Official and Unofficial Islam in Soviet Union During the Cold War

Muhammet KOÇAK[*]

Abstract

From its foundation, the Soviet regime had oppressed the Muslims through eradicating Muslim institutions such as mosques, madrassahs and shrines and taking measures against Muslim scholars and imams. When World War II began, the Stalin needed the support of Muslim *ulama* to legitimize the war effort against Nazis and mobilize Muslim soldiers. Muslim *ulama*, along with the authorities of other religions, supported the Soviet war efforts in exchange for the recognition of the state. As a result of this arrangement, an accredited body of Muslim scholars emerged during the war and remained effective in the upcoming decades. This accredited body was institutionalized and utilized by the state to sustain a form of Islam and Muslim population that do not threaten the regime. While these *Muftiates* served multiple functions, they were far away from fulfilling the needs of the Muslim population. The Soviet Muslims continued to join Sufi shrines and *tariqah*s in an attempt to preserve their religious customs and lifestyle. This situation brought about an Islamic life squeezed in between official and unofficial institutions and state authorities.

Key Words: *Islam in the Soviet Union, Muslim Minorities, Islam, Religion-State Relations, Communism.*

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[*] Doktora Öğrencisi, Florida International University, mkocak@yandex.ru. (Makale gönderim tarihi: 20.09.2018; Makale kabul tarihi: 13.11.2018)
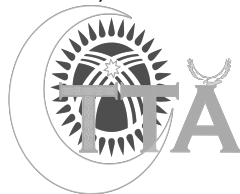
Soğuk Savaş Sırasında Sovyetler Birliği'nde Resmi ve Gayriresmi İslam

Özet

Sovyet rejimi kuruluşundan beri medrese, cami ve dergâh gibi kurumları yok ederek ve İslam alimlerine ve imamlara karşı tedbirler alarak Müslümanları baskılamıştı. İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nın başlamasıyla, Stalin asker toplamak ve Nazilere karşı savaşı meşru kılmak amacıyla Müslüman ulemanın desteğine ihtiyaç duydu. Diğer dini otoriterler birlikte Müslüman ulema Sovyetleri devlet tarafından tanınma karşılığında desteklediler. Bunun sonucunda akredite bir Müslüman alim grubu oluştu ve takip eden on yıllarda da etkinliğini sürdürdü. Bu akredite oluşum devlet tarafından kurumsallaştırılarak Sovyet rejimini tehdit etmeyen bir İslam formu ve Müslüman topluluğu oluşturulmak amaçlandı. Bu süreç sonucunda ortaya çıkan kurumlar her ne kadar birçok fonksiyon icra etseler de Müslümanların dini ihtiyaçlarını giderme konusunda yetersiz kaldılar. Sovyet Müslümanları, dini geleneklerini ve hayat tarzlarını korumak ve yaşatmak amacıyla yasaklı Sufi dergahlarına ve tarikatlara katılmayı sürdürdü. Bu durum Sovyetler Birliği'nde kurumsal ve kurumsallaşmamış İslami kurumlar ve devlet otoriteleri arasında sıkışmış bir İslami yaşamı beraberinde getirdi.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Sovyetler Birliği'nde İslam, Müslüman azınlıklar, İslam, Din-Devlet İlişkileri, Komünizm.*

Introduction

World War II was a turning point for the conditions of the Muslims within the Soviet Union. During the war, the Soviet state needed the endorsement of religious figures for wartime efforts. In return, a portion of Muslim *ulama*[1] was accredited by the state. This tolerance led to the opening of the four *Muftiate*s[2] that would work in parallel

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[1] Muslim scholars.

[2] State-sanctioned institution overseeing the operations of *imam*s and mosques.
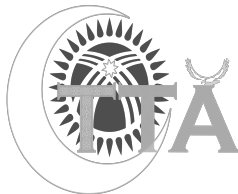
with the atheist Soviet bureaucratic apparatus and unauthorized Islamic activities. The official Soviet Islam would be under strict supervision of the state and pose no threat to the political integrity of the regime.

