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IDENTITY POLITICS AND POLITICAL MOBILIZATION IN CENTRAL ASIA:  
THE CASE OF THE ISLAMIC RENAISSANCE PARTY (IRP)

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of  
Miami University in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Department of Political Science

by

Pinar Akcali  
Miami University  
Oxford, Ohio  
1998

Dissertation Director: (Dan N. Jacobs)

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## ABSTRACT

### IDENTITY POLITICS AND POLITICAL MOBILIZATION IN CENTRAL ASIA: THE CASE OF THE ISLAMIC RENAISSANCE PARTY (IRP)

by Pinar Akcali

This dissertation is a case study of the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) in the ex-Soviet republics of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan during the five year period of 1990-1995. The IRP is analyzed within the framework of the categories of parallel and official Islam and the two main bodies of literature that deal with religion in Central Asia. Also, some reference is made to the literature on identity politics. First, the impact of parallel and official Islam on the emergence of the IRP is analyzed. Then the all-Union and regional branches of the party are examined with specific reference to its implications on religious and ethnic identity in the region. It is concluded that in Central Asia, several different types of attachments, like nationalism, religion, regionalism, and clan loyalties form a complex web of ethnic identity.

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the loving memory of my son, Gokhan Akcali, who passed away in August 1997, when he was one year old.

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Islamic revival—which had begun to develop in the 1980s when Gorbachev came to power—gained further momentum in the five Central Asian republics (now countries) of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan. In all of these republics new mosques were built, madrasas or religious schools were opened, religion was reinforced as an integral part of the ethnic identity of the Central Asian people, and political organizations reflecting Islamic interests began to emerge.

The most important Islamic organization to develop in Central Asia, was the all-Union Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) which held its founding congress in Astrakhan, in June 1990. The stated objectives of the party were to enable the Muslim populations of the former Soviet Union to live in accordance with the requirements of the Qur'an, and to advance humanistic ideals and equal rights for all nations.<sup>1</sup> The IRP soon expanded its sphere of influence to all the Central Asian republics by establishing regional branches, and it attracted members from several strata of these societies, especially in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The IRP has been more successful in these two countries than in others in Central Asia. In Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan the party has no strong organizational structure and its popularity in the latter two nations is basically among the Uzbek residents.

The Tajik branch of the IRP was established a few months after the all-Union IRP, in October 1990. It was the leading force behind the spring 1992 demonstrations that forced the communist President Nabiev to resign. In 1992 it was reported that the party had 30,000 members.<sup>2</sup> According to one scholar, the actual number may have been as high as 40,000 not including sympathizers.<sup>3</sup> The Uzbek branch of the IRP, was established in January 1991 in Tashkent. It provoked a strong reaction among the authorities which led to the

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<sup>1</sup>Bess Brown, "The Islamic Renaissance Party in Central Asia," RFE/RL Research Report, 10 May 1991.

<sup>2</sup>The Economist, 19 December 1992.

<sup>3</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 88.

arrest of 400 participants and the expulsion of one party member of the organizing committee from the republic. Under the Uzbek Law on Public Associations that went into effect in February 1991, the party has been denied official recognition and its activities banned. Since then Uzbek branch has been conducting its activities underground. Today the party is most influential in the Fergana Valley and its membership is estimated to be between 40,000 and 50,000.<sup>4</sup>

This dissertation is a case study of the IRP in the two Central Asian republics where it has been most influential, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, in the period between 1990-1995. It attempts to explain the autonomous political mobilization of Islam by the IRP at both the all-Union and the republican levels in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. In this context, two main research questions can be formulated as such: 1) How important are the informal (or "parallel" Islamic) and formal (or "official" Islamic) structures of organization and models of behavior in explaining the emergence and behavior of the IRP? 2) How important is Islam as a basis of political identity in comparison with other factors like nationality or clan (all-Union IRP versus republican branches in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan)?

Limiting the study of the IRP to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan is justified on the grounds that Islamic revival has been particularly strong in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan where the party's most influential regional branches were established shortly after the all-union IRP came into being. And after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, it was in these two republics where the IRP had the broadest base and support and where it was best organized. In order to understand the conditions under which the party emerged, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan seem crucial. The IRP is a new form of political organization in Central Asia that is different than others because of its heavy emphasis on religion. Knowing the social and cultural conditions under which the party emerged may be an important factor in better understanding post-Soviet Central Asian politics.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 90.

## 1. Why A Case Study?

A case study of the IRP is justified by a variety of factors. Like all other parts of the former Soviet Union, the Central Asian republics experienced a difficult and painful period of social, political, and economic transformation in the years following the end of communist rule. In Central Asia—especially in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan—Islamic groups have capitalized on the deteriorating economic conditions, low wages, high prices, unemployment, and housing shortages—which increased during this period—to delegitimize the Central Asian governments. These governments are portrayed as remnants of the former communist era, incapable of bringing real change to society and offering new alternatives to the Central Asian people. Such developments seem to create a conducive environment for the rise of Islam as a political power in the region. Within this context, Islamic revival in Central Asia has become a crucial factor that may have important geopolitical consequences. If religion becomes dominant in the political evolution of the region, the relations among Russia, the West, and Central Asia could become a key dimension in a new strategic balance. Islamic revivalism is perceived as a threat both by Russia and the West. Russia worries about Islamic fundamentalism because it can potentially turn the former Muslim republics against itself, and it can also encourage separatist tendencies among the Muslim people within the Russian federation, and indeed among other ethnic groups as well. Russian-Central Asian borders, therefore, present complex and highly unresolved problems.<sup>5</sup>

While Islamic revival is observed in many other Muslim countries around the world, Central Asia has a unique position within this general picture. No other Muslim countries have had an officially atheist government policy forcefully imposed from above attempting to replace Islam with a different—and in many cases totally incompatible—ideology. In almost no other situation was Islam under such attack and harassment. And in almost no other country had Muslims been so isolated from their co-religionists. So, observing the resurfacing of political Islam in the form of the IRP after seven decades of Soviet rule seems to be particularly significant.

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<sup>5</sup>Graham E. Fuller and Ian O. Lesser, A Sense of Siege: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 142.

The IRP is a unique phenomenon. It was the first Islamic political organization in the USSR that was formed independently of the officially established Islamic structure. As will be analyzed in more detail below, there have been other Islamic groups in Central Asia both before and following Soviet rule. In almost all of these cases, however, such organizations remained underground, had a generally hostile attitude toward the official structure, and tried to keep the social, cultural, and traditional aspects of Islam alive among the Muslim populations of the USSR. These groups did not—or could not—emerge as potential sources of political opposition to the communist system. However, in the case of the IRP there are some basic differences that stand out. First, although formed outside the officially established religious structure, the IRP was not hostile to it; in some cases, it even collaborated with it. Second, unlike the other Islamic groups, the party, at least in the beginning, chose to operate legally and sought the recognition of the communist regime. Third, unlike the previously established Islamic groups, the IRP had an explicitly political orientation: it rejected the limits imposed on Islam by the regime and it refused the restriction of religion to the private sphere of life. As such, the IRP added a new political and/or public dimension to Islam in Central Asia. With the IRP, religion took the form of a new and a potentially powerful participant in the political power struggle.

Finally, the IRP occupies a unique place both within the well-recognized categories of "official" and "parallel" Islam on the one hand, and within the two main bodies of literature that deal with Soviet Islam on the other. The IRP is unique because it does not fit in exclusively with either "official" or "parallel" Islam, or in the two bodies of literature; rather, it is explained by a combination of different concepts and approaches in the literature. These points will be explained in the following section in more detail.

Case studies are significant methodological tools and research strategies used in describing and analyzing social phenomena in an intense, comprehensive, qualitative and multifaceted way. Case studies are holistic: they try to present the totality of the phenomenon under investigation, and offer a detailed and focused analysis of complex and dynamic social actors, groups or institutions.<sup>6</sup> As such they have played an

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<sup>6</sup>Louis B. Barnes, C. Roland Chistensen and Abby J. Hanses, Teaching and the Case Method (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1994), 56.

important role in encouraging and facilitating the development of new ideas, theories and generalizations. They may define new concepts, generate hypotheses and prepare the ground for new theories and further testing of the old ones. Social science inquiry has considerably benefited from case studies. These studies have been particularly significant in advancing empirically grounded social knowledge and in expanding the understanding of deviant and extreme cases.

For the purposes of this dissertation, a case study seems to be a good research strategy because the emergence, social role, and political effectiveness of the IRP require a close and detailed assessment of the whole complex of cultural, economic, and political influences that impinge upon the movement. The relevance and weight of the respective influences and their interaction needs to be understood. The systematic and holistic emphasis of the case study method is suited to this kind of analysis. It is hoped that a more comprehensive analysis of the IRP will provide a better understanding of politics in Central Asia in particular and Islamic revival in general. As will be explained below, a basic argument of the thesis will be that the IRP cannot be fully explained by the concepts and analysis of the existing literature which deals with Central Asian Islam. As such, it is hoped that this study may be an aid to future research in which the IRP experience can be generalized to develop theoretical propositions about Islamic revival and contribute to the expansion and generalization of such theories.

## **2. Literature Review**

Most of the scholars who deal with Islam in Central Asia during the Soviet period concur on its persistence in the region. The literature suggests that Islam has remained an important part of the everyday lives of the Central Asian people despite the antireligious activities, propaganda, and bureaucratic maneuvering of the Soviet authorities.

The scholars also agree on the existence of ethnic attachments among the Central Asian people other than religion. Clan, tribal, regional, and recently national affiliations have been pointed out as other sources of identity. Moreover, it is frequently emphasized that these different identities and Islamic identity are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In most cases, they reinforce each other. In the literature on identity politics,



ethnicity is a highly debated and elusive concept. In this dissertation, it is defined as that aspect of self-identity which gives a person membership in a significant group in a state. Within the specific context of Central Asia, the group may derive its significance from one or several of its religious, linguistic, cultural, social, national, tribal, or economic characteristics.

A third point of agreement among scholars is the existence of two categories of Islam in the region during the former Soviet period: "official" and "parallel" Islam. Official Islam refers to the formal religious establishment controlled by the Soviet regime, and parallel Islam refers to independent religious groups, practices, and beliefs that existed outside the formal Islamic structures.

Although the scholars agree on the existence of this dichotomy, they disagree on the importance of the official and parallel versions of Islam in Central Asia. Much of the literature that deals with Islam in Central Asia focuses on this disagreement. In the following sections, first, the dichotomy of official/parallel Islam is spelled out and then the two main bodies of literature are described.

#### **A. The Official/Parallel Dichotomy of Islam**

Before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the term "official Islam" referred to the attempts of the Soviet regime to redefine and/or draw limits on the power of Islam among the Muslim populations of the country. Although at certain times—like the Second World War—repression of religion was relaxed, atheist propaganda and anti-religious policies continued to exist throughout the Soviet period, until its end.

After the Second World War, the Soviet regime set up four spiritual directorates in the Muslim areas of the country. These boards had administrative authority over the religious affairs in their jurisdiction, but ultimately they were under the control of the Council of Religious Affairs in Moscow. Until very recently, official Islam was generally viewed as synonymous with the Soviet government, remaining outside the sphere of influence of Central Asian political elites—and so it was. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of independent republics in Central Asia, however, conditions changed considerably. Religious affairs in Central Asia were no longer conducted under the surveillance of Moscow. However, official Islam still exists in the region today, with a unique character of its own. It is no longer Moscow, but the Central

Asian political elites--most of whom are remnants of the old Communist Party--who keep this "new official Islam" alive in the region. In other words, official Islam of the former times is perpetuated by the recent Central Asian regimes which are in a different situation but use the old devices. On the one hand, the authorities are aware of the fact that in order to stay in power and to enjoy legitimacy, they have to allow religious freedom and tolerate Islam. On the other hand, however, they do not want to see Islamic fundamentalism gain political power and endanger their secular regimes. So they seek to control and limit the activities of Islamic groups within their republics. As such, the Central Asian authorities, especially in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, have been intolerant of the IRP from the very beginning. Therefore, the "new" official Islam, though different to some extent from the original version, acts in a similar way and perpetuates the old official/parallel dichotomy of religion. Throughout the dissertation this new version will be treated as an extension of the former one.

Parallel Islam refers to the religious principles and practices which were kept alive outside the official structures by the Muslim people themselves. Considering official Islam too narrow and constrained to meet the religious needs of the people, parallel Islam filled the gap in Central Asia throughout the Soviet period. Grass-roots initiatives in the form of Sufi brotherhoods, cults of holy places, shamanism, and, after perestroika, several new mosques and religious schools have performed the role of sustaining the knowledge and practice of Islam among the population from one generation to the next.

As it developed independently and unofficially, parallel Islam remained illegal and therefore had to operate in the underground throughout the years of Soviet rule. It created its own institutions and interpretations of Islam, and in general remained hostile to the officially established religious structures. Despite the fact that it had limited resources at its disposal, parallel Islam was more influential and legitimate in the lives of the Central Asian people than was official Islam.

## **B. The Two Main Bodies of Literature**

In the argument over the importance and place of official and parallel Islam in the lives of the people, one group of scholars--Alexandre Bennigsen being the most notable among them--puts the basic emphasis on

parallel Islam, disregarding the influence and impact of the official establishment. According to these scholars, parallel Islam is more powerful and deep-rooted among the people than official Islam. They hold that Islam has always played the basic role in the lives of the Soviet Muslims both as a faith and as the main source of ethno-national and cultural identity.

The second group of scholars, Muriel Atkin and Martha Brill Olcott are among the best known ones, hold that Islam is only one among many different identities and loyalties of the Central Asian people. According to these scholars, Islam has been an important part of Central Asian identity, but it is not the basic factor. There have always been other loyalties--tribal, clan, regional, and dynastic--which were sometimes more important than Islam both before and after the Soviet period. While recognizing the importance of Islam in Central Asia, they also take into account the administrative and regulatory power of official Islam (with its clear resource advantage).

#### **a. The First School**

This school is best characterized by the works of Alexandre Bennigsen, who dedicated himself to the study of Soviet Islam and raised the subject to the status of a scholarly field. S. Enders Wimbush and Marie Broxup are also among the prominent scholars of this first school.

Bennigsen suggests that Islam is not only a code of worship with certain beliefs and rites, but also "a complex aggregate of cultural, psychological, and social traditions, attitudes and customs governing the whole way of life of the Muslim community."<sup>7</sup> In a joint work he and S. Enders Wimbush claim that by transcending the narrow spiritual domain, Islam makes it "impossible to assert that someone from a Muslim area who eschews the formal religious practice of Islam *ipso facto* ceases to be a Muslim." According to them even though a Soviet Muslim was a non-believer "he nevertheless preserves certain spiritual, social, and

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<sup>7</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen, "Several Nations or One People: Ethnic Consciousness Among Soviet Central Asian Muslims," *Survey* 24, no. 3 (1979): 53.

psychological attitudes and allegiances which help to determine his political, cultural, and social behavior and values."<sup>8</sup>

Bennigsen distinguishes three levels of ethnic consciousness among the Muslim peoples of the former Soviet Union. The subnational consciousness refers to the clan or tribal loyalties, and the supranational consciousness refers to religious affiliations. Both of these have long histories and are deeply rooted in the culture of the area; they define the nature of Central Asian ethnic identity, contributing to the growth of Central Asian unity. Subnational and supranational identities crosscut the national identity which was a Soviet creation imposed beginning in 1924 with the aim of securing Soviet control in Central Asia. The nations created then were mainly based on language, and were designed to replace the subnational loyalties with larger ones and break apart the supranational consciousness with more restricted ones.<sup>9</sup> According to Wimbush, too, the national identities of the Soviet Muslims formed in the 1920s had the political purpose of creating "largely artificial alliances ... that would undermine pre-Soviet attachments to pan-Turkic and pan-Islamic ideals."<sup>10</sup>

However, according to Bennigsen, Central Asia possesses a strong historical and cultural unity because of its religious and ethnic structure. Since the Arab conquests it has been mainly a unified state. When the region was divided in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, "it was always along purely geographical lines and never along ethnic or national lines." The Soviet policy divided this unified world along ethnic and national lines and created new and artificial modern nation states. These states had never existed as such in the past.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, the nations created in 1924 "have become economic, administrative,

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<sup>8</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, Muslims of the Soviet Empire (London: C.Hurst and Company, 1986), 3.

<sup>9</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen, "Several Nations or One People: Ethnic Consciousness among Soviet Central Asian Muslims," 51-3.

<sup>10</sup>S. Enders Wimbush, "The Soviet Muslim Borderlands," in The Last Empire: Nationality and the Soviet Future, ed. Robert Conquest (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1986), 219.

<sup>11</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen, Islam in the Soviet Union: General Presentation (Ankara: METU African Asian Research Group, 1985), 3.

and especially bureaucratic realities” but they have not yet become real nations.<sup>12</sup>

Bennigsen and Broxup also suggest that the general trend in Central Asia has been toward greater unity and consolidation, and not towards cultural division of Islam. According to them, the purely national awareness of belonging to a modern nation is difficult to analyze:

Completely artificial in the beginning, these nations have had to become economic and administrative realities. However, a purely Uzbek or purely Karakalpak culture has not emerged in spite of half a century of efforts. Neither has a feeling of local Uzbek patriotism been created and it is doubtful whether it will emerge in the near future.<sup>13</sup>

According to Bennigsen and Broxup, in the minds of Central Asians, "Muslim consciousness continues to enjoy priority."<sup>14</sup> Therefore, they conclude, although forced to adapt itself to the new circumstances that arose under the Soviet regime, Islam has not in any way been "contaminated" either by Marxism or by secularism. From the point of view of Islamic law and theology, Islam in the USSR is the "same untainted religion it was before 1917, and its leaders, though submissive to the godless state, have never been accused of infidelity (kufr), heresy (shirq), or even innovation (bida'), even by their enemies."<sup>15</sup>

Similar points of view are expressed by S. Enders Wimbush. According to him, Soviet Muslims remained part of the world of Islam, and Islam plays an important part in the psychological make-up and identities of Central Asian Muslims. Moreover, according to Wimbush, modern national distinctions which were created by the Soviets do not necessarily contradict Islamic identity. As he puts it:

One can easily be an Uzbek and a Muslim, just as one can be a Saudi and a Muslim, but can one be both a Muslim and a New Soviet Man? Again, the answer probably is yes in most cases but not insofar as being a New Soviet Man means becoming Russified. Islam is a way of life and a set

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<sup>12</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen, "Several Nations or One People: Ethnic Consciousness among Soviet Central Asian Muslims," 61.

<sup>13</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 138.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 137.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 109.

of historical and social conditions... In a very real sense, Islamic tradition has become the fundamental cultural bulwark against assimilation by an aggressive Russian culture... Unlike many other Soviet peoples, the Soviet Muslims' search is not for a national identity that somehow amalgamates aspects of the New Soviet Man in such a way as to assuage the ideological demands of the ruling Russians. There is not an identity crisis, for they cannot cease to be Muslims.<sup>16</sup>

In short, according to Wimbush a person may have other attachments or identities along with being a Muslim; however, among these, only being a Muslim is permanent. Therefore, although other identities (like national identity) may develop in time, they remain secondary. A Muslim does not have to choose between being a Muslim and a member of a certain nationality. He can be both, although the first will always be primary.<sup>17</sup>

Helene Carrere d'Encausse is another prominent scholar of this school. She analyzes group cohesion (especially in the three major events of human life; birth, marriage, and death) among the Soviet Muslims, their refusal to marry outside the group and emphasis on traditional Muslim holidays. Then d'Encausse elaborates on what she calls "Homo Islamicus" which looms behind "Homo Sovieticus."<sup>18</sup> According to d'Encausse the life styles and traditions of Homo Islamicus are in most cases based on religion and the Central Asian people "have long been incorporated in a culture which all the peoples of the borderlands feel as being common to them and as separating from those who do not belong to their spiritual world."<sup>19</sup> The bonds of history, culture, and tradition raised a serious problem for the Soviet regime. As d'Encausse puts it:

This Homo Islamicus has in effect behind him more than a half-century of cultural revolution intended to create a Homo Sovieticus. He has gone through the standardizing mold of schools and youth organizations. As a preschooler he was an "Octobrist"; then he proudly wore the red neckerchief of the pioneers and learned the rudiments of socialist

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<sup>16</sup>S. Enders Wimbush, "The Soviet Muslim Borderlands," in The Last Empire: Nationality and the Soviet Future, 219-220.

<sup>17</sup>S. Enders Wimbush, Sovyet Orta Asya'sında Soysuzlastırma Politikası (Ankara: METU Asian African Research Group, 1986).

<sup>18</sup>Helene Carrere d'Encausse, Decline of an Empire (New York: Newsweek Books, 1979), 248.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 263.

morality and socialist behavior, which a whole lifetime was to reinforce. And now having come of age, this citizen, in whom the regime has invested so much, spontaneously rediscovers the authority of the father and the Elders, the disparaged traditions, the pre-eminent solidarity of the national cultural group from which he sprang.<sup>20</sup>

#### **b. The Second School**

This view of the primacy of Islamic identity is challenged by such scholars as Martha Brill Olcott, Muriel Atkin, Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, Maria Eva Subtelny and Mehrdad Haghayeghi.

According to Martha Brill Olcott, the traditional culture of Central Asian societies, as well as Islamic values, rituals, and practices, continue to be effective in the region. The Islamic attachment of the population has been "probably the greatest single source of cultural vitality in Central Asia" for a long time.<sup>21</sup> However, Islam was basically a social and cultural force and in time, religious identity became less important.<sup>22</sup> According to Olcott, Central Asians are "not deeply religious", they are "Muslims by practice, but their faith is simplistic. They do not hold a Muslim worldview, or judge events by the moralistic yardstick of a true believer. Nor do they have a strong commitment to restore the primacy of Sharia law."<sup>23</sup> As such, Islam is not a political force, but a social one. According to Olcott, Central Asian Muslims were not seriously disturbed by the atheistic philosophy of the Soviet regime and were "certainly well integrated into the Soviet social and political structure; both the masses and the clergy have developed a *modus vivendi* with the regime."<sup>24</sup> Olcott further suggests that after decades of Soviet rule and antireligious policies the very nature and practice of

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Martha Brill Olcott, "Central Asia: The Reformers Challenge a Traditional Society," in The Nationalities Factor in Soviet Politics and Society, eds. Lubomyr Hajda and Mark Beissinger (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), 253.

<sup>22</sup>Martha Brill Olcott, "Ceremony and Substance: the Illusion of Unity in Central Asia," in Central Asia and the World, ed. Michael Mandelbaum (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1994), 25.

<sup>23</sup>Martha Brill Olcott, "Soviet Islam and World Revolution," World Politics 34, no. 4 (1982): 498-9.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 500.

Islam has changed in Central Asia. The harsh and repressive policies of the 1920s and 1930s had their effect and now "many Soviet Muslims have encountered a regime whose understanding of Islam does not depart from their own relatively weak commitment to their faith."<sup>25</sup> According to Olcott the dominance of the traditional Islamic religion has, for the most part, been destroyed in the region.

Olcott identifies three types of Muslims in Central Asia. The first group is "ethnic Muslims" whose identification with Islam is "almost entirely passive"; they are Muslims because they are members of an ethnic and national group that has historically been Muslim. The second group is "traditional Muslims" who adhere to religious practices, but have little or no awareness of the doctrinal teachings of Islam. According to Olcott, this is the largest category. The third and the smallest group consists of "doctrinal Muslims," who have at least some knowledge of Islamic doctrine and attempt to work their faith into their daily life."<sup>26</sup>

However, Olcott states that although religious identity still provides some basis for a common bond, Central Asians are conscious of belonging to a national community as well as to a religious one. So, although the Central Asian people have been and still are considered to be a single people, a single family, they have multiple identities besides Islam such as nationality and, until recently, Soviet.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, according to Olcott, unity in Central Asia is an "illusion."<sup>28</sup>

Olcott points out that over the centuries Central Asian identities and the languages of the peoples of Central Asia have changed. With each new group of conquerors many individuals were killed but the predecessors were rarely forced out entirely; rather, they were absorbed into the new order while maintaining

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 494.

<sup>26</sup>Martha Brill Olcott, "The Reformers Challenge a Traditional Society," 270-1.

<sup>27</sup>Martha Brill Olcott, "Ceremony and Substance: the Illusion of Unity in Central Asia," in Central Asia and the World,

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid.



some aspects of their previous identity, such as language, tribal characteristics, and some customs.<sup>29</sup> As such, for centuries the area has been home to a number of ethnically distinct communities. For example, even though their languages were mutually intelligible and intermarriages common, the Kazakhs and the Kyrgyz maintained distinct tribal structures. Over time their sense of ethnic uniqueness was strengthened, as each group created its own relations with various ever-changing neighboring powers.<sup>30</sup>

Olcott further suggests that during the communist regime, the Soviets encouraged the Central Asian republics to view one another as administrative rivals, competing for centrally allocated resources. "Politics in the Soviet period was a zero-sum game in which one republic's gain was another republic's loss. Though the USSR is gone now, that distrust and competitiveness has had the intended effect of diminishing the likelihood of regional cooperation."<sup>31</sup> After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian leaders could not form a Central Asian grouping but joined the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to try to preserve some sort of expanded regional structure.<sup>32</sup> And today, it is becoming even more difficult for Central Asian people to be drawn together as certain internal developments, such as economic difficulties and ethnic clashes, pull them in different directions. Central Asia as a single region in religious, linguistic and economic terms is, in Olcott's view, a "myth."<sup>33</sup>

Muriel Atkin has ideas similar to Olcott's. According to Atkin, the various peoples of Central Asia have long known that there were differences among them in their origins, language, way of life and culture. They traditionally led separate, distinct lives with historical experiences and cultural heritages that "differ widely" from each other.<sup>34</sup> Atkin accepts that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most Central

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 20-1.

<sup>30</sup>Martha Brill Olcott, "The Reformers Challenge a Traditional Society," 253.

<sup>31</sup>Martha Brill Olcott, "The Myth of Tsentral'naia Aziia," *Orbis* 38, no. 4 (1994): 551.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 533.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Muriel Atkin, *The Subtlest Battle: Islam in Soviet Tajikistan* (Philadelphia: Foreign Policy Research

Asians customarily defined themselves by religious affiliations, however, according to her, they were also aware of the fact that the broader Islamic community was subdivided into groups. Atkin states that these groups were "different and not infrequently, mutually hostile."<sup>35</sup> Ethnic ties, loyalty to dynasties, local political chiefs, tribes or clans, economic interests, geographic subdivisions of the region, all constituted "bases for division" which at times conflicted with religious ties.<sup>36</sup>

According to Atkin, today, although the Islamic component of national identity in Central Asia is powerful, this does not always result in a strong sense of belonging to a broader, supranational Islamic community. Other loyalties remain at least as important as the religious ones. Atkin points out that Sunni Islam, the shared religion of all Central Asian people, has not served as a unifying supranational bond in the region. Although every Muslim is believed to be part of a single community of believers, the umma, the religious unity among the Central Asian Muslims, remained only an ideal. In practice, it did not prevent conflicts, war, and bloodshed among the fellow believers, both before and during Soviet rule.<sup>37</sup> Regional leaders were unable to cooperate in opposing the Russian conquest at the end of the nineteenth century due to their rivalries. The struggle of the Basmachi in the 1920s to prevent the Red Army's conquest of Central Asia was also weakened by a lack of coordinated efforts and acrimony among the believers. Therefore, concludes Atkin, "the spiritual unity of Islam has been driven by worldly rivalries in Central Asia as elsewhere."<sup>38</sup>

Atkin also deals with the impact of Soviet nationality policies on the Central Asian people. According to her, the notion that people of the region should be categorized by nationality is a twentieth century Russian innovation. As Atkin puts it:

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Institute, 1989), 3.

<sup>35</sup>Muriel Atkin, "Religious, National, and Other Identities in Central Asia," in Muslims in Central Asia: Expressions of Identity and Change, ed. Jo-Ann Gross (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 47.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Muriel Atkin, "Tajikistan: Ancient Heritage, New Politics," in Nations and Politics in the Soviet Successor States, eds. Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 373.

<sup>38</sup>Muriel Atkin, "Religious, National, and Other Identities in Central Asia," in Muslims in Central Asia: Expressions of Identity and Change, 62.

The nationally defined political and cultural institutions in contemporary Central Asia are contrivances of the Soviet regime, for the purpose of political control, and were imposed on the region by Moscow's fiat in the 1920s and 1930s. **What was artificial then has taken a life of its own. National identity became a factor in the competition for advancement within the Soviet system.** In the past few years it became even more important as the Soviet Union collapsed and people looked for alternative political programs. For many nationalities, this also entailed as a crucial component, redefining the national identity, which had been subject to manipulation for decades by the Soviet regime.<sup>39</sup>

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, according to Atkin, nationalism emerged as more powerful than Islam as a "rallying point."<sup>40</sup> She points out for example, the Tajiks not only refuse to be a part of the Turkic-speaking populations of Central Asia, but they also do not want to be "submerged" in the Persian speakers beyond their borders, despite the fact that they want to borrow selectively from that world to strengthen their own cultural identity.<sup>41</sup>

Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, on the other hand, puts the main emphasis on the results of the industrialization, modernization, and mobilization efforts of the Soviet regime and the nationality-based units of its federal political-administrative system. According to Rakowska-Harmstone, in the context of modernization and mobilization of Soviet society, a new type of nationalism has been generated. Starting from the 1970s, indigenous modern elites started seeking sources of legitimacy in their own unique national groups and the federal system has provided them with both the basis and the means of pursuing national interests and objectives. Although the development of a separate sense of ethnic identity was long circumscribed by the cultural unity of Islam, in Central Asia too, national consciousness has started to exert pressure in cultural, political, and economic spheres.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Muriel Atkin, "Tajik and the Persian World," in Central Asia in Historical Perspective, ed. Beatrice Manz (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 128, emphasis added.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, "The Dialectics of Nationalism in the USSR," Problems of Communism 23, no. 3 (1974).

Maria Eva Subtelny, who has analyzed the "millennia-long symbiosis" of the Turkic pastoral nomad and the sedentary Iranian, emphasizes the mutual influence of these two groups of people and talks about the phenomenon of "mixed languages" and bilingualism. According to Subtelny, by the end of the nineteenth century, the Iranian population of Soviet Central Asia was completely Turkicized and it assimilated the formerly nomadic Turkic elements. During the 1920s, when ethnic and national identities were weak or non-existent, Soviet nationality policy aimed at the creation of modern Uzbek and Tajik nations, each with its own separate territory, history, and cultural heritage. In the long-run the policy was successful. The Tajik and the Turk emerged as two different nationalities and they were no longer involved in a symbiotic relationship. In Subtelny's words: "As a result, the traditional symbiotic relationship between Turkic and Iranian peoples was replaced by ethnic rivalry and competition for territory and cultural symbols that had previously been common property of both."<sup>43</sup>

The final scholar of the second school to be cited is Mehrdad Haghayeghi. According to him, Islam in Central Asia is different in nature than in the Middle Eastern or Arab worlds. It is predominantly cultural, reflecting its influence mainly as a way of life. Although initially Islam was introduced to Central Asia violently by military means, it retained its identity through Muslim merchants who came seeking goods and markets. Over the course of five hundred years, not Islamic ideology, but "the culture and daily life of Islam" was emphasized by these merchants.<sup>44</sup> In time Islam was "redefined to suit the ethnic and tribal peculiarities that had shaped the life of the people for centuries," so the Islamic tradition in the region "has evolved into a mild variety."<sup>45</sup> According to Haghayeghi, strong ethnic loyalties and tribal life styles in Central Asia have been effective in shaping Central Asian Islam, not vice-versa. And today ethnic orientation precedes religious

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<sup>43</sup>Maria Eva Subtelny, "The Symbiosis of Turk and Tajik." in Central Asia in Historical Perspective, ed. Beatrice Manz (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 56.

<sup>44</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, "Islam and Politics in Central Asia," Meeting Report (Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies) 12, no. 3 (1994).

<sup>45</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, "Islamic Revival in the Central Asian Republics," Central Asian Survey 13, no. 2 (1994): 251.

orientation, and ethnic separatism is the "most centrifugal force" in the region.<sup>46</sup>

Haghayeghi also points out that Central Asian people are predominantly from the Sunni branch of the Hanafi school. This school of Islamic jurisprudence, founded by a non-Arab, is noted for its liberal interpretation and administration of Islamic laws and its distinction between faith and practice. Its emphasis is on moderation in action and orthodox interpretation of Sunnah, the tradition of Prophet Muhammad.<sup>47</sup>

It is also frequently emphasized that Islam in Central Asia is diverse and fragmented, including many subdoctrinal groups like the Sufi brotherhoods and the Wahhabi movement. The former refer to the mystical orders organized by Muslim ascetics who preach a return to a simpler, deeper, and personal expression of faith that does not necessarily need mosques, formal prayers and mullahs to keep the essential spirit. Wahhabism, on the other hand, is the principal creed of Saudi Arabia. It is fundamentalist, calling for a return to the simplicity and piety of early Islam. The Wahhabis decry what they consider as later corruptions, including Sufis. For such reasons, scholars argue, Islam in Central Asia is not conducive to Islamic fundamentalism. Therefore, a large-scale Islamic fundamentalist movement which is against the West and seeks to obtain political power in the region is unlikely.<sup>48</sup>

The dichotomy of parallel and official Islam and the two bodies of literature about Islam in Central Asia are critical in analyzing and understanding the IRP. In this dissertation, they will also serve as the basic framework within which hypotheses will be formulated and analyzed. However, the discussion of the IRP can also be placed within the larger body of comparative politics literature that deals with identity politics. Although it is outside the scope of this study to analyze the IRP from the perspective of identity politics literature, some mention of this literature may help place the discussion in a larger framework of comparative politics, which, in turn, may provide further research questions for future studies. As such, alongside the dichotomy of parallel and official Islam and the two main bodies of literature, the two approaches of identity

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<sup>46</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, "Islam and Politics in Central Asia."

<sup>47</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, "Islamic Revival in the Central Asian Republics." 251.

<sup>48</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, "Islam and Politics in Central Asia."

politics will also be used to evaluate and analyze some of the findings of the dissertation in the following chapters. In the literature on ethnic identity, the main approaches seem to be the primordial and instrumental theories.<sup>49</sup> In this section, these two approaches and their relevance to the case of the IRP will also be briefly discussed.

### **C. The Primordial Approach**

The primordial approach puts the main emphasis on human beings' primal need to belong. Primordial attachments form the basis of subjective claims to ethnic identity and inherent or given characteristics (like religious commitment) have primary importance in forming this identity. According to the primordialists, ethnic bonds are deep-seated, irrational, atavistic allegiances which persist for hundreds of years, in some cases, overriding loyalties to other important collectivities.<sup>50</sup> Human actions are seen as being value-oriented and as such the primordial factors have accounted for persistence, diversity, tension, and conflict. Primordialists claim that changing economic and social contexts disrupt conventional ways of understanding and acting in the world. People get disoriented by change and they seek refuge in those aspects of their lives that most basically define who they are. In other words, in the context of disorienting social change, people retire to their ethnic identity which give them a sense of belonging and a notion of self esteem in order to meet their emotional needs.<sup>51</sup>

The primordial approach was criticized because of its deterministic and static explanations that do not display any dynamic properties. As primordial traits were often viewed as fixed, involuntary and

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<sup>49</sup>The instrumentalist approach is sometimes also called "mobilizationist" or "circumstantialist." See respectively, James McKay, "An Explanatory Synthesis of Primordial and Mobilizationist Approaches the Ethnic Phenomena," Ethnic and Racial Studies 5, no. 4 (1982), and Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "Why Ethnicity?" Commentary 58, no. 4 (1974).

<sup>50</sup>E. Shils, "Primordial, Personal, Sacred, and Civil Ties," British Journal of Sociology 8, (1957); also, Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States," in Old Societies and New States, ed. Clifford Geertz (New York: Free Press, 1963).

<sup>51</sup>Harold P. Isaacs, Idols of the Tribe: Group Identity and Political Change (New York: Harper and Row, 1975).

compelling, a human being is seen "as a leopard who cannot change his ethnic spots."<sup>52</sup> In short, according to the critics of this approach, the primordialists do not provide a comprehensive theoretical explanation of ethnic phenomena because of their psychological reductionism, their inability to account for social change and their disregard for political and economic influences.

#### **D. The Instrumental Approach**

The instrumental approach puts the main emphasis on the economic, social, and political interests of an ethnic group. Human action is rationally oriented toward practical goals and ethnic conflict occurs as a result of allocation of resources in a society for which ethnic groups compete. Subjective claims to ethnic identity are derived from the instrumental manipulation of these identities in service of collective political and economic interests. According to the instrumentalists, in the context of socioeconomic change, people with common interests form groups to pursue those interests, with ethnicity being the most effective unifying principle for the appeals to be made. In other words, changing economic and/or political environments disrupt the existing traditional order and create new shared material interests. People with common interests coalesce into groups and pursue these new interests.<sup>53</sup> As such, resurgent or newly created ethnic groups exist "essentially as a weapon in pursuit of collective advantage."<sup>54</sup> Therefore, according to the instrumentalists, ethnic tension and conflict are not the result of any primordial need to belong, but are due to the conscious efforts of individuals and groups mobilizing ethnic symbols in order to obtain access to social, political, and material resources. So, the emotional power of ethnic affinities can be retained as long as they advance shared objective interests.

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<sup>52</sup>James McKay, "An Exploratory Synthesis of Primordial and Mobilizationist Approaches to Ethnic Phenomena," 398.

<sup>53</sup>See for example, Leo A. Dupres, Cultural Pluralism and Nationalist Politics in British Guiana (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1967) and Abner Cohen, Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: Hausa Migrant in Yoruba Towns (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).

<sup>54</sup>Crawford Young, "The Temple of Ethnicity," World Politics 35, no. 4 (1983): 660.

In other words, instrumentalists claim that ethnic cleavages arise as a result of specific and immediate circumstances that may put ethnic groups in competition with each other for scarce resources. And loyalties are readily manipulated in a rational way for pursuing political and economic goals by ethnic or political leaders. As such, primary forms of identity are constructed by political leaders who emphasize the identity as a basis for action and political mobilization. So, ethnic identities are stressed in order to influence political, economic and social policy. One of the main scholars of the instrumentalist approach, Werner Sollors, for example, rejects the exploration of the concept of ethnicity as a fixed, self-evident category, and puts the emphasis on its "construction" or "invention."<sup>55</sup> According to Sollors, ethnic groups are not natural, timeless categories that act in isolation, rather they are in dynamic interaction and part of the historical process and conditions. They continually emerge, change, and redefine themselves over the course of time.<sup>56</sup>

Another important scholar is Eric Hobsbawm who introduced to the literature the concept of the "invention of tradition." According to Hobsbawm, many modern cultural symbols like folk ballads, flags and anthems were made up in order to substantiate political motivation. He suggests that inventing traditions "is essentially a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition"<sup>57</sup> and that "all invented traditions, so far as possible, use history as a legitimation of action and cement of group cohesion."<sup>58</sup>

Although the literature on ethnic identity seems to be divided between the primordialists and the mobilizationists, some scholars have attempted to introduce some unity to the field by bringing these two approaches together. For example, James McKay views the two polar types of ethnic self-assertion not as

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<sup>55</sup>Werner Sollors, "Introduction: The Invention of Ethnicity," in The Invention of Ethnicity, ed. Werner Sollors (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), xiii.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., xiv.

<sup>57</sup>Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in The Invention of Tradition, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 4.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 12.



mutually exclusive, but as "complementary" and reconcilable.<sup>59</sup> According to McKay, ethnic tensions and conflicts that are "purely ideal" or "purely material" constitutes only a minority of all cases and that "all polyethnic societies are characterized by a combination of instrumental and affective bonds."<sup>60</sup> McKay believes that: "Instead of asking **which** approach—primordial **or** mobilizationist—has more explanatory power, it is now possible to inquire about the **extent** to which **both** are operative in **varying degrees**."<sup>61</sup>

Another scholar who attempts to bring together the two approaches to ethnic identity is G. Carter Bentley. According to Bentley, ethnic phenomena need richer explanations both at the individual and collective levels to bring unity to the highly fragmented field of ethnicity.<sup>62</sup>

Bentley's analysis is built upon the "theory of practice" outlined by Pierre Bourdieu.<sup>63</sup> According to Bentley, despite their apparent disagreements, both the instrumental and primordial models seek an objective grounding for subjective identity claims. Neither of those models explains "how people came to recognize their commonalities of interest or sentiment in the first place. Neither of them has been tested at the level of the individual where ethnic identity formulation or manipulation presumably take place."<sup>64</sup> Bentley argues that the theory of practice developed by Bourdieu can be applied to ethnic phenomena. The main concept of Bourdieu's theory is **habitus**, which refers to "systems of durable, tranposable dispositions" that comprise "a set of generative schemes that produce practices and representations that are regular without reference to overt rules and that are goal oriented without requiring conscious selection of goals or mastering of methods of

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<sup>59</sup>James McKay, "An Exploratory Synthesis of Primordial and Mobilizationist Approaches to Ethnic Phenomena," 401.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 401-2.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 403.

<sup>62</sup>G. Carter Bentley, "Ethnicity and Practice," Comparative Studies in Society and History 29, no. 1 (1987): 24.

<sup>63</sup>Pierre Bourdieu, Outline of a Theory of Practice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

<sup>64</sup>G. Carter Bentley, "Ethnicity and Practice," 27.

achieving them."<sup>65</sup> The process is similar to learning one's native language in which competence is achieved without conscious awareness of the structure of what is learned.

According to Bentley, ethnic identity "derives from situationally shared elements of a multi-dimensional habitus" and as such, an individual may possess several different "situationally relevant but nonetheless emotionally authentic identities."<sup>66</sup> Bentley further argues that "sensations of ethnic affinity are founded on common life experiences that generate similar habitual dispositions. ... It is commonality of experience and of the preconscious habitus it generates that gives the members of an ethnic cohort their sense of being both familial and familiar to each other."<sup>67</sup> Therefore, concludes Bentley, consciousness of affinities of interest and experience "provides the objective grounding for ethnic subjectivity sought by both primordialists and instrumentalists."<sup>68</sup>

### **3. Hypotheses**

As indicated above, this dissertation attempts to explain the autonomous political mobilization of Islam by the IRP at both the all-Union and republic levels of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and asked the following questions: 1) How important are the informal (parallel Islamic) and official (official Islamic) structures of organization and modes of behavior in explaining the emergence and behavior of the IRP? 2) How important is Islam as a basis of political identity in comparison with other factors like nationality and clan?

The four hypotheses of the dissertation will be developed out of these two research questions. The first two hypotheses will analyze the emergence and behavior of the IRP from the perspective of the existence of parallel and official Islam. The last two hypotheses will analyze the emergence and behavior of the IRP

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<sup>65</sup>Pierre Bourdieu, Outline of a Theory of Practice, 77, 85. quoted in Bentley, "Ethnicity and Practice." 28.

<sup>66</sup>G. Carter Bentley, "Ethnicity and Practice," 35.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 32-3.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 27.

from the perspective of Islamic identity versus other identities in the region. As such, the literature about Islam in Central Asia that is reviewed above serves as background as well as a starting point for the hypotheses which guide this dissertation. The first and the second hypotheses are derived from the dichotomy between official and parallel Islam. The second and third hypotheses are associated with the identity-based politics as treated by the two bodies of literature described above. The basic argument of these hypotheses is that both the official/parallel Islam dichotomy and the two types of identity politics are insufficient by themselves to explain the IRP as a political party, and a combination of these factors is necessary.

#### **A. The Official/Parallel Dichotomy of Islam and the First and the Second Hypotheses**

Although the categorical distinction between official and parallel Islam is widely used among scholars, when it comes to the IRP it may not be particularly useful. The party is somewhere between the two categories, emerging as a third alternative in the guise of Islam seeking political power. However, although different from official and parallel Islam, political Islam--symbolized by the IRP--is linked to both parallel and official Islam.

On the one hand, the IRP shares certain striking similarities with parallel Islam. First of all, both emerged outside the official religious establishment and became serious alternatives to it. Like parallel Islam, the IRP broadened the definition of Islam by carrying it outside the boundaries established by official Islam, and like parallel Islam it emerged as part of the struggle against the communist regime. It must also be added that the IRP had to be in close contact with people who adhere to parallel Islam because as a political party, it required followers, and parallel Islam was an important source.

However, the IRP is also different from parallel Islam because it is not only concerned with the cultural and social aspects of religion but is also very active in the political power struggle. Both in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, the IRP has conducted its activities in coalition with the pro-democratic forces and groups, declaring power-sharing to be its preferred method of action. Furthermore, it is important to point out that from the beginning the IRP wanted to find its place in the new political arena through legal political struggle.

and expressed support for parliamentary and electoral means of achieving power. The leaders, at least initially have repeatedly expressed readiness for a dialogue with the authorities and tried to avoid any actions that could be interpreted as extremist, terrorist or militant. They have remained moderate, seeking to act as an officially recognized opposition, and they have aimed at presenting an image of peaceful coexistence with official Islam. Unlike parallel Islam, in general the IRP has not been in conflict with official Islam, and sometimes has even acted in collaboration with it.

All these points of difference with parallel Islam might seem to move the IRP closer to official Islam. Similar to official Islam, the party sought recognition from the authorities and was ready to make concessions for the right to legally exist. The IRP did not present itself as a potential threat to the existing political system, and it had no intention of violently overthrowing the regime by a radical Islamic agenda. The party claimed that it would use only peaceful and democratic methods in its activities like official Islamic institutions did. As such, the IRP saw official Islam as a model of legal existence within the boundaries of the political system. However, the IRP was definitely not a part of the official Islamic establishment. It opposed the secularist orientation of the new official Islam--which limited religion to the private level--and stressed the importance of Islam to the political and/or public as well as private spheres of life. In short, in the case of the IRP, the distinction between official and parallel Islam is not very clear and the boundaries between the two are blurred. So, the IRP crosscuts the dichotomy between the two types of Islam and its emergence as a political party can be explained by neither of them. It is the combination of both types of Islam that explains the party's emergence most fully. Like parallel Islam (and unlike official Islam), the IRP emerged as a popular reaction to the communist regime. On the other hand, like official Islam (and unlike parallel Islam) the IRP sought to be a legal political actor and tried to stay within the legally established system.

In consideration of these observations it can be pointed out that both parallel Islam and official Islam contributed to the emergence of the IRP as a legal political organization. Parallel Islamic institutions, by expressing the feeling of alienation among the Central Asian Muslims from the communist system and the Communist Party, were important in the emergence of the IRP. On the other hand, official Islamic institutions, by setting the pattern of Islam as the basis for formal organization and participation, were also important in the

emergence of the IRP. Under these observations, it is possible to develop the first and the second hypotheses as follows:

**a. The First Hypothesis:** The existence of parallel Islam in Central Asia was a necessary cause for the emergence of the IRP in the form of an Islamic political party. The logic here is that, parallel Islam, by keeping alive and nurturing an enduring sense of Islamic identity among the Central Asian people, was an important prerequisite for the emergence of the IRP, but it was not a sufficient cause by itself.

**b. The Second Hypothesis:** The existence of official Islam in Central Asia was a necessary cause for the emergence of the IRP in the form of a legal political entity. The logic here is that official Islam, by setting the pattern or mode of Islam as the basis for formal and legal organization and participation within the boundaries of the existing political system, was an important prerequisite for the emergence of the IRP, but it was not a sufficient cause by itself.

### **B. The Two Main Bodies of Literature and the Third and the Fourth Hypotheses**

As is the case with the official/parallel dichotomy of Islam, the IRP can best be explained by combining the two bodies of literature that deal with the politics of identity in Central Asia.

The first school—characterized by the works of Alexandre Bennigsen—is useful in explaining the support and appeal of the IRP to Central Asian societies. However, this approach remains ineffective in explaining the national divisions (or branches) of the party which operate in a different way in various Central Asian republics. The effectiveness and amount of support the party enjoys change with the different political, economic and social conditions in each republic.

It must also be kept in mind that although the party at first called itself a party for all Muslims living within the borders of the former Soviet Union regardless of location, specifically national branches have proven to be increasingly influential. In fact, from the very beginning, there were divisions within the party based on nationality. For example, in early fall of 1990 two of the Tajik participants of the founding congress of the IRP and other supporters formally requested the permission of the authorities to hold a regional conference of the party in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan. The Supreme Soviet rejected the request,

claiming that the party was violating the USSR law on freedom of conscience and therefore the establishment of a regional branch in Tajikistan would not be allowed. Despite the ban, however, at the beginning of October a constituent conference formally established a branch of the IRP in Tajikistan.<sup>69</sup>

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, the party totally lost its unity. The regional branches became independent and, in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, they evolved into fundamentalist political parties. Thus, the common bond of Islam did not provide unity within the party and prevented it from operating on the all-Union basis. Instead the IRP chose to function in national contexts and acquired a different character in each former republic. As one observer put it, "Islamic fundamentalism and nationalism tend to stimulate and complement each other."<sup>70</sup> It would seem that the first body of literature overestimates the unifying role of a shared religion in Central Asia.

