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The Case of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan**

*Vitaly V. Naumkin*



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Berkeley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies  
University of California, Berkeley  
Institute of Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies  
260 Stephens Hall #2304  
Berkeley, California 94720-2304

Tel: (510) 643-6737  
bsp@socrates.berkeley.edu  
<http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~bsp/>

## **Militant Islam in Central Asia: The Case of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan**

*Vitaly V. Naumkin*

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Dr. Vitaly Naumkin is president of the International Center for Strategic and Political Studies, Moscow, and head of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences. He also is editor-in-chief of *Vostok-Oriens*, a journal of the Russian Academy of Sciences. His expertise is in the politics, history, and ethnography of the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Caucasus; security studies in general; Russian foreign policy; and the Muslim regions of Russia, including Chechnya. He is the author of more than 400 articles in Russian, Arabic, English, and French. During the spring 2003 semester, Dr. Naumkin served as a visiting professor in the UC Berkeley Department of Political Science, where he taught a course entitled, "Islam and Politics in the Former Soviet Union."

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Beginning in the early 1990s, the ideology of political Islam and Islamist organizations began to become important factors in Central Asian political life. Until the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, however, Islamism in Central Asia received scant attention abroad. That has since changed, and it is now difficult to even discuss Central Asia in the West without reference to Islamist mobilization in the region. Nevertheless, few studies have examined the phenomenon comparatively, placing it in the context of Islamist movements elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> This working paper will begin this task by focusing on the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), one of the three key Islamic groups active in Central Asia.

The IMU was listed by the US State Department as a terrorist organization for the first time in 2000. It is a militant and extremist Islamic organization that has operated mostly within the borders of one state (Uzbekistan). Nevertheless, it is closely linked to international Islamic networks. It has also used armed struggle and terrorism in an effort to topple the regime of Islam Karimov, Uzbekistan's president. Although many of its members were killed or dispersed during the US-led military campaign in Afghanistan, the IMU still has a social base in the Ferghana Valley, a densely populated region that straddles southeast Uzbekistan, southwest Kyrgyzstan, and northern Tajikistan.

The other important radical Islamic movements in Central Asia are the Hizb at-Tahrir al-Islami (HTI, or Party of Islamic Liberation) and the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (IRPT). Both are quite different from the IMU. The HTI has to date advocated nonviolent political struggle. Its principal mode of operation has been education and the dissemination of printed materials. Its goal is the creation of an Islamic state (a "Caliphate") encompassing the entire region of Central Asia. Unlike the IMU, the HTI is a true transnational organization that consists of semi-independent branches, only some of which are in Central Asia. In Central Asia, it has been most active in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, although there has been growing evidence of HTI activity in southern Kazakhstan.

Despite the fact that the HTI's agenda does not appeal directly to the grievances and concerns of the people of Central Asia, it has been increasingly successful in recruiting sympathizers. In part this is because the people of Central Asia deeply prefer open borders between their states. The "Islamic internationalism" of the HTI is thus more appealing than the particularistic and egoistic nationalism of Central Asia's national governments.

While the IMU has been losing influence in the wake of post-September 11 and the launching of the global war on terror, the HTI has been gaining popularity. Central Asia's acute socio-economic and political problems, as well as the inability of its ruling elites to find a formula for successful modernization and democratization, are increasing social frustration and disaffection, which in turn provide fuel for Islamists of all types, especially those that do not espouse violence such as the HTI. The persecution of Islamist activists by Central Asian governments also creates new martyrs, increasing the HTI's popularity and broadening its social support.

The third significant Islamist party in Central Asia is the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (IRPT). The IRPT was established in Tajikistan in 1991 as a national Islamic party, becoming the first Islamic political party ever registered in Central Asia. It was also the first Islamic party to form an alliance with democratic parties and to participate in presidential elections. Remarkably, in 1992—just one year after the collapse of the USSR—the IRPT briefly became part of a coalition government, although that government proved short-lived. A subsequent outburst of violence radicalized the party, and it subsequently became involved in the Tajik Civil War, which broke out in 1992. In 1997, under strong pressure from the international community, the parties to that conflict, including the IRPT, agreed to a peace treaty. The treaty provided for the inclusion of representatives of the opposition in the government, as well as the incorporation of the opposition's guerrilla units into the armed forces and police. This became a unique example of constructive cooperation between secularists and Islamists in Central Asia.

Although the IMU was dealt a serious setback by the fall of the Taliban in Central Asia, it has nevertheless survived and remains the most active Islamist organization in the region that

espouses violence and terrorism. Even if it proves unable to recover fully from the setbacks suffered during the Afghan campaign, a study of its history and methods will help us understand why Islamic militant groups have been able to garner support in moderate Islamic societies such as those of Central Asia.

## **THE ROOTS AND CAUSES OF ISLAMIC RADICALISM**

Before turning to history of the emergence of the IMU, a brief excursion into the roots and causes of Islamic radicalism is necessary. Existing literature on the topic can be divided into a number of categories—economic, political, ideological, behavioral, instrumental, security, and agency-based—each of which has roots in long-standing theoretical approaches in the social sciences. After briefly reviewing these approaches, I will discuss others that have been absent from the literature.

*Economic* approaches stress the importance of socio-economic conditions as the cause of Islamic militancy. The general assumption is that poverty, underdevelopment, unemployment, and other grievances give birth to extremism. These economic explanations can be further subdivided into “static” and “dynamic” models.

The static approach, which emphasizes conditions at a particular moment, is unconvincing for a number of reasons. First, it cannot explain why radicalism is on the rise and is able to mobilize supporters in some countries but not others where economic conditions are equally dire. Second, it cannot explain why extremism, including Islamic radicalism, appears in societies that are relatively developed socio-economically. Moreover, statistical analyses confirm that a low standard of living has no direct or significant effect on the rise of Islamic extremism. Saudi Arabia, for example, is one of the wealthiest countries in the Middle East, but the Saudis are nevertheless among the strongest supporters of Islamic radicalism. On the end of the spectrum, Mauritania is one of the poorest Muslim countries on earth, but it does not appear to be prone to religious extremism.

In an effort to address these shortcomings, some scholars have offered a more convincing approach based on economic factors. The emphasis here is on relative economic deprivation. A significant decline in living standards, it is argued, often engenders extremism. While this economic explanation seems more appealing, it does not seem to explain the rise of Islamic militancy over the past several decades. For example, Uzbekistan has become a hotbed for the most ferocious Islamic movements in Central Asia despite the fact that its decline in living standards has been less than that of other Central Asian countries in the post-Soviet period.

An alternative hypothesis stresses not economic but *political* deprivation. Frustration and discontent arise from a lack of participation, oppressive regimes, widespread corruption, and the pressure of patronage networks. However, this approach is also not convincing because there are many authoritarian regimes that do not ignite Islamic militancy, as in Turkmenistan.

The *ideological* explanation, which has become particularly popular in the West after September 11, argues that Islam as a religion, or more precisely some schools of thought within Islam that are usually called “fundamentalist,” contain ideas that profess intolerance and hatred of non-Muslims as well as of Muslims who supposedly violate authentic Islam’s norms. Also termed Salafism (from the Arabic word *salaf*, which means “ancestors”), the ideology is inspired by the legacy of the first Islamic state founded by the Prophet Muhammad and his immediate heirs. Violence, it is held, is necessary to return the Islamic world to this idealized era. In particular, the Salafi concept of *takfir*, which represents the core of the Salafist program, legitimizes violence against self-identified Muslims (including some heads of Muslim states) who are supposedly violating the norms of authentic Islam and are therefore infidels (*kafirs* or *kufir*). There is also concern about the efforts by some Islamic schools of thought to spread their influence to states where Muslims are not a majority. For example, a radical cleric in Tatarstan, Nurulla Muflikhunov, has asserted, “*Kafirs* (infidels) who are friendly with Muslims do not acquire *iman* (Islamic faith), whereas Muslims who are friendly with *kafirs* lose their faith, appear before Allah as *kafirs* themselves and are punished accordingly.” He has also stated: “Those who do not adopt Islam are the enemies of Allah and of Muslims....”<sup>2</sup>

Some scholars, however, do not view Salafism as responsible for militancy. John Esposito, for example, has argued: “Islamic modernists and movements like the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt and Pakistan’s Jamaat-i-Islami worked to combine religious reform and political mobilization.”<sup>3</sup> Still others point out that political mobilization does not necessarily turn Islamic activists into perpetrators or advocates of violence. In the words of Francois Burgat: “The Quran can ‘explain’ Osama [sic] bin Laden no more than the Bible can ‘explain’ the IRA.”<sup>4</sup> This view is supported by the existence of nonviolent Islamic organizations like Jamaat-i-Tabligh (in Pakistan), or the existence of a clear-cut moderate trend (parallel to the radical one) within the North Caucasian Salafist movement headed by the late Ahmet-qadi Akhtaev.

In accordance with such a view, the expanded version of jihad that Islamic extremists have embraced has little to do with the roots of Islam to which the Salafis appeal. Many Western scholars have argued that the ideas of terrorist jihadists such as Usama bin Laden are in fact deviations from “true Islam.” For example, John Esposito argues that terrorists ignore classical Islamic criteria for a just jihad.<sup>5</sup> Most Islamic clerics also blame the “global terrorist jihadists” in Palestine, Kashmir, Chechnya, and elsewhere for violating basic Islamic principles. They point out that “big jihad” (which means violent struggle against the enemies of Islam, in contrast to the “small jihad,” which means the personal effort of an individual Muslim to enforce belief within himself) is justified only when the existence of Muslims is threatened, when their rights are violated, or when their land is taken from them.

While it may be fruitless to try to convince people who are determined to take the lives of their enemies and die in the process that their commitment is not justified by Islamic teachings, it is true that there is nothing in Islam that justifies suicide attacks in the name of God. As Bernard Lewis has noted, suicide attacks are prohibited by a number of passages from the traditions of the Prophet, such as “Whoever kills himself in any way will be tormented in that way in Hell” and “Whoever kills himself in any way in this world will be tormented with it on the day of the resurrection.”<sup>6</sup> Nor are suicide attacks exclusive to Islam. Many non-Muslims have engaged in the practice, including European partisans during World War II, Japanese kamikaze pilots,

nationalists in today's India and Sri Lanka, and so on. The key elements here are the motivations underlying suicide attacks and the driving force that justifies them in the minds of those who carry them out.

*Behavioral and psychological* explanations attempt to explain these motivations. Behavioral explanations view Islamic extremism as a specific type of behavior based on exclusion and intolerance of outsiders. However, as Ernest Gellner has observed in reference to similar claims about ethnic violence, such motivations “are common to all human groups, and cannot serve to define either tribe or nation.”<sup>7</sup> Nor are the motivations unique to confessional groups. Boundaries drawn by the Salafis between “us” (true Muslims) and “them” (bad Muslims, or infidels) are clearly of a psychological nature, but this observation is unable to explain when, why, or how those boundaries are drawn.

*Psychological* explanations hold that people behave emotionally rather than rationally. Emotions, for example, are said to have overwhelmed the rational concerns of the Afghans when they welcomed the obscurantist Taliban after they seized power in Afghanistan. The Afghan people supposedly saw the Taliban as pious Muslims and sincere defenders of public order and social justice, in contrast to the corrupt mujahedeen who came to power in Kabul after the collapse of the pro-Soviet government. A second psychological approach, which is very close to the behavioral one, might be useful for understanding the underlying causes of the emergence of “classical” Salafism in the central Saudi Arabian region of Nejd in the 19<sup>th</sup> century—the psychological features of Arabia's Bedouins combined with their societal peculiarities may help explain why this strict and puritanical form of Islamic belief first appeared and then spread. Nevertheless, behavioral approaches usually overestimate the autonomy of motives, emotions, and impulses, and they underestimate the structural causes of puritanical and violent streams in Islam. They also fail to interpret militancy and extremism in the obvious absence of autonomous impulses in many cases, which is why an adequate understanding of violence is required.

*Functionalist* approaches explanations view Islam as a tool for pursuing political goals. A parallel can be drawn here between interpretations of religious and ethnic violence. As Randall Galvert has argued: “Under the right conditions, ethnic violence can be perpetrated through the efforts of political leaders striving cynically to gain or hold office. And under the right conditions, ethnic conflict can be suppressed or eliminated by the action of politicians seeking to maintain democracy, peace, and economic development.”<sup>8</sup> A special line of argument in this category stresses the linkage between religion and ethnicity. Islamic radicalism, it is asserted, is merely an expression of ethnic strife. In the view of Gellner and others, nationalism emerged as a reaction to industrialization and the uprooting of people from their local communities because kinship and religion were no longer capable of organizing people.<sup>9</sup> A similar uprooting took place in Central Asia during the Soviet period. The Communists tried to supplant nationalism with their doctrine imposed from above because they regarded nationalism as extremely dangerous. Islam and Islamic networks survived because the Communists did not believe that Islam was as dangerous as nationalism. After Communism collapsed, the peoples of Central Asia suffered an identity crisis, and Islam became one of the most important components of new identity that eventually emerged for Muslims in the region. The rise of Islamic militancy, it is argued, was directly rooted in the self-assertiveness of nations searching for a collective identity.

Many generalizations that have been made about ethnic movements can be applied to religious ones. For example, Ted Robert Gurr’s catalog of violent protest lasting over five years and involving ethnically defined minorities could be applied to sectarian violence.<sup>10</sup> Gurr distinguishes among (1) political banditry, sporadic terrorism, and unsuccessful coups by or on behalf of the groups; (2) campaigns of terrorism and successful coups by or on behalf of terrorist groups; (3) small-scale guerrilla activity or other forms of small-scale violence; (4) guerilla activity involving more than 1,000 armed fighters carrying out frequent armed attacks over a substantial area, groups involved in revolutionary or international warfare that is not specifically or mainly concerned with group issues; and (5) protracted civil war fought by military units with base areas. Applying these categories to Islamist mobilization in Central Asia, we can say that

the violent conflict in Tajikistan fits into categories four and five at its various stages from 1992–1997.<sup>11</sup> The activities of the first radical Islamists in Uzbekistan in the beginning of the 1990s, on the other hand, would fit into category one, while the subsequent incursions of Islamists into Uzbekistan would generally fit category two.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, parallels can be drawn between the composition of Islamist movements and nationalist ones. For example, Islamists can be divided in the same kind of categories that Alexander Motyl has identified for nationalists: “martyrs,” “fanatics,” “true believers,” and “believers of convenience.”<sup>13</sup>

*Security* explanations emphasize the feeling of vulnerability and insecurity that generates social resentment in Islamic societies that are faced with technological and cultural penetration by secular and transnational Western civilization, Westernization, and modernization. The demonstration effect due to the growth of the mass media intensifies feelings of insecurity and inferiority. The “clash of civilizations” thesis (a formulation coined by Samuel Huntington) is a variety of this approach.<sup>14</sup> Rejection of Western culture, or at least some of its components, is common to many Islamic societies, and the desire to protect the authenticity of Islamic culture, order, and way of life may be conducive to extremist thinking and behavior. But some scholars, notably Olivier Roy, have noted that many members of extremist Islamic groups and terrorist networks are well integrated into Western societies, received their education at Western universities, and were re-Islamized in the West. This observation undermines security-oriented explanations. However, it also fails to explain those cases where extremists were not in direct contact with the West.

*Agency-based* approaches emphasize the role of individual political actors in the emergence of Islamic militancy. Political actors can be divided into ideologues, teachers (guides), organizers, field commanders, financiers, and “diplomats” (recruiters of external support). These roles are, however, often combined in one person, who at one moment may be primarily an organizer but at another is a commander. In general, political actors of all types have played an important role in mobilizing religious militancy throughout the Islamic world. Abul-Ala Maududi was an ideologue whose role has been widely recognized by other Salafi

scholars and politicians, and his books, translated into Arabic (from Urdu), received a broad response in the Arab world. Although he created Jamaat-i Islami in Pakistan in 1941, he remained primarily an ideologue rather than an organizer. Hasan al-Banna, who founded the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928, seems to have played an organizational role that is as important as his theorizing. Sayyid Qutb, a writer who inspired Islamist radicals in Egypt and was eventually executed by the secular nationalist government of Gamel Abdul Naser in 1966, was in fact not a fighter, the claims of the Egyptian government notwithstanding. Hindustani in Central Asia (see below) was a moderate thinker and a teacher who did not call for violence or the creation of an Islamic state. His teachings nevertheless served as the basis for a later generation of ideologues of militant Islam. Post-Soviet Central Asia has had a number of different types of Islamist activists, like Tahir Yuldashev or Juma Hojiev (Namangani), who founded the IMU. The former head of Tajikistan's *qaziyat* (Muslim Directorate), Hoji Akbar Turajonzoda, was and still is a skillful politician and diplomat.

