LUISS

Degree Program in Politics: Philosophy and Economics

Course of Contemporary History

Engaging Islam: The Soviet Union's Religious Policies and Third World Alliances During the Cold War

Prof. Federico Niglia

SUPERVISOR

Prof.ssa Lucrezia Luci

CO-SUPERVISOR

Pietro Palladino 099302

CANDIDATE

Academic Year 2023/2024

This page has been intentionally left blank.

Index

Contents

Introduction

The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, coupled with ever-present western colonialism and the rise of the USSR on the world stage, marked a pivotal shift in the geopolitical landscape of the 20th century. With the end of WWII and the retreat of colonial powers, the USSR embarked on a diplomatic mission to ally with as many countries as possible, augmenting the socialist bloc's power in the ongoing Cold War. On the domestic front, instead, the USSR faced the challenge of integrating into the now more than 20-year-old Union different peoples living on its immense territory. Islam was at the centre of both endeavours, representing the majority of ex-colonial people and an important slice of the Soviet population and territory. The USSR therefore set out on an unprecedented path to engage with Islam rather than suppress and denigrate it, not only within its borders but also across the emerging Third World. This thesis delves into the multifaceted strategies employed by the Soviet State to institutionalise Islam, harnessing its potential both as a tool of domestic governance and as an instrument of foreign policy. Through this exploration, the study aims to uncover the complexities of Soviet-Islamic interactions, shedding light on the broader implications for Muslim identity and freedoms under Soviet rule and the USSR's diplomatic contacts with the Muslim-majority regions of the Third World.

This research is guided by the objective to dissect the layers of the Soviet Union's employment of Islam, focusing on the dual fronts of engagement: domestic management and international diplomacy. Specifically, its aims are to:

- Analyse the Soviet diplomatic and para-diplomatic overtures towards the Muslim world, understanding the role Islam played in informing Soviet foreign policy towards Third World countries.
- Examine the internal mechanisms of control and integration of Islam through organisations such as CARC and SADUM, detailing their relations with Communist Party hardline forces.
    - Investigate the contributions and influences of prominent Soviet figures such as Nuritdin A. Mukhitdinov and Sharaf R. Rashidov, particularly in the context of Soviet Uzbekistan, highlighting how non-Russians could "play the game" to their and their people's benefit.

The intersection of Soviet policy and Islam represents a critical dimension of Cold War geopolitics. By examining the USSR's attempts at manipulating Islamic identity for both internal control and external diplomatic leverage, this study gives a glimpse of the complex relationships between political power, religious and national identity, and international diplomacy. This is particularly interesting, as in this case we see a militant atheist state interacting with a religion nowadays regarded as one of the most radical and fanatic. Furthermore, it provides the causes whose legacies now shape post-soviet states' perception of themselves and their engagement with the Muslim world.

1 Chapter 1- Diplomatic Push Toward the Third World and Cultural Effort

As the dust of World War II settled, the global stage witnessed the emergence of two superpowers, each vying for dominance in a rapidly changing world. This period marked the onset of the Cold War, a time characterized by ideological battles and geopolitical chess games that extended beyond the traditional European theatre (LaFeber, 2002). Central to this new world order was the Third World, a diverse collection of nations, each grappling with the legacies of western colonialism in defining their national identity. It was in this context that the Soviet Union, under the leadership of Nikita Khrushchev, embarked on a strategic reorientation of its foreign policy. This chapter aims to explore the Soviet Union's diplomatic manoeuvres in this era, focusing on its efforts to court the emerging nations of the Third World and the domestic academic context that guided them. The mid-20th century was a pivotal moment for these nations, many of which found themselves at a crossroads, navigating the pressures of Western capitalism and Eastern socialism, both promoting their model of development. This moment served as a catalyst for Khrushchev, prompting a series of diplomatic initiatives aimed at bolstering the USSR's presence in regions far removed from its traditional spheres of influence. By setting the stage with a broad overview of the geopolitical context and the Soviet Union's strategic imperatives, this chapter will provide a foundation for understanding the complex dynamics that defined international relations in the latter half of the 20th century. Through this lens, we will gain insight into the challenges and contradictions of Soviet policy, the aspirations of Third World nations, and the enduring legacy of this critical juncture in world history.

1.1 Khrushchev's Diplomacy: Soviet international positioning

Kruschev's foreign policy reorientation gained traction especially after the refusal of soviet requests to join the 1955 Bandung conferences of ex-colonised powers, on the charges of colonialism in Central Asia (Final Communiqué of the Asian-African conference of Bandung (24 April 1955)). This had a twofold effect on Khrushchev. First it convinced him of the need of having a more effective diplomatic presence in the third world, and prompt him to take a tour of Asia with his top diplomats to boost the relations he could not have boosted at Bandung; second he resolved to adjust the image of the Soviet Union as a colonial power by transforming the international and domestic status of the Central Asian republics, granting them more autonomy to engage with the world (Ermarth, 1969). The importance of this engagement was further stressed with the creation first of SEATO in the far East and of the CENTO, or Baghdad Pact. The first was a loose military anti-communist alliance founded in 1954 by the United States, France, Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, the Philippine, Thailand, and Pakistan (Franklin, 2006). The second was a security alliance aimed at countering soviet influences in middle east, founded in the same year of Bandung, 1955, by Türkiye and Iraq and then joined by the UK, Iran, Pakistan and sponsored by the US (Kretschmar, 2015). Therefore, a revitalisation of the USSR's foreign policy was needed to boost both its reputation, slandered at Bandung, and its geo-strategic situation, endangered by the two openly hostile organisations. The aim of the engagement with non-aligned countries, was not to install communist parties at the head of third world nations but more broadly to promote friendship and cooperation with local regimes, showcasing the USSR's achievements and enlarging the anti-capitalist camp (O.Freedman, 1987). This translated into an always more accepted Islam, be it still progressive, and a pronounced anti-Zionist

rhetoric, as Israel was now firmly considered the American agent to the middle east in its disputes and tensions with the surrounding Arab states (Halliday, 1987). One of the clearest examples of the prototype of the soviet middle eastern ally is the PDRY, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (Halliday, 1987). It was established with the end of British colonial rule in 1967 and lasted until Yemeni unification between North and South in 1990. Its inclusion of Islam into education and law as a crucial dowel of Yemeni's culture was always to be contained by a progressive and anti-capitalist framework, with modern policies in favour of women's rights, education, and healthcare. It also served as beacon of socialism oriented towards Africa, with its support of national liberation movements.

Kruschev's foreign policy was to be supported by an ideological legitimation in the frame of scientific socialism (Ermarth, 1969) (Sabine Dullin, 2017). This proved to be an arduous task for the party theorists. The fundamental theoretical principle on which to build was the just proposed "peaceful coexistence," first laid down by Khrushchev at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in February 1956. The focus was on emphasising the superiority of the socialist system and that through creating the necessary conditions, local socialist forces could have developed and prevailed. As explained in the 1961 CPSU Program, it was believed that with the retreat of colonial powers and both the nuclear umbrella and the arms and loans of Moscow, the local "working class, peasantry, national bourgeoisie and democratic intelligentsia" could rally the people and conduct a national liberation struggle to create an independent state, a "national democracy" governed through a united front of anti-imperialist and progressive forces, including the communists. To help in this struggle the USSR should have provided for economic and sometimes military resources to supplant western economic aids and eradicate every form of "neocolonialism" on the Leninist basis that western capitalism based its perpetuation on colonies and colonial exploitation. Eventually though, this political theory came into question and the necessity for additional political

conceptualisation became imperative. As time went by, the confidence in the socialists to take power gradually eroded, also as a result of the division of the socialist camp with the Sino-Soviet split of the late fifties. As a matter of fact, the Soviet Union was focused on promoting peaceful transfers of power under soviet deterrence of western interventions, attracting criticisms both from the West and from the East. The US criticised it for destabilising the region while the Chinese for not being destabilising enough. In his commentary during the Moscow Declaration of eighty-one Communist parties in 1960, Kruschev stated that though the risk of nuclear war was to be born in mind, the USSR would support local revolutionary forces, shielding them from western imperialism through nuclear deterrence. As a result of this, Kennedy saw it as being a call for violence in the third world while Beijing (Peking) denounced it as completely the opposite. This ambiguity manifested in the Vietnam war, in which the soviets provided limited resources to the Vietminh, alarming the US, and disappointing the PRC, proving to the rest of the world that the soviet nuclear umbrella was not to be relied upon. Another point of contention among party theorists and communists forces abroad was that communist parties across the middle East were persecuted by the local regimes, even if these pursued socialist-oriented policies. In this demanding situation the soviets resulted to theorising and accepting the threading of a “non-capitalist path” of Arab “revolutionary democracies” and coming to terms with local bourgeoise nationalist governments (Pennar, 1968). The Soviets therefore encouraged the communist parties of those countries to cooperate with their national governments to ensure full political independence and a united front against imperial “neocolonialism.” Following this benevolent gesture from the USSR, countries like Nasser’s Egypt and FLN’s Algeria released jailed communists and in Algeria they were even let in the FLN ruling coalition. Many communist parties dissolved to join forces with the regimes even though some, such as the Syrian one, continued to operate clandestinely and rejected the soviet approach to middle eastern political development. This proved to strain relations

between the pragmatic soviet line and the ideologically driven local communists, who grew increasingly in support of Beijing's extremist views. Soviet foreign policy did nonetheless have some positive effects in augmenting Moscow's influence in the third world arena.

For example, it provided loans to Afghanistan and increasingly attracted it to the soviet sphere of influence due to its frictions with Pakistan, a key US ally. India too was courted when Kruschev and the Premier Bulganin visited the country and paid respect to Ghandi's shrine, hailing him as a progressive force and criticising Pakistan and CENTO as reactionary and imperialist. This was followed by substantial investments in Indian infrastructures and modernisation. It is though important to notice that this excessive friendliness to Nehru's government caused the Indian communist party to become a centre of Maoist communists (O.Freedman, 1987). Following Iraq's withdrawal from CENTO something similar to India happened, when the Soviets continued granting loans while the Iraqi government purged the communists, leaving them no choice but supporting Beijing. Evaluating Moscow's engagement with the third world, it is apparent that the main obstacle it faced was the undecidedness between a realist and an ideological way of approach. Party theorists tried and at times managed to find suitable archetypes in which to categorise third world development, but they were bound by the dictates of a soviet scientific socialism which considered itself as the sole rightful expression of the forces of history. This rigorous ideological line was to be adapted to Kruschev's pragmatic stances and economic support to countries such as India and Iraq in a strict anti-western sense. Additionally, the assumption of total nuclear deterrence under which to foster peaceful transfers of power was proved not to work with Vietnam, and only served to deepen the division of socialist forces between ultra-leftist insurrectionist Maoism and the more moderate and pragmatic Soviet line. The effort was further limited by the few resources the Soviet state had available, in respect to the ones at the disposal of the US. Soviet

resources in fact, though the third world arena had experienced a surge in importance, were still mainly directed to the European allies and their economic recovery. Therefore, the soviet diplomatic effort to the third world was characterised by relative scarcity of resources and ideological ambiguity, facing much more prepared western powers, materialising in CENTO, SEATO, and their diplomatic initiatives. Nonetheless it proved to bear fruits, as in many cases soviet influence managed to reach crucial areas such as Algeria, Egypt, Afghanistan, and Yemen.

