

RUSSIA'S MUSLIMS



DECEMBER 17, 2009

**Briefing of the
Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe**

Washington: 2012

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe
234 Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
202-225-1901
csce@mail.house.gov
http://www.csce.gov

Legislative Branch Commissioners

HOUSE

ALCEE L. HASTINGS, FLORIDA,
Co-Chairman
EDWARD J. MARKEY, MASSACHUSETTS
LOUISE McINTOSH SLAUGHTER,
NEW YORK
MIKE McINTYRE, NORTH CAROLINA
G.K. BUTTERFIELD, NORTH CAROLINA
CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, NEW JERSEY
ROBERT B. ADERHOLT, ALABAMA
JOSEPH R. PITTS, PENNSYLVANIA
DARRELL E. ISSA, CALIFORNIA

SENATE

BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, MARYLAND,
Chairman
CHRISTOPHER J. DODD, CONNECTICUT
SHELDON WHITEHOUSE, RHODE ISLAND
TOM UDALL, NEW MEXICO
JEANNE SHAHEEN, NEW HAMPSHIRE
SAM BROWNBACK, KANSAS
SAXBY CHAMBLISS, GEORGIA
RICHARD BURR, NORTH CAROLINA
ROBERT F. WICKER, MISSISSIPPI

Executive Branch Commissioners

MICHAEL H. POSNER, DEPARTMENT OF STATE
ALEXANDER VERSHBOW, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
MICHAEL C. CAMUÑEZ, DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

The Helsinki process, formally titled the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, traces its origin to the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in Finland on August 1, 1975, by the leaders of 33 European countries, the United States and Canada. As of January 1, 1995, the Helsinki process was renamed the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The membership of the OSCE has expanded to 56 participating States, reflecting the breakup of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia.

The OSCE Secretariat is in Vienna, Austria, where weekly meetings of the participating States' permanent representatives are held. In addition, specialized seminars and meetings are convened in various locations. Periodic consultations are held among Senior Officials, Ministers and Heads of State or Government.

Although the OSCE continues to engage in standard setting in the fields of military security, economic and environmental cooperation, and human rights and humanitarian concerns, the Organization is primarily focused on initiatives designed to prevent, manage and resolve conflict within and among the participating States. The Organization deploys numerous missions and field activities located in Southeastern and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. The website of the OSCE is: <www.osce.org>.

ABOUT THE COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the Helsinki Commission, is a U.S. Government agency created in 1976 to monitor and encourage compliance by the participating States with their OSCE commitments, with a particular emphasis on human rights.

The Commission consists of nine members from the United States Senate, nine members from the House of Representatives, and one member each from the Departments of State, Defense and Commerce. The positions of Chair and Co-Chair rotate between the Senate and House every two years, when a new Congress convenes. A professional staff assists the Commissioners in their work.

In fulfilling its mandate, the Commission gathers and disseminates relevant information to the U.S. Congress and the public by convening hearings, issuing reports that reflect the views of Members of the Commission and/or its staff, and providing details about the activities of the Helsinki process and developments in OSCE participating States.

The Commission also contributes to the formulation and execution of U.S. policy regarding the OSCE, including through Member and staff participation on U.S. Delegations to OSCE meetings. Members of the Commission have regular contact with parliamentarians, government officials, representatives of non-governmental organizations, and private individuals from participating States. The website of the Commission is: <www.csce.gov>.

RUSSIA'S MUSLIMS

DECEMBER 17, 2009

PARTICIPANTS

Kyle Parker, Policy Advisor, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe	Page 1
Paul Goble, Professor, Institute of World Politics	2
Shireen Hunter, Visiting Professor, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service	9

RUSSIA'S MUSLIMS

DECEMBER 17, 2009

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe Washington, DC

The briefing was held at 2 p.m. in room 1539, Longworth House Office Building, Washington, DC, Kyle Parker, Policy Advisor, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, moderating.

Panalists present: Kyle Parker, Policy Advisor, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; Paul Goble, Professor, Institute of World Politics; and Shireen Hunter, Visiting Professor, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service.

Mr. PARKER. On behalf of Senator Cardin, Chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, I'd like to welcome you all to today's briefing on Russia's Muslims. We are pleased to have two world-renowned experts on the topic and this is the last official event the Helsinki Commission will hold this year. This event will be on the record and transcribed and will be posted on our Web site and I think a video feed on YouTube and there will ultimately be a transcript.

So we'll hopefully go at a leisurely pace and not be interrupted, as we often are when the Congress is in the session by the annoying buzzers and not as pressed for time. So please, as you're out there listening to the presentations, be thinking of good questions. There will be, certainly, an opportunity to participate, hopefully, in a discussion about a topic that's quite relevant and I would say quite misunderstood.

Islam in Russia is something that I get the impression is not terribly well-understood in Russia, let alone here in Washington. And it's something that there are clearly policy relevance—given a number of issues in Russia, religious freedom, the radical Islam, terrorism, demographic issues as far as where the community's growing, but it is, as I think, we'll learn from the presentations of our witnesses, a type of Islam unlike what we may be a little more familiar with coming out of the Gulf or out of Iran, but certainly having some commonality as well as an influence from abroad.

There are a number of centers of Russian Islam, the North Caucasus being one of the largest ones. The city of Kazan, which was in the news when Secretary Clinton visited because it was her city she visited outside of Moscow and remarked there on the relative inter-religious, interethnic harmony that exists in the Republic of Tartarstan, not necessarily the case in some of the southern regions. As well, of course, the two big cities, Moscow and St. Petersburg, which have sizable Islamic communities.

And as far as briefings go that we hold, it's a little unique in the sense that we're often holding a briefing or a hearing on a crisis. The war in Chechnya, free media under siege in a particular country, whereas this one is not being held on any particular crisis at all, but on a community, an interesting community and I hope our discussion today will have a certain academic flair to it, in a sense, something you might, you know, might almost expect from a college lecture. But hopefully, an interesting one. [Laughter.]

So with that, we will begin with Professor Paul Goble, who is currently a professor at the Institute of World Politics here in Washington. He's held a number of senior government posts over the past few decades, including at the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of State, USIA or——

Mr. GOBLE. Voice of America.

Mr. PARKER. Voice of America.

Mr. GOBLE. Radio Free Europe.

Mr. PARKER. Pardon me, Radio Free Europe. [Laughter.] So we will begin with you, Paul, please. Thank you very much.

Mr. GOBLE. Thank you very much. It's a great pleasure to have this opportunity to speak on this subject and I wish to commend the Commission and its staff for organizing it. And I'm very grateful to have the chance to appear before you. I have been in the nationalities business in Washington for 35 years and one of the sad things is that despite the increasing importance of the various parts of this community and other ethnic group—ethnic and religious groups in what was the Soviet Union, many of them remain largely unstudied.

And indeed, within the U.S. Government, large numbers of them are referred to as orphan communities, by which people mean no one is paying attention to them. We tend to wait until there's violence and one of the consequences of that is that we associate small groups only with violence, rather than with a much more important historical and political tradition.

Two years ago, Elena Chudinova, a Russian Orthodox Children's writer published a remarkable novel which sold very well in the Russian Federation. It was called "The Mosque of Notre Dame de Paris." The premise of this novel was that in the year of Our Lord 2048, Muslim radicals had taken over the European Union. They had imposed Shariah. They had confined the small number of remaining Christians in ghettos that were guarded by Palestinian radicals.

And these communities could only be rescued by the daughter of a Jewish oligarch from Russia, a dissident cardinal from Beirut, the Israeli Governor of Baghdad and six Serbs who hated Europeans. All the buttons were pushed. One of the reasons I mention this is that in fact, this novel, which was supposedly set in Europe 35 years from now, in fact, has nothing to do with Europe in 2048. It has a great deal to do with how many Russians misperceive their own future and the population which is radically changing.

No one knows exactly how many Muslim believers there are in the Russian Federation. All figures are problematic. Indeed, even if you ask Muslim leaders, they will explain to you that only Allah knows the answer to that question. Typically, we talk about Muslims and we give numbers in terms of what are called ethnic Muslims, that is, people who are members of communities that are historically Islamic.

Some of those people are Muslims in a belief sense, some are not. But culturally, most of them are part of a Muslim tradition. If you count that way, there are already,

in the Russian Federation, somewhere between 20 and 25 million people of Islamic heritage. That number is growing rapidly, both in terms of absolute numbers and relative to the total population. Its relative growth is powered by three things.

