. pp.109
infighting, succession struggles, as well as defeat by Timur, led eventually to the weakening of the Kingdom of Horde and its disintegration into the Kazan, Nogai and Crimean khanates, while in the North Caucasus a few small states emerged and a local Muslim culture developed in each of them. At the same time, the principality of Muscovy\(^9\) claimed succession to Byzantium, it expanded at the expense of other Russian principalities, and after having steadily accumulated power emerged as a centralized ‘Tsardom’.

*Islamic Resistance during the period of the Tsars*

The Russian Empire of the Tsars\(^{10}\), which thus emerged, was an imperialist state different from the other colonial states only in the sense that it had contiguous colonial territories while others had overseas colonies. The Russian process of conquest involved the twin approach of first conquest and then colonizing the area by settling it with Russians, Ukrainians and

\(^9\) The early Russian State which later developed into the Russian Empire.

\(^{10}\) The Emperor of the Russia Empire was known as such, the word is a derivative of the word Caesar.
Cossacks. It launched a military advance on the Muslim states that took shape as a result of the Horde's disintegration in doing so, the tsars were encouraged by the Orthodox Church. During its 107 years of existence the Kazan Khanate fought episodic wars with Moscow and alternated between periods of relative independence and relative dependence. These cycles came to an end with the storming of Kazan by Ivan-the Terrible in October 1552, Moscow had finally defeated Kazan Khanate. In 1556 even Khanate of Astrakhan had been captured which gave Russians outlet to the Caspian Sea.\textsuperscript{11}

Having made this state one of its possessions, Christian Russia turned into a country with a large community adhering to a religion that was different from its own. It was now faced with the need to develop a policy in respect to its Muslim subjects. Tsarist Russia however rejected the Horde's tradition of confining itself to exacting tribute from its subjects of a

\textsuperscript{11} Konstantin Tarnovsky, \textit{Illustrated History of the USSR: A brief outline}, (Moscow: Novosty, 1982), pp. 25
different religion without interfering into the inner life of their community. On the contrary, its military leaders allied to hierarchs of the Orthodox Church made it their aim to persecute the Muslims. Without an organized clergy and stripped of any sort of protection, the Muslim community had now nothing to do but fight for survival in the hostile state. It naturally suffered heavy losses, both human and territorial. The nobility and lower military class among the Muslims living in the Russian empire either began to serve Russian princes or changed their occupation. As far as the common folks were concerned like farmers and stockbreeders, the Muscovites ousted them from their lands. During the next three centuries Russia took possession of all Muslim territories in Eastern Europe, with similar events occurring in these territories as well. Retreating before the advancing Russia, the remaining Muslim states namely the Nogai and Crimean Khanates and small states those in the North Caucasus diminished, grew weaker, and finally vanished. A major part of the original Muslim population also left their lands, which
were occupied by the Russians. Those who remained in the
course of time diminished, too, either ousted by the alien,
mostly Slavic population or assimilated by it. These were done
by through administrative, and economic pressure of Russian
authorities and the preaching of the Church. Surviving Muslim
communities, in turn, became isolated in conservatism as a
means of self-preservation. These Muslim communities were
in constant opposition to Russian authorities. They took every
opportunity to rebel or support the rebellions of Russian re-
settlers and the Cossacks and naturally suffered new losses
when the rebellions were put down. The opposition that these
Muslim communities put up to Russian imperial advance
elevated them in the eyes of oppressed and persecuted who did
not wish to resign to the despotism of the Russian officialdom
and Church. For example they supported the revolts of Stepan
Razin\textsuperscript{12} and Pugachov\textsuperscript{13} Thus Islam in Russia and along its

\textsuperscript{12} ibid., pp.36
\textsuperscript{13} M. Vyatkin, "Feudal Russia in the Late Eighteenth Century" in I.Smirnov M.P. Vyatkin, SM Levin (eds.), \textit{A Short History of the USSR}, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965) translated by George H. Hanna, pp.177
borders did not only constantly lost adherents, but also gained new ones.

The Caucasian region on the other hand experienced its first aggression from the Russian Empire at the end of the 16th Century when the Russians built two fortresses for the first time in this region, one on the river Terek in the year 1587 and the other on the river Sunja in the year 1591\textsuperscript{14}. The saga of resistance, militancy and conflict in this region therefore stretches back to the time of the Tsars. By the time of the reign of Tsarina Catherine II Russians had captured North Caucasian lowland and the Nogay Tatar country\textsuperscript{15}. Under Catherine II the annexation of the Crimea was also completed (1783). Catherine II however made an effort to reach to her Muslim subjects.

She undertook measures to extend the Russian Empire's patronage to its Muslims and integrate them into the state's

\textsuperscript{14} Kalpana Sahni, *Crucifying the Orient: Russian Orientalism and the Colonization of Caucasus and Central Asia* (Oslo: White Orchid Press, 1997), pp.91

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, pp.36
class structure. Tatar *murzas*\(^\text{16}\) and Bashkir chieftains were granted nobility rights by the year 1784. Muslim merchants received privileges in trade with Turkistan, Iran, India, and China, and an order was given to print the Koran in the original. The ban on building mosques was relaxed and the Orenburg Mohammedan Spiritual Assembly OMSA was set up in 1788.\(^\text{17}\) Thus, after more than two centuries of intolerance towards Islam and sever persecutions, the Russian government gave an official status to Islam and began to organize its leaders in the form of a clergy, which it would be in a position to control. These measures facilitated improvement in relations between the Muslims and authorities. Clerics and merchants from among the Russian Muslims became intermediaries between Russia and its Muslim neighbors. They established all sorts of relations with them and in a way facilitated its expansion into Asia. Russia also greatly benefited from recruiting Muslims to the army and

\(^{16}\) A *murza* is one of the hereditary nobility among the Tatars.