1.2. Soviet Oriental Studies: Foreign Policy Relevance and Gafurov's Role

The shift in Soviet foreign policy under Nikita Khrushchev marked a strategic reorientation towards engaging the newly independent nations of the Third World, with a particular focus on Southeast Asia and the Middle East. This policy shift was not solely the domain of politicians and diplomats; it crucially hinged on the application of Oriental Studies. This academic discipline, encompassing the comprehensive study of Asian societies' history, languages, and religions, became instrumental in preparing Soviet diplomats for more informed engagement in these regions. The transition from the Stalin to the Khrushchev era thus witnessed a parallel transformation in Oriental Studies, reflecting and facilitating the Soviet Union's diplomatic pivot towards peaceful coexistence and influence expansion in the Third World (Abdel-Malek, 1963). Under the Stalin administration the focus of orientalism was on the contemporary history and rather superficial, as the hope was to foment local subversive actions to install the communists to power. This imposed serious limitations on the institutes of orientology and orientologists themselves, who were frequently criticised for the lack of "politicised material"

they produced, while falling into the bourgeoise mind frame of studying classical orientology (Battis, 2015). As we have explored previously, this changed with Khruschev and the path towards peaceful coexistence and engagement. A clear expression of this was Mikoyan's speech at the 20th party congress in 1956 about how the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Soviet Academy of Sciences (IVAN), was still sleeping while the colonial world was awakening. This initiated the reforms of the discipline which was so crucial for Kruschev objectives. It is though important to note that this particular use of orientalism was not new to soviet Marxists. Already after the Congress of Baku, soviet orientalists debated how to correctly identify Asia and how to classify its mode of production in a Marxist framework. Asian exceptionalism was the thesis put forward by the "Aziatchiki" who inserted it in the classical Marxist paradigm of primitivism, feudalism, capitalism, socialism, and communism (Battis, 2015). This was deemed relevant to foreign policy since the Soviet state should decide which government to ally to in order to progress local class struggles according to historical materialism. Though this thesis was discarded under Stalin, when the focus shifted to Europe and the colonial question was generally disregarded, there is no doubt it still had influence on oriental studies as a whole. Furthermore, national delimitations and cultural policies to be enacted in the increasingly autonomous republics of central Asia required an expertise on the region only orientalists could provide. While in tsarist times domestic-aimed oriental studies served the purpose of colonial management, as they were used in every imperial western power, in soviet times this was mainly aimed at creating national identities to be incorporated into the socialist union (Battis, 2015). We in fact see how in tsarist Russia, Tatars were employed as translators and that Kazan was the centre of oriental studies. The Turkic nature of the Tatars and the emphasis on management and utility led the Persian minorities of central Asia to cease speaking Persian to adopt Turkic, in order to draft intelligible petitions for the tsar. This region was tellingly named "Turkestan" in 1867 and proclaimed a governorate general. This generalisation

aimed at controlling local populations had little regard for academic debate on national identities. This caused local minorities like the Persian-descended Tajiki one to be forced into assimilation with an estranged Turkic heritage. The road to re-establish a Persian identity in soviet central Asia was slow. Turkestan endured as a soviet republic in the first years and was then converted into the different SSRs. Here the first Tajik state was established as an autonomous republic under the Uzbek SSR, finally obtaining the status of republic in 1929. The re-establishment of auto determination for Persian minorities in central Asia came as a consequence of orientalists' pressure on the Bolsheviks, such as Ol'denburg, Bartol'd and Semenov. This is because imperial orientalists were promoted from colonial managers to intellectual resources, crucial in the debate over nationality policies. Especially the Tajik SSR was involved in frequent intellectual and historical disputes with its Uzbek counterpart to integrate parts the Tajiks argued were originally owned by Persian speaking people. The Tajiki strive for a clearly defined identity did not only depend on these disputes. There were entire political movements aimed at denying the Tajiks a territory of their own as they were not recognised as Iranians. The Pan-turkists, as they were called, continuously lobbied for Turkic hegemony in soviet central Asia, clashing with Tajik and soviet orientalists (Bennigsen, 1984). In this sense, orientalists and their works acquired a clear and fundamental political value, as exemplified by Semenov joining the Society for the Study of Tajikistan and the Iranian Peoples Beyond its Borders. This society succeeded in raising awareness in Moscow and Tashkent of the separate identity of Persian-speaking population in and outside the Soviet borders. Only during the Purges of Stalin, he was accused of anti-revolutionary activities and temporarily exiled to Kazan. Once the waters calmed, he moved permanently to Toshkent but continued to advise the central committee of the Tajik USSR on cultural policies to adopt to boost national identity. One of Semenov pupils and friends was Bobojon Gafurov, who will eventually become a prominent Tajiki politician and later head of oriental studies of the Russian academy of sciences. He

was in fact encouraged and supervised in authoring his academic dissertation by Semenov himself. Gafurov was then promoted to commissar for propaganda of the Tajik SSR and commenced writing a book on the history of the Tajik people, for which he asked Semenov's help (Naby, 2017). The German invasion halted this endeavour. In 1947 "A short History of the Tajik People" was published. In his review, Semenov praised the work but also highlighted the fact that present political matters required the work to have a teleological aspect which it lacked. The focus on the political landscape of central Asia was still very much present in academic works on the differentiation of Iranians and Turks. Thanks to his personal links to Gafurov, Semenov was later appointed as the director of the republic's academy of sciences and as deputy to the Tajik supreme soviet. What differentiated the two orientalists in their approach to the history of Tajikistan and Central Asia as a whole is what made the latter, Gafurov, gain political prominence and rise to the upper echelons of Moscow. Semenov in fact was still influenced by a 19th century's trend of examining ancient civilisations in terms of "racial" struggle, and that was why he championed the Tajik cause against the Turkic one: because he saw the Iranian Tajiki as the true Aryans, more civilised that the steppe nomads. Gafurov instead translated this clash into class struggle and employed Marxist tools to explore the history of his people. This allowed him to climb the career ladder, for under Kruschev, as explored before, a realignment in foreign policy happened and more experts on third world countries were needed (Yakovlev, 2021) (Naby, 2017).

Gafurov was the litmus test of a new "khorenisatsiia", aimed at fostering soviet based ethnic identities through promoting local intellectuals to important union-posts, showing domestic and foreign actors the tolerance and unity of the USSR under the idea of the ‘‘Druzhba narodov’’. These cadres substituted the intellectuals and the nomenklatura that succumbed to the purges of Stalin and were ready to take the reins of the new powers conferred on Central Asian SSRs with

Kruschev's reforms. They in turn had also the role of ferrying the masses to accepting the campaign of destalinisation (Jones, 2005). Gafurov under this point of view was ambivalent. Though he had praised Stalin, probably just to promote its republic's interests, he also had favourable relations with Kruschev. This led for him to be "promoted" to the academic post of head of Soviet orientalism from the politically dangerous post of first secretary of the Tajik SSR. It proved to be a functional move as Gafurov had previously expressed criticism of VOKS (the association for cultural relations with foreign countries) and the general approach to Soviet engagement to the Third world. It follows that Gafurov was relieved of his "peripherical" political post but was not deprived of political power. On the contrary, he shifted from national domestic policy to foreign policy and soft power building. He in fact was the mind behind Khruschev's third world policy, also thanks to his personal connection to foreign minister Anastas Mikoyan, and frequently organised meetings, entertained ambassadors and wrote speeches relative to the Bandung conference and countries that participated to it. It must be said that Guber, the previous head of the institute of oriental studies, had already made significant changes in terms of study of classical orientalism and engagement with the west, as proved by the delegation he sent to the congress of orientalists in Cambridge in 1954 (Azimdjanova, 2014). What he lacked was political knowledge and ambition which Gafurov had aplenty. Guber was a Russian academician while Gafurov was an oriental politician with a vision in mind.

Among Gafurov's improvements of the Institute, he proposed the creation of oriental studies departments and academies in other soviet republics, during the All-union conference of orientalists in Tashkent in 1957 (Kemper, 2015). This was not only to train new orientalists but also to specialise different republics in handling para-diplomatic relations with different countries, integrating classical tsarist orientology with a Marxist political analysis and in a sense revitalising the aim of the 1920s' congress of Baku. As a consequence, Gafurov's was functional

to the destalinisation process, portraying the new orientalist effort as a realignment to original Leninist objectives. Gafurov's expertise on the matter gave him the ability to direct republics to foreign countries which shared common culture, history, and development. These were Iranian studies in Leningrad and Dushanbe, Turkology in Leningrad, Toshkent and Baku, Uyghur and Chinese studies in Kazakhstan and Arabian studies in Moscow, Leningrad, and Tbilisi. This renewed, centralised but capillary oriental studies Web doubled the number of employed orientalists and tasked republics with pursuing their specific foreign policy objectives. It of course massively improved the quality of oriental studies research, making it much more appreciated by Academicians worldwide and ensuring soviet authoritativeness in the matter at international conventions. It also had some domestic opposition, since it centralised oriental studies, taking away one of the main tools the now autonomous SSRs had to forge national identities and conduct their foreign policy. One such opposer was a figure we are going to examine later, the Uzbek general secretary Nuritdin Mukhitdinov (Kemper, 2015). While he was one of the national cadres promoted by Kruschev and had a seat with Gafurov to the Central Committee in Moscow, he also had regional political objectives. Previously having helped Gafurov in his realignment of third world policy, now he manifested discontent when the Uzbek academy of science's department of oriental studies was centralised. The rationale behind this protest was that since the Uzbek academy was now given by Gafurov foreign countries and cultures to study, it could not focus as much as it had on Uzbek culture, with considerable political damage to Mukhitdinov. As we have said though, this improved greatly the quality of the research conducted in the now specialised academies of sciences. This became evident at the conference of world orientalists of 1960, held in Moscow, and organised by Gafurov himself (Kemper, 2015). Here he masterfully bridged any political difference between the western and soviet scholars, mitigating the political views expressed by Mikoyan's speech, present at the conference, and making sure no potentially inflaming paper was presented on either soviet or

western supremacy in orientalism. While significant problems were posed by the Chinese boycott of the conference and the rare political content of some papers written by some of the guests, and the obvious difference in the understanding of the teleology of orientology as a discipline, the conference proved to bear some fruits. Soviet orientology increased its prestige with western scholars, decolonisation of the discipline was talked about while also spending some words on the usefulness of classical oriental studies, and Gafurov entrenched his position as respectable head of oriental studies of the USSR and as an authoritative scholar in the minds of western academicians. Through his reforms on oriental studies, Gafurov also succeeded at strengthening the autonomy and identity of the Tajik SSR, now a prominent centre of Persian studies and oriental scholarship (Muratbekova, 2023).

Oriental studies also became a major discipline in the Union also thanks to the bimonthly published journals “Aziia i Africa Segodnya” and “Narodny Azii I Afriki” of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Landau, 1971). It is though important to note the different tones of the two most important oriental academic publications. The first one was much cheaper, concerned with contemporary oriental countries’ problematics, adorned with post stamps and other foreign places’ photographs. It was pervaded by political messages and aimed at a general and casual reader. The latter is instead properly academic in content, with summaries in English, French and for a period also in Chinese. It dealt with matters of history, economics, politics, and language of oriental countries. Though papers published are almost always authored in the Soviet Union and the eastern bloc, the journal also features tables of sources and employs quotes often from western experts, showing the interconnections permeating the iron curtain in the discipline.

Indeed, the discipline of Oriental Studies under the Soviet regime underwent a remarkable transformation that was both reflective and constitutive of broader

shifts in Soviet foreign policy and internal nationality strategies. This reimagining of Oriental Studies from a tool of colonial oversight to a sophisticated mechanism for engaging with the Third World illustrates the Soviet Union's adaptive approach in the context of decolonization and global ideological competition. The pivotal role of intellectuals like Gafurov in redefining and leading this discipline underscores the intersection of academic scholarship and political strategy, where scholarly pursuits were seamlessly integrated with the exigencies of state policy and diplomacy.

The emphasis on Oriental Studies facilitated a nuanced understanding of the socio-political and cultural landscapes of Asia and the Middle East, enabling the Soviet Union to craft more informed and effective foreign policies. This strategic investment in knowledge and expertise was aimed not only at enhancing the Soviet Union's influence in these regions but also at fostering a sense of solidarity with emerging nations navigating the complexities of post-colonial independence. The narrative of peaceful coexistence and support for anti-colonial struggles, articulated through the prism of Oriental Studies, served as a soft power tool that aligned with broader Soviet aims of expanding its influence in a rapidly changing world. Moreover, the evolution of Oriental Studies within the Soviet Union reflected internal debates and developments concerning national identity and the role of the Soviet state in managing its diverse ethnic and cultural landscape. The discipline's focus on Central Asia, in particular, played a critical role in shaping the region's identity politics, navigating the legacy of Tsarist policies, and articulating a Soviet vision of national development. The case studies of Tajikistan and the broader Central Asian context illustrate the complex interplay between academic scholarship, political ideology, and the practical demands of state-building and policy formulation.

In conclusion, the transformation of Oriental Studies in the Soviet Union from the Stalin era to the Khrushchev period represents a microcosm of the broader shifts in Soviet domestic and foreign policy strategies. This analysis reveals the dynamic relationship between academic disciplines and state objectives, where scholarship not only reflects but actively shapes political realities. The legacies of this transformation are multifaceted, influencing the trajectories of international relations, the development of academic disciplines, and the construction of national identities within the Soviet Union and beyond. As such, the history of Soviet Oriental Studies offers valuable insights into the complex interdependencies of knowledge, power, and politics in shaping an effective foreign policy to engage with the third world.

1.3. Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee and Other Organizations: Soviet para-diplomatic outreach

In crafting a nuanced strategy to project its influence beyond its borders, the Soviet Union engaged in a complex mosaic of cultural and scientific diplomacy, harnessing an array of associations and organizations to extend its soft power across the emerging Third World. This effort transcended traditional political alliances, focusing instead on fostering ideological solidarity and mutual developmental objectives with nations across Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Through initiatives such as educational exchanges, cultural festivals, and scientific collaborations, the USSR aimed to embed itself within the socio-cultural fabric of these regions, presenting itself as a partner in progress and an ally in the anti-colonial struggle. The establishment of institutions like Lumumba University in Moscow symbolized this approach, offering students from non-aligned and developing countries access to Soviet higher education and indoctrinating them

with ideals that resonated with Moscow's geopolitical aspirations. This subsection will explore how these diverse, yet interconnected activities formed the backbone of the Soviet Union's endeavours to wield cultural and scientific influence as a means of solidifying its standing on the global stage, particularly among the newly independent states of the Third World, in pursuit of a broader coalition against Western hegemony. In line with the developed and mature orientalism that was revitalising in the same period as we saw earlier, Soviet cultural and soft power was projected according to the needs of a postcolonial approach aimed at engagement and bloc-building. It therefore aimed at evoking a socialist-leaning and anti-colonial sentiment in third-world countries, promoting Soviet modernisation. Both Soviet and western orientalism perceived themselves as distant from the “other” that was the third world, but the intent of their engagement differed greatly.

