

# THE CHINA AND EURASIA FORUM QUARTERLY

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Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program

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*May 2006*

## Terrorism



*Central Asia- Caucasus Institute  
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Dear Colleagues and Friends,

The previous issue of the China and Eurasia Forum (CEF) Quarterly addressed the narcotics problem and its negative impact on the region. Terrorism is another key challenge faced by the governments today. On the one hand, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) was effectively destroyed during the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan; the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) in Xinjiang has demonstrated limited activity in the 2000s; and Al-Qaeda seems to prioritize other theaters for staging its operations. On the other hand, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) continues to stress the persistent threat of terrorism, the Andijan uprising demonstrated how fragile the region is, and the Taleban is gaining ground in parts of Afghanistan. Al-Qaeda, moreover, is still operating in the vicinity despite its low profile in the region.

This setting provokes a number of questions of critical importance for present and future counter-terror efforts in the region, and this is particularly crucial considering the stakes involved: First, the remaining nuclear materials in the post-Soviet Central Asian states are particularly vulnerable to smuggling and theft. Second, continued instability in all of the Central Asian states (with the partial exception of Kazakhstan), combined with a deteriorating situation in Afghanistan will also give terrorists the upper hand in disrupting the stability of region. A forewarning was given during the Andijan upheaval in 2005, and the turbulence unfolding in Kyrgyzstan the same year with criminal interest supporting the “revolution”. Third, the young population in Central Asia and their increased interest in drugs and extremism could also prove to be a global time-bomb if a more viable alternative future for these youngsters are not available. In Tajikistan over 50 percent of the population is below 18 years of age, and the current drug abuse threatens to wipe out an entire generation. Moreover, the narcotics trade is a virtually unending source of financial resources for criminals with terrorist links. This is indeed a challenge of momentous proportions and a recruitment base with great potential for terrorist networks.

In order not to be caught off-guard, there is a need for a nuanced understanding of terrorism, its attraction, and how best to counter such threats. This, combined with a chronic ignorance of Central Asia as a region, makes the Eurasian region one of the most important theaters in the global war on terror to date.

Many initiatives have been set up and some seem to realize the potential threat of terrorism. Rarely however do they realize the inter-connection between the Central Asian drug trade, terrorism, state

infiltration, and criminal networks. The European Union's contributions against such activities have been dismal, and the EU has shown little interest in funding efforts to counter such operations. A consensus on terminology is also lacking and this affects any anti-terrorism response negatively. The concept of terrorism has been misused by some governments in the region to crack down on their opposition forces, and also by Western states to crack down on governments they feel do not meet their democratic or human rights standards. Indeed, the case of Xinjiang testifies to the confusion and disagreement on the terminology of terrorism: some argue that terrorism presents a significant threat; some argue the opposite, while others assert that these positions do not mean anything and the term "terrorism" itself masks the debate as to whether the region has the right to self-rule.<sup>1</sup> Another part of the problem is that disengagement from the governments in the region presents its own set of security problems and any effective measures against terrorism is impossible without their involvement.

Any effective response must involve measures at all different levels, international, regional, national and at the grassroots. As in the case of narcotics networks, there is a strong transnational strain in the current wave of terrorism. Both governments, and to some extent the terrorists themselves, often seek to internationalize the problem – creating the appearance of a united front. Governments often seek to shift attention beyond its borders, blaming neighbors or other states, even if the terrorists often are exclusively national in orientation and goals. Some subordinates to Al-Qaeda often also seem to use this label to create a propaganda effect although the particular attack may be part of their ongoing domestic struggles. In Chechnya for example, their aims are primarily national even if there is an international component in recruitment. If governments and international actors continue to confuse the objectives of the local terrorist movements with those of Al-Qaeda - which has an international agenda to undermine the U.S. through its interests worldwide so as to enable the creation of an Islamic superstate - they will fail to understand the terrorists' motives and how to counter such threats.

Failures in these efforts are regularly blamed on either governments or the international community's joint efforts, be they the EU, UN, or the OSCE. Here, globalization, in combination with Western cultural hegemony, authoritarian governments, and widespread poverty are often viewed as the primary triggering factors behind terrorism. Though these factors are important, the problem is more complex and specific to the particular situation at hand. The eradication of poverty, greater engagement with governments facing the terrorist threats, together with

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<sup>1</sup> S. Frederick Starr, "Introduction" in Starr Ed. *China's Muslim Borderland* (NY: M.E. Sharp, 1994).

a more sensitive global policy are a few of the many issues that need to be addressed. Focusing on the structural problems behind each of the different conflicts will prove crucial; this is however not to say that all conflicts could be resolved with peaceful means. Terrorism inadvertently impact citizens' security and liberties and the task at hand is to limit such violations as much as possible.

The authors to this issue have devoted time to reflect on the origins of terrorism and terrorist organizations in the region, and suggestions for viable counter-terror responses. Readers will find that the articles in this issue clash with one another. This reflects the complexity of the terrorism debate. Indeed, this also testifies to the uncertainty surrounding terrorism in Central Asia and neighboring regions, which also makes it such a pressing issue. Our hope is that our readers will find the articles stimulating.

Today, information on the presence of Al-Qaeda in Central Asia and Xinjiang is largely unclear. There are also a lot of heated debates as to which are moderate Islamic groups and which are the radical ones operating in this region. "Akromiya" which allegedly instigated the Andijan uprising last summer and the Hizb ut-Tahrir are but two examples of this. Meanwhile, terrorist activities against Central Asia's energy infrastructure have not materialized and protection of these, especially the Atasu-Alashankou pipeline running from Kazakhstan to Xinjiang will prove important for an attractive investment climate in the region. On a broader perspective, it is clear that the region and its partners need to cooperate more closely together to counter any threats which would undermine the stability of the region.

A further note: To increase the usefulness of the journal, we need your assistance. We have had three consecutive issues with special topics so far - Energy and Security (November 2005), Narcotics (February 2006) and now Terrorism (May 2006). We are very interested in what you think of the China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly and will be conducting a survey to gather feedback from our subscribers via email and our webpage. We seek your cooperation in filling in the questionnaire which we will release shortly. This will help us in our effort to improve the journal.

Finally, on behalf of the CEF team, we hope you enjoy your read!

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# Central Asia in Al-Qaeda's Vision of the Anti-American Jihad, 1979-2006

*Michael Scheuer\**

Among the positive attributes of Osama bin Laden's leadership is his consistent ability to differentiate between the essential and the nice to have. He has, to this point, kept Al-Qaeda and its closest allies focused on what he deems most important: Savaging America's economy and political will to the point where Washington – under Democrats or Republicans – will no longer have the financial ability and popular support to field sufficient power in the Middle East to ensure the survival of the apostate, Arab police states Al-Qaeda has atop its list of Islam's enemies.

Because of bin Laden's ability to keep his eyes on the prize, the main interests of other Islamist groups often do not register among bin Laden's top concerns. Israel and Central Asia are two such issues. Bin Laden's relative quiet about both issues, however, should not be taken as a lack of interest, but rather as reflections of the reality he sees. He has long judged Israel as nothing more than a crusader outpost that will fold-up once U.S. support is cutoff; put simply, drive America from the region and Israel dies. It remains to be seen whether Al-Qaeda's approach to Israel changes to more activism now that the U.S. occupation of Iraq has, for the first time, given bin Laden contiguous safe have from which to attack the Levant states and through those states into Israel.

## **Al-Qaeda and the History of Islamic Activism in Central Asia**

Central Asia, which Al-Qaeda defines as the region bracketed by Chechnya and China's Xinjiang province, always has been a strong interest of bin Laden's, but one which he believed Al-Qaeda needed to devote few resources because the group's indirect and direct allies were

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spreading Wahabist, Salafist, and other strains of radical Islam there. Indeed, others were far ahead of bin Laden in Islamization efforts. The initial motivation for Islamist activism in Central Asia was, of course, Moscow's 1979 invasion and occupation of Afghanistan. Instead of solidifying the Afghan communists' rule in Kabul, and creating a secular buffer between the USSR and Arab radicals, the Red Army's Afghan misadventure further Islamicized Afghanistan and Pakistan, and allowed Afghan insurgents to spread their religious message in Soviet Central Asia. Ahmed Shah Masood's Tajik-dominated Jamiat Islami was active in this regard, as were – to a lesser extent – Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hisbi Islami and then-Pakistani President Zia's intelligence services. Some Central Asian Muslims, moreover, gained training and combat experience from Masood's forces during the Afghan jihad. At this stage – 1979-1989 – bin Laden's role in Central Asia was negligible, except for the funding and military advisers he supplied to Masood.

Three events that followed Al-Qaeda's formal founding in 1988 created an environment in which Islamization in Central Asia accelerated: The 1989 withdrawal of the Red Army from Afghanistan; the 1991 collapse of the USSR and subsequent establishment of corrupt, anti-Muslim dictators in the Central Asian republics, and the annihilation of the Afghan communist regime in 1992. These events turned the eyes of many Middle Eastern Islamists – states, organizations and individuals – toward Central Asia and the emerging opportunities there to create Islamic states from the former Soviet republics.

First out of the starting box were Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states. Their activities in support of the Afghan mujahedin were not only meant to help their Muslim brethren defeat the Soviets, but to establish Afghanistan as a base from which to spread the Salafist and Wahabist versions of Sunni Islam in Central Asia, as well as to prevent what they feared would be Iran's efforts to spread Shiism in the region's overwhelmingly but also nominally Muslim population. With Riyadh in the van, non-governmental organizations from the Gulf States set-up shop in Central Asia – openly and covertly – and began providing their standard retinue of products: health services, cottage-industry skills, education, and religious indoctrination. In addition, Saudi Arabia is home to many now-wealthy descendants of Uzbeks and other Central Asian Muslims who fled the Bolshevik occupation of the region in the 1920s and 1930s, and it is a sure bet that these men sought to fuel an Islamic renaissance in their former homelands.

For bin Laden and Al-Qaeda, the 1988-to-1995 period afforded an opportunity to engage in more than a minor way with Central Asian Muslims. Al-Qaeda was founded, in part, to maintain a ready reserve of trained Islamist fighters who could be sent to support oppressed Muslims in other Muslim states, such as Kashmir and Mindanao. With the Soviet

and Afghan Communists no longer an obstacle, Al-Qaeda began dispatching trained fighters to fulfill that purpose. The outbreak of Islamist violence in Tajikistan, therefore, moved bin Laden to send a limited number of Al-Qaeda cadre to support Tajik Islamist forces, among them his close associate Wali Khan Amin Shah and the soon-to-be-famous mujahid, Ibn Khattab. In addition, bin Laden, even after his 1991 move to Sudan, continued to run training camps in Afghanistan where he welcomed the chance to train Tajiks, Uzbeks, Uighurs, and Chechens.

All this said, however, bin Laden in these years deliberately limited Al-Qaeda's role in Central Asia to building contacts and quietly assisting militarily. He was content to have the great bulk of Islamicizing done by the personnel and monies of the Saudis and other Gulf states. There were two main reasons for bin Laden's decision to limit Al-Qaeda's activities in Central Asia. First, there was at the time no U.S. targets in the region whose destruction would further Al-Qaeda's goal of bleeding America's economy; indeed, a high level of resources deployed to Central Asia would undercut Al-Qaeda's capability to hit U.S. interests.

Second, and more important, bin Laden viewed the former Soviet Central Asian republics as a happy-hunting ground in which to seek WMD components or off-the-shelf chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons. About 1992, Al-Qaeda set up a WMD-acquisition unit – manned by hard scientists, technician, and engineers – and its activities have since targeted the Former Soviet Union's (FSU) WMD arsenal. Building on contacts made by Afghan mujahedin during the Soviet-Afghan war with renegade Red Army, GRU, and KGB officials involved in narcotics trafficking, gem smuggling, and other illicit activities, Al-Qaeda quietly began WMD-shopping in the FSU. Because bin Laden attached top priority to these endeavors, and because other entities were spreading the Prophet's message and wielding his sword in the region, he intended to limit Al-Qaeda's Central Asian operations to keep a low profile, thereby avoiding the notoriety that might accelerate the then-and-now lethargic pace of U.S.-Russian efforts to secure the FSU's WMD arsenal.

After bin Laden moved back to Afghanistan in May, 1996, Al-Qaeda's activities in Central Asia continued to focus on sending combat veterans to assist Islamist groups fighting in the region, and on training Central Asians in Afghan camps. That Al-Qaeda both trained and won the allegiance of a goodly number of Chechen, Tajik, Uzbek, and Uighur Islamists is evident from the prominent part fighters of those nationalities played in battles against the U.S.-led Afghan coalition. Chechen and Uzbek fighters, for example, fought in a stubborn and disciplined fashion against Northern Alliance forces in northern Afghanistan, as well as against U.S. forces in the south and during

“Operation Anaconda.” In addition, Pakistan’s army has endured hard fighting and considerable casualties battling Chechens, Uzbeks, and Uighurs since 2003 when it began operating against Al-Qaeda and Taleban forces in Waziristan.

### **Central Asia and the Anti-U.S. Jihad Today**

Currently, bin Laden’s view of the role Al-Qaeda and its Taleban allies should play in Central Asia displays the consistent themes of assisting Central Asian mujahedin with training and combat veterans, and seeking non-conventional weapons in or through the region. He also appears to be planning to have Al-Qaeda take a larger role in attacking the expanded, post-2001 U.S. military presence in Central Asia, although Uzbek President Karimov’s decision to terminate U.S. basing rights in his country removes the Central Asian target on which Al-Qaeda would have focused. In a June, 2002, letter to Mullah Omar – posted on the Web site of West Point’s Counterterrorism Center<sup>1</sup> – bin Laden described the ongoing importance of Central Asia to the anti-U.S. jihad and suggested that new military opportunities were rising there.

“During the previous period [i.e., before the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan]; with the grace of Allah, we were successful in cooperating with our brothers in Tajikistan in various fields including training. We were able to train a good number of them, arm them and deliver them to Tajikistan. Moreover, Allah facilitated to us delivering weapons to them; we pray Allah grants us all victory.

We need to cooperate all together to continue this matter, especially Jihad continuation in the Islamic Republics [of Central Asia which] will keep the enemies busy and divert them from the Afghani issue and ease the pressure off. The enemies of Islam[’s] problem will become how to stop the spreading of Islam into the Islamic Republics and not the Afghani issue. Consequently, the efforts of the Russians and their American allies will be scattered.

It is fact that the Islamic Republics region is rich with significant scientific experiences in conventional and non-conventional military industries, which will have a great role in future Jihad against the enemies of Islam.”

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<sup>1</sup> West Point’s Counterterrorism Center Website at: [www.ctc.usma.edu](http://www.ctc.usma.edu).



In reviewing the evolution of bin Laden's approach to Central Asia, one is reminded of Leo Tolstoy's timeless military axiom in *War and Peace* that "the strongest warriors are these two – time and patience." Before America's invasion of Afghanistan, bin Laden sparingly applied Al-Qaeda resources to train and arm Islamist fighters but focused on keeping the area open for his WMD-acquisition unit to exploit. He clearly thought time is on Islam's side in Central Asia, and believed that the combination of oppression by anti-Muslim governments in the newly independent republics and China; a fast-growing interest in a more conservative Islam among Central Asian Muslims; the development of Gulf-State-sponsored NGO and proselytizing networks in the region, the growth in Afghan-controlled narcotics trafficking networks through Central Asia; and the steady expansion of the subversive Hizb-ut Tahrir organization across the region probably would push Islamic militancy ahead faster than could Al-Qaeda and the Taleban.

At this writing, bin Laden and Al-Qaeda benefit from the developing chaos in Central Asia without – according to the publicly available information – having had to expend substantial resources there. In an odd way, in fact, the U.S.-led occupation of Afghanistan and use of Central Asian support bases – which Washington and NATO expected to moderate extremism in Afghanistan and Central Asia – seem to have contributed to increased Islamist unrest across the region. Islamic militancy and subversion are now major problems in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Washington; the continuing presence of essential U.S. bases in the region is problematic – witness Tashkent's eviction of U.S. and NATO bases – because of the U.S. and European Community's condemnation of the actions regional regimes take to suppress the Islamists. Most important for bin Laden, because America, Russia, and the West do not see Al-Qaeda as a major threat in Central Asia they have shown no inclination to speed-up the securing of the Soviet nuclear arsenal. This reality leaves Al-Qaeda on-going acquisition opportunities, although the wording of bin Laden's above-quoted letter to Mullah Omar can be read as stating that those opportunities have long since been successfully exploited.

## **Conclusions**

Overall, U.S. and NATO-country policies in Central Asia face a choice from which Al-Qaeda and its allies will benefit. After Andijon, a policy that combines seeking bases and over-flight privileges from Central Asian leaders, an eagerness to participate in exploiting the region's energy resources, and a simultaneous reserving of the right to publicly abrade and sanction regional governments for human-rights abuses is no longer tenable. Western policies, therefore, will change

by force of circumstance. Washington and the Europeans can stand by their insistence on substantive human-rights reforms by Central Asian regimes, thereby losing basing rights and any measure of influence they may now have on the regimes' behavior vis-à-vis domestic Islamists. This policy also would give Russia and China a long leg-up in the competition for regional energy resources. On the other hand, Washington and Europe can drop their human-rights agenda, support the Central Asian regimes, and seek to preserve or expand basing rights at a time when the growing Afghan insurgency appears likely to require a longer and perhaps larger presence of the U.S.-led coalition military forces in Afghanistan. Either policy choice will stimulate Islamic militancy in Central Asia. That has long been Al-Qaeda's major, non-WMD-related goal in the region, and, for now, bin Laden can continue to see it gradually being realized with only a minor expenditure of his group's resources.

# Terrorism in Eurasia: Enhancing the Multilateral Response

*Richard Weitz\**

The upcoming summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization provides a timely opportunity to enhance the international response to Eurasian terrorism. China, Russia, the United States and their allies should establish mechanisms to integrate better the efforts of the main multilateral institutions concerned with preventing and responding to terrorism in Central Asia. Many of their activities needlessly overlap, leading to wasted resources and potential conflicts.

Responding to the threat of Eurasian terrorism requires a multilateral effort. Terrorists regularly move from country to country, seeking safe havens wherever they can. Operatives of the region's most prominent terrorist group, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), used Afghanistan and Pakistan as bases for launching forays into Central Asia.<sup>1</sup> Efforts to establish multilateral institutions exclusively among the Central Asian countries have regularly encountered insurmountable intra-regional rivalries. For this reason, the most successful cooperative initiatives thus far have involved at least one extra-regional great power. In the realm of antiterrorism, the most important multilateral institutions have been the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, with the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe playing smaller roles.

## Eurasia's Key Antiterrorist Institutions

The title of the "Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism," signed at the organization's founding summit in June 2001, highlights the priorities of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Its Regional Antiterrorism Structure

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Weitz, "Storm Clouds over Central Asia: Revival of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)?," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 27 (2004): 465-490.

(RATS) in Tashkent officially began operations in June 2004. Its staff coordinates studies of regional terrorist movements, exchanges information about terrorist threats, and provides advice about counterterrorist policies. For several years, SCO members have undertaken numerous joint initiatives to combat narcotics trafficking and other organized crime, which has become a major source of terrorist financing. After the May 2005 Uzbek military crackdown in Andijan, the SCO members pledged not to offer asylum to designated terrorists or extremists.<sup>2</sup> In early March 2006, Uzbekistan hosted a multilateral exercise, *East-Antiterror-2006*, under its auspices.

After Vladimir Putin became Russian President, Moscow launched a sustained campaign to revitalize the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) by enhancing cooperation among a core group of pro-Russian governments. Defending against transnational threats such as drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and especially terrorism soon became a CIS priority. For example, the members established a Counter-Terrorism Center in Bishkek that is compiling a list of terrorist and extremist organizations operating in its member states. In May 2001, the CIS members created a Collective Rapid Deployment Force (CRDF) to provide a collective response to terrorist attacks or incursions. It initially was not a standing force, but a formation of earmarked battalions based in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan.<sup>3</sup> In August 2005, the CIS organized a major command staff exercise, "Anti-Terror 2005," in western Kazakhstan. Representatives from most members participated, as did Iranian observers for the first time.<sup>4</sup>

Russia's efforts to enhance security cooperation among a core group of pro-Moscow governments culminated in the May 2002 decision by the presidents of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan to create a new Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Besides developing the capacity to mobilize large multinational military formations in the event of external aggression, the CSTO has taken charge of the CRDF, giving it a multinational staff and a mobile command center. CRDF units have engaged in several major antiterrorist exercises in Central Asia, including *Rubezh-2004* ("Frontier 2004") in August 2004, and *Rubezh-2005* in April 2005, which involved

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew Oresman and Zamir Charginov, "The Shanghai Cooperation Summit: Where Do We Go from Here?," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* (July 2005): 5-6.

<sup>3</sup> Oksana Antonenko and Kathryn Pinnick, "Russia's Foreign and Security Policy in Central Asia: The Regional Perspective," in *Russia's New Southern Border: Western Siberia—Central Asia* (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2003), 6.

<sup>4</sup> For more on these exercises see "Raising the Profile of Caspian Counterterrorism," *Eurasia Security Watch*, September 7 2005, <[www.afpc.org/esw/esw101.shtml](http://www.afpc.org/esw/esw101.shtml)> (May 14 2006); and "CIS Holds Anti-Terror Exercise," *United Press International*, August 17 2005.

approximately 3,000 troops.<sup>5</sup> Countering narcotics trafficking and terrorism within Central Asia have become major CSTO objectives. Since 2003, the intelligence, law-enforcement, and defense agencies of the member states have jointly conducted annual “Kanal” (“Channel”) operations to intercept drug shipments from Afghanistan through the region’s porous borders. Furthermore, the CSTO has established a working group on Afghanistan to strengthen that country’s law enforcement and counter-narcotics efforts.

By taking charge of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan in August 2003, NATO has also committed itself to promoting long-term security in Central Asia. In line with this enhanced role, alliance representatives have sought military transit agreements, secure lines of communications, and other supportive logistical arrangements from Central Asian governments. At their late June 2004 Istanbul summit, the NATO heads of government affirmed the increased importance of Central Asia by designating it, along with the Caucasus, as an area of “special focus” in their communiqué. They also appointed a Secretary General Special Representative for the region and stationed a liaison officer there. The alliance has unsuccessfully pressed Central Asian governments to undertake both political and military reforms. After NATO’s North Atlantic Council curtailed cooperative programs with Uzbekistan following the Andijan crackdown, the Uzbek government responded by expelling almost all NATO forces from its territory. Despite the collapse of NATO-Uzbek security ties, the other Central Asian governments remain interested in cooperating with the alliance. For example, Kazakhstan recently negotiated an Individual Partnership Action Plan with NATO.

The EU seeks to eliminate sources of terrorism in Eurasia by reducing poverty, environmental degradation, and illicit trafficking in narcotics, small arms, and people. Notwithstanding these goals, its substantive focus remains developing the region’s energy and transportation routes, expanding trade and investment, and promoting political, economic, and social reforms. The EU also devotes considerably more resources to other regions such as the Balkans and the South Caucasus. For 2006, the European Commission has allocated only 66 million euros to help all five Central Asian governments reduce poverty, expand regional cooperation, and support ongoing administrative, institutional, and legal reforms.<sup>6</sup> Another impediment to EU antiterrorist efforts in Eurasia is that the governments of Russia and Central Asia accuse EU officials of

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<sup>5</sup> For a description of the 2004 exercise see Erica Marat, “CSTO’s Antiterrorist Exercises ‘Rubezh-2004’ Score High Rating Among Member-States,” *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, August 25 2004; For the 2005 exercises see “Counter-Terrorist Exercise ‘Rubezh-2005’ to End in Tajikistan Soon,” *RIA Novosti*, April 6 2005.

<sup>6</sup> “EU Aid for Central Asia to Fight Poverty,” *Iran News Agency*, January 3 2006.

employing “double standards” in approaching terrorist threats. For their part, EU governments have declined to share substantial terrorism-related intelligence with Russian or Central Asian governments because they consider the level of data protection in Russia and Central Asia inadequate.<sup>7</sup>

Like the EU, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) seeks to reduce political, economic, and social causes of terrorism. Such factors include unfair elections, unjustified restrictions on freedom of expression, and discrimination based on religion, ethnicity, or other improper considerations. Current OSCE projects in Central Asia include curbing illicit trafficking in drugs and small arms, strengthening the security of travel documents and border controls, and countering terrorist financing and other transnational criminal activities. The OSCE Special Police Matters Unit seeks to bolster Central Asian countries’ ability to counter terrorism and other illegal activities. Its Forum for Security Cooperation has encouraged members to adopt stricter export controls on small arms, light weapons, and Man Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS), all of which could facilitate terrorist attacks. In recent years, Russia and the Central Asian governments have complained that the OSCE has become excessively preoccupied with democracy and human rights while neglecting their security and development needs. Resource limitations also constrain the OSCE’s influence in Central Asia. The organization allocates far more funds and personnel to its field missions in southeastern Europe than to Central Asia.<sup>8</sup>

### **Restructuring the Multilateral Response**

The above survey makes clear the many overlapping multilateral antiterrorist activities in Central Asia. To reduce redundancies and exploit potential synergies, the leaders of these institutions and their member governments should deepen the dialogue and ties among them. The most urgent need is to connect NATO with the SCO and the CSTO, since the United States, China, and Russia are the most important non-regional countries active in Central Asia, and the most significant members of these institutions. In addition, Russia (which belongs to both organizations) and China have already taken steps to enhance cooperation between the SCO and the CSTO directly.

This month’s SCO summit would provide a convenient occasion for strengthening ties between the SCO and NATO. Russia and China would probably prevent NATO governments from obtaining formal

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<sup>7</sup> Dmitry Babich, “Russia as the EU’s Strategic Partner?,” *Russia Profile*, 3, 1 (January-February 2006): 39-40.

<sup>8</sup> Solomon Passy, “Transforming the OSCE,” *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 3, 3 (Fall 2004).

SCO observer status, while the North Atlantic countries' physical distance from Eurasia makes full membership impractical. In November 2002, however, the SCO Council of Foreign Ministers adopted a mechanism whereby it could invite "guests" to attend its meetings.<sup>9</sup> Alternatively, Western officials might induce the individual hosts of SCO meetings to invite NATO observers directly to those sessions. At the July 2005 summit in Astana, then SCO chairman and host, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, established this precedent by inviting senior officials from India, Iran, and Pakistan to participate as "guests of the chairman."<sup>10</sup> Although these countries obtained formal observer status at the summit, Afghan representatives have attended several SCO meetings without receiving or requiring such status. Finally, NATO governments could seek to become a "partner" of specific SCO organs, such as the RATS.

Another institutional relationship that requires further development is that between the CSTO and NATO. Since late 2003, CSTO officials, strongly supported by the Russian government, have advocated cooperating directly with NATO against terrorism and narcotics trafficking.<sup>11</sup> In December 2004, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov noted that CSTO Secretary General Nikolai Bordyuzha had submitted an official proposal to NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer to establish formal contacts between the two organizations, especially in the counter-narcotics field.<sup>12</sup> At the February 2006 international security conference in Munich, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov said that NATO and the CSTO should join forces to combat terrorism and reconstruct Afghanistan.<sup>13</sup> NATO governments should consider such offers more seriously now that their position in Central Asia and Afghanistan has become more precarious.

Working together to strengthen security along the Tajik-Afghan border could provide an optimal locale for multi-institutional collaboration since the three organizations' zones of interest overlap there. The CSTO has established a special contact group with Afghanistan, and the SCO has invited Afghan delegations to several of its meetings. For its part, NATO enjoys overflight rights over Tajikistan in support of its operations in Afghanistan and provides technical assistance to Tajik border guards. The members of all three institutions have been especially

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<sup>9</sup> Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Shanghai Cooperation Organization," January 7 2004, p. 3, <[www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/topics/sco/t57970.htm](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/topics/sco/t57970.htm)> (May 15 2006).

<sup>10</sup> "Natwar Singh Arrives for Central Asia Summit," *Indo-Asian News Service*, July 4 2005.

<sup>11</sup> Breffni O'Rourke, "NATO: Alliance Praises Efforts of CSTO States, But Cool to Offer of Cooperation," *RFE/RL*, December 3 2003, <[www.rferl.org/features/2003/12/03122003164831.asp](http://www.rferl.org/features/2003/12/03122003164831.asp)> (May 15 2006).

<sup>12</sup> "CSTO, NATO Should Unite Anti-Drug Efforts," *RIA Novosti*, December 16 2004.

<sup>13</sup> "Ivanov for NATO-CSTO Interaction in Fighting Terrorism," *RIA Novosti*, February 5 2006 <<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20060205/43344211.html>> (May 13 2006).

concerned by the transit of Afghan heroin through Tajikistan to Russian and European markets. In December 2005, the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) launched an initiative to improve counter-narcotics training in Afghanistan and Central Asia.<sup>14</sup> NATO's participation in the CRDF's annual "Kanal" drug interception operations could expand such cooperation in a limited but mutually profitable manner.