The idea of accrediting *ulama* did not emerge in the Soviet Union. Similar structures existed during the imperial era as well. The main difference between the Soviet era *Muftiates* and their predecessors in the Russian Empire was the confessional character of two states. While the Russian Empire was Orthodox, the Soviet Union was atheist. In the Soviet Union, the major activities of the *Muftiates* included the regulation of the limited number of mosques and *madrasa*s, [3] diplomatic initiatives towards Muslim world and the publication of a few religious materials. However, the *Muftiate*s conducted these duties within the framework of aggressive anti-religious propaganda of Soviet bureaucracy.

In the end, neither the Soviet engineered scientific atheism could replace Islam, nor could *Muftiates' services* meet the needs of the Muslim population. Under these circumstances, the Soviet Muslims deferred to *tariqah*s and *Sufi* orders. These unregistered entities played a significant role in the lives of the Soviet Muslims and the influence of these unregistered institutions were more consolidated and widespread than state-sanctioned *Muftiate*s. These unregistered institutions were illegal but survived under the notoriety of Soviet regime.

This article begins with the properties of the *Muftiate*s under the Soviet regime. Then, I will analyze the Soviet anti-religious campaign and its impact on *Muftiate*s. In the following part, I will examine the social and political framework within which the unregistered institutions survived. Finally, I conclude this article with an examination of the consequences of these arrangements as experienced during the last phase of the Soviet state.

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[3] Islamic theological seminary.

1. Spiritual Directorates of the Soviet Union

1.1. The Properties of Four Spiritual Directorates

The Soviet era *Muftiate*s had predecessors in the Russian Empire. The Russian Empire had three Muslim spiritual directorates that acted within the framework of the imperial state bureaucracy. The Central Spiritual Directorate of Muslims was the largest of these three Muftiates. It was founded in 1788 in Orenburg (relocated to Ufa in 1792) under Catherine the Great. In 1794, a *Muftiate* with similar structure was founded in Crimea. In 1872, in parallel with the Russian expansion in the region, another Muftiate was founded for the Muslims of Caucasus in Tbilisi. Following the Bolshevik takeover, the spiritual directorates experienced major breakthroughs. TsDUM [4] (Central Spiritual Directorate of Muslims), was the only Muftiate that could survive Stalin's dictatorship. The Spiritual Center in Tbilisi was first moved to Baku and then closed down.[5] Taurida Muftiate in Crimea was liquidated on the eve of the WWII.[6]

During WWII, in an attempt to mobilize the Muslim soldiers more effectively, Stalin relented the pressure over the Muslim *ulama.* Following this, the *ulama* was permitted to form religious institutions under the control of state. In exchange for this, the *ulama* supported the war efforts called for *jihad* against the Nazis. The arrangement gave way to four institutions, including TsDUM, which changed its name and continued to exist. The *ulama* of Central Asia founded the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan

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[4] *Tsentralnyy dukhovnii upravleniye musul'man* (Central Muslim Spiritual Directorate)*.* This was the predecessor of the first Muftiate in Ufa.

[5] Yaacov Roi, *Islam in the Soviet Union,* Hurst & Company, London 2000, p. 101.

[6] Roman Silant'ev, ''Evolutsia sistemi vneshnikh snoshenii dukhovnikh upravlenii musul'man Rossii: sravnitel'no istoricheskii analiz (konets XVII v. – nachalo XXI v.)'' Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Moscow State Linguistic University, 2014, p. 42.

(hereafter SADUM). [7] Following their footsteps, Muslims of Transcaucasia held a conference in Baku and founded the Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Transcaucasia (hereafter DUMZ).[8] The *ulama* in the Northern Caucasus followed the suit and founded the Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of the Northern Caucasus (hereafter DUMSK).[9]

TsDUM, which was the largest and oldest Muftiate during the imperial era, was renamed DUMES[10] and became responsible for the spiritual affairs of the Muslims in Volga Region, and the European part of the USSR. Its official language was Volga Tatar. Following the war, Siberia was included into its zone of authority as well.

Following its foundation, SADUM became the largest and most influential Spiritual Directorate. It was based in Tashkent and responsible for the religious affairs in five Central Asian Soviet republics.[11] Its official language was Uzbek. It was the only Muftiate that had two *madrasas* under its jurisdiction. SADUM was also authorized with publishing activity.

