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Islamic Extremism as a Political Force

A Comparative Study of Central
Asian Extremist Movements

Michael Fredholm



Department of Oriental Languages
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Asian Cultures and Modernity

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A plethora of state- and nation-building programmes are being developed in present-day Asia, where governments have to consider the regionality of old ethno-cultural identities. While the cohesive power of traditions must be put into use within a particular nation, that same power challenges its national boundaries. To soften this contradiction, economic and/or political regionalism, in contrast to isolationism and globalism, becomes a solution, suggesting new and exciting routes to modernity. In studies conducted by the Asian Cultures and Modernity Research Group at Stockholm University, sociolinguistic and culture-relativistic perspectives are applied with the support of epistemological considerations from the field of political science.

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by

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Editorial Note

The author has written extensively on the history, defence and security policies of Eurasia. This report is a further elaboration of a previous report by this author in the series (No. 5, October 2003). Research for this report was conducted at the Forum for Central Asian Studies, and an early draft was used as study material at the Department of Central Asian Studies, Stockholm University. The views presented in this article are those of the author alone and do not represent those of the Swedish government or any other group.

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Islamic Extremism as a Political Force

A Comparative Study of Central Asian Islamic Extremist Movements

Background

Islam in Central Asia does not constitute a uniform religious, social, or political force. While all titular Central Asian ethnic groups, i.e., the nations that states were named after, eventually embraced Islam, the religion did not penetrate the traditional cultures and social systems of these groups to an equal extent. While the sedentary groups generally embraced Islam fully, and often acquired a reputation for Islamic scholarship as well as occasional bouts of fanaticism, nomadic and pastoral groups more typically assimilated Islam in a more perfunctory manner.

These different degrees of Islamicisation remain visible today. The Tajiks are generally regarded as most Islamic, followed by the Uzbeks. The Kyrgyz, Kazaks, and Turkmens, in roughly descending order, are regarded as comparatively less Islamic in their attitudes.¹ The difference between sedentary and nomadic groups with regard to Islam can also be discerned among the non-titular ethnic groups. So are, for instance, the sedentary Uighurs regarded as far more Islamic than their formerly nomadic neighbours. This traditional ranking in Islamic piety continues to affect the development of Islamic extremism in Central Asia. In newly independent Tajikistan, the influence of Islamic extremism constituted an important factor among those that caused the 1992-1997 civil war. Uzbekistan produced an Islamic extremist guerrilla group, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which in its struggle against the secular regime had to relocate abroad and grew into an important part of the terrorist network around Al-Qaida. Uzbekistan is also the Central Asian country that appears to have been most susceptible to Islamic extremist politics in the form of the illegal Islamic party Hizb ut-Tahrir. Meanwhile, Kyrgyzstan has been somewhat less affected, but affected nonetheless. Kazakstan, on the other hand, has been relatively little affected by domestic groups of Islamic extremists, while Turkmenistan so far may have been spared altogether. Among the Uighurs, an established but secular independence movement is currently losing ground to groups of Islamic extremists.

Since the various Islamic extremist movements have shown a propensity for violence, secular regimes in Central Asia as well as those in neighbouring states which may find themselves the targets of Islamic extremist aggression are duly concerned.

The Difficulty in Defining Religious Beliefs

Wahhabism and Salafism are terms commonly used to identify what here will be referred to as modern Sunni Islamic extremism, a loose movement the guiding idea of which is to purify the Islamic, or the entire, world by recreating what its proponents regarded as the perfect Islamic society, a goal to be achieved by turning society back to an essentially imagined model of seventh-century Arabia, the time of the Prophet. To achieve this task, its proponents claim the right, and need, to use lethal force.

In Russia and Central Asia, the term Wahhabism has since the late 1980s often been misused to denote any kind of Islamic fundamentalism, or at times, any believing Muslim opposed to the ruling government. Rhetoric about Islam, and in particular what was referred to as the Wahhabi threat, has been used to justify the suppression of groups that certainly formed part of the political opposition but by no means could be described as proponents of Wahhabism. Some Western academics accordingly condemn the use of the term Wahhabism as incompatible with serious scholarship, claiming that a significant Wahhabi movement does not exist in Central Asia.² Both views are simplistic. The fact that accusations of Wahhabism have been used to justify political repression has already been proven so there is no need to elaborate further on this subject here. However, Salafism/Wahhabism comes in degrees. Few who demonstrate Salafi/Wahhabi tendencies would describe themselves as followers of Wahhabism, since

¹ Alexei Malashenko, "Islam in Central Asia," Roy Allison and Lena Jonson (eds), *Central Asian Security: The New International Context* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2001), 49-66, on 51.

² See, e.g., Muriel Atkin, "The Rhetoric of Islamophobia," *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 1 (2000), 123-32; Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 46.

they regard themselves as Muslims and nothing else. Some would consider it sinful to use the name as it would place the movement's founder, Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab, next to God by naming the religion after him. Moreover, groups in Central Asia which display Salafi thought follow leaders such as Usamah bin Ladin, wanted by the United States for his part in several terrorist attacks, and Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, currently in an American prison for his role in terrorism in New York. These men themselves reinterpreted the creed of original Wahhabism according to their own needs. For this reason, some academics prefer to use the term neo-Wahhabism.³

However, the main reason why the arguments for or against a Wahhabi presence are simplistic is that the average member of the so-called Wahhabi extremist movement in Central Asia - a rank-and-file member of the Afghan Taliban or a young man attracted by the views of Usamah bin Ladin - is no religious scholar. He does not, indeed cannot due to his limited religious education, distinguish between the different schools of Islam. The religious roots of the Taliban, for instance, lie in the Hanafi tradition (*Hanafiyyah*), originated by the theologian Imam Abu Hanifa (699-767) and one of the four schools of orthodox Islamic law, or to be precise, the Deobandi school, named after the Deoband *madrasah* (religious boarding school) Dar ul-Ulum Deoband ("House of Learning of Deoband"), sixty miles north of Delhi, India. The Deoband school has since its establishment in 1867 been the leading Islamic center in the Indian subcontinent, and thereby the leading Hanafi centre. Deoband is the second oldest Islamic university, after Al-Azhar in Cairo.

Although the Hanafi and Wahhabi movements ostensibly follow different traditions, Deobandi scholars and followers often demonstrate Wahhabi tendencies. Wahhabi thought was first introduced to India in 1823/1824 by an Indian pilgrim to Mecca named Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi (1785-1831). Having returned to India after his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1821-1823, he began to propagate an ideology akin - but not quite identical - to Wahhabism throughout northern India and in what would become Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Bengal, after which he settled among the Pashtuns. Barelwi in particular preached against innovations such as Shia Islam and Sufism, and against infidels such as Sikhs and British. In 1827, he claimed the title Imam, declared a jihad against the Sikhs in Peshawar, and led the Yusufzai Pashtuns to war. Barelwi was defeated and killed at Balakot in 1831. His followers continued to propagate Wahhabi (or what some would refer to as Barelwi) thought in Herat and Balkh in Afghanistan as well as several northern Indian cities. In addition, and roughly contemporary with Barelwi, there were also Meccan influences due to the activities of the Faraidi movement in 1818-1845 in Bengal, under the leadership of Hajji Shariatullah (1781-1840) who was born in Bengal but lived for 18 years in Mecca, from which he returned in 1818. Like Barelwi, Shariatullah was anti-British and anti-Hindu. By the 1890s, Wahhabism was spreading also to the central Asian cities. The influence of Wahhabism on Deoband grew rapidly from at least 1925, when Indian Muslims first went on a pilgrimage to Mecca following its occupation by Saudi Wahhabi forces. These pilgrims brought home "glowing reports" of the new Wahhabi regime. Islamic scholars from the Deoband seminary would generally not call themselves Wahhabi although they were certainly influenced by Wahhabism. Such men soon established local branches of the Deoband seminary in what today is Pakistan. Many of today's Afghan religious leaders have studied there.⁴ Other religious scholars, who at least eventually referred to themselves as Wahhabis, including Sayyid Shari Muhammad, a native of Medina, established a presence in Tashkent, present-day Uzbekistan, and the Ferghana valley of Central Asia from 1912 and have remained there since. They too appear to have come primarily from India.⁵ Few followers of either the Hanafi or Wahhabi tradition have gone to the lengths of scholarship required to ponder whether or not they were Wahhabis.

³ Alexander Ignatenko, "Islamic Radicalism: A Cold War By-Product," *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 1, 2001, 101-112.

⁴ See, e.g., Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 564-6, 721-2; Mehrdad Haghayeghi, *Islam and Politics in Central Asia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 93, 163-4; William Maley (ed), *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 14-16, 75; M. J. Gohari, *The Taliban: Ascent to Power* (Oxford: Oxford Logos Society, 1999), 31-32; Robert Lacey, *The Kingdom: Arabia & the House of Sa'ud* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), 195. Some scholars play down the Wahhabi tendencies of Deoband while acknowledging its orthodoxy and rejection of innovation. Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd edn 1990), 57-8. See also Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

⁵ Ahmed Rashid, *The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism?* (London: Zed Books, 1994), 44; Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000), 85; Rashid, *Jihad*, 45; Bakhtiyar Babadzhonov, "The Fergana Valley: Source or Victim of Islamic Fundamentalism?" *Political Islam and Conflicts in Russia and Central Asia* (Stockholm: Swedish

Although one could argue that followers of the Hanafi school are no genuine Wahhabis even though many of them are strongly influenced by Wahhabism, and that strictly speaking, the Taliban were Hanafi rather than Wahhabi, for all practical purposes they acted as Wahhabis. Schools of Islamic thought change and adapt according to the demands of their times as well as popular sentiments among their leaders. They also frequently borrow ideas and norms from each other. It is accordingly just as easy to underrate as overrate the Wahhabi presence in any given part of Central Asia.

It should also be noted that in countries such as Uzbekistan, where any form of Islamic opposition is routinely labeled Wahhabism, this very persecution has given the Wahhabis a popular mystique that in fact encourages local Muslims to regard them as the persecuted Muslim faithful.⁶

Whether persecuted or not, the Wahhabis of Central Asia and the rest of the former Soviet Union are quite clear on what they stand for. A modern Saudi guide to Islam by one Abdullah bin Ahmad al-Zayd, in 1996 translated into Russian and published as *Obucheniyе molitve* ("Teaching to Pray"), has been distributed widely among Muslims in these countries. It points out: "He who of his own will performs an act of worship (prayer, fast, supplication, vow, sacrifice or plea for salvation) addressed to anyone besides Allah, to a monument or benefactor, falls into polytheism, and this is one of the greatest sins which brings all good acts to naught. He who does this may be killed, while his property may be taken away." This, in no uncertain terms, is a call to murder those who, for instance, follow the traditional Central Asian Sufi Islam.⁷

For practical purposes, perhaps the definition of Islamic extremism proposed by the Council of the Muftis (Islamic religious leaders) of Russia on 30 June 2000 is the best one. The Council then singled out as extremist those movements that (1) rejected the basic Islamic traditions, (2) claimed the right to brand as "non-Muslims" traditional believers who happened to disagree with their interpretation of Islamic law, and (3) claimed the right to kill "infidels" including traditional Muslims who had failed to side with them.⁸ This will be the definition of Islamic extremism adopted here, since it subsumes all varieties of Sunni extremism, whether referred to as Salafi or Wahhabi.

Central Asian Islam versus Islamic Extremism

While the seven decades of Soviet rule by no means eradicated Islam in Central Asia, it certainly went a long way in undermining the authority of local religious leaders and in loosening many religious norms taken for granted when the region was an integral part of the Islamic world. The Soviet system produced a set of values within Central Asian Islam that set it apart from the rest of the Muslim world. Identifying oneself as a Muslim remained important, but Islam became regarded as synonymous with Central Asian customs and traditions (many of them of Sufi origin), not the strict observance of Islamic law and ritual. A person would identify himself as a Muslim because he was, for instance, an Uzbek, not because he considered himself particularly religious. Most Central Asians, Muslim clerics included, thus had a very limited knowledge of Islamic theology. This situation has to a large extent persisted in post-Soviet Central Asia. Islam no longer is, if it ever was, the central factor in life for a majority of Central Asians. Instead Soviet-style secularism seems to have become the norm for most people as they struggle to make a daily living.⁹ Yet, a vocal minority has turned its back on secularism, instead embracing Islam in its more extreme varieties.

Modern Sunni Islamic extremism, as is well known, originated in the Wahhabism of Saudi Arabia and was further propagated by the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt. It had little if anything to do with the traditional, Sufi type of Islam that existed in Central Asia since before the Russian Revolution - although history shows that Sufi Islam as well could exhibit extremist, violent tendencies. Yet, it is striking that the present extremists regularly condemn the rich traditions of Sufi Islam that despite the atheism of the Soviet period still exist in Central Asia. However, the Islamic extremism in Central Asia is not pure Wahhabism and, as will be shown in the case studies (see below), reflects in itself the fact that Islamic extremist thought reached Central Asia during several separate periods and from several directions:¹⁰

Institute of International Affairs, 1999), 112-123; Ashirbek Muminov, "Traditional and Modern Religious-Theological Schools in Central Asia," *Political Islam and Conflicts in Russia and Central Asia* (Stockholm: Swedish Institute of International Affairs, 1999), 101-111.

⁶ Rashid, *Jihad*, 46.

⁷ First noted in Vitaly V. Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia: Between Pen and Rifle* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 5-6 with note, which also includes the translated excerpt.

⁸ Ignatenko, "Islamic Radicalism," 101-112.

⁹ On Islam in contemporary Central Asia, see International Crisis Group (ICG), *Central Asia: Islam and the State* (Osh/Brussels: ICG Asia Report 59, 10 July 2003).

¹⁰ A further source of Wahhabism or at least Salafism in Central Asia has been tentatively identified in the Vaisov group (the Vaisites) among the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Volga Tatars.

- Wahhabi missionaries from the Arabian peninsula and eventually India, from the 1890s and in particular the years following 1912
- Deobandi missionaries from India, in the years following 1925
- Missionaries from the Middle East, known as Wahhabis, from those modern extremist organisations that originally grew out of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (a late one of which was Al-Qaida), from the 1970s onwards
- Deobandi missionaries from Pakistan and Afghanistan, from the 1970s onwards
- Mainly Pakistani missionary organisations with Wahhabi tendencies such as the Tabligh, from the 1980s onwards (the time of the Soviet war in Afghanistan)

Many missionaries had only a rudimentary knowledge of the religion they preached, so it is often difficult to define exactly which strand of Islam influenced which particular movement.

Islamic Extremism and Politics

Islamic extremism, like any other political ideology, can be used as a political tool by its leaders. Three quite different strands of political thought can be discerned among the current extremist groups. These are the dream of the Caliphate; the use of Islam as a political means of opposition; and Islam as a pretext for violence and criminal activities.

The Dream of the Caliphate

The outspoken wish of most Islamic extremists appears to be the restoration of the Caliphate, a true Islamic state under a united government of the Muslim world. Most would insist that a true Caliphate can only be restored through revolutionary means. Since they also believe that all forms of social injustice miraculously would disappear as soon as a true Islamic state has been established, this is a dream that some are willing to die for.

There is a fundamental desire for social justice in most Islamic extremist groups. Western models of every variety are regarded as having been tried and failed. When the colonial powers withdrew from the Islamic world, they were replaced by nationalist dictators such as Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt and Achmed Sukarno in Indonesia. In Central Asia, a case could be argued for including post-Soviet presidents such as Uzbekistan's Islam Karimov, Turkmenistan's Saparmurat Niyazov, and Kazakhstan's Nursultan Nazarbayev in the same group. As nationalism and socialism failed, Islamic reformers moved into the ideological void, relying for support on the urban poor and the devout middle class - including those who were over-educated and under-employed. They in particular targeted the young, since young people typically are more easily swayed towards extremist doctrines. In the Islamic world, Western-type democracy far too often degenerated into destructive rivalry among groups of elites, all equally corrupt. A typical example is Pakistan. Western-style socialism usually brought superficial reforms but failed to raise the standard of living among the poor. Most importantly, each type of regime was perceived as dividing society into a modernised, Westernised secular elite separated from the majority of the population, which is seen by the extremists as poor, exploited, and in essence more Islamic - and thereby superior.¹¹ In short, a very real desire for social justice and Islamic reform was coupled with a xenophobic, virtually racist feeling of superiority based on a historical past. Sunni Islamic extremism in

Vaisites spent considerable time in Turkestan and, among other appeals, "once called on the people to behead seventy thousand government-appointed mullahs," insisting that they had the right to call for an armed struggle. Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 17. The brotherhood of the Vaisites of Kazan', reportedly a heterodox offshoot of the Sufi group Naqshbandiyyah, was founded at Kazan' in 1862 by Bahauddin Vaisov. The group, the membership of which mainly consisted of small artisans, seemingly combined Sufi mysticism, Wahhabi puritanism with extreme and intransigent nationalism and, after 1907, Marxist socialism. The Vaisites then proposed militant methods inspired by the Russian revolutionaries. In 1917, the son and successor of the sect's founder, Inan Vaisov, accepted weapons from the Kazan' Bolsheviks and the Vaisites allied themselves with the Bolsheviks. Inan Vaisov was killed, fighting for the Bolsheviks, in Trans-Bulak in February 1918. Many other Muslims considered the Vaisites heretics. Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemerrier-Quelquejays, *Islam in the Soviet Union* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1967), 54, 243 n.6.

¹¹ See, e.g., Georgii Mirskiy, "Islamic Fundamentalism and International Terrorism," *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 6 (12), 2001, 28-37, on 29; John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 165; Gilles Kepel, *Le prophete et pharaon: Les mouvements islamistes dans l'Egypte contemporaine* (Paris: Éditions la Decouverte, 1984); Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000).

the Islamic world accordingly shows clear similarities with twentieth-century Nazism in the Western world.¹²

The prime example in Central Asia of this strand of current Islamic extremism is, as will be shown, the Hizb ut-Tahrir. Believing the introduction of the Caliphate to be the only dream worth striving for, members of the Hizb ut-Tahrir in most cases refuse to take part in normal political discourse.

Islam as a Political Means of Opposition

Not all Islamic political leaders have been dreamers or visionaries. Some have been closely involved in politics. As a political force, Islam can serve as a platform for the gradual introduction of certain forms of political justice and human rights through regular political means. This is especially true in situations where no other political form of opposition is viable. Islamic extremism has at times acquired the mantle of a political opposition movement, especially where all or most genuine political forms of opposition are proscribed.

In Central Asia, Islam has been used as a basis for political opposition by the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) and, as will be shown, several Uighur groups wishing to create an independent East Turkestan.

It should also be noted that in countries such as Uzbekistan, where any form of Islamic opposition is routinely labeled Wahhabism, this very persecution has given the Wahhabis, indeed any groups of Islamic extremists, a popular mystique that in fact encourages local Muslims to regard them as the persecuted Muslim faithful.¹³ This, as well as the greater credibility gained by extremist groups when the secular state structures fail to deliver economic and political reforms, works to increase the popularity of Islamic extremism. While there no doubt always would be a small core of Islamic extremists, even in the West, they could hardly have achieved their current level of support if popular discontent and opposition had been integrated into a normal political process.

Islam as a Pretext for Violence and Criminal Activities

It would be naive to believe that certain Islamic leaders, self-proclaimed or otherwise, would be above using political Islam, and especially Islamic extremist thought, to further their own ambitions. If not to gain outright political power, then as a pretext for the violence needed to maintain control over smuggling routes and criminal networks. As will be shown, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) for a number of years in some ways was chiefly a vehicle for drug smuggling out of Central Asia. However, the border between religious fanaticism and the cynical use of religious tenets for personal advancement is not always clear-cut. Some Islamic extremist leaders would find it hard to define where their faith ends and their self-interest begins. The knowledge that one is the tool of God effectively precludes any notion that one is using religion for personal gains.

In Central Asia, as will be shown, the IMU is the prime example of how self-proclaimed Islamic leaders have used Islam as pretext for violence and criminal activities, including drug smuggling.

Although one easily could argue that such leaders abuse the religion for personal reasons, the political uses and abuses of Islam should not prevent a sober analysis of why Islam with such an apparent ease lends itself to such uses. There are factors within the ideology of Islam that seemingly encourage violence and the use of force. Islam as a religion, through its scholars and believers, needs to confront the three questions of why Islam allows militant extremists to interpret the faith in militant and destructive terms; why Islam has endorsed the creation of so many extremist organisations; and why Islam apparently includes no ideological defences against the spread of political extremism and the advocacy of violence.¹⁴

¹² The analogy should not be taken too far, even though both ideologies to some extent emerged out of similar movements of thought in the first half of the twentieth century. Although proponents of both Nazism and Sunni Islamic extremism dream of a utopian past, one based on an Aryan ancestral home and the other on the Arabian peninsula at the time of the Prophet, most Muslims even of the extremist persuasion would categorically not insist on a purity of race. Yet, the religious prestige and at times even popular veneration of privileged groups within Islamic society such as the sayyids, the reputed descendants of the Prophet, the mirs, reputed descendants of the first three Caliphs, and the khwajas, descendants of the early Arab conquerors in Central Asia, due to their perceived inherent holiness, would seem to suggest that the importance of race remains greater than ideologists and theologians might wish.

¹³ Rashid, *Jihad*, 46.

¹⁴ See, e.g., Mirskiy, "Islamic Fundamentalism," 37.

The Impact of Islamic Extremism on Central Asian Politics

One could argue that the proponents of Islamic extremism achieved little but yet had a great impact on Central Asian politics.

First, Islamic extremism was central to the geopolitical development of the region during the last decade of the twentieth century – and remains so. Without the threat from Islamic extremism, it is unlikely, to say the least, that the United States would have devoted so much resources, money, and military power to the Central Asian region. The deployment of American military forces to what increasingly looks like permanent bases in the region (first in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, then in Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan) has furthermore polarised the strategic situation between the United States and the two great powers already present in the region, Russia and China. The meeting of these three great powers in Central Asia would not have occurred unless all three had been faced with the threat of Islamic extremism. However, Islamic extremists never succeeded in gaining uncontested control over any state within the region. Even the Taliban did not manage fully to control the territory of Afghanistan. Moreover, since the 2001 War on Terror Islamic extremists are no longer in control of any state within the region, not even the most fragile of them.¹⁵ The conclusion must be that while Islamic extremism was central to the region's geopolitical developments, this was more through its role as a catalyst in pushing great powers into action than through its actual power.

Although the threat of violence from Islamic extremists is real and lethal, it mostly derives from domestic or regional sources. Nor is it likely that the extremists really expect to win any global showdown with the West or the comparatively secular Islamic states that they profess to fight. Any overview of the means of coercion and violence available to the parties in the conflict indicates that the states remain vastly more powerful with regard to the use of force.

Second, Islamic extremism played an important role in the development of authoritarianism in Central Asia, as well as elsewhere. Since almost immediately after independence in late 1991, the impact of Islamic extremism has been central to the retention, and even strengthening, of authoritarianism within Central Asian state structures. Islamic extremism thereby directly prevented the states within the region from acquiring any increased level of democracy and popular legitimacy. Again, this was attained through its role as a catalyst rather than through the direct participation in government by Islamic extremists. Among former Soviet Central Asian republics, an Islamic movement only ever managed to acquire a modest role within the state structures of Tajikistan – and even this participation in government was limited to more moderate Islamic leaders. Besides, the Tajikistani government remained dependent on Russia, which further limited the impact of the co-optation of certain Islamic leaders into the ranks of government.

Moreover, Islamic extremism has, as will be shown, invariably displayed a very simplistic ideology. There are no indications that any Islamic extremist movement ever made actual preparations for, or indeed thought about, how to rule their much desired Islamic state, had they succeeded in creating one. Even the Taliban never bothered to build any form of civilian administration, being content with a military chain of command which in itself always remained vague and ill-defined. The often-expressed desire to build an Islamic state purely on Islamic law does not inspire confidence in any Islamic extremist movement's ability actually to run such a state.

The Origins of Central Asian Wahhabism

The influence of the Wahhabi-influenced Deobandi school on the religious scholars of Central Asia has already been noted. Among those who at least eventually referred to themselves as Wahhabis (*vaxxobiylar*) were several who established a presence in Tashkent and the Fergana valley of Central Asia from 1912 onwards. Among them was, as noted, Sayyid Shari Muhammad. He was a native of Medina, unlike most Deobandi clerics in Central Asia, who appear to have come from India. A Wahhabi presence has remained in Central Asia since.¹⁶ Other early proponents of Wahhabism in Central Asia included Shami Domullah al-Tarabulsi (died after 1940 in internal exile), a native of Tripoli in Lebanon who was active in the period 1919-1932 when he fought Sufism apparently on behalf or at least in support of the Bolsheviks.¹⁷ However, little is known of these developments from the time when the Soviet

¹⁵ See, e.g., Carl Hammer (pseud.), *Tide of Terror: America, Islamic Extremism, and the War on Terror* (Boulder, Colorado: Paladin Press, 2003), which discusses the War on Terror in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

¹⁶ Rashid, *Resurgence*, 44; Rashid, *Taliban*, 85; Rashid, *Jihad*, 45; Babadzhanov, "Fergana Valley," 112-123; Muminov, "Traditional and Modern Religious-Theological Schools," 101-111.

¹⁷ Bakhtiyar M. Babadzhanov [Babajanov], Ashirbek M. Muminov, and Martha Brill Olcott, "Mukhammadzhan Khindustani (1892-1989) i religioznaya sreda ego epokhi (predvaritel'nyye

Union consolidated its hold over the region until independence was regained in the early 1990s. Since unofficial Muslim clerics in the Soviet Union tended to move from one clandestine mosque or madrasah to another, no records were kept, and furthermore, since several of those involved are dead, it is hard to trace exactly how Wahhabism disseminated to and throughout the Central Asian republics in the years under Soviet rule. Yet, enough hearsay and personal memories remain to discern at least the broad developments of the period.

