

“Islam and Ideology in Central Asia,” in *Islam in World Politics*, eds. Nelly Lahoud and Anthony H. Johns (London: Routledge, 2005), ch. 7.

- R
Roy, A. and Prasted, H. (1999) 'Islam in History and Politics: A South Asian Perspective', *South Asia*, Special Issue, Islam in History and Politics, vol. 22, pp. 1–12.
- Sayed, G. (1995) *The Case of Sindh: G.M. Sayed's Deposition for the Court*, Karachi: Naveen Sindh Academy.
- Sayeed, K. (1987) *The Political System of Pakistan*, Karachi: Civil and Military Press.
- Shahabuddin, S. and Wright, T. (1987) 'India: Muslim Minority Politics and Society', in Esposito, J. (ed.) *Islam in Asia. Religion, Politics, and Society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Shaikh, F. (1989) *Community and Consensus in Islam. Muslim Representation in Colonial India, 1860–1947*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–9.
- Sikand, Y. and Katju, M. (1994) 'Mass Conversions among Indian Muslims,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 29, no. 34.
- Stern, B. (2001) *Democracy and Dictatorship in South Asia. Dominant Classes and political Outcomes in India. Pakistan and Bangladesh*, Westport: Praeger.
- Syed, A. (1984) *Pakistan. Islam, Politics and National Solidarity*, Lahore: Vanguard.
- Thapar, R. (1991) 'Communalism and the Historical Legacy: Some Facets', in Panikkar, K. (ed.) *Communalism in India: History, Politics and Culture*, Delhi: Manohar.
- (1989) 'Imagined Religious communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 209–31.
- Vanaik, A. (1997) *The Furies of Hindu Communalism: Religion, Modernity and Secularization*, London: Verso.
- van der Veer, P. (1994) *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Wright, D. (2002) 'Bangladesh and the BJP,' *South Asia*, vol. 25, pp. 386–7.
- Yasmeen, S. (1999) 'Islamisation and Democratisation in Pakistan: Implications for Women and Religious Minorities', *South Asia*, special issue, vol. 22, pp. 183–96.
- Zakaria, R. (1988) *The Struggle Within Islam. The Conflict Between Religion and Politics*, London: Penguin.
- Zavos, J. (2000) *The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

7 Islam and ideology in Central Asia

John R. Pottenger

Soviet ideology had envisioned that the Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, 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 atheist 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 thus 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 radicalisation 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.¹ Today, Islamic beliefs and practices are ubiquitous and pervade nearly all aspects of social

relations, from salutations (Ассалому Алейкум) to prayers (Аллоху Акбар) in various settings. Many mosques and madrassahs 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 *madrassah* built in memory of Muhammad Bakhouddin Naqshbandi, a fourteenth-century Muslim scholar and one of the founders of the Sufi *naqshbandiyya tarikat*, considered the most revered mystic and saint in Central Asia. The mosque contains holy relics, including the tomb of Bakhouddin 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 stone tomb in the belief that such ritual acts will heal bodily infirmities. Many travellers also stoop to pass beneath a thick and heavy branch of an ancient tree on the site, believing that if done three times, their back pains will disappear; others leave messages scribbled on scraps of paper or pieces of cloth tucked tightly between crevices of the tree, imploring assistance from Allah.

Sojourners too arrive at the Naqshbandi mosque to perform sacrifices of lambs, as thanks to Allah for blessings received by their families. In fact, Muslim Tajiks and Uzbeks in the region maintain that walking from the regional capital city of Bukhara to the Naqshbandi mosque and back ten times in one's life is the equivalent of the obligatory Hajj to Mecca, thus permitting believers to fulfil 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 *Naqshbandi tarikat* historically have advocated political responsibility, and in the nineteenth 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 industrialising 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 infrequent if tepid tolerance of religious expression, 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 timeless 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 ultimate justification of the policies of the Soviet state was used to politicise and subsume economic activity within it in 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.² 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 withered 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.³

For seven decades, nonetheless, the Soviet Union was guided by sophisticated theories that meshed poorly with practical problems. But as the fervour of theoretical righteousness slowly dampened with time, the search for practical solutions to practical problems crept to the fore. Ironically, the last 50 years of Soviet history witnessed the political authorities gradually weaning themselves away from total state control of social decision-making toward greater reliance on independent civil society of voluntary associations throughout its 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 programmes 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), advocated new policies of *glasnost* (openness to expanded press freedom and artistic expression, and, later, religious freedom) and *perestroika* (restructuring of economic decision-making and infrastructure).⁴ 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.⁵

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,⁶ the Soviet empire imploded; its attempt to institutionalise 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 steppes of Central Asia bounded by China, India, and Persia. By the end of the nineteenth century, the empire secured its suzerainty over the nomadic tribes of Central Asia, the emirate of Bukhara, and the khanates of Tashkent, Samarqand, Khiva, and Kokand.⁷ With domination over the largely Muslim population centres along the Great Silk Road nearly complete, Tzar Nicholas II (1868–1918) may have been considering embarking upon further expeditions of conquest into British-controlled India. However, complications of European politics and war, including the bourgeois–democratic Russian revolution of February 1917 and the Bolsheviks' seizure of power in 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.