Unlike its Tsarist era predecessor, DUMZ regulated the religious affairs of the Muslims of both *Sunni* and *Shia* rites.[12] DUMZ was based in Baku and its official language was Azeri Turkic. The reconciliation of

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[7] *Dukhovnoye upravleniye musul'man Sredney Azii i Kazakhstana* (Muslim Spiritual Directorate of Central Asia and Kazakhstan.

[8] *Dukhovnoye upravleniye musul'man Zakavkazya* (Muslim Spiritual Directorate of South Caucasus)*.

[9] *Dukhovnoye upravleniye musul'man Severnogo Kavkaza* (Muslim Spiritual Directorate of North Caucasus)

[10] The Muftiate responsible for the Islamic affairs of the Volga region was referred as DUMES. *Dukhovnoye Upravlenie Yevropeiskoi Chasti SSSR i Sibiri.* (Muslim Spiritual Directorate of the European Part of USSR and Siberia)

[11] Alexandre Bennigsen and Enders Wimbush, *Mystics and Commisars: Sufism in the Soviet Union,* University of California Press, Berkeley LA 1985, p. 15.

[12] Bennigsen and Wimbush*, Mystics and Commisars …,* p. 14-15.

the Muslims between these two rites made the opening and functioning of such *Muftiate* possible.

DUMSK was the most conservative of all these Muftiates. The center of this Muftiate was based in Buinaksk (*Temirhan-Şura*) and then was moved to Makhachkala, both in Dagestan ASSR.[13] Its official language was Arabic. DUMSK was filled with Dagestani Arabists, which multiple times accused the operations of SADUM and DUMES for being modernist. Notwithstanding its representation of all Muslims in Northern Caucasus, DUMSK remained under strong influence of the *ulama* of the Dagestan region.

It should be kept in mind that these spiritual directorates operated within the Soviet bureaucracy. Before the war, especially during 1930s, the *ulama* figures were labeled as traitors and parasites in state-backed media outlets and they were purged by the state authorities.[14] After WWII and the opening of the *Muftiate*s, Soviet press stopped its negative coverage of the *ulama* and the registered *ulama* remained beyond the target of anti-religious campaigns. In turn, the Soviet religious leadership appeared to be loyal to the state, preached such loyalty to Muslims, and never protested against the anti-religious propaganda.[15]

1.2. The Functions of Spiritual Directorates under the Soviet Union

1.2.1. Regulation of Mosques and Madrasas

The four *Muftiate*s were the only legal institutions that regulated the religious life of Muslims. Unregistered religious activity in Soviet Union was strictly forbidden. The law required the registration of all mosques

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[13] Eren Murat Taşer, ''Soviet and Muslim: The Institutionalization of Islam in Central Asia, 1943-1991'', Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 2010, p. 25.

[14] Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, *Islam in the Soviet Union,* Pall Mall Press, London 1967, p. 175.

[15] Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal-Lemercier Quelquejay, "'Official' Islam in the Soviet Union,'' *Religion State and Society* 7-3, 1979, p. 156.

and *ulama* to one of the four *Muftiate*s. In late 1980s, only 450 registered working mosques remained compared to 25000 mosques that existed before the Revolution.[16] This decrease in number was due to the Soviet anti-religious campaigns and Nazi invasion. One should also consider the unofficial mosques and gathering places, not counter by this account.

When it comes to *madrasa*s, not every *Muftiate* was authorized. SADUM was the only spiritual directorate to have *madrasa*s under its command. One of the most prestigious of theses *madrasas* was Mir-i Arab in Bukhara, Uzbekistan SSR. Constructed in the 16th century, this *madrasa* had operated almost ceaselessly until its forcible closure under Stalin. In 1945, it was reopened and put under the control of SADUM. Mir-i Arab was only instructing Quran reading and basic knowledge of Islam. This level of education was very modest compared to the education in the 17th century Muslim *ulama* received. Fortunately, the graduates of Mir-I Arab could go on with their studies in Ismail Al-Bukhari *madrasa* in Tashkent*,* which offered higher education.[17] Opportunity for Islamic education abroad was permitted for the graduates of Mir-i Arab *madrasa* as well.[18] It is noteworthy that in the late Soviet era, the head of DUMES, Talgat Taceddin, and the head of DUMZ, Allahşükür Paşazade, were graduates of Mir-i Arab *madrasa.* These two figures are still active in Russia and Azerbaijan respectively.