In the Soviet period, two influential Muslim clerics came to inspire the resurgence of Islamic activities in Central Asia. The first, Muhammad Rustamov Hindustani, can be described as a Deobandi with Wahhabi tendencies. The second, Abdulhakim Qori (from Arabic *qari*, “reader of Qur’an;” the honorary title *qori* indicates a scholar who can recite the entire Koran), was a devoted Wahhabi. Together they prepared the ground for the various Islamic extremist groups that grew out of the 1970s and 1980s.

Muhammad Rustamov Hindustani

Muhammad (or Muhammadjon) Rustamov Hindustani (1892-1989), also known as Hoji Domla (*domla* or *domullah* is another scholarly title), was born and educated in Khokand. He continued his studies in Bukhara. During the First World War, Rustamov moved to Afghanistan, where he continued his religious education. He then studied in India (reportedly at the madrasah Uthmaniyyah in Ajmer, Rajasthan). Rustamov went on pilgrimage to Mecca, after which he returned to India for further studies. Rustamov returned to Central Asia in 1927, only to be arrested several times and in 1936 sent to Siberia. After his release and subsequent military service during the Second World War (he was called up in 1943 and wounded near Minsk in late 1944, after which he was discharged), Rustamov lived in Tajikistan, where he worked first as an official imam, then, after a further spell of internal exile, at the Department of Oriental Studies and Written Heritage of the Tajik Academy of Sciences in Dushanbe. He was fully rehabilitated in 1955. At some point during the 1970s, he opened a clandestine Islamic school in Andijon, and became the most influential underground preacher in Soviet Central Asia. His influence spread throughout the Uzbek and Tajik parts of the Ferghana valley. Sermons and lectures were taped on audio cassettes and distributed among trusted believers. Such a system of underground teaching, which would become increasingly common among his followers, became known as *hujrah* (“cell”).¹⁸ By 1982, his was one of at least 22 illegal Islamic schools in the region, all of which were closed by the security forces. Rustamov died seven years later in Dushanbe.¹⁹

Despite himself displaying Wahhabi tendencies, Rustamov, interestingly, by the end of his life was reportedly the first to attach the definition of Wahhabite to the emerging Islamic extremist movement in Central Asia. The term was henceforth adopted by local theologians, ordinary believers, and eventually those in the state structures as well, after which the term was turned into a derogatory categorization.²⁰ However, already in 1983, a group of 22 unregistered clerics, aged 22-45, in Kulob (then Kulyab) Oblast in Tajikistan came to the attention of the Soviet authorities. They called themselves Wahhabis and studied what Soviet officials referred to as documents advocating pan-Islamic ideas.²¹ This, it should be noted, was several years before the Soviet authorities began to describe virtually all Islamic activists by this term as a matter of routine. Be that as it may, Rustamov’s numerous disciples and followers included several who would influence Islamic thought in Central Asia. Among them were Abdulhakim Qori; Rahmatullo Qori Alloma; Abduwali Qori Mirzoyev; Ishoq Qori; Ismail Domla; Ibrohimjon Qoqandi (in Khokand); Hikmatullah Qori (in Dushanbe); Muhammad Ali Marginani (in Yazyawan); Ubaydullah Makhsun (in

razmyshleniya o formirovaniy ‘sovetskogo islama’ v sredney Azii,” *Vostok (Oriens)* 4, September-October 2004, 43-59, on 53; Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 40-41.

¹⁸ In the Ferghana Valley, unofficial clergy enjoyed huge prestige. Local officials often allowed, and sometimes assisted, them to open unregistered mosques and religious schools for children. On mullahs in the Ferghana Valley who early on advocated Wahhabi beliefs, such as that it was a sin to listen to the radio when music was broadcast, see Yaacov Ro’i, *Islam in the Soviet Union: From the Second World War to Gorbachev* (London: Hurst & Co., 2000), 250.

¹⁹ On Hindustani, see Muminov, “Traditional and Modern Religious-Theological Schools,” 108-9; Haghayeghi, *Islam and Politics*, 93; Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000), 154; Vitaly V. Naumkin, *Militant Islam in Central Asia: The Case of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan* (Berkeley: University of California, Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies, Working Paper, 2003), 19; Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 44-51. See also Babadzhonov, Muminov, and Olcott, “Mukhammadzhan Khindustani,” 43-59; Bakhtiar Babadzhonov [Babajanov], “Islam in Uzbekistan: From the Struggle for ‘Religious Purity’ to Political Activism,” Boris Rumer (ed), *Central Asia: A Gathering Storm?* (London: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), 299-330, on 306-8.

²⁰ Babadzhonov, “Islam in Uzbekistan,” 308.

²¹ Ro’i, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, 358-9.

Namangan); Abdul Latif Andijoni; and Muhammad Sodiq Qori Mama Yusupov (born in Andijon in 1953; mufti 1989-1993).²² The disciples can be broadly divided into two schools, known respectively as Ahl al-Hadith and Ahl al-Qur'an.²³ Both can be regarded as Wahhabi schools. The Ahl al-Hadith included Abdulhakim Qori; Rahmatullo Qori Alloma; Abduwali Qori Mirzoyev; and Obidkhon Qori Nazarov, all of whom became devoted Wahhabis. Abduwali Qori Mirzoyev, as will be shown, also became the teacher of one of the first Uzbek leaders of the Hizb ut-Tahrir. The Ahl al-Qur'an, a loose group of religious clergy also referred to as *Uzun soqollilar* ("long-bearded ones") who until the early 1990s attacked Sufism, instead calling on believers to rely on the Koran, included Tolqin Qori (a Wahhabi who himself was a disciple of the already mentioned Obidkhon Qori Nazarov); and the various members of the subsequently banned group known as the Akramiyyah, founded in Andijon in about 1996 by Akrom Yuldoshev (born 1963), a renegade member of the Hizb ut-Tahrir who developed his own version of this party's model of how to recreate the Caliphate.²⁴

However, the disciple of Rustamov (and probably also of Abdulhakim Qori; see below) who was to become internationally most renowned was Abdullah Saidov (1947-2006), currently better known as Said Abdullo Nuri, who eventually became a founding member of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT). Another founding member of the IRPT, Abdussamad Himmatov (born 1951), currently better known as Muhammad Sharif Himmatzoda, was another of Rustamov's disciples. Himmatov reportedly went on to fight with the Afghan mujahidin, after which he became the leader of the military wing of the newly founded IRPT.²⁵

While Muhammad Rustamov clearly had numerous disciples and followers, from him the path of extremist thought continued chiefly through two men: Abdulhakim Qori of Margilan and Rahmatullo Qori Alloma of Andijon.

Abdulhakim Qori

Abdulhakim Qori (also known as Mullah Hakimjon Qori Marghiloni²⁶), who lived in Margilan, is regarded as yet another of Rustamov's disciples. However, the two men were of almost the same age, and some indeed suggest that Rustamov instead was Abdulhakim Qori's disciple. Furthermore, Abdulhakim Qori became a Wahhabi as early as in 1954 and is indeed at times referred to as the father of Central Asian Wahhabism. Some of the men who studied under Rustamov also studied under Abdulhakim Qori. Among them were Rahmatullo Qori Alloma and Abduwali Qori Mirzoyev, both from Andijon, who studied for Abdulhakim Qori in 1978. Both broke with their teacher in 1979 and returned to Andijon, which suggests that they by then had come under the influence of Wahhabi thought brought to Central Asia directly from the Middle East and not only through the medium of the Deobandis. In the 1970s, the two men had been among those who established contacts with Arab missionaries from several Middle Eastern countries. The latter regularly visited the Soviet Union as part of the religious, scientific, and technical exchange programmes through which the Soviet Union attempted to assist its allies in the Middle East. Others were undergraduate students who attended university in the Soviet Union. It is hardly surprising that they soon established close links with young Soviet Muslims such as Alloma and Mirzoyev. The Soviet Muslims and Arab missionaries soon formed clandestine missionary networks,

²² Muminov, "Traditional and Modern Religious-Theological Schools," 109.

²³ On the various members of these schools as well as the following discussion on their beliefs, see Muminov, "Traditional and Modern Religious-Theological Schools," 109. Both schools ultimately derived from nineteenth-century Islamic extremist movements formed in India following influences from the Arabian peninsula.

²⁴ On the Akramiyyah, see Babadzhanov, "Fergana Valley," 119-21. On the *Uzun soqollilar*, see Babadzhanov, Muminov, and Olcott, "Mukhammadzhan Khindustani," 54-5; Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 121 n.48. There is some disagreement on which school especially Rahmatullo Qori Alloma and Abduwali Qori Mirzoyev can be said to have belonged to - which only supports the suggestion that both can be regarded as Wahhabi schools. The latter's preachings leave little doubt of his beliefs. He rejected all suggestions that "inhibit Muslims in their righteous actions to purify Islam of innovations and filth imposed by unbelievers" and declared that "from the former communists who have preserved their power one should not expect assistance in the rebirth of Islam" and that "the enemies of Islam - the Jews and atheists - will always obstruct Muslims in their efforts to determine their own fate and to occupy state posts." Mirzoyev's disciples included Muhammad Radjab Qoqandi. Babadzhanov, "Islam in Uzbekistan," 314, 326 n.36.

²⁵ Rashid, *Jihad*, 97, 98.

²⁶ Different sources offer different information on his year of birth. Some mean that he was born in 1896 or 1897 and died in 1991 or 1993, while others claim that he was still alive in early 2004, then being in his late nineties.

religious schools, and mosques in towns such as Andijon, Farghona, Namangan, Khokand, and Margilan. There were several small Wahhabi groups in the Fergana valley by the early 1980s, in places such as Namangan, Osh, and the vicinity of Tashkent.²⁷

Abdulahkim Qori did not limit his activities to Margilan. Until the 1980s, he also worked to open Islamic schools in Tajikistan (in particular in the Proletarskiy and Nauskiy districts and the town of Tursunzadeh).²⁸

Despite the rift between them, the chief path of extremist thought continued from Abdulahkim Qori to Rahmatullo Qori Alloma, whom Abdulahkim Qori no doubt influenced substantially before the new links to the Middle East overtook events. However, yet another disciple of Abdulahkim Qori was reportedly Juma Namangani, who later became a founder of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).²⁹

Rahmatullo Qori Alloma

Rahmatullo Qori Alloma (c. 1950-1981) from Andijon studied under first Rustamov, then in 1978 under Abdulahkim Qori. As noted, Alloma broke with Abdulahkim Qori in 1979 and returned to Andijon. Two years later, in 1981, he died in a car accident (some religious leaders believed that Abdulahkim Qori had him murdered³⁰). However, Alloma did leave a legacy of extremism behind him. First, Alloma's disciple Obidkhon Qori Nazarov also became a noted Wahhabi. Second, from Alloma, the path of extremist thought continued to another of his disciples: Abdulahad in Namangan, who, preaching in the Ata Wali Khan Tura mosque in his native Namangan, was one of the men behind the early Adolat movement.³¹ This, as will be shown, was the movement in which the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) originated, and Abdulahad would become a prominent supporter of this group.

Other disciples of Alloma include the already mentioned Ishoq Qori, Ismail Domla, Ibrohimjon Qoqandi (in Khokand), Hikmatullah Qori (in Dushanbe), Muhammad Ali Marginani (in Yazyawan), Abdullajon Makhsum Domla (in Margilan), Abdul Latif Andijoni, and Muhammad Sodiq Qori Mama Yusupov.³² In time, such men gave their movement the name *Mujaddidiyyah* (from the Arabic word *mujaddid*, signifying a "renewer" who will renew - that is, restore - the authentic Islamic faith and turn the Muslim community back on the road of permitted behaviour). They referred to their opponents by the pejorative term *mushriklar* (polytheists).³³

The Genealogy of Extremism

As noted, a direct genealogical link of thought can be traced from the early Deobandi, Rustamov, first to one of the early leaders of the Hizb ut-Tahrir in Uzbekistan, then also to one of the splinter factions that in Central Asia grew out of the Hizb ut-Tahrir. Yet another genealogical link can be followed from Rustamov and probably Abdulahkim Qori to the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT). One or perhaps two further links can be traced from Abdulahkim Qori to the IMU (Fig. 1). However, at least the latter two or three strands of Islamic extremist thought, and probably all of them, were further radicalised along the way through direct connections with the Middle East.

Although Rustamov had studied at Deoband, he had done so before the school appeared to have reached its most radical Wahhabi phase. This soon became evident. The numerous splits with regard to doctrine among these men show that Central Asian Deobandism and Wahhabism grew increasingly radical as time passed. It became increasingly difficult to distinguish between Hanafism, which at least originally was the publicly claimed doctrine of most of these clerics, and Wahhabism. Each disciple gives the impression of having regarded his teacher as being too soft on doctrine, and in the case of the link Rustamov - Abdulahkim Qori - Alloma, each disciple came to break with his teacher, publicly renouncing the teacher's views as being insufficiently radical.

²⁷ Muminov, "Traditional and Modern Religious-Theological Schools," 109; Martha Brill Olcott, "Islam and Fundamentalism in Independent Central Asia," Yaacov Ro'i (ed). *Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies* (London: Frank Cass, 1995), 21-39, on 33, 35-7; Davlat Nazirov, "Political Islam in Central Asia: Its Sources and Development Stages," *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 4 (22), 2003, 154-62, on 158; Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 51-2.

²⁸ Nazirov, "Political Islam," 158.

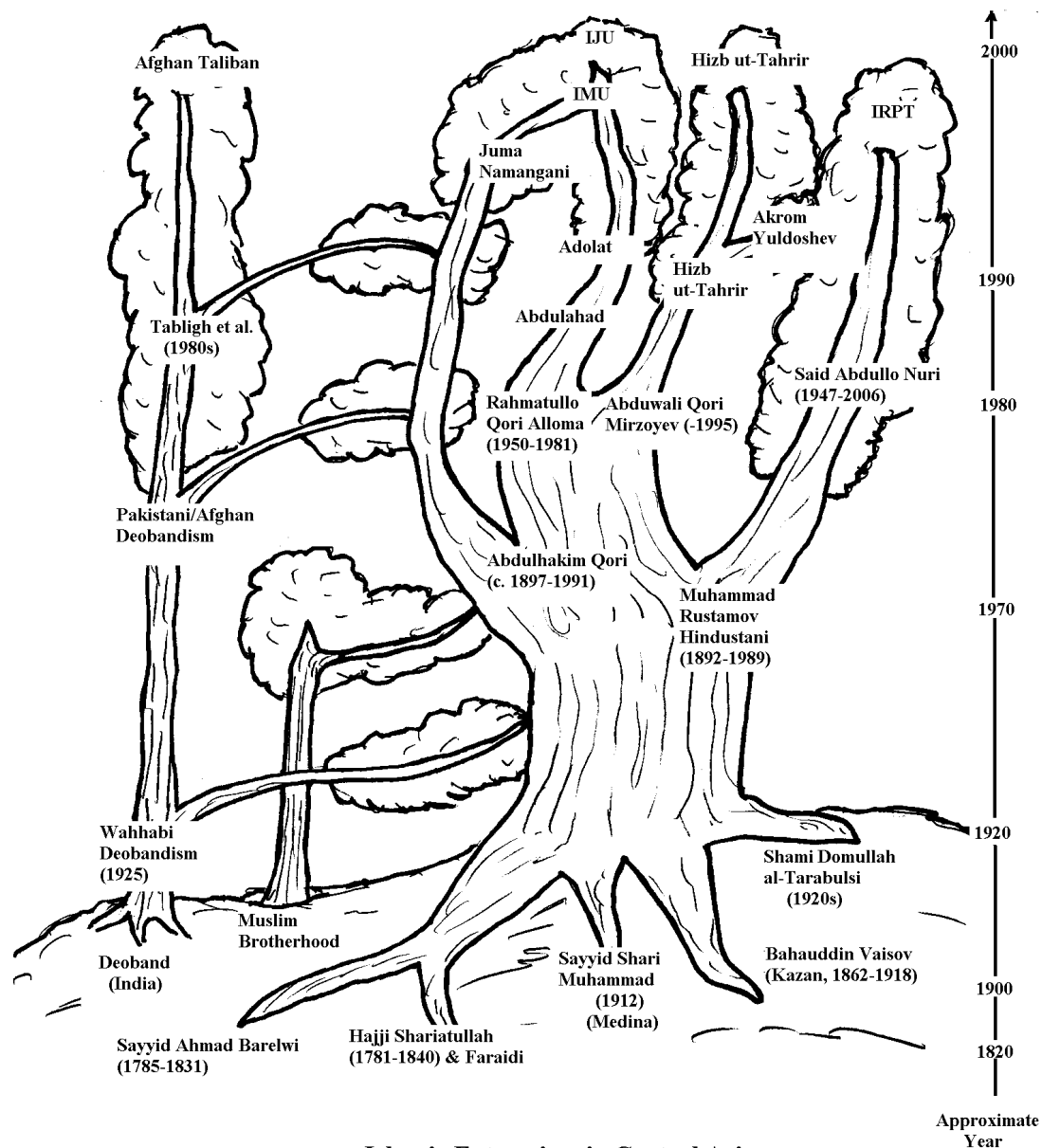
²⁹ Nazirov, "Political Islam," 158.

³⁰ Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 52.

³¹ Muminov, "Traditional and Modern Religious-Theological Schools," 109-10; Olcott, "Islam and Fundamentalism," 29, 35-7; Naumkin, *Militant Islam*, 20-21; Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 58-9.

³² Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 52-3.

³³ Babadzhonov, "Islam in Uzbekistan," 309, 326 n.37.



**Islamic Extremism in Central Asia
Main Lines of Development**

Yet, even those Muslim clerics who insisted that they never taught politics, such as Rustamov, typically concentrated their teachings on the works of Egyptian and Pakistani Islamic extremist thinkers such as Hassan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, and Sayyid Abul Ala al-Maududi. The Islamic schools also, in emulation of the extremists in the Middle East, soon widened their curricula to include physical training and the martial arts. Again following the example of their Middle Eastern role models, the extremist networks in the 1980s began to infiltrate the state power structures, including law enforcement. They also began to receive funds from a few local supporters, and, at first apparently with the help of Middle Eastern Muslim students in the Soviet Union, began to acquire the means for printing clandestine publications.³⁴

The underground clerics were not the only ones influenced by Wahhabi thought. Even the official clergy frequently displayed signs of Wahhabi influence, often issuing fatwas aimed at traditional beliefs. An example was the official mufti in the period 1957-1982, Ziyauddin Khan Ishan Babakhanov (1908-1982), who had been trained in Saudi Arabia in 1947-1948 and in the words of some was “the first official Wahhabite” in Central Asia.³⁵ Babakhanov was not the only official cleric who advocated Wahhabi beliefs. Another case was a newly-appointed *imam-khatib* (cleric who conducts the Friday

³⁴ Nazirov, “Political Islam,” 158.

³⁵ Babadzhonov, “Islam in Uzbekistan,” 306.

sermon and prayer) in Leningrad at the very end of the 1960s or the early 1970s, a recent graduate of the Mir-e Arab seminary, who forbid women to participate in funerals and proclaimed that it was a sin to go to the theatre.³⁶ And even before Babakhanov became mufti, in 1956, there was a suggestion that religious textbooks, by this time presumably of an extremist nature, should be imported from Egypt for use in the Mir-e Arab.³⁷ There have been claims that the early Bolsheviks and Soviet leaders (in some cases at least, as late as in the late 1980s) supported Wahhabi thought because the proponents of Wahhabism backed the Soviet attempts to destroy traditional Central Asian Sufi Islam and its holy places as a means to prevent Sufism from becoming a rallying point against Soviet rule. As such, Sufism would have been dangerous due to its popular appeal, mass following, and potential of mobilisation.³⁸

In this light, it is interesting that there have also been claims that Abdulkhikim Qori, Abduwali Qori Mirzoyev (imam of the great mosque in Andijon), and Rahmatullo Qori Alloma, among others, received the support of the KGB or other special services, since the security organs saw them as natural allies in the struggle against popular Islam and traditional Muslim culture.³⁹ Others, however, claim that Abduwali Qori Mirzoyev (who disappeared together with his assistant on 29 August 1995 in connection with a flight from Tashkent to Moscow; soon thereafter another of his assistants and in September the same year, his former bodyguard Negmat Parpiyev disappeared as well), Rahmatullo Qori Alloma, Obidkhon Qori Nazarov (who disappeared - having either been arrested or escaped arrest and gone into hiding - with his son on 5 March 1998, being then imam of the Takhtaboi mosque in Tashkent) and several of their family members and aides were murdered by the security services.⁴⁰ The truth in these allegations has been impossible to verify, and even if the special services supported the extremists at first, it remains quite possible that they fought them later. In fact, declassified Soviet documentation has shown that at least in the course of the 1970s, the government took measures to terminate the activities of in any case some proponents of Wahhabism, the group called the Ahl al-Qur'an. A house search was conducted, illegal religious materials were confiscated, and the members of the group were cautioned that if they continued their activities, they would be prosecuted (which was a common way to address the problems of unregistered religious activities).⁴¹

The Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan

Origins of the Party

The Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) grew out of the All-Union Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), a party created to serve as a vehicle for all Muslims of the Soviet Union. To examine the IRPT, it is accordingly prudent first to examine the origins of the IRP.

The Constituent Congress of the Islamic Renaissance Party of the Muslims of the Soviet Union (*Partiya Islamskogo vrozhdeniya* in Russian) met in Astrakhan on 9 June 1990. Most of the chief founding members were Avars from Dagestan. Among them was Ahmed Qazi Akhtayev (died in March 1998), who had previously studied and taught Islam clandestinely. Akhtayev became the leader (amir) of the new party. Two other influential Avars came from Qizil-Yurt in Dagestan, Abbas Kebedov and his brother Muhammad Bahauddin Kebedov (also known as Bagaiddin Magomedov; in 1999 he was, together with Shamil Basayev, M. Tagayev, and Khattab, one of the leaders of the failed extremist invasion of Dagestan). Abbas Kebedov headed the organisation committee (*orgkomitet*), while Muhammad Bahauddin presided over the assembly. The Kebedov brothers had also previously studied and taught Islam clandestinely. Yet another Avar, Ayub Omarov from the village of Kvanada in the Tsumada district of Dagestan (also known as Astrakhanskiy Ayub ("Ayub from Astrakhan"); original name Anguta Magomedovich Omarov; he studied under Muhammad Bahauddin), was another member of the leading group. Apparently, the only non-Avar who gained a leading position was Valiahmed Sadur, a Tatar academician from Moscow. Sadur became press secretary.⁴²

³⁶ Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, 282.

³⁷ Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, 587 n.140.

³⁸ Naumkin, *Militant Islam*, 17; Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 39-43, 52.

³⁹ Babadzhanov, "Fergana Valley," 115-16.

⁴⁰ See, e.g., the Islamic web site, www.muslimuzbekistan.com; Naumkin, *Militant Islam*, 25; Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 71, 78.

⁴¹ Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, 425.

⁴² Alexei Malashenko, "Does Islamic Fundamentalism Exist in Russia?" Ro'i, *Muslim Eurasia*, 41-51, on 43-5; Aleksei Kudriavtsev, "Wahhabism: Religious Extremism in the Northern Caucasus," *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 3 (2003), 131-6, on 131-2. On the Kebedov brothers, see Enver Kisriev, "Islam's Political Role in Daghestan," *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 5 (2000), 65-70, on 68; Amirkhan Magomeddadaev, "The Muslim East and Radicalization of Islam in the Northern Caucasus," *Central Asia*

On 9 July 1990, the 183 (according to some only about 140) participants, apparently chiefly from Dagestan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, agreed to form a party, declaring its main objective to be the consolidation of all Soviet Muslims under the aegis of a unified co-ordination body to counterbalance the existing official Muslim spiritual directorates. The assembly also formed a fifteen-strong council of ulama, elected at the suggestion of Kebedov's organisation committee. The congress also decided to set up independent branches of the party within each Soviet republic. The IRP registered as a political party in Moscow. Local IRP structures were also formed in Makhachkala, Dagestan; in the North Caucasian republic of Karachayev-Cherkessiya; some Muslim-populated oblasts of the Volga region and the Urals; and in Moscow.⁴³

Several founding members were influenced by Wahhabism. A Chechen, Adam Deniev, was elected head of the party's North Caucasian branch. He was subsequently removed from this post and has since been regarded as one of the leaders of the Chechen Wahhabis; in 1995, he reportedly proclaimed himself Caliph.⁴⁴ Muhammad Bahauddin also eventually went to Chechnya, where he as noted continued to promote Wahhabism.⁴⁵

In April 1992, the IRP split into two wings, as the radicals under Heidar Jemal from the Independent Centre of Information 'Tawhid' and Sergei Dunayev, the 'co-ordinator of spiritual contacts,' broke away from the moderates under Sadur. When the moderate wing held a regional conference (for European Russia and Siberia) on 12 April 1992 in Saratov, the radicals ignored it, even though delegations from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Belarus attended as well.⁴⁶ This split between moderates and radicals, in conjunction with the preceding dissolution of the Soviet Union which in one stroke eliminated the justification to maintain an all-union organisation, to all effects ended the IRP.

The IRPT

Several of the local branches of the IRP survived the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The most important turned out to be the one in Tajikistan. Yet, the history of the IRPT can be said to have begun years before the foundation of the party.

