
Soviet ideology had envisioned that the Central Asian republics of Kazakhsthan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan would ultimately become more economically developed and integrated into a larger arrangement. Furthermore, the ideology maintained that the proper understanding of social relations consonant with Marxist and a-religious principles would eventually replace the social role of religion in these societies. With the unexpected dissolution of the USSR and the Soviet project far from complete, the Central Asian republics turned to the only realistic alternative to Soviet atheistic ideology: Islam.

Today, Islamic values and expectations have a strong influence on politics in the five contiguous Central Asian republics. In turn, the politics of the region is influenced by international Islamic movements and other geopolitical forces. However, unlike many regions of the world and that unique to Central Asia, the revival of Islamic teachings and practices has emerged from the shadows of seven decades of Soviet ideology and practices. As a result, one observes two different ways in which Islam is made to play a role in the politics of Central Asia: an Islam in tune with the interests of those in state power and another in tune with the political aspirations of the Islamist parties opposing the state.

In this chapter, I argue that the Soviet experiment and its legacy are embedded in the Central Asian republics' new nationalism and their response to resurgent Islam. I examine the way in which religious Islamic teachings were managed and policed during the Soviet era and the remnants of this legacy on the now-independent Central Asian republics, focusing in particular on the Uzbekistan experience. I also argue that this current policy by the Central Asian governments of suppressing religious aspirations is acting as a catalyst for the radicalization of Islamic movements in Central Asia.

Islamic presence in Central Asia

An Islamic revival has been underway during the past decade, as the Muslims of Central Asia rediscover their heritage and renew their faith. Today, Islamic beliefs and practices are ubiquitous and pervade nearly all aspects of social
relations, from valorizations (Attachment Attitudes) to prayers (Karma Aspects) in various settings. Many mosques and madrasas constructed during the medieval era are being restored and new ones built at an unprecedented rate.

Near the city of Bukhara, Uzbekistan, stands the mosque and mausoleum of the thirteenth-century Sufi Muslim scholar and one of the founders of the Naqshbandiyya tariqah, revealed the most revered mystic and saint in Central Asia. The mosque contains both relics, including the tomb of Muhammad Iskandar Naqshbandi. Throughout the day, devout Muslim pilgrims arrive from various cities, as well as nearby Bukhara, itself regarded as the holiest Islamic city in Central Asia, to pay homage to Naqshbandi. They walk three times around the sacred tomb in the belief that such rituals will heal bodily infirmities. Many travelers also stop by to rest beneath a thick and heavy branch of an ancient tree on the site, believing that if done three times, their back pain will disappear; others leave messages scrawled on scraps of paper or pieces of cloth tucked tightly between crevices of the tree, imploring assistance from Allah. Sojourners too arrive at the Naqshbandiyya mosque to perform sacrifices of lambs, as thanks to Allah for blessings received by their families. In fact, Muslim Tajiks and Uzbek in the region maintain that walking from the regional capital city of Bukhara to the Naqshbandiyya mosque and back ten times in one's life is the equivalent of the obligatory Hajj to Mecca, thus permitting believers to fall into one of the five pillars of Islam.

In addition to the development of personal spirituality, Islam encourages believers to develop a sense of social concern for the less fortunate and justice for society. While Sufi mystics generally avoid involvement in politics, the followers of Naqshbandiyya tariqah historically have advocated political responsibility, and in the tenth and early twentieth centuries, they actively resisted both tsarist and Soviet domination.

Soviet experiment and legacy

During the Soviet era, certain heavy industries were placed in Central Asia to incorporate the natural resources of Russia's border regions into the Soviet Union's developing and industrializing economy. Collective farms were also created for increased cotton production to develop the nascent textile industry. Nevertheless, during the ensuing seven decades, Soviet leaders, both union-wide and in Central Asia, would develop an uneasy relationship between the growth of state bureaucracies and their social and economic policies and the intermittent of rapid tolerance of religious expressions, as the Soviet Union sought a solution to the dilemma of freedom and necessity. From a neutral point of view, the history of the Soviet Union may be seen as a modern social experiment to resolve the persistent problem of conflict that has plagued liberal democracies. It attempted to overcome the ultimate incompatibility of the Cartesian dualism between private interest and public good by arguing for the preferable and possible identification of the one with the other. That is, the seamless and universal quest for a just society free from the turmoil of competing interests would be achieved if the objectives of private interests and the common good were identical.

Declaring to have discovered the natural laws of social development and thus the ability to explain and solve this riddle of identification, the Soviet Union promulgated its Marxist-Leninist ideology that claimed the ability to eradicate social conflict and achieve social justice. This ideology served as the guiding ethos of political, economic, and social arrangements throughout society. With an ideological alternative to Western theories of liberal democracy that historically had given legitimacy to unbridled and short-sighted competition, the all-inclusive justification of the policies of the Soviet state was used to pursue and subsume economic activity within it as an effort to achieve social justice.

One consequence of the Soviet attempt to overcome the public–private dichotomy was to render irrelevant the raison d'être of civil society: the maintenance of a tension between the contrary and competing values of private interest and public good. Since the claims of private interest and public good were theoretically synonymous under the Soviet model, the tension between the two theoretically dissolved. Without any tension to be maintained through the nurturing of formerly competing sets of values, the need for voluntary associations also disappeared. Guided by this model, the practical development of a vibrant civil society in the Soviet Union waned nearly to extinction as the state early on extended its political reach into virtually all aspects of social and economic life, including those of the cultural, ethnic, and religious subgroups of Central Asia.