A more ambitious idea would be to establish an overarching coordination mechanism for the region's major antiterrorist institutions. In mid-December 2005, CSTO General Director Toktasyn Buzubayev said the CSTO favored creating a Eurasian Advisory Council that could include representatives from the CSTO, the SCO, NATO, the EU, and the Eurasian Economic Community (which includes Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan).<sup>15</sup> At a minimum, such a body could help de-conflict multilateral antiterrorist activities in Central Asia. A coordination council would also allow representatives from the various institutions to meet periodically to exchange ideas and explore possible collaborative projects.

Some might argue that the SCO desires less to cooperate with NATO in Central Asia than to displace it from the region. Not only are NATO and the SCO potential geopolitical rivals, but their members appear to have different understandings regarding what constitutes terrorists acts and who commits them. For example, American and European officials have criticized Russia, China, and Central Asia for employing overly broad definitions of terrorism in Chechnya, Xinjiang, and Andijan. Some fear these governments will justify suppressing their nonviolent political opponents by denouncing them as terrorists, bolstering terrorist recruitment in the process. For their part, the SCO members have complained that NATO governments are pursuing ineffectual antiterrorist and counternarcotics policies in Afghanistan. At their July 2005 Astana summit, the SCO heads of state asked the Operation Enduring Freedom coalition to establish a deadline for withdrawing from their military bases in Central Asia since they no longer appeared to be waging a vigorous antiterrorist military operation in Afghanistan.

Despite the unanimous adoption of the Astana resolution, the SCO appears divided over the desirability of a continued NATO military presence in the region. Some participants (e.g., Uzbekistan) clearly

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<sup>14</sup> "NATO and Russia Launch Afghanistan Counter-Narcotics Training," December 12 2005, <[www.nato.int/docu/update/2005/12-december/e1208b.htm](http://www.nato.int/docu/update/2005/12-december/e1208b.htm)> (May 12 2005).

<sup>15</sup> According to Buzubayev, "Through the council, it will be possible to carry out joint monitoring of the military-political situation, to develop and implement means for strengthening trust in the region, to agree on general standards and norms in relations and to agree on measures to ensure security in the region, countering terrorism and other challenges and threats"; cited in John C. K. Daly, "Kazakhstan Investigating Closer Ties with NATO," *United Press International*, December 13 2005, <<http://washingtontimes.com/upi/20051213-015005-7808r.htm>> (May 5 2006).



wanted to end the now unwelcome Western military presence. Some (e.g., Russia and China) might have sought to reaffirm their expectation that NATO would eventually reduce its regional military footprint. Others (e.g., Kyrgyzstan) might have hoped to leverage the statement to extract greater basing rents. Finally, some signatories might have wanted simply to express their disapproval of certain Western policies. For example, they might have sought to galvanize NATO into heeding their complaints about the terrorist and narcotics threats from neighboring Afghanistan. Since only Uzbekistan eventually proceeded to expel NATO forces, most SCO leaders apparently realized upon reflection that a major Western military withdrawal from Central Asia would substantially worsen their security given the inability of any other country or institution to fill the resulting vacuum.

The ambivalence among SCO members regarding the continuing military presence in Central Asia suggests that a NATO offer to establish direct ties might enjoy success. The SCO Executive Secretary, Zhang Deguang, said in early June 2006 that although his organization lacks contacts with NATO, “we are open for cooperation.”<sup>16</sup> Russia could play a pivotal role here in framing a package deal. Since Russian officials have led the drive to develop ties between NATO and the CSTO, they might induce reluctant SCO members to open a formal dialogue with NATO if Western governments reciprocated in the case of the CSTO. A more elegant solution would be to establish an overarching framework that would integrate all three institutions. Although such architectural restructuring will not be easy, effectively countering terrorist threats in Eurasia requires better coordinating multilateral efforts in this area.

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<sup>16</sup> “CSTO Not NATO-Style Organization,” *Interfax News Agency*, June 6 2006.



# East Turkestan Terrorism and the Terrorist Arc: China's Post-9/11 Anti-Terror Strategy

*Pan Guang\**

Anti-terrorism has become an important part of China's domestic and diplomatic agenda. China's anti-terrorism campaign started even before 9/11, but it was only after the attacks that China participated fully and became a significant player in the international anti-terror coalition. This has its historical roots and theoretical basis. With reform and opening-up unfolding under Deng Xiaoping's leadership in the 1980s, China experienced rapid economic growth, combined with an influx of various external influences into China. Some violent and terrorist activities, mostly with economic motivations and criminal elements began to occur.

In this period, hostage taking, bank robberies, and armed drug-trafficking became ever more frequent. Most of these activities took place in the eastern coastal regions, where the economy and overseas connections are more developed, although drug-trafficking generally originated from the north-west (Afghanistan-Xinjiang) and south-west (the triangle region-Yunnan). To be sure, terrorist actions of a political nature were also ubiquitous, including the recurrent hijacking of planes across the Taiwan Strait. On the whole, however, the Chinese government labeled these as ordinary criminal acts rather than terrorist acts. The Chinese authorities began to feel the urgency of anti-terrorism only after terrorist violence emerged with the separatist "East Turkestan" movement in Xinjiang in the early 1990s.

## East Turkestan Separatism: The Historical Basis

The current activities of the "East Turkestan" separatism in China can be traced to the great uprising of the Hui people in the mid-19th century. At the time, Yaqub Beg, a Muslim leader who led the expedition against the rule of the Qing dynasty, for 10 years (1867-77), turned parts of Xinjiang

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into a kingdom independent from Qing control. Nevertheless, it was in the 1930s and 1940s that a so-called “East Turkestan” state was really established. Uighur separatists established the Turkish Islamic Republic of East Turkestan in November 1933, but the regime collapsed in less than five months. In November 1945, the Eastern Turkestan Republic was set up in Yining, but was also relatively short-lived and lasted only for half a year. In the four decades from the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 to the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan in 1989, “East Turkestan” separatists rarely undertook armed activities within Chinese borders. However, the end of the “jihad” against Soviet troops in Afghanistan combined with the chaotic situation unfolding there in the early 1990s somewhat spilled over, providing separatists with an opportunity of waging a “jihad” in Xinjiang. In April 1990, separatists launched an attack in Baren in Akto county of Xinjiang, killing nearly 60 civilians and policemen. This turmoil represented the beginning of terrorist violence committed by the “East Turkestan” group.

After 1996, with the support from the Taleban and Al-Qaeda, religious extremists and terrorist organizations in Central Asia built up their cross-border networks. Certain organizations of the “East Turkestan” campaign like the “East Turkestan Islamic Movement” became very active among these cliques, and Osama bin Laden has reportedly been quoted as saying: “I support your jihad in Xinjiang [referring to ETIM].”

In order to cope with these terrorist challenges that threatened China’s security and unity, the Chinese authorities began to formulate an anti-terrorism strategy seriously, focusing mainly on combating “East Turkestan” terrorist forces to ensure the security and stability of Xinjiang. Anti-terror corps were organized in Xinjiang, the first among China’s provinces and autonomous regions, under the fiscal support of the central government. Meanwhile, as the “East Turkestan” movement had international connections and was transnational in nature, this inadvertently implied that any Chinese anti-terrorist strategy was forced to rely on international cooperation. Indeed, this became one of the driving forces behind the institutionalization of the “Shanghai Five” and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) mechanisms. From the Chinese perspective, it was of particular importance that China could now, within the framework of the organization, count upon the support of the other five member states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Russia) in its campaign against the “East Turkestan” movement.

## **China's Anti-Terror Strategy After 9/11**

Shortly after 9/11, China established its National Anti-Terrorism Coordination Group (NATCG) and Secretariat led by Hu Jintao. The National Ministry of Public Security also simultaneously launched an anti-terrorism bureau responsible for the research, planning, guidance, co-ordination and undertaking of the national anti-terror agenda. The NATCG's office was subordinated under the anti-terror bureau of the National Ministry of Public Security. In addition, all the provinces followed suit by organizing their own anti-terrorist co-ordination groups and offices, with Beijing, Shanghai, Guangdong, Xinjiang and Tibet at the forefront. In view of these expanded efforts, China has also made remarkable achievements in strengthening its anti-terror mechanism since 9/11. The capabilities of the "East Turkestan" group were severely weakened following the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan and the subsequent strikes on terrorist bases. However, following the U.S.-led war in Iraq, the group has somehow revived, coinciding with the resurrection of the Taleban and Al-Qaeda, and the security situation in Central Asia has deteriorated again. To counter the emerging threats in the post-9/11 environment, the following measures have been taken by the NATCG and the National Ministry of Public Security.

Firstly, an early warning and prevention system has been set up. The objective of this system is to monitor the activities of terrorist groups, forestall terrorist attacks, and cut terrorist financing.

Secondly, a quick response mechanism is now in place. The purpose of this is for relevant authorities to take speedy and determined measures to neutralize perpetrators, restrict their fallout, and work for a quick resolution in the event of a terrorist strike. China has greatly enhanced the capabilities of its quick-response anti-terror troops over the past two years both in personnel and equipment. They are now deployed not only in Xinjiang, but also in almost every provincial capital city. China has also participated in various bilateral and multilateral anti-terror exercises. For example, China conducted a joint bilateral anti-terror military exercise with Kyrgyzstan in October 2002. In August 2003, China took part in the multilateral anti-terror military exercise dubbed "United-2003" with other fellow SCO members. Some of the more recent exercises include "Great Wall-2003" held on September 26, 2003 attended by President Hu Jintao, as well as "Peace Mission 2005" under SCO auspices.

Thirdly, a crisis control and management system is now being established. This system focuses on damage-control of human losses and infrastructural damages in the wake of terrorist attacks or during their initiation. China, drawing especially upon the experience of authorities in New York City handling the 9/11 disaster, seeks here to improve the co-ordination of policemen, fire-fighters, armed troops, civilian rescuers

and medical personnel in the event of a terrorist attack. Training and exercises at various levels have already been conducted for this purpose.

Fourthly, a mass education and mobilization system has been initiated. Various authorities in China have carried out a series of education and training programs among civilians to raise awareness of counter-terrorism efforts. A number of schools have added anti-terrorism to their curriculum, while some research institutes and universities have set up anti-terror research centers. Besides, the Chinese legislature – the People's Congress – is also currently drafting an anti-terrorism law. This is especially important as China is hosting the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing as well as the 2010 World Expo in Shanghai.

### **Growing Interconnections in the “Terrorist Arc”**

Besides concern over “East Turkestan” terrorist forces and recent Chinese adaptations and counter-measures to the threat, growing interconnections between terrorist organizations in Asia are also attracting Beijing's attention. In the new surge of terrorist attacks sweeping the world following the Iraq War, the formation of a “terrorist arc” stretching across the Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia and Southeast Asia is being formed. This is an extremely disturbing development. Terrorist organizations and activities in Central Asia, South Asia and Southeast Asia are starting to resemble those in the Middle East in terms of intellectual connections, organizational networks, and activities.

This development is also partly driving the Chinese anti-terror strategy. What is particularly worrying is that Southeast Asia, sitting at the eastern end of this arc, has become the target of frequent terrorist attacks in recent years. Certain terrorist groups closely connected to Al-Qaeda, such as Jamaah Islamiyah, Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia, and Abu Sayyaf have plotted a series of terrorist activities against the state and civilians alike. It has been pointed out by some that Jamaah Islamiyah, as the main agent of Al-Qaeda in Southeast Asia, is now functioning within a broad scope ranging from southern Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines, all the way to Australia. Lee Kuan Yew, Minister Mentor of the Singapore Cabinet, recently remarked that it is very disturbing to see that, although the 230 million Muslims in Southeast Asia have long been “tolerant and easy to live with”, recent changes indicate that extremism and terrorism are taking root.

Such developments are of direct concern to China's view on security. Both because terrorist groups in Southeast Asia such as Jamaah Islamiyah, are closely connected with terrorist organizations in Central Asia and South Asia; but also because terrorist activities in Southeast

Asia are bound to threaten the security of China's citizens abroad. In fact, terrorism in Southeast Asia has already affected Chinese tourists and engineering workers in the region. Bali, which has witnessed repeated explosions, is a favorite resort of the Chinese. Meanwhile, Chinese engineering workers in the Philippines have more than once been taken hostage by the Abu Sayyaf, with one Chinese killed so far. With regards to security, if maritime terrorist activities in Southeast Asia target oil tankers at the Strait of Malacca, an act which cannot be ruled out, China's energy security will be threatened as over 60 percent of imported oil passes through the Strait.

South Asia faces similar challenges and what is most alarming to us in this region is terrorists' frequent targeting of Chinese citizens. On May 3, 2004, Chinese engineers working in the Pakistani Gwadar Port were attacked by car bombs leaving three killed and nine wounded. On June 10, 2004, a group of Afghan terrorists attacked a construction site near Kunduz causing the death of eleven Chinese workers and further injuring four. In October 2004, two Chinese engineers were taken hostage with one eventually being killed by Al-Qaeda militants, according to Pakistani officials. More recently, three Chinese engineers were killed in Gwadar while another three were killed in a bombing in Amman, Jordan.

What merits our special attention is that terrorist groups now are adjusting their strategies with some resorting to new approaches and appearances. Certain groups are cropping up and expanding their organizations by enlisting members from the disadvantaged masses. Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) has become very influential in Central Asia though it was first established in Jordan and Saudi Arabia in 1953. HT maintains close connections with al Qaeda and focuses mainly on subverting the existing state establishments. By increasing its membership through philanthropic activities and pyramid-selling-like means, the party is expanding rapidly and gaining popularity in Central Asia, particularly in the poverty-stricken Ferghana valley where unemployment rates reach as high as 80 percent. This is a worrying development considering the cross-border nature of the problem and the recent resurrection of terrorist elements in Asia.

## **Conclusion**

On the basis of a reviving threat from East Turkestan terrorist groups and growing dangers emanating across the "terrorist arc," China will, in the foreseeable future, continue to be an active member in the international anti-terror coalition. However, it needs to be pointed out that China does not endorse the U.S. actions in the Iraq war. The Chinese have adopted a regional approach as part of its anti-terror strategy. This is in contrast with America's unilateralism in its global

war on terror as reflected in the invasion of Iraq. Although China's main concern is with terrorism in its immediate surroundings, it is becoming increasingly clear that Chinese participation is indispensable for international anti-terror efforts; whether in the hinterlands of Eurasia, South Asian subcontinent, Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, or even the Middle East.



# Nuclear Smuggling, Rogue States and Terrorists<sup>†</sup>

*Rensselaer Lee\**

The trafficking of nuclear and radiological materials, which surged after the demise of the Soviet Union, is a recurrent and pervasive threat. Such materials could gravitate into hostile hands, increasing the array of potential dangers to Western security and stability. U.S.-funded security measures at post-Soviet nuclear facilities and border crossings suffer from technological and conceptual limitations and we should not feel much safer because of them. In response, improved intelligence on adversaries is a vital tool for proliferation prevention, complementing the reactive and stationary risk management systems now being implemented in Russia and elsewhere.

## The Loose Nukes Problem

The threat of catastrophic terrorism in the post-9/11 world raises new concerns about a recurrent and dangerous criminal activity: the illegal trade in nuclear and radiological materials. The trade is preeminently (though not entirely) an Eurasian phenomenon, one associated with the breakup of the USSR and the diminished ability of post-Soviet states to monitor and control stockpiles. The true dimensions of the nuclear smuggling business and its implications for international stability and relationships are somewhat ambiguous. Little fissile material of significance and no nuclear warheads appear to circulate in the black market; buyers are elusive; and arrest and seizure statistics provide little evidence of participation in the market by rogue states, terrorists, and major transnational crime syndicates. Nevertheless, the observed reality

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<sup>†</sup> This article is drawn partly from the author's testimony "The Dark Side of the Nuclear Smuggling Business" presented to the Subcommittee on Prevention of Nuclear and Biological Attack, House Committee on Homeland Security, September 22, 2005. A lengthier version will be published by the Cato Institute in June 2006.

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of the traffic may be a misleading guide to the magnitude and patterns of the traffic as a whole. It is what we cannot see happening that gives us greatest cause for worry.

As with other illegal businesses, drugs for example, what is seized is only a small fraction of what circulates in international smuggling channels. Some significant incidents go unreported, particularly in former Soviet states. Also, it stands to reason that sophisticated and well-connected smugglers are far less likely to get caught than the amateur criminals and scam artists who dominate the known incidents. On the demand side, we can be fairly certain that a handful of nation-states and sub-national actors are "in the market" for strategic nuclear goods. For example, Iran, North Korea, Saddamist-Iraq and the Al-Qaeda network have sought fissile materials through clandestine channels; and Al-Qaeda and the Japanese terror cult Aum Shinrikyo have at least explored the possibility of buying an intact nuclear weapon.<sup>1</sup> Conceivably, end users or their representatives can connect with sellers of nuclear wares in ways that are not readily apparent to Western law enforcement or intelligence services.

Threats to international security from nuclear and radiological terrorism can be grouped into several categories in order of increasing probability and decreasing consequence. One is that terrorists or hostile states could manage to steal or buy a state-owned nuclear weapon, especially a tactical or portable one. Theft or diversion of a Russian nuke for terrorist use is the most commonly mentioned scenario.<sup>2</sup> A second is that adversaries could fabricate a so-called improvised nuclear device from stolen or diverted fissile material, most likely highly-enriched uranium (HEU). This is considered more likely since Russian nuclear weapons by most accounts are substantially more secure than their nuclear explosive components. A third is that terrorist groups could fabricate a radiological dispersal device (RDD) or "dirty bomb," which does not produce a nuclear yield, but rather a conventional explosion designed to spread radioactive contamination. Radiological materials are widely used in the civilian economy and not particularly difficult to obtain; yet RDDs are not mass casualty weapons since radioactive

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<sup>1</sup> Nuclear Threat Initiative, "The Demand for Black Market Fissile Material" *Securing the Bomb* 2005, June 2005, <[www.nti.org/e\\_research/cnwm/threat/demand.asp](http://www.nti.org/e_research/cnwm/threat/demand.asp)> (April 30 2006).

<sup>2</sup> The late Russian General Alexander Lebed's assertion that scores of suitcase weapons went missing from Soviet arsenals has received much publicity, despite Russian, IAEA and official U.S. denials, and despite reports that such weapons would not have been armed in any event. See, for example, Rensselaer Lee, *Smuggling Armageddon: The Nuclear Black Market in the Former Soviet Union and Europe* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 125-127 and David Smigielski, "A Review of the Suitcase Nuclear Bomb Controversy." Russian American Nuclear Security Advisory Council, September 2003, <[www.ransac.org/documents/suitcasenukes090103.pdf](http://www.ransac.org/documents/suitcasenukes090103.pdf)> (April 30 2006).

particles tend to disperse rapidly following the explosion. Each of these threats commands the attention of nuclear policymakers; however, the main focus of this article is on the high consequence and moderately probable scenario that smuggled fissile materials could fall into the hands of states or groups intending to do harm.

## Supply- and Demand-side Pressures

### *Insider Theft*

Typical smuggling cases have involved opportunistic thefts of small amounts of material by solitary nuclear workers, who then search for a buyer, often with the help of local relatives or petty criminals, who in turn are soon apprehended by police. Yet here are important exceptions. For example, Russia's Federal Security Service in 1998 reportedly foiled an attempt by "staff members" of a Chelyabinsk nuclear facility (probably Chelyabinsk-70) to steal 18.5 kilograms of HEU, almost enough for a nuclear bomb. Where the material was headed and who the customers were is unclear, but an operation of this magnitude almost certainly would have required prior arrangement with a prospective buyer. Also unclear is whether the theft attempt was an isolated case or a single failure in a string of successful diversions.<sup>3</sup>

Other incidents have involved deceptive practices by senior facility managers, specifically illegal exports under cover of the legal trade in nuclear and radioactive materials. In a well-known case at the Mayak Production Association in Chelyabinsk, the director of Mayak's isotope separation plant was convicted of exporting a non-nuclear radioisotope (iridium-192) using false customs documentation. Yet managers could just as well create appropriate paperwork to conceal a more serious diversion – describing a shipment of HEU as a relatively innocuous substance—such as natural uranium or cesium, for example.<sup>4</sup>

### *State-sponsored Proliferation*

A further danger is that of “state-sponsored” proliferation, in which high government officials covertly transfer strategic nuclear goods to client states or groups, either for personal gain or as a matter of policy. The black market network run by Pakistani scientist A. Q. Khan is the latter-day model for this. In the 1970s and 1980s, Khan had pioneered the centrifuge enrichment program that enabled Pakistan to produce nuclear arms. Khan is known to have sold key components of a nuclear weapons

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<sup>3</sup> Yevgeniy Tkachenko, “FSB Agents Prevent Theft of Nuclear Materials,” ITAR-TASS, December 18 1998; Center for Non-Proliferation Studies, “MINATOM Says 1998 Theft Involved HEU,” NIS Nuclear Trafficking Data Base, October 30 2000.

<sup>4</sup> Lee, *Smuggling Armageddon*, 131.

program, including uranium enrichment technology and hardware, to Iran, North Korea and Libya. Libya also received from Khan blueprints for an implosion-type nuclear device. In addition, an Iranian exile group claims that the network provided an undisclosed quantity of HEU to the Iranian government in 2001.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, some U.S. officials believe that the Russian-Iranian nuclear cooperation allows Iran to maintain wide ranging contacts with Russian nuclear entities and to exploit these relationships to advance its nuclear weapons objectives.

*Demand-side Challenges: Nation States, Terrorists and Criminals*

Anecdotal evidence suggests that nation states and terrorists are in the market for strategic nuclear goods, but face significantly different constraints in procuring them. Nation states have the advantage of being able to deal with government officials or facility managers directly, and might successfully exploit quasi-official channels and networks (leveraging formal cooperation agreements) to get what they want. Terrorists lack such opportunities, and must somehow link up with a social subset of people who are willing to commit illegal or disloyal acts. The obvious candidates here are criminal organizations, specifically ones having connections inside nuclear enterprises and cross-border smuggling experience. Al-Qaeda reportedly negotiated with the Chechen “mafiya” to buy tactical nukes and with Russian crime figures in Europe to obtain the makings of a radiological (dirty) bomb.<sup>6</sup>

*Smuggling Dynamics*

Nuclear smuggling is widely perceived as an anemic, disorganized and supply-driven business. Yet evidence suggests increasing levels of sophistication in cross-border smuggling operations. For instance, sellers of nuclear or radiological material are increasingly likely to rely on paid couriers instead of trying to move goods on their own. Smugglers are believed to collect and share information on which Russian customs posts are equipped with radiation monitors and to route their shipments accordingly. Reportedly, smugglers have probed the sensitivity of monitors by sending across decoys with innocuous radioactive items such as radium-dial wristwatches. According to Western customs officials, smugglers are becoming more adept at shielding and concealing their wares, for example encasing radioactive material in lead containers installed in vehicles instead of carrying it on their persons. All this seems

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<sup>5</sup> William Langewiese, “The Point of No Return,” *The Atlantic*, January-February 2006, 96-118; “Pakistan’s Khan gave Iran Bomb-Grade Uranium-Exiles,” *Reuters*, November 17 2004, <<http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory?yd=259250>> (April 30 2006).

<sup>6</sup> See for example, Riyad Alam al-Din et. al., “Report Links Bin Laden, Nuclear Weapons,” *Al Watan Al Arabi*, November 13 1998, 20-21; Sarah I. Yall, “Briton Tried to Buy A-Bomb, Prosecution in Trial Contends,” *The New York Times*, March 22 2006, A14.

to suggest an organizational intelligence behind the traffic, as well as (ominously) expectations that customers exist or can be found for stolen and smuggled materials. Finally, several data bases indicate a significant shift in the locus of smuggling activity, from Europe to the Caucasus and Central Asia, which include vast territories where functioning law enforcement and border control infrastructure are practically non-existent. Little weapons-usable material has been detected along these southern routes, but the trend is nonetheless worrisome because of the relative proximity of the traffic to regional trouble spots in the Middle East and South Asia.

*Parallel Concerns: Knowledge Smuggling and Brain Drain*

Clandestine transfers of nuclear design intelligence represent an additional proliferation concern, but will receive only brief attention here. No hard evidence exists that Russian nuclear scientists have sought or obtained employment in the weapons programs of hostile states or groups. It is true that in the 1990s, some nuclear specialists seeking greener pastures left Russia, mostly for Western Europe, the United States and Israel, although not necessarily to share nuclear knowledge. Of course, transfers of sensitive military knowledge to foreign clients can occur from within Russia itself via the Internet, facsimile transmission and various covert channels.

## **Non-Proliferation Policy**

*Limitations of policy*

The United States funds a variety of programs designed to keep nuclear and radiological materials out of the hands of would-be thieves and smugglers and (ultimately) to prevent nuclear terrorism. One important example is the Department of Energy's (DOE) International Materials Protection, Control and Accounting (MPC&A). Sometimes called the "first line of defense" against nuclear smuggling, MPC&A focuses on securing fissile material and warhead storage sites, mainly in Russia. A complementary effort, broadly referred to as the "second line of defense," emphasize deployment of technological monitoring systems for people and cargo at key border crossings and international shipping hubs. Also worth mentioning is DOE's Global Threat Reduction Initiative, which aims at removing potential bomb material from vulnerable sites around the world, mainly research reactors using HEU. It also includes a component for protecting non-nuclear radiological materials against theft. As the main U.S. government sponsor of non-proliferation work, the DOE, is spending more than US\$500 million on such programs in 2006.

Whether or not such efforts will prevent a nuclear catastrophe remains to be seen; yet there is reason to be skeptical. Clever adversaries and their inside collaborators can simply find a myriad number of ways to defeat or circumvent the technical fixes, border controls and other containment measures being introduced under the U.S.-Russia cooperative programs. According to Russian and U.S. experts, collusion of just five well-placed insiders may be sufficient to carry off a successful theft, even in Russian enterprises equipped with the most advanced U.S. safeguards.<sup>7</sup> The participation of senior facility managers, who have the authority to shut down alarms, alter relevant paperwork and co-opt custodians of nuclear wares, greatly increases the odds of success of a diversion scheme.

Similarly, the border and cargo monitoring systems being deployed may be ineffective in intercepting serious smugglers with the requisite technological expertise and knowledge of the terrain to move their wares covertly. Obviously, smart smugglers can opt to circumvent those customs posts that are equipped with radiation monitors. Russia's 5000-mile long, largely uncontrolled border with trans-Caucasian countries and Kazakhstan is an open invitation to traffic in nuclear materials and other lethal items.<sup>8</sup> Alternatively, traffickers may simply bribe border officials to turn off or ignore the sensors. A further limitation is that most of the equipment being installed at borders is not sensitive enough to detect well-shielded HEU, which is the material most likely to be used in a terrorist bomb. An additional constraint is the staggering (and probably immeasurable) number of containers and travelers that would require monitoring. The odds that terrorists could successfully smuggle a shipment of HEU in one of the 23 million containers that enter the United States each year are thus uncomfortably high.

Finally, new U.S. security measures have taken a long time to implement. As of the mid-2000s, only about half of the estimated 600 tons of Russian fissile material outside of weapons was protected by modern U.S. safeguards. However, 15 years have already passed since the disintegration of the Soviet Union and some undetected smuggling of consequence may occur in the meantime. This has important implications. For example, Iran is estimated officially to be 5 to 10 years away from a nuclear weapon according to projections of its centrifuge enrichment capability. However, Iran could shorten this time frame from years to months by obtaining HEU or plutonium via black market

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<sup>7</sup> Author interview with an official from a Moscow area nuclear facility. Moscow, September 15 2004; Matthew Bunn and Anthony Weir, "Securing the Bomb 2005: The New Global Imperative," (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University, Belfer Center for Science and Technology, May 2005), 14.

<sup>8</sup> Similarly, America's 4000 mile and 2000-mile borders with Canada and Mexico respectively offer similar opportunities to smugglers of dangerous weaponry.

channels. Indeed, the Iranian weapons program could be functioning on parallel tracks, one involving clandestine procurement operations and the other the more visible and laborious path of uranium enrichment. With respect to terrorists, the picture is equally cloudy. Most observers believe that terrorists have not yet acquired nuclear weapons or nuclear explosives. If they had, they already would have used them against U.S. or other Western targets, the conventional wisdom goes. Yet most experts believe that terrorists could muster the technical expertise to manufacture a nuclear weapon, assuming they had the requisite quantities of fissile material at hand.<sup>9</sup>

### *Intelligence-Based Security*

Washington's lines of defense-approach to nuclear security has many weaknesses that can be exploited by clever adversaries intent on obtaining the ingredients for a nuclear or radiological weapon. This reality highlights the need for intelligence-based approaches that provide advance warning of illegal nuclear deals and stop consequential proliferation incidents before they happen. In particular, more intelligence and law enforcement resources should be focused on the demand side of the proliferation equation, about which not enough is known.