1.2.2. *Ulama*'s Foreign Contacts

The Soviet state aimed to employ the registered Muslim *ulama* to cultivate the Soviet soft power in the Muslim world as well. It should be noted that, the contacts between Muslims of the Soviet Union and the global Muslim world did not start with the state-sanctioned institutions. As early as the first years of USSR, Muslim communists planned to export socialist revolution to the Islamic world and conducted propaganda abroad. The Soviet government also had friendly relations

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[16] *Ibid.,* p. 151.
[17] Bennigsen and Wimbush, *Mystics and Commisars …,* p. 19.
[18] Bennigsen and Quelquejay, "'Official' Islam in the Soviet Union …", p. 154.

with various Muslim countries including Afghanistan, Turkey and Iran within the framework of the Soviet strategy to contain British Imperialism. When Stalin took charge, this strategy fell out of favor and cordial relations with various Muslim countries ended. Following the end of WWII, the Soviet rule set aside ideological differences and turned back to the Middle East. The USSR aimed to undermine the strategic domination of the USA in Muslim regions by making alliances with the Muslim countries.[19] Following the departure of European powers from the region, the USSR actively supported the movements it considered close to the Soviet ideology. As a result of the support given by the Soviets to leftist political factions, pro-Soviet regimes in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, South Yemen and Libya emerged.

With the help of the Muftiates, the USSR aimed to advertise that Soviet Muslims were living peacefully and tried to sustain its alliance with the pro-Soviet regimes in the Middle East. The Soviet soft power in the Middle East was supplemented by conferences in the Soviet Union, visits of Muslim figures to the Soviet Union and publishing activities. Significant representatives from Pakistan, Egypt, and Singapore visited Soviet Union within the framework of this policy. The visiting foreign delegations would start their visit in Tashkent, they would then visit the Mir-i Arab and Ismail el-Bukhara *madrasa*s and finish their trips with a reception by Muslims of Leningrad and Moscow.[20] Especially the tomb of Imam Al-Bukhari was the point of interest for the foreign Muslims who visited Soviet Union.[21] The visits of the religious personnel would take place smoothly as the Soviet *ulama* were usually fluent in Arabic.[22] The Soviet hosts would usually include Ziauddin Babakhanov, the head

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[19] Martha Brill Olcott, "Soviet Islam and World Revolution", *World Politics* 34-4, 1982, p. 489.

[20] Bennigsen and Broxup, "'Official' Islam in the Soviet Union," p. 104-105.

[21] Silant'ev, "Evolutsia sistemi vneshnikh …", p. 123.

[22] Eren Murat Taşer, "Soviet Policies Toward Islam Domestic and International Considerations," in *Religion and Cold War a Global Perspective,* ed. Philip Muehlenbeck, Vanderbilt University Press, Nashville TN 2012, p. 170.

of SADUM between 1957 and 1982, and a few of his assistants. [23] Babakhanov was also the head of the Department of Foreign Relations of the Muslim Organizations of the USSR, the institution that coordinated the international ties of the Soviet *ulama.*

The influence of the diplomatic activities of the Soviet *ulama* within the Islamic world remained limited. The foreign *ulama* that contacted the Soviet Union were either under tight control of the pro-Soviet regimes or they were marginal figures in their own countries. [24] Following the Afghan War, the Soviet Union lost the minimal grassroots support it had abroad. The Soviet *ulama* was perhaps the only Muslim institution in the Muslim World that took a position in favor of the invasion.[25] In fact, the majority of the *ulama* as well as the Muslims of the USSR remained in opposition.[26]

1.2.3. Religious Publication

The publication of any material in the Soviet Union was strictly under state control. This strict control was even more pervasive when it came to the religious publication. Only SADUM could legally publish, which published the *Journal of the Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan* in Uzbek language. Later, the journal was also published in Arabic, English, French, Persian and Dari.[27] SADUM also published a few editions of the *Quran*, a compilation of *fatwa*s issued by Ziauddin Babakhanov, a religious calendar and an album of Islamic monuments in Soviet Union.[28] Later on, TsDUM also published a religious calendar and a book named *Islam and Muslim Faith*.[29] These publications included messages that condemned capitalism, preached

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[23] Bennigsen and Broxup, '''Official' Islam in the Soviet Union,'' p. 106.

