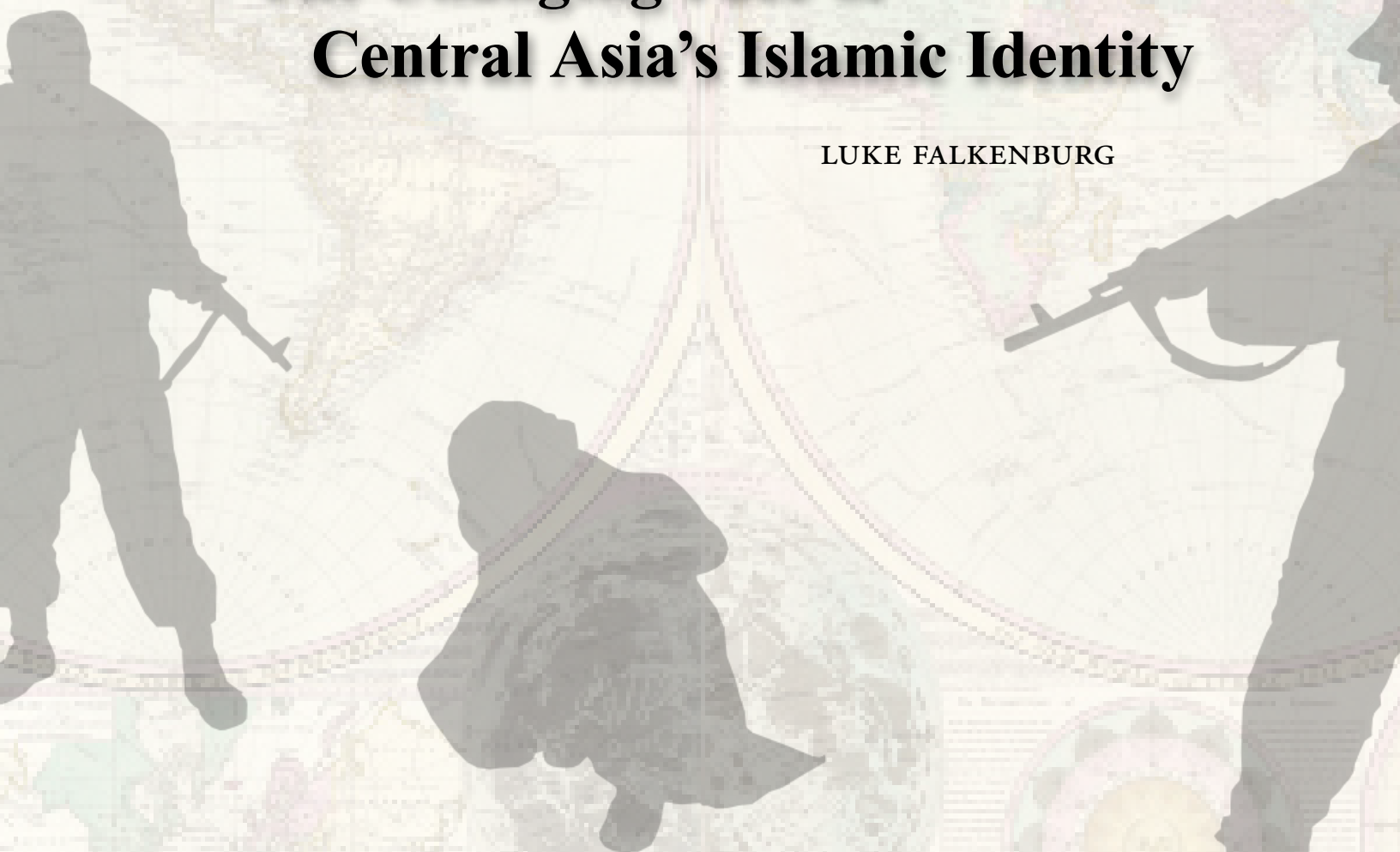




# **A Capacity for Violence: The Changing Face of Central Asia's Islamic Identity**

LUKE FALKENBURG



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Open Source, Foreign Perspective, Underconsidered/Understudied Topics

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### **Author Background**

Luke Luke Falkenburg holds a Master's of Science in Global Affairs from New York University's Center for Global Affairs, with a concentration in Transnational Security, and certification in Arabic. He has a Bachelor's in History from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Further, he has extensive experience in the Islamic world and served in the United States Marine Corps where he deployed twice to Iraq.

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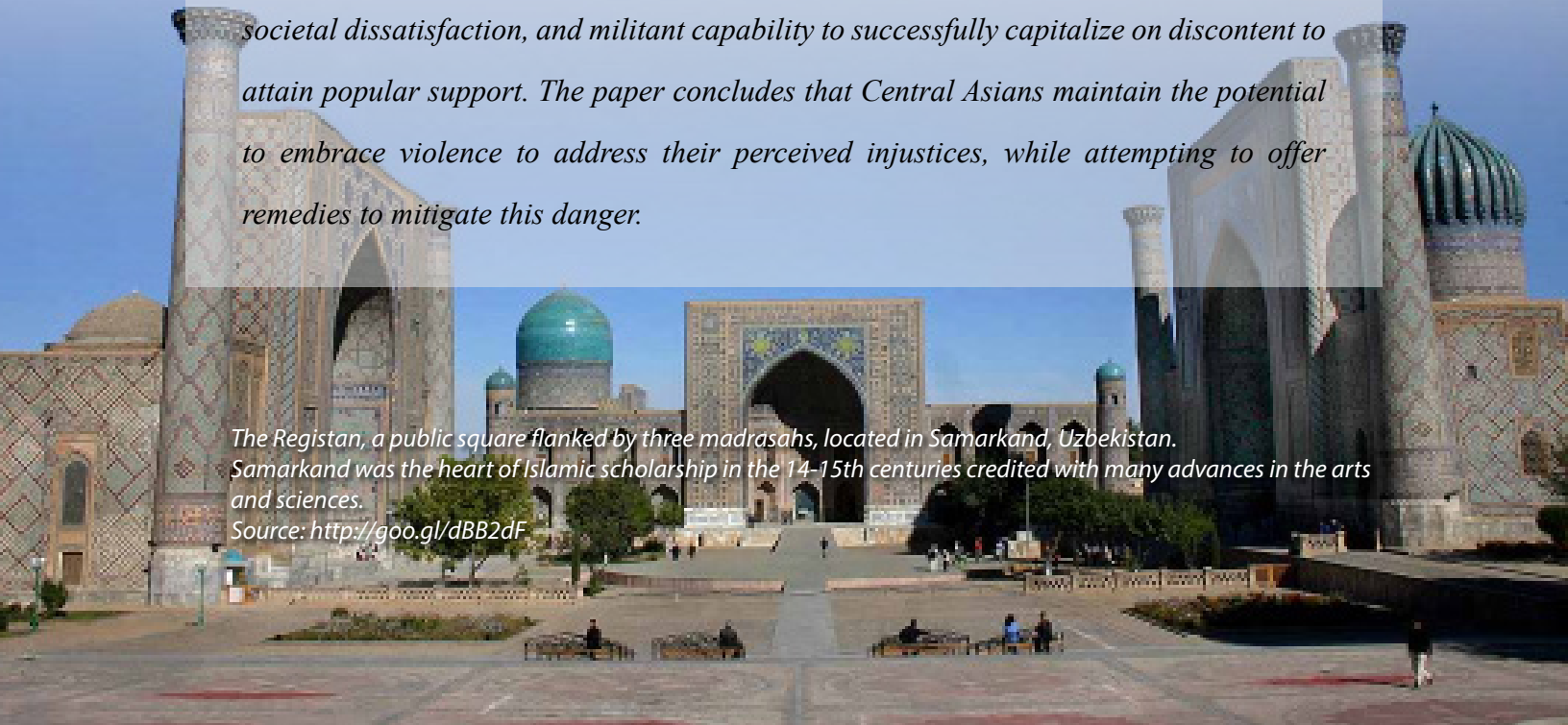
# A Capacity for Violence: The Changing Face of Central Asia's Islamic Identity

BY LUKE FALKENBURG

*Although the war in Afghanistan removed a significant portion of militant Central Asians, many belonging to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, from the region, currently, Central Asia is witnessing a radical and militant Islamic resurgence, partially because of the pending NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan set for 2014. However, any future prospects of militancy being successful in Central Asia hinges on the region's willing or unwilling support of militancy. Therefore, this paper questions whether militancy will find regional support and what factors, be they religious or not, will lend them reinforcement? Additionally, will popular Islamic political organizations, like Hizb ut-Tahrir, renounce peaceful advocacy in favor of violence to achieve their aims? Thus, this paper analyzes the current state of Islam in Central Asia, foreign influences, Islam's relationship with the state, the populace's religiosity, influence of religious organizations, economic and societal dissatisfaction, and militant capability to successfully capitalize on discontent to attain popular support. The paper concludes that Central Asians maintain the potential to embrace violence to address their perceived injustices, while attempting to offer remedies to mitigate this danger.*

*The Registan, a public square flanked by three madrasahs, located in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. Samarkand was the heart of Islamic scholarship in the 14-15th centuries credited with many advances in the arts and sciences.*

*Source: <http://goo.gl/dBB2dF>*



## I. Introduction:

This article explores Central Asian society's<sup>1</sup> receptiveness to Islamic militancy, whether from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)<sup>2</sup> or other Islamic factions, because the future success of these groups hinge on their ability to gain a degree of popular support. However, as Martha Olcott stresses, it is often difficult to determine religious behavior, because it is a “notoriously unpredictable phenomenon,” which, depending on the individual's conscience, may drive some to rebel against the state and others to adhere to its policies.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, as Dr. Adeb Khalid emphasizes, any examination of Islam in Central Asia must manage to avoid mixing Islamic militancy and extremism with Islamic discourse.<sup>4</sup>

The questions must be asked then: how do Central Asians identify with Islam? Will militants be able to capitalize on this identity to gain support, or will social factors, economic depravity, and poor and corrupt governance be utilized? Finally, are Islamic organizations presently located in Central Asia becoming more accepting of violence to achieve their aims and thus adopting militant trends?