First, fertility rates among historically Islamic people are vastly higher than they are among ethnic Russians by factors of three to eight times. In other words, the average ethnic Russian woman today has about 1.1 children per lifetime whereas the average Chechen and Ingush woman has about 10. Even if you assume regression to the mean over generations, that still gives you a big outflow.

Second, because of the incredible alcoholization of the ethnic Russian population, you have unprecedented levels of adult mortality among ethnic Russian males between the ages of 18 and 55. Indeed, it has been said, that an ethnic Russian man is more likely to die in the next year from alcohol-related problems than a man living in Afghanistan or Iraq. It is that—so you have a big death rate.

And the third thing is immigration. There are somewhere between 12 and 14 million people in the Russian Federation who come from former Soviet republics that were historically Islamic. It is projected by the Institute of Ethnology in Moscow that within the next 10 years, there will be more Muslims in the Russian Federation from the near abroad—that is, from the former Soviet republics of Central Asia and Azerbaijan and the Caucasus than are native-born.

That has an enormous consequence because it means that the usual Russian insistence that the Muslims of Russia do not pose the same kind of challenge to the Russian state that the Muslim populations in Western Europe do goes out the window because the people who are coming in as migrants speak a different language, have a different cultural tradition and have a very different set of attitudes toward the Russian population within which they live. A lot of the assumptions that have governed the discussion in the Russian media in the past have to go out the window.

What I want to do today is three things and obviously, it would be impossible to cover even one of those in the next 4 hours. And I'm not going to take even that long to talk about all three. First, I'd like to talk about the inheritance of the Muslim problem or the Muslim issue after 1991. What caused things to be the way they were in 1991? Why were Muslims organized and why were they particularly open to certain kinds of movements after the collapse of Soviet power?

Second, I want to talk about what might be described as the perfect storm of events that happened in the 1990s and subsequently, because we really see something happening in the former Soviet space, something happening in the world of Islam and something related to the demographic change that has made the Islamic challenge, if you will, within the Russian Federation far more severe now than anyone expected 15 years ago.

And the third I want to do, because this is a U.S. Government operation here, is to talk about the implications for policy. The fact is that the rise of the Islamic communities—and I think we should say plural because there are many of them, there's not just one—inside the Russian Federation has already provided some important policy challenges to the United States, many of which we have not dealt well with. And I'm going to specify some of the places I think we've been very wrong.

And second, they pose some very serious challenges to us in the medium term because a lot of our expectations about what Russia is are going to have to be changed. And third, they provide an occasion for reflection about something that we Americans

have tended to ignore as a challenge, namely how do you treat a rising social force which is going to come into power because it will remember how you treated it before it got there. And we should remember that when you mistreat people or you allow others to mistreat them without challenging that and they come to power, they will not forget that. OK.

The first thing to say about the inheritance of Islam is that Muslims came into the Russian empire in all the ways that Muslims came into anywhere. Some of these areas were conquered. Derbent in the south in Dagestan is one of the oldest mosques in the world, dating to within 50 years of the Hijra. Others came in by migration. Others were communities that were conquered.

At one point, there were more mosques in what is now the Kremlin than there have ever been churches because the Kremlin was built as a Mongol outpost. On the other hand, it is worth noting here that the Russian mythology about the Tartar yoke or the Mongol yoke is mostly a lie because it serves nationalist purposes and it is rarely challenged, to which it is said that it was the Muslims who took Russia for the Mongols.

In fact, when the Mongols conquered Russia, they were not Muslim yet. They were Nestorian Christians and Khazarite Jews. It was only two generations later that they changed. And so the idea that Muslims took Russia—the Christians and Jews took Russia after Europe in the way that the horde did is not fair. It's also important to understand that for the last thousand years, Russians and Muslims have been locked in a very complicated historical embrace.

The Russian national hero, Aleksandr Nevskiy, for example, was usually held up as the Russian national symbol, in fact, was an ally with a Muslim power against a Christian power, which is conveniently neglected in the discussion of him, but we don't have time to go into that.

All right. When the czarist authorities move south and east and began taking over historically Muslim areas, Catherine the Great in the 18th century created the ancestors of what are called Muslim spiritual directorates. It was an effort on the part of the Russian imperial government to create institutions to transform Islam into a church.

One of the big problems that westerners and Russians among them have is that they can't deal with a religion that doesn't have a clergy, that has structure. And so what we have seen is an effort on the part of Russian state and the Soviet state and indeed, even to this day, to create official structures that would give a hierarchy to allow better official control. These—this—these institutions, which we'll have occasion to come back to several times in a few minutes, never fully captured the entire Islamic community.

What they did, however, was to divide Islam between what has been frequently called official Islam and unofficial Islam. Official Islam is that which is part of the Muslim spiritual directorates. It is tightly controlled by the state most of the time. And unofficial Islam, which is not controlled, which is underground and which comes to be viewed as politicized as a result.

When the Soviet Government took over in 1917, 1918, the Soviet authorities, in their own atheistic program and antireligious program, destroyed more of the Islamic community than they destroyed anyone else. Ninety-nine percent of all mullahs were killed who were alive in 1918 on the territory of what's now the Russian Federation. And between 97 and 98 percent of all the mosques were shut down. That doesn't mean they weren't used, but they were official shut down.

The ability to recreate a Muslim spiritual directorate in the late '30s and early '40's was profoundly limited and it is significant. And this is something that you should all remember when talking about Russian Islam. Unlike in Christianity, unlike in Judaism, the organizations of Islam have never been centered in Moscow. They've always been kept outside. The central Muslim spiritual rector was in Ufa and there's a reason for that. It was to keep it away from the foreign embassies of Muslim countries.

Now, that system began to collapse in the late '80s. The collapse of the Soviet Union, I can say very quickly—we, in the West, we in the United States, look at the way in which the opening of the western border of the former Soviet Union and the Russian Federation played such a great role and we just, of course, marked the death of Yegor Gaidar and the role he played in transforming that part of the world.

But we tend to forget the extent to which the other borders opened as well. And I'm prepared to argue that the opening of the border to the south of the Russian Federation may ultimately play a bigger role in the transformation of this area than the opening to the west. That's for three reasons.

First, it took place at precisely a time when you had an Islamist revivalist movement, the Allah Suria movement wanted to go back to basics. It came at a time when, thanks to the antireligious efforts of the Soviet state, large numbers of people in the Russian Federation knew they were Muslims but had no idea what that meant.

One of the people I knew in my career was Dzhokhar Dudayev, the first President of Chechnya Ichkeria, before his murder by the Russian authorities. President Dudayev once told me Mr. Goble, I'm a good Muslim, I pray three times a day. Well, a good Muslim prays five times a day but Dzhokhar Dudayev did not know that because he had been a member of the Communist Party from the age of 18 and a major general in the Soviet air force.

Large numbers of Muslims in the Russian Federation were people who had never had access to a mullah, never had a chance to read the Koran, never had a chance to have religious education, never had religious broadcasting and therefore, had a very cloudy and very imperfect view of what being Muslim meant. And the Soviet Government was not unhappy about that, to a certain extent, the Russian Government isn't either.

But Islam, among its other qualities, is assessed with oneness and correctness. And therefore, people who had the chance, for the first time, often in their lives after 1991 to get a true measure, were prepared to listen. To split the community precisely because with the collapse of the Soviet wall to the south, we have seen, over the last 20 years, the most amazing growth of Muslim institutions in the world, right here.

To give you a very short compass, let me just list four sets, pairs of statistics, one for 1991 and one for 2008, 2009. In 1991, there are an estimated 150 to 180 mosques on the territory of what is now the Russian Federation. This year, there are 8800. That's a pretty big jump. In 1991, there were 40 Muslims from the Russian Federation who went on the hajj.

This year, there were 25,000 who went there officially and 40,000 total, because 15,000 people went without checking the authorities, about 15,000 additional. The number of missionaries coming in and providing a particular view of what Islam meant, zero in 1991. It's been running over a thousand a year since then, many of them facilitated not by Iran, but by Turkey. Again, we can talk about that.

And perhaps most important in terms of changing views, the number of Muslims studying abroad at Muslim universities like al-Azhar and in the madrasahs of Southwest Asia and South Asia. In 1991, there were four. It's currently just under a thousand, but it ran as high as 1800 in the late '90s. More than 22,000 of those people have returned.

So what you have is suddenly people are getting religion. And something all of you know, if you've had experience with religion is that missionaries tend to be rather more dogmatic than other people. The kind of people who are coming in and telling people what Islam means are not people from your Unitarian church. These are people who have a very doctrinal commitment. This has split Islam in many places.

