

The Bashkort and Tatar Identities in the City of Ufa

An Exploration¹

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Introduction

Since the dissolution of the USSR there has been an explosion of interest in the ethnic scene in the successor states because the ethnic factor seems to have played a prominent, though mostly unexpected, role in the Soviet collapse. In Russia, its government's warfare with secessionists in Chechnya¹ and a dynamic relationship with vocal nationalist movements and leaders of other ethnic republics further contributed to both general and scholarly interest in this field. Muslim ethnic republics of the Russian Federation, in particular, have now become a major focus of attention. Indeed, even in the Soviet period some scholars believed that the Soviet Muslim population might become a principal destabilizing factor in the Soviet system (Bennigsen), even though in reality nationalist movements in the Baltic republics proved to be much stronger than in Central Asia. Nevertheless, studies of the Soviet census data showed that the rate of russification of the Muslim peoples was significantly lower than that of the Orthodox Christian peoples, other things being equal (Anderson & Silver). In the post-Soviet Russia, the degree of nationalist mobilization also appears to be statistically associated with the Muslim religion (Gorenburg).

The obvious prominence of the religious factor leaves open the question of its interpretation. On the one hand, there is a tradition exemplified by John Armstrong and Anthony Smith who emphasize historic roots of modern nations. John Armstrong, in particular in his seldom-cited *Nations before Nationalism*, argues that professing

¹ We are indebted to Rushan Galliamov without whom this study would not be possible.

different religions in the course of centuries contributed to deep cultural divides and still continues to influence ethnic conflict in the modern world. In fact, his book preceded the much more popular Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* argument. On the other hand, since the works of Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm the synoptic view has been that nations are essentially modern and artificial constructs oftentimes used by self-interested elites to promote their own agendas. These days, even Anthony Smith acknowledges that nationalism is a rather recent phenomenon, although he still argues that nations themselves are not so recent.

If we take the rational choice model widely used to explain political behavior, the politicians who may be interested in manipulating popular identities for their own benefit will appear to be also interested in minimizing their costs and maximizing their gain. From this perspective, it is rational for them to choose such strategies of popular mobilization that will resonate well with the identities of mass publics. Constructing something that goes against the general mood may still be possible, but it will take more resources and in the end may be too difficult to realize. In particular, the situation of political competition, as Shepsle & Rabushka point out, would make such "constructors" vulnerable and prone to lose. Therefore, ignoring the reality on the ground (whatever it is) in one's political construction would not be rational. Eric Hobsbawm himself seemed to be fully aware of the fact when he wrote that the transmission of an elite's message to the masses could succeed only if it was transmitted on the same wavelength to which the masses had already been tuned. Stuart Kaufman has recently shown that in some cases it was mass publics that led elites into conflict in the post-Soviet space, whereas elites had to follow nationalist masses through the logic of intra-elite competition and outbidding.

Both Volga Tatars and Bashkorts have demonstrated a significant degree of

republics was keen to capitalize on it and, using their respective nationalist movements as bargaining chips, secured a number of privileges for themselves in their negotiations with the federal government. At the same time, as they consolidated their political power, they quelled and subdued the nationalist movements. This picture so far seems to agree with the constructivist approach. Yet the reasons why the nationalist movement in those Muslim republics was way stronger than in neighboring Christian ethnic republics remain unclear. The present study attempts to investigate some facts on the ground that may clarify this situation.

This paper does not aspire to resolve the debate between the dominant view and the supporters of the primordialist tradition. It only reflects our attempt to explore and understand the nature of identities of the two Muslim peoples of the Volga-Urals region. Instead of making definitive statements, the empirical material that we have will be used only to generate hypotheses in the methodological paradigm of grounded theorizing (Glaser & Strauss). Whereas we know the basic situation in the region, we lack a good explanation for the causes of strong independent movements in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan. This paper will attempt to seek an answer to this question in the nature of identities the indigenous people of this region have. Informal interviews seem to better suit the purpose of exploration than mass survey techniques.