Realising the imminence and immensity of their territorial acquisitions with their diverse nationalities, the Bolsheviks descended into discord regarding problems of disparity between theory and practice. Advocates of strict adherence to Communist tenets eschewed acceptance of the legitimacy of nationalism, arguing that nationalist aspirations enabled capitalist imperialism with its system of exploitation and oppression of the labouring masses by the elite. Yet since industrialisation had hardly touched Turkestan and its Muslim populations, 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, proposed utilisation of ethnic nationalism as an indirect approach to garner support for socialist policies.

In April 1917, Stalin weighed in 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.⁸ 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 Federation of Socialist Republics, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, and the Transcaucasian Soviet Federation of Socialist Republics. Later, discussion 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 rebels fought a guerrilla 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 acceding 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 ASR (1917–24) was eventually dismembered into five national republics and admitted as constituent republics of the USSR: the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (1924), the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic (1927), the Tadzhik Soviet Socialist Republic (1929), the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (1936), and the Kirgiz Soviet Socialist Republic (1936).⁹ 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'.¹⁰ 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 conjectured national identity, in fact allusions to recognition of nationality were primarily used by the Soviet central government to undercut bourgeois nationalist tendencies;¹¹ indeed, the major Muslim population centre of Central Asia, the Ferghana Valley, was divided among the Kirgiz 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 internecine disputes could be manipulated to serve as obstacles to control by any single group, thus undermining nationalist 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.¹² As a consequence of this strategy, when the USSR was dissolved in 1991, the newly independent republics and sovereign nation-states were left lacking a coherent public philosophy to develop a new sense of national identity.

The second antinomy is an extension of the first: with the demise of the Soviet Union's foundational, atheistic ideology that had attempted to control and redefine Islamic social teachings in terms 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 discrediting 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 reinstatement 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 1917, the Soviet government declared and respected freedom of religious belief and expression of all Muslims.¹³ However, while incorporating representatives of local nationalities to strengthen implementation of and compliance with Soviet policies, Stalin also noted that organisers 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.¹⁴ A secular movement, Pan-Islamism attempted to link Muslim modernists, who promoted 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.¹⁵ 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 salve 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 of 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.¹⁶ 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 atheisation' that occurred when the Soviet government closed Christian churches in Soviet Europe.¹⁷ 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 1989, the only two *madrasas* 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 believers were permitted annually to make the Hajj 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 70 years earlier. Considered one of the holiest treasures of Islam and superseding all other versions of the Qur'an, Central Asian Muslims believe the Othman text to be a seventh-century manuscript, a copy of the recension of the Qur'an compiled under the rule of Othman (644–56), within 25 years of the Prophet's death.¹⁸

In order to advance Soviet domestic and international objectives, then, these efforts that alternately attempted to eradicate then placate religious sensitivities were similar to those that alternately attempted to undermine then reconcile nationalist tendencies. Perhaps, given enough time, such utilitarian methods would have been successful in resolving the antinomies of Soviet 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 defence 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 1991), Kyrgyzstan (September 1991), Tajikistan (September 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

national presidents of the Central Asian republics, have retained and enhanced their political position, despite nominal attempts at democratic and competitive elections. They are: Askar Akaev (president of Kyrgyzstan since 1991), Islam Karimov (president of Uzbekistan since 1991), Nursultan Nazarbayev (president of Kazakhstan since 1991), Saparmurat Niyazov (president of Turkmenistan since 1991), and Emomali Rahmonov (president of Tajikistan since 1997). 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 current trend of Central Asian national leaders.

Islam Abduganievich Karimov was born on 30 January 1938, in the ancient and historic city of Samarqand in the southeastern part of the Uzbek SSR.¹⁹ 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 1983 he was appointed minister of finance of the Uzbek SSR, and in 1986 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 Kashka 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 Soviet of the Uzbek SSR elected him president.

With the demise of the Soviet Union imminent, 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 Soviet²⁰) 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 2007.²¹

Despite Karimov's longevity in office, liberal-democratic countries have a vested interest in assisting Uzbekistan and the other Central Asian republics

in their transition toward a market economy and democratic polity. Primarily, the discovery of extensive oil and natural gas reserves comparable to those of the Persian Gulf in Uzbekistan, as well as in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, have attracted Western business interests and their investments. From cooperative assistance and training programmes to joint economic ventures and even military alliances, the US government has applied considerable pressure on Karimov to engage in fundamental political and economic reform.²² Karimov's attempt to effect a transition from the Soviet model to liberal society, however, has resulted in 'a nontraditional form of authoritarianism in which power resides as much in the person of the president as in the office'.²³

The Constitution of Uzbekistan and subsequent amendments and legislation have in effect shifted the separated powers of the state (as typically found in constitutional democratic governments) 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 *bokims* (local governors and city mayors), and the administrators and councils of the *maballas* (neighborhood associations).²⁴ 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.²⁵ This form of 'presidentialism', as opposed to party control, has resulted in a powerful Uzbek state run by Karimov and other former Communist elites.²⁶ Thus, while the state has the façade 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.²⁷ 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 toleration. 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 citizens 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

welfare of the poor, and of the state to correct social injustice; nevertheless, diverse opinions exist on how to fulfil adequately this imperative.²⁸