And at the same time this was happening, splitting the Islamic communities—and one footnote on that. One of the biggest mistakes of things you will see in articles and books about Islam in Russia is the western imposition on this area of the assumption that people know the difference between Sunni or Shia or between the four legal schools of Sunni Islam. I lived in Azerbaijan, all right? And I will tell you, in Azerbaijan, which is two-thirds Shia and one-third Sunni; people do not refer to themselves as going to a Sunni or Shia mosque.

They go to a Persian mosque or they go to a Turkish mosque. But the idea that people understand these theological distinctions is simply wrong. And that has—add a corollary to that—is the assumption that this is all about doctrine, in terms of how people behave because they're Muslims is a huge failure of imagination on our part.

When we talk about religions we know something about, we talk about practice. When we talk about religions we know little about, we talk about doctrine. And we make the mistake of assuming that everybody does what the doctrine says, whereas in our own lives, in our own practice, we know that isn't true.

My wife and I happen to be Catholic converts. We got to mass every Sunday at 7 a.m. because they don't sing and they're shorter and you're supposed to go every Sunday. Fifty weeks out of the year, we can go in at the 7 mass and lie down in the pews because there are so few people you could go to sleep.

But 2 weeks of the year, there will be all of the people who will show up and you have to get tickets to get into mass, which is Christmas and Easter. We all understand that. When we talk about Islam, we fail to understand that much diversity, not only within doctrine, but in terms of obedience to doctrine. And this is a huge, huge mistake which I'd urge you to avoid.

Now, the other thing that was happening besides the expansion of the foreign influence and people recovering their identity is that we saw the wars in the North Caucasus. And I want to insist very strongly that the Chechen movement in the 1990s had nothing to do with Islam. Dzhokhar Dudayev was a secular nationalist that believed that Chechnya had every bit as much right to be independent as Estonia, where he had earlier served.

What happened, unfortunately, is that the people who were ethno-nationalists were largely killed. And because of the events of September 11, it became very convenient—and for the Russian Government to accuse it didn't happen to like and wanted to suppress as being a Muslim. This willingness to accept this idea that the Russians are accusing people of being Muslim and therefore, it's legitimate to go after them has only encouraged the Russian government to accuse more people of Muslim and being Islamist fundamentalists.

The consequence of that is that the Islamic fundamentalists are getting the benefit of those churches. When you run an ideological conflict as a war on terrorism, it inevitably is the case that a group that can say, we're being blamed for this, therefore, we take responsibility, are in a position to pick up support that other people couldn't. And that's generally forgotten.

Now, very quickly, there's so much more to say but because I want to stay fairly close to my 15 minutes, let me make three points about American policy. The reality is that the U.S. Government, historically, has known almost nothing about the Muslims of the former Soviet space and even less about the Muslims of the Russian Federation.

And the amount we know is probably less today than it was 25 years ago, simply because of certain political assumptions about the way things are going. Tragically, we have allowed ourselves to be trapped by our commitment to support the central government in Russia. The worst at the beginning of this was in October 1993, after Boris Yeltsin used the highly original and democratic means of provoking his parliament by firing tanks at it, the mayor of Moscow, Yury Luzhkov, issued his infamous order to expel persons of Caucasus nationality [speaking in Russian].

Not only did the United States not condemn that, but the United States went to its allies in Europe and told them not to criticize it either, lest it undermine Boris Yeltsin. The consequences of that has been an increase in racism and the opening of the door to the Chechen War.

Second, we have been unwilling to face up to the real challenges that are there. We have not understood that Russian policy toward Islam has often been extraordinarily hostile. And it is not surprising that Muslims are angry, but we have not taken the trouble to make the distinction between objections people have because they are Russian citizens who happen to be Muslims and objections people have because they are Muslims. We have assumed that if you were a Muslim, that is the basis of your objection. Many of the complaints that you'll get in the North Caucasus have nothing to do with Islam but they are invariably interpreted as such both in Moscow and in the West. And that's a huge, huge mistake.

A bigger challenge for us however looms, and that is, first, there is not going to be a time when a Russian government that faces the current demographic reality is going to line up with us on the Middle East on all of our policies. It simply can't. As many of you know, beginning in 2008, the Russian government had to adjust its draft policy so that it drafted more heavily in ethnic Russian areas than in ethnic Muslim areas because the percentage of 18-year-old males who were of Muslim heritage is too high. Moscow is already the largest Muslim city in Europe and Russia is going to be increasingly Islamic over the next decades. Exactly what that means is an open question.

Second, we need to understand that Russia is prepared to be incredibly repressive toward Muslims. If you doubt that, please read Mr. Rogozin's statement of yesterday—Russia's Ambassador to NATO—who said that there needed to be an alliance between the Americans, the Europeans and the Russians against the threat from the South. And there was no question to what that threat was. It was Islam.

And when you look out, you're going to see that the Russian government, in facing a situation whereby 2025 or 2030 perhaps half of the population or at least a plurality of the population will be of Islamic background—that doesn't say believers but Islamic background.

There are going to be pressures in Russia in three directions. One is repression and autocratic regime. Second is to let parts of the Russian Federation go, which many Russians may not be able to prevent, and then third is a desire on the part of some in the Russian Government to absorb Ukrainian Belarus because a Slavic state that includes Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus will not have a Muslim majority until sometime in the 22nd century. And there are too many people in Washington who will see that as a reasonable reason—or justification—for selling out Ukraine.

But this brings me to where I want to end, and that is this: All of you know that in the Middle East, in the Arab countries, the United States is well thought of generally by the governments and hated by the population. In Iran, the reverse is true, where the government hates us but the Persian people do not.

It's worth asking yourself why this is so. The reason it is in the case of Iran—and we won't go to the Arab world—is the following: Most of the people who are in the current Iranian Government were either followers of or themselves victims of those who were tortured by the shah's regime. That regime was rather uncritically supported by the United States. It is not surprising that they remember how they were treated before them came to power.

This is not to say that the United States or any country should not resist violence, should not oppose terrorism. It is to say that we need in thinking about what we are going to do as a country to pay attention to the possibility that some of the forces we may not like are nonetheless going to come to power. Many of our problems with the Russian Federation in the 1990s came from the unmitigated hostility to Boris Yeltsin of the first Bush administration. I'll just be blunt; that's one of the reasons we had problems.

And I think we also need to understand something else, and that is this: Islam by its nature is not necessarily ineluctably hostile to the rest of the world, nor is it true that the more people know about Islam the more hostile they will become. The reality is that in Islam, the more people know, the less hostile they're going to be. The danger to the Islamic communities in the Russian federation is precisely that they were kept from knowing very much for so long.

And the greatest reason I have for optimism about the future is that more and more, these people are reading the Quran in Russian or in their national languages. All of us know that in the West, the world was transformed when the Bible was translated into German and into English in the 15th century. We are now watching the Quran cease to be an Arab-centric vehicle in the way that it was only a generation ago.

As more and more people learn about Islam, the ethical qualities of the religion will come to the fore, I believe, and therefore it is not necessary that we have to accept the current problems as being inevitable and forever. And if we learn about that, if we learn about Islam and we take it seriously and we see this as an interactive process rather than flowing from the (Sikh/sixth ?) sword of the Quran, some people would say, then I think there can be hope not only for us in dealing with the future of this part of Eurasia but also for the Russians who can deal with an ethnic community of which they are ineluctably the part, and if that happens, then all of us—the Russians, the Muslims of this part of the world and the United States—will be far better off. Thank you.

Mr. PARKER. Thank you very much, Professor Goble. We will now turn to Dr. Shireen Hunter, who is a professor at Georgetown's School of Foreign Service as well as the author of more than seven books and countless scholarly monographs and articles on Islam in

Russia and politics of national identity, including her book, “Islam in Russia: The Politics of Identity and Security,” which I definitely need to read. And as well, Dr. Hunter has been a consultant to the U.S. Government on these questions and we’re very pleased to have you here and, please, your remarks.

Dr. HUNTER. Thank you very much. It’s always very hard to follow Paul Goble in any kind of panel because he presents everything so well and in such a cogent way and his knowledge is so vast that it really doesn’t leave anything for other panelists to say, so I have a really big challenge and so I’m going to try to fill in some of the points that maybe Paul didn’t have time to cover.

First of all, I think one of the things that we have to understand that Islam was present in what is now part of the Russian Federation far before Christianity came to Russia. For example, the Bulgar Kingdom, which is on the Volga, which is actually—I visited the city on [inaudible] which the Tatars now take pride on. And it was a very nice boat ride on the Volga to go to Bulgar existed before actually Vladimir finally made Christianity an official religion of Russia.

