IS RADICAL ISLAM INEVITABLE

IN CENTRAL ASIA?

PRIORITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

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The terrorist acts in the United States on 11 September 2001 have prompted an ongoing discussion of how international engagement, in all its aspects, can undermine Islamist radicalism and promote religious tolerance. New attention to Central Asia after 9/11, including a Western military presence, has also focused minds on whether the region is at serious threat from Islamist radicalism and what can be done about it. This report examines the attitudes of Central Asian Muslims to the West, based on public opinion surveys and interviews in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and offers a range of policy options for closer engagement with Islam and approaches that might reduce support for radical alternatives to present regimes.

The rapid religious resurgence in the late 1980s and early 1990s was mostly focused on restoring the rights of Muslims to worship freely but was also accompanied by an increase in interest in political Islam. Over a decade later, about a fifth of Uzbeks say they want a legal Islamic party in order to represent the interests of Muslims, as do 16 per cent in Tajikistan, and 17.5 per cent in Kyrgyzstan. Large majorities in each country prefer the present secular system of government but small minorities have emerged that are radically opposed to secular polities and seek an Islamic state.

Radical groups that appeared in Central Asia in the early 1990s, many inspired or funded by Saudi Wahhabi organisations, found only limited popular support. But further support for radicalism has partly resulted from bad policies and a lack of democratic reforms and justice that push people to extremes. Ordinary people are experiencing a long, traumatic and difficult transition, which is leading to a great deal of frustration. Their governments are closed systems dominated by elites who use the rhetoric of democracy to secure their international standing, while pursuing authoritarian policies.

Domestically, there is more concern about the international campaign against terrorism than is apparent from official statements; however, public opinion is diverse, and negative sentiments against U.S.-led policies are still more muted than in many other parts of the world. In Tajikistan, 34.8 per cent and 30.1 per cent, respectively, believed that the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq had no positive results. In Kyrgyzstan, 36.7 per cent held negative opinions about the war in Afghanistan, while 52 per cent did not support the war in Iraq. But concern about international terrorism stemming from radical Islamist groups, in part genuine, in part the creation of government propaganda, was substantial.

Recent increases in assistance to Central Asia in conjunction with the campaign against terrorism have been perceived by many leaders in the region as evidence that there is only limited international concern about their commitment to democracy, while signalling to the people that the West is befriending authoritarian regimes for short-term political expediency. If ordinary citizens come to feel that there is diminishing commitment to or chances for democracy, they may look elsewhere to address their grievances.

General anti-Westernism is low, although many people do not agree with specific policies. The majority of those surveyed in all three Central Asian states looked favourably on major Western states. In Uzbekistan, the figures were U.S., 60 per cent favourably to 10 per cent unfavourably; Germany,

50.9 per cent to 3.4 per cent; and Japan, 55.4 per cent to 1.8 per cent.

At the same time, significant numbers believe that development assistance has had little positive impact or is getting lost or stolen (30.1 percent, Uzbekistan; 54 per cent, Tajikistan; and 27 per cent, Kyrgyzstan). Disappointment with donor aid is one reason for anti-Western feelings, and it fuels the ideas of those who believe that Western policies are aimed at supporting the corrupt elites who hold power in these countries.

The West has responded with attempts to identify moderate Muslim voices friendly towards their policies and objectives. The U.S. and other Western states are increasingly trying to use the instrument of public diplomacy to "win the hearts and minds" of Muslims in Central Asia. Public diplomacy is only one tool to bring about change, however. If it is to have any lasting impact, it should complement an even greater program in assistance cooperation to support democratic reforms in order to create more open and just societies in which people – both secular and devout – can exercise their individual rights. Supporting moderate voices should be a part of that process, but a far more expansive program of support to those identified with democratic reform needs to be attempted.

Indeed, public diplomacy cannot be a surrogate for a carefully designed program of support for democratic reform that includes all instruments available to the international community. If the West is to make a positive contribution to long-term stability in Central Asia, it must engage on behalf of democratic policies which create a space for civil society that includes religion. Such policies must address a multitude of obstacles to democracy in the region, notably political and social disenfranchisement, economic dysfunction and disillusionment.

There are many concrete things that the West can do to address Islam in Central Asia, but these need to be in the context of wider reforms and progress towards democratic standards that create an environment in which moderate Islam can flourish naturally. The U.S. government in particular has stressed its support for democratisation in the Middle East as a major part of wider policy aimed at undermining radicalism and terrorism. Similar thinking needs to be applied to Central Asia, where poor governance, injustice and repression only fuel radicalism and undermine support for democratic

solutions. International credibility is very much at stake in Central Asia: ideas, perceptions and policies need to be adapted to make sure that minority support for radical Islamist ideas does not grow into greater popular discontent with concepts of secular governance and democratic ideals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the International Community, in Particular the U.S., the European Union and its Member States, and Donors:

Improving public diplomacy

1. Recognise that the most effective public diplomacy will be through influencing governments, or being seen to try vigorously to influence governments, to open up political and economic systems in ways that improve people's lives and allow freedom of religion.

2. Combine private pressure for reform with unambiguous public statements that distance Western governments and institutions from the repressive policies of Central Asian regimes.

3. Design initiatives that are integrative and foster pluralism between secular and devout individuals, or Muslim and non-Muslim groups, including by integrating religious figures and other informal leaders into existing aid and assistance programs where appropriate.

4. Circulate press statements that demonstrate understanding and sensitivity to local Muslims in full in local languages and take greater care in interviews with state media, which are usually distorted to suit the host government.

5. The U.S. should use public diplomacy as a tool not only to achieve greater understanding of its policies but as part of a broader program to advance democratic reform, including by:

(a) developing a coordinated strategy for promoting democratic change with others in the international community so that a common policy can be put into place;

(b) providing more support for independent media;

(c) supporting human rights organisations where they exist and identifying explicitly and publicly with the victims of repression and their families; and

(d)   issuing regular briefings by cross-departmental teams, including Defence, State and Treasury, on the commitment to reforms across the board;

6.   The European Union and its member states should make greater efforts to raise human rights concerns in public interviews and statements and during Cooperation Council meetings.

Exchange programs

7.   Continue and expand visit programs for religious leaders to Western countries, and vice versa.

8.   Continue and expand educational exchanges between students in Central Asia and Western countries, in particular by opening the fields of study to include comparative religions and the history of religion, and by including appropriately qualified students from madrasas.

9.   The U.S. should continue and expand official exchange programs such as the International Visitors Program, Community Connections and the new cultural and religious programs and in doing so:

(a)   promote greater transparency and openness in the selection process of participants, especially those related to religious issues;

(b)   provide opportunities for greater follow-up activities, such as public speaking events, roundtables, and the publishing of newspaper articles and other materials on their experiences; and

(c)   develop networks of participants to promote further debate and discussion within the region.

Education

10.   Provide technical assistance on educational reform, including for religious establishments, and in developing courses on the history of religion and comparative religion.

11.   Encourage Central Asian governments to pursue a fair program of madrasa accreditation, preferably under ministries of education, with an appropriate balance of religious and secular subjects.

12.   Provide support for a network of religious leaders and teachers in Central Asia to teach about world religions and the history of religion, and develop materials in local languages.

13.   Develop relations with religious education establishments by providing or funding teachers of English or other major Western languages, donating computers to schools and madrasas and including madrasas in internet connectivity programs.

14.   Encourage the development of websites and other internet material that would provide teaching and allow questions and answers for young Muslims.

15.   The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) should integrate issues of religious tolerance and freedom of belief and expression into the focus on education being promoted by the forthcoming chairmanship of Bulgaria.

Promoting discussion

16.   Provide funds and support for publishing ventures for religious scholars, and scholars of religion.

17.   Support media programs and reporting on religious affairs and help religious leaders develop more skills in presenting their arguments and discussing difficult issues.

18.   Encourage the development of monitored internet sites that promote discussion of Islamic issues and the role of religion.

19.   Promote roundtables, conferences and seminars on freedom of belief, the role of religion in society, state and religious relations, and pluralism and diversity and encourage participation by religious leaders, NGO and civic activists, academics and government officials at all levels.

20.   Develop Western expertise in Central Asian religion, politics and culture and send appropriately trained personnel to embassies in the region.

Osh/Brussels, 22 December 2003

IS RADICAL ISLAM INEVITABLE IN CENTRAL ASIA?

PRIORITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

I.   INTRODUCTION

After twelve years of purported reforms with few
positive results, many in Central Asia are
increasingly frustrated and sceptical about the
prospects for democracy. People in Uzbekistan have
been told that their country is democratic, but the
lives of many are getting worse and they have less
say in their future each year. Tajikistanis are slightly
more hopeful about democracy having just come out
of a civil war, but for those on the losing side of that
struggle, "democracy" is seen as supporting the
people in power. The people of Kyrgyzstan have the
greatest frustration, as what has been called the
region's "island of democracy" seems increasingly
to be returning to a feudal past.

The origins of terrorism and conflict are always
complex but a pervasive lack of access to justice
coupled with disillusionment with democracy are at
least on a par with poverty and deprivation. The lack
of access to justice is particularly significant because
it means people are unable to contribute to the
political process. "It is when individuals feel that they
cannot realise their own potential, or self-worth or
dreams that the propensity for terrorism or conflict
arises".[1]

A civic activist from Uzbekistan puts it more simply,
warning that, "terrorists come from places where
laws and rights are violated".[2] Of course, lack of
justice is more easily manipulated in situations of
poverty and economic collapse. Indeed, the biggest
threats to Central Asia, defined by Central Asians

themselves, are unemployment, low living standards,
drugs and corruption.[3]

If terrorism has indigenous potential in Central Asia,
therefore, it is to be found in a lack of justice that is
characterised by poor and unresponsive governance,
economic dysfunction, social dislocation and a strong
disappointment with democracy. Islam is the most
likely instrument available for Central Asians to use
to overcome these features of their lives because
most other avenues of political expression are closed
or very limited at best.

Western efforts at public diplomacy in the region,
formerly limited, are assuming increasing importance
in a post-11 September world that has suddenly
assigned new significance to Central Asia. But simply
explaining policies will not be enough to ensure that
Central Asians are supportive of the West. They are
increasingly aware of the opinions and views of the
global Muslim community. "If the West is going to
support authoritarian regimes in the Muslim world
while bombing innocent Muslims, then of course, it
will lead to more extremism in the region and
elsewhere in the Islamic world".[4] Citizens of the three
states studied in this report may not totally support
Western – especially U.S. – policies in Afghanistan
or the Middle East. However, the West has a huge
opportunity to keep them on its side if it provides
real backing for the building of democratic societies.
Identifying with that goal would be the most effective

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[1] ICG interview, Hakim Feerasta, Resident Representative,
Aga Khan Development Network, Dushanbe, 8 August 2003.
[2] ICG interview, Erk member, Uzbekistan, July 2003.

[3] Uzbeks rank unemployment, low living standards and
drugs as the three biggest problems (33.9 per cent, 12.8 per
cent and 12.6 per cent, respectively); Tajiks are most
concerned about unemployment, low living standards and a
bad economy (29.9 per cent, 23.4 per cent and 15.9 per
cent); while Kyrgyz think that unemployment, a bad
economy and corruption (34.9 per cent, 14.8 per cent and
14.8 per cent, respectively) most threaten their security.
[4] ICG interview, imam, Tashkent, March 2003.

way of building long term positive relations with the peoples and governments of Central Asia.

There is clearly a security role for the international community in assisting regional governments in addressing the threat from hardcore terrorist groups such as al Qaeda, or its local allies, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). This report does not address these security linkages, but rather focuses on the larger issue of how international engagement can be used to limit the development of extremist ideas among the Islamic community. Defeating terrorism is only partly about direct security responses to terrorist groups. It is even more important to address the structural issues and grievances that nourish radical groups if they are allowed to fester.

There are a number of key questions Western states have to ask themselves in the aftermath of the military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the establishment of military bases in Central Asia.

❑   Has the closer security relationship with the Central Asian states lessened the belief among the population in the West's commitment to democracy and human rights in the region? In other words, do U.S. military bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan actually encourage anti-Western ideas?

❑   To what degree can the international community engage religious leaders and the broader Islamic community on issues of faith, or at least of religious tolerance and freedom?

❑   What other types of policies and programs, from economic development projects to support for civil society initiatives, to broadening public participation in local, regional and national decision-making, are most likely to undercut support for radical religious groups and to improve relations between the West and the Muslim world?

The challenge for the West is how to engage Islam in order to foster deeper understanding, while not becoming hostage to religious politics. Approaches should recognise the diversity of religious sentiments (or lack of religious sentiments) and address the real causes of frustration, resentment and isolation that could potentially lead to Islamist extremism. An effective and comprehensive policy of addressing the threat of Islamist extremism would not only promote moderate Central Asian leaders and organisations and improve intercultural understanding, but also

include renewed and strengthened commitments to supporting democratic and economic reforms that enable open societies and responsive government.

Three local polling organisations conducted surveys in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan on behalf of ICG in August 2003 as part of the field research for this report. These examined a broad spectrum of issues, from Islamic identity to views on domestic and global policies in the fight against terror. While it is always difficult to establish public sentiments through surveys with precision, it is particularly so in Central Asia, and especially in Uzbekistan, given the restrictions on freedom of expression. The findings do, however, demonstrate patterns and trends. Data in this report will be from these surveys unless otherwise noted.[5]

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[5] The surveys were carried out by experienced polling organisations in each country. Although questions were identical and polling methods similar in each case, the results should be treated with some caution. The differing nature of the political systems and cultural factors make a straightforward comparison within a specified margin of error impossible. In Uzbekistan, in particular, the reluctance to speak openly about sensitive issues makes all polling data difficult to interpret. However, ICG believes the results reflect a broadly accurate picture of religious beliefs and political views in each country. They also tend to correspond with anecdotal evidence and the results of ICG's extensive interviewing in the region. In Uzbekistan, 800 respondents were interviewed in the Tashkent, Ferghana Valley, Kashkadaryo-Surkhandarya, Bukharo and Samarkand regions. Interviews with 800 respondents were also conducted in Tajikistan in the Badakhshan, Sughd, Khatlon provinces and in the regions subordinate to Dushanbe (RSD). In Kyrgyzstan, 812 respondents were interviewed in the Bishkek, Jalal-Abad, Talas, Naryn, Osh and Batken regions.

II.   THE FACES OF ISLAM

Islam has a long and rich history in Central Asia. Most of the region, beginning with ancient Soghdiana and Bactria, converted to Islam in the seventh and eighth centuries through both trade and war.[6] Many places with evocative names such as Samarkand, Bukhara and Khorezm were cultural and scientific centres of the Muslim world, attracting the most prestigious religious scholars, scientists, astrologers and artists. The area was scientifically and culturally ascendant in the Islamic world while most of Europe was still in the Dark Ages. Central Asia was also a centre of religious pluralism, with large populations of Buddhists, Nestorian Christians, Manicheans and Jews.

Russian and then Soviet usurpation of these territories ended ties with the greater Muslim world. Initially, Bolshevik leaders promoted a blend of Islam and communism as a tactical measure to harness the Muslim nationalism of the mostly Turkic groups.[7] This soon gave way to an enforced atheism that brutally de-veiled women, closed mosques and arrested clergy.[8] Land endowments to mosques, called *waqf*, were outlawed in order to undermine the economic power of the clergy.[9]

As Moscow's grip loosened, Latvians, Lithuanians and other European peoples of the Soviet Union

sought to reassert their national identities during *perestroika* and *glasnost*. The Muslim Turkic and Persian peoples sought to reestablish themselves as part of the greater *ummah* (global Muslim community) by emphasising their Muslim heritage, which is often more important than ethnicity.