On the other hand, the second body of literature also seems inadequate as it underestimates the political potential of Islam as an alternative to the secular regimes in the region. From the very beginning as a political party, the IRP has played an active role within the political struggle against the communist system. It has established links and collaborated with other democratic groups, secular nationalists and ex-communist reformers. By seeing Islam in a non-political framework and by stressing its rather minimized role among other identities, this body of literature seems to lose its explanatory power. Thus, the IRP does not fit into these two bodies of literature, but intersects them in the present political, social, and economic circumstances of Central Asia.

In sum, the IRP crosscuts the two main bodies of literature about Islam in Central Asia. The first body of literature suggests that Islam is still the basic pillar of identity in Central Asia. This approach may explain why the IRP emerged as an "all-Union" party appealing to all "Muslim" Soviet citizens at first, regardless of region, nationality, and ethnicity. The second body of literature suggests that other attachments

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<sup>69</sup>Bess Brown, "The Islamic Renaissance Party in Central Asia," 13.

<sup>70</sup>Alexei V. Malashenko, "Islam and Politics in the Southern Zone of the Former USSR," in Central Asia and Transcaucasia: Ethnicity and Conflict, ed. Vitaly V. Naumkin (Connecticut: The Greenwood Press, 1994), 120.

like tribe, ethnic background, and nationality are at least as important as religion. This approach may explain why the national or regional branches of the IRP emerged in a short period of time, even before the dissolution of the Soviet Union. So, the foundation of the IRP as an all-Union Islamic party reflects the importance of the common religious identity in Central Asia. The rapid organization of the national branches reflects the coexistence of other attachments and identities with Islam. The party had to combine both identities to have support. The dissertation will investigate whether the activities of the all-Union and national levels of the IRP are based on these different identities. The persistence of Islamic identity can be analyzed by the first body of literature, whereas the coexistence of other attachments can be analyzed by the second body of literature.

In consideration of these observations, the third and the fourth hypotheses are the following:

**c. The Third Hypothesis:** The persistence of Islamic identity in many parts of the former Soviet Union was the sufficient cause for the emergence of the IRP as an all-Union party.

**d. The Fourth Hypothesis:** The co-existence of ethnic, national, and communal identities with Islamic identity was the sufficient cause for the organization of the IRP on republican levels throughout Central Asia.

#### **4. Methodology and an Outline of the Dissertation**

The second chapter of the thesis following the introduction will give the historical background of the region with a specific emphasis on the Islamic experience of the Central Asian peoples particularly in recent times. This is critical because the IRP emerged as a culminating point of several historical events that affected Islam's development in the region. As Islam is one of the basic pillars of ethnic identity in Central Asia, the historical conditions that affected the IRP's coming into existence in 1990 need to be understood.

In this chapter, the main emphasis will be on the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, focusing primarily on Russia's involvement in the region. Certain historical events, persons, and movements like the Basmachi uprising, the Muslim national communist Sultan Galiev, and Jadidism will be emphasized as turning points in Moscow's relations with the Central Asian Muslim populations. The policy of tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union regarding Islam will also be analyzed in this part. The dichotomy of official/parallel Islam will be examined in more detail. From a historical point of view the dichotomy plays a basic role in understanding

Central Asian Islam throughout most of the twentieth century.

The third and fourth chapters of the thesis will investigate the hypotheses of the dissertation and explain how the IRP crosscuts the dichotomy of official/parallel Islam and intersects with the two main bodies of literature.

#### **A. The First and the Second Hypotheses**

In order to see how the IRP crosscuts the dichotomy of official/parallel Islam, it is necessary to look at its ties and similarities with these two categories. On the one hand, it is important to analyze how the IRP moved beyond the officially established religious structure, how and why it struggled against the communist regime, how and why it broadened the definition of Islam and brought it outside the boundaries of official Islam. On the other hand, questions such as why the IRP sought official recognition, to what extent the IRP was willing to stay within the legal political system and cooperate with both official Islam and other political groups in the region are also crucial.

In an attempt to answer these questions, the founding congress of the party, its program, its goals and objectives, its activities, and the statements of its leaders will be analyzed. Since the IRP was founded in 1990, little research in detail has been done on the subject. This dissertation will use several newspapers as well as periodicals such as Central Asian Survey, FBIS Daily Report, and RFE Research Report as well as Turkic and Russian language sources.

#### **B. The Third and the Fourth Hypotheses**

In order to see how the IRP crosscuts the two main bodies of literature dealing with Central Asian Islam, it is necessary to understand the extent to which each of the two schools of thought can explain the IRP. Is the IRP a political party that confirms the strength and primacy of the common supranational bond of Islam among the Central Asian people? By defining Islam in both socio-cultural and political terms does the party symbolize Islam as a total way of life (assumptions of the first school)? Or do the political appeal and power of the IRP diminish when other identities and attachments, like clan, tribal, national and ethnic are taken into



account (assumptions of the second school)?

In order to see how the first school explains the emergence of the IRP, the persistence of Islam in the everyday lives of the Central Asian people needs to be understood. It is possible to observe this persistence by looking at the social customs and traditions of the people and at demographic data such as population growth, migration patterns, and family structures. Islam still occupies a very important and unique place in Central Asia today. The IRP emerged, built itself and sought its support in Islam's strength in the region. The activities of the party before the collapse of the Soviet Union will be specifically emphasized. Initially the party was formed as an "all-Union" organization with the aim of representing all of the Muslim people of the country regardless of factors like nation, ethnicity, etc.

In this context it is also important to analyze the implications of the Afghan war for Soviet Muslims, the relations between Soviet Muslims and the Afghan people. Many Soviet Muslims, as well as Central Asian conscripts in the Soviet Army, sympathized with Afghan coreligionists battling Soviet troops. This factor seems to be an indicator of the common bond of Islam. The relations of the IRP leaders and Afghan rebels like Gulbeddin Hekmatyar and Ahmad Shah Masud, as well as other fundamentalist Islamic groups, will also be looked at. These relations may indicate the primary importance of Islam for the Central Asian people.

On the other hand, if one looks at the IRP closer, one can also claim that the second body of literature can be used in partially explaining the IRP. It is important to observe how after the breakup of the Soviet Union the regional and/or national branches of the party in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan consolidated into independent national parties. In a short time the national branches of the party gained strength and the all-union activities of the original party faded away. The separate branches of the IRP in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan started to appeal more and more to nationalist feelings. In time several differences of opinion on important issues like attitude toward the government and the official Islamic establishment emerged. This process seems to suggest the importance of "national" interests and primacy of "nation-states" in Central Asia today. In this section, all these foregoing developments will be examined.

The last chapter of the thesis will summarize and elaborate on the findings and discuss their implications for the original hypotheses.

## CHAPTER II: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter lays out the history of Central Asia prior to the 1917 revolution and through the first decades of Soviet rule. The main emphasis is on Islam's development and importance in the region as well as the conditions under which the Bolsheviks established their rule in 1917. It is crucial to understand the initial conflict and resentment between the people of Turkestan and the recently empowered Soviet authorities, how and why both sides reacted to new developments in the region, and finally how they interacted with each other in the years after 1917. Within this context, the reformist Jadid movement, the new regime's attitude toward Islam and the Muslims, the native Basmachi uprising, and Muslim national communism are also considered and analyzed. All of these form the basis of the deep-rooted ethnic and national problems which affected the region throughout Soviet rule and which will be frequently referred to in the following chapters of the dissertation. They have also been influential in perpetuating the impact of Islam in Central Asia, which in turn contributed to the emergence of the IRP in 1990. Although recent developments are mentioned to some extent, these will be dealt with in detail in the following chapters, in which the hypotheses of the dissertation will be analyzed.

One of the most noteworthy features of Central Asian history has been the continuous movements of different populations. Some of these movements have been the result of sudden irruptions of nomads and/or conquests. Trade, pilgrimage, and quest for knowledge have also prompted people to come to Central Asia. Thus, from the very earliest times, Central Asia has been a center for "cross-cultural fertilization" and has shown extraordinary ability "to recreate itself, to accept change and yet to maintain continuity."<sup>71</sup> For about a millennium (from the middle of the eighth century to the seventeenth) the region was the traditional heartland of Inner Asia and was at the crossroads of several major empires and nomadic conquerors such as the Huns, the Mongols, and the Turkic Khanates. Each successive wave of conquerors shaped the region culturally and commercially and contributed to the emergence of "high culture civilizations," which flourished in the great

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<sup>71</sup>Shirin Akiner, "Post-Soviet Central Asia: Past is Prologue," in The New States of Central Asia and Their Neighbors, ed. Peter Ferdinand (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1994), 6.

urban centers of Bukhara, Khiva, and Samarkand. For almost a millennium, "that culture was a fountainhead of artistic, literary, architectural, musical, and medical achievements, blending the three great streams of Turko-Mongolian military structures and discipline, Persian administrative genius and language, and Arabic religion and philosophy."<sup>72</sup>

Another striking feature of Central Asian history is the existence of two broad categories of people-- the nomads and the settled people-- that determined the history of the region prior to the twentieth century. The nomads were basically in the north (modern Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) and the far south (southern Turkmenistan); the settled people were on the fertile oasis land of the south. Water has always been scarce in Central Asia basically due to the limited and unreliable rainfall. In this situation, according to one observer, "there were only two alternatives for human ecology: stay with water where it was or follow water where it could be found."<sup>73</sup> The first of these alternatives led to oasis agriculture, the second to nomadic pastoralism. Therefore Central Asia was divided along natural and geographical lines between the arid open steppe and desert land of the north, and the fertile oases and river valleys of the south. In the vast steppe of the north, nomadic pastoralism had always been the way of life. In the fertile land between the Syr Darya and Amy Darya rivers of the south, however, sedentary agricultural and commercial urban areas had developed. Although nomadic pastoralism and oasis agriculture contrasted, they were similar in their "ecological extremism"; the former represented "an extreme of dispersal, using every blade of grass," whereas the latter represented "an extreme of concentration, getting the best out of every drop of water."<sup>74</sup>

Nomadic pastoralism was the dominant way of life in Central Asia throughout most of its known history. Until the introduction of the steel plow and steam-driven tractor in the nineteenth century, the northern steppe zone with its severe winter, short growing season and relatively low average rainfall was not suitable

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<sup>72</sup>Cyril E.Black et.al., The Modernization of Inner Asia (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 64.

<sup>73</sup>S.A.M. Adshead, Central Asia in World History (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 15.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid. 20-1.

for agriculture.<sup>75</sup> Nomads lived in the marginal areas between agricultural settlements, deserts and mountains by herding sheep and horses and moving across the countryside in accordance with the seasonal availability of water and fresh grass for their livestock. In the pastoral economy of the north, there was no permanent settlement. The livestock provided food, clothing, shelter, fuel, and transportation to the nomads. The nomads were hunters, archers, horse breeders and horsemen, and as such they had mobility and developed military skills.<sup>76</sup>

Oasis agriculture, on the other hand, was the way of life in the southern areas of Central Asia where the available water was intensively applied to agriculture. Intensive irrigation would annually increase land yield in cereals twofold or even more. It would also supply textile fibers like cotton and high quality fruit, especially grapes and melons. Oasis agriculture was based on tapping water in three ways. First by diverting a river into irrigation channels along which villages and farms were collected, second, by sinking wells, and third by tapping subterranean and hence not evaporated run-off basins on hillsides, which formed the underground aqueducts known as kariz.<sup>77</sup>

To the south of the steppe and desert regions, there were also towns renowned for their crafts. Their beautiful and durable textiles were much in demand, especially during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Urban crafts had a long history of being highly specialized in Central Asian towns. Craftsmen had their own guild organizations with written statutes and traditions. These guilds "fed the phenomenon of the bazaars, which played a significant role in bringing together not only the urban and rural populace for exchange of goods and produce, but the nomadic peoples as well."<sup>78</sup>

There was a symbiotic relationship between the nomads of the north and the settled oases and towns

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<sup>75</sup>Thomas J.Barfield, The Nomadic Alternative (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1993), 136.

<sup>76</sup>Cyril E. Black et.al., The Modernization of Inner Asia, 87.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 21.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 121.

of the south in economic, commercial, and military terms.<sup>79</sup> In other words, between these two groups of people there were "important elements of complementarity"; the nomads needed grains, tea, tobacco, as well as weapons and tools, and the sedentary people needed meat, wool, transport animals, fur, leather and carpets.<sup>80</sup> In political terms, too, there was some degree of cooperation between the nomads and the agricultural settlers. Over the centuries various nomadic clans not only bartered and traded with, but also provided the changing dynastic leadership for the southern cities.<sup>81</sup> The sedentary people realized that the best defense against one set of nomads was another set of nomads. "If the nomad wanted to organize an empire out of his conquests, it was best done from an oasis with its granaries, money, literacy and unifying religion. The oasis needed government and protection: the steppe could provide both. The steppe lacked administration and education: the oasis could provide both."<sup>82</sup>

The first urban settlements in the south appeared around 1500 B.C., probably founded by peoples of Iranian origin. From the sixth to the fourth centuries B.C. the Persian Achaemenian empire controlled the region. The shahs of that dynasty never ruled the entire region and their political influence had only nominal significance. But the cultural impact of the Persians was strong. At the end of the fourth century B.C. Alexander the Great overthrew the Achaemenians, and Hellenism was introduced to Central Asia. Later, around the middle of the third century B.C., the eastern part of the region formed part of the Greco-Bactrian State while the western part was incorporated into the Parthian (White Hun) empire.<sup>83</sup>

In the third century A.D., Iran, now ruled by the Sassanid dynasty, reestablished its hegemony over southern Central Asia. It would remain one of the major political, cultural, and economic forces in the region for many centuries. About the fifth century, Central Asia began to experience the intrusion of various Turkic

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 88.

<sup>80</sup>S.A.M. Ashead, Central Asia in World History, 24.

<sup>81</sup>Cyril E. Black et.al., The Modernization of Inner Asia, 88.

<sup>82</sup>S.A.M. Ashead, Central Asia in World History, 25.

<sup>83</sup>Shirin Akiner, "Post-Soviet Central Asia: Past is Prologue," 7.

people who would dominate the entire area. The struggle between the cultivators of the soil and the nomads-- or between Iran and Turan--"became the subject matter of ballads and epics and left its imprint on the attitudes, values, and culture of the peoples of Central Asia."<sup>84</sup>

The first Arab conquest in the seventh century was a very important development in the history of Central Asia. As one observer put it, the peoples of Central Asia "can hardly be said to have entered history before the Arab conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries."<sup>85</sup> By the middle of the tenth century Islam had become the only religion in the region, replacing and eradicating all other dominant faiths like Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Nestorian Christianity. It became the dominant cultural and social force in the area. It molded diverse peoples into uniformity and was strong enough to be adopted by successive invaders like the Karakhanides, the Seljuk Turks, and later the Mongols. Until the end of the sixteenth century, Central Asia was one of the most prestigious areas of the entire Muslim cultural world. By the ninth century the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand had become important centers of intellectual, scientific and spiritual life. Some of the most distinguished Muslim scholars like Imam al-Bukhari, Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Al-Khwarizmi either originated in Central Asia or studied and taught there.<sup>86</sup>

Between the ninth and thirteenth centuries Islam expanded through important trade routes traveled by Muslim merchants. During this time, the peoples of Central Asia played a major role in the destinies of both Europe and East Asia by providing one of the basic routes of world trade, the Silk Road. The Silk Road was opened at about 100 B.C. and became legendary as one of history's most important overland routes of commerce as it connected Central Asia with China and India. For centuries, trade items like highly valued Chinese fabric, gold, silver, precious stones, and woolen and linen textiles were transported along this road. The commerce was conducted by camel and horse caravans organized by the Mongols at the eastern end and

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<sup>84</sup>Firuz Kazemzade, "Central Asia's Foreign Relations," in The Legacy of History in Russia and the New States of Eurasia, ed. Frederick Starr (New York: M.E.Sharpe, 1994), 196.

<sup>85</sup>Geoffrey Wheeler, The Peoples of Soviet Central Asia (Great Britain: The Bodley Head Ltd, 1966), 25.

<sup>86</sup>Michael Thomas, "Glasnost and Soviet Muslims," America 163, no. 8 (1990).

by Arabs and others in Central Asia and further west.<sup>87</sup> Through the Silk Road not only goods but also several important technological and ideological innovations were transmitted. For example, the horse, the Bactrian camel with two humps (as well as the art of riding it) and firing an arrow accurately from a bow were introduced to the world from Central Asia.<sup>88</sup> For centuries Central Asia was an important location where spectacular economic, cultural, and political achievements were attained. Agriculture was well-advanced; in fact Central Asia was one of the first areas where important developments like animal domestication and metal working were experienced.<sup>89</sup>

The Mongol invasion of Chengiz Khan in the early thirteenth century was another important turning point in the history of Central Asia. The Mongols were nomadic people who lived in southern Siberia and who were divided into numerous clans, constantly at war against one another. They were eventually united under Chengiz Khan in 1200, who launched attacks on China and India before invading Central Asia. The invasion of Central Asia was bloody and destructive. Bukhara, Samarkand, and Khodzhent were captured. Irrigation systems and cities were destroyed and populations decimated. In general the invasion was a major setback for the Muslim world in general. As one observer writes: "The splendid civilization that fell was never to recover, despite subsequent periods of prosperity and cultural growth. For Central Asia the Dark Ages began in the thirteenth century, and there has been no Renaissance."<sup>90</sup>

After the fall of the Muslim kingdoms of Central Asia and the Kazakh steppes, the Mongol invasion quickly spread to Russian lands. Thus, according to one observer, it became the "first major experience shared between Russians and Muslims," indicating that although Central Asia appeared "as a remote frontier seen

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<sup>87</sup>Cyril E. Black et.al., The Modernization of Inner Asia, 9.

<sup>88</sup>Geoffrey Moorhouse, On the Other Side: A Journey Through Soviet Central Asia (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1991), 42.

<sup>89</sup>Becker Seymour, Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva 1865-1924 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 3.

<sup>90</sup>Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia: The Case of Tadjikistan (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), 12.

from Moscow, [it was] indeed the key to the Volga and thence to the heart of Russia."<sup>91</sup>

After the death of Chengiz Khan, his empire was divided among his heirs and began to deteriorate. In the fourteenth century, one of Chengiz's heirs, Timur (Tamerlane), embellished his capital, Samarkand, built roads and canals, developed trade, and supported artisans, artists and scientists. During the reign of Timur's grandson, Ulug Bey, central authority was greatly weakened and the Mongol empire disintegrated gradually into ever smaller units.

The last major invasion of Central Asia before the Russians arrived was in the fifteenth century, when Uzbeks, one of the Turkic nomad tribes, swept through Central Asia and established their khanate. They claimed descent from Chengiz Khan and they attempted to unify Central Asia and extend their rule into Afghanistan and Iran.

In the early sixteenth century two developments further contributed to the gradual decline and stagnation of Central Asia that had started with the Mongol invasion. The first of these developments was the opening of the direct sea route from Western Europe to India and China by Vasco de Gama in 1498. Oceans became more important as convenient modes of transporting goods. As ocean commerce grew, Central Asia lost its historical trade monopoly. Many prosperous towns along the Silk Road declined in their importance; bazaars were deserted, wells were abandoned, and inhabitants left. Central Asia's strategic and commercial importance was greatly reduced. "The day would come when it would be cheaper for Istanbul merchants to buy Chinese goods from Venice then to import them via the Silk Road."<sup>92</sup>

The second development in the further decline of Central Asia was the rise of the Safavid dynasty in Iran in 1501. Its founder Shah Ismail Safavi was a Shi'ite who fought the battle of Mevr in 1510 against the Sunni-Uzbek leader Shaybani Khan in the eastern Iranian province of Khorasan. The Uzbeks were routed and Shaybani Khan was killed on the battlefield. As a result, a permanent political and ideological line was drawn

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<sup>91</sup>Amir Taheri, Crescent in a Red Sky: The Future of Islam in the Soviet Union (London: Hutchinson and Co. Publishers Ltd., 1989), 18.

<sup>92</sup>Firuz Kazemzadeh, "Central Asia's Foreign Relations," 197.



between Sunni Central Asia and Shi'i Iran. The division that had once been along linguistic and cultural lines, between the sedentary Persian speakers and the nomadic Turkic people, now became religious. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Central Asia was separated from the Muslim (mainly Sunni) Middle East. As a result, the old centers of art, science, literature, and religious learning became poorer.<sup>93</sup> The region also declined further in economic terms and entered a period of economic stagnation. In short, by the middle of the seventeenth century, "from being a maker of world history, Central Asia became its recipient."<sup>94</sup>

In the nineteenth century tsarist Russia's southern drive started to gain momentum. At the time the Khanates of Bukhara, Khiva, and Kokand were the chief independent principalities in the region. Although these native powers were independent, they had been quarreling among themselves for decades, and as a result of continuous wars they had been "fatally weakened."<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, they had lost their economic prosperity and political power long ago. They had no well-defined borders, lacked political coherence, modern armies and organizational skills. As such they were unprepared to repel Russian expansion and conquest.<sup>96</sup>

The final Russian conquest of Central Asia was not until the 1890s but Russia's interest in the region became explicit as early as 1826 when a Russian major general submitted a memorandum to Tsar Nicholas I urgently calling for the occupation of Khiva and the establishment of Russian imperial control over Central Asia. There were two reasons for his call: first to ensure the security of Russia's trade routes (as the volume and importance of commercial ties with Central Asia had increased); second to forestall the continuing advance of England, the greatest rival of Russia in Asia, which had already established its control over India, and was moving north to Afghanistan.<sup>97</sup>

After the 1820s, Russia's cotton textile industry grew dramatically and its demand for sources of raw

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid.

<sup>94</sup>S.A.M. Ashead, Central Asia in World History, 177.

<sup>95</sup>Amir Taheri, Crescent in a Red Sky: The Future of Islam in the Soviet Union, 63.

<sup>96</sup>Michael Rywkin, Moscow's Lost Empire (New York: M.E.Sharpe Inc, 1994), 35.

<sup>97</sup>Cyril E. Black et.al., The Modernization of Inner Asia, 41.

cotton increased. Central Asia was seen as a potential source of cheap cotton.<sup>98</sup> Later, when the American Civil War would cut off cotton supplies to Russia, Central Asia would become a critical source of cotton and encourage Russia's advance toward the south.

Between 1840 and 1860, Russian exports to Central Asia increased twelvefold and imports sixteenfold, and there was an economic imperative to expand trade even further. Russian merchants urged the government to guarantee the safety of trade routes in Central Asia and a powerful merchant lobby demanded the absorption of the region into the Russian empire. For Russian exporters, Central Asia was the easiest market for their goods; first their goods were inferior in quality to those of Europe, and second there was no competition in Central Asian markets.<sup>99</sup>

The Russian military conquest started in 1865 with the capture of Chimkent and Tashkent. In 1866 Khodzhent was taken. The Russian province of Turkestan was formed in 1867. In 1868 Samarkand fell under Russian control and the Emirate of Bukhara became a Russian protectorate, followed by Khiva one year later. In 1876 the Khanate of Kokand was annexed, abolished and incorporated into Russian Turkestan together with Fergana Province. With the exception of the two protectorates of Khiva and Bukhara, the annexed region of Central Asia was placed under the military administration of the Governate General of Turkestan.<sup>100</sup> The Governate General in turn was divided into three provinces: Fergana, Samarkand, and Syr-Darya. In these new Russian provinces the social organization and the administrative system of the natives were not substantially changed. Although the higher administrators were basically Russian, the lower administrators were natives, elected as before by the local population. In the courts the same system was applied. Russian courts interfered only when natives were not involved or very serious criminal cases were being considered. Most civil suits, especially those concerning family and commerce among the natives, were settled by Muslim

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<sup>98</sup>Violet Conolly, Beyond the Urals: Economic Development in Soviet Asia (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 25.

<sup>99</sup>Ahmed Rashid, The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 51-2.

<sup>100</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, Muslims of the Soviet Empire, 10.

judges, also elected by the natives.<sup>101</sup>

Therefore, in general terms, the tsarist colonial administration of Turkestan did not attempt to change the traditional social structure and or assimilate the local people. From the very beginning, Russia's policy toward Central Asians was one of noninterference in cultural and religious life. The tsarist regime wanted to weaken Islam in the region, but during most of its rule, it attempted to do this "by ignoring rather than attacking" it.<sup>102</sup> The traditional Islamic schools were not bothered and the new method schools of the Jadids were tolerated although not supported; they were suspected.<sup>103</sup> The Russian government recognized the Islamic religion as the faith of the Central Asians at the time of their conquest, and General Kaufman, the first Governor General of Turkestan, even prohibited Orthodox missionaries from entering the Central Asian provinces during his administration.<sup>104</sup>

This cautious approach to Islam was in general consistent with what had been Moscow's "traditional patterns of pragmatic flexibility" in dealing with its Muslim subjects since the time of the conquest of Kazan in the sixteenth century.<sup>105</sup> When Russian rule was secure and the new subjects loyal, the regime did not attack the religious status quo and exercised considerable tolerance toward Islam. The privileges of the Muslim upper class were retained, the regime working together with loyal Islamic elites who were coopted into the nobility of the empire. Thus, the Muslim clergy continued to enjoy an important spiritual and political position in the eyes of the vast majority of Muslims. They applied the Sharia, taught at maktabas and madrasas, officiated at circumcision, marriage, and burial ceremonies. The clergy also had considerable economic power

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<sup>101</sup>Serge A. Zenkovsky, Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 75.

<sup>102</sup>William Fierman, "Introduction," in Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation, ed. William Fierman (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc), 13.

<sup>103</sup>The Jadids and the new method schools will be described below in detail.

<sup>104</sup>Serge A. Zenkovsky, Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia, 75.

<sup>105</sup>Andreas Kappeler, "Tzarist Policy toward the Muslims of the Russian Empire," in Muslim Communities Reemerge, ed. Edward Allworth (Durham: Duke University Press), 147.

basically due to its control over waqf (endowment) land and buildings.<sup>106</sup> The Islamic theological schools in Turkestan were totally financed by local donations. At the beginning of the twentieth century they had more than 17,000 students all of whom received stipends for their studies which could last as long as twenty years. An estimated 9,000 Islamic holy places, including the tombs of Muslim saints and mythical places of worship associated with the legendary kings and princes of the Iranian and Turkic peoples, were maintained.<sup>107</sup>

Although the Russian government did not interfere in the local ways and tradition in everyday life, it kept the Muslim areas under strict military control and economic dependence. Through a network of railways, economic ties were strengthened. The subsistence based agricultural economy was disturbed by the introduction of large-scale cotton growing. Pastoral nomadism was discouraged. Cotton production was increased heavily; on the eve of the First World War, 87 percent of Russia's total cotton production came from Central Asia.<sup>108</sup>

### **1. The Jadid Movement**

The Russian conquest of Central Asia in the nineteenth century had come as a shock to believers because it demonstrated the vulnerability of the region to an "infidel" power. Russian economic and technological superiority introduced changes which started to fragment the Islamic community.<sup>109</sup> A Tatar writer, philosopher, and political leader, Ayaz Ishaki started a debate by asking "How could a Tatar ox-cart compete with the Russian locomotive?" In other words, the Muslim Turkic citizens of the Russian empire were being threatened by their conquerors in a new technological world in which they could not survive.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup>The waqf holdings will be explained below.

<sup>107</sup> Amir Taheri, Crescent in a Red Sky, 70.

<sup>108</sup> Ahmed Rashid, The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism, 52.

<sup>109</sup> James Critchlow, Nationalism in Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic's Road to Sovereignty (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 169.

<sup>110</sup> Alexandre Bennigsen, Self-Determination in Soviet Central Asia: Problems and Prospects (Ankara: METU Asian-African Research Group, 1986), 1.

The economic backwardness of Russia's Muslims was further intensified by social, intellectual, and political challenges from the West, which necessitated "urgent response that included a willingness to accept the need for an all-embracing reform effort."<sup>111</sup> Islamic societies had to define their political and economic interests against Western competition.

The discourse, which ensued, generally known as Jadidism, was basically a Muslim reformist movement initiated at the turn of the twentieth century. Its main object was to bring Islamic culture into line with modern life. It was argued that Islam's decline and defeat were due to its own failure to keep up with a changing world. Islam had to reform itself and respond to external--basically Western--influences. In the process, Islamic experience need not be rejected as irrelevant. However, "the painful consequences of not sharing in the West's engagement with technicalism and its many attributes and advantages" must also be seriously considered.<sup>112</sup> In other words, rejecting all that the West had to offer was "foolish at best and suicidal at worst."<sup>113</sup>

It is important to note that the Jadids were sincere and practicing Muslims who were loyal to their Islamic culture, identity and heritage. None of them believed that secularism would solve Islam's problems. Almost all of them were products of Qur'anic schools and Islamic theological centers. However, many also had direct access to European political thought and they had the command of one or more Western languages. They were influenced by the development of parliamentary governments in Western Europe and they supported constitutionalism. Influenced by Western political thought, they took a stand against the conservative, traditional mullahs. According to the Jadids, "the root of all ... problems in Muslim societies had to be found in tyrannic government supported by clerical obscurantism."<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup>Edward J.Lazzerini, "Beyond Renewal: The Jadid Response to Pressure for Change in the Modern Age," in Central Asia: Expressions of Identity and Change, 159.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., 161.

<sup>113</sup>Amir Taheri, Crescent in A Red Sky, 73.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., 73.

The most influential and articulate advocate of Jadidism was the Crimean Tatar Ismail Bey Gasprinskii (1851-1914). He emphasized that all Muslims of the Russian empire shared low levels of literacy and underdevelopment that prevented national awakening. He decided to overcome these difficulties by two cultural means; first by spreading education, second by intensifying communication. The first of these would be realized in the "new method" (usul-i jadid) schools, which would seek to prepare the next generation of Muslims to operate in a more modern world. They would introduce secular subjects such as natural sciences, languages, and mathematics to the exclusively religious base of education. Although the main areas where these schools were established were the Volga region, Crimea, and Azerbaijan, they also existed in Turkestan where there were one hundred Jadid schools by 1915.<sup>115</sup>

The second aim, intensifying communication, would be realized basically by a common Turkic language that was introduced as the language of instruction in about 5,000 new method schools opened throughout the Turkic-speaking areas of the Russian empire. Gasprinskii's newspaper Tercuman (Interpreter) became the medium as well as the spokesman for the Jadid movement.<sup>116</sup>

When the 1917 revolution came to Central Asia, the Jadids were confronted with the dilemma of choosing between the supporters of the new regime, with an atheistic ideology, and the conservative Muslim leaders who had joined the Basmachi uprising.<sup>117</sup> They chose to make common cause with the revolution because they believed that in this way in the long-run they could best advance their own nationalistic purposes. Furthermore, the Basmachis represented many of the reactionary elements they opposed. Therefore, although the atheistic nature of the new regime was not acceptable to them, they chose to collaborate with the Bolsheviks.

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<sup>115</sup>Geoffrey Wheeler, Racial Problems in Soviet Muslim Asia (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 10.

<sup>116</sup>Kemal H.Karpat, "The Turkic Nationalities: Turkish Soviet and Turkish Chinese Relations," in Soviet Asian Ethnic Frontiers, eds. William O.McLagg, Jr. and Brian D.Silver (New York: Pergamon Press, 1979), 121.

<sup>117</sup>The uprising refers to the popular anticommunist struggle started by the Muslim people of Central Asia in 1918. Detailed information about the Basmachis will be given below.

In a very short time, however, it became clear that the Soviet authorities condemned the idea of reform according to Pan-Turkish ideas and/or within Islam. They insisted that the widespread social and cultural reforms needed could be associated only with the triumph of the revolution.<sup>118</sup> The Jadids, on the other hand, repudiated the theory of class struggle and the dictatorship of the proletariat. As they believed in Turkic unity, this subject was given utmost importance in their schools. The students were indoctrinated not in Marxist theories but in the spirit of Turkic nationalism. Under the new revolutionary government in Tashkent, the Commissar of Education was not even an Uzbek, but an Ottoman Turkish artillery official and former prisoner of war, Effendiev.<sup>119</sup> In general, the Jadids looked increasingly to the Young Turks--the reformist, Western-educated elites of the Ottoman Empire at the turn of the century--rather than to the Russian revolutionaries, for inspiration and a new societal model.<sup>120</sup>

The Jadids, however, were not successful in attracting the Muslim masses. First of all, the traditional Islamic leaders, who were suspicious of their ideas and actions, "provided an effective barrier through which very few new ideas could infiltrate."<sup>121</sup> The new method schools were seen as threats to the religious and social status-quo, despite the considerable religious instruction in them. It was feared that they could turn their students into "infidels" and permanently harm Islam by their new ideas.<sup>122</sup> Second, although the Jadids were aware of the necessity of reforming Islam and adjusting Muslim societies to a new world, their specific solutions did not appeal to many Muslims. As Amir Taheri puts it:

Few [of the Muslim people] were prepared to accept Russian domination as a necessary evil. As in the case of Afghanistan in the early 1980s, most of Russia's Muslims were not prepared to gladly submit to foreign rule in exchange for becoming "civilized." Even fewer could persuade

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<sup>118</sup>Geoffrey Wheeler, The Peoples of Soviet Central Asia, 97.

<sup>119</sup>Serge A. Zenkovsky, Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia, 245.

<sup>120</sup>Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia: The Case of Tadzhikistan, 1.

<sup>121</sup>Amir Taheri, Crescent in a Red Sky, 74.

<sup>122</sup>Edward A.Allworth, The Modern Uzbeks (California: Hoover Institution Press, 1990), 141-3.

themselves that Russia—and beyond it Europe—were worthy models to emulate. Nineteenth-century Europe with its many wars and revolutions seemed more like a warning than a model, despite its undoubted material progress and military strength.<sup>123</sup>

After the revolution, especially during the 1920s and early 1930s, Moscow had relied on some communist party leaders who had their roots in the jadidist movement. During the purges in late 1930s, however, most of these leaders were imprisoned and killed, and a new generation of leaders who were distinctly different from their predecessors emerged.<sup>124</sup> Thus the Jadid movement lost its impetus and influence in Central Asia and disappeared from public agenda in a short period of time.

## **2. The October 1917 Revolution in Central Asia and the Islamic Policy of the New Regime**

Immediately after the October 1917 revolution two fundamental principles of Soviet state policy regarding religion in general were established: First, Soviet people would be completely free to profess whatever religion they pleased or to profess no religion at all, that is to be atheists. Within this context, on 20 November 1917 the Russian Bolshevik government, addressed an appeal specifically to Muslims, signed by Lenin and Stalin. In the appeal, all Muslim peoples of Russia "whose mosques and prayer houses were trodden underfoot by the Tsars and oppressors of Russia" were entitled to order their national life "freely and without hindrance." Their beliefs, customs, and national cultural institutions were declared "free and inviolate" and the Muslims of Russia were called upon to support the Bolshevik revolution.<sup>125</sup>

The second principle was the complete separation of religion from state. The equality of all religions before the law was recognized. The celebration of every form of religious custom and ceremony, providing

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<sup>123</sup> Amir Taheri, Crescent in a Red Sky, 81.

<sup>124</sup> Donald S. Carlisle, "Modernization, Generations and the Uzbek Soviet Intelligentsia," in The Dynamics of Soviet Politics, eds. Paul Cocks, Robert V. Daniels, and Nancy Whitter Heer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 248.

<sup>125</sup> Bohdan Nahaylo and Victor Swobada, Soviet Disunion: A History of the Nationalities Problem in the USSR (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 32, quoted from Dekrety Sovetskoi Vlasti I (Moscow: 1957): 113-4.



that it did not disturb public peace or infringe upon the rights of other citizens of the Soviet republic, was allowed. Local government agencies were specifically forbidden to limit the freedom of conscience of any citizen.<sup>126</sup> In addition to these measures, complete secularization of the state was attempted by the prohibition of the observance of religious customs and ceremonies of any kind at any state or public place. Religious oath in public offices was abolished and the keeping of registers of births, marriages and death was transferred to civil authorities. Civil duties could not be neglected on religious grounds. Furthermore, all existing properties of religious institutions were nationalized and their right to own property was denied.<sup>127</sup>

These measures aimed first at reducing the importance of all religions, and second at eliminating them completely from Soviet society. The policy of the Soviet regime was antireligious and was designed to facilitate the "dying out of religion."<sup>128</sup> Until its very end, the regime remained hostile to all religious beliefs and worship. Intense campaigns conducted against all major religions sharply reduced the number of legally ordained and organized clergymen and houses of worship. Despite the openly stated policies of religious freedom, religion never received official recognition in the definition of nationality, unlike for example common history, language and country.<sup>129</sup> As all religious establishments were closely supervised and licensed by the ruling Communist Party, religious practice and education were forced into the confines of the immediate family.

Although the Bolsheviks were against all religions, they regarded Islam as particularly objectionable. Their initial reaction to and ideas about Islam remained almost the same throughout the entire Soviet period until the dissolution of the Union in 1991. In this section Moscow's general attitude toward Islam is portrayed and analyzed. Before 1917 Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders ignored Islamic issues, despite the Russian empire's long and strategically important association with the Muslims of Central Asia and the Caucasus.

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<sup>126</sup>Alexander G. Park, Bolshevism in Turkestan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), 210.

<sup>127</sup>Ibid., 211.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid., 207.

<sup>129</sup>Muriel Atkin, "The Survival of Islam in Soviet Tajikistan," Middle East Journal 43, no. 4 (1989):605.

Marxist ideology offered no prescription for dealing with the Muslim world. Marx himself knew little about Islam and was not interested in understanding it. He did not visit any Islamic country until almost the end of his life when he spent some time in Algeria. His letters from this journey reveal a "totally European attitude toward Muslim culture and confirm, even at the end of his life, that Marx lived entirely within a European cultural context."<sup>130</sup>

After 1917, however, the Bolshevik leaders realized that they had to formulate an Islamic strategy to secure Soviet power in the Muslim territories of the empire. Such a strategy "was not a matter of choice" for the Bolsheviks: they had to have an Islamic strategy for two urgent reasons.<sup>131</sup> First, there was a sizable Muslim population which had to be won over to support the regime, and second, Muslims beyond the borders of the Soviet Union to the south and east could potentially represent a threat. Therefore the loyalty of the country's own Muslims had to be ensured and they had to be kept from developing a sense of common purpose with Muslims beyond the border.

Although as a religion Islam came under the general attack directed against all supernatural beliefs, it was regarded as potentially more dangerous than others.<sup>132</sup> According to some scholars, Islam had its own distinctive moral, social, educational, and judicial systems, all of which "erected psychological barriers" between Muslims and non-Muslims.<sup>133</sup> As such, it seemed to be a more serious rival to the totalitarian ideology of the regime than most of the other religions in the country.<sup>134</sup> Islam offered not only a set of spiritual beliefs but also a set of rules by which to govern society as well as every aspect of individual and social life. Within this context, it did not recognize the separation of the mosque and the state. Further, Islam

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<sup>130</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen et.al. Soviet Strategy and Islam (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 5.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid., ix.

<sup>132</sup>Geoffrey Wheeler, Racial Problems in Soviet Muslim Asia.

<sup>133</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State, 45.

<sup>134</sup>Alexei V.Malashenko, "Religious and Political Change in Soviet Moslem Regions," in State, Religion, and Society in Central Asia: A Post-Soviet Critique, ed. Vitaly Naumkin (Reading, New York: Ithaca Press, 1993), 166.

offered its believers a strong sense of belonging to the umma which transcended all ethnic, regional, national and local affinities, as well as class barriers. In Islam, classes did not exist in economic and social terms, and were not considered to be in conflict; even if there were conflicts, they could be harmonized through religious structures.<sup>135</sup> Another critical issue was the specifically articulated respect of Islam for private property, the very cornerstone that the Bolsheviks wanted to abolish.

The Soviets treated Islam as an "archaic residue of an outmoded society."<sup>136</sup> The backwardness of Central Asia was seen in large part as the product of its religiously based traditional culture.<sup>137</sup> Islam belonged to the past; not even to the capitalist stage of evolution, but to the feudal era, so it had no place in a society of "advanced socialism."<sup>138</sup> Of all religions, Islam was accused of being the most conservative (even reactionary) and least socially advanced because it sanctified the authority of the elders, humiliated women and inculcated submission, fanaticism, intolerance, and xenophobia. It set "believers" against "infidels" and was an obstacle to the friendship between the different peoples of the Soviet Union, internationalism, and Soviet patriotism. Certain Islamic rites like circumcision and fasting during Ramadan were criticized as primitive, barbarian, and unhealthy.<sup>139</sup> Islamic art and literature were ridiculed as incapable of evolution or progress.<sup>140</sup>

And yet there was one more challenge for the Bolsheviks: Islam could operate without a formally structured priesthood. Anyone who could read Qur'an and recite prayers could also perform the rites. As such, Islam was more flexible and more difficult to control than many other religions. The closing of a mosque or a madrasa did not necessarily have the same effect on the Muslim people as the destruction of a church or the

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<sup>135</sup>Taheri, Crescent in a Red Sky, 72.

<sup>136</sup>Ira M.Lapidus, A History of Islamic Societies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 815.

<sup>137</sup>Rajan Menon and Daniel N.Nelson, Limits to Soviet Power (Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1989), 82.

<sup>138</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State, 47.

<sup>139</sup>Marie Broxup, "Political Trends in Soviet Islam After the Afghanistan War," in Muslim Communities Reemerge, 305.

<sup>140</sup>Marie Broxup, "Comrade Muslims," Wilson Quarterly, 16, no. 3 (1992): 45.

elimination of formal religious instruction had for orthodox Christians, for example.<sup>141</sup> As Islam did not have a formal hierarchy, "it could assume an ethereal existence: it could be anywhere and yet nowhere at the same time."<sup>142</sup>

Such were the basic conflicts between the new regime and Islam. This led to severe friction between the natives of the region and the authorities both initially and throughout the Soviet period. The first open conflict was the Basmachi uprising.

### **3. The Basmachi Uprising**

In the early days of the Bolshevik revolution, many native leaders in Central Asia looked favorably upon it. The "April Theses" of Lenin adopted by the Bolsheviks in the spring of 1917 had promised the right of secession and political determination to all peoples of tsarist Russia. This promise did much "to rally the support of the Muslim nationalists and liberals--like the Jadids--to the Bolshevik cause, or at least to ensure their initial neutrality."<sup>143</sup> The Provisional Government of 1917, established after the February revolution, had been unresponsive to the Central Asian demands for autonomy, and initial response to the Bolsheviks was not negative.<sup>144</sup> At the time of the October 1917 revolution, there had been few native communists in Central Asia and among the Central Asian Muslims no serious revolutionary movement existed.<sup>145</sup> However, the Soviet power was regarded as "the authority of bearers of the idea of equality for all peoples--an administration

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<sup>141</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen, "Several Nations or One People? Ethnic Consciousness Among Soviet Central Asian Muslims," 54.

<sup>142</sup>Amir Taheri, Crescent in a Red Sky, 128.

<sup>143</sup>Marie Bennigsen Broxup, "Comrade Muslims," Wilson Quarterly 16, n. 3, (1992): 40.

<sup>144</sup>David C.Montgomery, "The Uzbeks in Two States: Soviet and Afghan Policies Toward Ethnic Minority," in Soviet Asian Ethnic Frontiers, eds. William O.McCagg, Jr. and Brian D.Silver (New York: Pergaman Press, 1979).

<sup>145</sup>James Critchlow, Nationalism in Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic's Road to Sovereignty.

which would establish conditions propitious for the rebirth of the East and of Islam."<sup>146</sup> In this sense, many Muslim leaders were initially ready to support the Bolsheviks.

In Tashkent, the administrative center of Turkestan, Russian soldiers and workers overthrew the Provisional Government and established Soviet rule on 31 October 1917, six days after the Bolsheviks had seized power in Petrograd. In spite of what Lenin had said previously, it soon became clear that the Soviets were against territorial self-rule. The local soviet in Tashkent was unresponsive to native demands for participation in the government.<sup>147</sup> All fifteen members of the ruling Council of People's Commissars of the Tashkent Soviet were Europeans. In November 1917, a Muslim congress was held in Tashkent and it made a proposal to the Soviet government that the indigenous population would be given half of the seats in the local political bodies. The proposal was "modest enough" considering the fact that the indigenous Muslim population of Turkestan comprised over 90 percent of the total. However, the proposal was rejected outright.<sup>148</sup> The same month the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars declared that it was not possible to admit the Muslim population to the higher agencies of the territorial revolutionary government, since their attitude toward the new government was uncertain and they did not have any proletarian organization.<sup>149</sup>

Shortly after the rejection of the proposal, Central Asian leaders called a congress in Kokand in November 1917 and declared the Government of Autonomous Turkestan. In January 1918 Mustafa Chokay was elected its president. Chokay was a moderate Pan-Turk and he favored autonomy rather than secession. His main goal was to unite Turkestan.

Thus by the end of 1917 a system of "dual authority" had come into existence in Turkestan. The

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<sup>146</sup>Serge A. Zenkovsky, Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia, 232.

<sup>147</sup>Richard Pipes, The Formation of the Soviet Union (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 91.

<sup>148</sup>Bohdan Nahaylo and Victor Swobada, Soviet Disunion: A History of the Nationalities Problem in the USSR, 37.

<sup>149</sup>Marie Broxup, "Comrade Muslims," 40.

authority of the Tashkent Soviet extended over a number of cities including Kokand's new quarter and its fortress, while the jurisdiction of the Government of Autonomous Turkestan was confined to Kokand's native old city and the Fergana Valley. The latter government was weaker, having no arms or funds.<sup>150</sup> Seeking conciliation, it sought to cooperate with Lenin and the Bolsheviks in Petrograd. In January 1918, it informed the Tashkent Soviet that it was forming a parliament in which one-third of the seats would be reserved for Muslims. The Russian dominated Tashkent Soviet fearful of losing control, became alarmed. An army was sent to Kokand and the Muslim government quickly collapsed. Its head, Chokay, fled and ended up in Paris. Many of the residents of Kokand were massacred and the city was razed. The destruction of the Kokand government started the Basmachi uprising.

The Basmachi uprising was the popular anticommunist guerrilla movement organized by the local Muslims against the Bolsheviks in Turkestan beginning in 1918. The term "Basmachi" derives from the Uzbek word **basmak**, meaning to attack, raid, oppress, or tread on. In Turkestan the name Basmachi was originally applied to robbers, bandits, and highwaymen who attacked caravans and settlements. After 1917, the term was used by the Russians to designate the members of the uprising.<sup>151</sup> However, the rebels called themselves the "Bekler," or "Freemen". In Turkestan the uprising is even today known as the "Beklar Hareketi" (the Freemen's Movement).<sup>152</sup>

The uprising was basically a struggle for independence from the Russian/Soviet domination that threatened the traditional way of life in Central Asia. Expelling the Russian settlers (both urban and rural), was one of the basic purposes of the uprising.<sup>153</sup> The Basmachi struggle, however, was also conducted in reaction to the atheistic element of the regime, with the aim of achieving religious as well as political independence.

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<sup>150</sup>Bohdan Nahaylo and Victor Swobada, Soviet Disunion: A History of the Nationalities Problem in the USSR,38.

<sup>151</sup>Richard Lorenz, "Economic Bases of the Basmachi Movement," in Muslim Communities Reemerge, 299.

<sup>152</sup>Alexander G. Park, Bolshevism in Turkestan, 34.

<sup>153</sup>Chantal Lemerrier-Quellejey, "Muslim National Minorities in Revolution and Civil War," in Soviet Nationalities in Strategic Perspective, ed. S.Enders Wimbush (New York: St. Martin's Press), 52.

The Tashkent government had abolished the religious courts and other Muslim communal institutions, seized Muslim property and even permitted the Red Guard detachments to desegregate mosques and other holy places. The Basmachi leaders invited the people to armed resistance in defense of Islam against the "infidel Bolsheviks."<sup>154</sup>

The revolt also had economic reasons. Starting from the end of the nineteenth century, the raging "cotton fever" introduced to the Fergana Valley by the Russians had resulted in the emergence of a mass of landless and unemployed peasants. The revolutions in 1917 did not ameliorate the misery of the people. The same year a severe draught cut off the grain imports. Whatever grain could be got was distributed exclusively to the Russians, heightening resentment. The Tashkent administration, draining the available resources through frequent confiscations and requisitions, made the situation even worse.<sup>155</sup> All these economic developments and policies awoke great anger among the native population of Central Asia, contributing to the Basmachi uprising.

The uprising, beginning in the Fergana Valley immediately after the destruction of the Muslim Kokand government in February 1918, was started by the traditional authorities (the feudal aristocracy, tribal and religious leaders, landowners and merchants), but was strongly supported by the population at large, including the peasants, and even some of the Jadids.<sup>156</sup> The uprising grew quickly and in a few years time was extended to Bukhara and northern Turkmenistan. Although for a while it actively and effectively opposed the Soviet regime, it started to lose its momentum in a relatively short time and was finally defeated.

One of the basic reasons for the defeat of the Basmachis was the lack of unity among its leaders as well as its followers. Having grown spontaneously, the revolt was a "typical peasant and tribal guerrilla force,

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<sup>154</sup>Alexander G. Park, Bolshevism in Turkestan, 218.