Some observers have minimized the role of human agents in Central Asia, arguing that a lack of theoretical knowledge, political experience, and organizational expertise have made agency less important. Many emphasize instead *institutional* factors. For them, human agents do not act independently of their social environment. Institutions matter most, they argue, because they support collectively shared systems of meanings that shape agents' activities.

In fact, none of the approaches in this incomplete list provides a full and adequate explanation of Islamic radicalism in general or in Central Asia in particular. A combination of approaches, or compromises among different explanations, might be more productive. However, it is more constructive in my view to leave aside theory until we consider the empirical case of the IMU and consider what light its history throws on theoretical disputes.

First, however, I would like to address the question of *violence as culture*, an approach that has received little attention in the literature on Islamist militancy but that I think has particular explanatory power. Not surprisingly, many members of radical Islamic movements in the Soviet successor states have been former wrestlers, boxers, special forces officers, and so on.

The Adolat movement, which emerged in the Uzbek part of the Ferghana Valley at the beginning of the 1990s, for example, consisted primarily of young specialists in martial arts. The most notorious field commander of the Uzbek Islamists, Juma Hojiev (Namangani), served with Soviet forces in Afghanistan, as did many of the Islamist field commanders in Tajikistan. Still others were specialists in contact sports and martial arts. In Dagestan, a prominent political Islamic activist, Nadirshah Khachilaeov, was a famous wrestling champion.

All these people were what Charles Tilly has called “specialists in violence.”<sup>15</sup> These specialists may operate inside and with the government, or they may operate outside and against it. On many occasions, their principal role is not to employ violence but to threaten it. In the case of post-Soviet Islamist movements, demonstrative ritual acts play a particularly important role in solidifying the reputation of experts in violence. They also make clear the inevitability of punishment in case of noncompliance. For example, Juma Namangani captured and decapitated fighters who decided to return to their villages upon the declaration of an amnesty by the government, which reinforced his image as a fearless, determined, and cruel commander, and also confirmed that those who betrayed “the cause of jihad” would be ruthlessly punished.

Though not the only political actors in Islamic movements, the specialists in violence are of great importance in reproducing a general culture of violence. Violent rituals have become a feature of Central Asian political life. In this regard, a comparison can be drawn between Central Asia and the Caucasus. In the Caucasus, violent public rituals play an even more significant role in creating “strong” images of public figures, and they thereby help mobilize people politically. Televised public executions and floggings organized by Chechen separatists during the break between the two wars with Moscow (1996–1999), or the punishment of a policeman who was decapitated by Islamic radicals in the Ferghana Valley, are examples. Another purpose of these acts is to signal the commitment of Islamic radicals to a certain code of honor and the tradition of the blood feud. Cutting the ears off deceased enemies during the Tajik civil war was another vivid and frightening example.

Specialists in violence have been recruited not only by Islamists but by secular forces as well. During the first phase of the civil war in Tajikistan in 1992, for example, many former racketeers and criminals took the side of the secular opposition to the Islamic Revival Party. In doing so, they sided with certain solidarity groups and regional elites. Sangak Safarov, the leader of the Popular Front (which was responsible for the victory of the Kulyabi-Leninabadi-Hissari alliance over the Gharm-Karategin-Pamir block of Islamists and “democrats”) had spent 23 years in jail on charges of theft of public money and fraud. After the victory over the Islamists, some former racketeers were rewarded by appointment to ministerial posts, including, for example, Yaqub Salimov, who became Tajikistan’s Interior Minister.

A factor that helps maintain a culture of violence in Central Asia and indeed throughout the post-Soviet space is the high level of militarization of society that is a legacy of the Soviet period. A great number of former army, police, security specialists, and others were trained to use weapons and fight by the Soviet regime. Many of these people have since entered politics, business, or the civil service. Still others became unemployed, which has meant that they are subject to recruitment by political actors.

A special subdivision of the violence practiced by Central Asian Islamic radicals is what could be called opportunistic violence. This category usually includes hostage taking, looting, enslavement, and so on. The point is to use violence to take revenge, make profits, or scare people. In some cases, opportunistic violence turns into a full-sized business. For certain nationalist and radical Islamic movements, opportunistic violence is so common that observers describe them as business operations. Such is the case with part of the Chechen separatist movement, as well as with the IMU. Involvement in hostage taking, however, does not necessarily mean that the participating parties are merely criminal gangs. It may be that it is a “business on the side” that is particularly attractive because of the huge inequalities in post-Soviet societies.

Religious determinism as expressed in religious doctrines is also an important factor shaping individual and group behavior. In medieval Islam, a broad debate unfolded between

*jabriyyah* and *qadiriyyah* in regard to the question of free will. Are the Muslims free in their actions, or is everything predestined by Allah? If the latter, do Muslims bear responsibility for what they do? The *jabriyyah* asserted that individuals could not be responsible for deeds because Allah guides people in this world and predetermines all that happens. The *qadiriyyah*, in contrast, held that Allah gives believers a choice of actions within a certain range. By choosing within that range, individuals realize their free will. They will be either rewarded or punished on the Day of Judgement for the choices they make. This debate continues among Islamic scholars and theologians today, and it is quite relevant to the interpretation of the behavior of certain Muslim groups and to the ways in which Islam is used to mobilize people politically.

A comparison can be drawn here between Islam and Buddhism to illustrate this mechanism by which religious determinism is used for political purposes. Unlike Islam, Buddhism offers no constraints on individual behavior, and thus it appears that it lacks a means for justifying group behavior. It might be assumed, then, that there is no room in Buddhist teachings for even the possibility of free will. But such an assumption would be wrong because the concept of *karma* makes the believers' attitude towards life entirely deterministic. As Nadezhda Bektimirova, a Russian specialist on Buddhism, explains:

...a part of the members of the Buddhist *sangha* (community of monks) who suffered the most from Pol Pot, later declared that the Pol Pot genocidal regime is the result of *karma* of the Khmer people, that is to say, a retribution for the ancestors' past sinful deeds, particularly for the wars of conquest against its neighbors in the period of the Angkor Empire. It was through the concept of 'personal *karma*' that many ordinary Cambodians explained their long-suffering in regard to the Pol Pot experiments and their inability to organize any resistance in the localities.<sup>16</sup>

Determinism as well as the notions of responsibility and divine reward are therefore part of any religion, and they can be employed in one way or another for the purposes of political mobilization. Mobilization for collective violence and the response to it are both directly linked to these motivations, and they help explain the emergence and evolution of radical Islamism in Uzbekistan.

## THE EMERGENCE OF RADICAL ISLAM IN UZBEKISTAN

The history of Islamism in Uzbekistan can be broken up into several periods. The first spans the years 1950 to 1970, when the first Salafis appeared in the region. However, the Salafis were relatively isolated at the time, and they proved unable to propagate their ideas or have any influence on public life. The second period covers the period of 1970 to the late 1980s, when relatively less repressive Soviet rule enabled the Salafis to recruit more disciples and teach them privately at underground seminaries (*madrasas*). Also during this period, the Salafis began to distribute tapes of sermons and lessons to “trusted” audiences. They did not, however, call for jihad or direct struggle against the Soviet regime at the time. Instead, they concentrated on promoting Islamic piety, devotion, and morals, and as a result the broader political influence of these teachers was limited. The third period began at the end of the 1980s, at which point the Salafis started to operate more openly. With strong support from abroad, they began to occupy significant positions in mosques and *madrasas*. They also began to propagate a stricter, more puritanical, and conservative form of Islam. The fourth period covers the early 1990s, after the collapse of the USSR, when the Salafis began to organize in the Ferghana Valley, calling for the adoption of Sharia (Islamic law) and the creation of an Islamic state. They continued, however, to advocate dialogue with the authorities, and in general they eschewed violence during this period. The fifth period began in 1992 after a government crackdown on Islamic activists in the Ferghana Valley. Many were forced to flee to Tajikistan and Afghanistan, where they formed an alliance with the Tajik Islamic opposition in its struggle against the Tajik government. The sixth period runs from the middle of the 1990s until 1997, when the United Tajik Opposition (the UTO) entered into negotiations with the government and then signed an agreement ending the Tajik civil war. It was at that point that the IMU was established. Shortly thereafter, the IMU undertook a series of armed attacks and began seizing hostages. The final period began after September 11, 2001. IMU guerrillas fought on the side of Taliban against the US-led coalition, and as a result some militants were killed while others fled to Pakistan. In the period since the fall of the Taliban, their activities have been substantially reduced.

## Salafism in Central Asia

Most people in Central Asia adhere to Hanafi Sunnism, the most tolerant and liberal *madhhab* (school of thought) of the four schools of Sunnism (Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki, Hanbali). This school agreed well with local "popular" or parallel Islam, which the Hanafi muftis and *ulama* (Islamic scholars) believed was compatible with Sharia principles. This "popular" Islam included the tradition of the *ziyarat* (a pilgrimage to the tombs of local saints asking them to cure maladies), the collective reading of the Quran in houses, local customs pertaining to divorce and the division of property, and so forth. However, already in Soviet times a number of local religious authorities, both official and informal, developed a tendency, which can be characterized as Salafi, to take a tougher stance on "popular" Islam, Sufi customs, *urf* and *adat* (customary or tribal law). It remains unclear whether this trend was a consequence of the influence of Wahhabism, which is a Salafi doctrine within the most strict of the Sunni *madhhabs*, Hanbalism (Wahhabism was created in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by an Arabian scholar from Nejd named Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab. Later his doctrine became the official school of Islam in Saudi Arabia). Wahhabist influences may have arrived during this period via contacts with Saudi Arabia, but it is also possible that Salafi tendencies were a natural development of the thought of individual Central Asian Islamic scholars.

Saudi influence cannot be entirely excluded despite the fact that contacts were rather limited and the clergy was under the strict control of the state in the person of the KGB. In fact, Saudi influence existed at least to some degree, both through limited contacts and through literature. Saudi Arabia acted as a magnet not only because it was a country in which the holy places of Islam were to be found and which had powerful financial resources, but also because a significant part of its inhabitants (estimated to number no less than 300–350,000) had originally come from Central Asia, mostly from Uzbekistan, as descendants of pilgrims who had settled there in pre-revolutionary times and as *basmachis* (armed rebels against the Soviet rule) who took refuge there after their defeat in Soviet times.

While local forms of Salafism may not have been directly inspired by Wahhabism, some Central Asian analysts have discovered traces of Saudi influence at a very early period, long before perestroika. An Uzbek researcher, Baktiyar Babajanov, who has analyzed the *fatwas* (religious decrees) of the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan (SBMCAK, which was located in Tashkent) that were directed against “popular” Islam, writes that some Hanafi *ulama* believe that “the first Wahhabi” in Central Asia was a certain Ziyauddin Babakhanov. Babakhanov had been trained in Saudi Arabia in 1947–1948, and subsequent contacts with Saudi theologians may have strengthened Saudi influence on the mufti.<sup>17</sup> Babajanov is not inclined to support this point of view, however, because the greater part of traditional rituals “had for centuries remained an object of criticism by the *ulama* of all *madhhabs*.” Moreover, SBMCAK had for many years been headed by the Babakhans dynasty: from 1943 to 1957, the Mufti was Ishan Babakhan bin Abdul Majid khan; from 1957 to 1982 the Mufti was the latter’s son, Ziyauddin khan Ishan Babakhanov; while from 1982 to 1989 the Mufti was Ziyauddin’s son, Shamsuddin khan Babakhanov.<sup>18</sup> *Fatwas* issued by all three identified many traditional local rituals that had been incorporated into Islamic practices as *bid’a* (forbidden innovations). These included most of the rituals related to *ziyarat* (pilgrimage to the tombs of saints), ritual cries of women’s burial processions, traditional healing or protecting from “the evil eye” by reciting the Quran, etc.

In fact, even before the Soviet period, a number of religious figures, particularly those in the Bukharan Emirate, shared Salafi views. They were the third party in the struggle between the traditionalists and the modernizers (*qadimists* and *jadidists*), like the Vaisov Group, or Vaisites at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century in Tatarstan. The Vaisites (their founder, incidentally, had spent a good deal of time in Central Asia, which was then called Turkestan) called on the people to behead 70,000 government-appointed mullahs, and similar appeals were later issued by Bukharan fundamentalists who called on believers to get rid of all modernists. The Vaisites, as a Tatar researcher writes, “proposed a mythical version of the Muslim *umma* (nation or people) of the first centuries of the *Hijra*.” In addition, they “insisted

that they had the right to call for armed struggle.”<sup>19</sup> Taking into account the historical interrelationships between Turkestani and Volga Tatar Islam, Vaisite ideology can be considered as one of the sources of modern Central Asian Salafism.

Thus, the tendency to dissociate Islam from traditional beliefs and customs existed in Central Asia even before Sovietization, creating a background against which local Salafism could grow. One could not expect, however, that it would easily take root in an environment where Islam was under pressure from official Soviet atheism. Religious authorities drawn to Salafism also understood that the lifestyle of the Muslims of Saudi Arabia was far removed from the habits and culture of Central Asians, and that “popular” Islam was the form of Islam that was able to survive the Soviet system. Along with occasional displays of Salafism among the official clergy, “unofficial” Salafism also appeared in Central Asia in the postwar period.

### **The Early Salafi Ideologists**

Scholars call them “the first Wahhabis,” though it is inappropriate to speak of them as Wahhabis existing in the framework of the Hanbali *madhhab* because virtually all Central Asians are Hanafis. Like Afghan or Pakistani Salafis, they may have been close in terms of doctrine to Saudi Wahhabis, and on a number of precepts of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) they remain within the framework of their Hanafi traditions. Therefore, while “Wahhabi” is perhaps ambiguous, the term is only conditionally appropriate to these figures.

It is difficult to ascertain when and where Salafi preaching first appeared in Central Asia in the postwar period because it was conducted secretly. Moreover, until some point, probably in the 1970s, the preachings were not circulated on audiocassettes, which became common later. There are reports that as early as the first half of the 1950s, there were individual adherents of Wahhabism in Uzbekistan, including Abdulhakim *qori* from the city of Margelan (*qori* means a religious scholar who can recite the Quran).

Regardless, the emergence of Central Asian Salafism is certainly associated with a school of students led by an underground Kokand preacher, Muhammad Rustamov, who became known as Hindustani, or Haji *domla* (a honorific title acquired by knowledge). Hindustani was one of the most, if not the most, influential unofficial spiritual leaders of his time in Central Asia. He was born in Kokand, studied there and then in Bukhara, Afghanistan, and India (at Deoband) before the Second World War. He lived in Uzbekistan and then in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan. Olivier Roy has noted that after his return to the USSR, he was arrested and spent 15 years in Siberia.<sup>20</sup> In Dushanbe, Hindustani worked at the Institute of Oriental Studies in the Tajik Academy of Sciences. Upon his death in 1989, he left behind many talented students who privately or even secretly taught Hanafi Islam. He was also widely known for his sermons and thematic addresses that were distributed privately on tapes. His theological works are still in circulation in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, and they are considered major sources of Islamic education there.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the fact that Hindustani adhered to the Hanafi *madhabb* throughout his life, he advocated a puritanical and militant form of Islam. Many of his students later became founders of the “Wahhabi” movement in Central Asia, as well as spiritual fathers of militant Islamic organizations. These included ‘Allama Rahmatulla *qori* (d.1981), who joined Wahhabis while in Andizhan (he was condemned by Hindustani for doing so).<sup>22</sup> An even more prominent figure was Abduwali *qori* Mirzaev, who, as the imam of the great mosque in Andizhan, was close to professing Hanbali Sunnism, although he cannot be considered a Hanbali theologian because he tried to place himself above all of the four schools, interpreting the main sources of Islam in an independent manner, like a *mujtahid* (an outstandingly knowledgeable scholar who has a right to issue *ijtihad*, or an independent judgment on a religious matter). Mirzaev inspired others who became leaders of different terrorist organizations. Yet another theologian considered a Wahhabi was Obidkhon *qori* Nazarov, a pupil of Rahmatullah *qori*. Most of these early radicals left behind audiotapes that are still in use among their supporters, which continue to be used to recruit new members of radical Islamic movements throughout Central Asia. (Only recently have

Central Asian Islamists started to use the Internet for the dissemination of their ideas. Moreover, access to the Internet is still limited in most Central Asian states.)

### **Teachers and Disciples**

Hindustani's disciples became very active in the late 1980s after the launching of the Gorbachev reforms. They were allowed to start to mobilize support, although not directly under the banner of political Islam. Rather, they focused on issues like the return of mosques that had been seized by the state and the establishment of new Muslim communities. For example, a group of active supporters of Rahmatulla *qori* in Namangan demanded the return of a great mosque to believers. When this demand was rejected and some ringleaders were even arrested, many supporters threatened to start a hunger strike. Finally, the scared officials gave up and released those under arrest.<sup>23</sup>

At the beginning of the 1990s, the Islamic Revival Party (IRP) of the USSR, which had been established on June 9, 1990, in Astrakhan, became active in Uzbekistan. Its leaders, however, occupied very moderate positions, and they shied away from calling for the creation of an Islamic state, a platform that would have been natural for a political Islamic party. They were considered too moderate by young Salafi revivalists, who were seeking a more radical organizational framework for their aspirations. On the basis of the pan-Soviet IRP, a separate IRP of Uzbekistan was established in January 1991. Even this moderate party faced strong opposition from the Uzbek government, which was determined not to allow many Islamic political parties to emerge in the republic.