\(^{17}\) Bernard Pares, no.1,pp. 287-290
navy where offices of mullahs, muezzins, and akhuns\textsuperscript{18} were introduced for them, so that they instructed and administered prayers and rituals. The Muslims were also admitted to the bourgeois and merchant classes. At the same time, the Russian government persistently proceeded with its policy of christianising and Russification. It supported anti-Muslim propaganda that formed negative stereotypes of Islam in the Russian public opinion.

However by the 19\textsuperscript{th} century major campaigns were launched to conquer the North Caucasian people. The important aspect to note with regard to the numerous mountainous North Caucasian nationalities is that conquest by the Russians did not mean the end of the matter. The trend was that these nationalities after the conquest soon rose in revolt, which involved a fresh military campaign of the region. In this manner this area remained a boiling pot till 1864 and even later if we take into account minor revolts. The chief reason for the stiff resistance of the people of North Caucasus was its

\textsuperscript{18} An Akhun is a Muslim theologian, more revered than a mullah
unique topography and society as well as the marshal spirit of its people. Along with this, the Caucasian isthmus since distant past has been at the crossroads of military, political, commercial and cultural contacts. This factor prompted the creation of the tribal association first and then full-fledged polities that competed for the military hegemony and control of trade routes. While the developed statehood existed in the lowland Caucasus i.e the southern Caucasus region, its highland area till the 19th century served home to communities with strong rudiments of military democracy. Internecine strife was a common phenomenon for the highland and lowland Caucasus. So were the wars with foreign invaders, Arabs and Turks early on from the south and the Russians later, from the north. Long bloody wars with foreign enemies occupy an important place in the history of each Caucasian people and have played significant role in the formation of the Caucasian mentality. Weapons became an attribute of the Caucasian national costume, and even peasants carried them when they
went to farm their fields. The North Caucasian Society from time immemorial has been divided into numerous clans, which often fought with each other and followed their old customary laws called the *Adat* and followed the system of blood feud called *Kanli*. The 'barbarian' custom of cutting dead enemies' heads and hands as military trophies was also widespread among the Caucasians like many other warlike people of the world. The clans lived in the Caucasian mountains that also divided them. The Caucasian mountains are one of the highest in the world with living conditions very severe. As a result any attempt by the advancing Arabs and the Turks on the possible Islamisation of the area could not succeed. However where force failed gradual persuasion worked, the Sufi mystics who settled in this region through their missionary activities converted the people to Sufi Islam. Many of them even laid

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*Kanli* was the tribal system of justice in the North Caucasian region where revenge was taken by one clan from the other for a particular action.
their lives in this process\textsuperscript{21}. The Sufi way of life with its tradition of \textit{Pir} and \textit{Murid}\textsuperscript{22} became acceptable to the people as they were already organized under clans where members had to maintain unquestioned loyalties towards the clan chief\textsuperscript{23}. The first Sufi order \textit{Sillsillah or Tariquas}\textsuperscript{24} to enter the region was Naqshabandi order, later came the Quadri order, which after the decline of the former became as popular\textsuperscript{25}. The basic difference between the two was that while the Naqshabandi recite the \textit{Zikr} silently while the Quadris recite it loudly\textsuperscript{26}. The other difference if that of tolerance and moderation Quadris being more moderate. Sufism gave a semblance of unity to the hitherto divided Caucasian people as a result they could unite to fight against the Russians though this unity was hard to maintain, it provided the people with


\textsuperscript{23} David Damrel, no.6,pp.10

\textsuperscript{24} The organized system through which the Sufis were bound and which had Sufi master and disciples under him.

\textsuperscript{25} Ben Fowkes (ed.), \textit{Russia and Chechnia, The Permanent Crisis: Essays on Russo Chechan relations} (Hound Mills: Macmillian Press, 1998), pp.4

\textsuperscript{26} David Damrel, No.8.,pp.10
great leaders who were inspired by religion to call for Jihad or holy war and Ghazawat or religious struggle. It also gave the people a greater cause of saving ones religion that was now identified with their way of life.

The North Caucasian people’s struggle continued for a long time. The earliest revolt occurred in 1707 but the earliest important leader of the Islamic revolt was Sheikh Mansur or Eliza Mansur a former Italian Jesuit who started his struggle in 1785 and defeated the Tsarist forces at the river Sunja. He briefly united much of what are Dagestan and Chechnya under his rule. But at the battle of Tatar- Toub in 1791 he was defeated and taken prisoner. The second leader was Ghazi Mollah who belonged to the Avar people of Dagestan. He organized the people against the Russians and made them give up their old customary laws for for the Islamic law the Shariah. He captured a few mountain villages, which had become pro Russians, his siege on the Russian fort of

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27 There is a debate about the understanding of Jihad in Islamic theology according to some scholars it is a fight against the impurities within one self others view it as war against non believers
28 M.J. Akbar, no.20, pp.187g
Vnezapnaya was also a success. However Russians later laid siege on the Aoul of Gimri, Ghazi Mollah was defeated and killed but his associate and disciple Sheikh Shamyl later known famously as Imam Shamyl escaped.\textsuperscript{29}

Imam Shamyl’s name became synonymous with the free spirit and the love for freedom of the Muslim people of North Caucasus. Their refusal to accept Russian rule led them to declare open war against the Russian under the leadership of Shamyl. This was by far the greatest rebellion in the region against Tsarist Russia. At first the struggle of the mountain people was purely defensive. They defended the Aoul of Ashilta in Central Dagestan against Russian attack\textsuperscript{30}. Through his experience of struggle with large well-equipped, technologically superior Russian army, he understood that it was very difficult to defeat them on the open ground. They could be defeated only through guerilla warfare, which was

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid. The story goes that Shamyl was surrounded by three soldiers one of whom he cut into two and leapt over the other two slashing them too all the while having suffered a wound in his chest. It is this exemplary bravery, which has now become a part of folklore in North Caucasus that has given heroic aura to Shamyl.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid
possible in the Caucasian mountains. But here his limitations were that while he with his army could escape in the hills the mountain villages though well fortified were vulnerable to Russian siege. In spite of this Shamyl carried on his struggle.