A.   PIETY

The majority of Central Asians consider themselves to be Muslims, but the levels of pious expression differ from country to country because of historical trends and current politics; it tends to be much stronger in low-lying areas that were characterised by trade and sedentary lifestyles, and much more tenuous in mountainous areas inhabited by mostly nomadic tribes. Piety also varies markedly within countries because of regional differences, gender, level of education, or habitat (city or rural).

The following summaries of religiosity in the three countries provide a general overview. However, there are certain important caveats. Apart from the general qualifications noted above about survey material, it is hard to judge levels of religious belief on the basis of observance of external rituals. The following is, therefore, more an approximate guide than definitive scientific study.

1.   Uzbekistan

92 per cent of Uzbek citizens consider themselves Muslims, of whom 64.6 per cent identify themselves as such because their parents were Muslims. Another 23.5 per cent identify themselves that way because they are ethnically Uzbek or because Uzbekistan is a Muslim country. But accepting a Muslim identity does not necessarily translate into observance of common religious rituals.

Observance of Ramadan and other traditional practices are increasingly popular in Uzbekistan. Just over two thirds (64.5 per cent) of those considering themselves to be Muslims claim to observe Ramadan. More formal religious observance through prayers and education is relatively low compared to the popularity of other traditions, which mirrors trends in other countries. Almost 72 per cent of those who consider themselves Muslims do not pray at all; only 11.5 per cent pray at least once a day. An additional 6.9 per cent pray only on holidays. The propensity to pray increases with age – 55.2 per cent of the people who pray daily are over 51 years of

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[6] Bactria and Soghdiana correspond roughly to present-day southern Uzbekistan, northern Tajikistan and part of Afghanistan. Islam spread beyond this area into what is now Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Indeed, the minor battle of Talas in the eighth century in what is now Kyrgyzstan stopped the advance of Arab armies.

[7] See ICG Asia Report N°59, *Central Asia: Islam and the State*, 10 July 2003 for a detailed analysis of this period; also, Bennigsen, Alexandre A. and Wimbush, S. Enders, *Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union: A Revolutionary Strategy for the Colonial World* (Chicago and London, 1979).

[8] The term clergy in Islam is rather a misnomer as there is no system of ordainment and very little hierarchy. It is used here to specify classes of religious leaders with some level of religious education as opposed to ordinary mosque-goers.

[9] W*aqf* in the form of land endowments to the mosques remains outlawed across Central Asia, although it has experienced a resurgence since the 1980s, albeit in a different form. As one imam explained, "*waqf* can be essentially anything. The important aspect is to show piety". Today, piety is shown by contributing to mosque construction, which is dependent upon private domestic and foreign funds or charity. ICG interview, "unofficial" mullah, northern Tajikistan, June 2003.

age. People who have little education are nearly as likely to pray with the same frequency as people with higher education.

People in the Ferghana Valley (39.7 per cent of those who pray on a daily basis) are more likely to pray more often than people in, say, Tashkent and its environs (22.1 per cent). But in Uzbekistan there is an added reason since government restrictions and repression also mean that many people are reluctant to observe Islamic rituals more fully.[10] Some do not attend prayer services to avoid evoking the suspicions of the authorities. "I want to go to pray", says one middle-aged Uzbek man, "but if I wear a beard and go to the mosque, the authorities will come after me".[11]

Moreover, people who are simply trying to survive from day-to-day have little time or money to devote to prayer or education. Because the Ferghana Valley area has historically been more religious than the rest of the country, there is a widely held belief that it is the source of religious extremism and radicalism; an important factor, however, is that it is a highly populated and slightly wealthier area that nevertheless has been economically and politically marginalised from the rest of the country.

Almost one half (48 per cent) of the Muslim population has no religious education. Most who do have some received it from their parents (28.6 per cent), or through informal networks (4.5 per cent).

2.   Tajikistan

Nearly all citizens of Tajikistan consider themselves Muslims – 95.3 per cent. The majority of Tajikistani Muslims identify themselves as such because they were born Muslim (69.9 per cent). About 45 per cent pray rarely or not at all; 31.2 per cent pray more than once a day; 16.3 per cent only on holidays and 2 per cent only on Fridays.

Almost two thirds (63.6 per cent) of those who did not complete school education pray regularly. Almost two thirds again in the so-called regions of republican subordination (RRS), including the Rasht Valley (63.9 per cent),[12] and well over one-half in

Gorno-Badakhshan (57.1 per cent) pray on a regular basis. Nearly two thirds (63.9 per cent) of the inhabitants in Khatlon province pray regularly, while only 37.3 per cent in the northern Sughd province do. As people get older, they are more likely to pray more often. Well over half (55.6 per cent) of those between 30 and 49 pray regularly; while just over 80 per cent of those between 50 and 59 pray often.

About a fifth of the population (20.7 per cent) has no religious education; of those who do, many got their education from their parents or relatives (26.2 per cent), at home and through informal home networks (25.2 per cent), or from reading the Koran (31.9 per cent). Very few received a formal education in the mosque or madrasa (3.9 per cent and 1.4 per cent, respectively), and usually only supplemental knowledge. There was a big difference between formal religious education for men and women since there are few mosques for women, and madrasas must be affiliated with a mosque (some madrasas do educate both sexes); 2 per cent of men received a formal religious education, while an insignificant proportion of women did. Slightly more men and women got supplementary knowledge through formal institutions.

3.   Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan's population is much more diverse than that of Uzbekistan or Tajikistan. Only 79.9 per cent consider themselves Muslims, partly because of a large ethnic Russian minority. All the ethnic minority Uzbeks and Tajiks in ICG's Kyrgyzstan survey considered themselves Muslims, as did 94.1 per cent of ethnic Kyrgyz, though religious beliefs are generally considered to be relatively shallow among the formerly nomadic Kyrgyz. Among those with a Muslim identification, 70.9 per cent consider themselves to be Muslim because of their parents, while 14.8 per cent believe that to be a Kyrgyz means to be a Muslim. However, 40.3 per cent pray rarely or not at all, and 17.6 per cent only on religious holidays. Just 20.7 per cent pray at least once a day. Few in Kyrgyzstan have a formal religious education (6.4 per cent). Most of these were educated by parents or relatives (24.9 per cent) or informally (11.9 per cent). Muslims in Kyrgyzstan are more likely to pray more often if they have a low level of education, live in a rural area and do not work.

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[10] See ICG Report, *Islam and the State*, op. cit.
[11] ICG interview, Tashkent, July 2003.
[12] The RRS includes areas such as Garm and Tavildara, which were strongholds of the Islamist opposition during the civil war.

B.   DIFFERENT TRENDS IN CENTRAL ASIAN ISLAM

Although Muslims in Central Asia speak of the unity of Islam, it is not a monolithic religion,[13] and their opinions on Islam, democracy and world events are diverse. The overwhelming majority of Muslims belong to the *Hanafi* school, or *madhhab*, although many are not aware of this.[14] The *Hanafi madhhab* is known throughout the Muslim world for tolerance and adaptability. Relations between *Hanafi* clergy and secular rulers were historically rather accommodating.[15]

Islam has also adapted itself to local conditions. Celebrations of birth, circumcisions, marriages and death rituals are an important means of observance. Fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, is very popular. While the expression of these customs may differ from similar rituals elsewhere in the Islamic world, they embody a valuable link connecting Central Asians to the greater *ummah*.

1.   Orthodox Islam

Traditional Islam. Mainstream Islamic doctrine is generally very conservative since it was essentially frozen at the end of the nineteenth century.[16] But,

the distinction between conservatism and fundamentalism in Central Asia is slowly blurring as religious leaders and devout followers redefine the role of Islam in light of the domestic space permitted for religion.

Traditional Islam in Central Asia generally has a conservative outlook but with considerable adaptation to local customs and political realities. This has preserved elements of shrine worship or pilgrimages that are anathema to purist Muslims from other schools. But this ability to adjust to different cultures has ensured Islam's survival in the region despite generations of repression.

Although the Soviet period did not destroy Islam, it did limit its interaction with much of the world and ensured that for most Central Asians, Islam is mainly important as a facet of cultural and everyday life events, through birth, marriage and death, to underpinning many aspects of social morality.

Much of mainstream Islam reflects thinking which was current in an earlier time. Typically, today's religious students learn about Islam from books dating to the early 1900s that are still widely in circulation and often the only source of written or taught information apart from the Koran. After 70-plus years of Soviet rule, Central Asian Islam was ill-equipped to face new ideas and new challenges.

New ideas have come into Central Asia from outside, primarily through the work of Muslim missionaries from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Egypt and Turkey – to name a few countries – who arrived around the time of independence with diverse interpretations of Islam. Some introduced fundamentalist lines of thinking, such as *Wahhabism*, into the region.[17] Wahhabi ideas were also occasionally brought in by returning pilgrims from Saudi Arabia or students from Pakistan.

The official clergy have had little response to these new trends and indeed had their own vested interests in keeping discussions limited because there would then be fewer people to question their

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[13] In general, Muslims recognise two sects of Islam based on a seventh century dispute over succession after the fourth caliph Umar: *Sunni* (customary) and *Shia'* (partisans of Ali), which can be further subdivided. Sunnis recognise four major schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*madhhab*): *Hanafi, Maliki, Shafii,* and *Hanbali. Hanafi* Islam is the predominant *madhhab* stretching from northern Africa to Indonesia. Sunni Islam also recognises other lines of jurisprudence, or *fiqh,* such as *Deobandi, Salafi* and *Wahhabi*; they do not have the same level of authority as *madhhab*. *Shia'* Islam recognises the heirs to Ali, whom they believe was the rightful heir to Umar. *Shia'* Islam gave rise to an offshoot, the Ismailis, who also inhabit the Pamiri mountains of southeast Tajikistan.
[14] Indeed, 87.0 per cent in Uzbekistan, 30.6 per cent in Tajikistan and 84.1 per cent in Kyrgyzstan do not recognise their *madhhab*. (It seems that people in Tajikistan are more aware because they recognise differences due to a sizable Ismaili presence in the Pamirs.) See also ICG Report, *Islam and the State*, op. cit.
[15] Ibid. See also Sergei Poliakov, M.E. Sharpe, *Everyday Islam* (New York, London), 1992.
[16] Conservatism (in all faiths) can become fundamentalist in response to a fear that secular authorities are trying to sideline or annihilate religion's role. Radical Islamists (or proponents of other confessions, too) take fundamentalism a step further and seek to change the system to ward off these changes. As a scholar of Islam noted (in general),

"[f]undamentalism…exists in symbiotic relationship with a coercive secularism. Fundamentalists nearly always feel assaulted by the liberal or modernising establishment, and their views and behaviour become more extreme as a result". Armstrong, Karen, *Islam: A Short History* (New York, 2000), p. 166.
[17] See the section on *Wahhabism* below for greater detail.

authority. They have come to monopolise access to Islamic thinking.[18]

One result has been that modernising tendencies have been largely marginalised. Nevertheless, small clusters of struggling reformers are seeking answers about contemporary democracy and governance in the framework of Islam. They are found mostly among the clergy in northern Tajikistan, within a reformist branch of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan, and among individual leaders in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and many devout women (but not all) throughout the region. They face numerous obstacles such as history, government control and the conservative status quo.

> Because of globalisation, we need to review many laws of Shariat. Women especially are coming to the opinion that modernisation is needed. But the official Islamic establishment is not considering this; much of the *ulama* [religious scholars] and many of the imams aren't ready. If there was *ijtihad* [independent reasoning] here, maybe there would be modernisation.[19]

The reformist *Jadid* movement from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been largely unable to reestablish itself after Soviet suppression.[20] And, of course, government fears of extremism and radicalism – or just plain fear of Islam itself – that stifle discussion and learning also impede attempts at modernisation.

Sufism. Central Asia – particularly Uzbekistan and parts of Tajikistan – was historically closely connected with Sufism, popularly known as the mystical side of Islam. The most popular order of Sufis (called a *tariqqa*) is the Naqshbandiya, which originated in Bukhara in the fourteenth century; the second largest, the Qaddiriyya order, came into being two centuries

earlier.[21] Because of the nature of Sufism, there is very little reliable information about the numbers of adherents.[22]

Sufic rites concern the exploration of one's inner self, through meditation and purification. Sufi students (*murid)*, learn from a teacher (*ustad* or *murshid),* through a master-apprentice system of intense studies lasting at least seven years. Studies include learning silent or musical recitations called *zikr*. "They learn about the prophets and the characteristics and colours associated with them as part of their studies".[23] Once that is mastered, the apprentice continues until he or she has earned a certificate from the *Sheik* or *Pir-Eshon* – the highest authorities among Sufis.

There has always been tension and distrust between Sufi orders and the official religious establishment, although Sufis usually have shied away from politics.[24] Sufism plays a mitigating factor in the spread of fundamentalist Islam in the region because proponents of "pure" Islam usually frown upon its metaphysical approach. The Uzbek government has caught onto this and has begun to promote Sufism.[25]

As one Sufi leader commented about *Wahhabi* devotees:

> They are not correct in the practice of our faith – they are narrow-minded and do not understand the depth of Islam. *Wahhabism* is about 200 years old but Islam is 14 centuries, so who are they that are intending to teach Islam? Our goal is knowledge – their goal is

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[18] There is also an economic factor to their interest in maintaining the status quo because Imams and other clergy are dependent upon donations to their mosques and payments for performing rituals.

[19] ICG interview, devout, young female computer specialist, Tashkent, July 2003. According to *Hanafi* thinking, the "gates of *Itjihad*" were closed in the fourteenth century. This student chose to wear the veil while on an Uzbek government-sponsored scholarship to New York City in the autumn of 2001.

[20] See ICG Report, *Islam and the State*, op. cit. and ICG Asia Report N°58, *Radical Islam in Central Asia: Responding to Hizb ut-Tahrir,* 30 June 2003.

[21] See Ernst, Carl W., *Sufism* (Boston and London, 1997).

[22] A member of the Naqshbandiyya order in Uzbekistan suggested that there are 10,000 Sufis, while a Qadiriyya Sufi in Tajikistan contended that 30 per cent of the population belongs to the Naqshbandiyya order. These figures are not very reliable, although they do indicate how devotees internally assess their presence. ICG interviews, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, July and September 2003, respectively.

[23] ICG interview, Sufi teacher, Dushanbe, September 2003.

[24] The relatively recent alignment of a prominent Qaddirya Sufi leader in Tajikistan, Akabar Turajonzoda, with the United Tajik Opposition prior to the civil war was unusual.

[25] Goble, Paul, "Fighting Fundamentalism with Sufism", RFE/RL, 12 September 2000. A Western scholar in Uzbekistan also noted that students have stopped asking questions about the Uzbek hero Tamerlane in favour of queries about Naqshbandiyya Sufism. ICG interview, September 2003.

political power. Where politics starts religion ends![26]

Davatchi and tabligh.[27] Far from all Muslim missionaries in Central Asia represent Wahhabi groups. Among the most effective have been large numbers of so-called *davatchi* or *tabligh,* a group who came mainly from Pakistan in the early 1990s. The types of message propagated by the *tabligh* vary tremendously and reflect their origin and the predominant school of thought there. In general, though, they represent conservative Muslim views, focused on personal religious habits, but with no political overtones.

Davatchi (literally, those who call people to Islam) wear clothing that they believe are reminiscent of the age of the prophet Muhammad and work much like Christian missionaries, donating their money and time (usually three to 40 days per year). As one explained to ICG:

> You have to cleanse yourself. You need to cleanse yourself from bad habits. Ramadan cleanses us; not only is food forbidden, but so is arguing…We also need to go on the Haj to free us from sin…then we will find paradise.[28]

In Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, law enforcement bodies are highly suspicious of them, while Uzbekistan will not tolerate them at all. Kyrgyzstan is the most lenient and has set up an entire department within the Muftiyat to oversee *davatchi* affairs.[29]

There is a debate in official Muslim circles as to the utility of the *davatchi.* Some view them as instrumental since they seek recruits in the bazaars among common people, while many Imam-kotibs remain aloof from most of their congregation. Others contend that they compete with the official clergy and are not subject to their officially-sanctioned "authority".

