

Changing Federalism and the Islamic Challenge in Tatarstan

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Abstract: The author examines Russian President Vladimir Putin's reassertion of the central government's authority in the Republic of Tatarstan, which former President Boris Yeltsin ceded in a 1994 power-sharing treaty. The treaty allowed Tatarstani authorities to abandon their nationalist rhetoric and suppress their perceived opposition. The Tatarstani government's authoritarian policies penetrated the religious sphere. The Tatarstani government has attempted to subordinate all religious structures to a single religious authority, creating a (only partially visible) religious opposition. The repression prevented Tatarstani President Mintimer Shaymiev from relying on a powerful grassroots movement to oppose Putin's centralization attempts. A united elite-level nationalist and religious opposition is starting to emerge and may find popular support.

Keywords: Islam, nationalism, Tatarstan

Tatarstan—an autonomous ethnic republic within the Russian Federation dominated by traditionally Muslim Tatars—was at the forefront of nationalist mobilization in the late 1980s and early 1990s. From 1990 to 1993, against a background of political rivalries in Moscow (first between Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, then between Yeltsin and the parliament), the republic's leadership enjoyed virtual independence and consolidated its position vis-à-vis the federal government to win extraordinary concessions in a power-sharing treaty between the republic and Russia's central government. The republic's leadership insisted on being an equal partner with Moscow; retained a substantial share of federal taxes for the local budget; and enacted local laws that sometimes contradicted federal law.¹ Tatar ethnicity and (especially) proficiency in the Tatar language were essential for advancing in many types of careers in the republic. Until recently, three-quarters of the Tatarstani legislature's (Gossovet) members were ethnic Tatars, even though Tatars barely constituted a majority of the population. During his tenure, however, Russian President Vladimir Putin slowly eroded Tatarstan's independence. Putin rescinded all Tatarstani laws found to contradict federal law and enforced fiscal discipline, and the Moscow headquarters of the ruling United Russia Party demanded its Tatarstani representatives revise the Gossovet's ethnic composition.²

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Although the Russian federal leadership's reasons for making these changes are clear, their methods of doing so without encountering substantial resistance from the republic's leadership or the Tatarstani nationalist movement's popular leaders are not. I use the example of Tatarstan to examine the ease with which the central government regained the ground lost to some ethnic republics during the Gorbachev-Yeltsin conflict and Yeltsin's first term as president. Because Tatar nationalism and Islamic tradition were so instrumental to Tatarstan after 1991, I also examine the history of the Volga republic's Islamic renaissance, and the prospects of politicized Islam.

Stage One: A Game of Nationalism

In the late 1980s, as the Soviet grip on free speech and political organization loosened, nationalistic Tatarstanis mobilized to improve the status of the republic and their native culture. After Russia declared sovereignty on June 12, 1990, Tatarstan sought to elevate its status from an autonomous region within the Russian Federation to a union republic within the Soviet Union. Tatarstan and other autonomous regions, such as Chechnya, Bashkortostan, and Yakutia, profited greatly from Gorbachev and Yeltsin's 1989–91 rivalry. In the context of this power struggle, Yeltsin suggested in 1990 that the leaders of Tatarstan "take as much independence as you can"—warning if they seceded, the "decision will be final."³ However, even after the Soviet Union's collapse and Gorbachev's fall from power, Yeltsin did not focus on reining in autonomous Russian regions, instead wrestling with the parliament over constitutional powers and economic reforms.

Meanwhile, before concluding a power-sharing treaty with Moscow on February 15, 1994, Tatarstan enjoyed virtual independence. The republic's government, under the leadership of the experienced Communist bureaucrat Mintimer Shaymiev, artfully employed this independence to consolidate its position vis-à-vis Moscow.⁴ Within Tatarstan, President Shaymiev played a subtle game with the popular nationalist movement. Although he used the movement as a bargaining chip in his negotiations with Moscow to win more concessions by presenting himself as a nationalist leader, Shaymiev carefully engaged the movement to avoid the same fate as Communist elites in Chechnya, who were ousted by the nationalist movement.⁵ Shaymiev proceeded to subdue and marginalize the nationalist movement, securing his grip on political power. At the same time, the republic's status began to resemble that of a union republic within the former Soviet Union. For example, the government emphasized ethnic identification and proficiency in the Tatar language, which played an increased role in such issues as employment, reflecting the mass nationalist sentiment.