The twelve interviews analyzed here were collected in the city of Ufa, the capital of Bashkortostan, in December 2000. The respondents are five Bashkorts, five Tatars, and two people with no clear ethnic identity, though they are registered as either Tatar or Bashkort. We tried to diversify this small sample by age and by whether they studied in ethnic school. All of them resided in the city at the moment of the interview. All respondents have university degrees and most of them are academics. The interviewer, who happened to be a Turkish national, speaks good Russian and some

ethnicity could not easily ask the respondents if they hated Russians. On the other hand, an insider Tatar could not easily ask Bashkorts politically charged questions and vice versa. The general purpose of the interview was to find out how Tatars and Bashkorts related to each other, to Russians, to the federal authorities, to other Russian minorities, to other peoples of the Turkish stock, to other Muslim peoples, and whether they would rather side with the West or the East.

Ethnic Bashkorts are only the third largest group in the republic that bears their name, after Russians and Tatars. They make just about 22% of the republic's population. Yet in spite of their numeric inferiority, their status of the titular group provides them with a preferential access to political power and secures them many important positions in Bashkortostan's society. In particular, Bashkorts are over-represented in the *Kurultay* (the parliament) and in the universities, especially in the departments of literature and history (Galliamov). The republic's government is restricting education in Tatar language and many schools that used to function in Tatar in the Soviet period have been turned into Bashkort-language schools. Such policies feed complaints and counter-mobilization of the local Tatars who generally enjoy support of the neighboring republic of Tatarstan (Gabdrafikov). Russian provincial governments can rarely boast of democratic and tolerant style, yet the case of Bashkortostan is generally thought to be on the darker side of the Russian spectrum as far as free speech and other political freedoms are concerned (cf. Hale).

At the same time Bashkorts and Tatars are closely related religiously and linguistically. The Bashkort dialect spoken in Western Bashkortostan is very close to standard Tatar, although standard Bashkort is different. Tatars are generally perceived as more advanced and having deeper cultural tradition than Bashkorts, whereas the latter are perceived as more traditional and rural. From the perspective of various

no surprise then that analyses of the Soviet census data revealed that in the Soviet period a number of Bashkorts re-identified themselves as Tatars (e.g., Anderson & Silver).

Findings³

One of the principal questions was whether Tatars and Bashkorts considered themselves a nation and, if so, whether they wanted their nations to have independent states or they were fully satisfied with an autonomous status within Russia. Importantly, every single respondent said he/she would be opposed if the federal authorities tried to limit the republic's autonomy. Furthermore, it turned out that Bashkort respondents said that ideally they wanted an independent state, even though they all thought it was practically unfeasible. The only exception was the Bashkort respondent who could not speak either Tatar or Bashkort. According to him, the autonomy was "probably enough." To the contrary, Tatars had more diverging opinions on the issue. There were Tatars who considered themselves a part of the Russian nation, as well as Tatars who took a stance similar to that of our Bashkort respondents. Also, there were intermediary opinions among the Tatars as the following excerpt demonstrates:

Do you demand more autonomy in any field? If Russia were to offer you independence, would you accept it?

I have already mentioned my demands for greater autonomy. If Russia were to offer us independence, it would make independence meaningless. We yearn for independence to the extent that Russia does not want us to become independent. If Russia were to offer us independence, independence would become only a formality, at which point I would refuse it.

³ This section will present the results of the interviews. In the quotations that follow, the interviewer's words are written in italics. Underlined words Russian and Turk are used to distinguish them from the common meaning of these words. The adjective Russian refers to the Russian state and is inclusive of all Russian citizens irrespective of their ethnic origin and thus distinguished from the adjective Russian designating ethnic Russians. The word Turk refers to the people of the Turkish stock, such as Tatar or Azerbaijanis, and is thus distinguished from the word Turk designating the Turks of Turkey. (Russian language, which was the language of interviews, has different words for Turk and Turk, as well as for

Characteristically, even the Russophone Bashkort who thought that autonomy was “probably enough” said in response to the same question that he wanted more autonomy for Bashkortostan in every field. Conversely, here is the answer from a Tatar:

I want to live in a great country. What meaning is there in living in a small ethnic country?