Second, as far as the Caucasus is concerned, now, the certain parts of North Caucasus did not become Islamized until quite late, like 15th/16th century. But places like Dagestan and obviously the Southern Caucasus, they became Islamized very earlier, around definitely toward the end of the 7th century. But definitely by the 8th century, Islam had penetrated those parts.

And, again, even before the so-called Mongol invasion, Mongol/Tatar invasions, which devastated many parts of the world and including parts of Russia, brought down the Ruskia state. However, missionaries were coming from Bukhara and Samarkand and so on. And as a result, in areas in the Volga-Ural region, like in Bashkortostan and so on, Islam was beginning again to gain roots by 9th century and definitely by 10th century. So I think this is something that we have to try to understand that Islam had very strong roots there.

But another thing that we have to understand is that Islam and ethnicity somehow is conflated in the Russian federation. In other words, most of—although now you have, you know, some Russian converts and so forth—but that most of the Muslims are also non-ethnic Russians, or they’re not non-Slavs. And although there are some Tatar Christians and others, but this is something that, particularly when we talk about problems—and I think that what Paul was saying about the Chechen conflict and Islam’s role wasn’t a motivator or later on became a legitimizer or whatever, is very important.

I submit to the same theory; that this was more of a kind of a nationalist thing, particularly if you look at the history of Russian conquest of Caucasus. The people that resisted most were the Chechen and actually Dagestanis—Avars—because Sheikh Mansur and Sheikh Shamil, they were both actually Avars. But there is tribalism there. So you can’t really distinguish that much between the Avars and the Chechens and so on, so that element is also very important.

So when the Russians often talk about the threat of Islam, well, on the one hand, obviously, when they talked about threats from the South, essentially because even Kosirev used to talk about threats from the South. On the one hand, I think it was because they wanted to find a common ground with the West; saying that, we face the same enemies.

But the other thing was also that they want to reestablish their sovereignty over these regions within a variety of things; and as a result, to say that, our desire to bring these countries back on in our Europe is because we are facing this security threat from them. And therefore Islam was a very convenient thing to say.

The other point that I would like here to say, I take a little bit issue with these apocalyptic, in my opinion, things about the number of Russian Muslims. A more detailed study of also, for example, mortality and so on and child mortality among the Muslim women, you also see, however, that the child mortality and so on is higher among Muslim women than it is among the Slavic women.

And why is that? That has a lot to do with economic condition. And here again, I think that the economic conditions is also related quite a bit with the potential attraction of some of the youth of the Muslim population of the Russian Federation to a more radical, you know, Islamist ideology.

You see, for example, that Tatarstan, when you—I mean, some of the statistics in the schools obviously are all that one has to go, but I think the basic facts that they show hasn't really changed in 4, 5 years. For example, when we looked at, for instance, average of wages in Muslim-inhabited areas and, let's say, that national average, in places like Tatarstan and to some extent Bashkortostan, which are all, you know, industrial regions of Volga-Ural region, the average wages were much closer to the national wage. And as a result, although Muslims still were at the lower level—I mean, you could see this in Kazan.

I mean, maybe now it has changed, but several times that I visited Kazan, when you went to the Muslim quarters, then obviously everything became—in addition to the fact that there was a land speculation, everybody buying and building villas and all the kind of Muslim fabric of old-Tatar Kazan was beginning to disappear, which is in my opinion very sad.

But anyway, but you could see immediately it would drop. I mean, you could visit in Marjani mosque, the neighborhood was just delinquent almost, but other parts—derelect rather, not delinquent—sorry. So I think this is also very interesting to note.

Now, when you look into the South areas, what the Russians call South Russia; we call it North Caucasus—now, this becomes absolutely the economic conditions is, I will say, below misery level. Prior to even during the Soviet times, there was really no industrial—much of industry that had been done. Agriculture was of what they called a “kitchen variety,” meaning mainly that people grew stuff for themselves.

And the wages are way, way below the national level. Unemployment is incredibly high in Dagestan, including there was an interesting recent report by ICG, which was quite interesting. Unemployment among the youth and so on is about 50 percent.

Now, in the meanwhile, there is a criminal class which is related with government and so on, which was getting very wealthy even in very poor areas, partly because of either stealing, including stealing—for example, a lot of people in Chechnya are getting rich by stealing oil, and then selling it, I don't know, black market or whatever, and crime and all these other things. but when you look at the living conditions in, say, places like in Ingushetia or Kabardino-Balkaria and all these places that are getting, you know, you are having more violence and so on, I think that we should keep in mind this whole incredible economic condition that is absolutely terrible.

The other thing, frankly, is that the whole Chechen situation, so by and large, when you look at Tatarstan and Bashkortostan and those parts, and even in places like Siberia and so forth and so on, you don't have, really, a big problem of what Islamic opposition or Islamic fundamentalism or whatever.

The Tatars, particularly the—Yeltsin, for some reason, was willing to cut a deal with Tatarstan, although Putin took away a lot of the concessions that Yeltsin had made to Tatarstan, including for them to be able to manage their own budget and so on and so forth, but relatively because there was a nationalist movement, there was an Islamist movement much stronger in Tatarstan in '88, '89 and '90, '91 than there was in Chechnya at the time.

But Yeltsin, first of all, made two mistakes. One, he went to Chechnya and told, I think, Dudayev or some other people, take as much sovereignty as you want. Well, if you're offering me sovereignty, I mean, I would be a fool not to take it, right? But then later on, then he went back on his word.

More importantly, unlike the case of Tatarstan, when, as they say, it was, you know, a solution by treaty, and as a result, nothing really big happened and whatever, in Chechnya, he didn't take that route. For some reason, I was told and some other people know—I don't know what, Paul, you think—but that for some reason, Yeltsin took a disliking to Dudayev, and he that he didn't want to talk to Dudayev.

But be that as it may, and I think that to a great extent, here I have to add that given the poverty and so on, the Chechen conflict became a crucible for both external influences. I agree 100 percent with Paul that for a while, anyway, the word "Wahhabi" had become sort of like, any Muslim that Russians didn't like was a Wahhabi.

Now, having said that, that this word was much abused and misused, one should not, nevertheless, forget that there were groups that came, particularly what they called the Afghan Arabs and so on and so forth, and used Chechnya and brought these new visions of Islam that basically was in conflict with the more Sufi traditions of the Caucasus, including Chechnya and Dagestan and so on.

Now, already you have Islamic fratricide. There were during the Chechen war, conflicts between the Sufis and Salafis and so on and so forth; all this Jamaat [inaudible] is bringing up [inaudible] or not. You know, I mean, the point is that if the Russian Government misbehaves, doesn't necessarily mean that these Jamaat [inaudible] people who are joining them are good either.

So this is a big problem, but one of the reasons that I've tried to be honest with you, I think Putin, instead of celebrating the Winter Olympics in Sochi should have invested more in Ingushetia and in improving peoples' lives, investing a little bit in other places and so forth.

Now, Islamic extremism in these parts also is directly related to the repression and corruption in particular of the local elites as well. The corruption and repression is just out of this world. And I think that is going to be—I mean, relatively speaking, Tatarstan still is better run because, I mean, it's more, but also you know, Kazan and so on was a center.

The other thing that I believe is troublesome eventually for Russia, I think that during the '90s, I think; during Yeltsin and maybe later on a little bit, say, there was an effort to, I think to, an effort to—at least an effort to try to create a more multicultural Russian identity because, I mean, if the person that started this commission to talk about

Russian identity was supposed to be—now, Mr. Sarkozy is also having a commission on French identity—again, because of Muslims. [Laughter.]

But the fact is that he started this question of identity. At that time, there was some hope that this Russian identity would be a more multicultural, along democratic lines and so on, and the government was beginning to develop relationships with this new structure of various Muslim spiritual boards and so on and so forth. And there was a process of at least the legitimization of the presence of Islam in the public square and so forth.

I think that the problems of Chechnya initially affected Russia very much. Again, here, I'm not going to say where the original sin lies and, you know, empires and so on. It's very difficult; one doesn't know. But I think that it would be a mistake to underestimate the dramatic impact that the Chechen War and particularly the terrorism that spun out of this Chechen war, in particular, for example, the hostage-taking in the—exactly, the theater and so on, on the whole ethnic Russians, if I can put it that way.