Stage One Continued: The Islamic Renaissance

The revitalization of Islam in Tatarstan, like Tatarstani nationalism, dates back to late-1980s perestroika and was part of the general search for new ideological alternatives across the Soviet Union. Islam was a particularly important tool for the Tatarstani nationalist movement. It reinforced a distinct Tatar identity that was instrumental in their demands for greater autonomy and independence from the Russian federal government.

Tatarstani nationalists adopted the most common approach at the time—attempting to restore Islam as a conservative national tradition, a set of certain popular rites.⁶ Islam did not represent an independent political force at the time. The nationalist movement instead used Islamic symbols, such as green flags and traditional hats, to reinforce their political demands with claims of a unique national identity.⁷

Some scholars even draw direct parallels between the late-1980s' nationalist leaders and the 1920s "national Communists," who strategically used Communist rhetoric to legitimate their demands for greater autonomy.⁸ The Islamic renaissance of the late 1980s served a similar purpose in the struggle to promote Tatarstan's autonomy.⁹ Islam's instrumentalist role is exemplified by numerous instances of its noncanonical usage: reciting prayers in theaters or staging theatrical shows devoted to Ramadan and the Feast of Sacrifice in stadiums or in the streets near national monuments. For example, the first public Ramadan celebration in Kazan, on April 16, 1991, culminated in a procession of thousands of people to Freedom Square chanting nationalist movement slogans.¹⁰ After Shaymiev signed the power-sharing treaty, such public celebrations of religious holidays declined, becoming private and local instead. The only public component remaining is the formal greeting published in the press on religious holidays, reflecting the president's general deemphasis on Tatar national and religious identity after he consolidated power. Tatarstan's Russian-language newspapers sometimes totally ignore the holidays.¹¹ At the same time, a politically ambitious strand of Islam that is self-sufficient and independent of the nationalist movement's remnants and the local government has emerged.

The growing number of Muslim parishes and schools in Tatarstan are powerful indicators of the Islamic renaissance. In 1990, there were only 154 Muslim parishes in Tatarstan (for about 2 million Tatars living there).¹² Most of them formed after Gorbachev's reforms began. Of the fifty-five imams, forty-one were older than sixty years old, only one had a university-level theological education, and only eight had a secondary (high school level) Muslim education. After 1990, the situation changed dramatically—two Muslim secondary schools were founded in Tatarstan (during the Soviet era, Tatar religious leaders were educated in Central Asia). Numerous new parishes and mosques continued to rapidly be built; the number of parishes increased from eighteen in 1988 to more than 700 in 1992.¹³ These changes were not controlled by the government or even by the Spiritual Board of Muslims. According to Valiulla Yakupov, the current deputy head of the board, "almost half the mosques [at the time] were built without any licensing documents from any Muslim authority."¹⁴ Saudi, Jordanian, Turkish, Egyptian, and even Sudanese assistance played an important role in effecting this change.

Before 1991, Tatarstan Muslim organizations were subordinated to the Spiritual Board of Muslims's European Part of Russia and Siberia headquarters in the city of Ufa, Bashkortostan, which was headed by Talgat Tadjutdin. Tatar nationalists wished to change this and called on Tadjutdin to relocate to Kazan, Tatarstan's capital. According to the nationalists, Tatarstan's impending succession from Russia would require independent religious structures. The mufti rejected these calls and instead established a representative's office in Kazan. In response, nationalist leaders created an alternative Spiritual Board of Muslims of Tatarstan, which precipitated a schism among the Tatarstani Muslims.

Foreign financial resources played an important role in precipitating the schism. After a Moscow-based Russian government watchdog organization, the Council on Religious Affairs, dissolved, the government lost control over the receipt and distribution of financial assistance from foreign Muslim countries, allowing the Tatarstani clerics to tap into the financial resources from foreign governments that previously would have been allocated to Ufa. For example, at the second International Islamic Forum, titled "Islamic Education in East Europe and Muslim States," held in Moscow September 28–October 1, 1992, the international Muslim organizations' leaders concluded agreements with the new Russian

Muslim organizations' leaders that provided not only financing, but also sent teachers and accepted Russian students at Islamic universities abroad. At the same forum, Saudi representatives gave away fifteen libraries of *Salafite* (known as *Wahhabite* in Russia) literature.¹⁵ According to Yakupov, the Saudi delegations to Tatarstan hinted at generous assistance should an alternative organization to the Ufa Muslim headquarters emerge.¹⁶ Thus, Tatar clerics' disagreement as to how the spoils should be divided greatly contributed to the heat surrounding the debate over establishing a Tatarstani Muslim Spiritual Board and the ensuing schism.¹⁷ Shaymiev's position on the issue also played a significant role in the schism.