A similar difference between Tatars and Bashkorts was found when we asked whether the respondents thought of Russia as their motherland. Whereas some Tatars responded positively and some others said that only the Volga-Urals region was their home, all Bashkorts thought of Bashkortostan as their only motherland.

At the same time, when asked about their attitudes to Russians, most respondents had a rather positive attitude to them, though they were careful to distinguish between the actions of the Russian state (which most respondents did not like for one reason or another) and Russians as such:

Do you like or dislike Russians, or are you indifferent to them?

I like the Russian people. Their character is very similar to ours. I think it is wrong to claim that ‘Russians oppressed us.’ The Russian people, Russian language, and Orthodoxy were used to oppress us; they were the instruments, not the oppressors themselves. As long as a Russian does not identify himself with the oppressors, I bear no grudges against him. (Tatar)

I like Russians because they are sociable people; I feel at ease with them. I cannot socialize with Tatars; for some reason, they do not like us. (Bashkort)

I like Russians. They are indifferent to cultural differences, friendly, and tolerant of minorities. (Tatar)

I like the Russian people because ordinary Russians share our fate, and do not have advantages over us. Russians themselves suffer from the unwise policies of politicians. (Tatar)

Still, whatever variation there is seems to indicate that Bashkorts were more likely to say they were “indifferent” (three cases) or “disliked” Russians (one case). No such cases of either kind were registered among the Tatars. Significantly, no one, be it Tatar or Bashkort, answered “yes” when asked if they ever felt material discrimination by Russians (which would, for instance, deliver different salaries for the same job or impede one’s promotion). At the same time, some respondents complained about the kind of racism that we termed emotional discrimination:

It does happen that Russians use swearwords to offend Tatars and us. They may call us *Churki*. They also use 'Tatar' as a swearword. (Bashkort)

When I worked as a schoolteacher, I witnessed the following: A Russian kid calls a Tatar kid some name, and the Tatar, in response, calls the Russian a 'Tatar'. 'Tatar' has become such a common swearword that even Tatars use the name of their people as a swearword. (Tatar)

I studied at an ethnic school, and sometimes I speak Russian with an accent. Because of this, Russians say that I am not cultured. I cannot understand why, if an Armenian or a Georgian speaks Russian with an accent it is acceptable, but if a Bashkort or a Tatar speaks Russian with an accent he or she is considered not cultured. I consider this to be emotional discrimination. (Bashkort)

Ethnic identity, whether it is constructed or primordial, is oftentimes rooted in historical mythology. Russian popular historiography portraying the ancestors of Tatars and Bashkorts as savage invaders while elevating the conquest of Kazan by Ivan the Terrible or the Battle of Kulikovo (where a Tatar general was defeated by Russians) may contribute to the boundaries between these ethnic groups and Russians. On the other hand, another part of the popular tradition emphasizes their common struggle against Hitler and Napoleon. We found that with respect to these issues Tatars had more diverse attitudes than did Bashkorts. Here are some characteristic reactions from our respondents:

Do you react to Russians taking pride in their struggle against the 'Tatar-Mongol yoke', the conquests of Ivan the Terrible, and the triumph of Orthodoxy over Islam, including the cross over the crescent?

All these, of course, are falsifications of history intended to prove Russian greatness. Take the Battle of Kulikovo, for example. Who was Mamai? Mamai was nobody, just a rebel commander. Soon after that battle, Tatars took Moscow and burned it to ashes. Though, I personally do not react to such falsifications, since we, Bashkorts, were not conquered. We joined Russia willingly. It was Tatars who were conquered. (Bashkort)

No. My Russian friends accept that these are mistakes. (Tatar)

This is all very offending, of course. These are perversions of history that were forcefully implanted in Russian consciousness by oppressors. The remedy is to carry out sanitary work. I have been carrying out such sanitary work on Russian textbooks published here; I remove such elements from Russian folklore, early and modern Russian literature. Unfortunately, though, we cannot see such work being done on textbooks published in Moscow. (Tatar)