For seven decades, nonetheless, the Soviet Union was guided by sophisticated theories that meshed poorly with practical problems. But as the fervor of theoretical righteousness slowly damped with time, the search for practical solutions to practical problems crept to the fore. Ironically, the last 30 years of Soviet history witnessed the political authorities gradually weaving themselves away from total state control of social decision-making toward greater reliance on independent civil society of voluntary associations throughout the republics. Indeed, the greater flow of ideas from and communication with the West as well as an ever more inefficient economy operating alongside an expansion in social welfare programs made it increasingly difficult for the Soviet Union to govern along narrow ideological lines. In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the Communist Party (1985–91), advanced new policies of glasnost (openness to expanded press freedom and artistic expression, and, later, religious freedom) and perestroyka (restructuring of economic decision-making and infrastructure). This greater reliance on a capable citizenry, as in the West, was seen by the Soviet leadership as a practical step toward maintaining power while resolving its economic and budgetary crises.

Yet just as the door began to open for the re-emergence of civil society, including significant relaxation of restrictions on religious activities begun in the 1980s, the Soviet empire imploded, its attempt to institutionalize its
ideal of justice faltered and collapsed after seven decades. Shortly before and immediately following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the five Central Asian Soviet socialist republics proclaimed and gained their independence. Facing enormous economic and social problems, they began their independence with only their Soviet-era authoritarian bureaucratic structures left intact. Conflict and uncertainty have arisen, as well, over the place and role of Islam. Key to understanding Islam and politics in Central Asia today is recognition of two apparently contradictory and incompatible yet simultaneously held and interrelated theoretical claims, or antinomies, in previous Soviet practices.

The antinomies

The first antinomy: in the process of constructing artificial political territories and institutions to undermine the threat from bourgeois nationalist tendencies, the Soviet Union laid the foundation for nationalism to prevail in the post-Soviet era. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Russian empire steadily expanded its reach through the conquests of Central Asia, the annexation of Bessarabia, and the khansates of Bukhara, Samarkand, Khiva, and Kokand. With the establishment of Muslim population centres along the Ganges River nearly complete, Tsar Nicholas II (1868–1918) may have been considering embarking upon further expulsions of conquest into British-controlled India. However, complications of the European anti-war policies and war, including the bourgeois-democratic Russian revolution of February 1917 and the Bolsheviks' seizure of power on October that same year, arrested any potential expansion of the Russian empire. With their seizure of state power, the Bolsheviks inherited most of the territories under the previous tsarist government's rule, including the Central Asian region known as Russian Turkestan.

Realizing the immaturity and immensity of their territorial acquisitions with these diverse nationalities, the Bolsheviks descended into discord regarding problems of disparity between theory and practice. Advocates of strict adherence to Communist tenets exalted acceptance of the legitimacy of nationalism, assuming that nationalist aspirations enabled capitalist imperialism with its system of exploitation and oppression of the labouring masses by the elite. Yet since industrialization had hardly touched Turkestan and its Muslim population, a Marxist-Leninist ideology with its focus on the plight of the proletariat seemed hardly appropriate to rally local supporters to defend and promote the socialist objectives of the Soviet Union. Pragmatists, on the other hand, purposed utilization of ethnic nationalism as an indirect approach to garner support for socialist policies.

In April 1917, Stalin weighed on the 'national question'. Siding with the pragmatists, he argued that those regions with non-Russian populations, customs, and languages, including Turkestan, should be given regional autonomy. Indeed, a year later the new Bolshevik government proclaimed the existence of the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Republic. This apparent nod toward nationalism over ideology was seen by Stalin and his supporters as a technique to resist the bourgeois forces with their own appeal to nationalism; those forces had been engaged in earlier efforts to rid Central Asia of Russian colonialism and were now actively resisting the presence of the new Soviet regime.

Pursuing this path of national recognition, on 31 December 1922 the first Congress of Soviets ratified the Declaration and Treaty of Union that created the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which was composed of the following national republics: the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, and the Transcaucasian Soviet Socialist Republic. Later, Annexation proceeded on the best approach for the eventual incorporation of the other national groupings. Yet among the Muslim population of Turkestan, popular appeal of anti-Soviet movements grew, principally led by the Basmachi Rebellion (primarily 1918–24), consisting of Islamic traditionalists, progressive nationalist intelligentsia, and bandits. The Basmachi rebellion fought a guerilla war against the Red Army, leading uprisings in the Ferghana and Pamir regions of Central Asia, thus forcing the Soviet government again to address the national question more directly. The government used a combination of military force and conciliation to defeat the Basmachi, especially according to ethnic demands, including the reversal of anti-Islamic policies instigated during the Civil War (1918–22).

Following the military defeat of the Basmachi, the short-lived Turkestan ASSR (1917–24) was eventually dismembered into five national republics and admitted as constituent republics of the USSR: the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (1921), the Tatar Soviet Socialist Republic (1922), the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic (1929), the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (1936), and the Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic (1936). Furthermore, Stalin advocated local control of government and party by the indigenous peoples, noting that Kirghiz, Uzbek, Bashkir and other languages are an actual reality. He argued that the personnel selected and appointed to government institutions and the Communist Party should be recruited from 'the local people acquainted with the manner of life, habits, customs and language of the native population'.