The Uzbekistani part of the Ferghana Valley was where Salafis and radical Islamists managed to mobilize popular support. The Salafis not only replaced the traditional imams who were loyal to the government in Tashkent, but they also channeled the political mobilization that was underway in the region along the course of political Islam. A newly-converted Salafi and a follower of Rahmatulla *qori*, Imam Abd al-Ahad, who acquired the reputation of being a devoted

Wahhabi, preached in the Ata Wali Khan Tura mosque in Namangan, a city that together with Margelan and Andizhan became a stronghold of militant Islamists. For the first time, Muslim preachers began calling for the rule of Sharia law, which was to solve all the problems and heal all the diseases the Muslims were suffering from and, in particular, would end inequality, despotism, and criminal disorder.

Also during the early 1990s, the religious-political group Islam lashkarlari (Warriors of Islam) was created, which was followed by the establishment of Adolat (Justice), which according to the Uzbek scholar A. Muminov was one of two wings of Islam lashkarlari.<sup>24</sup> Adolat was comprised mostly of young men who organized themselves in *mahalla* (neighborhood) militias. These *mahalla* started patrolling the streets and controlling prices at local markets. In effect, Adolat tried to take over the functions of local state authorities. Having successfully challenged local law enforcement structures, the Adolat militia declared that they had replaced them, and they based their activities on Sharia.<sup>25</sup> Adolat gained broad support in the densely populated cities of the Ferghana Valley through its high level of religiosity. Their contribution to the promotion of the idea of Islamic state was immense. Most members of the Adolat militias were strong, well-trained sportsmen (mainly in different types of martial arts). They performed all necessary Islamic rituals and were devoted to Islamic traditions and moral values. In particular, they ordered all women not to appear on the streets unless properly veiled. These injunctions were met with particular admiration by the older generation, which believed that Central Asian youth were disrespectful of tradition and neglected the Islamic code of behavior.

I visited the cities of Ferghana in the beginning of 1992, met several members of Adolat, and spoke to local people. By then, the militants were already in control of most of the mosques in Namangan as well as many mosques in Margelan, Andizhan, and other cities in the valley. One local resident, Muhammadjan, told me that after months of total chaos, when anybody could be robbed in the streets and have his or her car stolen if it was left unguarded for ten minutes, only Adolat militiamen were able to restore law and order. He also reported that Adolat militiamen had cut off the hands of several thieves in accordance with Sharia (I could not verify

this). And he claimed that the militiamen were “clean” and honest people who did not take bribes, unlike the officers of the Interior Ministry, and that they were serving all citizens. Muhammadjan was therefore eager to vote for the Islamists and not for the “corrupted regime of former atheists.”<sup>26</sup>

Certain parallels can be drawn between Adolat in that early period and the Muslim Brotherhood in various Arab countries in the initial stages of the Muslim Brotherhood’s development. The new movement in the Ferghana Valley became stronger and more popular with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the appearance of independent Uzbekistan. An important step towards turning the Ferghana Islamic movement into a truly militant one was the takeover of the headquarters of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan in Namangan by the Islamists in December 1991, when the mayor city refused to allow them to build a new mosque where they wanted. Adolat also tried to extend its activities to the capital, Tashkent. Although the Uzbek government of those days was cautious about direct confrontation with the domestic Islamic opposition, it prevented this penetration, keeping Tashkent under the firm control of its security forces.

The Islamists were led at the time by Tahir Yuldashev, who already regarded himself as ruler of Ferghana. Under his leadership, the Islamists felt they were capable of launching a war to overthrow Karimov. Yuldashev, who had been born in 1967 and who was an underground imam at the beginning of the 1990s, was a talented and energetic speaker and organizer. Another prominent young figure was a former Soviet paratrooper, Juma Hojiev (Namangani), who was born in 1969 and had returned from Afghanistan in 1988 after serving as part of the Soviet military contingent. He too became engaged in the activities of radical Islamists. The militants began to openly criticize Karimov, whom they characterized as an infidel, and they began also to accumulate weapons in their houses in order to foment a popular rebellion. They also took steps to prepare for the creation of the Islamic state in Uzbekistan and were completely confident that they would be supported by a majority of the people and would win the coming conflict easily. As one Tashkent analyst later told me, in those days many people in Uzbekistan considered

Karimov to be half-Uzbek and half-Tajik (or maybe even pure Tajik). He was also married to a Russian and represented the Samarqand clan and was allied with the Jizak clan (not the strongest one in the republic). He was therefore viewed initially as a weak politician who would be unable to defeat the opposition, which by that time already consisted of radical Islamists as well as “democrats” (the Erk and Birlik political parties). But Karimov, despite the fact that he was not supported by some strong Uzbek political clans (for instance, the Tashkent and Ferghana clans) managed to consolidate his grip on power in the critical period following the Soviet collapse.

Indeed, it seems clear that the Islamists underestimated Karimov, who had strong “administrative resources,” a critical factor in Uzbekistan’s sociopolitical environment. Yet they were encouraged by the fact that the democrats decided to build an alliance with them, as also happened in Tajikistan, although their agendas were quite different. This alliance of convenience was based on their common goal—toppling Karimov and his regime.

The political mobilization of Uzbekistan’s militant Islamists was supported by foreign missionaries and teachers of Islam and Arabic from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and other Muslim countries. Most supported the idea of an Islamic state and were hostile to the Karimov regime in Tashkent. Muminov believes that the second wing of Islam lashkarlari (the first being Adolat) was comprised of Wahhabis who “concentrated on religious questions under the leadership of Tahir Yuldashev.” They formed groups of 20 to 50 people, and there were some 60 groups in total.<sup>27</sup> If this information is accurate, then a united movement had already formed with its own military and political/ideological wings, international support, and local political allies. Rashid asserts that local Wahhabis were receiving massive aid from abroad by then, especially from Saudi Arabia.<sup>28</sup> But my own impression in those days was that this aid had not yet reached the level of what was demanded by the militants. The imam of the Margelan’s mosque in the beginning of 1992, for example, asked me to help procure religious literature from the Gulf states, despite his own wide connections in the Arab world.

In February 1992, Adolat, Birlik, Erk, and the IRP asked Karimov to start negotiations in Namangan. It seemed to me at the time that Adolat leaders were hoping that Karimov would

refuse to negotiate, which would help them mobilize supporters for a planned uprising.

Yuldashev and certain other militant Salafi leaders intensified their contacts abroad at the same time. A representative of a charity organization from Saudi Arabia who visited Russia in March 1992 told me that as he hoped Karimov would have to declare Uzbekistan an Islamic state in the near future. Yuldashev and his comrades apparently hoped the same.

But Karimov, after being directly challenged by the Islamists, severely cracked down on the Ferghana militants with the help of his loyal law enforcement agencies. All foreign “missionaries” were immediately expelled from the country, and many supporters of the Islamic and democratic opposition were arrested. The leaders of the opposition groups fled from the country, and these groups were declared illegal. The leader of the IRP, Abdulla Utaev, was arrested in December, even though his small party had not been directly involved in violence. Only one insignificant radical Islamic political group, Tawba (Repentance), continued to operate in the republic. In 1995, however, it disappeared like its predecessors.

### **Uzbek Militants Abroad**

In April 1992, when the situation in Tajikistan proved most favorable for the activity of Islamists of all types (in May of that year a government of national reconciliation was established in which the Islamists tried to play the dominant role), the majority of Islamic radicals and extremists from Uzbekistan fled to Tajikistan (President Karimov had by then dealt a shattering blow to their positions). During the short-lived civil war in Tajikistan, the “Namangan battalion” was formed by these Uzbek radicals. The battalion fought as part of the forces of the Tajik Islamic opposition. After the opposition’s defeat in December 1992, the Uzbeks together with the Tajik Islamic opposition left for Afghanistan, where they formed their main base.

The leaders of the Uzbek Islamic extremists, Tahir Yuldashev and Juma Hojiev, remained active. Rashid recalls that after the war broke out Yuldashev went to Afghanistan with the leaders of the IRPT. In Taloqan, he helped to spread IRPT propaganda and newsletters. He

also began traveling to Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and later to Iran, the United Arab Emirates, and Turkey, where he established contacts not only with other Islamic parties and movements but also with the intelligence agencies of these states, from whom he requested support. Pakistan's Interservices Intelligence (ISI) provided funds and a sanctuary. Between 1995 and 1998, Yuldashev was based in Peshawar, "the center not only of Pakistani and Afghan Islamic activism but also of pan-Islamic jihadi groups."<sup>29</sup>

One of the most important sources of support for the IMU in Pakistan was from the Jamiat-i Ulema Islami, a future supporter of the Taliban. Funds were raised by this party to cover the costs of enlisting young Uzbek Islamists in their *madrastas*. Rashid writes that he saw hundreds of students of Islam from Central Asia in many of these *madrastas*, the majority of whom were Uzbeks and Tajiks, "although there were also a few Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and Uighurs from China."<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile, the Tashkent government was purging the country of all radical Islamists. In August 1995, Abduwali *qori* Mirzoev, after flying from Tashkent to Moscow with his assistant, suddenly vanished. Soon thereafter another of his assistants disappeared as well. It was rumored that all had been seized by the Uzbek special services. Also, unexpectedly, the Imam of the Tukhtaboi mosque in Tashkent, Obidkhon Nazarov, vanished together with his 13-year-old son in March 1998. In this case also, many people believed that the family had been destroyed by the Uzbek security forces, although official sources denied this. Amnesty International reported in 2001 that Abduwali *qori* was held in an underground cell in Tashkent for several years, where he was constantly tortured.<sup>31</sup> The authorities hated Abduwali *qori* so much that his name was always mentioned later on when any extremists or terrorists were put on trial. After the mysterious disappearance of Abduwali, in September 1995, his former bodyguard, Negmat Parpiev, also disappeared.

In December 1995, masked men in Namangan captured a police officer who was notorious for his brutality and decapitated him. A journalist who reported the news believed that the beheading was the Islamist's response to the earlier disappearance of Abduwali *qori* and

Negmat Parpiev. In a gun battle that followed, the masked men, one of whom was killed, shot three more policemen. The authorities reported that the gunman who had been killed was a Wahhabi. This was used by the government as a pretext to impose curfews in the cities of the Ferghana Valley and to detain large numbers of local residents accused of religious extremism.<sup>32</sup> The first trials of suspected Islamists were held behind the closed doors, but later, in 1998, the authorities decided to give them wide publicity.

As a result of these repressive measures, the Islamists were forced to change tactics. In 1996, they announced the creation of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). The IMU declared that its ultimate goal was the removal of the Karimov regime by force and the establishment of Islamic rule in Uzbekistan.

## **THE RISE OF THE IMU**

### **The First Actions of the IMU**

In the opinion of a Tajik journalist then in Afghanistan and familiar with the opposition forces, the IMU was created by Tahir Yuldashev once it became clear that the Tajik oppositionists were going to negotiate a peace settlement with the government.<sup>33</sup> It is hard to say whether “the Tajik factor” was in fact critical to the formation of the IMU, however, because the Uzbek extremists still had the opportunity to carry on armed struggle on the side of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), which was based in the Tavildara region of Tajikistan. From the very beginning, the IMU oriented itself towards support for the Taliban, which probably accounted for their increasing divergence from the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan, which was firmly resolved to support the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance and its leader Ahmad Shah Masood.

A British observer asserts that “the IMU and its leader have resembled little more than a network of militants primarily motivated by economic interests.” In other words, the organizations “resembles a gang of guerrillas more than a group of terrorists.”<sup>34</sup> The observer

supports his argument by noting that the IMU's activities have largely focused on transporting drugs from Afghanistan to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, drugs that are destined for Russia and Europe. He also notes that the IMU has been active in making money from taking hostages. Strangely enough, this observer claims that Namangani "has never been driven solely by Islamic ideology." In Rashid's words, Namangani "is a guerrilla leader, not an Islamic scholar." In fact, leaders of militant movements at the head of armed struggles only rarely are scholars. However, this hardly allows one to claim that they are not terrorists.

The fate of the Uzbek Islamist militants was connected in a strange manner with a rebel colonel of the Tajik army. As noted earlier, the government of Tajikistan, with active mediation by the UN and a number of neighboring states, signed a peace agreement with the UTO in 1997. Under the terms of the "General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord," as the agreement was called, the UTO obtained a 30 percent quota of seats in governmental bodies. UTO fighters, including the Uzbek militants, were to be integrated into the power structures of the republic after being certified in commissions expressly created for the purpose.

The Tashkent government regarded this process as unacceptable, and it accused Dushanbe of using the Uzbek Islamic militants as leverage to exert political pressure on Uzbekistan. In its turn, Dushanbe accused Tashkent of supporting a rebel colonel from the Tajik military, Mahmud Khudoiberdiev. A native of Kurghanteppa, Khudoiberdiev on several occasions in the 1990s attempted to use forces under his command to force Tajik President Rahmonov to remove the colonel's rivals, among whom were the president's fellow countryman, Mahmadsaid Ubaidullaev, who was the speaker of the upper chamber of parliament and mayor of Dushanbe (known as "the strong man of Kulyab"), as well as Gaffur Mirzoev "Sedoi" (the Grey-haired), commander of the presidential National Guard. During the civil war, Khudoiberdiev had courageously fought on the side of the Popular Front (to which the Kulyabi clan owed its victory), and he believed that he had been insufficiently rewarded by the Kulyabis for his efforts. A military operation in the town of Tursunzade in 1996 by Khudoiberdiev's

regiment had become one of his best-known campaigns. His regiment forced Mirzoev's men back from Tursunzade and reasserted its claim to the Tajik Aluminium Plant. As the winner of the engagement, Khudoiberdiev demanded that Vice-Premier Ubaidullaev be ousted from his post. Rahmonov met this condition. A year later, the colonel instigated another mutiny, this time without success. As a result, he was compelled, with some of his fighters, to take refuge in Uzbekistan.

After another of the colonel's mutinies was suppressed in the fall of 1998 and he again hid in Uzbekistan, Rahmonov convened a secret conference. As Sanobar Shermatova, a journalist of Uzbek origin from Moscow asserts, the president did not hide his feelings and spoke of Uzbekistan's Karimov in a very uncomplimentary fashion. He asked a question to the audience: how could one take revenge on a neighbor who continued to destabilize the situation in Tajikistan? Shermatova says: "And then Ubaidullaev reminded those present that Juma Namangani and his fighters, whom the Uzbek authorities wanted deported, were based in Tavildara. Thus the Uzbek militants were again revived on the political scene."<sup>35</sup>

The journalist repeats here the widespread theory about how the Tajik authorities, supported by Russians who wanted to keep Karimov within their sphere of influence, not only tolerated Uzbek extremists but even helped them survive. But this theory may be too sophisticated to be true. In any case, in summer 1998 Khudoiberdiev again staged an abortive revolt in the north of Tajikistan. He mounted his attack from Uzbek territory, where he was hiding from the Tajik authorities. He was not supported by the local population, however, and he was therefore forced to pull back.

### **The February 1999 Terrorist Bombings**

On February 16, 1999, militant Uzbek Islamists detonated a series of bombs in Tashkent. They had hoped to kill the Uzbek president, but he escaped. Sixteen innocent civilians were killed, and more than 100 were wounded. Until then, the Karimov regime had claimed that stability was

their main achievement, pointing to the catastrophic consequences that resulted from the legalization of opposition parties in neighboring Tajikistan in the beginning of the 1990s. Under Karimov's leadership, the country had managed to avoid political murders, conflicts in the criminal world, and the redistribution of spheres of influence. The explosions in the compound of government buildings in Tashkent were therefore a shock.

The Uzbek authorities accused the IMU of perpetrating this act of terrorism and started a broad wave of repressions. Later, when the terrorists who had allegedly performed this act were captured, their indictments in the Supreme Court of Uzbekistan read:

The main task was assigned to Z. Hasanov, who was to drive a Kamaz truck laden with explosives to the territory of the Oliy Majlis (Supreme Council) and blow it up. He was to finish his life as a *shahid* [martyr]. There were also other plans, [each] one more fantastic than the other: to blow up the president's residence in Durmeni; to stage a collision of the president's automobile with a Kamaz filled with explosives; and to take the president's daughter and diplomats of foreign states hostage.