<sup>155</sup>Richard Lorenz, "Economic Bases of the Basmachi Movement in the Farghana Valley," in Muslim Communities Reemerge, ed. Edward Allworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 281.

<sup>156</sup>Martha Brill Olcott, "The Basmachi or Freeman's Revolt in Turkestan 1918-1924," Soviet Studies 33, no. 3 (1981): 352.

effective, elusive but anarchic."<sup>157</sup> Its leaders had come from very different backgrounds: there were tribal chieftains (like the Turkmen Junayd Khan and Uzbek Ibrahim Beg), village aksakals ("Elders"), authentic former highway robbers, religious leaders, and sheiks of Sufi brotherhoods.<sup>158</sup> These individual leaders were involved in internal struggles, disagreements, jealousies and simple reluctance to cooperate.<sup>159</sup> Each Basmachi detachment operated independently. For example, the Khivan Basmachis were led by Junayd Khan, those of the Samarkand district by Akhil Beg and Karakul Beg. The district around Khodzhent was ruled by a chieftain named Hamdan. The Fergana Basmachis quarreled with each other so bitterly that in some cases some leaders resorted to assassination and even collaboration with the Soviets to destroy their opponents.<sup>160</sup>

Still another source of Basmachi weakness was the rivalry among units of different ethnic origin. Almost all of the ethnic groups in the area were present in the movement: Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Turkmen, and Karakalpak. Especially bitter was the hostility between the Kyrgyz and the Uzbeks, and between the Turkmen and the Uzbeks.<sup>161</sup>

In November 1921, with the arrival of Enver Pasha in Bukhara, the uprising temporarily attained some unity. Enver Pasha, a former Minister of War in Turkey until 1918, was one of the leaders of the Young Turk movement. He originally came to Russia to aid the Bolsheviks in taking control of Turkestan. Upon reaching Central Asia, however, he changed sides and joined the Basmachis, probably because his earlier Pan-Turkic dreams were reawakened.<sup>162</sup> Enver Pasha proclaimed himself the Commander-in-Chief of the insurgent

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<sup>157</sup>Chantal Lemerrier-Quelquejay, "Muslim National Minorities in Revolution and Civil War," in Soviet Nationalities in Strategic Perspective, ed. S. Enders Wimbush (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 52.

<sup>158</sup>Ibid.

<sup>159</sup>Alexander G. Park, Bolshevism in Turkestan, 51.

<sup>160</sup>Richard Pipes, "The Establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics," in The Soviet Nationality Reader: The Disintegration in Context, ed. Rachel Denber (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 49.

<sup>161</sup>Ibid., 50.

<sup>162</sup>Sergei P. Poliakov, Everyday Islam: Religion and Tradition in Rural Central Asia (New York: M.E.Sharpe, 1992), 100.



Basmachi army and attempted to unify the rebellion. However, in a short time his efforts failed as some tribal leaders like Ibrahim Beg refused to recognize his authority. In 1922 he was killed by the Red Army cavalry.

Another factor that contributed to the defeat of the Basmachis were the economic and religious concessions given by the Soviet authorities. The Soviet leadership understood that support of the native population was necessary for the success of the new regime. A series of far-reaching reforms were introduced in 1922. First, there were religious concessions to clergy. The most unpopular legislation was abrogated: endowment property (waqf) which had been confiscated for the benefit of the new regime was restored to its trustees. Mosques which had been seized by the state were returned to their congregations.<sup>163</sup> Religious courts were brought back and the old-style religious schools, maktabs and madrasas, were reopened.<sup>164</sup>

The liberal approach of the New Economic Policy introduced in 1921, which permitted the return of private trade and ended the forcible requisition of food and cotton, also undermined the Basmachis. Tax-in-kind, which replaced requisitions, relieved the burden on the peasants considerably and thereby removed a principal source of rural dissatisfaction and unrest. Furthermore promises of desperately-wanted land and water reforms were made. In time, the Soviet regime increased its support among the peasant populations of Central Asia who were tired of fighting and wanted to work.<sup>165</sup> By the end of 1923 "the backbone of the movement was broken."<sup>166</sup>

Although the Basmachis were defeated after a long and difficult struggle, they remained a potential threat for the regime throughout most of the 1930s. Local resistance continued until 1926 and was revived again during the collectivization campaign in 1929-1932.<sup>167</sup> In certain areas the rebels continued to fight until

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<sup>163</sup>Richard Pipes, "The Establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics," in The Soviet Nationality Reader: The Disintegration in Context, ed Rachel Denber (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 154.

<sup>164</sup>Alexandre G. Park, Bolshevism in Turkestan, 54.

<sup>165</sup>Michael Rywkin, Russia in Central Asia (New York: Collier Books, 1963), 60.

<sup>166</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemerrier-Quellejey, Islam in the Soviet Union (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1967), 85.

<sup>167</sup>Martha Brill Olcott, "The Basmachi or Freeman's Revolt in Turkestan 1918-1924," 362.

the mid-1930s and they would be totally suppressed only in 1941. According to one scholar, however, the Basmachis left an important legacy behind: it was a shared act of resistance of the "ummah" with the aim of defeating a common infidel enemy. It brought people throughout Turkestan into contact with each other and helped develop a common consciousness. Despite the unrelenting attacks of the Soviet authorities on the Basmachis in official history and literary accounts of the Civil War period, the Basmachis continued to hold a high place in folk history and its leaders are today seen as national heroes rather than "brigands."<sup>168</sup> For example Enver Pasha's grave in southern Tajikistan has been declared holy and non-Muslims are not allowed to approach it.<sup>169</sup> In the 1980s, the Afghan guerrillas fighting against the Soviet invasion would be referred as the "Basmachis of the 1980s."

#### **4. Muslim National Communism**

It was obvious to Moscow in the early 1920s that if the Muslims could unify in one state, they would pose a serious challenge to Russia's claim to leadership of the Soviet Union. Therefore prevention of Muslim unity was seen as essential. Within this context, not only were the Jadids and the Basmachis, but Muslim national communists, as well, were suppressed.

Muslim national communism was an attempt of Muslim nationalists in the early 1920s to combine and synthesize Islam, nationalism, and Marxism. The Muslim national communists emphasized the adaptability of socialism to their own economic, historical, and social conditions, and the possibility of giving communism a "national" face. In this context, socialist ideas appeared to be immediately relevant in the fight for national liberation. More specifically, socialism was seen as a means of getting rid of the Russians and ending their "imperial" domination. There was, in the minds of the Muslim national communists, "a clear demarcation between Muslims and Russians."<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>168</sup>Ibid., 369.

<sup>169</sup>Sergei P. Poliakov, Everyday Islam: Religion and Tradition in Rural Central Asia, 100.

<sup>170</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen and S.Enders Wimbush, Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union

Muslim national communist ideology had two basic pillars. The first was the notion of "proletarian nations," the second was the understanding that socialism had failed to solve the nationality problem. According to the notion of proletarian nations, the world was divided into oppressor nations and oppressed nations. The focus of the Marxist doctrine of imperialism, however, was entirely shifted away from the economically exploited proletariat to the oppressed nation. According to Muslim national communists, the economic conflict between the rich (oppressor) nations and the poor (oppressed) nations should have priority over the economic conflict between the proletariat and the capitalists. Although the internal class struggle within the oppressed nations would not have to be foregone entirely, it had to be delayed indefinitely. So, the Muslim national communists made a clear preference for national over class solidarity basically because no proletariat in the Marxist sense existed in Muslim societies.

Muslim national communists also rejected the idea that with the ascendancy of socialism, the basis for oppression would be removed. According to them, the Russian revolution did not change "the naturally aggressive nature of the imperialist" and the new socialist regime was unsuccessful in either decreasing Russian oppression or diminishing nationalist sentiments.<sup>171</sup> Furthermore, the Muslim national communists did not want to dilute their national identity, but to enhance it.

Muslim national communists approached socialism from a pragmatic point of view, building their ideas on a "realistic assessment of what they could accomplish within the changing political environment of the Russian empire and of what they could attain if that empire should cease to exist."<sup>172</sup> For them, socialism was a "plan for organization and action and not a comprehensive body of doctrine promising to restructure their national society along proletarian internationalist lines."<sup>173</sup> Muslim national communists ignored most of the formulas of orthodox Marxism like the class struggle, the supremacy of the industrial proletariat, and

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(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 22.

<sup>171</sup>Ibid., 45.

<sup>172</sup>Ibid., 3.

<sup>173</sup>Ibid., 13.

internationalism. Marxism was interpreted and adopted in the light of specific national conditions.

The foremost advocate of Muslim national communism was Volga Tatar Mir Said Sultan Galiev. Galiev cherished the idea of the unification of Turkestan with its overwhelming Muslim and Turkic population. He believed that the only guarantee against great Russian chauvinism was the creation of a separate Muslim communist party and an independent Muslim Red Army. Both the party and the army would be sensitive to local demands and be nationalist and populist.

Starting in 1923 "Sultangalievism" was treated by Stalin as treason and was condemned. Galiev himself was arrested and was accused by Stalin of collaboration with the Basmachis and other nationalists fighting against the Soviet regime. He was expelled from the Communist Party and in 1928 was sent to the Solovki camps. Although his ultimate faith is unknown, his disappearance drastically reduced the strength of the Muslim national communist movement.

#### **5. National Delimitation of 1924-1925 (Natsional'noe Razmezhevanie)**

In the early 1920s the Soviet leaders believed that Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism were potentially destructive to the formation of a socialist state in Central Asia. Pan-Islamism claimed universality and called for the union of all believers, transcending race, nationality, and class. Pan-Turkism, the union of all Turks, called for a "a Pan-Turkic empire stretching from the Urals to Afghanistan and from Istanbul to Sinkiang." Both Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism were dangerous to Bolshevik domination of Central Asia.<sup>174</sup> Moscow believed that a system of divide and rule, which would establish a uniform territorial-administrative structure in Central Asia and would provide centralized control over the region's inhabitants, was needed.<sup>175</sup> The Central Asian people were seen as a "dangerously homogeneous mass that seemed unperceptive to communism" and

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<sup>174</sup>Firuz Kazemzade, "Central Asia's Foreign Relations," 212.

<sup>175</sup>Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia: The Case of Soviet Tadzhikistan, 27.

therefore they had to be "pared down" into "more convenient units," that is nations.<sup>176</sup>

To conform to the Stalinist model, each nation had to have, or in this particular case, had to be given, a single distinct language, territory, economy, and history. However, as the Soviets saw it, the overwhelming majority of people in Central Asia shared a single language, territory, history, and tradition. Thus they seemed to constitute one huge nation, which the Soviets were determined to replace with several "nations."<sup>177</sup> As soon as the Basmachi threat was essentially eliminated in 1924, a so-called "national delimitation" process was started in Turkestan. The Soviet leaders inaugurated an act of "blatant political engineering" as they artificially constructed nations in the region.<sup>178</sup> The first Soviet federal constitution of 1924 officially introduced the process. With the constitution, Soviet Central Asia was broken down into new federal units. The Kazakh and Kyrgyz areas remained initially in the Russian Republic as autonomous units: two new union republics, Turkmenia and Uzbekistan, were formed; and the Tajik areas were given autonomous status within Uzbekistan as the Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, including parts of Samarkand and Fergana provinces, and the Pamirs.

Within the process of national delimitation, language was given a special importance. Until the 1920s there were no national languages in Central Asia as the natives of the region spoke a variety of different dialects, some Turkic, some Iranian. When the Soviet authorities carved the Central Asian republics from the former territory of the tsarist province of Turkestan, they deliberately magnified the differences in the various Turkic dialects.<sup>179</sup> The aim was to prevent the spread of one common Turkish language by creating separate written and spoken languages for each ethnic group. Phonetic distinctions were stressed and each "language" was infused with Russian vocabulary. This process was further facilitated by the enforced switch from Arabic

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<sup>176</sup>H.B.Paksoy, Alpamysh: Central Asian Identity Under Russian Rule (Connecticut: AACAR, 1989), 22.

<sup>177</sup>Ibid.

<sup>178</sup>Garet M. Winrow, "Turkey and the Former Soviet Central Asia: National and Ethnic Identity," Central Asian Survey 11, no. 3 (1992): 104.

<sup>179</sup>James Critchlow, Nationalism in Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic's Road to Independence, 101.

to Latin script in the 1920s, and then in the late 1930s from Latin to Cyrillic.<sup>180</sup>

Soviet leaders clearly hoped that these new creations would undermine Pan-Islamic and Pan-Turkic sentiments that they feared could lead to Central Asian unity. According to one observer, before the Soviets came, the overwhelming majority of indigenous inhabitants of the region considered themselves part of the Muslim community, despite the fact that they had existed as different ethnic groups with different local customs. "But when the Soviets claim[ed] that these groups were independent in language, history, customs, and territory, ... they start[ed] distorting history."<sup>181</sup> These distortions would have severe repercussions for the entire region in the coming decades.

In general, the national delimitation policy became a turning point in the history of Central Asia. At the time of the configuration of the republics, the ethnic composition of Central Asia was very complex and it was almost impossible to ensure even "approximately the principle of conformity of the new political borders to interethnic divisions."<sup>182</sup> Boundaries were drawn in such a way that different populations of Central Asian people were divided among two or more republics. For example the population of Fergana Valley was administratively part of Uzbekistan but there were almost equal numbers of Tajiks, Kyrgyz, and other indigenous groups living there. Similarly, although the south Kazakhstan oblast was an organic part of Uzbekistan in ethnic composition, natural features, and economic ties, it was assigned to Kazakhstan.<sup>183</sup>

As was mentioned above, in the 1920s modern concepts of ethnicity were irrelevant for Central Asian people who identified primarily with their town or district and regarded themselves simply as Muslims and Turkestanis. They had spoken and used two highly evolved literary languages (Persian and Chaghatay Turkic) interchangeably --at least at the elite level-- for generations. Now a plural society had to become "a set

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<sup>180</sup>Garet M. Winrow, "Turkey and the Former Soviet Central Asia: National and Ethnic Identity," 105.

<sup>181</sup>Baymirza Hayit, Some Problems of Modern Turkestan's History (Dusseldorf: East European Research Institute, 1963), 31.

<sup>182</sup>Victor Y.Porkhomovsky, "Historical Origins of Interethnic Conflict in Central Asia and Transcaucasia," in Central Asia and Transcaucasia: Ethnicity and Conflict, 20.

<sup>183</sup>Boris Z.Rumer, Soviet Central Asia: A Tragic Experiment (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 18.

of national societies bilingual in Russian and either Turkic or Tajik."<sup>184</sup> As a result, there emerged instances of brothers in the same family being assigned different nationalities.<sup>185</sup> Such "ethnic confusion" exists even today. For example in Khodzhent (Leninabad until 1991) populations are still so intermixed and bilingual that two brothers born in the same geographic location can be officially registered as different nationalities. In a home Tajik and Uzbek and even Russian may be spoken with equal frequency.<sup>186</sup>

After the process of national delimitation was put into effect, an intense antireligious campaign was started. The first target were the Muslim religious and charitable endowments (waqf). The waqf landholding--compromising close to ten percent of all cultivated lands--was the basis of clerical economic power and independence. Their revenues were used to support the work of the mullahs, religious schools, and voluntary hospital work. As a result of their liquidation by 1925, the Muslim religious and educational institutions were deprived of material support. During this period all traditional Muslim courts were also abolished. By 1927 both Qur'anic (Sharia) and customary (Adat) laws had been outlawed.

An offensive was also launched against the parochial school system. Before the revolution in Turkestan there were about 8,000 maktab (primary schools) and madrasas (secondary schools). By 1928 all had disappeared. Similarly, there were 26,000 mosques served by over 45,000 mullahs in 1917, an average of one Muslim cleric for every 700 to 1,000 believers. Until 1928 this establishment was still largely intact. By 1942, their numbers had been severely reduced (about 1,300 mosques and 2,000-3,000 mullahs).<sup>187</sup> As the result of an intense antireligious campaign started in 1928, the Muslim clergy was discredited, accused of ignorance, bribery, immorality, and corruption. In 1929 a constitutional amendment abolished the right to religious proselytization. Previously all citizens had the freedom of religious and anti-religious propaganda.

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<sup>184</sup>Beatrice Manz, "Historical Background," in Central Asia in Historical Perspective, ed. Beatrice Manz (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 17.

<sup>185</sup>Paul B.Henze, "Turkestan Rising," Wilson Quarterly 16, no. 3 (1992): 54.

<sup>186</sup>Eden Naby, "The Emerging Central Asia: Ethnic and Religious Factions," in Central Asia and the Caucasus After the Soviet Union ed. Mohiaddin Mesbahi (Gainseville: University Press of Florida, 1994), 38.

<sup>187</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State, 48.

The amendment omitted the right to religious propaganda, paving the way for antireligious indoctrination. The same year the Law on Religious Associations established strict guidelines for organized religion. Religious associations were required to get officially approved registration in order to operate. The law prohibited charitable, economic, and recreational activities under the auspices of religious associations. The minimum age to belong to any religious association was eighteen.<sup>188</sup>

During the 1930s intense anti-Islamic propaganda campaign was conducted. In the schools and popular media, Islam was pictured as a force that hindered progress, and Muslim leaders were presented as ignorant, corrupt, and hypocritical. The Soviet-organized Union of Godless (Allahsizlar) led the onslaught against the Muslim leaders and believers who were accused of being spies in the pay of Japan and Germany, saboteurs, counter-revolutionaries, and parasites. Several Muslim clerics were imprisoned and/or liquidated.<sup>189</sup>

The strongest assault on Islam was launched in 1932 when the Union of Godless was given control of all mosques and Islamic seminaries—as well as churches and synagogues—throughout the country. In Central Asia many mosques were turned into night clubs, cinemas, dance halls, libraries, social centers, or even warehouses. The payment of Islamic taxes and alms was declared illegal and Muslims were no longer allowed to go Mecca for hajj (holy pilgrimage). The plan also included a ban on printing and distributing the Qur'an. More than 3,500 religious books were black-listed for "propagating Islamic superstition" and destroyed. In 1934 and 1935 piles of Muslim books, including copies of the Qur'an, were set on fire in public squares.<sup>190</sup> Furthermore, publications which discredited Islam and its rituals appeared throughout the country. According to one prominent Soviet scholar on Islam, Lucien I.Klimovich, for example, Prophet Muhammad did not exist and Qur'an was drafted in the interests of the wealthy classes of Mecca by people with ulterior motives.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>188</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 24.

<sup>189</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State, 48.

<sup>190</sup>Amir Taheri, Crescent in a Red Sky, 108.

<sup>191</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 25.



## **6. The Second World War and the Emergence of Official Islam**

During the Second World War, the Nazi threat forced the Soviet government to reconsider its Islamic policy. Stalin now sought the cooperation and political allegiances of the Muslims. This led to a relatively soft policy toward Islam and a set of tactical compromises that attempted a reconciliation. During this period, the relations between the government and the Muslims became more relaxed and police measures against Islamic activities were reduced. Several mosques and some madrasas were reopened and the four Muslim Spiritual Directorates—that would be the backbone of "official Islam"—were created.

Sometimes also called "establishment Islam", "state-sanctioned Islam", or "government Islam."<sup>192</sup> "official Islam" referred to legally recognized Islamic institutions that were under the strict control of the Soviet government. These institutions were created after the outbreak of war with Germany in 1941 on the initiative of the Mufti of Ufa, Abdurrahman Rasulaev, who was prompted to do so. The mufti approached Stalin seeking to normalize relations between Islam and the Soviet government. In 1942 a concordat was signed under which Islam was given legal status and an official administration modeled on the Central Spiritual Muslim Directorate, created in Orenburg by Catherine II in 1783.<sup>193</sup> The religious affairs of the Muslims were organized into four geographically based "Spiritual Directorates" (*Dukhovnoye upravleniya*). The first was for Central Asia and Kazakhstan, with headquarters in Tashkent and with Uzbek as its official language. The second was for European Russia and Siberia, with headquarters in Ufa in the Bashkir ASSR, and used Volga Tatar as its language. The third was for Dagestan and the North Caucasus, with headquarters in Makhach-Kala (Buinaksk until 1974) in the Dagestan ASSR, and used classical Arabic as its language. The last was for Transcaucasia, with headquarters in Baku, Azerbaijan, and covered not only the Transcaucasian Sunni communities but also the entire Shi'ite population of the former Soviet Union. Its official language was

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<sup>192</sup>For these other names of official Islam, see respectively Yaacov Ro'i "The Islamic Influence on Nationalism in Soviet Central Asia", *Problems of Communism*, July-August 1990, 50-3; Muriel Atkin, "The Survival of Islam in Soviet Tajikistan," *Middle East Journal*, Autumn 1986; and Sergei Poliakov, *Everyday Islam: Religion and Tradition in Rural Central Asia*.

<sup>193</sup>Marie Broxup, "Political Trends in Soviet Islam after the Afghanistan War," in *Muslim Communities Reemerge*, 305.

Azeri.<sup>194</sup>

These four Spiritual Directorates (also called "boards") were administered by an executive committee elected by a regional congress of believers and they were composed of both clergy and laymen. Each was headed by a mufti or a Shi'ite Sheikh ul-Islam in the case of Transcaucasia. In each Muslim republic a separate kazyat (delegation) headed by a kazi (who worked under the control and supervision of the mufti) would serve as the leading representative of the Spiritual Directorate. These directorates were under the control of the Council of Religious Affairs in Moscow, which was in turn attached to the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union.<sup>195</sup>

The most important of these directories was the one for Central Asia and Kazakhstan, known as SADUM (Sredne-Aziatskoe Dukhovnoye Upravleniye Musulman). The board was established on 20 October 1943 in Tashkent. It had jurisdiction over approximately seventy-five percent of all the Muslims of the former Soviet Union.<sup>196</sup> The head of SADUM was sometimes called the "Grand Mufti." The directorate in Tashkent was the only one to have a publication facility, and the only two official madrasas of the Soviet Union were established on its territory.

Although the Spiritual Directorates originally aimed at rallying Muslims for the war effort, they were allowed to continue to exist after the war "as convenient means of channeling religious activity through a controlled mechanism" in order to guarantee the loyalty of the believers. As such, they were to "manipulate Islam in much the same way that the 'national' institutions of the Union republics were designed to manipulate ethnic loyalties."<sup>197</sup> They were designed to coordinate and guide the functioning of the officially registered

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<sup>194</sup>James Thrower, "Notes on Muslim Theological Education in the USSR in the 1980s," in Political and Economic Trends in Central Asia, ed. Shirin Akiner (London: British Academic Press, 1994), 175-6.

<sup>195</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen, Islam in the Soviet Union: General Presentation, 8.

<sup>196</sup>Annette Bohr, "Turkmen," in The Nationalities Question in the Soviet Union, ed. Graham Smith (New York: Longman, 1990), 232.

<sup>197</sup>James Critchlow, "Islam in the Fergana Valley: The Wahhabi 'Threat,'" Report on the USSR 1, no. 49 (1989): 15.

mosques and mullah.<sup>198</sup>

Within the specific context of Central Asia, SADUM transmitted information about Islam, conducted prayers and maintained holy places. It also published religious calendars, occasionally some collections of hadith (sayings of Prophet Muhammad) and excerpts from the Qur'an and its own periodical, Muslims of the Soviet East, which was published in Uzbek, Arabic, Persian, Dari, English and French.<sup>199</sup> SADUM also sanctioned and controlled the mosques and the official mullahs. The small number of registered clerics were employed either as the executives of the administration's own bureaucracy, or worked as the staff of the legally functioning mosques.<sup>200</sup> There were, however, many more unregistered clerics who were working underground and performing various Islamic rites for Soviet Muslims outside the confines of SADUM. Since under Soviet legislation any kind of religious activity outside the official mosques was illegal and forbidden, these unregistered clerics were labeled as "parasites" and hunted down by the Soviet authorities. Only the registered clerics of the Spiritual Boards could function as the representatives of Islam vis-a-vis the Soviet authorities.<sup>201</sup>

The official mullahs became part of the political and administrative system. They were appointed to various public councils "where they sat quietly."<sup>202</sup> They were supposed not to protest the anti-religious pressures of the regime and to defend it against foreign criticism of the anti-Islamic policies of the Soviet government. Because of their loyalty to the regime, the official Muslim leaders were sometimes regarded as the successors to the pre-revolutionary Jadids, the Muslim reformist intellectuals, who collaborated with the

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<sup>198</sup> Azade-Ayse Rorlich, "Islam and Atheism: Dynamic Tensions in Soviet Central Asia," in Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation, 188.

<sup>199</sup> Muriel Atkin, "The Survival of Islam in Soviet Tajikistan."

<sup>200</sup> Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, Muslims of the Soviet Empire, 16.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Alexei V. Malashenko, "Religious and Political Change in Soviet Muslim Regions," 165.

Bolsheviks in 1917.<sup>203</sup>

The Muslim Spiritual Boards were required to support the Soviet system and adopt Islam to the requirements of a socialist society. The boards, therefore, tried to establish a balance between atheism and Islamic teachings. The official mullahs attempted to demonstrate the compatibility of Islam, modernity, and socialism.<sup>204</sup> Islam was depicted as a religion "which is not opposed to, but rather ... capable of coexisting with Marxism-Leninism."<sup>205</sup> It was asserted that the worldly goals of the Soviet regime were reconcilable with Islam, and therefore it was possible to be a loyal Soviet citizen and a good Muslim at the same time.

Some official Muslim clerics went beyond this, claiming that Islam, being the most liberal, humanistic, and advanced religion, was "best fitted to prepare the faithful for the construction of real socialism." In fact, some held that only Muslims, being the best socialists, were capable of building real socialism.<sup>206</sup>

Arguments favoring the inherent compatibility of socialist and Muslim values were based on a number of parallel features. It was claimed that in both socialism and Islam there was high regard for collectivism, equality, social justice, and friendship of peoples. Islam, like socialism, put the emphasis on society and defined the individual in terms of his or her service to society as a whole.<sup>207</sup> Nationalization of the means of production was a modern extension of Islamic social justice. Muslim practices like payment of zakat

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<sup>203</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen, "Official Islam and Sufi Brotherhoods in the Soviet Union Today," in Islam and Power, eds. Alexander S.Cudsi and Ali Hillal Dessouki (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 98.

<sup>204</sup>Ira M. Lapidus, A History of Islamic Societies, 814.

<sup>205</sup>Yaacov Ro'i, "The Islamic Influence on Nationalism in Soviet Central Asia," Problems of Communism, 39, no. 4 (1990): 50.

<sup>206</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen, "Several Nations or One People? Ethnic Consciousness among Soviet Central Asian Muslims," 54.

<sup>207</sup>Alexei V. Malashenko, "Islam versus Communism: the Experience of Coexistence," in Russia's Muslim Frontiers, 63.

(poor tax) signified equitable distribution of wealth. Pilgrimage and prayer symbolized equality.<sup>208</sup>

The same line of reasoning was extended further: the teachings of socialism were attributed to Prophet Muhammad. It was claimed that the basis of communist ideology was originally derived from the will of Allah as revealed to the Prophet. One of the Muslim dignitaries who attended a conference of Muslims in Tashkent in September 1970 said: "I admire the genius of the prophet who announced the principles of socialism. I am happy that a large number of socialist principles are nothing more than the realization of the Revelation bestowed on Muhammad."<sup>209</sup>

The theme of the compatibility of Muslim and Soviet values remained on the agenda even during the last years of the Soviet Union. For example in 1989, the Tashkent mufti Muhammad Sadyk started his tenure of office with praise for the policies of President Gorbachev. The mufti stressed that the social evils Gorbachev had targeted had always been condemned by Islam.<sup>210</sup>

In summary, throughout the half-century of their existence, the four Muslim directorates had to work within narrow limits and under close controls. As such they provided theological rationalization for many restrictions on Islam as they tried to reconcile the contradictory aspects of Islam and Soviet norms and practices. By helping to adopt Islamic doctrines to Soviet conditions, the Muslim directorates also facilitated the survival of Islamic values.<sup>211</sup> However, in general terms, official Islam had an insignificant influence on the masses and could only minimally contribute to the preservation of the religious feelings of the masses. It tried to disseminate its "liberal modernist ideology" through some of its editorials (as in its quarterly The Muslims of the Soviet East), the Friday preaching of the few surviving mosques, and the fatwas (legal opinions) published by the muftis. These limited channels, however, did not reach the majority of the people.

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<sup>208</sup>Ira M. Lapidus, A History of Islamic Societies, 814.

<sup>209</sup>Hans Braker, "Soviet Policy Toward Islam," in Muslim Communities Reemerge, 171.

<sup>210</sup>Muriel Atkin, "The Survival of Islam in Soviet Tajikistan," 608.

<sup>211</sup>Bohdan Bociurkiw, "Nationalities and Soviet Religious Policies," in The Nationalities Factor in Soviet Politics and Society, eds. Lubomyr Hajda and Mark Deissinger (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), 157.

Therefore the discussions concerning the compatibility and coexistence of Islam and Marxism remained "purely platonic and [did] not reach the masses of believers."<sup>212</sup>

### **7. Developments After the Second World War**

After the war, the Soviet Union had a new global status and sought to increase its political influence among the Third World nations. In deference to Muslim nations in the Middle East, Africa and Asia, Stalin sought to create a more positive image of Islam's treatment in the Soviet Union. In January 1946, one of the provisions of the 1929 Law on Religious Associations was reversed, permitting Islamic theologians to form religious organizations which resulted in the revitalization of religious activities, though they remained under strict state control.<sup>213</sup>

Another development in the wake of the war was a limited tolerance for the practice of certain Islamic rituals that had previously been banned. Pilgrimages to Mecca, Islamic income tax, the Ramadan fast and public prayer were to some extent allowed to be observed. The number of legally sanctioned mosques was gradually increased as well. In 1948 two institutes of higher Islamic studies were permitted to train Muslim leaders, one in Tashkent and the other in Bukhara (the limited liberalization of this measure is indicated in that there had been over 100 religious schools in Bukhara alone at the time of the 1917 revolution).<sup>214</sup> The Union of Godless was dissolved and some antireligious publications like Bezboznik (The Atheist) and Antireligioznik were suspended.

As early as 1947, however, the post-war liberalization began to be curtailed, and antireligious activities were resumed under the institutional supervision of the "All-Union Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge," Znanie (Knowledge), for short. However, limited and officially

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<sup>212</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen, "Official Islam and the Sufi Brotherhoods in the Soviet Union Today," in Islam and Power, 99.

<sup>213</sup>Haghyeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 45.

<sup>214</sup>Michael Thomas, "Glasnost and Soviet Muslims," 243.

controlled Islamic activities, albeit under the supervision of this new institution continued to be permitted. By 1948, Znanie was active across Central Asia, using a wide variety of propaganda techniques such as lectures, films, literature, posters, and radio programs to deliver its anti-religious message.

After Stalin's death, Khrushchev resumed the offensive against Islam under his policy of "back to Lenin."<sup>215</sup> Khrushchev was concerned about the persistence of religion in the Soviet Union. In addition to ideological justifications for attacking religion, he tried to legitimize his own antireligious position by economic rationalization as well. For example, he argued that certain Islamic rituals such as pilgrimages to holy places and fasting during the summer harvest had adverse effect on agricultural production.<sup>216</sup>

In 1954 two party resolutions regarding religious activities were publicized. The "July Resolution" proposed strengthening antireligious activities, ordering the introduction of a series of lectures promoting atheism and the publishing of a monthly journal, Science and Religion (Nauka i Religija). In November 1954, a second resolution entitled "On Errors in the Conducting of Scientific-Atheistic Propaganda among the People" was promulgated. It emphasized the need to rely on science, criticizing the non-material character of religious laws. As a result of these two resolutions, in the 1954-1959 period antireligious measures were intensified in all of the Soviet republics. More atheistic themes were used in schools and public lectures, new antireligious museums were opened, and the circulation of Nauka i Religija was increased.<sup>217</sup>

In 1958 the former Union of Godless was revived, some of the mosques were shut down, and religious weddings and funerals which had been on the rise were banned. Widespread publicity was given to veil-burning ceremonies, with the aim of demonstrating both the emancipation of women from the dominance of Muslim law and tradition, and their integration into the new socialist system. In 1959 "the end of the era of the veil" was officially announced with the ceremonial burning of the "last veil" in Bukhara.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>215</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State, 48.

<sup>216</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 29.

<sup>217</sup>Ibid.

<sup>218</sup>Ahmed Rashid, The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism (Karachi: Oxford University

In the early 1960s the level of attacks on religion was intensified. Although no new legislation was introduced, there was a renewed emphasis on enforcement. The decree on "Strict Observance of the Laws on Religious Cults" called for the complete implementation of the existing laws and introduced more severe penalties for religious observance. By 1963, the number of operating mosques was sharply reduced to approximately 400 for the entire Soviet Union, and several harsh methods to discredit the official clergy were used. For example, Pir Niyaz Khodzha, a well-known Seyyed (direct descendent of the Prophet Mohammed), was forced by the authorities to openly denounce prominent members of the clergy as parasites and adventurers.<sup>219</sup>

After Khrushchev's fall in 1964, "a mutually acceptable modus vivendi" between Islam and communism--similar to that of the end-of-war Stalinist era--developed.<sup>220</sup> Brezhnev adopted a less hostile attitude toward Islam. During his tenure, anti-Islamic campaign was slowed and the closing of mosques was stopped, their number remaining stable until the 1980s.<sup>221</sup> The government moderated its position, primarily for purposes of gaining support in the Middle East and among other Third World Muslim nations. Particularly in foreign policy contexts Islam was assigned a progressive anticolonial character. The Muslim Religious Board of Central Asia and Kazakhstan became active in conducting Soviet propaganda activities abroad. Brezhnev also called for increased study of Islam, and in the 1960s a new generation of Soviet experts--mostly sociologists-- started to analyze Islam with the aim of developing policies that would reduce friction between Muslim believers and the regime. It was chiefly during this time that the concept of "parallel Islam" was developed by the Soviet specialists.

While the Soviets realized that some degree of political flexibility was necessary in dealing with the Muslim populations of the country for foreign policy purposes, the authorities did not drop their anti-Islamic

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Press), 34.

<sup>219</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 33.

<sup>220</sup>Michael Rywkin, Moscow's Muslim Challenge (New York: M.E.Sharpe, 1990), 88.

<sup>221</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen et.al., Soviet Strategy and Islam, 35.



line and never completely abandoned antireligious propaganda campaigns. There was no dramatic change in the domestic treatment of Islam. Like Khrushchev, Brezhnev stressed the importance of law-enforcement and immediate punishment of the violators of the existing laws on religion. During his era, new laws that increased the penalty for religious offenses were passed. For example, in 1975, by a series of amendments to the 1929 Law on Religious Associations, state control over religious activities were strengthened. Brezhnev also emphasized the necessity of socialistic and atheistic education among the new generation. But in practice during the Brezhnev period, enforcement remained weak and Islamic practices that evaded the legal structure of the regime continued to develop.

### **8. The Gorbachev Era**

At the beginning of the 1980s, the relative liberalism of the Brezhnev years suddenly was halted. The Islamic revolution in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan raised fears about the potential of these developments to jeopardize Moscow's control in Muslim territories. Extra security measures were taken along the borders with Iran and Afghanistan. Furthermore, the KGB's presence in Central Asia was substantially increased for the purpose of controlling a potential Islamic revival there sympathetic to the Iranian revolution and to the Afghan mujahidin. In the early 1980s a new anti-Islamic campaign was initiated. Even Gorbachev's policies of openness did not preclude Moscow's increased fear of the full-scale restoration of Islam.<sup>222</sup>

Like most of his predecessors, Gorbachev saw Islam as irrational, corrupt, treacherous, violent, and an impediment to the success of his economic and political goals in Central Asia. Islam was identified as the cause of the region's "backwardness" and in the mid-1980s another anti-religious campaign was mounted.<sup>223</sup> When he first came to power, Gorbachev sharply criticized Party members who participated in Islamic observances. Some of these people were accused of xenophobia, nationalism, corruption, and "tolerance for

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<sup>222</sup>Martha Brill Olcott, "The Reformers Challenge a Traditional Society."

<sup>223</sup>Martha Brill Olcott, "Central Asian Political Crisis," in Russia's Muslim Frontiers, ed. Dale F.Eickelman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 53.

Islam" and they were purged.<sup>224</sup> The Muslims in the Party were urged to attack religious "excesses." For example, on his first visit to Tashkent in 1987, Gorbachev gave a speech to local Party members calling for a "firm and uncompromising struggle against religious phenomena." He then stated that "We must be strict above all with communists and senior officials, particularly those who say they defend our morality and ideals but in fact help promote backward views and themselves take part in religious ceremonies."<sup>225</sup>

So in the early years of perestroika, the official attitude of the government toward Islam remained ambivalent. In the organs of the state, in statements from the senior leadership—including those of Gorbachev—there was a critical and derogatory approach to Islam.<sup>226</sup> For example on 19 February 1987 Pravda Vostoka, Uzbekistan's Russian-language party daily, published an insulting reference to the Qur'an. The author suggested that the knowledge of Russian was an important means of reducing the influence of Islam. He asked: "Can one really compare the ringing words of Pushkin, the pathos and vital force of Gorkii's words, the sharpness and greatness of Lenin's speeches, with the barely intelligible muttering and abstruse prayers from the Koran?"<sup>227</sup>

During the first years of perestroika, the Muslims of the former Soviet Union also saw a difference in the official approach to Christianity and Islam. While preparations for celebration of the millennium of Christianity in Russia were taking place, anti-Islamic propaganda was being continued in Central Asia and other Muslim areas. The Muslims saw this as a proof of the existence of a "two-track perestroika", one for the Christians and one for the Muslims. This increased the antagonism between the center and the Central Asian

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<sup>224</sup>Miron Rezun, "The Muslim Borderlands: Islam and Nationalism in Transition," in Nationalism and the Breakup of an Empire: Russia and Its Periphery, ed. Miron Rezun (Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1992), 126.

<sup>225</sup>Time, 12 January 1987, 60.

<sup>226</sup>Shirin Akiner, "Uzbeks," in The Nationalities Question in the Soviet Union, 223.

<sup>227</sup>Bohdan Nahaylo and Victor Swobada, Soviet Disunion: A History of the Nationalities Problem in the USSR, 263.

republics.<sup>228</sup>

In his early years Gorbachev also continued the assault against local Party members in Central Asia that had been started during Andropov's tenure. Native elites were purged on charges of graft, nepotism, and corruption. By 1986, for example, more than half of the Uzbek Party elite had been replaced.<sup>229</sup> There was a freeze on "affirmative action" policies that used to favor native cadres in appointments to Party and managerial posts. Instead, an intensive "parachuting" of Russian and other nonnative cadres into strategic control positions, formerly regarded as the preserve of local leaders, was undertaken.<sup>230</sup>

Toward the end of the 1980s, however, Gorbachev came to recognize, at least in part, the deep-rootedness of Islam both among the Central Asian people and among some of their leaders. Official attempts to wipe out Islam had not only failed to reduce the number of believers, but had encouraged the growing vitality of Islamic activity that was beyond Moscow's control.<sup>231</sup> The aid of Islamic leaders was sought to help prevent manifestations of corruption, drug addiction, alcoholism, prostitution, and crime. Also, after 1989, the authorities turned to Muslim clergymen to help them calm the ethnic tensions in the region. In this new context, Islam was assigned a more positive role; a more tolerant public attitude and a more pragmatic policy toward Muslims were adopted.

A clear indication of change came in 1988 when a new mufti was appointed. For three generations, the Babakhanov family had fulfilled this function cooperating closely with the authorities. Shamsuddin Babakhanov, the most recent mufti of the Muslim Board for Central Asia in Tashkent had been appointed in 1982. However, Babakhanov had been criticized by the Central Asian people because of his support for the

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<sup>228</sup>Azade Ayse-Rorlich, "Islam and the Soviet Nationalities Question: Establishing a Central Asian Identity," in Soviet Nationalities Problem, eds. Ian A. Bremmer and Norman M. Naimark (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 87.

<sup>229</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 51.

<sup>230</sup>Michael Rywkin, Moscow's Muslim Challenge, 149.

<sup>231</sup>Annette Bohr, "Turkmen," in The Nationalities Question in the Soviet Union, 246.

unpopular invasion of Afghanistan.<sup>232</sup> He was now also accused of deviating from Islam by drinking alcoholic beverages and womanizing. He had become an embarrassment not only to the people in Central Asia, but also to the local authorities who worked in alliance with him. Yet, there was no formal mechanism by which he could be relieved of his duties. But when the Muslim community in Tashkent held a public demonstration and demanded his resignation, their demands were met by the authorities. A few weeks later, the rector of the Tashkent madrasa, thirty-seven year old Mohammed Sadyk was installed in Babakhanov's place.<sup>233</sup> Sadyk, who had received his advanced religious training at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, would soon become a prominent public figure.

During this period, several new mosques were opened. By October 1990 there were a total of forty mosques in Tajikistan compared to seventeen a year earlier, and a total of thirty in Tashkent compared to two in 1989. By 1991, there were over 1,000 mosques in all of the Central Asian republics--more than 700 of them built during the past year--and a new mosque was being opened every day.<sup>234</sup> As of 1994 an estimated 7,800 mosques and prayer houses had been opened in Central Asia, half of which were located in Uzbekistan. In Tajikistan, 126 mosques and 2870 prayer houses were established in the 1991-92 period. In relation with the opening of new mosques, Islamic education became more widespread in Central Asia. Since 1991 an estimated 380 madrasas had been operating in Uzbekistan. The number of students enrolled in the two major madrasas has nearly tripled. In 1990, the second largest Islamic institute on Soviet territory was opened in Dushanbe (the largest was the Al Bukhari Higher Islamic Institute in Uzbekistan).

During this period, several volumes of previously banned Islamic literature and simple religious pamphlets were printed. Saudi Arabia sent one million copies of the Qur'an, and there was a boom in the publication of the holy book in local languages.<sup>235</sup> Teaching of Arabic was permitted and plans were approved

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<sup>232</sup>Ahmed Rashid, The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism, 45.

<sup>233</sup>Akiner, "Uzbeks", 224.

<sup>234</sup>Ahmed Rashid, The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism, 45.

<sup>235</sup>Ibid.

for expanding the number of students in the country's two madrasas.<sup>236</sup> Among these developments, the return of the Othman Qur'an to the safekeeping of the Muslims was the one that had the most symbolic meaning. The Othman Qur'an was copied soon after the death of Prophet Muhammad in the seventh century and is considered one of the holiest treasures of Islam. During tsarist times, it was taken to St.Petersburg.<sup>237</sup> Although returned to Central Asia by the Soviet government in 1918, it was kept in the Tashkent Museum in the custody of the civil authorities until March 1989, when it was handed over to the Library of the Religious Board of Central Asia.<sup>238</sup>

In May 1989, for the first time in sixty years, Islamic prayer was permitted in the Kalyan Mosque, one of the oldest in Asia.<sup>239</sup> In July 1989, the traditional Muslim feast of Kurban Bairam was officially restored.<sup>240</sup> In October 1990, a total of 1,500 Soviet Muslims were allowed to make the hajj to Mecca. Another important development was the permission given to the Spiritual Board to publish its own paper, Islam Noori (The Light of Islam), twice a month, with a print run of 40,000.<sup>241</sup> The paper's editor Muhammad Dzhumanov said that the paper would have the task of fighting superstition and promoting the purity of Islam. It would also give up-to-date information about Muslims abroad and publish readings from the Qur'an and sayings of Prophet Muhammad.<sup>242</sup>

Another sign of the softening of the Soviet leadership toward Islam was the tolerance of political

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<sup>236</sup>Robert L.Canfield, "Restructuring in Greater Central Asia: Changing Political Configuration," Asian Survey 32, no. 10 (1992).

<sup>237</sup>Shirin Akiner, "Uzbeks," 224.

<sup>238</sup>Azade Ayse-Rorlich, "Islam and Atheism: Dynamic Tensions in Soviet Central Asia," in Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation, 209.

<sup>239</sup>Michael Thomas, "Glasnost and Soviet Muslims," 245.

<sup>240</sup>Annette Bohr, "Turkmen," 240.

<sup>241</sup>Bess Brown, "Religion and Nationalism in Soviet Central Asia," RFE/RL Research Report, 20 July 1990, 27.

<sup>242</sup>Pravda Vostoka, 24 May 1990, 4, as quoted in FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 14 June 1990, 118.

activities of some of the leading official clergymen. The head of the SADUM, Mufti Mohammed Sadiq Mohammed Yusuf, was elected, together with other clergymen, to the USSR Congress of People's Deputies in Spring 1989. Soon after his election he was sent to the Fergana Valley as a member of the delegation dispatched by the Uzbek Communist Party to help restore calm in the wake of the ethnic violence in May-June 1989.<sup>243</sup> In Tajikistan, the republic's supreme religious authority Kazi Ali Akbar Turajonzoda, was elected to Tajikistan's Supreme Soviet in 1990. In both cases, however, the official mullahs used their seats only as platforms to defend believers' rights, and did not get involved in any activities that could disturb the division of power between the state and the mosque.<sup>244</sup> For example, Kazi Turajonzoda started a campaign to have several "nonpolitical" Islamic elements included in Tajikistan's legal code such as the adoption of Islamic holidays as official holidays, the substitution of Friday for Sunday as the weekly day off, the slaughtering of livestock according to Islamic law, and the exemption of mosques and other religious institutions from land taxes.<sup>245</sup> Furthermore, both Mufti Mohammed Yusuf and Kazi Turajonzoda expressed their intentions of not getting involved in the activities of any Islamic political party. The Mufti said in 1990: "We are against the creation of a religious party. Our main goal is to spread the ideas of Islam... Political struggle only hinders us." Kazi Turajonzoda expressed his ideas about being involved in politics in the following way: "According to our faith and in my own personal view, we [the clergy of Tajikistan] always want to be outside of politics."<sup>246</sup>

The most important development that took place in the official Islamic establishment after the dissolution of the Soviet Union was the division of SADUM, the Central Asian Spiritual Directorate, along national lines within the first few months of independence. In Uzbekistan a group of imams from Tashkent

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<sup>243</sup>James Critchlow, "Islam in Public Life: Can This Be 'Soviet' Uzbekistan?," Report on the USSR 2, no. 11 (1990): 24.

<sup>244</sup>Jonathan Steele, "Glasnost Throws Open Mosque Doors," The Guardian, 24 October 1990, 9.

<sup>245</sup>Keith Martin, "Tajikistan: Civil War Without End," RFE/RL Research Report, 20 August 1993, 21.

<sup>246</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 20 February 1990, 74. It must however, be noted that in a few years time Kazi Turajonzoda would emerge as one of the most influential leaders of the Tajik IRP.

and the surrounding area held a conference in the mosque of Yakhasarai in September 1991 and founded a Muslim board of their own headed by Imam Mansurov, who was known to be in opposition to SADUM.<sup>247</sup> In Tajikistan, a separate and independent spiritual board was registered in the aftermath of the 1992 civil war. According to Kazi Turajonzoda, the main activities of the board were to administer the religious establishments in Tajikistan, to protect the mosques, the rights of the clergy and the believers in the republic, and to provide religious education for the children.<sup>248</sup>

### **9. The Emergence of Parallel Islam from the Underground**

Despite all these changes during the Gorbachev years and early 1990s, it was basically the emergence of parallel Islam from the underground that shaped Islamic revival in Central Asia. Parallel Islam had been illegal Islam existing outside Soviet control. It grew up independently and as an alternative to the official Muslim establishment, and as such it was condemned by the Soviet authorities.

From the beginning of the Soviet period, parallel Islam played the leading role in sustaining the knowledge and practice of Islam as well as performing prescribed religious rituals like birth, marriage, burial, and circumcision among the general population. Parallel Islam kept the traditional Muslim society alive throughout the Soviet period. As one observer put it:

while Islam was not visible on the formal surface of social life, it was the implicit regulator, a fact which all government officials, even those at the highest level, had to take into account... It is clear that the "Islamic line" was never broken in the Soviet society. Despite the ambiguity of its position, Islam remained the preserver of spirituality, the framework for a worldview, and, to a significant extent, the regulator of relations between people. What many politicians and scholars saw as the sudden appearance of Islam in the political area was in fact an inevitable development. The renaissance of "Soviet Islam" was merely a continuation of processes which had been interrupted in the 1920s.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>247</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 13 September 1991, 100.

<sup>248</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 30 July 1992, 61.

<sup>249</sup>Alexei V. Malashenko, "Islam Versus Communism: the Experience of Coexistence," in Russia's Muslim Frontiers, 66-7.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, parallel Islam emerged from the underground and started to act openly and freely. Today, parallel Islam has two very different styles in Central Asia. One style is the parallel Islam of popular and often private piety. Basically this involves specific acts of pilgrimage to holy places and distinctive devotional recitations. The organizational framework is provided by the Sufi brotherhoods which have the ability to provide a sense of communal identity to their followers. The second style is fundamentalist and involves a sense of active mission to purify Muslim society of non-Islamic practices. Advocates of this second approach are generally called Wahhabis.<sup>250</sup> In Central Asia these pietistic and the fundamentalist styles of parallel Islam are not always mutually supportive. They have become allies only under specific conditions of major threat to the basic Islamic identity of the society, such as occurred in the late 1920s and 1930s.