During the period 1839 to 1847 Shamyl constantly harassed the Russians even at the face of many defeats. In 1847 he gave a crushing defeat to General Vorontsov in the jungles close to his capital Dargo, for the next 10 years. Russians left Shamyl alone and as a result he set up a kingdom in present day Chechnya and Dagestan, which is referred by the Caucasian people as the ‘time of Shariah’. The command of the Russian army now came under General Beriatinsky who adopted measures similar to General Yermolov as he cleared the forest so as to force the Caucasian to fight on the open ground. In 1858 there was a last big battle between Russians and Shamyl’s forces as he came to support the Ingush who had revolted against the Russians. In June 1859 Shamyl was
captured from the Aoul of Ghounit and later banished to a small town near Moscow.\textsuperscript{31}

What emerges when we take a look at this struggle is that the Caucasian people offered stiff resistance to the Russians at every stage offering great sacrifice. On the other hand Russians many times showed excessive cruelty as was committed by the legendary General A.P. Yermolov. Thus the Muslim people of North Caucasus were incorporated into the Russian Empire at the great cost of men and money. By 1864 the region was firmly under the Russian control though there were a few revolts till 1877. The Circassians and the Ubykh were mostly expelled between 1864 and 1866, as they continued with Shamil’s fight even after his defeat. With the conquest of the region Russians tried to consolidate themselves, many schools and churches were built and the Christian missionaries got engaged in active proselytizing.

The Muslim Areas under the Soviet Rule

With the coming of the Soviets there was no respite for the Muslims. The Soviet due to their belief in Marxism considered religion to be an evil and as a result suppressed the Muslims in Russia. The Soviet policy however acted as a double-edged sword for the Muslims. First, they suffered due to the attempts of Bolsheviks to get a greater control over the provinces, where the provinces, which were mainly in Asia, came under the control of Russians in Moscow. Secondly as already mentioned the official policy of the Soviet government was to deny the people freedom of practicing their religion. When the Bolsheviks came to power their official policy was to give the 'right to self-determination' for all the nationalities of the Russian Empire. A closer examination of that period tells us that this was a policy on paper only. Though in 1914 the right of self-determination was a political stand taken by the Russian Marxists it was not something they desired. Lenin from his writing comes out as a champion of the oppressed but a closer reading of his statements and writings tell a different
story. What he wanted was the self-determination of the various nationalities but under the umbrella of Soviet Russia. In 1918 when the Bolshevik's needed the support of the Russian borderland in their struggle against the White army they agreed with their right to secede but once they had been defeated their views changed. This policy of denial of the self-determination to the nationalities can also be seen in the vacillating stand the communist Government took in the formation of the various Republics within Russia. In the 1922 Treaty on the Formation of USSR only four territories were included. Amongst these were Byelorussia and the Federal Republic of Trans-Caucasus, which included Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Rest of the areas, about 90 percent of the country was made the part of the Russian Soviet Republic. Later once the Soviet power was consolidated the autonomy promised to the administrative and territorial divisions of the USSR was not given.

Before this in the North Caucasus the revolution in Russia prompted the mountainous people of the North
Caucasus to set an autonomous state which they mentioned as the ‘Union of Mountain People, which would work within the framework of Russia.’ This Mountain Republic had the membership of most of the North Caucasian nations and its leading figure was a wealthy Chechen oil industrialist Tapa Chermoev. Meanwhile the Bolsheviks set up their own Terek People’s Soviet in January of 1918. The Chechens however rejected both sides and was led by their own religious leaders. Thus occurred a five cornered struggle between liberal nationalists, mountain Chechens and Ingush, Cossacks (assisted by local Russians) Russian reactionaries from outside (volunteer Counter Revolutionary White army led by General Denikin) and Bolsheviks. The important point to note here is that at one point of time the Bolsheviks made an unprincipled alliance with their Polar opposites, the Sufi leaders of the Chechens and Ingush. The Bolsheviks with their help were victorious but once the other elements were cleared they turned towards the Islamic leaders. Meanwhile there was an uprising from August 1920 to March 1921, led by Sheikh Gotsinskii alongside Saidbak, Shamyl’s grandson. The
Bolsheviks crushed this uprising.\textsuperscript{32} There was another revolt started by Shaykh Uzun Haji. He had been for some years maintaining an independent existence by carving a ‘North Caucasian Emirate’. He had supported the Bolsheviks who subsequently turned against him. The revolt was crushed in 1925.\textsuperscript{33} The Soviet authorities had learnt some lessons from the zeal with which the Muslims had fought them. They therefore introduced indiginization, which mainly meant that non-Russians were to be brought under party work and to be involved with the Soviet policymaking. But there were very few communists in Caucasus. As a result there was a policy of respecting Caucasian religious institutions such as \textit{Sharia}, \textit{Waqf} properties and \textit{Mazaars}. However bu 1923 this policy was stopped. The head of Southeast Bureau of the Bolshevik Party Anastan Mikoyan got rid of the main instrument of moderate policy, Tashtemir on grounds of clericalism. After this an anti-Islamic campaign was put in hand by Southeast

