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CRITICAL GEOPOLITICS OF ISLAM IN ASTRAKHAN, RUSSIA: MOSQUE CONSTRUCTION AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

CRITICAL GEOPOLITICS OF ISLAM IN ASTRAKHAN, RUSSIA: MOSQUE
CONSTRUCTION AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

This thesis examines how and under what influences communities of Islamic faith
have developed in post-Soviet Russia. My arguments are based on research conducted in
Astrakhan, Russia in the summer of 2009. Astrakhan is the capital of Astrakhan Oblast
in southwest Russia and has a reputation for being a multi-confessional and multi-ethnic
city. Astrakhan is home to Russians, Tatars, Kazakhs, Kalmyks, and many other
nationalities. I draw from interviews and newspaper analysis to examine what the local
landscape of Islam looks like in Astrakhan, how has it changed since the collapse of the
USSR, and what future trends are emerging. Mosque renovations and demolitions are the
center of my analysis.

Drawing on scholarship in critical geopolitics and critical geographies of religion, this
paper seeks to understand how the Kremlin and other levels of government influence the
development of Islam locally within Astrakhan. Interviews are used to study local
understandings of the changing forms of Islam in Astrakhan, and to see if locals believe
that the state has been supportive to the Islamic community. My research contributes to
wider scholarship on the importance of the relationship between the state and local
Islamic communities for Islamic nation-building in the Russian Federation.

Keywords: critical geographies of religion, critical geopolitics, Russia, Islam, former
Soviet Union

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Meagan Todd

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CRITICAL GEOPOLITICS OF ISLAM IN ASTRAKHAN, RUSSIA: MOSQUE
CONSTRUCTION AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

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THESIS

Meagan Lucinda Todd

The Graduate School

University of Kentucky

2010

CRITICAL GEOPOLITICS OF ISLAM IN ASTRAKHAN, RUSSIA: MOSQUE
CONSTRUCTION AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

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THESIS

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the
College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By

Meagan Lucinda Todd

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Patricia Ehrkamp, Assistant Professor of Geography

Lexington, Kentucky

2010

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis examines how and under what influences communities of Islamic faith

develop locally in Astrakhan, Russia. Astrakhan, the capital of Astrakhan Oblast, is

located in southwest Russia and has a reputation for being a multi-confessional and

multi-ethnic city. It is the thirty-third largest city in Russia, with a population of 504, 501.

(Russian Federation Census, 2002). More than 130 ethnic groups are located within the

city, but there is a large Russian majority population of 73%. As Russia's southern

outpost, Astrakhan's proximity to the Silk Road and location on the Volga ensured

international trade and the intermingling of different cultures throughout its history

(Riasanovsky, 2005). Within the city, there is a sizable Islamic presence. The Islamic

community within Astrakhan is very diverse, consisting of members of Avar, Azeri,

Tatar, Kazakh, and Russian ethnic groups. Today, the region's largest Islamic population

are the Kazakhs, at 14.3 percent of the region's total, and the second-largest is Tatars

comprising 7.1 (Russian Federation Census, 2002). Kazakhstan and Iran have consulates

in Astrakhan city. This diversity makes Astrakhan an appropriate site to study the

dynamics of Islamic-community building within Russia.

This research investigates how the Kremlin and other levels of the state government

influence the development of Islam within Astrakhan. My research questions are:

- What does the local landscape of Islam look like in Astrakhan? What did it look like in the past, and what are plans for the future?

- How does the Kremlin influence the development of Islam locally within Astrakhan? More specifically, is the state sponsoring or preventing mosque construction and Islamic scholarship? What other organizations or sources are providing financial and other means of support (i.e., wealthy donors, other Islamic communities)?

I answer these questions through an analysis of processes of mosque construction as a function of community building. My research considers the religious landscape as playing a key role a key role in political formation and identity maintenance. In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson writes that a nation is:

> "an imagined political community, imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, or meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion…Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined (Anderson, 1993: 6)."

A shared destiny has to be imagined between the members of a community in order to link them together. One way that elites work to create this unity is through invented traditions. Invented traditions work to create a normalized, universal view of the past and to establish rituals and shared values in the present, which must be preserved in the future to keep the imagined community alive (Hobsbawn and Ranger, 1992). Religious landscapes can serve as a form of an invented tradition, which are used by nation-states to manufacture and create a national past and shared roots. In this thesis, I treat the landscape as a "social hieroglyph" (Mitchell, 2002: 15), symbolic of social and political relationships, and investigate what it reveals about state-mosque relations. My arguments are based on qualitative research conducted in Astrakhan in the summer of 2009.

Section 1.1: Russia as a Multi-ethnic and Multi-religious state

Just as Voltaire famously stated that the Holy Roman Empire was not Holy, Roman, or an Empire, one can think of the Russian Federation as being neither Russian nor a Federation (Goble 2004). While this is, of course, a gross exaggeration, stating that the Russian Federation is not Russian draws light to the diversity within the Federation's borders. In contemporary Russia, there are over 160 ethnic groups. 79% of the

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population is of Russian nationality, with Tatars, Ukrainians, Chechens, Armenians, and many other groups making up the rest of the total. According to the 2002 Russian census, only 1.6% of the population consists of people from ethnicities not indigenous to the Russian territory. 22 out of the 83 federal territories within Russia are homelands of ethnic minority groups. While Russian territories exhibit a decline in population, growth is occurring in the Caucuses and Siberia. The birthrates of ethnic Russians are lower than those of other groups, such as Chechens. Although Russians make up the majority of the country, population projections suggest that by 2030, the country could have a non-Russian majority (Goble, 2004: 78).

Besides being multi-ethnic, Russia is also a multi-confessional country. There are no census data collected on religious affiliations, so it is hard to estimate the number of peoples belonging to each religion (Heleniak, 2006). However, religious communities have to register with the Russian government, so there are data available on the number of official congregations of different religious groups. Russian Orthodoxy is the largest religious group in Russia, with 29,784 organizations, while Protestants have 4453 and Catholics have 255 communities. Islam has over 5,000 organizations, Judaism has 267, and Buddhism has 192. There are also many smaller religious groups in Russia, such as Shaman and pagan (Religare, 2006). These data do not account for non-registered religious communities, or the numbers of members of each community. However, it does serve to highlight that Orthodoxy has the largest number of communities, while Islam has the second largest.

Claiming the Russian Federation is not a federation criticizes both the vertically-organized governmental structure of the country as well as the Kremlin's inability to create political stability within its borders. The Russian Federation appears to a liberal

democracy; there is a president, prime minister, and bicameral legislature. The federation is divided into 83 territorial units which receive two representatives each in the upper house of the legislature. Some of these units are republics, which are home to ethnic minorities, while others are oblasts, which are provinces with usually a majority ethnic Russian population (Constitution of the Russian Federation, Article 65).

Yet, under Putin, governmental power has been concentrated increasingly in vertical structures. Regional government has become more centralized. In his first term, the federal territories were divided into seven districts, led by an administrator appointed by the president whose purpose was to ensure that regional governments follow federal law (Sukhov, 2008). Also, the laws regarding representatives in the upper house of the federal legislature were changed. The governor and an elected representative used to serve as territorial representatives, but now representatives are appointed by local officials and must be confirmed by the president (Sukhov, 2008).

Although regional governments have become more centralized, regionalism challenges the sovereignty of the Russian Federation. The First Chechen War was fought from 1994-96, under Yeltsin, and the Second Chechen War from 1999-2009. Chechen insurgents want to separate from the federation and establish their own country (Hahn, 2007). Islamic extremism has become synonymous with the Chechen insurgents and threatens Russian political stability (Hahn, 2007).

As this discussion shows, the Russian Federation has a multinational, multi-confessional populace. But, state-mosque relationships are complicated at the national level. On one hand, Russia has been in a civil war with Chechens, identified as separatist Islamic fundamentalists. In 1999, Russia also outlawed Wahabbism and extreme forms of Islam (Hahn, 2007). Despite the war, Putin has tried to show that the Russian state is

supportive of non-extremist forms of Islam. In 2005, while attending the Chechen parliament in Grozny, Putin stated, "Those who are fighting on the other side (Chechen militants) don't know that Russia has always been the most loyal, reliable and consistent defender of the Islamic interests. By destroying Russia they are destroying one of the major supports for the Islamic world (Shmeliov, 2005: 2)." The Russian state imagines itself as supportive of more moderate forms of Islam, while other forms of Islam are perceived as a threat to the state.

Section 1.2: The Russian State and Vertical Power

The relationships between the Russian state and non-separatist Islamic communities of faith are part of my analysis. Within this project, the term "state" interchangeably refers to government power at the local, regional, or national level. "Kremlin" is used as a metaphor for the national level of government power. I analyze state-Islamic relations as localized in Astrakhan. The nation-state has been considered the dominant political unit of territorial division since the Treaty of Westphalia (Agnew 2000). Yet, the nature of the relationship of nationality to statehood varies from country to country. In regards to Russia, Paul Goble (2004) writes:

> The Russian state became an empire long before the Russian people became a nation, and as a result, the Russian state has never been a nation state, a compact between the government and the people, but the Russian people have always been a state nation, a nation not defined by itself but those with power (2004: 79).

To imagine Russia as a state-nation rather than a nation-state highlights the power of its vertical, centralized government. Although power may be dispersed amongst different actors in networks, and a state may never have full hegemonic control over its

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constituents, in Russia the state has always attempted to centralize power into vertical

structures (Martinez-Vazquez and Boex, 2001; Sukhov 2008).

This tendency is reflected in efforts to centralize Islam. The Russian state encourages

the registration of Islamic communities into official Islamic structures, with the main one

being the Central Spiritual Directorate of Muslims (TsDUM). The Spiritual Directorate

was created in the Soviet era to monitor mosque activities and make sure that they were

in line with party ideology. In the Soviet era, these boards, located in Bashkortostan and

Dagestan, organized theological matters and were heavily monitored by the government.

They were overseen by the State Committee of Religious Affairs and were monitored by

the KGB. Now, there are over 60 of these directorates. However, the boundaries for the

directories often overlap, and many communities do not register at all (Walker, 2005:

262). Communities also join two other national-level Islamic structures, the Council of

Muftis of Russia and the Coordinating Council of the Muslims of the Northern Caucasus

(Matsuzato, 2007). Walker sites the organizational fluidity of Islam as one of the reasons

a national-level hierarchy akin to the structure of the Russian Orthodox Church has not

developed, as well as Russian law which gives religious organizations autonomy (2005:

263). Despite this autonomy, the leaders of TSDUM and representatives from the

Kremlin have voiced interest for the government to create a centralized, well-ordered

spiritual directorate to curb extremism (Goble, 2009). Although the government in

Moscow has no immediate plans to exert state controls and create a vertical power

structure for Russian Islam, the three already-existing state approved structures have

come to define "official" Islam in Russia (Matsuzato, 2007).

The leadership of these official organizations meets with the Russian president

annually at the Kremlin, and also in times of emergency, such as in the aftermath of the

hostage crisis at the Dubrovka Theatre Centre in Moscow in October 2002. Transcripts

of all official meetings between the President and Islamic leadership are published on the

Kremlin website and often copied in national newspapers, such as *Izvestaya Gazeta*.

In this thesis, I investigate to what extent the nation-state and official Islamic

structures are distanced from Islamic communities of faith, looking at whether or not they

exhibit authority at the local level. I study how vertical power structures impact Islamic

communities in their everyday life, and also how Islamic communities in turn support or

subvert these vertical power structures. This research provides an analysis of how

geopolitical discourses produce everyday landscapes of religion, and how landscapes of

religion affect geopolitics.

Section 1.3: Outline of Thesis:

My research is informed by the fields of feminist geopolitics and critical geographies

of religion. In Chapter Two, I examine literatures on geopolitics, critical geopolitics, and

feminist geopolitics to understand the advantages and disadvantages of geopolitical

approaches and to see how geographers have tried to move geopolitics from being a form

of statecraft to a way of interrogating how everyday life and national and international

political processes are constitutive of each other. I also draw from literatures on the

critical geographies of religion, especially the politics of claiming sacred space. I focus

my study on Islam in Astrakhan on mosque construction as a function of community

building. Constructing a mosque requires the community to interact with local, state, and

even national and international entities.

In Chapter Three, I introduce my research site and outline my methods. First, I

provide an in -depth look at the Islamic community in Astrakhan and provide a brief

overview of several of the mosques in Astrakhan. Because this is a localized study, I use a mix of archival research and qualitative methods. I consult a variety of archival materials, such as presidential speeches, governmental holiday addresses, and news articles. I also conducted semi-structured interviews in Astrakhan and use the transcripts and field notes taken as sources on contemporary mosque-state relations.

The fourth chapter draws on these empirical data. Here, I examine the discourses surrounding state-Islamic relations at the national and local level. The first part of this chapter focuses on discourses on state-Islamic relations produced by the national government and leaders in official Islamic structures. In the second half, I examine to what extent geopolitical discourses produced on the national level about translate to what is going on the ground within Astrakhan.

In chapter five I conclude by summarizing my research findings. I argue that the state takes a contradictory stance on developing Islam within Astrakhan. On the one hand, the state tries to create ties with "official" Islamic communities to show that it is tolerant of Islam, despite separatist movements in the Caucuses. Yet, on the other hand, as my research shows, the notion that the state is generally tolerant of moderate forms of Islam needs to be questioned. Overall, my project contributes to understanding how geopolitical motivations influence the Russian government's relationship with Islamic communities

Chapter 2: Review of Geopolitics and Geographies of Religion

Geopolitical concerns shape religious landscapes and communities of faith. In this study, a critical geopolitical approach will be outlined and then employed to understand the workings of state and non-state power in Islamic community building. Before proceeding with this analysis, I will situate my research in the appropriate literatures on geopolitics and geographies of religion that have informed my study. In the first part of this section, I will discuss literatures on geopolitics, critical geopolitics, and feminist geopolitics. This discussion highlights the advantages and shortcomings of geopolitical approaches in studying how religious communal spaces are affected by the nation-state and other political actors. Then, I will turn to literatures on the geographies of religion to understand how scholars have studied sacred and secular places. After examining these bodies of literatures, I will be able to situate my research on Islam in Astrakhan at the intersection of work being done in both the critical geographies of religion and feminist geopolitics. In the conclusion, I outline the conceptual approach of this study, which combines aspects of critical feminist geopolitics and critical geographies of religion.

Section 2.1: Classical Geopolitics

The development of geography as a discipline is linked with enlightenment exploration; similarly geopolitics has its origins with the rise of colonialism and empire-building (Livingstone 1993, Gilmartin and Kofman, 2004: 113). Two scholars associated with the birth of geopolitics in the second half of the nineteenth century are H.J. Mackinder, a British geographer, and Frederich Ratzel, a German geographer (Gilmartin and Kofman, 2004). These are two major individuals in geography's hagiography (Livingstone 1993). Mackinder's Heartland Theory, outlined in his 1904 article "The

Geographical Pivot of History," is considered one of the first geopolitical theories.

Mackinder was a member of the Royal Geographical Society, a learned society started in

1830 which was responsible for the organization and dissemination of information

gathered in exploration. Claiming that the age of exploration was over, and that the post-

Columbian age had begun, Mackinder's theory divided the world into three sections -the

World Island, the offshore island, and the outlying islands. He argued that control over

the pivot-area in the "World-Island," which is located in present-day Russia, would allow

an empire control over 50% of the world's resources. He outlined a global imaginary

where people inhabit a worldwide, closed political system, and where weaker territorial

units would be taken over by the colonizing powers (Mackinder, 1904: 421-422). The

Heartland Theory was a call for Great Britain to transform from a maritime power into a

land-based one to better position itself in the balance of politico-territorial power.

Although never adopted by the British, the Heartland Theory showed that geopolitical

thought was the preserve of elite, educated European men. Geopolitics has its origins in

the struggle for territory and Eurocentric thought.