#### **A. The Sufi Brotherhoods**

Sufism is a mystical and ascetic branch of Islam that originated in Persia and Central Asia soon after the arrival of the Arabs in the seventh century. Literally Sufism derives from the word for **suf** (wool) referring to the type of garment many early Sufis wore, thus displaying their lack of concern for worldly comforts.<sup>251</sup> It involves a corpus of techniques regarding the journey of an adept or disciple (murid) toward God. The adept aims to achieve personal union with and absorption into God through the path (tariqa) toward him, and is led by a spiritual master called sheikh, pir, ihsan, murshid or ustad.<sup>252</sup>

The Sufis believe that through the "spiritual program" designed for them, the adept can come closer to God. The program has spiritual as well as physical aspects. Sufi activities include frequent prayers, invocations and ritual litanies (zikr), various forms of yoga, specified breathing and physical movements as

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<sup>250</sup>John O.Voll, "Central Asia as a Part of the Modern Islamic World" in Central Asia in Historical Perspective.

<sup>251</sup>Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban, Islamic Society in Practice (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), 38.

<sup>252</sup>Azade Ayse-Rorlich, "Islam and Atheism: Dynamic Tensions in Soviet Central Asia," in Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation.



well as meditation undertaken every year on just bread and water for as long as forty days.<sup>253</sup>

Sufism puts the stress on the inner awakening and moral reformation of the individual, and as such it is a "deeply personal and silent expression of faith that does not need the trapping of mosques, formal prayers and mullahs to retain its essential spirit."<sup>254</sup> It is the most tolerant expression of Islam incorporating all Muslim sects, as well as Buddhist, Shamanist, and even Christian ideas and beliefs.

Although at first Sufism was a purely individual experience based on the personal relation between the disciple and the master, in time the brotherhoods became more organized. In the twelfth century, when Islam was threatened for the first time by the invaders of other faiths (the Kara Khitai in the East, Crusaders in the West), the Sufis assumed the role of defenders of the faith. They organized into brotherhoods and turned into centers of opposition to the various threats to Islam. Central Asia, being a borderland of the Islamic world and facing invaders on many sides, became one of the most active areas of Sufi expansion. Some of the most important brotherhoods like the Kubrawiya, Yasawiya and Naqshibandiya were founded there. All three played important roles in leading holy wars during the Mongol and Russian invasions.<sup>255</sup> After 1917, the Sufi orders called into serious question the Soviet presence in their lands. According to one observer this resistance was the origin of what may be described as the "Soviet trauma of Islam."<sup>256</sup> Despite the fact that they were clandestine or semi-clandestine, the Sufi brotherhoods were not small societies but mass organizations. They had well-structured, hierarchical organizations that attracted Muslim peoples from all strata of society, both urban and rural, including industrial workers and intellectuals.<sup>257</sup> The brotherhoods were particularly active in those areas where the official Muslim establishment was weak. After the 1917 revolution not one case was

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<sup>253</sup> Ahmed Rashid, "Revival of Sufism," Far Eastern Economic Review, 17 December 1992, 33.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1985.

<sup>256</sup> Hans Braker, "Soviet Policy Toward Islam," 161.

<sup>257</sup> Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, Muslims of the Soviet Empire.

reported of Sufi murids being infiltrated or coopted by the Soviets.<sup>258</sup>

Sufis endorsed the concept of holy war (jihad) as a means of defense against foreign domination. Submission to infidel invaders was seen as a religious crime because the believer, in order to belong exclusively to God in a spiritual sense, had to be free and independent.<sup>259</sup> However, it must also be kept in mind that Sufis did not believe in political parties, messianic missions or political preaching. They had no political ideology and no political program. As such, they did not represent an alternative political system to the Soviet state.<sup>260</sup> Nevertheless, their constant activity helped Islam to survive both as a religion and as a way of life in Soviet Central Asia. The Sufi clerics embraced religious educational and social activities, and taught people the basic rites of Islam as well as the method of contemplation and prayer. They conducted prayers at the homes of believers and at illegal prayer houses. By focusing not on the mosque but on private prayers conducted at homes and other unofficial holy places, Sufism "propounded its own system of rites and rules for spiritual teaching."<sup>261</sup> The Sufis kept a low profile by not trying to overthrow the Soviet authorities and by refusing to become involved in political activities and movements. So they were able to isolate themselves from the authorities. As one observer put it, the KGB "barely knew that they existed."<sup>262</sup>

### **B. The Wahhabis**

Wahhabism is an Islamic fundamentalist sect established in Saudi Arabia in the eighteenth century by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792). It is the puritanical offshoot of the Sunni branch of Islam, and it

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<sup>258</sup>The Central Asian Newsletter, December 1988-January 1989, 12.

<sup>259</sup>Uwe Halbach, "'Holy War' against Czarism: The Links between Sufism and Jihad in the Nineteenth-Century Anticolonial Resistance against Russia," in Muslim Communities Reemerge, 260.

<sup>260</sup>S. Enders Wimbush, "The Muslim Soviet Borderlands," in The Last Empire: Nationality and the Soviet Future, 228.

<sup>261</sup>Yaacov Ro'i, "The Islamic Influences on Nationalism in Soviet Central Asia," 52.

<sup>262</sup>Ahmed Rashid, The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism, 43.

became the religion of the Saudi royal family.<sup>263</sup> The followers of this school call themselves "Muwahiddin", that is, believers in "tawhid" (monotheism), but they are commonly known as Wahhabis. The movement was born in reaction to what was seen as the internal degeneration of Islam in the eighteenth century. To counter this degeneration the Wahhabis called for a return to the simplicity and piety of early Islam, and its main sources, the Qur'an and pure sunnah (the doings of Prophet Muhammad).<sup>264</sup> The Wahhabis believe in the establishment of a Muslim community similar to that which existed at the time of the Prophet.

The Wahhabi movement was introduced to Central Asia from India in the early nineteenth century. An Indian pilgrim to Mecca named Sayed Ahmad spread the faith in 1822 after his return to India. Following his death in 1830, some of his disciples continued to propagate the Wahhabi teachings in Afghanistan and northern India. By the 1890s many Central Asian Muslims had traveled to India to receive education from Wahhabi teachers, some of whom were later invited to reside in Central Asian towns and villages.<sup>265</sup>

At the beginning of this century, a native of Medina, Sayed Sharie Muhammad, further spread Wahhabism in Central Asia. He set up Wahhabi circles in Tashkent and the Fergana Valley.<sup>266</sup> During the October revolution, one of the contemporary leaders in Central Asia, Muhammad Haji Hindostani left for India and received his education there. He subsequently returned to Andijan in Uzbekistan. One of his disciples, Abduwali Qari began to politicize Wahhabism and opened clandestine schools. Another important Wahhabi leader was Rahmatollah, who conducted his teaching activities underground with the aid of illegal radical literature printed in small printing houses set up by the followers.<sup>267</sup> Probably the most legendary of all Wahhabi teacher was Bahauddin Vaisov from the Fergana Valley who was sentenced to prison in 1950 and

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<sup>263</sup>James Critchlow, Nationalism In Soviet Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic's Road to Independence, 179.

<sup>264</sup>Helene Carrere D'Encausse, Islam in the Russian Empire (California: University of California Press, 1988), 56.

<sup>265</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 93.

<sup>266</sup>Ahmed Rashid, The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism, 44.

<sup>267</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 93.

later died in an asylum. He is considered "one of the first martyrs of Islam in the modern era" in Central Asia.<sup>268</sup>

In the 1960s and 1970s the Wahhabis continued their clandestine activities. Although they were not as popular nor had as large a following as the Sufi brotherhoods, they were nevertheless able to achieve a synthesis of folk and doctrinal Islam. During the Soviet-Afghan war and after Gorbachev's coming to power, Wahhabi activism increased in Central Asia. However it was basically after the collapse of the Soviet Union that the Wahhabis emerged as a determined and well-organized fundamentalist group. Today they are influential in the Fergana Valley, especially in the cities of Namangan and Andijan. In these areas young Wahhabi imams have developed a political strategy. First they seize an abandoned mosque or piece of land and demonstrate until the place is handed over to them. Then they establish mosques and madrasas in these places. The imams teach people how to pray and perform Islamic rites, and lecture about the creation of an Islamic republic and the overthrow of the government.<sup>269</sup> The Wahhabis have also been reported to organize Islamic guard patrols. Some Uzbek public officials claim that the Wahhabi militants are creating a secret army with students receiving weapons and military training. They are also accused of organizing hit squads to strike at government officials.<sup>270</sup>

Once highly secretive, since late 1980s the Wahhabis have been involved in open confrontation with the authorities across Uzbekistan with the aim of defeating Islam Karimov's government and spreading an Islamic revolution in Central Asia. They have been accused by the authorities of being instrumental in the anti-Meshketian massacre of Uzbeks in June 1989. In May 1990, the Wahhabis organized a demonstration in which they demanded the replacement of Mufti Muhammad Yusuf and the resignation of the Uzbek Party leadership.<sup>271</sup> And in November 1991, the Wahhabis, together with other Islamic groups (including the Uzbek

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<sup>268</sup> Ahmed Rashid, The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism, 44.

<sup>269</sup> World Press Review, 40, no. 3 (1993), 45.

<sup>270</sup> Time, 27 April 1992, 46.

<sup>271</sup> FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 9 May 1990, 103.

Islamic Renaissance Party) organized a demonstration in Namangan and seized a Communist Party building with the aim of turning it into an Islamic center. The demonstration was quickly transformed into a movement for Muslim self-government in Namangan, which was not recognized by the authorities.<sup>272</sup>

The Wahhabi movement is funded to a large extent by the Ahl-e Sunnat organization in Saudi Arabia created for the propagation of Wahhabism. The organization gives financial support for the construction of mosques and Islamic centers which provide education, meals, and Islamic literature.<sup>273</sup> An estimated \$1.3 million of Saudi money was to be spent for such purposes by the end of 1993. A two-story Islamic complex is under construction in Namangan to provide Islamic education. Another Islamic complex with the capacity of one hundred students has been built in Andijan. In Marghilan an Islamic university with a student body of 5,000 is planned, and similar projects have been discussed for Kokand and Khiva.<sup>274</sup>

Today in Central Asia, Wahhabism stands in rigorous opposition to Sufism. Since the Wahhabis do not take into consideration any doctrines other than those expressed by the generation of Prophet Muhammad, they consider the Qur'an and the hadith (the sayings of the Prophet) as the only authoritative sources by which the Islamic community may conduct its affairs.<sup>275</sup> The Sufi tradition in Central Asia is regarded as "nothing but a Zionist and Turkish conspiracy to undermine Islam."<sup>276</sup> The Wahhabis reject the whole structure of Sufi devotional practices such as the worshipping of saints or making pilgrimages to graves of holy figures.<sup>277</sup> Such practices are renounced as being, at best, later corruptions or innovations, and, at worst, "shirk" (polytheism). Anyone who participates in such practices is declared an unbeliever and is subject to the death penalty for

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<sup>272</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, "Islam and Democratic Politics in Central Asia," 190.

<sup>273</sup>Ahmed Rashid, The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism, 78.

<sup>274</sup>Ahmed Rashid, "With God On Their Side," Far Eastern Economic Review, 19 November 1992, 23-4.

<sup>275</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, "Islam and Democratic Politics in Central Asia," World Politics 156, no. 4 (1994): 190.

<sup>276</sup>Ahmed Rashid, The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism, 101.

<sup>277</sup>James Critchlow, "Islam in Fergana Valley: The Wahhabi "'Threat'".

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The Wahhabis not only oppose the Sufi brotherhoods but the Uzbek IRP as well. The Wahhabis denounce the IRP leadership for their willingness to compromise with the Uzbek government in order to participate in parliamentary elections. A leading Wahhabi clergy said: "The IRP wants to be in parliament. We have no desire to be in parliament. We want a revolution."<sup>279</sup>

Although the Wahhabis have managed to arouse some interest and support, their influence is limited. In Uzbekistan they do not number more than 10,000 and they have little following in the capital or in the vast southern regions of the country, where Sufism is much stronger.<sup>280</sup> The puritanical views of the Wahhabis are not shared by the majority of the Muslims of Central Asia, who adhere to the Hanafi school which is noted for its general liberal orientation and its emphasis on private opinion and public consensus in administration and interpretation of Islamic principles.<sup>281</sup>

The foregoing were the basic historical developments that culminated in the formation of the all-Union IRP in June 1990 in the Russian city of Astrakhan. The next chapter will deal with the emergence of the IRP from the perspective of parallel/official Islam and offer an analysis of the first hypothesis.

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<sup>278</sup>John Obert Voll, Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World (Boulder: Westview Press, 1982), 61.

<sup>279</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 95.

<sup>280</sup>Shirin Akiner, "Post-Soviet Central Asia: Past is Prologue," 21.

<sup>281</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, "Islam and Democratic Politics in Central Asia," 190.

**CHAPTER THREE:**  
**PARALLEL AND OFFICIAL ISLAM AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE ISLAMIC  
RENAISSANCE PARTY**

This chapter will analyze the first and the second hypotheses of the dissertation in two sections. The first hypothesis was stated as the following: **The existence of Islam in Central Asia was a necessary cause for the emergence of the IRP in the form of an Islamic party.** In an attempt to analyze this hypothesis, similarities of the IRP with parallel Islam will be looked at in the first section of this chapter. Here, the political power struggles of the all-Union IRP as well as the Uzbek and Tajik republican branches will be described. This section will also analyze how the all-Union IRP and its Uzbek and Tajik branches were formed, how they functioned in a political environment that had hitherto been explicitly hostile to Islamic political activities, and how the IRP interacted with the authorities both at the all-Union and at the republican levels.

The second hypothesis was stated as the following: **The existence of official Islam in Central Asia was a necessary cause for the emergence of the IRP in the form of a legal political entity.** In order to analyze the second hypothesis, similarities of the IRP with official Islam will be looked at in the second section of this chapter. Here, the program and goals of the IRP as well as statements of its leaders regarding the party's activities will be analyzed.<sup>282</sup>

**1. The First Hypothesis: The IRP and Parallel Islam**

Like parallel Islam, the IRP both at the Union and republican levels emerged as a reaction of the Muslim populations of the former Soviet Union to the communist regime in general and the Communist Party in particular. The IRP was part of the general struggle to broaden the definition of Islam by carrying it outside

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<sup>282</sup>Throughout this and the following chapters, "IRP" will refer to both the all-Union and the Tajik and Uzbek branches of the party as a general term, when they all share similar and/or common characteristics. If the Tajik and Uzbek branches are referred, then the specific labels "Tajik IRP" (or the Tajik branch) and "Uzbek IRP" (or the Uzbek branch) will be used.

the narrow boundaries set by official Islam. Like parallel Islam, the IRP aimed to make religion part of the social, cultural, and in some cases, national identity of the Muslim people instead of limiting it to the individual or spiritual level. Islam, according to the party leaders, should play a more important role and enjoy a higher status in a Muslim society, and it had to prevail in both public and private spheres of life. In general therefore, the IRP utilized the potential of parallel Islam to become politicized, which was the result of the general feeling of alienation among the people from different strata of the Muslim societies in the former Soviet Union.

The available membership figures of the IRP seem to suggest that in a relatively short time the party greatly increased its supporters who came from a variety of backgrounds. Very shortly following its establishment, the all-Union IRP increased its influence in several areas of the Soviet Union. Although at first the leadership of the party was dominated by the representatives of the Tatar and Avar communities, the party commanded a relatively large following among other nationalities as well, particularly in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. According to some observers, the all-Union IRP was composed of students, rural dwellers, young men recently coming to towns from the countryside, traditional intelligentsia, and middle and lower sections of the clergy.<sup>283</sup>

According to the regulations of the all-Union IRP, members were to be Muslim men and women above the age of fifteen. They should be obliged to follow the requirements and prohibitions of Islam as well as its moral principles. The members could be expelled from the party if they also belonged to another party the program of which contradicted the program of the IRP.<sup>284</sup>

Since there are no official and verifiable membership figures available, statistics on membership of the all-Union IRP sometimes conflict. The head of the party's Moscow branch, Mohammed Salahitdinov, said on 10 March 1991 in an interview in Literaturnaya Rossiya that the party had about 20,000 members. The

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<sup>283</sup>Ludmilla Polonskaya and Alexei Malashenko, Islam in Central Asia, (Reading: Ithaca Press):1994, 128.

<sup>284</sup>Igor Yermakov and Dmitri Mikulsky, Islam v Rossii i Srednei Azii [Islam in Russia and Middle Asia] (Moscow: Lotus Foundation, 1993), 177.



party's press secretary, Vali Ahmed Sadur, on the other hand, was quoted in Moskovskie Novosti at the same time as stating that the party had 10,000 members with cells in almost all the major cities of the European part of the USSR.<sup>285</sup> Two other reports gave the membership to be around 10,000.<sup>286</sup> Another report estimated the total number of members to be around 60,000, and according to a prominent activist of the IRP, in the summer of 1991 the party had 100,000 members.<sup>287</sup> Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the number was reported to be 70,000.<sup>288</sup>

The stronghold of the Uzbek branch of the IRP is in the densely populated and poverty-stricken Fergana Valley, particularly in the two cities of Namangan and Andijan. The chairman of the Uzbek IRP, Abdullah Utaev, and his first deputy, Abdullah Yusuf are also based in the Fergana Valley. The Karakalpak region and Samarkand are other areas where the IRP is strong. The party has a potential of appealing to a wide spectrum of population, including the rural Uzbeks, young people in Tashkent, and Westernized but nationally conscious intelligentsia to whom Islam is an important part of national identity.<sup>289</sup> Because of government repression there are no verifiable sources of information on the membership of the Uzbek IRP. In 1991 it was reported that the party had about 5,000 members in Tashkent alone.<sup>290</sup> Another estimate put the total membership of the Uzbek IRP as high as 40,000 to 50,000.<sup>291</sup> In a public opinion survey conducted in Uzbekistan at the beginning of 1992, the IRP supporters substantially outnumbered two other major parties.

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<sup>285</sup>Bess Brown, "The Islamic Renaissance Party in Central Asia," 12-3.

<sup>286</sup>The Economist, 21 September 1991, 59; Izvestia, 8 January 1991, 4, quoted in The Current Digest of the Soviet Press, 43, no. 1 (1991): 17.

<sup>287</sup>See respectively, Lahouari Addi, "Islamist Utopia and Democracy," Annals of the American Association of Political and Social Science 524, November 1992: 136; and Alexei V. Malashenko, "Islam and Politics in the Southern Zone of the Former USSR," in Central Asia and Transcaucasia: Ethnicity and Conflict, 119.

<sup>288</sup>The Economist, 21 September 1991, 59.

<sup>289</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>290</sup>The Economist, 21 September 1991, 60.

<sup>291</sup>Mehrdad Haghighyehi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 90.

Erk and Birlik, among ethnic Central Asians. The poll indicated that respondents had the highest degree of confidence in the IRP (57 percent) as compared with Birlik (34 percent) and Erk (seven percent).<sup>292</sup>

Estimates of the number of IRP members in Tajikistan, too, are unconfirmed and sometimes contradictory. They range from ten thousand to seventy thousand.<sup>293</sup> In September 1991 in Islamskie novosti it was reported that according to Davlat Usmon, the head of the Tajik IRP, the membership of the party was between 15,000 and 20,000.<sup>294</sup> Another report claimed that there were 30,000 members in September 1992.<sup>295</sup> Still another scholar gave the estimated number for the same period as 40,000.<sup>296</sup>

The Tajik IRP was influential especially among the rural population, almost all of its leadership being drawn from poorly-educated and unemployed villagers. Only a handful of its leaders had any religious education, those who did not were mostly young unregistered imams of local mosques.<sup>297</sup> However, the leadership of the Tajik IRP drew people from a variety of backgrounds, not only from the unregistered self-appointed mullahs. Some in the Tajik IRP obtained religious education through Soviet institutions of official Islam, the most obvious example being Kazi Turajonzoda, the head of the Tajik Spiritual Directorate. Some had secular careers, like Davlat Usmon, who is a lawyer.<sup>298</sup> Muhammad Sharif Himmatzoda, another

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<sup>292</sup>Opinion Research Memorandum, Office of Research, US Information Agency, 30 September 1992, 12-3.

<sup>293</sup>Muriel Atkin, "Islam as Faith, Politics, and Bogeyman in Tajikistan," in The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia, ed Michael Bourdeaux (New York: M.E.Sharpe, 1995), 257.

<sup>294</sup>Alexei Malashenko, "Islam versus Communism: The Experience of Coexistence," in Russia's Muslim Frontiers, ed. Dale F.Eickelman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 76.

<sup>295</sup>Dilip Hiro, Between Marx and Muhammed: The Changing Face of Central Asia, (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995), 212.

<sup>296</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 88.

<sup>297</sup>See for example, Nassim Jawad and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh Tajikistan: A Forgotten Civil War, (London: Minority Rights Group International, 1995), 13, and Niyazi Aziz, "The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan After February 1990," in State, Religion, and Society in Central Asia: A Post-Soviet Critique, 281.

<sup>298</sup>Muriel Atkin, "Islam as Faith, Politics, and Bogeyman in Tajikistan," 253.

influential leader, is the son of a farmer and a mechanic.<sup>299</sup> There were also local Sufis, who play the traditional role of Sufi orders in resisting anti-Islamic government, as well as urban intellectuals and Islamic fundamentalists supporting an Iranian type of regime.<sup>300</sup>

Perhaps the most comprehensive and reliable record of the membership of the Tajik IRP has been presented by Dmitri Mikulski, staff researcher at the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, who has analyzed the membership patterns and organization of the Tajik IRP.<sup>301</sup> He found that the changes that took place during the Soviet years failed to eradicate the traditional social patterns in Tajikistan, which continue till today. Large Tajik ethnic groups have undergone no significant change and the "avlod" (clan) remains the basic unit of social organization. The avlods also intersect to a great extent, both in the village and in the cities, with the "mahalla" (the neighborhood commune or traditional settlement structure of the Tajiks). The avlods bring their members together in a "gashtak" (men's council) which provides the traditional and basic form of interaction in the community. The gashtaks are traditional assemblies of the inhabitants of a single neighborhood (or sometimes profession). They follow a defined ritual at the end of which a meal is served. The members of one gashtak, according to mores, are obligated to support each other in various life situations.<sup>302</sup>

According to Mikulski, these mahallas or neighborhood communes, are the real foundation of the Tajik IRP, and the gashtaks are the basic organizational pattern of the party's political activity at all levels throughout Tajikistan, especially in the Garm region, the New Matcha in Khojend Oblast (former Leninabad),

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<sup>299</sup>Ahmed Rashid, "Clout of the Clergy," Far Eastern Economic Review, 9 January 1992, 18.

<sup>300</sup>Michael Collins Dunn, "Central Asian Islam: Fundamentalist Threat or Communist Bogeyman?," Middle East Policy, 1, no.4 (1992): 37.

<sup>301</sup>Religious and Political Forces of Contemporary Tajikistan (Religiozno-Politicheskie Syli Sovremennovo Tadjikistana), published in 1994 in Moscow by the Institute of Europe, quoted in Central Asia Brief, 10, no. 2 (February 1994): 11-2.

<sup>302</sup>See also Dmitri Mikulski "Central Asian Alternatives: The Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (History of Creation, Structure, Ideological Principles)," Vostok, no. 6, November-December 1994, quoted in FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 7 April 1995, 97.

and the Kurgan Tyube and Kulyab regions, where many Garm people settled between the 1930s and the 1970s. In other words, there is an intertwining of the organizational structure of the Tajik IRP with the mahalla-avlod settlement. Party bodies at all levels regularly assemble with each other for the discussion of political, organizational, and ideological issues of party life. The party leadership uses the gashtaks as a form of organization to pass their decisions and ideological principles promptly to the rank-and-file party members.<sup>303</sup>

Mikulski claims that the Tajik IRP "comprises people who have maintained the traditional--albeit somewhat transformed during Soviet times--social ties. This conclusion seems valid in relation to both the rank-and-file members and the leaders of the party... This situation in the party ... corresponds entirely to the general nature of the contemporary Tajik society, founded precisely on social ties of a traditional nature."<sup>304</sup> The foundation and the leadership stratum of the Tajik IRP comes from the heads of traditional Sufi brotherhoods, "ishans," while the rank-and-file members enjoy the "neophyte status of murids" (adepts).<sup>305</sup>

So, in general, both the all-Union and republican branches of the IRP brought together those coming from different backgrounds who did not want to live according to the moral, political, and socio-cultural values of the communist system. This seems to be especially true for the more traditional strata of societies and more conservative areas of Central Asia, where negative reaction to the communist system and attachment to Islam were greatest. In other words, the IRP sought the support of the people who preserved their traditional norms and ways of life and resisted the values of the communist system.

#### **A. The IRP in the Political Power Struggle**

The IRP, both at the union and republican levels, was based on widespread societal feelings of alienation against the communist system. Such feelings--which it shared with parallel Islam--pushed the IRP

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<sup>303</sup>Ibid., 97.

<sup>304</sup>Ibid., 98.

<sup>305</sup>Central Asia Brief, 10, no. 2, (February 1994): 12.

into the political power struggle. The party, like parallel Islam, developed outside the official religious establishment and, although sometimes it collaborated with it, refused to be assimilated by it. The party conducted its activities on a purely political basis and engaged in the political power struggle against the Communist Party and/or the communist system from the very beginning of its establishment. It also had the ultimate or long-run goal of establishing a Muslim state. As such, it formed a radically different political alternative for the authorities, going beyond parallel Islam. Both the all-Union IRP and its regional branches in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan emerged as political parties and remained part of the general struggle to overthrow the system.

**a. All-Union IRP in the Political Power Struggle:** The all-Union IRP was the first Islamic party to emerge in the former Soviet Union. At the time of the party's foundation, various Islamic leaders throughout the country sought to unite all Muslims. The contacts among these leaders in various regions of the Soviet Union led to the founding congress of the all-Union IRP on 9 June 1990 in the south Russian city of Astrakhan, a large administrative center and a port in the Volga delta.<sup>306</sup> At the congress, the representatives of Muslim communities from throughout the country declared the establishment of the All-Union IRP and adopted a platform and program. North Caucasians played the most visible role in the creation of the party. There were a total of 150 delegates in the congress: 60 of them were Avars, the major ethnic group in Dagestan; 24 delegates were from Tajikistan and the rest were from various Muslim areas including Abkhazia, Azerbaijan, and Tataristan.<sup>307</sup> An Avar physician, Akhmatkadi Akhtaev, was elected the leader of the party and Geydar Dzhemal, an Azeri, became his deputy. A Tatar scientist from Moscow, Vali Ahmed Sadur, became the party's press secretary and chief ideologist.<sup>308</sup> One of the most prominent future leaders of the Tajik IRP, Davlat Usmon, also played an important role in the congress.

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<sup>306</sup>Dilip Hiro, Between Marx and Muhammad: The Changing Face of Central Asia, 173.

<sup>307</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 87.

<sup>308</sup>Alexei V. Malashenko, "Islam versus Communism: the Experience of Coexistence," in Russia's Muslim Frontiers, 71-2.

During the founding congress, the delegates reached an agreement on the constitution of committees for the several functions of the party. Ten members would sit on each committee and one of these members would act as chairman. The June 1990 meeting adopted the name of Islamic Renaissance Party (Partiya Islamskovo Vozrozhdeniya). The central office of the party was to be located in Moscow for the time being. The delegates agreed to open branches of the party both at republic and district levels.<sup>309</sup>

The newly established party was denied official registration. In Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, the authorities were particularly harsh in dealing with the IPR and they did everything possible to prevent the organizational meetings of the local chapters. In Tashkent, delegates to a January 1991 meeting were arrested by the militia. In Tajikistan the first meeting had to be held illegally in a small village near Dushanbe after the request of the Tajik Muslims to register the local branch of the IRP was denied. Finally, the IRP, denied registration in Muslim regions, applied for and was granted registration as a public association by the executive committee of the Oktiabr raion of Moscow.<sup>310</sup> According to the deputy chairman of the party Geydar Dzhemal, in the long-run this arrangement worked better for the purposes of the party, because headquartering the party in Moscow improved the possibility of establishing closer ties among the Muslims of different republics as well as foreign Muslims.<sup>311</sup>

At the beginning, the all-Union IRP, working out of Moscow, had three regional structures. The first was the Central Asian, the majority of whose members were Tajik; the second was the North Caucasian, consisting mainly of Daghestani, Chechen, and Ingush people; and the third was the European regional structure basically for Muslims living in Russia and Siberia, mainly Tatars. The regional organizations of the party were headed by elected chiefs (amir) and they elected an all-Union organization which in turn elected its secretary (amin). The supreme organ of the party was responsible for organizing congresses to meet at least once every two years. It was the prerogative of the party congress to elect the Council of Ulemas, who were

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<sup>309</sup>Soviet Muslims Brief, no. 3 (1990):4.

<sup>310</sup>Bess Brown, "The Islamic Renaissance Party in Central Asia," 12.

<sup>311</sup>Den, no. 21, 25 October-8 November 1991, 7.

chosen from among the members of the Islamic institutions of Muslim regions. The council had the right to choose and remove the head of the party, to discharge incompetent members, and even approve the composition of the party's Coordination Committee. The Coordination Committee resembled the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the former Soviet Union. According to the regulations of the all-Union IRP, the Central Committee had its own executive organ which dealt with daily tasks. It was made up of different divisions that would specialize in different activities like information, education, finance, printing etc.<sup>312</sup>

Following its formation, the all-Union IRP presented itself as the only political organization working throughout the former Soviet Union, calling itself a party for all Muslims. It held meetings, conferences, educational and training programs all over the country. When, for example, the third regional conference of the party was held in Saratov on 12 April 1992, about forty delegates from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Byelorussia, and other parts of the former Soviet Union attended the conference. During the meeting, the party's press secretary Vali Ahmed Sadur declared that the purpose of the conference was to exchange opinions and to look at some of the problems Muslims were facing in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the successor of the Soviet Union, including the involvement of the Islamic groups in the political activities of their respective countries. Many of the participants asserted that although in number Islam was second only to Christianity in the CIS, it has not been given the place and importance it deserved. Delegates also complained that problems of the Muslims did not get enough media coverage and that governments in many parts of the CIS ignored the Muslims.<sup>313</sup> During the meeting, Sadur pointed out that the party had good relations with different Muslim organizations of the world and did not intend to follow any particular organization or country. Relations should be established with both governmental and nongovernmental organizations. At the meeting, the delegates further supported the Iranian government's proposal that Tashkent and Samarkand should be declared international centers of Islamic

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<sup>312</sup>Igor Yermakov and Dmitri Mikulsky, Islam v Rossii i Srednei Azii 176-7.

<sup>313</sup>Central Asia Brief, 8, no.3 (1992): 9.

learning. They also fully supported the aim of the conference of uniting all Muslims under the banner of Islam, emphasizing that Islam was a religion of peace and brotherhood.<sup>314</sup>

**b. The Uzbek IRP in the Political Power Struggle:** Before the establishment of the Uzbek branch of the all-Union IRP, there were other Islamic groups that had been formed in Uzbekistan during the late 1980s and early 1990s. One such group was the organization called Islam and Democracy of Uzbekistan. It held its founding congress in Almaty, Kazakhstan in October 1988. Although it aimed at becoming an inter-republican party, it did not succeed in reaching beyond Uzbekistan. The membership of the party was estimated at 2,500 in 1989, of which the preponderant majority came from the cities of Andijan, Bukhara, and Samarkand. The chairman of the party Almaz Estekov defined the basic objective of the party as being the "spiritual cleansing of people from immorality and preaching of the democratic principles of the Koran." It is not clear whether the organization is still active today; according to one observer, it may have been absorbed into the Uzbek IRP.<sup>315</sup>

Another group that was formed shortly before the establishment of the Uzbek IRP was the Islamic Democratic Party. That party had its founding congress in August 1990. It advocated the creation of a theocracy and the imposition of sharia, calling for the veiling of women. The leader of the party, Dadakhan Hassanov--a renowned composer and performer of traditional Uzbek music--pointed out their intent to seize power by non-violent means, to unite and educate Uzbek Muslims in the spirit of Islam, and to work with, rather than against the regime.<sup>316</sup> Although it is not clear whether the organization still exists today, it also seems likely to have been integrated into another group. In 1994 Hassanov was reported to be one of the active members of another opposition organization, the nationalist Erk Party.<sup>317</sup> Neither Islam and Democracy nor the Islamic Democratic Party were as influential as the Uzbek branch of the IRP.

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<sup>314</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>315</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 85.

<sup>316</sup>Ibid., 85; Ahmed Rashid, The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism, 100.

<sup>317</sup>RFE/RL Daily Report, 13 October 1994.



On 20 December 1990 a request to hold a constituent conference of the Uzbek branch of the IRP in Tashkent was made to the authorities. The request was rejected. On 26-27 January 1991 group members informed the city officials that they intended to hold a republican conference anyway. The officials again refused to allow the conference, saying that they would not endanger stability by allowing the IRP to meet.<sup>318</sup> However, the Uzbek IRP went ahead with its plans, not disclosing the precise location of the meeting. On the day of the conference, KGB agents or plain-clothes policemen stood at the entrance to each mosque in Tashkent, hoping to determine where the conference was to be held. At the railway station and airport arriving delegates were harassed. Despite these attempts of intimidation, the conference began in a textile workers club in Tashkent. By the time the authorities were able to discover the location of the conference, the participants had managed to adopt documents creating a regional organization and to elect a chairman.<sup>319</sup> Soon afterwards, policemen invaded the meeting and arrested the four hundred delegates and guests on charges of holding an unauthorized assembly. The delegates were fined and one member of the committee of the party was expelled from the republic. The chairman of the all-Union IRP, Akhmad Kazi Akhtaev, attributed the reaction of the Uzbek authorities to fear of the party's potential influence in Uzbek political life.<sup>320</sup>

In February 1991, the Uzbek Supreme Soviet adopted a law which outlawed parties with a religious platform.<sup>321</sup> The Communist Party secretary Karimov stated that clergy should not be allowed to be members of the parliament and banned any attempt by the clergy to run for parliament or to establish religious parties.<sup>322</sup> A year later, the ban on religiously-based political organizations would be strengthened as political parties and

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<sup>318</sup>Abdujabar Abduvakhitov, "Islamic Revivalism in Uzbekistan," 85-6.

<sup>319</sup>Ludmilla Polonskaya and Alexei V. Malashenko, Islam in Central Asia, 125.

<sup>320</sup>Brown, "The Islamic Renaissance Party in Central Asia," 14.

<sup>321</sup>Cassandra Cavanaugh, "Crackdown on the Opposition in Uzbekistan," RFE/RL Research Report, 31 July 1992, 20.

<sup>322</sup>The Economist, 21 September 1991, 58.

movements were forbidden to accept financial support from religious organizations.<sup>323</sup>

At the beginning of December 1991, during the presidential election campaign, Karimov visited the city of Namangan in the Fergana Valley. While he was there, representatives of the official clergy expressed support on behalf of all Muslims for Karimov's presidency. However, this caused great popular resentment and a protest rally was organized. At the demonstration, the leaders of informal Muslim groups took control, set up an alternative Islamic government and elected an "amir" (head), twenty-four year-old Tahir Yuldashev from the IRP. On 8-9 December 1991, a crowd of 10,000 people, belonging mainly to the Uzbek IRP, surrounded the two Communist Party office buildings in Namangan, demanding that one be made into a hospital and the other be given to the Islamists as a headquarters. After the buildings were besieged for several days, the Communists abandoned them. According to Tahir Yuldashev, it was "God's strength" that helped them turn the old Communist Party office into an Islamic center. Although the IRP was still not recognized, claimed Yuldashev, the authorities would not be able to do anything against it.<sup>324</sup>

Karimov was forced to recognize Muslim self-government which according to one account had 50,000 supporters.<sup>325</sup> Later, however, Karimov regained the upper hand. Seventy-one of the movement's organizers were arrested. From then on the Uzbek IRP operated underground and the self-government bodies were dissolved. But Muslim activists succeeded in establishing another Islamic organization called "Adolat" (Justice), which cooperated with other radical militant organizations in Fergana like the "Islam Lashkari" (Army of Islam), as well as the underground IRP. Adolat was composed of volunteer squads of male activists seeking to maintain public order within their neighborhoods. Having established itself in districts where religious attachments were very high, Adolat emerged as a potentially powerful organization upholding Islamic morality and tradition. In Namangan, Adolat formed vigilante groups to impose the veil on women

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<sup>323</sup>Bess Brown, "Tajik Civil War Prompts Crackdown in Uzbekistan," RFE/RL Research Report, 12 March 1993, 3.

<sup>324</sup>The Guardian, 18 March 1992, 5.

<sup>325</sup>The Economist, 21 September 1991, 58.

and to ban the sale of alcohol. Some citizens were "arrested" and "tried" by Islamic "judges" appointed by these groups who often sentenced the guilty to forced labor on the construction or repair of local mosques.<sup>326</sup> Adolat exercised considerable influence in early 1992, until the government managed to restore its authority.<sup>327</sup>

After the events in Namangan, Karimov became less and less tolerant of Islam. Although he had always opposed the state's adoption of a religious ideology, when he first came to power, he had acknowledged the importance of Islam in the lives of the Uzbek people, in their psychology, and in the building of spiritual and moral values.<sup>328</sup> But with increase in political activities by the Tajik branch of the IRP, and especially after civil war would break out in Tajikistan in spring 1992, Karimov became more antagonistic. He blamed the war in Tajikistan on the IRP and became very concerned about the spread of Islamic revivalism from Tajikistan and Afghanistan to Uzbekistan. After the civil war ended, all religious activities, political and nonpolitical, were severely curtailed in Uzbekistan. By Karimov's order the loudspeakers placed over the mosques for azan (the call for prayer) were removed. Strict regulations were imposed for the construction and repair of mosques. Many religious schools in Tashkent and Samarkand were closed by the authorities.<sup>329</sup> According to Karimov, mosques in the republic had been used as one of the most effective means of promoting Islamic values among the population and carrying out agitation for the establishment of an Islamic government in Uzbekistan.<sup>330</sup> In article 57 of the 1992 constitution of Uzbekistan, adopted after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, political parties based on national and religious principles

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<sup>326</sup>Dilip Hiro, Between Marx and Muhammad: The Changing Face of Central Asia, 179.

<sup>327</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 94.

<sup>328</sup>Dilip Hiro, Between Marx and Muhammad: The Changing Face of Central Asia, 182.

<sup>329</sup>Central Asia Brief, no. 4 (1993): 5.

<sup>330</sup>Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 6 January 1994, 3, quoted in The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press, 46, no. 1 (1994): 17.

were outlawed.<sup>331</sup> The underground Uzbek IRP was further repressed. The chairman of the party, Abdullah Utaev, was accused of being connected with Tajik IRP militants, and was abducted by gunmen on a Tashkent street on 6 December 1992 while on his way to afternoon prayer.<sup>332</sup> As many as twenty other Muslim scholars from the Uzbek IRP were reported to be in jail with him.<sup>333</sup> Since Uzbek authorities denied holding him, his whereabouts were unknown.<sup>334</sup> The arrest of Utaev marked the beginning of a period of active repression of the Uzbek IRP that continued into the second half of the 1990s.<sup>335</sup> In late 1996, the strength of the IRP and other Islamic groups in general remained largely a matter of speculation.

**c. The Tajik IRP in the Political Power Struggle:** The Tajik IRP traces its roots back to youth groups that had been formed in the 1960s and 1970s. It grew out of the underground Islamic Revival Movement, which was organized in Muslim elementary schools that operated in the village teahouses. These schools became widespread in Kulyab and Kurgan Tyube oblasts during this period. The elders of the Sufi clans provided instruction during their regular visits to villages, assembling preschool children as well as adolescents. They taught Arabic, the Qur'an, and the Hadith for several weeks at a time. According to one observer:

All of this took place under the protection of the portraits of members of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee that decorated every teahouse. The training was intensive, and so profoundly affected the consciousness of the children that upon coming to conventional Soviet schools, they even read Cyrillic from right to left.<sup>336</sup>

Although the authorities and Soviet security organs were aware of the movement in the 1960s and

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<sup>331</sup>Central Asia Brief, no. 1, (1993): 4-5.

<sup>332</sup>Ibid.

<sup>333</sup>The New York Times, 13 February 1993, L5.

<sup>334</sup>Yalcin Tokgozoglul, "Uzbek Government Continues to Stifle Dissent," RFE/RL Research Report, 1 October 1993, 13.

<sup>335</sup>Financial Times, 26 January 1993, 5.

<sup>336</sup>Dmitri Mikulski, "Central Asian Alternatives: The Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan," 94.

1970s, they "looked the other way" and did not arrest the mullahs who were directing the activities.<sup>337</sup> But they did scatter them to rural areas. According to one observer, at the time the Soviet government did not want to alienate the Middle Eastern countries with which it was trying to establish good relations. However, by sending the mullahs to remote rural areas, they unintentionally led to a wide diffusion of the movement. For example in 1985 it was reported that the movement not only existed in Kulyab and Kurgan Tyube but also in districts more directly subordinate to republic administration, near the capital city of Dushanbe.<sup>338</sup>

What was to become the Tajik IRP was established as a clandestine political organization in 1976. Most of the new group's supporters came from Kurgan Tyube, including a young activist, Muhammad Sharif Himmatzoda, who would emerge as the party's leader fifteen years later.<sup>339</sup> The group started to build an awareness among its members of the importance of creating a Muslim state which would replace the atheist Soviet regime.<sup>340</sup> According to the deputy chairman of the party, Davlat Usmon, by 1977 the hitherto fragmented Islamic groups had already been unified and consolidated throughout Tajikistan.<sup>341</sup> Usmon pointed out that "a deep and thorough conspiracy" against the regime was organized during the IRP's underground years. Its members met clandestinely and only a few of them were arrested by the KGB during this period. In 1982, the activists started an underground newspaper called Islama Pravda (Islamic Truth) and by 1989 they were issuing underground leaflets and brochures calling for the liquidation of the communist-atheist regime.<sup>342</sup>

In the post-Soviet political era, even before the establishment of the Tajik IRP as an open public organization, religious motives always seemed to play an important role in Tajik politics. For example, in

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<sup>337</sup>Ibid.

<sup>338</sup>Allen Hetmanek, "Islamic Revolution and Jihad Come to the Former Soviet Central Asia: The Case of Tajikistan" Central Asian Survey, 12, no. 3 (1993): 369.

<sup>339</sup>Dilip Hiro, Between Marx and Muhammed: The Changing Face of Central Asia, 193.

<sup>340</sup>Central Asia Brief, no. 5/6, 1992, 5.

<sup>341</sup>Dmitri Mikulski, "Central Asian Alternatives: The Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan," 94.

<sup>342</sup>Robin Wright, "Report from Turkestan" The New Yorker, 6 April 1992, 74.

February 1990, upon hearing rumors that Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan would be given preferential treatment for housing over local residents of Tajikistan, thousands of people demonstrated. They demanded the resignation of the communist leadership, improvement of economic conditions, job opportunities, and housing in the republic. There were also demands for the declaration of Islam as the official religion of Tajikistan, for the reinstatement of Arabic script, and for an end to the sale of pork in public markets.<sup>343</sup> It was also reported that during the demonstrations Tajik girls who were not wearing headscarves were terrorized.<sup>344</sup> After several days of looting, burning, and pogroms against non-Tajiks, especially ethnic Russians, 22 people were dead, and more than 700 injured.<sup>345</sup>

After the unrest, many of those who were put on trial for their role in the violence were village mullahs accused of preaching interethnic and interconfessional hatred. Investigators claimed that the plan for the rioting against the non-Tajiks was discussed by some extremist religious groups ten days before the events occurred. For example, during the opening ceremony of a mosque in the village of Arbobkhoton in the Leninsky District, many participants called for the overthrow of the Soviet regime and the establishment of an Islamic state.<sup>346</sup>

For the Tajik opposition in general, the period following the February 1990 events was marked by closer cooperation among the various groups and more open political confrontation with the authorities. Two previously organized groups, Rastokhez and Lali Badakhshan ("Ruby of Badakhshan") now became more active. The former, an informal discussion group, was formed in 1989 by Tajik writers and intellectuals. It aimed at advancing Tajik national interests, culture, tradition and language within a parliamentary democratic system.<sup>347</sup> Lali Badakhshan was created in 1989 as an organization to promote the interests of the Pamiri

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<sup>343</sup>David Aikman, "Karl Marx Makes Room for Muhammad," Time, 12 March 1990, 45.

<sup>344</sup>Bess Brown, "Unrest in Tajikistan," Report on the USSR, 23 February 1990, 30.

<sup>345</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 11 September 1990, 105.

<sup>346</sup>Izvestia, 27 August 1990, 20, quoted in The Current Digest of the Soviet Press, 42, no. 34 (1990): 25.

<sup>347</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, "Islamic Revival in Central Asian Republics," 256.

ethnic group that resided in the Gorno-Badakhshani region. That group's main political goal was to achieve greater autonomy for the region and to promote Pamiri culture in a parliamentary democracy.<sup>348</sup> In addition to these two groups, in August 1990 the Democratic Party of Tajikistan (DPT) was founded, mainly by the members of the intelligentsia, although there were workers, peasants, and some Islamic leaders among its members (this last group was attracted by the party's tolerant program regarding religion). DPT also included people from other ethnic groups such as Russians and Jews. It advocated a mixture of Tajik nationalism, Islamic revival, and parliamentary democracy. (Rastokhez, Lali Badakhshan and the DPT would in spring 1992 collaborate with the Tajik IRP and form the "United Block of Democratic Forces of Tajikistan.")

In October 1990, the Islamic Revival Movement emerged from the underground. Davlat Usmon and Said Ibrahim Gado, two of the participants of the Astrakhan congress, which had established the all-Union IRP, formally requested the permission of the authorities to hold a regional founding congress of the party in the capital city of Dushanbe. When their request was rejected, the conference was held in the village of Chortut in Leninsky raion. In attendance were 300 delegates from all parts of the republic, along with some party members from Tataristan and Dagestan.<sup>349</sup> During the meeting a council of ulema with 27 members was created and Adussamad Himmatov was elected chairman.<sup>350</sup>

The Tajik government attempted to prevent the establishment of the IRP. The Communist Party forced the mosques to pledge that they would not join any political party and that they would act in accordance with the laws of the Tajik republic.<sup>351</sup> All active supporters of the party in the republic were placed under surveillance. The authorities prohibited club and movie theater managers from letting their premises for

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<sup>348</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 233.

<sup>349</sup>Bess Brown, "The Islamic Renaissance Party in Central Asia," 13.

<sup>350</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 87.

<sup>351</sup>Miron Rezun, "The Muslim Borderlands: Islam and Nationalism in Transition," in Nationalism and the Breakup of an Empire: Russia and its Periphery, ed. Miron Rezun (Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1992): 127.

the conference. KGB officials kept mosques under constant surveillance.<sup>352</sup> On 5 October 1990, one day before the scheduled constituent conference of the Tajik branch of the party, the conference was prohibited. The chairman of the Supreme Soviet Committee on Questions of Legislation, Law, and Appeals of the Citizens pointed out that the program represented by the Tajik branch of the IRP contradicted both the USSR law on freedom of worship and religious organizations and the Tajik constitution.<sup>353</sup> However, the Tajik Muslims went ahead and held a constituent conference of the IRP in Chortut. In December 1990, the Tajik legislature outlawed the Tajik IRP and passed a law prohibiting the establishment of any religious political groups.<sup>354</sup> President Makhkamov further justified the outlawing of the party in Tajikistan by claiming that it consisted of Muslim extremists and had political links with Afghan mujahidin and Iranian fundamentalists.<sup>355</sup>

Despite the ban, however, the Tajik IRP continued its activities and was an important part of the Tajik political scene in the following months. On 31 August 1991, President Mahkamov was forced to resign as a result of a no confidence vote in the Supreme Soviet and mass demonstrations organized by the Tajik IRP, the Democratic Party of Tajikistan (DPT) and Rastokhez.<sup>356</sup> The Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, Kadriiddin Aslanov, became the acting president. On 9 September 1991, the Tajik Supreme Soviet announced Tajikistan's independence, but the demonstrators continued their protests, calling for the dismantling of the Communist Party and holding of new, multiparty elections, demanding that recruits perform their military service in Tajikistan.<sup>357</sup> Aslanov issued a decree that banned the Communist Party.

On 21 September 1991, the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan staged what its opponents termed a

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<sup>352</sup>Ludmilla Polonskaya and Alexei V. Malashenko, Islam in Central Asia, 124.

<sup>353</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 9 October 1990, 104.

<sup>354</sup>The Economist, 21 September 1991, 58.

<sup>355</sup>Soviet Muslims Brief, 7, no. 2 (1991): 5.