At the frontline of the soviet side of this engagement we find the SKSSAA, with the aim of producing practical and applicable knowledge about organisations and popular movements in the near east. The Soviet Committee for Solidarity with the Countries of Asia and Africa (SKSSAA), also known by its Russian acronym СКССАА, was an organization established in 1957 by the Soviet Union to foster and maintain relations with nations within Asia and Africa, particularly during the Cold War era (Casula, 2018). Establishing contact and evaluating their possible alignment with soviet values and objectives, they produced material for the politicians to act upon, in particular the distinguishing between perceived allies and enemies. We see how it produced statements praising the Yemeni socialist republic while condemning frequently the alleged crimes of the Israeli military during the Yom-Kippur war. Important legitimacy to these statements was provided by the fact that the committee employed many middle eastern people, seemingly appearing as the middle east speaking for itself. It also commanded some respect among local Arab partners. This is showed by the mediating role the

SKSSAA, a CPSU organ, assumed to solve the disputes between the All-Arab People's Congress and Libya, which was accused of influencing too much the Palestinian resistance, bypassing the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO). Another example is the call for the SKSSAA to act as a mediator between the People's Front for the Liberation of Palestina and Syria when the latter shifted its foreign policy to be more western aligned. The authority the SKSSAA commanded among its Arabian allies was fostered by the numerous scholarships, medical treatments, and funded trips it dispensed to its partners. These were granted after the possible recipient's values and interests were examined by the committee and judged friendly (Casula, 2018). An example was the assessment of the ex-premier and foreign minister of Morocco visiting Moscow. Though not communists, they were described as potential allies and a detailed description of their personality, and opinions was drafted. This was repeated in the SKSSAA's visit to Somalia, where one of the main weaknesses of the committee emerged. In fact, the committee came back to the USSR lamenting no encounters and scarce attention given them by the political leadership of Somalia, meeting instead only with public representatives. Sometimes, as in this case, the partners the soviet sought expected more senior and official encounters with high-ranking party members and not the SKSSAA. Furthermore, the committee was displeased with the divisions developing in the Arab camp and found itself supporting only the Arafat side and its two-state solution against more extremist factions, effectively losing the authority to act as a neutral mediator. Though in its reports to Moscow the committee described such movements as left extremists, it presented itself as the forebearer of revolutionary values which could not be expressed aloud by the official Party structure. This way the SKSSAA positioned itself in the middle between official and institutional organ of the party and also back-channel tool to conduct a para-diplomacy that was much more autonomous and independent from the official party line. This also allowed the committee to organise such events as the Afro-Asian writers' conference in Tashkent in 1958 (Casula, 2018) (Jansen,

2019). Here, despite the boycotts of the Algerian delegation and the secretary of the African society of culture Diop, the SKSSAA managed to achieve some results. The conference proved to highlight connections between ex-colonial peoples and the soviet east, also thanks to the SKSSAA president at the time, Mirzo Tursunzade, Tajik poet embodying the progress and integration of ex-colonies in the soviet system.

Cultural diplomacy was also carried out through another organisation, VOKS (or as it was known after 1957 SSOD), the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. This organisation was meant to entertain para-diplomatic connections with other friendship societies abroad, promoting peace and the distribution of information of the accomplishment of soviet development. This society had behind it a number of cultural organisations with foreign departments, officially independent from the CPSU and therefore more autonomous in dealings of public diplomacy. Other than establishing contacts with prominent western intellectuals, VOKS was also producing propaganda to influence foreign perception of the USSR (Fayet, 2013). In 1958 the Soviet Central Committee issued a decree on the specialisation of republican VOKS societies on the line of the subject of oriental academies of science. This mean that each republic had its countries to engage with such as Ukrainian SSR with China, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland; GDR, with Albania and Italy; the Uzbek SSR with China, Arab East, India; the Georgian SSR with China, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Greece; the Latvian SSR with Finland; the Irkutsk Region with China, Japan and the Buryat ASSR with Mongolia. This confirmed that the specific cultural features of each republic were revived and put into use to establish para-diplomatic connections abroad, on the lines of the revitalisation of Oriental studies (Porter, 2022).

Soviet cultural policy was also carried out through the recently joined UNESCO (1954). Here the Soviets were able to both explain their conceiving of central Asia and soviet "asianness," and also sponsor cultural programs and educational scholarships. We see how in UNESCO, the new autonomy achieved by central Asian republics was put in beneficial use with scientific cooperations and joint research programs on the region. Kruschev's government through its representative proposed a major project to be funded for the study of the civilisations of Central Asia at the 1966 14th UNESCO general conference, a proposal which was supported by every major central Asian country (Muratbekova, 2023). After the project was approved, also Mongolia and China joined in. This provided for a forum of discussion and cooperation for scholars of the majority of Asian countries, including a fair share of soviet Russians, Siberians, and central Asians. In addition to that, the conferences within the project were a crucial moment of showcasing one's importance and investment in the research and of these seven conferences, three were held in soviet republics. Soviet orientalists cemented the links created through this joint research program thanks to the creation of the International Association for the study of the Cultures of Central Asia in 1973, continuing to present themselves as experts on the matter.

One crucial way of carrying out the soviet cultural effort was granting education to third countries' students. This way the developing world could train its technicians and experts to speed the pace of the state building process, while the Soviets created meaningful connections to the futures elites of those countries and managed to show them the soviet way of life, development, education, and third-world regard. As education was perceived by third world countries as one of the top priorities for the managing of the now independent bureaucracies, Secretary Khrushchev announced in 1960 during a visit in Indonesia the founding of the peoples' Friendship University in Moscow, later renamed after the assassinated Congolese leader Patrice Lumumba, built especially for foreign students to be

educated the Soviet way (Katsakioris, 2021) (Katsakioris, 2019) (IuB & Vi, 1970) . This endeavour was soon met by western accusation of it being a recruitment centre for terrorist and a hub of indoctrination of foreign youth, similar to the earlier Communist University of Toilers of the East and Sun Ya-tsen University. This overlooked one key difference: the Lumumba University was a proper academic university focused on training every sort of expert, from the mathematical field to the social science one, while the previous two universities were centre for political education of foreign revolutionary cadres. The Lumumba University was nonetheless a very politicised institution and integral part of Kruschev's cultural effort. Accordingly, we see its administrative council being formed by the aforementioned SKSSAA, the Union of soviet societies for friendship and cultural relations (VOKSS), the All-Union central council of Trade Unions and the Committee of youth organisations. The university's policy was to accept only students from the third world, and to tailor courses of each faculty according to their needs. We note therefore how engineering courses focused on geological features and materials present in the southern hemisphere, medicine delved into tropical diseases and economics dealt with economic development. They were coupled with cultural events aimed at fostering the sense of friendship and loyalty to soviet ideals.

This was not free of problems. The university was subjected to frequent hostile propaganda from western countries, depicting it as either a terrorist recruitment centre or a racist university that segregated foreigners from ethnic Russians. Many of these accusations were spread through propaganda campaigns directly on African soil, which goes to show the importance of education sponsorship and third-world countries alliance-seeking during the Cold War. Indeed, often enough foreign students were subject to discrimination by Soviet citizens unaccustomed to blackness and treated with superficiality, which, coupled with other factors, caused the university to have higher drop-out rates than other Soviet universities.

The most notable event in this regard was the 1963 protest of foreign African students in the Red Square after a Ghanaian student was found dead on the outskirts of Moscow. Racism, though, was also present in the countries of origin and contributed to depicting Lumumba University as ill-suited. Iraq, for example did not recognised degrees from the university as it 'considered Friendship University as a party school, in which only ill-educated Negros study'; while Tunisia stated that 'the Tunisian Commission for the allocation of scholarships decided against the enrolment of Tunisian students at Lumumba University, considering that studies at this university constitute a form of discrimination against Tunisians, because young Tunisians have an education level comparable to that of European students, while the university is suited to African students whose level is lower' (Katsakioris, 2019). This was likely a result of the Soviets overemphasizing their desire to influence African students, as implied by the university's name. Another point of contention was the direct granting of scholarships from soviet organisations, often without consulting local institutions, which contributed to the University's reputation as a recruitment centre for subversives. Many of them were forbidden to accept those scholarships, and some were jailed or forbidden to leave their country as they were thought to be Soviet spies (Katsakioris, 2019). This could also work "a posteriori." Many of the students with degrees from Lumumba University were discriminated against in their countries of origin as their degree was not recognised or recognised as a bachelor, with the suspicion of them being communist spies. Adding to the discouragement foreign students faced when deciding whether to study at Lumumba University, Soviet citizens were feeling discriminated against too. The fact that stipends for foreign students were higher and, together with their own government's and family's economic aid, allowed foreign students to live without the constraints faced by Soviet students, was perceived by the latter as giving a clear preference to foreigners. The soviet authorities exacerbated this situation by favouring foreign students over citizens, particularly in university housing in Kiev,

Leningrad, and Moscow. This contributed to damaging both Soviet third-world policy and the legitimacy of the Soviet government itself.

In the Khrushchev era, the Soviet Union embarked on an ambitious program of cultural and scientific diplomacy, aiming to project its influence and ideology beyond its borders into the newly independent nations of the Third World. This period witnessed the establishment of institutions like Lumumba University in Moscow, designed to educate students from developing countries within a framework that aligned with Soviet geopolitical aspirations. Such initiatives were part of a broader strategy to foster ideological solidarity with these nations, emphasizing shared developmental goals and support for anti-colonial struggles.

The Soviet efforts in cultural festivals, educational exchanges, and scientific collaborations sought to integrate the USSR within the socio-cultural landscapes of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. By presenting itself as a beacon of progress and an ally against imperialism, the Soviet Union aimed to cultivate future leaders sympathetic to its cause and principles. This nuanced approach underscored the importance of soft power in Soviet foreign policy, highlighting the role of intellectual and cultural ties in international diplomacy.

Through its strategic engagement with the Third World, the Soviet Union not only sought to expand its sphere of influence but also to build a collective identity rooted in shared aspirations for progress and independence, marking a pivotal chapter in the history of Cold War diplomacy.

2. Chapter 2- SADUM, CARC and the Party: domestic architecture for the management of Muslims

Chapter 2 will discuss the complicated tapestry of religious administration and control within the Soviet Union in the years following Stalin's rule, revealing that the management of Islam was part of Soviet domestic and foreign policy. In broad Cold War terms, this chapter gives an analysis of the institutional mechanisms that the Soviet state used to accommodate itself to the religious landscape, with attention to the Muslim population of Central Asia and Kazakhstan.

The chapter begins with the institutional structure and the nuanced roles that each of the actors—the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan (SADUM) and the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults (CARC)—played. An examination of their establishment gives us a glimpse at the extent of their influence over Islamic education and religion practice among Soviet Muslims.

We then move on to the hidden landscape of Islamic underground movements, which remain present despite efforts by the state to control and even suppress them. We will look at the level of autonomy allowed by the Soviet system, offering an insight into the delicate balances of control and tolerance at the hands of the state. Moving further into the religious space of life, the chapter looks at the major doctrinal and cultural arguments of the Muslim community under Soviet rule.

Chapter 2 therefore examines the post-Stalin Soviet Union's religious control, focusing on Islam. It explores the roles of SADUM and CARC, their influence on Islamic practices, the existence of Islamic underground movements, and the major debates within the Muslim community under Soviet rule.

2.1 Soviet internal religious policy: SADUM and CARC and conflict with Hardliners

The Soviet Union was the home of around forty million Muslims, located mainly in the central Asian SSRs. Managing this considerable minority of people crucially different from western Christians proved to be a key factor influencing the grip Moscow exerted on Central Asia. At the birth of the USSR, this Muslim stronghold was granted extensive rights such as qur'anic tribunals, mosques and religious schools, both due to the weakness the newly formed soviet entity and also as a reward for the Jadid Muslims who fought together with the Bolsheviks against tsarist forces in the name of freedom of cult (Tasar, 2017, pp. 42-43). As Moscow's power grew stabler, Stalin recanted on these concessions, banning Muslims from administrative posts, requisitioning their property, and sending Russians enforcers of these policies. In this repression the moderate Muslims who were allied to the old Bolsheviks were the first to succumb, shifting the Islamic doctrinal trend to the radical side. With the entry of the Soviet Union in WWII, Stalin resolved to compromise on the issue of religion in order to foster cohesion and recruit Muslims into the red army's ranks rehabilitating both orthodox Christianity and Islam. That is why in 1943-44 he sponsored the creation of spiritual directorates to administer believers' religious needs and a council under the council of minister, the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults (CARC), which was to deal with every different directorate and regulate state-religion matters (Tasar, 2017, pp. 47-49).

CARC had its representatives in every republic and oblast' of the Union and had the task of dealing with all sanctioned religious organisations other than the Russian Orthodox Church, monitored by the Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church (CAROC). It was CARC that had the last say on every matter, proposal and initiative of the respective religious organisation, Islamic spiritual directorates for the purpose of this chapter. The main type of requests submitted to

CARC was the registration of active mosques or the restoration of previously working ones. Usually, the integration of actively used mosques into Soviet bureaucracy was met with approval, while the restoration of ancient mosques was more difficult to get approved for.