*Khazret Sultan Mosque, the largest in Central Asia, in Astana, Kazakhstan  
Source: <http://blogs.voanews.com/photos/2012/07/06/july-6-2012/>*

This article confronts the challenge of resolving the question of the capacity of Central Asian Islamic society to support violence and/or actively support militant organizations such as the IMU. First, the current status of Islam in Central Asia and the impact of foreign interpretations of Islam will be analyzed. Next, the relationship between the state and Islam is appraised and how this relationship contributes to religious extremism. Third, the overall religiosity of Central Asia and the likelihood that Islamic organizations are becoming accepting of violence as a means to further their objectives are ascertained. The paper concludes that Central Asian Islam does, indeed, possess a capacity for violence. Finally, after concluding that there is fertile ground from which militant Islam may be able to plant its seed, future prospects for mitigating this emerging threat will be discussed.

## II. Influence from Abroad: Islam in Central Asia

To understand political Islam and Islam in general in Central Asia and its potential to become violent, it is necessary to at first have some concept of how Central Asian society identifies with it. The Muslim population of Kyrgyzstan is estimated to be 75%, in Tajikistan 90%, and in Uzbekistan 88%.<sup>5</sup> Currently the majority of Muslims in Central Asia are adherents of *Sufism*,<sup>6</sup> or what has been dubbed “folk Islam,” a cross between the authentic traditions of the region and Islam, primarily from the *Hanafi* School of jurisprudence.<sup>7</sup> Many Central Asian governments prefer to promote Hanafi Islam, which is viewed as being compatible with Sufism, in order to mitigate Islamic extremism.<sup>8</sup> In countries such as Uzbekistan, an estimated 90% of the country’s 28 million Muslims identify in some form with Hanafism.<sup>9</sup> However, imported sects such as *Ahmadiyya*,<sup>10</sup> *Wahhabism*,<sup>11</sup> *Deobandism*,<sup>12</sup> and *Salafism*<sup>13</sup> challenge these traditional beliefs. These various branches, which condemn the fact that Islam in Central Asia merged with traditional customs, are becoming extremely popular among the youth.<sup>14</sup>

According to Aibek Samakov, an expert on Islam in Central Asia from the Aigine Cultural Research Center in Bishkek, the reason for increasing popularity of foreign interpretations of Islam is that most Muslims lack knowledge about Islam, even basic precepts, and may not even know the “five pillars of Islam.”<sup>15</sup> Students are sent, sometimes after receiving scholarships from host nations, to countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia for education, where they pick up that country’s particular brand of Islam.<sup>16</sup> Although conclusive information of who funds these studies is lacking, when individuals return they bring these new ideas with them, but no one at home is educated enough in Islamic jurisprudence to challenge these notions.<sup>17</sup> Former *Mufti (an Islamic legal authority)* of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, Muhammad Sodik Muhammad Yusuf,<sup>18</sup> echoes Mr. Samakov’s sentiment saying this lack of proper Islamic education has led to increasing membership in radical underground groups.<sup>19</sup> Thus, individuals with no prior education in Islam are susceptible to individual interpretations of those persons teaching them.

Additionally, widespread distrust in the secular government has led to increased political activity in these groups, especially among the youth, who see religious organizations as a conduit for their growing frustrations.<sup>20</sup> Hundreds of Central Asian youth have been educated in Saudi-funded Pakistani Deobandi *madrasahs*<sup>21</sup> alone, after which they then bring radical ideas back home, a process that has been occurring since the 1970s.<sup>22</sup> Some students may bring back more liberal notions of Islam such as the *Fethullah Gülen*<sup>23</sup> school of thought from Turkey, which is open to modernization and a working relationship with the *dhimmi*



Fethullah Gülen. Source: <http://goo.gl/cYnuCq>

community.<sup>24</sup> Yet, even modern and forward-looking Islamists are viewed by their governments as radicals and are persecuted. For example, between 2009 and 2011 in Uzbekistan more than 200 prisoners were accused of following the teachings of *Said al-Nursi*.<sup>25</sup> However, those students influenced by Deobandism, Wahabbism, and Salafism tend to be more supportive of militancy and have the desire to clean up *bid'ahs*<sup>26</sup> in Islam, proposed by schools such as Said al-Nursi, and remain ideologically opposed to folk Islam/Sufism.

Of first concern dealing with the increasing influence of outside sects of Islam is the extent of direct influence of foreign powers implementing their particular brand of Islam within Central Asia. The last major anti-Islamic campaign was initiated by the Soviets in 1985-1987 when it was believed Wahhabism had infiltrated the chain of unofficial mosques.<sup>27</sup> Currently, it is widely agreed that mosque numbers and attendance are rapidly increasing.<sup>28</sup> Foreign governments are financing much of this construction, for

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example, Qatar's construction of a mosque in Dushanbe (to be discussed later in the paper). Saudi Arabia, having recently built embassies in Dushanbe in 2010 and in Bishkek in 2012, is becoming more active in mosque construction; however, its intentions remain unclear, and it is unknown if these mosques will be Wahhabi or not.<sup>29</sup> The Turkish government has been active as well, but it remains more supportive of traditional Sufism. Further, Turkish and Saudi funding permitted Kyrgyzstan to open its largest mosque in Osh in June 2012.<sup>30</sup> Although, the state remains the largest provider of mosques in Central Asia, the increasing numbers of unregistered mosques is still a question mark among security services. One representative from an international organization working in Central Asia, who spoke with the author, asked the question of who is financing them, and what is their doctrine?<sup>31</sup>



Kadyr Malikov. Source: BBC

Conversely, Kadyr Malikov, a renowned Islamic scholar and political scientist, dismisses foreign influence, especially allegations of Saudi meddling. He claims Saudi Arabia provides only a portion of building costs, and the funding is not direct.<sup>32</sup> When a community wants a mosque built it must go through official channels, or the mufti, who oversees all operations.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, foreign governments are prevented from building Islamic madrasahs, which remain controlled by the security services.<sup>34</sup> How-

ever, this only accounts for funding of official mosques and madrasahs, and ignores the fact of the rising number of unregistered institutions that have no accountability to central control. Moreover, Amanda Ross McDowell, the Deputy Head of Mission at the British Embassy in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, said that although there have been instances of foreign mosque funding, such as Naryn Mosque,<sup>35</sup> private and commercial funding inside countries such as Kyrgyzstan from countries like China, Russia, Iran, and Turkey overshadows any other known investments and targets economic assistance and infrastructure construction, not madrasah and mosque development.<sup>36</sup>



*“Essentially, militant Islam has encouraged the Central Asian authoritarian regimes to act autocratically, regardless of real or imagined threats.”*

### III. The State & Islam

State suppression, implemented by the aforementioned Central Asian regimes to clamp down on religious organizations, has had varying success and has been reactionary and misplaced by the tendency to associate any Muslim opposed to the regime as a “militant,” instead of focusing on actual militants. This naïve classification significantly contributes to increasing sympathy for radicals in general; thus, the continuing security threat posed by militant Islam from groups that have thus far proven themselves to be non-violent. Essentially, militant Islam has encouraged the Central Asian authoritarian regimes to act autocratically, regardless of real or imagined threats.

In Uzbekistan, similar in varying degrees to other Central Asian states, the whole official religious establishment is controlled by the state. The Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Uzbekistan, which regulates official mosques, pays imams, and determines which Uzbeks go on the *hajj*, answers to the State Committee on Religion, which answers to the president and his ministers.<sup>37</sup> The state, in addition to monitoring content of sermons, regulates religious airtime.<sup>38</sup> However, the effects of globalization, particularly the Internet and cable television, make this more problematic for the regime.