2.   Political Islam I: Moderate Groups

The Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT). The only legal party with a religious mandate in Central Asia exists in an uneasy relationship with the government. Its leader told ICG that "the fact of the party's existence is witness to the peace agreement, but many in the government are still afraid of it".[30] Like other opposition parties, it faced obstacles from the regime in effectively running in parliamentary elections. The IRPT currently has two seats in the Majlisi Oli and several government posts and got about 8 per cent of the vote in the last parliamentary elections.[31]

There are two general directions within the IRPT's leadership; some, usually the public and international face, are very modern; the majority are very conservative. The membership base reflects the typical devout Muslim in Tajikistan; most are rural, poorly educated and from lower-income areas. Supporters are also concentrated in more marginalised areas such as the Rasht Valley, around Kurghon-Teppe, and northern Tajikistan.

State officials tolerate the IRPT because of the political deal made as part of the peace agreement. Many heads of local government outside of Dushanbe erect formidable barriers to limit its presence. Nevertheless, the government needs it. Because the authorities have essentially eliminated almost all other channels of opposition, the only real legal choice is the IRPT;[32] it serves as a buffer between the state and more opposition-minded elements, including more radical Islamists. However, it has trouble developing membership since many believe the party has sold out to the government and is no longer a true opposition.

3.   Political Islam II: Radical Groups

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Hizb ut-Tahrir. The armed Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and unarmed Hizb ut-Tahrir are the most well-known radical Islamists in Central Asia.[33] The Western military operations in

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[26] ICG interview in a Sufi tea house, Tashkent, July 2003.
[27] For more details, see ICG Report, *Islam and the State*, op. cit.
[28] ICG interview, *Davatchi*, Bishkek, April 2003.
[29] See ICG Report, *Islam and the State*, op. cit.

[30] ICG interview, Said Abdullo Nuri, Leader, Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 6 August 2003.
[31] The elections were widely evaluated as very unfair; however, the level of IRPT support would probably not grow much under better conditions. For election results, see "The Republic of Tajikistan: Elections to the Parliament – Final Report", OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 27 February 2000.
[32] Other opposition parties such as the Democratic Party or the Social Democratic Party reach only a small, urban-based intellectual elite.
[33] See ICG Report, *Islam and the State*, op. cit., ICG Report, *Radical Islam in Central Asia*, op. cit., and ICG Asia Report

Afghanistan seem to have damaged the IMU seriously, although there are reports that it may be regrouping and sending reconnaissance groups into the vicinity of Tavil-dara, or that its members have been involved in attempted terrorist acts in Kyrgyzstan.[34] If the IMU (now sometimes known as the Islamic Movement of Turkestan) regroups in any serious fashion, it might well be more inclined to resort to terrorism since its tactic of military incursion proved relatively unsuccessful.

There is some sympathy for Hizb ut-Tahrir and the IMU in the Ferghana Valley and for the IMU in the Surkhandaryo and Kashkadaryo regions, which have borne the brunt of government efforts to control independent Islam in Uzbekistan. Residents of these areas do not necessarily sympathise with the objectives to establish a Caliphate but many are searching for the key to open a closed political system. A former political prisoner asked:

> Did the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan threaten Uzbekistan, or was it the other way around? Who threatened whom? The IMU wasn't really dangerous for the government; it was against the Karimov dictatorship. But, Karimov is dangerous for them. He's more dangerous than Saddam Hussein.[35]

As frustration builds, the risk is that this sympathy could turn into actual support for the IMU in the absence of other outlets.

The governments regularly try to counter this sympathy by blaming the Islamists for every security breach. This is dangerous, since it increases the cynicism of the population regarding terrorist groups, and makes the government's anti-terror message less likely to be believed. The lack of credibility enjoyed by most governments seriously undermines attempts to build popular support against potential terrorist threats.

The IMU and Hizb ut-Tahrir do not have a monopoly on radical Islam. There are non-orthodox – and sometimes very radical – religious figures, but most have not been able to develop much authority beyond their immediate localities and a few students or adherents. They have been driven even further underground and exist through local connections and *hujra*-style teaching. Some simply reflect unorthodox thinking in the sense that it is outside the acceptable notions of discourse. Other *hujra*, however, propagate *Wahhabi* or extremist teachings. These radical *hujra* seem to be more numerous in Uzbekistan than in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

There is more support in Uzbekistan for radical or extremist religious ideas, but they are mostly underground and relatively unorganised, with the exception of Hizb ut-Tahrir.[36] Recently, as the effects of wide-scale repression of political and religious figures is felt, some people have begun speaking more candidly. As a young mullah in southern Uzbekistan told ICG:

> I respect Muhammad-Sodiq Muhammad-Yusuf [the moderate former Mufti of Uzbekistan who recently returned from exile], but I respect Osama bin Laden more – he tells the truth. I've seen him on Al-Jazeera [independent Arabic-language TV]. But Mohammad-Sodiq no longer tells the truth.…We are persecuted here as Muslims. If I have no way out, then I will also have to fight for my views.…I hate Jews.[37]

N°14, *Central Asia: Islamist Mobilisation and Regional Security*, 1 March 2001.

[34] ICG interviews, Dushanbe, August 2003. Rumours of IMU members returning to central Tajikistan or the southern regions of Uzbekistan are frequent but very difficult to substantiate. An alleged member of the IMU was arrested in Uzbekistan in 2003 and charged with blowing up an exchange booth in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, in May 2003, and a market in Bishkek in December 2002. There have also been allegations of attempts by Islamist groups to attack the U.S. base in Bishkek, although these tend to be based on little evidence. While there is some evidence of an attempt to regroup the IMU, there is also evidence that many of its members have merged into the wider Taliban movement, losing some of their specific Central Asian focus. Others reportedly have been hired by drug traffickers because of their military skills and knowledge of mountain passes, but the IMU's former control over some drug routes seems to have been lost to more straightforward criminal groups. Not surprisingly, small arms are regularly found with drug caches; one such cache was recently discovered in the Jirgatol area near the border with Kyrgyzstan. "10 kilograms of heroin and one kilogram of rock crystal extracted from hide discovered in Jirgatol", *Asia Plus Info Blitz*, N°1326, 3 September 2003.

[35] ICG interview, opposition (secular) leader, Bukhara region, July 2003.

[36] See ICG Report, *Radical Islam in Central Asia*, op. cit.

[37] ICG interviews, radical mullah, southern Uzbekistan, July 2003. These comments were taken from two interviews, one in Tashkent and one with the same person in his hometown and with three of his students present.

These views do not represent more than a small minority but they seem to be growing in intensity, if not necessarily in number. Individuals holding them may not belong to any radical groups, having seen the repression faced by members, but it does not mean that they are not influenced increasingly by the global radical Islamist movement and prompted in large part by the repressive political environment in which they operate.

Wahhabism. Its followers initially had some success in recruiting in the early 1990s.[38] Saudi missionaries, often linked to those who came from families that left the Ferghana Valley after the Bolshevik Revolution, came to Central Asia to teach their own brand of puritan Islam and fund construction of mosques and madrasas. The movement found some willing followers among Central Asian Muslims, partly perhaps reflecting the allure of "pure" Islam after 70 years of Soviet rule.

Wahhabi and *neo-Wahhabi* ideas have been the basis of many of the radical, violent Islamist movements that emerged in the 1990s, such as al Qaeda and the IMU. Any growth towards *Wahhabism* is of concern because of the potential foundation it lays for the growth of such groups in the region.

But there is confusion about what *Wahhabism* actually is. Real *Wahhabism* invalidates many traditions and customs indigenous to Central Asia and so does not have widespread appeal. It seeks to diminish shrine worship and other local practices. Rituals are strictly interpreted based on the Koran and *sunna*, even how one says "amen". For many, these differences are irrelevant to their daily lives. For some, however, they constitute virtually a political stance.

The situation is further confused by the tendency of officials to label strong religious figures whom they consider potential threats as "*Wahhabis*" in an attempt to discredit them. The Uzbek government has used this instrument to an extreme degree. As one man labelled a "*Wahhabi*" told ICG:

> I have been monitored by the militia for over two years for simply wearing a beard and praying in the mosque. They took my passport and wouldn't give it back to me for a long time. They asked, "why do you want to build a theocracy? You can live without prayers and a beard"! The militia told my mahallah (neighbourhood) to isolate the children from me because they say I'm dangerous, and now the children whisper behind my back that I'm a *Wahhabi.*[39]

Sometimes, official religious figures themselves call competitors "*Wahhabis*" in order to discredit them.[40]

Wahhabi and other underground literature circulates widely. People going to Russia or to Saudi Arabia on Haj or business buy books or obtain pamphlets, which they resell or circulate through intimate *hujra* or *gap* when they return. Saudi Arabia also makes generous gifts to madrasas. A religious leader in Uzbekistan complained: "People go on the Haj and they get given this literature for free. Since there is no good literature here in Uzbekistan, they naturally find it interesting and read it".[41]

The authorities have attempted to clamp down on *Wahhabi* influence by strict measures reminiscent of Soviet times, first by banning missionary activity, secondly by limiting opportunities for Muslims to study abroad, particularly in Saudi Arabia, Iran and Pakistan, and thirdly by attempting to control the Haj. During the Haj, many Muslims from Central Asia are offered hospitality in so-called *rahat* houses, which are run by Uzbeks or Tajiks who are settled in Saudi Arabia and often use their hospitality to propagate their own strict brand of Islam. The Uzbek government has taken tough measures to limit both Haj travel and the opportunities of Haj participants to communicate with other Muslims, effectively reintroducing Soviet-era controls such as where pilgrims can stay. Other countries are more liberal, and some Uzbeks from Uzbekistan and Uighurs from China, which has similar controls, prefer to leave on the Haj from Osh or other Kyrgyz cities.

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[38] The Wahhabi *fiqh* evolved from the conservative Hanbali *madhhab* in Saudi Arabia in order to "cleanse" the religion of its impurities.

[39] ICG interview, Kashkadaryo Province Uzbekistan, April 2003.
[40] See ICG Report, *Islam and the State*, op. cit. See also Babadjanov, Bakhtiyar and Kamilov, Muzaffar, "Muhammadjan Hindustani (1892-1989) and the Beginning of the 'Great Schism' among the Muslims of Uzbekistan", in Stephane Dudoignon and Komatsu Hisao, eds, *Islam and Politics in Russia and Central Asia (Early Eighteenth to Late Twentieth Centuries)* (London, New York, Bahrain, 2001).
[41] ICG interview, Tashkent, January 2003.

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III. ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS

A. DEMOCRACY

A decade ago, when the Soviet republics were gaining independence, their leaders presented their moves for power in democratic rhetoric. But for most citizens that rhetoric has hidden an authoritarian political system and has been identified with continued repression and sharp declines in living standards. Public debates about the nature of the relationship between Islam, democracy and the state have been for the most part stifled by governments that remain fearful of the potential political impact of organised religion. Uzbekistan has been loath to implement even the most basic political or economic reforms. Dushanbe continues to use the threat of instability to thwart any alternative voices. Even more liberal Kyrgyzstan has veered off course. "I'm not satisfied with democracy. There is no reason to be [so] yet – it hasn't brought us anything", an unofficial imam in Kyrgyzstan told ICG.[42]

For many now, democracy is increasingly becoming an unattainable concept. Some wish to find a "third way", a vague type of Islamic democracy. Still others are disillusioned and want an Islamic state. This dissatisfaction and alienation crosses secular and religious lines. Young and old alike are becoming increasingly disenchanted with the ideal of democracy.[43] One old man in Tashkent summed up these feelings saying:

> All democracy is about is that bandits are becoming authorities but the poor are becoming slaves. I am tired of this and do not tell me about democracy![44]

1. Compatibility

Discussions in the West on the compatibility of Islam and democracy perplex many Muslims, who do not see a conflict. They believe, "Islam is democratic itself"[45] and that Islam and democracy

could easily co-exist. Others believe that would force religion upon them, which they do not want. But for many, Islam is the starting point in the search for justice. The real question is not whether Islam is democratic or anti-democratic, but how to realise secular democracies in a post-Soviet transitional country, while maintaining pluralist (albeit often very localised) identities that involve religion.

Views on formal political Islamic representation at are ambivalent. There is a broad range of opinions about the compatibility of multi-party rule with Islam, for example. About one fifth of Uzbeks believe that religious parties should not be legalised, either because religion should not mix with politics or because it would make life more difficult for Muslims. Just under one fifth believe that they should exist but be loyal to the government, while only about 2 per cent think that there should be a religious party in opposition.

In Tajikistan, about 45 per cent of those considering themselves Muslims believe there should be no political parties based on religion at all, or that they would be in opposition to the government, or that it would complicate life for Muslims, or lead to a civil war; only about 20 per cent believe they should exist as a constructive opposition or to protect the interests of Muslims, while just under 20 per cent believe they should exist as loyal partners of the government.

Just over one fifth of Kyrgyzstan's Muslims believe there should be political parties that support Islamic interests, while 30 per cent believe there should be no religion-based political party for various reasons. Only 8 per cent believe they should be loyal to the government.

Part of this tepid response to Islamic political parties is due to a lack of appreciation of parties in general. The most basic understanding that an opposition party is simply one that is not in government, or that opposition parties provide constructive criticism, is virtually non-existent. State restrictions on alternative political parties inhibit the development of such an understanding. The situation in Tajikistan is even more complicated because of the civil war and the strong association of the Islamists' role in the conflict. But religious sentiment is also an important factor

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[42]ICG interview, Imam (unofficial clergy), Jalal-Abad, July 2003.

[43] See ICG Asia Report N°66, *Youth in Central Asia: Losing the New Generation*, 31 October 2003.

[44] ICG interview, old man, Tashkent, July 2003.

[45] ICG interview, Islamist, Tajikistan, September 2003 and Muftiyat, Kyrgyzstan, July 2003. This comment was made

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by devout people – both official and unofficial leaders – throughout the region.

behind party weakness because many feel that religion should remain in the private sphere.

Much of the official clergy, who were trained under the Soviet system, are reluctant to embrace political pluralism expressed through political parties competing for power. In their view, the Islamic concept of unity is very fixed, and parties stand for disunity. Prominent religious figures in Uzbekistan also believe that parties in general and even religious-based parties would lead to a huge divide between Muslims. "The existence of a religious party would mean that we're not all united".[46] Furthermore, many add, "multi-party systems are only temporary.…They can create such havoc! Politics are dirty, but not Islam!"[47]

Others – especially in Tajikistan – would strongly disagree. Progressive religious thinkers hold that everything stems from Allah, that he created man to rule in his name, and, that there are multiple paths to achieving the same aims. "We need to respect that there are many parties in Tajikistan, all with the same goal but different paths", said a prominent religious figure from northern Tajikistan.[48] The "multiple paths" are the platforms of different political parties.

While the authorities in all three countries claim that they support independent political parties, their actions often demonstrate otherwise. Of course, secular civic activists recognise the benefits of numerous political parties, too, and frequently call for less interference and more freedom for them to operate.

Activists in Kyrgyzstan sought to establish a religious-based party in 2002 but a leader complained to ICG that it was not registered because of the word "Islamic" in its title.[49] The Islamic Party of Kyrgyzstan grew out of a split in the secular opposition Republican Party but has very little support other than among a few construction workers. While the party was supposedly Islamic-based, the leitmotif of its platform was economic.[50] Party leaders argued that

more people will turn to Islam because they are looking for a way out of poverty. At the moment, however, their impact is very marginal.