That is in line with the Marxist line of eradicating religion allowing for freedom of practice but limiting the spread and propagation of this phenomenon, attempting at getting it under the state's control. This was the propelling principle CARC officials adhered to, making it a centre for the moderate line in religious policy. In fact, as CARC officially represented the Soviet Government in the dealings with believers, it frequently found itself in ideological struggles with hard-liners, often hailing from the military-police apparatus (Tasar, 2017, p. 2). The initial prevalence of the moderate line was exemplified by the 1954 Central Committee decree on the " mistakes in the Conduct of Scientific-Atheist Propaganda among the Population", clearly stating that loyal soviet citizens could and should practice religious beliefs under state's surveillance but non suspicion (Tasar, 2017, pp. 79-90). This decree proved effective in granting legitimacy to CARC's moderate policies, at least until Kruschev's consolidation of power in 1959 and his implementation of anti-religious decrees.

Strict adherence to soviet law and the use of persuasion and enlightenment of the God-fearing folk were the main point of contention with other party bureaucracies. The division crystallised in a moderate CARC line and a hard KGB (the former MGB) line on religion. Both lines had deep roots in Bolshevik politics. The latter descended from the Stalinist policies of the great terror while the former could trace their ideas back to Nikolai Bukharin, the "golden boy" of the party, who in NEP times was the sponsor of the moderate line, bent on convincing rather than forcing (Tasar, 2017, pp. 86-87). CARC saw some success in early 1950s, managing sometimes to reverse MGB policies aimed at discouraging believers

from practicing rituals through its representative in Kyrgyzstan. It was also custom for CARC representatives to overlook too lenient officials, tolerating illegal mosques or ulamas while clamping down on overly harsh official harassing the Muslim population. Polianskii himself, the head of CARC in Moscow, supported this line of action, maintaining that illegal trespasses and requisitions undermined both the legal legitimacy of CARC and the anti-religious cause (Tasar, 2017, p. 94). Leveraging his post's authority, he followed condemnation of administrative abuse with concrete steps, often appealing to the USSR prosecutor general and republics' ministers. This, as stated previously, caused frequent friction with the hard line MGB, as showed in the managing of some of the most popular shrines in the Ferghana valley. Here MGB competed with CARC for the administration of these shrines and tried to ban pilgrims and merchants from attending, prompting CARC to state that this only emboldened pilgrims to make the journey, as they felt that "they suffered but then Allah would think more highly of them" (Tasar, 2017, p. 96). As fluctuating as this balance of power was, we see the administration of many shrines in the Vally coming under the kolkhozes affiliated with CARC's line in the fifties. In that period many functionaries and even school personnel attended sacrifices and ceremonies at many shrines, and in 1958 data shows that 70% of collective farms' households made themselves available as hostels for pilgrims (Tasar, 2017, p. 96). This ran counter to the customary practice not to register shrines and mosques so that republican officials could boast a victory of scientific-atheist propaganda. This trend was met by CARC with tolerance and noninterference in unregistered religious affairs, as it was understood that Soviet law allowed freedom of conscience even without registration, particularly after the 1954 decree. Moderatism, though popular, did not fully pervade the administrative machine. It in fact coerced local officials to comply with who held the most power at that time. As a consequence, at the eve of Kruschev's anti-religious campaign the hard-liners gained prominence and many officials who professed themselves moderates promptly switched side.

The spiritual directorate which was tasked with managing Muslim believers' religious affairs in Central Asia was SADUM. CARC had the duty and the incentive to collaborate and defend SADUM, as in CARC's founding charter of 1944 this had the task of "facilitating the ties between the government of the USSR and heads of religious organisations on matters requiring resolution by the government" plus ordinary intelligence gathering. This therefore made a close contact between CARC representatives and SADUM's ulamas vital, as the latter provided the intelligence to be forwarded to Moscow by the former. It was therefore crucial to establish SADUM as the centre of spiritual authority and boost its power by not interfering in its internal affairs, so that the information it gathered could be authentic and precise. SADUM was founded with at its head a previously jailed ulama, Ishan Babakhan, a mufti tracing his lineage to two respected saints of Central Asia. It was based in Tashkent, arguably the academic, economic and cultural centre of Soviet Central Asia (Tasar, 2017, pp. 49-50). While also other spiritual boards were created for the northern Caucasus, European Russia and Siberia and Transcaucasia, the latter covering also all Shia Muslims of the USSR, SADUM was by far the most relevant as it had under its aegis 75% of all soviet Muslims (Tasar, 2017, p. 141).

It is though crucial to understand that the directorates other than SADUM succeeded to pre-existent tsarist organisations. These were not present in Central Asia despite the Muslim majority there, since it was regarded purely as a colony in imperial times., Each of these Directorates or "Boards" was the sole legally able entity to administer religious affairs such as mosques, religious schools, and doctrinal debates through fatwas. It follows that each of them had the prerogative to recruit ulamas to conduct day to day religious business. This bureaucratisation served the Soviets as it made eradicating lone and unregistered ulamas easier, aligning the state's interests with the one of a religious organisation. SADUM was also the only one which published a quarterly review in Uzbek written in Arab

script, “Journal of the Spiritual Directorate of the Muslim of Central Asia and Kazakhstan”, replaced in 1969 by “Muslims of the Soviet East” (Tasar, 2017, pp. 176, 278). The latter was divided in an Arabic edition and an Uzbek edition, a sign that it was not only aimed at domestic readers but also foreign ones. Additional proof of this is the addition of two other editions, in English and French, in 1974. This journal exceeded by far the Christian “Journal of the Moscow patriarchate” in both depth of themes and presentations of them. This goes to show that the management of the Muslim minority in the USSR was much more important in the eyes of the nomenklatura than the management of other religious groups, even the orthodox Christians.

It was difficult in the years following its establishment in Tashkent for SADUM to present itself as the Islamic authority of the region. Many ulamas had survived Stalin’s great terror and practiced in secret, while more generally the Islamic creed was not at all accustomed to such a degree of centralisation, with no precedent in the history of the region. The mufti’s lineage, state’s recognition, and the fear of operating outside the law worked in SADUM’s favour. Kyrgyzstan shows how SADUM behaved and indeed failed in centralising the managing of the zakat (charitable offers) and remove from its ranks ulamas first recruited due to their popularity but then rebellious such as Shafoat Hoji (Tasar, 2017, pp. 167-168). He was a Kyrgyz ulama who, though employed by SADUM, frequently resisted its control and monitoring, championing local authority against centralisation. By acquiescing to his demands and firing those at SADUM who went against him, Shafoat emerged as a charismatic figure in SADUM’s early years able to rival the mufti Ishan Babakhan. Another similar event occurred in the miners’ town of Kok Yangak where SADUM failed to remove a local imam due to the popular support he enjoyed, eventually leading to his backing also by CARC. Here we see how cleverly the people of that town employed the language of “Islam informed Soviet

patriotism" using themes both of soviet and Islamic origin to sway CARC bureaucrats in its favour.

Legitimacy in the eyes of believers was always a priority for SADUM, since as representative of soviet atheist power it was viewed unfavourably. This improved with the worsening health condition and death of Ishan and the gradual transfer of power to his son Ziyauddin, officialised in 1957. He commanded some respect among ulamas as he had been to the Hajj, visited the prestigious Al-Azhar University in Cairo and received a degree there (Tasar, 2017, p. 147). On behalf of his aging father, he started to concentrate power in the hands of SADUM already in 1952, at a Plenum in Tashkent. Here He and the council approved fatwas (scholarly opinions) demanding the end of traditional wedding practices, rendering circumcision voluntary and forbidding other folk traditions, making clear that a "purification" of Islamic practices in central Asia was necessary. They also established that fatwas had to be interpreted as an executive order and not as opinions, ensuring that no fatwa could be issued without the muftiate permission (Tasar, 2017, p. 156). As Kruschev took the post of general secretary and initiated its cultural effort in foreign policy, Ziyauddin was allowed to travel abroad and bring back sacred Islamic texts and material to teach. As SADUM controlled educational institutions such as the Mir-i Arab in Bukhara, the Baraq-khan madrasa, and the higher Islamic institute of Tashkent, Ziyauddin aimed at equipping these poorly outfitted institutions with professional personnel. Integrating the clandestine ulamas who were teaching in the Ferghana Valley, SADUM managed to give credibility to Islamic education in the USSR and to strengthen the moderate line of Islam, sidelining the conservatives (Tasar, 2017, p. 152).

These made their comeback in the years following 1958, at the start of Kruschev's anti-religious campaign. With a newfound sense of progressive revolutionary

struggle, Kruschev encouraged local administrators to legally persecute the unregistered as social parasites, mobilising the people against them (Tasar, 2017, p. 197). This new hardline impulse was difficult for the new CARC chief, Puzin, to enact, given the historically moderatism of the institution. This eased with the 1961 Sovnarkom declaration stating that local republican administrator and the people should be the advancers of the anti-religious campaign. CARC in fact was demoted from watchdog of local administrations to active collaborator of the latter, in addition to creating popular commissions to gather intelligence on religious activities and conduct atheist propaganda, undermining CARC. In this, a great number of orientalists and academicians was employed by the ministries of culture, to convince both the people and the institutions of the reactionary character of Islam (Tasar, 2017, pp. 206-207). Orientalist newspapers too featured in this renewed propaganda campaign. One feature of this campaign was to depict the late Stalin years' moderation of religion as a direct consequence of the Stalinist corruption of Leninism denounced in the secret speech, augmenting its source of legitimacy for Kruschev. Though battened, CARC endured as a point of rally for moderatism, even when implementing the Party's policies. Sentences for religious crimes in fact were much softer than the ones of the Great Terror, signifying that even if hardline policies were to be implemented, no return to the earlier revolutionary bloodbath was sought after (Tasar, 2017, p. 214). SADUM too was victim of financial and legal constraints, seeing its local ulamas fired or exiled. Nonetheless Zyiovuddin strived to present himself as loyal and useful, implementing legislations and actively reducing SADUM's budget and legal scope. This, coupled with the ever-present campaign against shrine pilgrimages and the relevance SADUM acquired abroad made so that it could endure domestically as a powerful, though humbled, religious institution.

The section has discussed the elaborative development of Soviet religious policy, especially the mandates of CARC and SADUM, which were indispensable for the

first time in the attempts of the Soviet regime to control a large number of its Muslim subjects. For example, the Soviet government granted freedom of religion to secure and consolidate power among Muslim communities. However, in the changing ideological paradigms, more restrictive measures were undertaken, reflecting a shift from accommodation to control. During World War II, the formation of CARC and spiritual directorates like SADUM was a strategic adaptation that integrated religious management with state policies. They exerted control and tried to socialise religious life to further the aims of the larger state, not only through registrations but also through political struggle. This approach underscores a key aspect of Soviet governance: the use of religion to promote integration and cohesion of a multifaceted, socialist state, and always subject to change in the political landscape but still keep a grip on religious institutions.

2.2 Underground Movements: The System's Tolerance and Suppression

As we delve deeper into the intricacies of Soviet religious policy, this subchapter shifts focus to the clandestine realms of Islamic education and the subtle, often covert interactions between underground religious movements and the official Soviet system. Despite the rigorous controls imposed by institutions like SADUM and CARC, a vibrant undercurrent of unofficial religious activities persisted across the Soviet Union, particularly among its Muslim populations. These underground movements not only challenged the state’s authority but also reflected the resilience of religious identity and practice in the face of systemic suppression.

This subchapter examines the dual existence of institutional and non-institutional religious education, exploring how ulamas and other Muslim clerics navigated the

restrictive landscape to preserve and pass on traditional Islamic knowledge. It also considers the state's toleration of a degree of autonomy within the budgets of Islamic institutions, a nuanced approach that reveals the complexities of Soviet religious policies. By examining these interactions, we gain a deeper understanding of the sophisticated dance between repression and resistance, illustrating the dynamic and often contradictory nature of Soviet governance in relation to its Muslim communities.

Through a detailed exploration of these underground networks and their delicate negotiations with the state apparatus, this subchapter aims to uncover the layered strategies employed by both the Soviet authorities and Muslim religious leaders. The narrative will uncover how these strategies shaped not only the religious landscape but also the broader socio-political context of the Soviet Union during this tumultuous period.

As we saw how SADUM and CARC were bent on religious monitoring and recruiting religious figures into their ranks, one must not forget how there existed a conspicuous number of ulamas who continued to practice in clandestinity. They were considered dangerous by both SADUM and CARC because they were impossible to control and tend to spread folkloristic strands of Islam which undermined the spiritual authority of the Muftiate. Often their incentive to do so is found in the economic compensation they receive for the performance of certain rituals on particular social occasions. In fact, we see how in Kazakhstan many called these ulamas to recite passages from the Quran on important occasions such as graduation, recruitment in the army and others. Through this social role, these religious practitioners become notable members of society, and the ones who do not respect him by not offering and economic compensation for his services often face ostracism. Some of these ulamas grew to become important wise men in the eyes of believers and even waged propaganda wars against the communist

newspapers which criticised them. As an example, we see how one of these mullahs located in Khashkilang passed around a pamphlet recounting of a dream a child of the village had. In this dream God appeared to have said to the child "Do not ye forget Me; if ye do, ye shall face My wrath!" and the mullah required that each who received the pamphlet should print nine copies and distribute them (Tasar, 2017, p. 135). This battle was not only a spiritual one but also, and mainly, one of control over the community, contended between the usual religious figures and the party apparatus. CARC representatives also had the duty of documenting the various unregistered places of worship. This was a considerable task, both for the practicality of tracking every unofficial place of worship and also due to the reliance many CARC official had on local administrators, often reluctant to report fellow nationals and often coreligionists. Many in fact were located int the countryside were clan dynamics persisted and effective control over traditional rituals and practices was difficult. It is especially due to the difficulty to exert control over these communities that CARC entrusted SADUM to gather all believers under its banner, stirring the masses towards a controllable faith rather that straight up promoting atheism at the risk of exposing the people to unregistered radical mullahs (Tasar, 2017, pp. 108-110,190).