While these republics were ostensibly created on the basis of a conquered national identity, in fact all attempts to recognize national territory were primarily used by the Soviet central government to undercut bourgeois nationalist tendencies, indeed, the major Muslim populated centres of Central Asia, the Ferghana Valley, was divided among the Kirghiz SSR, Tadzhik SSR, and Uzbek SSR. Furthermore, the territorial boundaries of the republics did not strictly adhere to the location of the diverse national populations. For example, the two largest cities of Tajik residents, Bukhara and Samarqand, were
assigned to the Uzbek SSR, not the Tadzhik SSR. Consequently, nearly all of the republics contained substantial numbers of diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groups whose interests could be manipulated to serve as obstacles to control by any single group, thus undermining nationalistic tendencies. Eventually, according to Soviet ideology, nationalism would be replaced with internationalism and the USSR itself would become part of a World Soviet Socialist Republic. 13 As a consequence of this strategy, when the USSR was dissolved in 1991, the newly independent republics and sovereign nations-states were left lacking a coherent public philosophy to develop a new sense of identity.

The second antithesis is an extension of the first, with the demise of the Soviet Union's foundational, atheistic ideology that had attempted to control and rule life in the absence of socialist objectives that would ultimately undermine the appeal of religion, traditional and fundamentalist religious beliefs have surged forth to fill the void left by the discredit of Soviet ideology. The unintended consequences of perestroika resulted in the dismemberment of the Soviet Union into 15 national republics; similarly, glasnost opened the door to consideration of alternative ideologies and renewed expressions of spirituality. The reassertment of the legitimacy of religious faith resulted primarily in the reinvigoration of those traditions of the past. In Central Asia, the Muslim faith had not been completely eradicated and thus garnered attention as the basis for religious life as well as the foundation for a new nationalism. Ironically, Soviet attitudes and policies toward religion had engendered certain sympathy for the value of things spiritual.

Prior to 1991, the Soviet government's attitude toward religion was arbitrary and changeable. In November 1937, the Soviet government declared and respected freedom of religious belief and expression of all Muslims. 14 However, while incorporating representatives of local nationalities to strengthen implementation of and compliance with Soviet policies, Stalin also noted that organizers of the local Communist parties in Turkestan tended to base their social assessments and arguments less on class analysis and more on an appeal to nationalism under the label of Pan-Islamism. 15 A secular movement, Pan-Islamism attempted to link Muslim modernists, who professed political freedom as a means to create ethnic units with access to natural resources, with Muslim traditionalists, who advocated unification of the umma to create a regional theocracy or caliphate. 16 However, the Bolsheviks perceived Pan-Islamism as simply a tool by the ruling classes in Muslim societies to stifle the socialist revolution; they also regarded religion as merely a veneer for the pain and suffering of the exploited masses.

At the end of the 1920s, the Soviet government initiated a new, wide-ranging campaign against religion. This campaign included the closing of Muslim courts, madrasas, and mosques, and the prohibition of Islamic publications, as well as the use of Arabic script. To discredit religion, Stalin called upon the Communist Party to form Marxist study groups at the local level, to publish Marxist literature in the native languages, and to form a

University of the Peoples of the East for disseminating Marxist principles to a wider audience. 17 In pursuing these activities, Stalin believed that local nationalist aspirations would be converted to internationalism and religious adherence to atheism, as the peasantry began to see their former position of oppression in the worldwide system of capitalism and imperialism and the cynical use of religion by that system.

The anti-religious campaign in Central Asia, however, failed to lead to the "mass atheism" that occurred when the Soviet government closed Christian churches in Soviet Europe. 18 During and following the Second World War, the Soviet government lifted slightly its restrictions on Muslim practices in Central Asia. To regulate Muslim affairs, four Muslim Spiritual Directorates were created to control and regulate religious practices. The most significant Directorate was located in Tashkent, Uzbek SSR, and, until 1969, the only two muftis approved to reopen were located in Bukhara and Tashkent. In addition, a small number of mosques were permitted to reopen; the publication of certain religious literature was approved, including an Uzbek translation of the Qur'an; and a select few Muslim believers were permitted annually to make the Haji to Mecca. Furthermore, the earliest extant manuscript of the Qur'an, known as the Mushaf of Othman, was returned to Tashkent from St. Petersburg; where it had been taken by the tsarist government in 1884.

Considered one of the holiest treasures of Islam and superseding all other versions of the Qur'an, Central Asian Muslims believe the Qur'an text to be a seventh-century manuscript, a copy of the recitation of the Qur'an compiled under the rule of Othman (644-656), within 25 years of the Prophet's death. 19 In order to advance Soviet domestic and international objectives, these efforts that alternately attempted to eradicate then please religious sensitivities were similar to those that alternately attempted to undermine then reconcile nationalistic tendencies. Perhaps, given enough time, such utilitarian methods would have been successful in resolving the antinomies of Soviet religious theory and practice. The unexpected demise of the Soviet Union, however, truncated its social experiment, thus leaving its hypotheses untested. More important, though, its experimental designs were left intact, thus permitting advocates of religion and nationalism to find common ground in their defense of the new republics of Central Asia.