Uzbekistan has attempted to maintain its regional sphere of political and economic influence by developing its own Islamic nationalism, while resisting outside radical Islamist influences. With the demise of Marxist-Leninist ideology and the need to develop a new sense of national unity, Karimov embarked on an undertaking to replace the Soviet ideology and doctrines based on the findings of class analysis with a new nationalism to instil commitment to the policies of and compliance with the social and economic objectives of the Uzbek state. Given that Islamic cultural roots are sufficiently deep and Islamic ethical obligations are inherently political, many observers argue that the presence of Islam in Uzbekistan is crucial to developing a national identity as required by civil society.²⁹

In classical liberal theory, the state's role is generally that of an umpire among competing individual and group interests, striving to avoid violence through the peaceful resolution of conflict.³⁰ Beyond guaranteeing basic individual rights, including freedom of speech, association, and religion, as well as maintaining the peace, the liberal state has little interest in authoritarian politics, including a command economy and a totalitarian society. Liberal civil society, then, promotes the importance of freedom of thought, speech, and association, not only with regard to politics but also with regard to religious matters.³¹ Consequently, virtually all religious teachings and practices, including participation in politics, are tolerated. With the understanding that the formal institutions of church and state would not commingle, liberal-democracies have generally relegated ecclesiastical institutions and their religious activities to civil society, along with other voluntary associations. While the religious values found in civil society frequently have an impact on politics, as do other values, liberal-democracies have generally been tolerant of diverse and opposed religions and theologies to the point of, but not including, violent disruption of society itself.³² Nevertheless, as with many other social issues, a grey area seems to envelop that point of tolerance, thus frequently making it difficult to determine when the mingling of religious beliefs and political activity has become 'uncivil'.

Karimov wrestles with these issues as he proclaims the necessity of religious freedom and encourages 'freedom of conscience and religion' for Uzbekistan:

Every individual has the right to hold his or her own opinion and beliefs, to perform religious rites and rituals. Religion today as a spiritual force facilitates the process of purification [of the soul and society] by exposing lies and hypocrisy [sic] and promoting high moral principles.³³

Yet Karimov also recognises non-religious secular thinking as 'parallel with religion, and possessing the same right to exist'. He believes that the interaction between secular and religious thinking will promote 'the richness, variety, and development of the human race'.

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 convictions*'.³⁴ 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 13. Democracy in the Republic of Uzbekistan shall rest on the principles common to all mankind, according to which the ultimate value is 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.³⁵

Article 31. 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.³⁶

Article 61. Religious organizations and associations shall be separated from the state and equal before law. The state shall not interfere with the activity of religious associations.³⁷

The Uzbek constitutional and ostensibly secular state, then, must be tolerant of 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 that are transmitted from generation to generation; religion is the spiritual dimension of society that influences cultural development. He values the crucial role that religion, especially Islam, plays in assisting individuals to 'overcome the trials of human existence as well as their isolation and alienation from one another'.³⁸

Keenly aware of the rich Islamic heritage that has survived 1,400 years, easily outliving Soviet attempts to control and ultimately eradicate religious beliefs, Karimov has been attempting to instill 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 focused on the historic figure of Amir Temur (Tamerlane, 1336–1405). The Turkmen Mongol conqueror, born in Shakhrysyabz (near Samarqand, Uzbekistan), ultimately subjugated Central Asia, southern Russia, Afghanistan, Mesopotamia, Armenia, Georgia, northern India, and parts of Persia, and unified them under the Moghul Empire (fourteenth–sixteenth centuries). Indeed, Karimov has developed an ideology of the state that places himself in a line of succession of strong national leaders since Tamerlane.³⁹ The government also

focuses on the historic achievements of the cultural, literary, scientific, and religious flowering of the Islamic renaissance of the medieval area. The Naqshbandi mosque, for example, in preparation for the jubilee celebration held in October 2003, underwent restoration and renovation under the direction of and with financial support from the Uzbek government.

Consequently, despite his public and theoretical support of political liberalism, Karimov nevertheless perceives contemporary liberal society's approach to religious freedom as tolerating narrowly focused, religious organisations advocating extremist causes that threaten social stability and the legitimacy of the state itself. Unable to accept the ruinous outcome of this apparent contradiction, the Uzbek government restricts religious activities for the collective welfare of society. While he wants to encourage society's gravitation toward reliance on the compassionate social character of Islam, Karimov claims that he does not want a narrow religious or political ideology to control public policy in Uzbekistan, as during the Soviet era. He wants to replace the indoctrination of Soviet ideology with the inculcation of liberal political and Islamic ethical values that will provide space in civil society for the free discussion of policy options to achieve the common good. To this end, he argues that Uzbekistan must foster the development of civil society to encourage the emergence of voluntary associations, including religious diversity, and to promote respect for and tolerance of individual rights, including religious freedom.