One task of intelligence is simply to clarify the nature of the threat. This means collecting information about the adversaries: who they are, what material and weapons they seek and how they intend to obtain these items. A second objective is to identify and disrupt adversaries' WMD procurement operations in countries of proliferation concern, like Russia. More needs to be known about such activities – how they are organized and financed, what front companies, criminal groups and other intermediaries are used, who the inside collaborators are and so on. Better intelligence can be seen as a dynamic component of nuclear defense, complementing the essentially reactive and stationary risk management systems that define U.S. non-proliferation policy.

## **Conclusions**

As should be obvious, the imperatives of U.S. nuclear security policy are ultimately inseparable from the imperatives of the global war on terrorism. Al-Qaeda's attempts to acquire ingredients of deadly weapons

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<sup>9</sup> For the classic statement on this point, see J. Carson Mark, Theodore Taylor, et. al., "Can Terrorists Build Nuclear Weapons?" (Nuclear Control Institute, Washington, D.C.), 1-12, <[www.nci.org/k-m/makeab.htm](http://www.nci.org/k-m/makeab.htm)> (April 30 2006). This is a paper prepared for the International Task Force on Preventing Terrorism 1986 <[www.nci.org/nci-book2.htm#contents](http://www.nci.org/nci-book2.htm#contents)> (April 30 2006). The authors estimate that 52 kilograms of HEU of a standard density would be needed for a crude gun-type uranium device.

and even weapons themselves are much cause for alarm. The content and magnitude of nuclear leakage from Russia and other supplier states remain undetermined. Keeping terrorists on the run and off balance may be the best way to ensure that they will not ultimately succeed in building a nuclear bomb.



# Reevaluating the Risks of Terrorist Attacks Against Energy Infrastructure in Eurasia

Pavel K. Baev\*

Oil terminals, refineries and pipelines appear to be ideal targets for terrorists with guaranteed media attention and high resonance in the sensitive markets. Indeed, such renowned expert in evil conspiracies as Georges Remi (Hégré) back in 1971 vividly depicted the panic in the West caused by explosions on pipelines in the Middle East in his *Land of Black Gold*, the 15<sup>th</sup> volume in the acclaimed series *The Adventures of Tintin*.<sup>1</sup> Some 35 years later, in the world of globalized bad news, a spectacular fire on any oil rig or tanker would be immediately splashed over millions of TV screens and push prices to new record heights. Yet, surprisingly little of that is actually happening in the real Eurasian war against terrorist networks, from Xinjiang to Chechnya and from Egypt to Afghanistan, with the obvious exception of Iraq.

It was *Katrina* not Al-Qaeda that devastated the platforms and refineries along the U.S. Gulf coast in August 2005; it was a short circuit not a well-placed bomb that caused the massive blackout in Moscow in May 2005; and it was not a shoot-out but a labor strike that stopped the pipeline construction in Azerbaijan in November 2005. Terrorists apparently prefer different kinds of “soft” targets, and the attacks in the Indonesian island of Bali, southern Turkey, and, repeatedly, in the Egyptian Red Sea resorts indicate that tourism is a deliberately targeted industry. It is possible to explain it by the dual desire to reduce the income of the regime in a particular country and to limit the all-penetrating Western influence,<sup>2</sup> but the fact that energy infrastructure, so

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<sup>1</sup> It may be worth noting that the original version of that comic book produced in 1950 featured the conflict between Jewish settlers and the Palestinians, but in 1969-1971, the author altered the storyline for the British edition; see Hégré, *Land of Black Gold (The Adventures of Tintin)*, (London: Little & Brown, 1971).

<sup>2</sup> The connection between terrorism and tourism remains under-researched, one precise comment on the April Daham bombing is “Punishing the West, All Things Secular and Egyptians too,” *The Economist*, April 27 2006. President Putin, paying a brief visit to Dagestan in July 2005, ordered to deploy two mountain brigades, since the “resorts in the

valuable and vulnerable, has been so far mostly spared still requires an explanation.

### Intentions, Aims and Limitations

One, and perhaps the most obvious, part of such an explanation can be found in the multiple preventive measures aimed at enhancing security of the most crucial energy assets. The colossal Ras-Tanura oil terminal and the Abqaiq refinery in Saudi Arabia are fortified with every available means, from good old barbed wire to electronic sensors, so the terrorist attempt to penetrate the perimeter in late February 2006 was effectively blocked.<sup>3</sup> The U.S. Navy supported by numerous vessels from other states spares no effort at patrolling the Persian Gulf and surrounding waters so it would be quite difficult for terrorists to repeat such attack as the one on the French tanker *Limburg* in the Gulf of Aden in October 2002. For the armed forces of Azerbaijan and Georgia, protecting the yet-to-be-opened Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline is the highest priority, and China takes security of the just-completed Atasu-Alashankou pipeline very seriously.<sup>4</sup>

For the last three years, the U.S. occupation of Iraq has provided the major focus for terrorist operations and the escalating inter-communal strife manifests itself in terrorist attacks of every possible kind. Oil installations are routinely targeted but since there has been no significant investment in rehabilitation and modernization of the industry, it has remained of only limited interest to insurgents of all persuasions. In fact, mismanagement and engineering incompetence have proven to be the main causes in the failure to open the crucial Fatah pipeline link across

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Krasnodar kray where millions of our citizens are spending their holidays must be protected." Nothing was said about the terrorist attacks in Dagestan itself. See Yulia Latynina, "Boots in Dagestan," *Ezhednevny zhurnal* (in Russian), July 18 2005, <[www.ej.ru/dayTheme/entry/1443/](http://www.ej.ru/dayTheme/entry/1443/)> (April 30 2006).

<sup>3</sup> The multi-layered defenses around Ras-Tanura are described in Peter Maas, "The Breaking Point," *New York Times*, August 21 2005. On the February clash, see "Attack on Abqaiq Highlights Growing Focus on Oil Targets," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, April 2006.

<sup>4</sup> For an up-beat assessment of the BTC project, see, S. Frederick Starr & Svante E. Cornell, Eds., *The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline: Oil Window to the West* (Washington: Johns Hopkins University, 2005). A recent report of an independent panel chaired by Jan Leschly commissioned by BP provides a more cautious view; see Ahto Lobjakas, "Panel Assesses Impact of Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline," *RFE/RL Newslines*, February 17 2006 <[www.rferl.org/newslines/2006/02/170206.asp](http://www.rferl.org/newslines/2006/02/170206.asp)> (April 30 2006). On the prospects for delivering oil from Kazakhstan to Xinjiang, see Marat Yermukhanov, "Kazakh-Chinese Pipeline: A Bond of Strategic Partnership or Source of Tensions?" *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, January 11 2006, <[http://caciaanalyst.org/view\\_article.php?articleid=3932&SMSESSION=NO](http://caciaanalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid=3932&SMSESSION=NO)> (April 30 2006).

the Tigris.<sup>5</sup> The larger point is, however, that since Iraq has become the central theater of war for al Qaeda and other international terrorist networks, they have had only limited “free capacity” for organizing major attacks elsewhere. On top of that, the establishment of the Hamas government in the Palestinian autonomy and its severe financial problems have certainly generated much demand on various Islamic charities, further reducing funding available for other extremist groupings.<sup>6</sup>

It appears possible to suggest that besides these two factors – improved protection and concentration of the *Jihad* campaign on Iraq – there are other forces at work in limiting the terrorist threat to energy infrastructure, and some of those may be related to the political agendas of terrorist organizations. It is well known, for that matter, that the Saudi regime is no less an important enemy for Al-Qaeda than the U.S., so any turn of events that could strengthen the royal family’s grasp on power is undesirable for Osama bin Laden and his associates. A series of attacks on oil installations across the Gulf is guaranteed to push up global prices on hydrocarbons – and that would bolster the revenues of the Saudi budget and implicitly increase international support for the corrupt monarchy.

A different, while not dissimilar, logic could have motivated the Chechen resistance. In principle, it would have been far easier to bring the group of about 30 armed rebels and suicide bombers to Novorossiisk or Tuapse than to Moscow in October 2002 and capture an oil refinery instead of the *Nord-Ost* theater. The leaders of the insurgents, however, sought to avoid any attacks that could damage, even indirectly, significant Western interests (oil is broadly perceived as the absolutely crucial one) and thus undermine the support for their cause. The petroleum industry in Chechnya itself has been damaged beyond repair in several rounds of heavy fighting and Moscow has so far refused the demands of the maverick Prime Minister Ramzan Kadyrov to grant his government the full control over the few rigs that could still pump up some oil.<sup>7</sup> There have been several small-scale acts of sabotage on the

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<sup>5</sup> James Glanz investigated the fiasco of this project awarded as a no-bid contract to a subsidiary of *Halliburton* in “Rebuilding of Iraqi Pipeline as Disaster Waiting to Happen,” *New York Times*, April 25 2006.

<sup>6</sup> See on that “Does Saudi Arabia Fund Terrorism?” *Middle East Quarterly*, March 2006, <[www.meforum.org/article/934](http://www.meforum.org/article/934)> (April 30 2006).

<sup>7</sup> On the growing demands from the Chechen government for reconstruction funds and for control over the *Grozneftegas* company, see Musa Muradov & Alla Barahova, “Chechnya Demands Tax Break and Control Over Oil,” *Kommersant* (in Russian), March 31 2006, <[www.kommersant.ru/doc.html?docId=662415](http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.html?docId=662415)> (April 30 2006). My recent analysis of the overlapping conflicts in the region can be found in Pavel Baev, “Shifting Battlefields of the Chechen War,” *Chechnya Weekly*, April 20 2006,

Baku-Novorossiisk pipeline in Dagestan but the major new routes for the Caspian oil have so far remained safe, while violent instability has spread across the North Caucasus.

It is further possible to assume that Iran has not been eager at all to see any attacks on tankers in the Persian Gulf, primarily because the threat to squeeze the sea traffic in the Strait of Hormuz is one of its trump cards in the nuclear tug-of-war with the U.S.; it is crucial for Tehran not to waste it prematurely. In Central Asia, several Islamist organizations operating primarily in the Ferghana valley, such as *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, have shown much restraint in resorting to violent means and targeted mostly the weak points of the Karimov regime in Uzbekistan.<sup>8</sup> The main routes of narco-traffic in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, where violent attacks are commonplace, are a long way from the oilfields of Kazakhstan. The rise of piracy in the Indonesian waters could encourage a terrorist organization to attempt an attack on an oil or LNG tanker, but it has to consider the consequences of possible damage to the interests of China, which receives most of its oil imports through the Strait of Malacca.<sup>9</sup>

### Terrorists Without Borders

If this exercise in rationalizing the activities driven by distorted beliefs, fears and anger is not entirely off mark, it would suggest that some of the factors that have so far kept the oil assets relatively safe are wearing thin. Iraq, for instance, while continuing to pull in all sorts of enthusiastic *mujahideen*, has also become a training ground from where qualified and seasoned terrorists are emerging to take their eschatological battle to other theaters. Regarding Saudi Arabia, the fact that it now produces oil at the maximum capacity means that its crucial role of “energy security” guarantor is all but exhausted. A couple of relatively simple attacks, for instance on the oil pipeline to the Yanbu terminal on the Red Sea, could accentuate this inability to open the tap any wider, caused fundamentally by sustained underinvestment. The unsuccessful attack last February has certainly taught the planners (there are hardly any doubts that the

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<[www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=416&issue\\_id=3697&article\\_id=2371008](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=416&issue_id=3697&article_id=2371008)> (April 30 2006).

<sup>8</sup> One of the best sources on Hizb ut-Tahrir are the reports from the International Crisis Group. See for instance, International Crisis Group, “Radical Islam in Central Asia: Responding on Hizb ut-Tahrir,” *Asia Report*, June 30 2003, <[www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=1441&l=1](http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=1441&l=1)> (April 30 2006); on the current situation in Uzbekistan, see International Crisis Group, “Uzbekistan: In For the Long Haul,” *Asia Briefing*, February 16 2006,

<[www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3952&l=1](http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3952&l=1)> (April 30 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Update analysis of these risks can be found in Catherine Zara Raymond, “Maritime Terrorism in South-East Asia: Potential Scenarios,” *Terrorism Monitor*, April 6 2006, <[www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369950](http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369950)> (April 30 2006).

capacity to plan major attacks has survived the severe crackdown by the Saudi security forces) some important tactical lessons. They also understand that the oil prices have climbed so high that a possible extra bonus to the Saudi budget would not make much of a difference.

The situation is even more worrisome in Russia, which has been promoting its profile as a provider of “energy security” aiming at making a grand stand at the July G8 summit in St. Petersburg. The new leaders of Chechen resistance are generally less concerned about the support for their cause in the West, but they could have taken notice of the pronounced reluctance in Europe and the U.S. to buy the Russian claims at the face value. Most probably, the explosions on the trans-Caucasian gas pipeline supplying Georgia last winter were not of the Chechen making; indeed they were only a minor embarrassment to Moscow, while putting Tbilisi under a lot of stress. The precedent has been set, nevertheless, and now it is necessary to assess the impact factor differently. Indeed, a spectacular fire on the Novorossiisk terminal or a serious sabotage on the pipelines crossing Volga in the Astrakhan oblast could be a major blow to Russia’s status as the self-proclaimed “energy super-power”.

As for Central Asia, the booming oil industry in Western Kazakhstan most probably would remain off limits for the extremist organizations that might have penetrated into the south-eastern provinces of this vast country but still have limited reach. Moscow would hardly resort to any “unconventional” methods seeking to check the aggressive push of the Chinese energy companies.<sup>10</sup> In Turkmenistan, however, a single terrorist attack on the poorly maintained gas infrastructure could trigger the sudden collapse of the despotic regime weakened by rivalries in Niyazov’s court, and reverberate in the complicated arrangement for Russian gas exports to Ukraine and Europe that depend upon uninterrupted delivery of Turkmen gas.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For a sharp perspective, see Stephen Blank, “China Makes Policy Shift, Aiming to Widen Access to Central Asian Energy”, *Eurasianet*, May 21 2006, <<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav031306.shtml>> (April 30 2006).

<sup>11</sup> On Niyazov’s uncertain grasp on power, see Slavomir Horak, “Rumbles in the Turkmen elite,” *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, May 3 2006, <[http://cacianalyst.org/view\\_article.php?articleid=4202&SMSESSION=NO](http://cacianalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid=4202&SMSESSION=NO)> (April 30 2006); on the far-fetched plans for exporting Turkmen gas to China, see Muhammad Tahir, “Another Gas Export Dream: How far is the Turkmen China Gas Project From Realization?”, *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, May 3 2006, <[http://cacianalyst.org/view\\_article.php?articleid=4208&SMSESSION=NO](http://cacianalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid=4208&SMSESSION=NO)> (April 30 2006).

## Conclusions

Overall, the situation of extremely tight global demand-supply oil balance objectively increases the risks of terrorist attacks on energy infrastructure since the potential public relations and material “returns” on the investment of human resources in planning and execution of an operation of this kind have grown exponentially. However, a note of caution is due with any such conclusion: In the last few years, such attacks have been seriously over-predicted and bin Laden’s propaganda appeals “to stop the biggest plundering in history” are taken rather uncritically for real threats.<sup>12</sup> Spinning imaginative “worst case” scenarios may be an intellectually fascinating pastime, but real risk assessment has to focus on far more probable small-scale attacks, perhaps multiple, on the targets with high “value and vulnerability” indicator.

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<sup>12</sup> A dramatic assessment of these risks was presented at the seminar “Saudi Oil Facilities: Achilles Heel of the Western Economy” at the Jamestown Foundation, Washington DC, May 15 2006. See also John C.K. Daly, “Saudi Oil Facilities: Al-Qaedass’s Next Target?” *Terrorism Monitor*, February 23 2006, <[www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369910](http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369910)> (April 30 2006).

# The Phenomenology of “Akromiya”: Separating Facts from Fiction

*Alisher Ilkhamov\**

## “Akromiya” and the Andijan Uprising

On May 13 2005, thousands of Andijan citizens came out to the main square of the city to hold a peaceful demonstration and, according to eye witnesses, were shot down by the governmental forces in the same evening.<sup>1</sup> It was preceded by a court trial of 23 local businessmen who were accused by the government of being members of a secret extremist organization “Akromiya”. These businessmen were known and popular in the city for their charity activities and for providing jobs for around five thousand people. That is why many Andijaners, suffering from the decline of their living standards and chronic unemployment, were aggrieved by what they regarded as an unfair trial and participated in the pickets during the court hearings and in the demonstration on May 13.

There is another part of the story: on the night from May 12 to 13 2005, a group of armed men attacked a military barrack, a prison and local department of the security services. However, the identity of the group is

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<sup>1</sup> The following reports are based on the eye witnesses: “Preliminary Findings on the Events in Andijan, Uzbekistan, May 13 2005 (With Information as of June 13 2005),” OSCE-ODIHR, June 20 2005 <[www.osce.org/item/15234.html](http://www.osce.org/item/15234.html)> (April 30 2006); “Bullets Were Falling Like Rain,” The Andijan Massacre, May 13 2005, *Human Rights Watch* 17, 5(D) (June 2005) <<http://hrw.org/reports/2005/uzbekistan0605/>> (April 30 2006); “Uzbek Refugees Recount Harrowing Tales Three Months After Andijan Violence,” *UNHCR News Stories*, August 15 2005; International Crisis Group, “Uzbekistan: The Andijan Uprising,” Asia Briefing N°38, May 25 2005; Bukharbaeva, Galima [a witness of events], “Proshel mesayts s 13 maya – dnya tragichekshih sobytiy v Andijane,” [One Month Has Passed Since 13 May – The Day of Tragic Events in Andijan]. *Ferghana.Ru*, June 13 2005, <<http://news.ferghana.ru/detail.php?id=328335622424.31,512,21057897>> (April 30 2006); Volosevich, Alexei [a witness of events], “Andijanskliie hroniki: istorii iz goroda perezhihshego tragediyu 13 maia,” [Andijan Chronicles: Stories From the Town That Suffered a Tragedy on 13 May], *Vremya Novostei*, N°100, June 8 2005, <[www.vremya.ru/2005/100/13/126873.html](http://www.vremya.ru/2005/100/13/126873.html)> (April 30 2006).

still a matter of dispute: the organizers<sup>2</sup> of the demonstration on May 13 claimed that they were not involved in the attacks while the Uzbek government accused “Akromists” in implementing these violent actions. What the organizers of the uprising later acknowledged is that they indeed carried out a seizure of an oblast administration building, held a number of hostages – mainly policemen and security service agents – and that around forty guns were confiscated from those servicemen shooting at the crowd during the day.<sup>3</sup>

The event subsequently ended in bloodshed with Human Rights Watch describing it as a massacre.<sup>4</sup> According to the government of Uzbekistan, 187 citizens died during the May 13-14 events including hostages and representatives of security services. According to a number of independent sources, no less than 700 people died, mainly peaceful citizens among whom were women and children. Some of the demonstrators managed to flee across the border to the territory of Kyrgyzstan and later received asylum status.

It is evident, that the Andijan uprising revolves around the controversial case of “Akromiya”. There are two opposing set of opinions towards this group. According to one view which is mostly presented by the Uzbek government and some local experts, “Akromiya” is an extremist Islamic organization which harbors an intention to overthrow the secular constitutional order of Uzbekistan. The other camp denies that such an organization even exists.<sup>5</sup>

For this paper, I have set myself the task of examining what is fact and what is fiction with respect to the phenomenon of “Akromiya”. It is not an easy task because there are very limited credible sources available on this matter. To date, very little empirical research has been done in Andijan with respect to the local Muslim community and the activity of “Akromists”. Public attention to this group is mainly channeled towards the trial of those 23 businessmen mentioned and the Andijan uprising. To understand the context of this crisis, we first have to examine the role of Akram Yuldashev, an Islamic preacher based on Andijan and his group of followers.

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<sup>2</sup> The organizers were primarily the 23 businessmen released from the prison and their supporters.

<sup>3</sup> Video interview with Kabul Parpiev, one of uprising leaders, taken by freelance journalist Shahida Tulyaganova in June 2005. A copy of the interview was presented to me by Tulyaganova for research purposes.

<sup>4</sup> “Bullets Were Falling Like Rain,” *Human Rights Watch*.

<sup>5</sup> One of the most eloquent proponents of this view is Saidjahon Zainabitdinov, a human rights defender from Andijan sentenced to seven years following the events. See his article: “Protiv ‘akromistov’ fabrikuyutsya novye lozhnye uliki” [New Circumstantial Evidence Are Being Fabricated Against ‘Akramists’]. *Centrasia.Ru*, May 9 2005. <<http://centrasia.org/newsA.php4?st=1115619300>> (April 30, 2006).



## **Akram Yuldashev and His Group of Followers**

To start with, Akram Yuldashev was born in 1963 in Andijan. It is known that after graduation from the engineering program of Andijan University, he worked as a mathematics teacher. It has also been established that between the 1986 to 1988 period, he was a member of the clandestine Islamic organization Hizb ut-Tahrir. He left this organization apparently because of disagreement with the organization's agenda and operational methods.

There are no known records available specifying the reason of his departure from this organization but one can conclude, taking into account Yuldashev's subsequent writings and deeds of his followers that Yuldashev dismissed the call for an Islamic state. Furthermore, unlike the Hizb ut-Tahrir, he and his followers were never identified for calling for the establishment of a Caliphate and had also never publicly raised any political demands. Accordingly, none of such charges were brought to the court that considered the case of those 23 businessmen on trial. Nonetheless, it would appear that he did not abandon his determination to raise the role of Islam in society. Instead, he chose an evolutionary approach of upbringing the Muslim community by stressing on the need for pious deeds in everyday life.

In 1998, Akram Yuldashev was imprisoned for two years and six months by the Uzbek authorities on the charge of drugs possession<sup>6</sup> but was pardoned shortly after. In the wake of the bombings in Tashkent city in 1999 which the authorities claimed to be the work of Islamists, he was arrested again and sentenced to 17 years in prison, where he had remained since. Despite being self-taught on religious issues, Yuldashev nevertheless became a spiritual authority and was seen as a charismatic leader. He was popular across the whole Ferghana Valley, especially in Andijan.

Between 1990 and 1992, he handwrote a short forty-four pages tract called "Yimonga Yul" (Path to faith), in which he set forth his philosophy. After issuing this tract, Yuldashev started gathering a group of disciples. The decisive moment in the establishment of the community of his followers was his acquaintance with a local Andijan businessman named Bahrom Shakirov. Shakirov was so deeply impressed by the ideas of the Andijan spiritual teacher that he radically changed his own lifestyle, abandoned his habit of gambling and began to follow Yuldashev's call to prioritize one's spiritual needs over the material wants and to focus on 'wealth for the soul'.

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<sup>6</sup> Similar accusations were levied against other Islamists, devout Muslims and dissidents. To detain and convict these people the Uzbek police is said to routinely plant drugs on those considered disloyal to the current political regime.

In 1993, Shakirov donated a large parcel of land in Andijan's Bogi-Shamol suburb to establish a business community where followers of the Yuldashev's teaching could begin entrepreneurial activities in accordance with the pillars of Islam. On this plot of land, ten enterprises<sup>7</sup> were founded; they include a bakery, hairdressing salons, a cafeteria, and a shoe factory. By 2005, the number of firms expanded to 40.<sup>8</sup> All of its members were committed to giving a fifth of their earnings towards charitable goals realized via the establishment of a *zakat* fund<sup>9</sup> called 'Bait-ul-mol'.<sup>10</sup>

This philanthropic activity of the "Akromist" community has given a reason for Forum 18's<sup>11</sup> Igor Rotar to describe it as a "unique model of Islamic socialism."<sup>12</sup> But I would qualify the movement in a slightly different manner, as an Islamic equivalent of "social democracy", or even "moral economy", since Yuldashev and his adepts do not disapprove of private ownership and, at the same time, their activities imply a counterbalancing principle of social solidarity within the boundaries of their own community.

Apart from promoting charitable activity once a week, Yuldashev would conduct studies on Islamic education with community members, an act which the authorities perceived as a challenge to their monopoly over religious upbringing and education. The independence of the group, detached from state control and patronage, is most likely to be the key concern for the authorities. Another significant area of concern lie in the fact that Yuldashev's teachings, with its strong emphasis on moral-based social deeds of Muslims, was not in accordance with the practices of officially sanctioned Islam which focused mainly on the formalities of worship.

But even without their spiritual leader and after a short period of despondency, the community continued with its devotional activity and expanded its welfare network. On June 23 2004, the authorities suddenly ordered the arrest of 23 businessmen from this network. Despite the

<sup>7</sup> N.C. Aizenman, "The Eye of the Uzbek Storm," *Washington Post Foreign Service*, May 29 2005. Page A16,  
< [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/05/28/AR2005052800870\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/05/28/AR2005052800870_pf.html)>  
(April 30 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Kabul Parpiyev (one of the leaders of the Andijan uprising). *Ferghana.Ru*,  
(In Russian), August 13 2005,  
<<http://news.ferghana.ru/detail.php?id=376934560219.63,1444,12124212>> (April 30 2006).

<sup>9</sup> *Zakat* is one of five pillars of Islam requiring Muslim to share a part of their incomes for those most needed, the poor, disabled and incapable part of the society.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Kabul Parpiyev.

<sup>11</sup> Norwegian-based Forum 18 seeks to highlight one's right to religious freedom as stipulated in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.  
<[www.forum18.org](http://www.forum18.org)> (April 30 2006).

<sup>12</sup> Igor Rotar, "Uzbekistan: What is Known about Akramia and the Uprising?" *Forum 18 News*, June 16 2005, <[www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article\\_id=586](http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=586)> (April 30 2006).

absence of any evidence of anti-constitutional activity and ignoring protests of innocence, the businessmen were charged with organizing a criminal organization, mass rioting and infringement upon the constitutional order. The judicial process for the 23 businessmen began on February 11, 2005 and concluded on May 11 the same year, just before the government lost control of the situation on May 12<sup>13</sup>, 2005.

The accused were charged with membership in an organization called "Akromiya", which the defendants deny exists. The group members were calling themselves "Birodar" (brothers), which is reminiscent of the "Muslim brotherhood" in the Middle East. Among the local population, they were known by the nickname "Yimonchilar", which originated from the title of Yuldashev's "Yimonga Yul".

### **"Akromiya" and Yuldashev's "Yimonga Yul"**

While Akram Yuldashev has been accused of religious extremism by the authorities, it is impossible to accuse him of being so by simply referring to his pamphlet. The "Yimonga Yul" is in fact quite innocent and peaceful in content. At his 1999 trial, Yuldashev said the following of his tract: "Having written a religious book, I wanted to call people to the truth and kindness to each other."<sup>13</sup> The pamphlet can be qualified as a sort of religious existentialism. It consists of twelve parts which serve as the basis for setting forth views on the role of thought and logic in Islam, as well as stages of spiritual self-improvement.

Like many similar tracts on Islam, it contains citations from the Koran throughout. Calling man weak and helpless, Yuldashev, in his tract, sees man's path to salvation through religion. But religion for him is "no fairy-tale or legend, nor some ritual being carried out in a defined time," (cit. from "Yimonga Yul"), a reference to his observation of the local population's habit of practising Islamic rituals while at the same time lacking moral conviction in one's social action. Reading the tract, one is struck by its scientific style, especially when Yuldashev writes of the working processes of brain and thought. Some points even remind one of Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychology with its theory of the *Hierarchy of Human Needs*. In addition, the tract does not contain any noticeable social or political commentary that can perhaps be regarded as agitative towards the government.

Nevertheless, not everyone regarded Yuldashev's tract as wholesome. Bakhtiar Babadjanov, a well known Uzbek expert on Islam, has suggested that behind the abstract phrases in the pamphlet, one can reveal a call for jihad. Babadjanov comes to this conclusion only by the fact that

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<sup>13</sup>"Matlyuba Azamatova. 4 tisyachi chelovek piketiruyut zdaniye suda v podderzhku akromiytsev," [Four Thousand People are Picketing the Court Building in Support of Akromists]. *UzNews.Net*, May 11 2005, <[www.uznews.net/st190.htm](http://www.uznews.net/st190.htm)> (April 30 2006).