It is very offending that many people who do not know history, and not only Russians, associate Tatars with the Mongols. Tatars lived on this soil before Mongols. Our ancestors were called Bulgars. Before becoming an ethnic name, 'Tatar' was a collective word for all nomadic tribes of the east. In fact, all Muslims in the Russian Empire were called 'Tatars'. Tatars themselves became victims of the Mongols. Some now say: 'For centuries, Tatars sacked Russian hearths. It is time we, Russians, took back the tribute Tatars stole from us'. Such attitudes, of course, cannot lead to friendship between the peoples. Personally, I find it all very offending. (Tatar)

It is significant that, although their reactions are quite different, all respondents acknowledge that such attitudes exist and that they are offending. Another part of historical mythology that may affect people's attitudes today are historic wrongs committed by Russians in the past. Here is a grudge a Bashkort respondent has against Russians:

In the Russian Empire, Bashkorts were not allowed to settle within one hundred kilometers of Ufa. Bashkorts had to settle on the periphery. Even today, you can find all sorts of peoples around Ufa: the Chuvash, Russians themselves, but there are very few Bashkorts. Because of this, we came to be known as a provincial people. That all began to change after our [declaration of] sovereignty, but there are still relatively few Bashkorts in Ufa. I am personally hurt by all this, both morally and emotionally.

We also found that Tatars were more likely than Bashkorts to have positive memories about their historic cooperation with Russians:

Do you attribute any meaning to Tatars/Bashkorts having fought alongside Russians against Hitler?

Yes, of course. This is all in accordance with Islam. The Great Patriotic War was a jihad. (Tatar)

No. We really had no choice. (Bashkort)

Of course. I do not even take this as an ethnic issue. Whatever problems we may have had with Russians, the Nazis did not even consider us human. We had no choice. (Tatar)

Understandably, the extent to which our respondents identified with Islam was another major area of our interest. To the straightforward question whether the respondent was faithful, both Tatars and Bashkorts split in roughly equal proportions. However, Tatars, if they were not religious, were more likely to add that they respected Islam, whereas Bashkorts in such cases restricted their answer to the laconic "no." A more interesting question, however, is whether traditional religious identity contributes to the division of the world into "us" and "them." In particular, the 1999 Kosovo crisis in which Russia seemed to support Orthodox Serbs against Muslim Albanians was still a recent event in December 2000 and a very divisive issue. During the crisis, there was a movement in some Russian regions to send volunteers and assist the Serbs. As a reaction, in Tatarstan there emerged a movement to send volunteers and help the

What did you think of the Tatar plan to send volunteers to Kosovo to fight on the Albanian side, in response to the Russian plan to send volunteers to the Serbs? Did you approve it or not?

I do think that Russians have the right to support the Serbs as the two peoples are very close to each other. However, we have nothing to do with Albanians. There are more than a billion Muslims on earth; are we to send volunteers to Muslim guerrillas in the Philippines as well? I think that the Russian army should have acted to support the Serbs; not because I care about the Serbs, but we should not have swallowed the international humiliation NATO imposed on us in our traditional, imperial sphere of influence. It is very humiliating that we no longer have the international power of the Soviet Union. (Tatar, 20+ years old)

Since back when I was a Socialist, I have had to ask myself why, when it comes to the Balkan question, Russia automatically backs the Serbs. There can only be one answer: due to Orthodoxy, their shared faith. Faith unites peoples. And during the war in Kosovo as well, the position of Russia could not but raise questions and discontent in the minds of the twenty million Muslims of Russia, among whom I include myself. (Tatar, 50+ years old)

We have a very brittle balance between the nations in Russia. Both Tatars and Russians should be very careful about not disturbing that balance, for the consequences would be disastrous. (Tatar, 70+ years old)

To the contrary, Bashkorts' answers were again more uniform. Here is one reaction from a Bashkort:

What did you think of the Tatar plan to send volunteers to Kosovo to fight on the Albanian side, in response to the Russian plan to send volunteers to the Serbs? Did you approve it or not?

There was nothing serious about that. It was all a lot of talk. Tatars like to talk. But there was no way they could realize something like that.

Just as 'talk', though, do you think that it had a beneficial effect?

Well, yes. It did make Russians think about what they were doing, and about possible consequences.