As noted, one disciple of Rustamov and probably also of Abdulhakim Qori was Abdullah Nuriddinovich Saidov, currently better known as Said Abdullo Nuri. He was born in 1947 in the town of Tavildara. In 1953, Nuri's family was among those relocated to the Vakhsh valley in the south for work in the cotton fields.⁴⁷ It appears that Nuri was one of several young Muslims from Tajikistan who went to Andijon to study for Abdulhakim Qori in the late 1960s or early 1970s. At some point between 1973 and 1978 (according to Nuri's friends as early as in 1974; others suggest 1976-1977 as being more likely), they returned to Tajikistan to establish a clandestine Islamic study group known as *Nahzar-e Islami* (Islamic Knowledge), by some referred to as the Muslim Youth Organisation, in Qurghonteppa (Kurgan-Tyube). Nuri, who then lived on the "Turkmenistan" state farm in Vakhsh district, became the head of the group. Meanwhile, he studied to become a surveying engineer.⁴⁸

From 1979 onwards, the Tajik Muslims found themselves witnesses to two important events. First, Ayatollah Khomeini's 1979 Islamic revolution took place in Iran. Since Tajiks speak a language closely related to Iranian Persian, they could understand Iranian radio broadcasts, when such could be heard in Tajikistan. As elsewhere in the Muslim world, the Tajik extremists could not help but being inspired by

and the Caucasus 1 (31), 2005, 42-50. On Anguta Omarov, see Amirkhan Magomeddadaev, "Politicization of Islam in Daghestan: The Factors Behind It (1987-2002)," *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 3 (21), 2003, 43-7, on 46, and in particular Arbakhan Magomedov and Viktor Viktorin, "Islam in the Caspian and the Caucasian Foothills Borderland: Social and Religious Revival on the Fringes of the Muslim World," *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 5 (35), 2005, 121-34.

⁴³ Malashenko, "Does Islamic Fundamentalism Exist?" 43-5; Stéphane A. Dudoignon, "Political Parties and Forces in Tajikistan, 1989-1993," Mohammed-Reza Djalili; Frédéric Grare; and Shirin Akiner (eds), *Tajikistan: The Trials of Independence* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1998), 52-85, on 63-4; Mavlon Makhamov, "Islam and the Political Development of Tajikistan After 1985," Hafeez Malik (ed), *Central Asia: Its Strategic Importance and Future Prospects* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 195-209, on 201; Rashid, *Jihad*, 98.

⁴⁴ Kudriavtsev, "Wahhabism," 132.

⁴⁵ Igor Dobaev, "Islamic Radicalism in the Northern Caucasus," *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 6 (2000), 76-86, on 78.

⁴⁶ Malashenko, "Does Islamic Fundamentalism Exist?" 43-5.

⁴⁷ Rashid, *Jihad*, 97.

⁴⁸ Nazirov, "Political Islam," 158; Rashid, *Jihad*, 97.

the Shia Islamic revolution, even though they were Sunni, not Shia.⁴⁹ Second, the 1979-1989 Soviet war in Afghanistan could not easily be ignored in the geographically and culturally adjacent Tajikistan. On a number of occasions from about December 1986 to April 1987, combat teams from the Afghan Hizb-e Islami group (funded by the American and Pakistani intelligence services, the CIA and ISI) crossed the Amu Darya. In April 1987, they even attacked a Soviet frontier guard post near Pyandzh, Tajikistan.⁵⁰ At around this time, the mythos of the IRPT held that Nuri led the first Soviet public protests in support of the Afghan mujahidin. This took place in Pyandzh in March 1987, only a few weeks after Afghans from the Hezb-e Islami had fired rockets on the city from the Afghan side of the border. Soviet security forces did not take kindly to the protest, which ended in riots. Nuri and some forty others were arrested.⁵¹ Other reports, however, indicate that Nuri was arrested already in August 1986, then sentenced to six years in prison in 1987.⁵² The latter version seems most credible, since it is known that the Tajikistani security organs in 1986 struck back against the extremists, dozens of whom were arrested and sentenced to imprisonment.⁵³ In either case, Nuri was released in 1988.⁵⁴

Hitherto the Soviet Islamic extremists had been forced to maintain a clandestine network, since the KGB and other state structures actively sought to suppress them. However, the perestroika period introduced by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in spring 1986 provided them further freedoms. Suddenly it became permitted to preach openly, new mosques could be established, and public meetings were allowed. The extremists often managed to legalise their organisations, although many of their activities, such as polygamy, acquisition of firearms, and evasion of military service, remained illegal.⁵⁵

In the early 1990s, those arrested in 1986 were released.⁵⁶ This led to an upsurge in Islamic activities. In February 1990, violent housing riots took place in Dushanbe. Although caused by fears that Armenian refugees would be allocated homes in the Tajikistani capital, the protests soon turned into populist demands for more mosques to be opened, the selling of pork and alcohol to be banned, Russian street names to be replaced with Tajik ones, better housing, and so on. Meanwhile, the Tajikistani members of the incipient movement began to organise themselves.⁵⁷

Following the constituent congress of the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) in Astrakhan in 1990, the members of the Tajikistani delegation began to organise the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT). A programme and charter of the party was produced and distributed, stating that the IRPT was a sociopolitical organisation guided by the ideals and cultural values of Islam. It aimed to consolidate all believers devoted to the revival of Islamic principles, thus working to make true Islam the creed of the people. The party also wished to reshape the economic structure of the republic according to Islamic law. In other words, the IRPT as founded was a typical Salafi organisation, aiming to recreate the early period of Islam. What was less clear, however, was the time-scale the organisation had in mind. While an Islamic state was the ultimate goal, the IRPT leadership appears to have realised that Islamic rule was unpopular in Tajikistan, and that several decades of public agitation and propaganda would be required before the party reached its goal. A publication, *Hidayat*, was also launched, and a 17-member organisation committee was established.⁵⁸

In August 1990, the organisation committee applied to hold a Constituent Conference in the capital Dushanbe. This request was denied, however. This did not prevent the constituent conference from taking place on 6 October 1990 in the mosque of the village of Chortut, Leninsky district, in a suburb of Dushanbe. About three hundred delegates and guests attended. The conference elected a 27-man council

⁴⁹ Nazirov, "Political Islam," 159.

⁵⁰ *Washington Times*, 23 April 1987; Mohammad Yousaf and Mark Adkin, *Afghanistan: The Bear Trap-The Defeat of a Superpower* (Havertown, Pennsylvania: Casemate, 1992, 2001), 189-206.

⁵¹ Rashid, *Jihad*, 43-4, 97-8.

⁵² Haghayeghi, *Islam and Politics*, 56.

⁵³ Nazirov, "Political Islam," 159.

⁵⁴ Rashid, *Jihad*, 43-4, 97-8.

⁵⁵ Nazirov, "Political Islam," 159.

⁵⁶ Nazirov, "Political Islam," 160; *Narodnaya gazeta* (Dushanbe), 12 December 1991.

⁵⁷ Rashid, *Jihad*, 99; Bess A. Brown, "The Civil War in Tajikistan, 1992-1993," Djalili; Grare; and Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 86-96, on 86-7.

⁵⁸ Makhamov, "Islam and the Political Development," 201-2. See also Haghayeghi, *Islam and Politics*, 87-92; Muriel Atkin, "The Politics of Polarization in Tajikistan," Malik, *Central Asia*, 211-31, on 215. The details of the programme of the IRPT was published in the Russian-language newspaper *Komsomolets Tadzhikistana* (Dushanbe), 21 November 1990. See also Saodat Olimova, "Political Islam and Conflict in Tajikistan," Lena Jonson and Murad Esenov (eds), *Political Islam and Conflicts in Russia and Central Asia* (Stockholm: Swedish Institute of International Affairs, 1999), 124-34, on 130-31.

of ulama; Abdussamad Himmatov (born 1951; now better known as Muhammad Sharif Himmatzoda) was elected chairman (amir); and Davlat Usmonov (now Davlat Usmon) and Saidibrahim Gadoyev were elected his deputies. All three had taken part in the Astrakhan IRP congress.⁵⁹ Himmatzoda, reportedly a graduate of the Polytechnical Institute of Dushanbe, was then working at a pumping station in Ordzhonikidzebad. He had trained as a mechanic, and was a student of Hindustani. Having reportedly fought with the Afghan mujahidin, he became the leader of the military wing of the IRPT. He also had links with the Hezb-e Islami of Afghanistan (of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar) and the Jamaat-e Islami of Pakistan.⁶⁰ Yet another founding member was the aforementioned Abdullo Nuri.⁶¹

The Ministry of Justice at first refused to register the new party. Yet, on 11 December 1991, three days after the formal dissolution of the Soviet Union on 8 December, the Ministry of Justice of independent Tajikistan approved the registration of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT; *Hezb-e Nehzate Islomi-ye Tojikiston* in Tajik, from the Arabic word *nahzat*, meaning “renaissance” or “rebirth”).⁶² The registration was made possible by a decision by the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Tajikistan on 22 October 1991.⁶³

Because of the registration problems, the first congress of the IRPT was held in Moscow on 26 October 1991. No less than 657 delegates and 310 guests attended. Himmatov announced that the IRPT had decided to leave the All-Union IRP (the disintegration process of the Soviet Union had already begun) but would continue its activities. The party then claimed twenty thousand members, or at least more than ten thousand active members. The congress also approved the emblem and banner of the party, as well as a party newspaper called *Najot*. While aiming for the Islamicisation of Tajikistan, the IRPT characterised itself as a “parliamentary type of a party.”⁶⁴

The IRPT soon grew to be a major opposition party. Following the election of Rahmon Nabiyev as president in September 1991, the IRPT became instrumental in organising mass protests at the election result. There was substantial popular resistance to Nabiyev, and not all of the tens of thousands of people who protested were supporters of the IRPT; yet, the party did achieve close contacts with the protesters and gained considerable public support. Most of the party’s faithful seem to have been drawn from the rural areas. According to some reports, the Islamic extremists comprised from 7 to 10 per cent of the Tajikistani Muslims.⁶⁵

The IRPT also acquired the support of representatives of official, Soviet Islam, and in particular that of Qazi Akbar Turajonzoda (original name Akbar Kakhharov), the grand mufti of Tajikistan. Turajonzoda was born in 1954 near Dushanbe. He studied at the official Mir-e Arab Madrasah in Bukhara, then went to Jordan for further religious studies in the 1970s (at the law faculty of Jordan State University). Following his return, he worked in the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakstan (*Sredneaziatskoye dukhovnoye upravleniye musul'man, SADUM*) in Tashkent. In 1988, he was appointed the first grand mufti of Tajikistan. He was elected to the Supreme Soviet in Moscow in 1990, and also had a television show in Dushanbe. From 1990 onwards, he promoted the rapid building of new mosques in Dushanbe. He also maintained clandestine links with the IRPT.⁶⁶

Due to a controversial presidential election on 24 November 1991, which Nabiyev won, protests and riots again shook Dushanbe in March 1992. Widespread anarchy broke out, and civil war could no longer be prevented. Various IRPT leaders withdrew to military bases in the Karategin and Tavildara valleys.⁶⁷

This is not the place to discuss the events of the 1992-1997 civil war, except when they led to important developments within the IRPT.⁶⁸ When the civil war broke out, Turajonzoda defected to the opposition. He fled the country in December 1992 for first Saudi Arabia, then apparently Afghanistan. Eventually he

⁵⁹ Makhmav, “Islam and the Political Development,” 201-2. See also Olimova, “Political Islam,” 129-31.

⁶⁰ Makhmav, “Islam and the Political Development,” 208-9 n.14; Rashid, *Jihad*, 98.

⁶¹ Rashid, *Jihad*, 43-4, 97-8.

⁶² Nazirov, “Political Islam,” 160; *Narodnaya gazeta* (Dushanbe), 12 December 1991. Others claim that the official registration took place already on 4 December 1991. Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, xvii.

⁶³ Olimova, “Political Islam,” 130.

⁶⁴ Rashid, *Jihad*, 100; Makhmav, “Islam and the Political Development,” 202; Olimova, “Political Islam,” 130-31.

⁶⁵ Rashid, *Jihad*, 99-100, 111; Nazirov, “Political Islam,” 160.

⁶⁶ Rashid, *Jihad*, 100-101; Olcott, “Islam and Fundamentalism,” 30-31.

⁶⁷ Rashid, *Jihad*, 100; Olimova, “Political Islam,” 131.

⁶⁸ On the Tajik civil war, see, e.g., Lena Jonson, *The Tajik War: A Challenge to Russian Policy* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1998); Djalili; Grare; and Akiner, *Tajikistan*; Haghayeghi, *Islam and Politics*, 142-51; Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 201-56.

took up a life in exile in Iran. He also travelled extensively abroad, seeking support for the IRPT. Yet, Turajonzoda and the IRPT leaders did not fully trust each other.⁶⁹

Although radical Islam was only one factor among those that caused the Tajik civil war, the IRPT from the very outset found itself deeply involved in the fighting. While IRPT leaders fled to Iran, Pakistan, Russia, and Afghanistan to seek financial support there as well as in Saudi Arabia, their followers fought the government forces from their bases in the Karategin and Tavildara valleys, Qurghonteppa (Kurgan-Tyube), and Kunduz and Taloqan in Afghanistan, where the Tajik opposition enjoyed the support of the Afghan Tajik leaders Burhanuddin Rabbani and Ahmad Shah Masud.⁷⁰ When the IRPT was banned in June 1993, following the outbreak of civil war, an Islamic Renaissance Movement of Tajikistan was formally created in 1993 in Afghanistan, with Said Abdullo Nuri as chairman, Turajonzoda as first deputy, and Himmatzoda as deputy chairman.⁷¹

The IRPT was not the only opposition party, and alliances were soon forged between the IRPT and parties such as the Rastokhez (“renaissance” or “rebirth” in Persian) Popular Front, the Democratic Party of Tajikistan, and the Lali Badakhshan (La’l-e Badakhshon). The latter represented the Muslim Ismailis of the Pamir and came to control most of Gorno-Badakhshan. In 1995, these parties including the IRPT formed an umbrella organisation known as the United Tajik Opposition (UTO). Headquarters were established in Moscow and Taloqan. In 1996, a few UTO leaders, such as Davlat Usmon, established personal contacts with the Taliban, even as most UTO groups remained dependent on Masud.⁷²

The IRPT Becomes a Parliamentary Party

Due to support from Uzbekistan and, most importantly, Russia, the government forces emerged largely victorious. Although they could not prevent UTO raids in the summer, they regained control over the major inhabited areas, although not much else. The stalemate eventually led to peace negotiations. A General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan that included a general amnesty, the legitimisation of the opposition parties, and the provision of a coalition government was finally signed in Moscow on 27 June 1997. In September 1999, the IRPT was re-registered, renounced violence and jihad, and adopted a party programme and charter that emphasised its role as a parliamentary party. In February 2000, six parties including the IRPT took part in parliamentary elections. The incumbent president Rahmonov’s People’s Democratic Party of Tajikistan won 64.5 per cent of the total vote. The Communists came second, and the IRPT third, gaining only 7 to 8 per cent of the vote. Most IRPT supporters were reportedly those with low incomes or those unemployed, the self-employed, and those who referred to themselves as Karategins. Although criticised (the IRPT estimated that it actually would have gained 15 to 25 per cent of the vote, had election irregularities not occurred⁷³), the election result was accepted by the various parties including the IRPT.⁷⁴ The UTO transformed itself into part of the coalition government of Tajikistan. The other part of the coalition, under President Emomali Rahmonov, remained the representative of the old Soviet *nomenklatura*.⁷⁵ Yet, Rahmonov has since 2000 enhanced his position, consolidated presidential power, and succeeded in increasing his control over important areas of the country by carefully selected patronage.⁷⁶

As noted, relations between the IRPT leaders and Turajonzoda were never quite as cordial as they wanted them to appear. Not long after the end of the civil war, Turajonzoda was expelled from the IRPT

⁶⁹ Rashid, *Jihad*, 100-101; Olcott, “Islam and Fundamentalism,” 30-31.

⁷⁰ Rashid, *Jihad*, 102-3.

⁷¹ Olimova, “Political Islam,” 131.

⁷² Bakhrom Tursunov and Marina Pikulina, *Severe Lessons of Batken* (Camberley, Surrey: Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, Conflict Studies Research Centre, 1999); Ahmed Rashid, “Namangani’s Foray Causes Concern Among Central Asian Governments,” *Eurasia Insight*, 5 February 2001 (www.eurasianet.org); Alexander Kniazev, “Afghanistan: Religious Extremism and Terrorism, the Year 2000,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 5, 2000, 76-83, on 82; for more information on Davlat Usmon, see International Crisis Group (ICG), *Tajikistan: An Uncertain Peace* (Osh/Brussels: ICG Asia Report 30, 24 December 2001), 6.

⁷³ Muhiddin Kabiri, “The Tajik Experience with a Multiparty System: Exception or Norm?” Birgit Schlyter (ed), *Prospects for Democracy in Central Asia* (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute, 2005), 21-. Kabiri, the moderate deputy chairman of the IRPT, reckons that the party could win up to 15 per cent of the vote in a free and fair election.

⁷⁴ See, e.g., Nazirov, “Political Islam,” 161; Rashid, *Jihad*, 104-5; Olimova, “Political Islam,” 131-2.

⁷⁵ Jonson, *Tajik War*, 1; Anette Bohr, *Uzbekistan: Politics and Foreign Policy* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1998), 51-4.

⁷⁶ ICG, *Tajikistan*, 4-5.

because of his support for President Rahmonov. Perhaps in recognition of this allegiance, Turajonzoda was appointed vice prime minister in March 1998. In February 2000, one group within the IRPT attempted to assassinate him, but failed. Such groups also regarded Nuri as too conciliatory. These tensions caused several splits within the IRPT.⁷⁷ One prominent group which left the IRPT was the Taqfir (“denunciation of unbelievers”) Party, founded after the civil war ended in Garm by Islamic extremists around Mullo Amirkhon.⁷⁸ In addition, not all IRPT members accepted the peace process. Some joined the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), while others simply turned into bandits. One group of about hundred IRPT renegades, led by Rahmon Sanginov, was still fighting in the summer of 2001, until the Tajikistani army put an end to him and some forty-five of his men in August 2001.⁷⁹

Nuri was re-elected to a four-year-term as chairman of the IRPT on 13 September 2003.⁸⁰ As for Himmatzoda, he joined the government as a member of parliament. A new generation of IRPT leaders, including Mohiddin Kabiri, an aide to Nuri who in time became deputy chairman of the IRPT, also joined the moderates.⁸¹ Yet, the IRPT, which currently claims forty thousand members, seems to remain divided into moderates and radicals. In May 2003, security forces detained the IRPT deputy chairman Shamsiddin Shamsiddinov, who was charged with creating an armed paramilitary formation and for involvement in various criminal activities, including murder.⁸²

Although the IRPT lost, or at least never regained, much political support, its main faction under Nuri assumed the role of parliamentary opposition within the government. It no longer claimed to hold extremist, or even particularly radical, beliefs. The IRPT even supported the banning of the Hizb ut-Tahrir, a yet more radical extremist group. There were several reasons for this. IRPT moderates no doubt opposed the further fragmentation of Tajikistani society since this risked a return to the violence of the civil war, while IRPT radicals may have seen the Hizb ut-Tahrir as a rival for their own Islamic support base. However, the Tajikistani population by then had lost much of its appetite for Islamicisation. Sufferings during the war had checked the initial enthusiasm for the Saudi- and Pakistani-funded re-establishment of Islamic schools. In addition, external funding for madrasahs had been banned in 1993. Tajikistani society in most respects returned to secularism, or at least to the kind of Muslim culture that had existed in the Soviet period. Tajikistan had learnt that to show respect for Islam and Muslim traditions was one thing, while to insist on Islamic law was something altogether different.⁸³

The other branches of the former All-Union IRP fared far worse than the IRPT in Tajikistan. In Kazakhstan, the IRP became dominated by non-Kazaks, and so found little popular support. In Kyrgyzstan, the IRP only managed to find a base among ethnic Uzbeks in the south, thus failing for the same reason. The IRP never succeeded in gaining a foothold in Turkmenistan. In Uzbekistan, the IRP was established in January 1991, gained wide support in the Ferghana valley, but lost momentum when its chairman, Abdullah Utayev, was arrested and subsequently disappeared in December 1992. Most believe that he was kidnapped and killed by the Uzbekistani security service. The IRP faded into oblivion as yet more

⁷⁷ Rashid, *Jihad*, 108.

⁷⁸ Olimova, “Political Islam,” 133. This party may or not have a connection with the Hizbu Takfir (“Taqfir Party”) in Kazakhstan. Its followers, known as *takfirshilar* (“denouncers”), first appeared in Kazakhstan after the return *en masse* in the mid-1990s of Kazak Muslims who had studied at Islamic religious institutions in Bashkortostan and Tatarstan. The *takfirshilar* condemn all Muslims loyal to the state as *kafir* (“disbelievers”) and advocate armed jihad. The already mentioned Islamic extremist, the Avar Ayub Omarov from Astrakhan who was one of those who initiated the Constituent Congress of the Islamic Renaissance Party of the Muslims of the Soviet Union in Astrakhan in June 1990, is generally believed to have founded the idea of taqfir in the Soviet Union. It is therefore reasonable to assume that similar beliefs exist in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan as well. On the *takfirshilar*, see, e.g., Nurlan Al’niyazov, “Dukhovnoye upravleniye musul’man i musul’manskaya obshchina Kazakhstana,” Z. I. Munavvarov and R. J. Krumm (eds), *Gosudarstvo i religiya v stranakh s musul’manskim naseleniyem* (Tashkent: Respublikanskiy nauchno-prosvetitel’skiy tsentr Imama Bukhari, 2004), 41-46, on 45-6.

⁷⁹ Rashid, *Jihad*, 108-9.

⁸⁰ RFE/RL *Central Asia Report* 3: 32 (18 September 2003).

⁸¹ Rashid, *Jihad*, 109. On the present parliamentary role and prospects of the IRPT, see also Kabiri, “Tajik Experience.”

⁸² RFE/RL *Central Asia Report* 3: 32 (18 September 2003).

⁸³ Rashid, *Jihad*, 109-13. See also Olimova, “Political Islam,” in particular 128-9.

radical Islamic groups, such as Adolat, emerged in its wake. Nonetheless, the IRP remains banned in all Central Asian former Soviet republics except Tajikistan.⁸⁴

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

Origins of the Movement

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), or *O'zbekiston Islom Harakati* as it is known locally (*Harakat ul-Islamiyyah* in Arabic),⁸⁵ can be said to have formed part of the Arab Afghan network and shared recruiting base (primarily unemployed young men) as well as attitudes to Wahhabism with the Taliban and the Arab Afghans, the Islamic extremists in Afghanistan. The movement relied on bases in Afghanistan (Mazar-e Sharif, Konduz, and Taloqan) and Tajikistan (Hoit in the Karategin valley and Sangvor in the Tavildara valley).⁸⁶

The groups that comprised the IMU had their origin in the public manifestation of the Islamic movement called *Adolat* ("Justice"), a faction of a larger group called *Islom lashkarlari* ("Warriors of Islam"), which arose in the city of Namangan in the Uzbekistani part of the Ferghana valley in 1990 as a response to what was perceived as widespread corruption and social injustice exposed by the liberal perestroika era as well as the resurgence in Islamic activities no longer prohibited by the Soviet government. The movement, funded by sources in Saudi Arabia and therefore inspired by Wahhabism, was led by two young men: the passionate college drop-out and local mullah Tohir Yuldosh and the former conscript soldier Jumaboy Khojiyev (later known as Juma Namangani or, at times, Tojiboy). In 1990, the movement built the first of several mosques and madrasahs. Of the various centres, Yuldosh operated out of the Otavalkhon mosque in Namangan. From November 1991 to the spring of 1992, the movement, which primarily consisted of unemployed young men, perhaps as many as five thousand altogether although other reports indicate numbers ranging from three to five hundred active members only, went on to organise protest meetings and occupy government buildings. The movement formed its own vigilante religious police force which administered summary justice in the streets. In April 1991, President Karimov, arriving to talk to the militants, was shouted down and Tohir Yuldosh even grabbed the microphone from the president's hands. In December 1991, militants occupied the headquarters of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan (CPU) in Namangan. Among many demands, they demanded that the government immediately proclaim the establishment of an Islamic state, use Islamic law as the only legal system, cease to orient the country towards Turkey, and introduce separate schools for boys and girls. In no time, branches of Adolat rose across the Ferghana valley, in Andijon, Margilan, Kuva, Farghona, and Osh (in Kyrgyzstan).⁸⁷

Tohir (or Tohirjon) Abduhalilovich Yuldosh (also known in Russian as Tahir Yuldashev and in Arabic as Muhammad Tahir Farooq (Farukh in Russian), was born in 1968.⁸⁸ His father died when he was five, and he was brought up by his mother, Karomat Asqarova.⁸⁹ An early member of the Uzbekistani branch of the All-Union Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), founded in Astrakhan in June 1990, he had grown disillusioned with this party's refusal to demand an Islamic state. Together with other likeminded young Uzbeks, Yuldosh formed Adolat as a platform for his demand for an Islamic revolution.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ Rashid, *Jihad*, 102; Naumkin, *Militant Islam*, 20; Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 70; Akbar S. Ahmed, *Living Islam: From Samarkand to Stornoway* (London: Penguin, 1995), 206.

⁸⁵ International Crisis Group (ICG), *Central Asia: Islamist Mobilisation and Regional Security* (Osh/Brussels: ICG Asia Report 14, 1 March 2001), 4; Rashid, *Jihad*, 247. This section is based on Michael Fredholm, *Uzbekistan & The Threat from Islamic Extremism* (Camberley, Surrey: Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Conflict Studies Research Centre, 2003).

⁸⁶ See, e.g., Orozbek Moldaliev, "An Incongruous War in the Valley of Poison: The Religious Conflict in Southern Kyrgyzstan," *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 1, 2000, 11-20; Rashid, *Jihad*, 137-86.