Ratzel believed that modern states desired to achieve Grossraum (large space), much

like the United States. He proposed that the state was not just territory, but also culture.

Size mattered: large states had a higher civilization, and more "primitive" civilizations

had less territory (Livingstone, 1993: 200-201, Agnew, 2003: 98-99). States were the

unit of the geopolitical order, but this order could change as more advanced states

absorbed lesser ones. His ideas were folded into Nazi geopolitik through his student

Rudolf Kjellen, who was the first person to use the term geopolitics. However, Ratzel

called for a blending of cultures in the quest for Grossraum, rather than the biological

unity of the Aryan race (Agnew, 2003: 99, Livingstone, 1993: 202).

Germany and Britain were two great imperial powers, and two forefathers of

geopolitics emerged from their geographical-imperialist traditions (Gilmartin and

Kofman, 2004: 114). This period of geopolitics is what Agnew calls "Naturalized

geopolitics." In this period, the nation-state was seen as the organic unit of world

organization, and as a uniting force against political movements and laissez faire

capitalism (Agnew, 2003: 98). Although Gilmartin and Kofman write that no great

geopolitical thinker came from France, due to France's concerns with nation-building and

identity, Parker's work (2000) on the French School show that many geographers in

France were thinking geopolitically. Although these French geographers may not be part

of geography's hagiography, their work envisions an alternative geopolitics and many

ideas that resonate with critical geopolitical scholars.

French geopolitical thought was structured explicitly against Ratzelian ideas, and was

heavily influenced by Paul Vidal de la Blache. Vidal believed it was short-sighted for

geographers to accept the state as the solo entity of geopolitical order. He argued in an

1898 review of Ratzel's *Politische Geographie,* published in Annales de géographie, that

the:

> The phenomena of political geography are not fixed entities. Cities and states
> represent forms which have already evolved to arrive at the point where we now
> observe them and which may still continue to evolve. We must therefore see them
> as being changing phenomena (les faits en mouvement) (Parker, 2000: 958).

In France, a geopolitics emerged that did not uncritically privilege the nation-state as

the unit of analysis and argued that geopolitical orders were ever-evolving.

Vidal also wrote in his review of *Politische Geographie* that the state is part of a

progression of political-territorial entities and thus arises the necessity not to study the

state as an isolated compartment, some sort of a slice of the earth's surface. By its

origins, its direction, its stages of development and the provisional nature of its existence it is part of a wider group (of phenomena) the life of which interpenetrates its own (Parker, 2000: 959). According to geographers of the Vidalian tradition (Albert Demangeon, Jacques Ancel and Yves-Marie Goblet), the state drew legitimacy from treaties and legality, rather than claims to be the natural territorial order (Parker, 2000: 959). States were seen by Vidalians as enclosures which crippled a nation and the genre de vie (cultural milieu), in contrast to the Ratzelian idea that states were representative of the health of a nation (Parker, 2000: 962).

Goblet, a Vidal-inspired French geographer, considered political geography as a "task of peace (Goblet 1955, 225)" He envisioned geopolitical space to be occupied by international emporiums, rather than nation-states. To Goblet, the trading city was an example of open geographical space that had been deadened by the nation-state. He proposed that borders of nations limited the potential flows between different places. The Hanseatic League is an example of the open geopolitical space he imagines. His international emporiums are not tied to nation-states, and are instead flexible lines of trade and communication linking territorial space (Parker, 2000: 962). Perhaps, Goblet's work can be seen as a precursor to calls from geographers to pay attention to flows that exist between places.

French geographers provide an alternative to the traditional genealogy of geopolitics, and perhaps one of the most important ideas that they had was that the nation-state was not the end of the evolution of political-territorial units. During the Cold War, geopolitics became characterized by the bifurcation of the world into communist and capitalist. There were two superpowers, the US and USSR (Agnew, 2003: 109). States sided with the superpowers, and international entities like NATO, World Bank, Warsaw Pact and

CMEA developed. Although the nation-state was the preclusion for membership in these entities, a new international scale of geopolitics was created in the Cold War which would both challenge and reify the integrity of the nation-state.

Section 2.2: Critical Geopolitics

In the 1990s, as the Cold War ended and globalization intensified, the field of critical geopolitics emerged. Agnew and O'Tuathail (1992) were the first to propose geopolitics as discourse, rather than as an empirical approach to statecraft (Dodds, 2001). Rather than positing geopolitics as a science, geopolitics was proposed as a form of the state's power/knowledge. They write that geopolitics:

> should be critically re-conceptualized as a discursive practice by which intellectuals of statecraft 'spatialize' international politics in such a way to represent a 'world' characterized by particular types of places, peoples, and dramas. In our understanding, the study of geopolitics is the study of the spatialization of international politics by core powers and hegemonic states (1992: 192).

Rather than describing global space, geopolitics creates certain stereotypes of global space to justify foreign policy experience. It is the role of critical geopolitics to expose how global space is written and to challenge hegemonic geopolitical worldviews (O'Tuathail, 1996: 20). Influenced by Foucault and Derrida, O'Tuathail looks at the underlying motivations for why elites and states shape geopolitical discourses in certain ways (Gilmartin and Kofman, 2004: 119).

In *Critical Geopolitics*, O'Tuathail describes geopolitics as working to de-territorialize and de-politicize international relations (1996: 53). One way geopolitics accomplishes this is through presenting itself as a classical tradition of thought or statecraft when it has always had an unstable meaning and was contingent upon its historical and social milieu (1996: 64). The debate over geopolitics does not mean the

term is useless, but rather that geopolitics must be understood in textuality, or within the networks of discourses that they produce and are produced. Historical, geographical, and political specificity help to understand the various purposes of geopolitics within certain discourses.

Geopolitics also depoliticizes international relations through the naturalization of ethnocentric tendencies. Even though classical geopolitical reasoning may divide the world into categories such as core and periphery, or first, second, and third world, these categories are based on Western, imperial forms of knowledge. From positions of power, elites and scholars sought to create an objective, panoptical view of the world in accordance with Cartesian perspectivalism. This refers to the ability to distance oneself from a view and become an objective subject seeing a picture in its whole. To see geopolitical space as whole is to see it as "closed space." Territory is made visible by its organization into rational entities vis-a-vis nation-states. Critical geopolitics works to deconstruct the god's eye view of the world. Rather than claim Cartesian perspectivalism as objective, a deconstructive critical geopolitics claims that this is a way of subjectively imagining global space through exercising power and naturalizing Eurocentrism. One aim of critical geopolitics is to raise awareness that divisions such as first/second/third or core/periphery are productions of space- spectacles rather than reality, and to question the purposes of elites presenting the world in certain ways (O'Tuathail, 1996: 34).

Critical geopolitics sought to deconstruct geopolitics in order to expose the role it played in using violence to promote the sovereignty of the nation-state. By presenting the nation-state as the de-facto, natural unit of political analysis, geopolitics served

militaristic causes, resulting in colonialism, imperialism, and warfare. Militarism is understood as:

> state-society crystallization that brings together autocratic bureaucracy, technocratic professionalism, class segments, lethal technologies, economic interests, and popular nationalism, a crystallization that interweaves elements of many different sources of social power and is reducible to no single factor (O'Tuathail, 1996: 256).

Geography and the struggle for territory took the blame for these violences, rather than the militaristic milieu which produced space to serve imperialistic aims (O'Tuathail, 1996: 55).Significantly, critical geopolitics exposes space as a discursive subject, rather than as a container or object (Murphy et al. 2004: 621).

Although Flint is wary of critical geopolitics for focusing on the history of geopolitical discourse, others in the discipline have outlined alternative forms of geopolitics (Flint, 2002 391). O'Tuathail adopted an approach of localized geopolitics in his application of critical geopolitics. This approach takes an empirical, disaggregated look at the local scale in international political matters. In an uncritical geopolitics, the local was understood as a slice of the global whole. Local places were imagined as synecdoche of their nation-states, rather than as diverse, potential international actors unto themselves. (O'Tuathail, forthcoming 4). O'Tuathail and Agnew write:

> The irony of practical geopolitical representations of place is that, in order to succeed, they necessitate the abrogation of genuine geographical knowledge about the diversity and complexities of places as social entities. A complex, diverse, and heterogeneous social mosaic of places is hypostatized into a singular, overdetermined and predictable actor (1992).

Classical geopolitics can be considered a-geographical in the sense that it paints the world in broad, nation-size brushstrokes, ignoring place-based particularism (O'Tuathail, forthcoming 4). Localized geopolitics calls for geographers to move from the global/macro-scale to a local one, and from capital cities to other areas. It disaggregates

abstractions such as first/second/third world through a call for localized studies. A localized study looks at how organizations work on the ground in specific places, and through networks of power rather than via centers of power. For example, O'Tuathail analyzes linkages amongst various ethnonationalist political parties, local warlords, and government agencies while investigating ethnic cleansing and population returns in Bosnia-Herzegovina (O'Tuathail, forthcoming: 12). Investigating population returns after ethnic cleansing with a localized geopolitical framework allows for a nuanced look at how local power dynamics impact returns to Bosnia-Herzegovina (O'Tuthail, forthcoming: 23). Through attention to local studies, perhaps critical geopolitics can serve aims other than imperialism, despite the role imperialism played in the initial creation of geopolitical discourse.

Section 2.3: Feminist Critique of Critical Geopolitics

Feminist geographers argue that critical geopolitics has reproduced rather than changed the way geographers study geopolitics (Staeheli, 2001). Feminist political geographers have accused critical geopolitics of making many of the same assumptions of traditional/classical geopolitics. Specifically, critical geopolitics has been accused of focusing on the primacy of the nation-state, privileging elites, adhering to a masculinist, Cartesian perspective. Examining the weaknesses of critical geopolitics will reveal what a critically feminist geopolitics looks like.

Some critiques are that the nation-state still functions as the de-facto unit of analysis and the public domain is favored over the private (Secor, 2001; Pain, 2009; Gilmartin and Kofman, 2004: 121). Critical geopolitics may not accept the nation-state as a natural unit of territory, yet in the critical geopolitical literatures, alternative spatialities of political power are often overlooked (Staeheli, 2001: 186). There is little attention to the

household or family and community or regional networks. Although networks are often

mediated through nation-states, globalization, regionalism and separatism are forces

challenging state sovereignty (Flint, 2002: 393). Feminist geographers are concerned

with analyzing how state power functions or is subverted at multiple scales (Staeheli,

2001: 186). Work in feminist geopolitics- or counter-geopolitics- shows the importance

of examining political life beyond the level of the nation-state.

In "Toward a Feminist Counter-Geopolitics," Secor oulines an alternative

spatialization of politics (2001). She draws from feminist political geography, writing

that, "feminist approaches show how the (immanently political) categories of public and

private, global and local, formal and informal, ultimately blur, overlap, and collapse into

one another in the making of political life (193)." Through investigating daily activities

of women in Istanbul, Secor shows how the everyday can be political. By decoupling

geopolitics from the nation-state and global scale, new spaces of political life appear.

Although critical geopolitics exposes how elites produce geopolitical space, feminist

political geographers believe critical geopolitics are still elite-centered (Gilmartin and

Kofman, 2004: 121).   O'Tuathail and Agnew write that 'wise men' are not the only

people shaping geopolitics, they then outline a new class of geopolitical actors who still

seem to possess class, access to education, and upward mobility. They divide geopolitics

into two categories, practical and formal, with practical geopoliticians being politicians or

military officers, and formal geopoliticians being strategic thinkers and public

intellectuals. These actors still hold elite positions in a society. Gilmartin and Kofman,

however, claim people carrying out geopolitical agendas and shaping geopolitical

imaginations are not always in the government or in elite positions. Although state

strategy may be defined by elites, Kofman argues that geopolitics needs to be

democratized and examined beyond elite attitudes and viewpoints (2004: 121).

Analyzing geopolitics beyond elites is one of the tasks of feminist critical geopolitics.

Nick Megoran has examined the way popular culture transmits geopolitical views and

discourses of danger to youths in Uzbekistan. Pop music is one way that youths

participate in and embody "a geopolitical script that could be found in learned academic

tones, the news media, the universities, and in discos and dining rooms across the state,

binding the population together in a fearful experience of a nation in danger (Megoran,

2009: 33)." Secor's work (2001)on feminist geopolitics follows the daily patterns of

Muslim women in Istanbul, exposing the political livelihood of everyday life. Musicians

and women are two categories of political actors missed by classical and critical

geopolitics.

Feminist political geographers argue that geopolitics continues to be masculinist.

But, a feminist geopolitics does not simply involve studying the way women are political

actors in spatializations of power (Hyndman, 2001: 211). Dowler and Sharp write that

"Most specifically, a feminist geopolitics does not simply rewrite women back into

geopolitical histories. Instead, it offers a lens through which the everyday experiences of

the disenfranchised can be made more visible (2001: 169)." Geopolitical events may take

place in war zones, borderlands, and presidential quarters, but they also take place in

private homes, discos, places of worship, and in communities. Looking in ghettos and

other places of disenfranchisement, home life, and previously seemingly apolitical spaces

is the task of feminist political geographers.

Staeheli argues that geopolitics/ political geographies and feminist geographies do not

work well together because political geography privileges the global scale and outcomes

rather than processes (2001). A feminist geography does not prioritize the global scale,

but rather looks at how global, national, or urban scales are related to each other in political relationships of power (Hyndman, 2001: 212). However, many critical feminist geographers, such as Secor, Pain, and Smith, have asked how global processes shape everyday practices in geopolitical analyses. Pain and Smith's edited volume *Fear: Critical Geopolitics and Everyday Life*, looks at the circulation of fear to see how the everyday and geopolitical factors influence each other (2009: 3). Their collections of essays follows Dowler and Sharp's call from 2001 to embody geopolitics and to study ways that bodies become represented and entangled in international relations, to locate geopolitics and to give voice to marginalized groups, and to ground geopolitics, finding out how international imaginations play out in the everyday life (Pain, 2009: 6).

What a critically feminist geopolitics offers that a localized geopolitics does not is attention to the interaction between geopolitics and everyday life. Everyday life has emerged as an important analytic which counters traditional gridding of space into national/local/global scales and public/private boundaries. A localized geopolitics privileges the local scale, maintaining dichotomies that alternative geopolitics should seek to move beyond. Examining everyday lives involves looking beyond knowledge produced at the national level and beyond elites. Looking at everyday life does not mean that the nation state disappears as a unit of analysis, but that it is de-centered. Powerful elites are not denied their might, but other actors are considered. Like localized geopolitics, critically feminist geopolitics looks at networks of power rather than centers of calculation. It is a way to democratize geopolitics by including people and spaces previously overlooked in analyses on spatialities of political power, and it moves geopolitical analysis away from thinking about space in fixed scales and false binaries of public and private. Although classical geopolitics may be seen as militaristic and critical

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geopolitics as deconstruction without a reconstruction (Hyndman, 2001: 213), from these fields feminist geopolitics emerges. A feminist geopolitical approach investigates both how nation-state level and elite discourses impact daily lives, and how everyday lives impact elite discourses.

Section 2.4: Geographies of Religion

Historically, religions have played a large role in the shaping of local, state, and international politics. For example, in the Russian Empire under Nicholas I, the slogan "Orthodoxy-autocracy-nationality" served as political ideology (Johnson, 2005 p.30; Riasanovsky, 2005 p.362). In contemporary secular countries, religions still serves as powerful social and political forces (West, 2006: 280). In this section of my literature review, I am going to review research trends on geographies and critical geographies of religion, and overview research being done specifically in the context of Russia. Doing so will highlight how my research on Islamic communities contributes to a body of literature characterized heavily by attention to the relationship between the state and the Orthodox Church in Russia.