Islamic social thought does indeed argue that the state has an interest that transcends the necessity of serving merely as an umpire among competing interests.⁴⁰ Shared values must be promulgated and inculcated by the state in civil society, including a commitment to individual liberty and religious freedom. In this regard, Karimov frequently refers to Islamic traditionalism, particularly the Sufi *Naqshbandi tarikat* to lay a foundation of shared values in Uzbek civil society.⁴¹ Indeed, to resist those militants who are errantly borrowing from the Islamic past to subvert Uzbekistan's attempt to build a decent society, Karimov appeals to the historic contributions of the Uzbek Islamic heritage: 'Reviving the spiritual originality and traditions of Central Asian Islam takes the ground from under the followers of *imported Islam* as well as the *politicization of Islam* and the *Islamization of policy*.'⁴²

In April 1999, in an effort to incorporate Islam into his new nationalism and to deflect popular interest in the fundamentalist teachings of various Islamists, Karimov issued a decree creating the Tashkent Islamic University. Oriented toward Sufi values of the *Naqshbandi tarikat*, the university operates independently of the Uzbek system of higher education, reporting directly to the Cabinet of Ministers.⁴³ Its charge is to do research and teaching in the history and philosophy of Islam, Islamic law, and information sciences.⁴⁴ Reflecting on the importance of Uzbekistan's independence, the university administration states:

We emphasize that an Independent Motherland, peaceful life and society with democratic principles was our ancestors' dream. Nowadays their

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 Nasr Farabi [d. AD 950].⁴⁵

In their resistance to Soviet ideology, various Uzbek political and religious leaders had frequently appealed to the moral values of the noble traditions contained in their historical literature. In his attempt to make a case for supporting the just, ethical ruler, Karimov, too, frequently appeals to the past, often referring to and citing Abu Nasr al-Farabi, a tenth century Muslim philosopher and the founder of Muslim political philosophy.⁴⁶

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 cooptation 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 organisations vary in size and ideology. The organisations are particularly active in the densely 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.⁴⁷ 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 Deobandi *madrāsas* reserved 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, influenced 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 Sufi, moderate 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 *mujahedeen* in Afghanistan, who were resisting the Soviet military invasion, as well as the *madrāsas* that trained Central Asian Islamists, primarily from Uzbekistan. The more prominent Islamist organisations include the Islamic Renaissance Party,

the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement, and *Hizb ut-Tabrir al-Islami* (Party of Islamic Liberation).

Established in 1990 by Muslim Tartars in the Soviet Union, the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) advocated adoption of the *shar'ia* in Russia.⁴⁸ Under the liberalising 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. Although 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 (1992–97), the IRP composed the majority of the membership of the United Tajik Opposition and formed military units to fight against the Communist-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 popular appeal has been extremely weak in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, the IRP has spread rapidly in the Ferghana 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 Ferghana 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 *Adolat* (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 *Adolat* Party, several Islamic activists fled to Tajikistan and then to Afghanistan. After participating in the Tajik civil war and studying in Taliban *madrasas*, the Islamists returned to Uzbekistan in 1999 to found the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).⁴⁹ 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 Caucasus region, especially in Chechnya. Their objective is to form an Islamic caliphate that extends from the Muslim region of western China on the east to the Black Sea on the west.

The Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) operates primarily in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China, which borders the Central Asian republics of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.⁵⁰ 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 1944 before Chinese annexation after 1949. In tandem with the East Turkestan 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 Islamist organisations and individuals, have been closely associated with the Taliban and Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network in Afghanistan. The organisations had received financial assistance as well as terrorist and guerrilla training from al-Qaeda 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 fought alongside the Taliban suffered substantial losses of personnel as well as clandestine bases from which to operate. Nevertheless, these 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.⁵¹

Hizb ut-Tabrir al-Islami (Party of Islamic Liberation) also calls for the creation of an Islamic caliphate in Turkestan.⁵² Influenced by Wahhabist teachings, the *Hizb ut-Tabrir* emerged in the Middle East in the 1950s, but is now based in London. The party publicly supports Islamists actively engaged in violent and illegal political activities to bring about the caliphate; however, *Hizb ut-Tabrir* 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. *Hizb ut-Tabrir* prefers to proselytise among the disaffected and the poor, as well as the young middle class who are educated but unemployed. Furthermore, with its popularity and adherence having spread throughout the Ferghana Valley and now expanding into Kazakhstan, *Hizb ut-Tabrir* is emerging in public opinion as a respectable, non-violent political alternative to the regimes in power.⁵³

Karimov and Islamism

While he advocates the importance of Islam in contributing to the rebirth 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 want to impose 'alien spiritual ideals and values' that will disrupt Uzbek society and ultimately return Uzbekistan to 'medieval obscurantism'.⁵⁴ He argues that Islamic militants, calling themselves 'fighters for faith', attempt to justify their political activism by preaching a perverted 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.⁵⁵

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.⁵⁶

To reduce political threats to Karimov's regime, the Uzbek government has banned most opposition political parties, both secular and Islamic, including the *Erk* (Freedom) Democratic Party, the *Birlik* (Unity) Party, the *Adolat* Party, and the IRP.⁵⁷ And to defend 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-Tabrir*.⁵⁸

These and many other non-state-approved, independent Islamic organisations are often characterised as fundamentalist movements advocating teachings at odds with the ethos of toleration and pluralism. *Hizb ut-Tabrir*, for one, declaims the necessity of changing any and all corrupt societies in which Muslims live into an Islamic society to be incorporated into a grand caliphate.⁵⁹

[*Hizb ut-Tabrir*] aims to do this by firstly changing the society's existing thoughts to 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 detest 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 Shari'ah 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 laws and solutions of Islam.⁶⁰