⁸⁷ ICG, *Central Asia: Islamist Mobilisation*, 4; Rashid, *Jihad*, 137-40. See also William Fierman, "Political Development in Uzbekistan: Democratization?" Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (eds), *Conflict, Cleavage, and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 360-408, on 382; Haghayeghi, *Islam and Politics*, 93-4; Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 66-7; Babadzhanov, "Islam in Uzbekistan," 315-16, 328 n.55.

⁸⁸ Moldaliev, "An Incongruous War," 11-20; Rashid, *Jihad*, 247. Other reports indicate that he was born in 1967. Naumkin, *Militant Islam*, 22; Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 68.

⁸⁹ Rashid, *Jihad*, 146. She publicly disowned her son in 1999.

⁹⁰ Rashid, *Jihad*, 138-9; Ahmed Rashid, "Heart of Darkness," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 5 August 1999, 8-12; Ahmed Rashid, "The Taliban: Exporting Extremism," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December

Jumaboy Ahmadjonovich Khojiyev, an ethnic Uzbek born in 1968 in Namangan, graduated from agricultural vocational school before he was drafted into the Soviet army in 1987. He reportedly served as an airborne soldier in Afghanistan during the last phase of the Soviet war there, eventually becoming promoted to sergeant, unless the elite airborne episode too is part of the myth that soon grew around his person. He is said to have become interested in Islam during his term in Afghanistan.⁹¹

Although the term Wahhabism was unknown among most government leaders at this early stage, it was clear to them that Adolat was beyond their control. Adolat was banned in March 1992, and the Uzbekistani government restored order, dissolving the movement. Several Adolat leaders, including Yuldosh and Khojiyev, who now took the name Juma Namangani after his hometown, in 1992 fled to Tajikistan, where they joined the Tajikistani branch of the IRP, which by then was preparing to launch a violent civil war in Tajikistan.⁹² There the two young men embarked upon very different careers, although aiming for the same broad goals.

Yuldosh began what can only be called a political career. When the civil war moved against the IRPT, he joined the other key IRPT leaders in exile in Afghanistan. He also travelled to Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, and later to Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, and perhaps the Caucasus as well, to make contacts with other radical groups and to request funding from the intelligence services in these countries. Pakistan's Inter-services Intelligence agency (ISI) offered continuous funding and a base in Peshawar, the centre of the Arab Afghans. Yuldosh remained based there from 1995 to 1998. Yuldosh also received funds from various Islamic charities and, according to Russian and Uzbekistani officials, the intelligence services of Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey. Saudi Arabia contained a large Uzbek diaspora, the ancestors of which had fled there during the 1918-1928 Basmachi revolts against the Soviet power. Being now committed Wahhabis, they eagerly offered their support to Yuldosh.⁹³ The Saudi-trained extremist preacher Abdulhad in Namangan, who as noted had been a disciple of Alloma, became one of the key supporters of Yuldosh.⁹⁴

When Namangani arrived in Qurghonteppa (Kurgan-Tyube), Tajikistan, in 1992, he brought with him some thirty Uzbeks and several Arabs, who had served as emissaries to Adolat from Saudi Islamic charities. These men formed the core of Namangani's force, which within months attracted additional recruits from Uzbekistan, soon totalling some two hundred, as well as additional Arabs out of Afghanistan. Namangani then volunteered the services of his men and himself, as a subordinate commander, to the IRPT-supported United Tajik Opposition (UTO) during the Tajik civil war. The IRPT in its turn attached several Tajiks to Namangani's group and moved the volunteers to a camp in the village of Sangvor in the Tavildara valley, which became Namangani's base after 1993. Namangani, a charismatic leader and tough disciplinarian although somewhat erratic, temperamental, and authoritarian, was a useful field commander to the UTO. He also made several valuable friends within the IRPT: Hakim Kalindarov, who led the Tavildara groups together with Namangani, and most importantly, Mirzo Ziyoiev, the IRPT's army chief of staff from 1996 and thereby Namangani's direct superior. Ziyoiev was the nephew of Said Abdullo Nuri, then head of the IRPT, and after the civil war became minister of emergency situations in the new coalition government. As for Namangani, he learnt some Tajik and married an Uzbek woman, with whom he got a daughter (in early 2001, Namangani also married a Tajik widow with two sons whose husband, an IRPT member, had been killed in the Tajik civil war and accordingly was regarded as a martyr; Namangani's Uzbek wife and daughter were then in Afghanistan⁹⁵). He also occasionally travelled to Afghanistan to meet the IRPT political leadership.⁹⁶

After the Tajik civil war ended in 1997, Namangani at first refused to accept the end of the jihad against the government. Ziyoiev finally persuaded him to cease fighting, and Namangani settled his men at his

1999, 22-35; Ahmed Rashid, "From Deobandism to Batken: Adventures of an Islamic Heritage," CACI Forum Transcription, 13 April 2000.

⁹¹ Moldaliev, "An Incongruous War," 11-20; Rashid, "From Deobandism to Batken;" *Washington Post*, 10 November 2001; Rashid, *Jihad*, 137-8. Other reports indicate that Khojiyev was born in 1967 (Naumkin, *Militant Islam*, 22) or 1969 (Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 68). In either case, he reportedly returned from Afghanistan in 1988, which would seem to suggest the earlier year as his year of birth. Khojiyev was later publicly disowned by his sister Makhbuba Ahmedov and his brother Nasyr Khojiyev (both arrested in 2000). Soon after, so did his mother. Rashid, *Jihad*, 147.

⁹² Rashid, *Jihad*, 140.

⁹³ Rashid, *Jihad*, 138-41, 148.

⁹⁴ Abdujubar Abduvakhitov, "Uzbekistan: Center of Confrontation Between Traditional and Extremist Islam in Central Asia" (Washington, DC: The Nixon Center, presentation, 16 July 2003).

⁹⁵ Rashid, *Jihad*, 158.

⁹⁶ Moldaliev, "An Incongruous War," 11-20; Rashid, "From Deobandism to Batken;" *Washington Post*, 10 November 2001; Rashid, *Jihad*, 137-8, 141-3.

camp in the Tavildara valley. As for himself, he acquired a residence in Hoit, a small village north of Garm in the Karategin valley. He soon appeared to have become heavily involved in the transportation of heroin from Afghanistan to Tajikistan and onwards to Russia and Europe, at times travelling to Afghanistan himself. Namangani also formed a substantial personal military force, mostly Uzbeks but also Arabs, Tajiks, and Chechens. Many of his men were accompanied by their families.⁹⁷

Yuldosh and Namangani establish the IMU

In 1997, Yuldosh travelled to Hoit to meet his old associate Namangani. Neither was pleased with the end of the jihad. They accordingly agreed to form a new group to continue the jihad against their native country and other states in Central Asia. Some claim that Usamah bin Ladin was the one who urged them to create the group. Be that as it may, it seems clear that Al-Qaida contributed funds to the new movement. Both Yuldosh and Namangani certainly favoured Wahhabi Islam and agreed with the anti-Western rhetoric of Usamah bin Ladin. In 1998, Yuldosh settled in Afghanistan, in a building offered by the Taliban in Wazir Akbar Khan, the diplomatic quarter of Kabul. He also received a residence in Kandahar. In the summer of 1998, Yuldosh and Namangani met in Kabul to formally establish the new group, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the formation of which they announced. Yuldosh also pledged to set up an Islamic state. Namangani then returned to Tajikistan. From among the Wahhabis of Uzbek origin from the Arabian peninsula, they (probably Yuldosh) picked Zubayr ibn Abdul Raheem, reputedly a descendant of the Mangit family which formerly ruled Bukhara, as head of the religious leadership of the IMU. The latter on 25 August 1999 issued a declaration of jihad against the governments of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan (the respective presidential administrations received it by fax), in which he also proclaimed that foreign tourists coming to Uzbekistan would be attacked.⁹⁸

This declaration of jihad deserves to be published in its entirety. It was written in Arabic as follows (a translation will follow below):

{ وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ كُلَّهُ لِلَّهِ فَإِن لَّمْ يَتَّخِذُوا فِتْنَةً لِّمَن يَكُونُ فِتْنَةٌ فَلْيَمْلِكُوا بِمَن بَدَأَ الْفِتْنَةَ وَلْيَعْلَمُوا أَنَّهُمْ لَكَاظِمُونَ }⁹⁹

يعلن أمير الحركة الإسلامية لأوزبكستان (محمّد طاهر فاروق) بدء الجهاد ضد السلطة الغاشمة القائمة في أوزبكستان المتمثلة في كريموف وزياتيفه .

والقيادة إذ تعلن هذا البلاغ لتتبعه وتؤكد على الأمور التالية :

أولاً: أن هذا الإعلان يأتي بعد موافقة كبار العلماء، وموافقة أجهزة القيادة للحركة الإسلامية .
ثانياً: أن هذه الموافقة تأتي بناءً على توفر الأدلة الشرعية الدالة على وجوب جهاد هؤلاء الطواغيت وتحرير البلاد والعباد منهم .

ثالثاً: أن الهدف الأسمى من إعلان الجهاد هو إقامة الدولة الإسلامية وتحكيم الشريعة الإسلامية المستمدة من القرآن والسنة النبوية الشريفة .

رابعاً: أن من أهداف إعلان الجهاد أيضاً هو الدفاع عن ديننا الإسلامي في بلادنا مما يتعرض له من انتهاكات، ولدفاع عن المسلمين في بلادنا مما يتعرضون له من انتهاك أعراضهم، وسفك دمائهم، واستحلال أموالهم، ومن اغتيال العلماء والمفكرين، والشباب المسلم، واعتقال الكثير منهم وتدنيتهم بشتى أساليب العذاب بدون أي وجه حق، قال تعالى { وَمَا نَقَمُوا مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ }، وكذلك لإتخاذ المستضعفين وإطلاق سراح حوالي خمسين ألف معتقل من أسر الظالمين، قال تعالى { وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ }، ومن أجل إعادة فتح آلاف المساجد والمدارس الإسلامية التي أغلقتها هذا النظم الظلم .

خامساً: أن مجاهدي الحركة الإسلامية من ذوي الخبرة في القتال قد أتموا استعداداتهم للقيام بهذا الجهاد المبارك .
سادساً: أن الحركة الإسلامية تحذر الحكومات المجاورة لأوزبكستان من قيامها بأي دعم أو إسناد لحكومة "طشقند".

سابعاً: كما تحذر الحركة الإسلامية السياح القادمين إلى هذا البلد وإلا سيئالهم من ضربات المجاهدين .

⁹⁷ Rashid, *Jihad*, 144, 145, 148.

⁹⁸ Rashid, *Jihad*, 145-8; Zurab Todua, "Kyrgyzstan after Akaev: What Happened and Why, What Next?" *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 3 (33), 2005, 14-22, on 20.

ثامناً: أن سبب بدء الجهاد من أرض قرغيزستان هو قيام الحكومة "حكلم بشكوك" باعتقال آلاف من المسلمين الأوزبك الذين هاجروا إلى أرض قرغيزستان ثم تسليمهم إلى زبائية كريموف، قال تعالى ﴿وَلِيِّنَ الظَّالِمِينَ بَخْسُهُمْ لَوْلِيَاءَهُمْ﴾.
 تاسعاً: أن الحركة الإسلامية متواصل - بمشينة الله - الجهاد في سبيل الله إلى أن تتحقق جميع أهدافها .
 عاشراً: لا يوجد - مع الأسف - مجاهدون من جنسيات أخرى في صفوفنا حتى الآن .
 حادي عشر: ندعو الحركة الإسلامية حكومة كريموف المتسلطة والحكمة في "طشقند" إلى الاستقالة بدون شروط أو قيود قبل أن تكفل البلاد في دوامة وحرب طاحنة تسبب الدمار للبلاد والقتل للعباد، وإلّا فهي المسؤولة عن عواقب مواقفها وتصرفاتها .

والله لكبر والعزة للإسلام.
 رئيس الديوان القيادي للحركة الإسلامية لأوزبكستان
 للزبير بن عبد الرحيم
 4 جمادى الأولى 1420هـ / 25 أغسطس 1999م .

In the Name of Allah the Most Compassionate and the Most Merciful
 A Message from the General Command of the Islamic Movement of
 Uzbekistan

“And fight them until there is no more fitnah and the religion is all for Allah”
 Al Anfaal : 39

The amir (commander) of the Harakat ul-Islamiyyah (Islamic Movement) of Uzbekistan, Mohammad Tahir Farooq, has announced the start of the Jihad against the tyrannical government of Uzbekistan and the puppet Islam Karimov and his henchmen.

The leadership of the Islamic Movement confirms the following points in the declaration:

1. This declaration comes after agreement by the major ulama and the leadership of the Islamic Movement.
2. This agreement comes based on clear evidence on the obligation of Jihad against the *tawagheet* (infidels) as well as to liberate the land and the people.
3. The primary objective for this declaration of Jihad is the establishment of an Islamic state with the application of the Shar’iah, founded upon the Qur’an and the Noble Prophetic sunnah.
4. Also from amongst the goals of the declaration of jihad is:
 - a. The defence of our religion of Islam in our land against those who oppose Islam.
 - b. The defence of the Muslims in our land from those who humiliate them and spill their blood.
 - c. The defence of the scholars and Muslim youth that are being assassinated, imprisoned and tortured in extreme manners - with no rights given them at all. And the Almighty says:

“And they had no fault except that they believed in Allah, the All Mighty, Worthy of all praise!”
 Al Buruj: 8

d. Also to secure the release of the weak and oppressed who number some 5,000 in prison, held by the transgressors. The Almighty says:

“And what is the matter with you that you do not fight in the way of Allah and the weak and oppressed amongst men, women and children”
 An Nisaa: 75

- e. And to re-open the thousands of mosques and Islamic schools that have been closed by the evil government.
5. The Mujahidin of the Islamic Movement, after their experience in warfare, have completed their training and are ready to establish the blessed Jihad.
6. The Islamic Movement warn the Uzbek government in Tashkent from propping up or supporting the fight against the Muslims.

7. The Islamic Movement warns tourists coming to this land that they should keep away, lest they be struck down by the Mujahidin.
8. The reason for the start of the Jihad in Kyrgyzstan is due to the stance of the ruler Askar Akayev of Bishkek, in arresting thousands of Muslim Uzbeks who had migrated as refugees to Kyrgyzstan and were handed over to Karimov's henchmen.

The Most High says:

“Verily the oppressors are friends and protectors to one another”

9. The Islamic Movement shall, by the will of Allah, make Jihad in the cause of Allah to reach all its aims and objectives.
10. It is with regret that Foreign Mujahidin (Al Ansaar) as of yet have not entered our ranks.
11. The Islamic Movement invites the ruling government and the Karimov leadership in Tashkent to remove itself from office - unconditionally, before the country enters into a state of war and destruction of the land and the people. The responsibility for this will lie totally on the shoulders of the government, for which it shall be punished.

Allah is Great and the Honour is for Islam

Head of the Religious Leadership of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

Az Zubayr Ibn ‘Abdur Raheem

4th Jumadi Al Awwal 1420 a H

25 August 1999

By the time this declaration of jihad was issued, there is some evidence that the IMU had also attempted, but failed, to set up a centre in Turkmenistan. According to information from the attorney general of Uzbekistan, Yuldosh in October 1998 sent two key followers, Zahid Dehkhonov and Bahrom Abdullayev, to Turkmenistan for this purpose. However, the two men were detained and handed over to Uzbekistan.⁹⁹ Turkmenistan was then, it should be remembered, anxious to maintain good relations with the Taliban of Afghanistan and their Pakistani sponsors, so Yuldosh may conceivably have expected to be able to establish a centre there without trouble from the government.

A series of six car bomb attacks in Uzbekistan's capital Tashkent had already occurred on 16 February 1999, in what possibly was an attempt on the life of President Karimov. The car bombs killed 16 and injured more than 130 people.¹⁰⁰ In one alleged IMU document from later in the year, the IMU would seem to take responsibility for the attack, although the group denied responsibility in another document.¹⁰¹ Uzbekistani intelligence accused Yuldosh of having organised the attacks from the United Arab Emirates. Uzbekistan consequently applied pressure on Tajikistan to expell Namangani and his men. Namangani, however, in early summer 1999 had left Hoit and moved to his camp in Sangvor in the Tavildara valley, preparing for war. In August 1999 (a date no doubt co-ordinated with the declaration of jihad the same month), he left his Sangvor camp and moved into Kyrgyzstan. Meanwhile, Yuldosh dispatched supplies and new recruits provided by the Taliban, Al-Qaida, Pakistan, and various groups in the Arabian peninsula, including the Uzbek diaspora there. Additional funds came from profits in the heroin trade.¹⁰²

In August 1999, Namangani dispatched several small IMU guerrilla groups into Kyrgyzstan towards the Uzbekistani Sukh and the Tajikistani Vorukh enclaves, two regions inside Kyrgyzstan that although physically separated from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan remained part of their territory. On 9 August, a twenty-one-man group kidnapped the mayor and three officials of a small village west of Osh. The group

⁹⁹ Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 80-81.

¹⁰⁰ Neil J. Melvin, *Uzbekistan: Transition to Authoritarianism on the Silk Road* (Amsterdam: Harwood, 2000), 39, 57; Naumkin, *Militant Islam*, 28-38; Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 76-87.

¹⁰¹ Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 76, 82. Naumkin publishes an abridged translation from Uzbek of the first document, which is signed “The IMU leadership” and concludes that “the government's continued aggressive policy in relation to the Muslim people may lead to events similar to the explosions in Tashkent.” He also provides a translation of the second document, signed by Yuldosh, in which “the IMU declares that there is no link whatsoever between the explosions in Tashkent and the Movement as a whole, nor with a single participant in that Movement.”

¹⁰² Rashid, *Jihad*, 151-5, 159.

demanded \$1 million in ransom, supplies, and a helicopter to fly to Afghanistan. On 13 August, the Kyrgyzstani government gave in, granting the guerrillas safe passage back to Tajikistan - and probably a ransom of \$50,000 - in exchange for the hostages. This enraged Uzbekistani President Karimov, who retaliated by ordering air raids on the towns of Tavildara and Garm in Tajikistan, where the IMU enjoyed considerable support - an attack vigorously protested against by the Tajikistani government. Other IMU guerrilla groups, approximately 50 to 150 IMU fighters, then moved into the area around Batken in Kyrgyzstan. They briefly occupied three villages and in an amazing coup also kidnapped a major general of the Kyrgyzstani Interior Ministry - the commander of the Interior Forces, no less. On 23 August, the IMU achieved international fame when an IMU group seized seven additional hostages, including four Japanese geologists. In addition, the IMU recruited more men among the local Kyrgyz. The confusion was now considerable, as most observers by then had no idea who the IMU fighters really were, not to mention what they wanted or where they were going. In addition, several Japanese agents and negotiators descended on Kyrgyzstan, a major receiver of Japanese aid, demanding the immediate release of the four geologists. By 4 September, negotiations were somehow opened, apparently through a Pakistani who was a member of the extremist organisation Sipah-e Sahaba (several Pakistanis from the two extremist groups Sipah-e Sahaba and Lashkar-e Jhangvi had by then joined Namangani), although at first without results. The Uzbekistani air force again went into action, this time launching air attacks on the IMU-held villages around Batken and Osh in Kyrgyzstan. The Kyrgyzstani army launched its own offensive against the guerrillas. This situation continued until 25 October 1999, when the hostages were released, probably in exchange for a ransom of \$2 million to \$6 million (different sources suggest different amounts, probably because some money disappeared on the way to the IMU), paid by Japan to Kyrgyzstani officials, who then handed it (or at least parts of it) over to the IMU. As winter approached, threatening to close the mountain passes through snowfall, the IMU guerrillas prepared to return to Tajikistan.¹⁰³

Under intense pressure from Uzbekistan, senior representatives of the Tajikistani government including Mirzo Zioyev were dispatched to persuade Namangani to leave for Afghanistan. Arriving already before the IMU guerrillas returned, they negotiated with Namangani who soon accepted a Tajikistani government rescue and transportation operation. In the first week of November 1999, some six hundred IMU guerrillas (one-third from Hoit, the rest from Sangvor), together with their families, were flown in Zioyev's ministry of emergency situations transport helicopters from Kyrgyzstan (at least the wounded IMU fighters were almost certainly rescued by Zioyev¹⁰⁴) and Hoit and Sangvor to the Afghanistan border, where they were received by Yuldosh and his Taliban protectors. The IMU guerrillas settled down in Mazar-e Sharif, and their dependants were given quarters in an abandoned United Nations refugee camp at Kamsachi (originally set up to house Tajik refugees from Tajikistan), about 15 miles from Mazar-e Sharif, which the IMU had disposed since May 1999. In addition to Mazar-e Sharif, the IMU also opened offices in the residences in Kabul and Kandahar provided by the Taliban to Yuldosh.¹⁰⁵ However, having quite independently formed the military wing of the IMU, Namangani became the movement's main military leader, and thereby the most influential IMU leader.

In July 2000, Namangani returned to the Tavildara valley along with several hundred IMU guerrillas. In August, several IMU guerrilla groups, each probably of no greater strength than at most a hundred, but probably more often fifty men, set out in what gave the impression of being a skillfully co-ordinated diversionary offensive in several directions at once. By thus dividing the already poorly co-ordinated enemy forces, Namangani managed to provide security for other IMU groups which probably were smuggling narcotics and weapons into enemy territory. The main fighting group again moved towards Batken, Sukh, and Vorukh in Kyrgyzstan. Another group appears to have remained in Tajikistan, moving through the Zeravshan valley towards Penjikent, where it turned south into the as yet poorly defended Surkhondaryo (Surkhandarya) province of Uzbekistan. There a base was established with some 170 IMU guerrillas, most probably from already established sleeper cells or recent recruits from the local population. Yet another group appears to have gone to Khojand in northern Tajikistan and somehow crossed into Uzbekistan, ultimately taking up positions in the mountains north of Uzbekistan's capital Tashkent. Fighting - and considerable confusion among civilians and government forces - broke out on all

¹⁰³ Rashid, *Jihad*, 161-4, 175; Tursunov and Pikulina, *Severe Lessons of Batken*. See also ICG, *Central Asia: Islamist Mobilisation*, 7-9; and (although plagued by several errors) International Crisis Group (ICG), *Recent Violence in Central Asia: Causes and Consequences* (Central Asia/Brussels: ICG Central Asia Briefing, 18 October 2000); Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 89-93. On the Uzbekistani air raids, see also Martha Brill Olcott, "Central Asia: Common Legacies and Conflicts," Allison and Jonson, *Central Asian Security*, 24-48, on 47 n.31.

¹⁰⁴ Tursunov and Pikulina, *Severe Lessons of Batken*.

¹⁰⁵ Rashid, *Jihad*, 145, 164-7; Rashid, "Heart of Darkness;" Rashid, "Taliban: Exporting Extremism;" Rashid, "From Deobandism to Batken."

three fronts. Namangani had proved himself a master guerrilla leader, able to cause significant mayhem with only a handful of men.¹⁰⁶

On 12 August 2000, the Batken guerrillas kidnapped first twelve mountaineers of various nationalities, then an additional four specifically American ones. The IMU guerrillas kept the American mountaineers but either abandoned or lost track of the others. The Americans were rescued within days. However, upon their return to the United States, they in a lucrative deal sold what apparently was a highly embellished account of their heroic struggle against their kidnapers and their escape from the extremists to a major publisher and the movie rights to the tale to Universal Studios. The Clinton administration responded to the media attention (and the burgeoning Uzbekistani co-operation with the CIA) on 25 September 2000 by declaring the IMU, which it hitherto had barely noticed, a terrorist organisation. By the time the IMU withdrew the surviving guerrillas in late October, and Namangani himself apparently went to Afghanistan, the United States was already flying military supplies and counterinsurgency equipment into Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. So did Russia, China, Turkey, France, and Israel.¹⁰⁷

In late November 2000, Namangani left Afghanistan and returned to Tajikistan with a force of some three hundred guerrillas. Mirzo Zioyev was again dispatched to Tavildara to negotiate Namangani's return to Afghanistan. In January 2001, Namangani and most of his men (a small garrison was left in the Sangvor camp) were again airlifted by Zioyev's government transport helicopters to the Afghan border.¹⁰⁸

IMU Strategy

Why did the IMU, which wished to overthrow the government of Uzbekistan, for two years in a row instead invade Kyrgyzstan? Two explanations are possible. First, the reason may be found in the geography and in the social situation of the region. The population of Kyrgyzstan includes large numbers of ethnic Uzbeks, and the country, in addition, is located between the areas held by extremists in Tajikistan (the Garm, Jirgatal, and Tavildara districts) and the populous Ferghana valley, shared by Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan and one of the suspected targets of the IMU intrusions.¹⁰⁹ Due to the Ferghana valley's large population and its conservative attitudes to Islam, the valley may be the only area in Uzbekistan where Islamic extremists were likely to gain a wide following - and from which they may be able to create an uprising strong enough to make an impact upon the Uzbekistani government.

The Ferghana valley, which saw considerable resistance to Russian forces before their conquest and occupation of the valley in 1876, has a history of violent uprisings. In 1898, peasant unrest in Andijon was used by local religious and secular groups to challenge local administrators as much as Russian control. A new uprising, again partly of a religious character, took place in 1916 in response to the Mobilisation Decree drafting Central Asian men in support of Russia's First World War efforts. This was followed by the 1918-1928 revolt of the Basmachi movement in response to the brutal Soviet suppression of local autonomy. Bloody riots again erupted in June 1989 in the Ferghana valley between ethnic Uzbeks and Meskhetian Turks. The conflict was fundamentally engendered by economic decline. In June 1990, ethnic violence occurred between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in the Osh district of Kyrgyzstan's part of the valley.¹¹⁰

In Kyrgyzstan, there are also, as noted, two Uzbekistani enclaves that are geographically separated from (indeed unconnected to) Uzbekistan: Sukh and Shah-e Mardon. The Sukh enclave, with a predominantly Tajik population of some 43,000 people, belongs to Uzbekistan. Favourably disposed to

¹⁰⁶ Rashid, *Jihad*, 167-70. See also ICG, *Central Asia: Islamist Mobilisation*, 7-9; and (although plagued by several errors) ICG, *Recent Violence*. For the narcotics situation, see International Crisis Group (ICG), *Central Asia: Drugs and Conflict* (Osh/Brussels: ICG Asia Report 25, 26 November 2001).