Yuldashev ostensibly cites some places in the Koran which, in combination with some other Koranic verses (not cited by Yuldashev, by the way), can be interpreted as justification of jihad.<sup>14</sup>

Babadjanov's shift in attitude against "Akromiya" is in fact worth mentioning. In the period before the Andijan event in May 2005 Babadjanov presented "Akromiya" as being far from an extremist group. For instance, back in 2002, he described the group as just "utopian" and Yuldashev's teaching as "amateur."<sup>15</sup> After the Andijan event, Babadjanov drastically changed his position and now describes "Akromiya" as a jihadist group.<sup>16</sup> According to Babadjanov in his recent presentation at America's Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in May 2006, he claimed that he spoke to Yuldashev in the cell for half an hour and Yuldashev ostensibly admitted that he overestimated the Uzbek population's readiness for jihad. But one should regard with skepticism confessions made by anybody being kept in custody or prison in Uzbekistan where the torture of arrested dissidents has been uncovered as routine practice.<sup>17</sup>

Besides Babadjanov, the other, less known, scholar who supports the government's position of Akromiya's extremist character is Zuhritdin Husnuddinov who was until late 2005 advisor to the Uzbek president and rector of Tashkent Islamic University.<sup>18</sup> Husnuddinov is the author of a

<sup>14</sup> Refer to Babadjanov's presentation at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington DC, On May 2, 2006,

<[www.carnegieendowment.org/events/index.cfm?fa=eventDetail&id=881&&prog=zru](http://www.carnegieendowment.org/events/index.cfm?fa=eventDetail&id=881&&prog=zru)> (May 20 2006). This presentation was also reported in the media: Julie A. Corwin, "Uzbekistan: Scholar Says Andijon Group Threat To State," *RFE/RL*, May 4, 2006, <[www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/5/a966430c-7188-454d-8182-416e815cc452.html](http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/5/a966430c-7188-454d-8182-416e815cc452.html)> (May 20 2006)

<sup>15</sup> B. Babadzhanov. "Islam in Uzbekistan: From the Struggle for «Religious Purity» to Political Activism," in Rumer B., ed., *Central Asia: A Gathering Storm?* (Armonk, N.Y. : M.E. Sharpe, 2002), 319.

<sup>16</sup> Babadjanov's presentation at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington DC, May 2, 2006.

<sup>17</sup> In late 2002, a UN Rapporteur, Theo van Boven, conducted a fact-finding mission to Uzbekistan. He uncovered evidence of systematic torture of suspected religious and political sympathisers. His report confirmed the high casualty rates resulting from torture, and its perfunctory use in detentions. In 2006 concern over the systematic use of torture by the Uzbek government was again raised by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Manfred Nowak. Source: "Uzbekistan: Systematic use of torture continues – UN," *IRIN*, April 20 2006,

<[www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=52879&SelectRegion=Asia&SelectCountry=UZBEKISTAN](http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=52879&SelectRegion=Asia&SelectCountry=UZBEKISTAN)> (April 30 2006).

<sup>18</sup> It is worth mentioning that the university was created in 1999 by the government and assigned to produce imams and officers for state structures, including the National Security Service. One of the tasks of the officers is to monitor religious leaders in Uzbekistan and shape the regime's policy and the population's view toward Islam.

reference book on Islamic movements, currents and sects<sup>19</sup> which contains an article on "Akromiya" describing it as being extremist and even more radical than Hizb-ut-Tahrir.

These two are the most prominent of scholars who promote the idea of Yuldashev and his group as extremist. In both cases, both of them evoked a "supplement" to "Yimonga Yul" which they attribute Yuldashev to have written in addition to the tract mentioned. In Husnuddinov's account, Yuldashev is alleged to have described in the "supplement", a five stage program leading to the establishment of an Islamic state:

Stage 1 "Sirli" (secret), the goal of which is the recruiting of new members of the movement;

Stage 2 "Moddii" (material), directing the accumulation of the movement's financial potential;

Stage 3 "Ma'navii" (moral-spiritual), the goal of which is the indoctrination of the movement's members;

Stage 4 "Uzvii maidon" (organic union), the essence of which is the infiltration into state institutions;

Stage 5 "Tuntarish" (translated as violent coup d'état), the final point of which is the establishment of a new state order based on *Shariat*<sup>20</sup>, beginning at a local, followed by the central level.

The point in the supplement which was taken as evidence of conspiracy with the intention to overthrow the constitutional order and secular state is Stage 5, "Tuntarish". This reference was considered sufficient for qualifying the group of Akram Yuldashev's followers as an extremist organization.

Babadjanov's past presentation of the supplement before the Andijan events is slightly different compared to Husnuddinov. He translated the name of the fifth stage as "Ohirat" (Outcome)<sup>21</sup> implying the end of a certain evolutionary process, that does not necessarily require a violent change of regime but points to the creation of an Islamic state as final outcome nevertheless.

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<sup>19</sup> Husnuddinov, Z. "Islom yunalishlar, mazhablar, okimlar," [Islam: Movements, Currents, Sects], (Tashkent: National Encyclopaedia of Uzbekistan, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> Islamic law derived from Koran.

<sup>21</sup> B.Babadjanov, "Ferganskaya dolina: istiochnik ili zhertva islamskogo fundamentalizma?" [The Fergana Valley: The Source of a Victim of the Islamic Fundamentalism] *Centralnaya Azia I Kavkaz* 5 (1999).

What is most striking is that neither Yuldashev, nor anybody else from his circle, ever recognized his authorship of the supplement. Moreover, Babadjanov in one online discussion which preceded the Andijan events stated two important facts: at the time when he first time wrote on “Akromiya,” there had been several versions of “Yimonga Yul” in circulation, some with and others without the supplement.<sup>22</sup> Babadjanov surprisingly did not even question and elaborate on the authenticity of the version with the supplement he personally used subsequently when denouncing “Akromiya”. In the interview with Forum 18, he also acknowledged that the supplement was brought to his office from the Prosecutor investigation office,<sup>23</sup> and not obtained from “Akromiya” members themselves. This thus opens questions as to the authenticity of the supplement he refers to and the basis for his accusations against Yuldashev. This doubt about Yuldashev’s authorship of the supplement is shared by Rotar who writes that it is unclear who wrote this supplement and whose idea they contain.<sup>24</sup>

### The Nurchu Movement in Uzbekistan

Yuldashev’s teachings and group of followers are akin to a number of moderate Islamic movements in the rest of the Muslim world, for instance, the Nurchu movement in Turkey and, Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle East (in its latest, post-Said Qutb, period). Just like Yuldashev’s grouping, the Nurchu activist networks emerged around a charismatic spiritual leader Sayid Nursi (1876-1960) whose collection of theosophical tracts “Risale-i-Nur” is highly identical to the one written by Yuldashev. Nurchu similarly focused on enlightening the Muslim society and building a pattern of devout Muslims via charity and welfare activity.

As a category of the Islamic movement, Nurchu, far from being extremist, never set a goal to establish an Islamic state in the observable future and never speculated on this matter.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the Turkish ruling Justice and Development Party (*Ak Parti*) whose constituency is comprised of social movements like Nurchu, has so far demonstrated much greater determination to enforce democratic institutions in the

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<sup>22</sup> Babadjanov’s comments to the article of S. Zainabitdinov: “Obshina ‘Akromiya’ – proizvolnoe tvorchestvo uzbekskih spets’sluzhb i politologov,” [“Akromiya” Community – Arbitrary Creativity of Uzbek Security Agencies and Political Scientists], *Ferghana.Ru*, May 6 2005, <[http://news.ferghana.ru/comments.php?mode=news&view=comm&cid=262&comm\\_id=762&id=3629](http://news.ferghana.ru/comments.php?mode=news&view=comm&cid=262&comm_id=762&id=3629)> (April 30 2006).

<sup>23</sup> Igor Rotar, “Uzbekistan: What is Known about Akramia and the Uprising?”

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Although they also most probably had a vision of their movement bringing gradual changes in the society and state in accordance to values of Islam.

country than all previous governments.<sup>26</sup> Despite the noticeably moderate character of the Nursi's ideas and the Nurchu movement he founded, the Uzbek government has clamped down on its activities. In 2002, twelve Uzbek citizens were imprisoned and sentenced from 15 to 18 years for being readers of Said Nursi's books.<sup>27</sup>

The education of people in accordance to the tenets of Islam cannot be considered criminal *per se*. Yuldashev's followers must have seen in their activity, an expression of pious community building, where the principle of a zakat economy and social solidarity were prove of genuine devotion to Islam. Unfortunately for Yuldashev and his followers, their call for moral conviction in one's social action, emphasis on self-enlightenment and spiritual self-perfection as main duties of Muslims, appears to have challenged the Uzbek government's conceived notion of the role of Islam for Uzbek society – that it should be restricted to formal worship and remain under the supervision of the secular state.

From the treatment of the Nursi followers in Uzbekistan in 2002, one could, at that time, already predict how the authorities would react towards the appearance of other moderate Islamists groupings. The government's suspicion towards Yuldashev's grouping thus comes as no surprise. In May 2006 a conference on "Akromiya" was held in Tashkent, a professor of Tashkent Islamic University in his presentation listed in one row, movements such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, "Akromists" and "Nurchists", qualifying all of them, with no exception, as extremist.<sup>28</sup>

## Conclusions

It would appear that the inability to distinguish between radical and moderate Islamic movements remains a characteristic of the current political regime. Ultimately, if the Uzbek government is to promote its image abroad and boost its relations with its own population, it would be important for the leadership to make a distinction between moderate

<sup>26</sup> To read up on the moderate nature of the Nurchu movement, see M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>27</sup> The verdict of the Tashkent regional military court from July 5 2002, a copy of which has been obtained via a human rights activist who has requested to remain anonymous. The account of this trial is also published in the news-letter issued by the human rights NGO 'Ezgullik' in 2002, titled "Sbornik soobsheniy o narusheniyah prav cheloveka v Uzbekistane (za period mai-iyun 2002)," [Collection of Reports on Human Rights Violations in Uzbekistan During May-June 2002] (available in print only).

<sup>28</sup> "Deyatelnost ekstremistskih organizatsyi v Tsentralnoi Azii priobritayet vse bole radikalnyi kharakter - expert," [Expert: The Activity of Extremist Organizations is Acquiring an Increasingly Radical Character], *Interfax-Kazakhstan*, May 10 2006 (Disseminated via email by: "Interfax-Kazakhstan" <delivery@interfax.kz>).

Islamic activism and radical groups which employ violence against the state and call for establishing a Caliphate.

The matter of non-radical Islamism relates to a broader agenda of regional and global security. The discourse of moderate Islam has been promoted by the current U.S. administration as an advanced means of fighting extremism and terrorism. It is the hope of this author that this article's account of the state of moderate Islamic activism in Uzbekistan, taking Yuldashev and his followers as a case study, will contribute to the discussion of such an agenda.



# Perception and Treatment of the “Extremist” Islamic Group Hizb ut-Tahrir by Central Asian Governments

*Saule Mukhametrakhimova\**

The repressive policies of Central Asian governments towards Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation) did nothing to reduce the influence of the banned Islamic party. This is not surprising as these authorities' heavy-handed tactics can hardly compete with the movement's sophisticated approach to gain popularity among the region's disaffected. Its members believe that the Islamic way of life is the only way to address the problem of corruption and inequalities in these societies.

## Hizb ut-Tahrir in Central Asia

It is understandable why Central Asian leaders would regard a group which aims to overthrow secular governments in the region and establish an Islamic state as a danger. However, the harsh treatment of suspected Hizb ut-Tahrir members far exceeds the real threat they pose. Comparative figures in Kyrgyzstan – which has the most publicly engaged Hizb ut-Tahrir community in the region and with probably the second largest membership after Uzbekistan - show that ten thousand Kyrgyz have been converted by protestant missionaries whereas an estimated three thousand Kyrgyz natives have joined the Islamic movement.<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to get the exact number of members and most estimates vary between 15,000 to 20,000. Hizb ut-Tahrir representatives tend to quote the upper end of this estimate while human rights activists and observers typically refer to the lower end of the range.

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<sup>1</sup> Anara Tabyshalieva, “Hizb-ut-Tahrir’s Increasing Activity in Central Asia,” *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, January 14 2004, <[www.cacianalyst.org/view\\_article.php?articleid=2016&SMSESSION=NO](http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid=2016&SMSESSION=NO)> (April 30 2006).

Hizb ut-Tahrir is bundled together with Al-Qaeda and the home grown militant Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan as terrorist organizations by the governments in Central Asia and its activities are banned throughout the region. As a result, thousands of suspected party members have been put behind bars. Accused of attempting to topple the government, they have been sentenced to up to 15 years of imprisonment in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan for crimes such as possessing propaganda materials like leaflets and video cassettes. Tashkent has also accused Hizb ut-Tahrir of being involved in the 2004 Tashkent bombings that killed 47 people.<sup>2</sup> Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, known until recently for their more lenient approach, have increasingly been following the Uzbek lead and performing their own crackdowns.

Hizb ut-Tahrir, which originated in the Middle East in the 1950s - advocates the creation of a region-wide Caliphate. The spread of movement's ideas in Central Asia dates back to early nineties following collapse of the Soviet Union. The ideas of Hizb ut-Tahrir took foothold first in Uzbekistan where it enjoyed the biggest following and later spread into neighbouring Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. Its activists convey their message in a simple way: poverty and unfairness in society can be tackled if corrupt governments are replaced with the rule of Islamic law.

Most of people in Central Asia do not want to see Hizb ut-Tahrir's idea of introducing Sharia (Islamic Law) become reality. Although the majority of people in the region consider themselves muslims, they strongly favour a secular state. Afghanistan's experience of setting up an Islamic state during rule of the Taliban ("Students of Islamic Knowledge Movement") between 1996-2001 is a good illustration of what happens when a group with radical ideas imposes their vision of an "ideal" society on others.

Nevertheless, there is widespread support for the organization's criticism of corruption, inequality and repression against devout Muslims. Hizb ut-Tahrir's call for social justice easily strikes a cord with hundreds of thousands of workers Tajikistan and Uzbekistan who have been forced to become migrant workers due to unemployment at home, as well as impoverished people in the provincial towns and villages of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

### **The Crackdown on Hizb ut-Tahrir and its Effects**

The inability of authorities to deal with Hizb ut-Tahrir is a combination of factors. Civil society activists expressed concern that there is no

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<sup>2</sup> Gulnoza Saidazimova, "Uzbekistan: Effect of Tashkent Explosions Still Felt Two Years Later," RFE/RL, March 27 2006. <[www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/03/DB00D0E9-C2E7-4BE7-89C7-5CA39EC49F3D.html](http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/03/DB00D0E9-C2E7-4BE7-89C7-5CA39EC49F3D.html)> (April 30 2006).

political will to acknowledge the cause and effect relationship between the failure of these governments' social policies, corruption and religious repressions on one hand and Hizb ut-Tahrir's wider social appeal on the other.<sup>3</sup> There is no real understanding of Hizb ut-Tahrir's sophisticated nature when it comes to winning hearts and minds as well as their ability to change the way it operates, depending on political climate. There is also a lack of experts able to lead an informed debate and help with policy recommendations.

The authoritarian Central Asian regimes thus employ the only option they know when dealing with dissent: by cracking down on the members and banning the organization. There are also those who point out that the authorities use the threat of Hizb ut-Tahrir as a convenient excuse to justify the policy of repression and to control the rise of political Islam in their states. The spill-over effect of the party's activities from Uzbekistan into neighbouring countries at the end of nineties is a direct consequence of the Uzbek authorities' harsh policies. Ideas associated with Hizb ut-Tahrir came from Uzbek party members who were forced to leave the country and find refuge within Uzbek communities in neighboring states.

The policy of crackdown does not seem to have had any effect on the party which seems to have found ways of surviving through years of crackdown. In Uzbek jails, thousands of jailed Hizb ut-Tahrir members stick together. Such unity gives them a sense of purpose and courage to stage protests against their harsh conditions. This phenomenon was witnessed by Uzbek journalist and civil society activist, Ruslan Sharipov who spent ten months in prison as a result of his human rights activities in 2003.<sup>4</sup>

Jailed Hizb ut-Tahrir activists in Kazakhstan continue their mission in the prison system recruiting followers from among the inmates. Kazak journalist Sergey Duvanov, sentenced to three and a half years in 2003 for his political writing, was quoted as saying that he witnessed a jailed Hizb ut-Tahrir activist to recruit a group of followers within three weeks.<sup>5</sup>

Party members claim that their aim is to achieve political change through peaceful means. Nevertheless, reports on the ground suggests that over the last couple of years, some splinter groups have emerged favouring more radical action in response to increasing pressure from the governments.

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<sup>3</sup> Telephone interview with the director of Kazak Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law, Yevgeniy Zhovtis, May 8 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Ruslan Sharipov, "Uzbek prisons – A Survivor's Guide," *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, December 10 2004.

<[www.iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=162118&apc\\_state=henirca200412](http://www.iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=162118&apc_state=henirca200412)> (April 30 2006)

<sup>5</sup> Telephone interview with the director of Kazak Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law, Yevgeniy Zhovtis, May 8, 2006.

## Politics and Publicity

Hizb ut-Tahrir is constantly looking for ways to promote itself by attempting to participate in politics and improving its public outreach. Last July, Hizb ut-Tahrir members in Southern Kyrgyzstan organized a campaign to support a candidate in Kyrgyzstan's presidential election.<sup>6</sup> It marked the first time the party had an opportunity to engage politically, an act which is a central part of their ideology and approach.

This seems to tie in with Hizb ut-Tahrir's widely referred strategy which is based on several stages: attract new members; build up a network that is deeply rooted within the population; infiltrate the government to gain supporters among those in power and to prepare the ground for establishing an Islamic state. This is not to say that political action in Kyrgyzstan is a sign of the party's campaign entering into another stage. Nevertheless, an analysis of Hizb ut-Tahrir's activities since the late nineties, when the first trials brought them into public light, suggests that its leadership has a clear idea of what they want and would seize any opportunity available to further their cause and objectives.

In the early days of Hizb ut-Tahrir, propaganda literature was usually exchanged among members of the group. This followed by party activists targeting big gatherings to spread their word to the people. In Kazakhstan, the first reported public action of party activists distributing leaflets, took place during celebrations commemorating the ancient city of Turkestan in South Kazakhstan in 2000. This tactic was then followed by direct mailing whereby activists place leaflets in people's post boxes.

Its members also demonstrate a proactive approach in getting their message across by initiating contacts with local media and offering interviews and information. A personal encounter two years ago with Vadim Berestov, a media savvy Hizb ut-Tahrir representative in Shymkent, was a good example of this. Although wary of the organization's propaganda, this author was nevertheless surprised to find him rather friendly and extremely articulate.

Last year, Hizb ut-Tahrir's representative in Osh, South Kyrgyzstan managed to register a television and radio broadcasting company called "Ong" (Consciousness)<sup>7</sup>. However, the company had to cease its broadcast activities following just three days of broadcast when its partner, the private TV channel Keremet, cancelled its initial agreement to cooperate with Ong. Keremet is said to have caved in to pressure from authorities, a Hizb ut-Tahrir spokesman claimed.

<sup>6</sup> Telephone interview with Osh-based journalist Alsiher Saipov, May 9 2006.

<sup>7</sup> "Kyrgyz member of banned group comments on suspension of own TV programme," Text of report by Kyrgyz AKI Press News Agency, in English by BBC Monitoring Service, March 10 2006, <[www.khilafah.com/home/category.php?DocumentID=13048&TagID=2](http://www.khilafah.com/home/category.php?DocumentID=13048&TagID=2)> (April 30 2006)

Another aspect of Hizb ut-Tahrir's activities that has certainly helped to gain more sympathy is their charity work in protecting the socially vulnerable. This system initially provided social support mainly to families of jailed party activists. However, over the years, the social network has been subsequently extended beyond party ranks to the larger community. Party members would provide support to poor families in dispute with authorities over payment of utility bills, assist young families and organize free distribution of food during religious holidays.<sup>8</sup> This appears to become part of movement's policy recently. According to a local journalist, the practice resembles the way Christian protestant groups attract new members with the help of free offerings, handing out food, cloths and sometimes money.

All this contributes to the image of Hizb ut Tahrir as a party that really cares about the common people unlike the state which appears to have forgotten about them. With the growing disparity between rich and poor groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir could find plenty of sympathisers in Central Asia.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

How then should the Central Asian government deal with the Hizb ut-Tahrir? A few suggestions come to mind:

- First, the governments should encourage and support informed debate on Hizb ut-Tahrir and its influence on socially vulnerable groups in the region involving independent experts;
- Second, they should change their policy of crackdown against suspected Hizb ut-Tahrir members since it is more likely to lead to their radicalization;
- Third, the governments in the region should stop their policy of repression against secular opposition groups which serve as useful platforms for expressing popular discontent with government policies;
- Fourth, the governments should undertake serious measures to tackle widespread corruption that erodes trust in state institutions;

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<sup>8</sup> Ikbol Mirsaitov, "Activeness of Hizb-ut-Tahrir should be countered with ideology," *Ferghana.Ru News Agency*, April 26 2006.  
<<http://enews.ferghana.ru/detail.php?id=840115169716.11,163,7752709>> (April 30 2006).

- Fifth and finally, the governments should work closer together with community leaders and NGOs in addressing problems of socially vulnerable groups.

It has been stated earlier that most of people in Central Asia do not want to see Hizb ut-Tahrir's idea of introducing Sharia (Islamic Law) become reality and that they favor a secular state. It has also been pointed out that the Hizb ut-Tahrir is the most effective as a result of its network and its social appeal to vulnerable groups in the society. The idea behind these recommendations is to identify ways of how Central Asian governments can deal with the Islamic party without radicalizing it further. What is also important is to address the issue of widespread corruption and injustices that make Hizb ut-Tahrir ideas attractive. If they are able to do so, it would undercut the current wave of support directed towards the Islamic group.

# An Al-Qaeda Associate Group Operating in China?

*Rohan Gunaratna and Kenneth George Pereire\**

The threat of global terrorism has escalated significantly in the last few years. International attention is naturally focused on countries where terrorist spectacles have occurred, or where there are ongoing high profile conflicts. The drama and, corresponding attention often leave little time or attention to 'lesser-known conflicts'. The situation in Xinjiang in Western China, an area bordering Afghanistan is a case in point.

In this remote region the indigenous Muslim Turkic speaking Uighurs are feeling pressured by the non Muslim Han Chinese immigrants to the region, as well as restrictive Chinese political controls on their religion. A recent report noted that the younger generation of Xinjiang Muslims were lamenting about how hard it was for them to learn Islam in Xinjiang. This they attributed to tight controls by the ruling Communist party over the curriculum of Xinjiang Islamic colleges.<sup>1</sup> This lament is part of a wider issue, the serious and widespread human rights violations directed against the Uighur community and what role, if any, it plays in the larger international jihadi conflict.

As with conflicts in Mindanao and Southern Thailand, the key issue in this conflict appears to be religious and cultural freedom. Muslims in Xinjiang have a long list of grievances with the government including what they perceive as state interference in religious worship. The young Xinjiang Muslims went on to elaborate that some of the state controls included Party authorities prescribing to Muslims what versions of the Koran to use. Party authorities were also making it mandatory for Imams to attend political education camps, run by state authorities.<sup>2</sup> These

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<sup>1</sup> "China's Grip on Xinjiang Muslims," *BBC News*, November 29 2005. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4482048.stm>> (April 30 2006).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

allegations are neither new, nor are they entirely baseless. Human Rights groups have accused the Chinese government of arbitrary abuses aimed at suppressing the freedom, religion and culture of the Xinjiang Muslim minority.

### 9/11 and its Effects

The grievances are not entirely confined to China. Some Uighurs remain in indefinite custody at the US detention centre at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Many of their appeals for release from detention are rejected on unclear and difficult to verify charges. There is some optimism however, after five Uighurs were released from the US detention centre in Guantanamo Bay in early May 2006, and subsequently transferred to Albania for resettlement. Abu Bakker Qassim and A'del Abdu al-Hakim, two Uighur "militants" believed to be wrongfully held at Guantanamo since June 2002 were among the five Uighur men released from Guantanamo. The two had previously appealed even to the U.S. Supreme Court to take up the case but their appeals were rejected as the men were due to have a hearing in a lower court.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, grievances still persist among the Uighur community.

These two cases of abuses are symptomatic of the kinds of abuses and repression that the Muslim Uighurs have faced for centuries. The failure of the Uighurs to be released from detention at Guantanamo Bay is also symptomatic of post-9/11 measures by coalition forces and the "War on Terror" label. Countries facing great difficulty in containing their own domestic small-scale skirmishes, insurgencies, separatist problems, choose to conveniently "hijack" the opportunity of labeling what they choose to perceive as their own domestic problems as part of the larger "War on Terror." This allows them to link a local problem to the larger global jihad legitimately in the eyes of the coalition, and thus allowing a broader range of tactics to be deployed.

Beijing has not missed the opportunity of labeling its fight against Uighur separatism as being part of the larger US-led global campaign against terrorism. While it was unlikely that there is formal Sino-U.S. arrangement on this issue, it seems clear that there was an informal understanding. China will support the global struggle against violent extremism, in exchange for the U.S. recognizing the Uighur's as part of that struggle.

In 2002, China issued a 15-page report formally linking its fight against Uighur separatism to the international war on terrorism.<sup>4</sup> In

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<sup>3</sup> "Guantanamo Uighur Appeal Rejected," *BBC News*, April 17 2006, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4916784.stm>> (April 30 2006).

<sup>4</sup> International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR) Database sources.



August 2002, the U.S. added the previously little known East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), based in China's Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang Weiwuer Zhiziqu) to its list of terrorist organizations.<sup>5</sup>

Although none of the Uighurs at Guantanamo claim to belong to the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), the continued detention of their fellow Uighurs at Guantanamo, provides the potential for all the Uighur groups to link their local grievances to the wider global jihad. What is worse, the domestic Uighur community faces continued repression. Worrying trends are already beginning to emerge. Since the late 1990s, the secular orientation of the Uighur groups has begun to change and after 9/11, the Uighur groups are significantly influenced by the developments in the global jihad arena. The World Uighur Congress (WUC), an exiled Uighur group, issued a stern warning that China's treatment of Uighurs residing in the Western region of Xinjiang risks turning the area into a "time bomb."<sup>6</sup> It however stopped short of linking it to the wider oppression of Muslims.

The oppression is serious enough for the million-strong overseas Uighur diaspora spread throughout Europe, USA, Canada, Australia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan to warrant providing significant financial support. Several separatist political organizations such as the World Uighur Youth Congress and the East Turkestan National Congress receive substantial funding from the overseas diaspora population. This source of funding will become even more critical with the release of a prominent Uighur activist, businesswoman and fund raiser, Rebiya Kader from detention in China on 14 March 2005 and exiled to the US. She served several years in prison on charges of providing state secrets abroad and upon her release, was exiled to the US. With her assistance, the Uighur diaspora will be able to raise even more funds to support the Uighurs in Xinjiang.

In addition, there are a number of umbrella bodies for other Uighur organizations operating in Germany. These groups claim to represent the interests of the Uighur people, such as promoting and lobbying for the rights of the community.<sup>7</sup> However, the Chinese government insists that these groups are terrorist organizations, with the World Uighur Youth Congress pursuing subversive activities.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> "In Xinjiang Province, an Uneasy Coexistence", *USA Today*, September 22 2004.

<sup>6</sup> "China Given Warning on Xinjiang," *BBC News*, September 30 2005, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4297070.stm>> (April 30 2006).

<sup>7</sup> United General Assembly of East Turkestan National Congress, *PRT Press Review*, April 13 2004.

<sup>8</sup> "Eastern Turkistan Terrorists Evidence Revealed," *China Daily*, February 14 2004. <[www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2004-02/14/content\\_306053.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2004-02/14/content_306053.htm)> (April 30 2006)

### **“Jihad in Eastern Turkestan”**

More worrying, however, is a recent hour long video entitled “Jihad in Eastern Turkestan”, posted in a Middle Eastern Website, which did establish the link.<sup>9</sup> The website is an Arabic website based in the United Kingdom and posts publications and news about the developments of Jihadi groups. The video is effective as a means of communication of Uighur operational capability, and is obviously inspired by videos produced and issued by groups such as Al-Qaeda and its affiliates.

The video illustrates Uighur militants displaying their weapon and combat training prowess with Rocket Propelled Grenades, M-16s, AK-47, detonators, and small rockets. Interestingly, the militants even make an unverifiable claim to have brought down an “enemy” plane. The enemy, being the Chinese authorities, and warn of many more attacks to come. The video also features a clip of an airplane crashing into the World Trade Centre building on September 11. This in itself illustrating that the Uighurs militants are drawing inspiration from sensational Al-Qaeda style attacks, as are many other militant groups. The video also featured people reading their wills and making last rites, possibly before embarking on suicide missions, and also featured the body of a Uighur militant, possibly killed in combat and being hailed as a martyr. In a dramatic ending, the video displays the faces of their enemies; Chinese Communist Party leaders.

Two things can be ascertained from the video. The first is that the more radicalized Uighur have begun to adopt the jihadi tactics, if not ideology. The second is that the Chinese government is running out of time if it wants to contain the Uighur struggle.