Geographers have made significant contributions to scholarship in the field of religion. Cultural geographers like Ellen Semple (1911) have studied how environment determines religious imagery, while others like Isaac (1959) have investigated how religious motivations transforms landscapes. In her survey on trends in the geographies of religion, Kong (1990) cites the study of religion as a superorganic entity affecting the landscape as the most common type of research done on the geographies of religion. This type of research includes studies on the spatial diffusions of religion, as well as distribution and demography. These analyses are characterized as highly useful in their

descriptive nature, but also as amalgamations of facts lacking analytical insight (Kong, 1990: 362).

Another strain of research on religion and the cultural landscape is the study of how religion affects the physical make-up of landscapes through sacred structures and spaces. Geographers have studied the types of sacred structures religious groups such as Buddhists or Muslims use to mark their landscape (Kong, 1990: 363). For example, Islam and Noble (1998) discuss mosque architecture and morphology in Bangladesh. Building materials and window styles are among some of the elements examined. They understand architecture as "the carrier of the social, political, and cultural history of a nation (1998: 5)," and examine how mosque architecture changed over time in Bangladesh in regards to societal and political shifts. This work moves beyond a synthesis of building style through critical attention to architecture's role in nation-building.

Rather than focusing on religion as an element of culture existing in isolation, geographers in the 1980s called for studies of the interaction between religious and secular agents on the landscape (Kong 1990: 359,364). The shift from studying religion as a superorganic cultural force affecting the landscape to studying religion as part of dynamic and contested cultures represents the shift within cultural geography from traditional to critical analysis (Kong 1990: 368). Rather than focusing on the diffusion of religion or numbers of worshippers, critical geographers looked at changing symbolism and the textuality of religious landscapes. The metaphor of landscape as text is outlined Duncan's book, "The City as Text: The Politics of Landscape Interpretation in the Kandyan Kingdom (1990)." In this book, Duncan looks at how the landscape of the Kandyan Kingdom was created in such a way to secure, legitimize, and hegemonize the

king's power. What thinking about the landscape as text does is to reveal that the landscape is not "innocent." Rather, it is a result of political and social motivations (Duncan, 1990: 13). The textual, symbolic landscape is an invented tradition serving the elites in their creation of imagined communities. Thinking of landscape as text allows the script written by elites to be re-written and interpreted in ways independent of the author. In this way, cultural, religious landscapes can become a space to ascertain or contest power relations.

The political symbolism of sacred spaces served as a fertile area of focus for cultural geographers. Lewandowski studies how the postcolonial Madras state used Hindu symbols in renaming places to secure political legitimacy in her analysis of urban landscapes (1984). David Harvey's article, "Monument and Myth (1979)," explores how the class struggle between the leftist Paris Commune and the Catholic Church and Parisian bourgeoisie in Second-Empire Paris becomes ensconced within the built environment. The titular monument under study is the Sacre-Coeur, a Catholic monumental cathedral built in Paris on the hill of Montmarte between 1880 and 1914, a time of overt class warfare between workers and royalists. Also on Montmartre, in 1871, Eugene Varlin, a member of the Commune, was beaten and shot by royalists. The Sacre-Coeur, meant to venerate the sacred heart of Jesus, became for many leftist Parisians symbolic of social struggle. Exploring different myths surrounding the Sacre-Coeur shows how sacred spaces cannot be divorced from secular contexts.

Another area receiving critical attention by geographers is the relationship between secular and sacred places in urban space. In her agenda for new geographies of religion, Lily Kong writes, "Theories of urban space and society must take on board integrally the ways in which socially constructed religious places overlap, complement or conflict with

secular places and other socially constructed religious places in the allocation of use and meaning (2001: 212)." In other words, geographers need to pay attention to the cultural politics of religion, and the various interactions between state powers and religious communities in the creation of sacred and secular landscapes. She calls attention to the fluidity that can exist between secular and sacred, and wants to investigate how places can be infused with dual meanings (Kong, 2001). Although a church may have one set of meanings to its congregation, it is seen in a different light by the government. Kong outlines this divergence as one between insiders and outsiders. Insiders are individuals who go to religious sites for congregation and sacred experiences, and who relate to places on an intimate level. She considers the state to be an outsider , which means that it views the religious site in terms of functionality rather than spirituality. Factors like orderliness and efficiency weigh in over holiness in assigning locations or planning demolitions. The aesthetic value of a holy site may be important to outsiders in the sense that it promotes tourism to an area (Kong, 1993: 345-346). Yet, Kong is uncritical in her acceptance of the state as purely secular, rather than as mediated through the bodies of those working for the government who may possess religious affiliations driving their decisions and individual politics. Although the separation of religion and state may be something expected of a secular government, it rarely works that way in practice.

Importantly, Kong proposes that sacredness is not an essential quality of a place, but is created through processes of inclusion and exclusion, and appropriation and dispossession (2001: 213). Her work calls attention to the need to pay attention to social and political forces enabling construction or destruction of sacred places. The production, of sacred place is one area in which the politics of sacralization have been studied. Urban geographers, for example, have investigated debates on the locations of sacred places of

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worship or study. Dwyer and Meyer have studied the funding of Islamic schools in Western Europe (1995), while Kong has studied the location of religious buildings in Singapore (1993).

In "Negotiating conceptions of sacred space," Kong studies the tensions between religious individuals and the state in the creation of the religious landscape in multi-confessional Singapore (1993). Although at the macro-level of the state it appears as if there is no conflict between the state and various religious groups, her methodology of interviews and in-depth questionnaires reveals various forms of symbolic resistance and hegemonic rationalization individuals use to cope with threats to sacred spaces by the state (1993). Her work is also insightful because she studies many different religious communities in the context of Singapore, including Islamic, Buddhist, and Chinese religionists. She reveals tensions between the groups and exposes religious harmony in Singapore and the secular commitment to multiculturalism as a myth. For example, a Hindu feels Islam is more favored by the government due to the many mosques in the city, while new Hindu temples are located to the periphery (Kong, 1993: 347). It appears that although there is no state religion in Singapore, some people feel that there is a hierarchy of preference of religious groups reflected in the built environment.

Besides investigating politics of sacralization, anthropologists and geographers have also looked at the politics of religious communities. Religious communities have a political element to them because they are considered to be "imagined." Rather than being homogenous units clearly separable and different from other groups, the boundaries, identity, and differences within communities are constructed, and are always being negotiated and contested through everyday life (Kong, 2001: 222). Religious places pay a key role in fostering religious identities (Ehrkamp, 2007: 14). In a study of

Hindu-Caribbeans in London, Vertovec (1992) discusses how temples are important places in producing and reproducing Caribbean-Indian-Hindu communities through stress on congregational activities like worship and activities (Kong, 2001: 223). Nye (1993) writes that there is a dialectical relationship between sacred places and religious communities: building a place of worship requires appealing to a community, while the place of worship also creates a sense of community (Kong, 2001: 224). Mills' work (2006) in Kuzguncuk, Istanbul, focuses on how the multiconfessional and multiethnic neighborhood landscape is used by Turkish media to create narratives of tolerance and belonging, while obscuring narratives of a traumatic minority history and present. Examining the interrelated politics of religious place and community making is one way geographers contribute to critical studies of religion.

In her review on works done on geographies of religion in the 1990s, Kong writes that geographers should pay attention to looking at not only officially sacred spaces, like churches and mosques, but also at other religious structures like houses, schools, organizations, and festivals (Kong, 2001: 226). Ehrkamp's research on Turkish immigrants in Duisburg-Marxloh, Germany discusses ways religious identities are enacted beyond mosques and in other everyday spaces, like private homes, schools, and teahouses (2007). In order to understand the identity politics of religious communities, it is necessary to examine both officially recognized religious spaces, like mosques and pilgrimage sights; yet other spaces are also key sights of identity-building (Kong, 2010).

In the 2000s, there has been increased research focused on the geographies of religion (Kong 2010). This is evidenced by a special section devoted to geographies of religion in a 2006 issue of the Annals of the Association of American Geographers. Ferber and Holloway focused on ontological issues on doing research on the geographies of religion.

Ferber (2006) provided a look at the issue of objectivity in research on religion, arguing for a move beyond debates on insider/outsider roles of research through encouraging reflexivity in research. Holloway (2006) called for research on the geography of beliefs to pay attention to affect and embodiment, arguing, "the affectual relations and forms of embodiment that produce and are produced in religious-spiritual space must be given greater attention if we are to develop more complex and nuanced analyses (186)." In the same issue, Ivakhiv (2006) encourages geographers to study the religious and sacred as discursive formations impacting how significance is distributed and created across space rather than as a term with a stable meaning. Proctor (2006) also wrestles with the question of how to define religion, and uses a survey of Americans to search for an answer to this question. This special section raised and provided a scholarly debate on many important issues facing geographers doing research on religion.

Geographies of religion have focused on three main strains of research: distribution and location of religious places, the politics of creating sacred space, and the identity politics of religious communities. Studies of religious communities in Singapore and Duisburg-Marxloh have shown the importance of local studies in understanding the geographical particularism of a community. These studies reveal difference and complexities of religious identities that are often overlooked when researching at the scale of the nation-state (Ehrkamp, 2007: 12). Also, local studies show how a community cannot be thought of outside neighborhood, urban, and even transnational contexts (Ehrkamp, 2007: 26).

Section 2.5: Geographies of Religion in the Russian Federation

In order to sit situate my project's contribution to critical geographies of religion in Russia I provide a brief review of literatures on geographies of religion in the Russian

context. While some geographers have studied Islam in Russia, most of this research falls into the realm of descriptive religious geography, with a focus on demography and location of Islam. Forest and Johnson (2001) and Sidorov (2000) have done more critical research on the relationship of the Orthodox Church to the politics of place-making in Russia.

Walker and Heleniak have both contributed scholarship relating to the size and distribution of Muslim communities in Russia (Walker, 2005; Heleniak, 2006). Heleniak points out that there is great difficulty in counting the number of members of any religious group in Russia due to lack of questions about religion on the Russian census, last conducted in 2002 (Heleniak, 2006: 426). In the absence of census data about religious affiliation, Heleniak estimates numbers of Islamic people in Russia by counting ethnic groups associated historically with an Islam. He classifies 56 of the 184 ethnic groups counted in the 2002 census as Muslim, and uses data from Russia's Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology to confirm these groups' affinity with Islam (Heleniak, 2006: 427). Conflating religious affiliation with ethnic affiliation provides a rough estimate of how many Muslims are in Russia, but fails to count everyone. There can be many pitfalls to this strategy. For example, Tatars are the second largest ethnic group after Russians, and the largest group of ethnic Muslims, making up 38% of the ethnic Islamic population (Heleniak, 2006: 432). Although many Tatars may be atheist, Christian, or agnostic, there are no data collected at the national level in regards to religious affiliation and so it is hard to guess the numbers of self-identifying Islamic people in Russia. There are also no numbers on the amount of ethnic Russians which practice Islam (Heleniak, 2006: 432). If we accept that ethnicity and religion go hand in hand, there is still discrepancy in collecting data on ethnicity. Many members of minority

populations were counted into an "Other" category at the district level, and so it is hard to

extrapolate how many people in this category fall into ethnic Islamic groups (Heleniak,

2006: 430). Also, it is speculated that census fraud and false inflation of population

occurred in Chechnya in 2002 (Heleniak, 2006: 431). These discrepancies in counting

make the rough estimate of Islamic people in Russia vary widely, from 2 million to over

30 million (Heleniak, 2006: 434; Walker, 2005: 247). Because the Russian population is

roughly 145 million, this means Russia has been predicted to be as little as 2 percent or

up to 21 percent Islamic (Walker, 2005: 247). Heleniak points out that the positionality

of the reporting group greatly affects the numbers reported, citing that those who fear the

influence of Islam in Russia use higher numbers to create an Islamic threat (2006: 434).

Although Putin reported in 2003 that there were 20 million Muslims in Russia, Heleniak

could find no information to support his numbers. Notably, Putin presented these

numbers at a meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference as part of his case for

Russian membership (Walker, 2005: 247). Despite lack of data, Heleniak and Walker

point out that the 20 million mark has been used in many news sources as a statistic since

(Heleniak, 2006: 434; Walker, 2005: 247).

Out of the 83 federal districts of Russia, eight are identified as homelands of Islamic

people: Adygea, Bashkortostan, Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia,Kabardo-Balkaria,

Karachayevo-Cherkessia, and Tatarstan (Heleniak, 2006: 429). The Caucasian republics

of Chechnya, Dagestan, and Ingushetia have the highest percentage of Islamic

populations, at 96%, 96.9%, and 98.5% respectively (Heleniak, 2006: 438). In

comparing figures from the 1989 USSR census and 2002 Russian census, Heleniak

shows that although Russia's population as a whole declined by 2 million people, the

Islamic population is on the rise. He finds that many Islamic ethnic groups are the

youngest in the country, with Chechens and Ingush being the country's youngest groups and the median age of Tatars being below national average (Heleniak, 2006: 432). Heleniak writes that the Islamic communities in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan can be seen as more ingrained in Russian society, because more Russians live in these territories. For example, in Tatarstan in 2002, there was a 53% Tatar and 39% Russian population, and in Bashkortostan there was a 30% Bashkir, 14% Tatar, and 36% Russian population (Heleniak, 2006: 442). The concentration of Russians in ethnic homelands and also the number of Tatars in ethnic Russian territories suggests that these two ethnic groups are more willing to intermingle than ethnic Caucasian groups. Heleniak's work provides an analysis on Russian census data to reveal dynamics of the Muslim population. He recognizes the pitfalls of using such data, such as undercount, and the underlying motivations for exaggerating or lying about the number of Islamic people in Russia. Although he works from data gathered at the national level, he is critical of its collection and use. Also, his work provides good background information for understanding the distribution, nature, and size of the Russian Islamic population.

Although most geographical research on Islam in Russia is related to figuring out the size and distribution of the group, research on Orthodoxy in Russia focuses more on the relationship between the church and state politics. Sidorov (2000) and Forest and Johnson(2002) shows how the built environment of Orthodoxy is evident in how the secular Russian state and how elite politicians use Orthodoxy to reflect political values and create certain national images.

Sidorov's article on the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow, Russia, examines how a large and prominently-positioned Orthodox church in Russia's capital shows the interplay between scale, politics, and Orthodoxy throughout Russia's history (Sidorov ,

2000: 231). The cathedral was built in the 1890s as a monument to the Patriotic Wars against Napoleon and was larger than churches in the Moscow Kremlin (Sidorov, 2000: 557). In 1931, the cathedral was demolished and a Palace of the Soviets was planned to be built in its place. A monument meant to be symbolic of Soviet universal greatness was to replace the monument to Russian Orthodox victory over Napoleon. The plans for the monument were scrapped due to WWII, and a large pool was built on the site (Sidorov, 2000: 560). Local Moscow authorities decided to rebuild the cathedral in 1994; the project was sponsored largely out of a loan by the city, which has been repaid by banks and businesses (Sidorov, 2000: 565). Although this Cathedral is a national monument, the plans to rebuild it were dictated by political elites localized in Moscow, rather than by the Russian Ministry of Culture or Orthodox Church (Sidorov, 2000: 562). Sidorov writes, "By localizing a national monument, the builders enlarge the scope of the local Moscow state (2000: 564)." This account shows how religious spaces can be created for national ends and also how Moscow and elites imagine themselves as representative of the whole Russian Federation. The iterations of buildings on the site of the Cathedral reveal much about political change within Russia (Sidorov, 2000: 568). The newest Cathedral shows the expansive role of Moscow in the political state, as well as a desire to continue the association of the Russian state with Orthodoxy.