Bureau and the work of the earlier years was undone.\textsuperscript{34} This was the first experience the Bolsheviks had of the spirit of resistance of the Caucasian people. The Bolsheviks on their part were behaving no differently than the imperialist Tsars. In fact the Soviet government was causing much greater suffering to the various nationalities and which included the Muslims, than the Tsars. This was through their deliberate policy of divide and rule. In January 1921 the North Caucasus was divided administratively into two, the Dagestan ASSR and the Mountain ASSR, the Chechens and the Ingush were included in the later republic. Moreover this policy was implemented in the Caucasus region as well. Here administrative units were carved out arbitrarily and often people of the same linguistic and ethnic stock were divided. In spite of this the Chechens were able to get a separate autonomous region in 1922. Ingushetia was separated from the Mountain ASSR in 1924 and was incorporated in Chechnya. In 1936 Chechno-Ingushetia was elevated to the rank of Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of the RSFSR i.e. the present day Russian

\textsuperscript{34} Ben Fowkes (ed.), no. 12, pp. 8
Federation. But the Balkars and Karachai though practically identical were split up and combined with different ethnic people administratively. The Cherkess or the Sircassians were divided three ways and were never united. In 1929 the Sunzhen district was added to Chechnya, similarly an area with considerable Cossack population and Grozny with a big Russian minority were included, which added a sizeable non-Caucasian element in Chechnya. Nevertheless the policies followed during the period of Lenin seem much lenient when compared to the latter period of Stalin. Lenin in fact had even attempted to solve the nationalities issue in the Soviet Union though within the parameters of the Bolshevik ideology, but he was unsuccessful. The figure of 1926 show that there were still 106 mosques, 126 religious lower schools, 427 religious middle schools and sixty thousand murid\textsuperscript{35} in Chechnya.

During Stalin’s period, in the late 1920’s an attempt was made to liquidate the sufî brotherhoods. But this policy was unsuccessful as sufî brotherhoods survived leading to the revolt of 1929-30 against the introduction of collective farms.

\textsuperscript{35} members of Sufî brotherhoods
This revolt was followed by further rising in 1940 and in 1943 in Chechnya that is during the Second World War period. 

This act of the Chechens prompted Stalin to deport the Chechen-Ingush people en-masse. It was said that these people were Nazi sympathizers who rebelled to divert the forces of Russia, however there was no substantial evidence of the involvement of the total population thus was carried out one of the biggest Human Rights Violation of all times. The main implementer of the deportation in North Caucasus was Beriia. In fact the targets given to him regarding the deportation of the Chechen were not only achieved rather they were exceeded.  

The Muslims living in the Volga region also faced similar denial of freedom of religion. Here also the Soviet State had the policy of discouraging people to practice their religion. In the beginning Bolsheviks had talked of right to self-determination. This can be seen, in the newly adopted policy by Moscow and announced in the famous declaration of

36 David Damrel, no.8, pp.10
December 20, 1917, addressing the Muslim workers. The Soviet government then promised the Muslim workers freedom of religion and practice of their manners and customs without restrictions. The December 4, 1917 declaration jointly signed by Lenin and Stalin said:

"To the Muslims in Russia, be they Tartars of Volga, the inhabitants of Cremia, the Kaukaz, the Siberia or Turkistan, the Turks of Kaukaz, the Charks, the dwellers of Kaukaz mountains, to all those whose mosques and worship places and whose faith and traditions were trampled upon by the Tsars of Russia or the other tyrants; Be assured that your traditions and faith and your national and cultural institutions shall be free from this day and nobody will object to these in future. You are free to organize your national life without any interference and obstacles from outside."

The Declaration of November 15, 1917, jointly signed again by Lenin and Stalin said:

"Nations in Soviet Russia are entitled to decide about their future any time. They have the right to secede from the Union and pronounce
complete freedom, and also have the right to forsake all national and religious bindings and discrimination."

After having come to power the Soviet government however broke all these promises, religious leaders were persecuted, religious institutions were closed, religious education was not permitted and churches and mosques still ‘working’ were highly taxed.38

On the other hand after 1905 the chaos of 1917 presented Tatar nationalists with another opportunity to pursue their political agenda. On November 29, 1917, a Tatar National Assembly called the Milli Medzhlis declared the formation of an independent Idel'-Ural Republic covering the territory of modern-day Tatarstan and Bahkortostan, much of Orenburg oblast, and territories extending south to the Caspian Sea. The Republic was however short-lived, the Bolsheviks dissolved it in the spring and created instead a Tatar- Bashkir

Soviet Socialist Republic on March 23, 1918. However, the Bolsheviks had to soon evacuate the area in the face of an advancing White army. When they reoccupied the region within a year in 1919 they had to deal with a liberation movement which started in Baskorstotan or Bashkiria. This rebellion, which was subsequently quelled, was a result of the arrest of the Bashkir Central Committee. After this revolt it was decided to create two autonomous republics within the RSFSR, the Bashkir autonomous republic and the Tartar autonomous republic. Thus the Bashkirs and the Tartars had been living together since long and had close similarity in culture and language yet they were divided.