Islamic parties are not inherently anti-democratic, although current international experience has left much to be desired. Islamic parties have recently come to power through the ballot box in countries as diverse as Algeria and Turkey in 1997 and November 2002, respectively. The circumstances are distinct, yet reflect a common desire to promote justice and social equality in systems seen as inherently corrupt. Islam's emphasis on justice appeals strongly to those frustrated with contemporary politics. Turkey's Islamist Justice Party[51] has so far been more successful than Algeria's Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) because of two factors; first, it was able to bridge the gap between Islamists and more secularly-oriented voters, and secondly, the previous ruling party agreed to act within the constitutional order and cede power. The willingness for all parties – including Islamic parties – to support democracy is based in large part upon the ability to operate within the democratic framework. If prevented from using the system, they are more likely to act outside it in the quest for political freedom and power.

2. Feudalism Revisited?

There is a lack of popular support for Islamic governance in Central Asia, but support for secular liberal democracy also seems fragile. The use of democratic slogans and institutions by governments has undermined the very idea of democracy for at least part of the population; local secular states that are seen by some Muslims as anti-Islamic equally undermine the concept of secularism as the basis of government. Defending secular democracy requires a real effort by governments to make such governments work for the benefit of ordinary people.

The transition to liberal or popular-based democracies is stalling, especially in Uzbekistan. While undergoing some political transformation, which is always encased in democratic rhetoric, the

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[46] ICG interview, Uzbekistan, 2003.
[47] ICG interview, Muftiyat, Kyrgyzstan, July 2003. Similar views were expressed in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, June, July, August 2003.
[48] ICG interview, Chorku, Tajikistan, June 2003.
[49] ICG interview, Bishkek, February 2003. Parties based on religious ideologies are not permitted in Kyrgyzstan.
[50] ICG interview, Bishkek, February 2003.

[51] The Justice Party has a chequered history, having been banned by the Turkish government and then reformed under a new name on several occasions. Indeed, the military has sometimes intervened to oust the popular party. Most recently, the Turkish government banned the "Refah" (Welfare) party on the grounds that it was unconstitutional, a decision upheld by the European Court of Human Rights.

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Central Asian states are essentially neo-feudal. People feel more like subjects of feudal principalities (or khanates as the case may be) to be exploited by the ruling elite than truly free citizens; they serve the government, not the other way around.

One NGO worker claims:

> Democracy [in Uzbekistan] is "realised" on the international level. Our leaders promise [international organisations and diplomats] that there will soon be democracy....but what they promise them and how they act toward us, their citizens, are two different things.[52]

An activist in Karshi (Uzbekistan) complains: "Each *hokim* [regional governor] does what he wants. How many times has our train station been rebuilt? Now they are building fountains, but we have to buy water to drink"![53] In a more extreme example, an Uzbek man was recently sentenced to an eight-year jail term for hooliganism after refusing to sell his ownership of the local market to the regional governor.[54]

This reality of Central Asian "democracy" understandably creates widespread cynicism about the very concept of democratic governance. Mechanisms for public influence are weak or non-existent. Voting is rarely an exercise of civic responsibility, but rather a staged popularity contest. Citizens have little means to influence legislation, either through a representative or directly, and their livelihoods can be destroyed or they can face arrest if they display politically inappropriate views.

Occasionally central governments will reprimand local officials for overstepping their authority. President Karimov recently chided a regional leader from a southern Uzbekistan province for appropriating cotton-growing land from farmers and then refusing to return it after a court ruled against him.[55] Cases like this are not exercises in rule of law or protection of individual rights. They are messages to local governments about who really wields power.

Everyone, whether ordinary citizens or the authorities, lives in fear of inadvertently crossing an invisible line.

The real problem in Central Asia's pseudo-democratic states is that the feudal practices are discrediting secular democracy altogether. Many people are coming to consider that what they experience and are told is a democracy is un-Islamic and begin to seek Islamic forms of government to answer their problems. As one Tajik Islamist protested, "The authorities can do whatever they want, because they can. Islam would not allow this – it is more democratic".[56]

B. SEPARATION OF RELIGION AND STATE

Opinions on the feasibility of the separation of Islam from governance vary throughout the region. The basis for differentiation lies primarily in how people define their identity. Muslim identities are stronger in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and the south of Kyrgyzstan, and less so in the north, where nomadism has been much more significant.

The stronger the Muslim identity, the smaller the space tends to be between religion and the state. In all three countries, both government officials and the official Islamic establishments routinely express support for a separation of Islam from the state. Both usually have strong suspicion of Islamists. Many civil servants have a latent fear of their own Muslim heritage (except when they see it as politically expedient). Representatives of the official Islamic establishments have been indoctrinated with the notions that Islam should be apolitical and that the state leaves them be. In spite of the reality of heavy governmental interference and control, they generally say, "The government doesn't meddle in our affairs and we shouldn't interfere in theirs".[57]

Many young people, as well as civic activists and official clergy, are also loath to recognise an accommodation between religion and politics, asserting that they cannot and should not mix. Islam is only one part of their identity, and identification

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[52] ICG interview, NGOs, Namangan, July 2003.

[53] ICG interview, civic activist, Karshi, July 2003.

[54] "Uzbek entrepreneur jailed for refusing to sell his shares to governor", *Mohiyat,* Tashkent, 10 October 2003, pp. 1- 2, via BBC Monitoring Global Newsline Central Asia Political File, 23 October 2003.

[55] "Uzbek TV lambasts district administration for violating farmer's rights", Uzbek Television First Channel, 30 July 2003, BBC Global Monitoring News File Central Asia Political File, 14 August 2003.

[56] ICG interview, Islamist, Tajikistan, September 2003.

[57] ICG interview, Muftiyat, Kyrgyzstan, July 2003. Similar views were expressed in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan by members of the official clergy and the government, June-July 2003. For an analysis of the real situation, including government interference and repression of religious affairs, see ICG Report, *Islam and the State*, op. cit.

as a Muslim state would negate the pluralism of their heritage. Most grew up in a dogmatically atheist and therefore secular society. Part of their outlook also stems from a desire to reject an Islamic identity they perceive to be backwards or non-modern. A Kyrgyz NGO leader commented:

> The West should stop seeing us as Muslims and recognise us as Europeans, not only as Asians and Muslims. Many of the elites do not want [our country] to be identified as a Muslim country or as an Islamic state and are strongly opposed to this categorisation. How you [the West] identify us will become a self-fulfilling prophecy. You need to develop the same standards for us as for Eastern Europe. If we're compared to Eastern Europe, we'll become like it, but if we're compared to Afghanistan, then we'll become like that.[58]

Others acknowledge the multiple aspects of their identity and do not want to choose one over another. For them, the structure of the state is "European", meaning secular, while its substance is, or should be, based on Islamic values. As an adviser to Tajikistan's president said, "The West should recognise us as European states, but with Muslim cultures".[59] This position is occasionally expressed by government officials wishing to gain acceptance by the West while maintaining their legitimacy at home. They believe that the West is not ready to accept their Muslim identity and that it fears any political role for Islam, as they themselves do. However, they have an even greater fear of alienating a deeply conservative population by ignoring Islam altogether.

Some people in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, as well as several leaders of the IRPT who are seeking to justify their support of the Tajik government and find a common ground with their party membership, do not separate Islam from the state on the basis of identity. They hold that Tajikistan, for example, is a fully Muslim country because the population itself is Muslim. "We are a Muslim country; our leaders are Muslims and our people are Muslims. How can our identity be separated from our government? It

would be like saying that Europe or North America are not Christian"![60]

Others put it a bit differently, saying that the character of the state is Muslim because its leaders are Muslim. They compare this to the Judeo-Christian nature of the U.S. or Europe. "There shouldn't be a separation between Islam and the state; those working in the government are also believers".[61] This position is somewhat popular in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan among those who seek to balance two identities, like politicians and some individuals with prestige in local communities.

Many others would disagree, saying that government must reflect Islamic tenets. "We don't want a Caliphate; it's not appropriate for the modern world....The majority of us are Muslims, we must live as good Muslims and our system of governance must be compatible with Islam. Our laws must uphold the will of the Prophet".[62] This opinion is often voiced by the rank-and-file and some leaders of the IRPT but is also widely held throughout Central Asia regardless of political affiliation or the level of an individual's piety.

Indeed, many people feel that the separation of religion from the state is a Western concept alien to Muslim societies. "How can the West separate things? They are Christians there, does that mean that their governments are not Christian?"[63] Some also believe that the concept of separation is not only Western in origin, but that it is being imposed on local Muslims:

> The U.S. and the West in general should understand that we are different, and even if they found their ideal in secularism, then they don't have to do that for Muslims. Muslims should decide this for themselves.[64]

C.   *SHARIA* AND SECULAR LAW

As Central Asia experiences a post-Soviet re-Islamisation, an informal discussion has arisen over the role of *sharia* law, particularly in respect to

[58] ICG interview, Edil Baisalov, President, NGO Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society, Bishkek, 14 July 2003.
[59] ICG interview, Ibrohim Usmonov, presidential advisor, Dushanbe, 24 June 2003.

[60] ICG interview, IRPT activist, Tajikistan, June 2003.
[61] ICG interview, Islamic academic, Kyrgyzstan, July 2003, respectively.
[62] ICG interview, Islamist, Tajikistan, June 2003.
[63] ICG interview, Kurghon-Teppe, Tajikistan, June 2003.
[64] ICG interview, female Islamic cleric, Tashkent, 2003.

secular legislation. *Sharia* has no official status in any of the three countries. Desires for its recognition are found in certain areas not only because they are more religious or traditional, but also because the processes of change and transition have been more distressing. Since *sharia* is mandated by Allah, it is believed to be more powerful than secular law, which is developed by humans and often violated.

In Uzbekistan, 20.5 per cent of respondents said that some elements of *sharia* should be incorporated into the legal system and an additional 15 per cent that the country's legal system should be based on it. Those in the Samarkand region (51.3 per cent) were more likely to want state legislation to be based partly or entirely on *sharia* than those in the Ferghana Valley (29.4 per cent). At the same time the former were also more likely to want no legal status for *sharia* (20 per cent to 11.9 per cent). This may, however, reflect primarily much greater reluctance to discuss the issue at all in the Ferghana Valley – even in an anonymous survey – due to problems with the authorities over the past few years.[65]

In Uzbekistan, surprisingly, an overwhelming majority (74.4 per cent) of those who said they wanted full implementation of *sharia* had finished secondary school. And 38.6 per cent of those who can afford sufficient food compared to 18.6 per cent of those who cannot said they favour *sharia*.

One third of Tajiks believe that *sharia* should be entirely separated from secular laws. Nearly as many (32.1 per cent) think that some laws should be based on *sharia*, while another 10.8 per cent believe it should be the law of the land.[66] *Sharia* is hugely popular in Khatlon province where 64 per cent want at least some elements introduced. Nearly everyone there considered themselves to be Muslim (99 per cent, compared to 88 to 94 per cent in other regions of the country) but this accounts for only part of the reason why people look most favourably on *sharia* there. The interest may also be due to the desire for better law enforcement in a region where corrupt officials notoriously flout and exploit secular laws.

Fewer people in Kyrgyzstan (27.1 per cent) want any form of *sharia*, although slightly more men

would like it to become the legal basis than women. One third want entirely secular state laws. Jalal-Abad province in southern Kyrgyzstan, looks more sympathetically on *sharia* (43.5 per cent) than the rest of the country, including conservative Osh province (15.8 per cent).

The successes of *Adolat*, an Islamist group that emerged in the early 1990s in the Namangan area of the Ferghana Valley, and of the IRPT in Tajikistan's Karategin Valley in the early 1990s were both partly in response to a collapse in state power and a desire for order in situations of rising criminality. *Adolat* was able to apply *sharia* informally to criminal activities as a type of vigilante reaction to the government's inability to combat criminality. Even today, some still seek a bigger role for *sharia* as an answer to rising criminality and corruption even if they do not want its complete implementation. "Much of our constitution reflects the laws of *sharia*. But it would be useful to employ *sharia* on criminals too".[67] But what was really important for the initial success of these groups was that they had leaders who were willing to capitalise on frustration and use *sharia* and Islam in general to address what were essentially problems of law and order, social change, and governance.

However, when Central Asians speak of recognition of *sharia* by secular legislation today, they are usually referring to family law, the status of women, cultural traditions, and sometimes criminal law. During the Soviet period, many people continued to live everyday and family life according to *sharia*, resulting in a dual system, which is still widely internalised. Many want to be able to pick and choose between systems depending upon which is most advantageous at the moment.

Sharia is very popular among official and unofficial clergy; rural and provincial elders; middle-aged people in Uzbekistan and older people in Tajikistan, as well as among IRPT members. But it is also popular among semi-devout people, especially in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Most of these people would like to return to a time that is more familiar – even if not directly – and which exemplifies a heritage that was essentially forcefully taken away. Islamic precepts are comforting during stressful

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[65] Significantly more people in the Ferghana Valley were unable or unwilling to answer the question (43.7 to 15.8 per cent).

[66] Men and women expressed themselves in virtually equal proportions on this question.

[67] ICG interview, secular political party leader, Khatlon province, July 2003.

times and provide an understandable and apparently just basis for order.

> The government should recognise *sharia*. Its laws are some of the most progressive out of all the religious laws and could become internationally recognised. *Sharia* is one of the world's contemporary religious laws in which there can be economic development. Are people able to observe secular laws today? The government is always changing them. *Sharia* laws are given by God and are constant.[68]

Kyrgyzstan has come close to legalising a system similar to *sharia* by constitutional recognition of courts of elders (*shuro aksakal*), based on customary law. In principle, the *aksakal* judges should apply secular legislation, but in reality, few are properly trained for this and apply whatever law they see fit, including *sharia*. The elders may hear and rule on cases, instead of courts; sometimes the procedure is similar to arbitration, while in others instances it replaces a real court hearing. The decisions can be appealed to a state court. Usually, they hear disputes among families or neighbours or complaints dealing with administrative issues. While the *aksakal* courts are an innovative way to accommodate traditional customs in a modern system, they raise several legal issues such as the jurisdiction of two legal systems.

Many people are fully convinced of the need for completely secular systems of governance. They truly believe that secularism is the best way to promote pluralism and diversity. Some, especially bureaucrats, have become accustomed to living in a formerly atheist country and view religion with great suspicion. Others assert that the tenets of *sharia* do not reflect the priorities and needs of their lives: "The more I know about *sharia*, the more I know that I don't want to live in a system based on it"![69] Still others view *sharia* as outmoded, unchanging and inflexible. Instead of seeking ways to explore modernisation or reform, they simply reject its tenets.

All three governments are categorically against recognising any aspect of *sharia* as legally legitimate

because they see it as undermining state authority and legitimacy. But resisting calls for *sharia* requires more than just prohibiting discussion. It requires states to ensure that secular laws are fair, justly implemented, and not regularly flouted in ways that bring legal systems into disrepute. More effort needs to be made to ensure that issues such as women's rights are respected in practice, not just on paper. *Wahhabi* women missionaries reportedly found a ready audience among rural women in Surkhandarya (Uzbekistan) for *sharia*: not working outside the home might seem like a restriction of liberty, but when the only employment is back-breaking work on cotton fields for no compensation, supporting a more conservative law seems quite rational.