With regard to Uzbekistan, *Hizb ut-Tabrir* 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'.⁶¹ 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-Tabrir* supports those who believe it is their 'primary function to protect Islam and fight the enemies of Allah'.⁶²

In addition to proselytising and social activism, many militant organisations in Uzbekistan also engage in political assassination 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'.⁶³ Calling on faithful Muslims to defend fellow believers who have been subjected to imprisonment and torture, the IMU proclaimed that 'the Mujahedeen 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'. Indeed, the IMU has been accused by the Uzbek government of insurrection 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 Ferghana Valley and the deadly but failed assassination attempt on President Karimov in Tashkent in February 1999.⁶⁴

To curb the influence of Islamic militancy, in 1998 the Oliy Majlis enacted the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations to restrict the activities of virtually all religious denominations, including non-state-approved Islamic organisations.⁶⁵ 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 Islamic 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 strictures on religious dissent and thus Karimov's own commitment to individual rights, including religious freedom, and the rule of law. The US Department of State and the US Commission of International Religious Freedom have cited abundant 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.⁶⁶ International non-governmental organisations, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe,

have also documented numerous cases of human rights abuses involving religious beliefs and activities in Uzbekistan.⁶⁷

These organisations 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 conspiracy to overthrow the government to worshipping in unapproved 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.⁶⁸ The use of forced confessions as well as refusal to consider evidence presented by the defence is pandemic, 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'.⁶⁹

Implications for stability

Socio-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 reorienting 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 bureaucracies, 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 introduction 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 governments resist further liberal-democratic reforms in the face of real and perceived threats from Islamist organisations.

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.⁷⁰ With the transition from the Soviet system to liberal-democracy, the period since independence has been punctuated with eruptions of social insubordination, 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 nationalised one preferred version of Islam, thus marginalising all other interpretations to the point of persecution and ultimately, then, undermining the promise and possibility of civil society itself.⁷¹ 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 he 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.⁷²

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 militants.⁷³ With military and diplomatic intervention from Uzbekistan and Russia, the war ended with an agreement permitting the militants to share power in the Tajik government. Concomitant with resurgent 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, those 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 riskiest with regard to the likelihood 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).⁷⁴

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 rooted in respect for individual rights and fear of government authority. The Central Asian republics evince a

half-hearted approach to pluralism and diversity, while displaying immoderate willingness to exercise swift and often brutal government repression. The missing variable in the equation is a genuine effort by the republics' 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 teaching 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 Islamic fundamentalism is likely to pose only a modest threat to the stability of the political regimes of Central Asia.⁷⁵ Alternately, the use of harsh treatment to silence opposition Islamic movements is likely to increase their popular appeal, thus posing a moderate to extreme threat to political stability, depending on the nature and magnitude of the repression.

Notes

- 1 Field research conducted in February, July, and August of 2003, and June and July of 2004, in various locations of Uzbekistan, including Bukhara, Gala-Assiya, Samarqand, Tashkent and Termez; many thanks to A.A., B.I., D.M., H.S., J.M., O.M., T.H., G.A., S.M, Z.T, N.T., and V.S. for first-hand knowledge and on-site explanations.
- 2 For a historical account of the development of 'civil society', see Ehrenberg (1999). On various approaches to understanding the significance of civil society, see Barber (1999), pp. 9–29; Cohen (1998), pp. 35–40; and Fine (1997), pp. 7–28.
- 3 See, for example, Shahrani (1995), pp. 273–79.
- 4 Gorbachev (1987).
- 5 Nelson and Kuzes (1998), pp. 480–503; and Starr (1999), pp. 28–29.
- 6 Bourdeaux (1995), pp. 113–17.
- 7 Alaolmolki (2001), pp. 18–22.
- 8 Stalin (1975a), p. 104.
- 9 Gleason (1997), *passim*.
- 10 Stalin (1975b) pp. 130–31.
- 11 Smith (1996), pp. 3–5.
- 12 Stalin (1975c), p. 194.
- 13 Akiner (1995), pp. 337–38.
- 14 Stalin (1975d), pp. 148–51; see also Stalin (1975e), p. 160.
- 15 Gregorian (2003), pp. 46–47.
- 16 Stalin (1975f), pp. 202–15.
- 17 Ibrahim (1993), p. 24.
- 18 Akiner (1996), pp. 342–43.
- 19 The following biographical information on Islam Karimov is taken primarily from the following sources: Overseas-Post Organization (1996), pp. 5–19; Press Service of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, www.press-service.uz/eng/president_eng/president_eng.htm (accessed 19 May 2002); Encarta Encyclopedia, www.encyclopedia.msn.com/fin/