Although the Bolsheviks purged the nationalists who had established the Idel'-Ural Republic, they were soon confronted by another Tatar national movement this time led by Sultangaliev. Mirsaid Sultangaliev was a Tatar teacher who became involved in the anti-Tsarist socialist opposition after

39 Kalpana Sahani, no.3, p.140-141
40 Ibid
1905 but did not join the Bolsheviks until 1917. He quickly rose to become the highest-ranking Muslim in the new socialist state. While he considered himself a committed Marxist, Sultangaliev also believed that the oppression of Muslim peoples at the hands of the colonial powers including Tartars at the hands of Russians made them de facto proletarians and turned their national revolution into proletarian revolutions.\textsuperscript{41} As essentially classless peoples, Muslims could forgo the class struggle. He called for the establishment of an independent Muslim Communist Party, a separate Muslim Army, and a separate Muslim State uniting all the Muslim peoples of the Tsarist Empire that was to be called The Republic of Turan. After Stalin emphatically rejected his views, Sultangaliev was arrested in 1923. He was freed in 1924, but was later arrested again and finally executed in 1939.

Following Sultangaliev’s first arrest in 1923, Stalin launched a crackdown on ‘Sultangalievism’ that led eventually to the annihilation of the bulk of the Tatar political and cultural elite. He also unleashed a devastating assault on Islam that included the destruction of most of Tatarstan’s mosques. The terror in Tatarstan only abated in 1940 after the Mufti of Ufa convinced Stalin to sign a decree legalizing Islam and establishing an official Islamic administrative apparatus.

Despite the purges, Tatar nationalism survived, surfacing, most notably in 1936 when the Stalin constitution was adopted for the USSR. Representatives of the Republic asked, that in view of the size of its population and territory and the distinctiveness and vitality of Tatar culture, Tatarstan’s status be raised to that of a full Union Republic. The petition was denied, the official explanation was that the Republic lacked an external border, Tatarstan however, continued to raise these demands right up to 1977.

42 M.B. Broxup, no.19 pp. 79-81
In the years following World War II, Tatarstan experienced a period of rapid urbanization and industrialization, as a result of the discovery of oil in 1946. Russian in-migration increased as Russians arrived in search of jobs, particularly in the cities. Assimilation pressures on Tatars accordingly intensified. By the end of 1980s, only 12 percent of Tatar children in the Republic were being educated in their native language. And although Tatars had a high rate of native language retention 96.6 percent of Tatars in Tatarstan, and 83.2 percent for Tatars in the USSR, as a whole the use of Tatar at home was declining, particularly for the younger generation. Russian was the language of government and the workplace, while Tatar was becoming essentially a “home language.” Native language retention was declining particularly rapidly among Tatars outside the Republic, in part because Tatars living outside the republic had lost many of the cultural benefits afforded to them before

World War II. And the percentage of Tatars who considered themselves believers in Islam was low and declining 17.9 percent in 1967 and 15.7 percent in 1980. Thus, while the Tatars had managed to preserve their distinct identity, by the late 1980s Tatar culture was under serious and intensifying pressure. \[44\]

In the city of Kazan there had been 13 mosques among 45,320 people in 1917. This got reduced to only one by 1986 while the Muslims had become one million. \[45\] In spite of the religious persecution Islam remained a prominent force in the region. The Tatar people had a strong sense of ethnic distinctiveness rooted in their traditional Islamic beliefs, distinct language, and record of intellectual and cultural achievement.

Thus it was during the Soviet period that Muslims in USSR were persecuted. During the Russian Empire there had been 28,000 mosques, which by the end of the Soviet era got

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\[44\] N. Develet, no. 38
\[45\] Ibid.
reduced to only 400. Yet, Islam was and has remained a part of the national identity. If today the national, non-religious consciousness is even stronger, this fact is nevertheless due to Islam. The Volga-Ural Muslims and the Muslims of the North Caucasus have succeeded in keeping their religion by being active in missionary work and fighting reprisals by the state during the Tsarist period and during the Soviet period.

Thus the Soviet rule which followed the Imperialist Empire of the Tsars and which lasted for almost 70 years, brought no respite to the Muslims in Russia. It made extremely difficult for the Muslims, to practice their religion in Russia and other Republics of the Soviet Union. The Soviets even succeeded in reducing the number of believing Muslims considerably, but they could not exterminate the influence of Islam as an important part of their national identity. Were the Soviet Muslims given the opportunity to practice their religion without pressure from the state, certainly the number of Muslim believers would have risen in the USSR.

46 Ibid.
Historical Perspective of Practice of Islam in Russia

The earliest Muslim religious buildings in East Europe were naturally located in Derbent, which was located on the border of Asia and Europe. The early monuments were also built in Dagestan, as well as in Itil, the ‘Great’ Bulgar capital of the Eastern Bulgars. They have however not been preserved in their original form. The cathedral mosque or the *Juma Masjid* in Derbent was built in 733-34 A.D.\(^{47}\) according to a late inscription. Since this mosque was rebuilt more than once only the stonework of the lower parts of the walls and inner columns is considered as the most ancient element. The year of the construction of the mosque in the Kumukh village- the Lak district of Dagestan is attributed to 779A.D. Epitaphs and building inscriptions of the 10\(^{th}\) and 12\(^{th}\) century has been found in a number of Dagestan's villages.\(^ {48}\) In the North Caucasus the Muslim religious buildings, which were built later, have been preserved, since they were predominantly

\(^{47}\) I. Smirnov, no3, pp. 27

\(^{48}\) ibid.
built of stone. Stone was abundantly available in the North Caucasus and it was obviously the natural building material.