Forest and Johnson's work on post-Soviet identity transformation in Russia also involves interrogating transformations in memorial landscapes. They use the constructivist school of nationalism and the literature on landscape as text to study how elites in Moscow have transformed Soviet-era monuments to shape a certain type of Russian national imaginary. They argue that:

> the physical transformation of places of memory during critical junctures reflects the struggle among political elites for the symbolic capital embodied in and represented by these sites. By co-opting, contesting, ignoring, or removing certain types of monuments, political elites engage in a symbolic dialogue with each other and with the public in an attempt to gain prestige, legitimacy, and influence (2002: 525).

Many monuments were taken down, transformed, or re-dedicated in the aftermath of the collapse of the USSR in 1991. Forest and Johnson develop a three-part schema to classify the fates of monuments: Co-opted/Glorified, Disavowed, or Contested. (Forest and Johnson, 2002: 530). While monuments to Lenin are considered contested within Russia, because some have been removed while others remain, World War II memorials fall under the category of Co-opted and Glorified. Other places falling into this category are associated with Russian Orthodoxy and pre-1917 Russian culture (2002: 534). Because Orthodox churches fall into the category of monuments which elites seek to co-opt and glorify in order to gain influence with Moscow's public, Forest and Johnson's work shows the symbolic role the Orthodox church plays in the creation of a wider Russian imaginary. The politics of sacralizing Orthodox space is seen as important for legitimacy, at least within Moscow.

Forest and Johnson's research supports Sidorov's arguments that the local Moscow state plays an expansive role in the Russian Federation. Although their work focuses on Russian nation-building via the built environment, they do not specify if they understand Russian to refer to an ethnic group or to a citizenship category. There is little research on Islamic and other minorities' identity-formation, or reclamation of historical mosques and Islamic/minority monuments in Russia. There is also little research on the interaction of the state and Islamic religious groups within Russia. Perhaps, the elites in Moscow are not focused on the symbolic capital associated with historical Islamic sites in Russia.

Yet, I argue that moving outside of Moscow will reveal the symbolic capital of

minorities' religious landscapes and the role that the state plays in shaping them.

Section 2.6: Studying Islam in Astrakhan

The bodies of literature outlined above inform my project. I have adopted a critical

feminist geopolitical stance in order to understand how communities of faith function as

political actors in contemporary Russia and how the everyday and local spaces of

religious life are impacted by state power at the national, regional, and local scales. I turn

to the critical geographies of religion to understand the politics of making sacred space

and to understand the role of religious places in community-building. Looking closely at

how religious communities and the state interact in the creation or destruction of the

Islamic landscape of Astrakhan shows how geopolitical motivations impact sacred

spaces. My approach is characterized by the following themes:

- In keeping with the suggestion by O'Tuathail (forthcoming) to conduct locality
  studies in geopolitical research, as well as Ehrkamp's (2007) and Kong's (1993)
  critical religious geographical research done locally, my analysis of Islamic
  community building in Russia is an in-depth analysis at Islamic communities in
  the local context of Astrakhan. Of particular concern is an analysis of the
  historical and contemporary landscape of Islam in the city.

- My localized approach does not mean that I replace a privileging of research at
  the national level with research on a micro-level. Rather, by examining the
  political life of local communities, I show how various places and scales of state
  and other powers interact in the creation of Islamic communities within
  Astrakhan. I show how Islamic communities in Astrakhan are embedded in

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networks of state and other forms of power.

- By choosing Astrakhan as a site, I am following critical and feminist geopolitical calls to move out of the capital city. My research is not in one of the ethnic homelands of Islamic people, but rather based in a multi-cultural provincial capital. This move is inspired by Kong's work in multi-confessional Singapore and a desire to study Islam in a Russia imagined as ethnically and spiritually diverse, rather than as a homogeneous nation-state.

In the following chapter, I discuss my site, Astrakhan, in-depth and outline my methodology.

Chapter 3: Introduction to Site and Research Methods

In this chapter, I introduce the reasons for selecting Astrakhan as the site for investigating my research questions, and provide background on the history and development of Islam in Astrakhan. I then turn to outlining my research methods which include archival research and interviews with leaders of mosque communities in Astrakhan.

Section 3.1: Site Selection: Astrakhan, Russia

One overlap between critical geopolitics and critical geographies of religion is the call for empirical, local studies (O'Tuathail, forthcoming, Kong, 2001) and a rejection of formal political arenas as sites of inquiry (Sharp, 2004: 94). In selecting Astrakhan, I followed O'Tuathail's recommendation for geographers interested in critical geopolitical research to move out of capital cities. Also, much research on the relationship of religion and state in Russia is based in Moscow (Sidorov, 2001, Forest and Johnson, 2002). Privileging Moscow as a research site would make me complicit in expanding the political scope of the Moscow state (Sidorov, 2001). Because my research is, in a sense, about understanding the reaches and limits of the Kremlin's power, I did not choose to research the sizeable Islamic community within Moscow and instead turned to Astrakhan. Part of the reason Astrakhan serves as a good field site is its provincial locale- it is located approximately halfway between Tehran, Iran and Moscow at the Volga River Delta near the Caspian Sea. Figure 3.1 illustrates the distance between Astrakhan Oblast and Moscow, while Figure 3.2 and Figure 3.3 illustrate Astrakhan's situational location at the intersection of the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

Figure 3.1: Astrakhan Oblast (highlighted). (Map by Jeff Levy, University of Kentucky.)

Although Kazan is the capital of Tatarstan, the traditional homeland of the largest

ethnic Islamic minority in Russia, I wanted to study Russian Islamic communities outside

of this historical core. Inspired by Kong's research in multi-confessional Singapore, I

wanted to go to a diverse city within Russia. The Caucasian republics of Ingushetia,

Chechnya, and Dagestan are not as religiously or ethnically diverse as Astrakhan

(Heleniak, 2006). Because of the Chechen war and a desire to examine the government's

relationship with non-separatist Islamic groups, I also wanted to go to a place where

moderate Islam was the dominant form practiced. Astrakhan also makes a good site for

studying Islamic-community building in Russia because of its multi-ethnic and multi-

confessional character. In the following section, I provide a historical overview of

Astrakhan.

Figure 3.2 Astrakhan in the Caspian Sea Region. (Map by Dick Gilbreath, University of
Kentucky.)

Figure 3.3: Astrakhan (underlined) in the context of the Middle East and Eastern Europe. (Map by Dick Gilbreath, University of Kentucky.)

From Hajji-Tarkhan to Astrakhan

In 2008, Astrakhan celebrated its 450th anniversary. During my fieldwork in 2009, banners were still hung up all over the city, marking this milestone anniversary. However, as an interviewee said as he took me on a driving tour of the old town, "Astrakhan is much, much older (July 2009)." Reviewing the historical and political geographies of Astrakhan will reveal how Astrakhan earned its reputation as a cultural melting pot.

Historically, Astrakhan was called Xacitarxan, or Hajji-Tarkhan. Astrakhan's name has Turkish origins: 'hajj' refers to a governor or leader, and the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, while and 'tarkhan' means untaxed. The city was not taxed by the Golden Horde (Everett-Heath 2005). Hajji Tarkhan was a provincial city in the Golden Horde. The city's first recorded mention is in the 1330s, in the travels of Ibn Battuta (Battuta 2005). Ibn Battuta, an explorer and Berber Islamic scholar from Morocco, visited Astrakhan on his way to Sarai. Sarai was the capital city of the khans of the Golden Horde, and was located north of Astrakhan and on the Great Silk Road trading route. Of Hajji-Tarkhan, Battuta wrote, "It is one of the finest cities, with great bazaars, and is built on the river Itil (Volga), which is one of the great rivers of the world (2005: 151)." Although Hajji-Tarkhan was not on the Silk Route, it was a key trade center. In fact, the city's Russified name, Astrakhan, was used to refer to fur brought to Russia from Central Asian trade (Everett-Heath, 2005).

In 1395, Hajji-Tarkhan and Sarai were destroyed by Tamerlane, a Mongol from Central Asia who sought to re-establish the Mongol empire. In his quest to rebuild the

Mongol Empire, Tamerlane sought to destroy the Islamic Golden Horde. The cities were rebuilt, although the Golden Horde never re-united and split into smaller khanates. Hajji-Tarkhan became the capital city of the Astrakhan Khanate . The khanate existed from the 1460s to 1556, and the population was mainly Tatar and Nogais, an Islamic Turkic ethnic group (Ozturkler).

Ivan the Terrible and Boris Godunov in Astrakhan

In 1556, Ivan the Terrible captured Hajj-Tarkistan, four years after he conquered Kazan. Hence, 1558 is considered by the Russian state as the marker of Astrakhan's age. A strong connection exists between state power and architecture (Rowland, 2003: 35), as evidenced in the building of Archangel Michael Cathedral in the Kremlin. State power also impacted the architecture of the newly rebuilt Astrakhan, despite its distance from Moscow.

Although Ivan the Terrible defeated the khanate of Astrakhan, he was not responsible for the large amount of building projects happening in the lower Volga region. Rather, Boris Godunov, a boyar, planned and sponsored many of these projects in his quest for power. The Kremlin of Astrakhan was built starting in 1558. The walls were built with masonry and bricks scavenged from the ruins of Sarai. The height of the walls span from 7-11.3 meters, and there are 8 towers on the kremlin. Notably, the Astrakhan Kremlin was built in a similar style to others in Moscow and Smolensk (located in Imperial Russia's western frontier). Godunov's repetition of architectural style shows a desire to create a symbolic union of the Russian state (Rowland, 2003: 38). Importantly, Godunov sponsored an Orthodox cathedral to be built within the Astrakhan Kremlin in 1600. The Dormition Cathedral in the Astrakhan Kremlin was architecturally and spiritually based

on churches in the Moscow Kremlin. The cathedral symbolized the sanctity of Moscow's troops in their quest to dominate the Islamic khanates of the Volga region (Rowland, 2003: 38) and the Kremlin showed the strength of the Russian state. By sponsoring such projects, Godunov sought to show not only his own wealth, but the strength and piety of his clan (Rowland, 2003: 35). In order to be comparable to the Rurikid clan (the clan of Ivan the Terrible), Godunov had to build quickly and he had to build strategically. He sought to establish his legitimacy to power through architecture, and it worked. In 1598, when Ivan the Terrible's handicapped son, Fyodor the Bellringer, proved incapable of ruling or producing an heir, Russia needed a new ruling dynasty. Gudonov claimed the ruling position, and became tsar. And, the Dormition Cathedral and the Kremlin dominated and continue to dominate the Astrakhan skyline from their strategic location on top of a hill(Figure 3.4).
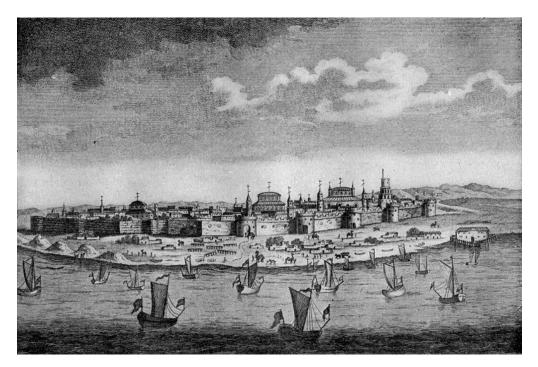

Figure 3.4: 17th Century Astrakhan. (*Rambaud's Russia*, 1898.)

While the Kremlin and Dormition Cathedrals became the visual centers of Astrakhan's religious and state landscape, Islam and other forms of faith continued to be practiced in the city. Despite using church architecture to proclaim the symbolic defeat of Islam, Godunov did not want to cripple the trade industry in Astrakhan. Godunov set up an infrastructure for trade in the city, building covered Persian and Bukhara markets on the outskirts of the kremlin, and later on establishing Indian, Tatar, and Armenian markets. Because of the desire to promote multinational trade, a multi-confessional infrastructure was also built. Mosques and Armenian churches were constructed near the markets and in the Tatar suburbs (Rowland, 2003: 38). While the kremlin and church were key political symbols, Godunov's desire to link Russian trade to a wider region allowed a new Islamic landscape to be built. Even though the landscape of Moscow traveled to Astrakhan, Astrakhan's situation on the Volga Delta ensured that the cultural and spiritual diversity of the region would continue.

Islam in the Soviet Era

Before the Bolshevik Revolution, Astrakhan was home to many different religions. However, the rise of the Communist Party and Stalinism greatly altered the religious communities and landscapes within the city and the Soviet Union as a whole. The Communist Party promoted atheism, and there was no official state religion. In this section I am going to provide a broader overview of what happened to Islam in Russia as a whole and then Astrakhan in particular.

Before the Soviet period, Orthodoxy and the Russian state were constitutive of each other. The Russian state was seen as the protector of Orthodoxy and bore the political ideology of, "Autocracy, Orthodoxy, Nationality" (Johnson 2005, 3). In the Bolshevik revolution, all three parts of this slogan were under attack. The Orthodox Church was

targeted, as was the monarchy. The Government Decree of 1918 on the Separation of the Church from the State and the School from the Church sought to crush the monarchy through dissociating the Orthodox Church from the State (Yemelianova, 2002: 103). In the early Soviet period, Islam was not a target of the Communist Party. Politicians stated that they viewed there to be no conflict between Islam and Soviet rule, and the Soviet government returned mosque properties confiscated by the tsar back to their communities in Orenburg, the Caucuses, and Kazan (Yemelianova, 2002: 103).

After World War II, some churches and mosques reopened, and holy texts could be printed (Johnson, 2005: 7). Although the Soviet period of Russian history was not one where religions flourished, communities of faith still existed. However, many ethnic groups were deported to GULAG from 1943-45, such as Chechens, Ingush, and the Buddhist Kalmyks. Religious leaders not in tune with Soviet policies were deported (Johnson 2005).

As in the rest of the USSR, the Soviet period was one of religious repression in Astrakhan. In the 1930s, most churches and mosques were shut down or re-purposed (Syzranov, 2007: 70).. St. Vladimir's cathedral, located outside of the kremlin, served as a bus station, while the White Mosque became a suitcase factory and the Persian mosque a clothing factory (Syzranov, 2007: 71). The Green Mosque was shut down and turned over to the city under cultural and social needs (Syzranov, 2007: 71). The cross at the top of the kremlin was replaced with an antenna, symbolizing the end of state-Orthodox relations. Six mosques were still opened at the end of the 1930s, and only four mosques at the end of 1954 (Syzranov, 2007: 71). According to an interviewee, an elderly Islamic scholar who worked at the Red mosque before the Soviet collapse, only old men came to services.

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Islam in Astrakhan after the Soviet Collapse

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, many mosques have been returned to local communities of faith. The four independent mosques that operated in the Soviet period united to form the Astrakhan Regional Spiritual Administration of Muslims (RDUM) in 1991. After 1990, there are 80 mosques in the Astrakhan region. Every city has one or two mosques, except the capital, which has over 30 mosques (interviews and various organizations state that there are from 32-39 mosques). Six mosques dating from before the 1917 revolution have been returned to Islamic communities and restored. Many of these historic mosques were located in the historic Tatar suburb, located outside of the downtown and Kremlin. In a tour of the Red Mosque, an Islamic scholar put emphasis on the wide age range of attendees at a madressah, stating that community members between 5-80 attend Arabic and Koran lessons on Sundays. And, a halal meat kiosk is located outside of the Red Mosque. The built landscape reflects a religious revival of Islam within Astrakhan. Visiting some of the mosques in-depth will reveal the dynamic nature of Astrakhan's Islamic community.

Red/Central Mosque:

The central mosque (Figure 3.5) was built in 1898, funded by a Tatar mullah, Abd al-Vakhlab Aliev, and a Tatar merchant, Shakir Kazakov. The mosques within Astrakhan have many names. This mosque has been called "Krasnaya" or red because of the color of the minaret, and also Kazanskaya. Kazankskaya refers to the city of Kazan, the Tatar home territory. This mosque was opened in 1950 during the Soviet period, and was a center of worship in the Soviet period. Today, it is the head mosque of the Astrakhan Regional Spiritual Board of Muslims. The mosque conducts services in Arabic, Russian, and Tatar languages, reflecting the multiethnic composition of attendees. Between 500-

600 worshippers show up on Friday services. This mosque is also home to small

madressehs which teach lessons on the Koran and Arabic. Importantly, a photograph of

Putin shaking hands with the mufti is on display in both the front office of the mosque

and also in the small Islamic shop located outside the mosque. A halal meat kiosk is

located outside the mosque's gates (Interviews, July 2009; Syzranov, 2007; *Astrakhan*

Travel Guide, 2008).