¹⁰⁷ Rashid, *Jihad*, 170-73, 258 n.13. For the media attention given to the American hostages, see, e.g., Michael Vig, "The Great Escape: Utah Climber Recalls Six Frightful Days in Kyrgyzstan," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 26 August 2000. The American mountaineers related their story in Greg Child, *Over the Edge: A True Story of Kidnap and Escape in the Mountains of Central Asia* (London: Judy Piatkus, 2002).

¹⁰⁸ Rashid, *Jihad*, 176, 178.

¹⁰⁹ Tursunov and Pikulina, *Severe Lessons of Batken*; Jane's Sentinel: Kyrgyzstan, 31 October 2000. See also International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), "The Fergana Valley: A Magnet for Conflict in Central Asia," *IISS Strategic Comments* 6: 6 (July 2000).

¹¹⁰ Background: Melvin, *Uzbekistan*, 12-16; Alexandre Bennigsen, *The Soviet Union and Muslim Guerrilla Wars, 1920-1981: Lessons for Afghanistan* (Santa Monica, California: RAND, 1981), 1 n.1. 1989 riots: Melvin, *Uzbekistan*, 25, 48; Center for Preventive Action (Nancy Lubin and Barnett R. Rubin), *Calming the Ferghana Valley: Development and Dialogue in the Heart of Central Asia* (New York: Century Foundation Press, 1999), 56. See also Shakhobidin Ziiamov, "On the 1989 Ethnic Conflict in Uzbekistan," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, 6, 2000, 134-8. 1990 riots: Melvin, *Uzbekistan*, 26.

the IRPT during the Tajik civil war, many of these Tajiks subsequently transferred their loyalty to the IMU. The fact that there is no land route between the enclave and the Uzbekistani main territory made conditions favourable for the IMU to occupy a piece of Uzbekistani territory - and a territory in which they could expect to win popular support - in a move the Uzbekistani army could not defeat or even react to except by a risky airlift operation. Another similarly located enclave within Kyrgyzstan is the Vorukh enclave, home of a predominantly Tajik population of some 25,000 people. Vorukh, which belongs to Tajikistan, is another hotbed of Islamic extremism and support for the IMU.¹¹¹

However, another explanation for the IMU raids is equally possible. They were perhaps less connected with the Islamic revolution than attempts to maintain transportation routes for narcotics trafficking. There is an increasing flow of narcotics from and through Kyrgyzstan (drugs from Afghanistan but also locally-produced opiates and marijuana from the Ferghana valley), and Osh has become a particularly important way-station.¹¹² Since the raids certainly were aimed at geographical objectives in the vicinity of known smuggling routes, this explanation cannot be ruled out. When small groups of raiders engaged the security forces in certain districts, the latter - too thinly stretched to maintain continuous control over the border - certainly left a number of other routes unguarded, thus giving the extremists the opportunity to move large shipments of narcotics through the region.¹¹³ In this way, it also became possible to move weapons, ammunition, and military supplies to IMU sleeper cells in Uzbekistan.¹¹⁴ Whether such movements actually took place seems to be known only to the IMU leadership. However, fuel and ammunition, not to mention wages to fighters, cost large amounts of cash, especially so if the extremists recruit criminals and former soldiers, which appears to be the case, and not only inexperienced and uneducated volunteers.¹¹⁵ The extremists need money and cannot rely only on sympathisers abroad. Distinguishing between political and criminal activities and objectives when discussing the extremist movement may in fact be impossible and may indeed be regarded as irrelevant by the movement's leaders themselves insofar as both were directed against infidels.

IMU in the War on Terror

By early 2001, the IMU had bases in Afghanistan as well as Tajikistan. There also seemed to be substantial numbers of clandestine IMU sleeper cells in Uzbekistan. Yuldosh had reportedly formed IMU cells in the Ferghana valley and also in Surkhondaryo (Surkhandarya), in southeastern Uzbekistan on the border with Tajikistan.¹¹⁶ It seems more likely, however, that the latter were formed by Namangani during his stay in the area.

In Afghanistan, the base at Kamsachi was commanded by Tal Udeshev, who escaped from Uzbekistan immediately after the bombings in Tashkent in February 1999 and, after a brief stay in Peshawar, Pakistan, moved there with the blessings of the Taliban. His group consisted of three to four hundred people, including perhaps as many as fifty Uighurs from China.¹¹⁷ It has been suggested that the Taliban sent diplomatically embarrassing recruits such as Uighurs and Chechens to the IMU when they or their sponsor Pakistan were under pressure from respectively China and Russia to cease their support to such groups. Pakistani extremists wanted by the Pakistani security forces were also quietly dispatched to the IMU.¹¹⁸ There were also bases in Kondozi, and a large IMU contingent (estimated to be 800 strong) since autumn 2000 formed part of the Taliban garrison in Taloqan.¹¹⁹

However, the main military leader of the IMU, and thereby the movement's most influential leader, was clearly Namangani. He was reputed not to get along very well with Udeshev.¹²⁰ The total strength of the movement is not known, although it has been estimated that the majority of the Arab Afghans in Central Asia (at the very most, an estimated 2,000 in Afghanistan and another 2,000 in Tajikistan; probably far

¹¹¹ Rashid, *Jihad*, 159-160; International Crisis Group (ICG), *Central Asia: Fault Lines in the New Security Map* (Osh/Brussels: ICG Asia Report 20, 4 July 2001), 13.

¹¹² Jane's Sentinel: Kyrgyzstan, 31 October 2000.

¹¹³ Tursunov and Pikulina, *Severe Lessons of Batken*; Jane's Sentinel: Kyrgyzstan, 31 October 2000. See also International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), "Central Asia's Narcotics Industry: The New 'Golden Triangle,'" *IISS Strategic Comments* 3: 5 (June 1997).

¹¹⁴ Rashid, *Jihad*, 167.

¹¹⁵ Jessica Stern, "Pakistan's Jihad Culture," *Foreign Affairs* 79: 6 (2000), 115-126, on 122-3.

¹¹⁶ Rashid, *Jihad*, 141.

¹¹⁷ Rashid, "Heart of Darkness;" Rashid, "Taliban: Exporting Extremism;" Rashid, "From Deobandism to Batken."

¹¹⁸ Rashid, *Jihad*, 175-6.

¹¹⁹ Rashid, "Namangani's Foray."

¹²⁰ Moldaliev, "An Incongruous War," 11-20; Rashid, "From Deobandism to Batken."

less on both accounts as these figures no doubt also included dependants) were in fact IMU members, except perhaps 500 to 1,000 Arabs who served directly under Usamah bin Ladin.¹²¹ In the spring of 2001, an eyewitness reported some four hundred men in Namangani's base at Sangvor in the Tavildara valley. The membership of the IMU predominantly consisted of Uzbeks, and Tajiks from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. There were, however, also believed to be many Kyrgyz as well as ethnic Uzbeks and Tajiks from Afghanistan, and some Arabs, Pakistanis, Uighurs, Chechens, and even Slavs.¹²² Some reports indicate that the IMU used Russian as a common language.¹²³ Morale was high, and like Al-Qaida's Arabs, few IMU guerrillas ever surrendered, even when cornered by government troops.¹²⁴

Despite this, the IMU can be distinguished from the Arab Afghans since the movement - at least so far - principally fought the neighbouring governments (Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan) and thereby formed a native fighting force rather than the global movement espoused by Usamah bin Ladin. It should, however, be noted that many members of the IMU appeared to originate from Afghanistan and indeed the Arabian peninsula.

The IMU also had a greater propensity for terrorist activities *within* the region than the members of Usamah bin Ladin's network. The IMU was, as noted, accused of perpetrating the car bomb attacks in Uzbekistan's capital Tashkent on 16 February 1999.¹²⁵ For this reason, the IMU could be regarded as the key terrorist threat in Central Asia.

As compared to the often eloquently argued global aspirations of the Arab Afghans, presented on the Internet and in various publications, only limited amounts of information specifically from the IMU ever reached the West. Nonetheless, the motivation, means, and background of the IMU - so far - appeared to be essentially identical to that of the Arab Afghans. Another similarity with the Arab Afghans was that the IMU forged intimate links with the Taliban. Namangani, in return for the patronage of Al-Qaida and the Taliban, not only allowed his forces to protect narcotics being smuggled from Afghanistan into Central Asia but also partly merged his units with the Taliban in the war on the Northern Alliance. Due to the intimate ties with Al-Qaida and the Taliban, the IMU reportedly established contacts with most or all Islamic extremist groups with a presence in Afghanistan. These included the Algerian *Groupe Islamique Armé* ("Armed Islamic Group," GIA) and *Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat* ("Salafi Group for Call and Combat," GSPC); the Libyan *al-Jamaah al-Islamiyyah al-Muqatila* (better known as the Islamic Fighting Group, IFG); the Pakistani and Kashmiri group *Harakat ul-Mujahidin* ("Movement of Mujahidin"), the Yemeni *Jaish Aden Abin al-Islami* ("Aden-Abyan Islamic Army," AAIA); the Somalian *Al-Itihaad al-Islamiyyah* ("Islamic Alliance," AIAI); and various radical Palestinian, Chechen, and Uighur groups.¹²⁶

It is unlikely that the IMU received much funding from supporters in Uzbekistan. While Islamic charities often collect funds for extremist groups, such collection would be difficult to organise in Uzbekistan due to the strict controls the state has imposed on mosques and religious institutions. There is, however, reason to believe that Islamic charities elsewhere, particularly in Pakistan, supplied the IMU, in the way they also supplied the Taliban and Al-Qaida. The Al-Rashid Trust, for instance, run by Mullah Khail al-Rashid, was accused of smuggling weapons and supplies, disguised as humanitarian aid, to the Taliban and IMU.¹²⁷

The IMU, due to its close association with the Taliban, was known to be armed as any other Taliban unit. In addition, the IMU was reportedly armed with Russian sniper rifles, night vision equipment, grenade launchers, pistols and silencers, some of which were acquired from military units in Central Asia.¹²⁸ Although there seems to be beyond doubt that the Pakistani Inter-services Intelligence agency

¹²¹ Fredholm, *Afghanistan*.

¹²² Rashid, *Jihad*, 158; Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism 13, 27 November 2001.

¹²³ Rashid, *Jihad*, 174.

¹²⁴ Rashid, *Jihad*, 168, 171.

¹²⁵ Melvin, *Uzbekistan*, 39, 57.

¹²⁶ Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism 13, 27 November 2001. On the Libyan IFG, see Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* (London: Hurst & Company, 2002), 142-3. Libya was, in fact, the first country to issue an international warrant for the arrest of Usamah bin Ladin, although other countries did not take the request seriously. By then, British intelligence maintained contacts with certain individuals in the IFG, who were close to Al-Qaida, in order to undermine the Qadhafi regime. Bernard Gérard, "11 septembre 2001: Terrorisme, islamisme et mondialisation," Éric Denécé (ed), *Guerre secrète contre Al-Qaeda* (Paris: Ellipses, 2002), 9-18, on 14; *Intelligence Online* 417 (15 November 2001), 1, 2; *Intelligence Online* 441 (21 November 2002), 2.

¹²⁷ *New York Times*, 25 September 2001.

¹²⁸ Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism 13, 27 November 2001.

(ISI) supported the IMU, some senior ISI officers believed, or professed to believe, in their contacts with journalists and Western intelligence services, that the IMU instead was under the control of the Russian intelligence or security services. This, they argued, explained the apparent ease with which the IMU crossed Central Asian borders.¹²⁹

The political structure of the IMU remains unknown to outside observers to this day and to some extent probably reflected the divisions within the organisation. Yuldosh was chief political leader. Zubayr ibn Abdur Raheem fulfilled the role of head of the religious leadership and also appeared to be the chairman of the supreme council of the IMU. However, the IMU military commander Namangani, who was known in Afghanistan as Juma Hakim¹³⁰ and also was one of the Taliban *de facto* defence ministers, until his death in November 2001¹³¹ remained the most influential leader of the organisation. The organisation of the group at the military level was also largely unknown to outside observers. While the IMU boasted brigades formed according to ethnic backgrounds, and did carry out joint operations with Al-Qaida and Taliban forces, most of the activities outside Afghanistan consisted of guerrilla raids and drug running accomplished by small units, typically of around fifteen men, under what appears to have been local commanders.¹³²

In mid-2000, a new group allied to the IMU was said to have been formed. This was the Islamic Movement of Tajikistan (IMT). There were also rumours about an Islamic Movement of Kyrgyzstan (IMK). So far, little is known about these groups, if they ever existed.¹³³ On 20 May 2001, however, it was reported that Namangani a few months earlier had launched a political party under the name of *Hezbe Islami Turkestan* ("Islamic Party of Turkestan," IPT), as an umbrella organisation of the IMU with the avowed intention to include not only Uzbekistan but also Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakstan, and Chinese Xinjiang in his movement's area of operations. Namangani appointed himself leader of the party, with Yuldosh as his deputy. The IPT was reportedly formed in the Taliban-held Deh-e Dadi town, south of Mazar-e Sharif, which served as Namangani's headquarters among the IMU training camps along the Amu Darya river.¹³⁴ Some claimed that not all IMU leaders agreed with the change. These various organisational changes may have indicated factional splits within the organisation.¹³⁵

However, the existence of such splits may now never become known. By late July 2001, IMU guerrillas were again attacking government forces on the Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan border in the Batken region. Yuldosh, who from his base in Afghanistan assumed responsibility for the attacks in the name of the IMU, also announced that what the Uzbekistani army earlier in the summer had claimed to have been military exercises in the Surkhondaryo (Surkhondarya) province in fact had been clashes with IMU guerrillas. Whether the guerrillas had passed through Tajikistan or been recruited from the sleeper cells already in place remained unclear to outsiders, although many observers believe the latter to be most likely.¹³⁶ Little else was heard of these skirmishes, before the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States brought further attention to the region. For the Uzbekistani and Kyrgyzstani, and to some extent also Tajikistani, governments, the 11 September terrorist attacks were a godsend. By offering intelligence and other forms of co-operation, as well as the use of bases and air space, they quickly became the beneficiaries of American military aid. When the Northern Alliance swept through Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, the IMU appeared to have been swept aside along with its Taliban sponsors.¹³⁷

Yet, the IMU to some extent survived the 2001 War on Terror in Afghanistan. The organisation has probably regrouped in Tajikistan, where it may easily go into hiding while reforming after the losses suffered during the war. IMU survivors definitely also escaped into Pakistan together with Al-Qaida.¹³⁸ There they took up positions in South Waziristan, being financed by contributions from Arab countries out of an office in Karachi. Approximately 150 remaining IMU fighters led by Yuldosh and his son-in-law and second-in-command, Dilshod Hojiev, in charge of IMU finances, and Ulugbek Holikov, alias Muhammad Ayub, in charge of IMU's military affairs, went into hiding in Wana, Pakistan. The IMU

¹²⁹ See, e.g., Rashid, *Jihad*, 216.

¹³⁰ *Dawn* (Pakistan), 21 May 2001.

¹³¹ *Washington Post*, 26 November 2001.

¹³² Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism 13, 27 November 2001.

¹³³ IMT: Jane's Sentinel: Tajikistan, 31 October 2000; IMK: Kiemiddin Sattori, "Tajik Press About the Youth and Islam," *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 3 (15), 2002, 126-34, on 131.

¹³⁴ *Dawn* (Pakistan), 21 May 2001; Rashid, *Jihad*, 180-81.

¹³⁵ Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism 13, 27 November 2001.

¹³⁶ Rashid, *Jihad*, 181-2; Interfax, 11 June 2001.

¹³⁷ Michael Fredholm, *Afghanistan and Central Asian Security* (Stockholm: Stockholm University, Asian Cultures and Modernity Research Report 1, March 2002).

¹³⁸ Naumkin, *Militant Islam*, 58, 61.

remnants also increasingly turned into a family affair, with all three hailing from Namangan. In addition, faced with a split within the organisation (see below), Yuldosh had summoned Ilhom Hojiev, alias Commander Abdurahmon, the cousin (or perhaps nephew) of the late Namangani, from Tajikistan.¹³⁹ The defeat of the IMU and the death of Namangani in Afghanistan in late 2001¹⁴⁰ may yet, however, signify the end of the movement as a fighting force. At the very least, its strength and power has been severely reduced. By 2003, factional splits were also reported within the organisation. Yet, the IMU remains popular among large segments of the religiously inclined part of the Uzbekistani population. The IMU may well rise again, either under surviving leaders from one of the factions of the original group or as a completely new group, which merely assumes the name of a renowned predecessor. The myth of the IMU remains alive and well, and it has merged with the already existing myths of anti-Russian resistance in Central Asia and the Caucasus. One example will suffice: the word has spread in the villages and army garrisons of Central Asia, that the advance guard of IMU guerrilla groups consists of beautiful female snipers armed with sophisticated guns and night vision goggles, equally prominent in seducing as killing enemy soldiers.¹⁴¹ This myth probably derived from Chechnya, where many Russian soldiers swore that they were confronted by a legendary unit of blonde Latvian (or Estonian, or both) women snipers known as *belyye kolgotki* (“white tights”) - a unit which allegedly turned up in every post-Soviet war against Russia and its allies.¹⁴²

The connection between the IMU and the well-funded international Wahhabi Islamic movement has also enhanced the group’s popularity. In Uzbekistan, where any form of Islamic opposition is routinely labeled Wahhabism, this very persecution has given the Wahhabis a popular mystique that in fact encourages local Muslims to regard them as the only remaining true Muslims.¹⁴³

Uzbekistan’s demographic development suggests that Islamic extremism will continue to gain converts. Poverty is rising, and unemployment in the Ferghana valley is reportedly as high as 80 per cent. Each year, an additional four hundred thousand young people look for employment, often without finding any. Sixty per cent of the population is under 25 years old, and this percentage is increasing.¹⁴⁴ This may prove a fertile recruiting ground for violent extremist movements.

Other Uzbekistani Militant Islamic Groups

By 1999, there were also reported to be about ten other, smaller militant Islamic groups active in the Ferghana valley, with names such as *Tabligh* (“Revelation”), *Uzun soqollilar* (“Long-bearded ones”), *Adolat uyushmasi* (“Justice Union”), *Islom lashkarlari* (“Warriors of Islam”), *Tavba* (“Repentance”), *Baraka* (“Blessing”), and *Nur* or *Nurchilar* (“Ray of Light”).¹⁴⁵ The number and names of these groups may well reflect old information, no longer reliable, or pure misunderstandings. Some groups of these names, such as the *Islom lashkarlari* of which *Adolat* was a faction as well as their successor *Tavba* (also known as *Hizbullah*, “Party of God”), active in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, were in fact groups that were crushed by the security forces already in 1992 and 1995, respectively,¹⁴⁶ while others, such as *Uzun soqollilar*, as noted are merely the popular nicknames of certain Islamic extremists opposed to Sufism.¹⁴⁷ Others, including *Tabligh*, are Islamic missionary movements based in India and Pakistan. Evenso, the *Tabligh* is known to have administered the recruitment of Islamic volunteers to the jihad in Afghanistan and the movement has been accused of subversive activities in Central Asia as well.¹⁴⁸ *Nurchilar*, finally, derived from the Turkish Nurcu movement, named after the Turkish leader Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (1873-1960) and continued by his disciple Fethullah Gülen. The movement’s newspaper *Zaman* (“Time”)

¹³⁹ Deutsche Welle, 1 March 2004; RFE/RL *Central Asia Report* 4: 10, 8 March 2004; Zeyno Baran, *Hizb ut-Tahrir: Islam’s Political Insurgency* (Washington, DC: The Nixon Center, 2004), 75-6.

¹⁴⁰ On the various contradictory reports on the death of Namangani, see Naumkin, *Militant Islam*, 58-9; Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 107.

¹⁴¹ Rashid, *Jihad*, 10.

¹⁴² Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 50.

¹⁴³ Rashid, *Jihad*, 46.

¹⁴⁴ Rashid, *Jihad*, 82.

¹⁴⁵ ICG, *Central Asia: Islamist Mobilisation*, 18; Abduvakhitov, “Uzbekistan.”

¹⁴⁶ Muminov, “Traditional and Modern Religious-Theological Schools,” 101-111.

¹⁴⁷ Moldaliev, “An Incongruous War,” 11-20.

¹⁴⁸ Viacheslav Belokrenitskiy, “Islamic Radicalism in Pakistan: Evolution and Regional Role,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 6, 2000, 104-116. For *Jamaat-e Tablighi*, see John K. Cooley, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), 82-5.

was banned in Uzbekistan in 1994 and several of its Turkish teachers were expelled.¹⁴⁹ Yet, this movement as far as can be ascertained had little to do with the other groups.

The Islamic Jihad Union

When the IMU split in 2003, the true successor to the IMU turned out to be not the remnant under Yuldosh but the so-called Islamic Jihad Union (IJU; *Islomiy Jihod*, or *Itihaad al-Jihad al-Islami*, perhaps more correctly translated as the Alliance of Islamic Jihad; its original name was *Jamaat al-Jihad al-Islami*, Society of Islamic Jihad, or simply *Jamoat* in Uzbek), as it became known in 2005 in the American and British lists of banned terrorist organisations. By then, the IJU had become involved in a series of plots to use suicide bombers in Uzbekistan.¹⁵⁰ The IJU, first known to outsiders simply as the Islamic Jihad Group, is generally believed to have been behind the suicide bombings in Tashkent and Bukhara in March and April 2004 and almost certainly conducted the co-ordinated bombing attacks in Tashkent on 30 July 2004 against the American and Israeli embassies and the office of the Uzbekistani Prosecutor General, all for which the IJU claimed responsibility. The core of the IJU consisted of former IMU members who had broken away from Yuldosh to work more closely with Al-Qaida against its global rather than regional enemies.¹⁵¹ There was also an IJU cell in Kazakstan.¹⁵²

On the eve of the Andijon affair on 13 May 2005,¹⁵³ the IJU posted a statement on the Internet, in which it expressed its support for any uprising against the Uzbekistani government, declared war on the Karimov government, and called on all Muslims to join in the attack. The statement was signed by the amir of the IJU, Muhammad Foteh Bukhoriy, and conveyed by an opponent of the Karimov government in exile, Hazratqul Khudoyberdi.¹⁵⁴

The United States and Israeli embassies in Tashkent took the threat from the IJU very seriously. In response to a “specific terrorist threat” the two embassies in early June 2005 withdrew non-essential staff from the country.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁹ Muminov, “Traditional and Modern Religious-Theological Schools,” 101-111; Babadzhonov, “Islam in Uzbekistan,” 319, 329 n.67. On Said Nursi, Fethullah Gülen, and the Nurcus, see Bayram Balci, *Entre Islam et turcité: Les écoles nurcu de Fethullah Gülen en Asie centrale* (Badia Fiesolana, San Domenico: European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, EUI Working Paper RSC 71, 2002); Bayram Balci, “Fethullah Gülen’s Missionary Schools in Central Asia and Their Role in the Spreading of Turkism and Islam,” *Religion, State & Society* 31: 2 (2003), 151-77; Mustafa Şen, “Turkish Islamist Entrepreneurs in Central Asia,” Schlyter, *Prospects for Democracy*, 253-64; Şerif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989). On the Uzbekistani view of the movement, see Bakhram Tursunov, *Extremism in Uzbekistan* (Camberley, Surrey: Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, Conflict Studies Research Centre, July 2002), 8.

¹⁵⁰ See, e.g., the presentation to the British Parliament by Home Office Minister Hazel Blears, 13 October 2005. The controversial former British ambassador to Uzbekistan, Craig Murray, commented that the UK had no own intelligence sources but relied on the American communications intercepts of the National Security Agency (NSA) for intelligence on this and other Al-Qaida-connected groups. See his web site, www.craigmurray.co.uk.

¹⁵¹ Press statement by Richard Boucher, spokesman for the Department of State, Washington, DC, 26 May 2005, upon the inclusion of the group in the list of specially designated global terrorist organisations under Executive Order 13224. For a brief summary of the suicide bombings in March and April 2004, see RFE/RL *Central Asia Report* 4: 14, 7 April 2004; 4: 15, 14 April 2004; 4: 33, 1 September 2004.

¹⁵² Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 117.

¹⁵³ On the events in Andijon, see Shirin Akiner, *Violence in Andijan, 13 May 2005* (London, 7 June 2005). Her report was subsequently published as Shirin Akiner, *Violence in Andijan, 13 May 2005: An Independent Assessment* (Washington, DC & Uppsala: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, July 2005).

¹⁵⁴ Web site, www.centrasia.ru.

¹⁵⁵ Reuters, 6 June 2005. On 2 June 2005, the United States Department of State issued a travel warning due to the sudden terrorist threat.