The explosion in the... Interior Ministry was timed for 10:50; in the building of the Nodirabegim Cinema for 10:55; in the cabinet for 10:57; in the building of the National Bank for Foreign Trade Activity for 11:20; and in the house rented at Kahhar Street #22 for 12:05. Work for the preparation of sabotage in the republic was carried out in parallel. A. Alimov and A. Mamajonov were to buy ten Kamaz trucks to bring the Namangani militants from Tajikistan to Osh, Kyrgyzstan, and to prepare medicines that would "keep them from freezing in cold weather" and medicines which would remove the "feeling of hunger."<sup>36</sup>

A total of 22 people appeared before the court on charges of attempting to assassinate Karimov and overthrow the government. All 22 were found guilty. The material damage from the explosions amounted to more than 690 million soms (about \$5,480,000). The court's verdict asserted that bombings were aimed at the physical elimination not only of Karimov but of other members of the government as well.

The Supreme Court sentenced six defendants to the maximum penalty—execution by a firing squad. The others received sentences of 10 to 20 years, to be served in maximum-security prisons. The verdict claimed that the defendants were connected with foreign extremist groups whose purpose was to overthrow the constitutional system in the republic, seize power, and

establish an Islamic state. Some were accused of having received military training at terrorist camps in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Chechnya. The defendants were also convicted of other crimes from earlier years, including robbery, the organization of a criminal community, and the smuggling and illegal storage of firearms.

The court's verdict asserted: "Wearing a mask of Islamic religion, the criminals created a special fund in the Ferghana Valley, whose purpose was the collection of money for the conduct of jihad, the seizure of power, and the creation of an Islamic state in Uzbekistan. In order to accumulate financial resources in this fund, the criminals attacked the houses of citizens and plundered businessmen." The verdict also listed the names of plotters who had been active in two regions of the Ferghana Valley and cited details of the preparation of the coup. In particular, it stated that as a result of the activity of two criminal groups during 1992–1998 in the Andizhan and Namangan regions, 12 people were killed and 38 injured. It also asserted that a total of over 5.5 million soms of valuables and property had been stolen by the accused.

Some Central Asian dissidents living abroad later put forward their own version of the February events in Tashkent. According to them, the IMU was indeed preparing a terrorist act, but the explosions were a provocation carried out by the authorities themselves. Political scientist and Munich resident Anvar Usmanov, for example, declared in an interview with *Deutsche Welle*: "The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan was undoubtedly preparing an attempt on the life of President Karimov. But there were SNB (political police) agents within that organization, who pre-empted it and provoked the notorious explosions. They served as an occasion for the opening of a real 'witch hunt' in Uzbekistan. A frenzied campaign started against all those who were a little bit out of the ordinary—for example, people who attended the mosque or voiced their own opinions. Anyway, Karimov tightened up on everyone."<sup>37</sup> Usmanov, and other dissidents are thus convinced that that the Uzbek secret services manipulated the Islamists and convinced them to attempt the assassination of Karimov for the sake of their own or their master's political purposes.

This explanation, in Usmanov's view, is supported by a later event when the Uzbek secret services were supposedly involved in another assassination attempt. This time, however, it was Saparmuradov Niyazov, the president of Turkmenistan, who was the target of the operation. The incident took place three years after the 1999 Tashkent explosions, on November 25, 2002.

Though Usmanov saw a link between the two, in the second case the scenario was different:

Some political groups in Russia and Uzbekistan, in my view, clearly helped Boris Shikhmuradov (a former deputy prime-minister of Turkmenistan who turned dissident who was accused of having orchestrated the assassination attempt). One may even speak about a certain Russo-Uzbek scenario. Naturally, Shikhmuradov had secured the support of these circles and leaned on them. In the process, he overplayed his hand, as well as that of his supporters and the circles named above. I do not believe that Shikhmuradov found support at the highest level in Russia and Uzbekistan, but nevertheless forces were found in these countries that pushed Shikhmuradov to take active steps. And then his patrons simply stepped aside, leaving him to the mercy of fate."<sup>38</sup>

Is there a grain of truth in the statements of a dissident who, without whitewashing the Islamists, wants at the same time to accuse Karimov of a maximum quantity of sins? Knowing the clan-based character of Uzbek society, it is hard to believe that had the Uzbek special services organized a "provocation" that caused such a great number of victims among the population, that they would have managed to prevent a leak of information from their ranks.

There is yet another version of these events. A British expert believes that although the IMU was blamed for the Tashkent explosions in 1999, "the evidence has never been conclusive. In fact, there are strong indications that the Tashkent bombings were perpetrated by one of Karimov's political opponents who had ties to powerful criminal organizations."<sup>39</sup>

In March 1999, Karimov appealed to Uzbek citizens who had joined the terrorists to lay down their arms in return for a pardon. According to official data (which is difficult to verify), about eleven hundred people returned to their *kishlaks* (villages). Abduwali Yuldashev, who had headed one of the camps located in the Tavildara zone of Tajikistan (according to Uzbek authorities), seized some young residents of the Khorezm region of Uzbekistan who had fled the camp in hopes of giving themselves up to the authorities. Some were shot to death on the spot,

while others were personally beheaded by Yuldashev in front of a line of his fighters.

Many notorious participants in the events in Uzbekistan in the beginning of 1990s have reappeared on the political scene in the period since. Investigating their origin and entrance into political life will help us better understand the role of terrorist networks in the region.

### **Terrorist Networks**

Abduwali Yuldashev has been one of the most notorious of the IMU terrorist leaders. Having visited Tajikistan in the early 1990s, he left for Afghanistan where he underwent combat training at one of the camps of the Islamic extremists. Afterwards he returned to Uzbekistan and engaged in robberies in the Ferghana Valley, which replenished the *bayt al-mal*—the treasury of Islamic terrorists.<sup>40</sup> His group killed a major in the Namangan traffic police as well as a number of policemen at the Chartak customs post, and it carried out a series of robberies in Andizhan during which several well-known entrepreneurs were killed. Among Yuldashev's group were two gunmen, Zahid Dehkanov and Kazimbek Zakirov, who were later put on trial for various crimes, including attempting to take the life of Karimov in February 1999. According to a memo of the investigation group of the office of the Attorney General of Uzbekistan, Dehkanov (alias "Said") started to attend the main mosque of the city of Andizhan in 1992, where Abduwali *qori* (Mirzoev) then preached. Under the influence of Zafar Mahmudov, he embraced Wahhabism and began to engage in robbery in search of funds. In October 1996, under the instructions of Kazimbek Zakirov, he left for Almaty, where he recruited Islamic extremists who were to be sent to fighting camps in Chechnya, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan. He himself underwent training in Chechnya in 1997. In October 1998, as an advisor to Tahir Yuldashev, he was sent, together with Bahrom Abdullaev, to Turkmenistan to set up an Islamist political center there. He was detained, however, and handed over to Uzbek law enforcement agencies.

The memo also mentioned that Bahrom Abdullaev (known by the aliases "Nurlan" and "Abdulla,") was also a student of Abduwali *qori* and was himself a *qori* as of 1991. In 1997, he underwent training in the camp of the Arab jihadist Khattab in Chechnya, to which he personally

sent 150 persons from Uzbekistan, among whom were direct accomplices in the Tashkent explosions. He likewise coordinated his activities with Kazimbek Zakirov (alias “Palvan”), whom I mentioned above. According to the investigation group, in September 1998, Bahrom Abdullaev was appointed by Tahir Yuldashev to be his representative (*amir*) in Uzbekistan.<sup>41</sup> Together with Dehkanov, Abdullaev was extradited to Uzbekistan by Turkmen authorities.

In the early 1990s, Palvan was also an active partner in robberies and murders in Andizhan. Then, having moved to Almaty, he coordinated the plotters’ activity in Tashkent, acting as one of the group’s leaders. After the explosions, he was apprehended in Taldy-Kurgan, Kazakhstan, where there was no tight control over Islamist activity. The city served as a transit base for terrorists, who, as shown by the materials of the investigation, in May 1997 devised a plan for a violent seizure of power under the slogans of jihad. According to the Israeli journalist Oleg Yaqubov, a native of Uzbekistan who carried out a journalistic investigation of the 1999 events in Tashkent and interviewed many people, including the arrested conspirators, more than 300 people were trained in the use of various kinds of weapons, combat skills, working with explosives, and reconnaissance in special camps in the villages of Shali, Serzhen-Yurt, and Aftori-Yurt beginning in 1997. All of this took place pursuant to an arrangement with Khattab, who had by then settled down in Chechnya. Yaqubov claims that altogether more than 5,000 Uzbek citizens were trained in fighting camps in Chechnya, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan.<sup>42</sup> A base disguised as a private firm in Almaty supplied the militants with money, temporary lodgings, and false passports made in Kyrgyzstan.

Regardless of how murky the story of the February 1999 Tashkent bombings is, it is clear that IMU militants were involved and that many of them were cold-blooded killers who were closely linked to transnational terrorist networks. This does not mean that some were not sincere believers who were mobilized through effective indoctrination. An example is Mahamadsobir Mamatov, who was born in Andizhan in 1973, received his secondary school education, and beginning in 1995, attended the Jome mosque in Andizhan together with his neighbor, Z. Mahmudov. There he became acquainted with K. Nazarov, T. Nuraliev, and Z. Dehkanov. At the

end of 1995, together with M. Ashurov, he guarded the house and family members of Abduwali-*qori*. After the disappearance of Abduwali-*qori*, he ceased to attend the mosque. He took the following oath: “I shall serve Allah, I shall not swerve from the path of Allah, I am ready to do everything for the sake of Allah, and I agree that I shall be punished in case I violate the oath.” He committed marauding raids and contributed one-fifth of the plundered property as *zakat* to the *bayt al-mal* foundation. He was arrested on April 16, 1999, and a military court sentenced him to 19 years in a maximum security prison.

### **The Leaders of Erk Convicted**

The names of those who guided the perpetrators of the terrorist acts in Tashkent were announced at the trial as the organizers. Blame was placed on “Islamic fundamentalists” and their “ringleaders.” According to the investigation, one of them, Tahir Yuldashev, financed the acts, providing about \$500,000 for the purchase of explosives, weapons, and vehicles. The accusation noted that in the event that they achieved their goal—the physical liquidation of Karimov and other government leaders—the terrorists would follow up with a series of acts of sabotage in various regions of the republic with a view to completely destabilize the country. After that, evidence gathered by the office of the Attorney General indicates that the fighting groups of Islamic fundamentalists Yuldashev and Juma Namangani were to penetrate the territory of the republic and seize power. With the seizure of power, Muhammad Salih was to become head of state. Salih had run for president in 1991 but had lost to Karimov and was then forced to emigrate.<sup>43</sup> A writer and a poet, Salih had been the founder of Erk, a liberal and secular party with strong elements of Turkic nationalism in its ideology. Salih received 12 percent of the vote in the elections. In late 1993, the party was banned, and he emigrated to Turkey. Most observers did not believe that Salih could have been involved in the conspiracy, although some political émigrés argued that the obligations that Salih had taken towards his Islamist partners in exchange for their support of him might have led him into full support of their attempt to assassinate Karimov.

To what extent were the allegations against Salih supported by facts? An interview with an Uzbekistani official sheds light on this question.

Question: Officials in Tashkent asserted that it was Muhammad Salih who stood behind the explosions in February 1999, and he was convicted *in absentia*. [Was] there concrete proof of his guilt?

Answer: We received information from intelligence sources that in May 1997, Salih met with Tahir Yuldashev and Juma Hojiev (Namangani) in Istanbul. They declared their intention to proclaim a so-called movement for the revival of Islam in Uzbekistan. As we know, they found common language and agreed on joint action. They had one objective—the overthrow of the present system in Uzbekistan. More than a year passed. At the end of September 1998, Yuldashev, Namangani, Zakirov, and Bahrom Abdullaev met in Kabul. Yuldashev was declared to be the *amir* of the movement, Namangani became his assistant for military affairs, and Bahrom Abdullaev became the *amir* of the *jihad* organizations carrying on their activity in the territory of Uzbekistan. In early December 1998, a meeting of Yuldashev, Namangani and Muhammad Salih was held in Kabul. It was long, and for ten days the plotters were busy drawing up a plan of the *jihad* movement in the republic, which was to begin in the spring of 1999. According to that plan, the president and members of the government were to be liquidated in Tashkent. Chaos would ensue in the republic, and it was at that time that Yuldashev with his militants was to break through into the republic from the south. And the Namangani militants were to enter the Ferghana Valley aboard 20 Kamaz trucks. The plotters' arrangements boiled down to the following: amid chaos and fighting, Muhammad Salih was to assume leadership in the republic, while Yuldashev was assigned the role of war minister in the new state. Salih pledged to give \$1,600,000 for this affair.

Question: How can a dissident living in Norway have such money? Did he really give it for the takeover?

Answer: “We know that Salih handed over part of the money for the organization of explosions in Tashkent. But, fortunately, their plans failed. There is evidence that part of the money promised by Salih was to be allocated by Arab foundations. He was also connected with the Taliban. But Salih had some additional shady ties which we were unable to uncover.”<sup>44</sup>

The conviction of Salih left no hope that Karimov would ever reopen a dialogue with Salih's party, Erk.

## Regional and Clan Rivalries

Although many Russian and Western observers expressed strong suspicions that the accusations against Muhammad Salih were fabricated, versions appeared in the Russian press trying to link the Islamist radical plotters not only to the leader of Erk but also to other regional groups and personalities, as well as to clans that were interested in toppling Karimov. One of these versions named someone from the close entourage of Karimov, Ismail Jurabekov, who for many years had stood behind Karimov before and after his ascent to power and who reportedly had for many years been the president's "purse."<sup>45</sup> Jurabekov has always been considered the unofficial leader of the so-called Samarqand clan, to which Karimov belongs.<sup>46</sup> For many years he occupied the post of vice-premier. However, in the secret hierarchy of the political elite, he had long remained *de facto* second in command, and in the president's absence he decided many important questions. About a year before the explosion, Jurabekov was unexpectedly forced to retire. Rumors circulated in Tashkent that the resignation was connected to drug dealing. Afterwards, pressure began to build on Jurabekov's son, who had close links with one of the two biggest mafia bosses in Uzbekistan from the Ferghana Valley, Salim Abdullaev. Abdullaev is known in Moscow as a successful businessman who owns a complex of commercial buildings and restaurants on Moscow's Novy Arbat street and is believed to be well connected in the Russian business and political circles. Salim together with Jurabekov's son supervised a network of supermarkets in Tashkent.

Information from Uzbekistan was supplemented by a confession from one of the most senior officers of the Russian Interior Ministry, who in a private conversation with Shermatova stated that Russian mafia rings were somehow involved in the Tashkent coup attempt. He claimed that Karimov had thrown an iron curtain around Uzbekistan, preventing the penetration of so-called "shadow structures." In the Soviet period, Uzbekistan had been one of the main bases of shadow operators. Today, however, unlike other CIS republics, Uzbekistan does not participate in the laundering of big capital. The Russian shadow operators were therefore allegedly interested in a regime change in Uzbekistan and supported the radicals accordingly. A

strange chain of links that related to the events in Tashkent was drawn: Russian shadow business circles – Salim – Jurabekov – Salih – the Islamists. Shermatova believed that if this version was correct, the origin of the sums promised by Salih to the Islamists (Yuldashev) to stage a coup could be explained.

On April 2, 1999, soon after the explosions, Jurabekov was appointed to a post specially created for him as head of state inspection on control and supervision of the technical condition and safety of irrigation facilities.<sup>47</sup> In light of the agrarian base of the country, where artificial water supply is well developed, the head of state inspection is considered an influential figure. One year later, Karimov created yet another post of state councilor for supervising the questions of reforms in agriculture and water facilities, and he appointed Jurabekov to this post.<sup>48</sup>

It therefore seems difficult to accept a *Moscow News* version of involvement of Jurabekov and the Uzbek/Russian mafia in the Islamists' plot against the Karimov. It is worth noting that in the fragile balance of regional, clan, and interest groups in present day Uzbekistan, Jurabekov is supported by the minister of interior, Zakir Almatov; and Jurabekov and Almatov, who are members of the Samarqand clan, are in turn allied with the Jizak clan, represented by the former minister of foreign affairs, Abdulaziz Kamilov (since March 2003, Kamilov has been the president's advisor for foreign affairs), as well as some other influential officials. Members of the allied Tashkent and Ferghana clans (including the minister of defense, Qadir Ghulamov, as well as others) believe that their representation in the government is insufficient, and the underground rivalry between these alliances, as well as some other interest groups, may have been related to the Islamists' activities.

Special attention should be paid to the fact that the Ferghana Valley has always been the main base of support for the Uzbek Islamists. Many secular personalities from business, mafia, and the political sections of the Ferghana clan maintain relations with the radical Islamists. Olivier Roy has argued that “the Islamists' implantation in Uzbekistan corresponded broadly to a regionalist identity—that of Ferghana, which was not well represented in the central government.”<sup>49</sup> This is, however, only part of the truth. The struggle for power and resources

among regional elites and clans helps shape the activities of *all* political movements, not only Islamist ones. Moreover, the IMU has been intensively engaged in drug trafficking, which deepens its already close relations with different mafia-type and patronage networks. Representatives of different regional clans sometimes cooperate with shadow and mafia-like groups that are engaged in illegal and criminal business. However, this does not preclude politicians from appealing to these groups for support and the promotion of the interests of their regional clans.