[24] Taşer, *Soviet and Muslim …,* p. 341.

[25] Olcott, "Soviet Islam and World Revolution", p. 493.

[26] Galina Yemelianova, *Russia and Islam: A Historical Survey,*: Palgrave, New York 2002, p. 131.

[27] Bennigsen and Wimbush, *Mystics and Commisars …,* p. 19.

[28] *Ibid., p.* 20.

[29] *Ibid.*

the benefits of the Soviet rule and the harmony between the Soviet rule and Islam.[30] The published materials were also far from being a type of material to be popularly read and their positive impact on the Soviet soft power remained negligible, if not any.

2. The Soviet Religious Policy and Islam

2.1. Atheist Propaganda

The Soviet 1936 constitution recognized the freedom of worship while it permitted antireligious propaganda within the Union.[31] The antireligious propaganda had an impact on not only the Muslims but also members of other religions. Soviet state confiscated the properties of the Orthodox Church and purged the Orthodox clergy. For Islam, the Soviet state framed the authority of the four *Muftiate*s in order to extensively limit this freedom of worship. The most effective policy of the Soviet Union in fighting religion was the rapid modernization. Despite the relative liberal climate following the *Destalinization,*[32] anti-religious campaigns gained impetus during Khrushchev era. In this era, the state intensified its efforts against the religious institutions and clergy using various state institutions.[33] Under Brezhnev, who served between 1964-1982 as the leader of the USSR, the anti-religious policies eased. In October 1964, the regime acknowledged the past wrongdoings of the state and condemned the mistreatments applied to the clergy. [34] Under Gorbachev, the oppression was intensified but

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[30] Bennigsen and Broxup, '''Official' Islam in the Soviet Union,'' p. 107.

[31] *Konstitutsiya Soyuza Sovietskykh Sotsialisticheskykh Respublik (Soviet Constitution),* Izdanie TsIK SSSR, Moscow 1937, *Statya* 124, p. 30.

[32] Following the death of Stalin, the new leader of the Soviet Union unleashed a reform process aimed at bringing a certain level of liberalization to the Soviet totalitarianism. The reforms included the improvement for the conditions of the prisoners and the ending of the personality cult of Stalin.

[33] Taşer, ''Soviet Policies Toward Islam...,'' p. 159.

[34] Shireen Hunter, *Islam in Russia: The Politics of Identity and Security,* M. E. Sharpe, New York 2000, p. 32.

under the liberal climate, the anti-religious policies could not secure a solid ground.

The Soviet state targeted Muslim families to prevent the emergence of a Muslim generation. To this end, the Soviet style houses were constructed without courtyard halls and apartments were promoted.[35] However, people were able to follow their cultural inclinations by erecting a wall around the plot.[36] The intensive efforts to bring equality between sexes within traditional Muslim families failed as well. Father remained the authority over the children.[37] Secular wedding rituals were compulsory, but they were unable to replace the religious ones. The *Komsomol'*[38] *nikah*[39] was generally supplemented with a religious one.[40] The Soviet Union also banned the payment of *kalym*,[41] which was initially effectively followed but the tradition reemerged during the 1960s.[42]

The Soviet state aimed to secularize Muslims' clothes and dietary as well. The attack against *hijab*[43] was unleashed as early as the 1930s when the party leaders' wives were demanded to burn their *hijab*s.[44] Pork meat was served in the canteens of the factories in Muslim regions.

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[35] Elizabeth A. Bacon, *Central Asians under Russian Rule: A Study in Cultural Change,* Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY 1991, p. 161.

[36] *Ibid., p.* 162.

[37] Bennigsen and Quelquejay, *Islam in the Soviet Union, p.* 188.