Hizb ut-Tahrir

Origins

The *Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami* ("Islamic Liberation Party") was according to official party history founded in 1953 by Sheikh Taqiuddin al-Nabhani (1909-1977), a Palestinian graduate of Al-Azhar and former member of the Muslim Brotherhood.¹⁵⁶ Nabhani, who worked as a teacher and local Islamic judge among the Palestinians on the West Bank, soon became known for his anti-Western, and in particular anti-British, views. He escaped to Syria when Israel was created in 1948, but in 1950 returned to the West Bank. Until 1951, Nabhani was involved with the secular Pan-Arab socialist Ba'th party. He was also in contact with a number of people who planned a coup against King Abdallah ibn Hussein (1882-1951) of Jordan with the intention of replacing him with a Ba'th-inspired regime.¹⁵⁷

After breaking with the Ba'th Party, Nabhani began to organise his own political party. His dream was to create an Islamic Caliphate (*Khilafah*) and rid the Islamic world of all Western influences. Nabhani first applied to register the party in Jordan in 1952, but his application was rejected. Nabhani and his associates were even jailed. This did not prevent the party from establishing a clandestine headquarters in Jerusalem (it was within a few years moved first to Damascus, then Beirut, where Nabhani probably lived for the rest of his life) and equally illegal offices in Damascus, Amman, and Beirut in the years 1952 to 1954. Within a few years, offices were also established in Hebron, Nablus, and Kuwait. In the period 1954 to 1956, branches were established in Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, and Kuwait.¹⁵⁸

Nabhani wrote 23 treatises (referred to by the Hizb ut-Tahrir as books) on the purpose and goals of his organisation. Most of them are currently treated as the core of the party's ideology, its so-called adopted teachings, a term used to distinguish these central documents from later texts that although they were used in certain circumstances, do not fully correspond to the ideology as elaborated by Nabhani. A few texts by Nabhani's successor Sheikh Abdul Qadeem Zalloom (also known as Abu Yusuf; died on 26 April 2003), another Palestinian from Jordan and a former Al-Azhar professor, are also included among the party's 'adopted' texts.¹⁵⁹ Zalloom, whose teachings as will be shown in 1997 caused the party to

¹⁵⁶ Rashid, *Jihad*, 116. See also Muminov, "Traditional and Modern Religious-Theological Schools," 101-111; Babadzhanov, "Fergana Valley," 112-123; the movement's web site, www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org. See also Suha Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest: Hizb al-Tahrir and the Search for the Islamic Caliphate* (London: Grey Seal, 1996), which is the ultimate source for much writing on the Hizb ut-Tahrir. The Hizb ut-Tahrir employs a large number of web sites, among them www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org (in several languages); www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org.uk; www.hizb-ut-tahrir.info; www.al-waie.org; www.hizb-ut-tahrir.dk (in Danish); www.expliciet.nl (in Dutch); www.explizit-islam.de (in German); www.hilafet.com (in Turkish); www.khilafah.dk (in Danish); www.khilafah.com (in English); www.khilafah.net; www.khilafah.com.pk (in Urdu); www.dawah.tv; www.ramadhan.com; www.al-aqsa.org; www.mindspring.eu.com (in English); www.1924.org (in English); www.al-islam.or.id (in Indonesian). Since the Hizb ut-Tahrir in 1996 was banned in several British universities (in London, Birmingham, Manchester, and Bradford), the movement also operated under the name Islamic Heritage Society. On the Internet, the Hizb ut-Tahrir was in addition active under the name Muslim Student's Website or Muslim Student Home Page (www.acgnet.co.uk/islam.htm; www.muslimstudents.org; neither currently active). Michael Whine, "Islamist Organizations on the Internet," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 11: 1 (spring 1999), 123-32, on 129. Other names used by the Hizb ut-Tahrir in Britain include (according to the International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (Israel) web site, www.ict.org.il; Michael Whine, "Hizb ut-Tahrir in Open Societies," Zeyno Baran (ed), *The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir: Deciphering and Combating Radical Islamist Ideology* (Washington, DC: The Nixon Center, 2004), 99-109, on 102) the Islamic Society, Islamic Forum, the Islamic Front, the International Islamic Front, the Islamic Forum Against Communism, the Young Liberating Party, Asian Youth, the 1924 Committee, the Muslim Media Forum, the Muslim Current Affairs Society, and the New World Society. When taking part in public protests, the party often uses orange-coloured banners.

¹⁵⁷ Malene Grøndahl; Torben Rugberg Rasmussen; and Kirstine Sinclair, *Hizb ut-Tahrir i Danmark: Farlig fundamentalisme eller uskyldigt ungdomsoprør?* ("Hizb ut-Tahrir in Denmark: Dangerous fundamentalism or innocent youth revolt?," Aarhus, Jutland: Aarhus universitetsforlag, 2003), 45.

¹⁵⁸ Grøndahl; Rasmussen; and Sinclair, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 41-2, 46-7, 254.

¹⁵⁹ Grøndahl; Rasmussen; and Sinclair, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 56. Books by the first and second leaders of the Hizb ut-Tahrir include Taqiuddin an-Nabhani, *The Islamic State* (London: Hizb ut-Tahrir, 1998; first published in 1962); Taqiuddin an-Nabhani, *Islamic Concepts* (np (London): Al Khilafah, nd (1973)); Taqiuddin an-Nabhani, *The Social System in Islam* (London: Al-Khilafah, 1999); Taqiuddin an-Nabhani, *The System of Islam* (London: Al-Khilafah, 2002); Taqiuddin an-Nabhani, *The Economic System of Islam* (London: Al-Khilafah, 4th edn 1990); Abdul Qadeem Zalloom, *Funds in the Khilafah State* (London: Al-

split into first two Jordanian factions, then one Jordanian and one European faction, was himself succeeded by Ata ibn Khaleel Abu'l Rashta (also known as Abu Yasin), another Palestinian and a member of the party since 1955. He was a civil engineer who had studied in Cairo and who until his succession headed the Jordanian branch.¹⁶⁰

From the very outset, the Hizb ut-Tahrir had a reputation for involvement in coups against secular regimes. It was accused of having participated in the April 1957 coup attempt against Jordanian King Hussein (1935-1999, r. 1953-1999)¹⁶¹ and also of participation in the two failed Jordanian coup attempts of 1968 and 1969. In connection with the 1968 attempt, rumours suggested that the Hizb ut-Tahrir even was involved in plans for simultaneous coups in Syria and Iraq, apparently inspired by the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. The 1968 coup was reportedly revealed to the Jordanian government by Yassir Arafat, while Jordanian intelligence found evidence that exposed the 1969 attempt. Within the Hizb ut-Tahrir, rumour has it that the party also attempted a coup in southern Iraq in 1970, 1971, or 1972 and yet another coup in Jordan in 1972. Jordanian security claimed that Hizb ut-Tahrir plotted to assassinate King Hussein in 1977 as well in a bid for power. There are even rumours of Hizb ut-Tahrir involvement in attempted coups in Algeria and Sudan.¹⁶²

In the 1970s, the Hizb ut-Tahrir grew rapidly in Egypt (where it was also known as *Shabab Muhammad*, "Youth of Muhammad") and established a presence in North Africa, especially Tunisia (where it achieved considerable influence in the 1980s). Some elitist cells within the party eventually appear to have penetrated the ruling circles in several Arab states, but this did not stop the Hizb ut-Tahrir leadership's interest in the use of force to further the Islamic cause espoused by the party. In June 1974, Hizb ut-Tahrir members attempted an armed attack on the military academy in Cairo to capture weapons with which to overthrow the government. They killed thirty soldiers but failed to achieve their objective. In 1983, Egyptian security accused Hizb ut-Tahrir of yet another coup attempt. In the summer of 1992, other members, under the name of *Hizb al-Nahda* (also known as *Parti de la Renaissance*) were accused of plotting a coup d'état in Tunisia. In 1993, members of the group were again accused of planning a coup against King Hussein of Jordan.¹⁶³

The Hizb ut-Tahrir works on several levels of society. First, its members attempt to call out to, attract, and educate members of the public in the Hizb ut-Tahrir ideology. This can be seen in all countries where the party is active. Second, members attempt to establish contacts with the leading members of society, typically by infiltrating military, law enforcement, and government organisations. There is evidence for this in the Middle East as well as, which will be shown, in Kyrgyzstan. Third, judging from the organisation's past history, Hizb ut-Tahrir will attempt to take power by assuming control over the government, in a coup if necessary. Once successful, one may assume that the party would then proclaim a Caliphate.

The Hizb ut-Tahrir Goes Global

Since the Hizb ut-Tahrir was banned in most parts of the Middle East, its leaders instead established the organisation in Europe, in particular Britain, where London is believed to be a major centre. The goal was at first not to establish a branch in a Western country, but to woo young Arabs from influential families, who attended higher education in Britain, so that they upon returning home would work for the party there. This plan failed, but many local Muslims were recruited. Muslim students in British universities form an important segment of the organisation's membership. The Hizb ut-Tahrir has branches not only

Khilafah, 2nd edn 1998); Abdul Qadeem Zalloom, *How the Khilafah Was Destroyed* (London: Hizb ut-Tahrir, 1998). Several of these are available on the Hizb ut-Tahrir web site. The Hizb ut-Tahrir also publishes a magazine, *Al-Waie* ("Consciousness," also available at www.al-waie.org).

¹⁶⁰ Grøndahl; Rasmussen; and Sinclair, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 256; International Crisis Group (ICG), *Radical Islam in Central Asia: Responding to Hizb ut-Tahrir* (Osh/Brussels: ICG Asia Report 58, 30 June 2003), 3.

¹⁶¹ Grøndahl; Rasmussen; and Sinclair, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 48.

¹⁶² Grøndahl; Rasmussen; and Sinclair, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 49; Taji-Farouki, *Fundamental Quest*, 27-28; ICG, *Radical Islam*, 10-11; Baran, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 34. There is little or no evidence to support the claims of Hizb ut-Tahrir involvement in these various coups.

¹⁶³ Dilip Hiro, *Islamic Fundamentalism* (London: Paladin, 1988), 3, 70-1; Avraham Sela (ed), *Political Encyclopedia of the Middle East* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 234, 374, 545, 742; Taji-Farouki, *Fundamental Quest*, 166; Steven Emerson, *American Jihad: The Terrorists Living Among Us* (New York: Free Press, 2002), 195-6. See also Erkin Kurmanov, "Hizb ut-Tahrir in Kyrgyzstan," *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 3 (15), 2002, 119-26. The Hizb ut-Tahrir involvement in the 1974 coup attempt is well documented, the Tunisian and Jordanian connections less so.

in Britain but also Germany, the Netherlands, France, Belgium, and the Scandinavian countries.¹⁶⁴ The Hizb ut-Tahrir maintains a web site with information in Arabic, Turkish, Russian, English, German, Danish, French, Urdu, and Malay.

The European countries are divided into three regions: Britain (based in London), Scandinavia (based in Copenhagen), and 'Europe' (based in France; this region includes the remaining European countries).¹⁶⁵

In Britain, the first Hizb ut-Tahrir branch was founded in 1986 by Omar Bakri Muhammad (although the present Hizb ut-Tahrir leadership denies this, since Omar Bakri Muhammad has broken with the party). He remained its leader until January 1996, when he broke with the main party leadership and established his own organisation, the Harakat al-Muhajiroun. The British branch is at the time of writing led by Jalaluddin Patel, with Imran Waheed as spokesman. Imran Waheed studied medicine at University College in London but was reportedly expelled because of his party's agitation against Jews and homosexuals; he currently works as a psychiatrist. The party achieved considerable popular support. At most, the party attracted as many as ten thousand members and supporters to public meetings. Almost 90 per cent of the party members in Britain are of Pakistani origin. The party also controls its own publishing company, Al-Khilafah Publications.¹⁶⁶ London is used as a base for many of the Hizb ut-Tahrir web sites and communiqués and press releases worldwide are generally published from London.¹⁶⁷

In Scandinavia, the Hizb ut-Tahrir is led from Copenhagen, headed by one Abu Abdul Karim. The party did not disclose the name of its deputy leader. Its spokesman is Fadi Abdullatif, with Emir Samil as deputy spokesman. Most members in Scandinavia belonged to the Danish branch. Only a few members were believed to reside in Norway and no more than about thirty in Sweden. In Copenhagen, the party has shown itself able to attract around a thousand members and supporters.¹⁶⁸

In Germany, the party was based in Duisburg. It had an estimated thousand members, and a spokesman named Shaker Assem. The Hizb ut-Tahrir (Germany) published two magazines: *Explizit* in German and *Hilafet* (Caliphate) in Turkish. However, the activities of the Hizb ut-Tahrir branch in Germany were banned on 15 January 2003 due to the party's agitation against Jews.¹⁶⁹

There are several Hizb ut-Tahrir branches in the Middle East and Asia. An important Hizb ut-Tahrir branch is, for instance, located in Turkey, where the party enjoys considerable support.¹⁷⁰

The Hizb ut-Tahrir established a branch in Pakistan in November 2000. Its spokesman was Naveed Butt, an electrical engineer educated at the University of Chicago. Members of the branch claimed that they were encouraged by Pakistani intelligence to set up an office there, although this support has apparently ceased.¹⁷¹

In 2003, the Hizb ut-Tahrir even announced that a branch had been opened in Iraq, following the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime earlier in the year.¹⁷²

The Hizb ut-Tahrir established a branch in Indonesia in 1983. This branch was founded by an Australian citizen of Jordanian-Lebanese origin somewhat incongruously known as Abdurrahman al-Baghdadi. The group remained an underground movement on college campuses in Java for the next fifteen years, then grew rapidly after the end of the Suharto regime. While the Indonesian branch still has a strong presence on campuses, it at the time of writing claims a membership counted in the tens of thousands, in the capital Jakarta; Bogor, western Java; Yogyakarta, central Java; and Makassar, southern Sulawesi. Its spokesman is Ismail Yusanto, a member since 1985.¹⁷³

The Hizb-ut Tahrir never discloses how many members it has, since it regards itself an elite, vanguard movement. A further problem is that party officials sometimes do not distinguish between members (*doris* in Uzbek, perhaps derived from an Arabic word for student) and supporters. Supporters who participate in the party's education programmes (but who are not yet members) are referred to as *shabab*

¹⁶⁴ Rashid, *Jihad*, 118-19; interview with Omar Bakri Muhammad on Danish television, 22 May 2002; Grøndahl; Rasmussen; and Sinclair, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 111-12.

¹⁶⁵ Grøndahl; Rasmussen; and Sinclair, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 113.

¹⁶⁶ Grøndahl; Rasmussen; and Sinclair, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 7, 116, 118, 119, 228; ICG, *Radical Islam*, 11.

¹⁶⁷ Whine, "Hizb ut-Tahrir in Open Societies," 103.

¹⁶⁸ Grøndahl; Rasmussen; and Sinclair, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 7, 9, 25, 27, 116.

¹⁶⁹ Grøndahl; Rasmussen; and Sinclair, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 14, 229-30; Michael Lüders, *Grenzland: Macht und Glauben in Zentralasien* (Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, nd (2003)), 12.

¹⁷⁰ Rashid, *Jihad*, 118-19; ICG, *Radical Islam*, 10. See also Rusen Cakir, "The Rise and Fall of Turkish Hizb ut-Tahrir," Baran, *Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 37-9.

¹⁷¹ Rashid, *Jihad*, 118-19; ICG, *Radical Islam*, 12-13.

¹⁷² ICG, *Radical Islam*, 10.

¹⁷³ ICG, *Radical Islam*, 12.

(Arabic for “youth”).¹⁷⁴ In Central Asia, at least, sympathisers are also known as *muyayit*.¹⁷⁵ The Hizb ut-Tahrir members in Denmark can be regarded as typical among the European branches. They can be divided into the children of Muslim immigrants, young Danes who have converted to Islam (several of whom, interestingly, are former members of various left-wing political parties), and young but well-educated Muslims who either are first- or second-generation immigrants, the majority being university students or information technology specialists.¹⁷⁶

The Hizb ut-Tahrir is led by an amir (leader) under whom there is a central leadership council (*qiyadat*), by some believed to be located in London. The international headquarters of the Hizb ut-Tahrir, believed to be located in Amman, Jordan, also includes a number of administrative departments. The party is further divided into regions, each of which reports only to the international headquarters, although at least the various European branches also seem to be in contact with each other. The party leader appoints regional leaders (*mutamad*) and spokesmen. The leader of each province is assisted by a provincial committee of five to ten people. Within a province, each city or other major geographical unit in which the party maintains a presence is typically led by a local committee of around four people under a leader (*masul*, “responsible, in charge”). Below him, the organisation is divided into districts, each headed by a district leader (*musond* or *musaid*; “assistant”), assisted by a number of subordinate chiefs (*naqib*; “leader”). On the local level, the party is organised into small study cells (Arabic *daira*, “circle;” Uzbek *halqa*, “ring;” in Tajikistan known as *ziyofat*, indicating entertainment of guests with food and drink; Russian *pyaterki*, “groups of five”), each of about five to seven members or sympathisers and headed by a *mushrif*. A *mushrif* typically leads from five to seven *halqalar* or circles. The ordinary members and sympathisers only know the other members of the circle, and then often only by nickname, as the *mushrif* is the only one who maintains contact with the next higher stage of the organisation.¹⁷⁷

New members are expected to take an oath on the Koran, vowing never to betray the interests of Islam. In addition, and different sources do not quite agree on the actual words used for the oath, the new member swears to follow his superiors within the party, never to reveal information about the Hizb ut-Tahrir to the public, and vows to fight to the end with all his energy for the establishment of a caliphate. After the new member has completed about two months of training, he or she is expected to form a new cell (women’s and men’s cells are for religious reasons separate; and women’s cells are regarded as less political and militant than those of the men). However, each aspirant must first be carefully investigated, including with regard to his place of work and home address, so as to avoid government infiltration.¹⁷⁸ The organisation accordingly follows the Marxist-Leninist practice of establishing clandestine organisations based on secret cells, which is not surprising considering the time and place of the movement’s original establishment.

The training provided within a cell in Uzbekistan included preliminary lessons in Arabic as well as courses on the ‘history’ (as seen by Hizb ut-Tahrir) of Israel, the United States, the Soviet Union, Europe, early Islam, and the Caliphate. The information provided, as noted from course notes from a student in Tashkent in 1998, was distorted to the point of being mere myths. The emphasis was on anti-Semitism, anti-Americanism, and the sins of the European model of democracy and all infidels. The students were warned not to discuss with non-members and included the following warning: “Be aware, someone may tell you that all the facts you heard here about the Jews, Americans or their ‘praised’ democracy are not true. You should know then, it is the enemy of Allah and Muslims before you.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ Grøndahl; Rasmussen; and Sinclair, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 30.

¹⁷⁵ ICG, *Radical Islam*, 21.

¹⁷⁶ Grøndahl; Rasmussen; and Sinclair, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 31-2.

¹⁷⁷ Grøndahl; Rasmussen; and Sinclair, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 26, 49; Taji-Farouki, *Fundamental Quest*, 117-23; Alima Bissenova, “Is Hizb-ut-Tahrir Going Public in Its Struggle?” *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, 18 July 2001; Rashid, *Jihad*, 119; International Crisis Group (ICG), *The IMU and the Hizb-ut-Tahrir: Implications of the Afghanistan Campaign* (Osh/Brussels: ICG Central Asia Briefing, 30 January 2002), 7; Kurmanov, “Hizb ut-Tahrir,” 120; ICG, *Radical Islam*, 20.

¹⁷⁸ Baran, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 27 (referring to a Western security service); Bissenova, “Is Hizb-ut-Tahrir Going Public;” Rashid, *Jihad*, 119; ICG, *IMU and the Hizb-ut-Tahrir*, 7; Kurmanov, “Hizb ut-Tahrir,” 120.

¹⁷⁹ Martha B. Olcott and Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, “Hizb-ut-Tahrir in Uzbekistan: ‘Non-Violent Methods of Struggle’ or Instigation to Terror?” Munavvarov and Krumm, *State and Religion*, 163-72, on 168.

The Hizb ut-Tahrir in Central Asia

In Central Asia, where the party is known as *Hezb-e Tahriri Islomiya*, its centre is Uzbekistan, where it claims eighty thousand members.¹⁸⁰ This number is unlikely to correspond to reality, even though the party has achieved considerable popular support. Independent analysts with access to a variety of sources, including within the Uzbekistani security service, estimated a total membership between 6,500 and 7,000 in early 1999 and up to 15,000 in 2003.¹⁸¹ Unlike the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which primarily recruited in rural areas, the Hizb ut-Tahrir appears to draw its supporters primarily from the educated urban elite as well as college students, educated but unemployed youth, and skilled factory workers. Most of the arrested Hizb ut-Tahrir members are educated, urban men in their twenties. They are not necessarily deprived or living in poverty. Quite a few, perhaps most, appear to have been introduced to Islam for the first time through the Hizb ut-Tahrir. The Hizb ut-Tahrir has become the most popular underground movement in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.¹⁸² At least originally, it appears that the Central Asian branches of the party were all part of one region, based in Uzbekistan.¹⁸³ The movement has been banned in all three countries.¹⁸⁴ Uzbekistan began to move against the Hizb ut-Tahrir in May 1998, after the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations had been passed. Despite its name, this law severely restricted religious worship, banning the use of unregistered mosques and requiring that all Muslim preachers be registered.¹⁸⁵

The Hizb ut-Tahrir probably first reached Uzbekistan in 1992-1993, with party cells appearing in Farghona, Andijon, and Tashkent between 1992 and 1994. The Hizb ut-Tahrir formally established itself in Uzbekistan in 1995 by publishing its charter clandestinely.¹⁸⁶ The first (or at least one of the first) Hizb ut-Tahrir cell was reportedly set up in Tashkent by a Jordanian named Salahuddin with the help of two Uzbeks, Hafizulla Mujahedovich Nasyrov (born 1971 in the Surkhondaryo province), who had studied Islam under Abduwali Qori Mirzoyev, and Nugman Omonovich Saidamirov (or Saidaminov; born 1972 in Tashkent, died in 2000 of a heart attack). Another Jordanian known as Isam Abu Mahmud Qiyadati (a name that suggests that he would be a high-ranking Hizb ut-Tahrir leader) has also been named as the one who organised the first cell in Uzbekistan (if correct, with one cell formed in Andijon already in 1991 under the leadership of one Abdurashid Hojimatovich Qasymov, born 1960 in Andijon). The first Hizb ut-Tahrir pamphlets in Uzbekistan, by then written in Arabic, apparently appeared in 1995/1996. Cells were then established elsewhere in Tashkent as well as in the Ferghana valley, whence the movement spread throughout the country and to Kyrgyzstan from 1997 and Tajikistan from 1998.¹⁸⁷ According to Uzbekistani law enforcement sources, the Hizb ut-Tahrir in the Central Asian region was led as follows:¹⁸⁸

1992-1996	Aburashid Hojimatovich Qasymov (sentenced to twelve years in prison)
1996-1999	Hafizulla Mujahedovich Nasyrov (sentenced to twelve years in prison)
1999-2000	Nugman Omonovich Saidaminov (or Saidamirov; died in 2000)
2000-2001	Istam Igamberdievich Khudoiberdiev (born 1957 in the Surkhondaryo province, sentenced to twelve years in prison)
2001 onwards	Abdurahim Abdurafukovich Tukhtasinov (born 1970 in the Andijon province, wanted by police)

¹⁸⁰ Bissenova, "Is Hizb-ut-Tahrir Going Public?" Rashid, *Jihad*, 119, 120; ICG, *IMU and the Hizb-ut-Tahrir*, 7.

¹⁸¹ ICG, *Radical Islam*, 17.

¹⁸² Rashid, *Jihad*, 111, 115-36.

¹⁸³ ICG, *Radical Islam*, 20.

¹⁸⁴ RFE/RL *Newsline*, 4 January 2001, 20 February 2001; Jane's Sentinel: Kyrgyzstan, 31 October 2000; Rashid, "Namangani's Foray."

¹⁸⁵ Rashid, *Jihad*, 125, 146.

¹⁸⁶ Olcott and Babadjanov, "Hizb-ut-Tahrir in Uzbekistan," 164; Nazirov, "Political Islam," 161. Uzbekistani law enforcement sources indicate that the first Hizb ut-Tahrir cell was formed in Tashkent already in the period 1989-1991. Alisher Sharafutdinov, "The Role of the Law Enforcement Bodies of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Combating Religious Extremism," Munavvarov and Krumm, *State and Religion*, 215-18, on 216. Sharafutdinov at the time of writing was Chief of the Main Investigation Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

¹⁸⁷ Rashid, *Jihad*, 120-21, 130-31; ICG, *Radical Islam*, 14; Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 141-5.

¹⁸⁸ Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 143-5.