Figure 3.5: Red Mosque and Halal Meat Kiosk

White Mosque:

This mosque (Figure 3.6) is known the White Mosque because of the color of its

minaret. Before the Soviet era, it was considered the main mosque of the Tatars

(Syzranov, 2007: 55). This mosque served as a suitcase factory in the Soviet era, but was

handed back to the community in the 1990s. Renovations began in 2001, and the mosque

opened up in 2007. The mosque was partly funded through donations from Kazan, local

businesses, as well as a half a million ruble contribution from the Astrakhan government.

It is located a block away from the Red Mosque in the historic Tatar neighborhood, and is

considered a historical monument. (Interviews, July 2009; Syzranov, 2007; *Astrakhan*

Travel Guide, 2008).

Figure 3.6: White Mosque. ("Churches and Mosques in Astrakhan: White Mosque,"
2008.)

Mosque 34:

This mosque (Figure 3.7) is located on a highway near the Astrakhan airport. The

mosque was ordered to be demolished in 2006 by the mayor, but its community has

refused to demolish the mosque. The city government believes the community has

violated zoning laws and built the mosque illegally, while the community believes they

are being discriminated against for building a mosque on a major gateway to the city

(Interview, July 2009). They have sued the government at the local, regional, and

national level for the right to build. Their case is waiting to be heard in the European

Court of Human Rights (Interview, July 2009).

Figure 3.7: Mosque 34

Section 3.2: Research Methods

I adopted several methods to answer my research questions on the role of the state and other entities in shaping the landscape of Islam in Astrakhan. By approaching questions from multiple angles, validity is increased and different perspectives are given consideration (Winchester and Rof, 2005.) Also, I can show how my local study, while not generalizable, is also not anecdotal, and has implications for understanding wider issues of how geopolitical motivations influence the Russian government's attempts at regulating Islam (Sharp, 2004: 96). Mixing methods allowed me to move beyond traditional geopolitical methods of analyzing state documents and supports a democratization of geopolitics by giving voice and methodological consideration to non-

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elites and non-governmental actors (Gilmartin and Kofman, 2004). Specifically, methods

for this research project included:

- In-depth, semi-structured interviews with members of Islamic communities.

- Archival research of Russian and other newspapers and scholarship from 2000 and beyond.

- Archival research of governmental and nongovernmental documents from 2000 onwards, with a focus on organizations studying freedom of religion in Russia.

I was a student at a local university, and lived in sweltering Astrakhan for eight weeks

in June and July 2009. During this period I conducted interviews for this research.

Archival research and discourse analysis were conducted in the summer and fall of 2009.

The year 2000 was chosen as a starting point for archival research because it is the year

that marks the beginning of Putin's presidency. Putin's rule has been associated with the

centralizing of power in the Kremlin (Sukhov, 2008) and is an appropriate time frame

since this project investigates relationships between the Kremlin and periphery. Site

visits, interviews, and archives provided me the appropriate materials needed for an

analysis of the landscape of Islam in Astrakhan.

Interviews

In Astrakhan, I was able to conduct seven interviews with members of Islamic

communities. In-depth, semi-structured interviews are appropriate research methods

because the information sought (about ideas and practices of Islam and the state) is

qualitative and non-standardized (Baxter and Eyles, 1999). I started out using an on-site

recruiting approach (Secor, 2010) by visiting mosques and asking members to participate

in interviews. Although there are 39 mosques in the oblast, I was able to interview

members at two mosques. This is because whenever I inquired to interview members, I

was referred constantly back to the mosque which served as the central mosque of one of Astrakhan's Islamic communities. And, once at the mosque, I was referred to interview the same members of the congregation. Often, members asked for permission from the mufti, the head Islamic scholar of the community and most powerful leader of the congregation before they could interview with me. Because of this time-consuming process, and the fact I was only able to be in Astrakhan for two months, I was not able to conduct as many interviews as desired. In another instance, I used the snowball technique (Secor, 2010) and was able to conduct interviews at a mosque located on the outskirts of the city. Because of the importance hierarchy and permissions played in my research, I interviewed primarily members holding prominent positions within the Islamic community, such as mullahs and imams. Although I aimed for gender equality in my research, I was only able to conduct one interview with a woman leader. My interviews with these leaders gave me an insider's perspective on the relationship between the state and Islamic communities.

Interviews were semi-structured in order to create a natural flow of conversation (Secor, 2010). A guide with several key questions (Appendix 1) was initially used to structure interviews. However, many people I interviewed volunteered to meet on multiple occasions. At follow-up meetings, once I had exhausted questions from my guide, interviews became very informal and driven by interviewees. Interviews were held in the locations of the interviewee's choosing and often occurred at mosques or restaurants. They were conducted in Russian and English. Although I asked for forty-five minutes of time, interview length varied from one to three hours. I asked to tape record conversations, but all but one interviewee declined. Therefore I took copious notes during conversations and also typed them up immediately after the interviews. Interviews were

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structured for me to understand characteristics of mosques, the mobility and education of the interviewee, how Islam has developed in Astrakhan, and the interviewee's opinion on the relationship between Islam and the state.

Archival research

Another method I used was archival research of relevant documents related to the relationship between Islam and the Russian state. Relevant documents were tracked down through search engines, such as Lexis-Nexis. I searched for key terms like Islam, Russia, Astrakhan, mosque, and more specific terms and sites as research went on. Also, I tracked down relevant sources by visiting the websites of several NGOs, news service providers, and the local and national government. My browsing research led me to many serendipitous finds (Rose, 2001: 143).

Relevant information came from such disparate sources as Forum 18, a Norwegian-Danish Christian News service, an open letter from the Islamic community of Russia to President Putin, and International Religious Freedom reports. I collected approximately 15 news articles and 60 press releases from the Astrakhan.net, a local news site, and Astrobl.ru, the web site of the regional government. I read holiday greetings and transcripts of annual meetings between the Russian president and Islamic leaders from 2000-2010, as well as over 30 articles from national newspapers, including Pravda and Izvestaya Gazeta. Besides articles from these sources, I also consulted Astrakhan travel guides, local history books, and scholarship from another geographer, Kimitaka Matsuzato. Matsuzato also conducted research on Islam in Astrakhan. Besides these textual sources, I also thought of the archive as visual (Rose, 2001; Schein, 1997: 225). I visited several key sites, like mosques, graveyards, and I also looked for older photographs (Rose, 2001). Overall, my archival resources are eclectic. As Gillian Rose

writes, "eclecticism is demanded by the intertextuality of the discourse (2001: 143)." The discourse surrounding Islamic- Russian relations are articulated through a variety of texts and images, and so I tried to gather a wide variety of materials.

Discourse Analysis

After gathering together my interviews and archival materials, I tried to analyze the discourses surrounding the relationship of the state and other entities in shaping Islamic communities within Russia. Nicholas Green writes, "Discourse is a coherent pattern of statements across a range of archives and sights (quoted in Rose, 2001: 143)." I performed a narrative analysis of my interviews, looking at how the stories interviewees told me about how their community were constructed and content analysis, tracking key themes across interviews (Secor, 2010: 202) I tried to understand the official discourse on the relationship of Islam and the state by examining governmental sources, as well as investigate how these discourses were subverted or present in other materials. Rather than searching for total explanations or fixed truths, I tried to see how my interview texts related to or challenged broader discourses found in archival research (Secor, 2010). I was especially interested with the discourses surrounding the built environment of Islam in Astrakhan. As Kong's work shows, the politics of sacralization is a key site of intersection between secular governments and religious communities (2001). I treated the landscape of Islam in Astrakhan as "discourse materialized" (Schein 1997: 663). The Islamic landscape, characterized by mosques, halal meat kiosks, and shops, can be viewed as the material manifestation of the politics on the place of Islam within Russia. Rather than being simply a product of this discourse, the landscape of Islam is also part of the development, reproduction, and/or subversion of the discourse (Schein 1997: 663).

Chapter 4: Contemporary Discourses on State-Islamic Relationships at the National and
Local Level: Tolerance and Building; Intolerance and Demolition

Almost twenty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation

struggles to balance its commitment to secularism with its historical ties to Orthodoxy

(Warhola, 2007). Meanwhile, state-Islamic relations have been an area of crisis for the

nation since the first and second Chechen Wars, with the Chechen guerillas challenging

the sovereignty of the federation (German, 2003: 12-13). Since Putin's presidency in

2000, state discourses on Islam have been split into two main threads: the state's

disapproval of Islamic extremism at home and abroad, and the state's protective role in

fostering Islamic community-building in its multi-confessional borders (Hahn, 2007: 54;

Konarovsky, 2000: 188). Textual analysis of newspaper articles and transcripts from

meetings between Islamic and Russian officials demonstrate these two overarching

discourses on state-Islamic relations. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine these

two threads of discourse in detail; my analysis here will focus on the relationship between

the state and "official" Islam. "Official" refers to Islamic communities which participate

in the three national-level Islamic structures within Russia: the Central Spiritual Board of

(TsDUM), the Council of Muftis of Russia, and the Coordinating Council of the Muslims

of the Northern Caucasus (Matsuzato, 2007). Before examining the national scale

production of Islamic communities as friend of the Russian state, I will briefly address

questions of secularism and the Russian state's relationship to the Orthodox Church.

Section 4.1: Secularism and the Russian State

In order to study state-Islamic relations within the Russian Federation, it is necessary

to understand how secularism is produced in Russia. Although secularism can be

uncritically understood as the separation of religion from the state, Asad's genealogy of

the secular shows that secularism is not a universal concept, but one that is situated in

histories and places (2003). Secularism cannot be uncritically and evenly applied, and

thus close attention must be played to how secularism is enacted. In Russia, as I show

below, the state is not able to exist in a separate space from faith, but is rather composed

of individuals with beliefs and official documents reflecting religious histories and

moralities. Analyzing laws and presidential speeches and meetings illustrates how and

what kind of secularism is institutionalized in Russia. My textual analysis shows that

Orthodoxy influences national- level politics in Russia in a way other religions do not.

Figure 4.1: Medvedev and Patriarchate Kirill, Christmas. (Vladimir
Rodionov/Kremlin/RIA Novosti/Reuters, January 6, 2010.)

In Figure 4.1, President Medvedev shakes hands with the leader of the Russian

Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill on Orthodoxy Christmas Day at the Christ the Savior

Church in Moscow. Christ the Savior is the largest Orthodox Church in Russia, and as

Sidorov writes, "a powerful symbol of the presumed break with the Soviet past and the

beginning of yet another epoch of Russian society (2001: 194)." Presidents of secular

nation-states often attend and hold religious celebrations. Images of state leaders

attending services remind one that the state is composed of individuals, whose religious beliefs may influence their politics. Prime Minister Putin and President Medvedev both identify as Orthodox. Putin was the first leader of Russia to publicly confess his belief in the Church since 1917, and Medvedev received publicly televised endorsement from the Russian Orthodox Church leader, Patriarch Alexy, on Christmas Eve after he had announced his candidacy (Osipovich, 2008). In order to show how faith affects secular politics, I first discuss Russia's laws on the separation of state and religion as well as presidential addresses on Orthodox holidays. I then compare these to Putin's presidential Ramadan greetings from 2000 and 2006. A comparison in language used towards the two groups highlights differences in how the state treats the religious groups.

One of the most important state-Orthodox discourses is the special role of Orthodoxy in the history of forming the Russian state. Adopted in 1993, the Constitution of Russia declares the Russian state to be a secular and liberal multi-national federation, prohibiting discrimination based on ethnicity, race, or religion. Article 14 of the constitution reads:

> 1. The Russian Federation shall be a secular state. No religion may be established as the State religion or as obligatory.
> 2. Religious associations shall be separate from the State and shall be equal before the law.

Although no religion is supposed to be state-sponsored, Orthodoxy receives special attention in federal laws. The 1997 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations was introduced with this statement:

> The Federation Assembly of the Russian Federation,
> affirming the right of each person to freedom of conscience and freedom of religious profession, as well as to equality before the law irrespective of religious affiliation and convictions;
> considering that the Russian federation is a secular state;
> recognizing the special contribution of Orthodoxy to the establishment of the state

system of Russia and to the development of its spirituality and culture; respecting Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, and other religions, constituting an integral part of the historical heritage of the peoples of Russia; striving to facilitate the strengthening of cooperation of the state with religious associations that exist in the Russian federation and enjoying public support; considering it important to cooperate in the achievement of mutual understanding, toleration, and respect in matters of freedom of conscience and freedom of religious profession;

adopts the present federal law. (1997, Sept. 16 Rossijskaya Gazeta , Issue 179).

The Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations was signed by Yeltsin, and regulates the formation and functions of religious associations, organizations, and groups within Russia. These two documents, the constitution and federal law, seemingly contradict each other. Orthodoxy is placed on another level of historical and spiritual status than other religions with the Russian government (Walker, 2005: 253). Although the law recognizes other religions within Russia, Orthodoxy is not placed in the same clause, making it seem as if it has a special place within the law rather than an equal status. Although Orthodoxy was practically synonymous with Russian dynasties before communism (Johnson, 2006; Rowland, 2003), Russian history is not merely that of the ruling family, but is multiethnic and includes histories of Islamic and animist peoples as well (Kappeler, 2001).

This sentiment is repeated in Dmitri Medvedev's address at Christ the Savior in Moscow on the occasion of the 1020th anniversary of the baptism of Rus. He stated:

> The conversion of Prince Vladimir and the whole of Rus to Orthodoxy were of truly historic significance and played a fundamental part in shaping our state's development. The decision was motivated in large part by the need to unite the divided eastern Slavic tribes and a number of other ethnic groups. A desire for statehood based on a completely new spiritual foundation emerged among them. Finally, the adoption of Christianity did much to help our forefathers become part of the processes taking place in Europe and the world and amounted in essence to a choice of civilisation. It changed not only the rules of social conduct and family life but transformed state life in its entirety. The adoption of Christianity enabled the ancient Russian state to engage in dialogue with other countries as an equal,

and it enriched ancient Russian culture with the universal values of the Bible. Many of these values form the foundation of the humanistic ideals we share with Europe (June 29, 2008).

Here, Medvedev affirms that Russia owes its moral values, as well as political values, to the Orthodox Church. He links Russia's conversion to Orthodoxy as a starting point to statehood which culminates in the formation of the Federation. Orthodoxy and the Bible are depicted as proxies by which Russia gains its European character. This statement by the president of a seemingly secular country reveals how important past relationships between the church and state can be for contemporary national identities.

Medvedev's statements on the special role of Orthodoxy in Russian history have received little criticism in Russian media. However, when a Muslim leader tried to call attention to the role the Golden Horde played in forming the Russian state, he was heavily criticized in national media outlets by Russian historians. At the International Conference "Russia and the Islamic World: the Partnership for the Sake of Stability," in September 2009, Gainutdin, leader of the Council of Muftis in Russia, repeated historian Karamzin's quotation, "Moscow owes its greatness to the khans," notably adding that, "This assessment also applies to Russia as a whole (Zaitseva, 2009)." He proposes that the modern, multi-ethnic state has its predecessor in Volga Bulgaria, the territorial formation of the Golden Horde and Turkic Tatars. His claims run counter to Medvedev's assertions that Russian progress is tied with its Orthodox history, rather tying state development with Islamic-Orthodox relations under leadership of the khans.