The new republics of Central Asia

With the unanticipated and unwanted dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian republics gained their independence. Uzbekistan (September 9, 1991), Kyrgyzstan (September 5, 1991), Tajikistan (September 29, 1991), Turkmenistan (October 1991), and Kazakhstan (December 1991). Since independence, the republics have been forced to confront the daunting challenge of retaining their new nation-state status and building a new sense of national identity. Nevertheless, although the Soviet Union disappeared, the Soviet system remained. The former Communist leaders, who are now
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in their transition toward a market economy and democratic policy. Primarily, the discovery of extensive oil and natural gas reserves comparable to those of the Persian Gulf in Uzbekistan, as well as in Kazakstan and Turkmenistan, have attracted Western business interests and investments. From cooperative assistance and training programmes to joint economic ventures and even military alliances, the US government has applied considerable pressure on Karimov's government in fundamental political and economic reform. Karimov's attempt to effect a transition from the Soviet model to liberal society, however, has resulted in a non-traditional form of authoritarianism in which power resides as much in the person of the president as in the office.

The Constitution of Uzbekistan and subsequent amendments and legislation have in effect shifted the strayed powers of the state to typically found in constitutional democratic governance to the executive branch, through the president's control over the personnel composition of the People's Democratic Party that provides most of the candidates for the Oliy Majlis, the judiciary, the bakhori (local governors and city mayors), and the administrators and councils of the mahallas (neighborhood associations). In contrast with the Communist Party that controlled the Uzbek government during the Soviet era, today the president controls the Uzbek government through appointments to party and state positions with plenary authority to remove appointees. This form of presidentialism, as opposed to party control, has resulted in a powerful Uzbek state run by Karimov and other former Communist elites.

Thus, while the state has the facade of an electoral regime by permitting (only government-approved) political parties to compete, it may more accurately be seen as a non-competitive authoritarian regime. One unfortunate consequence of this political hierarchy based on de facto concentration of powers and operated by elites from the Soviet era is the continued use of violent tactics and intimidation, also from that era.

Civil society, religion and nationalism in Uzbekistan

Western nations encouraged the reinvigoration of civil society in Central Asia to protect religious freedom. The idea of civil society minimally requires a set of shared values, even as a basis for diversity and tolerance. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the attempt to create shared values based on Marxism-Leninism formally disappeared, leaving a vacuum to be filled by another ideology or public philosophy. In Uzbekistan, as in the other Central Asian republics, the only existing philosophical framework that commands widespread appeal sufficient to lay the foundation for an alternative public philosophy is that of Islam. While approximately 80 per cent of Uzbek conrons are only nominally Muslim (Sunni), the past millennium of Islamic theological development has produced many schools of religious thought throughout Central Asia. The major differences appear to have less to do with doctrine and practice per se than with social ethics. That is, Islamic teachings have steadfastly focused on the moral imperative of the individual to contribute to the

dominant presidents of the Central Asian republics, have retained and enhanced their political position, despite nominal attempts at democratic and competitive elections. They are: Askar Akayev (president of Kyrgyzstan since 1990), Islam Karimov (president of Uzbekistan since 1990), Nauruzbayev (president of Kazakhstan since 1991), Saparmurat Niyazov (president of Turkmenistan since 1991), and Emomalii Rahmonov (president of Tajikistan since 1992). While Rahmonov governs Tajikistan with a coalition of secular and religious leaders, and Niyazov rules Turkmenistan on the basis of a personality cult, the political life and governance of Karimov in Uzbekistan typifies the common trend of Central Asian national leaders.

Ismail Abduqhamidovich Karimov was born on 30 January 1938, in the ancient and historic city of Samarkand in the southeastern part of the Uzbek SSR. An ethnic Uzbek, Karimov was born into a family of civil servants, a background that provided him with opportunities to pursue higher education, and at the same time climb up the higher echelons of public service. In 1963 he was appointed minister of finance of the Uzbek SSR, and in 1968 he became deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers and deputy head of government of the Uzbek SSR as well as chairman of the State Planning Office. Concurrently with his rise through the bureaucracy of the Soviet republic's government, Karimov also rose rapidly in the ranks of the Communist Party of the Uzbek SSR. In 1986 he was appointed first secretary of the Communist Party of the Karshi Darya oblast, a region in southern Uzbekistan that borders Afghanistan. In June 1989 he became first secretary of the central committee of the Communist Party of the Uzbek SSR and on 24 March 1990, the Supreme Soviets of the Uzbek SSR elected him president.

With the demise of the Soviet Union in 1990, Karimov became head of the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (the new name for the former Communist Party of the Uzbek SSR). On 31 August 1991, he declared the independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and called for national elections to fill the seats in the revived Oliy Majlis (the Supreme Assembly, Uzbekistan's unicameral parliament that replaced the Supreme Soviets) and to choose the republic's first post-Uzbek SSR president. In a multi-candidate competition and the first nationwide election for president, Karimov was elected to a five-year term as president on 29 December 1991 (four days after the official dissolution of the Soviet Union), with more than 86 per cent of the vote. On 8 December 1992, the Oliy Majlis adopted a new constitution modelled after those of other liberal-democratic governments. On 26 March 1995, in accordance with a national plebiscite, Karimov's period of office was extended to 2000. On 9 January 2000, with only a single token opposition candidate, Karimov was re-elected for another term, which was set to end in 2005. However, on 27 January 2002, in another plebiscite, Uzbek voters extended the presidential term of office from five to seven years, with Karimov now projected to leave office in 2007.

Despite Karimov's longevity in office, liberal-democratic countries have a vested interest in assisting Uzbekistan and the other Central Asian republics...
The Uzbek state, then, according to Karimov, must not only provide 'social protection' during and after the transition to a market economy, but it must ensure the rights and freedoms of citizens irrespective of their ethnic origin, religious beliefs, social status, or political affiliation. In his defence of individual rights, Karimov calls attention to specific articles in the Constitution of Uzbekistan that acknowledge democratic rights, including religious freedom.