### **The Threat from the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM)**

Of immediate concern is the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), the most militant of the groups in the Xinjiang region, and the group with the closest ties to Al-Qaeda. The aim of ETIM is to set up an independent Turkic state by the name of East Turkestan for Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang, Western China. Among the Uighur groups, ETIM is one of the major beneficiaries of covert funding from the Uighur diaspora population. The organization has used this funding to acquire a wide range of weapons including a range of automatic weapons, and explosive devices, some of them homemade. Raids on ETIM safe houses in Afghanistan and China have discovered arms caches and equipment for producing weapons.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The Middle Eastern Website is <[www.tajdeed.org.uk](http://www.tajdeed.org.uk)> (April 30 2006).

<sup>10</sup> ICPVTR Database Group Profile on East Turkestan Islamic Movement.

The actual scale of ETIM's financing and logistical infrastructure was discovered in a February 1996 crackdown by Chinese authorities. The raids recovered nearly 3,000 kg of explosives, 4,000 sticks of dynamite, 600 guns and ammunition, as well as other supplies.<sup>11</sup> Additional coalition forces raids in Afghanistan and Pakistan seized over 4,500 hand grenades, 98 guns, and a large cache of swords, knives, detonators and explosives.<sup>12</sup> The fact that these two raids recovered such a large quantity of weapons is illustrative of ETIM's rather sophisticated capability to access financing and a logistics network and indicative of closely cemented ties with Al-Qaeda.

Some of the attacks carried out by the ETIM took place in 1996. On May 12 1996, the vice-chairman of the province's People's Political Consultative Conference, Arunhan Aji, and his son were attacked while on their way to the mosque.<sup>13</sup> During the year, there were also a number of unconfirmed reports of bomb attacks against utilities and railway lines. In February 1997, rioting broke out in Yining after police attempted to arrest two suspected insurgents; many were killed and demonstrations spread to Urumqi, Kuqa and Hotan. Just days later, three bombs detonated on buses in Urumqi, killing seven people and injuring at least 60 others. Since then, numerous attacks including attacks on buses, clashes between ETIM militants and Chinese security forces, assassination attempts, attempts to attack Chinese key installations and government buildings have taken place, though many cases go unreported. What is worrying however is that with ETIM being on Al-Qaeda's radar screen, more attacks within China are imminent.

### **ETIM's Al-Qaeda Link and the Threat to China**

Al-Qaeda's biggest success has been its ability to inspire and influence local Muslim groups in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, and to imbibe its ideology of global jihad. By providing finance, training, weapons and ideology, Al-Qaeda has been able to empower local Muslim groups to fight their governments and the non-Muslim populace. In the post 9/11 environment, the Uighur groups are now significantly influenced by the developments in the global jihad arena.

Al-Qaeda invited a number of Chinese Muslims to train in their camps in Afghanistan and on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in the

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<sup>11</sup> ICPVTR Database.

<sup>12</sup> "China Seeks Cooperation Worldwide to Fight "East Turkistan" Terrorists," *Xinhuanet*, December 15 2003. Reproduced at the Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN Office report. Extracted from webpage: <[www.china-un.ch/eng/zt/zgfk/t89062.htm](http://www.china-un.ch/eng/zt/zgfk/t89062.htm)> (April 30 2006).

<sup>13</sup> "East Turkistan Terrorist Forces Cannot Get Away With Impunity," Information Office of the State Council of P.R. China, January 21 2002. <[www.chinaembassy.se/eng/zt/t100782.htm](http://www.chinaembassy.se/eng/zt/t100782.htm)> (April 30 2006).

1990s. Furthermore, at least one Pakistani group associated with Al-Qaeda, Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HUJI) provided assistance to ETIM. HUJI leader Qari Saifullah Akhtar cemented the ETIM link with the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. According to confidential sources, ETIM is now the most active of the Chinese Muslim (Uighur) groups and is today in contact with both the Iraqi and Afghan jihadist groups. With Al-Qaeda suffering operationally, Zarqawi's group is now expanding its operational and ideological influence on local jihad groups. According to closed reports, a few ETIM members based in Europe are closely studying Zarqawi's tactics and technologies. Al-Qaeda and Zarqawi's group will continue to influence ETIM and its associated groups to take the fight to Beijing and even to its other cities such as Hong Kong and Shanghai.

ETIM, and some of its veteran members, are already in some ways considered part of the "brotherhood of global jihad". Some members have also fought with the anti Soviet mujahideen in Afghanistan, alongside Filipino Moros, Uzbeks, and Arabs.<sup>14</sup> Confidential reports also noted that Hasan Mahsun, alias Ashan Sumut, the second leader of ETIM, sent several members into China in February 1998, to establish a dozen training bases in Xinjiang and inland regions, training more than 150 terrorists in 15 training classes. Hasan Mahsun was killed by Pakistani troops on October 2 2003, when the army raided a suspected Al-Qaeda base in South Waziristan, along the Afghan border. However, others have stepped in to replace Mahsun; two of the possible successors are, Abudumijit Muhammadkelim, alias Zibibulla, allegedly director of personnel training and external liaisons, and Abudula Kariaji, alias Abdulla Dawut, deputy head of the group.

Although the Chinese security forces and the intelligence service have been effective against ETIM and other groups, their presence overseas, from Central Asia to West Asia, and in Europe is enabling them to survive. Today, Munich in Germany is their main centre for disseminating propaganda and fund-raising. The ETIM, and associated groups, have learned from groups, such as the Chechen terrorist, to exploit Western human rights and humanitarian associations, to assist in various activities. A similar pattern exists in Central Asia, particularly, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, where the ETIM and its associated groups are now operating. Its presence in Afghanistan and the Afghan-Pakistan border is significant, and they work closely with Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in terms of training, ideology sharing, funding and resource provisions. The movement clearly has significant popular support, as it has been able to survive despite having over 2,500 members arrested over

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<sup>14</sup> See Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia* (London: IB. Tauris, 2000) 128. He also wrote that the mujahideen had "come to fight the jihad...and to train in weapons, bomb-making, and military tactics so they could take the jihad back home".

the last several years and this points to the group's strong regenerative potential.

Beijing genuinely fears any disruption created by the ETIM. The impression of instability anywhere in the country can have an impact on foreign investment and economic activity in the area. Xinjiang is a valuable resource – producing one-third of China's cotton. Explorations in the Tarim Basin have also revealed considerable oil and gas reserves. The region is also the location of China's nuclear testing area. As China's gateway to Central Asia, South Asia, and Russia, the region is a highly strategic location, making the Chinese government particularly attentive to the situation. This attentiveness has not been matched with an accurate understanding of the nature and scale of the problem, thus contributing to counterproductive reactions. The Chinese authorities are thus facing an escalating and significant security challenge at their hands. Thus the Chinese authorities need to utilize more than just a security response to the escalating and increasingly substantial security challenge.

### **Future Implications and Conclusions**

Al-Qaeda and other global jihadist groups will continue to work with ETIM and with other Uighur groups. Although the Chinese have been effective in dismantling the terrorist infrastructure, ETIM and its associated groups are quite adept at improvising weapons and acquiring weapons from criminal sources. In the not too distant future, it is likely that ETIM and its associated groups will adopt suicide tactics in China. The ability of militant Islamic revivalism to graft itself onto existing conflicts between Muslim and non-Muslim rulers has already been witnessed on several occasions, and the potential for a greater Islamicization of the Uighur conflict is a real and present danger to the Chinese government today.



# Will Kazakh Authorities Avoid Extremist Pitfalls?

*Marat Yermukanov\**

The Kazakh security service does not miss out on demonstrating its capabilities to the international anti-terrorist alliance. The latest report in a series of asserted crack-downs on terrorist networks came on April 24. The Kazakh Security Services announced that: “in close cooperation with foreign security services” the National Security Committee had thwarted a terrorist plot to blow up law-enforcement offices, government buildings, and public safety facilities in Almaty. The detained, including 10 Kazakh nationals were charged with propagating religious extremism and possession of firearms. Sergei Mishenkov, the head of the Department for Combating of International Terrorism of the National Committee, said, without disclosing a name or country of origin, the detained terrorists were operating in Kazakhstan on instructions from abroad.<sup>1</sup>

The growing Kazakh engagement in the global war on terror is driven partly by international obligations and need to demonstrate resolve, but also by striving to maintain a favorable investment climate. Prospects of hosting the presidency of OSCE in 2009 have also impacted the Kazakh counter-terror efforts. Simultaneously, the Kazakh leadership has to consider growing anti-Americanism and anti-Western sentiments among the predominant Moslem population. These groups view allegations of “Islamic terrorism” as part of an American propaganda campaign invented to justify the war in Iraq and to demonize the Moslem world. Torn apart by these controversies, Astana tries to persuade the outside world that they remain committed to the international anti-terrorist alliance, while still maintaining that terrorism and extremism have no breeding ground in Kazakh society.

## **Imaginary Foes or Real Threat? The “International Dimension”**

The credibility of the report issued on April 24 can be strongly doubted for at least two reasons. Both because the National Security Committee, as skeptics assume, tries to restore its tarnished image in the public eye.

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<sup>1</sup> *Central Asia Monitor*, April 28 2006.

This image has been stained after a series of failures to unravel scandalous murders of opposition leaders over the last two years, with the latest being Altynbek Sarsenbayev in February. But also because the arrests took place just ahead of the arrival in Astana of the U.S. Vice President Richard Cheney. Most likely, the much-trumpeted crackdown on alleged terrorist cells was designed to produce a propaganda effect. President Nursultan Nazarbayev in his public speeches invariably depict Kazakhstan as politically the most stable and economically prospering part of Central Asia. Kazakh authorities find it however increasingly difficult to project this image of Kazakhstan as an oasis of calm and peace, while simultaneously demonstrating resolve against terrorism.

The political establishment in Kazakhstan has always denied the existence of home-grown terrorists and religious extremists, maintaining however that some radical groups operating in the southern regions of the country have infiltrated from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Russia. For example, in April this year, in the town of Taraz (South Kazakhstan), Kazakh security services detained an alleged member of the Islamic radical party Hizb ut-Tahrir, reportedly wanted by Uzbekistan for organizing a criminal group in Qoqon and extradited him to the Uzbek police. Last December Rustam Chagilov, one of the suspected Chechen fighters, was also handed over to Russian security services.<sup>2</sup>

In October, 2004, the Supreme Court of Kazakhstan banned activities of Al-Qaeda, the Islamic Party of East Turkistan, the Kurdish People's Congress and the IMU. The decision was largely motivated on grounds not related to the actual threat to the state power that these organizations posed, but on fostering good relations with Uzbekistan, China and Turkey. The list of extremist organizations banned by the Supreme Court of Kazakhstan was also later extended to include Asbat-al-Ansar, the Moslem Brotherhood, the Taliban, Grey Wolves, Jamaat of Mojaheds of Central Asia, the Society of Social Reforms, Istlah and Followers of Pure Islam. Some of these decisions were highly controversial. The Islamic Party of East Turkistan, for example, is regarded by Kazakh and Uighur nationalists as the symbol of resistance to Chinese reprisals against Moslem minorities. Uighurs in the Almaty region on numerous occasions sought to draw attention from the Kazakh government to the Chinese persecutions of Uighur intellectuals. But Astana seems to put long-term economic partnership with China in front of the protection of ethnic minorities in the neighboring country. The waning interest of Kazakh authorities in the plight of Chinese Uighurs gives Beijing leeway to deal with ethnic nationalists under the pretext of fighting extremism. Despite sharp criticism from nationalists, the Chinese policy towards Uighur separatists does not contradict the

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<sup>2</sup> *Megapolis*, April 28 2006.



strategy of Astana in maintaining peace and political stability in the booming Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region and along the Atasu-Alashankou pipeline route. Beijing skillfully uses the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to strengthen its influence and security in the oil-rich region and as a way to internationalize the problem of Uighur separatism.

In his address to the nation delivered on March 1 this year, President Nursultan Nazarbayev underlined the key role of cooperation within the framework of Eurasian Economic Community, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, as well as with the United States. For the first time in his address to the nation he sent a clear message to the West that Kazakhstan would promote “bilateral ties with the majority of Islamic states and countries of Arab East.” The cooperation with neighboring states is however disappointing up until now despite these initiatives, and the geo-politics and rhetoric involved are hindering responses to the real challenge.

### **Coping With Domestic Challenges and Spill-Over from Neighbors**

In a country with a 70 percent Moslem population, according to Spiritual Board of Moslems of Kazakhstan, the government faces an extremely delicate task of reconciling traditionally moderate Islam and the pro-Moscow Russian Orthodox Church with new religious trends and more than 40 denominations and sects. Last April, the police in Almay region tried to evict Hare Krishna followers from their leased land. At the recent sitting of the Committee for Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Justice the chairman of the Spiritual Board of Kazakhstan Absattar Derbisali announced that he received numerous letters from Moslem believers in the regions who complained that the missionary work conducted by members of the Jehovah's Witnesses led to breakup of families in some villages. A second dilemma for government officials is the fragmentation of the moderate Islamic community of Kazakhstan into competing factions. Following independence more than two thousand mosques were opened all over the country, particularly in the predominantly Kazakh-populated southern regions. The Committee of Religious issues of the Justice Ministry of Kazakhstan lost control over mushrooming religious sects. Absattar Derbisali, the chairman of the Spiritual Board of Moslems of Kazakhstan, demanded the revision of the law “On liberty of religious faith and religious associations”, arguing that the document, “hastily adopted”, leaves loopholes for subversive activities of foreign missionaries and religious extremism.<sup>3</sup> Moslem clerics went as far as to depict foreign missionaries as potential sources of extremist threat

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<sup>3</sup> *Islam Orkenieti* [‘Islamic Civilization’], December 17 2005.

towards Kazakhstan's stability. But they also seem to target rival Islamic trends from Moslem countries.

Leaders of orthodox Islam in Kazakhstan publicly voiced alarms at the "bad influence" of unconventional trends from Pakistan, Turkey and Arabic countries, and launched media attacks on followers of Ismatullah, Akhmadia, the pro-Turkish Nurshilar ("Enlighteners") sect and Hizb-ut-Tahrir. Although all of these religious groups distort the teachings of Islam, only Hizb ut-Tahrir is usually singled out as the main extremist force. Hizb ut-Tahrir made its first appearance in Kazakhstan in the autumn of 2000 during the celebrations in the ancient city Turkistan, South Kazakhstan. At the time, four members of the militant group were detained with leaflets calling for the overthrow of Uzbek president Islam Karimov, together with extremist literature and videocassettes. The anti-Karimov nature of the seized material aroused the suspicion that the group was affiliated with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). But the security services of Kazakhstan found no evidence to confirm that the members of Hizb ut-Tahrir had any links to the IMU. That was a small consolation for Islam Karimov's regime. Tashkent continued to rebuke Astana for lacking the will to cooperate against terrorists. After shoot-outs and terrorist attacks in the regions of Tashkent and Bukhara Uzbekistan openly accused Astana of providing training camps to terrorists in South Kazakhstan and passage for militants of the IMU. Kazakh authorities denied these allegations outright. Uzbeks also voiced concern that some Kazakh nationals were involved in the Tashkent blasts. A few days later, an Uzbek detective who arrived to Kazakh city of Shymkent to investigate the case, was killed in mysterious circumstances.<sup>4</sup>

Since then, Hizb ut-Tahrir members have been active in the cities of Kentau and Taraz in South Kazakhstan. In March last year, the Taraz city court staged a spectacular trial and sentenced 16 members of the extremist organization Jamaat of Mojahedeens of Central Asia to various prison terms. In November 2004, Kazakh security services reported the detention of 12 members of Al-Qaeda who allegedly perpetrated subversive activities in Russia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. That was the first evidence of the presence of Al-Qaeda members in Kazakhstan who up till then were believed to operate exclusively in Afghanistan.

Shortly after the American invasion of Iraq, Hizb ut-Tahrir extremists expanded activities to the northern parts of Kazakhstan, dropping extremist literature and anti-American leaflets into mailboxes of residents of Pavlodar and Kokshetau with the eloquent titles "An open letter to French President Jacques Chirac", "Evil schemes of America",

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<sup>4</sup> Khabar TV, August 4 2004.

and “Who is responsible for Tashkent blasts?” In February, 2004, the five members of Hizb ut-Tahrir were sentenced from two to five years in jail.<sup>5</sup> This cross-border nature of terrorism and Islamic radicalism in Central Asia requires an orchestrated Central Asian regional response beyond rhetoric alone.

### **Unresolved Dilemmas of Regional Security**

Not long ago, the Kazakh ruling elite cherished the illusion that terrorism and religious extremism cannot be rooted in a country with high rates of economic growth and better standard of living. Recent events refute this theory. Kazakhstan, like any other country of the region is vulnerable to extremist attacks. Reliance on Chinese, American and Russian military and technical assistance and their security umbrella is not a panacea for the extremist and terrorist threat. To effectively ward off religious extremism and terrorism, Kazakhstan must adopt a clear policy of regional cooperation with the Central Asian states. Regrettably, the relations between the states of Central Asia are still strained and overshadowed by the pursuit of self-interests and egoism. The Kazakh border authorities have reported 27 shootings along the Kazakh-Uzbek border over the last twelve years. In this situation, it is hardly surprising that Kazakhstan has not ratified border agreements with Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to this day. It would certainly be in the best interests of NATO, OSCE as well as other international institutions to promote greater interaction among Central Asian countries to prevent these threats.

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<sup>5</sup> *Islam Orkenieti*, September 19 2005. One of the leaders, Uzbek-born Anuar Sadykov, who had strong links to terrorist networks in Russia and Uzbekistan, escaped the trial in mysterious circumstances.



# Cross Border Terrorism Issues Plaguing Pakistan–Afghanistan Relations

*Rizwan Zeb* \*

On May 24, Pakistani law enforcement agencies arrested six Afghan nationals from the Zar Karez area of Loralai district for illegally entering Pakistan without proper documentation. Out of the six arrested, one is reportedly a member of the Afghan provincial assembly, the second is the head of the border security force, while the third is an official of the Afghan intelligence. According to media reports, they were suspected of supplying weapons to the Baloch militants in Pakistan.

This event took place in a highly tense phase of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations as both countries are at loggerheads since the so-called verifiable intelligence provided by the Afghan President to the Pakistani President through the media about the whereabouts of Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden and the Taliban resurgence in southern Afghanistan. It is reported that more than 200 people were killed and hundreds others wounded during a battle in southern Afghanistan that started May 18 and continued for the next three days. It was the worst kind of violence since the ouster of the Taliban in December 2001. Kabul has always blamed Islamabad for the on-going violence in the country and the recent attacks have further poisoned the relations between the two.

## Rocky Relations Between Pakistan and Afghanistan

The situation in Afghanistan has considerably deteriorated over the past year. The security situation is worsening, lawlessness is gripping the country, drug trafficking is flourishing and the warlords are getting stronger. In fact, the opium trade, according to a number of reports, currently amount almost half of Afghanistan's GDP. This is an indication that the warlords are getting stronger in Afghanistan as they control most of the trade. Besides Al-Qaeda, the profitable drug trade is what finances the never-ending violence, drug-related killings and attacks on government and international troops in Afghanistan.

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Last year also saw the resurgence of the Taleban and an increase in suicide bombings. The Kabul administration blames all of these occurrences on Islamabad. Key figures in Kabul have at times claimed that Islamabad is not doing enough to address the issue of the Taleban and Al-Qaeda presence in its tribal areas, charge Islamabad vehemently denies. Against this backdrop, President Hamid Karzai visited Pakistan in February 2006. Insiders claim that though the trip resulted in “the usual mutual ceremonial vows of friendship and cooperation” yet “most of the official meetings ended on either a bitter or stale note because of the contentious issues raised by both sides.”<sup>1</sup> Prime amongst these issues were Kabul’s allegation about the Taleban and Al-Qaeda presence in Pakistani territories and Pakistan’s concern about Indian consulates based in Afghanistan and their role in the militancy in Baluchistan.

During President Karzai’s visit, Islamabad is reported to have provided proof to the Afghan President of the role of the Indian consulates in Jalalabad, Kandahar, Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat in fueling violence in Pakistan especially Baluchistan. Meanwhile, the main message by President Karzai was that Pakistan is not doing enough to address to Kabul’s concern regarding the alleged presence of terrorists in its territory.<sup>2</sup> It has been reported that the Afghan delegation handed over a list of wanted Taleban officials including Mullah Omar, whom they claimed were in Pakistan. This list was however leaked to the media, prompting the President of Pakistan, General Musharraf, to publicly declare in his interviews with the U.S. television networks ABC and CNN’s Late Edition that the information provided on Taleban leaders was “a waste of time” as most of it was outdated and that the CIA knew about this. During the CNN interview, he said, “I am really surprised and shocked why they have disclosed this to the media,” adding that ‘there is a very, very deliberate attempt to malign Pakistan’ by some agents, and “President Karzai is totally oblivious of what is happening in his own country”.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Imtiaz Gul, “Karzai’s Visit and Continuing Acrimony,” *The News International/Jang Group*, <[www.jang.com.pk/thenews/feb2006-daily/23-02-2006/oped/o3.htm](http://www.jang.com.pk/thenews/feb2006-daily/23-02-2006/oped/o3.htm)> (April 30 2006).

<sup>2</sup> President Karzai was quoted as saying: “I’m going to Pakistan especially to talk with the president of Pakistan and the government there about the issue of terrorism, [...] I will talk to them about these bombings going on in places like Kandahar, Paktia Province, Khost, and Mazar-e Sharif.” Quoted in Ron Synovitz, “Afghanistan: Karzai To Consult Pakistan About Suicide Bombings,” *RFE/RL*, February 15 2006, <[www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/02/A645C166-D11D-48BC-ADBA-454787683128.html](http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/02/A645C166-D11D-48BC-ADBA-454787683128.html)> (April 30 2006).

<sup>3</sup> “Musharraf Says Karzai Oblivious,” *BBC News*, March 6 2006, <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/4777610.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4777610.stm)> (April 30 2006).

## Pakistan's Effort Against the Taleban and Al-Qaeda

Currently, Pakistan has deployed over 80,000 troops on its border with Afghanistan and is actively involved in operations against the Taleban and Al-Qaeda terrorists in the area. At the same time it is also acting on a three-pronged strategy to develop the area and eliminate the root causes, which might breed extremist tendencies in the region along with its military operations in the area. In its operations against foreign terrorists and their supporters in the tribal areas, Islamabad has lost over 600 soldiers to date. This figure is higher than the casualties suffered by the coalition forces in Afghanistan put together. In a meeting with U.S. Central Command Chief, General John P. Abizaid, President Musharraf had in fact pointed the urgent need to reinforce security on the Afghan side of the border to stop “miscreants” sneaking into Pakistan’s tribal areas. President Musharraf also shared with General Abizaid evidence that infiltration was taking place from Afghanistan and about the involvement of foreigners in creating trouble in Baluchistan.

There appears to be a general misperception that Islamabad is not doing enough to combat the Taleban and Al-Qaeda and that Pakistan is behind the disturbances in Afghanistan. President Karzai and his administration continue to stress that Islamabad has to do more for the War on Terror. President Bush meanwhile has gone as far as to openly state during the joint press conference with President Musharraf that he had come to Islamabad to determine whether or not President Musharraf is as committed as he had been in the past.<sup>4</sup>

However, there are a number of factors which one has to keep in mind in order to understand the causes of the violence. As NATO’s General Karl Eikenberry notes, the greatest problem is not the strength of the Taleban but “the very weak institutions of the [Afghan] state”.<sup>5</sup> In addition to the failure of the Kabul regime to establish control in the country and build institutions, it is also far from clear as to what the Afghan government has done to dismantle the Taleban’s traditional stronghold in the south of the country. Another reason for this surge in violence is the planned withdrawal of some of the U.S. troops and the induction of NATO troops to the area.

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<sup>4</sup> During his visit to Pakistan, Bush was quoted as saying at a joint news conference with President Musharraf: “Part of my mission today was to determine whether or not the president is as committed as he has been in the past to bringing these terrorists to justice, and he is.” Refer to: “Bush: Pakistan Committed on War on Terror,” *China Daily*, March 4 2006, <[www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2006-03/04/content\\_526594.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2006-03/04/content_526594.htm)> (April 30 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Lolita C. Baldor, “US General Says a Weak Government Sets Back Afghan Effort,” *Associated Press*, May 11 2006. <[www.boston.com/news/world/articles/2006/05/11/us\\_general\\_says\\_a\\_weak\\_government\\_sets\\_back\\_afghan\\_effort/](http://www.boston.com/news/world/articles/2006/05/11/us_general_says_a_weak_government_sets_back_afghan_effort/)> (May 20 2006).

Perhaps the most important factor, which is ignored by Kabul and its allies, is that some of the violence is taking place in areas notorious for poppy cultivation and opium trade. Considering the fact that there are certain elements in Afghanistan who are notorious for their narco-trade links one can assume that these drug cartels may be doing their best to destabilize the country so as to use the situation in their favor. Such disturbance is no fault of Pakistan.

Islamabad has on its part has been expressing its concerns over the location of six Indian consulates in cities along the Pakistan border, and of Indian military assistance to the Afghan authorities for the building of the Afghan national army. India recently sent 300 commandos into Kandahar. While the Indians claim that their troops are there to protect Indian workers, Pakistan finds this explanation unconvincing as there are workers from many other countries in Afghanistan and the Afghan government has not allowed any of them to send their troops to protect their citizens. Kabul's failure to address this issue prompted Islamabad to accuse India of involvement in the violence in Baluchistan against the Pakistan government. The arrest of the Afghan provincial assemble member and intelligence operatives inside Pakistan territory further enforces Islamabad's view that some elements local and foreign inside Afghanistan are actively supporting the militants in Baluchistan and North West Frontier Province.

### **Fencing Makes Bad Neighbors?**

Islamabad has for some time been suggesting the fencing of the border between the two countries as a means to address the cross-border infiltration border issue. However, the Kabul administration has fervidly opposed this. Pakistan's Interior minister, Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao said that instead of putting its own house in order, the Afghan government has been falsely accusing Pakistan of cross-border infiltration. He added that fencing might be the best solution in these circumstances. The Lahore-based *Daily Times* in its editorial also pointed out that it is the most practical solution: "Not only is this important for security reasons, making it more difficult for people to cross over, but it also makes economic sense since the measure could reduce the smuggling of contraband".<sup>6</sup> The fence would not only make the border more secure and infiltration less likely, it will also address Islamabad's concern that Afghanistan's territory is being used against Pakistan. According to the editorial, the only reason Karzai and its team is opposing fencing is because they want "to keep the issue of the

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<sup>6</sup> "Mr Karzai Can't Have it Both Ways," *Daily Times*, March 12 2006, <[www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2006%5C03%5C12%5Cstory\\_12-3-2006\\_pg3\\_1](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2006%5C03%5C12%5Cstory_12-3-2006_pg3_1)> (April 30 2006).



legitimacy of the Durand Line<sup>7</sup> open. He knows that if the border is fenced, the line will become a permanent legal reality.”<sup>8</sup> Cynics would say that the other reason is that this will eliminate the support base and supply line of the rebels in Baluchistan.

However, a few observers have pointed out that Kabul administration is not a free agent and that they would not have done all this without the approval of the Americans. In support of their argument they quote a number of statements by U.S. officials including the recent one by the American President during his trip to Islamabad in which he said that he is in Islamabad to determine President Musharraf’s commitment.

Kabul and Islamabad have to realize that the blame game will not serve anybody’s interest. The sooner they realize it the better. President Karzai needs to assert himself and act on his assurances to Islamabad that Afghanistan’s territory will not be used against Pakistan. There is also need for him to put his own house in order rather than simply blaming everything on Islamabad. More coordination and intelligence sharing is key to success in this war against terror. Talking to each other directly, rather than through the media will also be very useful in mending fences and solving problems. However, from Pakistan’s perspective, the best solution to the immediate issue of terrorists’ crossing into each other’s territories is by fencing the border.

### Concluding Thoughts

Ambassador Tanvir Ahmed Khan, former foreign secretary of Pakistan, raised a very pertinent question when he wrote:

“People are weary of war and long for an opportunity to rebuild shattered lives. The question now is if the Afghans face a crisis of hope, is there more disenchantment with the reconstruction program that the insurgents exploit? Is there greater disappointment with the political process, which has failed to end exploitation of the people by the warlords? Are the foreign forces increasingly seen as the ultimate protectors of the corruption seeping through the new economic system?”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The Durand Line is named after the British negotiator Sir Mortimer Durand who negotiated the border with the then Afghan king Amir Abdur Rehman Khan in 1893. No Afghan rulers, including the Taleban has accepted the line. The Afghan position is that the treaty expired in 1993 as it was to stay in force for 100 years only. Islamabad rejects such claims.

<sup>8</sup> “Mr Karzai Can’t Have it Both Ways,” *Daily Times*.