The other important Muslim monuments, which have survived, are the Bulgar ruins, which date back to of the 10th-12th century. These ruins present remains of a mosque, while Bulgar headstones are attributed to the 13th and 14th century. In the city of Stary Krym are the walls and floors of the so-called mosque of Uzbek, which is the earliest monument of Muslim religious architecture in the Crimea.49 Besides numerous mosques, madrasahs, Sufi cloisters, mazaars or mausoleums, and headstones in Crimea's Kaffa, which is the present-day Theodosia, Bakhchisaray, Gezlev the present-day Yevpatoriya, Karasubazar, and other cities have since fallen into ruin. The minaret of the Khan mosque (1467) has been preserved in Kasimov located in the Ryazan region. Most religious buildings in Kazan and other cities and villages in the Volga region were built of wood, so they were destroyed during the

Russian conquest or burnt in fires. With Catherine II's permission to the merchant family of the Yunusovs constructed a stone mosque, which was erected in Kazan in 1767-71, which is known presently as the Al-Mardjani Mosque. Other Muslim religious structures in Russia were built in the 19th and the 20th century.

The continuity of any Muslim community was ensured by a system of religious education, one of its necessary elements was teaching the language of the Koran, i.e. standard Arabic. This was the case in Russia as well. The earliest sources about the spread of Islam in this area mention the existence of schools the *kuttab* or madrasah along with mosques, these were the important centers from muslim education and precepts were taught to the people. Ministers of the Muslim religion or the Ulema, as a rule, taught children and adults to read and write. There are specific data on madarsas that trained spiritual advisers, teachers, and

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administrators which were named variously as mullahs, imam-khatibs, muezzins, mugallims, mudarreses, qadis, muhtasibs, and nutavalliys. In the reign of Catherine II which was relatively tolerant to the Muslims the Apanaevskaya and Akhundovskaya madrasahs in Kazan were opened in the year 1771 and 1780 respectively.\textsuperscript{51} The peak of the Muslim education system in the area occurred in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} and through the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century when there was a debate between the traditionalists and reformers or the jadidists.\textsuperscript{52} Apart from the presence of a lot of primary schools or maktab, there were higher madrasahs, including large ones such as the Muhammadiya, Marjaniya, Qasimiya, Amirkhaniya, and Azimovskaya in Kazan; Uthmaniyya, Galiya, Hakimiyya, and Hasaniya in Ufa; Husayniya in Orenburg; and Izh-Bubi in the Vyatka province. There was a prominent madrasah in Bakhchisaray, known as Zincirli, in which Ismail Gaspirali also known as Ismail Mirza Gasprinsky pioneered new

\textsuperscript{51} ibid
teaching methods and new subjects. Following his example a lot of Russian Muslim schools introduced new methods. Almost all Muslim intellectuals graduated from these educational establishments, including left-wing radicals who accepted socialist and communist ideas, provided support to the Soviet government, and were then unfortunately almost totally destroyed by it during Stalin's period. These Russian authorities saw these intellectuals as a threat, so a Special meeting was held in 1910, called by Piotr Stolypin the prime minister and interior minister of Czar Nicholas II with an agenda of 'counteracting the Tatar-Muslim influence' as a result a policy was adopted to introduce a ban on teaching lay subjects in such institutions.  

Besides these, Muslims living in provinces of the Russian Empire consumed religious literature created in other regions in Arabic and Persian. Local authors occasionally supplied comments on individual works or made extracts from

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them, usually for education purposes. Only Sufi poetry in a local dialect of standard Turkic had certain originality. Experiments of using Caucasian languages to relate the teaching of Islam were first made in the late 19th through early 20th century. The libraries of some mosques and madrasahs, as well as individual scholars of modern history, judging by their remains, also contained antique manuscripts, but they descend from southern centers of Islamic scholarship. As for local manuscripts, they are most often student copies and various collections of mixed content. It is not only because of the poor preservation and deliberate destruction of everything written in Arabic characters, but also because of the spreading of printed typography, that few manuscripts remain. The first edition of the Koran in the Arabic original was carried out at Johann Schnorr's printing house in St. Petersburg in 1787 and it underwent a few more printings at the same printing house. The equipment was later transported to Kazan and delivered first to the First high school and then to the University. Copies of the Koran printed there sold throughout Russia and beyond.
Private printing houses too were established afterwards. From the early 19th century onwards, private printing houses were established not only in Kazan, but also in St. Petersburg and other cities in the Volga region, Crimea, and Dagestan. They published various Muslim religious literatures in significant quantities year after year up to 1917. The Tatar calendar published in Kazan from 1857 became the first Muslim periodical in Russia. In 1883, Ismail Gaspirali began publishing a newspaper named Tarjuman in Bakhchisaray. The number of Muslim newspapers and magazines rose from the year 1905. However during the Soviet era every year these started becoming more and more secular, including the OMSA organ Ma'lumat Mahkamah-yi Syar'iah. All these activities of the Muslim press came to a naught in the Soviet era.

As a result of forced or voluntary participation of the Muslims in different spheres of Russia's public and government life, an increasing number of them could speak Russian, which enabled them to learn about secular Russian and West European culture, so they were inevitably influenced
by it. As Russia progressed on the path of science, technology, and education it also in some respect affected its Muslim population, which generated educated soldiers and officers, technically competent workers and professionals, and scholarly intellectuals mostly stemming from among the Muslim clergy. Gradually schools, book printing, and journalism were developed. Along with it reformation developed as well that sometimes was going ahead of analogous proceedings in the rest of the Muslim world.