[38] Komsomol': The youth branch of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. In order to compete the religious wedding ceremonies, this organization engineered a ceremonial practice for the atheist couples starting from the mid-1950s.

[39] Niqah: Wedding ceremony.

[40] Alexandre Bennigsen, ''Unrest in the World of Soviet Islam,'' *Third World Quarterly* 10, 2: April 1988, p. 774.

[41] Kalym: The payment to be paid by the groom-to-be to the parents of the bride.

[42] Bennigsen, ''Unrest in the World of Soviet Islam,'' p. 775.

[43] Headscarf of Muslim women.

[44] Bacon, *Central Asians under Russian …,* p. 171.

However, pig breeding remained in direct ratio to the Russian population in the Central Asian republics.[45] Muslims preserved their internal network through periodical get-togethers, which helped Muslims to preserve their Muslim consciousness through socialization in between Muslims.[46] The introduction of alcohol to the Muslims, on the other hand, achieved more success. Vodka drinking, a practice which was introduced during the Soviet era, permeated the periodical get-togethers.[47]

Soviet authorities aimed to prevent the fulfilling of the five-pillars of Islam as well. The students and the workers faced persecution by food offers during *Ramadan* month, when Muslims have to fast during the day. The daily prayers, which Muslims have to perform five times a day, were prohibited.[48] Most Muslims would overcome this with *taqiyya*.[49] Muslims prayed whenever possible and denounced their religious beliefs, making combatting religion harder for the Soviet authorities.

2.2. The Bridge Between the Muftiates and the State

In 1943, a bureaucratic institution was set up within the Soviet bureaucracy to strengthen the bureaucratic grip over the religious institutions. The Council for the Affairs of Russian Orthodox Church was founded in 1943 and the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults (CARC) founded in 1944. These two were merged into Council for Religious Affairs (CRA) in 1965.[50] This council was segmented into various divisions for three divisions: 1) Armenian Greek Catholic, and Lutheran

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[45] *Ibid.*, p. 160.

[46] Adeeb Khalid, *Islam After Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia,* University of California Press, Berkeley LA 2007, p. 101.

[47] *Ibid.*

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 176-177

[49] Taqiyya: In Islam what matters is not the tongues says but what the heart believes. Taqiyya is the concealing of the faith under the fear of persecution or death.

[50] Riho Altnurme, ''Religious Cults, Particularly Lutheranism, in the Soviet Union in 1944-1949,'' *Trames* 6-1 2002: p. 4.

Churches 2) Islam, Judaism and Buddhism and 3) Old Believers and evangelical congregations.[51] The main objective of this organization was to transmit the interests of Moscow to the religious institutions. This institution conducted a duty, which was nearly impossible to fulfill considering the haphazard Soviet bureaucracy and the discrepancy between the image of believers in the eyes of the Communist party members and the real conditions.

CARC, and later CRA, was in charge of implementing opaque doctrines of the Soviet regime. From its foundation until Khrushchev's return to the anti-religious campaigns, CARC provided certain support to official religious institutions.[52] The NKVD[53] officers determined the Soviet religious policy throughout the 1920s and 1930s. In fact the first head of CARC, Ivan Polanskii, was a ''former'' NKVD agent.[54] The mandate of CARC over *Muftiate*s sometimes prompted the state sanctioned *ulama* to guide Muslims in contradiction to the Islamic principles.[55] The Soviet era *fatwa*s declared that fasting in Ramadan, sacrifice of livestock in *Kurban Bayramı* and collection of alms to the poor is no longer obligatory for Muslims.[56] NKVD officers, along with the Central Committee Department of Propaganda (*Agitprop*) would always intrude into the policy making by the CARC representatives.[57] Consequently, CARC remained as a secondary actor playing a minimal role to make of the religious policy and its role remained dependent on other dynamics.

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[51] *Ibid.,* p. 5.
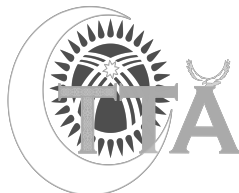[52] Taşer, ''Soviet Policies Toward Islam…,'' p. 165-166.
[53] Russian – Narodnyy Komissariat Vnutrykh Del: The Soviel internal intelligence agency.
[54] Roi, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, p. 17.
[55] *Ibid.,* p. 140-146.
[56] Khalid, *Islam After Communism: …,* p. 111.
[57] *Ibid.,* p. 19.