We can summarize these various accounts of the events of February 1999 in Tashkent as follows: (1) they were organized by local Islamists; (2) they were carried out by Islamists but masterminded by some foreign or international networks; (3) they were organized by the Uzbek secret services on the order of Karimov who wanted to carry out a campaign of repression against all opposition forces; (4) they were organized by the secret services in order to scare Karimov and raise their own status; (5) they were organized by one of Uzbekistan's rival political clans (or one of their leaders) to force Karimov make concessions in their favor; (6) they were organized by the local mafia; and (7) they were planned and carried out by some external actors. None of these explanations, or a combination of them, can either be confirmed or refuted by the available evidence, so we must remain open-minded about which is closest to the truth.

## **TRANS-BORDER VIOLENCE**

### **The Fighting Continues**

The February 1999 bombings in Uzbekistan affected the situation in Tajikistan. As a result of the broad campaign launched by Tashkent to ferret out members and supporters of Islamic organizations, many of those who sympathized with political Islam, as well as many others who simply had a spiritual education or orientation, were arrested, while others fled to Tajikistan where they received the protection of IMU commanders in the Tavildara region. It appears from

press reports that Juma Namangani's detachments received as many as several thousand reinforcements (which confirms that the Uzbek militants had decided not to respect the disarmament provisions in the General Agreement). At the time, Namangani was deciding whether he should keep his promise to the new Tajik government (which now included some of his former comrades in arms) that he would not take up arms against them. He was under pressure from some of his supporters to break his promise and launch a war against all regimes in Central Asia. As Zahid, one of the Uzbek militants in Tajikistan told me, even though Islamists had been included in the Tajik government, it was in fact no better than Karimov's government in Uzbekistan. Rahmonov, he asserted, was a much a *kafir* as Karimov.<sup>50</sup>

Namangani did not want to quarrel with the leaders of the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan, however. He also understood that he should not disperse his forces. Instead, as Rashid has written, "he only asked to be given transit rights to cross the Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan border into the Ferghana Valley, where he was continuing his war against Uzbekistan."<sup>51</sup> At the same time, the IRPT was in the midst of difficult negotiations with its former allies in the United Tajik Opposition and the government in Dushanbe on implementing the General Agreement, and the parties preferred not enter into open conflict with Namangani, which might have meant a new round of violence for the country. The unwillingness of the Tajik government to confront Namangani, however, led authorities in Uzbekistan to conclude that the leaders of the UTO were deliberately helping Namangani and his guerillas to leave Tajikistan.

A fragment of an IMU dossier compiled by a member of an Uzbek law enforcement agency was passed on to me by a journalist. The document clearly demonstrates the enmity the Uzbek authorities felt for the UTO leaders at the time. While some of the facts that the dossier contains can be confirmed by Tajik sources, others look doubtful. The document reads:

In a period of a sharp escalation of the situation in May 1999, which threatened to grow into open violent confrontation in view of serious divisions between the official Dushanbe and the opposition, IMU detachments commanded by Juma Hojiev and UTO forces were preparing for the resumption of joint military actions against government troops.

Meetings and consultations between Said Abdullo Nuri [the leader of the United Tajik Opposition] Tahir Yuldashev, Juma Hojiev and their plenipotentiaries have continually been held in the territory of Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. These sessions adopted decisions on general and coordinated tactics of action in case of a resumption of armed conflict in the Tajikistan and also worked out long-term plans for unleashing jihad on the territory of Uzbekistan.

On 12 May 1999, Nuri met Yuldashev in Tehran, where they discussed plans to organize further action by IMU militants to destabilize the situation in Uzbekistan and other states of the region. The high-ranking functionaries of the Tajik opposition frequently met Hojiev, who resided in RT territory and directly administered the IMU headquarters in the Hoit settlement. These conferences continued up to 12 August 1999, when Hojiev (before the start of the action in the Batken district of Kyrgyzstan) met Nuri for the next time and discussed with him the question of the further stay of the IMU militants in the opposition-controlled territories of Tajikistan.<sup>52</sup>

### **Hostage Taking in Kyrgyzstan**

A network of IMU members and sympathizers was concentrated in one of Kyrgyzstan's southern regions, Batken, where militants in the summer of 1999 began to plan a transit from Tajikistan. It is here, in the south of Kyrgyzstan, that two enclaves are located—an Uzbek one in Sukh, and a Tajik one in Vorukh. Both regions have traditionally been considered mainstays of Islamic radicalism—Rashid calls them “hotbeds of IMU support.”<sup>53</sup>

In August 1999, a group of 21 militants took a mayor and three of his employees hostage in a small village in the Osh region. The Kyrgyz authorities gave in to the terrorists' demands, paid ransom for their release, and gave the terrorists a helicopter to fly to Afghanistan. This caused a sharp reaction in Uzbekistan, whose authorities regarded the behavior of the Kyrgyz authorities as a manifestation of extreme weakness and even treachery in relation to Uzbekistan. One of the leading officials of Uzbekistan's Foreign Ministry told me at the time that Bishkek's orientation towards “pseudo-liberalism” and actual demobilization of its power agencies undermined the interests of Kyrgyzstan and showed other leaders in Central Asia how reforms should not be carried out. My interlocutor also asserted that Kyrgyzstan was poorly served by the “appeasement” of Islamists, who in reality “must be crushed like harmful insects.”<sup>54</sup> It is no

surprise, therefore, that Uzbek planes decided to bomb presumed terrorist bases in Tajikistan, which naturally drew a sharp reaction from the authorities in Dushanbe.

Soon thereafter, the IMU entered three Kyrgyz *kishlaks* and took hostage a general of the Interior Ministry of Kyrgyzstan. During the night of August 21, an armed detachment of fifty people captured a meteorological station of the Uzbekistan Meteorological Committee at the Abramov Glacier in Kyrgyzstan. Ten people working there were taken hostage. In addition, an entire group of mountain climbers was taken hostage, together with the personnel from the meteorological station. Before that, in the beginning of August, these fifty militants, among whom were Uzbeks, Tajiks, Arabs, Afghans, Pakistanis, and others, had captured a mountain *aul* (village) known as Zardaly in the Batken region.

The terrorists called themselves *mujahedeen*. They were well-armed and had modern communication equipment. Soon they were brought to the territory of Tajikistan, and new hostages were added to the old ones—nine policemen from Kyrgyzstan and two local inhabitants. The hostage-takers reportedly boasted that they had an additional 500–600 militants in Tajik territory. They also told the hostages that they were responsible for the February explosions in Tashkent. On August 25, law enforcement agencies in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan received a statement by fax from Tahir Yuldashev declaring that if the Kyrgyzstan authorities showed leniency to his people, his forces would simply pass through the territory of Kyrgyzstan into Uzbekistan. The overall objective of the militants, according to the politicians, was the destabilization of the situation in Uzbekistan and the creation of an Islamic state in the Ferghana Valley.<sup>55</sup>

According to an agent in Kyrgyzstan's National Security Ministry, one of the leaders of the militants was a certain Azizkhan, a former citizen of Uzbekistan and “the right hand” of Namangani.<sup>56</sup> In the early 1990s, he left Uzbekistan for Tajikistan and joined the armed Tajik opposition. He completed combat training in an Afghan camp in the town of Tahor, and upon returning to Tajikistan he headed one of the groups of the intransigent oppositionists who refused to lay down their arms.

The first hostages were released, but soon new ones fell into terrorist hands—four Japanese geologists and an interpreter. At first, the terrorists demanded a ransom of two million dollars for their release, but later the ransom was raised to five million dollars. Despite the Kyrgyz power agencies' inability to prevent these hostage taking incidents, they refused to allow the militants pass into the Uzbek part of the Ferghana Valley—instead, Kyrgyz troops launched a military operation that forced the militants back into Tajikistan.

Prior to this, the power ministries of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan had decided to form a joint operational headquarters in the town of Osh at a meeting of the foreign and defense ministers along with the heads of the four countries' intelligence services. But these meetings, as well as the joint operations center, proved of little effect: they did not lead to the liberation of the hostages or the departure of the militants, which took place in early October. Nevertheless, Kyrgyz officials claimed that the militants had left Kyrgyz territory because they were “unable to endure constant strikes of the united grouping of government troops.”<sup>57</sup>

The confusion that reigned among the military leadership of the three countries, and the quarrels between the generals involved, only became public knowledge much later.<sup>58</sup> Here is how one of the Kyrgyz officers recalls the events of those days:

Only we and the police special forces were left. Two generals commanded them, Isakov and Sadiev. The operation led to nothing. In approaching the place, a militant fired a shot from a sniper rifle and hit a soldier in the leg. After that the detachment waited a little more and left empty-handed. And what we were dealing with was only a band numbering 25–30 rifles! Then they began to rub the militants out, gathering three special-forces groups from each power agency.... Now there's no use lying any more, the time has passed .... Certainly, everything was so unexpected that we lost our bearings. To speak honestly, the army was not ready to fight. Fables are being told that our army closed the road to Uzbekistan for IMU gunmen and therefore the war began. A fat lot we care for them, they could quietly go to their Ferghana, we did not even notice them.<sup>59</sup>

The head of Kyrgyzstan's National Security Ministry, Misir Ashirkulov, described the situation in an interview in a similar vein, arguing that the Uzbek militants could have easily penetrated into Uzbekistan using mountain tracks.<sup>60</sup> However, for some reason they stopped

halfway and remained in mountain Kyrgyz *kishlaks* for almost two months, contacting members of the Kyrgyz and foreign mass media through a Kyrgyz parliamentary deputy, Tursunbai Bakir-Uulu. During this time, they staked out their claims, set out the aims and the tasks of the movement, and hurled threats against the Uzbek authorities. The impression was that this was their real mission.

Why did they do this? Some observers believed that they wanted to force the Uzbek leadership to recognize them as political opponents and negotiate with them. However, a former Tajik fighter informed us that during the standoff in the Kyrgyz mountains, a split occurred in the IMU leadership. Yuldashev believed that the Japanese hostages had to be given back in exchange for political concessions on the part of official Tashkent, but Namangani wanted a ransom for them. Most of the hostages (including all the Japanese) were released, and although it was not officially reported, there is no doubt that a ransom was paid for them.

During the operation against the terrorists, Uzbek aircraft bombed Kyrgyz territory. Later there were reports that that the incursions had actually been approved by the Kyrgyz side. As an officer of Uzbekistan's law enforcement agencies told me, Uzbek authorities were convinced that Kyrgyzstan alone was unable to cope with the terrorists. Officials in Tashkent had a very low opinion of the fighting ability and potential of the Kyrgyz army and law enforcement bodies, and they also doubted the political will of the Bishkek authorities to resist terrorists. To this day, the Kyrgyz grumble that the Uzbeks had accidentally or intentionally dropped bombs on a Kyrgyz village, killing 12 villagers and damaging dozens of houses.<sup>61</sup>

During the terrorist operation in Kyrgyzstan, the Islamists attacked one of the guard posts, and in the course of the ensuing battle the militants lost a few dozen people, including Abduwali Yuldashev.<sup>62</sup> Again, many voices accused the IRPT of links with the IMU terrorists, although Nuri had used all his influence to effect the release of the hostage. Still, a Russian website reads as follows:

For his part, Juma Hojiev, who coordinated the actions of the militants, invaded the Batken district of Kyrgyzstan. He reported by radio on the course of fighting and the actions taken not only to the IMU headquarters in Kabul and Kandahar, but also to

Mirzo Ziyoev's headquarters in Tajikistan. Communication between the leadership of the Tajik opposition and Hojiev was maintained by couriers constantly traveling back and forth along the route from the UTO headquarters. Nuri and Ziyoev handled instruction and advice bearing on the most confidential [matters]. Thus, on August 26, 1999, UTO leader Said Abdulla Nuri sent a message through a courier to Juma Hojiev in which he recommended the release of the Japanese hostages in order to prevent an international outcry. However, this recommendation ran counter to Yuldashev's instruction, which demanded that the foreigners taken hostage not be released in exchange for money and should be detained until the end of *jihad*.<sup>63</sup>

Several people later privately claimed that they had played a role in the release of the prisoners. One is a Tajik poet, Gulrukhsor Safieva, who is a close friend of President Akaev and someone who carries great deal of authority among the Tajik opposition. In a private conversation with a journalist, she asserted that she had made a major contribution to the hostage release by having persuaded two people with influence over Namangani—the aforementioned IRPT leader Nuri and Minister for Emergency Situations Ziyoev—of the need to release the captives.<sup>64</sup> But again, the truth about the details of 1999 is still unknown. What is clear is that pursuant to negotiations with the militants who had by then been driven into Tajikistan, the Japanese hostages were released in October 1999. According to rumors that were denied by the authorities, the release came after a (substantial) ransom was paid by the Japanese government.

### **The IMU's Adventures in Tajikistan and Afghanistan**

In the wake of the 1999 incursions, Tajikistan found itself in an extremely difficult situation because the Uzbek government stepped up pressure on Dushanbe to take resolute measures against the Islamists. The Uzbekistan mass media, supported by some of their counterparts in Russia, Kazakhstan, and elsewhere, blamed the IRPT for what had happened. Tashkent probably expected that the alliance between “the party of power” and the opposition in Tajikistan—which its supporters hoped would successfully demonstrate a case of integration of moderate political Islam with government structures—would in fact collapse.

A moment of truth ensued in relations between Rahmonov and the IRPT leaders. The leaders of the IRPT did everything they could to resolve the hostage crisis peacefully, and in

addition, Nuri and a number of UTO commanders who had fought alongside Namangani managed to convince the latter to agree to the deportation of the IMU's fighters to Afghanistan in November 1999. This action was approved not only by the Tajik leadership but also by the Russian troops guarding the Tajik-Afghan border. As a result, Uzbek political figures accused Moscow of abetting the terrorists, arguing that Russia wanted to use the IMU to pressure Karimov. Namangani thus managed to create tensions not only in relations among the three Central Asian republics but also between Uzbekistan and Russia.

Only a few months later, however, IMU gunmen reappeared in the mountains of Tajikistan. In May 2000, the mass media reported another deportation of IMU militants led by Namangani into Taliban-controlled parts of Afghanistan. In August, Namangani and his detachment managed to return once again to the Tavildara region, and again Uzbek officials accused Tajik authorities and the Russian border guards of aiding the Islamists. According to one Tajik official, the Tajik leadership wanted to avoid renewed fighting on its territory because the Tajik people were tired of civil war. In addition, the leadership was afraid of aggravating relations between "the party of power" in Dushanbe and the IRPT. However, experience showed that it was impossible to neutralize the extremists merely by deporting them to Afghanistan. They had been waging guerrilla war in the mountains for five years, and they therefore knew all the vulnerable places of the Tajik-Afghan border. It was therefore impossible to prevent them from crossing the border as long as they had complete freedom of movement and support on the Afghan side.

Although the Uzbek law enforcement agencies are certainly not unbiased, their information deserves to be taken into account in regard to degree of cooperation between Tajik authorities and the IMU.

After the signing, on 17 June 2000, of a conciliatory protocol on the dissolution and disarmament of illegal armed formations between the government of Tajikistan and the United Tajik Opposition, Nuri, Ziyoev and [other] well-known field commanders of the Tajik Islamists...considering the authority carried by Juma Hojiev among his militants and the part he had played in fighting on the side of the UTO, actively responded to the requests of IMU leaders and offered every kind of assistance in

transporting the Movement's detachments into the areas of the region of Karategin [that were] controlled by the Tajik opposition.... [T]hey stayed [there] until the start of the operation for [the] penetration into the territory of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Similar aid and assistance was rendered to the IMU by the UTO after the government of Tajikistan decided to deport the so-called 'Uzbek refugees.' In particular, a redeployment of militants and members of their families to other localities of Tajikistan was organized. These localities were situated in far away mountain regions. In view of the fact that pressure and demands to deport IMU militants and 'refugees' from Tajikistan began to mount, Tahir Yuldashev came to an agreement with Said Abdullo Nuri and Mirzo Ziyoev on the question of transporting members of the families of the Movement's functionaries and militants to Afghanistan. In the process, the UTO leadership promised to arrange 'a corridor' through the territory of Tajikistan for the withdrawal of the above-mentioned persons to the Islamic State of Afghanistan. The 'refugees' were withdrawing to the regions of Afghanistan controlled by the Taliban. The safety of their passage through Tajik territory to the border with Afghanistan was ensured by the units of UTO field commanders—Bobo Nemat, Sarabek, Dodi Khudo and 'the Shaikh', confidants of Ziyoev, also actively cooperating with Hojiev and other IMU functionaries in Tajikistan.