Further, government leaders such as Uzbekistan’s Islam Karimov willingly manipulate threat levels to increase international funding, increase their legitimacy, and implement repressive policies.<sup>39</sup> Uzbekistan also labels any arrested dissenter as a *Wahhabi* and limits foreign interpretations of Islam.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, Karimov has established repressive policies and jailed thousands of suspected Islamists on little more than misgivings.<sup>41</sup> For example, the average sentence for accused Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) members is 20 years, and in August 2008 Uzbek authorities apprehended 40 accused HT



Source: <http://thehizbuttahrirwatch.wordpress.com/>

*“Instead of mitigating the threat, they directly fuel resentment, which produces radicalism and increased membership in Islamic organizations.”*

members.<sup>42</sup> In 2007 the U.S Department of State estimated 4,500 members of HT were imprisoned in Uzbekistan alone.<sup>43</sup> Essentially, by labeling anyone suspicious as HT or IMU, Karimov makes anyone who is even remotely religious or political an easy target.<sup>44</sup> Such actions have led academics such as Dr. Khalid to conclude, “Islamic militancy does exist in Uzbekistan, but if it didn’t the regime would have invented it. It provides an excellent alibi for cracking down on all dissent.”<sup>45</sup> Unfortunately, by preventing open debates and various interpretations from entering Uzbekistan and jailing suspects with no regard for proper legal proceedings, Karimov is effectively forcing Islamists underground, where they are further radicalized and more difficult to monitor.



Islam Karimov. Source: wikipedia.org

In Uzbekistan, these measures were first introduced on a large scale after six car bombs were detonated simultaneously in Tashkent in 1999, allegedly orchestrated by the IMU and targeting Karimov. Although the attack failed and was supposedly the result of clan rivalries, 13 people were left dead and 128 were injured, and Karimov targeted Islam as the culprit.<sup>46</sup> The Global War on Terrorism has only fueled Karimov’s obsession and serves as a viable excuse to exercise political repression on Islamic organizations, which promotes the militants’ cause in the eyes of the populace. For example, in 1998 he stated, “[s]uch

people [Wahhabis] must be shot in the head. If necessary, I’ll shoot them myself.”<sup>47</sup>

Tajikistan, which appears moderate and democratic by permitting Islamic parties such as the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP),<sup>48</sup> bans HT and *hijabs*,<sup>49</sup> and regulates the building of mosques, content of religious teachings, and sermons.<sup>50</sup> In June 2011 a parental responsibility bill passed by Tajik President Rahmano and Tajikistan’s lower house of Parliament made it criminal for minors

under 18 to enter places of worship.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, the country has actively persecuted political Islamic groups. Between 2000-2005, 500 suspected members of HT were arrested, and even though only 189 cases came to court, by 2005 there were approximately 180 HT members imprisoned in Tajik jails.<sup>52</sup> Amnesty International in 2012 accused this prison system of implementing torture, to include acts of “electric shocks, boiling water, suffocation, beatings, burning with cigarettes, rape and threats of rape.”<sup>53</sup>

In Tajikistan, similar to its neighbors, the government favors Islam that is officially controlled by the state. For example, Qatar is currently funding the previously mentioned construction of a mosque in Dushanbe, which will be the biggest in Central Asia, able to accommodate 115,000 worshippers.<sup>54</sup> According to an American Central Asian analyst working in Tajikistan, the Tajik government plans to use this mosque to shut down smaller mosques that may be opposed to the regime, filter everyone into the large mosque, and use government approved sermons.<sup>55</sup> This process is already being implemented, noticeably with the closure of Haji Akbar Turajonzoda’s Muhammadiya Mosque in 2012.<sup>56</sup>

In Kyrgyzstan, the *Muftiat*,<sup>57</sup> whose history goes back to Soviet times, plays a central, albeit weak, role in the country’s religious affairs. Although it operates outside state control, it remains in tune with official policy, drafts official sermons, educates clerics, and determines which Kyrgyz obtain hajj visas.<sup>58</sup> Many muftis obtain their positions through inheritance rather than through capability, which erodes their legitimacy to a large degree.<sup>59</sup> Often, when the Muftiat attempts to impose its will, it meets stiff resistance from unofficial Islamic groups, such as the Kamalov family in the Ferganna Valley, who all but ignore their decrees.<sup>60</sup>

Furthermore, the Muftiat’s ability to monitor religious content is almost non-existent. For example, an Imam who is usually a Salafist will simply change his sermon’s rhetoric for the day if government officials are present.<sup>61</sup> Also, people remain fairly open about being members of outlawed

*“Thus, the future potential of increasing numbers of individuals turning to Islamic organizations, such as the IMU, HT, and Jamaat al-Tabligh, should economic reform fail to be implemented, must be acknowledged.”*

groups such as HT, especially in the south. One representative from an international organization claimed that when one sees an arrest occur, “it’s like going to an aquarium and saying you caught a fish, because everyone is a HT member.”<sup>62</sup> Therefore, in Kyrgyzstan the government’s ability to control and monitor an official brand of Islam is feeble, which permits alternative and unofficial forms to flourish.

These inadequate responses in dealing with perceived threats by the Central Asian governments demonstrate their fragility and impotence. Instead of mitigating the threat, they directly fuel resentment, which produces radicalism and increased membership in Islamic organizations. Moreover, state repression forces these organizations underground, where they are radicalized. Frederic Grare, of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, believes a lesson can be found in the resurgence of the Taliban, which is a direct result of the absence of strength and legitimacy of Hamid Karzai and the central Afghan authority.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, instead of alleviating the militant threat by mitigating extremist sentiment, the Central Asian regimes are quickly eroding their legitimacy, which directly correlates with rising violent extremism.

Further corroding the state’s credibility is its inability to provide social services, which has led the populace to turn to Islamic organizations as a source of relief. Although it is not the purpose of this paper to analyze the economic situation of Central Asia, a quick examination draws the conclusion that the current regimes fail to provide for their societies’ needs, which may create more animosity in the long term than repressive policies. However, it must be acknowledged that although economic deprivation may be a factor leading to radicalism, it would be misplaced to label it solely as the precursor. Plenty of radicals have emerged for a variety of reasons, so although economics plays a vital role, having a more robust economy by no means signals the absence of extremism in Central Asia.

All three countries have suffered significantly as a result of Soviet withdrawal in 1991. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan alone has noticed a significant lapse in education and health due to lack of funding, a trend also experienced by its neighbors.<sup>64</sup> GNI per capita in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan is \$1,280 and \$880 respectively (World Bank, 2010), which has left



26% of the Uzbek population and 33.7% of Kyrgyzstan below the poverty line.<sup>65</sup> A 2102 report by Business Monitor International claims the per capita GDP in Uzbekistan is now \$1,500 and in Kyrgyzstan approximately \$1000.<sup>66</sup> Despite international attempts, such as United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Kingdom's Poverty Reduction Initiative, the latter of which targets the 25% most impoverished Kyrgyz citizens, the problem persists.<sup>67</sup>

Likewise, corruption and nepotism run rampant, which directly contributes to the problem. For example, in 2009 Karimov's daughter Gulnara Karimova, in addition to her lavish private Sting concert, was reported by *Bilan* magazine to have between \$540-\$630 million in Swiss bank accounts.<sup>68</sup> Also, in Uzbekistan, reliance on the illegal black market appears to be the glue holding society together, although a police crackdown could bring the whole system crashing down. Furthermore, corruption in Kyrgyzstan, often surrounding the Manas air base,<sup>69</sup> has led to several "political putsches," such as the "Tulip Revolution."<sup>70</sup>

Additionally, underemployment is of concern. For example, in the past what has been described as "the tinderbox of Central Asia," the Fergana Valley, doctors and teachers have earned as little as \$10-15 per month.<sup>71</sup> With incomes at so low, individuals are incapable of adequately providing for their families.

Economic depravity has culminated in violent events, such as those in Osh, Kyrgyzstan's second largest city. In 2010 ethnic tensions there left more than 420 dead, mostly minority Uzbeks.<sup>72</sup> Although tension escalated due, in part, to ethnic tensions, southern Uzbeks, who feel increasingly marginalized by the northern government both politically and economically, may increasingly turn to Islamic organizations, be they militant or not, for support and as a means to vent growing dissatisfaction. As Dr. Daniel Masters states, it becomes simple to recruit from one group of individuals if they fear the economic and political dominance of the other group; religion can quickly become the language of this dialogue.<sup>73</sup> To Dr. Masters' point, former IMU leader Usmon Odil declared

*"Society's increased reliance on Islam to provide its basic needs correlates directly with a weakening and desperate central authority."*

“holy war” in southern Kyrgyzstan after the 2010 Osh incident,<sup>74</sup> and estimates ranging from a few hundred to several thousand ethnic Uzbeks have fled to bolster IMU or Islamic Jihad Union ranks in Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>75</sup>

Thus, the future potential of increasing numbers of individuals turning to Islamic organizations, such as the IMU, HT, and Jamaat al-Tabligh, should economic reform fail to be implemented, must be acknowledged. The fact that in its investigation of the Osh incidents the Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission found 168 automatic weapons alone, including machine guns, mortar tubes, and sniper rifles, should be of immediate concern, especially should the region become a new breeding ground for radicalism.<sup>76</sup> Currently, Amanda McDowell argues tensions are far below what was experienced in 2010, and that the government in the north is attempting to bridge any strains.<sup>77</sup> However, she does acknowledge that a variety of non-ethnicity factors, such as geographic remoteness resulting from mountainous terrain, has continued to keep the south’s center of reference inward-looking, as opposed to towards the national government in the north.<sup>78</sup>

Tajikistan is the worst off of the three countries. Because of Tajikistan’s dependence on the Soviet Union, the suddenness of Soviet withdrawal from there created an immediate sense of chaos. Between 1991 and 1992 the leadership of the country changed three times and created enough turmoil to force a brain drain from the country, as many educated ethnic Russians fled.<sup>79</sup> Eventually, contention among Communist and Islamist ethnic factions and divisions, the latter of which wanted to introduce governance based on *Shari’a*<sup>80</sup> interpretation, erupted in 1992 through a series of events that led to a civil war that lasted until 1997.<sup>81</sup> The civil war left Tajikistan as the weakest Central Asian state and one of the world’s most impoverished countries. Paul Collier estimates that “a typical seven-year war leaves a country 15% poorer than it would have been” and half the costs of war do not become apparent until after the conflict has ended.<sup>82</sup> This has clearly been the case in Tajikistan, which has contributed to its opium dependency.