3. Grassroots Parallel Islamic Activities

3.1. *Tariqah*s of Soviet Muslims

*Tariqah*s –*Sufi* orders- are based upon the relationship between *murid*[58] and *murshid*.[59] In *tariqah*s, *murshid* acts as a spiritual guide to his *murid*s. Throughout his/her life *murid*s follow a complicated path, during which he/she recites *zikr*[60] in order to preserve his/her spiritual enthusiasm. *Ziyarat*[61] to shrines and *mazar*s[62] can also be considered as the activities of *Sufi* orders. In Soviet Union, where fulfilling the obligatory duty of *hajj* was nearly impossible, these *ziyarat*s gained prominence.

Four of such mystic doctrines had strong roots within the Muslim regions occupied by the Soviet Union were *Naqshbandiyya, Qadiriyya*, *Yasawiyya* and *Qubrawiyya*. The most important *Sufi* lineage in the Soviet Union was *Naqshbandiyya*. Founded by Bahauddin Naqshbandi Buhari in 14th century, the order quickly spread in Central Asia and the North Caucasus. Adepts of *Naqshbandiyya* observe silent *zikr*. In Soviet times, this order was particularly active in the Volga Region and Central Asia. *Qadiriyya* was the second widespread *Sufi* order within the Soviet Union. Founded by Abdulkadir Geylani in 11-12th century in Baghdad, *Qadiriyya* expanded its influence following the Mongol invasions. In the Caucasus, *Qadiriyya* became associated with the resistance to Tsarist Russia in 19th century. Kunta Hacı, who led a resistance movement, was also the *murshid* of the Caucasus branch of *Qadiriyya*. *Qadiriyya* movement was especially popular in North Caucasus during Soviet times. More often than not, the lineage was also associated with clans. *Yasawiyya* movement was established by Ahmed Yasawi in 12th century. This movement was especially significant for the consolidation of Islam

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[58] Murid: Sufi adept.
[59] Murshid: Head of a Sufi chain.
[60] Zikr: Repetition of the name of *God*.
[61] Ziyarat: Literally means visit in Arabic, *ziyarat* means paying a pilgrimage visit to the tombs and shrines.
[62] Mazar: Tombs of deceased prominent Muslim figures, or *Sufi* leaders.

in Asia Minor. The *murid*s of Ahmad Yasawi migrated to Asia Minor from the Central Asian steppes to sow the seeds of Islam. In the Soviet Union, its effect was limited to Ferghana Valley. This order was by and large subdued by *Naqshbandiyya* later on. *Qubrawiyya's* sphere of influence was limited to Amu-Darya River. This order was almost completely absorbed by *Naqshbandiyya,* which replaced the loud *Qubrawiyya zikr* with silent one.

3.2. Sufi Orders and Soviet State

The secular Soviet rituals was unable to replace Islam. The registered mosques were inadequate and far from meeting the need of Muslims as well. As a result, *tariqah*s experienced a revival in the Soviet Union. The monopoly of the Soviet Union in regulating the religious activity of the citizens was put under judicial guarantee. For instance, the punishment for citizens who engage in religious teaching ranged from two to three years.[63] These measures were inadequate. Muslims, who were not able to perform their religious duties and ceremonies, utilized unregistered institutions. The ones who wanted to perform their marriage, circumcision, and burial ceremonies properly according to the Islamic customs resorted to *Sufi* adepts.[64] *Sufi* orders even clandestinely provided Islamic education.[65]

The institutionalization of the *Muftiate*s has widened the gap between the official Islam and Islam at popular level.[66] At the same time, the relations between *Sufi* orders and official Islamic institutions have become so convoluted that drawing a line between two was hard. For instance, Ziauddin Babahanov was an adept of *Naqshibandiyya,*[67] simultaneously being the head of SADUM for decades. The state sanctioned *ulama* did not collaborate with the Soviet bureaucracy in their efforts to eradicate unregistered Islam. Similarly, the Sufi orders

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[63] Taşer, *Soviet and Muslim…*, p. 461.
[64] Bennigsen and Wimbush, *Mystics and Commisars …,* p. 86.
[65] *Ibid*., p. 87.
[66] Yemelianova, *Russia and Islam*, p. 127
[67] Bennigsen and Wimbush, *Mystics and Commisars …,* p. 2.

led no strong open resistance movement against the *Muftiate*s or the Soviet state.