After the Tajikistan government made the decision to expel the so-called 'Uzbek refugees' from the territory of Tajikistan, the IMU leadership instructed the militants deployed in the area of the Hoit settlement to bring their family members only to the territory of the Islamic State of Afghanistan controlled by the Taliban Movement, as the Kandahar administration undertook to accommodate them. In the opinion of the Taliban leader Mullo Omar, the opposition forces (the Anti-Taliban Coalition), including senior commanders, were traitors to their nation, and it was necessary to be on guard against them. In this connection, the Taliban leader was given lists containing 431 militant family members, who were transported to the territory of Afghanistan by cars supplied by UTO leaders Nuri and Ziyoev.

Having regard to the evolving situation concerning the refugees, Tahir Yuldashev sought an opportunity to discuss this question with Said Abdullo Nuri and Mirzo Ziyoev to organize the corresponding 'corridor' and obtain a security guarantee when crossing the Tajik-Afghan border. Furthermore, the Tajik and Uzbek Islamist leaders reached an agreement on continued activity of the IMU headquarters in Tajikistan in the form of the preservation of the established material and technical base, as well as camps for training militants. They decided to leave some representatives of the movement in the localities where its main forces were to be deployed. Mullo Safar, the UTO commander of the Jirgatal sector, who had long since been linked to Juma Hojiev, was appointed to be in charge of work with IMU functionaries left behind in the territory of Tajikistan. IMU leaders Yuldashev and Hojiev, as before, coordinate all their actions with Nuri. At the same time, the latter renders both material aid to the militants and assistance in replenishing their ranks

with effectiveness. Nuri's supporters from among UTO militants, in particular from among the formations of Mirzo Ziyoev 'Jaga' and Abdullo 'the Shaikh' are direct associates of IMU militants. Moreover, in June 2000, Nuri officially placed his office in Meshhed at the disposal of Yuldashev.<sup>65</sup>

In August and September 2000, IMU units fought government troops in the south of Kyrgyzstan and in the Surkhan-Darya region of Uzbekistan. Having penetrated the area north of Tashkent, the militants attacked Uzbek units in the area of Janjiabad and Bostanlyk, quite near Tashkent (earlier the Bostanlyk region had been part of Kazakhstan). Uzbekistan's army managed to repulse the IMU gunmen and drive them back, but suffered considerable losses. As one of the participants in the fighting told me, the militants demonstrated unprecedented tenacity. When the Uzbek soldiers approached the corpses of the slain militants to remove them, the corpses, which had been mined, blew up.

The fighting led to a further deterioration of relations between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. During the operation, Uzbek government forces drove more than two thousand ethnic Tajik peasants from the Surkhan-Darya region into the mountains. They were accused of supporting the militants who, as it turned out, had established a fortified camp in that region. In Rashid's opinion, it was "a sorry example of Uzbekistan's ability to alienate and traumatize its own people whilst trying to deal with the IMU."<sup>66</sup>

A Tajik journalist who had earlier been in Afghanistan with the UTO and is now the press secretary of the IRPT chairman stated that the armed actions by the IMU in the south of Kyrgyzstan and in the Surkhan-Darya region of Uzbekistan in 1999–2000 were not ends in themselves.<sup>67</sup> In part, they were designed to destabilize the situation in Central Asia, but their main purpose was to ensure the Taliban's complete victory in Afghanistan and the liquidation of the Northern Alliance troops led by Ahmad Shah Masood. However, it is not clear why, if this was indeed the purpose of the operations, that Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan were the sole object of destabilization and not Tajikistan, which was providing considerable political and military assistance to Masud. Moreover, such a destabilization would have weakened the positions of Islamists in Tajikistan who had gravitated towards an alliance with the Taliban.

Nevertheless, it was during that period that the links between the IMU and the Taliban movement became clear. The international media reported that Namangani had been appointed a deputy defense minister by the Taliban government, a report that was not denied by the Taliban. With reference to Masud's intelligence, it was also reported that during the battle for Taloqan in October 2000, IMU militants, as well as those from the ranks of Uigur and Chechen separatist groupings, were airlifted out of the international terrorist base at Rishkhor near Kabul.<sup>68</sup>

## **THE IDEOLOGY OF THE IMU**

Many analysts have argued that the IMU is not guided by programmatic principles but instead has a purely practical political and economic agenda and thus pays scant attention to ideology. To assess this argument, we need to begin by reviewing the roots of the movement, focusing in particular on the radical Islamic organizations in the Ferghana Valley that predated the IMU—Adolat, Tawba, and Islam Lashkarlari—each of which was headed by future leaders of the IMU.

Unfortunately, there is a dearth of material on the ideology of Adolat. In part, this can be compensated for by tracing the nature of Adolat's practical actions. Doing so reveals four dimensions to Adolat ideology. First, it practiced Islamic puritanism, directing its efforts at ensuring the strict observance of the ordinances, rituals, and norms of Islamic morality, as well as devotion and piety. In this sense, Adolat was a Salafi organization. Second, it attempted to assume responsibility for maintaining public order and eradicating larceny, theft, corruption, and so on. Third, it called for social justice and equality. And finally, it advocated Islamic governance and the creation of a state ruled by Sharia law.

It is therefore wrong to characterize the organization (as a number of observers have) as merely a gang of murderers and drug dealers. Above all, it is important to stress that there was a *power* component in the program of the Ferghana Islamists from the very beginning. This can be seen in three important trends. First, they attempted to enforce Islamic norms and punish lawbreakers in keeping with the spirit and letter of Sharia (again, they are similar in this regard

to Middle Eastern Salafis). Second, members of special “patrol squads” were trained in policing and martial arts.<sup>69</sup> And third, arms were stockpiled and youth were trained in how to use them.<sup>70</sup> After the beginning of open confrontation between the Karimov regime and the Ferghana Islamists, two more power dimensions appeared in their program—advocacy for the overthrow of the secular “anti-Islamic” regime by force and intimidation in the form of terror directed against government representatives.

These five forms of power allow us to classify the early Ferghana Islamists not only as Salafis but also as jihadists; they were committed to violent struggle against a secular regime in the name of Islam. They subsequently received practical combat training during the civil war in Tajikistan and again during their military actions in Afghanistan and Chechnya. As a result, the armed wing of the Uzbek Salafi movement gradually came to dominate. Repression drove the militants out of Uzbekistan, and events unfolding in neighboring countries made it easier for terrorists and extremists in the movement to gain the upper hand. The “theoretical” or ideological wing of the movement—the Wahhabis—was relegated to the background. Moreover, the activity of the Salafi mullahs in the mosques and *madrasas*, which had been centers of Salafi indoctrination and recruitment in the early 1990s, was discontinued.<sup>71</sup>

Thus, the Islamists lost their ability to influence simply and reliably the minds and sentiments of Muslims in the region. Having been routed politically, they could only work illegally by recruiting supporters through underground circles, by training candidates for Islamic radicalism by means of audio recordings of sermons of Salafi mullahs and imams, and by circulating printed materials. The extremists also lost their theoreticians in the person of the Wahhabi mullahs. Carrying on propaganda inside the country became extremely difficult, and it also became less of a priority for them. Yuldashev and Namangani focused instead on sending Uzbek youth abroad for training in the *madrasas* of Pakistan, while they themselves were preoccupied by the fighting in Tajikistan and Afghanistan.

It is for these reasons that many observers have come to the conclusion that the IMU is completely without doctrinal underpinnings. In fact, however, as noted earlier, they were

committed to Salafism and were also jihadists. This was true even before the creation of the IMU, as is shown by leaflets, booklets, and audio- and videocassettes collected by an Uzbek researcher, Babadjanov. One of these, entitled “Lessons of Jihad” (*Zhihod Darsliklari*), is particularly instructive.<sup>72</sup>

Before turning to the text of this document, I should emphasize that the use of illegal materials as sources for scholarly research has risks. It is not always clear where these materials come from, who the author or authors were, or who disseminated them. In this instance, there is also an inconsistency in the substance of the material. Babadjanov reports that the Lessons were intended for mujahedeen from both the IMU and an organization called the Movement of Islamic Revival of Uzbekistan (MIRU). He also argues that references to certain events in the text indicate that the booklet was written around 1999–2000. However, he also reports that the MIRU was formed “approximately in 1994–1995,” and that “in 1998 [it] was transformed into the IMU.” Could this material really have been prepared in 1999–2000 for an organization that no longer existed?

Nor can we assume that the IMU was the document’s author. It is possible, for example, that it was forged by Uzbek intelligence services to discredit the IMU. Ideally, we could compare the content of these materials with public statements by IMU leaders to assess their validity, but such statements are unfortunately extremely rare.

Nevertheless, Babadjanov and Martha Brill Olcott argue that the materials collected by Babadjanov provide a fuller and, what is most important, more objective idea of the plans and objectives of the Movement inside Uzbekistan. They note that in contrast the IMU’s leaders are reluctant to publicize the details of their program and that they merely assert that their ultimate goal is “the overthrow of Islam Karimov’s regime,” “the release of brother Muslims from prisons,” and so on.

With these reservations in mind, let us turn to the substance of the Lessons. To begin with, they describe four “stages of jihad” (*zhihod urinlari*): (1) a political stage (*siyosiy urin*); (2) a military stage (*askariy urin*); (3) an economic stage (*iktisodiy urin*); and (4) a stage of struggle

against the believer's profane desires (*nafsiy urin*). The IMU strategists accordingly combine military, power, moral-religious, and political dimensions in their approach to jihad.

The lessons go on to state the following objectives:

To destroy the [state] system of infidels and construct the Islamic Order. Comment: When speaking of the system of infidels, what was meant was the *Sovetniklari* (Advisers),<sup>73</sup> plants, factories, slavery [the translators noted that in the radical view of the IMU, all Central Asian Muslims were in slavery to the Jews and America], schools, kindergartens, maternity houses, the TV, hospitals, collective farmers and even their houses, and so forth...<sup>74</sup>

But how is constructing "the Islamic Order" to be accomplished?

Our people are meek as sheep. But if one takes power over us, all of them will follow you. But we had been pursuing jihad in the mountains for about 30 years.

And still it is necessary to find out whether the group of people among whom you find yourself is inclined towards Islam, or if they are inclined as Jews or Christians. For example, if our people call themselves the followers of Imam-i a'dham [a references to the followers of the founder of the *madhhab* prevailing in Central Asia, the Sunni school of Abu Hanifa (al-Imam al-a'dham)], it means that they should be called this way. [Their outlook] should not be changed at once, this can be made after. When you are among them, they must perceive you as one of theirs...

Thus, the text mentions followers of the Hanifa *madhhab*. In doing so, it appears that the authors are claiming that some recruits who call themselves Hanafis may not be "bad Muslims" altogether, although some may be. The goal, then, is to transform recruits into "good" Muslims but who are still adherents of Hanafism. If so, the authors could be characterized as "strict Hanafis," which would make sense tactically given that Hanafi Islam is very popular in Central Asia. But a different interpretation is also possible. It may be that the authors envisage the replacement of Hanafism with a different and more suitable *madhhab*. For Arabian Wahhabis, this would be Hanbalism. If so, the authors are in effect rejecting the traditional form of Islam practiced in the region.

The text does not allow us to reach a conclusion on this question. Indeed, some parts leave the reader with the impression that it was written by semi-illiterates. It continues:

1. Military forces of the state. Comment: This can be compared to a man who has hands and legs. In precisely this way an army is a hand of the state. If it has opponents, it catches them by the hands. It is very difficult to learn something about the military force of infidels, that is, about the amount of weapons, tanks, planes and other things. But know that a boxer at the ring works with his hands and if his leg is broken, he can do nothing...

But how can we learn about the degree of enemy readiness? For this purpose one should strike a blow at one small part [of the military] and quickly retreat, watching them. How and in what time will they construct a roadblock, who and in what force will come to their rescue? Police will not interfere here, this means that military experts will have to come to their aid. For example, if in Palestine one bus blows up, Jews quickly cordon that place off and detain everybody. And it is in no way possible to bring in arms there. It means that this army is strong. To capture Palestinian cities and strengthen military force, the Jews improve their tactics that raises their power and fighting capacity. They are trying to prove that they have a strong army. It is extremely hard to struggle against such a country. But this may be compared to a dog. If a flea bites it, what a huge part of the body it begins to bite. And if we shall strike at a small part of these infidels, what a large territory they will be forced to cordon off. It is important to know the following. If we strike at the Hamza district [one of districts of Tashkent], what shall they do, cordon off [by troops] the whole city or only this Hamza district [of the city]?

Goal is paramount to any cause. Comment: The only goal of the Muslims is for Allah to be pleased with us. This means to carry out all Allah's commands, and to struggle. For the word of Allah to be above everything, for everything to be accomplished as Islam commands, so as to implement Allah's commands worldwide.

Idea. Any command except for Allah's commands is oppression, no matter what its forms are. We shall strive until it disappears completely.

Slogan. It is necessary to build such a political and military system that would never change, that would never come to an agreement with infidels, by rejecting their political system, their culture, to discharge them from all posts and to establish such an Islamic order. This is our slogan. That is: "La ilaha illa Allah, Muhammadu Rasulullah" (There is no god but Allah, Muhammad the Envoy of Allah).

Comment: There should be no exceptions! Whether it be TV, radio, bazaar, even the church. Let everything even become expensive! The slogan must be realized, come what may! All foreign ties are to be severed and built on the Islamic order alone. Will it be a bank? It will only be in the order laid down by Islam. In the Islamic state there will be no foreign ministry. All of them will be liquidated.

The founding of special organizations in the workplace is needed, to educate people in the spirit of true faith and world outlook. Comment: Many people understand

Islam, but they do not understand its ultimate goals. They do not understand that Islam is a life, a thing (*narsa*) reviving man. They think that it is only one of the parts of their life and, following precepts, breathe their last. There is no such nation—“infidels.” Allah had created all His creatures so that He be worshipped. We shall call on them to embrace Islam. If they do not accept—they must be killed, turned into slaves, and valued no more than cattle! Jews, Christians and polytheists—every one of them will turn into a thing. They will be divided as things. Man must not have a notion of what is true. One should not regard them with indulgence, saying: “They are humans too.” No, for they have become infidels to Allah!

One should know precisely - what is the condition of Islam, what are its assignments, what do infidels have in store against Islam, or what do they do in general? All this should be known. People with correct understanding are necessary to us for this purpose. Now one should be able to make *ijtihad*. There should be a correct understanding of the situation. Plenty of *fatwas* have now been issued, proceeding from the situation of the Islamic state. For example, the rules of prayer, the wearing of a beard, and so forth. These are immutable things. But one cannot lag behind in the military field, armament, transportation and other similar things...

These passages clearly demonstrate the Salafi spirit of the document.<sup>75</sup> Above all, there is an unequivocal rejection of an “infidel” political system and culture. But it is unclear whether it is calling for the complete rejection of, for example, TV and radio or whether its authors only want “to make them expensive.” Also unclear is the mention of the church, especially in a sentence together with TV and radio. The claim that an Islamic state will have no foreign ministry is pure demagoguery; Islamists cannot do without one even if they give it a different name.

On the whole, these passages have a certain flavor of anarchism in them. Strict and puritanical observance of the Sharia, together with a vague, anarchistic, and poorly articulated political model, appear alongside themes that are clearly unacceptable to Wahhabi theologians today. For example, the defense of *ijtihad* suggests that the authors do not understand the details of the theological disputes over *ijtihad*. They even erroneously associate it with the process of issuing *fatwas*.

There are other deviations from classical Salafi revivalism as well—in particular, the claim that issuing *fatwas* according to the spirit of the era of the Caliphate is unreasonable and that one should adjust to the dictates of time. This, however, does not suggest “a certain tendency

towards modernization.”<sup>76</sup> Instead, it implies an understanding that the Uzbeks are accustomed to the reverence of saints and other practices that are categorically unacceptable to Wahhabis, and that atavistic fundamentalist appeals will be rejected in the region. Certain adjustments, then, are necessary to ensure the appeal of the Salafi *da’wa* (appeal or call to Islam).

The irreconcilable attitude towards infidels—Christians and Jews, who must turn into “things” to be owned by Muslims—also testifies to the extremist quality of the Lessons. Here again somewhat contradictory elements are discernible. If the goal is the establishment of an Islamic state within Uzbekistan, it will not be necessary “to break a lance” over the insignificant number of non-Muslims living in the republic, particularly because the “infidels” do not occupy command positions in the Uzbek state. If, however, the goal is a state that extends beyond the geographical limits of today’s Uzbekistan, which the reference to infidels might suggest, other parts of the document imply that the objective is something different from Islamic rule in Uzbekistan. Had Christians and Jews not been specifically mentioned, one might have concluded that “infidels” refers to Uzbekistan’s rulers, people whom the Salafis do not consider Muslims. If so, it follows that the Salafis should subject these false Muslims to *takfir*, i.e., an accusation of godlessness, but there is no evidence that they have.