This battle reached its apical point after the 1954 decree which allowed for an increment of soviet flexibility in registering mullahs and bringing them under SADUM's authority. Some even came under the Muftiate's authority without getting a registration, according to the dynamic we explored earlier which allowed party's officials to claim a decrement in religious activities. The tolerance after the 1954 decree promulgation allowed for these unregistered to be tolerated nonetheless, provided they followed SADUM's line. The discourse also went the other way: the decree was read by everyone, and it helped to ease tensions between religious figures and soviet administration (Tasar, 2017, pp. 183-186). What this implied was that registered imams and mosques now were unofficially assigned

unregistered imams and mosques to oversee. SADUM shrewdly used the momentum given by the decree to boost its spiritual authority and control over the unregistered, ensuring its fatwas were followed to the letter. It is understood that this also meant that a portion of all the donations made to the unregistered now were put into SADUM coffers. In this sense registration bore more downsides that benefits. The possibility to operate mosques without sanitary and technical safety certificates was economically more palatable while also allowing for greater contract power with SADUM on the part of donations to send to Tashkent. Additionally, unregistered mosques ceased paying taxes, since they claimed the registered mosques overseeing them did that in their stead, creating an incentive to submit to SADUM.

Different was the discourse about “unregistrable” practitioners. These were shamans, sorcerers and wandering mullahs, deemed by CARC unregistrable and fanatics. As they remained the main form of opposition to SADUM’s control of religion, the latter began to use a fierce rhetoric against them and to coopt CARC’s support. CARC, for its part, battled with republican administrations on the matter of “shayks”, mullahs residing at a shrine. The republican bureaucracies in fact registered many of them as “guards” of a historical site since they needed no remuneration but paid taxes and had the incentive to protect its welfare (Tasar, 2017, p. 159). This practically meant that the shayk rented a shrine from the states and enriched himself with pilgrims’ donations. CARC argued in vain with the SSRs to transfer these area’s control to SADUM rather that the Architectural directorate of the republic. Though some of these shrines were transferred, the control of SADUM over these was not institutionalised, preserving the authority of some shayks in the face of the Muftiate.

As we have explored previously, CARC came to rely on SADUM to soften the role religion had in society and align it with most of the State’s interests. By doing

so they were creating a tolerated “progressive” Islam with which the Soviet government could collaborate. Accordingly, CARC judged “fanatics” all those strains of Islam which did not budge to the muftiate’s growing religious prominence. This was a clear innovation in the managing of Islam from tsarist times, which treated all Islam and Muslims as barbaric beasts. By so doing, fractures in the Islamic world were frequent and a source for instability, as doctrinal debates were a cause of disunity of religious authority in Central Asia. These in fact underlined virtually every challenge to SADUM spiritual rule, often on grounds of tradition and orthodoxy. Sufism was one of the religious currents which were criticised and attacked by SADUM (Tasar, 2017, pp. 202-203). This tradition was one followed by many of those employed by SADUM in its early years. Its main feature was the disciple-like relation it prescribed between a master (Ishan) and his followers (murids). Initially this practice was tolerated, also due to its popularity among SADUM’s ranks. Aiming though at full control of religious affairs, SADUM criticised Sufi masters who wandered across Central Asia, orbiting out of the muftiate’s control. These frequently moved across republics’ borders to meet murids, particularly in the Ferghana Valley and nearby areas. This proved that a parallel channel of authority competition existed outside the established SADUM-unregistrable framework. This changed with the second generation of SADUM leadership under Zyiovuddin. He refrained from having disciples, realising that the Sufi dynamic was incompatible with the battle the muftiate conducted against saints’ worship. Masters indeed inevitably became revered figures in their regions of operation. This was strictly linked with the struggle against shrines and the ulamas guarding them. Critiques of SADUM were also waged in jurisprudence matters, the branch dedicated to establishing the legal principle outlined in the Quran. Zyiovuddin was criticised as a follower of the “nontraditional” Shafi madhhab (school of jurisprudence), as he went against the usual tolerance the Central Asian Hanafi madhhab practiced towards shrine pilgrimages (Tasar, 2017, p. 156). While the actual school of jurisprudence

Zyiovvudin followed is difficult to assess, it is certain that he waged war on the autochthonous principles of central Asian jurisprudence in the name of returning to a pure and orderly Islam loyal only to the Quran. While worshiping saints was vigorously sanctioned, the muftiate frequently referred to saints and their teachings as proof of its upholding true scripturalist Islamic values. This eased the transition from shrine-related saints' worship to loyalty to SADUM authority. It also helped in the effort to gain administrative rights of as many shrines as possible. SADUM's battle was also fought against doom-prophets who appeared across Central Asia. In 1956 for example, a letter preaching the imminent end of the world began circulating, fuelled by a solar flare which disabled radio communications for a while. This was met by an active deployment of the muftiate's imams to calm the population and preaching reason in the Friday prayers. Another notable event was the supposed resurrection of a man in Toktogul, in the Kyrgyz SSR. Here a dervish had claimed to have been visited by one of God's messengers, prophesising his death in seven days (Tasar, 2017, p. 135). He predisposed local religious authorities for his funerary rites and seven days later was proclaimed dead. He later resurrected and went home, claiming to have visited heaven. Sanitary authorities conducted checks on him and stated he was of sound psychological status. Rather that criticising this fact as evidence of the credulity and fanaticism religion instilled in believer, Akhtiamov, CARC deputy for Kyrgyzstan, defended those progressive imams and believers not conned by this charlatan. This fanaticism was though sometimes present in the ranks of SADUM too, prompting CARC to take appropriate actions. The communal prayer to prevent flooding in northern Kyrgyzstan were deemed antique and reactionary. Polianskii, CARC chief in Moscow, issued hard reprimands and instructed local deputies to take appropriate actions, provoking great embarrassment to regional officials who had defended SADUM's moderate views. Oddly enough, CARC also fought as fanatic the inclusion of women in religious roles. Notwithstanding opposition to veiling and other practices, no pressure was applied on SADUM to employ females. CARC's

explanation was that since women were subject to discrimination in Islam, those who submitted to it and rose the ranks must necessarily be reactionary elements to fear. The most important case of charlatanism and fanaticism occurred in 1952 in southern Kyrgyzstan (Tasar, 2017, pp. 136-138). Here, a sect called the “lohoci” hosted rites where, according to CARC’s intelligence, the Ishan washed his hands in his urine and made his murids drink it, and later host incestuous orgies under a state of drug induced ecstasy. The sect was quickly looked down by society, fostering its cohesion. This type of sect spread across the territory, spurring local groups which took oaths of secrecy and performed rituals in their own houses. Even a party member, head of a local kolkhoz was found hosting such rites. The continuing eradication of such a tendency by CARC officials caused them to observe religious life with much more attention and scrupulosity.

The proposed investigation of underground Islamic education and secret religious movements inside the Soviet Union suggests the emergence of a multilayered story of resistance and accommodation in very stern state observance and regulation. While SADUM and CARC exerted controlling influences, another resilient undercurrent of unofficial religious activities persisted and demonstrated that a profound and enduring religious identity had been ingrained among the Soviet Union's Muslim populations.

This subchapter has detailed how the ulamas and other Muslim clerics managed to navigate through the tight Soviet environment as a means of allowing the preservation and continuity of the transmission of classical Islamic knowledge. Their efforts, often in the grey zones of the official system, underline the limits of state control and a dynamic interplay between repression and resistance. The nuanced state policy that allowed for a level of autonomy brought to the fore not only the complexities of Soviet religious policies but also demonstrated the tactical flexibility of the state in its management of religion. Furthermore, this continuous

struggle for community control of the dispute between the traditional figures and the Party apparatus greatly shifted with the 1954 decree. This, in theory, was meant to enhance the penetration of the SADUM among more clerics and, in essence, foster both official and unofficial religious practices. By insisting on registered imams and mosques watching over the unregistered, the Soviet state was, in fact, reinforcing the strength of this network of clandestine religious activities, making it possible for these networks to carve out spaces of relative autonomy.

Essentially, the character of the communications described in this section of the text serves to easily explain the ongoing struggle for spiritual authority and control within the community in the Soviet Union. This struggle was much more than a religious one; it had deeper connotations with wider social, economic, and political undercurrents that shaped the lives of Soviet Muslims. Furthermore, the continued efforts of 'unregistered' and 'unregistrable' practitioners in the face of official censure can only betray a deep commitment to religious and cultural identity. This nuanced exploration helps understand the ways in which Islam came to be oriented in ways that were both compliant with the Soviet regime's designs for a subservient "progressive" Islam and, on the other hand, diversely flourishing with religious expression at once. These both challenged the official story and added to a richer, if controversial, tapestry of religious life in the Soviet Union. In essence, such detailed analysis provides deeper insights into the sophisticated strategies both Soviet authorities and Muslim religious leaders adopted, shaping the religious landscape and much else within the larger socio-political context of the USSR during this very tumultuous period.

2.3 SADUM and CARC: Possibility of foreign outreach

In the constantly shifting landscape of Soviet religious and foreign policy, the external engagements of CARC and SADUM underscore a strategic dimension that aligns with the broader set of goals. This section will examine how these religious institutions expanded their influence beyond the territorial limits of the Soviet Union, participating in diplomatic and ideological interchanges that were pivotal during the period of the Cold War. Such interactions detail a strongly qualified level of Soviet policy whereby religion was an absolute determinant in the USSR's trials of projecting power and influencing international allies, especially where Muslims made up the majority. Following up on the themes introduced in the first chapter, which outlined how the Soviet Union reoriented itself under Khrushchev in relation to engaging with the Third World, this section will get into the details of how the tools of this expansive diplomacy—CARC and SADUM—functioned. These activities were not confined to the mere governance of religious affairs within the borders of the Soviet Union but extended their scope to include efforts at fostering ideological solidarity with mutual developmental objectives with nations across the Islamic world. This was part of a renewed effort to portray the Soviet Union as a leader of anti-imperialist and anti-colonial movements, which balanced the interests in the West and fostered alliances with shared, corresponding socio-political and religious interests. This sub-chapter will dwell on the main diplomatic missions, religious contacts, and the strategic use of Islamic solidarity as an element of Soviet foreign policy. It will also look at the inherent challenges that these institutions needed to face as they negotiated the complex interplay between promoting a secular, socialist state and engaging with deeply religious external entities. We would find that foreign policy manoeuvres of CARC and SADUM were, in fact, more intricately linked with the broader strategic objectives of the Soviet Union, and therefore, themes of adaptation and outreach that marked the critical areas of Soviet approach to the Third World.

Within the global Soviet ambitions, the activities of CARC and SADUM are interwoven with domestic religious policies, hence disclosing a complex picture of domestic religious policies that were interwoven with international political strategies that offered much subtler Soviet attitudes towards the Muslim world and its relationship with the rest of the globe during the Cold War.

The first officially sanctioned Hajj took place in 1945, after the political and military turmoil of the purges first and the great patriotic war later. This was no political event though, with the few pilgrims not being given any propaganda or diplomatic task despite their important meetings with political figures of the Middle East. Things changed with Kruschev's push towards the Third World. As we saw, SADUM used this new channel to showcase the utility of a Soviet Islam, managing to keep the muftiate relevant in the eyes of the Party. It in fact evolved to become a de facto representative of Soviet interests abroad under Brezhnev, dealing with foreign leaders and managing diplomatic ties (Tasar, 2017, p. 278). SADUM also worked for its own interests, aligned with the ones of the Soviet State. Indeed, it had the opportunity to be seen as a defender of Muslims and central Asian traditions abroad, at the same moment showing the world the achievements of Central Asian SSRs and stressing Central Asian's culture contribution to world history. It is no wonder that, as we have mentioned, Tashkent became the pearl of Soviet Central Asia, as it hosted SADUM headquarters. This introduced in the political balance struck between hardliners and moderates, actors such as the Foreign Ministry and organisations such as the previously mentioned SKSSAA and the SSOD (Union of Soviet Societies of Friendship with Foreign Countries). Also in this outreach effort, Moderates and Hardliners clashed. Control of SADUM's actions and correspondence was seen as crucial by the latter and necessary but within legal bounds by the formers. Moderates believed that SADUM could show foreigners the lies about the USSR told by capitalist countries, and that it would be more willing to do so if left alone. This reasoning

was quickly adopted by officials in the foreign ministry department for the Near East, who repeatedly asked for SADUM's advice and instructions when dealing with Muslim counterparts (Tasar, 2017, pp. 250-252). It was also custom for Soviet diplomatic missions to publicly show deference to the Muftiate delegation upon their arrival, demonstrating the respect the USSR felt for such figures. This approach brought gains such as valuable contact between the Muftiate and religious figures in countries like South Yemen and Turkey. CARC too had some diplomatic influence, in virtue of it being the monitoring organisation of most religious activities. A notable example was the exchange of support Kruschev had with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffry Francis Fisher, in relation to unilateral disarmament (Tasar, 2017, p. 253). The archbishop in fact supported the Soviet position on disarmament, leading to Kruschev incredibly praising the prelate at the head of the Anglican Church. Following this event, CARC capitalised on the matter, drafting a document summarising Kruschev and the Archbishop's points and instructing every religious institution in the USSR to share it abroad. Most importantly Puzin suggested SADUM to forward it to seven high-ranking ulamas of the middle east, leveraging its connections. This goes to show that any possible point of contact between the Soviet world and religion was not to be forsaken but instead exploited to reach foreign policy objectives.