The *tariqah*s infiltrated the social and political realm in the Soviet Union as well. In North Caucasus and Turkmenistan in particular, where the traditional extended families formed into clans, it was not uncommon that the clan members became *ipso facto* adepts of *Sufi* orders.[68] Similar situation could be observed in Soviet political organizations. On some instances, *kolkhoz*[69] chairman or local Communist Party authorities would join the gatherings of *tariqah*. Potential *murid*s were approached in factories and recruited to the orders.[70]

4. Conclusion

The Soviet state was the legal monopoly in regulation of the spiritual affairs of Muslims. It employed state sanctioned *ulama* for the purpose of controlling Muslims. In the meantime, anti-religious propaganda went on. The Soviet experience caused erosion in Islamic values and nearly annihilated the material Islamic culture in Russia. The transmission of the Islamic culture to the post-Soviet era could only be possible through the activities of *tariqah*s.[71]

Islam was not at the forefront of the events that led to the demise of the USSR. But the *Glasnost*[72] gave way to the demonstration of Islamic faith by the Soviet Muslims. Within the framework of the *Glasnost,* Islamic holidays and religious days began to be observed without hindrance. The Soviet media began to portray the Islamic festivals as national form of Soviet culture and the directorates enjoyed more

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[68] Taşer, *Soviet and Muslim…*, p. 64.
[69] *Kolkhoz*es were Soviet style collective farms.
[70] Taşer*, Soviet and Muslim…*, p. 65.
[71] Sergei Abashin, ''A Prayer for Rain: Practising Being Soviet and Muslim,'' *Journal of Islamic Studies* 25/2, 2014, p. 188.
[72] Gorbachev's reforms on issues regarding free speech, and general democratization attempts were named as Glasnost, which means openness in Russian

freedom in education and publishing.[73] In 1985, the authority of the Department of Foreign Relations of the Muslim Organizations of the USSR was significantly expanded.[74]

Especially the young Soviet Muslims, who did not live in the most repressive eras of the Soviet state appealed to Islam in the final decade of the Soviet Union. When Gorbachev amended the law and guaranteed the freedom of conscience in the Soviet Union,[75] the percentage of citizens who confessed their Islamic faith rose from 12% to 50%.[76] Political parties with Islamic lineages were founded as well. The Islamic Renaissance Party, which added into its program the aim of organizing Islamic schools, lecture series and special interest circles.[77] The Islamic Party of Turkestan behaved more audaciously and leveled up its demands to the point of secession.[78] During this turbulent time, *Muftiate*s did not play an active role. They passively followed the events and did not challenge the Soviet regime until the very end. Their institutional structure survived the dissolution of the USSR. The heads of different *Muftiate*s continued to serve in Russia and other former Soviet countries as well.

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[73] Yemelianova*, Russia and Islam,* p. 131.

[74] Silant'ev, ''Evolutsia sistemi vneshnikh …'', p. 133.

[75] ''Zakon RSFSR Ot 25.10.90 N 267-1 O svobode veroispovedanya,'' *Zakonı Rossii,* http://www.lawrussia.ru/texts/legal_913/doc91a947x905.htm.

[76] Galina Yemelianova, ''Islamic Radicalization: A Post-Soviet or a Global Phenomenon,'' in *Radical Islam in the Soviet Union,* ed. Galina Yemelianova, Routledge, New York 2010, p. 25.

[77] Alexei V. Malashenko, ''Islam Versus Communism: The Experience of Coexistence,'' in *Russia's Muslim Frontiers: New Directions in Cross-Cultural Analysis,* ed. Dale Eickelman, Indiana University Press, Bloomington IN 1993*,* p. 68.

[78] Yemelianova, *Russia and Islam,* p. 134.

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