Another issue of interest, in relation to Islam, is whether a non-Islamic faith is considered to be compatible with either Tatar or Bashkort identity. In Tatarstan there is a significant group of Tatar-speaking Christians who are officially considered a distinct ethnic group (*Kriashens*), although many Tatars consider them Tatars. One would therefore think that Bashkorts, who have no equivalent of *Kriashens*, should display less accommodating views on this issue than Tatars, but it is not the case. Apparently, the importance of Islam, at least as a cultural marker, has even somewhat greater value for Tatars than for Bashkorts. And here it is Tatars who seem to display more uniform attitudes than do Bashkorts.

Do you think that Islam is an inseparable part of the Tatar identity? Can a 'true' Tatar be Christian?

Yes. A Tatar may be Christian, but it is better if he is Muslim. (Tatar)

Of course. The future of Islam is the future of our nation; the rebirth of Islam will be the rebirth of our nation. Only Islam can help us regain the lost roots of our national culture. Our task is to teach

I do not think that a Tatar can be Christian. As for the baptized Tatars, if they knew which tortuous and insidious methods Russians baptized their ancestors with, they themselves would return to Islam. I often think to myself: 'How did so many Russians come about'? It happened through centuries-long Christianization of many peoples into Russians. But Russians could never break Tatars, for our faith was stronger. That is because we converted into Islam before they converted into Christianity. (Tatar)

Do you think that Islam is an inseparable part of the Bashkort identity? Can a 'true' Bashkort be Christian?

Islam is not an integral aspect of the Bashkort identity. A Bashkort may be of any faith. (Bashkort)

Islam is inseparable from the Bashkort identity, but this is our own, national Islam. It actually includes elements of Shamanism. A true Bashkort cannot be Christian, though. (Bashkort)

A Bashkort may well be an atheist; indeed, most Bashkorts are, due to the Soviet ideology. But being Christian is something different. An atheist is distant from his roots, but becoming a Christian is the first step into Russification.

What if a Bashkort were to become a Catholic or a Protestant? Would it still be Russification?

It would not necessarily be Russification, but it would irretrievably remove that person's Bashkort 'mentality'. (Bashkort)

Whereas Islamic identity seems somewhat more important for Tatars than for Bashkorts, Tatars were less likely than Bashkorts to express their solidarity with other Muslim and Turkic peoples.

Does the Islamic aspect of the Tatar identity carry political meaning in the form of Islamic international solidarity?

Such solidarity can become possible after the reformation of Islam, so that it will be compatible with the secular way of life. Those who are opposed to this reformation should realize that it is unavoidable for the survival of Islam. I have been to villages in Bashkortostan; many new mosques have been built. Who visits them? The youngest are my age! How can we stand for Islam if Islam is dying? (Tatar)

Does the Islamic aspect of the Bashkort identity carry political meaning in the form of Islamic international solidarity?

Of course. This comes more as a feeling than by intention. We feel ourselves closer to Muslim peoples. We supported the Albanians, for example, when Serbs were tormenting them, though we could not make this open to Russians. Russians supported the Serbs due to Orthodoxy, and ignored the crimes that Serbs committed against humanity. Similarly, we support the Chechens, not because of a political conviction, but because Russians are tormenting those people. We were also very unhappy with the Soviet Union's criminal war in Afghanistan. There is something about Russians that they always torment Muslim peoples. (Bashkort)

Still, most respondents from both groups emphasized that their Islamic tradition is very different from that of foreign Muslims and did not feel particular affinity with the latter:

Islam among Tatars is very liberal; it is their 'national Islam' as created by the Jadid movement. Tatar women have never worn the veil; you and I are sitting drinking beer in the holy month of Ramadan. Since we live in a cold climate, we eat pork. I have met Arab missionaries who come here to preach

Islam, but their understanding of Islam is completely different from ours. I do not think that we have anything in common with them. (Tatar)

The issue that clearly divides Tatars and Bashkorts is the policies of the Bashkortostan's government with respect to Tatars.