<sup>356</sup>DPT, a party including mainly Tajik intellectuals who advocated a mixture of Tajik nationalism, parliamentary democracy and Islamic revival, was very recently established at the time. Rastokhez, on the other hand, was founded in 1989 with similar goals and social backing.

<sup>357</sup>Izvestiia, 11 September 1991, 11.



"parliamentary putsch" which forced the resignation of Aslanov. He was replaced by the former Communist Party secretary Rakhman Nabiev. The Supreme Soviet acted a day after Aslanov banned the Party and ordered confiscation of its property.<sup>358</sup> On 23 September 1991, the ban on the Party was reversed and a state of emergency was introduced in the republic. The same day a rally of about two thousand people was organized by Rastokhez, the DPT, and the IRP. For over a week the participants protested the declaration of a state of emergency and demanded the dissolution of the Supreme Soviet and the holding of popular elections.<sup>359</sup> To resolve the crisis, Nabiev resigned. The Supreme Soviet rescinded the state of emergency, suspended the Communist Party, and agreed to hold new presidential elections in November 1991.<sup>360</sup>

With the acceleration of the process of breakup of the Soviet Union after the 1991 coup, the leaders of the regional branch of the all-Union IRP made another attempt to create their own party in Tajikistan. The constituent congress of the new independent party was held in Dushanbe on 26 October 1991 with the participation of 650 delegates and 310 guests. The congress adopted a resolution converting the Tajik republican organization of the all-Union IRP into the Tajik IRP. A party program and a charter were adopted, and a presidium of 17 people was elected. Muhammad Sharif Himmatzoda was named chair and Davlat Usmon and Said Ibrahim Goda became deputy chairs.<sup>361</sup>

Presidential elections in Tajikistan were held on 24 November 1991. The chairman of the Tajik Supreme Soviet Rakhman Nabiev won 58 percent of the votes cast. Davlat Khudonazarov, chairman of the USSR Union of Cinematographers, who was nominated for the presidency by many of the most prominent opposition groups, including the IRP, got 34 percent of the votes.<sup>362</sup> The opposition parties and Khudonazarov

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<sup>358</sup>Justin Burke, "Muslims vs. Communists in Soviet Tadzhikistan," The Christian Science Monitor, 1 October 1991, 3.

<sup>359</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 25 September 1991, 84.

<sup>360</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 144.

<sup>361</sup>Dmitri Mikulski, "Central Asian Alternatives: The Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan," 95.

<sup>362</sup>Ahmed Rashid, The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism?, 175.

accused the government of fraud and rejected the election results. The new government excluded the opposition and tension remained high.

### **1. The Tajik Civil War**

At the end of March 1992 the inhabitants of Gorno Badakhshan region in Tajikistan organized an anti-government gathering in Shakhidon (Martyrs) Square in Dushanbe. They were protesting the removal of Muhammadayez Nojavanov, a fellow Badakhshani and a supporter of democratic reforms, from the post of minister of internal affairs in the Nabiev government. The demonstrators also demanded the release of the mayor of Dushanbe, who had been arrested on 6 March when he had ordered the removal of a Lenin statue.<sup>363</sup> A coalition of opposition parties, including the Tajik IRP, joined the Badakhshanis and the protest quickly grew into a major around-the-clock demonstration that lasted almost a month. More than five dozen giant tents, provided by the central mosque in support of the demonstrators, were set up. The area where the demonstrators gathered was nicknamed "Tent City" and it had supply lines of food and water.<sup>364</sup> The protesters, whose number grew to 100,000, demanded the following: to dissolve the parliament and the presidium; to sack the chair of the Supreme Soviet, Safarali Kenjaev; to fix a date for a parliamentary general elections; to allow a multi-party system; prepare a new constitution; establish a temporary coalition government, and form a new presidium half of whose members should be from the opposition.<sup>365</sup> In late April the opposition seized 18 hostages (two ministers and 16 Supreme Soviet deputies) in support of their demands.<sup>366</sup>

On 22 April 1992, the chair of the Supreme Soviet Kenjaev resigned and the demonstrations stopped. But two days later President Nabiev appointed him the head of the committee for national security, formerly

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<sup>363</sup>Central Asia Brief, no. 2 (1992):4.

<sup>364</sup>Robin Wright, "Report from Turkestan," 72.

<sup>365</sup>Central Asia Brief, no. 2 (1992):5.

<sup>366</sup>Mehrdad Haghighyeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 145.

the KGB. The opposition regarded the appointment as a provocation and resumed their demonstrations. On the night of 24 April, 500 pro-government demonstrators from the Kulyab region crowded into Ozodi (Liberty) Square in front of the parliament building. By morning their number had risen to 2,000.<sup>367</sup> The demonstrators demanded the reinstatement of Kenjaev as chairman of the Supreme Soviet; the dismissal of Kazi Turajonzoda, the highest spiritual leader of the Tajiks, from his post; the election of the chief Islamic dignitary by all Tajik people; and cancellation of all agreements already made with the opposition.

There were now two groups of demonstrators in Dushanbe, the coalition of opposition parties and the government supporters. The two groups mulled about and did not clash for some time. But on 1 May 1992 President Nabiev issued a decree authorizing 1,800 automatic rifles to be distributed among his supporters in order to create a "National Guard." Then things changed rapidly.<sup>368</sup> (The National Guard was later succeeded by the "Popular Front" which would officially be registered as a public organization in October 1992.) On 3 May 1992 Kenjaev was restored to his former post of chairman of the Supreme Soviet. Anti-government forces then stormed the presidential palace and the following day they seized the national television center. Representatives of the Tajik IRP and Democratic Party of Tajikistan called upon the public not to support Nabiev's leadership. Nabiev declared a state of emergency and ordered a curfew. On 5 May 1992, when armed clashes broke out between the two groups of demonstrators and three people were killed, he revoked the state of emergency and negotiated an agreement with the leaders of the opposition parties.<sup>369</sup>

Although all opposition organizations participated in the spring 1992 demonstrations, the leading role was played by the Tajik IRP. Most of the demonstrators were the party's supporters. During the demonstrations the protests increasingly took on a religious atmosphere, with Islamic slogans similar to those used in Iran shouted by bearded young men and veiled women who declared their readiness to be martyred for

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<sup>367</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 27 April 1992, 60.

<sup>368</sup>Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, Human Rights in Tajikistan in the Wake of Civil War (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1993), xvi.

<sup>369</sup>Ahmed Rashid, The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism, 175.

Islam.<sup>370</sup> Daily prayers were organized during the demonstrations and the speakers told the demonstrators that they were "mujahidin."<sup>371</sup> Tajik veterans of the Soviet-Afghan war set up a tent of their own "to vent their wrath at a system that had forced them to fight their brethren in Afghanistan."<sup>372</sup>

President Nabiev ultimately accepted all the demands of the opposition, except that he give up the presidency. The opposition agreed to allow him to remain as nominal president until the general election which was set for the end of 1992. Nabiev set up a National Reconciliation government with 24 cabinet members: eight were from the opposition, including the ministries of interior, security, education, foreign affairs, and defense.<sup>373</sup> Vice-chairman of the IRP Davlat Usmon was appointed vice-premier and it was agreed that he would be government spokesman. In a protocol signed by the president, the council of ministers and the opposition, it was stated that equal rights should exist for all political organizations and groups, and that political parties and organizations could operate, provided that their activity was within the framework of the law.<sup>374</sup>

But the pro-Nabiev Communists in Khojend and Kuliab who ruled Tajikistan for decades did not accept the new coalition government and accused it of being unconstitutional. The pro-Nabiev militia from the Kuliab and Hissar regions refused to disarm and left the capital with its weapons on 9 May. The National Guard of Nabiev, formed immediately after the establishment of the coalition government, drafted these militias into its own ranks. The Guard demanded that the opposition parties, now calling themselves the "National Salvation Front" surrender the weapons they had acquired, but they refused.<sup>375</sup>

Tajikistan was in a chaos. Although a parliament existed it could not meet as the members from

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<sup>370</sup>Dilip Hiro, Between Marx and Muhammed: The Changing Face of Central Asia, 207.

<sup>371</sup>The Boston Globe, 6 May 1992, 10.

<sup>372</sup>Robin Wright, "Report from Turkestan," 72.

<sup>373</sup>Central Asia Brief, no. 2 (1992): 5.

<sup>374</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 7 May 1992, 53.

<sup>375</sup>Dilip Hiro, Between Marx and Muhammed: The Changing Face of Central Asia, 208.

Khojend and Kuliab refused to attend the meetings.<sup>376</sup> Nabiev was unable to persuade his supporters to accept the new government. In June armed clashes between pro and anti-coalition forces broke out and by late summer escalated into a full-scale civil war. On the one side was the National Salvation Front that had established its headquarters on 19 June in Dushanbe with forces favoring the Tajik IRP, the DPT, Rastokhez, and Lali Badakhshan. The deputy chairman of the IRP Davlat Usmon and the chairman of the DPT Shadmon Yusuf led this group.<sup>377</sup> The pro-communist and anti-coalition group, on the other hand was composed of Nabiev's National Guard and a procommunist group from Kuliab called the People's Front of Tajikistan led by a Kulyabi Tajik, Sangak Safarov.<sup>378</sup>

On 28 July 1992, pro-government forces in Kulyab and opposition forces in the Garm region signed a peace agreement in Khorog, the capital of Gorno Badakhshan, to end hostilities. Both promised to hand in their weapons. But as the fighting in the south continued, the agreement collapsed almost immediately.<sup>379</sup> On 31 August an opposition paramilitary group seized the presidential palace and mass demonstrations in the following days called for President Nabiev's resignation. On 7 September he was forced to resign at gunpoint at Dushanbe airport, after three of his bodyguards were wounded by the opposition.<sup>380</sup>

In accordance with the constitution, after Nabiev's resignation, Supreme Soviet chairman Akbarsho Iskandarov, who came from the Gorno Badakhshan region and enjoyed the support of the Islamic-democratic opposition, became the acting president. A moderate, Iskandarov tried to mediate between the warring sides. But he was unsuccessful and the power struggle between the pro and anti-government forces intensified.

By late September 1992 Tajikistan was paralyzed. There were food shortages and lack of medical

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<sup>376</sup>Keith Martin, "Tajikistan: Civil War Without End," 20.

<sup>377</sup>Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, Human Rights in Tajikistan in the Wake of Civil War, xviii.

<sup>378</sup>Barnett R. Rubin, "Tajikistan: From Soviet Republic to Russian-Uzbek Protectorate," in Central Asia and the World, ed. Michael Mandelbaum (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Inc., 1994), 214.

<sup>379</sup>Ahmed Rashid, "Dominion of Dominoes," Far Eastern Economic Review, 24 September 1992, 22.

<sup>380</sup>*Ibid.*, 22.

supplies. The government resigned in early November, a few weeks before the scheduled opening of the sixteenth session of the Tajik Supreme Soviet in Khojend. The session was intended to create a government of national conciliation. However, the ex-Communists now staged a comeback. The Supreme Soviet had been elected in 1990 and 94 percent of its members were Communist Party members at the time. Rather than focusing on a course of national reconciliation, the session rejected attempts at compromise. The Supreme Soviet seated a pro-communist government and replaced Iskandarov with Imomali Rakhmanov, a conservative from Kulyab, as president.<sup>381</sup> All members of the opposition parties lost their portfolios, and the majority of the new ministers were Kulyabis, sympathetic to ex-president Nabiev, who was a Khojendi. In the same session, the Supreme Soviet also voted to combine Kurgan Tyube and Kuliab regions into one administrative region, Khatlon, in an attempt to ensure control of the south of the republic by pro-communist forces from these regions.<sup>382</sup> In early December 1992, Dushanbe was captured by pro-Nabiev forces and between 3,000 to 5,000 people --most of them from the IRP and DPT-- were killed.<sup>383</sup>

## 2. Developments After the Civil War

In early 1993 several prominent opposition leaders were arrested on charges of trying to seize power by force, inciting to civil war, and seeking to set up a Muslim fundamentalist state in Tajikistan. Among those arrested were the IRP chairman Muhammad Sharif Himmatzoda and deputy chairman Davlat Usmon, who were later released. A number of other members of the IRP also received sentences ranging from three years to death on charges of "calling for the overthrow of the government."<sup>384</sup> The case of Ajik Aliev, who was the former chairman of the Tajik IRP in the Dangara district of the Khatlon region, received international

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<sup>381</sup>Keith Martin, "Tajikistan: Civil War Without End?"

<sup>382</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 147.

<sup>383</sup>Ahmed Rashid, "Civil War Drives Tajik Refugees to Afghanistan," Far Eastern Economic Review, 28 January 1993, 18.

<sup>384</sup>Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, Human Rights in Tajikistan on the Eve of the Presidential Elections, (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1994), 4-5.

attention, particularly from Amnesty International. Aliev went on trial on 20 July 1993 on charges of treason, organizing the forcible overthrow of the constitutional order, terrorism, hostage taking, and murder. On 25 August 1993, he was found guilty and sentenced to death.<sup>385</sup> He was executed on 15 September 1993.<sup>386</sup> Executions of other IRP members were also carried out, allegedly following fabricated charges.<sup>387</sup>

On 21 June 1993 the Supreme Court of Tajikistan banned the activities of the IRP, the Democratic Party of Tajikistan, Rastokhez, and Lali Badakhshan. These organizations were found guilty of violating the Tajik Law on Public Associations, the Constitution, and their own programs and charters by attempting the violent seizure of power, taking legislators hostages, and causing civil war.<sup>388</sup>

The state prosecutor of Tajikistan started proceedings against Kazi Turajonzoda, the head of the Tajik Spiritual Directorate, who fled the country after being accused of attempting to create an Islamic state. Under pressure from the Dushanbe government, the Muslim religious establishment elected a conservative clergyman to replace Turajonzoda.<sup>389</sup>

### 3. Negotiations

After the civil war, many of the IRP's best known leaders including Davlat Usmon, Muhammad Sharif Himmatzoda, and Kazi Turajonzoda fled to other Muslim countries, mostly to Afghanistan. There, they collaborated with several mujahidin leaders and used the latter's military camps to continue their struggle

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<sup>385</sup>Amnesty International, Tajikistan: Compilation Document (New York: Amnesty International, 1993), 7.

<sup>386</sup>Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, Tajikistan: Political Prisoners in Tajikistan (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1994), 9.

<sup>387</sup>Bess Brown, "Tajik Opposition to be Banned," RFE/RL Research Report 2 April 1993, 11; Central Asia Brief, no. 4 (1993): 3.

<sup>388</sup>Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, Human Rights in Tajikistan in the Wake of Civil War, (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1994), 21-2; Amnesty International: Tajikistan: Compilation Document, 9; FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 22 June 1993, 44.

<sup>389</sup>*Ibid.*, 12.

against the communist regime in Tajikistan. Beginning in spring 1993, armed groups of Tajiks started to launch attacks into Tajikistan from their bases in Afghanistan.<sup>390</sup> Although at first the Tajik government had refused to deal with the opposition, it later changed its stance and inaugurated negotiations for ending the fighting. This change of attitude was mainly due to two factors. First, the government could not stop the attacks. Second, Russia, which was providing most of the border troops of the CIS countries located on the Tajik-Afghan border, became increasingly uncomfortable with the situation and pressured the Tajik government to start negotiations. During a series of talks, countries other than Russia such as Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, as well as the United Nations, were involved as supervisors, mediators, and observers.

The Tajik IRP played a very visible role during the negotiations, acting as the main representative of the Tajik opposition. The party, which now called itself the "Islamic Movement of Tajikistan," seemed to receive "de facto" recognition both from the Dushanbe government and from international organizations such as the United Nations. According to the head of a United Nations delegation, who traveled to Tajik refugee camps in north Afghanistan in March 1995, the main purpose of his trip was to hold a meeting with Abdullah Nuri Saidov, the head of the Islamic Movement of Tajikistan. He stated that "It would be impossible to settle the political problem of Tajikistan without the participation of the [Islamic] opposition in Tajikistan."<sup>391</sup>

The Tajik government also seemed to accept the importance of the IRP. In April 1995, when consultative negotiations were held in Moscow between the government and opposition delegations, Rakhmanov expressed hope that the negotiations would be constructive and produce good results.<sup>392</sup> He stated that he was ready to meet with the leader of the opposition Abdullah Nuri Saidov "at any time, any place" with the purpose of "preventing further conflict situations on the Tajik-Afghan border, establishing and achieving

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<sup>390</sup>After the civil war, the CIS countries, particularly Russia, sent border guards to Tajikistan to help the Tajik government patrol the area and ensure the security of the southern frontiers of the CIS.

<sup>391</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 14 March 1995, 85.

<sup>392</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 21 April 1995, 60.



peace, and consolidating stability in [Tajikistan]."<sup>393</sup>

The first round of peace talks started in April 1994 in Moscow. Largely thanks to the diplomatic efforts of Russian and United Nations officials, representatives of the Tajik leadership and opposition came together for the first time since the end of civil war. During the talks, the two sides discussed measures to reach a cease-fire and to repatriate Tajik refugees. A very general joint statement given by the two sides at the end of the talks expressed the sides' readiness to make efforts to settle the conflict peacefully. However, neither side was prepared and the talks ended inconclusively.

A second round of peace talks started in Teheran on 18 June 1994. The Iranian government, sympathetic to the Tajik IRP from its foundation, helped persuade the party's leaders to continue the talks. Some of these leaders, such as Kazi Turajonzoda, had been residing in Teheran since April 1994. During this round of talks, it again became clear that the sides were widely separated. The government delegation was basically interested in a cease-fire, whereas the opposition had a number of other objectives, such as the freeing of political prisoners, dropping of all criminal cases in connection with the civil war, lifting of the ban on the activity of political movements and parties, and freedom of the press.<sup>394</sup> In September, when the government agreed to meet the opposition demands for releasing political prisoners, the two sides agreed on a temporary cease-fire under the supervision of the United Nations.

In late October a third round of talks which aimed to achieve a permanent cease-fire was held in Islamabad, Pakistan. The two sides agreed to extend the cease-fire which would be monitored by United Nations observers until 6 February 1995, and to create a commission to work on enhancing the peace process.<sup>395</sup>

On 9 November 1994 presidential elections and a referendum on a new constitution which would

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<sup>393</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 24 April 1995, 83.

<sup>394</sup>Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 29 June 1994, 3, quoted in The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press, 46, no. 26 (1994): 21-2.

<sup>395</sup>Bess Brown, "Overriding Economics," Transition, 1994 in Review Part ii, 15 February 1995.

increase presidential powers were held in Tajikistan. Imomali Rakhmanov was reelected president winning 60 percent of the votes. His only rival in the election was the former prime minister and then ambassador to Russia, Abdumalik Abdullojanev, who got 35 percent of the votes.<sup>396</sup> Both candidates were members of the ex-communist elite, and they favored a slow transition to a market economy and close ties with Moscow. The opposition parties, including the IRP, did not recognize the results of the elections because they were not allowed to participate. They also pointed out that at the time of the elections 30 percent of the electorate was living outside of Tajikistan as refugees from the civil war.<sup>397</sup>

In January and April 1995 consultative negotiations between the two sides resumed in Tehran and then in Moscow. The discussions concentrated on more effectively implementing the cease-fire and on its prolongation. These negotiations did not achieve a definite result but they paved the way for a more conclusive round of talks which were held in Kabul on 17-19 May 1995. At the end of that meeting a joint protocol was signed by the Tajik President Rakhmanov and the leader of the Islamic opposition Mullah Saidov. The two sides agreed to extend the cease-fire until 29 February 1996 and to start a fifth round of peace talks on 18 September 1995. At the end of the Kabul meeting, a joint statement was issued declaring that "a great deal" had been achieved as both sides "proved their readiness to settle the most important problems of the country, to reach mutual understanding between the parties, to ensure the cease-fire, the return of all refugees to their own homes, and fully normalize the political situation in Tajikistan."<sup>398</sup> The two sides extended the cease-fire for another three months, and agreed on the issues to be discussed in the next round of talks which were scheduled for Almaty, Kazakhstan, immediately after the Kabul talks. The opposition proposed that a council of national reconciliation be formed, made up of 40 percent from the opposition, 40 percent from the government and 20 percent from other ethnic groups in Tajikistan. The council would

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<sup>396</sup>Sevodnya, 9 November 1994, 5, quoted in The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press, 46, no. 45 (1994): 20.

<sup>397</sup>Wendy Sloane, "Holding Islam at Bay," The Christian Science Monitor, 4 November 1994, 5.

<sup>398</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 22 May 1995, 81-2.

resolve future political issues, and set constitutional, presidential, and parliamentary elections.<sup>399</sup> However, during the talks in Kazakhstan which started on 22 May 1995 the government delegation rejected the proposal, which increased the tension at the talks. Ali Akbar Turajonzoda stated that "no common language has yet been found between the government and the opposition."<sup>400</sup>

A few months later, on 26 February 1995 parliamentary elections were held in Tajikistan and the opposition was again almost entirely excluded. The only candidates allowed to stand were those who supported President Rakhmanov. One opposition party, the People's Unity Party, led by former Prime Minister Abdumalik Abdullojanov, was allowed to nominate candidates for five seats out of a 181-member parliament.<sup>401</sup> Once again, the opposition did not recognize the results of the elections and the two sides did not resume their talks for several months. Attempts made by the United Nations to restart negotiations failed. It was finally decided by the two sides that a fifth round of talks would start in Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan, in the fall of 1995. In October 1995, however, the Tajik opposition forces took a number of government soldiers prisoner while they were carrying out military operations in the Tavildara district, the stronghold of the opposition. Although the Tavildara events did not prevent the resumption of talks on 30 November 1995, they made progress difficult and again the talks ended inconclusively.

At the end of 1995, the Tajik opposition forces, united under the head of the Islamic Movement of Tajikistan, Abdullah Nuri Saidov, were still in exile, mostly in Afghanistan and Iran. They did not recognize the Tajik government and continued their political activities against it.

As analyzed in the first section, the political activities of the all-Union IRP and its Uzbek and Tajik branches emerged under somewhat different conditions. When the all-Union IRP was established, the former Soviet Union was still intact, although on its way to decline and disintegration. The national branches of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, on the other hand, shaped their activities under the national contexts of their

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<sup>399</sup>Ibid., 82.

<sup>400</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 30 May 1995, 90.

<sup>401</sup>Ahmed Rashid, "The Fixers," Far Eastern Economic Review, 16 March 1995, 24.

republics. However, in all three cases, the IRP based its ideology, program, and activities on the resilience of Islam in Central Asia as a socio-cultural factor. In other words, the party, both at the union and the republican levels turned the potential of parallel Islam into political action and struggled to reach its goals by a political agenda.

## **2. The Second Hypothesis: The IRP and Official Islam**

Both parallel Islam and the IRP emerged outside the officially established religious structure and they based their activities on the idea that the communist system should not replace traditional Islamic values. While parallel Islam remained underground, however, the IRP emerged as an explicitly functioning political party with a radical program and in time became a serious alternative to the communist system. Although, the IRP emerged outside the official religious structure and formed a radically different political alternative to the communist system, it nevertheless aimed to remain within the boundaries of the established political and legal system. In most cases, it expressed support for cooperation with official Islam as well as with the authorities. The party leaders said they rejected all forms of religious fanaticism, extremism, violence, and terrorism. They aimed at coming to power through legal, constitutional and democratic ways. In this sense, the IRP was similar to official Islam, which also operated within the legal framework of the political system.

In the short-run, the political power struggle of the IRP both at the union and the republican levels aimed at overthrowing the communist system. However, the party had the long-run goal of creating a Muslim state. The programs and statutes of the IRP were explicitly Islamic in content and it seemed that in the long-run the party leaders aimed to achieve an Islamic form of government.

### **A. Program and Goals of the All-Union IRP**

The program of the all-Union IRP stated that both tsarist and Soviet regimes were responsible for the destruction of Muslim culture and oppression of the Muslim people. At the time of the tsars, Muslims were made objects of colonial politics and were subjected to hostility, discrimination, and forceful Christianization. Furthermore, there was constant intervention into their internal affairs. During the Soviet regime, hostility and

discrimination continued, supplemented by unrestrained atheistic propaganda, which aimed at totally discrediting Islam. Furthermore, the Soviet economic order was oppressive, the Muslim republics being used as sources of cotton monoculture with inadequate prices and equipment. The Soviet-Afghan war was another indication of Soviet power directed against Muslims. According to the ideologists of the IRP, the former Soviet Union was the worst massive example of contemporary paganism.<sup>402</sup>

Some leaders of the all-Union IRP thought that because they were subjected first to the tsarist and then the Soviet social and political environment, Muslim peoples of the former Soviet Union had ceased to be real Muslims. They needed to be educated about the Islamic way of life, about Islamic customs, and tradition.<sup>403</sup> In an attempt to realize this, Islam had to be restored and revived. Conditions that would enable the Muslims to lead a life fully corresponding to religious requirements had to be created. Vali Ahmed Sadur, a member of the Council of Ulemas of the all-Union IRP and the party's press secretary, stated that they have "tried to express the party's basic aim from its name," the renaissance of Islam. According to Sadur, Islam had to "undergo a revival in areas from which it has been driven out and to spread to regions where it is unknown altogether or where people have a distorted notion of it."<sup>404</sup>

According to the leaders of the all-Union IRP, the party was established to represent the interests and rights of the Muslim minorities of the former Soviet Union and to protect them from persecution, deliberate lies and distortions arising from a poor knowledge of Islam. In its program, the party stressed the need to defend Islam from the atheistic attacks of its adversaries and to put an end to the propaganda of atheism. Furthermore, the party demanded legal equality for all religions as well as equality between believers and nonbelievers.<sup>405</sup> It also aimed at obtaining the same religious rights and freedoms that had been extended to the

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<sup>402</sup>Igor Yermakov and Dmitri Mikulsky, Islam v Rossii i Srednei Azii, 182-3.

<sup>403</sup>Nezavisimaia Gazeta, 31 January 1992, 5.

<sup>404</sup>Izvestia, 8 January 1991, 4, quoted in The Current Digest of the Soviet Press, 43, no. 1 (1991): 17.

<sup>405</sup>Lahouari Addi, "Islamist Utopia and Democracy," 135.

Russian Orthodox Church by President Gorbachev.<sup>406</sup> Even before the official establishment of the party its supporters were actively lobbying to increase the number of believers allowed to participate in the pilgrimage to Mecca. During the Astrakhan meeting in June 1990 which founded the party, the participants demanded that the Soviet government permit the Muslims to establish **sharia** courts, and centers for Islamic education. They wanted Islamic studies to be part of the curriculum in the institutions in Muslim majority areas. They sought opportunities and preaching facilities for Muslims.<sup>407</sup>

According to the leaders of the party the best way to protect the interests and rights of the Muslim people was to unite them. So, the all-Union party established itself as an organization open to all Muslims of the former Soviet Union and aimed to unite all those who wanted to live in accordance with the requirements of the Qur'an and Sunna. The IRP stood for the revival of the ideals of Islam, restoration of Islamic culture and the maintenance of Islamic traditions.<sup>408</sup> The first paragraph of the party program stated that the party was a religious organization uniting Muslims who were actively propagating Islam, observing its rules and taking part in cultural, socio-political and economic life on the basis of the principles of Islam.<sup>409</sup>

Although the initial goal of the all-Union IRP was basically to revive Islam in the former Soviet Union, "from the outset its objectives were political in nature."<sup>410</sup> It established a council of ulemas and advocated the view that the source of legislation of a Muslim society was the Qur'an and Sunna. For example the IRP leader Vali Ahmed Sadur confirmed the moderate standing of the party but stressed that he could not see Islam without politics. According to him, Prophet Muhammad himself began by organizing the Muslim community and created a strong state. He, however, denied that Islamic rule is predisposed to

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<sup>406</sup>Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, Russia and the New States of Eurasia: The Politics of Upheaval (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 115.

<sup>407</sup>Soviet Muslims Brief, no. 3 (1990): 4.

<sup>408</sup>Aziz Niyazi, "The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan After February 1990," in State, Religion, and Society in Central Asia: A Post-Soviet Critique, 289.

<sup>409</sup>Ludmilla Polanskaya and Alexei V. Malashenko, Islam in Central Asia, 124.

<sup>410</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 87.

authoritarianism.<sup>411</sup> The all-Union IRP in general demonstrated an overall moderate character in terms of its strategies for reaching its goals. It strongly denied any form of extremism, terrorism, and violence, and rejected all forms of discrimination. The party did not seek an Islamic upheaval and did not call for the creation of an Islamic state of its own.<sup>412</sup> An Iranian style theocracy run by the clergy, in which all other opposition parties and groups are outlawed, was rejected.<sup>413</sup> The program of the IRP clearly stated that it would use only constitutional methods and means for achieving its goals.<sup>414</sup> Furthermore, the party said it was prepared to act as an officially recognized political opposition in the new political area. The party leaders expressed their readiness for dialogue with state structures and authorities. They also sought cooperation with other political parties and groups. The party recognized all international legal documents--provided they did not contradict Islam-- and agreed to act to secure their implementation.<sup>415</sup>

### **B. Program and Goals of the Uzbek IRP**

The IRP's Uzbek branch became active under the leadership of Abdullah Yusuf about the same time that the all-Union IRP was established in June 1990. It declared itself ready to undertake political activity in order to "establish Islam as the Muslims' way of life" in Uzbekistan.<sup>416</sup> The IRP leader Abdullah Utaev stressed that although the government should remain secular in nature, Islam must play an important role in

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<sup>411</sup>Alexei V. Malashenko, "Religious and Political Change in Soviet Moslem Regions," in State, Religion, and Society in Central Asia: A Post-Soviet Critique, 172.

<sup>412</sup>Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, Russia and the New States of Eurasia: The Politics of Upheaval (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 115.

<sup>413</sup>Robin Wright, "Islam, Democracy and the West," Foreign Affairs 71, no. 3 (1992): 141.

<sup>414</sup>Aziz Niyazi, "The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan After February 1990," in State, Religion and Society in Central Asia: A Post-Soviet Critique, 289.

<sup>415</sup>*Ibid.*, 289.

<sup>416</sup>Dilip Hiro, Between Marx and Muhammed: The Changing Face of Central Asia, 173.

people's lives.<sup>417</sup> The party's initial platform which was made public on 16 December 1990 demonstrated its comprehensively religious orientation. In the program the party's aims were expressed as the following:

1. To explain to the people the real meaning of the holy Qur'an and hadith and to call the people to live and act according to the Qur'an and hadith.

2. To create its own publishing house

3. To call to Islam by all means of mass media.

4. To fight national and racial discrimination, crime, alcoholism, and all other things which are forbidden by shari'a through understanding and appeal.

5. To educate young people on the principles of Islam and, for this purpose, to create instruction and training centers and madrasas.

6. To ensure that the rights of the Muslims are exercised according to the Qur'an.

7. To strengthen Islamic brotherhood, to develop religious relationships with the Muslim world, and to seek equal rights with representatives of other religions.

8. To cooperate with other democratic parties and state organizations in all fields.

9. To create philanthropic funds that will support anyone in need of help.

10. To support educational and scientific progress, which is to be independent and free from the command system and ideological restrictions.

11. To strengthen the family according to the principles of Islam and to insure the rights of women and children.

12. To ensure the principles of an Islamic economy and regaining ecological purity.

13. To ensure the distribution of food according to the shari'a.

14. To solve the people's problems according to the Holy Qur'an and hadith.<sup>418</sup>

Although initially the IRP spokesman called for the overthrow of the communist government and the

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<sup>417</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 90.

<sup>418</sup>Abdujabar Abduvakhitov, "Islamic Revivalism in Uzbekistan," in Russia's Muslim Frontiers, 96-7.



establishment of an Islamic republic, in time the Uzbek IRP moderated its position and eliminated any implicit or explicit reference to the idea of creating an Islamic republic.<sup>419</sup> According to Uzbek journalist Anvar Usmanov, the Uzbek IRP came to a more moderate position mainly as a result of its close cooperation with the nationalist opposition party, Birlik. The leader of the IRP, Utaev soon advocated goals similar to those of Birlik: Uzbekistan's government should be secular, and all forms of belief and nonbelief should be respected, although Islam should occupy a central place in public life.<sup>420</sup>

The deputy chairman of the Uzbek IRP, Abdullah Yusuf, stated that the models adopted in Iran, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia did not appeal to them completely. The Iranian model was rejected because "There is a great difference between the Shia and the Sunni. The spiritual leader who will be a chief of state [in Uzbekistan] should not only be a member of the clergy. He has to know the secular sciences as well." The model in Pakistan, on the other hand was also not ideal because, although Pakistan was an Islamic republic, it was headed by a secular leader, and Sharia was but one--not the only--source of its laws. Finally, Saudi Arabia, where Sharia was the law but the clergy were only advisers to a monarchy and where no one voted, was also not an acceptable model. According to Yusuf, the Uzbek IRP had its own unique ideals, and what it really wanted was "an Islamic democracy." Yusuf defined an Islamic democracy in the following way:

With our people, the notion of democracy means no restrictions... It would not be a one-party state; the franchise would be universal; the rights of ethnic and religious minorities would be protected; and private property would be honored. But the IRP's Islamic democracy would in fact have some restrictions. Anti-Islamic practices, for example, would be forbidden. This means that all those things which are no good to humanity--drugs, drink, prostitution--must not be allowed.<sup>421</sup>

### **C. Program and Goals of the Tajik IRP**

The Tajik IRP seemed to have what might be called a "two-step goal," one for the short-run and one

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<sup>419</sup>The Economist, 21 September 1991, 59.

<sup>420</sup>Cassandra Cavanaugh, "Crackdown on the Opposition in Uzbekistan," 20.

<sup>421</sup>Robin Wright, "Report from Turkestan," 57-8.

for the long-run. In the short-run, the goals of the party were quite similar to other opposition forces in Tajikistan, especially to the secular, democratic groups. The Tajik IRP was in favor of a democratic, pluralist, and secular state in which civil liberties and popular sovereignty should prevail. The party was against any political group having a monopoly of power. It aimed at establishing a legal state with normal parliamentary activities based on equal rights for all political forces in Tajikistan. Within this context, the Tajik IRP expressed its willingness to cooperate with all political forces that were acting within the framework of law, including the communists.<sup>422</sup> Party chairman, Davlat Usmon pointed out in a news conference in 1991 that the Tajik IRP called for a secular democratic state "orienting on Islamic values."<sup>423</sup> Another member of the party, Rasul Borganyan expressed a similar idea when he talked about the ideal of establishing not an Islamic republic, but "an Islamic democracy," in which freedom of religion would be guaranteed for all citizens.<sup>424</sup>

In this sense, the Tajik IRP rejected religious extremism while still seeking to enable Muslims to live in accordance with the Qur'an, sunna and the hadith. It concentrated its attention on cultural aspects of Islam, preserving the Islamic heritage and family relations.<sup>425</sup> The party ideologists emphasized that their model for the socio-political order of the country was a just society structured on a foundation of the Islam of Prophet Muhammad, and of the continuers of his cause, his closest successors, "the just caliphs." The program of the Tajik IRP stated that the crisis of Muslim societies occurred only when "the colonizers and enslavers set foot on the land of the Islamic countries." Islam was considered a national treasure of the Tajiks and an integral part of Tajik culture. Tajik national traditions were not different from, and did not contradict Islam.<sup>426</sup>

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<sup>422</sup>Aziz Niyazi, "The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan After February 1990," 282. and Malashenko, "Religious and Political Change in Soviet Muslim Regions," 172, in State, Religion and Society in Central Asia: A Post-Soviet Critique.

<sup>423</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 10 December 1991, 74.

<sup>424</sup>The New York Times, 9 June 1992, A16.

<sup>425</sup>Alexei V. Malashenko, "Religious and Political Change in Soviet Muslim Regions" in State, Religion and Society in Central Asia: A Post-Soviet Critique, 172.

<sup>426</sup>Ibid., 98-9.

According to Abdullah Dadkhuda, who was responsible for education and propaganda activities of the party, "Islam has a specific solution and guidance for all political problems. The duty of the IRP is to educate people."<sup>427</sup> The Tajik IRP defined itself in its charter as follows: "The Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan is a socio-political organization based on Islamic faith, consisting of faith in one God and in the prophetic mission of Mohammed, and with it worship and prayer to Allah." The goal of the activity of the party is "the moral revival of the citizens of the republic, and a political and moral awakening aimed at the incorporation of the fundamentals of Islam into the life of the Muslims of the republic."<sup>428</sup> The program of the Tajik IRP "proceeds equally from divine inspiration, both in the realm of the intrinsically religious and in the sphere of culture, civilization and everyday life and politics, as well as in all life matters, and does not recognize any law that contradicts the Shariat."<sup>429</sup> The program, further identified the following goals and duties:

—an independent economic and political system which condemns economic monopoly and control over profit, and favors the transformation of Tajikistan from an exporter of raw materials into a producer of finished products.

—a complete political and legal awakening, applying the principles of Islam to the everyday life of Muslims.

—the spread of Islamic thought among the different nationalities of the republic.<sup>430</sup> Like all other nationalities and religious communities, political rights of the Muslims should also be protected through legal and constitutional means.<sup>431</sup> In this context, the Tajik IRP basically aimed at the establishment of a state in which Muslims and non-Muslims alike could freely profess and preach their religion.

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<sup>427</sup>Shahrbano Tadjbaksh, "The Tajik Spring of 1992," Central Asia Monitor 8, no. 2 (1992): 25.

<sup>428</sup>Dmitri Mikulski, "Central Asian Alternatives: The Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (History of Creation, Structure, Ideological Principles)," 98.

<sup>429</sup>Ibid., 99.

<sup>430</sup>Ibid.

<sup>431</sup>Miron Rezun, "The Muslim Borderlands: Islam and Nationalism in Transition," in Nationalism and the Breakup of an Empire: Russian and Its People, 127, Central Asia Brief, 10, no. 2, (1994): 12.

Whatever it said, however, the Tajik IRP ultimately wanted an Islamic state based on Sharia. Even before it became clear that the Soviet Union would not survive, IRP activist Davlat Usmon proposed that Tajikistan adopt an Islamic government, while remaining part of the Union.<sup>432</sup> Abdullah Dadkhuda, the party secretary in charge of education and propaganda, indicated that by an Islamic government, the IRP meant a government where the orders of God, the sacred Qur'an, the teaching and knowledge of the Prophet were the principal elements. He said: "We must have a parliament because the Qur'an encourages collective consultation. Future leaders should be chosen by the people and judged by their world view, their scholarly enlightenment and their knowledge of Islam."<sup>433</sup>

The following statement by Davlat Usmon, indicates the distinction between the short-run and long-run goals of the party. In an interview, Usmon stated:

We seek to establish a democratic regime and achieve full independence. We also want to be allowed to teach people Islam, which they have been denied for seventy years. We are not calling for the establishment of an Islamic state in Tajikistan, as most people are ignorant of Islam, **and in order for us to be able to do that [i.e. to establish an Islamic state] we must teach people Islam, since we do not want to establish Islamic rule by force. God willing, we will achieve Islamic rule in the future in one way or another.**<sup>434</sup>

Even though in the long-run the Tajik IRP favored an Islamic state, the leaders of the party did not seek the immediate establishment of such a state, but rather the introduction of democratic rule, within the framework of which, on the one hand, Muslims would have the opportunity for Islamic educational work among the population, and, on the other, the Tajik people would be able to make their own choice after a certain time, either for or against an Islamic state. As the party secretary in charge of education and propaganda put it: "The only way to advertise Islam is to do it through a parliamentary and democratic

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<sup>432</sup>Muriel Atkin, "Islam as Faith, Politics, and Bogyman," in The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia, 122.

<sup>433</sup>Sahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, "The Tajik Spring Of 1992," 25.

<sup>434</sup>Al-Havah, 11 December 1992, 8, quoted in FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 16 December 1992, 48, emphasis added.

political system. We are against forcing people to accept our path but we rely on any means to awaken them."<sup>435</sup> Another party leader, Muhammad Sharif Himmatzoda, said the following on the same subject: "The Islamic Revival Party supports the policy of democratic transformation in the republic. We favor the creation of an Islamic state in Tajikistan and believe that the transition of this kind can only occur through a free expression of the people's will. The republic is not yet ready for the move."<sup>436</sup> According to Himmatzoda, fears about the establishment of an Islamic state along Iranian lines in Tajikistan are "groundless." He stated that they have "no plans to create an Islamic state by force. Unlike the communists, [they] have no intention of imposing [their] ideology or system on the country. Of course if people favor an Islamic state in a referendum, they will have the right to choose that path. But, even if that happens, [they] will remain committed to human rights."<sup>437</sup>

Davlat Usmon expressed similar views:

Our main goal is to prepare people for the creation of an Islamic state. Becoming legal is very advantageous. It allows us access to the masses to educate them. Probably even the Russian sector of the population, which once listened only to the negative propaganda about Islam, will change its attitude toward us. At present, the creation of any Islamic state in Tajikistan is impossible, because seventy years of atheism shows. The people are not ready yet. Also, there's a phrase in the Qur'an about not forcing people to believe in something. Our charter says we have to use all means possible except violence, so we're educating them gradually about the Sharia.<sup>438</sup>

Therefore, the leaders of the Tajik IRP believed that the only way of establishing an Islamic republic in the long-run is by using legal, constitutional means and through a democratic system. People should not be coerced to accept Islamic rule, rather they must voluntarily and independently choose an Islamic state. A

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<sup>435</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 88.

<sup>436</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 1 October 1991, 75.

<sup>437</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 19 May 1992, 43.

<sup>438</sup>Robon Wright, "Report from Turkestan," 74.

referendum, not a violent revolution, was pointed out as the only way to an Islamic republic.<sup>439</sup>

The Tajik IRP seemed peaceful, avoiding all forms of violence, extremism, and armed conflict. It also sought national unity and conciliation in order to solve the current political crisis of the country. The party presented a list of proposals for this purpose at the beginning of 1995. In the list, the following "logical solutions" were emphasized: establishment of a national council made up of all interested groups in the Tajik issue; formation of a provisional government composed of impartial and competent people to govern during a temporary period; disarming of all parties, groups, organizations, and armed ministries; placing control in the hands of a United Nations peacekeeping force; and guaranteeing freedom of activity for popular parties, organizations and the media.<sup>440</sup> Mullah Abdullah Nuri Saidov, the leader of the Tajik IRP in exile also stressed the need for the unity of all Tajiks. He stated that the Tajiks should unite "for the sake of national salvation, for the future of the Tajiks." According to him:

the problem of Tajikistan should be solved without bloodshed, and for the benefit of the entire honored nation and people of Tajikistan. If the two sides [the opposition and the pro-communist government] can reach accord, judge one another fairly, respect the people of God, and care for the nation, while caring not for office, fame, or wealth, ... a Tajik's Muslim son will not die in a fratricidal war, money will not be spent in vain any more, and these funds will be spent on helping the families of the victims, orphans, and those who suffered losses from the war. The people of the republic will become friends, and will engage side by side in this creative struggle.<sup>441</sup>

In international relations, too, the party favored friendly relations with other countries. According to Mullah Saidov, if a movement wanted to announce its existence in society and not be eliminated, it should establish relations with other countries as well. The Tajik IRP made efforts to implement this from the very beginning. Saidov stated that the policy of the party is "a policy of peaceful coexistence with [their] neighbors and good relations with all countries in the world." Although first they had established relations with those

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<sup>439</sup>Allen Hetmanek, "Islamic Revolution and Jihad Came to the Former Soviet Central Asia," 371: Los Angeles Times, 14 May 1992, 4.

<sup>440</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 21 February 1995, 80.

<sup>441</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 12 June 1995, 83-4.

countries that were friendly to the Tajik IRP—like Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan—they also adopted policies that they hoped would establish relations with Western countries, like the United States, as well.<sup>442</sup>

However, despite such peaceful statements, the Tajik IRP was engaged in armed struggle against the government. According to Mullah Saidov, this became necessary in order to "save the nation," a theme frequently used by him. According to him, during the civil war, the opposition was forced to take up arms to defend their lives, property, wives, children, and honor. After the war, they had to continue their struggle in exile, in order to "save the nation from annihilation."<sup>443</sup> In a statement made in February 1995, Mullah Saidov again emphasized the same theme:

Tajikistan today is like a wrecked ship. If everyone does not unite to save it, everyone will drown. Now is not a time for seeking revenge ... [but] a time for ... saving the nation, so that a country known as Tajikistan can continue to exist in the pages of history... I can no longer allow Muslim to kill Muslim, Tajik to shed the blood of Tajik. People ask: why do you fight, then? It is a reasonable and logical question: We are defending to save the nation. We have declared a jihad against xenophobes and seekers after domination.<sup>444</sup>

During the process of peace negotiations in 1995, the leaders of the Tajik IRP on a number of occasions expressed their desire to meet with government representatives to find a permanent peaceful solution to the Tajik problem. For example, in March 1995 Nuri Saidov expressed readiness to hold talks with the Tajik president "at any time and in any place." He added that the Islamic movement of Tajikistan would always "remain faithful to its peace-seeking efforts and would make efforts to prevent violations of cease-fire by its mujahidin."<sup>445</sup> Ali Akbar Turajonzoda made similar statements during the negotiations. According to him, "the fact that the recent political antagonists have reached out to each other, displaying good will and

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<sup>442</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 23 February 1995, 77.

<sup>443</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 17 February 1995, 62.

<sup>444</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 21 February 1995, 79.

<sup>445</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 15 March 1995, 70; and 2 March 1995, 64.

readiness to work out compromises. inspires hope for a peaceful future in Tajikistan."<sup>446</sup> Turajonzoda stated that although official Tajik propaganda tries to "stick a label of political extremism on [the Islamic Movement of Tajikistan]" they "declare always and everywhere" that they will never thrust their opinion on society through the use of force and that they intend to act as a public movement based on law.<sup>447</sup>

According to the IRP leaders, in order to resolve the situation in Tajikistan, it was necessary to announce a transition period during which all the supreme military and economic power should belong to a Council of National Accord. Both the opposition and the government should provide forty percent of the representatives. Twenty percent should come from other minorities in Tajikistan, like the Russians and the Uzbeks. The council should be headed by a neutral person, and economic and socio-political issues should be solved by commissions with equal representation of the opposition and government members. An election to a new parliament should be held under the control of the United Nations. Furthermore, United Nations peacekeeping forces should be assigned to disarm the military formations of both sides.<sup>448</sup>

According to the IRP leaders, the Tajik government, by flatly refusing to participate in a coalition, displayed its irreconcilable attitude. Furthermore, the Rakhmanov government was illegitimate because the opposition parties and groups were not allowed to participate either in the November 1994 presidential elections or in the February 1995 parliamentary elections. According to Turajonzoda: "The regime which came to power by force is trying to legalize itself through elections." The opposition leaders also accused the government of violating the cease-fire agreements, of creating an atmosphere of fear and terror, and of torturing civilians. According to Mullah Saidov, such violations of human rights were not in the interests of the nation and will slow the process of national reconciliation.<sup>449</sup>

The Tajik IRP leaders claimed that the party was forced to take up arms against the regime as a result

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<sup>446</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 18 May 1995, 73.

<sup>447</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report 31 May 1995, 82.

<sup>448</sup>Ibid.

<sup>449</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 2 March 1995, 64.



of government repression and harassment. Turajonzoda declared that the supporters of the IRP became militant as a "reaction to the government repression, discrimination, violence, and double-talk."<sup>450</sup> He also affirmed the existence of clandestine, specifically trained opposition groups operating in Tajikistan, which "will be used as a leverage to bring pressure on Dushanbe if need be." Although, the leaders of the Tajik IRP asserted that they were forced to engage in armed struggle against the government, they rejected strongly any accusations that they were "terrorist." As Turajonzoda put it: "Our armed groups have never carried out any terrorist acts against civilian targets nor against individuals, nor do they intend to perpetrate such acts."<sup>451</sup> According to Davlat Usmon, immediately after the establishment of the new coalition government in 1992, the IRP disarmed its units and handed in all armored vehicles and a portion of the firearms captured during the seizure of the presidential palace. However, they stopped laying down arms because the "pro-communist mafia" (the supporters of the pro-communist Tajik government) did not do the same and even created new armed units to attack the opposition and to take hostages.<sup>452</sup>

It must also be kept in mind that the leader of the Islamic Movement of Tajikistan, Mullah Abdullah Nuri Saidov, seemed to be more radical and less peaceful in his statements than other influential figures, such as Kazi Turajonzoda. For example on 19 October 1995 he made the following statement about the next round of peace talks between the Islamic opposition and the Tajik government: "We said that if the fifth round [of peace talks] did not take place on 18 September, we might not be able to keep under control and hold back the mujahidin, who for the past one or two years have been thirsty for the enemy's blood and for the blood of those who have been threatening Islam and the freedom and independence of our country."<sup>453</sup> On another occasion, Nuri Saidov warned the Tajik President that if the government avoids a political settlement to the country's problems, then the opposition will never allow the government to govern in peace. He said that they

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<sup>450</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 207.

<sup>451</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 19 May 1995, 79.

<sup>452</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 8 June 1992, 57.