And unfortunately, by that time, many Chechens have used Islam. Dudayev, himself—I agree—Dudayev didn't know. I mean, he was—but early on, Dudayev started putting the green banners and zekr and so on, so they made it. And even today, with Russia blessing Kadirov, is basically using Islam to legitimize his rule. If he cannot give them economic well-being, he is giving them the biggest mosque in Europe.

Now, so the politicization of Islam, in general, has now taken shape. The government, the Federal Government uses it; the local governments use it and the opposition uses. And this is, I think, going to become difficult.

The other problem, however, is basically what is the status of Muslims in Russia? Muslims in Russia, I think that they are essentially on many levels still second-class citizens. Again, I apply a variety of things to that. There are now one or two Muslim billionaires and so on, but they are sort of shady characters.

Of my experience in those days in Kazan and people that I saw that were relatively wealthy, they were really—like, on American level, it was on the small kind of business type. They were not in industries and so on; they had some, you know, restaurant; they owned some restaurants; they owned some small, you know, businesses and so on and so forth.

So economically, Muslims are definitely on the bottom of the ladder. Now, if you go the Caucasus region, then that is, as I said, it's a misery. You don't have to talk about—you just have to look at misery index.

On the political level, Russian Muslims historically have always wanted to have some form of self-government. Therefore, every time there has been an opening, Russian Muslims have asked for some degree of autonomy—political. So you see, for example, in 1907 and so on, during a period of opening, Muslim political parties develop, they align themselves with democratic parties, like Kadets and so on, in Russia. They wanted to be involved.

The same thing was happening, you know, and I think that early on during Yeltsin and so on, there were some efforts, at least, to create that. But then when Putin came to power, with the new election laws, for all practical purposes eliminated the possibility of even a local Muslim party because any Muslim political party had to have offices at least in 40 federation subjects. This is impossible because Muslims are concentrated! Yes, there are Muslims now everywhere—in Kamchatka, in Karelia, everywhere, they are. But I mean, they are small communities.

Officially speaking, in certain parts including in Moscow and so on, the official Federal Government policy—and big things, notwithstanding the Moscow mayor taking these Azerbaijanis and others out—relatively speaking, he had been good to Muslims. He was the only one that—yes, Luzhkov. He was, for example, the only one that allowed when Muslims wanted to celebrate the 1,400th anniversary of the coming of Islam, the Federal Government wouldn't provide them a venue to hold this ceremony. Luzhkov provided them with it, so I have to look at some bright spots.

Now, there is a different story when it comes to how the local governments deal with it. And there, you have a lot of terms and rules; what I'm saying is that it's a very mixed picture of even the government handling of Islam. On the one hand, for example, you see in a highway from Moscow to Nizhny Novgorod, they have roadside praying places. On the other hand, now they want to sell a mosque because some company that owned the mosque has gone bankrupt. So it's really very—when you read all this stuff that—Web sites, Islamic Web sites—you just get a different story.

Some of the problem also is that Muslims of Russia are not united. So I mean, I think that in any calculations of the Muslim influence in Russia's future, you have to understand the Muslims of Russia are not united. Ethnicity is a big trump card, and the Tatars and Bashkirs hate each other. This is reflected in the relationship between the two chief muftis, Ravil Gainutdin and Talgat Tajuddin in Bashkir—and I like Ravil Gainutdin much better; he's a more stable, more knowledgeable person. Tajuddin's a little—I don't know what, Paul, you think—

Mr. GOBLE. He's a drunken—well, he's the only mufti in the history of the world who opened a mosque by taking a bottle of champagne and saying that he was christening it when he broke the champagne over it.

Dr. HUNTER. Exactly, exactly. So I rest my case. Now, this is very important, but the other thing that, here, is very sad in some ways, but as Paul mentioned, this is really the result of the Russian/Soviet treatment of Islam: because the Soviets particularly—but I mean, the czars did their share—but they essentially destroyed the indigenous intellectual religious capital of Muslims of Russia.

So what this meant, what this meant is that in addition to that during the Soviet time you had the parallel of Islam—that illiterate mullah just trying to keep something or Sufi brotherhoods—but it also meant that the official Islam was looked upon the same way that in the Arab world, and [inaudible] doesn't have much authority because he's seen as a bureaucrat.

By the same token—and I witnessed this—by the same token, the official clergy—at republic level, oblast level or higher, don't have that much. Ravil Gainutdin has some because he's a reasonable person, to some extent. As a result is that a lot of the freelance, the younger ones that are coming back from Saudi Arabia and so on with new ideas, which is fragmenting the Muslims because the Russian Federation Muslims, except for Dagestanis who are Shafei, are Hanafi. They are coming with that.

The other thing is that frankly—I have to say this unfortunately—the other thing is the Web sites. You have now on the Web sites you can get videos of fire-breathing sheikhs and with subtitles in Russian. I have seen this myself. So I think that Russians are going to have really an Islam problem.

But my opinion is really not so much of that the Muslims are going to take over Russia or population is going to disappear or so on; it's just going to be whether they are

ever going to be contained and are going to have the wisdom to do things to eliminate some of the causes of a Muslim disenchantment, and then the main challenge is in regard to the North Caucasus. That is the really Achilles' heel. Obviously, immigrants and so on and so forth are causing also their own problem.

But the other thing is if they can change their mindset, but that is a far more difficult thing to change because, as I say, it's not—I mean, look, even Armenia is full of Christians or Georgians; because they are dark and dark-haired and darker skin and so on, they are attacked because they think they are Muslims. So this is not only a religious thing; it is I think that unfortunately, conflation of this both race and religion that is given it a problem. And the challenge ultimately is Russia going to be able to become democratic and multicultural and develop an identity based on citizenship, or then some of the issues that Paul raised and so on could become bigger and bigger and more problematic.

Mr. PARKER. Thank you very much, Dr. Hunter. Thank you both for a very interesting presentation. At this point, we have time for participation questions and comments. Normally, we're pressed for time and we have to keep your comment or your question limited to a question. But because we have a relatively intimate audience today, I think we can be rather informal. Question, comment? Something? And there's a mic open. There's a few—are there a few mics or one mic?

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE. There's one mic.

Mr. PARKER. There's one mic over there. So I would just ask that you might identify yourself because, for the record. And do we have anyone who would like to start?

QUESTIONER. Ron McNamara with the Helsinki Commission. Thank you very much for the insights that you've provided. If I could run through a few points and get your reactions. One, I guess visions of sort of the Soviet of nationalities, I think it was, during the Soviet period, this structure that showed the diversity of cultures and ethnic groups in the Russian Federation but was largely sort of a showpiece and perhaps a means of managing those various ethnic groups in the Russian Federation.

I wonder what your sense is in terms of Putin's—and I guess we have to say President Medvedev by extension—understanding of Islam in the Russian Federation? Are they mainly seeking to manage the issue? Is it sort of divide and conquer, trying to keep things a bit separated along the ethnic lines? I find governments generally deal more readily with hierarchical structures where they can deal with one person as opposed to sort of this more decentralized approach, which is harder for governments basically to manage, if you will.

And then, I wonder in terms of you were talking about right up until the end of the Soviet period, not much understanding of Islam amongst nominal Muslims maybe in the Russian Federation. So where are the clergy being trained who are leading these various communities? For example, in France, we see an attempt—or the French leaders sometimes talk about a French Islam. Is there an attempt by the Russian Federation officials to try to inculcate some kind of a—or do they need to? Maybe they don't even need to.

And then, I know that there have been some issues, shall we say, pertaining to the upcoming census in the Russian Federation. I wonder if you could address the questions of religious identification and how those will or will not be addressed in the context of the upcoming census?

Mr. PARKER. Thank you, please.

Mr. GOBLE. OK, I'll work backward. Two days ago, in Rostov, there was a big meeting on how the census will be conducted with respect to the questions of nationality and religion. There will be no religion question. It was discussed in 2002 in Rostock. But none of the so-called four traditional religions—Orthodoxy, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism—their organizations that Karol put together in his earlier incarnation wanted to question.

One of the reasons nobody wants a question on religion is that it's becoming painfully obvious that the Russian Government and Mr. Putin in particular has simply lied through his teeth about what the percentage of the population that is historically orthodox. It's not 80 percent. It's not anywhere close to 80 percent. And a census would show that, so they're not going to ask that question.

With respect to nationality, the issue is much more sensitive. As the census was being worked up, one of the questions was did the constitution—the '93 constitution requires that people had the right to declare their ethnicity or not declare their ethnicity. That meant that a census taker could not demand someone to declare his or her ethnicity.