- Concise.asp?ti=0013B000 (accessed 20 October 2001); and the Umid Foundation, www.umid.uz/Main/Uzbekistan/President/president.html (accessed 1 June 2002).
- 20 In 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 Karimov, appointed as adviser to the Uzbek ambassador in Moscow. See, for example, Pannier (2003).
- 22 Crucial to the success and survival of this transformation is the reinvigoration and strengthening of civil society through educational assistance programmes. See Pottenger (2004), *passim*.
- 23 Easter (1997), p. 209.
- 24 See, for example, Sievers (2002), pp. 92–158.
- 25 Easter (1997), pp. 199–201.
- 26 Polat (1999), p. 138.
- 27 Levitsky and Way (2002), pp. 54–55.
- 28 Armstrong (1993), p. 143; see also Smith (2001), pp. 114ff; Tazmini (2001), pp. 63–83; and Allworth (1990).
- 29 See, for example, Hanks (1999), pp. 159–63; and Abduvakhitov (1995), pp. 295–302.
- 30 See, for example, Reiman (1994), pp. 19–37; and Hardin (1998), pp. 29–34.
- 31 Tierny (1996), pp. 36–42.
- 32 Neuhaus (1984), pp. 20–37.
- 33 Karimov (1992), p. 18.
- 34 *Ibid.* p. 14 (original emphasis).
- 35 *Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan* (1992), p. 10.
- 36 *Ibid.* p. 13.
- 37 *Ibid.* p. 18.
- 38 Karimov (1998), p. 20.
- 39 March (2001), pp. 371–84.
- 40 See Galston (1998), pp. 107–11; and Miller (1999), pp. 170–83.
- 41 Goble (2000).
- 42 Karimov (2000), p. 7 (emphases added).
- 43 Regarding celebratory accolades for Islam Karimov's use of Naqshbandi Sufism from the Islamic Supreme Council of America, see Mirahmadi (1999), *passim*.
- 44 'The Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan', in *Tashkent Islamic University*, (2000), pp. 5–6.
- 45 *Tashkent Islamic University* (2000), p. 10.
- 46 See, for example, Karimov (1998), pp. 5, 89, 91, 161–62; see also Allworth (1990), pp. 20 (on 12 natural qualities essential in a perfect sovereign) and 277; Butterworth (1992), pp. 26–37; and Alfarabi (2001).
- 47 Rashid (2002a).
- 48 Rashid (2002b) pp. 98–102.
- 49 On the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, see www.cns.miis.edu/research/wrc01/imu.htm (accessed 15 August 2002).
- 50 See the website defending the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement at www.uygur.org/wunn02/2002_02_03.htm (accessed 15 October 2003).
- 51 Cornell and Spector (2002), pp. 196–97.
- 52 On *Hizb ut-Tabrir*, see www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org (accessed 1 August 2002).
- 53 Atal (2003), pp. 99–100.
- 54 Karimov (1998), p. 16.
- 55 Press Service (1996–2002).
- 56 *Constitution* (1992), p. 12.
- 57 Roy (2001), p. 57.
- 58 *Ibid.* pp. 53–63.
- 59 International Crisis Group (2003a).

- 60 *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 'Hizb ut-Tahrir's Work', at: www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org (accessed 1 August 2002), p. 2.
- 61 *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 'The Constitution of Uzbekistan is the Law of Disbelief and Falsehood', at: www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org (accessed 1 August 2002), p. 1.
- 62 *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 'And kill them wherever you find them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out (2:191)', www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org (accessed 1 August 2002), p. 2.
- 63 'The Call to Jihad by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan,' in Rashid (2002b) pp. 247–48.
- 64 According to one account, the Islamist assassins appear to have had ties to Osama bin Laden and other Central Asian terrorist groups; see Yakubov (2000).
- 65 Beckwith (2000), pp. 997–1039; see also Ibrahim (1993), pp. 26–27.
- 66 See Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (2002), pp. 2–22; and US Commission on International Religious Freedom (2002).
- 67 See, for example, Human Rights Watch (2001), and Amnesty International (2001a).
- 68 Amnesty International (2001b).
- 69 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (1999), p. 6.
- 70 Hunter (2001), pp. 65–89.
- 71 Polat (1999), pp. 142–43.
- 72 Office of Research, US Department of State (2003), p. 3.
- 73 Payne (1996), pp. 381–82.
- 74 'Global Terrorism Index', *The Economist*, 30 August 2003, p. 74.
- 75 International Crisis Group (2003b).