What Tasar dubbed "the CARC-SADUM" alliance (Tasar, 2017, pp. 214-215), referring to their collaboration in moderatism in managing Islam, was again proved to be productive in their hosting foreign diplomatic parties. They in fact diligently analysed any relevant place hey could show to foreign parties, examining the cleanliness, holiness and practicability of mosques and other historical buildings. They also vetted foreign visitors, granting them the possibility of visiting only after establishing their progressive and modern beliefs, as we have seen the SKSSAA was doing.

Given the increasing contacts with the non-Soviet Muslim world, the Hajj acquired a stronger political connotation. Candidates to send to Mecca were vetted and in this, SADUM had the task of confirming the candidate's "truly" Islamic beliefs, disqualifying them if they were considered fanatics. Fanaticism was not the only disqualifying feature though. Given the highly politicised value the Politburo now attached to the Hajj, pilgrims should reflect also a healthy lifestyle and an educated mind (Tasar, 2017, p. 263). CARC therefore selected able bodied, strong looking men who not only were politically loyal, but could also debate about modern Islamic practice while showing to be observant Muslims, demonstrating that the USSR was a home also for those who wanted to be truly Muslims. Political loyalty was a crucial feature the pilgrim should have had, also due to the fact that Saudi Arabia and the USSR did not have any diplomatic contact except for the soviet Hajj delegations. Pilgrims, being SADUM ulamas, often had personal ties with Saudi religious figures, with whom they had banquets and private meetings. Nonetheless, Saudi officials were distrustful of these pilgrims, keeping them under scrutiny and often confiscating their printed material.

Some pilgrims even recounted in their reports to CARC that the situation in Mecca was much worse than any city in Central Asia. Extreme poverty of the population, practices of slavery, brides selling, popular illiteracy and religious police forcing anyone to go to mosque and pray five times a day were nothing out of the ordinary there. The Hajj also served to gather intelligence about the Turkic emigrees located there. These emigrees were useful to the King to serve as palace guards, due to his distrust of Arab officials. Even though interactions were frowned upon by both soviet ad emigree Turkic Muslims, on some occasions casual conversations or altercations occurred. Some of the emigrees even recanted their ideas on the USSR, such as a Kazakh emigree named Oltinxon to'ra Eshonxon, transforming into a reliable contact. The character of the pilgrimage emerged clearly with the Hajj of 1965, when some of the soviet pilgrims were arrested at Mecca's customs for

possessing opium with the intent of smuggling it (Tasar, 2017, pp. 271-272). The delegation was distrusted the whole pilgrimage, and nobody made contact with them, prompting CARC and SADUM to label it a “failed” Hajj. It is implied that the Hajj had a clear diplomatic objective, which was to make contact, show a favourable image of soviet Muslims and gather intelligence.

Tashkent-printed Qurans were used as foreign gifts to attest to the rigorous Islamic work SADUM conducted. However, SADUM only used these as diplomatic gifts and did not distribute them internally. We have also seen how SADUM had its own publications, now also intended for foreign readers, with photo albums and articles about “historical sites of Islam in the USSR” and “table books for imams” reporting all of the Muftiate fatwas. Through its publications, SADUM showed the whole Muslim world that Soviet Islam was alive and well.

While some did not buy into this narrative, such as the Americans, some others did indeed. On one occasion, in 1965, The secretary general of the National Muslim Assembly of Uganda visited Tashkent and even asked soviet representatives if the USSR could fund Islamic schools in his country (Tasar, 2017, pp. 261-262). This request was tellingly denied since in the words of one of the representatives “The USSR helped developing countries not on the basis of their religious orientation.” Internationally, as we have detailed in the first chapter, Nasser’s anticolonial Islamic socialism was bringing many to align with the soviet bloc, forming a united front against Israel and the USA. This contributed to the number of foreign representatives that visited and praised the USSR in its management of Muslims through SADUM and CARC, augmenting their diplomatic influence.

With Brezhnev’s coup against Kruschev, SADUM acquired more and more power, establishing itself as the organisation tasked with dialogue with the Muslim world. The mufti Zyiovuddin, and later his son Shamsuddin, were viewed as official Soviet representatives in all but name and frequent visits of foreign politicians

were organised and hosted in Tashkent. The pinnacle of their success and influence was the establishing of contact with the Saudis in an official manner, by SADUM joining the Saudi led Muslim World League (MWL) (Tasar, 2017, pp. 282-284). This proved crucial to mitigate the propaganda war between the Soviets and the Islamic world unleashing after the invasion of Afghanistan. Though soviet-Saudi relations were bad and deteriorating, SADUM-MWL ties were strong and served as a channel of diplomatic contact between the two ideologically opposed countries.

In conclusion, the subchapter has explored the intricate dynamics between SADUM and CARC and their international engagements during the Cold War era. These institutions were instrumental in the Soviet Union's efforts to extend its influence across Muslim-majority regions, leveraging religious diplomacy as a strategic tool. Through initiatives like the Hajj, hosting foreign parties, and media propaganda, they sought to project an image of Soviet tolerance and integration of Islamic practices within a socialist framework.

Despite occasional setbacks, such as the "failed" Hajj of 1965, SADUM and CARC succeeded in fostering a narrative of a thriving Soviet Islam, propounded by the distribution of Tashkent-printed Qur'ans and the publication of materials showcasing Islamic life in the USSR. Their work not only countered Western scepticism but also attracted genuine interest from Islamic states, aligning with the Soviet bloc against common adversaries.

Ultimately, the narrative woven throughout this subchapter underscores the profound impact that SADUM and CARC had on shaping Soviet religious policy and its intersection with global geopolitics. Their legacy is a testament to the power of religious diplomacy to navigate the complex landscape of international relations.

3. Chapter 3: Mukhitdinov, Rashidov and the Case of Soviet Uzbekistan

This last chapter will look into the pivotal roles of two prominent Soviet leaders of Uzbekistan: Nuritdin Mukhitdinov and Sharaf Rashidov, whose careers stand as examples of the complex relationship the Soviet Union had with Islam both domestically and internationally. This chapter attempts to dissect their dual influence: the contributions of Mukhitdinov in the Soviet Presidium and the long rule of Rashidov as the First Secretary of the Uzbek SSR. Their careers then serve to uniquely frame the lens for considering the Soviet approach to republics' autonomies and communities, necessarily including the Muslim factor.

The first section of the chapter provides an analysis of the political life of Nuritdin Mukhitdinov, his influence and impact on Soviet foreign policy and his eventual decline from power.

The second section will instead focus on the rise of Sharaf Rashidov as a continuator of the work of Mukhitdinov, both internationally and domestically.

3.1 Nuritdin Mukhitdinov

This subchapter explores the significant contributions of Nuritdin Mukhitdinov to Soviet political dynamics, particularly his instrumental role in the Soviet Union's interactions with its Muslim-majority regions. Mukhitdinov's career trajectory from a regional secretary in Uzbekistan to a prominent member of the Soviet Presidium illustrates the strategic integration of ethnic and religious identities into the broader Soviet policy framework.

As we examine Mukhitdinov's ascendancy, we will trace his influence on policies that addressed the complex relationship between Soviet atheist governance and Islamic cultural dynamics. His efforts to balance these often-conflicting paradigms played a crucial role in shaping the Soviet approach to managing its diverse populations and projecting its ideological stance internationally.

This narrative will highlight how Mukhitdinov's personal background, and professional endeavours facilitated the Soviet Union's diplomatic initiatives, particularly in the context of Cold War geopolitics and its outreach to the Third World. The discussion will contextualize his policy impacts and leadership within the broader Soviet efforts to navigate its internal and external challenges during a critical period of its history.

Nuritdin Mukhitdinov was born in 1917 in Tashkent from a family of Uzbek ethnicity and Muslim religion. He was selected to go study in Moscow due to his brilliant school results. He then fought in World War II and was wounded at Stalingrad and joined the party in 1942. He began his political career as secretary for propaganda of the Namgan region, rising to become the first secretary of the region in 1948. In 1950 he became central committee secretary and then first secretary of the Tashkent regional party branch. In 1955, returning from the Asian tour with Kruschev, he was appointed first secretary of the republic and the next

year chosen as a candidate for the USSR presidium membership (Zenkovich, 2002).

Due to his ethnicity and "cultural" background of having studied the Quran and Arabic as part of his religious education, he seemed the perfect candidate to demonstrate the tolerance enjoyed by soviet Muslims in the USSR. He was chosen to be the head of the Soviet delegation to Bandung, to which the USSR was forbidden attendance on charges of imperialism in Central Asia (Lerais, 2013). Eventually the soviet delegation was not even allowed to participate as an observer fuelling the public relations campaign to fight allegation of colonialism. Mukhitdinov accompanied Kruschev during his 1955 Asian tour, trying to repair relations with the countries which participated at Bandung and establishing important connections. The next occasion on the way of dispelling allegations of imperialism was Nehru's visit to the USSR. After having visited Moscow, Nehru stopped to visit Uzbekistan with Mukhitdinov as a guide, laying the basis for Uzbekistan and Tashkent to become the "Door to the East" of the later years. From this visit emerged the concept of orientalism as a potent tool of cultural relations with third world countries, as Nehru stressed that there was not enough emphasis in soviet discourse of Uzbek-Indian friendship's roots in pre-modern and ancient times (Kiraisirova, 2011). The need of eastern representatives and experts prompted Kruschev to assign to Mukhitdinov the task of researching historical and contemporary situations in the Near East that could serve foreign policy objectives. He was later promoted to full Politburo membership, showing the world the reproachment Kruschev was looking for with Soviet central Asian citizens after the turbulent Stalin years. The momentum for change was given by Kruschev at the 20th party congress. Here, other that the famous Secret Speech, Kruschev presented the idea of the birth of a Third camp (other than the socialist and capitalist ones) which was assuming more and more importance and was fundamentally aiming at peace. The need to approach and cooperate with this

emerging force was stressed also by foreign minister Anastas Mikoyan, as we saw previously, when he criticised the ineffectiveness and ineptitude of domestic institutes for the study of the East.

This was Mukhitdinov's role in the Politburo: bringing the East's voice to the highest decision-making body of the USSR to facilitate its interface with the Third World. He in fact proposed to the Politburo to organise the All-union conference of Orientalists in 1957 in Tashkent, which was swiftly approved by Kruschev (Kiraisirova, 2011). The conference aimed to reinvigorate oriental studies, emphasizing the historical and cultural ties between the Soviet Union and the Third World, and to utilize these connections to further Soviet foreign policy objectives. By hosting the conference in Tashkent, the Soviet leadership not only underscored the city's importance as a cultural and diplomatic hub but also directed significant resources to improve its infrastructure. This initiative was part of a broader strategy to transform Tashkent into a modern Soviet Central Asian capital. Under Mukhitdinov's influence, Tashkent underwent substantial development. Urban planners seized the opportunity to modernize the city, rationalizing its landscape, and replacing traditional structures with modern buildings. As a result, Tashkent became a model of Soviet progress in Central Asia, showcasing the compatibility of socialist modernity and traditional Eastern culture.

As we have already explored, this proved to grant legitimacy to Kruschev, portraying him as a true Leninist, and also Mukhitdinov, who was able to direct investment and academic attention to Uzbekistan and Uzbek identity. This was a key step to recover domestic and international credibility on the allegation of imperialism in Central Asia. These were mostly referred at the mode of engagement of Moscow with the central Asian SSRs which included the mandatory institution of the ethnic Russian second secretary post, the repression of every talk of industrialisation and development labelled "Pan-turkist" (e.g.

Khodjaev) and the lack of autonomy to engage foreign actors (Kalinovsky, 2018). Khodjaev himself was rehabilitated by Mukhitdinov at a congress of Uzbek intelligentsia, coordinating with Suslov, the leading party ideologue, to advance destalinisation. This also contributed to consolidate Mukhitdinov's grip on the Uzbek party machine, as he proceeded to remove all the remnant Stalinist-era appointees. Rehabilitation of national figures and promotion of investments was coupled with a revitalisation of national histories to be written by leading Uzbek intellectuals. As we saw, this was carried out in Mukhitdinov's Uzbekistan as in Tajikistan under Gafurov, proving the general gaining of autonomy by Central Asian SSRs (Mukhitdinov, 1995, p. 163) (Kalinovsky, 2013).