Stage Two: Shaymiev's Power Game

By 1992, the Tatarstani leadership no longer saw the feeble Russian central government as a major threat to its power. Although Shaymiev supported the August 1991 coup, Yeltsin could not remove him. Shaymiev's strong support from the Tatar nationalist movement made him invulnerable to Yeltsin's ire.¹⁸ However, Shaymiev viewed Tatarstani nationalist leaders as the major threat to his power. As soon as he had secured a number of privileges for his republic in the 1994 bilateral treaty with Moscow, his policies toward the nationalist movement changed. He continued co-opting the nationalists he deemed less dangerous into his government, but he also sought to marginalize those he felt he could not trust, such as Fauziya Bairamova (elected the "Tatar Woman of 1990"), the most popular nationalist leader and chair of the Ittifak Party. Soft repression against Bairamova and her associates included closing her party's office in Kazan in 1995 and the *Altyn Urda* newspaper in 1996.¹⁹

Shaymiev also sought to ensure political control over the continuing religious renaissance. Once a local Muslim governing body had been established, Shaymiev chose to support it to undermine Tadjutin, who could not be controlled because he was based outside the republic. Tadjutdin was enormously popular within Tatarstan (elected the "Tatar man of 1989") and was thus potentially dangerous. Consequently, the 1992 schism among the Muslims of Tatarstan was largely resolved by 1995 through Shaymiev's soft repression of Tadjutdin loyalists. This process included a campaign against Tadjutdin in the local press and the government newspaper *Watanym Tatarstan*. Seizure of mosques and other premises by the supporters of the new Tatarstani mufti followed. In January 1995, a Congress of Tatarstani Muslims legitimated the forcible transfer of all the Spiritual Board of Muslims's European Part of Russia and Siberia's parishes in Tatarstan to the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Tatarstan.²⁰

The head of the newly established religious body, 'Abdulla 'Aliulla, quickly learned that the republic's leadership would not tolerate independent political actors in Tatarstan. 'Aliulla's 1995 attempt to seize a mosque and a Muslim school in Kazan without the government's approval resulted in criminal charges.²¹ His position of leadership was weakened and, in February 1998, another cleric, 'Usman Iskhakov, was elected the republic's mufti with Shaymiev's support. 'Aliulla condemned the government's interference and received support from the opposition nationalist parties, including Ittifak and Milli Mejlis. 'Aliulla accused the county-level government leaders of handpicking congressional delegates and telling them whom to support in the elections.²²

Even before he was ousted, 'Aliulla initiated a rapprochement with the opposition nationalist forces to strengthen his position in the republic: he became the head of the

Tatarstan Muslims Movement in 1996 and later, in 1998, attempted to participate in the local elections as the leader of the Omet Movement and a member of the Popular Patriotic Union of Russia. However, the Tatarstani government's authoritarian nature left little possibility for any opposition leader to win an election in the republic. By that time, all county-level government heads had become members of the local legislature. Tatarstan had turned into one of the least democratic regions of Russia.²³ In the wake of the 1998 Muslim Congress, 'Aliulla continued to defend his position, emphasizing nationalist values. His stance was supported by the nationalist opposition, such as the Milli Mejlis Party.²⁴

Meanwhile, Iskhakov quickly consolidated his position of leadership through strong backing from the local government.

Unlike 'Aliulla, he understood that his position depended on Shaymiev's support. As Ravi Amirkhanov, the chairman of the Milli Mejlis Party, writes:

"[Iskhakov] was and still is an obedient tool of the authorities."²⁵

Shaymiev's selection of an imam for the newly opened Kul Sharif grand mosque in Kazan in 2005 is an example of the secular leader's domination of religious matters. The current mufti's political loyalty won him a second reelection in February 2006. This occurred despite

the rule that no one is permitted to serve more than two consecutive terms and local nationalist—including those in the government—protestations. The nationalists unleashed a vicious but unsuccessful campaign against Iskhakov on the eve of the election.²⁶ The government backing also allowed Iskhakov to make a personal fortune from various foreign charities' donations, while remaining unaccountable.²⁷

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Stage Three: Putin's Vertical Power