Article 34. Democracy in the Republic of Uzbekistan shall rest on the principles common to all mankind, according to the Uzbek state. Given that Islam is the social and cultural core of the Uzbek nation, the Constitution guarantees the following democratic rights, freedoms, and guarantees:

i) The human being, his life, freedom, honour, dignity and other inalienable rights. Democratic rights and freedoms shall be protected by the Constitution and the laws.

Article 35. Freedom of conscience is guaranteed to all. Everyone shall have the right to profess or not to profess any religion. Any compulsory imposition of religion shall be impermissible.

Article 62. Religious organizations and associations shall be separated from the state and equal before the law. The state shall not interfere with the activity of religious associations.

The Uzbek constitution itself is secular, and it sets out the state's position on religion. Karimov, however, also believes that the state has a special interest in religion beyond that typically found in liberal societies. He argues that religion contains universal norms of behaviour and values from generation to generation. Religion is the spiritual dimension of society that influences cultural development. It values the crucial role that religion plays in shaping human existence as well as their isolation and alienation from one another. He is keenly aware of the rich Islamic heritage that has survived 1,400 years, easily outstripping Soviet attempts to control and ultimately endurable religious beliefs. Karimov has been attempting to instil a sense of pride in the historic accomplishments, including the Islamic heritage, and potential of the nation of Uzbekistan. To enhance and strengthen its legitimacy, the government of Uzbekistan has reinterpreted historical events and contributions of individuals of the region to demonstrate the evolutionary development toward the emergence of the Uzbek nation. Particular attention has been focused on the history of Amir Temur (Tamerlane, 1336-1405). The Tigris-Mongol conqueror, born in Shakhrisabz (near Samarkand, Uzbekistan), ultimately subjugated Central Asia, southern Russia, Afghanistan, Mesopotamia, Armenia, Georgia, northern India, and parts of Persia, and unified them under the Mogul Empire (fourteenth-sixteenth centuries). Indeed, Karimov has developed an ideology of the state that places himself in a line of succession of great national leaders such as Tamerlane. The government also
dream is becoming true. There (has now) appeared the possibility of creating a full-scale harmony (that) never existed before and (the) building of (a) well-educated people's city dreamed by Abu Naser Farah (d. 4095).\(^{16}\)

In their resistance to Soviet ideology, various Uzbek political and religious leaders had frequently appealed to the moral values of the Islamic traditions contained in their historical literature. In his attempt to make a case for supporting the past, ethical rule, Karimov, too, frequently appeals to the past, often referring to and citing Abu Naser al-Farabi, a tenth century Muslim philosopher and the founder of Muslim political philosophy.\(^{17}\)

Given Uzbekistan's historical and cultural development as influenced by Islam, then, Karimov calls for a synthesis of modern liberal values of religious tolerance and the traditional Islamic values of social welfare with the personal spirituality of Sufi mysticism. However, his cooperation and promulgation of one version of Islam has clashed with Islamists who proclaim a radically different vision for Central Asia.

Islamists and Central Asia

Resisting Karimov's government in Uzbekistan and the other governments in Central Asia, Islamist organizations vary in size and ideology. The organizations are particularly active in the newly populated Ferghana Valley, which stretches through the republics of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Islamic militancy arose in the Uzbek city of Namangan, in the Ferghana Valley, while the Soviet Union was collapsing.\(^{18}\) With a Muslim population of seven million people, who are primarily ethnic Uzbeks, living in impoverished conditions and under oppressive and corrupt regimes, the Ferghana Valley appeals to Islamists who search for recruits in their attempt to re-establish an Islamic caliphate in Turkestan.

The Islamists' religious training has been influenced essentially by two major sects of Sunni Islam: Deobandism and Wahhabism. Operating in Pakistan during the late 1980s, several Deobandis have established protected places specifically for Islamists from Central Asia, where they were taught strict codes of Islamic adherence, including a version of jihad as a political struggle. The Deobandis, as well as the Taliban in Afghanistan, were the first generation of Islamic militants in the Ferghana Valley. Similarly, although it arrived in the Ferghana Valley as early as 1912, the influence of Wahhabism was initially negligible in the face of the overwhelming presence of the pre-existing Islamic traditions. However, with the financial backing of Saudi Arabia in the 1980s, the influence of Wahhabism in the Ferghana Valley increased dramatically. Financial aid from Saudi Arabia also supported the movement in Afghanistan, who were resisting the Soviet military invasion, as well as the madrasas that trained Central Asian Islamists, primarily from Uzbekistan. The more prominent Islamist organizations include the Islamic Renaissance Party,
the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, and Hez-i-Tehrak-i-Islami (Party of Islamic Liberation).

Established in 1996 by Muslim pastors in the Soviet Union, the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) advocated the adoption of the sharia in Russia. Under the liberalisation policies of glasnost and perestroika, the IRP registered as a political party and encouraged the establishment of separate branches in each of the Soviet republics. However, the party was banned in the Central Asian republics, the IRP first appeared in Tajikistan in October 1991, calling for the revival of Islam and the independence of Tajikistan. Plunging the republic into civil war (1992–1997), the IRP comprised the majority of the membership of the United Tajik Opposition and formed military units to fight against the government-controlled government. By 1997, Russia and Uzbekistan intervened to end the war and brokered a peace that created a coalition government, which includes the IRP. The IRP has had mixed success elsewhere in Central Asia. While its appeal has been extremely weak in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, the IRP has spread rapidly in the Fergana Valley of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. With government repression, several splinter groups with more radical approaches, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, have emerged.