D.   *JIHAD* AND VIOLENCE

The word *jihad* always evokes strong images among Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It is likely one of the most misunderstood and most broadly interpreted doctrines in all of Islam. *Jihad* has two primary meanings. Greater *jihad* (*jihad-i kabir* in Uzbek or Tajiki) is generally understood to be an internal struggle or effort at self-cleansing. Lesser *jihad* (*jihad-i saghir*), which is roughly understood to mean holy struggle or war, is the interpretation that usually makes the most headlines and causes the greatest anxieties. Some people are uncomfortable talking about *jihad* because they do not want their religion to be identified with extremism and violence or because of the pervasive fear of harassment from the authorities. Many more simply do no know what *jihad* is at all.

Only 3.6 per cent of those surveyed in Uzbekistan believed that *jihad* is the use of force to protect Islam from non-believers; 4.9 per cent said that force can be used only in critical situations and 12.9 per cent that it is not acceptable to use force to protect Islam. Furthermore, 9.2 per cent said it could never be used against their own government. A strong majority (60.1 per cent) did not know about *jihad* at all or were reluctant to discuss it.

A large number of Tajiks were also unfamiliar with the concept (37.8 per cent) but the rest usually said that it is acceptable if Islam is under threat, but not against one's own government. Nearly a third (32.5 per cent) believed that *jihad* is acceptable to defend one's self against non-believers or in critical situations; 8.4 per cent replied that it is never acceptable to wage *jihad* and 14.8 per cent that it

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[68] ICG interview, regional IRPT leader, August 2003. A doctor in Tajikistan summed up even more succinctly, "State laws are OK, but they can be easily violated; but not Islamic laws". ICG interview, doctor, Tajikistan, 2003.

[69] ICG interview, female NGO leader, Tajikistan, June 2003.

should never be waged against the government. More people in Tajikistan think that *jihad* should not be used against the government than in Uzbekistan or Kyrgyzstan, possibly because of the associations of the Islamist factor in the country's civil war.

Results in Kyrgyzstan are somewhat different because of the less important role of Islam in general. Many people were unfamiliar with *jihad* (47.9 per cent). Those who knew about it usually considered it acceptable to use force if Islam was under threat by non-Muslims or if otherwise prescribed in the Koran. Nearly 30 per cent believed that *jihad* is not acceptable under any conditions, while 10.1 per cent thought it permissible in critical situations or against non-believers. Some Kyrgyz believe that their fellow citizens think of *jihad* more as warfare than do Uzbeks or Tajiks because of their Mongol heritage.[70] Lack of religious knowledge may also contribute to their narrow understanding since that is the aspect of the term most commonly promoted in the popular media.

People who are familiar with the concept generally agree that lesser *jihad* is appropriate only under certain rare circumstances: when announced by the leading religious authority for defensive purposes and only as dictated by the Koran. What constitutes a "defensive position" is left open to broad interpretation.

Opinions on lesser *jihad* are not always so divisive. Nearly everybody interviewed, including official and unofficial clergy, secular civic activists and most ordinary people, believed that *jihad* in support of Palestinian rights is justified. Even the official clergy in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, who usually function as mouthpieces for their governments, told ICG that the Palestinians were correct in employing *jihad* against the Israelis. "Sometimes *jihad* is in defence of one's self such as the Palestinians.…If someone threw me out of my land, I would want to kill them too".[71] Many in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan believe that the Palestinians, and by extension all Muslims through the *ummah*, are threatened by Israel.

Even if the grounds for lesser *jihad* are controversial in the case of conflict, there is a growing consensus about other kinds of *jihad*. The concept can be further divided into several variations, ranging from diplomatic discussions with an enemy to economic

coalitions.[72] What these interpretations have in common is the notion of protest or struggle. Some Central Asian Muslims, it seems, are developing a type of "middle" *jihad*, understood as a symbolic protest. Because dissent is restricted and public opinion controlled, religion is the only avenue left open to express alternative viewpoints. As one unofficial mullah in Uzbekistan said: "My beard is *jihad* because it's a type of protest".[73] For him, it is a demonstration against government policies that forbid any manifestation of religion outside official parameters and discourage independent thinking.

E.   THE ROLE OF WOMEN

Islam sought to address many inequalities, including many pertaining to women, during its formative period. It allowed them for the first time to own and inherit property, divorce and participate in public life. Prevailing patriarchal systems and stagnation within the religion, however, meant that women's emancipation evolved more slowly over time. Today there is a lively debate in many Muslim countries about their role, position and rights in Islam and according to the Koran and *sunna*.[74]

This debate, however, is quite limited in Central Asia, where women are being increasingly marginalised,[75] although they still have some informal power, especially in the informal trading economies that have grown in each country since independence. In Chorku (a town in northern Tajikistan known for religious conservatism), for example, many mullahs insist that women should wear veils, a *hijab* or even a *paranja* (burqa or full covering), and they are segregated from general society.[76] While Chorku might be an extreme example, there are few public religious outlets like classes and sermons in which women can publicly participate and contribute their views. As a result,

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[70] ICG interview, young Kyrgyz man, November 2003.
[71] ICG interview, official clergy member, Osh, July 2003.

[72] ICG interview, religious clergy, Tashkent, August 2003.
[73] ICG interview, unofficial Mullah, Tashkent, July 2003.
[74] See for example, Jannah Sisters at www.jannah.org/sisters/ on the role of women in Islam.
[75] See Harris, Colette, *Control and Subversion: Gender, Islam, and Socialism in Tajikistan*, Ph.D. Thesis (University of Amsterdam, September 2000).
[76] ICG interview, Chorku, June 2003. In fact, there are two bazaar days, one for men and one for women, according to local women. The only women who can be seen in the bazaar on the men's day are Kyrgyz traders who have come across the border to peddle their goods or Tajik beggars in a full paranja.

ideas conveyed about women are often one-sided and serve to uphold a patriarchal system that relegates them almost entirely to the private sphere. Some use Islam to justify this marginalisation: "In Islam, men are the strong sex and women are the weak sex. But, the belief that Islam doesn't permit women to work is wrong. Their profession is to be a housewife and raise good children".[77]

Not all women are willing to submit to such views. After having been forcefully "emancipated" by the Russians and then Soviets in the early decades of the twentieth century and raised in an atheist environment, many devout women are seeking more liberal interpretations of their status within the context of the Koran and *hadith*.[78]

Marriage (*niqoh*) and divorce (*taloq*) reveal the duality of secular and *sharia* laws in the region. Certain obligations, such as *mahr* (essentially a dowry that must be repaid in the case of divorce) must be fulfilled. The problem arises upon divorce because these stipulations are often not recognised and enforced by the male partner or the Islamic judge, the *qazi*. If the marriage is not registered with the state, the woman has little recourse since *sharia* has no legal status.

Young couples in Uzbekistan must register a civil marriage with the state before they can have a Muslim wedding sanctioned by an Imam. Kyrgyz couples are also required to register their marriage with the state. Tajik couples, in contrast, are not obliged to register their marriage before an Islamic wedding, so many forgo the secular wedding and registration altogether.

The debate about polygamy is rising. Muslim women in the Middle East assert that the West is overly concerned with this issue and that the Muslim women's movement wants to give priority to

property and inheritance issues.[79] The circumstances for women in Central Asia, however, are different. As a devout woman in Uzbekistan said, "I am for polygamy. It provides support for our women".[80] In a period of severe economic decline, many women feel that they have no alternative source of income and cannot provide for their families or themselves. The situation is particularly dire in Tajikistan, which lost tens of thousands of young men to the civil war and more again to labour migration.[81] The effect of polygamy, however, is that many women are simply taken advantage of when rich men and bureaucrats take multiple wives, not in order to provide for women in difficult circumstances, but because it is quickly becoming a new symbol of status and wealth.

Religion is often used as the justification for marginalising factors, when frequently women's roles are defined more by culture. Girls and women are increasingly expected to engage in domestic housework (or field work). "It's better to have a boy because he will support the family even after he is married, but a girl will only be made to work for her husband's family".[82] Indeed, many women are becoming relegated to the private domestic sphere, and fewer girls are allowed to finish school.[83]

F. ATTITUDES TOWARDS NEW RELIGIONS

Central Asia's reputation as an historical centre of religious diversity and tolerance has been changing since independence. The opening up of the region included a huge influx of Christian missionaries.[84]

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[77] ICG interview, unofficial Mullah, Tashkent, July 2003. In an interesting study based on the World Values Survey, Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris attempted to correlate attitudes to gender issues with the level of democratic development, noting that "the gap in values [pertaining to gender issues versus democratic values] mirrors the widening economic divide between the West and the Muslim world….A society's commitment to gender equality and sexual liberalisation proves time and again to be the most reliable indicator of how strongly that society supports principles of tolerance and egalitarianism". "The True Clash of Civilisations", *Foreign Policy*, 1 March 2003.
[78] See ICG Report, *Islam and the State*, op. cit.

[79] See Jannah Sisters at www.jannah.org/sisters/. Shariat is very precise about the rights and obligations of the man for taking multiple wives. A man may marry up to four times simultaneously, but he must guarantee that he can provide equally for each wife and their children. At the time, polygamy was seen as a natural response to a society burdened by battlefield deaths of men. Conversely, debates about female inheritance is not such an issue in Central Asia because of the rights guaranteed under Soviet-era legislation. Central Asian women, however, increasingly face difficulties over property ownership, especially in Tajikistan. See ICG Asia Report N°51, *Tajikistan: A Roadmap for Development*, 24 April 2003.
[80] ICG interview, devout Muslim woman, Tashkent, July 2003.
[81] See "Tajik Women Want Polygamy Legalised", Institute for War and Peace Reporting, RCA No 151, 4 October 2002.
[82] ICG interview, Dushanbe, September 2003.
[83] See ICG Report, *Tajikistan*, op. cit.
[84] See ICG Report, *Youth in Central Asia*, op. cit.

Some arrived with a specifically evangelist message, staging faith healings and mass baptisms. Others came with the aim to assist poor communities, and still others use non-governmental organisations as a platform for their missionary work. The Central Asian Free Exchange (CAFÉ) in Uzbekistan is a typical example of a Christian organisation that proselytises under cover of an NGO. In Tajikistan, some organisations arrived under the banner of humanitarian aid. The blurring of proselytising and humanitarian assistance has negative repercussions and undermines the credibility of other aid organisations.

Many Christian missionary groups in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan provide more than food aid, teaching useful skills like computers and English. These new religions also offer something that Islam and the Orthodox Church do not: namely a sense of community and inclusion through social activities, which many find very attractive. Such opportunities are rare for many people because of poverty and the collapse of Soviet-era institutions.

Many conservative, rural communities have responded to the large presence of missionaries with suspicion, particularly to those with an evangelistic message. Inter-communal conflicts have arisen between villagers and converts. Occasionally, communities such as Ak-Tyuz in Kyrgyzstan's Chui oblast in April 2002 shun the converts and try to exile them or refuse to let them be buried in the local cemetery. Many people, especially in rural communities, are distrustful and strongly opposed to conversion because apostasy was historically one of the worst crimes in Islam. Many officials are also concerned about the potential for conflict from new Christian organisations: "They don't understand that we can't protect them; they need guards around their stadiums".[85] A leading Kyrgyz official suggested that in the long term they are more destabilising than Hizb ut-Tahrir.[86]

Many people perceive their governments' registration of Christian groups as hypocritical since pious Muslims often run up against discrimination in Kyrgyzstan, state harassment in Tajikistan or imprisonment in Uzbekistan, with little international response.[87] In reality, the authorities usually accept

missionary groups reluctantly, if at all. The Uzbek government has refused to register some Christian organisations, although the majority of rejections were to Muslim groups.[88] Many in the official structures of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are themselves not sympathetic to missionaries even if they do eventually comply with their international obligations. Kyrgyzstan often makes registration difficult for Christian churches, partly because of the fears of some officials:

> The [Christian] missionaries can go door to door, but if a Muslim would do that, he'd be called a terrorist! The roots of terrorism aren't in religion, but in the missionaries! It's the missionaries who cause the conflicts! We need to forbid them, but Kyrgyzstan's law on religion is based on international standards. The leaders of international organisations like the U.N. and the U.S. embassy want to protect the rights of missionaries, but not of Muslims. If Akaev wasn't so weak and we had a strong president, he would throw them out like in the Ukraine![89]

The refusal to register Christian churches in Uzbekistan or Turkmenistan often results in strong diplomatic pressure. In contrast, the refusal to register mosques, or their de-registration, as well as unfair vetting practices run by the state in both these countries as well as in Tajikistan, usually is met with a tepid response from Western diplomats, who prefer to view these practices as purely internal issues in all the countries of Central Asia.

G.   CULTURE AND VALUES

All international engagement faces difficult problems in confronting situations where Muslim norms (or cultural norms perceived as stemming from Islamic values) differ substantially from international norms on social issues. For the most part, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan tend to be more conservative than Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, reflecting the levels of piety. People in rural areas or who have a lower

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[85] ICG interview, government official, Kyrgyzstan, July 2003.
[86] ICG interview, Bishkek, August 2003.
[87] The exception has been U.S. pressure on Uzbekistan to release imprisoned Hizb ut-Tahrir members. See "Uzbekistan: International Religious Freedom Report 2002",

released by the Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State. See also, "Kyrgyzstan: International Religious Freedom Report 2002". Both are available at www.state.gov/g/dlr/irf/.
[88] Ibid. See also the regular reporting on similar issues on www.forum18.org.
[89] ICG interview, government official, Bishkek, 15 July 2003.

socio-economic status tend to be more conservative than those in urban areas and who have a somewhat higher socio-economic level. Many who arrive in the region for the first time (especially to Almaty or Bishkek or to a lesser extent Tashkent) are surprised at the liberal attitudes of young people.

Women's emancipation is a sensitive issue in much of rural Central Asia. Finding the right approach or balance on programs concerned with gender, family or other social issues can be difficult. Sometimes programs may overcompensate and misunderstand the real role of women. One NGO leader in Kyrgyzstan claimed:

> OSCE [Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe] and UN gender programs treated the women as if they were already wearing the veil. They came with ready-set agendas. The women here were already more politically active than in France! They actually went backwards in development here because the West thought this way.[90]

However, the ability to influence the decision-making processes directly – especially at the national level – is limited to small circles of women, usually in urban areas. Many are increasingly excluded from the public sphere.

International organisations face numerous obstacles in implementing programs for women due to resistance from conservative men (and sometimes women) who feel threatened by change. Sometimes gender projects to assist women with traditional livelihoods can backfire and do more harm than good. "We are having to take a very gradual approach to getting more women involved in our development projects since there have been reports of abuse in their homes", said one aid worker.[91] Programs offering microcredit to women in Tajikistan are criticised by some male Muslim leaders, who claim they are aimed at breaking up families and undermining communities.[92]

Issues concerned with sex, HIV/AIDs, and family planning also touch the very core of conservative societies, mainly because a woman's chastity is seen as a direct reflection of the man's honour, whether it is her husband, father, brother or other relative. Any project has to recognise this. At a minimum, there will be great resentment to the stated goals. HIV/AIDS awareness programs conducted by organisations like Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) were very popular among urban youth in southern Kyrgyzstan because they featured classroom activities and discotheques and distributed free condoms and colourful brochures. Often it was the only sex education they ever received. They were not very popular with parents or traditional village elders, however, who viewed them as anti-Islamic. MSF incurred the wrath of a prominent religious figure in southern Kyrgyzstan because of them.[93] A lack of information and openness can also provoke unfounded conspiracy theories directed at either international organisations or the government.

Other crucial issues such as access to education and assistance on domestic violence do not receive nearly enough attention from the international community, particularly in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. "When I went to the village [near Dushanbe] to work with the English teachers [mostly female], the mullah told me not to come back because he didn't want me empowering the women".[94] The OSCE, on the other hand, devoted much time to gaining the acceptance of local religious leaders and formal commanders for programs in the Gharm Valley on topics such as women in Islam and women in democracy, and for girls to study.