<sup>453</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 19 October 1995, 68.

will continue to establish justice through their struggle by any means.<sup>454</sup>

Thus, similar to official Islam, the IRP, in its initial phases, at both the union and the republican levels attempted to remain legal and sought recognition of the authorities. Moreover, official Islam did not engage in a political power struggle against the communist regime and remained totally loyal and subservient to it. The IRP, on the other hand, engaged in a political power struggle against the system and went underground immediately when it was outlawed or repressed. Furthermore, unlike official Islam in some cases it became radical and militant. So, although in the beginning the IRP had certain similarities with official Islam, in time it had a different character and agenda which changed even further depending on conditions.

Finally, it needs to be pointed out that from the perspective of identity politics, parallel Islam in Central Asia offers interesting analytical points that fit within both primordial and instrumental approaches. Islam has remained a strong, centuries-old "primordial" attachment of Central Asian people that the Soviet period was unable to eradicate. The Soviet government was perceived as a threat, so people kept their Islamic identity by clinging to their religious traditions which were far beyond the narrow limits defined by official Islam. Especially in the case of Tajikistan, where the traditional social patterns remained strong and resilient more than in any other place in Central Asia, parallel Islam was interwoven into the very fabric of society. Parallel Islam, therefore, emerged as the real expression of this primordial bond among the Central Asian people. It kept Islam alive and built its activities and social organization on the existence of this attachment.

It was the IRP that became the "instrument" to organize parallel Islam in the political arena with a political program. The party both at the all-Union and republican levels brought together people from a variety of backgrounds who were attached to Islam and did not want to live according to the moral, political, and socio-cultural values of the communist system. The IRP became the most influential group in Central Asia using people's primordial attachment to Islam in an attempt to realize the political goal of struggling against the communist regime. This common interest gave the leaders of the IRP the opportunity to manipulate Islamic identity and use it as an instrument of political action and mobilization in order to end the communist

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<sup>454</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 30 October 1995, 69-70.

system and replace it with a more traditional one. As such, it is possible to conclude that, as James McKay suggested, within the context of parallel Islam in Central Asia, too, the primordial and instrumental approaches were not mutually exclusive, but complementary and reconcilable. Both approaches had explanatory power and were operative in explaining the IRP.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

### THE ISLAMIC RENAISSANCE PARTY AT UNION AND REPUBLICAN LEVELS

This chapter will analyze the third and the fourth hypotheses of the dissertation in two sections. The third hypothesis was stated as follows: **The persistence of Islamic identity in many parts of the former Soviet Union was the sufficient cause for the emergence of the IRP as an all-Union party.** In an attempt to analyze this hypothesis, the persistence and survival of Islamic identity in the former Soviet Union in general and at the republican levels in particular will be looked at in the first section of this chapter. Here, Islam's influence in rural life in Central Asia, the all-Union IRP's emphasis on Islamic fundamentalism, and the Soviet-Afghan war and its impact on Central Asia--as an example of common bond or identity of religion between Tajiks and Afghans--will be examined.

The fourth hypothesis was stated as follows: **The co-existence of ethnic, national, and communal identities with Islamic identity was the sufficient cause for the organization of the IRP on republican levels throughout Central Asia.** In order to analyze the fourth hypothesis, the problems the all-Union party had to face, the importance of other identities in the region, and how different conditions in national contexts forced the party to engage in different patterns of behavior will be looked at in the second section of this chapter. Here, anti-Russian feelings among the Central Asian people, the cotton monoculture, ethnic conflict among the Central Asian people themselves, and the effects of attachments other than religion will also be examined.

#### **1. The Third Hypothesis: The IRP as an All-Union Party**

Over the course of the seven decades of Soviet rule there were important changes in Central Asia. At the time of the 1917 revolution, Central Asian societies were almost entirely rural. There was little developed industry; the literacy rate was around one percent; and the people were little influenced by the religion, language, culture and society of the Russians, whose forces had rather recently moved into the area. In the next several decades, waves of Russians and other Slavs came to Central Asia, bringing new policies, values

and attitudes with them, which they attempted to foist on the indigenous population.<sup>455</sup>

The new Soviet state set out to accelerate economic and industrial development, to educate the people, to make Russian the "lingua franca," and to supplant local cultural and religious values with Soviet mores. In an attempt to realize these goals, industry was developed, modern agriculture was introduced, basic health and sanitation improved, and education promoted. The literacy rate rose dramatically--from one percent of the population to somewhere between 97 to 99 percent for Central Asians ages nine to 49.<sup>456</sup> In all aspects of society the objective was to turn local practice into "faithful copies from Moscow."<sup>457</sup> The Soviets were also committed to promoting minority representation in areas such as higher education, Communist Party membership and government participation.<sup>458</sup> Moscow's developmental policies had, in some ways, considerable success in transforming Central Asia economically, politically, and socially. According to one observer, for Central Asia, the Bolshevik experience was "a form of colonial experience that ... had distinctive, powerful legacies and lasting transformative effects upon the region, its people and cultures."<sup>459</sup> For example, local ruling classes and some members of the intelligentsia now had "a common educational experience [with their Russian counterparts] and use[d] the same terminology in expressing their political and cultural thought, a terminology made in Moscow decades ago."<sup>460</sup>

In the realm of religion, the Soviet government tried to implement its atheistic policies. In order to eradicate the traditional Muslim values and to transform the Central Asian societies along the lines of the

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<sup>455</sup>Nancy Lubin, "Uzbekistan: The Challenges Ahead," Middle East Journal 43, no. 4 (1989): 622.

<sup>456</sup>Ibid., 622.

<sup>457</sup>Firuz Kazemzade, "Central Asia's Foreign Relations," in The Legacy of History in Russia and the New States of Eurasia, 213.

<sup>458</sup>Ellen Jones and Fred W. Grupp, "Modernization and Ethnic Equalization in the USSR," Soviet Studies 36, no. 2 (April 1984).

<sup>459</sup>Nazif Shahrani, "Central Asia and the Challenge of the Soviet Legacy," Central Asian Survey, 12, no. 2 (1993): 123.

<sup>460</sup>Firuz Kazemzade, "Central Asia's Foreign Relations," in The Legacy of History in Russia and the New States of Eurasia, 213.

Soviet pattern. Islam was constantly attacked by the Soviets not only as a belief system but also as a way of life. However, despite the attempts of the Soviet administration to decrease the influence of religion in the region, Islam remained pervasive in all strata of Central Asian societies. The traditional behavioral norms, ethnic customs and life styles sanctioned by Islam survived among Soviet Muslims. Moreover, the intensity of religious feelings did not show significant differences along age, sex, and educational variables, as it did among other religious faiths in the former Soviet Union.<sup>461</sup> And, starting from the 1980s, fulfillment of religious obligations, which was always a major aspect of social life in Central Asia, became more public than it had been since the 1920s. Islamic ceremonies connected with the life-cycle rituals of marriage, burial, and circumcision were now celebrated openly. Participation in Friday prayers in local mosques, fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, celebration of the feast of sacrifice and mawlid (the birth of the Prophet), and pilgrimages to Mecca and other holy places (like mazars) all rose steadily.

Soviet attempts to eradicate religion in Central Asia failed. According to one observer, "the fact that [the Islamic] way of life was forcibly attacked from outside, instead of having been left to disintegrate spontaneously under the impact of new forces" helped Islam survive in Central Asia. It had to defend itself against Moscow on two fronts: political and religious, resisting the imposition of Russian hegemony and the secular creed of communism.<sup>462</sup> The more Islam was driven underground by the communist regime, the more it prospered as a cultural phenomenon, linking people together against the Russians. In spite of all Moscow could do, Islam remained deeply rooted and it penetrated all aspects of everyday private and public life, especially in the rural areas. Religion helped make Central Asians significantly different from the average Soviet citizen and helped them to resist assimilation.<sup>463</sup> In many cases, the solidarity that Islam fostered cut across class divisions by uniting family, clan, and tribe despite differences in class. The Islamic assertion that

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<sup>461</sup>In the Christian areas, for example, religion was skewed in favor of the elderly, women, and the less-educated. However, this was not the case in Muslim regions. See James Critchlow, "Islam in Central Asia: Renaissance or Revolution" Religion in Communist Lands 18, no. 3, (1990): 207.

<sup>462</sup>Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia: The Case of Tadzhikistan, 282.

<sup>463</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State, 1.

economic differences and class conflicts can be resolved in a religious society by charity and poor tax (zakat) provided a direct challenge to the communist system.<sup>464</sup>

Over the years, Islam became one of the chief defining factors of ethnicity in Central Asia, even for the most educated Central Asians. Islam gave people "a distinct identity." Although Christian and Jewish Central Asians existed, they remained strangers to the vast majority of Muslims. Children from mixed marriages were automatically presumed to be Muslim.<sup>465</sup> In an article published in a samizdat leaflet in Tashkent and Bukhara on 12 March 1988, one intellectual said the following:

Soviet identity is too large; it is like saying one is an Asian. It is at the same time too narrow because it is limited to a specific type of socio-political organization... Soviet is how others see you, not how you feel yourself to be. Abroad many people even call you "Russian." Only the more knowledgeable call you "Soviet." But what is important is how you see yourself. I see myself as a Muslim. Even Uzbek is too restrictive. My mother is a Tajik, my father an Uzbek. So, who am I really? A Muslim. This is the only identity that is readily understood by everyone and provokes no "ifs" and "buts." It describes your past as well as your present. It also indicates the type of future you like to build for yourself. There is a certain quality about it. It is authentic, not a label stuck on your chest by some authority that now happens to be in charge... What if I left the citizenship of the USSR? Would I suddenly evaporate? What if Uzbekistan left the USSR and chose another political system as it has the constitutional right, in theory at least? Would I cease to exist? What if perestroika becomes a reality and the Soviet system itself is transformed into something else? Would I no longer be there? Whatever happens I will always be a Muslim... Only the term "Muslim" is large enough, accurate enough, and paradoxically, neutral enough to describe what we are in this corner of the world.<sup>466</sup>

Even local communist leaders and party members did not completely reject their Islamic identity in Central Asia. More and more after Stalin's death they actively participated in religious life-cycle rituals.<sup>467</sup> Most local communist leaders and officials did not accept Marxism-Leninism as an ideology that "would

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<sup>464</sup>Ahmed Rashid, The Resurgence of Central Asia, 42.

<sup>465</sup>Ibid.

<sup>466</sup>Amir Taheri, Islam in A Red Sky, 184.

<sup>467</sup>James Critchlow, Nationalism in Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic's Road to Sovereignty, 167.

transfer them or would change their convictions or would drive a wedge between them and Islam." For them Marxism-Leninism was merely "a technique of bureaucratic and political management." These leaders lived a kind of dual life in which they went to their offices, worked for the Communist Party and so became "Soviet men." When they came home, however, they became Muslim. And it was not uncommon that upon retiring these people became fully involved in Islamic rituals and started to fulfill all their religious obligations.<sup>468</sup>

Some observers have pointed out that Soviet anti-religious policies failed in Muslim areas because Islam, in contrast to other monotheistic religions, does not have a dominating clergy or an institutionalized religious establishment. Since the time of the Prophet Muhammad, clerical hierarchy and jurisdiction have never played a central role in Islam. As Alexander Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush point out:

Muslim believers do not require an intermediary between themselves and their Creator. A Mufti is not a Muslim bishop, and his statements, including his fetwas, carry no compulsion. A Muslim believer who becomes dissatisfied with his mufti's pro-Soviet attitude or his submissiveness to the Soviet state may join a Sufi brotherhood... He remains a perfectly orthodox Muslim within the mainstream of Islam.<sup>469</sup>

Since Islam has never required institutionalized congregations, the presence of mosques as places of worship has never been indispensable for the practice of Islam. The actual binding force for Muslims has always been the community of believers, the umma. The only framework for regulating the life of the community of believers were the Qur'an and the Sunna, both of which demanded believers' commitment to the five pillars of Islam that could be accomplished individually.

#### **A. Islam in Rural Central Asian Social Life**

Islam's survival in the everyday lives of the Central Asian people can best be observed in the rural areas of the region. According to one observer, almost every custom and tradition in rural Central Asia, where the majority of people live, has its roots in Islam. In those areas, being a Central Asian is synonymous with

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<sup>468</sup>Hafeez Malik, "Muslim Resurgence in Central Asia," Occasional Papers on Religion in East Europe 11, no. 2 (March 1991): 9.

<sup>469</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union, 47.



being a Muslim.<sup>470</sup> This is reflected in family structure, population growth rates, separation of the sexes, migration patterns, and the communal way of living. In rural Central Asia, the family structure perpetuates a traditional religious culture and way of life. Families are close-knit, large and united, bringing two or three generations together. Marriages are early and divorce rates are low. The idea of large families is deeply rooted in Central Asian tradition and is a source of ethnic pride. Women tend to stay at home and spend their mature years in child rearing. An average Central Asian woman has five or six children.<sup>471</sup> Throughout the Soviet period, there were many campaigns to secularize the women of Central Asia, to draw them out of the home, educate and turn them into wage earners. Polygamy was outlawed, early marriage for girls was forbidden and jobs for women became available. The veil was abolished and modern technological education became open to both men and women. However, in rural areas this had little effect. Most women continued to lead traditional lives, staying at home and raising large families. Even in cases where women worked outside the home, their primary role was that of wife and mother, and taking care of the home was still the woman's responsibility.<sup>472</sup> Although in urban areas many Central Asian women began to work outside the home and some women had highly responsible jobs, in general they continued to occupy subservient positions.

Men and women also lived separate social lives. Teahouses served as a meeting place for men only, whereas women got together among themselves in their homes.<sup>473</sup> During the Soviet period, the number of Central Asian women who worked outside the home did not rise significantly. For example in 1939 the number of women with an occupation outside the home was 3.1 per thousand in Uzbekistan and 0.7 per

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<sup>470</sup>Shirin Akiner, "Uzbeks," in The Nationalities Question in the Soviet Union, ed. Graham Smith (New York: Longman, 1990): 218.

<sup>471</sup>Michael Rywkin, Moscow's Muslim Challenge, 64.

<sup>472</sup>Gillian Tett, "Guardians of Faith: Gender and Religion in an (ex)Soviet Village," in Muslim Women's Choices, Religious Belief and Social Reality, eds. Camillia Fawzi El-Solh and Judy Mabro (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1994), 132.

<sup>473</sup>Eden Naby, "Ethnicity and Islam in Central Asia," Central Asian Survey 12, no. 2 (1993).

thousand in Tajikistan. By 1987, these numbers had risen only to 9.6 and 2.4, respectively.<sup>474</sup>

Another important reflection of the dominating role of Islam in rural Central Asia is population. In the former Soviet Union, Central Asia was always the region where the population growth rates--especially in rural areas--were highest. Between 1959 and 1989 population increase was 201.9 percent for the Tajiks, and 177.4 for the Uzbeks; whereas the population increase for the USSR as a whole was 36.8 percent.<sup>475</sup> In 1992, among the republics of the former Soviet Union, the highest population growth rate was for Tajikistan with three percent, followed by Uzbekistan at 2.4 percent. In 1959 the non-Muslim populations of the Central Asian republics accounted for 40 percent of the total population, but in 1992, this had dropped to 23 percent.<sup>476</sup> The main reason for the drop in the percentage of non-Muslims in the region had to do with the high population growth in the Central Asian societies. Even though high fertility rates in rural Central Asia created large rural labor surpluses and consequent high unemployment, the Central Asian people still favored large families. Some observers labeled this demographic explosion as the "revenge of the cradles." "[T]he best defense of Soviet Muslims against their conquerors has been their biological dynamism, which canceled ... all Russian attempts at biological or cultural assimilation."<sup>477</sup>

In Central Asia, the family remained the institution where religious rites, customs, and traditions survived. The family was the principal sources of children's religious upbringing, passing on fundamental information about Islam including basic prayers and life of the Prophet.<sup>478</sup> The majority of Sufis were recruited from the family, and dominated by the elders (the aksakals) who were mostly religious people.<sup>479</sup> According to

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<sup>474</sup>Vestnik Statistiki, no. 1 (1988): 57-64, quoted in The Central Asian Newsletter 7, no. 3 (August 1988):6.

<sup>475</sup>Martha Brill Olcott, "Reformers Challenge A Traditional Society," in The Nationalities Factor in Soviet Politics and Society, 261-262.

<sup>476</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 174.

<sup>477</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State, 124.

<sup>478</sup>Muriel Atkin, "Survival of Islam in Soviet Tajikistan," 608.

<sup>479</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Endrers Wimbush, Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union, 63.

Martha Brill Olcott, the strong role accorded to the family and the preference for living among kin sharply limited any desire on the part of most Central Asians to migrate outside their republic or even to regions within their own republic in which they had no kin.<sup>480</sup> Pattern of migration was another indication of dominance of Islam in rural Central Asia. Even when there were shortages of manpower in urban industrial centers in Central Asia, the great majority of the people remained in their ancestral villages and the rate of migration from the countryside to the cities in Central Asia remained very low. It is also important to point out that even when migration from the countryside to the cities had occurred, in most cases Central Asians formed their own communities and preserved their traditional rural lifestyles in the cities.<sup>481</sup> Ethnic amalgamation and mixed marriages with Slavs remained extremely low. This attitude is closely related to what Donald Carlisle analyzed as the "mahallah" mentality within the specific context of the Uzbek society.<sup>482</sup> The term mahallah referred to the nuclei of a city's native quarters, its neighborhoods or wards where a Muslim was born, raised, and ordinarily lived his or her entire life. The mahallah was a self-contained community where a traditional Muslim milieu and mentality dominated all aspects of life. An individual's primary and permanent allegiances were shaped by these native neighborhoods. Family and friends were the pillars of social life.<sup>483</sup> According to Carlisle everything revolved around the all-embracing mahallah. From it, one's allegiance extended to the native city, locale and region. Although an individual might travel throughout the republic to attend marriages, circumcision, and funeral rites, "realms beyond the local mahallah and extended family/kinship networks carried little weight in daily life. Kith and kin and tribe and clan, not the artificial political contrivances of the

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<sup>480</sup>Martha Brill Olcott, "The Reformers Challenge A Traditional Society," in The Nationalities Factor in Soviet Politics and Society, 269.

<sup>481</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen, "Soviet Muslims and Self-Determination," in The Soviet Union and the Challenge of the Future Volume 3: Ideology, Culture, and Nationality, eds. Alexander Shtromas and Morton A. Kaplan (New York: Paragon House, 1989).

<sup>482</sup>Donald Carlisle, "Uzbekistan and the Uzbeks," Problems of Communism 40, no. 5 (1991).

<sup>483</sup>*Ibid.*, 30.

Soviet state, were permanent and paramount realities."<sup>484</sup>

In urban areas, too, traditional ways of life remained dominant. Although the Russians made great effort to establish Soviet culture in Central Asia, local urban populations did not take advantage of these activities.<sup>485</sup> The traditional society remained integrated and proved to be resilient to the threats posed by the communist regime. In general, the native people retained their local identities, and in addition to family and clan maintained their loyalties to Bukhara, Samarkand, Khiva, Kokand, Fergana and Tashkent.

### **B. All-Union IRP: Emphasis on Islamic Fundamentalism**

The all-Union IRP based its support on this deeply-rooted religious structure in Central Asia. In its political struggle against the communist regime, the all-Union IRP tried to use Islam's power in the region. According to the party leaders, religion was the main identity of the Central Asian people, shaping their daily lives as well as their moral, cultural, and social behavior patterns. Islam was the common historical bond that united the people regardless of all other identities, which were man-made, and therefore, artificial. In this context, the all-Union IRP was more fundamentalist and traditional than the Uzbek and Tajik branches, especially in its attitude toward the Western world. The leaders of the all-Union IRP thought that in today's world the age-old struggle between the Christian West and the Muslim East manifested itself in many ways. The Western media, for example, supported Gorbachev's anti-Islamic policy, as in the war in Azerbaijan. Another example was the coalition formed against Iraq during the Gulf War. Similarly, the repression of the Muslim fundamentalists in Algeria was supported by the Western powers.<sup>486</sup> The new world order or American type of universalism was seen as another serious danger for the Muslim world because this new order supported Zionism. According to the head of the all-Union IRP, Geydar Dzhemal, Islam was the only

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<sup>484</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>485</sup> Eden Naby, "Ethnicity and Islam in Central Asia," 163.

<sup>486</sup> Igor Yermakov and Dimitri Mikulski, Islam v Rosii i Srednei Azii, 188.

power that could withstand this type of imperialism.<sup>487</sup>

The leaders of the all-Union IRP also had a skeptical attitude toward Western political concepts. According to them, most of the concepts used by the European intellectuals—such as the dictatorship of the proletariat and class struggle, nationalism and racial exclusion, democracy and anarchism—were in accordance with Western traditions and have always been unacceptable in the East. Western democracy, for example emerged in Europe as a result of the struggle between serfs and aristocrats.<sup>488</sup> These political concepts were man-made and alien to the Muslim world. The program of the IRP stated that "invented schemes of social development have brought mankind to complete crisis in all spheres of life. We see salvation only in following the way of Allah."<sup>489</sup> An article published in the IRP newspaper AI-Vakhdad and entitled "Demokratia-demokratam, Islam-musul'manam" [Democracy for Democrats, Islam for Muslims] asked the following question: Can we Muslims follow the various secularist systems which are based on teachings, whether they are about the dictatorship of the proletariat and class welfare or about nationalism and racial exclusivity or about Western democracy and absolute freedom, which leave God's teachings to the side, the teachings which raised us to a high level of civilization?<sup>490</sup>

One of the spokesman of the IRP explained in April 1992 that their goals were similar to those of the Iranian revolution.<sup>491</sup> Like the regime in Iran, they emphasized the importance of "tradition" and aimed at outlawing alcohol, drugs, and prostitution.<sup>492</sup>

For the leaders of the all-Union IRP, nationalism and nation were also unacceptable concepts for the

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<sup>487</sup>Nezavisimaia Gazeta, 31 January 1992, 5.

<sup>488</sup>Yermakov and Mikulski, Islam v Rossii i Srednei Azii, 186.

<sup>489</sup>Islamskaia partiia vozrozhdeniia [The Islamic Renaissance Party], 1991: 6.8, quoted in Alexei V. Malashenko, "Islam versus Communism: the Experience of Coexistence," in Russia's Muslim Frontiers, 71.

<sup>490</sup>Quoted in *ibid.*, 74.

<sup>491</sup>Time, 27 April 1992, 46.

<sup>492</sup>Robin Wright, "Islam, Democracy, and the West," Foreign Affairs 71, no. 3 (1992): 141.

Muslim world: they categorically rejected nationalism in the Western sense. The program of the party stated that it was against national isolation and that all Muslims were part of umma, not parts of different nations.<sup>493</sup> Since the foundation of Islam was the tradition of the Prophet Abraham, that is, the principle of monotheism, the differences of nation, language, and color of skin were unimportant and irrelevant. In Islamic terminology nation has a different ethnic meaning, "tribe," referring to the gathering of people together by the bonds of blood, all belonging to the greater community of believers, the umma. In a more general sense, umma also included Christians and Jews.<sup>494</sup> Unfortunately however, at the present time the Muslims throughout the world were fragmented, ignorant and "infected with nationalist and democratic ideas" which contradicted Islamic norms.<sup>495</sup> According to the IRP leader Geydar Dzhemal, for example, pan-Arabism, pan-Turkism and pan-Iranism were the three great internal threats that the Muslim world faces. As a solution to this fragmentation, the all-Union IRP strongly favored the unification of all Muslims within the former Soviet Union. The party therefore, emerged at the union level, trying to appeal to all Muslims of the country regardless of ethnic, regional, or national background. The party even aimed at forming a federation of Muslim governments within the body of CIS, which in time could also include other Muslim governments in the region.<sup>496</sup> Also on a more general scale, strong Islamic movements that emerged today in many Muslim areas such as Pakistan, Sudan, Algeria, and some Middle Eastern countries should be supported by the IRP. These movements are parts of one great whole, and they all rejected secular regimes.<sup>497</sup>

The only acceptable way for Muslim societies was that revealed by Allah to mankind as the foundation of all moral, legal, economic, and political principles. So it was necessary to return to Islam's original sources, the Qur'an and the Sunna, free of innovations and modernization. In this sense, it was argued,

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<sup>493</sup>Igor Yermakov and Dmitri Mikulsky, Islam v Rossii i Srednei Azii, 185.

<sup>494</sup>Den, no. 21, 25 October 1991-8 November 1991, 7.

<sup>495</sup>Igor Yermakov and Dmitri Mikulsky, Islam v Rossii i Srednei Azii, 185.

<sup>496</sup>Ibid., 191.

<sup>497</sup>Nezavisimaia Gazeta, 31 January 1992, 5.

fundamentalism was not fanaticism or reactionism but following the principles that had been laid down and followed by the Prophet himself.<sup>498</sup> Boundaries of future Muslim society should include realization of equality and social justice by the obligatory Muslim tax (zakat), charity (sadaka), ban on usury, and spreading of Islamic banks which would give credits without interest. For example, point 27 of the party's program stressed that the party would stand for regulating "the excessive accumulation of wealth in single hands, on the basis of sharia."<sup>499</sup> In short, the all-Union IRP supports traditionalism as a political doctrine based on Islamic values and ideals, and the rejection of all alien and borrowed elements.

Regarding the role of women in society, the all-Union IRP also had a conservative attitude. For example, the platform of the party stated that the IRP:

favors the enhancement of the role of women in families, believing that a woman is in the first place the mother of her children and only afterward an industrial worker, public figure, etc. The society must provide them with the opportunity for education and all-round development, but the main thing is to give them real opportunity to be keepers of the family heart.<sup>500</sup>

### **C. The Case of Afghanistan:**

#### **The Tajik IRP and the Afghan Mujahidin**

It was not only the all-Union IRP that emphasized religion as the common bond and as the most important factor that shaped the lives of the Central Asian people. A strong example of the utilization of the common bond of Islam was the relationship between the Tajik branch of the IRP and the Afghan mujahidin, both before and after the civil war in Tajikistan. The mujahidin and the Tajik members of the IRP supported each other on various occasions, mostly because they were all part of the Muslim "umma." In order to analyze

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<sup>498</sup>Alexei V. Malashenko, "Islam and Politics in the Southern Zone of the Former USSR," in Central Asia and Transcaucasia: Ethnicity and Conflict, 118.

<sup>499</sup>Islamskaiia Partiia Vozrozhdeniia (The Islamic Renaissance Party, 1991, 6,8), quoted in Alexei V. Malashenko, "Islam versus Communism: the Experience of Coexistence," in Russia's Muslim Frontiers, 72.

<sup>500</sup>Lahouari Addi, "Islamist Utopia and Democracy," 135.

this. a brief background of how and why the Soviet Muslims were involved with the Afghan Muslims is necessary.

The former Soviet Central Asian republics have for centuries had close relationships with Afghanistan establishing significant historical, cultural, religious and ethnic ties. These ties were considerably strengthened both during and after the Soviet-Afghan war of 1979-1989. The IRP had a keen interest in the developments in Afghanistan, and established close contact with many of the mujahidin leaders. Afghanistan is a striking example of Islamic solidarity and the transcendence of religion above other identities in Central Asia.

Before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, relations between the people on the two sides of the border were almost nonexistent. During the early decades of Soviet rule, especially during the Basmachi uprising, the relations between the Soviet and Afghan governments were hostile. The Afghans provided aid to the Basmachis, and when they were defeated by the Red Army, many of their people fled across the Afghan border. After the uprising was repressed, additional groups of arrivals fled to Afghanistan from Central Asia in response to the anti-religious policies of the Soviet regime. By the 1990s, there were at least 500,000 Central Asians in Afghanistan who were the direct descendants of these refugees of the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>501</sup> As such, northern Afghanistan remained a base of operations for Basmachi and other refugees from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan.<sup>502</sup>

The border between the former Soviet Union and Afghanistan remained tightly sealed until the 1960s. At the end of the 1960s, the Soviet government implemented a new policy authorizing Afghan residents of Central Asian origin to visit the USSR to meet with the members of their families. By doing that,

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<sup>501</sup>Anthony Hyman, "Central Asia's Relations with Afghanistan and South Asia" in The New States of Central Asia and Their Neighbours, ed. Peter Ferdinand (New York: Council of Foreign Relations Press, 1994), 76.

<sup>502</sup>David C. Montgomery, "The Uzbeks in Two States: Soviet and Afghan Policies Toward an Ethnic Minority," in Soviet Ethnic Frontiers, eds. William O. McCagg, Jr., and Brian D. Silver (New York: Pergamon Press, 1979), 165.



the government hoped to improve its image in the area. As a result, the contact between the residents of the two countries significantly increased. However, according to the President of Afghanistan, Burhanuddin Rabbani, it was the 1979 invasion that really "broke down the wall" between the people living on the two sides of the border.<sup>503</sup>

#### **a. The Soviet-Afghan Conflict and Central Asia**

On 27 April 1978, the government of Afghanistan was taken over by a military coup supported by the Soviet government and the Afghan army. President Muhammad Daoud, his family and most officials of his government were killed. Three days later, Nur Mohammed Taraki, the leader of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), became the head of the revolutionary council and the prime minister of the newly proclaimed Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. The new government received immediate recognition from the Soviet Union.<sup>504</sup>

Taraki proclaimed a total break with the past, and promised goals of accelerated technical, social, and economic development. Land would be redistributed and the lease system changed, formal education would be compulsory and secularized, and women would be "liberated" from male domination. These changes, however, were not welcomed by the majority of the Afghan people, who were mostly rural and without formal education. They resented both the forced imposition of the reforms, and their content. The reforms were seen as interference with their traditional structures, and this became one of the major reasons why the people reacted strongly against the new regime. In addition, the changes introduced were implemented without the necessary economic base. In a short period of time, nationwide unrest developed leading to armed conflicts. In September 1979, Taraki was murdered and replaced by his deputy, Hafizullah Amin, who arrested and executed several members of the opposition. However, resistance continued and by the end of the year the

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<sup>503</sup>Le Monde, 2 March 1990, 4, quoted in FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 6 March 1990, 115.

<sup>504</sup>David C. Montgomery, "The Uzbeks in Two States: Soviet and Afghan Policies Toward an Ethnic Minority," in Soviet Asian Frontiers, 162.

army became mutinous. It seemed possible that the government would be overthrown and replaced by some form of Islamic government.<sup>505</sup>

The overthrow of a pro-Soviet government on its borders was not tolerable for the Soviet regime. Its replacement by an Islamic regime was even more threatening, especially after the 1979 Iranian Islamic revolution. On December 1979 the Red Army moved into Afghanistan, allegedly at the invitation of the Afghan government, and installed a new president, Babrak Karmal, a former left-wing deputy, who at the time of the invasion was a refugee in the Soviet Union.

The first direct involvement of Central Asian Muslims in Afghanistan had occurred in April 1979, months before the invasion took place, when the Soviet government sent large numbers of Uzbeks and Tajiks there as administrative and technical cadres to aid the pro-Soviet government. By the end of 1979, hundreds of Soviet Muslims held positions in all levels of the Afghan bureaucracy. When the invasion took place in December 1979, thirty to forty percent of the troops were of Central Asian background—mainly Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Turkmen. In addition 30,000 to 40,000 Central Asians were mobilized and sent to Afghanistan to repair airfields and build camps.<sup>506</sup> In February 1980, however, the Soviet leaders started to remove Central Asian units from the combat area rapidly and the withdrawn units were replaced mainly by Slavs by March 1980.<sup>507</sup> This move was necessary because the Soviet Muslims proved to be "unreliable." In a very short time, friendly contacts and "widespread fraternization" had taken place between Soviet Muslims and the local population. For example, the two sides became involved in organizing a heavy traffic of Qur'ans. After a short time, many of the Central Asian troops had become unwilling to fight against their co-religionists.<sup>508</sup> Units of

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<sup>505</sup>Nassim Jawad, Afghanistan: A Nation of Minorities (United Kingdom: Minority Rights Group, 1992), 18-9.

<sup>506</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State, 112.

<sup>507</sup>Chantal Lemerrier-Quelquejay and Alexandre Bennigsen, "Soviet Experience of Muslim guerilla Warfare and the War in Afghanistan," in The USSR and the Muslim World, ed. Yaacov Ro'i (London: George Allen and Unwin Publishers, 1984), 213.

<sup>508</sup>S. Enders Wimbush, "The Soviet Muslim Borderlands," in The Last Empire: Nationality and the Soviet Future, 226.

Central Asian soldiers had refused to fight, deserted the Soviet army and went over to fight alongside the mujahidin. According to Nacem Majrooh, director of the Afghan Information Center in Peshawar, the Central Asian soldiers even gave advise to the Afghans on how to resist the Soviet troops, and sometimes told them the location of munitions stockpiles.<sup>509</sup>

The Afghan war would last almost a decade. When the invasion started the Soviet military planners had expected a quick victory over the unorganized and mostly rural-based resistance. In time, however, it became obvious that they had made serious miscalculations in assessing the political and military situation in Afghanistan. The Soviet forces were locked into a protracted guerrilla war with no victory in sight. The Afghan army units were not capable of launching offensive attacks. Their reliability was a constant worry for the Soviet officers. Combat conditions were unfamiliar for the Soviet soldiers, and it was difficult for them to carry out operations in the mountainous terrain of Afghanistan. The Soviets also did not anticipate the level of international reaction to the war, as well as foreign military assistance to the mujahidin.<sup>510</sup>

However, the most important reason for the Soviet failure was the power of the popular uprising against the Moscow-backed Kabul regime. Following the invasion various opposition groups which previously were not united, came together and announced a holy war against the unfaithful. They recruited people from among the different strata of Afghan society, all the way from supporters of monarchy to left-leaning radicals. At the end of ten years, the Soviets forces had to withdraw from Afghanistan.<sup>511</sup>

After the withdrawal of the Soviets in 1989, the war continued first against the pro-Soviet government left behind by the USSR, then among the Afghan mujahidin who came to power in 1992 as to who should govern Afghanistan.<sup>512</sup> The rival forces divided Afghanistan into four zones, depending on ethnic.

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<sup>509</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State, 113.

<sup>510</sup>Rasul Bakhsh Rais, War Without Winners (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 110-11.

<sup>511</sup>Oleg Sarin and Lev Dvoretzky, The Afghan Syndrome (California: Presidio Press, 1993), 44.

<sup>512</sup>Zalmay Khalilzad, "Afghanistan in 1994: Civil War and Disintegration," Asian Survey, 35, no. 2 (1995): 149.

national, and religious differences. Pashtuns were united under the leadership of Gulbeddin Hekmatyar and his party, Hizb-e-Islami; they controlled the south of Afghanistan. Uzbeks were united under Abdurrashid Dostam: they controlled the north. Tajiks were united under Ahmed Shah Masud and President Rabbani's Jamiat-e-Islami, a fundamentalist group; they controlled the northeast. Finally, the Shi'ite Afghans were united under Ismael Khan and his party Hizb-e-Wahdat; they controlled the city of Herat in the west. This last group had strong social, economic, cultural, and religious ties with Iran and was influenced by the Iranian government.<sup>513</sup>

Some of these groups had tried to establish relations with Central Asian groups in one way or another during and after the Soviet-Afghan war. When the IRP was established, they made contact with the Tajik branch of the party. For example, toward the end of the war Hizb-e-Islami planned to carry guerrilla attacks beyond the Amu Darya river into Soviet Central Asia in order to roll back communism by "freeing the Muslim lands of Bukhara, Khiva, and Khorezm."<sup>514</sup> The president of Afghanistan, Burhanuddin Rabbani who was a Tajik and one of the opposition leaders during the Soviet invasion, always had a keen interest in Soviet Tajiks. For example, during the February 1990 riots in the Tajik capital of Dushanbe he was reported to have talked about the need to defend the Muslims of Tajikistan. He had stated that: "In the event that harsh measures were used with regard to Central Asian republics, the Afghans would not sit on their hands."<sup>515</sup>

From the point of view of Tajiks in Tajikistan, Ahmed Shah Masud, an ethnic Tajik from Panjshir Valley near Kabul, was one of the most glamorous and able guerrilla commanders of the mujahidin. He carried the title "Lion of the Panjshir Valley."<sup>516</sup> In Tajikistan he was considered the hero of the anti-Soviet

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<sup>513</sup>Daniel Pipes, "The Event of Our Era: Former Soviet Muslim Republics Change the Middle East," in Central Asia and the World, ed. Michael Mandelbaum (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1994), 68. For the purposes of this dissertation, however, the Shi'ite population in Afghanistan will not be analyzed.

<sup>514</sup>Dilip Hiro, Between Marx and Muhammed: The Changing Face of Central Asia (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995), 244.

<sup>515</sup>Rabochaya Tribuna, 20 November 1990, 4, quoted in FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 29 November 1990, 100.

<sup>516</sup>Christopher J. Panico, "Uzbekistan's Southern Diplomacy," RFE/RL Research Report, 26 March 1993, 41.

resistance. He was the defense minister in Rabbani's government as well as the chairman of the field commanders and head of the most powerful military group within Jamiat-e-Islami. Masud had hopes of "reuniting Tajikistan" by bringing all Tajiks living in northern Afghanistan and Tajikistan together. Because of his military skills and well-armed troops he was perceived as capable of doing this.<sup>517</sup>

#### **b. Impact of the Soviet-Afghan War on Central Asia**

The religious element of the Soviet-Afghan war had a major impact on the Central Asian people. From the very beginning, the main slogan of the Afghan resistance movement had been "jihad against the bad Muslims (bi-din) and the Russian infidels (kafirs)."<sup>518</sup> The use of the term jihad in confrontation with a communist ideology was particularly striking because of the atheistic nature of the Soviet regime. The term "mujahid" and its plural "mujahidin"--which literally means "soldier (or soldiers) of Allah"--denoted someone engaged in jihad. Religion was "monopolized" by the Afghan resistance from 1979 on, and it became extremely difficult for the Soviet authorities to counter the Islamic appeal.<sup>519</sup>

When the Soviet Union became militarily involved in Afghanistan in 1979, its Central Asian Muslims "would meet face to face some of the world's most devout Islamic fundamentalists, the Afghans."<sup>520</sup> For the Soviet Muslims, the jihad proclaimed by the rebels raised the question: who was right, the Soviet army or the Afghan mujahidin? Almost immediately after the invasion, Soviet Islamic leaders started to emphasize repeatedly in broadcasts--both into the Soviet Union and into Afghanistan--the common heritage which the inhabitants of the two countries shared, and they called for support for the Soviet-installed regime. Throughout the Afghan war, the Soviet media attacked those religious figures who gave "a negative evaluation of the

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<sup>517</sup>Boris Z. Rumer, "The Gathering Storm in Central Asia," Orbis, 37, no. 1 (1993): 95.

<sup>518</sup>Chantal Lemerrier-Quellejay and Alexandre Bennigsen, "Soviet Experience of Muslim Guerilla Warfare and the War in Afghanistan," in The USSR and the Muslim World, 211.

<sup>519</sup>Ibid.

<sup>520</sup>S. Enders Wimbush, "The Soviet Muslim Borderlands," in The Last Empire: Nationality and the Soviet Future, 226.

international aid of the Soviet Union to the Afghan people."<sup>521</sup> In the early years of the Afghan struggle, the memory of the Basmachis was rekindled. In the official Soviet press, the story of the Basmachis was more or less a "taboo" topic up until the early 1980s. After the invasion, however, it was used by Moscow as a warning of the fate that awaited those who opposed Soviet rule.<sup>522</sup> In memoirs, television programs, novels, and historical surveys, the Basmachi movement was linked to "foreign imperialism" and was ascribed to reactionary Muslim clerics and the Sufi Brotherhoods. According to Alexandre Bennigsen, "the message [was] clear: We beat you before, if necessary we will beat you again."<sup>523</sup> Neither the regime nor the Islamic establishment were very effective in building support for the Red Army among Soviet Muslims. In time many people in Central Asia began to take the side of the Afghan rebels, who were now "us" while the Russians were "them," killing "Muslim fellow brethren."<sup>524</sup> In the long-run, the idea of Afghan jihad became part of the mass consciousness of the local peoples in Central Asia and greatly stimulated Islamic revival. According to one Uzbek teacher who left the USSR and joined the Afghan resistance, the Soviet Muslims did not forget "their past and their lost freedom":

They also remember the lives sacrificed to defend [this] lost liberty... The Muslim people all aspire to freedom and want to liberate themselves from the [Soviets]. Because of this, the Soviet Muslims consider the war in Afghanistan as a continuation of the war which brought the subjugation of Central Asia. The Afghan nation is fighting for her freedom, and we, the Muslims of the Soviet Union, we know that the Afghan people will win, and their victory will bring liberation of Central Asia.<sup>525</sup>

According to Alexandre Bennigsen, the Afghan resistance had important messages for Soviet

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<sup>521</sup>David Hirst, "Moscow's Muslim Time Bomb," The Guardian, 8 March 1989, 11.

<sup>522</sup>Eden Naby, "The Concept of Jihad in Opposition to Communist Rule: Turkestan and Afghanistan," Studies of Comparative Communism 19, nos. 3-4 (1986): 299.

<sup>523</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen, The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State, 114.

<sup>524</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemercier, The Afghan War and Soviet Central Asia (Ankara: METU Asian-African Research Group, 1986), 12.

<sup>525</sup>Marie Broxup, "Political Trends in Soviet Islam After the Afghanistan War," in Muslim Communities Reemerge, 318.

Muslims. First of all, the mujahidin demonstrated that open resistance, and even victory, was possible against the Soviet army, which was presented in propaganda as the first army of the world, invincible and irresistible. It turned out to be possible to challenge the Red Army. The second message was the rediscovery of the "umma," of a religious kinship and solidarity with the Afghans, and through them, with the entire Muslim world. Finally, the Afghan war was received by the Central Asians both as a jihad and as a national liberation movement in which religion represented the essential element. Islam appeared to be more dynamic with a higher mobilizing capacity than Marxism-Leninism.<sup>526</sup> Immediately after the withdrawal of the Soviet troops, an Azerbaijani scholar said: "For Soviet Muslims the impact of [Soviet] defeat in Afghanistan--a small Muslim and Third World country--will be enormous, incalculable, at least as dramatic as the defeat of the Czarist armies at the hands of the Japanese in 1905."<sup>527</sup> According to Alexandre Bennigsen, it is probable that the Islamic revival in Central Asia was a direct consequence of the victory of the Afghan mujahidin against the Russians.<sup>528</sup>

### **c. The IRP and the Afghan War**

The Tajik branch of the IRP established close relations with the Afghan mujahidin from the very beginning of the war. There were mutual support and sensitivity on both sides regarding the other's struggle with communism, and an implicit feeling of being responsible and helpful to one another in the "holy war" with the Soviet Union. The IRP leaders drew much of their inspiration from the mujahidin war effort. The civil war in Tajikistan in 1992, dramatically increased the contact between the Tajik IRP and the Afghan mujahidin. The effects of these increased relations can be analyzed under three general headings: (1) The Tajik refugees, (2) Mujahidin camps and (3) The Tajik-Afghan border.

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<sup>526</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen, "Afghanistan and the Muslims of the USSR," in Afghanistan: the Great Game Revisited, ed. Rosanne Klass (New York: Freedom House, 1987), 290-1.

<sup>527</sup>David Hirst, "An Explosive Mix Ready to Ignite," The Guardian, 7 March 1989, 19.

<sup>528</sup>Alexandre Bennigsen, "Islam in Retrospect," Central Asian Survey 8, no. 1 (1989): 91.

## 1. The Tajik Refugees

One of the most serious effects of the civil war in Tajikistan was the displacement of an estimated 500,000 people, who were mainly supporters of the Islamic opposition. It was reported in 1993 that about 120,000 of these people went to the Tajik capital, Dushanbe; 75,000 to Gorno-Badakhshan; and 200,000 to the Garm Valley and Khojand.<sup>529</sup> Among these displaced people were Tajik IRP rebel groups. They withdrew deep into mountains near the Garm Valley and into Gorno-Badakhshan. These groups chose to continue their anti-government activities on the territory of the Tajik republic, sometimes attacking the government forces near Dushanbe and capturing (or killing) soldiers and equipment.<sup>530</sup> They also circulated leaflets urging the Russian soldiers in Tajikistan to stay out of the conflict between the Tajik government and its opposition. The leaflets were signed by the head of the Tajik "government in exile," Abdullah Nuri Saidov, one of the IRP leaders.<sup>531</sup>

An estimated 20,000 Tajiks fled the country, going mostly to Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.<sup>532</sup> But many Tajik refugees, basically the supporters of the IRP, chose Afghanistan as a place of exile. Tens of thousands of Tajiks tried to cross the Amy Darya river, which formed the Tajik-Afghan border. According to eyewitnesses, hundreds of refugees died of cold, starvation, lack of safe boats, panic, attacks by pro-communist forces and drowning, as they attempted to cross the river into Afghanistan.<sup>533</sup> The IRP members who fled to Afghanistan started using the Afghan mujahid bases to launch attacks into Tajikistan. The Tajik government became preoccupied with stopping the infiltration of the IRP militants from northern Afghanistan with arms and other supplies. The IRP militants, contacted other Tajik refugees to help them carry weapons

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<sup>529</sup>Nassim Jawad and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, Tajikistan: A Forgotten Civil War, 20.

<sup>530</sup>Keith Martin, "Tajikistan: Civil War Without End," 27.

<sup>531</sup>RFE/RL News Briefs, 25-29 July and 1-5 August 1994, 7.

<sup>532</sup>Nassim Jawad and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, Tajikistan: A Forgotten Civil War, 20.

<sup>533</sup>Ahmed Rashid, "Civil War Drives the Tajik Refugees to Afghanistan," 18.



back into Afghanistan.<sup>534</sup> Some of the IRP leaders explicitly tried to use the refugees in the refugee camps in Afghanistan for political aims, and attempted to prevent them from returning to Tajikistan. For example, in March 1993, one of the IRP military commanders with 150 men was reported to disrupt the process of refugee repatriation from Afghanistan to Tajikistan in front of the representatives of the Human Rights Watch/Helsinki group by using his machine gun, seriously injuring one member.<sup>535</sup> A similar incident took place on 21 May 1993, when one of the best-known IRP leaders, Davlat Usmon, reportedly entered one of the refugee camps and urged the refugees not to return but to continue to struggle for an Islamic Tajikistan.<sup>536</sup>

## 2. The Mujahidin Camps

After the civil war in Tajikistan, many of the IRP's best known leaders, including Davlat Usman, Muhammad Sharif Himmatzoda, and Turajonzoda fled to Afghanistan. There they increased their ties with the mujahidin leaders and continued their opposition activities from exile. Himmatzoda, received training and fought with the Afghan mujahidin in the camps.<sup>537</sup> Turajonzoda, on the other hand, tried to coordinate the various IRP groups trained under different mujahidin leaders.<sup>538</sup> In some of the Afghan provinces new training camps were set up for the IRP rebels--known there as "mujahidin brothers from Tajikistan"--and other Tajik refugees, where they could pass through a combat training course and learn about combat in mountain terrain.<sup>539</sup> Refugees in the various areas of northern Afghanistan lived under the control of different mujahid leaders. These leaders, especially Hekmatyar and Masud, were equally involved and interested in the refugees as well as the IRP members. Both of these helped considerably to arm and train the IRP militants and refugees

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<sup>534</sup>Ahmed Rashid, The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism, 183.

<sup>535</sup>Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, Human Rights in Tajikistan in the Wake of Civil War, 34.

<sup>536</sup>*Ibid.*, 33

<sup>537</sup>Ahmed Rashid, The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism, 159-60.

<sup>538</sup>RFE/RL News Briefs, 1-4 June 1993, 3.

<sup>539</sup>Izvestiya, 31 July 1992, 2, quoted in FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 4 August 1992, 74.

from Tajikistan in their camps and bases in northern Afghanistan, during and after the civil war.<sup>540</sup>

Ahmed Shah Masud's Jamiat-e-Islami was also involved in Islamic revival in Central Asia even before the establishment of the all-Union IRP. It was reported that the organization's aim was to bring about an uprising by the thirty million Muslims in the Soviet Central Asian republics of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. According to General Zia Masud, brother of Ahmed Shah Masud, the question of military aid to Tajikistan was "still premature" in March 1990, because "there [had to be] first some clarification in the uprising in Tajikistan." He also pointed out that "they were **waiting for a political party to be formed** so that they could have closer contacts and found out their intentions and their needs."<sup>541</sup> Two months later, in June 1990, the all-Union IRP was established, and by the end of the year Masud's Jamiat was receiving weapons from Pakistan at his headquarters in Samangan for delivery to Tajikistan.<sup>542</sup>

Ahmed Shah Masud largely controlled the northern Afghan provinces of Kunduz (which directly borders the Kurgan Tyube region of Tajikistan), Takhan and Taliqan (where the IRP's exile headquarters was located). It was reported that in Kunduz, fighters from various mujahidin groups were recruiting Tajiks to attend "guerrilla warfare training centers." There were eight such centers holding tens of thousands of Tajik refugees and operating in areas adjacent to the border. It was pointed out that each of these centers was training an average of five hundred men and it was estimated that in April 1993 there would be about 4,000 trained fighters reinforcing the ranks of the IRP.<sup>543</sup> According to another estimate by Russian and Tajik defense officials, in the middle of July 1993, a total of 7,000 Tajik rebels and Afghan soldiers in Kunduz were ready for combat.<sup>544</sup>

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<sup>540</sup>It must also be pointed out that these camps have received aid from the Arab and Pakistani Islamists as well. See Barnett R. Rubin, "Tajikistan: From Soviet Republic to Russian-Uzbek Protectorate," in Central Asia and the World, 218.