In the Fergana Valley, the IRP demanded that strict adherence to Islamic codes of prayer and dress be observed in Namangan and that President Karimov declare Uzbekistan to be an Islamic state. With the government's refusal to meet their demands, more radical members formed the Jihad (Justice) Party, which was banned, along with the IRP, by the government.

After several confrontations with government authorities, including the arrest of members of the IRP and the Jihad Party, several Islamic activists fled to Tajikistan and then to Afghanistan. After participating in the Tajik civil war and studying in Taliban madrassas, the Islamists returned to Uzbekistan in 1999 to found the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). As a coalition of Islamic militants from Uzbekistan and other Central Asian republics, the IMU initially opposed the secular government of Uzbekistan as a result of the government's failure to support sufficiently renewal of the Islamic faith. The IMU has been active primarily in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, using car bombs and assassinations to target government buildings and officials, as well as taking foreign and domestic hostages. IMU militants operate throughout Central Asia, South Asia, and parts of the Middle East, including Afghanistan, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. In 2001, the leaders of the IMU called for the formation of an Islamic Movement of Turkestan to unify fundamentalist Islamic groups in Central Asia with those in the Caucasian region, especially in Chechnya. Their objectives are considered to be the establishment of an Islamic caliphate that removes the Muslim region of Western China on the east to the Black Sea on the west.

The Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) operates primarily in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of China, which borders the Central Asian republics of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Established in the 1980s, the ETIM evokes memories of the short-lived Republic of Uyghuristan or Islamic Republic of East Turkestan proclaimed in 1933 and again in 1945 before Chinese annexation after 1949. In tandem with the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Party, the ETIM calls for the liberation of the Muslim Uyghurs from Chinese domination and their reunification with other Turkic peoples of Central Asia (Western Turkestan). The ETIM frequently joins forces with the IMU to engage in subversive and terrorist activities, including political assassination, economic sabotage, and attacks on political and civilian targets, in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Xinjiang.

Both the IMU and the ETIM, along with other Islamic organisations and individuals, have been closely associated with the Taliban and al-Qa'eda network in Afghanistan. The organisations had received financial assistance as well as terrorist and guerrilla training from Pakistan prior to the US invasion of Afghanistan in its war on terrorism. As a result of the military triumph of the Afghan Northern Alliance and the US-led coalition, personnel from the IMU and ETIM who fled to Taliban-controlled territory in Pakistan suffered substantial losses of personnel as well as clandestine bases from which to operate. Nevertheless, Islamist organisations continue to receive support from other Islamic groups and patrons in the Middle East and Central and South Asia as well as continuing to engage in lucrative drug trafficking. Hez-i-Tehrak-i-Islami (Party of Islamic Liberation) also calls for the creation of an Islamic caliphate in Turkestan. Influenced by Wahhabi doctrines, the Hez-i-Tehrak emerged in the Middle East in the 1950s, but is now based in London. The party publicly supports Islamic activism engaged in violent and illegal political activities to bring about the caliphate; however, Hez-i-Tehrak does not publicly advocate the use of violence against the governments of the Central Asian republics. Nevertheless, the party has also been banned throughout Central Asia. Hez-i-Tehrak prefers to engage in peaceful means, such as education, for those who are educated but unemployed. Furthermore, with its popularity and adherence having spread throughout the Fergana Valley and now expanding into Kazakhstan, Hez-i-Tehrak has emerged as a respectable, non-violent political alternative to the regimes in power.

Karimov and Islamism

While he advocates the importance of Islam in contributing to the birth of an independent, just, and progressive Uzbekistan, Karimov also maintains that among the numerous Islamic organisations in Uzbek society, the obtrusive teachings and practices of certain militant groups are undermining that synthesis. According to Karimov, Islamists form an Islamic caliphate that removes the Muslim ideals and values that will disrupt Uzbek society and ultimately return Uzbekistan to "medieval obscurantism." He argues that Islamic militants, calling themselves "lighters for faith," attempt to justify their political activism by preaching a pretended understanding of Islam. Karimov has
condemned both international terrorism and religious and fundamentalist extremism, and declared them to be the greatest threats to Uzbek stability and sovereignty.\textsuperscript{5}

In addition to public moral exhortations, Karimov also relies on his government's broad interpretation of constitutional power to restrict unauthorised religious activities in the name of constitutional safeguards protecting individual rights.