A dispute broke out in the second half of the 19th through and early 20th century between the conservatives that praised adherence to anything old, habitual and traditional as virtue and, the Jaddidists both sides appealed to the public opinion and Russian authorities. All this in many respects played an important role in shaping a unique nature of Islam in Russia.\textsuperscript{54}

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The revolutionary developments in 1905 and subsequent liberal innovations rendered an exceptionally strong impulse to the awakening of the social consciousness of the Russian Muslims. The Muslim press and publishing business experienced a spurt in activity, charitable institutions and political parties were established and there was a Muslim faction in the Duma. All this activity that contributed to the secularization and politicization of Islam however gradually died away in the World War I years, beginning from 1914.

Islam in the former USSR from the very beginning was Sunni with Hanafi as the predominant ideology. One exception was Dagestan where the original Hanafi trend was in the 12th century replaced by the Shafi'i School of law and theology. Shi'i Islam also came to Russia in the 12th century but its presence was marginal as only small groups in Southern Dagestan represented it. These groups were influenced by Iran and Azerbaijan. Sufism which was a mystic-ascetic teaching within Sunni Islam was spread in Derbent by contemporaries and students of al-Ghazali who lived in the 10th century whose
works were readily read and later extensively and universally copied later. The Yasawi and Kubrawi orders had been popular with the Turkic population of the Kingdom of the Golden Horde, but from the 15th century the Naqshbandi order enjoyed the greatest success, while the Qadiri order became popular in Chechnya. These two became the kernel around which the ideology of Muridism developed, a Sufi ideology that was generated in Dagestan and Chechnya in circumstances of stiff resistance to Russian conquests in the 19th century. In the mountainous region of North Caucasus thus Islam came in the form of Muridism. These Sufi orders provided an ideological support, which rallied the people of North Caucasus organizationally and boosted these people with warlike morale, militarily. The Sufi teaching of the Yasawi and Naqshbandi orders had been popular with the Muslims in Eastern Europe since the time of the Empire of the Golden Horde, but its followers were usually apt to compromise with authorities. In the 19th and through the early 20th century, Sufism served as a means of expressing
conservative aspirations of wide public that was happy about neither official bureaucratized Islam nor various innovations and external influence. There appeared Sufi leaders in the Volga region who adhered to quite controversial and confused precepts, for example of Bagautdin Vaisov or Ishan 55 Zaynulla Rasulev who were scholars living in the 19th century.56

The two revolutions of 1917 inspired new hopes in the Russian Muslims, drawing them into nationwide social processes even more. Yet the real course of events brought them hardship. The civil war tragically split the Muslim peoples of the former Russian Empire between fighting groups. The civil war spread like a wild fire in the Volga region, North Caucasus and Crimea claiming numerous human lives and material resources. Muslim community leaders and their disciples most often sided with those who could not accept ideas of atheism and denial of private property, so they

55 An Ishan is a head and teacher of a Muslim, usually Sufi, community.
56 Abduyabbar A. Abduvakhitov no.55 pp.67-71
were obliterated or driven out beyond Soviet Russia. The exodus of Muslims from the North Caucasus and Crimea was particularly large-scale.

The majority of the Muslim population that stayed in their homeland had even fewer opportunities to choose their own way and influence their destinies than under the Tsarism. Since it was sparsely represented in the only ruling party, the CPSU, and its governing bodies, that made decisions and carried them out. Social experiments of the Communists were accompanied by severe persecution of religious people, including Islam's adherents and the clergy that were destroyed or neutralized together with the small number of politically or intellectually active Muslims. Industrialization and collectivization pulled down Islam's age-old support - the village community and urban class of merchants and artisans. The replacement of the Arabic alphabet with the Roman and then Cyrillic and a ban on all forms of religious education and upbringing, as well as public administration of holidays and rituals, led to the loss of continuity in passing on cultural
information and a spontaneous isolation of the new generation from the ancestors' traditions. Imposing the atheist vision of the world and militarized Soviet way of life in circumstances of a person's increasing dependence on technological and administrative systems made it very difficult and blameworthy even to observe the individual duties of a Muslim.

During World War II, authorities relaxed the religious ban and allowed opening some mosques, but as victory approached, they rained down extraordinarily cruel repressions on Muslim peoples. The Chechens were evicted from their homes and deported to the Asian part of the USSR. A significant number of them died.

Islamic Revival in Russia

The collapse of the authoritarian regime accelerated the process of Islamic revival that began during the Gorbachev era, in the atmosphere of perestroika and glasnost. The share of the population that referred to themselves as faithful Muslims increased considerably. After the break up of the
Soviet Union it was the Russian Federation what was left of it. Presently, there are about 15 to 20 million people are living within the Russian Federation which prefer to call themselves as followers of Islam.

Gradually the religious activity of the people in Russia has increased which of course was discouraged during the Soviet rule. This has been true for the Muslims as well. The number of Islamic religious organizations has multiplied over the years. During the Soviet times there were hardly 200 Muslim religious societies, which were legally operating in the Russian Federation of those times. Two Muslim spiritual boards, one at Ufa and the other at Makhachkala, Dagestan; managed the activity of these societies. There were no religious educational institutions. A few groups of young men from Russia studied at Muslim educational institutions in Uzbekistan and a number of other foreign countries. The Russian Muslims had no publications of their own.