Currently, Tajikistan’s debt is over \$1 billion or 100% of GDP, with 17.3% of its children malnourished, which makes it a poor and desperate country.<sup>83</sup> 34.3% of the population is over age 15, and because unemployment numbers are high much of its workforce works abroad in Russia for

remittances.<sup>84</sup> Russian remittances amounted to \$2.065 billion for Tajikistan in 2010, or 35% of its GDP.<sup>85</sup> The United Nations Development Programme and World Bank estimated these numbers at 41%<sup>86</sup> and 42%<sup>87</sup> respectively. 60% of Tajikistan's inhabitants live below the poverty line, which creates incentives for the populace to work in the informal sector.<sup>88</sup>

As a landlocked country Tajikistan often finds itself at the mercy of its neighbors for access to global or regional markets, which is problematic when the neighboring countries are experiencing their own difficulties.<sup>89</sup> Kyrgyzstan to the north and China's Uighur province to the east have done little to facilitate Tajikistan's development, while Uzbekistan to the west intentionally hampers it. For example, Uzbekistan will occasionally cut off gas supplies to Tajikistan, despite the fact that it is Tajikistan's only source for gas.<sup>90</sup> Afghanistan to the south contributes to instability due to its continuing war and the inability of the central government to attain legitimacy or control. Further, heavy reliance on opium that is often trafficked through Tajikistan contributes to corruption as militias and politicians attempt to capitalize on opium's vast profits. Therefore, weak and corrupt states such as Tajikistan leave openings for Islamic charities, which will be mentioned next, to enter the social landscape where the official government has failed to provide.

There are several cases of Islamic groups filling these voids left by the government and providing basic but essential services. Dr. Eric McGlinchey, in his book, *Chaos, Violence, Dynasty: Politics and Islam in Central Asia*, declares Islamic organizations have been responsible for creating local charities, building schools, and developing business associations that provide social welfare that the state has inadequately provided.<sup>91</sup> For instance, in Ak Terek village, near Lake Issyk-Kul, HT helped reconstruct the village's irrigation system, which won them many supporters.<sup>92</sup> However, the level of commitment these supporters give to HT is questionable, since the support was not obtained as a result of HT's radical rhetoric. In fact, the actual number of services these groups provide may be greatly exaggerated. Dr. Malikov says these groups do very little for society and

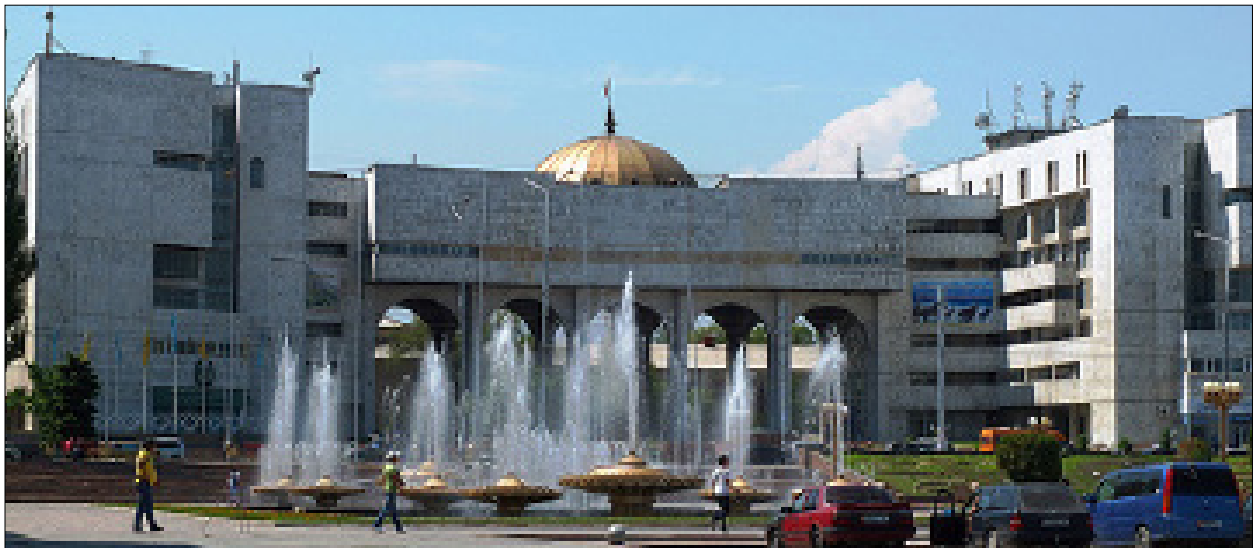
*“...control and continued state repression, often regardless of individual religiosity, has driven droves of individuals, notably youth, to Muslim organizations,”*

do not duplicate government functions.<sup>93</sup> Alternatively, he does acknowledge that they may provide religious education, but only for social reasons, for youth in rural areas where government presence is limited.<sup>94</sup> According to Ahmed Rashid, the simple fact that most organizations, notably the outlawed HT, are forced underground limits their ability to provide any sustainable social services.<sup>95</sup>

In the end, Central Asia is not experiencing a Hezbollah-type situation with charities, but, according to one representative of an international organization, it is entirely possible in the future.<sup>96</sup> Society's increased reliance on Islam to provide its basic needs correlates directly with a weakening and desperate central authority. This situation makes the region increasingly more likely to implode, as society becomes more accepting of violence against brutal and unresponsive regimes.

#### **IV. Religiosity & Capacity for Violence**

Despite the fact that increasing numbers of individuals may be turning to Islam, the numbers do not necessarily reflect an increase in society's piousness. For instance, Mr. Samakov mentioned a failed attempt to build a large mosque in Ala-Too Square in Bishkek to accommodate the throngs of Muslims that appear during Islamic holidays but are suspiciously absent the rest of the year.<sup>97</sup>



Ala-Too Square in Bishkek. Photo by Vlitvinov. Source: <http://www.worldplacestovisit.net>



An imam and his assistant in Uzbekistan echoed this sentiment when they lamented the fact that, despite a country boasting its Islamic identity, so few actually attend mosques each Friday.<sup>98</sup> In addition to a history of Soviet religious suppression, this is also a result of the media, which displays unfavorable and non-educational images of Islam to the populace, compared to the favorable image it receives in other parts of the Islamic world.<sup>99</sup> Moreover, Islam on the whole does not receive substantial official support. However, it does become more visible at the cultural level, dealing with civil relations such as marriage contracts.<sup>100</sup>

However, some regions do experience higher religiosity and mosque turnout, and Islam's societal influence is more noticeable. In Osh mosques directly engaged in charitable work influence the community through the *mahalla*.<sup>101</sup> The Batken province in Kyrgyzstan enjoys greater incorporation of Islam in social life compared to Jalal-Abad and Osh, and the Islamic influence there far exceeds that in the north.<sup>102</sup> However, Francois Burgat's declaration: "The Quran can 'explain' Usama bin Ladin no more than the Bible can 'explain' the IRA," must be heeded,<sup>103</sup> the point being that individuals may join radical Islamic groups like the IMU or HT for a wide array of reasons that may have very little to do with their own personal beliefs. Regional experts Matthew Stein and Chuck Bartles from the U.S. Army's Foreign Military Studies Office commented that these Central Asian groups are not as religious as were previously believed to be, and that it would be a mistake to equate their traditional beliefs as similar to those of groups such as al-Qaeda.<sup>104</sup> Therefore, an over-examination of how Central Asians identify with Islam may conclude with faulty reasoning, because in many cases Islam may serve a symbolic nature to politically mobilize support, regardless of individual piety.