The following passage describes what will happen to Uzbekistan under its “state of infidels”:

As a result of your [subversive] actions, anarchy and disorder are appearing in the state; corruption, larceny and murders are escalating; and order among government officials has been upset and they will begin to devour each other. The SNB (National Security Service) will begin to devour the Interior Ministry and so on. If disorder is not stopped, the SNB will begin to permanently check the work of the Interior Ministry. So they will start killing each other and themselves.

The state will impose a curfew. It will begin to strongly torment the people. This is to your advantage. Comment: Forces opposed to the state will appear.

Whatever the troop strength the state would muster, it will collapse, as the internal order in it will be broken. This means that immunity will be gone [and] its fatal outcome will be there for all to see. You should carefully analyze and get to know this time. Comment: This is similar to a stomach cold.

The same happens to the state of infidels. They will start to devour each other, and there will be no force which can resist you. The army will be able to protect itself only.

You should take advantage of such a moment. From now on you have to learn such fine policy, that is - help the people financially and with kindly word, and so on.  
Comment: What did Lenin do? He was with the people all the time. The one who is going to topple a state should always be with the people.

For example, the Decembrists all came from the intellectual milieu. They lost their struggle. The revolution was made by the Jews on Lenin's behalf. But the people do not understand anything. Like sheep, [they] can only eat. [They] will not even ask: "Where are you leading me?" The Americans are also like sheep, as they have no faith and ultimate goal.

These passages are obviously addressed to an older generation, not to the 15- to 20-year-olds who are usually the main target of Islamist propaganda. Although it appears that the document dates from 1999–2000, it might also include passages that date from earlier periods—we know that it is common for texts to wander from one Islamist document to another. People born in 1980–1985, whose political identity was formed during the early years of Uzbekistan's independence, almost certainly would not know who the Decembrists were. In fact, they do not even know who Lenin was, and so the claim that Lenin was "with the people" is hardly likely to be convincing for them. Nor do Uzbek youth have a clear idea of what the Bolshevik Revolution was. The claim that it was brought about by the Jews on Lenin's behalf thus has little meaning to them.

Perhaps, then, the Lessons were written by former Communist propagandists who had become Islamists. For them, it is difficult to write anything without mentioning Lenin. Another clue here is the author's remark that the description of many "secrets" and tactics of guerrilla warfare were borrowed from secular films about guerrillas during the Second World War.<sup>77</sup> Again, this would suggest that they have a memory of the war. The strategy of a campaign of sabotage is also explained by drawing on examples from daily life ("a flea on a dog") and also by reference to models of diversionary guerrilla tactics elsewhere (Vietnam, Afghanistan, Chechnya).

The obsessive and shoddy eclecticism of the Lesson is evident in its treatment of “the people.” On the one hand, the people are supposed to be with the militants who are going “to topple the state.” On the other hand, they are treated as utterly stupid and like sheep that crave to fill their bellies. Americans, too, are sheep-like because they lack faith. Are the people who have faith then not sheep? It is therefore evident that the Lessons are written in the voice of an elite that stands above the people. The Babajanov and Olcott assertion that the treatise is in essence egalitarian is in my opinion incorrect. Rather, the Lessons are like the doctrine of *‘amma* (the common herd) and *khassa* (the selected ones) that was advanced by esoteric Islamic sects in the Middle Ages, such as the Ismailite Batinites. The intent is to instill in the minds of future *mujahedeen* a feeling of “chosenness.” The people, the common herd, are merely instruments in the hands of the revolutionaries who will bring down the state, just as Lenin and the Bolsheviks brought down the Provisional Government.

At the same time, however, the “people” play a role in the action program of the militants:

Let the people always be with you, as otherwise you will start to be superseded by the infidel armed force. It is then that they will be necessary [to] you. They will work for you: in collecting information, or distributing the information you need, and will help secretly to spoil the machinery of the infidels, to prepare explosives for you beforehand in the villages and at small enterprises, which should always be linked to our center.

We have to study the possibility of manufacturing explosives in the countryside. There we have to attract those who are not enlisted into the army—invalids, patients who can be trained to produce explosives. For example, we will have to blow up some bridge. And we have only antitank mines. They can destroy the bridge only partially. Therefore we need an expert in the manufacture of explosives. We also need experts on weapons that are hard to import. Then we have to organize its production in the countryside as well...

Thus the weakest part of the society is called upon to help with the manufacturing of explosives, despite the fact that the rural population does not fit the profile of those who the authorities believe are inclined to engage in terrorism. According to Babajanov, the Lessons also addressed

subjects such as the chemistry of explosive substances, the tactics of fighting in mountain areas and in urban surroundings, the tactics of underground work in cities and in villages, and so on.

Babajanov also notes that the propaganda, or the *da'wa*, of the Ferghana extremists, does not fit with traditional Islamic teaching. In particular, it is heavily politicized. It is in the first stage that politics and *da'wa* (*siyesat wa da'wat*) are joined together closely. Moreover, *da'wa* must be directed mainly at rural inhabitants because they “are far from sumptuous and parasitic life and their hearts are full of resentment.” The appeal, then, is to the discontent of rural inhabitants over low salaries, delays in their payment, etc.

Significantly, *da'wa* must be combined with active disinformation through portable radio stations, newspapers, and leaflets.<sup>78</sup> According to Babadjanov, this misinformation includes denying that Islamists participate in the terrorist acts they commit. One of the purposes of terrorism is to undermine the economy, which will in turn promote the growth of discontent on the part of the people and lead them to support the Islamists. It is not clear, however, just how they expect to convince the public that the state is responsible for the terrorist acts they commit.

The Lessons' authors probably took into account that the *mujahedeen*, most of whom are young, are trying to mobilize older Uzbeks who were raised under Soviet socialism and still feel a certain nostalgia for Soviet-era egalitarianism, an egalitarianism that provided everyone with stable, albeit meager, wages, and a secure tomorrow. These people, the “invalids and patients” who will have to produce explosives for the militants in their homes, still respect Lenin, who symbolizes for them that mysterious “radiant Communist tomorrow,” alluring in its affluence, but that never quite came to pass. It is for this reason that the shepherds of these “silly rams” allude to the leader of the Bolshevik Revolution and why they refer to the war of Soviet guerrillas against the fascists, references that are entirely familiar to the senior generation and that for them are still subjects of great pride.

In sum, we can discern a very cynical three-part hierarchical scheme in the Lessons. At the top are the leaders (including the authors of the text). Below them are the active militants who tower above the ordinary people (the sermons and instructions of the leaders are addressed

precisely to them). And finally at the bottom is the general population, which is supposed to support the Islamists' program for changing the existing order.

## **THE IMU AFTER SEPTEMBER 11**

During the antiterrorist operation in Afghanistan after September 11, some IMU militants (the exact number is unclear) fought alongside the Taliban. As the tide of battle turned against the Taliban and its allies, there were intermittent media reports that IMU fighters had fled the bombing and returned to Central Asia. The Kyrgyz press reported in 2002 that Tajikistan's Security Ministry, supported by the CIA, had conducted a search for IMU forces in the mountains of Tajikistan but had failed to find any evidence of an IMU presence.<sup>79</sup> The American administration, however, felt differently. The State Department claimed that the IMU was continuing to plan terrorist acts.<sup>80</sup> It also asserted that the IMU still represented a serious danger to Uzbekistan and the region. But has the IMU really retained its potential? And if so, where are its militants?

Again, according to reports from the Uzbek special services (who of course might be spreading misinformation in order to damage the reputation of the IRPT), IMU militants are again using their former bases in Tajikistan and are being assisted by their former Tajik Islamic allies.<sup>81</sup> But IMU members who have fallen into the hands of Uzbek special services report that the IMU military leadership is for the time being hiding in Pakistan. And a British observer claimed in November 2002 that Yuldashev had fled either to Iran or Pakistan.<sup>82</sup>

As far as Namangani is concerned, there have been many contradictory reports that he was killed in a battle between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance. General Abdurashid Dustum, who is now the deputy defense minister in the government of Hamid Karzai, was the first to report Namangani's death. He asserted that Namangani had been killed in the fighting around Kunduz. The Taliban also confirmed his death, but they asserted that he had been killed near Kabul after being summoned to attend a military conference of the Taliban leadership. Since

then, the deceased has repeatedly, and mysteriously, been resurrected, only to die once again. There were claims that he had been seen alive and unharmed in Kunduz during the bombings. In March 2002, there was a new acknowledgement of his death. When the Northern Alliance, with American support, took control of Balkh province, they captured Taliban fighters who revealed under interrogation that Namangani had been killed during the assault against Mazar-i-sharif. Later, the son of an Uzbek militant, Husain Alimov, claimed to have participated in the funeral of Namangani in November 2001 in Afghanistan's Tahir province.<sup>83</sup> Only Yuldashev, Namangani's nephew Abdurahman, and a bodyguard were supposedly present along with Alimov's son. The latter reiterated the story that Namangani had died on his way from Tahir to Mazar-i-Sharif after an American bomb hit his car. Nevertheless, in July 2002, Kyrgyzstan's Security Council Secretary, Misir Ashirkulov, claimed that Namangani was still alive and was once again preparing attacks on the Ferghana Valley. And Ashirkulov also resurrected the charge that Namangani's fighters were regrouping at bases in the Tajik region of Gorno-Badakhshan. Tajik authorities and then the Foreign Ministry of Kyrgyzstan vigorously denied these claims, however.

In August 2002, a Russian website asserted that IMU militants were planning an operation to shoot down American and Russian military aircraft.<sup>84</sup> The website identified the individuals who had been charged with carrying out the operation, including their surnames and aliases, and it also identified those who had given the orders. The aircraft were to be downed by portable anti-aircraft missiles, and supposedly the orders to carry out the mission had come from Kunduz and had been given to a commander who was based in the Sogd region of Northern Tajikistan. The attacks themselves were to be mounted from Tajik territory. In all likelihood, however, this report was spurious.<sup>85</sup> It apparently was based on information from an intelligence report that was written in a clumsy bureaucratic style with an obviously false surname for a signature—*kozi* (the title for a Muslim judge) Nizometdin. Part of the report, which was reproduced in a Russian newspaper, reads as follows:

In October 2001, Juma Hojiev (Namangani) from Kunduz gave an instruction to Ilhom Hojiev, then residing in the Tavildara district of Tajikistan, and to Rasul Okhunov, a native of Uzbekistan, alias ‘Bakhtiyar’, ‘Lieutenant’, residing in that period in the RT Sogdian region, to commit terrorist attacks on US and Russian aircraft with the use of portable rocket launchers. Responsibility for committing this terrorist act was placed on Ilhom Hojiev.

Russia was not accidentally targeted by the IMU bandits for this action, as that country stepped up military and humanitarian aid to the anti-Taliban coalition in Afghanistan through the territory of Tajikistan. The bandits planned to commit attacks against US military aircraft in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in connection with the starting of the antiterrorist operation in Afghanistan. Wallahu bi-s-sawob. Kozi Mir Nizometdin.”<sup>86</sup>

There was renewed speculation about impending IMU operations at the end of 2002. Ahmed Rashid, writing in October of that year, suggested that “scattered militants” from the IMU might soon unite with other regional radical groups under one leader, although that leader would possibly not be Yuldashev. The real danger, he asserted, was that “some of the elements” of the Central Asian Islamists might “try to link up with Gulbuddin Hekmatiar.”<sup>87</sup> In addition, the head of the Kyrgyz National Security Service, Kalyk Imankulov, stated that he had obtained information that indicated that members of different radical groups might be “attempting to join forces in a single organization.” The IMU, HTI, Uighur separatists, and Tajik and Kyrgyz Islamists were, he claimed, uniting in an organization called the Islamic Movement of Central Asia (IMCA).

It is doubtful, however, that these diverse movements and organizations, which have quite different agendas, could be ever united. As Abduljelil Karkash, president of the Munich-based East Turkistan Information Center, has noted, the goal of the Uigurs, for example, is to achieve independence from Beijing, “an aim that has little in common with the IMU’s agenda.”<sup>88</sup> Nor is there any clear benefit from such a union. Some observers believe that Imankulov was deliberately spreading misinformation in order to heighten anxiety over the terrorist threat in Central Asia and thus secure additional support for Kyrgyzstan from the West. Still, reports persist that the IMCA is preparing attacks on Western targets in Central Asia. Uzbek sources, however, have so far reported little “visible change in the pace or volume of IMU recruiting,”

although one consultant expects “a series of sabotage incidents targeting domestic and international military bases” in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan “in the immediate future.”<sup>89</sup> Others shared these fears, suspecting, like Rashid, that the IMU or some successor organization will target foreigners in Central Asian countries in order to “show the regimes to be vulnerable and unable to protect foreigners.”<sup>90</sup>

There has also been much speculation about possible cooperation between the IMU and Al Qaeda. With its leaders and operatives now in hiding, it is not clear whether Al Qaeda could mount an operation in Central Asia even if it wanted to. Nor is it clear if such a dangerous alliance would benefit the IMU. However, it is clear that IMU militants who had been fighting alongside the Taliban in 2001 escaped to Pakistan together with Al Qaeda members. Moreover, the Islamic parties that now form the government of the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan have traditional links to the IMU, and in the words of Rashid these parties “could sustain the IMU in the future.”<sup>91</sup>

It is impossible to determine definitively whether the IMU will reemerge as an active player in Central Asia that is again capable of mobilizing violence. It is also possible that the IMU will be reborn under a different name. What is clear is that opportunities for launching new operations in Uzbekistan are much more limited now than before September 11, 2001, because of the tremendous risks from association with an organization that the international community has designated a terrorist group. As a result, political opposition is much more likely to gravitate today towards the nonviolent but clandestine Hizb at-Tahrir al-Islami.

## CONCLUSION

This analysis of the IMU provides a number of empirical and theoretical insights into the nature of organized extremism in Central Asia. First, while some might argue that the IMU’s demise signals the end of Islamic militancy in Central Asia, its trajectory actually has laid the foundation

for a trend that will likely persist, especially since dissatisfaction and opposition to authoritarian governments and corrupt ruling elite are growing.

Second, no single theory can explain this phenomenon. Instead, we must rely on elements of different explanations for different aspects of the problem. Economic factors, including the grievances of impoverished and jobless segments of Central Asian society, play an important role. Patronage networks such as clans, families, and regional groups also provide fertile ground for Islamist mobilization. Thus, further study should focus on the system of patronage-type relationships and their role in Islamist mobilization.

Third, external factors have been, and probably will continue to be, very important for the dynamics of Islamist mobilization in Central Asia. International Islamist groups channel aid originating from Middle Eastern Salafi centers to militants in Central Asia. This aid is used to indoctrinate Central Asian youth and train Central Asian guerrillas, who may then be used for missions other than the Islamicization of Central Asia (for example, fighting on the side of Taliban in Afghanistan).

Fourth, organized crime and political extremism are essential components of the activities of militant Islamists in the region. Income from drug trafficking, hostage taking, looting, and so on helps fund extremist groups. Extremism in turn creates more favorable conditions for criminal groups because it destabilizes society and exerts pressure on governments.

Fifth, it is clear that Karimov's harsh repression of not only Islamists but ordinary believers in Uzbekistan has been counterproductive, feeding radical sentiments and widening the IMU's base of support.<sup>92</sup> While Karimov has been strongly criticized by the international community for violating human rights,<sup>93</sup> he is convinced that an iron fist is the best way to protect the stability and security of Uzbekistan and to secure his position politically. Arrests and repression continue accordingly, despite the fact that the defeat of the Taliban has improved Uzbekistan's security and deprived Karimov of one of his excuses for any hint of liberalization. The US State Department has concluded that "there were about 300 arrests in the first seven

months of 2002 on religious or political grounds, compared with 1,500 on average in any seven month period in 1999–2001.”<sup>94</sup> US officials had hoped that by the end of 2002, the figure would be down to 500 to 600.<sup>95</sup> The Independent Human Rights Organization of Uzbekistan (IHROU) estimated that in December 2002, about 6,400 people remained imprisoned on political and religious grounds in the country. “Of those arrested on the grounds of religious activism, about 1,200 to 1,700 are considered ‘Wahhabis’ (i.e. members of radical Sunni Islamic groups), 4,200 to 4,300 members of Hizb at-Tahrir, and 600 to 700 are pious Muslims not belonging to any political religious organization.”<sup>96</sup> Yet another human rights group offers an even higher estimate, claiming that there were “up to 30,000 political and religious prisoners” in Uzbekistan in 2002.<sup>97</sup>

Finally, our analysis suggests that the theoretical concepts of militant Islamists in Central Asia as expressed in printed and disseminated materials are not of primary importance for recruiting members and supporters. This implies that other mechanisms for addressing, influencing, and recruiting individuals to the cause are more important than propagandizing mechanisms that operate through traditional social institutions and networks.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Exceptions include a book by French scholar Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2000), and one by the Pakistani journalist Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> N. Muflikhunov, *Kniga propovedei i nastavlenii* (Kazan, Russia: Iman Publishing House, 1998), pp. 143–144; Dmitrii Makarov and Rafik Mukhametshin, “Official and Unofficial Islam,” in Hilary Pilkington and Galina Yemelianova, eds., *Islam in Post-Soviet Russia: Public and Private Faces* (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), p. 123.