The most notable consequence of Mukhitdinov's sponsorship by Kruschev was his support during the confrontation with the Anti-party group. In 1957 in fact Malenkov, Kaganovich and Molotov moved to oust Kruschev from power, eventually failing and being outmanoeuvred by the General Secretary. Kruschev's success depended on him bringing the case before the Plenum, allowing for all his regional allies to speak in his favour. The crucial ally swinging power in favour of Kruschev was without doubt Georgy Zhukov, head of the Army. Nonetheless Mukhitdinov played a role, convincing the Plenum of the attention Kruschev dedicated to the various SSRs, stressing how he had visited central Asian republics many times and frequently listened and applied proposals from local representatives (Kalinovsky, 2013) (Mukhitdinov, 1995, pp. 218-220).

Mukhitdinov also had a huge influence on the direction of soviet foreign policy. He was one of the main sponsors behind the creation of the SKSSAA and VOKS, defining their role according to the line He and Kruschev shared. It was this influence that eventually brought to his demotion, having developed tensions with both Suslov and Mikoyan (Zenkovich, 2002). When Mukhitdinov refused to support on behalf of the central Asian delegation the proposal to remove Stalin's

body from the Mausoleum in Leningrad, namely because this would upset his Muslim electoral base since disturbing the dead was haram, his promotion to deputy chairman of the Council of ministers did not take place. He was then not re-confirmed to the Presidium by Kruschev himself and shocked by this betrayal, Mukhitdinov did not show up to a plenary meeting of the 22nd CPSU Congress that was taking place which was regarded as a "gross violation of internal party discipline". Though there was much talk of removing him from the Central Committee, Kruschev was dissuaded from doing it by the letters and telegrams, which came to him in enormous numbers from Uzbekistan in defence of Mukhitdinov.

Later, Mukhitdinov was appointed first deputy chairman of the State Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries under the Council of Ministers of the USSR. From 1968 to 1977 he held his last influential post as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the USSR to the Syrian Arab Republic. After 1977 he was appointed Deputy Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Chamber of Commerce and Industry and retired in 1985 (Zenkovich, 2002). His retirement from Uzbek and Union politics allowed for another Central Asian to rise to prominence: Sharaf Rashidov.

In conclusion, Nuritdin Mukhitdinov's career path is an excellent example of the Soviet Union's strategic management of its multi-ethnic and multi-religious polity. Becoming a significant figure of the Soviet Presidium, Mukhitdinov used his expertise in Islam and Western culture to reconcile the Soviet secular model with the cultural demands of the USSR's Muslim-majority regions. His role was instrumental during high-profile foreign policy tours that aimed to both mend the USSR's tarnished international reputation and position it as a nation invested in the global progressive struggle. Mukhitdinov's participation in these tours and the cultural diplomacy he conducted during presentations of Uzbekistan to dignitaries

like Nehru were an example of the way this relatively isolated nation could fulfil its role as a global leader and progressive force. His focus on oriental studies and the organisation of major conferences to bring foreign students and scholars to Tashkent further illustrate this role. His politics and distinctive touch with foreign representatives served as a counterpoint to a still-dominant Western impression of the Soviet Union as internally repressive and repressive towards non-Slavic peoples. His leadership in the USSR offers an illustration of the fine line this polity had to walk between a given political centre's assertion and various ethnic or religious groups' demands for recognition.

3.2 Sharaf Rashidov

This subchapter navigates the importance and central position of Sharaf Rashidov in the Soviet political environment—both internally and externally. His career as a top leader in Uzbekistan reveals the functional and finely knitted connection between regional governance and the broader strategies the Soviet Union crafted and implemented to establish influence across the Third World. Sharaf Rashidov's career opens the door to understanding the intricacies of the Soviets' governance and cultural relations and shows how Uzbekistan functioned under Rashidov as one of the major gateways through which the Soviet Union interacted with several global regions with dominant Muslim populations. His forays and engagement with the leadership from Asia to Africa present the Soviet Union as a key player in the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist narratives.

Moreover, this subchapter will discuss how Rashidov promoted the Soviet Union agenda through cultural and educational arenas by way of Soviet Union-oriented events and exchange programs. Rashidov's governance ideas on culture and education provide a variety of perspectives from which to view the Soviet Union

at the time, as it made pragmatic and flexible moves to blend politics and cultural influence, forming alliances and shaping perceptions from post-colonial countries.

Sharaf Rashidov was born in 1917 in Jizzakh, in the Uzbek SSR. Working initially as a teacher after graduating at the pedagogical college, he then became the editor of the Samarkand Paper “Lenin Yuly”. Since 1941 he was involved in Komsomol and Party work, participating in the Great patriotic War. After that, he returned to his editor position, then was promoted to the Samarkand party committee and then chairman of the board of the Union of Writers of Uzbekistan in 1949. From 1950 to 1959 he was chairman of the presidium of the Uzbek SSR, the youngest to ever occupy that role. In 1957, alongside Mukhitdinov, he signed a document criticising the Anti-Party group, manifesting his support for Kruschev. He replaced Mukhitdinov when this was ejected from the Presidium of the USSR in 1961, becoming the leading Uzbek political figure (Zenkovich, 2002).

As for Mukhitdinov, Rashidov’s rise was supported as an example of “khorenisatsiia” (indigenisation) of national cadres which served Kruschev’s domestic and foreign policy objectives. Again, resembling the rise of Mukhitdinov, Rashidov accompanied Kruschev in international visits such as the 1955 visit to India and the 1955-57 Asian tour. In 1957 he followed marshal Voroshilov during the tour of southern Asia where he was designated as deputy to the marshal himself. He made the acquaintance of important leaders such as Mao, Zhou Enlai, Ho Chi Minh and others, being even singled out by the latter as the living example of the multinational character of the USSR (Cucciolla, 2020) (Mukhitdinov, 1995, p. 216). Following this Asian tour, Rashidov’s prestige as a representative of the Soviet State abroad led to him being chosen to spearhead the soviet delegation at the Afro-Asian Solidarity conference in Cairo at the end of 1957. Here he managed to present the Soviet Union as a true friend of the Third World, thundering against the imperialist powers and their colonial methods (Kiraisirova, 2011) (Cucciolla,

2020). Thanks to his ex-colonial Uzbek credential he spoke to African and Asian leaders empathising with their condition and praising the revolutionary fight against capitalists. This was perceived by the US to have "unveiled the particularly militant definition that Moscow's peaceful coexistence doctrine did not apply in the underdeveloped world". Rashidov was again considered the best candidate to conduct Soviet-Arab relations. When in Cairo, he was instructed to meet leading Egyptian political figures such as Nasser and the chairman of the Parliament Boghdadi, inviting them to visit the USSR and in particular his own republic of Uzbekistan. The Central Committee also instructed Rashidov to organise meeting to foster religious cooperation. He paid a visit to the Al-Azhar university rector together with Zyovuddin Babakhanov, the SADUM mufti, and facilitated the creation of connections between SADUM and Egyptian clergy. The Cairo conference was a remarkable success, having created a permanent secretariat of the Afro-Asian solidarity organisation, secured the partial re-integration of the USSR among the ranks of anti-imperialist countries and the promotion of it as a multinational, religiously tolerant country. Nasser even visited Uzbekistan the following year, deepening cooperation with the USSR and highlighting the parallels between the Uzbek and Egyptian people in terms of ex-colonial people, proving that the line Kruschev's foreign diplomacy followed was bearing its fruits.

Rashidov was employed as a soviet representative also in diplomatic relations with non-middle eastern countries. He led the soviet delegation to Cuba in 1962 which had the secret aim of discussing missiles placement on the island. This provided the occasion to establish a friendly relation with Castro, who the following year spent 40 days visiting the USSR, spending some time also in Tashkent. Rashidov later helped Brezhnev oust Kruschev and therefore gained the trust of the new general secretary who confirmed Rashidov's place in Third World diplomatic dealings. He again led soviet delegations to Jakarta in 1965 and to the tricontinental Conference of People's Solidarity in Cuba in 1966. He also frequently visited

FLN's Algeria, from 1963 to 1981, strengthening Soviet-Algerian relation as Egypt-Soviet ones cooled. In 1972 he received US communist party delegation led by Angela Davis in Tashkent and the following year he visited Lebanon and Iraq. In 1980 he was sent to visit various African Countries, the last of which was Ethiopia in 1983 where he inaugurated the first Lenin statue in Africa (Cucciolla, 2020). This shows the ease with which a non-Russian could rise to represent the USSR abroad thanks to the reputational benefit the Union gained.

Rashidov was not only relevant to soviet foreign policy as an individual, but also through his administration of the Uzbek SSR. He stressed Uzbek - Indian relation following the suggestion of Nehru to Mukhitdinov. In Tashkent, the Indian communist party was found, and peace talks between India and Pakistan were held in 1966. Rashidov also sponsored Tashkent as the see where to hold numerous cultural festivals. Following the 1957 Cairo conference, he secured, in collaboration with Mukhitdinov, Tashkent as the place were to host the Afro-Asian Writers' Conference of 1958, with 140 writers from thirty-six countries. In 1968 Tashkent also hosted the International Film Festival of Asia and Africa in 1968, and then again selected in 1982 as the city hosting the 11th meeting of the presidium of the Afro-Asian solidarity organisation. All these events promoted the image of Tashkent as a modern, Muslim, soviet capital, proving the effectiveness and compatibility between the soviet model of development and Islamic heritage. Furthermore, it again highlights how both Soviet international reputation and the Uzbek people stood to gain from this situation. In fact, to further demonstrate soviet-Islamic compatibility, Rashidov secured funds to restore monuments and academic institutions. Rashidov also allowed SADUM mufti Zyiovuddin Babakhanov to organise the first international Islamic conference in Soviet History in Tashkent in 1970. In 1971 Rashidov also employed soviet resources to build the Al-Bukhari Theological school in Tashkent, to impart reliable Islamic education to futures officiants (Cucciolla, 2020). This soviet-Islamic entente dissolved after the

Afghan War, with the numbers of foreign religious leaders visiting the USSR plummeting.

Like Mukhitdinov before him, Rashidov cared also to be seen as a defender of Uzbek national Identity. He in fact carried out the rehabilitation of Faizulla Khodjaev that Mukhitdinov had started. This process in fact had stalled after the deposition of Kruschev. It was finally rendered official with the 1967 decree of the Uzbek Central committee termed “On commemorating F.Khodjaev”, with the Uzbek academy of science allowed to produce his selected works (Mukhitdinov, 1995) (Kalinovsky, 2013).

In conclusion, Sharaf Rashidov's leadership epitomized the Soviet Union's strategic use of its regional leaders to advance its foreign policy and cultural diplomacy objectives during a critical period of the Cold War. His role as a key figure in Uzbekistan not only enhanced the Soviet presence in the Third World, but also helped to bridge the ideological and cultural gaps between the USSR and countries across Asia and Africa. Rashidov’s engagements, from hosting significant international conferences in Tashkent to representing Soviet interests in pivotal global meetings, underscored his effectiveness in utilising cultural and diplomatic platforms to reinforce the Soviet image as a supporter of anti-imperialist movements and a friend to the non-aligned world. Additionally, he also showcased Uzbekistan as a model of development appealing to Third World countries, while at the same time promoting Uzbek interests and securing investments, as Mukhitdinov did before him.

Overall, Rashidov’s legacy illustrates the dynamic interplay between regional leadership and global strategy, revealing how personal leadership and cultural understanding can significantly influence international relations and policy efficacy. His contributions remain a testament to the depth and breadth of Soviet diplomatic engagement during a transformative period in world history.

Final remarks

This thesis has examined the intricate strategies employed by the Soviet Union to institutionalise Islam within its borders and harness its influence as an instrument of foreign policy abroad. We have examined the complex international situation it found itself in, then detailed the roles of key domestic control organisations such as SADUM (Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan) and CARC (Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults) finally showing the significant contributions of regional leaders such as Nuritdin A. Mukhitdinov and Sharaf R. Rashidov. This study has tried to shed light on the nature of Soviet-Islamic interactions, both in the light of foreign diplomatic dealing and domestic integration and administration.

Internationally, we have delved into the Soviet Union's diplomatic situation and objectives under Nikita Khrushchev, with a focus on its outreach to Third World nations during the Cold War. This shift was primarily driven by the changing global stage, which included the Bandung Conference and the creation of SEATO and CENTO. The USSR's initiatives aimed to build alliances, shape global dynamics, and counteract Western dominance by partnering with nations navigating the challenges of post-colonial independence and development.

Khrushchev's strategy was not just about extending Soviet influence but also threading a balance between promoting socialist ideals and engaging in pragmatic diplomacy. Despite obstacles like limited resources and the internal disputes of the communist movement, as highlighted by the Sino-Soviet split, the USSR successfully expanded its reach into regions like the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia. This flexible foreign policy allowed the Soviet Union to forge

significant ties with key countries such as Egypt, Algeria, Afghanistan, and Yemen, bolstering its global stance while carefully managing local and regional political complexities.

The Soviet Union's engagement with the Muslim world was driven by the need to counter Western influence and propaganda, building alliances with ex-colonial powers in need of assistance to develop. The diplomatic missions and cultural exchanges were conducted by organisations such as the SKSSAA (The Soviet Committee for Solidarity with the Countries of Asia and Africa) and VOKS (All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries), while civil society connections were established through the Soviet participation in UNESCO programs and the sponsorship of foreign students to study in the USSR. Here too, we see the USSR utilise the "asianness" of its Central Asian citizens to present itself as having a fundamental Third-Worldist component that made it possible to interact with other developing countries on an equal footing. "Asianness" in this context not only refers to Islam, but also to a cultural heritage from the former colonial era that could resonate with other newly independent peoples, thereby facilitating contact.