Article 20: The exercise of rights and freedoms by a citizen shall not encroach on the lawful interests, rights and freedoms of other citizens, the state or society.\textsuperscript{6}

To reduce political threats to Karimov's regime, the Uzbek government has banned most opposition political parties, both secular and Islamic, including the Erb (Freedom) Democratic Party, the Birlik (Unity) Party, the Adabat Party, and the IR.\textsuperscript{7} And to defer the ostensibly secular Uzbek state, the government has banned independent Islamic mosques and organisations. The primary targets of the ban include followers of Wahhabism, the Army of Islam, the IMU, and Hizb ut-Tahrir.\textsuperscript{8}

And many other non-state-approved, independent Islamic organisations are often characterised as fundamentalist movements advocating teach-ins at odds with the ethos of toleration and pluralism. Hizb ut-Tahrir, for one, declares the necessity of changing any and all current societies in which Muslims live into an Islamic society to be incorporated into a grand caliphate.\textsuperscript{9}

[Hizb ut-Tahrir] aims to do this by firstly changing the society's existing thoughts in Islamic thoughts so that such thoughts become the public opinion among the people, who are then driven to implement and act upon them. Secondly, the Party works to change the emotions in the society until they become Islamic emotions that accept only that which pleases Allah (swt) and rebel against and desert anything which angers Allah (swt). Finally, the Party works to change the relationships in the society until they become Islamic relationships, which proceed in accordance with the laws and solutions of Islam. These actions which the Party performs are political actions, since they relate to the affairs of the people in accordance with the Sharia rules and solutions, and politics in Islam is looking after the affairs of the people, either in opinion or in execution or both, according to the rules and laws of Islam.\textsuperscript{10}

With regard to Uzbekistan, Hizb ut-Tahrir criticises the secular nature of the constitution for embracing 'the separation of religion from state and contradicting the doctrine and ideology of the Qur'an.'\textsuperscript{11} Furthermore, it perceives the real intent of the constitution as facilitating the West's growing military presence in Central Asia, which threatens pure Islam. This constitution allowed the Jewish Karimov on behalf of Uzbekistan Muslims to sign a deal with the United States and take part in its crusade against Islam and Muslims. Hizb ut-Tahrir supports those who believe it is their 'primary function to protect Islam and fight the enemies of Allah.'\textsuperscript{12}

In addition to proselytising and social activism, many militant organisations in Uzbekistan also engage in political assassinations and guerrilla warfare. For example, in August 1999, the IMU formally announced 'the Jihad against the tyrannical government of Uzbekistan and the puppet Islam Karimov and his henchmen.'\textsuperscript{13} Calling on faithful Muslims to defend fellow believers who have been subjected to imprisonment and torture, the IMU proclaimed that 'the Masihabad of the Islamic Movement, after their experience in warfare [in Afghanistan and Tajikistan], have completed their training and are ready to establish the Blessed Jihad.'\textsuperscript{14} Indeed, the IMU has been accused by the Uzbek government of harassment and participation in earlier subversive activities in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, cooperation with the Taliban in Afghanistan and Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network, and armed attacks on the Uzbek state, including the killing of police officers in the Fergana Valley and the deadly but failed assassination attempt on President Karimov in Tashkent in February 1999.\textsuperscript{15}

To curb the influence of Islamic militancy, in 1998 the Oliy Millat enacted the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations to restrict the activities of virtually all religious denominations, including non-state-approved Islamic organisations.\textsuperscript{16} Under this law, in addition to outlawing proselytism, all religious organisations must be registered with and approved by the Uzbek government before they may conduct worship activities and religious rituals as well as conduct other social programmes. With regard to registered religious organisations, the primary target of the legislation, only those imams, mosques, religious practices, and publications that have been approved by the Spiritual Directorate for Muslims are permitted. The Directorate reports to the Committee for Religious Affairs under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, with its members appointed by the president.

The attempts by the government of Islam Karimov to deal with problems of Islamic extremism, however, have brought into question the prudence of its use of harsh structures on religious diversity and thus Karimov's own commitment to individual rights, religious freedom, and the rule of law. The US Department of State and the US Commission of International Religious Freedom have cited abridgment instances in Uzbekistan involving breaches of rule of law, including arbitrary and unlawful deprivation of life, disappearances; torture and other cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment and punishment; arbitrary arrest, detention, and exile; denial of fair public trial; and arbitrary interference with personal privacy, family, and home.

International non-governmental organisations, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe,
have also documented numerous cases of human rights abuses involving religious beliefs and activities in Uzbekistan. These organizations claim that thousands of individuals have been arbitrarily arrested, detained under inhumane conditions, kept incommunicado, tortured, and frequently killed by Uzbek police and security forces. Individuals publicly accused of various infractions of the law—from conquest to overthrow the government to worshiping in unauthorized mosques, possessing banned literature, or growing a beard—have been convicted by Uzbek courts in unfair trials, as adjudged by standards found in international agreements to which the Republic of Uzbekistan is a signatory. The use of forced confessions as well as refusal to consider evidence presented by the defence is endemic, with sentences of punishments frequently disproportionate to the crimes alleged to have been committed. In addition to the hundreds who have died while in custody or been executed after sentencing, it is estimated that 7,500 individuals are presently incarcerated for conviction of various crimes related to religious activities. However, it may well be the case, as noted by the US Department of State, that the [Uzbek] government does not consider this repression to be directed against religious freedom itself but instead against those who desire to overthrow the secular order.16

Implications for stability
Social-religious mores and practices, as well as a considerable presence of the state, are found throughout Uzbekistan and the other Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, as Islamic teachings and rituals have survived Soviet ideology and policies. The overwhelming task of resisting individual values and expectations as well as economic and social institutions and practices in these newly emerging Central Asian republics suggests that meaningful change, if it occurs at all, will be gradual and evolutionary. The government bureaucracy, state policies, and the leaders of the ruling political parties generally imitate those of their Soviet predecessors. Nevertheless, to varying degrees, the republics have initiated modest reforms, from introductions of official currency exchange rates and limited market practices to facilitate economic growth, to relaxation of certain restrictions on religious activities to encourage diversity. Yet serious implications for social stability exist as the Central Asian government resists further liberal-democratic reforms in the face of real and perceived threats from Islamic organizations.

