This is a study of Soviet policy of secularisation of politics and its implementation in Soviet Uzbekistan during 1917-1938. The subject of this study concerns an important aspect of development of Soviet society during its formative period, 1917-1938. Even a casual glance at the history of Central Asia leaves us in no doubt that since the advent of Islam in Central Asia, its all-embracing role has been one of the determining factors in the life of Central Asians. Hence the problem of secularisation, in Central Asia assumed primary importance after the Bolshevik Revolution. The Bolshevik Revolution unleashed a multi-level process of change and development all over Russia (later, the Soviet Union). The process of secularisation and its specific features, as in Uzbekistan, were interlinked and integrated with the over-all process of socio-cultural change.

The task that the Soviets undertook in Uzbekistan was not an easy one. The Soviets employed the Marxian framework of secularisation of politics applying it with considerable agility and resilience to suit the specific conditions existing in a pre-capitalist socio-economic formation subjected to colonial exploitation like that of Central Asia on the eve of the October Revolution. In the ultimate analysis, the use of political power by the Soviets proved crucial.
Hence, one of the basic hypotheses underlying the present study is that a deliberate and programmatic use of political power was the essence of Soviet policy of secularisation of politics. Our main hypothesis that "the Soviet policy of secularisation of politics in Uzbekistan remained largely contingent on the existence of a powerfully organised political movement as well as on one party state-structure committed to create the new bases of political power conducive to secularism" has stood the test of our investigation and analysis.

The thesis is divided into three integrated parts, namely, (i) the framework, (ii) strategies and tactics, and (iii) the impact. Systematically it identifies the programme, analyses its implementation, and finally investigates the end-result as of 1938.

The framework for Soviet policy of secularisation is investigated in Part I. It consists of three chapters, each dealing with an important input of this framework. Concepts and ideas derived from Marxism and Leninism, historical legacy and the use of political power are these inputs focussed here. Thus the evolution of a programmatic policy towards secularisation is charted out and consequently identified.

Part II consisting of three chapters is on the strategies and tactics that the Soviets employed for the
secularisation of politics in Soviet Uzbekistan. These have been identified and analysed as the creation of a uniform pattern of socialisation, liquidation of traditional patterns of socialisation and the promotion of social mobility. Such specific features of Soviet policy of secularisation of politics in Uzbekistan, as political reorganisation of Central Asia into national republics, nativisation of Soviet political apparatus, growth of education and emancipation of native women from traditional customs and values are also highlighted.

Part III analyses the impact of Soviet policy of secularisation on the Uzbek society. The study concludes that by 1938 the Soviets had succeeded in their objective of secularisation of politics in Uzbekistan. The process, however, continued even after 1938, yet the foundation of a secular polity of Soviet type was, by and large, firmly laid down by the close of the year 1938.

Our study has shown that Soviet policy of secularisation of politics, however, did not lead to a complete fusion of the native nationalities and the Russians. There were still areas of social tensions between them. Neither did it result in Russification of the native culture. In fact, the pattern of culture that was emerging in Soviet Uzbekistan appeared to be a syncretisation of Marxian world outlook and the great national traditions of the Uzbeks.
In writing this thesis I have mainly relied on the published Soviet source material in Russian; this is supplemented with my own observation and unstructured interviews recorded during my field work in the USSR (Soviet Uzbekistan) from December 1976 to November 1977. Although archival sources are still beyond the access of non-Soviet scholars, these are abundantly found in the works of Soviet scholars published during the last two decades or so. These are frequently used here. Moreover, old journals and newspapers made available at the Alisher Navoi' State Library, Tashkent and the Fundamental Library of Social Sciences, Tashkent, and the materials loaned by some Soviet scholars from their personal collections proved to be of immense value in preparing this thesis.

In transliterating Russian words we have generally followed the Library of Congress system. But the works of Central Asian origin have been mostly rendered as they are pronounced like Tajik, jadid, etc.

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