The complex relationship between the central government and the provinces under Putin complicated Tatarstan's autonomy. The center's demand to bring local laws into accord with Russian federal laws; the new administrative layer of federal districts; the introduction of plenipotentiary representatives in those districts in 2000; the cancellation of some rights of the local government (particularly with respect to the use of natural resources); the increase in the share of taxes to be paid to Moscow; the cancellation of local gubernatorial elections; and Putin's ability to disband regional legislatures, granted in 2005, illustrate unitary, if not authoritarian, trends in the relationship between the center and its provinces.²⁸

While these new measures created widespread discontent, people in ethnic republics that are economically advanced and rich in natural resources, such as Tatarstan, have communicated particular displeasure with the emerging Russian political system. In addition to economic complaints, provincial political actors protest what they see as Moscow's attempt to undermine their nationhood.²⁹ Nevertheless, the republics appear to have ceded power to the central government without much active protest—at least for the time being—despite local elites' frequent use of ethnic and religious differences to advance their

republic's position in Russia in the past fifteen years. The massive 1989–92 nationalist demonstrations are still fresh in the Tatarstanis' memory. Separatist ideas are still prevalent in the local press and even have some local officials' unofficial blessing.³⁰ The current situation is characterized by a frail balance between local religious activists, the nationalist activists, the local government, and the federal center.

The Tatarstani ruling elite wish to protect and expand the local government's powers. To quote Rafael Khakimov, a political advisor to Shaymiev: "Ceding regional powers to the federal center was obviously a losing strategy, it has become almost a nightmare now."³¹ The end result of Shaymiev's 1990s policies, which subdued and marginalized the nationalist movement and secured his own grip on political power in the republic while boosting Tatarstan's status within the Russian Federation, is also a political dead end, however. Although the republic's status was temporarily elevated, by the late 1990s, eliminating the nationalist movement tipped the balance of power toward Moscow. Consequently, it was difficult for the republic's leadership to rely on nationalism when Putin began to revise the relationship between Moscow and ethnic republics, such as Tatarstan. Moscow's current position is so secure that it has recently deemed it safe to return some powers back to the provinces. This issue was further discussed at a State Council (gubernatorial assembly) special session in Kazan during its August 2005 millennial celebrations. Still, after the old power-sharing treaty expired in July 2005, it took the federal center two years to ratify a new treaty.

The second Chechen war further contributed to the new Moscow-centric status quo. Putin's resolution in fighting the war prevented Tatarstan's leadership from rekindling nationalist mobilization. Putin's resolve made any possible reinvigoration of the Tatarstani nationalist movement a doubly dangerous strategy for Shaymiev, as he risked the retaliation of frustrated nationalist leaders and the consolidated central government. Chechnya's example showed Shaymiev how a popular movement can oust regional leaders. From Shaymiev's perspective, Putin's authoritarianism may have looked like a lesser evil compared to an unpredictable grassroots movement.

Politicized Islam and Its Union with Opposition Nationalism

Radical Islam's emergence among a once thoroughly secular people is a recent phenomenon. Tatarstani leaders have used their Islamic identity for instrumental reasons on the global stage several times. Islam in the secularized post-Soviet context is an important asset for Tatarstani leaders and may prove instrumental for achieving their economic and symbolic interests. Although ethnic Tatars dominate the local government, they remain marginalized and stigmatized beyond Tatarstan's boundaries. Tatarstanis' lack of opportunities in the rest of Russia and interest in boosting their status prompted a search for useful contacts in the Islamic world. Further, Tatarstani leaders wished to capitalize on some local companies' long-established business links in Muslim countries. In addition, some Tatarstanis viewed the chill in U.S.-Arab relations as an opportunity to secure Arab money. The emphasis on Islamic solidarity may be interpreted as a tool to ensure a privileged position in a world that has not been very generous to ethnic Tatars.

The federal government's pressure to curb local governments' powers may exacerbate the situation in Tatarstan, even though the leadership is afraid of radical political Islam and attempts to distance itself from it. Tatarstani leaders would like to promote a modernized version of Islam compatible with Western civilization. Hakimov champions a vision of "EuroIslam," which distinctly emphasizes religious tolerance. Addressing some

Muslim and nationalist leaders' discontent regarding the Kazan city government's accepting a famous Russian icon from the Vatican, Khakimov advised them to reread the Koran: "All world religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have common roots."³² When Farid Mukhametshin, the Gossovet chairman, addressed the World Tatar Congress in 2005, he did not use the words "Islam" or "Muslim."³³ In general, the local government's secular nationalists perceive Islamic universalism as a threat to Tatar national particularism. They sometimes accuse Tatarstan's current religious leaders of betraying the Tatar nation for the sake of international Islam.