In Kyrgyzstan, the Hizb ut-Tahrir is reputed to be very active in the Osh and Jalalabad regions, where local Uzbeks have distributed leaflets calling for the overthrow of existing governments in Central Asia and the establishment of a pan-Islamic state. The first secret cells in these regions appeared in 1997/1998, and since 1999, the activists there have worked openly. Almost three hundred such activists were arrested in southern Kyrgyzstan in 2000 for distributing religious literature. Kyrgyzstani security forces believe that ninety per cent of the members are ethnic Uzbeks, the rest ethnic Kyrgyz and Uighurs, and some claim that there are more than sixty thousand Hizb ut-Tahrir supporters (not necessarily members) only in Osh.¹⁸⁹ However, sources within the Kyrgyzstani security service estimate a membership of between 1,000 and 1,200.¹⁹⁰ Osh in Kyrgyzstan serves as a centre for the dissemination of Hizb ut-Tahrir propaganda; materials are sent from London to Osh over the Internet, where it is printed for distribution to Hizb ut-Tahrir groups in the Uzbekistani cities of Andijon and Tashkent.¹⁹¹ The Hizb ut-Tahrir has enjoyed high-level support in the Osh region. In September 2002, the chairman of the Kyrgyzstani National Security Service (SNB), Kalyk Imankulov, indicated Tursunbay Bakir uulu as a supporter of the Hizb ut-Tahrir. Bakir uulu, a leading member of the opposition who previously was the president's special representative for human rights and then sat on the Constitutional Council (and since has toppled Kyrgyz President Akayev), was known since at least the previous year for his outspoken sympathy for the organisation.¹⁹² This writer has personally met officials serving in counterterrorism in Osh who did not hesitate to defend the Hizb ut-Tahrir in public.¹⁹³ Several members of the State Commission of Religious Affairs of Kyrgyzstan have also displayed extremist sympathies, including Sadykjan Kamalov (also known as Sheikh Sadikjan Kamaloddin), who in October 2004 became the head of the Islamic Center in Karasu.¹⁹⁴

In Tajikistan, more than 150 Hizb ut-Tahrir activists were arrested in 2000. The Hizb ut-Tahrir seems to be especially strong in the northern part of the country (the movement claims twenty thousand members in Sughd Province, formerly Leninabad, which again seems a highly embellished figure¹⁹⁵), probably because most Uzbeks live there.¹⁹⁶ The Hizb ut-Tahrir membership is estimated to be a few thousands, at most.¹⁹⁷

The Hizb ut-Tahrir is since 2000 also gaining popularity in Kazakhstan, at least in the south and in Almaty, Kazakhstan's largest city. There are probably no more than a few hundred, or only a few dozen, members.¹⁹⁸ Occasional reports indicate that Hizb ut-Tahrir members are also active in Turkmenistan,¹⁹⁹ as well as in Russia.²⁰⁰ The movement even appears to have spread into China. In June 2001, two Hizb-ut Tahrir cells were reportedly found by Chinese security forces: one in Urumchi and one in Khotan.²⁰¹

At present, the Hizb ut-Tahrir makes maximum use of videos, computer CDs, the Internet, and email to publish its beliefs. Another favourite form of propaganda is the *shabnama* (a Persian word meaning "night letter"), printed and pushed under people's doors at night. Posters are also produced and displayed on walls at night.²⁰² Originally, all publications were in Arabic. This has changed, and in Central Asia,

¹⁸⁹ Kurmanov, "Hizb ut-Tahrir." For more details on the regional membership of the Hizb ut-Tahrir, see ICG, *IMU and the Hizb-ut-Tahrir*; ICG, *Radical Islam*, 18.

¹⁹⁰ ICG, *Radical Islam*, 17.

¹⁹¹ Baran, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 85.

¹⁹² Kabar, 4 September 2002; RFE/RL *Central Asia Report* 1: 1, 27 July 2001.

¹⁹³ Personal statements by the officials involved, spring 2004.

¹⁹⁴ Baran, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 108. On Hizb ut-Tahrir activities in Kyrgyzstan, see also Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 168-77.

¹⁹⁵ Rashid, *Jihad*, 131.

¹⁹⁶ Kurmanov, "Hizb ut-Tahrir;" ICG, *IMU and the Hizb-ut-Tahrir*.

¹⁹⁷ ICG, *Radical Islam*, 17. On Hizb ut-Tahrir activity in Tajikistan, see also Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 160-68.

¹⁹⁸ Rashid, *Jihad*, 130-31; ICG, *Radical Islam*, 14, 17. See also Igor Savin, "Hizb ut-Tahrir in Southern Kazakhstan: Social Makeup," *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 6 (24), 2003, 63-9; Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 193.

¹⁹⁹ ICG, *Radical Islam*, 14.

²⁰⁰ See, e.g., *Moscow Times*, 10 June 2003. Several Hizb ut-Tahrir members including Alisher Musayev, the suspected Moscow head of the party, were detained on 9 June 2003. See also RFE/RL *Russian Political Weekly* 4: 48, 16 December 2004, on Hizb ut-Tahrir activity in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan.

²⁰¹ *Economist*, 29 September 2001, 30 March 2002.

²⁰² Rashid, *Jihad*, 120-21, 130-31.

most of the literature is currently in Uzbek, with some in Tajik and a few in Kyrgyz.²⁰³ The contents as well as high quality of printing evidenced by its leaflets and other literature in its heyday indicated that much of it came in from abroad, some reportedly from Libya. The movement also seems to receive funding from abroad, since at least the rank-and-file members of the organisation, mainly young men from 17 to 25 years of age, from time to time reportedly receive rewards of fifty or a hundred dollars.²⁰⁴ Members with regular jobs are instead expected to contribute from five to twenty per cent of their income to the party every month. The movement also runs small businesses to get additional funds.²⁰⁵

The IMU is believed to have sought a rapprochement with the Hizb ut-Tahrir, but the latter appears to have rejected the proposal. The two movements are, however, reputed to share the same values and opinions (for instance, that Uzbekistani President Karimov is a Jew, an infidel, an enemy of Islam, and a servant of the West).²⁰⁶ The Hizb ut-Tahrir has also stated that its members “are preparing a terrible death” for Karimov and that he “would get his just punishment in this life.”²⁰⁷ Propaganda against Israel and the “worldwide Zionist conspiracy” is another popular topic, as is the demand that all Shia Muslims be expelled from Central Asia (and presumably the world), although the European branches of the organisation claim that both Shia and Sunni are welcome into the organisation. In addition, several hundred Hizb ut-Tahrir members reportedly fled to Afghanistan, where they subsequently joined the IMU. Hizb ut-Tahrir literature was reportedly found on several killed IMU fighters and in abandoned IMU camps. There is accordingly little doubt that the two organisations maintained close contacts, at least on the individual level.²⁰⁸

The views of the Hizb ut-Tahrir are simplistic and single-minded as in all other Wahhabi groups; the imposition of Islamic law is in itself believed to resolve all ethnic, social, and economic problems and create a perfect, quite frankly utopian society without further ado. When a European NGO attempted to fight AIDS by propagating the use of condoms among local women, the Hizb ut-Tahrir protested, claiming that the NGO was encouraging prostitution.²⁰⁹

However, the Hizb ut-Tahrir has also learnt what strategy works best in the modern, media-driven Western world. By assuming the role of an oppressed victim, the party manages to position itself as the persecuted keeper of the faith, truth, and innocence. Being victimised by the secular world, the party aims to show itself as morally and politically superior to the forces of secularism. In other words, the party aims to make use of the current political climate to gain an ideological advantage. Being a victim of the evils of secularism, the party suggests that it is merely waiting for the righteous time when good will defeat evil and truth will prevail over lies, in other words, the introduction of the Caliphate.²¹⁰ This strategy seems to work well. Despite having seemingly few members, the Hizb ut-Tahrir has made headlines throughout the world. In addition, the emphasis on victimhood ensures that the party meets a positive response from sympathetic Western academics and members of the media.

Although the Hizb ut-Tahrir remains oppressed, its very aura of resistance appears to encourage new recruits to the movement. This, together with the possibility that some of them will move on to violent means to bring an Islamic state into being, means that the Hizb ut-Tahrir remains a strong threat to secular rule in Uzbekistan. It should be noted that the Hizb ut-Tahrir sees its mission as consisting of three phases: inviting people to Islam, establishing an Islamic state, and finally, expanding the Islamic state through jihad. In the Islamic state, military conscription and training in preparation for jihad would be mandatory for all Muslim men over 15.²¹¹ This shows that although currently advocating non-violent means, the Hizb ut-Tahrir does not rule out the use of violence, especially against the non-Muslim world after the Islamic state has been re-established. Furthermore, although the Hizb ut-Tahrir itself eschews the use of force, it is willing to rely on outside “assistance” (*musrah*, the term used for the assistance the Prophet Muhammad received from foreign tribes to take power) from those who are willing to fight for the party’s goals.²¹² In addition, certain symbolism as used within the party also suggests that violent methods are not ruled out. Most conspicuous among these symbols is the black flag prominently displayed on the Hizb ut-Tahrir web site. A black flag of this kind traditionally symbolises the jihad

²⁰³ Kurmanov, “Hizb ut-Tahrir.”

²⁰⁴ Babadzhanov, “Fergana Valley,” 112-123.

²⁰⁵ Kurmanov, “Hizb ut-Tahrir,” 121.

²⁰⁶ ICG, *Central Asia: Islamist Mobilisation*, 6-7.

²⁰⁷ Statement posted on the web site, www.newscentralasia.com, 5 August 2004.

²⁰⁸ Rashid, *Jihad*, 123, 133; ICG, *Radical Islam*, 24.

²⁰⁹ Rashid, *Jihad*, 121, 129.

²¹⁰ Grøndahl; Rasmussen; and Sinclair, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 196-200.

²¹¹ Rashid, *Jihad*, 117-18.

²¹² ICG, *Radical Islam*, 7-8.

against those territories that remain under the control of non-Muslims - in all but name a declaration of war against the non-Islamic world.²¹³ As noted, the organisation has in the past attempted violent actions elsewhere, a fact that the party leadership does not deny.²¹⁴ It has also (at least in 1988) published texts advocating the hijacking of aircraft of countries considered to be opposed to Islam. Chief among such countries, the Hizb ut-Tahrir believes, is the United States, but other states with “imperialistic motives” such as Britain and Russia by then remained “potential” enemies, while Israel was regarded an “actual” enemy.²¹⁵

In June 2001, Hizb ut-Tahrir in a document published in Uzbekistan as *Shahid bo'lish amaliyotlari* (“General practices of becoming a martyr”) also stated its belief that suicide attacks with explosive belts, so-called martyr belts, were legitimate in the struggle against unbelievers. The party in addition seemingly reiterated its opinion that it was lawful to blow up or shoot down airliners in order to kill unbelievers. “A Muslim is allowed the use of any methods and means in the struggle against the infidels, if they are employed for the killing of the infidel...If the enemy is destroying our warriors, children, women, and old men by using missile systems, planes, cannon, and other weapons, we should use similar means and, in particular, use explosive substances. In such cases there is no difference whether we shall be killing enemy soldiers or together with them destroying their children, women, and old men,” the article concludes.²¹⁶ Actual call for arms against the *kafirs* (“disbelievers,” identified as the United States, Britain, and the other Coalition allies in the war against the Taliban as well as the Muslim leaders who support them or prevent Muslims from joining the “world jihad in Iraq”) have been noted in Hizb ut-Tahrir leaflets written in local languages (unlike the English-language leaflets produced for foreign journalists and non-governmental human rights organisations, which typically do not include radical anti-Semitic or anti-Christian statements) in Central Asia.²¹⁷ In addition, many individual members of the Hizb ut-Tahrir have expressed sympathy with the armed struggle of the IMU and say that they are willing, in some cases apparently eager, to fight. The Hizb ut-Tahrir also recruits many new members in prisons.²¹⁸ If these are already hardened militants or indeed criminals, this is a further source of increased propensity for violence.

Factionalism

The clandestine nature of the Hizb ut-Tahrir also means that the organisation is prone to factionalism. In Central Asia, at least two cases are known in which significant Hizb ut-Tahrir sub-groups in Uzbekistan established separate political movements, independent of the Hizb ut-Tahrir leadership. Factional splits have also been reported in Kyrgyzstan. In early 1997, Akrom Yuldoshev in Andijon, who in about 1996 had established his own group, the Akramiyyah, left the Hizb ut-Tahrir after a dispute with local leaders. Akramiyyah cells were established in among other locations Andijon, Namangan, Khokand, and Osh (in Kyrgyzstan).²¹⁹ In March 1999, another split took place in Uzbekistan’s capital Tashkent,

²¹³ Grøndahl; Rasmussen; and Sinclair, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 83.

²¹⁴ ICG, *Radical Islam*, 9.

²¹⁵ Emerson, *American Jihad*, 196-7; Whine, “Hizb ut-Tahrir in Open Societies,” 105. This was an English-language leaflet entitled “The Islamic Rule in Hijacking Aeroplanes” that was inserted inside copies of the Arabic-language journal *Al-Fajr* No 12, April 1988, which was distributed freely outside the Central London Mosaic. The leaflet, which was written by Hizb ut-Tahrir’s then leader Abdul Qadeem Zalloom and dated 8 April 1988, argued that the hijacking of aircraft was forbidden in Islamic law unless the aircraft contained Israelis or Jews, in which case it was an obligation for Muslims to hijack the aircraft and kill the Jews.

²¹⁶ “Shahid bo'lish amaliyotlari,” *Al-Waie* 170, June 2001 (www.al-waie.org). An abridged translation, from which this excerpt is taken, is provided in Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 154-5.

²¹⁷ Olcott and Babadjanov, “Hizb-ut-Tahrir in Uzbekistan,” 169, 171 n.7, 172 n.25. Examples include leaflets dated 20 March and 13 April 2003.

²¹⁸ ICG, *IMU and the Hizb-ut-Tahrir*, 8-11.

²¹⁹ See, e.g., Babadjanov, “Fergana Valley,” 119-21; Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 159-60; Tursunov, *Extremism in Uzbekistan*, 15-16. One might wonder if the group known as Bayat (“Oath”) in northern Tajikistan is also an offshoot of the Akramiyyah. Bayat became known to the public only in January 2004, after the murder of a Baptist missionary in northern Tajikistan. The group, some of whose members formerly belonged to the IRPT, also targeted sellers of alcohol and local mosques that supported the government. On 25 January 2006, an armed group believed to be connected with Bayat attacked a prison in northern Tajikistan to free an inmate, in striking similarity to the incident which led to the bloodshed in Andijon on 13 May 2005. After the raid, during which the group also killed the prison director, the raiding party escaped into Kyrgyzstan, in another similarity to the Andijon attack. See, e.g., Zoya

where a significant group of Hizb ut-Tahrir members led by one Sharipjon Atoyevich Mirzajanov (born 1952) reportedly set up its own party, called *Hizb an-Nusrah* (“Assistance Party”), because they were dissatisfied with only non-violent means of political struggle.²²⁰ Claims within Uzbekistani law enforcement suggest that the Hizb an-Nusrah is a wealthy organisation with funds derived from the United States as well as from narcotics trafficking.²²¹ Following the bloodshed in Andijon on 13 May 2005, Uzbekistani religious authorities warned the public of the dangers of the Akramiyyah in various ways, for instance by displaying explanatory materials in mosques.²²²

Factional splits are also known to have taken place outside Central Asia. The 1996 defection of Omar Bakri Muhammad in Britain who subsequently set up the Harakat al-Mujahiroun has already been mentioned. In yet another case in London, the leader of the Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights (CDLR), a militant Saudi opposition group which aimed to overthrow the Saudi government, left the Hizb ut-Tahrir to concentrate on the CDLR. More importantly, a Hizb ut-Tahrir leader named Bakir Salim Khawalda (or al-Khawaldeh; apparently also known as Abu Rami²²³) on 22 October 1997 broke with the party and established his own, rival organisation in Britain and Jordan. Farid Qasem, a British citizen of Iraqi or Syrian origin who hitherto had been a Hizb ut-Tahrir spokesman (and according to some sources established the party in Britain²²⁴), followed him into the new group, and so did apparently several others. The stated reason for the split was Sheikh Abdul Qadeem Zalloom’s endorsement of a book on Islamic Dawa (“call” or proselytising) by Mahmoud Abdul Latif Awidah. A dissident leadership first under Muhammad Nafi Abdul Karim (died in 1998), then under Bakir Salim Khawalda emerged. The dissidents (by some referred to as *nakithin*, “renegades”), represented by its spokesman, Jamal Shakir Hussein al-Musa, a Jordanian of Palestinian origin who lived in Jordan, claimed that Zalloom was controlled by Awidah, as well as Muhammad Sabri Musa, Abdul Hadi Faour, and Abdul Halim Zalloom (the brother of Sheikh Abdul Qadeem Zalloom). The Zalloom faction instead chose Muhammad Hussein Abdullah (also a Jordanian of Palestinian origin who lived in Jordan) as its spokesman. Both factions from this date distributed leaflets and other materials in the name of the party. However, Khawalda’s group soon broke up, with some members returning to the Hizb ut-Tahrir, and others moving on to the more militant Harakat al-Muhajiroun of Omar Bakri Muhammad. This was not the end of the split, however, as several European leaders (under Dr Tawfiq Mahmoud Mustafa, a pediatrician who holds German citizenship; Shaker Assem, the spokesman of the group in Germany in Duisburg; Mahmoud Asad, reportedly an Israeli citizen also known as Abu Omar; and Usamah Badran, another Israeli citizen) then chose to split from both Jordanian factions, the one breaking up as well as the surviving Zalloom faction.²²⁵

It is unclear how the European-Jordanian divide fared following the death of Sheikh Abdul Qadeem Zalloom in 2003, and the succession by Ata Abu’l Rashta. It is possible that the two remaining factions have got over their differences and become reconciliated.

A factional split has also been reported from Pakistan, where a splinter group referred to as Tanzim-e Islami reportedly believes that the Caliphate can be established in Pakistan first, and the rest of the world later.²²⁶

In light of the American military presence in Central Asia, it should be noted that the Hizb ut-Tahrir from 1992 to 1999 also had a branch in California, known as the Islamic Cultural Workshop (ICW). It currently appears to have ceased activities.²²⁷ The Hizb ut-Tahrir has announced that it supports actions against the “infidel powers” (presumably the United States and Britain, although the wording suggests that other Coalition partners would be included as well) that engaged in military operations in Afghanistan.²²⁸

Pylenko, “Suspected IMU Member Escapes from Tajik Prison,” *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, 22 February 2006.

²²⁰ ICG, *IMU and the Hizb-ut-Tahrir*, 9; Kurmanov, “Hizb ut-Tahrir,” 123; Babadzhanov, “Islam in Uzbekistan,” 319 with note; Tursunov, *Extremism in Uzbekistan*, 14.

²²¹ Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 160.

²²² B. Boboyorov, ‘*Akromiylar kimlar?*’ (“The followers of ‘Akramiyyah,’ who are they?”), seen displayed at the Ko’kaltosh Madrasasi, Tashkent, 25 May 2005.

²²³ Naumkin, *Radical Islam*, 135.

²²⁴ The web site of the International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (Israel), www.ict.org.il.

²²⁵ See, e.g., Grøndahl; Rasmussen; and Sinclair, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 118-19.

²²⁶ Husain Haqqani, “Understanding HT Ideology,” Baran, *Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 33-36, on 36.

²²⁷ Emerson, *American Jihad*, 193-7.

²²⁸ Kurmanov, “Hizb ut-Tahrir,” 122; Zeyno Baran, “Taking Back Islam: Combating Jihadists and Radical Islamists,” Munavvarov and Krumm, *State and Religion*, 198-206, on 203.

The United States is also the home of several Hip Hop music groups that perform songs seemingly inspired by the Hizb ut-Tahrir - another clue to the modernity of the party and the fact that it is not a run-of-the-mill Wahhabi group. The two most prominent were 'Soldiers of Allah' (which subsequently changed its name to 'Muslim Studio') and 'An-Nasr.' Another was called the 'Arab Legion.'²²⁹

Although there is, so far, no evidence that the Hizb ut-Tahrir, as an organisation, has engaged in violence in recent years, there is little doubt that the party through its propaganda at least encourages others to take up arms. Besides, the documented participation of the party in violent coups during its early years, in addition to the persistent rumours even within the party of participation in coups for which there is no evidence, does not inspire confidence in its present activities. It is thus hardly surprising that the organisation remains banned in most Muslim countries.

China and the Uighur East Turkestan Movement

Activities in Exile

The Uighur East Turkestan movement is generally seen as a separatist movement within China; however, there is a substantial minority population of Uighurs in several of the former Soviet Central Asian republics. Some of these have been known to be active participants in the East Turkestan movement.

However, the membership of the East Turkestan movement is primarily made up of ethnic Uighurs and others of Turkic origin from China's westernmost province, Xinjiang, since 1955 designated the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR). The name of the movement as well as its aspirations derive from East Turkestan (*Sharqiy Turkiston*), earlier the common name for the region and from 1944 to 1950 also the name of an independent, Uighur-led secular republic - the East Turkestan Republic - in the northern section of present-day Xinjiang (Ili, Tacheng, and Ashan (present Altay) districts; official Chinese historiography thus refers to it as the "Three Districts Revolution") that enjoyed support from and to some extent was controlled by the Soviet Union.²³⁰ The founders of the movement were all leaders from this republic who had been forced into exile. There also was a brief state formation usually called the Turkic Islamic Republic of East Turkestan from 1933 to 1934 - an unusually bloody and violent period even in this region's history - which the movement with some panache claims as the first republic of this name (it inconsistently referred to itself as both the East Turkestan Republic and the East Turkestan Islamic Republic).²³¹ The ethnic Uighurs within the movement often refer to any future independent state as Uighuristan rather than East Turkestan.²³² The strength of the movement, or rather its two main components (secular and clerical) is unknown to Western observers.

More than sixty per cent of Xinjiang's approximately 18 million inhabitants belong to ethnic minorities. According to official statistics from 2000, the region's largest ethnic group, the Uighurs, numbers some 8

²²⁹ Grøndahl; Rasmussen; and Sinclair, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 208-10; Madeleine Gruen, "Demographics and Methods of Recruitment," Baran, *Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 116-23. See also the web sites, www.soldiersofallah.com; www.muslimstudio.com; www.angelfire.com/nd/nasr; www.nasrproductions.i-p.com; www.arablegion.net. The groups do not seem to have been great successes. The web site www.soldiersofallah.com was closed in February 2003 when the group changed its name but Muslim Studio as well as was terminated on 29 February 2004. Some information remained and continued on the web site, www.trustislam.com.

²³⁰ Justin Jon Rudelson, *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism along China's Silk Road* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 29, 57, 159; Michael Dillon, *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Far Northwest* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 32-5; Mark Burles, *Chinese Policy Toward Russia and the Central Asian Republics* (Santa Monica, California: RAND, 1999), 9. See also Linda Benson, *The Ili Rebellion: The Moslem Challenge to Chinese Authority in Xinjiang 1944-1949* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1990); David D. Wang, *Clouds over Tianshan: Essays on Social Disturbance in Xinjiang in the 1940s* (Copenhagen: NIAS, 1999). For practical reasons, the Uzbek transliteration of Uighur words has been adopted in this section.

²³¹ Rudelson, *Oasis Identities*, 6, 28; Dillon, *Xinjiang*, 20-21; see also Roostam Sadri, "The Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan: A Comparative Review," *Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* 5: 2 (1984), 294-319; Lars-Erik Nyman, "Turkish Influence on the Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan (TIRET)," *Materialia Turcica* 2 (1976), 12-24; Erling Hoh, "Hear Our Prayer," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 13 April 2000, 24-5; James Millward, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang: A Critical Assessment* (Washington, DC: East-West Center Washington, 2004), 5 with note. For a general background to the events, see Owen Lattimore, *Pivot of Asia: Sinkiang and the Inner Asian Frontiers of China and Russia* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1950).

²³² Hoh, "Hear Our Prayer," 24-5.

million. Most other minorities are also of Turkic origin, including a population of 1.3 million Kazaks, 166,000 Kyrgyz, and almost 14,000 Uzbeks. There are also some 40,000 Persian-speaking Tajiks as well as a significant population of Mongols. Han Chinese so far form only the second largest ethnic group, with a population of somewhat less than seven million (according to official statistics, not necessarily reliable as China for political reasons may wish to play down the Han Chinese presence in the region).²³³

There is also an Uighur exile community in Istanbul, Turkey. This was dominated by Isa Yusuf Alptekin, commonly known as Isa Beg, former secretary general of the republic, until his death on 17 December 1995 at the age of 94. Among the groups in Turkey championing Uighur independence were the East Turkestan National Salvation Committee (also reportedly known as the International East Turkestan Committee) and the East Turkestan National Revolutionary Front.²³⁴ Istanbul is also the headquarters of the Eastern Turkestan Refugees Association (*Doğu Türkistan Göçmenler Derneği*), established in 1960 and first headed by Isa Beg, then Arslan Alptekin, although the latter, who was Isa Beg's son, was then only one of the group's several leaders. This organisation's emblem and flag (white star and crescent on blue) is the same as that of the failed Turkic Islamic Republic of East Turkestan. In Istanbul is also located the East Turkestan Foundation, with Brigadier General Mehmet Riza Bekin as chairman.²³⁵ One or more of these groups grew into the East Turkestan National Centre (ETNC), founded in December 1998 in Istanbul with Hamit Gokturk as secretary-general.²³⁶ Some groups maintain a presence further afield, such as in Germany where the first East Turkestan (Uighurstan) National Congress assembled in October 1999, electing Enver Can as its president. Germany is also the home of Erkin Alptekin (born in 1939), eldest son of Isa Beg.²³⁷ An East Turkestan National Liberation Union was reportedly based in Munich, in conjunction with the East Turkestan Information Center under Abduljelil Karkash.²³⁸ There is also an East Turkestan Information Center in Sweden, reportedly headed by one Dilxat Raxit (Dilshat Reshit) who in addition functions as a spokesman for the East Turkestan Information Center in Munich and the World Uighur Congress (WUC; see below).²³⁹ A group based somewhere abroad known as the Uighur Political Union Committee has also been reported.²⁴⁰ So was an organisation named the World Uighur Youth Congress, headed by Dolqun Isa (Eysa) and apparently based in Switzerland.²⁴¹ In 2004, no less than two umbrella organisations were formed as well. One was the World Uighur Congress (WUC), with Erkin Alptekin as first president, which was established on 16 April in Munich in a merger between the East Turkestan (Uighurstan) National Congress and the World Uighur Youth Congress; the other was the East Turkestan Government-in-Exile.²⁴² There are, in fact, numerous separatist organisations among Uighur expatriates. Most appear to be primarily concerned with

²³³ Colin Mackerras, "Xinjiang at the Turn of the Century, and the Causes of Separatism," Craig Benjamin and Samuel N. C. Lieu (eds), *Walls and Frontiers in Inner-Asian History* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002; Silk Road Studies 6: Proceedings from the Fourth Conference of the Australasian Society for Inner Asian Studies (A.S.I.A.S.), Macquarie University, November 18-19 2000), 19-48, on 28. See also Burles, *Chinese Policy*, 9; Anthony Davis, "Xinjiang Learns to Live with Resurgent Islam," *Jane's Intelligence Review* 8: 9 (September 1996), 417-21; Xu Tao, "Extremist Threat in Northwestern China," *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 5, 2000, 83-4; Rudelson, *Oasis Identities*, 21-3; Dodge Billingsley, "China Frets over Xinjiang Separatists," *Jane's Intelligence Review* 13: 11 (November 2001), 36.