Also, in his speech, Gainutdin proposes that Moscow developed into the cultural, political, and spiritual capital of Russia due to the will of the khans in the horde. Tying Islamic history to the future of the Federation, Gainutdin also quotes Tatar philosopher Ismail-bey Gasprinsky, stating "In the future, perhaps, not far, Russia is destined to

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become one of the major Muslim states," adding "we all can testify how true this prophecy has turned out to be: present-day Russia, if one takes into consideration the dynamics of the development of its Muslim community is in fact a significant Muslim country (Zaitseva, 2009)." His audience was the international Islamic community, yet his words became scrutinized in the Russian press.

Representatives from the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as the Mufti of Perm, stated in interviews with Blagovest and Interfax-Religion, two Russian non-governmental news agencies, that the Golden Horde did not play a crucial role in contemporary Russian state formation (Zaitseva, Sept. 29 2009; Interfax, 2009). According to historian Igor Froyanov, the Russian state became strong in spite of the Golden Horde:

> Not because of the Golden Horde did Russia emerge as a powerful unified state, but against it, in the struggle with the Tatars a Russian single state was forged. The struggle against very dangerous foreign enemies raised, I believe the issue - to be or not to be the Russian ethnos. Therefore it was necessary to all of its resources, all its reserves, all of its resources to gather in one fist. The struggle implemented the principality of Moscow…And there is great historical role of Moscow. (*Interfax* Sept 25, 2009).

By analyzing the negative response in newspapers to Gainutdin's claims of the importance of the Golden Horde for the contemporary Russian state, as compared to the non-response to claims of Orthodoxy's contributions in the constitution and presidential speeches, one sees that historical discourse is not neutral. Foucault writes, "War is waged throughout history, and through the history that tells the history of war" (Foucault 1997: 173). There is never an impartial or objective historical knowledge. In the Russian secular state, Orthodoxy is imagined as victor in the wars with the Golden Horde, and as a contributor to Russian progress. Meanwhile, similar claims about the contributions of

the Golden Horde are met with dissent. Although a discourse highlighting the

relationship between the church and state in Russian statehood is produced by the state, a

negative discourse is produced in the media on the contributions of Tatar ancestors.

The special role of Orthodoxy in Russia's history is an important marker of state-

church relations. Also important is the discourse surrounding the morality that Orthodoxy

affords the Russian state. In a Christmas greeting to Orthodox Church members during

his first year as president, Putin stated:

> Orthodoxy has traditionally played a special role in the history of Russia. It has
> not only served as a moral compass for every believer, but also as an unbending
> spiritual pivot for the entire people and the state. Based on the idea of love for thy
> neighbour, and on the commandments of goodness, mercy and justice, Orthodoxy
> in many respects has determined the character of Russian civilization. Its eternal
> truths, which have turned into the indefeasible laws of life, have in all centuries
> supported people in sorrow and in joy, returned hope to them and helped them
> find their faith. The monumental values of Christianity formulated two thousand
> years ago have retained their deep meaning right up to the present day.
> As we enter the third millennium, I firmly believe that the ideals of Christianity
> will make it possible to strengthen understanding and accord in our society, and
> serve the spiritual and moral revival of our fatherland (2000a).

Christian values are seen as good for the Russian state, and key to strengthening

Russia morally. This holiday greeting is very different from the one Putin issued for

Ramadan in the same year:

> People of different faiths have lived side-by-side in Russia for centuries. The land
> we all share has always cherished peace and accord above anything else. Islam
> and Christianity both preach those supreme values. 'Cooperate in good deeds' and
> 'Do not assist evil,' the Koran says.
> The outgoing century has taught us many lessons, the most important of which is
> that a strong and worthy 21st century state can be built only by joint efforts. We
> will never attain wellbeing and prosperity unless we respect and understand each
> other, however different we might appear.
> We highly value the traditions of civil and interdenominational accord, which the
> Russian Muslim community has always respected. We attach great importance to
> the efforts of the Muslim clergy and to its ample peacemaking experience. We
> count on its further contribution to the cause of interethnic peace and religious

tolerance in our country, and to the restoration of law, order and normal life in the North Caucasus (2000b)

This statement alludes to the Second Chechen War, and shows that Putin views official Islamic communities as being on his side, rather than sympathetic to the separatists. He uses an excerpt from the Koran to code the Chechens as evil, thus splitting the Islamic community into two groups: those with the state, and the separatists. Yet, comparing these two holiday statements and the language used shows how Putin codes the state as Orthodox and even state-approved Islam as other. Notable in the address is the absence of the special role of Islam in shaping Russia's history or mentions of Islam in determining an essential Russian identity. Peace is mentioned many times, but spiritual and moral revival is not. There is no reference to Islam in the Christmas address, yet a reference to Christianity in the Ramadan greeting and an emphasis on building a strong state through joint efforts. Yet, Christian values are the key to building the strong Russian state in the Christmas address.

Looking at state documents and state-issued holiday greetings shows that the Russian state, although claiming to be secular, treats Orthodoxy as having special historical and moral influence. Importantly, in his speech on the 1020th year of Orthodoxy in Russia, Medvedev establishes a link between Russia's political progress from ancient state to European state with Orthodoxy. The history of battles between Islamic tribes and Orthodox Russians are not mentioned directly; neither is the atheism of the Soviet period. In official public discourse, religious tensions from the past are silenced while Orthodoxy is celebrated as the bringer of culture and values. Meanwhile, in newspapers, a speech addressing the contributions of the Golden Horde to Russian culture brings up memories of war and violence. In order to examine state-Islamic relations, in Russia, first the

paradoxical secularism of the state must be highlighted: Although the state claims that all religions are equal, one (Russian Orthodoxy) appears to be more equal than others.

Section 4.2: Islam and the Russian State

In this section, I discuss discourses produced at the national scale relating to state-Islamic relations in regards to moderate Islam. I show how prominent leaders and the president work to create a discourse of peace and Islam that they juxtapose with a rebellious Islam associated with the Chechen War. Also, I examine how the state supports Islam within its borders in regards to funding Islamic education and creating a dialogue with Islamic communities. Doing so allows the state to play a role in fostering the growth of preferred, non-rebellious forms of Islam.

Official Islam and Peace

One of the strongest problems surrounding state-Islamic relations for the Kremlin is that Islamic rebels in Chechnya threaten the very fabric of the Russian Federation. In reaction to this perceived threat, and in recognizing the varied nature of Russia's Islamic communities, there is a strong emphasis at the national level of Islam's alliance with the state and peaceful nature. The state repeatedly describes Islam as a peaceful religion, in order to contrast with images of terrorists. Putin opened a meeting with Muslim organization leaders with, "I know that in your prayers, sermons and dialogues with people you always return to Islam's very fundamentals and Islam, like all peaceful religions, is based on kindness, on faith in kindness (January 10, 2006)." Using this particular language, the Russian government tries to show that it does not conflate Islam with terror. And in adopting this very language in turn, the official Islamic community

shows that they view the war in Chechnya as a battle of good and evil, with the state as good and rebels as evil.

Separating Islam from the terrorist events is a key issue for the leaders of the official Islamic structures in Russia. After the Moscow Theater Hostage Crisis, where about 50 Chechen guerillas took 850 prisoners hostage in 2002, the head of the Union of Muftis of Russia, Ravil Gainutdin, tried to distance Islam from the acts. He stated, "Mr President, we remember your statement that criminals have neither ethnicity nor religion. This is why we think that to contrast religions with each other is not the thing to do now. Religions are not guilty of this tragedy (Putin, Oct. 24, 2002)." Mufti Akhmad-Khadzhi Shamayev, the pro-Moscow leader of Chechen Muslims, repeated this sentiment in the newspapers after the event, publicly stating "Terrorists have no nationality. If they are indeed Chechens and if they are Muslims, they must have at least something sacred in them... They are just giving their nation a bad name ("Rebels seize Moscow theatre" Oct. 23, 2002)."

Leaders of the moderate Islamic structures articulate their alliance and agreement with Putin, revealing that they pray for success in the war in the Caucasus. In the meeting mentioned above, Ismael Berdiev, head of Coordinating Council of the Muslims of the Northern Caucasus, stated, "The situation in the Caucasus is now quieter, more stable. Thank you for having chosen the right policies. In mosques when people pray they already have started to ask, to pray for the President, to pray that everything works out for him. So that, by Allah, everything works out, everything is good (Putin, 2006)." Hearing these words come from an Islamic leader from the North Caucasus, after the height of Chechen insurgency, shows that leaders of official structures view the state as a means for the Islamic community there to achieve peace and stability.

Islam, Education, and the State

Although the official Islamic leadership has requested Islamic banking systems and funding for mosque construction, education is the main area receiving government support (Medvedev, July 15, 2009). Proper education and leadership is seen as key to curbing extremism and is one area in which the Russian government has directly invested in Islam. In 2007, Putin approved the Fund for Supporting Islamic Culture, Science, and Education, which was worth about 60 million rubles (Putin, Nov. 8, 2007).

Figure 4.2 Medvedev at the Cathedral Mosque in Moscow, with Islamic leader Ravil Gainutdin.(Russia Muftis Council, July 15, 2009.)

In his visit to the Cathedral Mosque in Moscow in 2009 (Figure 4.2), the first visit of any Russian president to a mosque while in office, Medvedev also addressed the state's interest in supporting Islamic education. He stated:

> Our world is still complicated, and there are various ethnic and religious conflicts. Unfortunately, we are also seeing an increase in extremism in many parts of the world, and sadly, extremist organisations are quite active in Russia. Clearly, extremists rely on many slogans: some religious ones, some related to Islam, some unrelated to Islam, and some that have nothing to do with religion. Nevertheless, this is a complicating factor that destabilises the situation in our country. We need to be aware of this and take all possible measures to mitigate it. In this context, our most important common challenge is to spread ideas of tolerance, religious and otherwise, and promote caring attitudes toward the religious values and traditions of different peoples in our multi-ethnic, culturally diverse nation. Here, the Muslim clergy plays an important role (2009).

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In the Soviet era, only two institutes of higher learning for Islam were in operation. Since the collapse of the USSR, demand for religious training has risen, with over 22,000 Muslims traveling abroad for education. Since 2007, eight government-sponsored higher-education theological institutions in Russia have begun training for Islamic students. Goble reports that, "Because they (the students) were often supported by and thus attracted to more radical institutions in the Middle East and South Asia, these students often returned home with radical ideas (2009)." Aleksy, an official from the Presidential Administration, states that the government has adopted state standards for higher professional education in Islamic theology, and that over 320 students are enrolled in the classes (Hunter, 2004: 74; Goble, 2009). According to Islam News, an independent information source of Islam in Russia, "In previous years, most students went to Arab countries, where trained in lesser-known schools or preparatory courses. Lack of educational foundations contributed to the rapid spread of radical ideas among young people ("Russia Becomes the Center of Islamic Education," 2009)." Adopting state standards and using state money to develop educational structures suggests that the Russian government is trying to moderate the spiritual and political ideas of the Islamic community. Simultaneously, distrust of Islamic education abroad is spread.

The leaders of Russia's official Islamic groups consider the funding of Islamic education within Russia as a form of state-building. Domestic religious educational institutions try to separate themselves from extremism and stress how their curriculum creates feelings of patriotism in their students. Education at religious institutions often combines religious training with other secular subjects, such as Russian language courses (Hunter, 2004: 71). In 2007, in response to government funding Gainutdin, stated:

> And this (funding) will certainly help us train members of the clergy and help instill feelings of patriotism in them. It can also help the process of educating worthy members of the Islamic clergy in the Motherland, who can then resist the spread of alien ideologies and fight against extremism and radicalism (Putin, 2007).

The above quote shows that Islamic community leaders are interested in keeping radical ideas away from their communities in favor of building a cadre of future leaders that are Russian Islamic citizens. Russian policies seek to develop Islam within Russia so that influences from radical Islam abroad can be obviated, as evidenced in the discourse surrounding the Russian state's support of Islamic education (Hunter, 2004: 74).

Textual analysis of state documents and transcripts of meetings at the national level suggests that the government and the leaders of official Islamic structures have similar opinions on many issues, such as a disapproval of the Chechen War and the role state-funded education can have in nurturing Islamic citizens. Above all, discourses surrounding official Islam at the national level paint Islam as a peaceful faith, and one that has aims of protecting the nation from radicalism that are harmonious with the government. Official Islam is imagined as a strength of the state and even a subtle mechanism of state power in its production of good citizens, rather than a threat.

In the following section, I turn to the multicultural Russian city of Astrakhan. Doing so will investigate if and how the dominant discourses surrounding state-Islamic relationships produced at the national level play out in the everyday lives in Astrakhan. I will focus on the politics of mosque-building locally, and see what this analysis might reveal about macro-scale state-Islamic relations.

Section 4.3: Contemporary Discourses on Islam in Astrakhan, Russia

Astrakhan is characterized by its ethnic and religious diversity, as evidenced in the travel writings of Ibn Battuta, a Berber explorer, and also in its restored religious landscape. At the 1999 International forum "For a Culture of Peace and Dialogue Among Civilizations in the Third Millenium, held in Moscow and sponsored by UNESCO, the mayor of Astrakhan Igor Bezrukavnikov gave a talk called "Peace to the Coming One" on the role of mayors and the mass media on violence prevention. He stated:

> Astrakhan has become the Southern outpost of Russia, when its frontiers lie close to the troubled area of Chechnya, multi-lingual Dagestan, mysterious Kalmykia, this issue (violence prevention) is of special importance. Throughout its history Astrakhan has never experienced national wars or religious rebellions - here people have always traded, fished, built cathedrals and brought up children together. What we need is not to lose, to break the "uniting threads of centuries" (Bezrukavnikov 1999).

Astrakhan is imagined as a place with a heritage of peaceful coexistence of very different peoples. Notably, the destruction of the city by Tamerlane and again by Ivan the Terrible is not mentioned. Bezrukavnikov believes that this imagined history of harmony must be preserved by civil, spiritual, and state intuitions to pass on to future generations of citizens (1999).

Peace, Tolerance, Respect: Mosque-State Relations in Astrakhan

The historic role of Astrakhan's Islamic community in preserving peace is evidenced in an address to Astrakhan's Islamic community on the holiday Kurban Bairam by the chairman of the State Duma, Alexander Klykanov. He states:

> The great authority, Astrakhan Spiritual Administration of Muslims (ARDUM), and all Muslims of the Astrakhan region will continue to promote the preservation of international peace in the region. Only by following the traditions of the strengthening of civil harmony, interfaith dialogue, understanding and good relations between people we can count on the future and further welfare and prosperity of the Astrakhan region (Office of Press Service, Nov. 27 2009).

The regional authority of Islam, ARDUM, is depicted as an asset to bringing and assuring peace in the city region. This sentiment is expressed repeatedly in the annual holiday addresses.

During a meeting with the Astrakhan governor, Talgat Tajuddin, the chairman of the Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Russia (TsDUM), stated that Astrakhan was a good example of religious tolerance within Russia. He stated, "You managed to find the golden rod of the fraternal relations ("Supreme Mufti of Russia Talgat Tajuddin visited the Astrakhan Region," 2006)." At the national level, official Islam is depicted as a peaceful religion which gives its members values beneficial for Russian society. This characterization of Islam is reproduced at the local-level governmental discourse in Astrakhan, and plays a role in giving Astrakhan a reputation as a peaceful, tolerant, multi-confessional city.

Claims of a tolerant past and present by the media or official figures, however, do not map exactly onto minority groups experiences (Mills, 2006). Thus, beyond looking at official reports, I visited mosques to interview local members of the Astrakhan community. I wanted to see how they viewed tolerance and state-mosque relationships. I interviewed many prominent members of mosque communities, including six males and one female.