The problem with that, of course, is that if some size or percent of the population doesn't declare its ethnicity, how do you allot them in terms of calculation? So there have been issues about the nationality line—nationalist—and the upcoming census is the only one where a census taker cannot write it down, but has to have the person write it down, which will also have consequences of distorting the relative thing, and—nationalist is the only thing that cannot be gotten out of official documents.

In other words, if someone refuses to participate in the census, which people often do, you go to the official documents, in many cases, and get this data. You're not allowed to get that. Now, that, it's not clear—this is the Rostov discussion of 2 days ago—it's not clear how far you're going to go.

The idea of creating a distinctly Russian Islam—all Islam is as every bit as diverse as Christianity. Within Russia, it is every bit as diverse, both doctrinally and in terms of attachment to doctrine. There are people who talk about Russian Islam. There is an organization called NORM—the National Organization of Russian Muslims—which is the ethnic Russia part.

Shireen is absolutely right; there are very few. It does tend to run along ethnic lines, but it is not nearly as perfect as it used to be, in that regard. There are lots and lots of Tatars who are Kriyashen who are Orthodox Tatars. There are lots and lots of people—the intermarriage by ethnic Russian women with Muslim-nationality men—those people are reidentifying.

And the missionary, Father Sysoev, who was just killed—probably by someone who wanted the land under his church, rather than by a Muslim fanatic, it now appears—he got in trouble for writing a rather nasty book that said no good Russian woman should ever marry a Muslim, and went on. I mean, it was really pretty ugly. But he was not the hero he was made out to be in the West.

There is no clergy in Islam. The people who are the mullahs or people who are communicating the information—many of them were trained abroad or—and Shireen's quite right—being trained through the Internet—lots of that.

One of the interesting things—the mufti of Karelia, up near Finland, is a former Palestinian medical student who came to Petrozavodsk 30 years ago, nearly, married a local Polish-Russian woman who converted to Islam. She's in charge of public outreach for that

mufti. You can always count that Petrozavodsk will be, after Moscow, the second-largest pro-Palestinian demonstrations in Russia, when that happens.

With respect to Putin and Medvedev's understanding, I think there's a huge difference of understanding of religion between Putin and Medvedev. Medvedev thinks, I think largely to his wife, is very, very interested in religion and very much a believer. His wife is absolutely committed, very close to the patriarchate. And Medvedev has said some things which reflect an understanding of faith.

Putin, I think, it's instrumental—that is to say, religion is something you use for political purposes. And I've not seen anything that Putin has said or written that suggests a deeper understanding, even of orthodoxy, let alone Islam. I think it's an instrumental view—it's something you use or you play.

With respect to representation in government institutions, the Soviet nationalities, of course, was, like almost all Soviet Government institutions, decorative, not real. But it had symbolic matter. The parceling out of seats in parliaments, however, on ethnic lines, did matter. In Dagestan, which was run like Lebanon, where you assign a certain number of seats to the Avars, a certain number to the Lezgins and so forth—that kept stability going. It was a very effective system.

No, it was very effective until Vladimir Vladimirovich, probably with the advice of the Americans, said oh, but that's not majoritarian democracy. We should let the majorities run. So when the majorities run, what happened is the Avars took over. All the groups that had, had seats in the past were forced—or many of the groups that had seats in the past were forced out—and then you got instability.

It wasn't that it was unstable when you had a quota system; it became unstable when, in the name of majoritarian democracy—and with respect, I think Putin only understands democracy as an instrumental value and only in a majoritarian sense, not in terms of protecting minorities—then it became unstable. Is it a smart idea to make sure that all groups are represented? Yes, it is.

One of the things that has just happened this past week, which is very, very discouraging, is that there's a proposal to cut the size of the legislative bodies in all of the federation subjects. In other words, in 20 of the 22 non-Russian entities inside the Russian Federation, the size of the legislature will be cut. As you cut the numbers down, what you will do is inevitably, the smaller groups will be disenfranchised.

Mr. PARKER. But is this all of the subjects, or just 20 of—

Mr. GOBLE. No, 20 of—

Mr. PARKER. So not the 80—

Mr. GOBLE. No, no—well, there are 83, now, with the consolidation. Of those, roughly 20 are non-Russian. And of those that are non-Russian, about 15—what 12 to 15, depending how you count, are Muslim. All of those will see the size of their legislatures reduced.

Mr. PARKER. But none of the Russian constituents—

Mr. GOBLE. Some of the Russian ones will see theirs reduced as well. Some will see them increased in size. There's a formula. There's a four-part formula that's going to be imposed depending on population. When that happens, if, in for example, Dagestan, you cut the size of the parliament from 70 members to 50 members, the reality is, the smaller groups are going to be disenfranchised. The reality from that is that some of those people will be radicalized.

Dr. HUNTER. Can I just add a couple things? I mean, on the question of nationalities under the Soviet Union, the problem was that the Soviets were kind of in a bind because, on the one hand, the whole concept of the Soviet Union, this socialist utopia, was that all these ethnic, religious and other bonds are going to disappear and a new sort of “homo sovieticus” is going to emerge.

One of the reasons the Soviets were so much against Islam, and much, even, harsher than Christianity—because they saw Islam, also, as enveloping and in fact, in its vision, as totalitarian as socialism. Because there’s also a “homo islamicus.” You see what I’m trying to say? At the same time, they had to keep this vision that Soviet Union was not a colonial empire, which it was and that it was a republic.

So they, in a paradoxical way, actually, the Soviet Union helped to develop national identities that, frankly, did not exist as such. I mean, they were local identities. You were from Samarkand or Bukhara or Khujand or Karasmu or whatever, and then you had an Islamic identity. They more or less manufactured Kazakh, Turkish and they’d national uprising and, I mean, all kinds of historic revisionism and so on and so forth. And then this, of course, you know, backfired on them.

Now, problems that existed—you know, the other things that I think now, probably Russia may come to regret, just during the time when the Bolsheviks were fighting for the, you know, they gave all kinds of promises to Muslims. And a lot of Muslims actually bought into this. You know, there were Shariah squadrons and so on fighting alongside of the Red forces and so on. They had already plans which, if Russians had accepted at the time, would have solved many of these things.

They had the idea of *idil urda*, republics which combining Tatarstan and Bashkortostan—because Bashkirs are essentially Tatars. The Bashkir was a dialect of Tatar and the Russian, you know, Soviets made it into separate land and now, they don’t get along with one another. Then also, there was the idea of a North Caucasus federation, but as soon as they won the war, they went into the policy of miniaturization.

Problems are extreme. There are a lot of the non-Muslims ethnic Russians in some of these North Caucasus republics that they feel disenfranchised because, for example, in places like Karachay-Cherkessia or Kabardino-Balkaria or whatever—actually titular nationalities, that the republics are named after them form a very small minority.

So the whole Russian Federation is still bedeviled with this very terrible nationalities policy that the Soviets had, which essentially was miniaturize and keep rival groups together so they will constantly fight and, as a result, look to the center for protection. You see, and Putin in Georgia is doing the same thing, with South Ossetia, you know, and all these other things. On the census stuff, one of the issues that I think that once was raised was the whole question of classifying of Tatars, because after the ethnic Russians, Tatars are the largest minority.

However, there were plans—and I don’t know whether they did it; Paul would know this better—they wanted to divide Tatars. Now, they are identifying them as subgroups—Kazan Tatars, Tatars in Siberia, Tatars this-and-that—which would then eliminate Tatars as a whole second-largest ethnic population.

Mr. GOBLE. This was led by Tishkov and he was pushing the Kriyashen—the question as to whether orthodox Tatars are, in fact—that was the big one, because the real numbers that would get would cut the size of the Kazan Tatars is to take the Kriyashen. The Siberian Tatars—what happened in 2002—I mean, the 2002 census was a total fraud,

but what happened was that you could declare you were a Siberian Tatar, and that was to be recorded. The issue was, when that data was coded, whether Siberian Tatars would be listed separately or not.

And the point, as the data got out, the official census accounts did not list them separately, but then the government subsequently did so that you have two—that's why it was confusing.

Dr. HUNTER. Confusing, yes. So I think that there were a lot of these things. You know, I think the Russian Federation is kind of really still coping with the legacies of the Soviet era, and how they're going to deal with it or not.

On the question of Russian Islam, there is some of the Russian Muslims themselves that identify, like this Tatar intellectual—I have his name—Hakimov—he talks about something called “Euro-Islam,” but by that, he means a very reformist Islam—Islam that—you know, it's that some of the Muslim reformists are saying that. It's more of Islam as a religion; not so much politicized Islam. But at one point, there were efforts, again, that became very controversial and everybody disliked it that, you know, the government had to decide, for instance, what should be the content of sermons—Friday sermons, and so on.

