Although Russia is widely associated with Orthodox Christianity, it accommodates almost 15 million Muslims in its federally organized state. The major Islamic enclaves of the region are in the North Caucasus, the Volga-Urals and the North Caucasus. Following the fall of Communism Russia's Islamic regions have experienced a revival of Islamic influence, enhanced by local voids, centrifugal political processes and the shifting sands of civil society. The autonomous republics of Tatarstan in the Volga-Urals and Dagestan in the North Caucasus exemplify two different models of a relationship between Islam and power in the post-Communist umma. The following draws on the findings of a research project on Post-Soviet Tatarstan and Dagestan.

In post-Soviet Tatarstan Islam has become an organic part of the Tatar national revival. Historically considered as the core of political and cultural environment was rendered 'Tatar' and 'Islam' practically synonymous. The Islamic renaissance among Tatars has been characterised by high levels of urbanisation, secularisation and, as a result, the dissent Tatars, non-integrators, of re-integrating Islam into the fabric of Tatar society, represented by the Vostatanski Obshchestvenni Tsent (VOTOTS, All-Tatar Public Centre), the party of Itfiafn (Union), Milli Mejlis (National Assembly) and Azityk (Freedom). After the abortive Gorbachev coup d'état in August 1991, the Tatar nationalists received carte blanche from Tatarstan President Shaimiev, who manipulated them in order to avoid inevitable repercussions from Moscow due to his backing of the anti-Yeltsin campaign. During the period of amicable relations between the official Tatar establishment and the Tatar nationalists, lasting from 1989 till 1994, the government in Kazan and the Tatar nationalists, lasting from 1989 till 1994, the government in Kazan (capital of Tatarstan) responded favourably to the nationalist's main Islamist related aspirations. In particular, it encouraged the emergence of a separate Islamic administration - Dukhovnoe Upravlenie Musul'man Respubliki Tatarstan (DUMRT, Islamic Spiritual Board of the European Part of Russia and Siberia), based in Ufa. The 1994 power-sharing treaty between Moscow and Kazan, which secured wider autonomy for the Tatar leadership, put an end to the alliance between the establishment and the Tatar nationalists. Shaimiev's team opted for the formation of a democratically elected, moderately Islamised political regime which negated the neutralization of the nationalist opposition. This included the co-optation of the nationalists' most influential representatives, the formation of the official duplicate national organizations and the incorporation of some nationalist ideas into the official ideology. For example, in opposition to the Milli Mejlis the Shariah government sponsored the formation of a tariqat Vostatanski Mezhdunarodnii Congress (All-Tatar World Congress) and the creation of Indus Tagirov. It also appropriated nationalist policies in areas such as language, education, especially religion (e.g. restoration and building of mosques, opening an Islamic University, Islamic colleges and madrasas).

In spite of the official separation between the state and religion, as declared by the 1989 Constitution, the Shaimiev government supported de facto an increasing role for Islam in Tatar politics. It perceived the DUMRT as an indispensable attribute of the strengthening of national and nationalistic sentiment. In February 1998 Tatarstan officials orchestrated the unifying congress of Tatarstan Muslims and promoted Gusman Ihsishakho as the mufti of Tatarstan. Since then the government has discreetly supported the mufti's initiatives, policy aimed at making Kazan the Islamic capital of Eurasia and centralizing Tatarstan's Islamic communities under the DUMRT's auspices in opposition to the ufa Mufti Talgat Tajuddinov. In July 1999 the authorities adopted a new law on 'The Freedom of Consciousness and Religious Freedom'. Recognising the DUMRT as the only legitimate Islamic administration in the republic. The formal display of loyalty has allowed Mufti Ihsishakho to enhance his personal power and to place his relatives and associates in the major local Islamic administrations of Tatarstan. He also introduced new registration rules for mosques which reduced the status of Mufti Talgat Tajuddinov's followers illegal. In addition to forging special relations with the muftiy, Tatarstan authorities have promoted Islamic themes in official symbols, architecture, monuments and designs. The strengthening of the symbolic function of Islam has been accompanied by some attempts to revive its ideological function. To this end the leading Tatar official ideologist, R. Khakimov, has advocated the restoration of Tatar reformist Islam or Jihadism as a viable basis for the Tatar national ideas. He introduced the concept of EuroIslam, described as a neo-Jihadism, which would arguably permit the resolution of the apparently inevitable conflict of interests between the Muslim Tatarstan and allegedly Islamophobic Europe. In the whole, however, the impact of Islam on Tatarstan's official politics has been more symbolic than genuine. Islam has been regarded as a vital component of Tatarness and its official ideology, but has remained relatively insignificant. As for the religious Islamic revival, it has been weak and has had only a marginal impact on political and public life.

Dagestan
In Dagestan the influence of Islam in the policy-making process has been much more pronounced than in Tatarstan, due in part to the substantially higher level of religiosity of the population. Another reason is the much deeper economic crisis, aggravated by Dagestan's close geographical proximity to and the intensively Islamicised Chechnya. Dagestani society has relatively strong communal, ethno-clan and religious ties which supercede individual rights and values. Most Dagestanis are Sunni of the Shafiite rite, albeit the Nogays of northern Dagestan adhere to the Hanafi rite. It is also significant that the majority of Dagestani Muslims profess mystical Islam - Sulfiism of Naqibakhsh, Shadhlil, Dzhafuli, Kadzi, and Yazavi orders. Local Sulfiism absorbed various pre-Islamic beliefs and practices and became deeply integrated into the Muslim political-economic system. As a result, there emerged a particular regional form of Sufism, known as Taratism. Compared to Tatarstan, in Dagestan Islamic Islam has remained a pivotal social and cultural regulator. Its survival, although mainly in its municipal and village forms, is undeniably of vital importance for Muslims across the republic. The Dagestan officials have carefully attuned their rhetoric and actions to the policies of President Putin, who tends to equate Wahhabism with Islamic extremism and internal terrorism.

The ongoing official physical and ideological warfare against Wahhabism has secured for Sufism the position of official traditional Islam. However, given the deep interweaving of Sufism with popular social works based on clan solidarity, it is unlikely that it could provide a plausible ideological framework for the future modernization and democratization of Dagestani society. Moreover, the prolongation of the current economic and social disorder, on the one hand, and the association of Sufism with semi-crime and inefficient regime, on the other, might continue to generate increasing receptiveness to Wahhabism both among official authorities of Dagestan and among the Dagestani society. This resolute anti-Wahhabi position of the Dagestan government has brought together the Dagestan government and the official Dagestani administration (DUMD, Spiritual Board of Mus- lims of Dagestan), controlled by the Avar nationalist leader Mufti Iskhakov, who tends to equate Wahhabism with Islamic extremism and internal terrorism.

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