<sup>9</sup> Tanvir Ahmad Khan, “Kabul: The Frequently Asked Questions,” *Daily Times*, May 26 2006.

These questions point to the internal dysfunction of Afghanistan. Rather than blame Pakistan for its woes, the Afghan authorities should instead address the challenges faced by the country from within.

Despite the tension in bilateral relations, there have been positive developments too. The volume of Pakistan's trade with Afghanistan has reached one billion dollars from about US\$200 million of few years back. Islamabad has given \$250 million for Afghanistan's reconstruction thus far. Both countries have also agreed to and have taken steps to enhance social, cultural and sports ties. The initiation of the Peshawar-Jalalabad bus service is one manifestation of this positive trend. Islamabad has also started a number of projects in Afghanistan such as building of roads, schools, hospitals and providing training to Afghan nationals in different sectors. Islamabad clearly understands that a stable Afghanistan is in Pakistan's interest. Therefore it will not do anything to destabilize it as it will spill over into Pakistan, as has occurred in the past.

Kabul should also realize that there are certain limitations on policies and actions against Pakistan because being a landlocked country it needs Pakistan for access to the outside world. In the meantime, it is most likely that the Kabul administration will continue to blame Islamabad for its problems while it faces difficulties in providing the Afghan people what they deserve. Until this change, the chances of any improvement in Pakistan-Afghanistan relations are remote in the near future.

# Confronting Terrorism and Other Evils in China: All Quiet on the Western Front?

*Chien-peng Chung\**

## ABSTRACT

Despite the predictions of many observers, and reports of occasional arrests of political activists, China's hitherto restive western regions heavily populated by non-Han Chinese ethnic minorities have been relatively quiet for a number of years. However, disturbances by ethnic minorities can recur with little forewarning. If or to what extent they do clearly depends on three major set of factors: PRC minority policies, foreign attention, and minorities' grievances.

*Keywords* • Xinjiang • Tibet • terrorism • China • separatism • PRC minority policies

According to the official Xinjiang Daily, the number of people arrested in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 2005 for endangering state security, which could be anything from terrorism to talking with western reporters, was 18227.<sup>1</sup> In 2002, a Tibetan lama and ex-monk were respectively given death and life sentences in western Sichuan for setting off five bombs that killed one person and injured twelve others in the provincial capital of Chengdu.<sup>2</sup> Yet, despite the predictions of many observers, and reports of occasional arrests of political activists, China's hitherto restive western regions heavily populated by non-Han Chinese ethnic minorities have been relatively quiet for a number of years. This near-absence of organized violent protests or bombing incidents is particularly marked when compared to the period between 1987 and 1997. Thus one is tempted to ask, as of the proverbial dog that did not bark, what happened to China's supposed vulnerability to, and war on, terrorism?

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<sup>1</sup> "18,000 Uyghurs Arrested for 'Security Threats' Last Year," *South China Morning Post*, January 21 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Erik Eckholm, "China Court Rejects Appeal of Tibetan Monk Sentenced to Death for Separatism," *New York Times*, January 27 2003; "China Justifies Death to Tibetan Monk," *Press Trust of India*, November 5 2004.

## The Past and Presence of Terrorism in China

Terrorism is a difficult term to define in any context. It seems even more vague and broad when applied to circumstances in China, where any premeditated and violent criminal act against any person or property with the intent of spreading fear or causing harm for a political purpose, whether executed individually or by a group of people, would count as terrorism. The PRC government is working on an Anti-Terrorism Law, which when promulgated, might provide an exact definition of terrorism. In any case, terrorism in China is usually identified with the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) and other Uighur separatist cells in Xinjiang, and to a lesser extent, militant members of the Tibetan Buddhist clergy agitating for independence. Beijing is understandably concerned that a volatile Xinjiang would threaten import of oil and gas through pipelines from Kazakhstan in Central Asia across Xinjiang to the Chinese coast, a restless Tibet would stoke the issue of legitimacy of Chinese rule, and a twitchy Inner Mongolia might damage China's relations with Mongolia.

In the aftermath of the events of September 11, 2001, the PRC authorities treated the global "war on terror" essentially as a foreign relations exercise, to protect its relations with the United States, and as an excuse to crackdown on what it deemed to be terrorist activities on Chinese soil and uncover foreign linkages to the perpetrators. Washington has since become more sympathetic to Beijing's charge of terrorists fomenting "splittist" or separatist violence and its "Strike Hard" (*yan da*) campaign against them, most notably by placing the little-known ETIM on the U.S. list of terrorist organizations in August 2002. The PRC authorities have made much of 12 Uighur "terrorists" who joined the Taliban and are detained by the U.S. at its facilities at Guantanamo Bay.<sup>3</sup> They have also accused another Uighur "terrorist" group, the East Turkistan Liberation Organization, of killing a Chinese embassy diplomat in Kyrgyzstan's Bishkek in 2002 and nineteen Chinese passengers in a China-bound Kyrgyz bus in 2003.<sup>4</sup> Occasional reports have surfaced of Uighur separatists operating with the Al-Qaeda, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Hizb-ut-Tahrir, Chechens, and other groups in Central Asia that use violence to pursue their aims, and even an IMU cell established in Xinjiang, but there has so far been no concrete proof.

Thus 9/11 should not be read as a demarcation or signpost in China's "war on terror," but should instead be recognized as an ongoing domestic affair reaching back years. Violent demonstrations for democracy and

<sup>3</sup> "Guantanamo Prison: Uygur Inmates are Unwilling to be Extradited to China," *Epoch Times*, March 8 2006.

<sup>4</sup> James Millward, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang: A Critical Assessment* (Washington, DC: East-West Center Washington, 2004), 21-22.

independence in Inner Mongolia in 1989 and 1990 were handled by armed police units, resulting in several fatalities.<sup>5</sup> China's counter-terrorist efforts started in Xinjiang with a confrontation between the police and armed rioters at Baren County in 1990, followed by violent events such as bombings of buses and public buildings, and gun attacks on policemen and officials, with the most fatalities occurring in a clash between soldiers and protestors in Yining City in 1997.<sup>6</sup> PRC authorities have admitted to very few incidents in Xinjiang since the turn of 1997 and 1998, after the introduction of *yan da*, which started as a nationwide campaign to strike at skyrocketing crime, but has targeted separatism and illegal religious activities in Xinjiang principally but also in Tibet. Major round of demonstrations by protesting monks and nuns in Tibet started in 1987, but the last of them was dispersed by the authorities in 1993. This was shortly after the appointment of the uncompromising Chen Kuiyuan as Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Secretary for Tibet, who banned all displays of the images of the self-exiled Dalai Lama, head of the Tibetan Buddhist hierarchy, after Beijing replaced his choice of the number two Panchen Lama with its own candidate in 1995. There have been occasional small-scale bombings since then – a bomb exploded outside a Lhasa police building in 1998 injured four people and one in 2000 went off beside a Lhasa courthouse – but no mass risings.<sup>7</sup>

### **Terrorism and the “Three Evils”: A Fine Balancing Act**

Terrorist or violent political acts are a manifestation of root causes that suppression alone does not adequately deal with. Also, as with elsewhere, terrorism in China cannot be understood in isolation. It has to be seen in the wider context, since the term “terrorist” is usually applied to separatist and unofficial religious groups in the ethnic autonomous regions of Xinjiang, Tibet, and to a lesser extent, Inner Mongolia. In Beijing's parlance, terrorism constitutes one of “three evils,” together with separatism and religious fundamentalism, which, in its view, are all inter-connected threats to China's national security and regional stability. This is because Beijing sees terrorism as a violent expression of the aim of ethnic separatism and the result of zealous religiosity on the part of minorities that threaten to displace the state as an object of adulation. As such, separatist-cum-religious terrorism is closely associated with the fears, grievances and aspirations of certain, though by no means most, ethnic minorities in China. The presence of the “three evils” also means that the root causes of terrorism - religious freedom, cultural autonomy,

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<sup>5</sup> June Teufel Dreyer, “China's Vulnerability to Minority Separatism,” *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 32, 2 (Summer 2005): 72.

<sup>6</sup> Millward, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang: A Critical Assessment*, p. 14-18.

<sup>7</sup> Barry Sautman, “China's Strategic Vulnerability to Minority Separatism in Tibet,” *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 32, 2 (Summer 2005): 99.

living standards, and political rights of ethnic minorities - are not addressed directly or earnestly enough by the Chinese authorities. Indeed, an unstated source of ethnic discontent is the discriminatory practices in the execution of minority policies of the PRC government, even assuming the purest intent.

For all their collective malfeasance, it must be admitted that the “three evils” offer rather good mass media propaganda for the PRC government to keep ethnic demands on the defensive, dismiss foreign scrutiny, encouragement or support for the causes of Chinese minorities, and perhaps most importantly, sustain the unity of China’s dominant Han Chinese ethnicity. The last aspect is shaping up to be of increasing salience to China’s leadership, in the face of the end of the state’s socialist ideology and the homogenizing, materialistic and individualistic effects of globalization, to prevent the emergence of centrifugal southern, provincial or coastal nationalisms that would challenge, or at least weaken, the present hegemonic state constructed around the ruling CCP, patriotic state-nationalism and a principal ethnic group.

Both the PRC authorities and émigré Uighur and Tibetan independence advocacy groups are carefully crafting a fine balance between playing up and playing down the threat of separatist violence. For Beijing, playing up the issue would discourage foreign trade and investments in Xinjiang or Tibet, but playing it down would deprive the authorities of excuses to initiate actions against separatists and religious radicals. For the émigré activists, the problem is either discrediting their cause by associating it with terrorism, or demonstrating their hopeless lack of influence in rousing their fellow minorities in China. However, even if the true state of separatist violence or terrorism is between an exaggeration and an understatement for both parties, it is far from being a phantom menace. China’s western front has been mostly quiet for at least the past eight years now, but disturbances by ethnic minorities can recur with little forewarning. If or to what extent they do clearly depends on three major set of factors: PRC minority policies, foreign attention, and minorities’ grievances.

### **The Four Aspects of China’s Minority Policies**

The policies or strategies adopted by the PRC government in handling ethnic minority issues are particularly related to forestalling or suppressing separatism-inspired ethnic disturbances or violence, though not exclusively so. Securing border control and maximizing mineral extraction in the western regions are also major purposes for the government. There is often talk of a “carrot and stick” or “hard and soft” strategy that is supposedly pursued by the Chinese authorities to deal with minorities’ grievances – hard measures to clamp down on dissidents

advocating independence or self-determination through elections, and soft measures to win over support, or at least acquiescence, of the minorities for CCP rule and its minority policies. In fact, there are four major aspects of this strategy – crushing separatism, promoting economic development, disaggregating issues by distinguishing non-separatist from separatist demands, and expanding personal liberties – all of which have their hard and soft qualities.

To crush separatism, the government has extended the “Strike Hard” campaign to Tibet and Xinjiang since at least 1997, through tightly observing religious activities and festivals, monitoring Muslims who have returned from studying in the madrassahs (Islamic schools) of Pakistan or the Middle East, arresting and executing suspected terrorists, indicting known separatists, weapons and subversive literature at the border, establishing a number of anti-terrorist surveillance centers and quick reaction units in sensitive regions since September 11 2001,<sup>8</sup> strengthening overall military preparedness, reinvigorating the system of informants, and, it should be mentioned, promoting reliable and capable minority cadres to fill up party and government positions in autonomous regions, prefectures and counties. At least in the above aspects, the government’s campaign to crush separatism appears to have been relatively successful so far.

The Chinese government has realized that poverty breeds discontent. To promote economic development in Xinjiang, which in 2004 ranked thirteenth in per capital Gross Domestic Product (GDP) amongst China’s thirty-one provincial-level units, and Tibet, which ranked twenty-fifth,<sup>9</sup> Beijing has allocated vast sums of money to build up basic infrastructure in these regions, promoted culture-related commercial items such as tourism, handicrafts, and folk medicines, and retained affirmative action programs in college enrolment and government jobs for ethnic minorities. Since the first Central Ethnic Work Conference jointly organized by the State Council and CCP Central Committee in 1992 unveiled plans to accelerate economic development in minority areas, the PRC has adopted a “dumbbell” strategy of economic development, which emphasizes equally on both cross-border and domestic trade and investment for China’s western regions. The “Prosperous Border Rich People” (*xingbian fumin*) part of the “Great Western Development” (*xibu*

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<sup>8</sup> Martin Andrew, “Terrorism, Riots and the Olympics: New Missions and Challenges for China’s Special Forces,” *China Brief* 5, 19 (September 13 2005)

<[www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=408&issue\\_id=3453&article\\_id=2370204](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=408&issue_id=3453&article_id=2370204)> (April 30 2006); You Ji, “China’s Post 9/11 Terrorism Strategy,” *China Brief* 4, 8 (April 15 2004)

<[www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=395&issue\\_id=2935&article\\_id=236613](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=395&issue_id=2935&article_id=236613)> (April 30 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Calculated from National Bureau of Statistics, *China Statistical Yearbook 2005* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2005), 58, 96.

*dakaifa*), announced in 2000, mandated the state to spend 60% of its capital investments in the west where 80% of China's minorities live,<sup>10</sup> in order to create an ethnic merchant middle-class that is, if not pro-Chinese, at least not willing to tolerate instability in the region.

In disaggregating issues, the authorities have tried to separate actions that threaten state security and national unity from non-separatist demands, by dealing with the latter through legal means and government fiat. These include banning books or articles that have courted charges of being insulting to minorities' customs and religious beliefs; taking steps to conserve minorities' natural living environment by answering their calls for reforestation, the return of cultivated lands to pasture, or more studies to be conducted before constructing dams; excluding minorities from China's official one-child policy; and allowing the right of religious belief for all citizens except those under eighteen and CCP members,<sup>11</sup> targeted for official atheism, secular modernization, and Hanification (Sinicization). Although China has come very far from the Cultural Revolution years when religious practices were outright forbidden, the religious proscription for party members and discouragement of fasting for Muslims during the month of Ramadan make the CCP look decided less liberal and far more unreasonable than either the Cuban Communist Party or the Vietnam Communist Party, which are arguably more communistic than the CCP, yet allow party members to hold religious beliefs and join religious organizations.

The authorities have allowed for the gradual expansion of individual liberties in many spheres of a person's economic, social and religious life, while maintaining strict monitoring and socialization over the religious establishments, vernacular schools, and cultural or literary associations of ethnic minorities, which constitute the markers and standard-bearers of their identities. All imams in mosques are state employees and graduates of a single state-run Islamic Seminary in China, there are party committees in monasteries, and sermons are well-attended by informers and plain clothes policemen, in spite of the fact that Lamaist Buddhism and the dominant Xinjiang version of Islam – Sufism – have a mystical bend and are by and large tolerant religious denominations.

### Foreign Attention on Ethnic Causes and PRC Counter-Measures

Concern and attention on the part of foreigners for the rights and welfare of China's ethnic minorities is another major determinant of whether

<sup>10</sup> Barry Sautman, "Resolving the Tibet Question: Problems and Prospects," *Journal of Contemporary China* 11, 30 (2002): 99.

<sup>11</sup> Igor Rotar, "The Growing Problem of Uighur Separatism," *China Brief* 4, 8 (April 15 2004)

<[www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=395&issue\\_id=2935&article\\_id=236612](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=395&issue_id=2935&article_id=236612)> (April 30 2006).



large-scale minority disturbances recur. Foreign interest in, and advocacy of, ethnic minority causes in China are crucial moral and material pillars of support, especially for émigré activists keeping alive the cause of independence or genuine autonomy for Tibet, Xinjiang or Inner Mongolia, and their contacts within China.

Unfortunately for the activists, foreign attention on China's treatment of its ethnic minorities has diminished over the last eight to nine years, reflecting a classic syndrome of "out of sight, out of mind." This is a major by-product of the *yan da* campaign, which through tough policing, roundups and detentions of suspected separatists, terrorists or participants in illegal religious or other gatherings, and mass media denunciations of the "three evils," the PRC authorities have effectively succeeded in forcing the issue out of foreign eyes.

Perhaps more frustrating for the minorities is the fact that foreign criticisms of the PRC government's treatment of its ethnic minorities and dissidents, at least at the official level, are more often than not a direct function of the state of relations between foreign governments and Beijing – more likely if the foreign government wishes to vent discontent with China over trade disputes or charges of spying, and less so if it believes it requires the assistance, or at least understanding, of its Chinese counterpart, such as in combating world terrorism or preventing the spread of nuclear weapons

If foreign support of the causes of China's ethnic minorities is mostly a reflection of instrumental reasoning, depending on the economic opportunities or military threats emanating from China, with the degrees of cooperation or confrontation dictated by prospective gains or losses from the country's relationship with China, perhaps it is not surprising then that external espousal for the minorities' causes have all but disappeared. The rise or development of China has made foreign governments more cautious about offending Beijing over ethnic issues, particularly since this is a very sensitive matter with China that could fetch no credit for any foreign party bringing it up. Since the late 1990s, both U.S. President Bill Clinton and the government of British Prime Minister Tony Blair have expressed recognition of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet.<sup>12</sup> While the U.S. Congress and the European Parliament have passed resolutions calling Tibet an occupied country and telling the Chinese to leave,<sup>13</sup> these are mostly for the consumption of the domestic constituents of the Congressmen and Parliamentarians, who can afford to

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<sup>12</sup> "Jiang, Clinton Have Frank Exchanges of Views at Press Conference," *Xinhua News Agency*, June 27 1998; "Britain Wants China to Grant Tibet Freedoms," *Reuters*, October 20 1999.

<sup>13</sup> "Dalai Lama Grateful for 'Occupied' Label," *Washington Times*, September 12 1995; "European Parliament Backs Negotiations on Future of Tibet," *Agence France-Presse*, March 14 1997.

assuage their own conscience, and that of the public at large, without having to display much concern for foreign affairs or defend their countries' foreign interests, as national leaders have to.

The émigré organizations of ethnic minorities from China are no less active now than before. The Tibetan Government in Exile (TGIE) has functioned in India's Dharmasala since 1959, and has organized elections to the Tibetan Assembly among its diasporic community since 1990.<sup>14</sup> The 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, who heads the TGIE, is still traveling to many parts of the world to promote human rights and cultural autonomy in Tibet, despite being already 71 years of age. In 2004, an umbrella organization known as the World Uyghur Congress (WUC) was formed to unite many small, weak and fractious diasporic Uyghur nationalist groups. Yet, realistically speaking, arguments on conscience, rights and human dignity, persuasive though they may be, and groups that advance them, can do little by themselves to further the causes of China's minorities. Involving foreign governments and multinational corporations to put pressure on the Chinese authorities may work better, but as noted, these actors often have their own interest calculations that may not be in tandem with those of the activists.

Since 1998, the Dalai Lama no longer describes Tibet as an occupied country or calls for its independence by right, and the younger generation of western-educated Uyghur diaspora groups now uses the language of democracy and free elections in Xinjiang. All this is calculated to sound more appealing to western audiences and less confrontational to the Chinese authorities, and hold out the chances of achieving some negotiated settlement with Beijing that is short of independence but would permit greater autonomy to the native inhabitants of Tibet and Xinjiang. One should not be overly-optimistic about Beijing's receptiveness to these conciliatory overtures, given no indication on its part so far to alter the political arrangements governing its autonomous regions.

The Chinese government, for its part, has not been remiss in adopting various means of dealing with unwanted foreign attention. As mentioned, the authorities have taken active security measures to remove as many immediate causes of ethnic grievances as possible, or at least reduce the number of incidents in which such grievances are openly aired. They have also been engaging in image-building activities with good propaganda value, by welcoming students from the Middle East or allowing large scale Buddhist gatherings or festivals to take place. Since 2002, after a nineteen-year hiatus, PRC officials have to date held five rounds of dialogue with representatives of the Dalai Lama. The Chinese seems to have calculated that it is in their interest, or at least of no harm

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<sup>14</sup> The Government of Tibet in Exile, "Democratization of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile," <[www.tibet.com/Govt/demo.html](http://www.tibet.com/Govt/demo.html)> (April 1 2006).

to them, to have the talks dragged out or intermittently restarted without achieving any concrete results until the Tibetans lose the most potent symbol of their cause with the Dalai Lama's passing. The rudderless TGIE will then most likely become defunct, or taken over by powerful segments in the Tibet Youth Congress opposed to the Dalai Lama's non-violent approach to the Tibet issue, which in either way will crumble foreign sympathy and support for its cause. Meanwhile, Beijing has been careful not to attack the words or actions of Tibetan or Uighur diasporic organizations in order not to raise their profile or accord them any importance.

More generally, Beijing has been providing economic benefits to foreign countries and companies, such as by opening the Chinese market to foreign products, encouraging Chinese investment overseas, promising more financial assistance for international aid agencies and developing nations, and signing free trade agreements with major trading partners. It has also tried to decrease security fears of its rising military strength by joining more international strategic conferences like the ASEAN Regional Forum and the Six-Party Talks for North Korean nuclear disarmament, publishing defense white papers more regularly, and conducting more joint military, anti-terrorist, anti-piracy or anti-smuggling exercises with neighboring countries. It has extended limited help to the U.S. in its global war on terrorism, by monitoring questionable financial activities in Chinese and Hong Kong banks and passing on intelligence on suspected terrorist organizations to the American government. It has discussed border controls with Muslim Pakistan, China's traditional friend, and has been developing good relations with both India and Nepal, which are hosting more than a hundred thousand Tibetan refugees, to diminish any sympathies both governments may have for TGIE activities in their countries. It has cooperated in fighting terrorism, religious extremism, and separatism with Russia and countries in Central Asia, which have their own problems with elements of the "three evils," within the rubric of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. On China's initiative, a joint anti-terrorist center was established by the organization in 2003 to exchange intelligence and plan regional anti-terrorist operations.<sup>15</sup>

Beijing has also been quick to admonish defiance of its position on the ethnic minority question. The PRC government has now and then demanded that the authorities of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan clamp down on what it considers to be separatist cells among the 350,000-strong Uighur émigré community in both countries, and extradite suspected Uighur separatists, terrorists or fugitives back to China.<sup>16</sup> When the

<sup>15</sup> You Ji, "China's Post 9/11 Terrorism Strategy," *China Brief* 4, 8 (April 15 2004).

<sup>16</sup> Graham E. Fuller and Jonathan N. Lipman, "Islam in Xinjiang," in S. Frederick Starr Ed. *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland* (Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe, 2004), 348.

authorities of Mongolia allowed the Dalai Lama to visit that country in 2002 after a seven-year absence, the Chinese promptly stopped train traffic between Mongolia and China for two days.<sup>17</sup>

### **Ethnic Minority Grievances: “End Game” for Real Autonomy?**

Observers to Xinjiang and Tibet have noted a rise in tension between the local ethnic groups and the Han Chinese. This heightened state of unease is the result of two principal factors: Han immigration, which has led to clashes in lifestyles and values; and increasing market-orientation of the regions' economies, which has resulted in growing wealth disparities.

Unlike before, immigration of Han Chinese into ethnic minority regions for the past twenty years has been the result of the lure of economic opportunities rather than one of state-sponsored population transfer. Still, the government has been promoting an unstated but deliberate policy of ethnic encirclement by authorizing Han settlements in neighborhoods separate from, but close to, Uighur and Tibetan quarters. The Han Chinese populations in Xinjiang and Tibet's capital of Lhasa are at least half the total,<sup>18</sup> if businesspeople, itinerants, soldiers, cadres, and residing members of their families are counted.

Although there is an increasing wealth gap within both the Han Chinese and ethnic groups themselves, minorities, perhaps naturally, tend to focus on a strong pattern of wealth disparities associated with ethnicity. There is no evidence of systemic partiality in public investment in favor of Han Chinese in minority areas, whether long-time residents, or fresh-off-the train immigrants, and minorities still benefit from official affirmative action programs that many Han Chinese find discriminatory against them. Yet, it is undoubted that informal discriminations like skill requirements, an urban bias, and individual prejudices of prospective government and private employers tend to work against ethnic minorities, since many more of them have fewer years of schooling and reside in small towns and rural areas than do the Han Chinese. Job prospects are particularly poor for non-Chinese speakers. Although employment has been created directly and indirectly in the energy and mining industries, and through Beijing's disbursement for infrastructure development, widespread perception amongst minorities has been that the Han Chinese has disproportionately commandeered preferred jobs and higher positions in state and collective units.<sup>19</sup> The

<sup>17</sup> “China Says Rail Traffic with Mongolia Held Up For ‘Technical Reasons’,” *World Tibet News Network*, November 7 2002, <[www.tibet.ca/en/wtnarchive/2002/11/7\\_5.html](http://www.tibet.ca/en/wtnarchive/2002/11/7_5.html)> (April 1 2006).

<sup>18</sup> Igor Rotar, “The Growing Problem of Uighur Separatism,” *China Brief* 4, 8 (April 15, 2004); Sautman, “Resolving the Tibet Question: Problems and Prospects,” p. 103.

<sup>19</sup> Calla Wiemer, “The Economy of Xinjiang,” in S. Frederick Starr Ed., *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland*, (Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe, 2004), 179-180.

Chinese government has been encouraging the development of a merchant middle-class in Xinjiang and Tibet, but it seems to have been easier for the business-minded Han Chinese or Hui (Han Muslims) resident than for the Uighur or Tibetan without strong entrepreneurial traditions.

A sense of disillusionment and resignation has overtaken many ethnic minorities in acquiescing to Han Chinese domination of their traditional homelands and control of the autonomous region party apparatus. Minority CCP cadres are often seen as lackeys of the Han Chinese for having to explain unpopular government policies or toe the party line in renouncing religious faith, which is the core of Uighur and Tibetan identity, and sometimes become the target of local attacks. Minorities are seeking refuge in their own culture and identity, and even ghettos, as special privileges have become essentially hollow in a market economy and as a result of Han Chinese competition. Han and locals are informally segregated – they live in different neighborhoods, shop in different stores, eat in different restaurants, and study in different schools – in which case it is easy for estrangement and alienation to deepen and boil over, as when racist taunts turn into gang fights and then riots.

Ethnic minorities obviously see Han immigration and economic competition as a threat to their numbers, welfare and identity. As such, ethnic minorities have sought as much as possible to preserve their culture, language and religion, and to some extent, they have been helped by the Chinese authorities anxious to maintain ethnic harmony. New mosques have been built, Tibetan lamaseries have been refurbished, and museums and monuments have been constructed to commemorate local celebrities like Ghenghis Khan, at government expenses. Yet, there are worries that the future of Xinjiang and Tibet may well resemble Inner Mongolia today, where the native Mongolians number no more than one-sixth of the total population, control is ceded to the Han Chinese, and the pastoral way of life – the essence of Mongol identity – is fast withering away.

The PRC authorities expect trouble from ethnic minority regions and actively prepare for it; witness the ongoing crackdowns against terrorists, extremists and separatists. However, officials are also confident that, given the measures they have taken or are prepared to take, large-scale protests or violent incidents involving ethnic minorities will decrease in frequency and intensity in the future.

The PRC's physical hold on Xinjiang and Tibet is becoming stronger as they are further incorporated into China proper through expanding networks of transportation, communication, and utilities, oil and gas pipelines, and changing demographics. The completion of the railway from Golmud to Lhasa in 2006 is expected to bring in a flood of Han

Chinese migrants into Tibet, as it did for Xinjiang after the completion of the Lanzhou-Urumqi railway in 1963. The structure of the economy in the minority regions are also changing to China's advantage, with the traditional oases, pastoral and subsistence local economies moving towards an industrial, market and knowledge-based economy oriented in the direction of the rest of China and the world, where the forces of urbanization, secularization, Hanification and globalization are hard to resist. Ethnic minorities are moving outside their traditional locales for study, work, marriage or migration overseas, thus slowly decreasing their composition of the population of their homelands.

Since the second Central Ethnic Work Conference in 1999, the word "nationality" is no longer used in the official context to refer to China's minorities. It is perhaps found to be too attached in meaning to the concepts of an ethnic domain or ethnic nationalism, and hence replaced with the term "ethnic." Yet, the ethnicity basis of the PRC as a state constituted by officially-designated ethnic groups may in time be replaced by a more self-selecting "cultural" categorization, as in multiculturalism or Han-ethnic biculturalism, and eventually the idea of common citizenship. Rights may in future be attached to cultural groups or citizenry, which would dampen the saliency of ethnicity, and consequently, ethnic-based violence.

The authorities also see a trend towards eventual convergence in values and interests among the material cosmopolitanism of global society, Han Chinese, and ethnic minorities, leading to what has been described as "*ningjuhua*" – coagulation, homogenization, or acculturation – between Han and minorities.<sup>20</sup> The ethnic minority elite appear well-socialized to the paramount ideology of Chinese state-nationalism and national unity, although they may only be pretending to subscribe to it in order to advance their careers. Also, the map of China today is accepted by both the Chinese government and most dissidents, who see a democratic Tibet or Xinjiang as part of a democratic China of the future.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, in the minds of most Han Chinese, if the Miao or Hmong people of the ancient Chu culture in south-central China and the Malayo-Polynesian Yue or Viet people of the south China coast could eventually become acculturated into the Chinese family, why not the ethnic minorities of today?