Therefore, as previously discussed, control and continued state repression, often regardless of individual religiosity, has driven droves of individuals, notably youth, to Muslim organizations, either for religious-ideological or socio-political reasons as forums in which to voice discontent. The question becomes whether these groups are becoming increasingly more disillusioned with their peaceful advocacy and may resort to increasingly violent methods to achieve their aims, possibly finding common ground with militant organizations like the IMU. Tomasz Sikorski believes

if and when militants fully move their operations back to Central Asia, they will have no problem replenishing their ranks with angry young Muslims who have currently found an outlet within Islamic organizations.<sup>105</sup> Additionally, Kadyr Malikov believes political Islam poses a large risk for militancy because of continuing substandard living conditions, insufficient education, and lack of knowledge concerning traditional Islam, which continues to make individuals susceptible to militant ideologies.<sup>106</sup>

In May 2011 the International Crisis Group forewarned of the rising threat level of local insurgencies from IRP radicalization and “men in their 20s with little memory of the 1992-1997 civil war,” in addition to the threats emanating from IMU operations in Afghanistan.<sup>107</sup> It is projected that by 2015 47% of the Uzbek population will never have lived under the Soviet system.<sup>108</sup> These youth are more vulnerable to Islamic influences, more rebellious and less susceptible to the blind allegiance upon which the Karimov regime thrives.<sup>109</sup> These sentiments were clearly echoed among frustrated Uzbek youth who believe their futures to be dim due to rampant corruption and lack of economic opportunities.<sup>110</sup> After commenting on how the trees and bushes in Mustaqillik Square, Tashkent, were so well pruned, one individual summed up the feeling: “in Uzbekistan, even the trees grow as they are told to.”<sup>111</sup> Ahmed Rashid argues this process has already been initiated and there is already significant cross-fertilization between the militants and Islamic organizations, largely due to the fact that they have both been forced underground they have been given little choice but to support one another.<sup>112</sup>

Conversely, Dr. Eric McGlinchey believes militant Islam’s threat is over-exaggerated and that the transformation occurring is “civil society wrapping itself around Islam.”<sup>113</sup> Although there may be some element of militant Islam, he concludes it is primarily regular, frustrated people organizing, much like what was seen in Egypt’s *Tahrir* Square.<sup>114</sup> In the end, as long as Islamic organizations are given no options but to continue their clandestine operations, the violent factions will continue to gain influence. Whether these violent factions join previously established groups like the IMU, find common cause with these groups, or create their own splinter organizations is inconsequential, as any of these three outcomes will have the same destabilizing regional consequences.

Radical Islam in Central Asia is frequently associated with HT, which wants to establish *Dar al-Islam*<sup>115</sup> and re-establish the Caliphate under Shari'a Law across the world, beginning in Central Asia. The main ideological difference between HT and groups such as the IMU is that HT claims to achieve its aims through peaceful means. HT operates underground, most evident in the Fergana Valley, which makes actual funding and membership difficult to determine. However, the Institute for Strategic Studies in Bishkek estimated that it is a truly global network located in 45 countries, with an estimated tens of thousands of supporters in Central Asia: approximately 10,000 in Kyrgyzstan alone,<sup>116</sup> an estimated 7,000-60,000 in Uzbekistan and 3,000-5,000 in Tajikistan.<sup>117</sup> Some estimates place membership of HT in Central Asia as high as 100,000.<sup>118</sup>

The concern with HT is that its members may eventually resort to violence to achieve their objectives and join jihadists returning from Waziristan. Although some members of HT undoubtedly believe in the organizations' peaceful advocacy, there is ample evidence that, for others, this rhetoric is merely a feint to deceive observers of HT and recruit prospects. Historically, HT groups are fiercely anti-Semitic and anti-Shi'ite, and have resorted to militancy, despite their call for peaceful



Tahir Yuldashev. Source: [www.orientalreview.org](http://www.orientalreview.org)

methods. Allegedly, HT plotted to assassinate King Hussein of Jordan in 1993, actively fought in a rebellion in northern Lebanon in 1999/2000, and planted bombs in Tel Aviv in 2003.<sup>119</sup> Furthermore, alleged HT members have been arrested in Egypt for plotting an uprising and were arrested in Indonesia for transporting explosives in 2002.<sup>120</sup>

*“...if radical Islam wishes to allay the fears it generates and join the political process, it must undergo a transformation, not a face-lift.”*

Although these trends occurred outside of Central Asia, HT in Central Asia remains a transnational organization whose peaceful ideology may not be as secure as it appears. They have condoned suicide attacks in Israel and supported plane hijackings in certain circumstances: “if the plane belongs to a country at war with the Muslims, like Israel, it is allowed to hijack it, for there is no sanctuary for Israel nor for the Jews.”<sup>121</sup> The IMU’s Tahir Yuldashev had met with Nizamiddin Jusupov, the head of Kyrgyzstan’s HT, in Central Asia to discuss the option of combining efforts to achieve the establishment of the Caliphate.<sup>122</sup> Additionally, Kyrgyz officials found HT pamphlets on the bodies of militants during the IMU’s 2000 military campaign.<sup>123</sup> Moreover, they claimed to have discovered several arms caches as a result of HT detainment and interrogation.<sup>124</sup> One article published in *Khilafah Magazine* stated:

[A] day will come when the Muslims will take revenge against all those who participated in their oppression. Hizb ut-Tahrir does not use weapons or resort to violence, nor uses any physical means in its call... However, do not expect, that these rulers and their regimes will collapse by themselves. On the contrary, patient believers are required to shake these regimes and uproot them.<sup>125</sup>

These cases illustrate the fact that, despite its ideology, HT has embarked in violent activity and may do so again, or at least have played with the idea of increasing militant activity. The fact that the international community continues to support repressive Central Asian policies that include labeling HT a terrorist organization may force it into that category.

Factionalism within Central Asia’s HT has emerged, with splinter groups such as *Hizb-an-Nusra*<sup>126</sup> and *Akromiya*<sup>127</sup> criticizing HT Central’s advocacy of peaceful means to achieve their aims.<sup>128</sup> There have been substantial reports that, to a certain degree, many groups, including the IMU and HT, joined together under the Islamic Movement of Central Asia (IMCA) as early as 2002.<sup>129</sup> Therefore, despite success in gaining popular support through peaceful means, it is logical to expect that many HT followers, frustrated by their states’ repressive measures and disillusioned by lack of physical results from HT’s supposed peaceful advocacy, would willingly resort to violence as militant Islamists return to Central Asia, thus bolstering the militants’ numbers and overall strength.



*Jamaat al-Tabligh*<sup>130</sup> is another Islamic organization gaining increasing popularity. It is an offshoot from the earlier Deobandi movement and has been banned in all Central Asian countries except for Kyrgyzstan.<sup>131</sup> The organization renounces politics and does not act as a charitable organization, although it occasionally acts as a rehabilitation center for addicts.<sup>132</sup> Members typically embark on *davaat*<sup>133</sup> and in Kyrgyzstan have been accused of sending, in coordination with the Kyrgyz Muftiat, young children to be educated abroad to countries such as Bangladesh where they are often radicalized, described in detail earlier in this chapter.<sup>134</sup> Further, the concern with Jamaat al-Tabligh is that membership in the organization is often seen as the first step in the radicalization recruitment process. They work closely with the muftiat by telling prospective recruits to come back to the one true Islam. Once new members enter, the organization serves as a stepping-stone before they are recruited by Salafists, Wahabbis, or HT.<sup>135</sup>

## **V. Future Prospects**

The question must be asked: would the implementation of inclusive policies for political Islamic groups mitigate the likelihood of their inclination toward militant Islam in the near future? Historically, when Islamic groups successfully join governments, they are put in small ministries where their efforts at reform are thwarted and their legitimacy is diminished in the eyes of their populace, which only exacerbates tensions.<sup>136</sup> Yet a report by the Social Research Center found that integration of Islamic and government institutions would promote civil society, improve social life, and, thereby, reduce the dissemination of Islamic fanaticism.<sup>137</sup>

Therefore, what is the likelihood that Islamic political groups such as HT may join the political process? Munir Shafiq believes, “if radical Islam wishes to allay the fears it generates and join the political process, it must undergo a transformation, not a face-lift. It must wholeheartedly and as a matter of principle accept pluralism and toleration.”<sup>138</sup> Additionally, Ulan Isakov, a journalist and work associate with Kyrgyzstan’s Committee on Religious Affairs, says if groups such as Jamaat al-Tabligh wish to be accepted they must shift from rhetoric to active participation, because the problem with radical Islamic organizations today is that they shift their ideologies and stances too

frequently, since they operate outside of official  
fore, with inclusion these groups become  
more accountable, moderate, and concrete in  
their ideologies. Currently, these Islamic or-  
ganizations, although to a lesser extent than  
their repressive governments, contribute to  
regional instability by acting as wild cards  
with minimal accountability. Mr. Isakov be-  
lieves this ideology will not be consistent un-  
til there is a dramatic improvement in social



Emomalii Rahmon.

Source: <http://centralasiaonline.com>

welfare, regardless of inclusive policies, which contributes to increasing membership in Islamic organizations.<sup>140</sup> It is evident that a combination of inclusion, economic reform, and religious tolerance are all necessary for Islamic political groups to effectively enter the official political arena.