Often it is not the information itself that upsets local sensitivities, but the way in which it is presented. Drawing religious leaders and other conservative leaders into the process can substantially improve a program's success. The UN Food and Population Fund (UNFPA) in Kyrgyzstan has taken a very sensitive approach by addressing these issues in terms of "the family and Islam" or "women's safe health". Several clerics in Bishkek told ICG how their views had changed after taking part in the seminars (where they had key roles in delivering the messages to participants),[95] although there is still some resistance from both religious leaders and conservative figures. The program holds promise, however, as it reaches

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[90] ICG interview, Edil Baisalov, President, NGO Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society, Bishkek, 15 July 2003.
[91] ICG interview, international organisation, Tajikistan, September 2003.
[92] ICG interview, Dushanbe, August 2003.

[93] Information provided to ICG. MSF has since closed its projects due to changes in funding, in southern Kyrgyzstan, but the work is carried on by several domestic organisations.
[94] ICG interview, English teacher from Egypt, December 2002.
[95] ICG interviews, religious leaders, Bishkek, 2003.

greater audiences, and the support of the Bishkek-based clergy is conveyed downwards.

Frequently, discussions about assistance take on religious overtones,[96] in part because charity is one of the five pillars of Islam but sometimes also in part to dampen the perception of Western ascendancy. "If the West wants to help Central Asia, it should be with [the guidance of] Allah. We can accept Muslim assistance, but not Christian".[97]

Where such attitudes prevail, international organisations face difficult decisions. While empowering women and encouraging knowledge of sexually transmitted diseases are key parts of many programs, much less attention is paid to presentation. While avoiding the issues because of local sensitivities would be a dereliction of most organisations' aims and values, correct approaches can make programs more effective. But they need also to be conducted in an environment in which wider public discussion of the role of women in society is encouraged.

IV. ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE WEST

A. U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

The region's history, including its experience with Russian and Soviet colonisation, has set public opinion on global and local events on a very different path from the rest of the Muslim world. Central Asians have widely differing views on U.S. policy in the Middle East and Afghanistan. Opinions in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan tend to mirror Russia's position since most news is from Russian sources. Public responses in Uzbekistan often reflect Tashkent's official line, partly because of limited media exposure, partly because of reluctance to oppose government policy openly.

In comparison with much of the Muslim world, anti-Americanism and anti-Westernism seem more muted. Nevertheless, there is underlying unease about many aspects of Western policy. Many ordinary people assert that the standards of judgement are very different when assessing non-Muslim conflicts: "Why does the world speak about Islamic terrorists and not Christian or Buddhist terrorists? What about Northern Ireland"?[98]

Many people have mixed emotions, and little information to go on. Only a small minority have fixed anti-Western opinions. Islamist radicals tend to blame the U.S. for all their ills, and see it as the enemy. As one Hizb ut-Tahrir member said, "The biggest enemy right now is the West because of its policies. The U.S. always wants to control everything".[99]

Most people – whether devout or secular – stress that Islam is a religion of peace and question that any terrorist acts could be justified by the Koran. They assert that terrorists are not real Muslims and have ulterior motives. "What kind of an idiot would destroy the World Trade Centre? Who was it for? Such a guy is a nationalist and a bad person. He thinks only of himself".[100]

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[96] The Henry Dunant Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue compiled a case study on armed Islamic extremist groups and humanitarian assistance in Central Asia. See, "HD Study: Humanitarian Engagement with Armed Groups, The Central Asian Islamic Opposition Movements", Geneva, February 2003.
[97] ICG interview, devout trader in the central bazaar, Jalal-Abad, July 2003.

[98] ICG interview, Muftiyat, Bishkek, July 2003. These were common questions in many interviews in all three countries.
[99] ICG interview, Hizb ut-Tahrir member, Jalal-Abad, 11 July 2003.
[100] ICG interview, unofficial Muslim cleric, Kyrgyzstan, July 2003. This Imam is affiliated with a group with links to Saudi Arabia that promotes Wahhabi-style Islam.

1.   Afghanistan

Although many people were relieved to see the Taliban fall, especially in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan where they were felt as more of a direct threat, most wanted the problem solved peacefully, or at least with UN backing. More people in Uzbekistan also preferred a peaceful solution through the UN to military action. Well over twice as many Tajiks supported such a UN solution. In Kyrgyzstan, at least six people wanted a peaceful resolution through the UN for every one who believed military action was best.

Overt opposition to the U.S.-led action in Afghanistan, nevertheless, was a minority opinion, although it seems to have contributed to a small but growing position that corresponds with radical Islamic views of the U.S. globally. "Many people think negatively about U.S. dominating policies in Afghanistan and Iraq. They haven't stabilised Afghanistan, nor will they be able to in Iraq. They think it is terrorism against Islam".[101] More extreme views are not uncommon: "Today, the U.S. is repeating the role of Hitler, who wanted to take on the world. I think that Osama bin Laden and chemical weapons in Iraq were thought up by the U.S.".[102]

Many Muslims also questioned the positions of their own government, especially in Kyrgyzstan, where this has been much more openly debated. The use of force against others in the Muslim community – especially so close to home – was not a very palatable prospect. As one devout man said: "I would never let my neighbour use my house to shoot at my other neighbour either".[103]

Many believe that the U.S. has done an "about-face" and is trying to use the war on terror to clean up the problems that it created itself by its policies in the region. Many Central Asians call attention to U.S. actions in Pakistan and Afghanistan during the 1980s, saying that "Osama bin Laden was created by the CIA. Now America must answer for its own problems".[104]

Some take into account the benefits that U.S. military action in Afghanistan has brought, primarily more immediate stability as there is no longer a fear of huge refugee flows. But, they also assert that it has caused drug trafficking through Central Asia to increase.

2.   Iraq

If views on Afghanistan were mixed in the region, there was much more popular opposition to the U.S. war in Iraq.

At the government level, Uzbekistan signed on as a full-fledged coalition partner, and any opposition was banned from the media. The French ambassador had no access to voice his government's position. Neither the Kyrgyz nor Tajik governments totally favoured the war, although neither openly opposed it.

Privately, however, in all three countries many people in government and ordinary citizens were against the war. "How can the U.S. be fighting against terrorism when its own policy in Iraq is one of terrorism?"[105] asked one party functionary of the presidential People's Democratic Party in Tajikistan. As the public debate in the U.S. was gearing up, several Tajik environmental groups sent an open letter to the American ambassador expressing concern that war would be a humanitarian disaster and inflame discontent against U.S. policy.

Kyrgyzstan was also deeply divided. Some opposition members were in favour of a military solution because they wanted to send a not-so-subtle message to President Akaev that dictators should not remain in power. Other opposition members protested in front of the U.S. embassy, demanding UN control over establishment of a new Iraqi government.[106] Several parliamentary deputies supported a resolution stating that the war on terror could not be won with violence.[107]

Often views concurred with those prevalent in Russian media, which emphasised a UN solution and often

[101] ICG interview , NGO worker, Kurghon-Teppe, July 2003.
[102] ICG interview, middle-aged professional, Kurghon Teppe, July 2003.
[103] ICG interview, devout trader in the bazaar, Jalal-Abad, July 2003.
[104] ICG interview, Kulob, June 2003.

[105] ICG interview, People's Democratic Party representative, near Dushanbe, June 2003.
[106] "Pravozashchitniki budut piketirovat' posol'stvo SShA v Kyrgyzstane" [Human rights defenders will protest in front of the U.S. Embassy in Kyrgyzstan], *Obshchestvenni rating*, 21 April 2003.
[107] http://www.msn.kg/page.shtml?option=item&year=3& mon=3&id=3900.

argued that the war was primarily about oil. More Uzbeks (23.6 per cent) believed that the war was to secure oil and gas resources for the West rather than to eliminate weapons of mass destruction (18.3 per cent). In Tajikistan (42.4 per cent to 19.3 per cent) and Kyrgyzstan (41.2 per cent to 9.9 per cent) the numbers were even greater. Few in any country thought that the war was really about bringing democracy to Iraq: 6.4 per cent in Uzbekistan, 11.6 per cent in Tajikistan, and only 4.3 per cent in Kyrgyzstan.

Much of the opposition to the war seems to have come more from Russian-influenced secular views more than from local Muslim sensitivities. Nevertheless, in the surveys, 5.2 per cent of interviewees in Uzbekistan, 8 per cent in Tajikistan and 9.2 per cent in Kyrgyzstan thought that the war was directed against Muslims or Islamic countries. But only 1.1 per cent of Uzbek respondents, 2.4 per cent of Tajiks, and 1.0 per cent of Kyrgyz believed its main aim was to defend Israel. This suggests there is a certain minority that equates U.S. foreign policy with an anti-Islamic campaign, but that wider opposition to that policy is more based on "traditional", post-Soviet suspicions of U.S. intentions.

But the minority view – that the war was directed at Islam – clearly has supporters. Although the figures are still quite low, there is increasing sentiment that the U.S. and other Western states are against Muslims and Islam, although this has not yet been translated into widespread anti-Western feeling. Often such views are based on limited access to information: "Right after September 11, President Bush said that Islam is the enemy of Christianity. If he didn't think about Islamic terrorism, he wouldn't have said those words", one official told ICG.[108] In actuality, President Bush delivered an early speech from a mosque in Washington, D.C. He also said that the war on terror was not a war against Islam. There is little opportunity, however, to refute the stereotypes because of the lack of open media and the filter of Russian (and sometimes Arabic-language) press.

There was another aspect of support for the U.S. campaign in countries like Uzbekistan, where at least a small part of the population considered it right to intervene to overthrow dictators:

> If the U.S. can take out Saddam Hussein, then it should also take out Islam Karimov. He's

an even bigger dictator and the security forces here are weak and would run away instead of putting up a fight. Then we could establish a real democracy here.[109]

> I think it's good that the U.S. is bombing Iraq. He's a dictator! Let them bomb Turkmenbashi next and then after that Karimov![110]

But for most in Central Asia, the war in Iraq seems to have increased suspicion of the U.S., and lessened its credibility as a force for good in the world. This may not translate into political action for the majority of the population, whether secular or devout: Iraq seems far away. The day-to-day struggles and the general lack of access to information mean that most people have little motivation to reflect on events in other regions. But for a small minority, the war gave more support for their argument that the West opposes Islam and that a radical response is needed.

3.   Israeli/Palestinian Conflict

Over one half of the Tajiks surveyed believed that American policies on Israel were either against Palestinians or destabilising in the Middle East (31 per cent and 24.3 per cent, respectively). Just over a quarter (26.6 per cent) were unable to answer or had no opinion while 13.4 per cent thought U.S. policies would help stabilise the Middle East. More Uzbeks, on the other hand, believed that U.S. policy in Israel has a stabilising influence (21.3 per cent to 16.2 per cent), and only 10 per cent believed it is directed against the Palestinians. Here also, however, individual interviews tended to suggest much greater dissatisfaction with U.S. policy than survey responses, indicating considerable self-censorship. The Kyrgyz believed 22.2 per cent to 10.4 per cent that U.S. policies were destabilising, while 15 per cent asserted they were directed against the Palestinians, and 47.7 per cent were unable to answer or had no opinion.

The statistics are difficult to judge, but tend to confirm the view that the Israeli-Palestine issue has only limited resonance with most of the population. Again, the conflict in the Middle East affected the views of a minority in each country on the U.S. and the West very negatively, based primarily on their solidarity with Palestinians as fellow Muslims. But many feel little affected about

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[108] ICG interview, presidential administration, Dushanbe, June 2003.

[109] ICG interview, dissident and former political prisoner, Bukhara region, July 2003.
[110] ICG interview, Dushanbe, June 2003.

policies in the Middle East because its problems are very distant from their day-to-day lives.

B. ATTITUDES TO WESTERN MILITARY AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

In general, most people have fairly positive views of the West. The majority of Uzbeks look favourably on the U.S. (60.8 per cent to 10.9 per cent), but less so on the UK (34.3 per cent to 5.9 per cent). Germany is also viewed fairly favourably (50.9 per cent to 3.4) as is Japan (55.4 per cent to 1.8 per cent); both are large donors.

The situation is similar in Tajikistan where 76.3 per cent view the U.S. favourably and 20 per cent unfavourably.[111] Kyrgyz views, however, were only 47.8 per cent favourable towards the U.S., (30.6 per cent unfavourable) and 31.3 per cent to 15.7 per cent on the UK. Kyrgyz held Germany in much higher esteem (57.8 per cent to 6.6 per cent).

U.S. foreign and military policy has come much closer to home for Central Asians since 9/11. The U.S. has established military bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan; the latter also has forces from a number of allied countries. There remain some French troops in Tajikistan, and the Germans have a military base in Termez, on the Uzbek-Afghan border.

The governments of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan each gave support and consent to use their territory for the operation in Afghanistan. Kyrgyzstan sought to play Russia and the U.S. off against each other to get more financial benefits, and Tajikistan lobbied hard for an international presence.[112] In spite of this, support publicly wavered. Tashkent was initially very quiet about its participation. Dushanbe was also silent and changed positions several times, presumably in order to not anger Russia. Kyrgyzstan has had a relatively lively press debate about its role in the anti-terrorism campaign and the foreign troops. None of the governments, however, was ready to offer full-fledged support without Russian consent. Moscow

eventually gave the nod when it joined the anti-terrorism campaign itself.

In general, there has not been a large popular backlash against the foreign military presence in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, although Hizb ut-Tahrir has circulated critical leaflets. In Uzbekistan all public opposition to the base has been suppressed. There has been a debate in Kyrgyzstan, however, where independent press broke the news that Akaev's son-in-law's business won a tender from the U.S. (believed to be worth several million dollars) to supply aviation fuel, leading to much controversy over whether the airbase was leading to greater regional security or greater financial security for the "Family":[113] "Many people feel that the presence of the U.S. airbase at Gansi isn't about security, but about financing, a lot of which goes to the president's family".[114]

C. INTERNATIONAL AID AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

There certainly is growing frustration in Tajikistan and even in Uzbekistan that donor development assistance is supporting corrupt governments because it is siphoned off by officials, or that the donors themselves are corrupt because they exercise inadequate oversight. While many Uzbeks (40.3 per cent) believe that international financial assistance is making a difference, a significant group believes that the situation is not improving, does not get to those that need it, or only supports the government (30.1 per cent). More Tajiks believe that international assistance is not helping than believe that it is (54 per cent to 38.7 per cent). Kyrgyz are much more positive (50.6 per cent to 27 per cent).

Many people have high expectations about Western support, especially in Uzbekistan. The nature of power relationships and lack of understanding about international relations are creating a dangerous situation in which such expectations cannot be met. For the first time, Uzbeks saw their president really criticised at the EBRD meeting in May 2003, which showed them there is an authority more powerful than Karimov. The ousting of Saddam Hussein also demonstrated that powerful states could impose their will on weaker states (whether or not they agreed

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[111] The figures for others include 61.4 per cent favourable to 20.3 per cent for the UK and 86.6 per cent favourable for Germany.
[112] Khatchadourian, Raffi, "U.S. eyes bases in Tajikistan", *Eurasia Insight*, 5 November 2001. See also "U.S. Senators on diplomatic fact-finding mission to Tashkent", RFE/RL, 10 January 2002.

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[113] David Stern, "Kyrgyz president admits that his relative is trading with U.S. Airbase", *Financial Times*, 22 July 2002.
[114] ICG interview, Bishkek, July 2003.

with the justification). Thus, some Uzbeks believe the U.S. should be able to impose its will on the Tashkent government to make reforms happen and prevent abuse of human rights. When reforms do not happen, there is a widespread assumption that it is because the U.S. has not pushed the issue with the government. The limitations of power – even for a superpower – are seldom fully understood.