By and large, my own observation on it is that what the Russian Governments would like is a quieter system. They don't mind, so much, if Muslims practice religion as long as they don't stake any economic claim, they don't stake the sort of first-class citizenship claims. The problem is that, that is also what the locals are doing as well. I mean, Shaimiev—I would not count as an independent mufti any more than Putin does.

Now, one thing on the situation of mosques: You know, when we look at the numbers, we think, oh my god, 8,800 or thousand or whatever mosques in there, but when you look at what these mosques actually, some of them, are—and you know, I have seen some of those—it's like, you know, maybe a quarter of this room is the mosque and it has no minaret, no nothing. It's a tiny, little thing and in some of the villages.

And then you know, they say—I went to a lot of these schools, and you read it—the lists here. They say that we have computers—I mean, I could see who had the money and who didn't. Some communities didn't have the money. Muslim schools that they were showing as, like, showcase—the computers, they didn't work! They were all junk. They were not connected. This school was pathetic. It was not connected. So I think that, in general, there is a lot of excessive thinking about the whole—and I think a lot of it comes from what Paul was saying about this problem of falling birthrate in Russia.

And you have the same fear they have about China—that Chinese are going to come and take all the—you know.

Mr. GOBLE. Could I do three footnotes? First, the 8,800 number is a good number—that there are 8,800 places in the Russian Federation which are called mosques—that all of them are very active or very large is very small. The reality is—and this is the important thing—the Russian Orthodox Church insists on how many thousand it has. It usually gives a figure between 12 and 14,000.

Well, last week, there was a missionary activity which pointed out that, in a majority of the Russian regions, at least 10 percent of the churches that were claimed as churches had no services at all—you know, they were being held for property. The second thing is, Rafael Hakimov, who's the director of the institute of history of the academy of sciences

in Kazan and also, a former advisor to Mintimer Shaimiev, his Euro-Islam is worth noting in another connection.

And I don't feel sorry for the Russian Government at all. The fact is that the most modern, the most progressive, the most thoughtful and interesting Muslim writing in the whole world at the end of the 19th century and before 1914 was coming out of Crimea and Kazan. And that was nearly totally destroyed. Those people were killed. Those books were one of the things Hakimov's trying to do is to reprint those kinds of things that were published before the war.

Dr. HUNTER. They were part of the movement—people like Marjani and so on—they were part of the reformist movement of the 19th century, with Sheikh Abdul and others, also, in the Middle East, and Jadid—all sort of things. But Paul is absolutely right that Kazan was a major center of Muslim reformism, but also other things. And obviously, those—before the takeover, obviously, of Ivan the Grozny, the tale of how much things were destroyed in Kazan is just amazing. It's just amazing. And it was—the reconquista was very brutal.

Mr. GOBLE. There's another thing here. Russian fears about the declining Russian birthrate and the declining overall Russian population; massive deaths among adult Russian males; the rise of immigration and the fact that, now, more than 60 percent of Russians say they want to block immigration permanently; the fact that the percentage of ethnic Russians is declining like a rock and will decline further if the census is—I mean, if it records it, it will be true.

But there's something else that's happening that has never been true in Russian history. Up until this generation, when ethnic Russians married non-Russians, the progeny almost 100 percent identified as Russians. That's no longer true. Now, what you're having is ethnic Russians marrying non-Russians, and not only is the ethnic Russian who's marrying in often changing his or her identity, but the progeny are almost always going in the direction of the non-Russians. That is a historical shift of such enormous consequence. The fear—that's deeper than the numbers.

One of the reasons Sysoev got so much attention is that he called attention to the fact that, a few years ago, there was some ethno-demographic data for the city of Moscow that showed that roughly a third of the ethnic Russian women getting married in this particular year in the city of Moscow married Muslim men, and that almost all of them reidentified to the ethnic group and converted to Islam, and that all their children were Muslims.

Now, the consequence of that is that you have the sense that your own identity is slipping away, and that is an existential fear, which is why Sysoev got so much attention when he was killed recently.

Mr. PARKER. Please.

QUESTIONER. Benedict Bernstein from Senate Foreign Relations. I have a couple of questions. One is to what extent has the issue of Islam in Russia played into Russian-Chinese relations? Second of all, how has the encounter with Islam in Afghanistan scarred or affected current stances toward Islam in the Russian Government? And finally, you mentioned that the vast majority of missionaries or people coming in to teach Islam in Russia were from Turkey, as opposed—

Mr. GOBLE. The Turks had facilitated it.

QUESTIONER. The Turks have facilitated it—all right. Can you talk about what effect that's been having—obviously, doctrinally, with changes, but in terms of, you know, Turkey's currently on the brink between Europe and Asia, and how that's been changing. And then also, what, politically speaking—why Turkey's been so interested.

[Cross talk.]

Mr. GOBLE. OK, I'll start. Very quickly, Turkey facilitated the departure of most of the people from the Russian Federation who received Islamic education abroad. They flew from Maykop into Eastern Turkey, where they met with consuls from Middle Eastern countries who gave them visas to go on. Turkey—you know, the American, simple-minded notion of the first Bush administration was that Iran was the threat of producing Islamic fundamentalism and Turkey was going to bring liberal democracy and free-market capitalism.

Well, that was nonsense, as anyone who's visited Baku knows, where the largest bank is the Bank of Iran and the largest mosque was built by the Turkish Government. It isn't that Turkey itself is the source of such ideology, although there's some of it. Some would say the Gulenista is part of that, although that starts getting really complicated. But the Turks also are playing a balanced role. Yes, on the one hand, they have one foot in the West, but on the other, they have a foot in the Middle East.

Dr. HUNTER. That's right—increasingly in the Middle East.

Mr. GOBLE. Increasing in the Middle East. I think we've assumed Turkey is fixed, and I think that's a huge error. With respect to Afghanistan, three quick points. The first is, the Russians are terrified by the way in which the French decision—French ability to get the E.U. to put money into building that wall that meant that the drugs go north, not west—has not produced an enormous drug problem in Russia. It's staggering. I mean, and the HIV/AIDS issues—all kinds of things that flow from that. They're very worried about that.

With respect to Taliban, I think a lot of Russians take the view: the Americans are finally getting theirs. There was an op-ed not long ago that said look, the Americans helped plan this against us and then now they're having to deal with it. That was in The New York Times, but you could read that in Novosti, too. I think Afghanistan is something the Russians see as a tar pit in which the United States is caught. And I don't think they're entirely unhappy about that. I think they're only too pleased, you know, to give their good offices to help, as a way, but we can suffer.

With respect to Islam and Russia-Chinese relations, there are two points I'd make. One is no country on earth was more unhappy with the end of the Soviet Union than China, because as long as the Soviet Union existed, somebody controlled Central Asia. And as long as somebody controlled Central Asia, Xinjiang—Eastern Turkistan—was less of a problem. The peoples of Central Asia and the peoples in Xinjiang are some of the same ethnic groups, and that cross-border stuff is a huge problem.

So when Russians look at Muslims or Turkic movements, they see that as a cross-border and so do the Chinese. This is all going to heat up because China is moving into Central Asia in a big way. While the Americans are worrying about Central Asia as only an American-Russian game, the team that's clearing the boards is China. They're getting the oil; they're getting the gas; they're getting the control. And they're only too pleased to support the highly authoritarian but very brittle regimes in Central Asia. So very quickly, that's what I would say.

Dr. HUNTER. I just will add a couple of footnotes. The one thing that we also have to realize—that Turkish policy in general, even before the AKA came to power, was what, in a way, the old Soviets used to do, what was the state-to-state relations and Turkey was the modernizer and that was the different thing.

One of the groups that has been very active in Central Asia—and they were very active, also, in the '90s—early '90s in Bashkortostan and Tatarstan is the Fethulla Gülen movement. And you see, Turkey was seen far more dangerous by many Russians because it combined Turkic tendencies and appealing to that, and there was some of that. And so now, a lot of some of these groups could possibly get expelled and what have you. And so that has been the activities of Gülen movement in general. There has been an issue.

Also, you have to understand that Islam, for Russia, has been a kind of a double-edged thing. On the one hand, they feel threatened, including by this Muslim population and so on; on the other hand, they have used their Muslim population as way of gaining influence in the Muslim world. Khrushchev did this. That's why you had a lot of the Ambassadors to Arab countries were from Muslim republics and so on.