The Bashkort government considers the nationalities problem in Bashkortostan as nonexistent, or at least wants to portray the problem that way to the outside world. This problem exists. Above all, this is the problem of national autonomy within Bashkortostan. This problem manifests itself in the economy, language, and the policy of cadres. In all these areas, Tatars are discriminated against. (Tatar)

The government of Bashkortostan is leading a dead-end policy by assuming a paternalistic attitude towards Bashkort ethnicity. Bashkorts are a minority in Bashkortostan, but they act like the majority. We suffer just like the 40 million Kurds in Turkey who suffer from the Turkish rule.

- *But the total population of Turkey is less than 70 million.*
- That is true. The Turkish minority rules over the Kurdish majority.
- *But the highest estimates of the Kurdish population in Turkey put the figure at around 15 million.*
- A Kurdish scholar from Ankara gave me this figure. (Tatar)

What do you think of the nationalities policy of Bashkortostan regarding the Tatars of Bashkortostan? Do you approve or disapprove it?

- I disapprove it. They want to bow to Tatar demands. There is no need to close Bashkort schools in northwestern Bashkortostan and replace them with Tatar schools. Our government should be more aware of Tatar plans. (Bashkort)

- What do you think of the nationalities policy of Bashkortostan regarding the Tatars of Bashkortostan? Do you approve or disapprove it?

- What about the policy of Bashkortostan? What is there to disapprove?
- *Certain Tatars here have complained to me that Tatar is not considered an official language, and that there is an effort to forcibly assimilate Tatars into Bashkorts.*
- Why on earth is Tatar supposed to be an official language in Bashkortostan? They have their own republic; they can go to Tatarstan if they are dying to have Tatar as an official language. As for assimilation, it was Tatars who first tried to forcibly assimilate us. Today, Tatar language and culture in Bashkortostan are flourishing much better than ours. They also enjoy the mighty cultural and financial support of Kazan. Obviously, the Bashkort Republic is obliged to favor the development of the Bashkort language and culture. The survival and the progress of the Bashkort nation are Bashkortostan's reasons for being. (Bashkort)

In particular, usage of Tatar language by ostensible Bashkorts in Western Bashkortostan is a serious political issue.

-Do you think that 'Mankurts' should be regained to Bashkort society?

- Yes, they should be brought back into the Bashkort nation.

- What is there about them that still makes them Bashkorts? Is it race?

- No, it is ethnicity. These people consider themselves Bashkorts, but they were forcibly assimilated into Tatars. It is imperative that we reeducate them in Bashkort, though we are having problems finding enough teachers. This, indeed, was one of the tricks that Tatars used to assimilate these people. Since Tatars were a better-educated people, they were able to raise many teachers who then educated Bashkort children in Tatar rather than Bashkort. Also, when the Bashkort language was standardized, the eastern dialect of the language was taken as its basis. This turned out to be a historic mistake, since Bashkorts in northwestern Bashkortostan began to perceive Tatar as closer to their dialect than their own language.

- What if these people consider themselves Tatars?

- They do not consider themselves Tatars. When you speak to them, they say they are Bashkorts. But they were registered as Tatars in order to assimilate them. Were it not for our effort, half of Bashkortostan would have belonged to Tatars.

Consequently, Tatars and Bashkorts tend to have diverging attitudes to the prospect of unification of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan.

- Are you for or against the unification of Bashkortostan and Tatarstan into a single republic?

I am against a union of Bashkortostan with Tatarstan. We are different peoples. Tatars have always wanted to assimilate Bashkorts, and a union would give them this opportunity. Without the protection of our republic, Kazan would crush us. (Bashkort)

Not only me, but all true Bashkorts are opposed to the idea of unification with Tatarstan. This idea is forwarded by the Tatars. Why? Craftiness and deceit are the primary ethnic characteristics of Tatars. They want to lure us into such a union, and then assimilate us. But we are not as gullible as they think we are. (Bashkort)

Bashkortostan and Tatarstan should unite on a federal basis between themselves, at least until the point when both republics will attain the level of self-sufficiency necessary for them to be independent of each other. Today, Bashkortostan and Tatarstan cannot exist without each other; they certainly cannot hope to reach the truly federal and sovereign standing in Russia that they seek. (Tatar)