Many are also concerned that the high levels of development aid (ODA) fuels corruption:

> The U.S. and other countries try to help us. The aid doesn't make it to the people; it's usually for bridges and government undertakings. But then [government ministers] squander the assistance and then siphon the money and put it in Swiss bank accounts. This money is from the blood of the people! And then Uzbekistan has to ask for assistance![115]

A recent study[116] found similar results to many discussed here. Expectations on humanitarian aid (and by extension ODA) varied from concerns about neutrality and independence, and impartiality of determining recipients, to concern about Christian missionary activity and showed a widespread believed that aid often has a hidden agenda.

V.   ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Research and surveys tend to suggest that the popular attitudes have not yet reached the levels of anti-Westernism or anti-Americanism seen in some other parts of the Islamic world, but that there is widespread mistrust of intentions and a small minority radically opposed to Western policies. A larger group believes that Western countries and organisations support corrupt, repressive regimes and are hypocritical about democratic values.

If Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are to avoid the fate of other countries in which terrorist or extremist movements have emerged and become healthy democratic states friendly towards the West, it is imperative to build up open political systems. Moderate voices – be they Muslim or secular – can only develop within an environment that supports pluralism and the opportunity for the realisation of one's own potential. Authoritarian regimes relying on fear and repression, while stifling individual freedoms, will only discredit democracy and push people to act outside constitutional frameworks. Two dangerous scenarios await the states that fail to liberalise their political structures. Internal turmoil could result, possibly with trans-border repercussions. Or, there could be limited terrorist acts against the governments or even against Western interests within the region if they are associated with supporting corrupt or repressive regimes. The likelihood of either scenario depends greatly on the level of openness in societies and domestic perceptions of the West's complicity in upholding corrupt regimes.

These scenarios are not inevitable if the West acts now to engage both devout and secular Central Asians and pushes to affect real reforms, while increasing its own understanding about the peoples and cultures of the region.

While more cultural interaction can only be a good thing, there is a danger for the West to engage Kyrgyz, Tajiks and Uzbeks "as Muslims", especially if this furthers a tendency to work only with those who are friendly to the West.[117] Given that many already believe humanitarian aid and development

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[115] ICG interview, unofficial Mullah, Tashkent, July 2003.
[116] "Humanitarian Dialogue Study", Henry Dunant Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, op. cit.

[117] Privately, many concur with this. "The U.S. wants to encourage Muslims to adapt moderate positions – especially after 9/11 [in order to prevent radical Islam]. But that is a slippery slope. U.S.AID should be discouraged from directly influencing Islam". ICG interview, July 2003.

assistance is provided with ulterior motives, this would only re-enforce perceptions of a hidden agenda.

> I think that some governments are up to no good. They establish their own opposition groups for their own interests, in those regions of the world where there is unrest, so that others will have to fight against them.…It was that way already in Afghanistan and Iraq. But if there is some problem, then they blame it on Islamic extremism or radicalism. That's not really fair.[118]

At the least, it has the potential to estrange Muslims who are not very devout, as well as non-Muslims who may feel excluded from any benefits and alienated.

Engagement should not be to impose Western values or systems, but for the sake of understanding Islam and regional factors in order ultimately to make more informed decisions. Efforts simply to engage Central Asians as Muslims, while admirable in the sense that they recognise the need to be more active on religious issues, are misplaced because they do not acknowledge the diversity of traditions or the need to focus on real reforms that could normalise Islam-state relations. Instead, they Islamicise politics, which alone will not make Muslims supportive of the West.

Nor should the West make all its policies revolve around Islam (although some programs should be more sensitive to Central Asian Muslim cultural values). As a prominent Uzbek social scientist remarked:

> If Europe wants to engage Central Asia, it should recognise that its civilisation is not based on Christianity, but that its value space is European-influenced. Central Asia is not only multi-ethnic, but multi-religious, too.…Many people are pro-European; they want to belong. There needs to be a feeling of partnership and inclusion.[119]

The real issue is how to balance the need and desire for public diplomacy that increases mutual understanding, while not creating a situation in which external actors directly influence the content of religious beliefs or even inadvertently contribute to a radicalisation of Islam. Rather, the emphasis should be on pluralism and the creation of conditions in which religious figures can develop moderate voices naturally. The West, in general, and the U.S., in particular, should not subordinate democratic reforms to other interests.

Such a program would have three primary aspects.

❑ First, public diplomacy should not be a surrogate for support to much needed political and economic reforms, which should remain top priority. A healthy program would advance open societies in which people could constructively participate in the decision-making processes, and in which they would feel that justice prevails.

❑ Second, considerable thought must be given to how to engage with Muslim communities. Getting it wrong can have very negative consequences. Common values should be built on partnerships of equality, but external agencies should be cautious about directly influencing the religious fabrics of Central Asia. Public diplomacy programs on religion should be in balance with other agendas rather than the top priority.

❑ Finally, the West must recognise its own shortcomings and seek to promote a greater understanding of Islam within its own policy circles. It is vital that Western countries overcome their fears of Islam and Islamist-influenced politics.

A.   POLITICAL REFORMS

There is fairly widespread acceptance that political reform is a key method of undermining radicalism. As a prominent U.S. policymaker recently said, "The U.S. has learned the hard way that Muslim countries under authoritarian rule can become breeding grounds for terrorists who then attack America because of U.S. support for those regimes".[120] Central Asian regimes, whatever their overt support for U.S. policies, are no exception. The need for reforms has been a common theme in ICG reporting

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[118] ICG interview, Kulob, July 2003.
[119] ICG interview, Alisher Ilhomov, Head of Open Society Institute, Tashkent, 18 July 2003.

[120] "U.S.: Washington announces plan to promote democracy in the Muslim world", Jeffery Donovan, RFE/RL, 6 December 2002.

on Central Asia because they are central to crisis prevention.

Broadly speaking, democracy promotion should consist of comprehensive programs that address political and social disenfranchisement, unresponsive governments, economic dysfunction and democratic disillusionment by supporting political parties, free elections, strong parliaments, independent judiciaries and freedom of speech and belief. It should be tied into anti-corruption measures, including efforts to promote accountability and transparency. And, it should open access to professions in the civil services based on competence rather than clan affiliation and political loyalties so that they become more responsive to local needs.

While there is broad acceptance that political reform is vital to undermining radicalism, there is much less agreement on how it can be achieved. In the end, of course, external influence is always limited in its ability to effect change if governments are strongly opposed. In Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan a combination of aid and pressure can have an impact. It is much more difficult in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, where the commitment of the governments to opening up the political system is almost non-existent, and the levers for international influence are very limited.

One approach – much favoured by the U.S. in Uzbekistan – has been to focus on private engagement with government officials, while limiting public censure to occasional statements and the annual human rights reporting mechanism. It is true that public criticism can backfire, but it does have an important purpose in alleviating domestic concerns that foreign governments are aligned with a very unpopular regime. Public statements of values and beliefs in relation to concrete government policies is an important part of public diplomacy, and a way to head off perceptions that the U.S. agenda in Central Asia is in some way aimed against Islam.

The West used an array of activities and programs during the Cold War in support of democratic change in dictatorial regimes. The U.S. and the EU should apply some lessons learned in Central America, Asia, and Eastern Europe to Central Asia. Identification with the victims of repression and support of their families, for example, are the kinds of assistance programs that send real messages to rulers.

The use of financial levers against regimes such as Uzbekistan's can have an impact. Recently Uzbekistan intensified efforts to promote measures against trafficking in human beings after it was listed a "Tier-3" country by the U.S. State Department. That rating – the worst – leads to automatic cuts in aid. Similar linkages to political change might have similar success.[121]

Pressure for reform is not only about achieving early results with governments. It is also vital to the image of the West in the Muslim world. The difficult balance between public and private diplomacy needs to be shifted towards more distancing of Western governments from local regimes. Otherwise, without the prospects of real reforms, and with a perception that the West is indifferent, Central Asians are likely to become increasingly frustrated and look for other answers to their problems, with results inimical to Western interests.

B. STRENGTHENING OPEN SOCIETIES AND RESPONSIVE GOVERNMENT

Ordinary people should have the feeling that they have a stake in the system and a sense of security and economic well-being. This requires flourishing civil societies with open channels for political participation and access to justice.

After more than a decade of projects to support civil society or to teach about the role of NGOs, many organisations have had enough of being taught. What Central Asian NGOs and civic activists really want is to focus on their roles as citizens. As one NGO leader in Kyrgyzstan articulated it, "We've been speaking about 'what is an NGO and civil society' already for ten years; now we need to talk about citizenship and responsibility".[122]

Many donor organisations tend to concentrate on domestic NGOs and political parties as key partners in strengthening civil society. Not infrequently government officials have their own NGO on the side or establish one to promote their interests. As a result, donors sometimes overlook key formal and informal leaders who strongly influence the community. Often, these represent the religious community. A more successful approach would be

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[121] ICG interview, U.S. diplomat, 2003.
[122] ICG interview, Tolekan Ismailova, NGO Civil Society Against Corruption, Bishkek, July 2003.

an integrative one involving both formal and informal civil society leaders.

An example is the USAID-sponsored "Community Action Investment Project (CAIP)", the goals of which are to strengthen participation in local planning and decision-making through implementation of infrastructure projects decided upon by a community-based organisation (CBO).[123] Most projects have involved infrastructure rehabilitation, but many are now moving in the direction of social mobilisation.[124]

CBOs are established via a type of "town hall" meeting, and members represent all walks of life. Because of the diversity of the participants, both informal and formal community leaders – some secular, some religious – are often drawn in. But, as an NGO worker noted, there is a fine balance to be considered when incorporating religious factors:

> Religious leaders are also naturally included because they are among the people in the categories found in the CBO. We don't want to target them directly as a separate category because we wouldn't want for them to think that the U.S. is trying to get them to tone down their message. We also don't want them to think that we're using humanitarian assistance to get them to convert.[125]

While the CBO approach is applauded, there is a potential downside that needs to be addressed. First, the dynamics between the CBO and responsible local government need to be carefully monitored so that a crisis in the legitimacy of local governments does not develop because the CBO has much greater funds at its disposal than the local government, which often has problems just to pay the bills. This is especially important in Tajikistan where a civil war resulted, in part, from such a crisis of legitimacy. Care should be taken to develop the program so that communities work in partnership with local government but the authorities do not have the opportunity to control the process and so disempower the people.

Rule of law programs also need to address the duality of legal systems stemming from the informal role of *sharia*. The OSCE in Tajikistan has worked with

two local NGOs and a madrasa to develop a training seminar for Islamic clergy on "Religion and the Law", consisting of a series of sessions in the northern Sughd province designed to familiarise Islamic leaders with secular laws pertaining to religion such as the registration of religious organisations, as well as provide information about *sharia*. The project arose from tensions surrounding governmental efforts to vet and reregister mosques in a very conservative area without a strong legal justification.[126] The content was entirely developed by the local trainers. This project, in addition to addressing a need to reduce tensions by enhancing knowledge, tackled a more fundamental issue: the relation of religion to the state and the determination of religious knowledge. The role of the local trainers was vital to avoid the impression that external organisations were attempting to influence religious beliefs.

C.   RAPPROCHEMENT WITH ISLAM

The West needs to promote shared values and recognise the pluralist nature of Central Asian societies. Many principles are common to both Muslim and secular societies in Central Asia and to liberal Western democracies. These should be integral parts of any reform or democracy building program in order to guarantee long-term success.

1.   Facilitating Values

Many projects and programs designed to foster reforms seek to develop democratic "values" that are in reality the principles of Western democracies and market economies. They seek to foster the concepts of civil society, free speech, fair elections, and so on. In order for such endeavours to be successful, they need to be complemented with efforts to draw out and strengthen the fundamental values on which democracy is supported. Concepts such as pluralism, rationalism, humanism, civic responsibility, critical thinking and trust are intrinsic to successful democracies.

While many of these principles are common to both Western, liberal societies and traditional, Muslim societies, they have been submerged in the latter under decades of authoritarian rule. Other values, such as the West's emphasis on individualism and Central Asia's strong communal or familial accent

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[123] See CAIP website at http://caip.usaidcar.info.
[124] ICG interview, representative of a CAIP implementing partner, Tajikistan, September 2003.
[125] Ibid.

[126] ICG Report, *Islam and the State*, op. cit.

seem to be at odds with each other at first glance. A mature democracy, in which the values are well-defined and accepted by the majority of its citizens could, in theory, accommodate either viewpoint. The challenge is to facilitate this process.

A unique effort to do exactly that is the "university curriculum" run by the Aga Khan Humanities Project (AKHP), which facilitated the development of a university-level course on ethics that is taught as an elective to honours students in six universities in Tajikistan, two in Kyrgyzstan and one in Kazakhstan. There are proposals in Tajikistan to expand it to all universities nationwide as a required undergraduate course. The materials are developed by local scholars and other experts and allow students to explore their values by examining their culture and history through topics as diverse as "the individual's responsibility to the community, society and the environment" to "the individual as an object of cognition, human diversity and human ideals".

The students gain more from the course than better knowledge of their culture and history. They develop a greater understanding of the context in which they live and their role in the world community. They also gain skills in critical thinking and civic responsibility based on ethical behaviour and trust, all of which are fundamental to a successful and mature democratic society, while in a specifically Tajik, Kyrgyz or Kazak context. Academicians are developing new teaching methodologies and materials as part of the curriculum development process. Now the program is being linked to top universities in the U.S. and UK in order to exchange knowledge and values.

Programs such as the AKHP curriculum lay the foundation for successful democracies because they cultivate the necessary values while promoting human dignity. Young people are empowered to examine the tenets of democracy and debate its nature in a context that is specific to their society, while reconciling competing viewpoints over the nature of the state and the role of culture and religion.

2. Supporting Pluralism and Dialogue

Several organisations and multi-lateral institutions have been supporting projects to promote pluralism in various ways. The German embassy in Tajikistan has sent Islamic leaders to Germany. Tajikistan has been benefiting from a strong third-track diplomacy program supported by the Kettering Foundation,

which seeks to involve people from all walks of life in a public dialogue process as a confidence-building measure. Discussion clubs around the country that include community leaders meet on a regular basis. Their representatives then meet at the national level in a discussion session that incorporates high-level officials from both ends of the political spectrum. The process is designed to give people a constructive forum in which to air their concerns and be listened to.

The German-based Centre for OSCE Studies runs a similar program, but more from an academic than a grass-roots conflict resolution perspective. It has essentially set a framework for dialogue that brings former enemies together but limits the terms of reference for discussion of religious issues. The UN Transitional Office for Peace-Building also has political discussion clubs that allow representatives of political parties to participate in community discussions in several districts. Local authorities often try to influence who is invited to participate. This project will serve a useful purpose if it provides a real forum for political parties to meet their constituents for debates and rallies and for both secular and religious constituents to voice their concerns.

Cultural exchanges are also an important means of supporting pluralism and dialogue, and several initiatives are underway. The U.S. and Germany are especially active. The German embassy in Tajikistan is organising an exchange program for a small number of Tajik Islamic scholars to study comparative theology at German universities. The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Uzbekistan is also promoting collaborative scholarship on both Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

The U.S. is allocating funds for several large programs that address Islamic issues. The State Department's Bureau for Education recently announced several programs in Uzbekistan on comparative religion and religious tolerance. The two biggest are the Uzbekistan Educational Partnership Program for Cultural and Religious Studies with the University of Washington and five secular and religious institutions in Uzbekistan and "Cultural and Religious Pluralism in the United States and Uzbekistan", which will be conducted by IREX. Both are for three years and together total over U.S.$1.5 million. While the exchanges themselves are very worthwhile, they seem to be part of a larger agenda to develop moderate Islamic voices in Uzbekistan who are friendly to the U.S., rather than to improve American knowledge

about the region or Uzbek knowledge about, say, modern teaching methodologies.