However, the American analyst working in Tajikistan believes a policy on non-inclusiveness, carried over from Soviet times, will continue as the government has not been pressured to include people in the political process.<sup>141</sup> In Tajikistan President Rahmano keeps marginalizing political Islam, and groups like the IRP cannot even push back.<sup>142</sup> For example, the power sharing system agreed upon in the 1997 peace accord has failed to fully materialize. Instead of maintaining the agreed upon 30% of Tajik ministerial posts being occupied by the UTO/IRP, Rahmano continues to favor his own political allies for these positions.<sup>143</sup> After the 2010 Parliamentary Elections the IRP only managed to retain two seats in Parliament.<sup>144</sup> Moreover, this marginalization was quite evident at a conference on the State and Religion in Dushanbe. Although Mr. Hait Mahmadali, Deputy Head of the IRPT, was present, in addition to several other Tajik religious figures and senior nongovernmental organization personnel, the absence of any government officials at a conference titled “Dialogue for a Policy on the Relationship between the State and Religion” remained suspicious.<sup>145</sup> As Dr. McGlinchey expresses, this is because Central Asian governments view these Islamic elites as a potential threat; they have economic resources, a belief system, and

a following, which is all that is needed for social mobilization.<sup>146</sup> Thus, for disliked autocrats such as Karimov, fear of easing up on Islam is justified, because they are unpopular and Islamic organizations such as HT are very capable of putting people on the street.<sup>147</sup> Therefore, if the government refuses to enter into a meaningful dialogue and continues to treat political Islam as extremist Islam, the probability of easing tension remains slim. Additionally, this continued perception might become a self-fulfilled prophecy as these groups are further marginalized and become more likely to adopt violent methods.

Furthermore, repressive measures implemented by regional regimes, such as jailing suspected Islamists without trial, have failed to eliminate the threat of radicalism/militancy in the long term. Accordingly, each government must differentiate between radical elements and regular Muslims. If this distinction is ignored, Karimov's frequent use of the term "Wahhabi" for all Muslims may become a self-fulfilling prophecy, with Muslims forced to operate underground in radical circles, and HT members encouraged to join returning militants and resort to violence. Islam has shown itself to be very resilient in Central Asia, as the failure of Soviet suppression illustrated.<sup>148</sup>

Therefore, Islam must be allowed to operate in the open if governments hope to moderate extreme fundamentalism. Additionally, as historic events in Syria, Yemen, and Egypt from 2011-2012 demonstrate, violent state repression alone fails to address Islamic radicalism. One possibility is for governments to continue to encourage traditional Sufism as a potential counterbalance to radical Saudi, Pakistani, and Afghani Islamic influences. However, as Martha Olcott states, Sufism will not be a barrier to radicalism if repressive state policies continue, but Sufism will instead be forced to increasingly collaborate and cooperate with other schools of Islamic thought against an unjust state.<sup>149</sup> Moreover, when radicals are arrested, these arrests should be legitimate, and the prison system should implement a reform program for radicals based on Saudi and Columbian rehabilitation programs, such as reverse indoctrination program.<sup>150</sup> This reform would help mitigate the success of HT recruiting new members in the crude prison systems, noticeably in Uzbekistan where membership is highest.<sup>151</sup>

In the end, Mr. Samakov recognizes the difficulty in educating the populace in proper Islam, and

even defining such a term. He concludes, “don’t try to control it. Let it be as it is, the people have a choice to make, to decide if they want to keep the traditional form or the new.”<sup>152</sup>

## **VI. Conclusion:**

All in all, Islam in Central Asia does possess the capacity to support violence, regardless of the level of religiosity or piety in individual communities or regions. This capacity is beneficial to militants, such as the IMU, who rely on a degree of popular support in order to maintain their operations and meet their objectives, and will likely remain so as long as the region continues experiencing economic depravity and state suppression.

## ENDNOTES:

- 1 For the purposes of this paper, Central Asia will refer to Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, where Islamic extremism has been most evident, noticeably in the Fergana Valley.
- 2 Although several groups have splintered from the IMU in recent years, since the IMU remains the largest group by most accounts, it will be used here to refer to militant Central Asians in general.
- 3 Olcott, Martha Brill. *In the Whirlwind of Jihad*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Washington, DC. 2012. p.7.
- 4 Khalid, Adeeb. *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia*. University of California Press. Berkeley & Los Angeles, CA. 2007. p.141.
- 5 Sikorski, Tomasz. "Armed Operations by Islamist Fundamentalists in Central Asia in 2009." *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs*, No.1 (2010), p.40.  
According to Dr. Eric McGlinchey's recent book, *Chaos, Violence, Dynasty: Politics and Islam in Central Asia* (2012), the numbers of self-identifying Muslims in the region are increasing. An International Foundations for Electoral Systems (IFES) study conducted in 1996 found 47% of Kyrgyz and 89% of Uzbeks identified with being Muslim. Surveys conducted by Dr. McGlinchey and his colleagues in 2008 found the numbers had risen to 80% of Kyrgyz and 95% of Uzbeks, (p.13-14).
- 6 Essentially an umbrella term associated with Islamic mysticism and the inner search to find spiritual "closeness" to God. It remains a contentious issue in Islam, especially among extremists, who often declare Sufis to be *kafir*, or *unbelievers*. For more information on Sufism, Oliver Roy's *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations* (2000) has a very detailed chapter devoted to the history of Islam in the region.
- 7 Established by Abu Hanifa in Kufa, Iraq, Hanafism is the oldest of the four main established schools of Islamic jurisprudence, the others being Shafi'i, Maliki, and Hanbali.
- 8 Personal interview with American analyst in Tajikistan on May 23, 2012.
- 9 Olcott, *In the Whirlwind of Jihad*, p.1.

- 10 *The Ahmadiyya movement was a messianic movement originating in British India. Conspiracy theorists often claim the movement to be a product of Western intelligence services to undermine Islam. Many classical branches of Islam have issued fatwas (religious edicts) against the movement, as it claims the existence of a prophet after Muhammad.*
- 11 *Wahabbism, founded in 18th century Saudi Arabia by Mohamed ibn-Abdul Wahhab, is often perceived to be a more fundamentalist, extremist, and militant form of Islam by critics due to its “literal” interpretation of the Qur’an. It is often associated with Saudi Arabia and notorious characters such as Osama bin Laden. Although Wahabbism has been gaining support in Central Asia, it is fundamentally opposed to the practice of honoring saints and visiting their shrines, which is a standard practice of Sufis in Central Asia, who compose the majority of Muslims.*
- 12 *Founded in India, under the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, Deobandism is the form Sunnism observed by the Taliban. It is largely exported to Central Asia by way of Pakistan and Afghanistan.*
- 13 *Salafism originated sometime in the 19<sup>th</sup> century out of Al-Azhar in Egypt and takes its name from the “earliest followers of the Prophet.” Often considered one of the most puritanical forms of Islam, it is often used as an umbrella term to describe various categories of Muslims.*
- 14 *Personal interview with Aibek Samakov on June 11, 2012.*
- 15 *Ibid. The pillars of Islam are as follows, 1) Shahadah, or declaration of faith; 2) Salah, or prayers five times a day; 3) Sawm, fasting during the holy month of Ramadan; 4) Zakaat, or almsgiving; and 5) Hajj, a pilgrimage to Mecca to be completed at least once in a Muslims lifetime if physically able.*
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 *In Soviet times, the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan was the leading authority on Islam for all of the U.S.S.R. After the Soviet collapse its authority has been limited to Uzbekistan. Muhammad Sodik served as Uzbekistan’s Grand Mufti until he was removed from power by Islam Karimov in 1993.*



- 19 McGlinchey, Eric. *Chaos, Violence, Dynasty: Politics and Islam in Central Asia*. University of Pittsburgh Press. Pittsburgh, PA. 2011, p.129.
- 20 Malikov, Kadyr. “Muslim Community in Kyrgyzstan: Social Activity at the Present Stage.” (Author and leading researcher: Kadyr Malikov; Research Participant: Mehriqul Ablezova; Editing group: Aida Alymbaeva, Tatiana Kotova, Chinara Esengul, & Tim Jeanneret; Financial Manager: Aida Konokbaeva). Social Research Center, American University of Central Asia, Bishkek. 2010, p.7.
- 21 Religious or educational schools.
- 22 Cornell, Svante E. “Narcotics, Radicalism and Armed Conflict in Central Asia: The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan,” *Terrorism and Political Violence, Vol. 17, 2005, p. 584*.
- 23 A derivative of the earlier Said al-Nursi teachings. The movement promotes interfaith cooperation and advocates the idea of *khizmet, service for the good of all society*.
- 24 Personnel interview with Aibek Samakov on June 11, 2012. In Shari’a law, the term *dhimmi* refers to “People of the Book,” which is inclusive of Christians and Jews.
- 25 Shishkin, Philip. “The Enemy We Need: Washington Courts a Repressive Uzbekistan—Again.” *World Affairs, January/February 2011, p.37*. For more information on Said al-Nursi refer to footnote 23. According to Eric McGlinchey in *Chaos, Violence, Dynasty: Politics and Islam in Central Asia (p.128)*, in August 1997, President Karimov feared the Fethullah Gülen to the degree that he recalled 2,000 students studying in Turkey back to Uzbekistan.
- 26 Innovations or “new things” in Islam (e.g., the cult of saints in Sufism).
- 27 Roy, Oliver. *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations*. New York University Press. New York, NY. 2000, p.153.
- 28 Phone interview with Kadyr Malikov on June 9, 2012.
- 29 Yuldoshev, Avaz. “Diplomatic mission of Saudi Arabia officially opened in Dushanbe yesterday.” *Asia-Plus News*. November 2, 2010. Accessed: 8/20/12. <http://dev.news.tj/en/news/diplomatic-mission-saudi-arabia-officially-opened-dushanbe-yesterday>, & “Embassy of Saudi Arabia opened in Kyrgyzstan.” *Kabar*. October 6, 2012. Accessed: 8/20/12. <http://kabar.kg/eng/politics/full/2320>