<sup>541</sup>Le Monde, 2 March 1990, 4, quoted in FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 6 March 1990, 116, emphasis added.

<sup>542</sup>Rabochaya Tribuna, 20 November 1990, 4, quoted in FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 29 November 1990, 100.

<sup>543</sup>Izvestia, 19 February 1993, 4, quoted in The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press, 45, no. 7 (1993): 20.

<sup>544</sup>Keith Martin, "Tajikistan: Civil War Without End," 27.

Gulbeddin Hekmatyar was the second mujahid leader whose support for the military activities of the IRP rebels has been reported in a number of accounts. His first explicit involvement in Tajik Islamic opposition preceded the civil war. KGB officials in Tajikistan pointed out that during the spring 1992 demonstrations in Dushanbe, he had armed four hundred IRP militants.<sup>545</sup> During the civil war, he was reported to set up military camps in Kunduz to train the IRP rebels. According to the chief of the frontier security headquarters, Colonel Valery Kochnov, between June 1992 and September 1992, six hundred Islamic radicals trained in these camps were arrested by the Soviets, but at least four hundred more rebels managed to cross the border without being caught in 1992.<sup>546</sup> The Tajik prime minister, reported in January 1993 that there were ten training camps in Afghanistan supported and funded by Hekmatyar for the training of Tajik rebels. The Russian border guard troop officials in Dushanbe further pointed out that on 21 January 1993 five hundred Tajiks had completed their training and were expected to launch a "mass provocation" against border installations.<sup>547</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Romaz Yankauskas, the deputy chief of the Russian border guard troops in Tajikistan, reported that at least twenty members of Hekmatyar's Hizb-e-Islami were fighting in the ranks of the opposition on the territory of the Tajik republic.<sup>548</sup>

### 3. The Tajik-Afghan Border

At the spot where the borders of Afghanistan, the former Soviet Union, and Iran meet, there is an isolated region called the "Green Triangle." This area has been used for decades by Afghan smugglers to pass illegal drugs and narcotics—especially raw opium—into Iran or the former Soviet Union. The Afghan people used to hide bundles containing narcotics among the reeds along the river marking the border between Afghanistan and the former Soviet Union. The Soviet villagers working in the adjoining fields picked up the

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<sup>545</sup>Ahmed Rashid, The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism, 177.

<sup>546</sup>The Guardian, 10 September 1992.

<sup>547</sup>RFE/RL News Briefs, 18-22 January 1993, 8.

<sup>548</sup>Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 23 September 1992, 1, quoted in FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 23 September 1992, 46.

bundles and left jewelry, money and other valuables in return. Especially during the harvest season, when thousands of people were in the fields, it was extremely difficult for the Soviet border guards to fight against this pattern of smuggling.<sup>549</sup>

After the defeat in Afghanistan in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the border between Afghanistan and the former Soviet republic of Tajikistan became a very serious problem for the authorities. Not only narcotics but also rifles, guns, hand grenades, arms, ammunition, and banned Islamic literature crossed the border. In April 1991, the chairman of the Tajik KGB, Vladimir Petkel, expressed "serious concern over the incessant attempts of foreign extremist-minded Muslim organizations and armed Afghan opposition units to establish illegal contacts with politically-minded nationalist groups in Tajikistan aiming to overthrow the existing social system and create an Islamic state in Tajikistan." According to Petkel, there were eleven groups engaged in smuggling weapons, subversive literature, and narcotics across the Afghan border.<sup>550</sup> During the spring 1992 demonstrations, organizing members of the IRP were reported to say: "If blood flow here, our brothers in Afghanistan will come and help us." The religious magistrate of Tajikistan, Kazi Turajonzoda (who would later become one of the leaders of the IRP) pointed out that believers in Tajikistan felt a sense of pride at events in Afghanistan.<sup>551</sup> About a year later, in July 1992, eight Tajiks who were trying to cross the border to Afghanistan were detained. They were found to have a letter of recommendation to the field commander of the Afghan mujahidin with the seal of the main mosque of the Tajik city of Kolkhozabad. The letter requested that "all possible disinterested aid be given to the coreligionists from fraternal Tajikistan."<sup>552</sup> In another letter sent in early October 1992 by Afghan mujahidin to members of the Tajik IRP who were fighting communist forces in southern Tajikistan, the following was stated: "In the name of Allah the Merciful, the Compassionate. Peace to you, brother Muslims of Tajikistan. The mujahidin

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<sup>549</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 2 March 1990, 101.

<sup>550</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 12 April 1991, 74.

<sup>551</sup>The Boston Globe, 6 May 1992, 10.

<sup>552</sup>Komsomolskaya Pravda, 15 July 1992, 1, quoted in FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 16 July 1992, 71.

of Afghanistan whose Islamic revolution has won in Afghanistan declare their readiness to give any support whatsoever to your Islamic revolution."<sup>553</sup>

Beginning in spring 1993, armed groups of Tajik oppositionists, supported by regular Afghan forces, started to attack the frontier and Russian border detachments from bases in Afghanistan.<sup>554</sup> In a short time, the intensity and frequency of the clashes increased. For example in a major attack on 14 July 1993 launched into Kulyab, twenty-five Russian border guards and more than one hundred villagers were killed.<sup>555</sup> The aim of these military operations was to speed the collapse of the government in Tajikistan. In 1994, there were 306 attempts to cross the border into Tajikistan; outposts were fired on 247 times; there were 96 clashes involving combat; and 50 people were wounded and 31 killed.<sup>556</sup>

It must also be noted that in several recorded instances local inhabitants of the border villages of Tajikistan supported the trespassers. For example on July 1992, during a battle between border guards and a group of trespassers, approximately 300 villagers came to the site where the conflict took place. They started to demand that the trespassers be allowed into Tajikistan. Later, shots were fired from the crowd at the border detachment.<sup>557</sup> According to the deputy chief of one of the border detachments, Major Zaidullayev, whenever the border guards tried to arrest smugglers, "the whole village [came] to the smugglers' aid. In some cases the local residents were heard shouting "Shoot the officers!" The border guards were forced to protect themselves and they were unable to approach the places where the trade of weapons was carried out.<sup>558</sup>

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<sup>553</sup>Allen Hetmanek, "Islamic Revolution and Jihad Came to the Former Soviet Central Asia: The Case of Tajikistan." 365.

<sup>554</sup>Irina D.Zviagelskaya, "Central Asia and Transcaucasia: The New Geopolitics," in Central Asia and Transcaucasia: Ethnicity and Conflict, 151.

<sup>555</sup>Burnett R. Rubin, "Tajikistan: From Soviet Republic to Russian-Uzbek Protectorate," in Central Asia and the World, 218.

<sup>556</sup>Sevodnya, 26 January 1995, 3, quoted in The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press, 47, no. 4 (1995): 25.

<sup>557</sup>See FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 14 July 1992, 33, and 24 July 1992, 61.

<sup>558</sup>Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 15 August 1992, 3, quoted in The Current Digest of the Post Soviet Press, 44, no.

In short, as the demographic data and the example of Afghanistan show, Islam is a very powerful identity for the majority of Soviet Muslims of the former Soviet Union. However, as the next part analyzes, other identities also exist among the Central Asians which affect negatively the functioning of a "common bond of Islam" in the region.

## **2. The Fourth Hypothesis: National Branches of the IRP**

During the last years of perestroika and following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, nationalist movements and ideas flourished throughout the former Soviet Union. All the republics started expressing explicit anti-Russian feelings. The Central Asian people also began to identify themselves as being distinct not only from the Russians but also from each other. In some cases, even sub-national and/or regional conflicts came to the surface. In time the emphasis on different national, ethnic, and regional identities among the Central Asian peoples showed that Islam, although very powerful, was not capable of uniting all Muslims. This caused the all-Union IRP to lose its appeal and power, and strengthened the republican branches.

### **A. Anti-Russian Feelings**

In the eyes of many of the Central Asian natives, the Russians were identified with hardship and oppression. The Central Asians viewed the Soviets as colonizers, invaders, and foreigners, not as "elder brothers." The Slavs, on the other hand, were almost always unwilling to learn the languages and traditions of ethnic Central Asians, despite the constant repetition of the rhetoric of **druzba narodov** ("friendship of peoples") and socialist brotherhood. As such, for most Central Asian people the Slavs represented an alien rule and a privileged minority.<sup>559</sup>

One important factor that caused resentment among the Central Asians was the Slavic domination of heavy industry. When Stalin came to power, he soon abandoned Lenin's policy of training native specialists to

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33 (1992):12.

<sup>559</sup>Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, Russian and Nationalism in Soviet Central Asia: The Case of Tadzhikistan, 93.

provide manpower for the economy. Instead, outsiders, mostly Russians, but other Slavs as well, were brought into the region to build and staff factories. Managerial, technical, administrative, and skilled-labor jobs in the production sector in Central Asian republics were mainly a European preserve.<sup>560</sup> For example, in some industries like mining and energy production, the Russians accounted for up to 90 percent of the workforce.<sup>561</sup> The natives, on the other hand, predominated in the least modernized sectors of the economy, mainly agriculture, light industry, food production service.<sup>562</sup> During the perestroika years, Moscow would be criticized openly for deliberately refusing to invest capital in building up the economy of Central Asia other than the huge heavy industry projects, which relied largely on imported European labor.

During the 1960s, the slow but steady process of "mirasism" started to emerge in Central Asia. Mirasism referred to the rediscovery, rehabilitation, and affirmation of the Islamic heritage, culture, and history of Central Asian people. The process concentrated mainly on recapturing the lost "miras" ("heritage" in Arabic) of Central Asia, which had been forgotten or suppressed in the political transformation of the first decades of the Soviet period. One observer points out that during the 1970s, the Central Asian Turkic peoples have become "increasingly assertive" in resurrecting their "proud and accomplished past."<sup>563</sup> Mirasism was emphasized especially in the literary works of writers like Chingiz Aitmatov, Askad Mukhtar, and Mirmukhsin. In this period, the cultural revival in the contemporary literary scene "ha[d] undergone a striking transformation from novels about bringing in the cotton and love for one's tractor to a belletristic search for cultural roots and the heritage of the past."<sup>564</sup>

With the outbreak of Iran-Islamic revolution in 1979, Central Asian people, particularly in Tajikistan

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<sup>560</sup>James Critchlow, Nationalism in Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic's Road to Sovereignty, 113-4.

<sup>561</sup>The Economist, 8 August 1992, 30.

<sup>562</sup>Nancy Lubin, Labor and Nationality in Soviet Central Asia (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 16.

<sup>563</sup>Daniel C. Matuszewski, "The Turkic Past in the Soviet Future," Problems of Communism 31, no. 4 (1982): 76.

<sup>564</sup>*Ibid.*, 78.

and Uzbekistan, started to demand more religious liberty and they organized a series of anti-Soviet demonstrations in Dushanbe and other Central Asian cities. In March 1979, for example, unofficial mullahs used the Persian New Year celebrations to politicize young people against the Soviet regime.<sup>565</sup>

The early phases of perestroika also helped trigger anti-Russian sentiments in Central Asia. Intensive "parachuting" of Russians and other nonnative cadres into strategic political and economic positions, the continuous purge of local officials, and a freeze on policies favoring native cadres in appointments posts all increased nationalist and ethnic feelings against the Russians.<sup>566</sup> According to one observer, starting from the 1980s on, indigenous Central Asians began to hold the Russians "responsible for everything, from long lines at stores, to shortages in consumer goods, to the rise in crime and 'hippie culture' infecting their republic... For the indigenous nationalities, a perceived worsening quality of life has already become linked with the presence of 'outsiders' in their republic." <sup>567</sup>

At the beginning of 1989, the "recruit murder scandal" caused great resentment among the Central Asian people. An Uzbek journalist, Karim Bariyer, charged the Russian officer corps with systematically abusing, even murdering Uzbek soldiers serving in the Red Army. When Russian military spokesmen attempted to refute Bariyer's accusations, Bariyer started publishing the photos of the dead soldiers.<sup>568</sup> The case became an emotional issue, serving as a catalyst for Central Asian nationalist causes.

As Moscow's political influence has decreased in the region, there has been a rise in anti-Russian and national feelings. For example, native languages have been raised to the status of state language and in many cases have become requirements for citizenship in Central Asian republics. As the head of the Independent News Agency of Tajikistan put it in 1992: "The Russians have been on the top for 150 years in [the] region

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<sup>565</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 35.

<sup>566</sup>Michael Rywkin, Moscow's Muslim Challenge, 149.

<sup>567</sup>*Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>568</sup>James Critchlow, "Islam in Central Asia: Renaissance or Revolution," 202-3.



and if they are not on top any longer, they should accept this, learn the local language and try to integrate."<sup>569</sup>

Another very sensitive issue that contributed to the increase of anti-Russian feelings in Central Asia was the economic, social, and environmental effects of cotton monoculture, which became one of the main issues on Central Asian agenda during the Gorbachev years and the first few years after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

### **B. Cotton Monoculture and Its Effects**

Another very sensitive issue that contributed to the increase of anti-Russian feelings in Central Asia was the economic, social, and environmental effects of cotton monoculture. Cotton monoculture referred to the agricultural policy of excessive planting cotton, enforced by Stalin, under the collectivization program of the 1930s. In fact, the emphasis of the Soviet government on cotton preceded Stalin. Immediately following the 1917 revolution, the new Soviet rulers saw cotton as a vital raw material ("white gold" or "king" as labeled by the Soviet media) for industrialization. In a 1929 economic resolution Stalin launched "a struggle for cotton self-sufficiency in the USSR."<sup>570</sup> Until that time, the Fergana Valley—the richest agricultural region in Central Asia—was famous for its exports of high quality grain, vegetables, and several varieties of fruits. During the collectivization years, however, the traditional agricultural base in the region was destroyed and farmers were forced to concentrate on cotton. The climatic conditions in Central Asia like the warm temperature, abundant sunlight, land and water resources all seemed to favor cotton cultivation. So a high percentage of the arable land in all Central Asian republics was set aside for cotton cultivation. This was especially true in Uzbekistan, which produced more than two thirds of all the cotton grown in the former Soviet Union. In 1989 Uzbekistan produced almost as much cotton as the entire United States.<sup>571</sup> However, there was an important drawback to

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<sup>569</sup>Ahmed Rashid, "Forced to Flee," Far Eastern Economic Review, 12 November 1992, 24.

<sup>570</sup>James Critchlow, Nationalism in Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic's Road to Sovereignty, 62.

<sup>571</sup>Nadia Diuk and Adrian Karatnycky, New Nations Rising: The Fall of the Soviets and the Challenge of Independence (New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 1993): 184.

this: the Central Asian lands received little rainfall, and as cotton growing demanded considerable amounts of water, artificial irrigation projects had to be created. In the Soviet period, the entire irrigation system of Central Asia was restructured for cultivating cotton. Huge reserves of water were diverted to the cotton-growing areas from the two great rivers of Central Asia, the Amy Darya and the Syr Darya, with the result that today rivers that used to replenish the Aral sea, formerly the fourth largest inland body of water in the world and the primary source of water for all Central Asia, no longer reach it. The Aral sea has become so depleted that it now holds less than one-third of its original volume of water.<sup>572</sup> It has been predicted that at the existing rate of evaporation, around forty cubic kilometers per year, the seabed would be essentially dry by the year 2010.<sup>573</sup> Every year wind scatters millions of tons of dust and toxic salts from the Aral's dehydrated seabed over the adjacent arable lands and to places as far as the Arctic Circle.<sup>574</sup> Furthermore, since the Aral sea had a decisive influence on moderating the climate of the region, the length of the growing season has been reduced and winters are now colder.<sup>575</sup>

In addition to the Aral problem, water and land pollution in the region has been extremely high. During the Soviet era, especially after the 1940s, the traditional system of crop rotation was replaced by continuous cotton production. In an attempt to meet agricultural plans, pesticides, herbicides, and defoliants were used excessively. As a result, today in Central Asia water supplies are highly contaminated and soil quality has deteriorated. Because of pollution the level of diseases and infections in Central Asia are extremely high. Stomach diseases, gastrointestinal infections, cancer, typhoid, hepatitis, anemia, and dystrophy have become increasingly frequent. Throughout the region birth defects as well as plant and animal mutations have increased. In some of the villages of the Karakalpak region in Uzbekistan the average life span is around forty.

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<sup>572</sup>Stephan K. Batalden and Sandra L. Batalden, The Newly Independent States of Eurasia (Arizona: The Oryx Press, 1993): 173.

<sup>573</sup>James Critchlow, Nationalism in Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic's Road to Sovereignty, 80.

<sup>574</sup>James Critchlow, "Islam in Central Asia: Renaissance or Revolution," 202.

<sup>575</sup>Annette Bohr, "Turkmen," in The Nationalities Question in the Soviet Union, 236.

allegedly due to the environmental devastation.<sup>576</sup>

These environmental problems affect women and children most, since much of the work in cotton raising is done by them, under harsh conditions, without adequate food, drinking water and shelter from the sun. For years, entire classes of students of all ages were taken from their schools to help with the cotton harvest, which often lasted into December.<sup>577</sup> Infant mortality rates are also high in the area. Some medical authorities have cautioned mothers against nursing their babies for the fear of poisoning them with contaminated breast milk.<sup>578</sup>

As Moscow's power in Central Asia declined in the last years of the Soviet Union, the cotton monoculture became a "potent political and psychological weapon to use against [the] center."<sup>579</sup> Especially during the years of perestroika, the policy of cotton monoculture and cotton delivery plans imposed on the republics was seen as the symbols of Russian domination and exploitation. The system of cotton growing was vilified by writers, journalists, and Central Asian officials. Monoculture was "no longer an esoteric economic concept: [but] had become a political slogan" used for challenging Soviet dominance and economic exploitation in Uzbekistan.<sup>580</sup>

It was within this context that, even the great "cotton scandal" of the mid-1980s was tolerated and justified. Starting from the late 1970s, Uzbek Communist Party officials, under pressure from the central authorities, began to pad cotton production figures, fabricating lies about millions of tons of cotton that were never produced or distributed. For many years, Soviet authorities continued to pay Uzbek officials for cotton that never existed. Uzbek Communist Party Secretary Sharaf Rashidov, who ruled Uzbekistan from 1959 to

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<sup>576</sup>Nancy Lubin, "Uzbekistan: The Challenges Ahead," 632.

<sup>577</sup>James Critchlow, Nationalism in Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic's Road to Sovereignty, 62.

<sup>578</sup>James Critchlow, "Islam in Central Asia: Renaissance or Revolution," 202.

<sup>579</sup>James Critchlow, Nationalism in Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic's Road to Sovereignty, 73.

<sup>580</sup>*Ibid.*, 62.

1983, came to be associated with the corruption, at the time commonly called the "cotton scandal."<sup>581</sup> Rashidov is believed to have siphoned off the equivalent of two billion US dollars during his tenure by issuing false cotton output statistics and funneling the money into the shadow economy of the republic.<sup>582</sup>

One observer suggests that among the Uzbek political elite bribery and corruption became the rule and not the exception, and that the cotton affair was just another example of this attitude. On the other hand, the ever higher plan figures from the center were so unrealistic that they could only be reached on paper.<sup>583</sup> It was also suggested that although the cotton affair "undoubtedly lined the pockets of many Central Asian officials ... it was also a form of passive national resistance."<sup>584</sup> As put by one observer:

By short-circuiting Kremlin's pressures for still more reckless expansion of cotton acreage; the "corrupt" officials helped to defend their land from further environmental degradation. The fact that some of the proceeds of their manipulations were used for public purposes, even to build mosques, also indicates that the "cotton affair" was not entirely venal in motivation.<sup>585</sup>

When President Karimov came to power in 1990, more than eight hundred sentences in connection with the cotton affair were reexamined by Uzbek courts; many of these sentences were overturned, and some of the dead "victims" were rehabilitated. In time, calls for the rehabilitation of Sharaf Rashidov himself started to appear in local press. He came to be seen as a national hero who advanced Uzbekistan's national interests in opposition to the excessive demands of the center. Rashidov was officially rehabilitated in 1992.<sup>586</sup>

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<sup>581</sup>Stephan K. Batalden and Sandra L. Batalden, The Newly Independent States of Eurasia, 174.

<sup>582</sup>Ahmed Rashid, "Heroes Old and New," Far Eastern Economic Review, 26 November 1992, 40.

<sup>583</sup>Cassandra Cavanaugh, "Uzbekistan Reexamines the Cotton Affair," RFE/RL Research Report, 18 September 1992.

<sup>584</sup>William Fierman, "Introduction," in Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation, 3-4.

<sup>585</sup>*Ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>586</sup>Cassandra Cavanaugh, "Uzbekistan Reexamines the Cotton Affair," 9.

### C. Ethnic Conflict Among the Central Asian People

Although conflicts between the Slavic and Central Asian people constituted an important source of tension in Central Asia, ethnic, regional, and sub-regional factors within the Central Asian societies have, on numerous occasions, exercised an even more powerful influence on the minds of the people.<sup>587</sup> In some cases, there have been bloody ethnic clashes among Central Asians themselves.

At the root of most of these conflicts have been Uzbeks and their claims to leadership in Central Asia. In the post-Soviet era, the Uzbeks have appeared to be the most nationalistic of all Central Asian people. Being the largest ethnic group in the region, they believe that they should have the leadership position in Central Asia.<sup>588</sup> Historically speaking, whoever controlled the land between the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya rivers, also controlled Central Asia. It is this territory that now lies in Uzbekistan.<sup>589</sup> According to one observer, before the Soviet rule, what preserved the delicate ethnic balance and prevented continued bloodshed in Central Asia was the "de facto acceptance of the ethnic pecking order in which the Uzbeks generally dominated or claimed a substantial portion of political power, with the Tajiks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and Turkmens commonly assuming subordinate roles with respect to the Uzbeks."<sup>590</sup> Today many Uzbeks consider themselves the inheritors of earlier Central Asian empires. President Islam Karimov declared his country to be responsible for the well being of all the Uzbeks in Central Asia, implying a right to intervene in the affairs of the neighboring countries. This may cause serious problems, because Uzbeks form substantial minorities in almost all Central Asian republics.<sup>591</sup> According to one observer, other Central Asian republics

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<sup>587</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 192.

<sup>588</sup>Miron Rezun, "The Muslim Borderlands: Islam and Nationalism in Transition," in Nationalism and the Breakup of an Empire: Russia and Its Periphery, 128.

<sup>589</sup>Martha Brill Olcott, "The Myth of Tsentr'naia Aziia," 563.

<sup>590</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 186.

<sup>591</sup>For example 23 percent of the population in Tajikistan, 13 percent of the population in Turkmenistan and 12 percent of the population in Kyrgyzstan are Uzbek. See Rashid, The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism, 80.

are "deeply suspicious of Uzbek aspirations."<sup>592</sup> These fears have been reinforced by Uzbek-involved ethnic explosions in the Fergana Valley (the Meskhetian conflict) and in the city of Osh. In addition to these conflicts, Uzbeks and Tajiks have had ethnic quarrels. The following sections, after examining these ethnic clashes, will analyze how such clashes negatively affected the functioning of the all-Union IRP.

#### **a. The Meskhetian Conflict**

The Meskhetian Turks were one of the nations that was deported to Central Asia by the orders of Stalin at the end of the Second World War on charges of collaboration with the German invaders. They were Georgian-speaking Shiite Muslims who were originally natives of southern Georgia. About forty percent of them were settled in the Fergana Valley in Uzbekistan, forbidden to change their residence, and ordered to report once a month to a special office.<sup>593</sup>

The Fergana Valley is the most densely populated region in Uzbekistan with over 280 residents per square kilometer (compared to an average of approximately 13 per square kilometer for the former Soviet Union). The population of the region increased by 27 percent from 1979 to 1989, whereas that of the former Soviet Union grew by only a little over nine percent. Similarly the largely rural indigenous Uzbek population doubled in size between 1959 and 1979. This population increase caused chronic rural overpopulation and underemployment. Of the estimated twenty-two thousand Uzbek youth coming onto the job market in the Fergana oblast each year, one in five could not find employment. From the perspective of the Uzbeks, the trouble was that non-Uzbeks, including the Meskhetians, lived better than the native Uzbeks in their own republic.<sup>594</sup> Most Meskhetian Turks were economically secure, while unemployment among the Uzbeks was high. The economic disparity between the relatively better-off Meshketians and the economically deprived

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<sup>592</sup>Ahmed Rashid, "Call of Chauvinism," Far Eastern Economic Review, 9 January 1992, 15.

<sup>593</sup>Anatoly M.Khazanov, "Meskhetian Turks in Search of Self-Identity," Central Asian Survey 11, no. 4 (1992): 4.

<sup>594</sup>Stephan K. Batalden and Sandra L. Batalden, The Newly Independent States of Eurasia, 176.

Uzbeks of Fergana caused great resentment among the Uzbeks. Many were convinced that the Meskhetians' departure would help improve the socio-economic conditions.<sup>595</sup>

A Meshketian outbreak started on 23 May 1989 in the town of Kuvasi in the Fergana Valley after an incident between a Meskhetian Turk and an Uzbek vendor in the local town market. A large crowd was drawn to the conflict and violence erupted. By early June clashes had spread to several other cities. Some armed Uzbek youth set fire to Meshketian houses. In a week's time, more than a hundred people--mostly Meshketians--were killed.<sup>596</sup> Eleven thousand of the 60,000 Meshketians in the Fergana Valley had to be evacuated to the Russian Republic.<sup>597</sup> There have been several different explanations for the outbreak. According to Uzbekistan's chief of security, "pan-Islamic" agitators incited the violence. Some of the Uzbek intelligentsia, on the other hand, suspected a well-planned provocation by the authorities in order to crack down on the opposition, especially on the nationalist Birlik.<sup>598</sup> However, the most probable causes pointed to the deteriorating economic situation and conflicts over housing, land, water rights and jobs.

#### **b. The Osh Conflict**

The trouble began in the city of Osh located in Kyrgyzstan near the Uzbek border in May 1990 when a Kyrgyz nationalist organization, Osh Aymaghi, demanded that land belonging to an Uzbek collective farm be reallocated for the construction of housing for the Kyrgyz. This caused great resentment among the Uzbeks who claimed that their economic and demographic presence in the region was not translated into political power and that they were constantly excluded from the political structure.<sup>599</sup> The ethnic Kyrgyz in Osh, on the

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<sup>595</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 193.

<sup>596</sup>Nadia Diuk and Adrian Karatnycky, New Nations Rising: The Fall of the Soviets and the Challenge of Independence, 189.

<sup>597</sup>Stephan K. Batalden and Sandra L. Batalden, The Newly Independent States of Eurasia, 176.

<sup>598</sup>Nadia Diuk and Adrian Karatnycky, New Nations Rising: The Fall of the Soviets and the Challenge of Independence, 189.

<sup>599</sup>About 12 percent of Kyrgyzstan's population is Uzbek, Far Eastern Economic Review, 9 January 1992,

other hand, resented the relative wealth and prominence of the local Uzbeks who controlled most of the city's trade and commerce.<sup>600</sup> In June 1990 the Osh Soviet decided to reassign the land of a collective farm that local Uzbeks had been farming for years to Kyrgyz. The decision precipitated a riot and the two ethnic groups clashed resulting in the loss of hundreds of lives. Although no armed clashes between the two groups were subsequently reported, the tension in the region remained high.

### **c. Tajik-Uzbek Hostility**

Although no armed clashes have recently occurred between the Tajiks and the Uzbeks in Central Asia, Tajik-Uzbek hostility is another important source of conflict in the region. According to one observer, the conflict and antipathy between the Tajiks and the Uzbeks, is "one of the oldest parameters in the region."<sup>601</sup> Today, both Uzbeks and Tajiks claim to be descendants of some of the past rulers of Turkestan like Timur and Ulugh Bey, and heirs to the great cultural tradition of Avicenna (Ibn-Sina), the famous physician and philosopher of Bukhara in the eleventh century, and Jami, the great mystic poet of Persia in the fifteenth century.<sup>602</sup> For some Tajiks, Uzbeks are Turkicized Iranians who still owe much to their Iranian roots. Some Uzbeks, on the other hand, deny the existence of a separate Tajik people, arguing that Tajiks are in fact fellow Turks who have forgotten their original language.<sup>603</sup> From the very outset of Soviet rule, the Tajik minority in Uzbekistan felt victimized by discrimination. Before 1917, Tajiks made up the majority of the population in Samarkand and Bukhara, the two largest cultural and economic centers of Central Asia that were long under Tajik cultural influence. However, because of the manner in which the territory of the old Emirate of Bukhara

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<sup>600</sup>Gene Huskey "Kyrgyzstan: the Politics of Frustration," in Nations and Politics in the Soviet Successor States, 406.

<sup>601</sup>Ibid., 195.

<sup>602</sup>Kadir Z.Alimov. "Uzbek History and Foreign Policy," in The Legacy of History in Russia and the New States of Eurasia, ed. Frederick Starr (New York: M.E.Sharpe, 1994): 221.

<sup>603</sup>Muriel Atkin, "Religious, National and Other Identities in Central Asia," in Muslims in Central Asia: Expressions of Identity and Change, 50-1.



was divided under the "national delimitation" policy of the Soviets, these two centers were assigned to Uzbekistan.<sup>604</sup> Tajiks, on the other hand, were left with mountainous areas and the backwater town of Dushanbe as their capital. As such, according to one observer, they were "Central Asia's biggest territorial losers."<sup>605</sup> Moreover, the Tajik population in Uzbekistan have been culturally and politically suppressed because the policy in Uzbekistan was to force Uzbek identities on Tajiks who were born after the 1920s, even though both parents were Tajik. This decades-old policy was be changed only in September 1990. The regional governing council of Bukhara allowed Tajiks to change nationality in their documents and reregister as Tajiks.<sup>606</sup> In another campaign led by a Tajik national association, 35,000 Uzbeks were reregistered as Tajiks in Samarkand within one month in 1991.<sup>607</sup> Today, according to official Uzbek statistics, five percent of the total population of Uzbekistan is Tajik. However, according to Tajik and some Uzbek specialists the actual number is between ten and fifteen percent.<sup>608</sup>

Tajiks fear being absorbed into a Central Asia dominated by Uzbeks and other Turkic groups. They do not want their own cultural tradition and language to disappear into a larger, mainly Turkic Central Asian community of nations. Tajik intellectuals, especially the younger ones, emphasize the importance of ties with Persian-speaking people as a means of asserting their uniqueness among the other Turkic groups in Central Asia, and reforming their identity on the basis of cultural heritage. They feel estranged from Turkic culture and regard the Tajik heritage as being alien to the Turkic.<sup>609</sup>

An interesting example of this attitude was the protest over Turkish television programs broadcast in

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<sup>604</sup>Boris Rumer, "The Gathering Storm in Central Asia," and Rywkin, Moscow's Lost Empire, 129.

<sup>605</sup>Martha Brill Olcott, "The Myth of Tsentral'naia Azii," 552.

<sup>606</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 24 September 1990, 104.

<sup>607</sup>Eden Naby, "Ethnicity and Islam in Central Asia," Central Asian Survey 12, no. 2 (1993): 160.

<sup>608</sup>Boris Rumer, "The Gathering Storm in Central Asia," 95.

<sup>609</sup>Eden Naby, "Tajiks Reemphasize Iranian Heritage as Ethnic Pressures Mount in Central Asia," Report on the USSR, 16 February 1990.

Central Asia in August 1992. One correspondent from Radio Dushanbe made the following remark about the initiative of the Tajik government in broadcasting programs from Turkish television:

The people...are surprised about the fact that [Communication] Minister Usmonov,...has managed to find funds for broadcasting programs from the Turkish television. [W]ith this auspicious act, he is taking us once again to the pan-Turkish era... The arguments by the republican communications minister on broadcasting Turkish television have caused anxiety among all our staff. We think this is a new treachery against our very weak and small nation. If Usmonov regards himself as caring about the nation...then why is he not making any efforts to broadcast Iranian and Afghan television, whose languages are understood by all Tajiks?<sup>610</sup>

Within this context, both the Tajik political and intellectual elites have increasingly emphasized the Persian heritage of the Tajik people. It has been claimed that this heritage was largely ignored by the communists, who cut Tajikistan off from its language and cultural links with Iran. As a result some young Tajiks now realize for the first time that their language, Farsi, is the same as that spoken in Iran.<sup>611</sup>

In an attempt to increase linguistic and cultural ties with Persian-speaking peoples--especially Iranians--in the region, Tajik intellectuals have popularized the writings of Persian poets and philosophers. They frequently assert that the Tajiks are an integral part of the wider Iranian cultural sphere and full heirs to more than two millennia of Iranian civilization. Some Tajik elites have gone so far as to argue that the Tajiks played the pivotal role in the creation of Persian civilization.<sup>612</sup> The theme of kinship between the Tajiks and other Persian speakers was further emphasized when the World Tajik Association was established in Dushanbe in September 1992. The purpose of the organization was to help Tajiks living abroad and other Persian speaking people to strengthen their ties, establish contacts, and help sovereign Tajikistan's economic, scientific, and cultural developments.

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<sup>610</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 26 August 1992, 47.

<sup>611</sup>Ahmed Rashid, The Reemergence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism, 172.

<sup>612</sup>Muriel Atkin, "Religious, National and Other Identities in Central Asia," in Muslims in Central Asia: Expressions of Identity and Change, 55-6.

#### **d. The Intra-Tajik Conflict**

There have been conflicts not only between the Central Asians and the Russians, and among the Central Asian people themselves, but also conflicts within the Tajik people. Tajikistan is a geographically fragmented country where regions are diverse in ethnic, topographic, linguistic, cultural, economic, and religious terms. Only sixty-two percent of the people in Tajikistan are Tajiks.<sup>613</sup> Regional differences, referred to as "mahalgaroi" (regionalism) have been both the cause and consequence of historical, political, and economic rivalries and conflicts among the Tajik people since the creation of the republic in 1924.<sup>614</sup> Regional factors such as ethnic and clan affiliations have always been important in establishing power balances in the republic. Throughout the history of modern Tajikistan, economic benefits and political power were distributed unequally among the four main regions of the country. Most of the republic's industrial investment went to the north of the country, mainly to the Khojend--formerly Leninabad--region, Dushanbe and Hissar. This led to uneven economic development of other regions. The north of the country became more industrialized and economically richer, whereas the south remained agricultural and impoverished. Political power was also in the hands of the clans from the Khojend region, which remained the provider of almost all Communist Party elite for over forty years. The Khojend power elite has managed to exercise control over much of the south through its alliance with the Kulyabis in the south, who became clients of the Khojendis. After the Kulyabis and the Khojendis united in the 1970s, Kulyab became a support base for the Communist Party.<sup>615</sup> The Khojend and Kulyab regions accounted about sixty percent of Tajikistan's population.<sup>616</sup> The Khojendis also allied themselves with the Russians in Tajikistan and so secured Moscow's support.

The Kurgan Tyube and the Gorno Badakhshan regions of Tajikistan, on the other hand, have remained economically less developed and politically less powerful. Most of the inhabitants of the Kurgan

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<sup>613</sup>Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras, Nations and Politics in Soviet Successor States, 599.

<sup>614</sup>Nassim Jawad and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, Tajikistan: A Forgotten Civil War, 13.

<sup>615</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 22 September 1992, 56.

<sup>616</sup>Dilip Hiro, Between Marx and Muhammad: The Changing Face of Central Asia, 192.

Tyube region came from the Gorno Badakhshan region as a result of Stalin's forced migration policy. The population of the mountainous Garm Valley in the Kurgan Tyube region is among the most religious in Tajikistan: the city of Garm is an Islamic stronghold. Finally, the Gorno Badakhshan region is the isolated eastern half of Tajikistan which is linked to the rest of the republic by only one road. The region is set in the Pamir mountains, and includes the Karategin Valley. Although it comprises 47 percent of the total territory of Tajikistan, Gorno Badakhshan is a sparsely populated area.<sup>617</sup> The inhabitants are overwhelmingly Ismaili Muslims, who follow a dissident form of Shi'ite Islam and speak some six dialects of eastern Iranian that are related to Tajik.<sup>618</sup> These Pamiri people consider themselves a separate nationality from the Tajiks. The region started to show signs of separatism in the late 1980s, leading to the establishment of the Lali Badakhshan separatist movement in 1989. In December 1991 the region declared its autonomy. However, during the civil war, the highway from Dushanbe to Khorog, the region's capital, was blocked by fighting, and the population of Gorno Badakhshan was faced with the danger of starvation.<sup>619</sup> In June 1993, the authorities appealed to Dushanbe for help, and the goal of independence was formally denounced.

When the civil war started in Tajikistan, these regional inequalities became even more apparent. Although the war seemed like a struggle between the old communist leadership and an Islamic leaning democratic opposition, clashes between regions and clans played the main role in the conflict. While the opposition has been labeled "Islamists," the religious factor was "only a cover for struggles between the elites of the regional clans."<sup>620</sup> According to Davlat Khudonazarov, President Nabiev's main rival in the 1991 presidential elections--who was a Pamiri and was supported by the united opposition-- in Tajikistan there was "no place for ideological issues" like communism versus Islam or democracy. The real struggle was between

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<sup>617</sup>Amnesty International, Tajikistan: Compilation Document, 2.

<sup>618</sup>Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, Human Rights in Tajikistan in the Wake of Civil War, xiii.

<sup>619</sup>Bess Brown, "From Central Asia: The Economic Crisis Deepens," RFE/RL Research Report, 7 January 1994, 66.

<sup>620</sup>Grigory Bondorevski and Peter Ferdinand, "Russian Foreign Policy and Central Asia," in The New States of Central Asia and Their Neighbours, 46.

the unevenly developed regions. "[T]he oppressed people sought to establish justice in the land of Tajikistan," since they had been deprived of economic and political power for decades.<sup>621</sup>

In 1991-92 the newly formed political parties in Tajikistan clearly reflected the resentment against the dominance of the Khojendis. The leaders of the Garm and Pamir clans formed the Democratic Party of Tajikistan. Almost simultaneously the IRP was set up by the peasants of the border region of Kurgan Tyube. The Khojend and Dushanbe clans created the so-called Popular Front, a loose organization mainly supporting the northerners. When the civil war erupted, the old communist elite drew its support from people of Khojend and Kulyab, whereas the opposition enjoyed the loyalty of people from the Kurgan Tyube and Gorno Badakhshan regions.

#### **D. All-Union IRP and Ethnicity in Central Asia**

These national, ethnic, and regional conflicts and problems in Central Asia affected the functioning of the all-Union IRP soon after its establishment. Although the branches of the IRP throughout the former Soviet Union shared a number of common characteristics--such as challenging communism with Islamic fundamentalism and emphasizing the deteriorating living conditions in order to delegitimize the heads of governments in their countries--in time there emerged serious problems between the center and its branches. Despite the IRP's claim to be an all-Union party bringing together all Muslim people it did not have any real political power in the former Soviet Union.<sup>622</sup>

Even before the demise of the Soviet Union, the IRP was unable to move beyond a loosely knit group of cells based in different republics. With the Soviet breakup, the local chapters became separate parties that supported Islamic ideals on a national and regional basis only.<sup>623</sup> These chapters proved to be increasingly

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<sup>621</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 30 September 1993, 40.

<sup>622</sup>Alexei V. Malashenko, "Islam versus Communism: the Experience of Communism," in Russi'a Muslim Frontiers, 73.

<sup>623</sup>Igor Yermakov and Dmitri Mikulsky, Islam v Rossii i Srednei Azii, 176.

influential in their own republics. At the end of 1991 there were already independent regional IRP structures in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan.<sup>624</sup> In time it became clear that Muslims who declared their allegiance to the party were not necessarily loyal to the party's central leadership. The leaders of the all-Union IRP understood that the Islamist activists from the different regions of the country were primarily concerned with their own interests, and generally were reluctant to give even nominal governing power to the all-Union IRP.<sup>625</sup> The party had to deal with the question of "how to reconcile the inclusive pan-Islamic aspirations with the existence of separate Central Asian nations and governments."<sup>626</sup> Forming one regional structure was very difficult particularly due to Turk-Tajik confrontation. The heads of the Tajik branch did not want to be in the same regional structure with Turkic people, especially Uzbeks.

Furthermore the all-Union and national branches of the IRP were involved in different patterns of cooperation with the authorities as well as other opposition parties. In the case of the all-Union IRP there was very limited, if any, cooperation with other political forces. At the international level, the party was very much against cooperation with countries other than Islamic ones. And at the internal level, the leaders were skeptical about other political groups, especially democratic ones. According to Geydar Dzhemal, for example, it was not possible to have a political alliance with democrats. For one thing, it was felt that democrats always had a negative attitude against Islam in general, and against the IRP in particular. Furthermore, they were judged opportunists, conformists, and pragmatists because they tried to contact the Islamists only after the Islamic movement in Tajikistan emerged from the underground, when being involved in an Islamic party was no longer as dangerous as it used to be. Moreover, as the democrats were mainly oriented toward non-religious values and Western political concepts, they had no contact with the Muslim masses, and they could not effectively mobilize them. They were unable to fill the political vacuum in their countries and lacked adequate

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<sup>624</sup>Ibid., 178.

<sup>625</sup>Alexei V. Malashenko, "Islam versus Communism: the Experience of Coexistence." in Russia's Muslim Frontiers, 73.

<sup>626</sup>Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, "Russia and the New States of Eurasia: the Politics of Upheaval." 115.

infrastructure.<sup>627</sup>

Uzbek and Tajik branches of the all-Union IRP on the other hand, showed different patterns of cooperation with the authorities, official Islamic figures and other opposition groups, depending on the specific conditions in each republic.

**a. The Uzbek IRP and Other Groups:** In Uzbekistan, there has been limited cooperation among opposition forces. Two leading nationalist and democratic opposition parties, Erk and Birlik, contradicted the Islamic-oriented parties like the IRP in their goals and programs. Although the leaders of these two parties recognized the significance of Islam for the cause of national revival, they believed that their parties were more powerful than that of the Islamists.<sup>628</sup>

The Uzbek IRP had very few, if any, contacts with the Erk Party. According to some Islamic leaders, the Erk Party became "obedient" to the communist power elite to preserve its status and therefore lost its popularity.<sup>629</sup> Although the secular leader of Erk, Mohammed Salih, attended the founding congress of the Uzbek IRP in Tashkent, he flatly opposed the registration of the party.<sup>630</sup>

The Uzbek IRP, on the other hand, had better relations with Birlik and the party leaders worked relatively more closely with Birlik than with Erk. Birlik leader Pulatov, was among the participants in the founding congress of the Uzbek IRP. He justified Birlik's positive attitude toward the IRP by saying that the Islamic movement in Uzbekistan was in a better position to reach people through mosques than was the democratic movement. According to him, "People who have already lost their faith in the communist regime are afraid to join the democrats but not afraid to join the Islamic movement." Pulatov also indicated that it was

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<sup>627</sup>Den, no. 21, 25 October-8 November 1991, 7.

<sup>628</sup>Ludmilla Polanskaya and Alexei V. Malashenko, Islam in Central Asia, 132.

<sup>629</sup>Abdujabar Abduvakhitov, "Islamic Revivalism in Uzbekistan," in Russia's Muslim Frontiers, 95.

<sup>630</sup>The Referendum on Independence and Presidential Election in Uzbekistan, U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Washington DC: 1992): 6.

better to be in close contact with the IRP so as to "move Islam in a more progressive direction."<sup>631</sup> It is also important to note that from the point of view of the Uzbek intelligentsia, which generally supported Birlik, the recovery of Turkic and Islamic identities were often inseparable from each other and both these identities were regarded as being compatible with human rights, and democratic and political ideals.

Birlik members and Islamic leaders regularly consulted, worked together, and supported each other against the communist government in Tashkent.<sup>632</sup> For example, during the anti-government demonstrations in Namangan in December 1991, many Birlik activists who collaborated with the IRP were arrested alongside the party's members.<sup>633</sup> Similarly, when a mass prayer meeting in the mosque of Namangan had developed into a rally of protest against the Communist Party in September 1991, demanding the banning of the Party and nationalization of its property, the leader of the local chapter of Birlik announced his full support for the Muslim demands.<sup>634</sup> After the Erk Party was officially registered, Birlik looked to the IRP for support and tried to establish closer contacts.<sup>635</sup>

On the other hand, there was no cooperation and coordination of activities between the Uzbek IRP and the official Muslim establishment in Uzbekistan, although both sides attempted to realize this from time to time. For example, in the second issue of the Uzbek IRP's publication Davat, the Republican chairman of the party Abdullah Utaev appealed to the official Muslim Religious Board to cooperate with the party.<sup>636</sup> The official clergy, however, seemed to be reluctant to be involved with an Islamic political party. The head of the Muslim Religious Board of Central Asia, mufti Mohammed Yusuf protested the establishment of religious parties in Uzbekistan and strongly opposed to the idea of an Islamic political party. According to him, religion

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<sup>631</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 124.

<sup>632</sup>Robin Wright, "Report from Turkestan," 60.

<sup>633</sup>Cassandra Cavanaugh, "Crackdown on the Opposition in Uzbekistan," 21.

<sup>634</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 30 September 1991, 99.

<sup>635</sup>Abdujabar Abduvakhitov, "Islamic Revivalism in Uzbekistan," in Russia's Muslim Frontiers, 95.

<sup>636</sup>Bess Brown, "The Islamic Renaissance Party in Central Asia," 14.



should not disturb the division of power between the state and the mosque.<sup>637</sup> Regarding the political activities of religious groups in Uzbekistan, including the Uzbek IRP, he said the following:

We believe that Islam in itself is a party which has existed more than 1,400 years. We have statutes in the form of the Qur'an, and a program in the shape of the Sunna of our Prophet. Moreover, Islam is above all parties. Whereas the program of various parties are drawn up by their members, our program was created by great Allah himself. And it differs from other programs in the same way as the Most High Himself differs from His slaves.<sup>638</sup>

In general the official religious establishment in Uzbekistan remained in close cooperation with Karimov's government. The organization enjoyed extensive government support that included plans for creating Islamic centers at state expense. Formal, though limited, clerical participation in the government became possible as Islamic clerics who headed the Department of Religious Affairs were permitted to introduce limited formal Islamic instruction in state schools. On some occasions, the official clergy and the government supported each other. For example, when in 1990 and 1991 attempts were made to oust Mufti Muhammad Yusuf by some of the other members of the official clergy, the mufti turned to Uzbek President Karimov for protection. When he was not removed from office, the mufti in return supported the president in the December 1991 elections. However, when the mufti expressed support for Kazi Ali Akbar Turajonzoda's involvement with the Islamic opposition movement in Tajikistan, this caused great resentment in the Uzbek government and the Mufti was replaced in April 1993 "for reasons of bad health."<sup>639</sup>

From time to time, the official clergy in Uzbekistan have tried to assimilate the IRP, in an attempt to prevent its further radicalization. Before he was replaced, Mufti Mohammed Yusuf met with the IRP members on a number of occasions hoping to coopt them. For example, during the fifth Kurultay of the Muslim Religious Board of Central Asia on 26 February 1992, the mufti met with several IRP representatives,

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<sup>637</sup>Jonathan Steele, "Glasnost Throws Open Mosque Doors," 8.

<sup>638</sup>Komsomolskaya Pravda, 8 December 1990, 1, quoted in FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 13 December 1990, 106.

<sup>639</sup>Martha Brill Olcott, "Islamic Consciousness and Nationalist Ideology in Central Asia," in From Gulf To Central Asia, ed. Anoushiravan Etheshami (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1994), 17.

including the Mufti of Tashkent, Abduaziz Mansur, in an effort to assimilate the party's high-ranking members. There was no positive response from the Uzbek branch of the IRP.<sup>640</sup> Also during the meeting, the IRP members were offered posts of deputy muftis, but the muftiate's offer was turned down. The basic objection of the Islamic opposition has been the government's constant monitoring of, and interference with, the affairs of independent religious groups and institutions.<sup>641</sup> In contrast, the IRP in Uzbekistan had opposed the board's authority and had pressed for the dissolution of the board and its replacement by a decentralized religious structure with more power given to regional and district organizations.<sup>642</sup>

**b. The Tajik IRP and Other Groups:** The Tajik IRP's involvement with the authorities, the official Islamic establishment, and the other political groups in Tajikistan was different than in Uzbekistan. The Tajik government was relatively more tolerant to Islamic revival in general than Uzbek president Karimov, and the official Islamic establishment was more willing to work together with the Tajik branch of the party. Under those circumstances, the Tajik IRP's involvement with the authorities and the official Islam followed a different pattern than that of the Uzbek branch of the party. The head of official Islam, Kazi Turajonzoda who played a conciliatory attitude between its muftiate and the Tajik IRP, ended up being one of the party's most influential leaders.