While they occasionally view Islamic identity as a useful tool, Tatarstan's ruling elite remain anxious about bringing expressions of Islamic identity (and nationalism) under their control. However, Islamic influences challenge their control—a conundrum clearly visible in education. There are currently fourteen Islamic schools in the republic—ten at the secondary level, and four at the university level, including the Russian Islamic University (founded in 1998). There are 108 instructors and 1,373 shakirds (students) at these religious schools.³⁴ Their official curricula may not always correspond to the actual content, and manuals the local imams allegedly authored may camouflage texts by Middle Eastern ideologues. An unknown number of unregistered schools also operate. This unregulated environment provides ample ground for the unregulated spread of radical Islam.

The strength of foreign influences in Tatarstan further challenges local elites' control over Islamic identity. Until Iskhakov consolidated power at the February 1998 Muslim Congress, Tatarstan hosted a number of Islamic centers that struggled with one another for influence and power. Many Tatar clerics received religious education in the Middle East. Moreover, foreign Islamic charities financed new mosque construction and sent Islamic literature to the republic. Fundamentalist ideas initially penetrated Tatarstan in this context.³⁵ By the late 1990s, the local government revised its policies regarding foreign Islamic influence, but even the current leadership of the republic's Spiritual Board of Muslims is suspected of having links with Middle Eastern fundamentalists. Sources close to the local government report that the first prayers in the new Kul Sharif Mosque, opened with pomp and fanfare during the Kazan millennium celebrations in the summer of 2005, were patterned after the Saudi (*Wahhabite* or *Salafite*) style rather than the local (*Hanafite*) tradition.³⁶

Local elites' control is also challenged by radical leaders' abilities to expand their following. Mansur Jalaletdinov, the imam-mukhtasib of Kazan, noted that radical Islamists expanded their influence by paying money to imams (typically in rural areas), effectively buying out their mosques: "They start helping [an imam] with money and then he gets attached to them. To leave them then [becomes] difficult or impossible."³⁷ Iskhak Lotfullin, the imam-hatib of a Kazan mosque, told a similar story to a *Nezavisimaia Gazeta* correspondent. According to Lotfullin, Arab and local radical Islamists, once they have bought out a mosque, organize prayers according to their custom. He accused the current mufti of receiving kickbacks from such deals and also said that: "Mufti 'Usman has made me an offer to pass my mosque to his men."³⁸

Tatarstan's leaders feel compelled to cooperate with the federal government in their struggle with radical Islam because of their minimal control over radical Islamic leaders in particular and Islamic identity in general. For its part, the federal government is happy to oblige, which has resulted in a crackdown on Islamic zealots. This marriage of convenience between Moscow and Kazan caused the balance of power to further shift toward

Moscow, which is probably why the Kremlin is now confident enough to return some of the powers that it had earlier taken away from the republics.³⁹

The government frequently cracks down on purported Islamic fundamentalists. For example, several dozen members of the international Hizb-ut-Tahrir al-Islami (Party of Islamic Liberation) were arrested between November 2004 and January 2005. Their local leader was internationally wanted Uzbek national Alisher Usmanov. Russian human rights organizations suggest that at least some cases were falsified and some evidence was acquired through torture. However, Shaymiev said in a 2006 interview that there were real attempts to commit terrorist acts in Kazan on the eve of its millennium celebrations.⁴⁰ The

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Tatarstani government and federal government attributed a 2005 gas pipeline explosion near the town of Kukmor to an Islamic sect popular in the town.

Opposition nationalists took the crackdown on radical Muslims as a convenient opportunity to appeal to the republic’s Muslims. They used Islamophobia as a political tool, suggesting that these events were just another pretext for the Kremlin to centralize the country. A 2005 joint appeal of the Ittifak and the Watan parties reads: “Under the veil of struggle against ter-

ror and right before the eyes of the international community, the authorities of the Russian Federation are committing violence against the Muslim peoples [thus] realizing the Russian emperors’ colonial designs. . . . It is clear that under the false pretext of the struggle with terror they want to eliminate [ethnic] republics and the very peoples of the republics.”⁴¹

Mainstream national leaders have also expressed a concern with Islamophobia. In particular, Rinat Zakirov, the World Tatar Congress chairman, said in March 2005: “These days, some forces actively use the label of ‘Wahhabism’ with respect to believers and negate our ancestors’ experience of Islam’s co-existence with other religions.”⁴²

Public opinion data demonstrate that elite-level developments reflect the popular sentiment and that a union of religious and nationalist opposition could be popular. The data were collected as a part of a larger project in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan. My colleagues from the Tatarstan Institute of History surveyed Tatars, Bashkirs, and Russians. For the purposes of this article, I used a representative sample of 400 Tatars in Tatarstan from the survey.