<sup>20</sup> Li Dezhu, "Xibu da kaifa yu minzu wenti," ("The Opening of the West and China's ethnic problem," *Qiusi (Seeking Truth)*, June 1 2000, translated in FBIS, June 15 2000, 57.

<sup>21</sup> Cao Chang-ching and James Seymour, *Tibet through Dissident Chinese Eyes: Essays on Self-determination* (Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe, 1998).

## **Wither China's Western Front?**

What are the ultimate aims of the PRC authorities for its ethnic minority west? They include exercising undisputed control over the autonomous regions, which are considered too strategically important and too much a part of the nationalist narrative to be surrendered; winning minorities' acceptance of Chinese sovereignty over their regions; depriving recalcitrant minorities of foreign support; minimizing disturbances harmful to China's self-image as a responsible great power; preserving distinct cultural and religious communities as attractions to earn tourist dollars; and turning a blind eye to Han Chinese migrants moving into minority territories, for the purpose of diluting the less trusted local population and integrating these areas firmly into China proper.

Beijing has yet to acknowledge that closing legitimate channels for expressing grievances – even if they reflect unhappiness with the political status-quo – may force ordinary folks who are not separatists into pursuing violence and terrorism to express their dissatisfaction. The Chinese authorities are plainly worried that open criticisms of the practice of ethnic regional autonomy, Han immigration into minority areas, religious restrictions on minorities and the disparities in living standards among ethnic groups will lead to a torrent of discontent. This will undermine the legitimacy of Chinese rule over minority regions in the eyes of both minorities and foreigners, embolden other disgruntled sections of the population to assert their views, and threaten party control over the country. Communist parties are not famous for their willingness to devolve power. For the CCP, it fears that genuine local autonomy may lead to independent centers of interest and power, and develop into sources of opposition to its rule over autonomous ethnic areas, should the Beijing leadership divide openly over one or more major disagreements. This was an important lesson for the Chinese leadership from the breakup of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, and may be its basic problem in accommodating the demands of China's restive ethnic minorities.

One can only hope that the PRC authorities pay careful attention in addressing ethnic minorities' grievances, create economic opportunities for them, expand direct elections to village and township congresses in minorities' areas as provided for in the state constitution, enforce anti-discrimination laws, and pry as little as possible into the lives of individuals; and that foreign governments and companies still take an interest in the well-being of China's ethnic minorities without challenging its borders or encouraging such challenges. Although it is relatively quiet on China's western front right now, ethnic consciousness, once re-awakened, would be almost impossible to extinguish. Occasional violence or "terrorist acts" in the name of ethnic causes will have to be expected.





# Fact and Fiction: A Chinese Documentary on Eastern Turkestan Terrorism<sup>†</sup>

*Yitzhak Shichor\**

## ABSTRACT

This article provides, for the first time in public, an English summary and analysis of a 60-minute video documentary called "On the Spot Report: The Crimes of Eastern Turkestan Terrorist Power" (*Dongtu kongbu shili zuixing jishi*). The documentary was shown to the author in August 2002 on a visit to Xinjiang at the official invitation of the Xinjiang International Economic and Cultural Development Center and a transcript was also provided. This rare documentary reflects Beijing's representation of "Eastern Turkestan terrorism," and its efforts to spread this message through the author and the media.

*Keywords* • Xinjiang • CCTV documentary "On the Spot Report: The Crimes of Eastern Turkestan Terrorist Power" • East Turkestan separatism

In August 2002, after several delays lasting a year-and-a-half, I visited Xinjiang at the official invitation of the Xinjiang International Economic and Cultural Development Center. This was not my first visit but the first official one. I was accompanied from Beijing by a friend from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. This was his first visit. After spending two-three days in Urumqi we drove many hours to Yining for a couple of days more and then back to Urumqi, altogether one week. I am still trying to figure out why I was invited – but one of my hosts' objectives was to spread around – through me – the theory of Eastern Turkestan terrorism. This issue was discussed a number of times during my stay. Most importantly, however, the next morning after my arrival in Urumqi I was shown a 60-minute video documentary called "On the Spot Report: The Crimes of Eastern Turkestan Terrorist Power" (*Dongtu kongbu shili zuixing jishi*). According to the transcript it was planned to be

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shown on television twice, on July 23 and 24, 2002 by CCTV Channel 4 in Chinese and simultaneously on CCTV Channel 9 in English but I am not sure if it was. The purpose was to expose East Turkestani terrorist acts in Xinjiang over the previous ten years and their links to Al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations. As part of a crackdown on Uyghurs launched after 9/11, the documentary aimed at implicating all East Turkestani and Uyghur organized groups – and their leaders at home and abroad – as "terrorists."<sup>1</sup>

For over ten years now, I have been in touch with some of these organizations and met some of their leaders and officials as well as Uyghurs in and outside China. Although a number of violent incidents involving Uyghurs have been reported throughout these years, China has hardly provided real evidence to justify the attribute "East Turkestan terrorism." Apparently, this TV video documentary was made in order to provide such evidence. Indeed it shows exploded public buses; interviews victims of persecution as well as the victimizers; exposes training camps, arms and explosives – some allegedly smuggled across the border and some produced in underground workshops; uncovers relations with Bin Laden and associates Uyghur "terrorism" with Islamic "radicalism" and *Jihad*. Watching this "evidence" creates an uneasy feeling that some of it at least had been fabricated and in any case by no means could involve the entire movements or their leaders. This is not to say that there have never been any Uyghur violent acts against Han Chinese, Hui Muslims or even so-called Uyghur "collaborators." It is to say, however that at least some of these acts have been no more than ordinary crimes and that those "terrorist acts" shown should by no means be considered as reflecting the agenda of all Eastern Turkestan organizations as Beijing often suggests.

This article provides, for the first time in public, an English summary of the original Chinese transcript of the TV documentary that I was given by my hosts, incorporating the main points. This rare documentary reflects Beijing's representation of "Eastern Turkestan terrorism."<sup>2</sup> Until a few years ago, the Chinese did not use the term "Eastern Turkestan" because it has been used primarily by separatist organizations and leaders who deliberately avoided using the term "Xinjiang" because of its "Chinese" connotation. Since 9/11, however, the Chinese have begun to

<sup>1</sup> For official Chinese publications on this issue, see: The Information Office of the PRC State Council, "True Nature of 'East Turkistan's Forces," *China Daily*, January 22 2002; "East Turkestan" Terrorist Forces Cannot Get Away with Their Offences (Beijing, January 1 2002); and *History and Development of Xinjiang* (Beijing: May 2003).

<sup>2</sup> A synopsis has been published by the U.S., "PRC Documentary Depicts 'East Turkistan Terrorism' in Xinjiang, Central Asia," FEA20051223015567 – FBIS Feature – 0015 GMT December 23 2005. See also: Wang Yanbin and Guo Li, "Exposé on 'East Turkistan' Terrorism – Criminal Activities of the 'East Turkistan' Terrorism in Xinjiang," *Liaowang* (Beijing) 40 (September 30 2002): 10-12., in FBIS-CHI-2002-1015.

use the term "Eastern Turkestan" (*Dongtu*, in short)<sup>3</sup>, probably to differentiate more clearly and symbolically between these organizations and the rest of the population of Xinjiang and, more specifically, to diminish the role of Uyghurs whose international profile has grown since the 1990s. Indeed the documentary hardly mentions "Uyghur terrorism" explicitly – although the language, the names, the images and the context implicitly delivers that same message.

The article follows the TV documentary which is divided into seven parts and lasts for sixty minutes. It speaks Chinese and Uyghur (with Chinese subtitles). I was given the entire transcript in Chinese while visiting Urumqi in August 2002. In addition to the visual parts, the text includes interviews with Uyghur inmates who reportedly have been held responsible for the "terrorist crimes"; with their victims and with security cadres and policemen. In between there are interjections by the reporters who give the historical background and some political implications. The first part of this article presents a summary of the Chinese transcript while the second part provides my interpretation and analysis.

## Transcript Presentation

### *[Start of Transcript]*

#### *Bus Explosions*

On February 5 1992, the Chinese New Year holiday, a bomb exploded on bus no. 52 in Urumqi, near the Xinjiang Academy of Science, reportedly carried out by "Eastern Turkestan terrorist forces." Two minutes later, at 21:42, another bomb exploded, this time on bus no. 30. The explosions caused three deaths, nine people were seriously wounded and fourteen people were lightly wounded. Yang Delu, then Deputy Director General of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (hereafter XUAR) Public Security Office that presumably arrested the culprits, testified that those "criminals" (*fanzui fenzi*, he didn't call them terrorists) confessed that they wanted to "celebrate the Spring Festival by lighting firecrackers." He then implied that they belonged to a "violent terrorist organization" called "The Party of Islamic Reformers" (*Yisilan gaigezhe dang*) that was established in 1990 and was responsible for these explosions aimed at splitting Xinjiang from the People's Republic of China (hereafter PRC).

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<sup>3</sup> The full Chinese term is *Dong Tujuesidan* and not *Tuerqisidan* so as to provide the historical continuity going back to the Former Han Dynasty, 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, and to dissociate from Turkey. For an extensive Chinese discussion of these terms, see: Pan Zhiping, "'Tujuesidan', 'Dongtujuesidan' yu 'Weiwuersidan'," ["'Turkestan', 'Eastern Turkestan' and 'Uyghuristan'"], *Xicheng yanjiu* [The Western Regions Studies] 3 (2004): 53-60.

The documentary goes on to explain the historical background of Eastern Turkestan separatism saying that this region had been an integral part of Chinese territory since 160 BC. After mentioning the brief control of various nomadic Turkic dynasties of north China, the documentary jumps to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century when "foreign colonialists" deliberately manufactured "Eastern Turkestan." It was meant to replace Xinjiang as the homeland of the "Eastern Turks", and exclude other "Chinese" nationalities. It is on the basis of this "fallacy" that "Eastern Turkestan splittists" claim independence from China. This claim is the origin of the "terrorist criminal activities" (kongbu fanzui huodong) in Xinjiang. From 1992 to 2001, "Eastern Turkestan forces" initiated at least two hundred violent terrorist attacks, in which 162 people of different nationalities, social cadres or religious believers died and more than 440 wounded. As Yang Delu put it, because the victims were of different nationalities including women and children, the violence and terror in Xinjiang are neither ethnic nor religious issues, "but a kind of criminal activity" (yizhong fanzui huodong).

#### *A Terrorist Training Camp*

According to the documentary, terrorists were trained to perform "criminal activities" in more than ten terrorist training camps built as early as 1990 in Kashgar, Hotan, and Aksu (Xinjiang) by "Eastern Turkestan terrorists." It was only two years later, in the wake of investigating the February 5 1992 explosion in Urumqi, that Xinjiang's Police discovered a terrorist training camp in Bokesumu Village, in Yecheng County. This is one of the earliest terrorist training camps of the Eastern Turkestan terrorists. Located in desolate and uninhabited places, training in weapons and explosives lasted for nine months. According to police records, between October 1991 and June 1992, sixty-two terrorists in three groups had been trained there. During the following few years they were engaged in a number of violent terrorist acts.

Having been trained at the "terrorist camp" in Yecheng County, Yibikayin Maimaiti and Duxun Saimaiti<sup>4</sup> led twelve terrorists breaking into the home of Pei Yinghua on November 20 1996, killing him and his wife – one of the village's few Han families. In his testimony Dai Guanghui, Shazhe County Public Security Office Director, said that the murderers – already executed – targeted a rich and influential Han family in order to scare a thousand Han people and drive them away from the region. Uyghur neighbors stated that there was no reason for the killing

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<sup>4</sup> Unless the Uyghur pronunciation could be established, names of people and places are given in their Chinese transliteration.

as relations with Han people in the village had been good. They added that the "terrorists" had also killed Uyghur cadres and religious figures.

#### *Traitor-Elimination Acts*

Indeed, whereas one of the terrorists' methods to foment ethnic splits is to oppose and exclude Han people, Han people are by no means their exclusive target. On April 29 1996, eight terrorists broke into the homes of four basic-level Uyghur cadres, killing four people and wounding three. According to one of the organizers, the aim had been to eliminate traitors, basic-level cadres with social prestige and religious figures who were close to the Xinjiang government, in other words, collaborators. Two days later, on May 2 1996, the police surrounded the eight terrorists responsible for the murder, when trying to escape. After resisting for more than ten hours, the terrorists took the most extreme action: they committed suicide, killing themselves by a bomb.

Both violent acts, but primarily the former, had been motivated not only by political or ethnic considerations but also by religious incentives. In addition to learning the use of weapons, "Eastern Turkestan terrorists" also went through extreme religious indoctrination. In 1996 the police captured a tape propagating extreme religious ideas at a terrorist training camp. The tape stated: "Can you take part in the battle? He who does not fight and is not willing to sacrifice his life and property has no faith. He and the likes of him should be shot at, without fearing death." Clearly, this is Holy War or Jihad. The "terrorists" declared that in order to establish Islamic rule, it is their belief that they should keep fighting against all the forces that stand in its way by whatever means. Those opposed should become the targets for attack including all non-Islamic people. This, they said, is our Muslim duty. Anyone disobeying the Islamic law is our enemy, even our own parents, not to mention religious figures.

On May 12 1996, the over 70-year old head of the Id Kah mosque in Kashi (Kashgar) and a member of the standing committee of the National Islamic Association, became a target for an assassination attempt. Spanning five hundred years of history, Id Kah is one of the most famous mosques in Asia. Located at Kashi's central square, the mosque attracts a large crowd of Muslims who participate in the services conducted every day. When he left his house on that morning on his usual way to the mosque, the head of the mosque accompanied by his son were attacked by three terrorists and were seriously wounded. He could no longer conduct the services at the mosque. Two years later, in 1998, the Xinjiang Police captured a terrorist who took part in the assassination attempt. At that time, he told the reporter, the order was to kill him because "we believed that he had betrayed the religion. We had to purify his faith, so we had to kill him. We believe he was scum of religion." In

fact, "the terrorists themselves do not have much knowledge of religion," said Zhang Xiuming, Director of the XUAR Police Office. "When I had religious discussions with many well-known religious patriots, they told me that their [the terrorists'] actions directly violate the religious doctrine. Therefore, they just use the religion to achieve their political aims."

*The "Hotan Conference" Plan*

At the beginning of 1996, after "hundreds of terrorists had been trained" and in order to work out a unified course of action and impose strict organizational discipline, the Eastern Turkestan terrorists held a so-called "Eastern Turkestan Islamic Conference" in Hotan. Seized by the police, a video of the conference had been made. According to one of the participants, a member of the so-called "Allah Party [Hizbullah] of East Turkestan" [Dongtu yisilan zhenzhudang], the video was made to commemorate the meeting and to enable other members of the organization who had not participated in the conference, to grasp its spirit. The participants were heavily dressed and their face covered "as a means to improve the quality of the conference. Also, the participants did not want the others to recognize them, so they all wore gauze masks."

The conference formulated disciplinary ground rules. When joining, each member had to pledge his loyalty to the organization; not to hesitate to sacrifice his life and that of his family; to absolutely obey higher level orders; not to ask others about their life; and to impose capital punishment upon those who betray the organization's members and secrets. No one should act without authorization, and those who violate discipline should be punished, depending on how serious the violation is. Anyone who does not act according to his pledge or wants to withdraw could get killed at gunpoint. Detailed notes were taken of each one's home address.

The Hotan conference designed a detailed program of action to be carried out in four stages. In the first stage, the main effort was to raise money and train the men. Unlike before, the new camps trained children between the ages of eight and fifteen who not only received physical training but also went through extreme religious indoctrination exercised under strict centralized control. In the second stage efforts had been made to kill a number of famous "scum" people in Xinjiang. The Hotan Conference had listed twenty-four targets for assassination. The program stated: "Our aim is to wipe out the religious traitors and the scum of our nation and society. By attacking them we warn others and weaken the power of the government: that is [we intend] to drive the Han people away and then explode the bridge [zhaqiao ganhan]."

The goal of the third stage was to create conditions for guerrilla war. After the Hotan Conference ended, the Xinjiang Police destroyed a total

of over ten secret storehouses in different places, used for concealing firearms. It also captured hundreds of different guns as well as a large number of explosive devices including time bombs, explosives and detonators. The last stage was aimed at mobilizing the entire people to take part in the war and wage a life-and-death struggle. A programmatic document issued by the Hotan Conference clearly proposed to propagate Holy War [Shengzhan, Jihad] and to promote independence by performing bigger terrorist acts. In a more precise language the document called on the readers "to perform, at any cost, all kinds of terrorist acts at crowded places, such as kindergartens, hospitals and schools, in order to create a terrorizing climate and to enlarge our influence."

On February 25 1997, less than three months after the Hotan Conference took place, several terrorists carried out a series of explosions on buses no. 10, no. 14 and no. 2 in Urumqi. Two Uyghur primary school pupils, not yet ten years old, who were riding bus no. 10, were killed instantly and others were badly wounded. Caught later, one of the terrorists who had been involved in the February 25 bomb attack confessed: after all, at the time we felt resentful towards the government and wished to take revenge by carrying out the attack. Asked how he felt about the fact that some Uyghurs had been killed he said: "As a subordinate I could only obey orders and submit to the command of my superiors. I just did what I was told to do." He added that he might have carried out whatever he would have been told to do, even a terrorist attack like 9/11. "Our acts against the government, which included the use of bombs and shootings, are basically the same as those undertaken by international terrorists."

### *The Origin of Weapons*

Between 1992 and 1997 the police uncovered over thirty "Eastern Turkestan" terrorist organizations in Xinjiang and captured hundreds of terrorists. Since then, a number of key members of the "Eastern Turkestan" terrorist organizations in Xinjiang escaped to foreign countries, where they have colluded with international terrorist forces outside China and continued to carry out terrorist acts and violence in Xinjiang. A substantial quantity of weapons and ammunition was captured at the Horgos border station [with Kazakhstan, near Yining] on April 6 1998, on board a lorry.<sup>5</sup> The shipment included AK-47 assault rifles, pistols and silencers, varied ammunition, explosives, detonators, bullets and antitank grenades. Between the middle of February to April 6 1998, the Eastern Turkestan terrorist organizations outside China have smuggled fifteen loads of weaponry into China. According to Wang

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<sup>5</sup> The original Chinese transcript says "train" (*huoche*) but there is no railroad in this border station. Instead it should be "lorry" or "truck", also *huoche*, but a different *huo*.

Mingshan, Deputy Director-General of the Yili-Kazak Autonomous Prefecture Public Security Department, the April 6 load of weapons had been the largest ever smuggled into the PRC since its foundation.

Wang Mingshan said that this weapon shipment had been planned and organized by a terrorist organization headed by Maimaitiming Aizilaiti [Mehmet Emin Hazret], based in Central Asia. Hazret, alias Aizimujiang, had originally worked as a screenwriter for the Xinjiang Tianshan Film Studio. In 1989, after he had left the country, he became the leader of the "East Turkestan Liberation Organization" [Dongtu jiefang zuzhi], a terrorist group outside China. In 1997 Haimiti Maimaitijiang [Hamid Mehmetjan], who at that time had been studying in Egypt, joined the organization and a year later Mehmet Emin Hazret sent him back to China with strict orders to receive the weapons shipment on April 6, to recruit new members to the organization and to send him a list of targets for assassination and bomb attacks. He was just one of over thirty members of the organization who were sent to China. In 1998 Hazret had planned to carry out a series of terrorist attacks in Xinjiang.

On April 24 1998, a serious gunfight broke out between the police and the terrorists. Wang Mingshan states that their resistance was based on professional strategic action. Indeed, during the interrogation they all confessed that they had been specially trained at military bases in Afghanistan. This is corroborated by one of the "key members" of the "East Turkestan Liberation Organization", who had joined in April 1998 and was arrested after he returned to China in April 2000 for illegally manufacturing explosive devices. A native of Yili, Xinjiang, Wuquwenla Rouzi, alias Tajier Aji [Tajir Haji], confirmed that "East Turkestan Liberation Organization" members had been ordered to go abroad for training courses. These include instruction in designing, assembling and disassembling pistols, rifles and other different weapons and making explosive devices.

The "East Turkestan Liberation Organization" was established in 1990. Its main goal has been to oppose and exclude the Han people in Xinjiang and finally to accomplish Xinjiang's independence. It is one of several organizations set up abroad to split the nation. As early as the 1950s, Yimin [Mehmet Emin Bughra], former vice-chairman of the Guomindang Xinjiang Government, and Aisha [Isa Yusuf Alptekin], Secretary-General of the Xinjiang Government, escaped before Xinjiang's liberation. They then established the "East Turkestan Party", "The Association of Eastern Turks Overseas" and other separatist organizations, with the support of foreign anti-China forces. On December 12 1992, these separatist organizations held the so-called "Conference of Eastern Turkestan" abroad. At the conference they designed a staged plan. According to the plan, during the first two years



they would develop the organization and expand their forces; during the next three years they would activate them; in 1997 they would go all out and in 2000 they would achieve independence.<sup>6</sup> In order to implement their plan, in 1997 they began to set up training camps abroad, train terrorists and gradually send their members to China, waiting for the opportunity to carry out acts of terrorism.

By then, "terrorists" had already begun illegal arms production in Xinjiang. On July 5, 1998, the Hotan Police uncovered a small munitions factory for the manufacturing of antitank grenades and other explosive devices at an ordinary village in Moyu County, Hotan Prefecture. On the surface, this residence looks no different from any other but, in addition to seizing a large amount of firearms, ammunition and raw materials, the police discovered a hidden tunnel nearly thirty meters long with electric light. Inside, explosives and cases for making antitank grenades were piled up. Antitank grenades were first found here together with the moulds, raw materials and half-made antitank grenades. In 1999 the Hotan Police located another workshop for illegal production of explosive devices and captured a great amount of homemade antitank grenades. Che Yuping, Director of the Hotan Prefecture Public Security Department, testified that in 1999 alone they captured more than five thousand antitank grenades with lethal radius of about three meters. Within less than three years, between 1997 and 1999, nearly six thousand such grenades were produced by the "terrorist organizations."

Who funded their production and where did the knowledge come from? At the end of 1999, the Xinjiang Police arrested Sidike Hasimu, one of the principal criminals who had illegally made these explosive devices. He arrived in Hotan in early 1999 carrying some chemicals such as sodium hydride and ammonium nitrate – used for the making of explosive devices, a trade he had learned in Jalalabad, Afghanistan. He was one of eight key members that, according to Che Yuping, were sent to slip into Hotan. Soon after their arrival they began recruiting people and training them in making explosives. Their plan was to establish a military stronghold, so that they could confront the local security forces for a long time and fight a guerrilla war. This operation was organized under the command of Aishan Maihesumu [Hasan Mahsum]. A native of Kashgar, he had left Xinjiang in 1997 and shortly afterwards joined the

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<sup>6</sup> Later called The First National Assembly, this was the Eastern Turkestan World National Congress, held in Istanbul. Representing Eastern Turkestani communities from all over the world, the Congress indeed called for independence but there is no evidence whatsoever of any "staged plan" or "timetable." In fact, the meeting has failed to produce an effective organization or coordination for collective action. Yitzhak Shichor, "Virtual Transnationalism: Uygur Communities in Europe and the Quest for Eastern Turkestan Independence," in Stefano Allievi and Jørgen S. Nielsen, Eds., *Muslim Networks and Transnational Communities in and across Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 281-311.

"Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement" [Dongtu yisilan yundong], "a terrorist organization."

According to Mutalifu Hasimu (Mutalif Kasim), the purpose of the organization is to establish a global emirate [qiuzhang] with a constitution based on Islamic law, to be launched in Xinjiang, first by means of war and by military force. Also a native of Kashgar, he is one of the key members of the "Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement" terrorist organization. In June 1999 Hasan Mahsum sent him back to Xinjiang to find weapons and then to look for rich donors and raise money; next he was ordered to get a map of the border area between Afghanistan and China, around Tashkorgan County, and collect intelligence about the geographic conditions there. Mahsum believed that if he would have waged war against China, this is where it would start. Already in the early 1990s, Mahsum was one of the leaders of "Eastern Turkistan" terrorism in China and a lecturer at the Yecheng County "Eastern Turkistan" training camp in Xinjiang preaching the ideas of "Holy War" [Jihad] to the terrorist trainees. In 1997, Mahsum escaped to Afghanistan, where a civil war was raging at the time. With Afghanistan as his base he continued recruiting new trainees for the terrorist training program. One of them was Mutalifu Hasimu.

#### *The Bin Laden Connection*

Mutalifu Hasimu left China for religious studies abroad.<sup>7</sup> Shortly after his arrival and seven months before he was to take his college entrance examination (in September), Hasan Mahsum and others approached him and told him to quit his studies. He was no different than many others who, since the early 1990s, had left Xinjiang for study or business in one of its eight bordering countries. These people have become the targets for the recruitment teams of the "Eastern Turkistan" terrorist organizations operating abroad. These splittists tempted and used pious Muslims who only wanted to improve their knowledge of Islam and led them astray. In 1997 the "Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement" began to set up offices in different Asian countries, recruiting people for a terrorist camp in Afghanistan by offering board, lodging and scholarships as bait. In fact, each terrorist organization had its own recruiting offices. The recruits were sent to Afghanistan and then the local offices placed them in different bases. In addition to physical training they received basic-skill drills such as assembling and disassembling different weapons and shooting. Those considered reliable were later sent to another base for an advanced course in chemical explosives. The entire training course lasted

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<sup>7</sup> The documentary does not specify where he went for his religious studies, but most probably it was Pakistan, an ally of the PRC that the documentary failed to mention by name. See also, Devin T. Hagerty, "China and Pakistan: Strains in the Relationship," *Current History* (September 2002): 284-289.

for one year. Mutalifu Hasimu estimated that Hasan Mahsum may have trained some five-hundred recruits by June 1999, when he returned to China.

Since the 1980s, international terrorist organizations have established more than one hundred training camps in Afghanistan. Captured later, Awuti Mawuti had gone to a base in Huo-Si-Te [probably Khost], in northwest Afghanistan [actually southeast, not far from the border with Pakistan]. The place was heavily guarded and always on alert and ready for combat. Outsiders were not allowed to enter and any strangers spotted were questioned. Anyone missing was found and brought back quickly afterwards. To run this operation a good deal of money was needed but the money did not come from Hasan Mahsum. It came from Arabs' financial support or, to be more precise, mainly from Bin-Laden. The expenses for food, clothes, medicine and other daily necessities were totally covered by Bin-Laden, according to eyewitnesses.

Mutalifu Hasimu was introduced to Bin-Laden in October 1997, when he went to one of his bases with Hasan Mahsum. Hasan Mahsum sent his recruits to be trained in the three bases that were directly under Bin-Laden's command. The two maintained very close relationship. After Bin-Laden had urged him to establish his own training camps in Afghanistan, Hasan Mahsum became his adviser. From the Taleban he received all kinds of weapons, including tanks, and not only for training. Many Xinjiang people – all associated with Hasan Mahsum – fought for the Taleban in the civil war, and about ten had died in battle. Moreover, "Eastern Turkestan" terrorists not only supported the Taleban in the Afghan civil war but also took part in the war in Chechnya.

In August 1997, Apulikemu Kuerban [Abdulkarim Kurban], an "Eastern Turkestan" terrorist, was captured by Russian troops during the Chechen war and then extradited to China. He had fought over twenty battles in the five months he spent in Chechnya before his capture. Apulikemu Kuerban had originally been a worker at the wool mill in Kashgar. He left Xinjiang in 1993 when he was 33, joined the "Eastern Turkestan Liberation Organization" in 1994 and was sent to the Chechen battlefield in 1996 to gain experience in fighting within the framework of a Holy War [Jihad]. The training of some Uyghurs – who identified themselves as Uzbeks – had begun even before the war started.