I am for a union of Bashkortostan and Tatarstan, which would be a strong, united Turkic republic, but the Bashkorts are opposed to it. Unfortunately, Bashkorts periodically violate our national rights. Bashkorts are still outliving the post-Soviet period of reactive nationalism, and have yet to become aware of their national interests. (Tatar)

The unification of Bashkortostan with Tatarstan would bring great joy to the Tatar people, since so many Tatars have been left outside the borders of Tatarstan. It is my dream to see this happen. (Tatar)

Nevertheless, those Bashkorts who have a stronger Islamic identity, still support the idea of a union of the two republics:

If Bashkortostan and Tatarstan unite into one national republic, that will not only be a very powerful republic: it will signal the unification of all Muslims of Russia. For that reason, Christians will never let us do that. At heart, I am of course for the unification of Bashkortostan and Tatarstan, but I fear that Russians will come and crush us. (Bashkort)

Discussion

The role of the Islamic factor appears to have played only a marginal role in the nationalist mobilization in both the Tatar and Bashkort societies. Rather, opposition to the federal authorities is facilitated on the popular level by a sense of distinct identity, which is mainly structured by popular historiographies that portray the nomadic ancestors of the two peoples as the “bad guys.” Because Tatars and Bashkorts share

assimilated by more numerous and advanced Tatars. Islam threatens to erode the ethnic boundary between Tatars and Bashkorts. Consequently, Islam tends to be less appreciated among the Bashkort elite than it is among the Tatars. In many cases, Bashkorts say that Islam does not play a central role in the Bashkort identity. In other cases, they emphasize that their Islam is very different from all other versions of Islam because it has incorporated unique local cultural elements, such as Shamanism. Thus, in most cases Islam plays only an instrumental role. This is consistent with reports that overlapping ethnic Muslim eparchies (the *mufitates*) are emerging in Bashkortostan; that is, there would be two mosques in one location, one preferred by Bashkorts and the other favored by Tatars. This is not unlike the situation in Ukraine where the Orthodox Church split into several denominations according to political and ethnic preferences of the population. However, when Islam is felt to be important in and of itself, this identity seems to override many others and then the distinction between Tatars and Bashkorts yields to solidarity.

Contradictions between Tatars and Bashkorts complicate the relationship of each group with the federal center. The problem for the Bashkort nationalists is exacerbated by cultural and linguistic dominance of Tatars to the extent that Tatar is the preferred language among many Bashkorts. Bashkorts, taking advantage of their political status, are attempting to reverse the situation. The Ufa Tatars, in the context of this opposition, may regard both the neighboring republic of Tatarstan and the federal authorities as additional resources. This may in part explain the more benevolent attitude of our Tatar respondents to the federal authorities. Additionally, the historic legacy of *Jadidism* and, in particular, the aspirations for leadership Tatars traditionally had with regard to the other 'Russian Muslims' may also contribute to the observed difference between Tatars and Bashkorts. Tatars who think of themselves as the educators and potential leaders of all 'Russian Muslims' are more likely to express universalist attitudes, embracing

people of various ethnic backgrounds and, perhaps, even of various religions. To the contrary, Bashkorts who are anxious to set up or confirm ethnic boundaries would be more likely to favor particularist attitudes.

Finally, we observed a tendency for the younger Tatars to be more “pro-Russian” than their older counterparts. (No such difference emerges for the Bashkorts.) Probably, the difference has roots in the post-World War II Soviet modernization. Older Tatars, during their impressionable years, were socialized in Tatar villages, but then in the 1950s and 1960s were coming to (essentially Russian-dominated) cities. The period was characterized by grotesque emphasis made by the Soviet government on the leading role of the Russian culture and the Russian people, which also included celebration of historic Russian victories over the Tatars. To the contrary, the younger generation of urban Tatars was raised in a Russian environment that had become multi-cultural and more tolerant. Thus many younger Tatars find it easier to identify with Russians (even to the point of nostalgia for the great and powerful USSR) than older Tatars. The apparent lack of age difference among Bashkorts may be attributable to their late modernization (relative to Tatars) or explained in terms of already discussed tendency for particularist attitudes.