References

- Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan* (1992), Tashkent: Uzbekiston.
- 'Global Terrorism Index', *The Economist*, 30 August 2003.
- Tashkent Islamic University* (2000), Tashkent: Nashriyoti.
- Abduvakhitov, A. (1995) 'Independent Uzbekistan: A Muslim Community in Development', in Bourdeaux, M. (ed.) *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, New York: M.E. Sharpe, pp. 293–305.
- Alaolmolki, N. (2001) *Life After the Soviet Union: The Newly Independent Republics of the Transcaucasus and Central Asia*, Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Alfarabi, (2001) *The Political Writings: Selected Aphorisms and Other Texts*, Butterworth, C. (trans.), Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Allworth, E. (1990) *The Modern Uzbeks: From the Fourteenth Century to the Present*, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.
- Akiner, S. (1996) 'Uzbekistan and the Uzbeks', in Smith, G. (ed.) *The Nationalities Question in the Past-Soviet States*, London: Longman, pp. 334–47.
- Amnesty International (2001a) *Annual Report 2001: Uzbekistan*, at www.web.amnesty.org/web/ar2001.nsf/webeurcountries/UZBEKISTAN?OpenDocument (accessed 9 November 2001).
- Amnesty International (2001b) *Uzbekistan: The Rhetoric of Human Rights Protection: Briefing for the United Nations Human Rights Committee*, at: [web.amnesty.org/aidoc/aidoc.pdf.nsf/index/EUR620062001_ENGLISH/\\$File/EUR6200601.pdf](http://web.amnesty.org/aidoc/aidoc.pdf.nsf/index/EUR620062001_ENGLISH/$File/EUR6200601.pdf) (accessed 1 June 2001).
- Armstrong, K. (1993) *A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, New York: Ballantine Books.
- Aral, S. (2003) 'Central Asian Geopolitics and U.S. Policy in the Region: The Post-11 September Era', *Mediterranean Quarterly*, vol. 14, pp. 95–109.
- Barber, B. (1999) 'Clansmen, Consumers, and Citizens: Three Takes on Civil Society', in Fullinwider, R. (ed.) *Civil Society, Democracy, and Civic Renewal*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Beckwith, G. (2000) 'Uzbekistan, Islam, Communism, and Religious Liberty – An Appraisal of Uzbekistan's Law "On freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations"', *Brigham Young University Law Review*, vol. 3, pp. 997–1048.
- Bourdeaux, M. (1995) 'Glasnost and the Gospel: The Emergence of Religious Pluralism', in Bourdeaux, M. (ed.) *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, New York: M.E. Sharpe, pp. 113–27.
- Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (2002) *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – 2001: Uzbekistan*, Washington, DC: US Department of State, 4 March at: www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/eur/83366.htm (accessed 28 July 2002).
- Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (1999) *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for 1999: Uzbekistan*, Washington, DC: US Department of State, 9 September, at: www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/irf/irf_rpt/1999/irf_uzbekist99.html (accessed 9 November 2001).
- Butterworth, C. (1992) 'Political Islam: The Origins', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 524, pp. 26–37.
- Cohen, J. (1998) 'Interpreting the Notion of Civil Society', in Walzer, M. (ed.) *Toward a Global Civil Society*, Rhode Island: Berghahn Books, pp. 35–40.
- Cornell, S. and Spector, R. (2002) 'Central Asia: More than Islamic Extremists', *Washington Quarterly*, vol. 25, pp. 193–206.
- Easter, G. (1997) 'Preference for Presidentialism: Postcommunist Regime Change in Russia and the NIS', *World Politics*, vol. 49, pp. 184–211.
- Ehrenberg, J. (1999) *Civil Society: The Critical History of an Idea*, New York: New York University Press.
- Fine, R. (1997) 'Civil Society Theory, Enlightenment and Critique', in Fine, R. and Rai S., (eds) *Civil Society: Democratic Perspectives*, London: Frank Cass, pp. 7–28.
- Galston, W. (1998) 'Progressive Politics and Communitarian Culture', in Walzer, M. (ed.) *Toward a Global Civil Society*, Rhode Island: Berghahn Books, pp. 107–11.
- Gleason, G. (1997) *The Central Asian States: Discovering Independence*, Boulder: Westview Press.
- Goble, P. (2000) 'Uzbekistan: Analysis from Washington – Fighting Fundamentalism with Sufism', Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty at: www.rferl.org/nca/features/2000/09/f.ru.000911132828.html (accessed 11 September 2000).
- Gorbachev, M. (1987) *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World*, New York: Harper & Row.
- Gregorian, V. (2003) *Islam: A Mosaic. Not a Monolith*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Hanks, R. (1999) 'Civil Society and Identity in Uzbekistan: The Emergent Role of Islam', in Ruffin, M. and Waugh, D. (eds) *Civil Society in Central Asia*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, pp. 158–79.
- Hardin, T. (1998) 'Private and Public Roles in Civil Society', in Walzer, M. (ed.) *Toward a Global Civil Society*, Rhode Island: Berghahn Books, pp. 29–34.
- Human Rights Watch (2001) *World Report 2001: Uzbekistan*, at: www.hrw.org/wr2k1/europe/uzbekistan.html (accessed 9 November 2001).
- Hunter, S. (2001) 'Religion, Politics, and Security in Central Asia', *SAIS Review*, vol. 21, pp. 65–89.
- Ibrahim, D. (1993) *The Islamization of Central Asia: A Case Study of Uzbekistan*, Leicester: The Islamic Foundation.
- International Crisis Group (2003a) 'Radical Islam in Central Asia: Responding to Hizb ut-Tahrir', *ICG Asia Report*, no. 58.