For those Tatarstanis who are concerned with their national and religious rights, a mix of religious and nationalistic ideas remains attractive. The data show that those Tatarstanis who pray regularly are more likely to support separtist attitudes.

Table 1 shows that about 25 percent of the 400 Tatarstanis in this sample pray regularly—at least once a week. This variable was recoded into a dichotomous variable that showed whether a person prayed regularly. It was then tabulated with several other variables.

Table 2 shows that those Tatarstanis who pray regularly are more likely to identify with their republic and less likely to identify with Russia than those who do not pray regularly. The value of the chi-square statistic, 12.2 with 3 degrees of freedom, suggests that these values are highly significant $p = .007$.

Religious Tatarstanis are more likely to support a greater degree of political autonomy from Moscow, although many people preferred not to answer the question tabulated in table 3 and similar questions about Tatarstani sovereignty. In particular, they are more likely to support the republic’s right to have a constitution with different/than provisions the federal constitution. The data presented in table 3 indicate a highly significant difference with Yates’s continuity correction of Pearson’s chi-square at 6.76 and $p = .009$.

TABLE 1. How Often Tatarstanis Pray, 2006

Response	<i>n</i>	%
Many times a day	24	6.0
Daily	55	13.8
Weekly	20	5.0
Occasionally	117	29.3
Never or almost never	69	17.3
Do not know	81	20.3
Missing	34	8.5
Total	400	100.2

Note. Percentages add to more than 100 because of rounding.

TABLE 2. Comparison of Tartarstanis’ Prayer Habits and Whom They Are “Prepared to Fight for,” 2006

Response to “Do you pray?”	I am prepared to fight for . . .									
	Russia		Russia and Tatarstan		Tatarstan		No one		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
No	31	13.7	79	35.0	45	19.9	71	31.4	226	100.0
Yes	5	5.9	36	42.4	28	32.9	16	18.8	85	100.0
Total	36		115		73		87		311	

TABLE 3. Comparison of Tatarstani Prayer Habits and Support for a Different Tatarstani Constitution, 2006

Response to “Do you pray?”	Tatarstan should have the right to have a constitution different from the federal one.					
	Agree		Disagree		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
No	99	52.1	91	47.9	190	100.0
Yes	44	72.1	17	27.9	61	100.0
Total	143		108		251	

Finally, table 4 shows that religious Tatarstanis are also less likely to approve of intermarriages than those Tatarstanis who are not religious. The chi-square is greater than 21 with three degrees of freedom and $p = 0.00$.

These simple tables demonstrate that religious Tatarstanis are also more likely to be more nationalist: they are more likely to (1) identify with Tatarstan rather than with Russia; (2) demand greater political autonomy for their republic; and (3) oppose intermarriages. The emerging elite-level union of opposition nationalists and religious activists may find mass support.

TABLE 4. Comparison of Tatarstani Prayer Habits and Support for Children Marrying a Russian, 2006

Response to "Do you pray?"	If your child married a Russian . . .									
	I would be against it.		I would prefer a Tartar, but would let the child choose.		I would approve only if the spouse adopted our customs and religion.		Ethnicity does not matter in marriage.		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
No	80	28.0	106	37.1	20	7.0	80	28.0	286	100.1
Yes	46	47.4	34	35.1	9	9.3	8	8.2	97	100.0
Total	126		140		29		88		383	

Note. Percentages do not add to 100 because of rounding.

Conclusion

An elite-level union of opposition nationalists and religious radicals is an emerging reality in Tatarstan. My data show that this union is grounded in popular sentiment. It is plausible that even mainstream nationalists may eventually support the union, if provided the right political opportunity. For instance, if the economy deteriorated, then the local political scene could change dramatically. Russia has witnessed similar scenarios in the north Caucasus, where religious fundamentalism superseded secular nationalism against a background of poverty and scarce economic opportunity. At the same time, the political void Shaymiev created has left him no choice but to follow the federal government's general line. This is, perhaps, inevitable, so long as the only viable alternative frame of mobilization remains Islamic fundamentalism.

NOTES

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