From interviews, I found that many members of local Islamic communities also desired strong state-mosque relations, and feel the local government promotes religious tolerance. When I visited the central mosque in Astrakhan, the location of the offices ARDUM, my interviewee pointed out a photograph on the wall: an image of Putin shaking hands with Nazymbek Ilyasov, the mufti of ARDUM. This photograph was also hanging in the Islamic goods shop in the mosque's courtyard. This photograph displays

good relations between the nation-state and the local Islamic communities affiliated with ARDUM. It suggests that the nation-state approves of ARDUM and the Islamic communities in Astrakhan, and its prominent positioning suggests that the official Islamic community is proud of their relationship with the state.

When I interviewed a leader of the Islamic community at the central mosque, he told me that Putin and Medvedev both worked to further the development of traditional Islam in Russia's borders. He voiced that he did not see a difference in Putin and Medvedev's policies towards Islam, stating that they both try to promote the good reputation of traditional Islam. I also asked interviewees how they viewed the relationship between the local government and local Islamic communities. The three respondents from the Central mosque reported that the local government supports Islamic communities through establishing laws on religious tolerance. One respondent said, "We tolerate and respect all confessions recognized by the government (Interview transcript, July 2009)." In the space of the mosque, the state at the national and local levels is seen as the promoter of religious tolerance, which allows for communities to grow. However, tolerance applied only to communities of faith recognized by the government.

Section 4.4: Islam and Others: Tatars and Caucasian Islamic Communities in Astrakhan

In my interviews, the phrase traditional Islam was repeated several times. For instance, when I asked one interviewee, a scholar who had been educated in Cairo during the Soviet period, if he felt free to practice his faith, he responded, "we are free to practice traditional Islam (Interview transcript, July 2009)." When I asked what he meant by traditional Islam, my interviewee contrasted it against "Chechen" Islam. Traditional Islam is associated with Volga Bulgaria, and the history of the Tatars (Interview

transcript, July 2009). At the local level, the nationwide split between official and unofficial Islam appears to be coded as a split between traditional Tatar Islam, and Chechen Islam. In this section, I first examine the role of "tradition" in Islamic community-building in Astrakhan. Then, I discuss discourses of integration and interruption surrounding Caucasian immigrant Islamic communities in Astrakhan. Doing so will display the multi-faceted landscape of Islam in Astrakhan, and reveal how official and non-official Islamic communities interact at the everyday level.

Preservation and restoration of traditional spaces of worship are two important discourses in Islamic-community building in post-Soviet Astrakhan. On a tour of the central mosque, the Islamic scholar I was interviewing was very proud of renovations. He pointed to the decorated posts, stating, "Ancient, old architecture is very important (Interview, July 2009)." These posts (Figure 4.3) are modeled after their originals, built in 1898 and ruined due to lack of funds for upkeep in the Soviet period.

One of the ways that the local government has supported Islamic community development politically is through returning mosques confiscated and repurposed in Soviet times to communities of faith.

The restoration of the White Mosque, the main mosque of Tatars before the Soviet era (Syzranov, 2007: 55), is an example of how the state supports the development of traditional Islam. Renovations began in 2001, but the Islamic community had difficulty raising the 15 million rubles necessary for the project. The mosque was partly funded through donations from Kazan, local businesses, as well as a half a million ruble contribution from the Astrakhan government (Interviews, July 2009). Members of
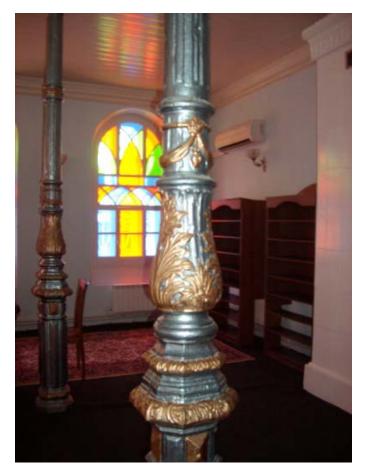
Figure 4.3 Historical design in the central mosque.

the local government were involved in fundraising efforts- for example, the mayor of

Astrakhan Sergei Bozhenov performed at a charity concert for the mosque (Gadelshina,

2008). In 2008, the White mosque officials re-opened as part of Astrakhan's 450th

anniversary celebrations (Figure 4.4). Striving to complete the White Mosque in time for

the celebration shows that the local government takes an interest in preserving Tatar

Islamic history. Restorations to the Kremlin and Volga promenade were also completed

for the occasion.

The White Mosque is in a historical Tatar neighborhood, located near the Astrakhan

Kremlin (Figure 4.6). During the 450th anniversary, the street that the White Mosque and

other mosques are located was renamed to Kazanskaya. In 1920, the street name was

changed to Spartakovskaya Street, in honor of Spartacus, a slave who led a revolt against aristocracy in Rome. The name change was proposed by the Tatar national center in Astrakhan, and agreed on by the region's governor, Alexander Zhilkin. Kazanskaya is the adjective form of Kazan, the capital of Tatarstan and a large city in the Golden Horde (Gadelshina, 2008). Kazan is the only city in Russia with a mosque in its kremlin, and the center of Tatar Islamic culture. This street name change shows how the local government politically supports Tatar culture.

The street name change is both in honor of Tatar culture in Astrakhan, and in recognition of the historical importance of Kazan. In 2006, Kazan celebrated its 1000th anniversary. By changing a street name to honor the city, the local government acknowledges historical ties to the Tatar homeland. At the national level, the role of the Golden Horde and history of the Tatars to the development of the nation state is heavily criticized, while at the local-level such historical connections are valorized.

Figure 4.4: White Mosque after renovations.

Although at the national level, Islamic and intellectual communities debate about the role of the Golden Horde in establishing the Russian state, Tatar history is important to local Islamic communities in Astrakhan. At an interview in the central mosque, when I asked how Islam helps the government, a respondent answered, "Traditionally, Islam is important in the historic founding of our people (Interview, July 2009)." This answer shows that locals view their religion as playing a positive role in the formation of the political state. Religion and Islam in particular is seen as a positive and historical factor working with the state to create Astrakhan's identity, rather than as working in a separate sphere from the government.

Figure 4.5: Kazanskaya Street, Astrakhan.

One way Astrakhan Islamic communities maintain their ties to Tatar Islamic history is through annual pilgrimages to Bolghar. Bolghar is located near Kazan, and is

considered to be its predecessor. Importantly, it is the site of the conversion of the ancient

Tatar people to Islam in 922. One respondent stated "Bolghar is where the Grand

Mothers and Fathers taught Islam a thousand years ago (Interview, July 2009)." Every

year, the central mosque organizes two buses to take about 100 people on a pilgrimage to

this holy site (Interview, July 2009). Maintaining historical connections to Kazan and to

the historic homeland of Tatar Islam is an important element of tradition in Islamic

community-building in Astrakhan.

While state and local officials generally view connections with Kazan in a positive

light, relationships with Caucasian elements of the Islamic community are more

complicated. At the central mosque, disapproval of non-traditional forms of Islam is

articulated which mirrors the disapproval of Chechen rebels produced by official Islamic

groups at the national level. Due to its proximity to the Caucuses, Astrakhan is home to

many migrant communities from the war-torn region. There are many immigrant

communities within Astrakhan, including sizeable Chechen and Dagestani communities

(Matsuzato, 2007). These groups, often affiliated with non-official Islamic communities,

use a variety of strategies to adapt into Astrakhan's wider Islamic community.

After perestroika, many North Caucasian peoples started selling products in the

traditionally Tatar Bazaar. In the 1990, the regional and city government turned over a

mosque located in the bazaar to the local community. This mosque became known as the

Caucasian Mosque (Figure 4.6) because it has members from Caucasian immigrants, like

Avar, Dargin, and Laks, besides Kazakhs and Tatars (Matsuzato, 2007). The mosque is

popular, with 300-400 Muslims attending daily prayers and 1,300-1,500 attending Friday

prayers (Matsuzato, 2007). Traditionally, Tatars and Kazakhs only attend mosque

prayers on Fridays, and there has been some fights and conflict in the market over the large crowds showing up to pray and interrupting business (Matsuzato, 2007).

The difference in prayer cultures highlights differences amongst Islamic communities in Astrakhan. Although the prayer practices of those at the Caucasian mosque disturb business, the skirmishes over praying reflect tensions existing between wanted and unwanted forms of Islam in Astrakhan and also in Russia. Going to mosque on Friday is a hallmark of moderate, traditional Islam, while going to mosque daily is associated with Caucasian influences and the threat of introducing Wahhabism in the city. Wahhabism is associated with the teachings of Muhammed Ibn Abdul Wahhab, and is the main form of Islam in Saudi Arabia. In Russia, Wahhabism is practiced principally in Dagestan and Chechnya (Hunter, 2004: 87). Yet, Wahhabism has a double meaning within Russia. Authorities have used Wahhabism to refer both to strict adherents of Islamic faith or to Islamic people who engage in violence, especially in the Caucasus (Hunter, 2004: 81). The new Caucasian presence in the city and the popularity of the Caucasian mosque indicate the arrival of a new form of Islam in Astrakhan.

Figure 4.6: Caucasian Mosque. ("Churches and Mosques in Astrakhan: Caucasian Mosque," 2008.)

Many young activists worship at this mosque and support it because they do not like being part of ARDUM (Matsuzato, 2007). This mosque is not officially a member of ARDUM, but has connections with ARDUM.. The mosque's imam is Abukhasan Musaev, a famous Avar from Chechnya. His appointment was confirmed by the head mufti of ARDUM, and he is considered to be a moderating influence on the parish. For instance, Musaev was educated within the former Soviet Union, he conducts services in Russian, and refers to both Dagestani and other madhhabs, Islamic schools of law, in his teachings to appeal to the broader multiethnic Islamic community (Matsuzato, 2007: 794). And, the Dagestani mosque's madrassah exchanges lecturers with the ARDUM's Khajji-Tarkhan institute (Matsuzato, 2007: 795). These steps show that the leadership of the Caucasian mosque makes efforts to separate their Islamic community in Astrakhan from the types of communities that exist in their homelands. State-approved and official Islamic education plays an important role in making the Caucasian mosque seem more moderate as opposed to "radical". Their imam was selected because he was educated in one of the two centers of Islamic training open in the Soviet period, and ARDUM – approved educators visit the Caucasian madrassah. Through creating links with ARDUM, the Caucasian mosque tries to maintain the tradition of interfaith dialogue and peace on which Astrakhan prides itself. While it is not part of the official structure of Islam, the Caucasian mosque acts as part of the wider community, partly in order to in avoid suspicions of extremism.

Most of the communities of faith in Astrakhan maintain positive ties with the local and nation-state government, as evidenced by the presence of Putin in the Central Mosque, and in assistance with the rebuilding of historical mosques. The Tatar Islamic community seems to have a favored relationship with the state, as seen in the renaming of

the street, assistance with the White Mosque, and the large number of Tatar officials in ARDUM (Matsuzato, 2007). In this sense, state preference for Tatar forms of Islam by the Russian state echoes the state preference of Russian Orthodoxy. The Caucasian community, partly due to the leadership's moderation, has its own building and educational school. Many of the discourses produced on the national level about how the state supports official Islam and sees Islam as a peaceful religion which instills good values to its members are reproduced in Astrakhan. In fact, the city has been upheld as a prime example of healthy state-mosque relationships by the leader of TsDUM. Astrakhan's growing Islamic landscape seems to be the result of positive state-Islamic relations. In addition to this visible presence of Islam in Astrakhan, however, there are also important absences and silences that I discuss in the following section.

Section 4.5: Demolition of Mosque 34: Islamic Communities and State Conflict

As I tried to track down mosques to visit for my research, I consulted guidebooks, web sites, and local people in Astrakhan. There are over 30 mosques in the city, and so I was very busy visiting these places. One day, while I was just leaving the central mosque, a man came up to me, asked me about my research, and if I had seen the mosque by the airport yet. I did not know that there was a mosque by the airport, because no one had mentioned it to me and it simply did not show up on any type of map. He told me that this mosque was well-known, and that I absolutely must visit it.

A day later, I visited the mosque, Mosque 34 (Figure 4.5) and learned about its dilemma. Although the mosque received building permits in 2003, they were revoked after a visit by president Putin in 2005 and a regime change in Astrakhan's local government. The community was ordered by the local government to demolish what they had already built. Yet, according to the mosque's imam, 20-25 Muslims live in the

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area, and there is an Islamic graveyard nearby. Despite this, the mosque was said to be improperly located on an access road in a neighborhood by the airport. The situation facing Mosque 34 reflects differing interests of the pragmatic state and the spiritual community in the construction of urban spaces (Kong 1993). It also reveals how the construction of everyday spaces of worship can contribute to an understanding of larger-scale issues (Kong 2010). The Islamic community has sued the local, regional, and national government for the right to build. Although they have ceased construction, they have not demolished the structure completely. The community still worships in an old silage tower located on the property (Interviews, July 2009). The discourses surrounding the demolition and lawsuits of Mosque 34 provide important insights into the ways that local Islamic communities and governments converse with each other in instances of conflict as I show below.

Sacred Spaces and Secular Concerns

The local government framed its argument for demolition in functionalist terms, reflecting what Kong refers to as a "material concern in its treatment of religious buildings (1993: 346)." The building was halted by an order from the regional branch of the Federal Service for Ecological, Technological, and Nuclear Monitoring, which claimed that the mosque was located within a dangerous distance of 110-kV transmission lines. The minaret is said to be located seven meters from the outer cable, when safety standards call for a distance of twenty meters. According to the manager of Astrakhanenergo, the Astrakhan power company:

> It is impossible to guarantee people's safety when the power grid safety rules are being breached in this way. Astrakhanenergo has warned all parties involved of the adverse consequences which could ensue. We set our point of view in court

that the mosque in its current form is placing people's lives in danger ("Muslims resist order to demolish new mosque in Southern Russia", April 11, 2006).

Figure 4.7: Proposed Plans for Mosque 34

The mayor and local government paint orders for demolition as a pragmatic decision, based on a violation of safety protocols and concern for citizens.

In addition to safety concerns, the local government also cites that the mosque should be demolished because of zoning issues. Oleg Popov, the head of Astrakhan regional government's department for work with religious organizations, stated the decision to demolish the mosque was reached because, 'the local Muslim community violated the law when it occupied a land plot intended for an apartment building ("Astrakhan Muslims protest against knocking down of an unfinished mosque", April 11, 2006)." The local authorities have requested that the Islamic community pay for the demolition, but

have also offered the community four alternative plots of land on which to build their

new mosque ("Muslims resist order to demolish new mosque in Southern Russia," April

11, 2006). The regional court cited failure to pay rent, inappropriate land use, deviations

from the proposed architectural plan, and failure to obtain consent from the power

company for building near an electric grid as reasons for demolition (Determination of

the Judicial Collegium for Civil cases of the Astrakhan Regional Court, April 10, 2006).

The state's appeal to such values of pragmatism, planning, and safety makes the orders to

demolish the mosque seem rational and based in secular concerns (Kong, 1993). The

Islamic community is made to look irrational because they ignore these pragmatic

concerns and refuse to move to alternative, appropriate spaces.

Questioning Secular Concerns of the State

However, the mosque's community questions the secular arguments made against

them, claiming that their building permits are legal and that underlying Islamophobia

informs the local government's decision. Rather than viewing the state as taking a

functionalist, pragmatic stance in their orders to demolish the mosque (Kong 1993), the

Islamic community feels the state is violating their rights to religious freedom. The

community states that the plot of land was purchased from the Astrakhan City Hall in

1998, and that appropriate documents relating to ownership and design were filed with

the Department of Real Estate and Architectural Administration of Astrakhan ("Protest

action against tearing down mosque in Astrakhan," April 12, 2006). The head of Mosque

34's parish council stated, "Today our building is the result of joint activities with our

former authorities: the late governor and former mayor ("The district court ruled the

demolition of a mosque," February 10, 2006)." So, the mosque community does not

accept the rational basis of the secular claims made against them, and challenges them with received permits and official approval.