57 Yaacov Ro'i, no. pp. 227
If we compare this scenario with the present we find that the situation has changed considerably. By January 1, 1998, the Justice Ministry of the Russian Federation and its offices in the regions registered 2,734 active Muslim religious societies (an equal number of them operates without registration, which although is also legal).\textsuperscript{58} Besides presently there are about 106 religious educational institutions, including the Higher Islamic Spiritual College and a madrasah in Moscow; the Muhammadiya madrasah in Kazan; the Imam al-Shafi'i Islamic University and a madrasah in Makhachkala; a madrasah in Ufa operating in Russia.\textsuperscript{59} These educational institutions provide education to hundreds of Muslims who in time would want to be members of the Ulema and to thousands of Muslims who wish to acquire greater knowledge regarding history of Islam and its precepts. Besides, hundreds of Russian Muslims study at foreign Muslim educational institutions. Theology has particularly been an area of interest.

\textsuperscript{58} N.Devlet, no. 38, pp.10 
\textsuperscript{59} ibid
in the last few years for the Muslims since Islamic revival has occurred in Russia. The Koran, the traditions of the prophet—the hadith collections, and other religious literature are now published in unprecedented numbers. A lot of Islamic organizations have their own organs of information with which they proselytize and propagate such as Islam Minbare ("The Platform of Islam"), the newspaper of the Muslim Spiritual Board of European Russia. It enjoys the greatest popularity with the Muslims in Russia, with a circulation of 6,500.\(^\text{60}\)

Over the years there has also been a considerable increase in the number of Muslims making Hajj pilgrimage to holy places in Saudi Arabia. Besides the charitable activities of Muslim organizations have also expanded. These organisations handle great educational work with convicts in jails and hard labor camps. They have allocated funds to support children's and old or disabled people's homes in their charge. They provide material aid to disabled and single

\(^{60}\) ibid
people and scholarships to students and also arrange for charitable dinners, concerts, etc.

Forty-three Muslim spiritual boards administer religious life of Islam's adherents in Russia. Three religious centers aspire to a nationwide status: the Central Muslim Spiritual Board of Russia and the European States of the CIS which has now been renamed as the Central Islamic Spiritual Board of the Muslims of Holy Russia, the Muslim Spiritual Board of European Russia, and the Supreme Center for Coordination of Russian Muslim Spiritual Boards. A fourth religious center aspiring to the same status was set up in Moscow in July 1996 and is called The Russian Council of Muftis.

Religious revival is accompanied by Islam's increasing role in the nation's social and political life. In the Soviet period, Islamic organizations were under state control, so all they were free to do was to express their solidarity with the government's stance on national policy issues. This occurred at various international forums and in sermons delivered in registered mosques. Presently, Muslim organizations take part
in the drawing up of bills and freely voice their position on educational and environmental issues; youth, economic and taxation policies; or reforms in various aspects of social life. Quite often this position is substantially different from the government's line.

Emergence of Islamic social and political unions has lately become a distinctive feature of social life. Some of them have quite clearly manifested themselves at the regional level. One such example is the Ittifak party, which has emerged in Tatarstan and the other that of Islamic Democratic Party which has emerged in Dagestan. The other such parties at the working at the regional and federal level are the Islamic Renaissance Party, Union of Russian Muslims, Nur, and Russian Muslims. A variety of Russian social movements and political forces, especially those in republics and regions with a significant share of Muslim population, nowadays try to find support in Islam. The revival of Islam in Russia presently has a strong effect on the cultural development of peoples whose traditional religion is Islam. Islamic elements are extensively
employed in works of art and literature. Muslim architecture is beginning to take up a prominent position in settlements (a decision has been made in some regions to build a mosque in every settlement). More than a thousand of mosques have been built over the past ten years, and they continue to be built. Thus a lot of ethno-religious traditions and customs that were suppressed during the Soviet rule after having heavily battled the religious vestiges have been successful in overcoming them and have re-emerged.

_Glastnost and Perestroika_ and religious revival in Russia

As _glastnost, perestroika_ and _democratizatsia_ made the Soviet Union a more open society, a demand started coming from various nationalities for a separate homeland. The new openness allowed the growth of national feelings as well as a desire to have more rights. It produced a chain reaction where openness and aspirations of the people fed on each other. There were particularly two aspects of Gorbachev’s reforms that led to upsurge of nationalism in Russia first it ‘de-
legitimised’ the communist party, which led to its disintegration. The communist party was a national institution and its disintegration resulted in ‘fragmentation of power’ that went into the hands of local military and political elites. Secondly economic reforms led to competition within different regions of Russia. In the changed atmosphere of perestroika the local leaders could afford to be assertive in their demands for greater autonomy from Moscow. ‘In some cases these elites were responding to popular pressures for national sovereignty and in others they sought merely to increase their own power and prerogative’. 61

Glasnost provided the various people in Russia to aim their grievances and give such views as hitherto not expressed, such as views on National Culture, Cross national relations and religious freedom. In the period of glastnost Soviet scholars started expressing for the first time that the earlier views of the Soviet scholars tantamount to self-deception.

With time as the reforms gathered some momentum even the official attitude started changing, in the year 1986 a number previously banned books were published. Many Soviet scholars started criticizing the official actions of the past. By 1988 the attempts made in the past to portray Shamyl in the negative were officially condemned, this was a result of the demand by the North Caucasian intelligentsia to fully rehabilitate their national heroes. This was followed by an article by A. Khalilov in, which Shamyl's actions were completely justified. In this atmosphere of openness the various nationalities started expressing their grievances and separatist aspirations, these demands were not new in the history of Soviet Union. What was new, however was the hope attached to it, that in the era of glastnost and perestroika their demands would be heard. It was then not just pure coincidence that there were many violent and inter-religious clashes in the Central Asia and Caucasian region. This was so because the Soviet citizen's were now less inhibited in raising their

62 Bulent Gokay, no.9, pp.49-51
demands even if it meant acting unconstitutionally, as they did not expect the severe penalties of the earlier years.