Now, Russia is an observer member of OIC. And so in a way, this can be—they can use this for a positive thing. In regard to China and Russia, they have used this so-called Muslim trade—I mean, that was essentially behind the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and whathaveyou—and of course, the Chinese are doing all kinds of things to the Muslim minority under the guise of fighting terrorism and what have you. They are doing impact, in some ways, even worse than the Russians are doing.

Mr. GOBLE. And they've got a lot more Muslims. There are 150 million Muslims in China, which is a huge population. It's not all in Xinjiang; a lot of it's further east.

Dr. HUNTER. They don't admit that, though.

Mr. GOBLE. I'm sorry?

Dr. HUNTER. They don't admit that.

Mr. GOBLE. No! Their censuses are even more dishonest than the Russian ones.

Mr. PARKER. You know, it's interesting, all this discussion on the census has me thinking, one of the things that the Helsinki Commission is quite involved in is election observation. And so often, the elections in Russia and in some of the neighboring countries are frankly not that interesting, and it almost seems that the monitoring of the census could potentially be a more fruitful operation. Given how this data will be used, you know, it seems to me to be a far more interesting problem. And of course, the census is going on, you know, seemingly away from any—

Mr. GOBLE. One of the things that one would love to see the U.S. Congress do is to beef up the Bureau of the Census's Center for International Research, which is the arm of the census that monitors—Murray Feshbach was associated with that for many years. Following the census is very, very tricky, and next year's census is going to be really tricky because it turns out that something like two-dozen of the regions of Russia are having elections on the same day that the census has been scheduled.

So the possibility of having the census conducted on the day that you have an election in some places, but not every place, and then the issue of whether there's actually enough money—because the amount of money for the upcoming census has been cut at least twice. It's about 60 percent of what the original amount was now. And the 2002 census was totally fraudulent because the Russian Government, after it surveyed 65, 66 percent

of the population, announced it had no money to survey the rest of them and therefore, it would use the files of the interior ministry.

What that did was to overstate the number of people who were in groups before, who were declining in size, and understate the size of the groups that were increasing. So that allowed President Putin to claim that the ethnic Russian population had fallen only by about a percent since 1989 when, in fact, it probably had fallen 6 percent. There are other issues. It's a huge issue. It's something we could perhaps have a good hearing on, is whether you count people who are physically resident or only people who are citizens, whether things are required.

And there is an issue that is right on the table now. One of the meetings was held in ROSSTAT the day before yesterday is that there is a proposal from one of the national republics to make answering the census mandatory and the failure to answer to be a crime. Now, if that goes through, then that changes the nature of the answers you get.

The question is whether or not that is congruent with the Russian constitution, and also with Russia's obligations to the Council of Europe—the agreements they have having to do with what kind of personal data you have to supply to officials or not. So it's a huge issue and you're absolutely right. It has been one that has been neglected, compared to monitoring elections.

Dr. HUNTER. But the problem is, in general, in Europe, also; I think it's not just for Russia. I think this has a lot to do with the economic changes, but also changes of attitudes, and particularly on women's issues. I mean, for example, in Spain, 30 years ago, the average birthrate for Spanish women was between, like, six and eight children per woman. Today, Spain has a negative birthrate.

In most places—the only country in Europe that still has relatively positive birthrate is, I think, France. So in general, I think so one of the reasons—it's not only that, but alcoholism is also making Russian men infertile. The other thing is that certain practices—women having so many abortions even young women cannot have children anymore. And so a lot of the societal things in general in Western Europe, also, is facing these problems, which has to do with economics and socials and, if one can put it, moral-with-a-small-m kind of things—that, you know, there are some practices that may sound, initially, good, but it has repercussions.

Mr. GOBLE. If ROSSTAT is to be believed—the Russian state statistical committee—last year, the fertility rate of Russian women—all ethnic groups—was exactly the same as the fertility rate of women in Italy—1.1-something; I forget what the third digit was—which is half of replacement level, which is 2.24 children, per woman, per lifetime. The difference, however, is that the population decline in Russia would not be what it is if that were the only factor.

What's much more important is the massive, super-high mortality rates among ethnic Russian men. And while all of the fertility rates are coming down—if I can just give you one demographic reality, there are three stages of demographic change, which are described along an S-curve. In traditional societies, people have a lot of children, because most of them die in childbirth.

In modern societies, people have very few children because they live in cities and they don't need the kids to keep them in their old age, although with our deficit, we may change that. But in between, you have people where people have values of having a lot of children but you bring in penicillin. And what happens is that people have the 10 chil-

dren in generation A, but instead of eight of them dying, only five of them die. And so you get these vast growth rates.

That's why nationality studies were created in the United States, because a lot of people did very foolish projections based on the '59-'70 intercensal period, which were not sustainable, because what happened is what you'd expect. Once people get used to the idea that half of their children are going to survive, they will adjust the total number of children they're going to have compared to if only 20 percent of the children are going to survive.

And then there are always weird people like me who are practicing to be an Uzbek—we have three. So you know, screwing up the statistic. But what we watch—and this is true in every population—is that inter-generationally, you get a decline—in other words, 10 children to 8, to 6, to 4. But—and this is my point—if you have people in North Caucasus who are having 8 of 10 children in this generation and if they have six in the next one and four in the next, you multiply eight times six times four; that is a very different outcome than if you multiply 1.1 times 1.1 times 1.1.

And one of the things that's really frightening in Russia today is that the Russian Government lacks the resources to pursue a successful prenatal policy, which is very expensive. So what and they have no interest, for all kinds of political and cultural reasons, of going after the super high rate of male mortality, because that would require going after alcoholism and they're simply not able to do that and maintain political stability.

Mr. PARKER. We are just about out of time, and I certainly want to thank our panelists. This has been a very interesting discussion, and I think oftentimes, you see a hearing or briefing on Capitol Hill packaged in such a way that there's a message to get out or a preconceived notion and I can honestly say this was one were pure interest in education and in creating a U.S. Government product—the transcript—in the open source that people can draw on.

There is no CRS ready-made product on Islam in Russia. It's certainly not the most important or the most pressing question that the U.S. Government deals with, but it's an interesting one and it's gaining relevance. The products I know of are classified, and they aren't even extensive. So to have a discussion like this is a start to advance the ball a bit. And you know, again, in Russia, you go closer to the source, there's not a whole lot of readily accessible knowledge. And you look at our sources and the things we rely on—journalists and NGOs—well, anyone who's read the newspaper, even recently, knows that that's a very dangerous profession, particularly in the North Caucasus, and the voices are being silenced.

The number of people who report out of that region dropped off sharply, scared out of the business or killed. And for the United States—for us to travel to the region—official U.S. Government travel to Dagestan is incredibly rare, and when it happens to those regions, it happens under the same conditions it would happen in Iraq or Afghanistan—literally with—not simply with bulletproof vehicles, but armored vehicles and armed escorts. And it makes it very difficult to, say, get out into the regions and talk to the people. So it's an area that is fascinating and very difficult to understand. And questions like terrorism, foreign influence, narcotics trade, trafficking—whatever question you might want to add as an interest, let alone, obviously, U.S. interest in values and human rights and fundamental freedoms—very difficult to get a grip on, whether those things are issues or are not issues, in the absence of any discussion.

And you know, a region like Dagestan that was mentioned quite a bit today—we held a briefing earlier this year on Dagestan, and this is a region with at least 30 major ethnicities and different languages. I mean, wrapping your mind around it is really quite something. And often, we're being fed simply, you know, the news headline that something happened there—somebody was killed there, a police station was attacked or a journalist was murdered—but not having any notion of the basis of, you know, what is this place, Dagestan, or the North Caucasus or Karabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, it's hard to even say these names.

So I am happy that our witnesses came and gave us these very interesting presentations, and I thank you, the audience, for participation. The transcript will be up shortly and for future Helsinki Commission events, please visit our Web site, csce.gov. We will hopefully have a very robust schedule, starting in January. Thank you all and the briefing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:30 p.m., the briefing ended.]



This is an official publication of the **Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe**.



This publication is intended to document developments and trends in participating States of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).



All Commission publications may be freely reproduced, in any form, with appropriate credit. The Commission encourages the widest possible dissemination of its publications.



<http://www.csce.gov>

The Commission's Web site provides access to the latest press releases and reports, as well as hearings and briefings. Using the Commission's electronic subscription service, readers are able to receive press releases, articles, and other materials by topic or countries of particular interest.

Please subscribe today.