The U.S. embassies in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have also supported programs to send high-ranking clergy and state officials dealing with religion, as well as prominent "moderate Muslim voices", to the U.S. for two-week study tours. They meet there with numerous NGOs, religious leaders, academics, and policymakers to learn about Islam in the pluralist, democratic U.S. society. Most return with positive images, which several have subsequently spoken about. Public speaking events, newspaper articles and appearances at madrasas might be a few of the activities that they could become involved in afterwards but in general there seems to be only limited follow-up:

In Uzbekistan, the U.S. embassy has taken great pains to ensure that diverse groups including both official and some more controversial religious figures are selected to go on visitors programs and exchanges. The embassy and directors of the various programs have also stepped in on behalf of religious leaders who have been blocked from leaving by the Uzbek government or who have subsequently lost their jobs. The question is what will happen to these people if they receive less direct support from the embassy in the future. There is also a risk that the general population may become suspicious of the program aims since it often perceives double standards in U.S. policies.[127] Such programs can certainly be helpful but more attention should be given to increasing the transparency of participant selection and explaining their objectives and aims to the public.

It would be useful to open existing exchanges to students from both secular and religious institutions to include fields like comparative religious studies, rather than develop specific programs for religion separately. Universities would, of course, still be able to pursue their own programs, but they would not be part of a greater political strategy.

Most of these exchanges are based on bilateral agreements. There is very limited interchange among

countries in the region. Islamic scholars in Tajikistan for example, have no contact with counterparts in Uzbekistan. Mutual suspicions between states in the region have limited contact, although exchanging ideas would be worthwhile, as religious leaders face similar issues despite different national contexts. Supporting regional projects designed to stimulate debate, exchange of ideas and education would also be worthwhile.

Wider exchange and discussion is also possible under the aegis of international organisations. The British Council has organised The Oxford Muntada Program, organized by the Center for Islamic Studies of Oxford University and funded by the British Council. It provides an intensive residential forum at Oxford for a group of approximately 25 young Muslim men and women to achieve through dialogue a better understanding of Muslim majority societies as well as of Muslim minorities in the West, and the challenges and opportunities for Muslim leaders operating at the interface of Islamic and Western societies.

The lack of debate within Central Asian Islam tends to allow alternative radical groups to dominate the agenda. There is very little opportunity for Muslims to discuss key issues in the media, or to get involved in public discussions of political issues. While there is a fear of over-politicising Islam, there also needs to be space for more controversial issues to be aired. Many conferences and seminars on religious issues supported by international organisations tend to be formal and unproductive, with little opportunity for real discussion. Instead, more informal fora are needed.

Support for media programs and reporting on religious affairs would be one way to bring some issues into the open and help religious leaders develop more skills in presenting their arguments and discussing difficult topics. The internet is an increasingly popular means for Muslims to find out what is happening in the world, and to discover more about their faith. But the most accessible sites are often run by radical groups, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir or Wahhabi-inspired organisations. Promoting an internet site that provides competent answers to religious and political questions would be of value to many young Muslims.

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[127] This is already happening in Kyrgyzstan as one NGO activist noted when discussing the International Visitors Program. "The U.S. is playing its own game". He also noted that the programs do not change negative opinions concerning U.S. policy in the Middle East or Afghanistan. ICG interview, NGO activist, Osh, Kyrgyzstan, July 2003.

3.   Changing Perceptions

Much, much more could be done to dispel false perceptions in both Central Asia and the West. People in Central Asia need to learn more about the West and its interests, priorities and cultures, and the West certainly needs to learn more about Central Asia.

German embassies have sought to establish positions for Islamic affairs as part of a public diplomacy strategy. This has worked well in Tajikistan, where a Persian-speaking Islamic scholar is the cultural affairs attaché. The officer not only advises the ambassador on Islamic issues and represents Germany to the Muslim community, but also coordinates exchanges on religious issues and is developing a program for youth to discuss with religious and secular leaders the role of religion in contemporary society.

More direct contact between Muslims of both regions would help dispel perceptions that the West is against Islam. The U.S. embassy in Tajikistan commissioned a local TV crew to produce a film about Muslims in America, which it hopes will be broadcast on domestic television this fall. Tajiks soon will be able to judge for themselves if the U.S. is really as anti-Islamic as they believe it to be or if Islam plays some role in American society. The OSCE in Kyrgyzstan brought a Muslim leader from the UK to a regional conference on inter-confessional tolerance and dialogue in 2002 so that he could tell people about his life and experiences as part of the Muslim minority in Britain.

Such programs give Central Asian Muslims alternative viewpoints to the existing options: on the one hand a stultifying, conservative state-dominated religion; on the other a radical, global dogma focused on hatred of the West and rejection of its values. They provide in effect an alternative global view from the many schools of thought that exist in mainstream Islamic thought in the West.

D.   MOVING FORWARD

Too often, public diplomacy is perceived as a one-way street to promote foreign interests. So far, it has been used mostly to explain the West in order to convince people in Central Asia of the correctness of national policies. This has fallen far short of the intended outcomes since many people are misinformed about the West.

Spending increased tremendously after 9/11 and embassies and development agencies have at times found themselves essentially over-resourced and understaffed, making it difficult to devote serious time to explaining policies in a culturally-sensitive form. But there is still much that Western organisations and diplomatic missions can do that does not require huge financial or personnel commitments and would lessen suspicions of hidden agendas, while providing space for them to advocate political reforms.

The West first needs to make genuine efforts to dispel perceived offensive stereotypes about Islam, and these efforts need to be visible to Muslims. Embassies should circulate in local languages more policy statements by their leaders which demonstrate understanding and sensitivity to Muslims. President Bush's speech about a war on terrorism and not on Islam from a mosque, for example, would have been welcomed by many people; circulation of speeches by Western Islamic leaders would also be very helpful.

Embassies and agencies should likewise show respect for important religious holidays and customs. The traditional practice of sending congratulations for state holidays could easily be expanded to include religious holidays. Public wishes for *Eid al-fitr,* for example, could be more frequently printed in newspapers. Some ambassadors and heads of agencies invite prominent religious leaders for an *iftar* (the breaking of the fast at sundown) during Ramadan, a practice that could be more widely adopted. A former U.S. ambassador to Uzbekistan is still fondly remembered for attending the wedding of the son of a controversial religious leader in 1996. Social calls, visits to mosques and prominent religious leaders (both official and unofficial), and appreciation of local customs go a long way to winning hearts and minds.[128]

Much more could be done to promote pluralism and dialogue. Roundtables, conferences and seminars on freedom of belief, the role of religion in society,

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[128] Of course, this can also backfire, as happened when the ambassador of a major European country visited the central mosque in Khujand. Prior to the ambassador's arrival the Imam-kotib and city authorities decided to "clean up" the "undesirables" around the mosque. Their enforcement methods included publicly humiliating and beating male and female beggars on the street just outside the mosque. ICG observation, Khujand, June 2003.

state and religious relations, pluralism and diversity should be organised in the region with participation from religious leaders, NGO and civic activists, academia and all levels of government. Religious experts from all types of faiths and other countries or regions should also be included – not to "teach" people in Central Asia about Islam, but to facilitate defining the role of religion by the exchange of experience and ideas.

Educational exchanges can also address Islamic issues. Programs that send young people abroad to study could also recruit from among madrasa students provided they meet the academic qualifications. The fields of study could also include comparative religion or the history of religion, for example, to enable young scholars to explore these topics more. Funds should be available for them upon return to translate and publish their work locally.

Religious education is an extremely important, yet tricky issue to tackle. Although international organisations should not be directly involved in the content of religious education, they can make a contribution through providing support for secular education in both state-run schools and madrasas in fields such as comparative religions or the history of religion. They can also push for reforms in both secular and religious institutions that support better education and learning in general, like the implementation of higher overall standards, training in pedagogical methodologies, and curriculum development. Mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences and geography are important subjects that everyone should be well-versed in. The international community can also facilitate the learning of foreign languages. Employing young Americans or Europeans in madrasas as English-language teachers is more likely to break down mutual stereotypes than any amount of public diplomacy. Western organisations can also promote information technologies in both state-run and religious education establishments.

On a program level, Western organisations should provide technical assistance for education reform, including in religious establishments. Having a regulated and integrated system of private, religious schools would enable young people to get a religious education as well as a general education up to secular standards. The Ministries of Education should be tasked with setting up a joint commission, with religious figures from the Qaziyat or Muftiyat or Council of Ulama, as well as independent

religious figures, academics, pedagogical experts and educational administrators, to develop curricula for madrasas based on a combination of secular and religious subjects. In return, the madrasas could be accredited by the Ministry of Education, and graduates could attend institutes of higher learning.

VI. CONCLUSION

Moderate Muslim voices can best be supported by promoting real reforms that provide an environment in which people of all persuasions can constructively contribute to political processes and in which rule of law is upheld. Closed political systems that serve the elites rather than the entire population in each country will only foster deep resentment and force groups to advance their agendas outside the constitutional frameworks. In effect, it is bad policies that could trigger radical Islam and terrorism in Central Asia. Concentrating only on Islamic issues will serve no more than short-term political interests and give the impression that the West supports a narrow segment of the population.

Any program to come to grips with radical Islam's potential needs to go further than traditional public diplomacy projects designed to make the West, or the U.S., acceptable to Central Asian Muslims. Efforts should be prioritised to promote real reforms, while improving mutual understanding. The focus should be on comprehensive political reforms based on pluralism and strengthening open societies by promoting civil society and rule of law, while seeking a rapprochement with Islam that increases mutual understanding, facilitates common values, and addresses Western perceptions.

Radical Islam in Central Asia is not inevitable if the West takes on its responsibilities in the region with vigour. The international community in general, and the U.S. in particular, have an obligation to push these agendas forward.

Osh/Brussels, 22 December 2003

APPENDIX A

MAP OF CENTRAL ASIA
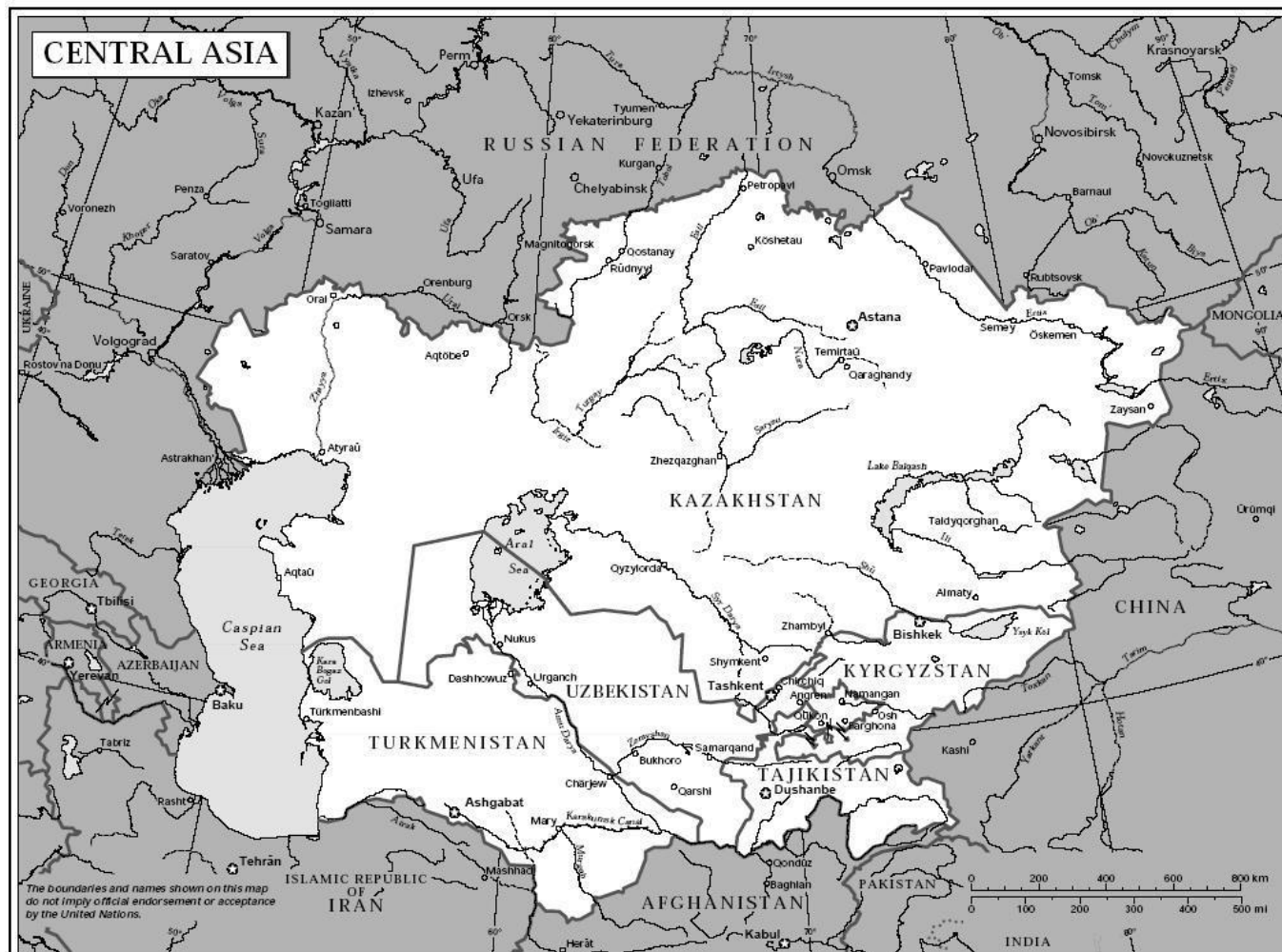
APPENDIX B

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

The International Crisis Group (ICG) is an independent, non-profit, multinational organisation, with over 90 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

ICG's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, ICG produces regular analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers. ICG also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a 12-page monthly bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in all the most significant situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

ICG's reports and briefing papers are distributed widely by email and printed copy to officials in foreign ministries and international organisations and made generally available at the same time via the organisation's Internet site, www.crisisweb.org. ICG works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The ICG Board – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring ICG reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policy-makers around the world. ICG is chaired by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari; and its President and Chief Executive since January 2000 has been former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans.

ICG's international headquarters are in Brussels, with advocacy offices in Washington DC, New York, London and Moscow. The organisation currently operates thirteen field offices (in Amman, Belgrade, Bogotá, Cairo, Freetown, Islamabad, Jakarta, Kathmandu, Nairobi, Osh, Pristina, Sarajevo and Tbilisi) with analysts working in over 30 crisis-affected countries and territories across four continents. In Africa, those countries include Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe; in Asia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kashmir and Nepal; in Europe, Albania, Bosnia, Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro and Serbia; in the Middle East, the whole region from North Africa to Iran; and in Latin America, Colombia.

ICG raises funds from governments, charitable foundations, companies and individual donors. The following governmental departments and agencies currently provide funding: the Australian Agency for International Development, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Canadian International Development Agency, the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the German Foreign Office, the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, the Luxembourgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the Republic of China Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Taiwan), the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the United Kingdom Department for International Development, the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Foundation and private sector donors include Atlantic Philanthropies, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Ford Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, William & Flora Hewlett Foundation, Henry Luce Foundation Inc., John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, John Merck Fund, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Open Society Institute, Ploughshares Fund, Sigrid Rausing Trust, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Sarlo Foundation of the Jewish Community Endowment Fund, the United States Institute of Peace and the Fundação Oriente.

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[*] The Algeria project was transferred from the Africa Program to the Middle East & North Africa Program in January 2002.

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APPENDIX D

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