- 30 RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service. "Massive Mosque Opens in Osh on Anniversary of Clashes." *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. June 11, 2012. Accessed: 8/1/12. <http://www.rferl.org/content/kyrgyzstan-osh-anniversary-mosque/24610498.html>
- 31 Personal interview with a representative from an international organization based in Kyrgyzstan on June 9, 2012.
- 32 Phone interview with Kadyr Malikov on June 9, 2012.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Naryn Mosque, in Naryn Province, Kyrgyzstan, opened in 1993 and was funded by Saudi Arabia.
- 36 Phone interview with Amanda Ross McDowell on August 1, 2012.
- 37 Olcott, *In the Whirlwind of Jihad*, p.216, 218, & 192.
- 38 Ibid, p.197.
- 39 Sanderson, Thomas M., Daniel Kimmage, & David A. Gordon. "From the Ferghana Valley to South Waziristan: The Evolving Threat of Central Asia Jihadists." Center for Strategic & International Studies. CSIS Transnational Threats Project, Washington, DC. March 2010, p.3. This is not to say that the regimes are not still forced to react to the instability that is caused by militant actions, but the fact that repressive policies have been established is evident. Refer to the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations. (Khalid, *Islam After Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia*, p.175) Furthermore, the *Administrative and Criminal Code of Uzbekistan: Article 216-2; Article 229-2; Article 244-2; and Article 246. (Olcott, In the Whirlwind of Jihad*, p.201-202).
- 40 Pannier, Bruce. "Pressure Cooker – Central Asia faces upsurge in Islamist militancy." *Jane's Intelligence Review*. March 25, 2012 ,p.6/8.
- 41 Sanderson, p.21.
- 42 Karagiannis, Emmanuel. *Political Islam in Central Asia: The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir*. Routledge. New York, NY. 2010, p.63, 65.

- 43 Ibid, p.109.
- 44 Phone interview with Matthew Stein and Charles Bartles on May 15, 2012.
- 45 Khalid, p.169.
- 46 Rashid, Ahmed. *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia*. Penguin Books. New York, NY. 2002. p.149-150.
- 47 Van Gorder, A. Christian. *Muslim-Christian Relations in Central Asia*. Routledge. New York, NY. 2008. p.122.
- 48 The IRP, or the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT), joined with the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) forces during the Tajik civil war in opposition to President Rahmano's supporters. At the war's conclusion, the IRP became the country's only legal Islamist party.
- 49 The head garment often seen covering a Muslim women's head; wearing it is believed to display modesty.
- 50 Pannier, "Pressure Cooker – Central Asia faces upsurge in Islamist militancy," p.6/8.
- 51 "Kazakhstan & Central Asia: Defence & Security Report." Business Monitor International, Ltd. London, U.K. 2012, p.32.
- 52 Karagiannis, *Political Islam in Central Asia: The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir*, p.61-62.
- 53 "Amnesty condemns use of torture in Tajikistan." *Associated Press/Fox News.com*. July 12, 2012. <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2012/07/12/amnesty-condemns-use-torture-in-tajikistan/>
- 54 "Tajikistan: Qatar Helping Dushanbe Build Massive Mosque." *Eurasianet.org*. October 20, 2011. <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/64345>
- 55 Interview with an American analyst in Tajikistan.
- 56 "Tajikistan: Could Showdown With Popular Cleric Backfire." *Eurasianet.org*. June 1, 2012. <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65484>
- 57 The Muftiate is the most powerful Islamic authority operating inside Kyrgyzstan. However, all Central Asian Republics have muftiates, which are controlled by the state to varying degrees.

- 58 McGlinchey, Eric. "Islamic Revivalism and State Failure in Kyrgyzstan." George Mason University. The National Council for Eurasian and East European Research. February 3, 2009. p.8.
- 59 Malikov, "Muslim Community in Kyrgyzstan: Social Activity at the Present Stage," p.10.
- 60 McGlinchey, Eric. "Islamic Revivalism and State Failure in Kyrgyzstan," p.19. The Kamalov family, located in Kyrgyzstan's Fergana Valley, have historically been sympathetic to Salafism, although neither they nor their followers classify themselves as such.
- 61 Personal interview with Aibek Samakov on June 11, 2012.
- 62 Interview with a representative from an international organization based in Kyrgyzstan.
- 63 Warikoo, K. "Introduction." In: Warikoo, K. (Editor). *Religion and Security in South and Central Asia*. Central Asia Research Forum, Routledge. New York, NY, 2011, p.6.
- 64 "Country Profile: Uzbekistan." Library of Congress – Federal Research Division. February 2007.
- 65 Data for Uzbekistan comes from "Uzbekistan Profile." *BBC News*. January 5, 2012. Accessed: 6/25/12. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16218116>, and "Central Asia: Uzbekistan." The World Factbook (CIA). June 20, 2012. Accessed: 6/20/12. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/uz.html>. Data for Kyrgyzstan comes from "Kyrgyzstan Profile." *BBC News*. December 14, 2011. Accessed: 6/25/12. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16187180>, and "Central Asia: Kyrgyzstan." The World Factbook (CIA). June 25, 2012. Accessed: 6/25/12. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kg.html>.
- 66 "Kazakhstan & Central Asia: Defence & Security Report." p.30.
- 67 McDowell interview.
- 68 McGlinchey, *Chaos, Violence, Dynasty: Politics and Islam in Central Asia*, p.116.
- 69 The Manas air base was established by the U.S. Air Force in 2001 to help support NATO operations in Afghanistan. Since then it has been a point of contention among many Kyrgyz, who accused former presidents of pocketing the profitable rents.

- 70 McGlinchey, *Chaos, Violence, Dynasty: Politics and Islam in Central Asia*, p.2. The “Tulip Revolution” in March 2005, led to the ouster of President Askar Akaev, who fled to Moscow. Furthermore, in April 2010 President Kurmanbek Bakiev fled to Minsk after being forcibly removed from office. Roza Outnbaeva served as interim president until President Almazbek Atambaev took office after being peacefully elected in December 2011.
- 71 “Inside the Valley of Fear: Tension in Central Asia.” *The Economist*. Vol.361, Iss.8247 (Nov. 10, 2001) p. 42. Accessed: 5/10/12.
- 72 International Crisis Group. “Kyrgyzstan: Widening Ethnic Divisions in the South.” Asia Report N°222. March 29, 2012. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/central-asia/kyrgyzstan/222-kyrgyzstan-widening-ethnic-divisions-in-the-south.aspx> p.i. According to the Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission’s “Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010,” the death toll was 470.
- 73 Masters, Daniel. “The Origins of Terrorist Threats: Religious, Separatist, or Something Else?” *Terrorism and Political Violence*. Vol.20, No.3 (2008), p.396-414, p.401.
- 74 “Kazakhstan & Central Asia: Defence & Security Report.” p.31.
- 75 Olcott, *In the Whirlwind of Jihad*, p.299. Although the actual date is contentious, the Islamic Jihad Union split from the IMU no later than 2007. Some reports believe it to be 2005, and others believe the Islamic Jihad Group, a group preceding the Islamic Jihad Union, split from the IMU as early as 2002 (Sanderson, Thomas M., Daniel Kimmage, & David A. Gordon. “From the Ferghana Valley to South Waziristan: The Evolving Threat of Central Asia Jihadists.” Center for Strategic & International Studies. CSIS Transnational Threats Project, Washington, DC. March 2010, p.8. ).
- 76 Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission. “Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010.” p. 41.
- 77 McDowell interview.
- 78 Ibid.
- 79 Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia*, p.89.
- 80 Islamic Law.

- 81 The civil war exacted a high price on Tajikistan. Low estimates list casualties as 20,000 dead and 600,000 displaced. (Gleason, Gregory, "Power sharing in Tajikistan: political compromise and regional instability," *Conflict, Security & Development*, p.126) Higher estimates say 50,000 died and 800,000 were displaced. (Markowitz, Lawrence P. "Tajikistan: Authoritarian Reaction in a Postwar State." *Democratization*, p.98) Regardless of the exact number, Ahmed Rashid claims that Tajikistan's civil war "had the highest number of casualties proportionate to the population of any civil war in the past 50 years." (Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia*, p.95).
- 82 Collier, Paul. *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It*. Oxford University Press. New York, NY. 2007, p.27-28.
- 83 USAID Website. "Congressional Budget Justification 2013." <http://www.usaid.gov/performance/cbj/index.html> According to the previously mentioned Business Monitor International report, "Kazakhstan & Central Asia: Defence & Security Report," per capita GDP in Tajikistan is approximately \$1,000. (p.30).
- 84 USAID. "USAID Country Health Statistical Report: Tajikistan." Analysis, Information Management & Communications Activity (AIM). Washington, DC. December 2009. <http://permanent.access.gpo.gov/lps107533/>, section 1: socioeconomic indicators.
- 85 "Kazakhstan & Central Asia: Defence & Security Report." p.28. Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, although not as dependent as Tajikistan, collect large remittances as well. The same report estimates that in 2010 Kyrgyzstan received \$1.037 billion in remittances (15% of its GDP).
- 86 "Remittances in Europe and Central Asia: between the Euro crisis and Russia's growth prospects." United Nations Development Programme. Office of the Senior Economist. 2012. <http://europeandcis.undp.org/senioreconomist/show/9BC4249F-F203-1EE9-B78FC634499EC270>
- 87 "Tajikistan: Country Brief 2011." The World Bank. August 2011. <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/ECAEXT/TAJIKISTANEXTN/0,,contentMDK:20630697~menuPK:287255~pagePK:141137~piPK:141127~theSitePK:258744,00.html>
- 88 Tajikistan Society and Culture Complete Report. "Tajikistan." World Trade Press. Petaluma, CA. 2010. <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/nyulibrary/docDetail.action?docID=10389330>, p.13
- 89 Collier, p.56-57.