Indeed, the limited application of liberal values, market techniques, and democratic practices has frequently been used by those already in positions of power to resist further efforts to create a civil society, resulting in insecurity in the region. With the transition from the Soviet system to liberal-democracy, the period since independence has been punctuated with eruptions of social instability, primarily of ethnic and religious conflict. This, in turn, may well have the effect of undermining the efficacy of long-term economic and political reforms. Islam Karimov’s government policies in Uzbekistan have been based on the promulgation of select Islamic interpretations and values that in a liberal-democracy would typically be carried out by voluntary associations in civil society. The use of state violence coupled with disregard for rule of law to proscribe unacceptable interpretations and perceived threats from Islamists has resulted in considerable human rights abuses. Indeed, it appears that the Uzbek state has in effect nationalized one preferred version of Islam, thus marginalizing all other interpretations to the point of persecution and ultimately, then, undermining the promise and possibility of civil society itself.21 Karimov has merely replaced the former political ideology of the Soviet era with a government-approved religious public philosophy, thus maintaining the Soviet bureaucratic model to be inherited. One public opinion survey has found a growing lack of confidence among urban Uzbeks in Karimov’s government being able to improve the economy and a belief that it is increasingly likely that ‘Islamic extremists will destabilize the government’, as a result of failure to institute democratic reforms and of increased repression.22

Yet other approaches to Islam and nationalism may hold promise. In 1992, Tajikistan descended into civil war (1992–97), as parliamentary disputes led to conflict between pro-Communist forces and Islamic militia.17 With military and diplomatic intervention from Uzbekistan and Russia, the war ended with an agreement permitting the militias to share power in the Tajik government. Concomitant with reintegration Islam, then, the political leaders of Tajikistan have also seen an opportunity to incorporate alternative Islamic voices into their development of Tajik nationalism and the crafting of public policies. Instead of restricting marginalised interests, these interests have been brought into the political process, which has had a moderating effect on extremist political demands. While the government of President Emomali Rahmonov still encounters political resistance and charges of corruption, the potential for social conflict has diminished significantly, as a result of his willingness to participate in a coalition government. For example, on the Global Terrorism Index compiled by the World Markets Research Centre, Tajikistan is ranked twenty-second richest in terms of risk of terrorism, in contrast with the following countries that are ranked as higher risks for terrorism: Columbia (first), Israel (second), the United States (fourth), and Great Britain (tenth).23

Islam and nationalism, then, have proven to be an explosive combination as well as a source of stability similar to that in many regions of the world. One key requirement to achieve social stability is the presence in civil society of a culture that encourages political pluralism and tolerance of religious diversity. Yet such a culture is a necessary but insufficient condition for stability, as pluralism and diversity are the very elements of instability. Limits must also be placed on the behaviour and actions that follow the potentially unstable combination of pluralism and diversity. If the model of liberal-democracy is correct, those limits must be noted in respect for individual rights and for government authority. The Central Asian republics exercise a
half-hearted approach to pluralism and diversity, while displaying inmoderate willingness to exercise swift and often brutal government repression. The missing variable in the equation is a genuine effort by the republic’s governments to instill respect for the rights and dignity of the individual in a culture that has substantial suspicions of any challenges to long-held community values. Indeed, if the Central Asian republics are in a transitory period between the Soviet practices of the past and a liberal-democratic future, their governments have a unique window of opportunity to guide their societies toward stability with diversity.

A crucial component of reaching respect for Islamic achievements of the past and values of the present is the concomitant recognition of Islam’s historic respect for religious tolerance and diversity. Religious freedom, then, would appear to be the bridge between past and future. As long as freedom of religious expression is permitted, the politically active presence of Islam; fundamentalism is likely to pose only a modest threat to the stability of the political regimes of Central Asia. Alternatively, the use of harsh treatment to silence opposition Islamic movements is likely to increase their popular appeal, thus posing a moderate threat to political stability, depending on the nature and magnitude of the repression.

Notes
3 See, for example, Schram (1995), pp. 213–229.
4 Gorbachev (1987).
10 Stalin (1975a), pp. 150–51.
14 Stalin (1975a), pp. 146–51; see also Stalin (1975a), p. 160.
20 For a referendum held on 27 January 2002, Uzbek voters approved the creation of a bicameral national legislature.
21 Speculation on the future successor to Islam Karimov has focused on his older daughter, Gulnara Karimova, appointed as advisor to the U.S. embassy in Moscow. See, for example, Paterno (2003).
22 Crucial to the success and survival of this transformation is the reintegration and strengthening of civil society, through educational assistance programmes. See Paterno (2003), paterno.
24 See, for example, Sutro (2002), pp. 72–158.
31 Terrey (1999), pp. 36–42.
33 Karimov (1992), pp. 19.
34 Ibid. p. 14 (original emphasis).
36 Ibid. p. 11.
37 Ibid. p. 18.
41 Gold (2000).
43 Regarding celebrity accolades for Islam Karimov’s use of Nap落在e Salafi from the Islamic Supreme Council of America, see Muhammad (1999), p. 16.
47 Rasch (2002).
50 See the website directing the Eastern Turkic Karas Movement at www.surat.org/eng/2002_05_09.htm (accessed 13 October 2003).
52 On the Hakb of Talak, see www.harbut-talib.org (accessed 1 August 2002).
58 Ibid. pp. 53–63.