In the Tajik case, however, different political developments before and after the civil war resulted in the emergence of two different leaders for the Tajik IRP. Just before the civil war, Kazi Ali Akbar Turajonzoda was the most influential leader of the party. After the war, he was replaced by Mullah Abdullah Nuri Saidov, an Islamic figure whose background and ideas were, in some cases, quite different than that of the Kazi. Under these two leaders, who symbolized two different time periods and different conditions for the Tajik IRP, the party's behavior changed.

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<sup>640</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, "Islamic Revival in the Central Asian Republics," 255.

<sup>641</sup>Mehrdad Haghayeghi, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, 160.

<sup>642</sup>Ibid., 92.

Kazi Turajonzoda and mullah Abdullah Nuri Saidov came from different religious backgrounds and traditions. Turajonzoda was born in 1954 to a family with a long religious tradition. His father was a Sufi sheikh, but Turajonzoda followed the path of official Islam in the former Soviet Union. He was educated at the madrasa in Bukhara and at the Islamic Institute of SADUM in Tashkent. This was later followed by studies at the Sharia Faculty of Amman University in Jordan.

In 1990 Turajonzoda was appointed kazikalon (chief justice or the supreme religious authority) of Tajikistan. That same year he was elected to Tajikistan's Supreme Soviet and he repeatedly submitted proposals for the inclusion of Islamic elements in Tajikistan's legal code, such as the declaration of Muslim holidays as nonworking days, switching the day off to Friday, slaughtering livestock according to Muslim law and exempting mosques and other religious institutions from land taxes. When all of his proposals were rejected, Kazi Turajonzoda aligned himself with the opposition.<sup>643</sup> At the end of the Tajik civil war, he decided to join the exiled IRP leaders in Afghanistan.

Abdullah Saidov, on the other hand, was born in 1947 in the Karategin Valley in the Garm region. He was an unregistered Wahhabi mullah and had a secondary education. He worked as an engineer-surveyor in the Kurgan Tyube technical inventory office. He received his religious training from his father, Nuriddin Saidov, who after retiring from his job as a state farm director, became a self-appointed mullah.<sup>644</sup> Like his father, Saidov did not recognize the official religious structure and accused it of apostasy. He tried to persuade believers to forbid their children to join the Komsomol and forbid their daughters to study in higher educational establishments.<sup>645</sup> He was officially summoned by the KGB for the first time in 1971 and was threatened because of his religious educational activities. He was arrested in 1973, but later released.<sup>646</sup>

During the 1980s, Mullah Saidov continued his activities. In 1986 he urged his followers to petition

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<sup>643</sup>Keith Martin, "Tajikistan: Civil War Without End," 21.

<sup>644</sup>Dilip Hiro, Between Marx and Muhammed: The Changing Face of Central Asia, 195.

<sup>645</sup>Kommunist Tadzikistana, 12 February 1987, as quoted in Central Asian Newsletter 6, no.1 (1987):5.

<sup>646</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 15 March 1994, 40.

the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to establish an Islamic state in Tajikistan. Failing in this, he allegedly told his followers in Kurgan Tyube to take up arms to achieve this goal. When he was arrested, his supporters organized demonstrations and demanded his release.<sup>647</sup> Among the demonstrators were local Communist Party members and intellectuals.<sup>648</sup> The protests were soon put down and the mullah was sentenced to eighteen months in prison in 1987. In 1990 he went on a pilgrimage to Mecca. In 1992 he became the editor in chief of the official newspaper of the Muslim Spiritual Board of Tajikistan. He was actively involved in all the meetings of the opposition in 1991-1992 and became very influential among the radical elements of the IRP. Following the civil war, he fled the country and became heavily involved with the Tajik IRP leaders in Afghanistan. In March 1993 he was elected the head of the Islamic Rebirth Movement of Tajikistan, the new name of the Tajik IRP.<sup>649</sup>

Turajonzoda was a representative of official Islam, whereas Saidov was a representative of parallel Islam. This difference became apparent when the two leaders came together in the Tajik IRP. Turajonzoda seemed to have a more moderate and conciliatory attitude in general, whereas Saidov was more radical and fundamentalist. Turajonzoda tried to solve the problems that occurred between the opposition and the government as well as between different opposition groups by negotiations. His role as the mediator between several different groups of Tajikistan was so extensive that the headquarters of the unified opposition in Dushanbe were located in the kaziats' center.<sup>650</sup> His popularity grew as he sought to establish an alliance among the Tajik IRP, his kaziats, and Sufi brotherhoods, and to work with the government.<sup>651</sup> Even before the Tajik civil war, Turajonzoda appealed to all political forces in Tajikistan to form a government of national unity. In his view, neither the opposition parties nor the government were in a position to solve the problems

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<sup>647</sup>Yaacov Ro'i, "The Islamic Influences on Nationalism in Soviet Central Asia," 61.

<sup>648</sup>Stephan K. Batalden and Sandra L. Batalden, The Newly Independent States of Eurasia, 153.

<sup>649</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 16 March 1995, 47.

<sup>650</sup>Keith Martin, "Tajikistan: Civil War Without End," 21.

<sup>651</sup>Dilip Hiro, Between Marx and Muhammed: The Changing Face of Central Asia, 200-1.

of the country on their own.<sup>652</sup>

Kazi Turajonzoda also had a moderate attitude as far as the relations with Russia were concerned. He stated that the Russian speaking population of Tajikistan had to remain "full-fledged citizens of the country" and that they should be given dual citizenship. According to him, the Russians must have the right to be citizens of Russia and the citizens of Tajikistan at the same time; otherwise they would leave and this was not a desirable situation.<sup>653</sup>

On several occasions Kazi Turajonzoda stated that he favored a secular democratic state in which religion would be separate from politics. According to him, the ideal social structure for Tajikistan was a democratic, legal, secular state with a free economy.<sup>654</sup> "Why should religion be a barrier to democracy?" he asked. "If the Baltic states can be democratic and Christian, surely we can have an Islamic democracy [in Tajikistan]."<sup>655</sup> According to the Kazi, Islam should reemerge as a belief system or ethics among the people, who need to be believers. He said: "Our future state should be democratic, respect human rights, and must have entrepreneurship. Our Islamic religion is to be equal to the religions of the Christians and Jews and other religions. We do not need an Islamic state."<sup>656</sup>

Turajonzoda rejected the Iranian model for Tajikistan.<sup>657</sup> The outside world should not expect a repetition of the Iranian revolution in Tajikistan because the models of state were very different for the Shia and the Sunni branches of Islam.<sup>658</sup> The Kazi claimed that even if all the clergy wanted an Islamic republic in

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<sup>652</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 10 February 1992, 78-9.

<sup>653</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 13 May 1992, 69.

<sup>654</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 8 July 1992, 73.

<sup>655</sup>Malcolm Gray, "Shedding the Past," Maclean's, 25 November 1991, 35.

<sup>656</sup>Berliner Zeitung, 22 November 1991, 7, quoted in FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 27 November 1991, 73.

<sup>657</sup>Vladimir Klimenko, "Winds of Islam Fans Politics Emergent in Tajikistan," Los Angeles Times, 14 May 1992, 4.

<sup>658</sup>Robin Wright, "Report From Turkestan," 75.

Tajikistan. it would be impossible for a number of reasons. First, the secularization of Tajik society since the 1920s had an impact on the minds, habits, and way of life of the people. Second, Tajikistan was closely tied economically to the Slavic republics, especially Russia, and the Slavs were against the idea of an Islamic state. Similarly the Western states and even some of the Islamic states also would not like to see an Islamic political order in Tajikistan. If Tajikistan chose the path of Iran, according to the Kazi, "very serious consequences, an economic boycott for instance, [could not] be ruled out." Tajikistan needed the help of other states in order to emerge from its economic crisis. Finally, the Kazi claimed that Tajikistan should not isolate itself from the world community; according to him, "building an Islamic republic in the twentieth century means dooming the republic to isolation. That would prevent the normal development of relations with the free world."<sup>659</sup>

It must, however, be noted that the Kazi did not rule out the possibility of creating an Islamic republic in Tajikistan in the long-run. When the majority of the people were educated about Islam and began observing Islamic norms, they would be ready to live by the Islamic laws. But only under this condition should an Islamic state be created.<sup>660</sup>

Saidov, on the other hand, had a much more fundamentalist attitude. For example in March 1994, he said the following:

The revolution in Afghanistan was an impetus to our movement. But the basis of our movement was the victory of Islamic revolution in Iran in which all the forces in the [Islamic] movement and all the Muslims trusted. After the Islamic revolution in Iran, these forces were convinced that when Islam was able to prevail in Iran, the same could happen in other countries too. This gave the people self-confidence.<sup>661</sup>

In a similar vein, on 19 October 1995 he made the following statement about the next round of peace talks between the Islamic opposition and the Tajik government: "We said that if the fifth round [of peace talks] did not take place on 18 September, we might not be able to keep under control and hold back the mujahidin.

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<sup>659</sup>Komsomolskaya Pravda, 4 October 1991, 1, quoted in FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 7 October 1991, 81.

<sup>660</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 14 September 1992, 34.

<sup>661</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 15 March 1994, 40.

who for the past one or two years have been thirsty for the enemy's blood and for the blood of those who have been threatening Islam and the freedom and independence of our country." Saidov also warned the Tajik president that if the government avoided a political compromise with the opposition, they would never allow the government to govern in peace. He said that they would continue the struggle for justice by any means.<sup>662</sup>

The all-Union IRP's emergence in 1990 indicated that Islam, after decades of being repressed, could still be a very important element of identity. The Afghan example was an indication that Islam could transcend national boundaries. However, as the bloody ethnic clashes in the Fergana Valley and other ethnic conflicts in the region showed, ethnic, regional and national attachments were at least as important as religion. Islam was not enough to act above all other different identities in Central Asia and other attachments limited the notion of common bond of Islam considerably.

Some of the findings of this chapter may also be analyzed within the specific context of identity politics and the primordial and instrumental approaches. As analyzed in this chapter, the persistence of religious identity in the Muslim areas of the former Soviet Union was the sufficient cause for the emergence of the IRP as an all-Union party. The Central Asian people resisted assimilation by clinging to Islam and by making it one of the main defining factors of ethnicity in Central Asia. Islam became especially significant in Central Asian people's relations with the Slavic people, linking them against their hegemony and ideology. Especially in rural areas, Islam survived and remained one of the core elements of the "primordial" attachment to religion and tradition.

The all-Union IRP, by using this primordial attachment organized its program, ideology, and activities within the context of the former Soviet Union, appealing to all "Muslim" people of the country, regardless of nationality, race, language, and region. The case of the Tajik IRP and the Afghan mujahidin also reflected this attitude. The concepts of Muslim brotherhood and **umma** were utilized as the reflections of the most important ethnic attachment of Islam that could supersede all other minor allegiances among the Central Asians. As such, it seems that the subjective or primordial claim to ethnicity (in this case religious

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<sup>662</sup>FBIS-SOV Daily Report, 19 October 1995, 68.

commitment) had primary importance that overrode other attachments. In other words, the all-Union IRP, as well as, the Tajik branch of the party in its collaboration with the Afghan mujahidin acted in a value-oriented way and based their activities on the ethnic bond of Islam as a deep-seated and atavistic allegiance.

However, when the national branches of the IRP in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and the ethnic clashes among the Central Asian people themselves are taken into account, a wider picture emerges. Although Islam could sometimes unite Central Asians, especially against their common enemies--as was the case in the Soviet-Afghan war--it is not sufficient to be a uniting factor in many cases. As the examples of the Meskhetian conflict, the armed clashes in the city of Osh, the Tajik-Uzbek hostility and the Tajik civil war illustrate, belonging to the same religion could not prevent ethnic conflict in Central Asia. Other attachments were at least as important as Islam in the region.

One such attachment was nationalism, which turned out to be the main force behind the separation of the Tajik and Uzbek branches of the IRP from the all-Union party. The branches acted on a national basis within the local conditions of their own republics. As such, the artificially created or "invented" nations of Central Asia were the main reason why the IRP could not continue functioning as an "all-Union" party. The primordial attachment of Islam was reduced within the framework of these invented nations.

As the events in the Fergana Valley, Osh, and the Tajik civil war demonstrated, in many cases, irreconcilable economic interests of different ethnic groups provided the bases for ethnic clashes. It was the unemployment and poverty in the Fergana Valley, the housing shortages in Osh, and regional inequalities in Tajikistan that caused the ethnic conflicts in those regions, rather than being an Uzbek, a Meshketian, or a northern or southern Tajik. As the instrumentalists would claim, the people aimed to protect their own interests and reacted violently when the competition for the allocation of scarce resources ended in their disadvantage. These ethnic conflicts in Central Asia were due not only to a primordial need to belong, but also to the conscious efforts of people who mobilized ethnic symbols (whether being an Uzbek, or a Kyrgyz, or a member of the Khojendi clan) in the search for economic and political gain. In such cases, competition for scarce resources became the main driving force.

In conclusion, it is possible to say that although the primordial attachment to Islam could sometimes



be the basis of the most important ethnic identity in Central Asia , in many cases, it was not sufficient to unite people. Other factors like regionalism, nationality, and linguistic differences have equally strong mobilizing potential among the Central Asians depending mostly on the perceived threat to group interests.

## **CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION**

In this chapter the arguments and the four hypotheses of the dissertation will be summed up and analyzed in the light of the data presented in the previous chapters. The first hypothesis assumed that the emergence of the IRP as an Islamic political party could be explained by the existence of parallel Islam in Central Asia; and the second hypothesis assumed that the emergence of the IRP as a legal party could be explained by the existence of official Islam in Central Asia. In this chapter it will be pointed out that although the IRP emerged as a result of the existence of parallel Islam, its leaders did not always look upon official Islam as a model and did not use legal political means to achieve their goals like official Islam did. Depending on different political environments, they chose whatever methods were available to obtain their goals, including violence. As such, the first hypothesis, that is the emergence of the IRP as an Islamic political party as a result of the existence of Islam in Central Asia, has been substantiated. However, the second hypothesis, that is the emergence of the IRP as a legal political party as a result of the existence of official Islam, has not been substantiated.

The third hypotheses of the dissertation assumed that the emergence of the IRP as an all-Union party could be explained by the survival of Islam among the Central Asian people as a "common bond," transcending other attachments; and the fourth hypothesis assumed that the emergence of the republican branches of the IRP could be explained by the coexistence of other identities alongside Islam. In this chapter it will be indicated that although Islam sometimes acted as a common bond, other identities that crosscut religion were at least as important as Islam. As such, the argument of the third hypothesis about survival of Islam in Central Asia as a common bond has been substantiated; and the argument of the fourth hypothesis about the importance of other identities has been substantiated.

### **1. The First Hypothesis**

The first hypothesis stated that the existence of Islam in Central Asia was a necessary cause for the emergence of the IRP in the form of an Islamic political party. In the previous chapters, the survival and deep-rooted penetration of Islam in the social and cultural lives of the Central Asian Muslims have been

analyzed. Without this type of effect of religion on people, the IRP would not emerge. As such it is concluded that the first hypothesis has been substantiated.

Islamic influence on the Central Asian way of living has deep roots that go far back before the Soviet period. Since Islam's introduction to the area in the seventh century, religion had always been an important identity factor shaping peoples' minds and traditions. On the eve of the 1917 Revolution, the vast majority of people in Central Asia regarded themselves as Muslims. Even the Jadid intellectuals, who were largely influenced by Western culture as well as its political and social institutions, aimed to bring Islamic culture into line with modern life. They had no intention of undermining religion.

The popular Basmachi guerrilla warfare of the 1918 was a striking example of the mobilizing force of Islam as well as its influence in Central Asia. It took more than a decade for the Soviet government to eradicate the armed struggle completely, and even though the Soviet media portrayed the Basmachi leaders as bandits, most people continued to cherish their legacy and viewed them as heroes.

The Muslim national communists of the 1920s, on the other hand, attempted to unite Islamic values with nationalist and communist ideas. These intellectual Communist Party members had no intention of eradicating Islamic values in Central Asia. Rather, they tried to find a way of coexistence between Muslim national interests and Marxism.

During the Soviet period, Islam has never stopped being on the political agenda of Soviet government. Depending on the political environment and the need for support from the Muslim populations of the former Soviet Union, religious policies have either been harsh or somewhat more tolerant and relaxed. But one thing remained constant: Islam and its influence has always been an issue for the Soviet government that needed to be dealt with.

Even the creation of official Islam was a recognition on the part of the government of the role of Islam among the Muslims of the country. Its main role remained to work on the theme of compatibility of Muslim and Soviet values. So there was the implicit recognition that Islam existed as an alternative value system, and that Soviet values needed to be legitimized for the Muslim populations. However, official Islam, established after three decades of Soviet rule, remained far too small and restrained to satisfy the spiritual and

cultural requirements of the Muslim populations. For millions of Muslims a parallel network of Islamic associations, including village councils, Muslim trading guilds, councils of clan and tribal leaders, and above all Sufi brotherhoods replaced and compensated for the inadequacy of the few licensed and state-approved clerics and organizations. The imams of the underground mosques, unofficial village mullahs, teachers of underground makhtabs and mazar sheiks (shrine officials) kept Islam alive and handed down religious knowledge and tradition. In the period after the Second World War, small groups of young people began to be taught under older persons who had been educated before the 1917 Revolution. Arabic language and script were the basic subjects of study. This education process, however, began an irreversible trend and hundreds of young people started to study Islam under senior religious teachers, few of whom were involved with the Muslim Spiritual Directorate (SADUM). Small illegal printing houses were also established. These houses printed literature on Islam and distributed their publications free. The main financial resources were the self-generated incomes of the activists from trades and crafts. Private homes and some public facilities like tea houses were used for prayers.

During the Soviet era, even until the Gorbachev years, the official government line remained hostile to Islam. However, despite all attempts of the government, Islam remained pervasive in all strata of the Central Asian societies, including local communist leaders and Party members. In rural areas, Islam's influence and survival was much stronger. In the late Gorbachev years, with the changing political atmosphere, parallel Islam emerged from the underground and started to be more active in the social and political lives of the Central Asian people.

Under such circumstances, it is possible to conclude that the emergence of the IRP would have been very unlikely, if not impossible, if parallel Islam had not had such a widespread influence in Central Asia. As such, the first hypothesis has been substantiated.

## **2. The Second Hypothesis**

The second hypothesis assumed that the emergence of the IRP as a legal party could be explained by the existence of official Islam in Central Asia, which provided the party a model of legal existence as an Islamic institution. Initially the IRP both at the union and the republican levels emerged as a legal political

entity that sought recognition of the authorities. The party claimed to be peaceful and democratic and presented itself as a political entity ready to make some concessions to the government in order to exist legally. To increase the party's influence in domestic and external affairs, its leaders promoted conciliation and political compromise with the authorities. As such, the IRP, both at the all-Union and the republican levels, did not challenge the existing political system and did not seek to destroy it; rather the IRP wanted to have a say in the socio-political affairs of the society. The party leaders also claimed to reject all forms of religious fanaticism and the forceful imposition of a religious order. As such, the IRP, especially in the Tajik case, resembled official Islam, which also made compromises, worked with the authorities and never claimed to make a political and/or religious challenge.

However, a closer look reveals that those were not the long-run aims of the party and that the IRP differed considerably from the official Islamic institutions. Although the party leaders stated that they wanted to remain within the boundaries of the existing political system, they acted otherwise in several cases. The IRP leaders adjusted their party's strategy and tactics according to the conditions of the political environment in which they operated. For example, the all-Union IRP utilized the convenience of the relatively more liberal political atmosphere of the later Gorbachev years, when religion was no longer repressed, but was slowly being accepted as part of one's cultural, national, and historic identity. Throughout the country there was relaxation in anti-Islamic propaganda and policies. Within the individual Muslim republics the Communist Parties themselves were becoming more national and Islamic, at least in rhetoric. It was only then that the IRP emerged--in the Tajik case from underground--as a legal political party, using the opportunities the new political environment offered.

Furthermore, under the conditions of the early 1990s, the all-Union IRP **had to** present itself as a political party which did not want to destroy the political system, but to remain a part of it. Although at the time Moscow's grip on individual republics was loosening and the country was on its way downhill, the USSR still existed with all its political and legal institutions. Although the Tajik and Uzbek branches of the party emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union, they still had to act in a political environment heavily dominated by the old Communist Party elite. As such, they, too, could not exist by explicitly presenting

themselves as potential challengers and/or destroyers of the regime. Instead they claimed to have chosen—like official Islam did—a moderate path within the existing system in which they would struggle for democratic and nationalist ideals. However, when conditions for a legal existence no longer existed, the party leaders changed their moderate character and took an explicitly hostile attitude toward the political system. Immediately after it was outlawed by the authorities, the IRP went underground and continued its struggle as an illegal party. So, being outlawed did not stop the party leaders from seeking power, sometimes through radical and militant ways. As the Tajik case shows, despite all statements supporting peaceful and constitutional ways of achieving power, the IRP engaged in armed struggle against the government. It must also be kept in mind that if the party manages to come to power in the long-run—although through legal and constitutional ways—what may happen afterwards is a question mark. Even if the majority of people agree to live under an Islamic regime, what would the position of non-Muslims and/or Muslims who prefer a secular system be in such a regime? This remains an open and potentially dangerous question, especially when one considers the activities of the Tajik IRP after the civil war. As was mentioned before, when the legal conditions for its existence no longer existed, the party immediately went underground and conducted its activities in an illegal and in many cases violent way. The long-term goals of the party do not appear different than those of other radical Islamic fundamentalist regimes, such as the one in Iran. Furthermore, the party not only established relations with the Afghan mujahidin and the Iranian government—which acted as a negotiator between the Tajik government and the IRP rebels—but also with other countries and other fundamentalist Islamic organizations. For example, Saudi Arabia became very heavily involved in the religious revival in Tajikistan. Tajiks returning from the hajj had with them loads of literature that was later put to use by the IRP. One scholar even claimed that the IRP was the "direct heir" of the Egyptian fundamentalist group, Muslim Brotherhood, which had created a number of secret cells in some Central Asian cities as early as the 1930s.<sup>663</sup> It was also claimed that one of the most important leaders of the Tajik IRP, Muhammad Sharif Himmatzoda, established close links not only with the

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<sup>663</sup>Ahmed Rashid, The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism, 44.

Muslim Brotherhood but also with the Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan.<sup>664</sup> So, if the IRP succeeds in achieving power in the future, regardless of its methods, it may not remain peaceful.

Although the IRP shared some similarities with the official Islamic establishment, it differed considerably from it. The existence of official Islam depended on a secular system in which religion was under the control of the political system and not vice-versa. The long-run goals of the IRP explicitly revealed that the party aimed to replace the political system (albeit through peaceful, legal, and democratic means) with an Islamic one. As such, the party was involved in a political power struggle, had a different agenda and regarded communism as an unacceptable ideology for Muslims. According to the party leaders, Marxism represented a man-made secular path that was alien to the God-oriented, straight path of Islam. If Muslims were to remain faithful to God and his will, they should return solely to Islam. Islam was a self-sufficient, all-embracing ideology that provided the only acceptable blueprint for Muslim society. There was no need to go outside Islam's way of life in order to renew the society. Such a political challenge was unacceptable and unthinkable for the official Islamic establishment, which always remained loyal to the Communist Party and never sought to challenge it. Furthermore, official Islam did not engage in a political power struggle against the communist regime. To the contrary, it tried to persuade the people that Islam and communism were compatible, and attempted thereby to justify certain acts of government, even when the people disagreed. The clearest example was the Afghan invasion in 1979. So, official Islam remained totally loyal and subservient to the regime; in no case did it turn radical and/or militant.

Unlike official Islamic institutions, the all-Union IRP and its regional branches in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan had one common goal in the long-run: to overthrow the communist system and replace it with a new regime supporting traditional religious values. As such, the IRP had more in common with parallel Islamic institutions. Both parallel Islam and the IRP struggled to achieve their goals by trying to gain the support of Central Asian people who felt alienated under the communist regime. In fact the IRP could be seen as the emergence of parallel Islam in the political arena after seven decades of communist rule. It is also

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<sup>664</sup>Ahmed Rashid, "Clout of the Clergy," 18.

possible to argue that during the Soviet period, parallel Islam always had the potential of turning into a full-scale political movement or organization. As it was repressed and/or severely limited, it had no opportunity to engage in an explicit political struggle against the regime. Nevertheless, parallel Islam continued to exist illegally and kept religion alive in Central Asia not only as a socio-cultural phenomenon, but in some cases as a political opposition movement. As was explained earlier, the Sufi elders were actively involved in instructing the children and young adults in Tajikistan's Kulyab and Kurgan Tyube regions which would later form the underground Islamic Revival Movement of the 1960s. In the 1970s this movement would transform itself into an underground political party aiming at creating a Muslim state.

The long-run goals of the IRP revealed that the party's resemblance to official Islam--in terms of its being moderate and aiming at staying within the boundaries of the political system--was temporary and only tactical. The party resembled parallel Islam more and it emerged as a reflection of parallel Islamic organizations in the political arena.

Therefore, official Islam was not essential in the emergence of the IRP as a model to be followed, but more as a model to be opposed. Initially--at least in rhetoric--its existence affected the policies and courses of action of the IRP as a model of legal, legitimate political participation. But in time, it was seen as a part of the old establishment and was rejected and opposed. The party leaders used legal political channels only when they did not face any repression or opposition from the authorities, and when the political environment was safe to do so. Accordingly, the second hypothesis was not substantiated.

### **3. The Third Hypothesis**

The third hypothesis assumed that the emergence of the IRP as an all-Union party could be explained by the survival of Islam among the Central Asian people as a common bond, transcending all other attachments, like nationalism and tribal loyalties. The emergence of the all-Union IRP in the former Soviet Union was an important indication that Islam could still have an appeal, uniting people coming from different ethnic, national, and regional backgrounds after seven decades of Soviet rule. As was presented in the previous chapters, Soviet administration was largely ineffective in decreasing the influence of Islam in Central Asia



despite all its attempts to eradicate traditional Muslim values. Especially in rural areas, family structures, population growth rates, migration patterns, communal way of living and separation of sexes all reflected such values. As such Islam remained influential in Central Asia, especially in uniting people against the Russians. Starting from the 1980s it became more public and its resurfacing resulted in the emergence of the all-Union IRP in 1990.

The program of the all-Union IRP suggested that being parts of different nations was not desirable for Muslims who formed one big community, the *umma*. Within this context, the party rejected all Western political concepts—including nationalism—and put the emphasis on Islamic solidarity and brotherhood. As the Afghan case showed, in certain cases, the appeal of Islam—in the form of Muslim brotherhood and *umma*—transcended national boundaries, and religion became more important than citizenship bonds or national identities among the Central Asian people. As the data presented previously suggested, the religious character of the Soviet-Afghan conflict resulted in fraternization between the Afghan people and Soviet Central Asians at the beginning of the war. In time, people started to take the side of the Afghan rebels and mutual support and sensitivity on both sides against the Soviet government increased. Especially after the Tajik civil war, IRP members and Soviet Tajik refugees were trained in Afghan mujahidin camps and they started violating the Tajik-Afghan border, attacking Russian troops there. In short, Islam seems to be a "common bond" among the Muslims of Central Asia, transcending other attachments and being the most important identity factor.

It must also be kept in mind that Islam has a significant potential for being one of the strongest political powers in the region. According to Martha Brill Olcott, for example, today in Central Asia three main groups are competing for political control everywhere. First, there are democratic groups dominated mainly by the intellectuals. These groups have not played a major role and have remained weak. Second, there are the representatives of the old Central Asian "patocracy,"—the old communist elite—struggling to remain in control. And third, there are the revivalist Islamic groups composed of fundamentalist-style clerics who were trained outside the official structure.<sup>665</sup>

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<sup>665</sup>Martha Brill Olcott, "Central Asia's Post-Empire Politics," *Orbis* 36, no. 2 (1992): 255.

The Central Asian political elites know that if they want to stay in power they must make some religious concessions to the people who are increasingly turning to Islam as a part of their cultural, social, and historic identity. However, the Central Asian governments are very much against the political form of Islam and demonstrate little tolerance for religious parties or groups. Furthermore, these governments are still very much dependent on Russia in economic and political terms. From the perspective of Russia, too, Central Asia is its "Central America."<sup>666</sup> As such, the regimes in Central Asia try to decrease the influence of fundamentalist ideologies not only for their own sake but also to please Russia. But as a result of this type of repression, Islam may emerge as a political alternative. As the leader of the Uzbek nationalist party Birlik points out: "The communists are trying to excuse tough measures against the democratic and Islamic movements by citing the threat of Islamic fundamentalism...But by these steps, they are pushing people into Islamic fundamentalism."<sup>667</sup> Another scholar, T. Saidbaev, states similar views. According to him:

Since 1960, life has been getting worse for the peoples of Central Asia: The standard of living has declined steadily, soil has been destroyed ... , people's health has gotten worse. ... All of this has left an imprint on the people's consciousness. And when the tough times began people turned to Islam, which was perfectly natural, since Islam has been and remains the core of the nation's view. Therefore, when people talk about the role of Islam in conflicts in one republic or another, it is not Islam but social phenomena that must be put in first place. Islam is only the idea, the flag, in which the people's extremely serious social and political demands have been wrapped. ... In Fergana, in Dushanbe, in Osh and in other places, people have put forth the same demands that any political movement does: the problem of power, the problem of ownership, the handling of social questions.<sup>668</sup>

Considering these observations, it is clear that Islam still has a very strong influence on the people in Central Asia. As such, the third hypothesis which suggested that the persistence of Islamic identity in many parts of the Soviet Union was the sufficient cause for the emergence of the IRP as an all-Union party, has been

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<sup>666</sup>Raymond Bonner, "Why All Eyes Are on a Place Called Tajikistan," The New York Times, 7 November 1993, 4.

<sup>667</sup>Daniel Sneider, "Uzbek Opposition Asserts Government Increases Repression," The Christian Science Monitor, 2 October 1992, 7.

<sup>668</sup>Izvestia, 28 November 1991, 4, quoted in The Current Digest of the Soviet Press, 43, no. 48 (1992): 12.

substantiated.

#### **4. The Fourth Hypothesis**

The fourth hypothesis assumed that the emergence of the republican branches of the IRP could be explained by the existence of other identities. Although Islam sometimes acted as a unifying and most powerful identity among the Muslim people coming from different nations and regions of the former Soviet Union, it has not proved adequate to submerge other identities like nationalism, tribalism, and regionalism. These other attachments and identities limited the effectiveness of the common bond of Islam considerably. In fact, Islam--although always a common attachment-- was never the most decisive factor of identity among the Central Asians. Even before the Soviet era, when the modern Central Asian states did not exist and the area was basically known as Turkestan, the role of Islam was quite limited. At the time the main identity for the individual in Central Asia was not Islam, but family, clan, and tribe. There were no national sentiments except for some Western-educated intellectuals. "It was only when one wished to distinguish oneself from the Russians that the term 'Muslim' or people of the Qur'an was used."<sup>669</sup> Other than that, being a Muslim was not a particularly distinguishing element of identity. In general, in Central Asia Islam as a unifying bond emerged only when there was an outside threat by a non-Muslim force. This was the case during the Basmachi rebellion of the early 1920s, and the functioning of the Sufi brotherhoods during the Soviet era. Even today it is possible to observe the same tendency. For Central Asian states, Islam became especially significant in their dealings with Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union because it distinguished them from Russia. According to one observer, "In most of the [Central Asian] republics Islam is a convenient symbol which allows local nationalists to distance themselves from Slavic culture and aspirations. Islam is also a catch-all slogan for mobilizing people against the local ex-communist elite who are still in power."<sup>670</sup>

During the late 1980s and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Central Asian people emphasized

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<sup>669</sup> Amir Taheri, Crescent in a Red Sky, 72.

<sup>670</sup> Ahmed Rashid, "Clout of the Clergy," 18.

their national identities and uniqueness not only against the Russians but against each other as well. As the bloody conflict in the Fergana Valley showed, when economic interests collided, religion was no longer enough to override other attachments. And as the Tajik fear of being absorbed into a Turkic and Muslim Central Asia showed, not even belonging to the same sect of Islam was sufficient to prevent conflict. Sunni Tajiks wanted closer ties with Shi'ite Iranians, not Sunni Central Asians. Furthermore, the civil war in Tajikistan was fought among the Tajik people themselves, whose history, language, and religion (with the exception of the small Pamiri population) were the same, but whose economic and political interests were in conflict. Unequal distribution of economic and political power between the economically rich and industrial Khojend region and the agricultural and impoverished Kurgan Tyube and Garm regions was the basic reason behind the Tajik civil war.

All these differences weakened the appeal of the all-Union IRP. In a short time national interests started to play a dominant role and the regional branches of the party began to undermine the central organization. Different conditions forced the Uzbek and Tajik branches of the party to act differently in the political area, engage in different coalition patterns and play different roles. Finally, the activities of the IRP, not only differed at the all-Union and republican levels in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, but also within the Tajik republic itself. When the political environment was conducive to forming a political alliance with the authorities, Kazi Turajonzoda, as the more moderate official Islamic figure, emerged as the most influential leader of the Tajik IRP. At this time the party presented itself as a more moderate and peaceful organization which was willing to stay within the boundaries of the political system. When, however, after the civil war, the party went underground, the more fundamentalist and radical leader of the IRP, Mullah Saidov, became the most influential person. Saidov's IRP was more radical, even violent, and became involved in armed struggle against the regime. These two leaders symbolized two different time periods and different conditions under which the Tajik IRP changed attitude and strategy in reaching its goals. Therefore, Islam by itself was not enough to cover up different personal opinions and attitude under different conditions, even in the same branch of the party.

It must however also be kept in mind that although Islam was inadequate to unite people, other

identities were not necessarily stronger than Islam. Within this context, the idea of a broader Turkestan, which after the collapse of the Soviet Union started to emerge in some political and intellectual circles in Central Asia, deserves special attention. Broader Turkestan refers to the notion of a unified Turkic and Muslim state composed of the former Soviet Central Asian republics which share several linguistic, religious, cultural, and historical characteristics. The Uzbek government seems to be particularly interested in "a unified Turkic community of interests," mostly as a result of its claims to leadership in Central Asia in the post-Soviet era.<sup>671</sup>

However, as one leader of the nationalist Erk party in Uzbekistan put it:

It is a very long way to Turkestan from where we are now. To talk of a united Turkestan today is very idealistic. Perhaps it is an alluring goal in the minds of some groups, but it's impossible at the present. The peoples of Turkestan are already divided into five republics; and in each, a national identity has been formed. One cannot deny this process that began even during the colonial period some 100 years ago. It's not that we don't want to unite, it's just that it's impossible today. It's a political dream.<sup>672</sup>

It must also be kept in mind that Tajik people do not consider themselves to be part of a Turkic Central Asia and refuse to be part of a renewed notion of Turkestan.

Another important point is the fact that in today's Central Asia, several identities, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive, crosscut each other. Both the Islamic factor and national attachments are important for Central Asians who are trying to form a modern identity under the new conditions that arose after the collapse of the Soviet Union. According to one observer, for example, Islam became an element of nationalism by itself for the Turkic Central Asians. In other words:

Whoever is Turkic is Muslim, and vice-versa. ... It is likely, therefore, that as nationalist movements build identity and grow vis-a-vis Russia in the decade ahead, the Islamist factor will increasingly play a part in any confrontation. Islam and nationalism, rather than being opposing forces, are likely to grow in tandem and feed each other.<sup>673</sup>

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<sup>671</sup>Nadia Diuk and Adrian Karatnycky, New Nations Rising: The Fall of the Soviets and the Challenge of Independence, 190.

<sup>672</sup>Donald Carlisle, "Uzbekistan and the Uzbeks," 43.

<sup>673</sup>Graham E. Fuller, "Russia and Central Asia: Federation or Fault Line," in Central Asia and the World, 118.

As such, the fourth hypothesis, which suggested that the coexistence of ethnic, national, and communal identities with Islamic identity was the sufficient cause for the organization of the IRP on republican levels throughout Central Asia, has been substantiated.

### **5. Some Concluding Remarks**

The conditions in which the IRP emerged, functioned, and changed course of action were affected by a complex set of social, political, and historical factors. The dichotomy of parallel/official Islam, the survival of Islam in Central Asia, and the existence of other identities alongside religion all played different roles in the emergence and activities of the party in the initial five year period of its existence.

The existence of parallel Islam, by its inevitable contribution to the survival of religious commitment among the Muslim people of the former Soviet Union, prepared the foundation of the IRP. It was on this foundation that the party built its ideology, course of action and basic outlook. When the party was formed in 1990, the former Soviet Union still existed as a legal and political entity. At the time it seemed logical and easier to form an "all-Union" party with regional branches throughout the country to seek the support of all Muslim peoples of the Union. Similarly, it was safer and reasonable to utilize the only all-Union Islamic establishment, official Islam, which could legally exist and function at the time. Therefore, official Islam was portrayed by the all-Union IRP as the model of a legal and legitimate channel of political mobilization and participation.

However, once the former Soviet Union ceased to exist, the conditions of the IRP's existence and functioning also changed. The emergence of different republics with their own national agenda and interests shifted the priority of the all-Union IRP to its regional branches. The former party organization lost its appeal and in a short time gave way to republican organizations which were primarily concerned with the national agenda in their own countries. Depending on the internal conditions of different republics, the national branches of the IRP changed their course of action and policy. At the end of this process, official Islam ceased to be an appropriate or desired model for the IRP which used illegal and sometimes terrorist methods of

action.

These general remarks about the IRP can also be placed within the larger body of literature on identity politics which was briefly mentioned in the Introduction. As was analyzed in the proceeding chapters, Islam in Central Asia has remained strong, mostly due to the existence of parallel Islam. The Soviet regime was unable to eradicate the centuries old "primordial" attachment of Central Asian people to Islam. The Soviet government with its anti-religious stance against religion was perceived as a direct threat to the traditional ways of society. As a result, as the primordialists would suggest, it is possible to say that people throughout Central Asia, especially in rural areas, turned more and more toward religion, kept their Islamic identities, and adopted to change by clinging to their traditional ways.

Like parallel Islam, the IRP used this primordial attachment to religion and emerged as a reaction of the Muslim populations of the former Soviet Union to the communist regime in general and the Communist Party in particular. The IRP was part of the general struggle to broaden the definition of Islam and it carried religion outside the boundaries set by official Islam. The IRP aimed to make religion part of the social, cultural, and national identity of Muslim people, rather than limiting it to the individual or spiritual level. Islam had to prevail in both public and private spheres of life. The IRP utilized the potential of parallel Islam to become politicized. But, unlike parallel Islam, it added a new political or public dimension to Islam. With the IRP, religion took the form of potentially powerful participant in the political power struggle.

As such, the findings of the study of the IRP seem to suggest that the inherent or primordial attachment to Islam became a basis for political organization and action only when it was defined and used by the party leaders for an identity-based politics (This was particularly obvious in the case of the all-Union IRP, which emphasized the common bond of Islam, as transcending all other identities in the former Soviet Union). It was mostly the conscious efforts of the IRP leaders, who used religion in order to mobilize the people to bring a new Islamic political system, that turned parallel Islam into a political party.

A final observation can be made regarding the "invented" tradition of nationalism in Central Asia. During the 1920s, belonging to certain "nations" was not a strong attachment among the Central Asian people. National boundaries, drawn by the new regime on the former territory of Turkestan, were seen artificial.

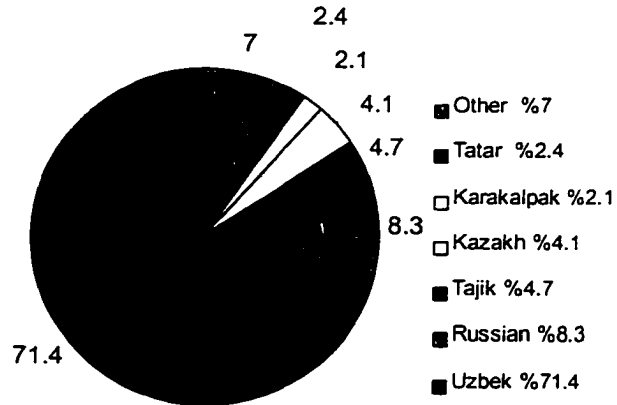
However, in time these "invented" nations became less artificial, and especially after the dissolution of the former Soviet Union, they emerged as legal and legitimate actors on the international arena as well as among their populations. This transition from being invented artificially to being real and functional was one of the main reasons why the all-Union IRP lost its appeal in a short time and the republican organizations became more and more involved in national issues and interests. For the republican leaders of the IRP in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the primordial attachment to Islam had to be brought together with the attachment to nationalism. In short, in time it became more and more clear that the "primordial" and the "invented" had to be kept together to build a strong political support and develop a realistic policy agenda.



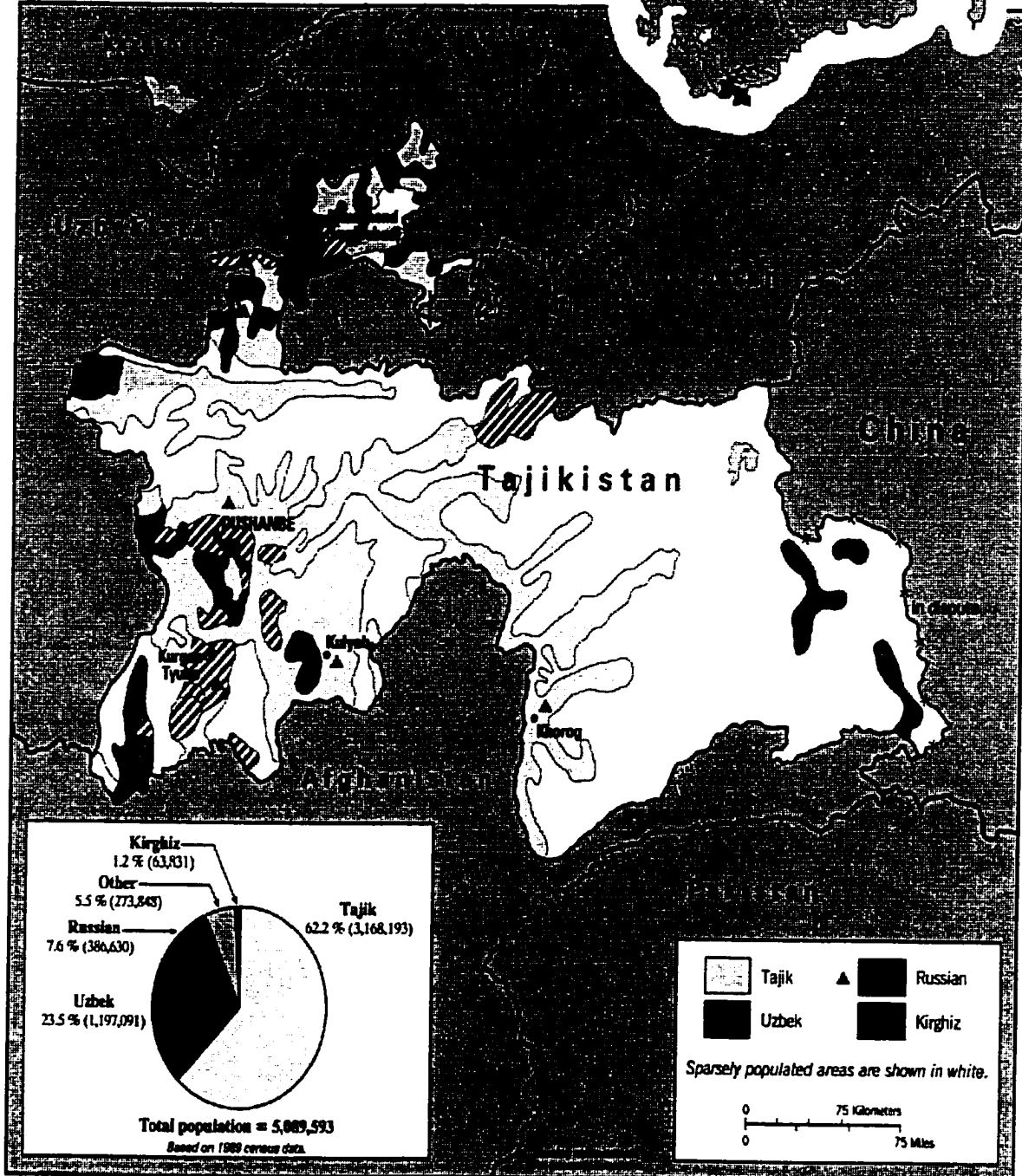
**Major Ethnic Groups in Uzbekistan**



**Population 21.6 million**



# Major Ethnic Groups in Tajikistan



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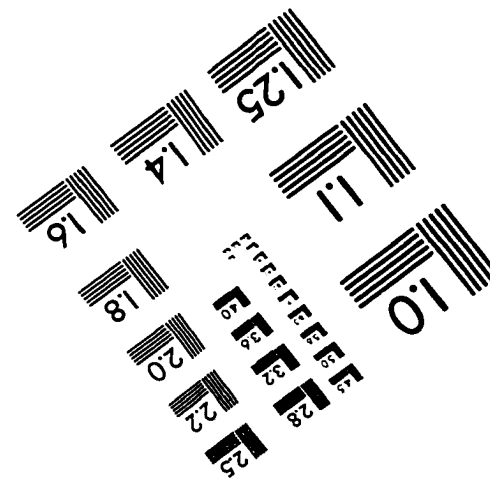
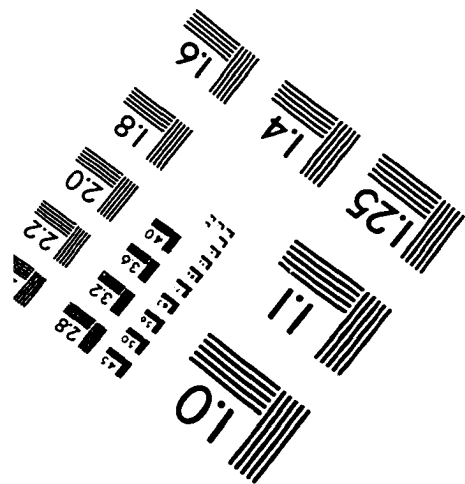
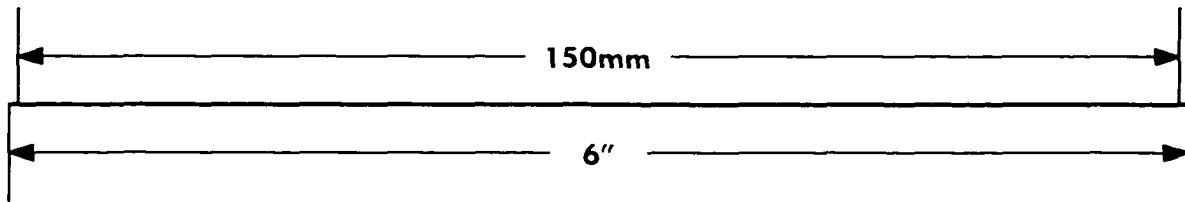
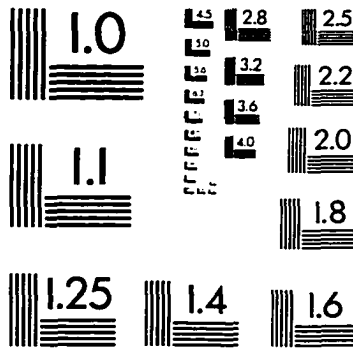
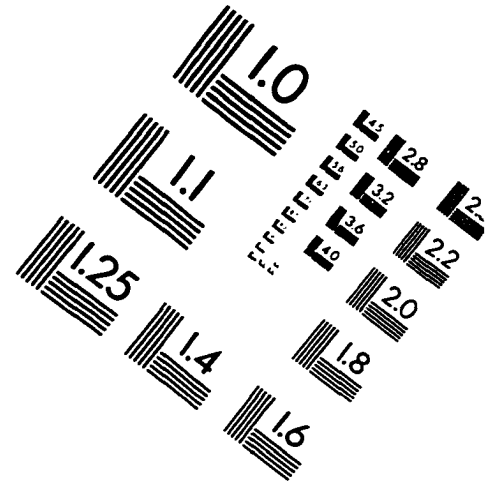
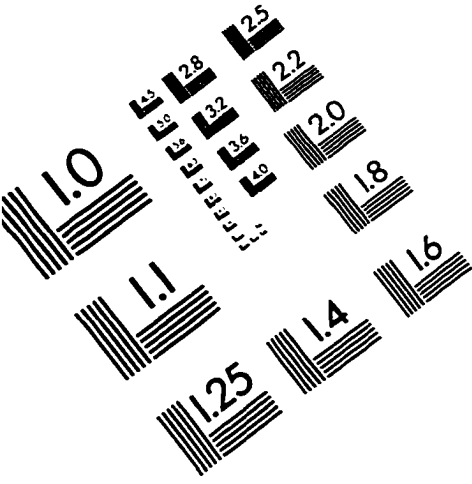
Time, 12 January 1987, 60.

Vestnik Statistiki, no. 1 (1988): 57-64, quoted in The Central Asian Newsletter 7, no. 3 (August 1988):6.

World Press Review, 40, no. 3 (1993), 45.



# IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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