We have also seen how this engagement was informed by a revitalised Orientalism, which expanded its scope to provide insights into how best to approach Third World countries. In this, the role of the Tajik Gafurov was crucial, influencing foreign policy by both advising the Politburo and receiving foreign dignitaries himself. Oriental studies also benefited from his tenure as head of the Institute of Oriental Studies, now featuring specialised departments for every Soviet SSR. There is no doubt that he symbolised a point of change in Russian and Soviet Oriental studies as he started focusing on shared histories between SSRs' peoples and foreign countries to emphasise a common cultural heritage on which to build diplomatic connections.

The Soviet Union's approach to domestic Islam was instead multifaceted and nuanced, characterised by a complex balance between repression and accommodation according to the intra-party prevalence of one faction over the other. Our examination has highlighted the pivotal roles played by the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan (SADUM) and the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults (CARC) in both domestic and international spheres during the post-Stalin era. This meant that religious activity, usually considered something to root out of society, was integrated into the Soviet framework. This was particularly evident at the apex of the moderates' influence after the 1954 decree.

Beyond their administrative functions, SADUM and CARC were instrumental in advancing the Soviet Union's foreign policy objectives during the Cold War. They actively participated in diplomatic endeavours aimed at fostering ideological solidarity with Muslim-majority countries. Through such engagements, they sought to project an image of Soviet Islam as a progressive and inclusive force, aligned with anti-imperialist and anti-colonial movements globally. The strategic use of religious diplomacy to enhance the Soviet Union’s global standing against Western adversaries strengthened ties within the Islamic world. This approach underscored the broader Soviet tactic of leveraging religious policy to promote internal cohesion and extend international influence.

One significant aspect of the Soviet strategy was the careful orchestration of religious leadership to align with state interests. The selection of compliant and loyal religious leaders to head institutions like SADUM ensured that the state's narrative and control were maintained. This approach was evident in the leadership of the Babakhanov family, who played pivotal roles in SADUM. Their loyalty to the state and their ability to navigate the delicate balance between religious authority and state control were crucial in maintaining the state's grip on religious

activities and foreign interactions with other spiritual leaders, such as during the Hajj.

We have then examined two of the most impactful figures who hail from Central Asia and shaped Soviet foreign policy towards emerging countries. The careers of both Mukhitdinov and Rashidov illustrate how the Soviet Union strategically utilised regional leaders to advance its diplomatic objectives. Their ability to navigate the complex interplay between regional governance and global strategy underscored the importance of personal leadership and cultural understanding in Soviet international relations. Nuritdin Mukhitdinov's ascent from a local secretary in Uzbekistan to a prominent member of the Soviet Presidium illustrates the delicate balance between ethnic and religious identities within the broader Soviet policy framework. His background in Quranic studies and his Muslim identity were leveraged to portray the USSR as tolerant and inclusive, countering Western narratives of Soviet repression. Mukhitdinov's significant role in high-profile foreign policy tours, especially the 1955 Asian tour with Khrushchev, showcased his diplomatic prowess in mending and establishing contacts with foreign leaders. His leadership skills manifested in the 1957 All-Union Conference of Orientalists in Tashkent, which enhanced the city's status and underscored the Soviet Union's commitment to cultural diversity and intellectual exchange. Mukhitdinov's influence was pivotal in shaping policies that strengthened the USSR's image among emerging nations, promoting it as a progressive alternative to both capitalist and traditional socialist models.

Sharaf Rashidov, following in Mukhitdinov's footsteps, further highlighted the integration of regional governance into the Soviet Union's broader strategic objectives. His rise to prominence, culminating in his role as the First Secretary of the Uzbek SSR, was marked by a strong focus on cultural diplomacy and economic development. Rashidov's engagements in international diplomacy, particularly at

the Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference in Cairo, positioned the Soviet Union as a staunch supporter of anti-imperialist movements and aligned it with the aspirations of newly independent nations. His efforts to promote Uzbekistan as a model of Soviet modernization, by hosting significant international events and fostering cultural and educational exchanges, played a crucial role in enhancing the Soviet Union's global image. Rashidov's diplomatic initiatives with leaders from Asia, Africa, and Latin America further solidified the USSR's alliances and underscored its commitment to supporting anti-colonial struggles and developmental policies.

Both Mukhitdinov and Rasidov stand as the primary example of the benefit the employment of “Asian” and “Sons of Muslims” (Kiraisirova, 2011) and at the same time loyal Soviet citizens could bring both to their native republics and the USSR’s image abroad. What had been struck was a balance between Union and Republic interests all mediated through such figures with both national and international political relevance. One must not only remember that they were in fact crucial foreign diplomats but also the first Uzbeks to sit to the Politburo and direct national policy, often on behalf of their Republic and Central Asia as a whole.

Underscoring all this is the Soviet conceptualisation of Islam more as a cultural heritage and local tradition than a purely religious and spiritual phenomenon. This is exemplified by internal regulation that made Islam legal and viable and the promotion of officials who could effectively speak to Muslim people and get their respect while at the same time remaining loyal to the party line. This led to a region such as Central Asia, previously disregarded and treated as a colony, being integrated into the Soviet system without seeing its identity being assimilated by Russian chauvinism. Leniency on Islam also gained traction thanks to its usefulness on the international stage. In fact, one’s religion or religious heritage, coupled with the clear manifestations of other “Asian” characteristics were key

elements of USSR's diplomats that allowed it to sympathise with ex-colonies and mend its reputation slandered at Bandung.

The relevance of this study lies in its analysis of the USSR's dual strategy of domestic control and international outreach. By examining the ways in which the Soviet state sought to integrate Islamic identity and leverage it for diplomatic purposes, this thesis has tried to provide a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between political power, religious identity, and international diplomacy in the Soviet context. The evaluation of the Soviet model contributes to a discourse on religion-management that could be valuable for contemporary non-religious polities seeking to balance secularism with religious diversity, highlighting the importance of adaptability and pragmatism in managing religious affairs.

Future research could explore the long-term effects Soviet religious policies had on the development of national identities and the role they played in shaping post-Soviet societies. Comparative studies between Soviet strategies and those of other secular states in managing religious diversity could supply further insights into the effectiveness of different approaches to religion-state relations. In particular, a comparative study of religious policies in other past and present communist states could provide information on whether the practice of religion to exploit its potential has been replicated elsewhere as a consequence of socialist political theory.

Bibliography

Abdel-Malek, A. (1963). Orientalism in Crisis.

Asia, V. o. (2018). SADUM: An Effort to Establish Soviet Islam. *Voices of Central Asia*.

Azimdjanova, S. A. (2014). Major trends and Results of the development of Oriental STudies in Uzbekistan.

Barghoorn, F. C. (1969). Soviet Cultural Effrot.

Battis, M. (2015). Soviet Orientalism and Nationalism in Central Asia: Aleksandr Semenov's Vision of Tajik National Identity.

Bennigsen, A. (1984). Panturkism and Panislamism in history and today. *Central Asian Survey, 3*(3), 39-49. Retrieved 5 18, 2024, from https://tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02634938408400476

BOCIURKIW, B. R. (1986). *The Formulation of Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*.

Buszynski, L. (1981). SEATO: Why It Survived until 1977 and Why It Was Abolished. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, 12*(2), 287-296. Retrieved 5 18, 2024, from https://cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-southeast-asian-studies/article/seato-why-it-survived-until-1977-and-why-it-was-abolished/7ee55bafd8cad273ae38976c12073d50

Casula, P. (2018). The Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee and Soviet perceptions of the middle-east during late socialism.

Crisostomo, R. (1982). The Muslims of the Soviet Union.

Cronin, S. (2022). Introduction: Edward Said, Russian Orientalism and Soviet Iranology.

Cucciolla, R. M. (2020). *Sharaf Rashidov and the International dimensions of Soviet uzbekistan* .

David-Fox, M. (2011). *RELIGION, SCIENCE, AND POLITICAL RELIGION IN THE SOVIET CONTEXT*.

D'encausse, H. C. (1973). Islam in the Soviet Union: Attempts at modernization.

Ermarth, F. (1969). The Soviet Union in the Third World : Purpose in search of Power.

Fayet, J.-F. (2013). VOKS, The third dimension of Soviet Foreign Policy.

Final Communiqué of the Asian-African conference of Bandung (24 April 1955). (n.d.). Retrieved 5 21, 2024, from Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe: http://franke.uchicago.edu/Final_Communique_Bandung_1955.pdf

Franklin, J. K. (2006). *The Hollow Pact: Pacific Security and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization*. ProQuest. Retrieved 5 18, 2024

G., C. (1948). *The Central Asian Republics: Their Place in the Soviet System*.

Halliday, F. (1987). "Islam" and Soviet foreign policy.

Heller, H. (n.d.). *The Cold War and the new imperialism: a global history, 1945-2005*. Monthly Review Press. Retrieved 5 21, 2024

Irina Maslova, S. D. (2020). *HISTORICAL ROLE OF THE COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS IN SOVIET RELIGIOUS POLICY*.

IuB, P., & Vi, D. (1970). [The Patrice Lumumba People's Friendship University--a realization of the concepts of V.I. Lenin on the equality of nations]. *Vestnik otorinolaringologii, 32*(2), 106. Retrieved 5 18, 2024, from https://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/4910757

Jansen, H. (2019). Soviet "Afro-Asian" in UNESCO.

John S. Reshetar, J. (1965). The Soviet Union and the Neutralist World.

Jones, P. (2005). *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era*. Routledge. Retrieved 5 18, 2024, from https://books.google.com/books?id=g7dYiQYo1nwC&pg=PA2

Kalinovsky, A. (2013). *Not Some British Colony in Africa*. Ab Imperio.

Kalinovsky, A. (2018). *Decolonization, De-Stalinization, and Development*.

Kassymbekova, B. (2021). *On writing Soviet History of Central Asia: frameworks, challenges, prospects*.

Katsakioris, C. (2014). The Soviet-south rncounter: Tensions in the friendship with Afro-Asian partners, 1945-65.

Katsakioris, C. (2019). The Lumumba university in Moscow: higher education for a Soviet-Third World alliance 1960-91.

Katsakioris, C. (2021). The Socialist countries, North Africa and the Middle East in the Cold War: The Educational Connection.

Kemper, M. (2015). Propaganda for the East, scholarship for the West.

Kemper, M. (2018). Russian orientalism.

Kiraisirova, M. (2011). *Muslims Sons of Moscow*. Ab Imperio.

Kretschmar, J. (2015). The Baghdad Pact. *Undergraduate Research Journal, 3*(1), 48-53. Retrieved 5 18, 2024, from https://journals.tdl.org/txstate/index.php/txstate/article/view/7085/6326

LaFeber, W. (2002). *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945–2002*. McGraw-Hill. Retrieved 5 21, 2024

Landau, J. M. (1971). Russian Journals dealing with the Middle East.

Lerais, E. (2013). Bandung 1955: Little Histories. *Australian Journal of International Affairs, 67*(4), 554-554. Retrieved 5 18, 2024, from http://tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10357718.2013.806021

Mukhitdinov, N. A. (1995). *REKA VREMENI, Ot Stalina do Gorbachyova [The River of Time, From Stalin to Gorbachev]*.

Muratbekova, A. (2023). Russian science diplomacy.

Naby, E. (2017). Bobodzhon Gafurovich Gafurov 1908-1977.

O.Freedman, R. (1987). Soviet Policy toward the Middle East.

Owen, L. A. (1956). Recent Soviet views on Asia.

Pennar, J. (1968). The Arabs, Marxism and Moscow: A Historical Survey.

Peyrouse, S. (2007). The Rise of political Islam in Soviet Central Asia.

Porter, L. (2022). Cold War Internationalism: The USSR in UNESCO, 1945-67.

Powaski, R. E. (1997). *The Cold War: The United States and the Soviet Union 1917-1991*.

S.D.KURBANOVA. (2021). *ROL' SHARAFA RASHIDOVA V RAZVITII MEZHDUNARODNYKH KUL'TURNYKH SVYAZEY UZBEKISTANA [The Role of Sharaf Rashidov in the Development of Uzbekistan's International Cultural Relations]*.

Sabine Dullin, E. F.-P. (2017). Flexible Sovereignties of the Revolutionary State: Soviet Republics Enter World Politics.

Tasar, E. (2017). *Soviet and Muslim: The Institutionalisation of Islam in Central Asia, 1943-1991*.

Wheeler, G. (2006). Middle Eastern studies in the USSR.

Williams, B. (1992). *Lenin and the problem of nationalities*.

Yakovlev, A. I. (2021). "He Created The institute in a New Capacity, It was his Brainchild": On Bobodzhan G.Gafurov, Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences (1956-77). *Bostochniy Kur'er*.

Zenkovich, N. A. (2002). *Samye zakrytye lyudi. Ot Lenina do Gorbacheva: Entsiklopediya biografiy [The Most Secretive People. From Lenin to Gorbachev: Encyclopedia of Biographies]*.