<sup>3</sup> John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 49.

<sup>4</sup> Francois Burgat, *Face to Face with Political Islam* (London and New York: I.B.Taurus, 2003), p. XV.

<sup>5</sup> Esposito, op.cit, p. 157.

<sup>6</sup> Bernard Lewis, *Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* (New York: The Modern Library, 2003), pp. 153–154. It is not quite clear whether Lewis is addressing suicide bombers here and telling them that they have misunderstood Islam, or whether he is addressing Westerners who consider Islam responsible for suicide attacks.

<sup>7</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), p. 99.

<sup>8</sup> Randall Galvert, “Identity, Expression and Rational-Choice Theory,” in Ira Katznelson and Helen V. Milner, eds., *Political Science: The State of the Discipline* (Washington, DC: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), p. 592.

<sup>9</sup> Gellner, op. cit.

<sup>10</sup> Ted Robert Gurr, *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflicts* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1993) and *Peoples versus States: Minorities at Risk in the New Century* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2000). Charles Tilly has criticized Gurr for failing to distinguish between violence inflicted by governmental agents and their allies on the one hand, and violence perpetrated by dissident groups on the other hand. See Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 64.

<sup>11</sup> The Tajik conflict, in my view, was not directly related to Islam. Indeed, most analysts of the Tajik conflict take a functionalist approach towards the role of Islam in the conflict, arguing that Islam was only an instrument of political mobilization. Others deny that Islam had any role whatsoever. Olivier Roy, for example, has argued that the basis for political mobilization in Tajikistan has always been regional, not ideological or religious (as stated in several public presentations). However, it is more appropriate, in my view, to argue that it was a conflict between regional elites competing over redistribution of wealth and power rather than a conflict between regions per se, given the traditional political passivity of the majority of the population and the lack of direct interest on its part in the competition. Moreover, the role of the Islamic factor cannot be ignored. Islam was used instrumentally for political mobilization and as a genuine system of values and concepts around which some groups of the population rallied. In addition, Roy argues that Islamic identity is constructed purely for the sake of political goals of primarily a nationalist nature, with which I also disagree.

<sup>12</sup> The same Islamic groups were involved in similar violent clashes with government forces in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan at the end of 1990s. These events are described in the next sections of this paper.

<sup>13</sup> Alexander Motyl, *Sovietology, Rationality, Nationality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), pp. 37–39.

<sup>14</sup> The clash of civilizations thesis can also be viewed as a *culturalist* argument. However, a deep feeling of insecurity is the overwhelming factor that is adduced to explain the supposed clash of civilizations, and therefore I prefer to categorize it as security oriented.

<sup>15</sup> Tilly, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

<sup>16</sup> Nadezhda Bektimirova, *The Cambodian Sangha's Involvement in Politics: Challenges and Consequences*, unpublished paper, presented at the Center for Southeast Asia Studies, University of California, Berkeley, on May 7, 2003, pp. 9–10.

<sup>17</sup> Bakhtiyar Babajanov, “O Fetvakh SADUM protiv ‘Neislamskikh Obychaev’” [On the Fatwas of the Spiritual Board of the Muslims of Central Asia against “non-Islamic rituals”] in Alexei Malashenko and Martha Brill Olcott, eds., *Islam na Post-Sovetskom Prostranstve: vzglyad iznutri* [Islam in the Post-Soviet Space: A View from Inside] (Moscow, Russia: Moscow Carnegie Center, 2001), p. 180.

<sup>18</sup> Ishan is an honorific title applied throughout Central Asia to spiritual leaders. In most cases, the title is inherited, but on occasion it can be acquired as a result of piety and religious knowledge. Ishans are usually members of the families of sheikhs or leaders of certain Sufi brotherhoods or branches, although they often lose direct ties to the brotherhoods or branches. In some cases, ishans do not even know what is expected of them according to Islam and Sufism, as is the case with several famous sheikhs who have many disciples in a number of regions.

<sup>19</sup> Aidar Khabutdinov, “Millet Orenburgskogo Dukhovnogo Sobraniya v kontse 18–19 vekakh” [Millet of the Orenburg Spiritual Assembly in the End of the 18–19<sup>th</sup> Centuries] (Kazan, Russia: Iman Publishing House, 2000), p. 89.

<sup>20</sup> Roy, *op.cit.*, p. 154.

<sup>21</sup> A number of his pupils subsequently became prominent figures in the Islamic movement, including ‘Allama Rahmatullah *qori*, Abduwali *qori* Mirzaev, Ishaq *qori*, Ismail domla, Ibrahimjan Khukandi (in Kokand), Hikmatullah *qori* (in Dushanbe), Muhammad Ali Marginani (in Yazyawan), Ubaydullah Makhsum (in Namangan), Abd al-Latif Andizhani, Muhammad Sadiq *qori* (Mufti of Central Asia in 1989–1993), as well as others. See Ashirbek Muminov, “Traditional and Modern Religious Theological Schools in Central Asia,” in Lena Jonson and Murad Esenov, eds., *Political Islam and Conflicts in Russia and Central Asia* (Stockholm, Sweden: Swedish Institute of International Affairs), Conference Paper 24, 1999, p. 109.

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

<sup>23</sup> Ludmila Polonskaya and Alexei Malashenko, *Islam in Central Asia* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1994), p. 13.

<sup>24</sup> Almost all those who have written about these organizations describe them as separate. This is inaccurate. For example, Ahmed Rashid, who focused on Adolat, argued that “other underground militant groups, including Tawba (Repentance), Islam Lashkarlary (Fighters for Islam), and Hizb-i-Islami (Party of Islam), also arose in Ferghana Valley” (Rashid, *op.cit.*, p. 139). Rashid also claims that Adolat was created by radical members of the recently formed Islamic Revival Party (IRP) of Uzbekistan, who were

disappointed by the party's refusal to demand an Islamic state. As the imam of the Namangan mosque, Abd al-Ahad told the Rashid at the time: "The IRP is in the pay of the government, they want to be in the parliament. We have no desire to be in parliament. We want an Islamic revolution here and now—we have no times for constitutional games" (Ibid).

<sup>25</sup> Uzbek scholars have compared the Adolat militias with clandestine urban associations of craftsmen in the cities of the Abbasid Caliphate like the *fityan* or *ayyarun* associations that performed similar functions and adhered to a certain code of honor. See Muminov, op.cit., p. 110.

<sup>26</sup> Interviews, January 1992.

<sup>27</sup> Muminov, op. cit., p. 110.

<sup>28</sup> Rashid, op. cit., p. 138.

<sup>29</sup> Rashid, op.cit., p. 140.

<sup>30</sup> Rashid, op. cit., pp. 140–141.

<sup>31</sup> Rashid, op. cit., p. 146 and pp. 256–257, note 11.

<sup>32</sup> Dilip Hiro, "Politics-Uzbekistan: Karimov Keeps His Gun Ready for Islamists," *World News*, Interpress service, IPC/DH/RJ/98: 2.

<sup>33</sup> Sulton Khamadov, "Mezhdunarodniy Kontekst—Afganskiy Faktor [International Context—The Afghan Factor], in *Religiozniy Extremizm v Tzentralnoi Azii: Problemy I Perspektivy* [Religious Extremism in Central Asia: Problems and Perspectives] (Dushanbe, Tajikistan: OSCE, 2002), pp. 130–150.

<sup>34</sup> Tamara Makarenko, "The Changing Dynamics of Central Asian Terrorism," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, February 2002: 1–2. <[http://www.cornellcaspien.com/briefs/020201\\_CA\\_Terrorism.html](http://www.cornellcaspien.com/briefs/020201_CA_Terrorism.html) 21.Shermatova>.

<sup>35</sup> Information passed to the author in November 2002.

<sup>36</sup> Materials provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Uzbekistan, 1999.

<sup>37</sup> Anvar Usmanov, "Interview with Ludvig Gibelhaus," *Deutsche Welle*, January 24, 2003.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Makarenko, op.cit., p. 3.

<sup>40</sup> Oleg Yakubov, *Volchya Staya* [Pack of Wolves] (Moscow, Russia: Veche Publications, 1999), p. 224.

<sup>41</sup> Yakubov, op. cit., pp. 217ff.

<sup>42</sup> Yakubov, op. cit, p. 224.

<sup>43</sup> Interfax: 06-09b-1992, 17:22 (Uzbekistan/terrorists/trail).

<sup>44</sup> Interview by Sanobar Shermatova made on behalf of the author, December 13, 2002.

<sup>45</sup> *Moscow News*, Moscow: June 22–28, July 6–12, 1999.

<sup>46</sup> By "clan" I do not necessarily mean a kinship, strictly speaking, but a patronage network.

<sup>47</sup> Interfax: 04-02-1999, 17:40 (Uzbekistan/appointment).

<sup>48</sup> Interfax: 03-15-2002, 17:58 (Uzbekistan/president/councilor/appointment).

- <sup>49</sup> Roy, op. cit., p. 156.
- <sup>50</sup> Interview by author in Dushanbe, May 14, 1999.
- <sup>51</sup> Rashid, op. cit., p. 159.
- <sup>52</sup> Untitled document in author's possession, 2002.
- <sup>53</sup> Rashid, op. cit., p. 160.
- <sup>54</sup> This official asked that his name not to be disclosed (interview in Tashkent, September 12, 1999).
- <sup>55</sup> Interfax: 08-24-1999, 18:40 (Kyrgyzstan/Uzbekistan/militants/expert).
- <sup>56</sup> TASS: 08-24-1999, 16:18 (Kyrgyzstan/terrorism/Azizkhan).
- <sup>57</sup> TASS: 10-11-1999, 10:26 (Kyrgyzstan/terrorism/militants).
- <sup>58</sup> *Vecherni Bishkek*, Bishkek, no. 163, August 23, 2002.
- <sup>59</sup> *Moya stolitsa*, Bishkek, August 30, 2002.
- <sup>60</sup> Interview conducted in Bishkek by Shermatova on behalf of the author in October 2002.
- <sup>61</sup> *Economist*, London, January 27, 2001.
- <sup>62</sup> Yaqubov, op.cit., p. 301.
- <sup>63</sup> See <<http://www.centrasia.ru/>>, the IMU dossier.
- <sup>64</sup> Information provided by Shermatova to the author.
- <sup>65</sup> Untitled document 2002 in author's possession.
- <sup>66</sup> Rashid, op.cit., p. 168.
- <sup>67</sup> Khamadov, op.cit., p. 147.
- <sup>68</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>69</sup> This feature, as already mentioned, is characteristic of the greater part of radical and even moderate Islamic movements in post-Soviet space. For example, all young men recruited by local Wahhabis in Dagestan were engaged in contact sports training and, in particular, in various kinds of wrestling. There were many sportsmen of the highest qualification among them, and all of them took shooting lessons. The youth who were studying Islam at a seminary (*madrasa*) in Makhachkala were also actively engaged in karate, as I witnessed on several occasions.
- <sup>70</sup> The scope of Islamists' combat training from the beginning of the 1990s until the first wave of arrests is not known precisely, but it surely existed. Nevertheless, during this early stage, Adolat does not appear to have expected a violent seizure of power, possibly because it was prepared to gamble on the weakness of the Karimov regime and felt (erroneously) that Karimov would eventually make concessions. Indeed, Karimov's invitation to carry out a dialogue with the Islamists in Namangan suggests that the latter hoped to represent themselves as a legal political force that could negotiate with the authorities, despite the fact that the authorities were doing so from a position of diktat.
- <sup>71</sup> Muminov, op. cit., p. 110. The "Mullo Kyrgyz" *madrasa* in Namangan was believed to be the center of a network for training Islamic radicals. As has already been mentioned, in the beginning of the 1990s, the Salafi mullahs gained control over most of the mosques in the cities of the Ferghana Valley. This group of mullahs, natives of the same region, came to serve in a number of mosques in Tashkent.

<sup>72</sup> Hereinafter, Bakhtiyar Babajanov, “Teologicheskoye obosnovaniye i etapy jihada v documentah islamskogo dvizheniya Uzbekistana” [Theological Justification and Stages of Jihad in the Documents of the IMU], perevod i komentarii Babajanova B.S. i Olcott M.B. [translation and commentaries by Bakhtiyar Babajanov and Martha Brill Olcott], in *Kazakhstan-Spectr*, Almaty, 3 (2002), pp. 15–21. (The article is by Babajanov, while the commentary and translation is by Babajanov and Martha B. Olcott).

<sup>73</sup> The Uzbek *Sovetniklari* is borrowed from Russian. Having a semantic association with the word “Soviet,” it was probably used by the authors of the document to emphasize how alien Uzbekistan government officials are to the national soil.

<sup>74</sup> The translation was made by the author from the Russian text by Babajanov-Olcott.

<sup>75</sup> I am deliberately avoiding a claim that it was drafted by IMU ideologists.

<sup>76</sup> Babajanov, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>77</sup> Babajanov, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, Bishkek, June 25, 2002.

<sup>80</sup> Interfax: 10-02-2002, 10:42 (Uzbekistan/USA/terrorism).

<sup>81</sup> These services reported their locations as follows: the *kishlak* of Hoit, the town of Garash located three kilometers from Hoit, Chusal located between Tavildara and Hoit in the area of the Nazarailok coal mines of the Devanasu gorge (50 km north of Hoit), the *kishlaks* of Jirgatal, Takob (25 km north of the city of Dushanbe); the settlement of Akademgorodok located between Kafarnihon and Dushanbe, Eski-matchi, Penjikent district; the settlement of Khovolang, the gold mine of Sovkhoz-2, the *kishlak* of Childara, the Russia and Leningrad collective farms near Dushanbe, the *kishlak* of Sari-Chinor, Kafarnihon district (the former sanatorium “House of the Cinema”), and the *kishlaks* of Chorku and Vorukh (the latter being an enclave in Kyrgyzstan).

<sup>82</sup> Makarenko, “Changing Dynamics,” p. 2.

<sup>83</sup> See <<http://www.centrasia.ru/>>, October 24, 2002.

<sup>84</sup> See <<http://www.eurasia.ru/>>, August 18, 2002.

<sup>85</sup> If we suppose for a moment that this information can be trusted, attacks had been planned for October 2001. In fact, after the start of the antiterrorist operation in Afghanistan, there was evidence that the militants were preparing actions against American forces in Uzbekistan. However, Russian military planes based in Tajikistan were never mentioned as targets by Islamic militants. Who felt the need to disseminate this information (or misinformation) nine months after a possible event, and why did they do so?

<sup>86</sup> *Moskovskie Novosti*, Moscow, July 18, 2002. The document calls to mind one of the events of summer 2000, when there was a surge of dubious information about Tajik officials on the Internet, information that supposedly showed how, with the help of specific Tajik officials, IMU militants were able to organize their summer offensive in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

<sup>87</sup> Zamira Eshanova, “Central Asia: Are Radical Groups Joining Forces?” October 11, 2002: 2. <<http://www.eurasianet.org/>>.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibragim Alibekov, "IMU Reputedly Expand: Prepares to Strike Western Targets," October 29, 2002: 1. <<http://www.eurasianet.org>>.

<sup>90</sup> Alibekov, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Most notably, the repressive measures carried out at the end of 1990s forced many young religious Uzbeks to go underground or to flee to Tajikistan and Afghanistan where they were recruited by the IMU.

<sup>93</sup> For example, a first deputy assistant secretary of state told the House of Representatives: "We have repeatedly expressed our view to Uzbekistan's President Karimov that his persecution and repression of legitimate, peaceful practitioners of Islam is counterproductive. Rather than lessening the threat, he is actually radicalizing Uzbekistan's disaffected and disenfranchised youth and driving them into the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and its radical allies." See Michael E. Parmly, Testimony at the Joint Hearing with Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, "Silencing Central Asia: the Voice of Dissidents," US Congress, Washington, D.C., July 18, 2001.

<sup>94</sup> "International Religious Freedom Report: Uzbekistan" (Washington, DC: US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2002), available at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2002/13990.htm>.

<sup>95</sup> *International Conflict Group Asia Report*, 46:5.

<sup>96</sup> Interview with Mikhail Ardzinov, Chairman IHROU, Tashkent, December 9, 2002, *International Conflict Group Asia Report*, 46:6.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with Tolib Yakubov, Chairman HRSU, December 14, 2002, *International Conflict Group Asia Report*, 46: 6.