- 90 Associated Press. "Uzbekistan Resumes Natural Gas Deliveries to Energy-Starved Tajikistan." *The Washington Post*, April 16, 2012.  
[http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/uzbekistan-resumes-natural-gas-deliveries-to-energy-starved-tajikistan/2012/04/16/gIQAfFaKT\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/uzbekistan-resumes-natural-gas-deliveries-to-energy-starved-tajikistan/2012/04/16/gIQAfFaKT_story.html)  
It must also be acknowledged that Uzbekistan feels vulnerable to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan when dealing with its water security. Uzbekistan is dependent on these countries for access to water, especially with the rapid depletion of the Aral Sea, which is down 70%. Currently countries such as Tajikistan have considered harnessing their water as a source of energy, which Uzbekistan considers as a hostile act. ("Kazakhstan & Central Asia: Defence & Security Report," p.33).
- 91 McGlinchey, *Chaos, Violence, Dynasty: Politics and Islam in Central Asia*, p.13 & 15.
- 92 McGlinchey, "Islamic Revivalism and State Failure in Kyrgyzstan," p.13.
- 93 Malikov interview.
- 94 Ibid.
- 95 Phone interview with Ahmed Rashid on June 29, 2012.
- 96 Interview with a representative from an international organization based in Kyrgyzstan.
- 97 Samakov Interview.
- 98 Personal interview with Imam and an assistant on June 1, 2012.
- 99 Malikov interview.
- 100 Ibid.
- 101 *Mahallas are neighborhood communities, often be based on ties of kinship and clan, which frequently act as a self-government when dealing with local issues.*
- 102 Malikov, "Muslim Community in Kyrgyzstan: Social Activity at the Present Stage." p.16.  
It should also be noted that, although Bishkek remains a center for Muslim activity in the north, this is largely a result of internal migration from the south to the north.
- 103 Naumkin, Vitaly V. *Radical Islam in Central Asia: Between Pen and Rifle*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. Oxford, UK. 2005, p.23.

- 104 Stein and Bartles interview.
- 105 Sikorski, p.51.
- 106 Malikov interview.
- 107 “Kazakhstan & Central Asia: Defence & Security Report,” p.32.
- 108 McGlinchey, *Chaos, Violence, Dynasty: Politics and Islam in Central Asia*, p.137.
- 109 President Karimov has already attempted, with minor success, to solidify youth support through youth organizations such as *Kamalot in order to instill patriotism and loyalty to the regime*. Eric McGlinchey in his recent book, *Chaos, Violence, Dynasty: Politics and Islam in Central Asia*, examines these youth organizations in great detail (p.137-140).
- 110 This is based on the author’s personal perceptions and conversations from his time spent in Uzbekistan between May 26, 2012 and June 4, 2012.
- 111 Ibid.
- 112 Rashid interview.
- 113 Phone interview with Eric McGlinchey on May 4, 2012.
- 114 Ibid.
- 115 Literally “House of Islam.” Generally refers to Muslim countries.
- 116 Debata, Mahesh Ranjan. “Hizb ut-Tahrir: The destabilizing force in Central Asia.” In: Warikoo, K. (Editor). *Religion and Security in South and Central Asia. Central Asia Research Forum, Routledge. New York, NY, 2011, p.129.*
- 117 Laumulin, Murat. “Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia.” In: Warikoo, K. (Editor). *Religion and Security in South and Central Asia. Central Asia Research Forum, Routledge. New York, NY, 2011, p.141.*
- 118 Karagiannis, *Political Islam in Central Asia: The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir*, p.58.
- 119 Debata, p.131.
- 120 Ibid, p.131.

- 121 Karagiannis, *Political Islam in Central Asia: The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir*, p.112-113.
- 122 Debata, p.130.
- 123 Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia*, p.133
- 124 Marat, Erica. "The State-Crime Nexus in Central Asia: State Weakness, Organized Crime, and Corruption in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan." Central Asia – Caucasus Institute, Silk Road Studies Program. October 2006. p.58
- 125 Karagiannis, *Political Islam in Central Asia: The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir*, p.114
- 126 Split from HT in 1999, *Hizb-an-Nusra, or the "Party of Victory," advocates violence to achieve its aims.*
- 127 Akromiya was one of the Islamic groups blamed for inciting violence during the 2005 massacre in Andijan, Uzbekistan. It was founded by Akrom Yuldoshev in 1993. According to Adeeb Khalid in *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia*, (2007), p.193-196, not much is known about the group except through the founder, who has spent 17 years in Uzbek prison and has been arrested on charges ranging from narcotics to involvement in the 1999 Tashkent bombings. Akrom, an Andijan native, wrote the group's manifesto, *Iymonga yo'l* ("The Way to Faith"), which determines that members of Akromiya are not required to observe Islamic rituals and canons such hajj or daily prayer until the Caliphate has been established in Central Asia.
- 128 Debata, p.133.
- 129 Warikoo, p.6
- 130 *Jamaat al-Tabligh, or "Society for Promulgating the Faith," was founded by Mohammed Ilyas in India in the 1920s, and it entered Central Asia in the 1990s. The organization has significant followings in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the U.K., in addition to Central Asia.*
- 131 Schenkkan, Nate. "Kyrgyzstan: Islamic Revivalist Movement Quietly Flourishing." *Eurasia Review*. October 26, 2011. <http://www.eurasiareview.com/26102011-kyrgyzstan-islamic-revivalist-movement-quietly-flourishing/>
- 132 Malikov, Kadyr. "Muslim Community in Kyrgyzstan: Social Activity at the Present Stage." p.12

- 133 *Davaat is missionary work in order to spread the faith.*
- 134 Shambetov, Toktosun & Daisy Sindelar. "Kyrgyz Authorities Cry Foul As Children Sent Abroad To Bangladeshi Madrasahs." *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. June 19, 2012. <http://www.rferl.org/content/kyrgyzstan-authorities-complain-children-sent-to-bangladesh-madrasahs/24619213.html>
- 135 Samakov interview.
- 136 Sivan, Emmanuel. "Why Radical Muslims Aren't Taking Over Governments" in: *Revolutionaries and Reformers: Contemporary Islamist Movements in the Middle East*. Rubin, Barry (Editor) State University of New York Press. Albany, NY. 2003. p.7.
- 137 Malikov, Kadyr. "Muslim Community in Kyrgyzstan: Social Activity at the Present Stage." p.7.
- 138 Sivan, "Why Radical Muslims Aren't Taking Over Governments" p.8.
- 139 Personal interview with Ulan Isakov on June 11, 2012.
- 140 Ibid.
- 141 American Analyst in Tajikistan, Interview.
- 142 Ibid.
- 143 Gleason, Gregory. "Power sharing in Tajikistan: political compromise and regional instability." *Conflict, Security & Development*. 1:03 (2001), p.129.
- 144 Najibullah, Farangis. "Will Tajikistan's Islamic Party See A Renaissance." *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. August 28, 2011. [http://www.rferl.org/content/will\\_tajikistans\\_islamic\\_party\\_see\\_a\\_renaissance/24310333.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/will_tajikistans_islamic_party_see_a_renaissance/24310333.html)

- 145 Mahmadali, Hait. "Open Dialogue Segment." Final Conference of the Project "Dialogue for a Policy on the Relationship between the State and Religion." Hotel Tajikistan, Dushanbe, Tajikistan. May 22, 2012.
- 146 McGlinchey interview.
- 147 Ibid.
- 148 It may be argued this was the only available venue for Central Asians to voice their discontent in Soviet times.
- 149 Olcott, *In the Whirlwind of Jihad*, p.309.
- 150 Sanderson, p.25. One excellent source that examines Saudi Arabia's reverse indoctrination process is Adam Lankford and Katherine Gillespie's piece in the *International Criminal Justice Review* (2011), "Rehabilitating Terrorists Through Counter-Indoctrination: Lessons Learned From the Saudi Arabian Program."
- 151 Karagiannis, *Political Islam in Central Asia: The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir*, p.59
- 152 Samakov interview.