²³⁴ Davis, "Xinjiang," 417-21; Guangcheng Xing, "China and Central Asia," Allison and Jonson, *Central Asian Security*, 152-170, on 163.

²³⁵ Hoh, "Hear Our Prayer," 24-5; Rudelson, *Oasis Identities*, 33.

²³⁶ Kyodo, 17 February 1999.

²³⁷ *Intelligence Digest*, 5 December 1997; *Economist*, 12 February 2000; Hoh, "Hear Our Prayer," 24-5. See also, e.g., Erkin Alptekin, "Eastern Turkistan After 32 Years of Exile," *Central Asian Survey* 1: 4 (1981), 149-53; RFE/RL *Crime and Corruption Watch* 2: 32 (12 September 2002); John Hill, "Interview: Enver Can," *Jane's Intelligence Review* 14: 10 (October 2002), 56; Interview with Asgar Can, *Kontinent* (Almaty) 14 (101), 16 July 2003 - 11 August 2003 (www.continent.kz).

²³⁸ East Turkestan Information Center web site, www.uygur.org; Xing, "China and Central Asia," 163; Naumkin, *Militant Islam*, 60.

²³⁹ *Washington Post*, 27 August 2002; Millward, *Violent Separatism*, 28.

²⁴⁰ Xing, "China and Central Asia," 163.

²⁴¹ Millward, *Violent Separatism*, 27-8. Chinese reports claim that Dolqun Isa is a member of the East Turkestan Liberation Organisation (ETLO; see below) and accuse him of terrorist activities.

²⁴² East Turkestan Information Center web site, www.uygur.org; Yitzhak Shichor, "Fact and Fiction: A Chinese Documentary on Eastern Turkestan Terrorism," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 4: 2 (2006), 89-108, on 103-4. See also their respective web sites, www.uyghurcongress.org and www.eastturkestangovernmentinexile.us.

political rivalry with other Uighur expatriate groups and have little or no involvement in Islamic extremism.

Kazakstan has a substantial Uighur minority of around 200,000.²⁴³ The largest of several Uighur political groups in the country are the United National Revolutionary Front of East Turkestan and the Uighur Liberation Organisation. The United National Revolutionary Front of East Turkestan, based in Kazakstan's former capital Almaty and led by Yusupbeg Muglisi (or Mukhlisi; also known as Modan Muglisi), advocates armed struggle against China.²⁴⁴ The more than eighty-year-old Muglisi organised the group in the mid-1970s, some say with KGB assistance, and in the mid-1990s made numerous wild claims, among them that he had nearly thirty armed units operating in Xinjiang.²⁴⁵ The Uighur (or Uighurstan) Liberation Organisation (ULO, *Uyg'ur Ozodlik Tashkiloti*), also based in Almaty, where it was formally registered as a legal political party in April 1991 by its founder and then head Hashir Wahidi (or Ashir Wahidi; killed in 1998), the then more than seventy years old former commander of the republic's military forces, has renounced violent means. Almaty is also the base of the Committee for Eastern Turkestan, formed in 1992 and headed by the aforementioned Yusupbeg Muglisi. Yet another group advocating armed struggle is the Organisation for East Turkestan Freedom. Several separatist parties were banned in 1996.²⁴⁶ The Committee for Eastern Turkestan, the Uighur Liberation Organisation, and what seems to have been yet another group, the International Uighur Union (or Uighur Trans-National Union), formed on 16 January 1992 in Almaty, have reportedly united to form the Uighur Political Union Committee.²⁴⁷ Other sources indicate that it was the Uighur Liberation Organisation and the United National Revolutionary Front of East Turkestan that merged, by 1999 (or in September 2001, in any case after the death of Wahidi), to form the unregistered Uighuristan People's Party or, as it was also known, the Association of Uighurs of Kazakstan. The joint group was reportedly led by Kakharman Khozhamberdi.²⁴⁸ By 1996, there was also the Attan organisation headed by Amantay Asilbekov,²⁴⁹ in addition to, within a few years, the Ittipak, the Nazgum charity, and the Society of Uighur Culture of Kazakstan.²⁵⁰

There are also several Uighur groups in Kyrgyzstan that advocate an independent state in Xinjiang, including the Society of Uighur Culture of Kyrgyzstan, the Ittipak Uighur Unity Association of Kyrgyzstan, based in Bishkek, and the political party For a Free Uighuristan, the latter created in June 1992.²⁵¹ Although some Uighurs in Kyrgyzstan are in favour of uniting with the Uighurs in Xinjiang, the mountainous nature of the Kyrgyz-Chinese border and the comparative lack of transportation infrastructure make this possibility far less acute than similar sentiments in Kazakstan, where certain groups have demanded territory from Kazakstan as well as China for an independent Uighur state.²⁵² Nonetheless, it appears that Kyrgyzstan has faced Chinese pressure to deal with its separatist Uighurs: in May 2000 five Uighur separatists were ordered deported to China. Perhaps in retaliation, a leading Chinese businessman was kidnapped in the Kyrgyzstani city of Osh by what may have been Uighur separatists, who demanded a ransom for his release. On 10 July 2000, the Kyrgyz government responded by arresting ten members of the Uighur Liberation Front, among whom were reportedly Uzbeks, Uighurs, Turks, Kyrgyz, and Chinese (citizens of Uighur origin?) who allegedly had fought in Chechnya and trained in Pakistan and Afghanistan.²⁵³ In November 2003, Kyrgyzstan banned two Uighur groups: the

²⁴³ Davis, "Xinjiang," 417-21; Glenn E. Curtis (ed), *Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan: Country Studies* (Washington, DC.: Library of Congress, 1997), 27.

²⁴⁴ This organisation has from time to time also called itself, or been called, the Revolutionary Front of East Turkestan, the United Revolutionary Group for Eastern Turkestan, and the United National Revolutionary Front (UNRF), unless either is yet another group; there are numerous Uighur factions. The group publishes the newsletter *Golos Vostochnogo Turkestana (Voice of Eastern Turkestan)*, edited by Yusupbeg Muglisi.

²⁴⁵ Millward, *Violent Separatism*, 25.

²⁴⁶ Davis, "Xinjiang," 417-21; Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism 10, 19 October 2000.

²⁴⁷ Xing, "China and Central Asia," 163.

²⁴⁸ Dillon, *Xinjiang*, 127; Millward, *Violent Separatism*, 19, 26.

²⁴⁹ Dillon, *Xinjiang*, 145.

²⁵⁰ Interview with Asgar Can, *Kontinent* (Almaty) 14 (101), 16 July 2003 - 11 August 2003 (www.continent.kz).

²⁵¹ See, e.g., Dillon, *Xinjiang*, 66.

²⁵² Jane's Sentinel: Kyrgyzstan, 31 October 2000; Jane's Sentinel: Kazakhstan, 2 January 2001; Davis, "Xinjiang," 417-21. See also Burles, *Chinese Policy*, 9-10, as well as 56-7.

²⁵³ Ahmed Rashid, "Central Asia Summary: Recent Developments in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan," *Eurasia Insight*, 18 January 2001 (www.eurasianet.org).

East Turkestan Liberation Organisation (ETLO, *Sharqiy Turkiston Ozodlik Tashkiloti*; headed by Mehmet Emin Hazret, in exile since 1989, and reportedly based in Istanbul²⁵⁴) and the East Turkestan Islamic Party.²⁵⁵

There is also a modest Uighur population in Uzbekistan.²⁵⁶ However, due to the authoritarian government there, it is unlikely that these Uighurs can mobilise within the country, even if they wanted to.

Some Uighur separatists also built up bases in Afghanistan, under Taliban protection. One such base at Kamsachi near Mazar-e Sharif was shared with the Udeshev group of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).²⁵⁷ Some 200 to 300 Uighurs are believed to have received military training in Taliban camps.²⁵⁸

Activities within China

There have also been armed groups within China. Already in December 1954, a separatist uprising took place in Khotan. It was suppressed, but further risings as well as violence against Han Chinese, often initiated by Sufi shaykhs, continued until April 1957.²⁵⁹ In 1967 or 1968 (or perhaps as early as 1963), the clandestine East Turkestan People's Revolutionary Party (ETPRP, *Sharqiy Turkiston Xalq Inqilobi Partiyasi*; at first called the Uighuristan Peoples' Party) was founded in Xinjiang, most likely as a reaction to the chaos of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). The party, which was secular, communist, and pro-Soviet in orientation, and may have received at least moral support from the Soviet Union, grew into a resistance movement that also came to include other groups, such as the League for the Struggle for East Turkestan Independence, the East Turkestan Youth National Salvation Army, and the Avengers Society. Although Chinese security forces already in 1969 managed to neutralise the movement, they did not manage to destroy it utterly. Small groups of insurgents remained. Some of them in January to March 1981 established a resistance organisation known as the Eastern Turkestan Prairie Fire Party, with its own National People's Liberation Front, which on 26 May 1981 attacked a military depot. However, the uprising was suppressed almost before it began.²⁶⁰

No Uighur movement subsequently appears to have maintained any presence within Xinjiang until the early 1990s. Ethnic violence, from 1980 onwards, directed against Han Chinese seemed spontaneous and of local origin.²⁶¹ The reasons appear to be several. First, the fragmentation of the Soviet Union gave a higher latitude of freedom in the new Central Asian republics which allowed an increased level of Uighur political mobilisation, and helped convince Uighurs in Xinjiang that the same could happen in China too. Second, the Han Chinese immigration to Xinjiang, actively sponsored by the Chinese government, continuously increased the non-Uighur population in Xinjiang from below 5 per cent of the total population in 1950 to somewhere over 40 per cent today, which makes the Uighurs feel swamped. Third, the spread of radical Islam inspired the Muslim population of Xinjiang to reassert itself, especially when Chinese policies on religion and minorities in the early 1980s grew increasingly liberal (cultural and religious reforms took place in 1978, followed by the opening of Xinjiang to foreign trade and tourism in 1985²⁶²). Funds for the building of new mosques and the opening of Islamic seminaries increasingly arrived from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. Finally, the opening of the region to cross-border trade and economic growth has brought outside ideas as well as funds and at the same time caused further resentment as local Uighurs saw Chinese interests take in the majority of the new money.²⁶³

However, in 1989 new bouts of violent anti-Chinese riots took place, for instance in Xinjiang's capital Urumchi. Other riots followed in and around major cities such as Kashgar and Yining (also known as

²⁵⁴ Millward, *Violent Separatism*, 24-5; Shichor, "Fact and Fiction," 96; B. Raman, *Explosions in Xinjiang* (South Asia Analysis Group Paper 1232, 27 January 2005; www.saag.org), which summaries a number of Chinese official reports.

²⁵⁵ *IWPR's Reporting Central Asia* 250 (4 December 2003).

²⁵⁶ Burles, *Chinese Policy*, 8.

²⁵⁷ Rashid, "From Deobandism to Batken;" Rashid, "Heart of Darkness," 8-12; Joakim Enwall, "Towards a Sociolinguistic History of Sinkiang," Mirja Juntunen and Birgit N. Schlyter (eds), *Return to the Silk Routes: Current Scandinavian Research on Central Asia* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1999), 119-131, on 129.

²⁵⁸ *Economist*, 29 September 2001.

²⁵⁹ Dillon, *Xinjiang*, 52-5, 119; Millward, *Violent Separatism*, 6.

²⁶⁰ Dillon, *Xinjiang*, 57-60; Millward, *Violent Separatism*, 7, 8, 33 n.11.

²⁶¹ Dillon, *Xinjiang*, 59-61; Millward, *Violent Separatism*, 8, 9.

²⁶² Rudelson, *Oasis Identities*, 123.

²⁶³ Davis, "Xinjiang," 417-21.

Ghulja to the Kazaks and Uighurs and Ili in Russian). Both Uighurs and Chinese Muslims (Hui, Dungan) participated.²⁶⁴

The situation grew far worse in the following year. On 5 April 1990, an armed uprising took place in Baren, near Kashgar. It eventually became clear that an extremist group led by Zeydin or Zahideen Yusuf had planned the rising since the previous year. The extremists attacked government targets in southwestern Xinjiang in inspiration of the Afghan mujahidin. Yusuf was soon killed, yet violence began to appear over wide areas indicating a pattern of if not outright co-ordination, then at least a network of militant separatists.²⁶⁵ The Chinese government blamed a new, previously unheard of local Islamic group known as the Islamic Party (or Islamic Movement) of East Turkestan. Further unrest and bombings followed in 1992-1993, and in 1993, the government blamed another group, the Islamic Reformists' Party, reportedly founded in October 1990.²⁶⁶ The names of the groups indicate that both were clerical, not secular. The extremist groups were also reputed to build links with Uighur-organised crime networks operating in Beijing, Guangzhou, and other major cities.²⁶⁷ A series of terrorist activities connected with the movement followed, including a campaign of sporadic violence against ethnic Chinese in Xinjiang, the planting of bombs and attacks on police and military personnel, as well as bank robberies to finance the movement. Particularly serious disturbances took place in Yining in April 1995, in Aksu in February to April 1996, and again in Yining in February 1997. Ethnic Uighur officials including establishment clergy and family planning staff were also targeted. As before, both Uighurs and Hui were involved.²⁶⁸ Expatriate representatives of the extremist movement also claimed responsibility for a bomb attack in China's capital Beijing on 7 March 1997 with at least a dozen casualties.²⁶⁹ Further attacks followed in 1998, 1999, and perhaps 2000.²⁷⁰ Eventually, on 21 January 2002, China's State Council released a report that named Hassan Mahsum (killed in Pakistan on 2 October 2003; possibly succeeded by Abudumijit Muhammadkelim, alias Zibibulla, or Abudula Kariaji, alias Abdulla Dawut²⁷¹), the leader of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM, *Sharqiy Turkiston Islom Harakati*), a beneficiary of Usamah bin Ladin's Al-Qaida network.²⁷² In anticipation of Chinese President Jiang Zemin's scheduled visit to the United States in October 2002 and as a reward for China's public announcement of its regulations for the export of missile technology, the United States in late August 2002 designated the East Turkestan Islamic Movement a terrorist group.²⁷³ There were also other local groups in Xinjiang, however. These by 1997 and 1998 apparently include (or included) bands known variously as the Tigers (or Wolves) of Lop Nor, the Ghulja Liberation Movement, and the *Shaniyaz* (some groups, such as the Tigers of Lop Nor, may never have existed except in the imagination of Muglisi and other expatriate Uighur leaders).²⁷⁴

The East Turkestan movement may be the only truly native separatist organisation in northern Central Asia, having emerged out of its own base rather than through any Wahhabi-inspired international Islamic networks. However, there appears to be two, very different, strands in the movement's background. The exile groups based in Istanbul and Germany seem to remain secular and nationalist, while the younger generation of the movement, and certainly the groups based in Central Asia, are clearly in sympathy and maintain links with the Wahhabi movement. While the older East Turkestan groups were nationalist and

²⁶⁴ Burles, *Chinese Policy*, 9-10; Dillon, *Xinjiang*, 60-61.

²⁶⁵ Dillon, *Xinjiang*, 62-5; Mackerras, "Xinjiang," 24 with notes.

²⁶⁶ Dillon, *Xinjiang*, 67-8, 155. On the Islamic Party of Allah of East Turkestan, as the Islamic group has been called by Chinese officials, see *ibid.*, 96.

²⁶⁷ Davis, "Xinjiang," 417-21.

²⁶⁸ Dillon, *Xinjiang*, 68-71, 86-90, 92-101, 106, 108, 110, 112, 115-20; Millward, *Violent Separatism*, 14-19.

²⁶⁹ Burles, *Chinese Policy*, 9-10; Rudelson, *Oasis Identities*, 170-171; Dillon, *Xinjiang*, 100-101, 115; Millward, *Violent Separatism*, 18.

²⁷⁰ Dillon, *Xinjiang*, 120-24, 126-30; Millward, *Violent Separatism*, 19.

²⁷¹ *Dawn*, 24 December 2003; Rohan Gunaratna and Kenneth George Pereire, "An Al-Qaeda Associate Group Operating in China?" *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 4: 2 (2006), 55-61, on 60.

²⁷² Mark Berniker, "China's Uighur Policy Draws Critics in Kazakhstan," *Eurasianet*, 29 January 2002 (www.eurasianet.org). Hassan Mahsum reportedly even offered to find Usamah bin Ladin and his family sanctuary somewhere in China. Roland Jacquard, *Les archives secrètes d'Al-Qaida: Révélations sur les héritiers de Ben Laden* (Paris: Jean Picollec, 2002), 135. Mahsum, a native of Kashgar, had left Xinjiang in 1997. Shichor, "Fact and Fiction," 97-8.

²⁷³ *Washington Post*, 27 August 2002.

²⁷⁴ *Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism* 10, 19 October 2000; *Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism* 11, 31 January 2001; Dillon, *Xinjiang*, 110, 114, 120; Millward, *Violent Separatism*, 27, 35 n.33.

secular, the younger groups found Islam their unifying factor and drew inspiration from the Soviet Afghan war.²⁷⁵ The Pakistani organisation Tabligh is believed to have sent supplies to Xinjiang and has provided religious instruction.²⁷⁶ So has the Hizb ut-Tahrir. In June 2001, two Hizb-ut Tahrir cells were reportedly found by Chinese security forces: one in Urumchi and one in Khotan.²⁷⁷

The Islamic approach to insurgency in Xinjiang is probably more fruitful than the older, fundamentally intellectual nationalist ideology. While Uighur intellectuals frequently describe themselves as Turkic and Uighurs, the majority of the population appears to see themselves as Muslims first and Uighurs second. Besides, the majority of Uighur intellectuals lives in Urumchi where they are isolated from and out of touch with the peasantry.²⁷⁸

To maintain stability in Xinjiang and fight separatism, China has emphasised the need for economic development of Xinjiang. One way to achieve this is through increased trade with the Central Asian republics. However, this policy is a double-edged sword, since it also brings the risk of increased religious activity from Islamic groups in those countries. Cross-border trade may also be used by extremist groups to bring financial or material aid to their supporters in China. If separatist activity in Xinjiang or political instability in Central Asia were to increase, the Chinese leaders may decide to restrict activity along the border, regardless of the consequences for economic development.²⁷⁹ The 1990s have already seen sweeping purges of unauthorised Islamic clerics and mosques, together with severe restrictions on Islamic activity in Xinjiang.²⁸⁰

So far, the Uighurs appear to be satisfied with fighting China. Although there is a considerable ethnic Uighur population also in the former Soviet Central Asian republics, the movement's leaders appear to regard these states as bases rather than targets for separatist activities. This would indicate that there is little chance of the movement instigating terrorism outside China's borders. On the other hand, the fact that some Uighur separatists built up bases also in Afghanistan, and there - under Taliban protection - established contacts with Islamic extremists from the Arab Afghan movement (who in their turn may have involved themselves also in Xinjiang²⁸¹) indicates that the Islamic wing of the East Turkestan movement has the potential to turn into a more general security threat to the region. Not even China's protégé Pakistan has been successful in preventing its own Islamic extremists, such as the Jamaat-e Islami movement, from assisting separatists in Xinjiang.²⁸² Chinese officials in 2002 indicated that over a hundred Uighurs who had received terrorist training in Afghanistan and other countries subsequently were arrested in Xinjiang.²⁸³ Besides, strikes against Chinese interests in important cities such as Hong Kong and Shanghai, and abroad, cannot be ruled out. These too might affect foreign, including Western, interests.

A further problem for China is that the influx of Han Chinese into Xinjiang appears to have come to an end. Recent years have even seen a net outflow of Han Chinese because of the lifting of residency controls and the establishment of a reasonably free labour market. Those Han Chinese who are able to migrate are increasingly attracted to the vibrant economies of the coastal, eastern regions of China, where many of them still have relatives.²⁸⁴ For the Chinese leaders, who have noted the flight of ethnic Russians out of the former Soviet Central Asian republics, this is a worrying prospect.

Conclusions

While Islamic extremism is a political force in Central Asia, Islamic extremists have not, so far, showed much success in actually gaining political power. Political parties based on Islamic extremist ideology have, as noted, been banned everywhere except in Tajikistan, but even there they have never done well in

²⁷⁵ Davis, "Xinjiang," 417-21.

²⁷⁶ Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism 10, 19 October 2000.

²⁷⁷ *Economist*, 29 September 2001, 30 March 2002.

²⁷⁸ Rudelson, *Oasis Identities*, 117-20, 133.

²⁷⁹ Burles, *Chinese Policy*, 14, 57.

²⁸⁰ Davis, "Xinjiang," 417-21.

²⁸¹ Michele Zanini, "Middle Eastern Terrorism and Netwar," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 22: 3 (1999): 247-56, on 250. See also Burles, *Chinese Policy*, 18.

²⁸² See, e.g., Burles, *Chinese Policy*, 18, based on "Unwelcome Traffic," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 7 December 1995, 40.

²⁸³ Information Office of State Council (People's Republic of China), "East Turkistan" Terrorist Forces Cannot Get Away With Impunity (2002; www.china-un.org).

²⁸⁴ ICG, *Central Asia: Islamist Mobilisation*, 25.

elections. The closest to power any Central Asian Islamic party has come was in Tajikistan, where the IRPT - through the UTO - achieved a certain level of participation in the national government. This, however, depended far more on the ability of the UTO to shed its extremist segments than on any gains the organisation could possibly have made by retaining them. In the final analysis, the extremists preferred to stay in the mountains with their guns than to engage with secular groups, even though this excluded them from the political process and in the end condemned many of them to a violent death in Afghanistan.

Moreover, Islamic extremism has, as noted, invariably displayed a very simplistic ideology. There are no indications that any Islamic extremist leaders ever made actual preparations for, or indeed thought about, how to rule their much desired Islamic state, had they succeeded in creating one. Even the Taliban never bothered to build any form of civilian administration, being content with a military chain of command which in itself always remained vague and ill-defined. The often-expressed desire to build an Islamic state purely on Islamic law thus does not inspire confidence in any Islamic extremist movement's ability actually to run such a state.

The conclusion then seems obvious. Rejecting all forms of modernity except weapons of war, the proponents of Islamic extremism remain unable to gain political power in any Central Asian state. An armed Islamic extremist group could, perhaps, gain military power over certain regions, such as happened in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, but it would still - like the Taliban - reject the means of ruling over any community more politically advanced than a cluster of villages. Neither the IMU in their Tajikistani bases nor the Taliban in Afghanistan ever bothered to rule their domains as anything but militarily occupied territories. They allowed, in most cases, their dependants to go on making a living through whatever means had been put at their disposal by earlier regimes, but they did not make any attempts to build public utilities, maintain the roads, or provide for the population under their control. In short, they had no interest in civil society and despised the means necessary to run a modern state.

This does not rule out the possibility that political forces based on Muslim culture, rather than Islamic singlemindedness, could grow in importance in the political life of the Central Asian states. After all, most current Central Asian rulers chose to reinvent themselves as devout Muslims after shedding the public trappings of socialism. Local Muslim culture and traditions have gained in popularity, since they provide means to emphasise the uniqueness of each new state vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, Russia, and the neighbouring states. Muslim culture has indeed been used as a religio-ideological base of national independence in the former Soviet Central Asian states. However, two factors work against this development. First, traditional Islam was thoroughly discredited by its support to the secular powers during the Soviet era, and except on the village level, where local traditions may well persist, does not seem able to attract urban youth as much as the extremist groups. Second, it is Islamic extremism, not traditional Central Asian Sufi Islam and interest in Muslim traditions, that grows fastest among the modern Islamic sects. There is a considerable body of evidence for this in the West (the most important of which being the fact that since most new and existing mosques are funded by Wahhabi sources in the Middle East, Wahhabi Islam accordingly becomes prominent in them), and the situation in Central Asia, while not easily quantifiable, seems to show the same characteristics. One could indeed argue that there is a risk that a more sophisticated Islamic extremist party, perhaps an offshoot of the Hizb ut-Tahrir, eventually might wish to take part in democratic elections to gain political power, only to abolish the democratic system in favour of Islamic law and totalitarianism once its leaders assume control over the government (according to the formula sometimes referred to as 'one man-one vote-one election').

However, no currently existing Islamic extremist group seems willing, or able, to challenge the secular state with much hope of success in a democratic election. As noted, the IRPT renounced violent means and re-entered the democratic process; yet did not gain a majority vote.

If traditional Islam cannot regain its status in the mind of the believers, then the contest will be between those who advocate Islamic extremism and those who support the structures of the secular state. Since the extremists reject political means and regard the struggle as a military matter, the contest will have to be military rather than political. However, no extremist group can build a fighting force strong enough to defeat the full military might of the modern secular state. One could perhaps argue that a militarily weak country such as Kyrgyzstan could be overrun by extremists. However, even if this should occur, the argument would be irrelevant, since the very threat from international Islamic extremism would then bring in the forces of far more powerful states, such as the United States, Russia, and perhaps even China. It is extremely unlikely that more than, at most, a handful of the extremist leaders really expect to win any global showdown with both the West and the comparatively secular Islamic states which they profess to fight. The fact that their objectives appear to derive from local rather than global factors speaks against such an interpretation. Besides, any overview of the means of coercion and violence available to the parties in the conflict indicates that the states remain vastly more powerful with regard to the use of force. In the end, the proponents of Islamic extremism will not be able to take power in Central Asia - but the road there may well be long and littered with corpses.

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