According to the mosque community, the opposition to the mosque began after regime change in local offices and Putin's visit to the city in 2005. They claim that in August 2005, President Putin remarked to the regional governor and mayor that they had not chosen a good place for a mosque (Russia Country International Religious Freedom Report, 2006). Mosque leader Asya Mahmudova stated, "The current mayor of the city of Astrakhan Sergei Bazhenov and Governor of Astrakhan Region Alexander Zhilikin do not like the fact that a mosque and not a church is located at the entrance to the town ("The district court ruled the demolition of a mosque," February 10, 2006)." One interviewee, a charitable donor of mosque 34, said that authorities were upset with the location of the mosque because they did not want people arriving to Astrakhan via airport to think they were in Saudi Arabia (Interview, July 2009). Importantly, the mosque is located near an Islamic graveyard and near about 20-25 Islamic families (Interview, July 2009). In an interview, the mosque imam stated that locals want to visit the graveyard and then come pray at the mosque. The imam felt that it is very comforting for the community to have a mosque near this graveyard. (Interview, July 2009). Because of these factors, as well as the money and time spent investing in the site, the local community did not want to move their mosque (Russia Country International Religious Freedom Report, 2006). The local community believed that national identity politics rather than welfare and safety concerns motivated the orders to demolish the mosque.

Islamophobic Discourses in Astrakhan and Moscow

Because the local community believed that have official approval as well as sacred obligation to build near a graveyard and provide services for local families, they framed their protests against the local, regional, and state court decisions in terms of political persecution and Islamophobia. After unsuccessfully appealing to district and regional-level courts to stop the removal of their mosque, ten people from Astrakhan and the Moscow activist group "For Human Rights" picketed the decision in Moscow. The protestors carried signs saying, "Russia is a multi-national state. Muslims are full-fledged citizens," "Shame on Islamaphobes in Astrakhan", "We respect authority and demand that they respect us!" and "Places of worship are protected! ("Protest action against tearing down mosque in Astrakhan," April 12, 2006)." These signs portray that the demolition as Islamophobia and a violation of Islamic citizens' rights, thereby challenging the image of Astrakhan as an exemplar of multiconfessional tolerance within Russia.

In response to accusations of Islamophobia, the Astrakhan government reaffirmed their stance on protecting citizens and commitment to religious tolerance in Astrakhan. Alexander Belov, the head of department on work with public and religious accusations in Astrakhan, stated, "The rumors of the mayor's anti-Muslim positions are unfounded. In the city, due to participation of the administration, there are 17 Muslim and 18 Orthodox churches that have never faced harassment (Tyukaeva, April 10, 2006)." City administrator Andrei Semonov stated, "We want to prevent any interpretation regarding the incitement of ethnic hatred and religious background (Tyukaeva, April 10, 2006)." To combat accusations of Islamophobia in regards to mosque construction near the airport, the city brings up its support of Islamic mosque-building in other areas of the

city. However, Mahmudova believes that the Islamic community in Astrakhan supports Mosque 34, claiming that eleven parish leaders have appealed to the governor asking to halt demolition, and that thousands of people have signed petitions against the decision ("The district court ruled the demolition of a mosque," February 10, 2006).

In order to correct what they felt was violations of their rights at the local level, Mosque 34's Islamic community placed hopes for correction at the federal level. Asya Mahmudova, the mosque's imam, stated, "The courts are blindly supporting the administration. We can't even get local newspapers to print our views so we have been obligated to come here to Moscow. We believe we will be listened to and the federal government will help us, that is our hope ("Russian Muslims and rights activists rallied in Moscow on Monday," April 12, 2006)." The community sent appeals to Putin, but claimed that their letters never reached his office ("The district court ruled the demolition of a mosque," February 10, 2006). By placing hope in the federal government, Mahmudova shows that she believes that the national-level courts and president will view that the decisions made by the state at the local level are not informed by pragmatic concerns, but are unlawful violations of the rights of Islamic citizens.

The federal court sided with the Astrakhan courts' decisions in the Supreme Court case on June 10, 2006. In response to this decision, members of Russia's Islamic community from Astrakhan and other regions banded together to protest again. A letter from Islamic leaders to Putin state that they view the demolition as akin to political persecution. They wrote:

> Speaking at the opening ceremony of the Parliament of Chechen Republic, you claimed that Russia had always been and still remained a most reliable defender of Islam. We believe in the sincerity of these words and value the fact they came from the mouth of the head of a great country and the warrantor of Russian constitution.

Yet, regrettably, it frequently occurs in our country that middle and lower levels of state power distort the policies of their superiors and turn them into something opposite to what they were intended to be.

The new city authorities in Astrakhan are planning to demolish the mosque, which construction was approved by the previous mayor, thus trying to discredit both the head of our state and the state in general without having any solid ground for such decision.

The court of law, including the Supreme Court of Russian Federation, has ruled in favour of Astrakhanian authorities. All complaints and appeals in defense of the mosque, including those sent to the General Prosecutor's office and the Human Rights Commissioner (ombudsman) of the Russian Federation, didn't lead to any positive results. We consider this to be a case of political persecution (March 7, 2007).

The letter was signed by more than 3,000 Russian Muslims, including Nafigulla Ashirov,Co-chairman of Russia's Mufti Council, Muqaddas Bibarsov, Co-chairman of Russia's Mufti Council, Shamil Sultanov,State Duma member, Marat Saifutdinov, Chief-editor of Islam.ru, and Denga Khalidov, Advisor to the President and corresponding member of the Academy for Geopolitical Issues and chairman of Center for the Issues of Ethnopolitics and Islam. It appeared in *Izvestiya Gazeta*, a national newspaper. This letter shows that many prominent Russian Muslims feel that lower levels of state power do not support Islamic community-building. This letter is an appeal to the president, as guarantor of the Russian Constitution, to protect Islamic citizens' from abuses from regional and city governments.

However, the president did not reply directly to the letter. Rather, Ostrovsky, a member of the Presidential Administration released a statement online. In the statement Ostrovsky told the signees that the Russian courts are subject to the Constitution, and that if they had problems with the judicial branch that they needed to communicate with the judicial branch. In regards to Mosque 34, he wrote:

> The said building is not built. Construction of the mosque had been suspended at the very outset, as was held in violation of applicable laws. The decision of the local authorities to postpone the construction of a mosque and move to another location were approved with the Supreme Mufti of TSDUM T. Tajuddin.

> Please inform on the outcome of your treatment of all signatories to its citizens (2007).

By telling the signees that they needed to pursue formal channels to challenge the demolition, the official dismissed the President's role in the case. He also reiterated that the findings of the court were approved by the leader of one of Russia's official Islamic structures. This is also evidenced by the lack of response directly from Putin himself. Although Islamic communities relied on the state and official structures within Russia as a means of obtaining justice, the state issued support of the findings of the court and in the integrity of state power at all levels. The Islamic community used discourses of Islamic rights, and the state at all levels responded with pragmatic discourses of their responsibilities for citizen's safety.

Yet, Mosque 34's Islamic community has not stopped appealing the decision. They have turned to international court systems, and their case is scheduled to appear in the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Strasbourg (Interview, July 2009). The controversy over this mosque has been mentioned in reports on religious freedom and property rights by Forum 18, a religious news service based in Oslo (Fagan, 2006), as well as in the 2006 Russian Country International Religious Freedom Report (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor). The demolition is cited in international reports as an example of the violation of religious freedom in Russia. Astrakhan, a city associated with a long history of religious tolerance, has started to develop a reputation as a case study of religious intolerance at an international level.

Section 4.6: Summary

Many of the Islamic communities within Astrakhan perceive that they are supported by the local government, and emphasize the roles of tolerance, respect, and preservation of tradition which help Islamic community-building. Even though members of Astrakhan's communities are immigrants from the Caucasus, they still have their own mosque, and are integrated to Astrakhan's Islamic community. Local communities and governments dialectically produce a discourse of peaceful Islamic-state relations which is similar to ones produced at the national level. But, Mosque 34's community believes that political motivations and exclusion underpin the built environment of Islam in Astrakhan. Despite its reputation as a tolerant multiconfessional city, they believe that the secular government at the local, regional, and national levels does not feel that the airport highway is a place where Astrakhan's Islamic identity can be on display. Rather, Islamic mosque construction is focused on revitalizing historic mosques in their appropriate historical neighborhood contexts.

Mosque 34's lawsuit is used by international institutions monitoring religious freedom to categorize Russia as a place of tense state-mosque relations, undermining Astrakhan's reputation as a peaceful, multi-cultural city. The demolition issue disrupts the narrative official Islamic groups and state leaders create on state support of Islam. Also, the demolition order also challenges the notion that the state supports or disapproves of Islamic groups based on their degree of radicalism or ethnic make-up.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In order to explore the complexities of what cultural landscapes of religion reveal about geopolitical relationships of Islam and the state in Russia, I performed a discourse analysis on the self-presentation of tolerance at both the national and local scales. Besides looking at the words spoken by governmental officials in Astrakhan, the Russian government, and leaders of ARDUM, I also traveled to the city and interviewed local leaders. My approach was informed by the fields of critical geopolitics and critical geographies of religion. These fields influenced my decision to do a local study (O'Tuathail, forthcoming; Kong 1993; Ehrkamp, 2007). From feminist critical geopolitics, I borrowed the element of focusing on what everyday religious landscapes could reveal about state-Islamic relationships (Pain, 2009).

In this project, I first explored how secularism is enacted in Russia. At the national level, the Russian government has pledged a separation of state and religion in the constitution, with all religious groups being seen as equal before the law. However, an analysis of official language used in governmental addresses to Orthodox and Islamic communities showed that the state feels Orthodoxy has played a special role in influencing Russia's history and culture that other groups have not. At the national level and within Astrakhan, this differential treatment of a religious group is reproduced in the preference of Tatar or "traditional" Islam over forms from Islamic separatists. The state's involvement in fostering moderate Islam at the national level is seen through the funding of Islamic education. In Astrakhan, this preference for Islam associated with Tatar culture is echoed through renaming a street after Kazan, the historic center of Tatar Islam.

Also, I examined how the state views itself as supportive of Islam at the national

level, and how this discourse of tolerance is reproduced at the local scale by both Islamic

communities and Astrakhan's regional and city government. Photographs of Putin and

Astrakhan's mufti shaking hands are displayed in the Central Mosque, symbolizing the

state's interest in promoting Islamic growth. The state paints itself as a friend of Islam

through its preferential treatment of moderate Islam, and the official Islamic

organizations align themselves with the state in the move to eliminate the rebellious

forms of Islam in the Caucasus.

I used the production of the Astrakhan mosque landscape as an analytical lens to

understand state-Islam relations at multiple scales. Although the state does not provide

financial support for mosque construction at the national scale, local governments support

Islam politically through returning mosques confiscated in the Soviet period to their

religious communities. And, in the case of Astrakhan's White Mosque, some government

funding was used to aid construction. Visiting the historical core of Astrakhan shows that

the local Islamic communities have experienced growth and have been able to preserve

many historic mosques- the White Mosque looks new, and the historical Black Mosque is

under renovation.

Next, I discussed how a proposed mosque demolition in Astrakhan disturbs

discourses of tolerance and respect of the state towards Islam produced at the local and

national level. Although the local government used a pragmatic concern over safety to

justify the demolition of mosque 34, the mosque community challenged these concerns,

protesting that the local government is Islamophobic. My local-level research revealed

many contradictions which exist within the Russian state. Rather than a seamless

structure, from the local perspective the state appears as a messy assemblage of

contradicting individuals, institutions and discourses. Although Mosque 34 felt they had received the appropriate permits from the local government, after regime change in the mayoral office the local government argued that they had not. The presence of national leaders has affected Islamic landscapes in Astrakhan in two opposing ways. Photographs of Putin and Astrakhan's mufti shaking hands are displayed in the Central Mosque, symbolizing the state's interest in promoting Islamic growth. Yet, interviewees and the Russian Country International Religious Freedom Report (2006) claim that the demolition was ordered after Putin remarked to the Astrakhan regional governor and city mayor that they had not chosen a good location for a mosque. The Astrakhan Kremlin and Dormition Cathedral are the markers of the gateway to the city from the Volga, and opponents to the demolition believe that Putin and local leaders did not want a mosque to be the first image visitors see when coming from the airport, a modern gateway to the city (Interview, July 2009). The partially-built mosque now sits off of the airport highway, half-way between construction and demolition and a visible symbol of tensions existing between the state at the local, regional, and national level and the local community of Mosque 34.

My research explored how local religious communities can become international actors. Mosque 34's community has challenged court orders for demolition at the international scale through bringing their case to the European Court of Human Rights. Minorities use such transnational institutions to make political claims and put pressure on the nation-state (Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2003). The court case has attracted some attention from NGOs, who use it to question religious freedom in Russia. Besides challenging Russia's commitment to religious freedom, the court case also undermines the strength of "power vertical" within Russia. Although the nation-state provided a

court system for Mosque 34's community to navigate, by turning to transnational legal spaces the community questions the authority and fairness of the Russian court system.

Finally, my study shows that there is a need for further in-depth, local studies of religious communities, and of Islam especially, in contemporary Russia. Out of the seven interviews I conducted, I only had one with a woman leader. More work needs to be conducted exploring how gender impacts perceptions of state-Islamic relations, and also more work needs to be done to see how those other than scholars or leaders in Islamic communities view these relations.

In a similar vein, the issue of generational differences came up in my research. Matsuzato notes that the Caucasian mosque is popular with youth activists (2007: 794). More work needs to be done exploring issues of youth culture and religion in Astrakhan or other regions, as well as how generational differences impact perceptions of mosque-state relations.

Appendix A: Interview Guide

The following themes will be addressed in interviews. Due to the open-ended nature of in-depth interviews, I am not able to provide a detailed list of exactly worded questions. Questions will be asked in English or Russian during interviews, and I will take written notes of answers with the consent of interviewees.

Core questions (English):

1) When was your mosque built?

2) How many people attend religious services?

3) Have you ever traveled to an Islamic country? If so, what was the nature of your travel? Have you ever made the hajj?

4) Who finances your mosque or spiritual center?

5) Does your mosque or religious center interact with a wider Islamic community?

6) What are the differences between Islam in Astrakhan and Islam in other parts of Russia?

7) What do you think is the relationship between government and religion in Astrakhan? And in Russia?

8) Do you think that the Russian government supports Islam? Why or why not?

9) What do you think are important subjects related to Islam in Astrakhan? What do you think are important issues related to Islam in Russia?

10) What is your opinion of religious freedom in Astrakhan?

11) In your opinion, do Russian politics influence Islam in Astrakhan? If yes, how?

12) Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your life in Astrakhan?

Core Questions (Russian):

1) Когда Ваша мечеть была построена?

2) Сколько людей посещают религиозные службы?

3) Вы когда-нибудь ездили в исламскую страну? Если да, то каков характер вашей поездки? Вы когда-нибудь сделали хадж?

4) Кто финансирует Вашу мечеть и духовный центр?

5) Существует ли в Вашей мечети или религиозным центре взаимодействия с более широкой исламской общиной?

6) В чем заключаются различия между исламом в Астрахане и исламом в других регионах России?

7) Как Вы думаете, какие отношения существуют между государством и религией в Астрахане? А в России?

8) Как Вы думаете, российское правительство поддерживает ислам? Почему да или почему нет?

9) Что Вы считаете важным вопросам, связанным с исламом в Астрахане? Что Вы считаете важным вопросам, связанным с исламом в России?

10) Каково Ваше мнение о религиозной свободе в Астрахане?

11) По Вашему мнению, влияют русские политики на ислам в Астрахане? Каким образом?

12) Есть ли что-либо еще Вы хотели бы рассказать мне о своей жизни в Астрахане?

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