- International Crisis Group (2003b) 'Central Asia: Islam and the State', *ICG Asia Report*, no. 59, 10 July.
- Karimov, I. (2000) *Uzbekistan Today*, Tashkent: InfoCentre OPRUz.
- Karimov, I. (1998) *Uzbekistan on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Uzbekiston.
- Karimov, I. (1997) 'Conference Address', in *Peace, Stability, Cooperation: International Conference 'Central Asia – A Nuclear Weapons Free Zone'*, Tashkent: Information Agency 'Jahon', pp. 26–34.
- Karimov, I. (1992) *Uzbekistan: The Road of Independence and Progress*, Tashkent: Uzbekiston.
- Levitsky, S. and Way, L. (2002) 'Elections without Democracy: The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism', *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 13, pp. 51–65.
- March, A. (2001) 'The Use and Abuse of History: "National Ideology" as Transcendent Object in Islam Karimov's "Ideology of National Independence"', *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 21, pp. 371–84.
- Miller, D. (1999) 'Communitarianism: Left, Right and Centre', in Avnon, D. and de-Shalit, A. (eds) *Liberalism and Its Practice*, London: Routledge, pp. 170–83.
- Mirahmadi, H. (1999) 'The Islamic Renaissance of Uzbekistan', *The Muslim Magazine*, vol. 2, www.jahon.tiv.uz/Z_P_News/muslim.html (accessed 20 October 2003).
- Nelson, L. and Kuzes, J. (1998) 'Russian Economic Reform and the Restructuring of Interests', *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*, vol. 6, pp. 480–503.
- Neuhaus, R. (1984) *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans.
- Office of Research, US Department of State (2003) 'Urban Uzbekistanis in Mild Discomfort at Home; Are There Possible Consequences for Karimov?' *Central Asia Opinion Analysis*, 21 October.
- Overseas-Post Organization (1996) *Islam Karimov Steers Uzbekistan On Its Own Way*, Nuremberg: Dr Harnisch Verlags GmbH.
- Pannier, B. (2003) 'Central Asia: Presidents' Daughters Emerge as Unlikely Political Forces in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan', Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, at: www.rferl.org/ncal/features/2003/09/24092003155844.asp (accessed 28 October 2003).
- Payne, J. (1996) 'Tajikistan and the Tajiks', in Smith, G. (ed.), *The Nationalities Question in the Post-Soviet States*, London: Longman, pp. 367–84.
- Polat, A. (1999) 'Can Uzbekistan Build Democracy and Civil Society?', in Ruffin, M. and Waugh, D. (eds) *Civil Society in Central Asia*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, pp. 135–57.
- Porttenger, J. (2004) 'Civil Society, the Economy, and Educational Assistance in Former Soviet Republics', *International Journal of Business Administration*, vol. 27, pp. 851–68.
- Press Service (1996–2002) *Annotations to the Collection of Works by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan: Islam Karimov*, Tashkent: InfoCentre OPRUz.
- Rashid, A. (2002a) 'They're Only Sleeping: Why Militant Islamicists [sic] in Central Asia Aren't Going to Go Away', *New Yorker*, 7 January, www.newyorker.com/fact/content/2020114fa_FACT (accessed 2 September 2003).
- Rashid, A. (2002b) *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia*, New York: Penguin Books.
- Reiman, J. (1994) 'Liberalism and Its Critics', in Delaney, C. (ed.) *The Liberalism–Communitarianism Debate*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 19–37.
- Roy, O. (2001) 'Qibla and the Government House: The Islamist Networks', *SAIS Review*, vol. 21, pp. 53–63.
- Shahrani, M. (1995) 'Islam and the Political Culture of "Scientific Atheism" in Post-Soviet Central Asia', in Bourdeaux, M. (ed.) *Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, New York: M.E. Sharpe, pp. 273–92.
- Sievers, E. (2002) 'Uzbekistan's Mahalla: From Soviet to Absolutist Residential Community Associations', *Journal of International and Comparative Law at Chicago-Kent*, 2002, vol. 2, pp. 92–158.
- Smith, G. (1996) 'The Soviet State and Nationalities Policy', in Smith, G. (ed.) *The Nationalities Question in the Post-Soviet States*, London: Longman, pp. 2–22.
- Smith, H. (2001) *Why Religion Matters: The Fate of the Human Spirit in an Age of Disbelief*, San Francisco: HarperCollins.
- Stalin, J. (1975a) 'Report on the National Question', in *Marxism and the National-Colonial Question*, San Francisco: Proletarian Publishers, pp. 100–8.
- Stalin, J. (1975b) 'The Policy of the Soviet Government on the National Question in Russia', in *Marxism and the National-Colonial Question*, pp. 122–35.
- Stalin, J. (1975c) 'The Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics', in *Marxism and the National-Colonial Question*, pp. 184–96.
- Stalin, J. (1975d) 'Theses on the Immediate Tasks of the Party in the National Question', in *Marxism and the National-Colonial Question*, pp. 136–52.
- Stalin, J. (1975e) 'Report on the Immediate Tasks of the Party in the National Question', in *Marxism and the National-Colonial Question*, pp. 153–64.
- Stalin, J. (1975f) 'Theses on National Factors in Party and State Affairs' in *Marxism and the National-Colonial Question*, pp. 202–15.
- Starr, S. (1999) 'Civil Society in Central Asia', in Ruffin, M. and Waugh, D. (eds) *Civil Society in Central Asia*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, pp. 27–33.
- Tazmini, G. (2001) 'The Islamic Revival in Central Asia: A Potent Force or a Misconception?' *Central Asian Survey*, 2001, vol. 20, pp. 63–83.
- Tierny, B. (1996) 'Religious Rights: A Historical Perspective', in Reynolds, N. and Cole Durham Jr, W. (eds) *Religious Liberty in Western Thought*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, pp. 29–57.
- US Commission on International Religious Freedom (2002), *Report on Uzbekistan*, Washington, DC: May.
- Yakubov, O. (2000) *The Pack of Wolves: The Blood Trail of Terror*, Moscow: Veche Publishers.