In addition to China's domestic stability, the actions of "Eastern Turkestan" terrorists also seriously threatened that of neighboring Central Asian countries. In order to raise money, in May 2000 the "Eastern Turkestan Liberation Organization" kidnapped a Xinjiang businessman, and set fire to his ware in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. On May 25 the same year, the terrorists attacked a Chinese working group in Kyrgyzstan, killed one of its members and wounded two more. After the incident they fled to Kazakhstan where they killed three policemen in

Almaty, in September. After 9/11, "Eastern Turkestan" terrorist organizations issued numerous statements, claiming that they had no relations with Bin-Laden and had never agreed with any act of terror or violence. At the time of the interrogation, Hasan Mahsum was in Afghanistan, still alive. He was Bin-Laden's close partner and his determination to carry out his original [Xinjiang] plan was by no means affected by the American offensive in Afghanistan.<sup>8</sup>

*Conclusion: Situation under Control*

Since 1997 "Eastern Turkestan" terrorist organizations have dispatched more than one hundred professionally-trained terrorists back to China and have carried out more than two hundred attacks, including assassinations, explosions, arson and poisoning. These activities have affected the stability, development and normal life in Xinjiang but, in the words of Zhang Xiuming, Director of the XUAR Public Security Office, "we have the capability to control the situation." The religious and cultural variation among the forty-seven different nationalities living there has never caused Xinjiang's separation from China. In fact, Xinjiang's people strongly support, safeguard and uphold China's national unity. In recent years, owing to resolute attacks against the illegal acts of the "Eastern Turkestan" terrorist forces in Xinjiang, the violent incidents are diminishing. Now, Xinjiang's society is stable and people of different nationalities unite. As part of the opening up of western China, the living standards of all nationalities are improving and Xinjiang is becoming a haven for investment and development.

*[End of Transcript]*

## **Postscript Interpretation**

Apparently, the documentary summarized above provides irrefutable "evidence", verbal as well as visual, of the so-called "Eastern Turkestan" terrorism. Yet a closer and also wider look at it reveals some flaws regarding both its information and its assumptions. There is no doubt that Xinjiang has witnessed some violent acts since the early 1990s, if not before. Many of these acts should be attributed to "terrorism." Yet, and this is spelled out also in the documentary and its language, some of them (e.g. attacks on Han Chinese) could be regarded as ordinary "crimes" (robberies and murders) that, for political purposes, have been later deliberately masked as "terrorism" to justify an increased crackdown on

<sup>8</sup> According to report from Pakistan, Hasan Mahsum died on October 2, 2003. "Military Confirms Killing Chinese 'Terrorist'," *Dawn*, December 24 2003; "'Eastern Turkestan' Terrorist Killed," *China Daily*, December 24 2003.

Uyghurs not necessarily involved in separatist activities. Many clashes in Xinjiang are not necessarily motivated by separatism. Indeed, during one of my visits to Kashgar in the 1990s I witnessed an incident whereby a car driven by Han Chinese hit an Uyghur bicycle rider. Hundreds of Uyghurs gathered within minutes in a makeshift demonstration that could have easily deteriorated into violent riots that Beijing would term "terrorism." In fact, the Chinese are very vague with regard to this term and adopt wide, flexible and inclusive definitions of "terrorism" not only in the media and in official statements but also in its December 2001 criminal code that lists "terrorist" offenses and their corresponding penalties.<sup>9</sup> In a recent article Pan Guang, Director of the Shanghai Institute of European and Asian Studies and an expert on Central Asia, admitted that in the four decades from the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 to the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan "'East Turkestan' separatists rarely undertook armed activities within Chinese borders." Furthermore, until the late 1980s "the Chinese government treated those [violent] activities [...] as ordinary criminal acts rather than terrorist acts." It was only from the early 1990s that Eastern Turkestan activism was regarded as "terrorism."<sup>10</sup> In fact, this term has begun to be used by the Chinese Government mainly since the early 2000s. In March 1998 Wang Lequan, secretary of Xinjiang's CCP committee still said: "Since early 1996, a series of *criminal activities* involving violent attacks have taken place in Xinjiang", carried out by "a handful of *criminals*" (emphasis added).<sup>11</sup> The term "terrorism" was widely used only after 9/11.

#### *Inconsistencies and Generalizations*

The preparation of this documentary, nearly a year after 9/11, betrays a PRC attempt to exploit the new situation and ride on the emerging global wave in the fight against terrorism. However, all the incidents presented

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Scobell, "Terrorism and Chinese Foreign Policy," in Yong Deng and Fei-Ling Wang, Eds., *China Rising: Power and Motivation in Chinese Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), p. 307. For Chinese academic treatment of terrorism, see Liu Yousheng, "Xiandai kongbuzhuyi de tezheng ji queding woguo bentu anquan zhanlue de jichu," [The Characteristics of Modern Terrorism That Determine the Basis of Our Country's Homeland Security Strategy], *Hunan gongan gaodeng zhuanke xuexiao xuebao* [Hunan Public Security College Journal] 17, 5 (August 2005): 45-48; Wang Xiuying, "Lun kongbuzhuyi de tedian ji guoji fankong de tujing," [Discussing Terrorism's Characteristics and International Anti-Terrorist Ways], *Shenyang gongcheng xueyuan bao (shehui kexue ban)* [Journal of Shenyang Institute of Engineering (Social Science Edition)] 1, 3 (July 2005): 32-33; Zhai Jinpeng, "Kongbuzhuyi xiangguan xingwu yaosu yanjiu," [Research of the Essential Behavioral Factors Related to Terrorism], *Shandong jingcha xueyuan xuebao* [Journal of Shandong Police College] 6, 84 (November 2005): 102-104.

<sup>10</sup> Pan Guang, "China's Anti-Terror Strategy and China's Role in Global Anti-Terror Cooperation," *Asia Europe Journal* 2 (2004): 523-524.

<sup>11</sup> Zhongguo Xinwen She, March 13, 1998, in FBIS-CHI-1998-072.

in the documentary had taken place in the 1990s, the last one in June 1999, well before 9/11. No incident is reported in the documentary for the next three years. In his concluding remarks Zhang Xiuming, Director of the XUAR Public Security Office, proudly says: "in recent years [...] the violent incidents are diminishing." Their numbers as given by the Chinese are also confusing and conflicting. The documentary reports "at least two hundred violent terrorist attacks, in which 162 people [...] died and over 440 wounded" from 1992 to 2001. Precisely the same figures are given by Xinhua a year and a half later, yet covering the period 1990-2001.<sup>12</sup> By implication, in 1990-91 there had been no casualties (which we know is not true). It also means that, by mid-December 2003, the Chinese could not report additional casualties. Moreover, Zhao Yongchen, Deputy Director of the Anti-Terrorism Bureau of the Ministry of Public Security, is quoted repeating the same figures in early September 2005, yet referring to "the past ten years." He added that "the 'East Turkestan' terrorist forces remain to be the great terrorist threat to China at present and in future." The same figures (over 160 dead and 440 wounded) were still circulated by Xinhua as late as February 28 2006!<sup>13</sup> In short, the Chinese data are apparently unreliable, which inevitably casts a shadow over the rest of Beijing's arguments, the documentary included.<sup>14</sup>

One of these arguments is that all Eastern Turkestan organizations by necessity adopt violence and terrorism. The documentary refers to four "terrorist" groups: (1) "The Party of Islamic Reformers", (2) "The Allah Party of East Turkestan", (3) "The Eastern Turkestan Liberation Organization" and (4) "The Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement." The first two are hardly known outside China. At best, they are – or were – small and loosely organized of little operative value. At worst, they may have been a figment of Chinese imagination or even invented by Beijing. When the Chinese issued their list of "East Turkestan terrorist organizations" on December 15, 2003, these two "parties" have not been included.<sup>15</sup> Are these terrorist organizations or not? It seems that Beijing has some doubts, at least. But the 2002 documentary does not. Of these organizations, only one, "The Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement", has been recognized as an international terrorist organization by the United States and then added to the UN list in September 2002. China's

<sup>12</sup> "Terrorist Forces Must Absolutely Not Be Allowed to Disrupt National Security and Social Stability," *Xinhua*, December 15 2003, in FBIS-CHI-2003-1215.

<sup>13</sup> "China's Parliament Ratifies UN Convention Against Terrorism Financing," *Xinhua*, February 28 2006, in FBIS. For Zhao's comments see *Xinhua*, September 6 2005, in FBIS.

<sup>14</sup> The following draws on Yitzhak Shichor, "Blow Up: Internal and External Challenges of Uyghur Separatism and Islamic Radicalism to Chinese Rule in Xinjiang," *Asian Affairs* 32, 2 (Summer 2005): 119-135.

<sup>15</sup> There are four groups on the list: The Eastern Turkestan Liberation Organization, The Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement, The World Uyghur Youth Congress and the East Turkestan Information Center.

list includes "The Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement" and the "Eastern Turkestan Liberation Organization", both mentioned in the documentary. Yet, while some evidence is available that these two organizations have most probably been involved in terrorist acts, Beijing has not provided a shred of evidence, least of all publicly, for any terrorist involvement of the other two organizations on its list: The World Uyghur Youth Congress (that has been organizing conferences from time to time) and The East Turkestan Information Center (that has been used to provide reports and data on the Internet and hardly has an office of its own).<sup>16</sup> Not mentioned at all in the documentary, both have been active in Germany since the early 1990s. The Chinese have repeatedly urged the German authorities to ban their activities and arrest their leading functionaries. Still, by December 2004, a year after the list was issued, "the Chinese have not presented any reasons for arrest that would hold during a trial."<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the Germans said that "over the past four years, no attacks by the Uyghurs in China have become known." Two terrorism experts of the German Federal Office of Criminal Investigations were supposed to visit Xinjiang to look at materials collected by China's Public Security Ministry against suspected Uyghur terrorist organizations.<sup>18</sup> Nothing has been heard about it ever since. Of the eleven "East Turkestan terrorists" identified by the Chinese in the December 2003 list, only two are mentioned in the documentary: Mehmet Emin Hazret and Hasan Mahsum. In short, Beijing has not come up with any evidence that connects the two organizations mentioned in the documentary, The Party of Islamic Reformers and The Allah Party of East Turkestan, as well as the two organizations on its December 2003 list (The World Uyghur Youth Congress and the East Turkestan Information Center) and most of the names on its list—to terrorism.

China's efforts to combine all Uyghur groups under one "Eastern Turkestan" umbrella that promotes terrorism do not reflect the reality. To be sure, a small minority of these organizations do endorse terrorism but they are small, marginal and – to judge by the outcome – not terribly effective. Moreover, they have been disregarded and excluded by the mainstream Uyghur organizations that have never promoted terrorism. This is especially true of the new organizations set up in 2004: the World Uyghur Congress and the East Turkestan Government-in-Exile.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> "China Seeks International Support in Counter-Terrorism," *Xinhua*, December 15 2003.

<sup>17</sup> "German Terror Investigators in China," *Der Spiegel*, December 13 2004.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Yitzhak Shichor, "Walking on Two Legs: Uyghur Diaspora Organizations and the Prospects of Eastern Turkestan Independence," *Toronto Studies in Central and Inner Asia* 8 (2006), forthcoming.

Beyond the fact that these two oppose terrorism,<sup>20</sup> the emergence of *two* competitive umbrella organizations underlines what has become the nature of the Uyghur national liberation movement all along, namely, ongoing splits and disunity. To a great extent, it is China's repeated attempts to "unite" these diverse groups under one "Eastern Turkestan" organization and to accuse them of terrorism, separatism and radicalism that contributed more than anything else to the improvement of their international and public image.

*The Myth of Islamic Radicalism*

Similarly, Beijing has consistently and probably deliberately inflated and exaggerated the role of religious "extremism" in Xinjiang, and its involvement in terrorism.<sup>21</sup> Such a view is often shared by the media and even non-Chinese scholars.<sup>22</sup> While the documentary avoids an explicit use of the term "religious extremism", it is frequently using the term *Jihad* (Holy War) and the establishment of an Islamic emirate as the goal of the terrorists.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> "The WUC declares a nonviolent and peaceful opposition movement against Chinese occupation of East Turkestan and an unconditional (...) rejection of totalitarianism, religious intolerance and terrorism as an instrument of policy." "Introducing the World Uyghur Congress," <[www.uyghurcongress.org](http://www.uyghurcongress.org)> (May 1 2006). See also "Declaration of the Formation of the Government-in-Exile of the Republic of East Turkestan," <[www.eastturkestan government in exile .os/about\\_us.html](http://www.eastturkestan government in exile .os/about_us.html)> (May 1 2006).

<sup>21</sup> For example, Ma Ting, "Yisilan shiye lide kongbuzhuyi." [Terrorism in Inner Islamic Perspective], *Xibei dier minzu xueyuan xuebao* [Journal of the Second Northwest Institute for Nationalities] 3 (2004): 96-99; Jiao Pei and Xia Lu, "Yisilan shijie: guoji kongbuzhuyi de zongjiao minzu yinsu fenxi [The Islamic World: an Analysis of the Religious and National Causes of International Terrorism], *Yinshan xuekan* [Yinshan Academic Journal] 17, 3 (May 2004): 81-84.

<sup>22</sup> For example, June Teufel Dreyer, "China's Islamic Challenge," *China Brief* 1, 6 (September 27 2001). Ahmad Lutfi, "China's Islamic Awakening," *China Brief* 4, 10 (May 13 2004), mentions "the radicalization of Islamic identity" and "Islamic insurgency" in Xinjiang. See also Ahmad Lutfi, "Seek Jihad as Far as China," in K. Santhanam and Srikanth Kondapalli, Eds., *Asian Security and China 2000-2010* (New Delhi: IDSA, 2004), pp. 506-515, and Matthew Oresman and Daniel Steingart, "Radical Islamization in Xinjiang – Lessons from Chechnya?" *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, July 30 2003.

<sup>23</sup> See Yitzhak Shichor, "Virtual Jihad: The Islamic Dimension in Uyghur National Separatism in Xinjiang," an unpublished paper delivered at the Annual Convention of the Israel Association for East Asian Studies, the University of Haifa, February 2 2004. For Chinese academic treatments of this topic, see Wu Yungui, "Shixi yisilan shengzhan guan de fazhan yanbian," [A Preliminary Analysis of the Development and Change in the Islamic Concept of Holy War (*Jihad*)], *Xiya Feizhou* [West Asia and Africa] 4 (July-August 1999): 1-7; Shang Quanyu, "Yisilan shengzhan de lilun yuanyuan yu shizhi," [Islamic Holy War (*Jihad*): Theoretical Origin and Real Substance], *Xiya Feizhou* 2 (March-April 2003): 9-12. Wu Yungui is the director of the Institute of World Religions at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.



Yet, *Jihad* has been used in Xinjiang mainly as a political rather than a religious term, as it had been used throughout history.<sup>24</sup> Quoted above, Zhang Xiuming, Director of the XUAR Police Office confirmed that "the terrorists themselves do not have much knowledge of religion. (...) They just use the religion to achieve their political aims." Indeed, during my visit my hosts admitted that, since the late 1980s, the government had lost control over Islam. They often complained that there are too many mosques, *imams* and *talips* (religious students), literature and cassettes and widespread ideas of sacrifice and suicide. But this by no means implies that Islam in Xinjiang had become more radical. Presented in the documentary, the Hotan conference was meant to show the "evidence" but it could have easily been fabricated: there has been no mention of this conference anywhere, anytime, as far as the author is aware of. Similarly, Chinese *Hajj* (pilgrimage) missions to Mecca, resumed in 1979 after a fifteen-year break, or the awakening phenomenon of militant-fundamentalist Islam abroad do not automatically feed Islamic extremism at home. Beijing has no doubt about the link between the "three evil forces" (*san gu shili*: separatism, terrorism and religious extremism),<sup>25</sup> but its arguments are unconvincing.

Islam is a very sensitive and elusive topic in Xinjiang. Ordinary people and even most academics, not to mention Uyghurs, are reluctant (at best) to talk about it. Books published in China that briefly deal with Islam in post-1949 Xinjiang generally overstate the link between Islamic radicalism and Uyghur national-separatism, while Uyghur publications tend to understate this link, especially after 9/11. Indeed, though Islam is an integral part of Uyghur collective identity, it is neither dominant nor homogenous – and by no means fundamentalist. An essentially eclectic religion that over generations absorbed local beliefs, it had been affected since the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Ottoman (later Turkish) secular policies. To be sure, southern Xinjiang is evidently and visibly more orthodox than the north or the center but not necessarily more radical. Radical Islam is not a product of Xinjiang – it has been imported from outside, mainly from China's allies, primarily Pakistan. Yet external support for Islamic terrorism and radicalism has diminished considerably ever since the mid-1990s after Beijing warned Muslim countries – including Iran and Saudi Arabia – not to interfere in China's internal

<sup>24</sup> Kim Hodung, *Holy War in China: the Muslim Rebellion and State in Chinese Central Asia, 1864-1877* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

<sup>25</sup> Bao Lisheng, "Three Evil Forces Threatening Xinjiang's Stability – Interviewing Pan Zhiping, Director of the Central Asia Research Institute of Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences," *Ta Kung Pao*, August 10 2001, in FBIS-CHI-2001-0810. See also Hao Shiyuan, "Minzu fenliezhuyi yu kongbuzhuyi," [Ethno-separatism and Terrorism], *Minzu yanjiu* [Ethnonational Studies] 1 (2002): 1-11; Liu Fengqi, "Kongbuzhuyi yu minzu fenliezhuyi," [Terrorism and National Separatism], *Hebei sheng shehuizhuyi xueyuan xuebao* [Hebei Province Journal of the Socialist College] 1 (October 2003): 41-45.

affairs. Security checks at the border stations (as I experienced a number of times in Turugart Pass) are tight and the guards are looking primarily for religious literature. Likewise, Muslim *Hajj* missions to Mecca are carefully selected and closely monitored and supervised by the Chinese authorities.

However, while Uyghur unrest in Xinjiang has undoubtedly also been fed by religious persecution, it is primarily related to social and economic discrimination. Nationalist aspirations, political demands or a quest for independence are beyond the horizon for most Uighurs in Xinjiang. Invented by the Chinese, the impression that radical Islam has become more influential in Xinjiang can hardly be substantiated. Notwithstanding the Chinese (probably deliberate) admission that the government has failed to control religion, Islam in the PRC has always been under firm state watch. Religious training and leadership have been consistently limited and co-opted.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, the newly opened economic and social mobility opportunities lead the younger generation far away from religion. In fact, though identified as Muslims, most Uyghur Diaspora leaders are very lenient as to maintaining religious prescriptions and prohibitions. In sum, Islamic radicalism in Xinjiang is a relatively rare phenomenon grossly played up by the Chinese authorities, the media and some academics.

## Conclusions

Contrary to the documentary's intention to demonstrate an intensification of "Eastern Turkestan" terrorism that affects not only China's national security but also that of its Central Asia neighbors, the facts show that "terrorism" in Xinjiang has been subsiding significantly since the late 1990s.<sup>27</sup> Beijing itself had downplayed Uyghur "terrorist" threats before 9/11 or when it has been trying to raise foreign investments in Xinjiang: only "an extremely small number of ethnic splittist elements" are engaged in "a handful of violent and terrorist activities. (...) Xinjiang's public order is there for all to see. Facts prove that Xinjiang is stable, security problems do not exist at all, and personal safety is completely guaranteed" (emphasis added).<sup>28</sup> To be sure, just a few days

<sup>26</sup> "At Xinjiang Islamic Religion Institution, Abdulahat Abdurixit Urges Cultivation of Quality Patriotic Religious Personnel," *Xinjiang Ribao* [Xinjiang Daily], August 4 2001, in FBIS-CHI-2001-0827.

<sup>27</sup> Colin Mackerras, "Why Terrorism Bypasses China's Far West," *Asia Times*, April 23 2004. See also: James Millward, *Violent Separatism in Xinjiang: A Critical Assessment*. Policy Studies 6 (Washington: East-West Center, 2004).

<sup>28</sup> Chen Guohua, "Wang Lequan and Abulahat Abdurixit Say That Xinjiang's Social Stability Is There for All To See," *Zhongguo Xinwen She*, May 29 2001, in FBIS-CHI-2001-0529. Also a Poliburo member, Wang is secretary of Xinjiang's CCP Committee, and Abdurixit was chairman of the regional government.

before 9/11 Wang Lequan, Xinjiang's CCP secretary said that the destructive activities of "national separatists" and "religious extremists" and their efforts "never affect Xinjiang's stability." In addition Abulahat Abdurixit, chairman of the regional government, stressed: "By no means is Xinjiang a place where violence and terrorist accidents take place" (emphasis added).<sup>29</sup> A few months later he said: "It is fair to say that Xinjiang has been victimized by terrorism."<sup>30</sup> In short, underscoring Eastern Turkestan Terrorism does not necessarily reflects the reality but is does reflect China's changing interests (such as winning U.S. support in the worldwide fight against terrorism).

Because, in spite of its repeated statements, Beijing firmly controls Xinjiang and does not perceive any real, serious or immediate "terrorist" threat to its national security in the northwest. This is evident by the relatively shallow military presence in Xinjiang, both in quantity and definitely in quality – unlike what outsiders believe.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Islamic radicalism in Xinjiang appears to be marginal at best and does not propagate terrorism. Thus, of the "hundreds" Uyghur "terrorists" who had, according to Beijing, collaborated with the Taleban or Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, only twenty-two have been detained by the U.S. at Guantanamo Bay. Washington was ready to release fifteen, some two thirds of them: one third who are totally innocent of collaborating with Al-Qaeda and one third whose case is unclear but who are definitely not terrorist. A U.S. military tribunal had ruled already in spring 2004 that they are not enemy combatants: "They had just been in the wrong place at the wrong time", and ordered them released from Guantanamo. Indeed, on May 5, 2006, it was reported that five Uyghurs had been released to be settled in Albania.<sup>32</sup> Only about one third – seven altogether that had been caught fighting – have been identified as terrorists.<sup>33</sup>

The bottom line is that Beijing has been trying to manipulate public opinion – at home and abroad – by exploiting the remoteness of Xinjiang as well as the cultural distance and the restricted information, to

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<sup>29</sup> Bao Lisheng, "Wang Lequan Says That Xinjiang Is Not a Place of Terror," *Ta Kung Pao* (Hong Kong), September 3 2001, in FBIS-CHI-2001-0903.

<sup>30</sup> *AFP* (Hong Kong), March 8 2002, in FBIS-CHI-2002-0308.

<sup>31</sup> Yitzhak Shichor, "The Great Wall of Steel: Military and Strategy in Xinjiang," in S. Frederick Starr, Ed., *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), pp. 120-160.

<sup>32</sup> "Detainee Release Announced," U.S. Department of Defense, News Release No. 406-06, May 5 2006, <[www.defenselink.mil/releases/2006/nr20060505-12980.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/releases/2006/nr20060505-12980.html)> (May 1 2006).

<sup>33</sup> *The Globe*, December 13 2005. See also *Washington Post*, December 13 2005 and "Uyghur Guantanamo Detainees' Future Uncertain," Uyghur American Association Release, December 22 2005. See also *Washington Post*, January 17 2006 and a transcript of a January 17, 2006 Australian Broadcast Corporation TV program: <[www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2006/sl549632.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2006/sl549632.htm)> (May 1 2006).

influence foreign governments (primarily the United States), international organizations (primarily the United Nations), various NGOs, the media and even some academics using the emerging and fashionable unity in the fight against "terrorist threats."<sup>34</sup> The documentary discussed above is one of the means used, but it missed the target.

Having monopolized political and military power in Xinjiang, Beijing must be aware that Uyghur activism and Islamic radicalism, either endogenous or exogenous, do not constitute a real threat to China's social cohesion and economic stability, let alone to its national security and territorial integrity. Yet, the Chinese have underlined Uyghur activism and Islamic radicalism and have frequently exaggerated their threat. For one reason, they want to forestall and preempt a likely deterioration in the ethno-religious power balance in Xinjiang and thereby prevent a negative outcome that could happen if nothing or little would be done. For another, the perception it creates is then used to justify and legitimize a further crackdown campaign – ultimately aimed at integrating China's restive nationalities into the 'people' (on behalf of modern socialist values) or to educate and at the same time warn other nationalities (and social groups) about the consequences (on behalf of traditional Chinese values). Finally, by depicting national separatism and religious radicalism as a threat linked to global "terrorism", and not just to China, Beijing can (and does) scare potential external supporters (in the West, in Central Asia and in the Middle East). This has opened the door for the PRC to join the U.S.-led international crusade against terrorism and, moreover, to gain unexpected sympathy and actual support.

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<sup>34</sup> Joshua Kurlantzick, "China's Dubious Role in the War on Terror," *Current History* (December 2003): 432-438.

# Strategic Surprise? Central Asia in 2006

*Stephen Blank\**

## ABSTRACT

In 2005, despite warnings about Uzbekistan's fragility by American experts Washington did not expect the uprising at Andijan which came to have a profound impact on its regional position by significantly lessening its ability to use Central Asian bases in the war on terrorism. Yet much of this could have been avoided by a coherent policy that took developments in Central Asia seriously, showed heightened rather than diminishing attention to the area, and took seriously both American strategic interests and the cause of democratization. Drawing on the concept of strategic surprise, the author of this article seeks to demonstrate that unless problems of poor policy and intelligence are corrected, the United States and other Western governments are likely to be surprised again in Central Asia, or be unable to deal effectively with future surprises.

*Keywords* • strategic surprise • Central Asia • terrorism • state failure • U.S. intelligence

Under the best of conditions prophecy or forecasting are difficult endeavors especially if one wants to predict unexpected development that shatter the confines of a linear progression from the present. Central Asia is a case in point for we cannot deny that the pace of political developments there has greatly accelerated and could develop in faster and even unpredictable ways in 2006. Indeed, testifying to the U.S. Senate in February, 2006 John Negroponte, Director of the Office of National Intelligence, warned that several Central Asian states could undergo upheavals that would leave them resembling the failed state condition of Somalia.<sup>1</sup> Other analysts such as Martha Olcott of the Carnegie Endowment, and Boris Rumer, and this author have warned as well about one or more Central Asian state being in danger of state failure.<sup>2</sup> Undoubtedly were upheavals of such magnitude and supposed unpredictability to occur in Central Asia they would entail what could be

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<sup>1</sup> John D. Negroponte, *Annual Threat Assessment of the Director of National Intelligence for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence*, February 2 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Blank, *Uzbekistan: A Strategic Challenge to American Policy* (Open Society Institute, 2005); Martha Brill Olcott, *Central Asia's Second Chance* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005); Boris Rumer, "Central Asia: At the End of the Transition," in Boris Rumer Ed., *Central Asia At the End of Transition* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe & co. Inc., 2005).

called strategic surprise, that is, a surprise act or actions of a magnitude that catches interested governments so off balance that it and its consequences (i.e. the reactions to it) affect the outcome of a war in truly consequential ways. Yet in fact the warning signs are there for all to see.

In Central Asia in 2005, and despite warnings about Uzbekistan's fragility by American experts, including this author, Washington did not expect the uprising at Andijan which came to have a profound impact on its regional position by significantly lessening its ability to use Central Asian bases in the war on terrorism.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, when the crisis did come the State Department and the Pentagon, gripped by rivalry, could not come up with a coherent response to the uprising and subsequent massacre at Andijan or to Tashkent's subsequent policies. As a result of the incoherence of U.S. policy, of which the demand for an investigation of Andijan is only a small part, America was ousted from its bases there.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the consequences of America's expulsion from its base in Uzbekistan have led Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to say publicly and privately that America seeks no new bases in Central Asia and will leave its existing base at Manas in Kyrgyzstan as the war in Afghanistan winds down or ends.<sup>5</sup> Yet much of this could have been avoided by a coherent policy that took developments in Central Asia seriously, showed heightened rather than diminishing attention to the area, and took seriously both American strategic interests and the cause of democratization. In the event, this did not happen, hence the defeat of U.S. interests in the area.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, given the multiple problems afflicting the U.S. intelligence community, it is unlikely that even if it knew what was coming at Andijan and what could be the consequences of that kind of insurgency, that it would have either been able to adequately inform the government or that the government could have acted effectively on that information given its own divisions. Thus the issue is not that a surprise occurred. Indeed, it is quite unlikely that the Karimov regime that disregarded American advice and pressure for reform could have averted Andijan or that anything America did or did not do could have prevented the uprising. Rather due to poor policy and bad intelligence, no effective response to it could be devised by Washington. Until and unless these problems are corrected America and other Western governments, if not other states whose intelligence

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<sup>3</sup> Stephen Blank, this paper was also briefed around Washington in late 2004 and many analysts at that time warned that Uzbekistan was on a failing state trajectory.

<sup>4</sup> John C.K. Daly, Col. Kurt H. Meppen (USA), Vladimir Socor, and S. Frederick Starr, *Anatomy of a Crisis: U.S.-Uzbekistan Relations 2001-2005* (Washington: Central Asia Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of State, Interview of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice with Kubat Otorbaev of Radio Liberty and Sultan Jumagulov of the BBC, Bishkek, October 11 2005, <[www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/54664.htm](http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/54664.htm)> (June 1 2006).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

operations are still more opaque, are likely to be surprised again in Central Asia or to be unable to deal effectively with future surprises.

Therefore America and the other interested governments in this region, both local and foreign regimes alike, are equally vulnerable to similar strategic surprises in 2006. But to understand what that means we first need to investigate the concept of strategic surprise in the current war. As Under Secretary of Defense Gordon England stated in a briefing for the new 2006 Quadrennial Review, the United States and many, but by no means all, of its allies are engaged in a so called 'long war' against a global enemy whose main tactic is the resort to terrorism on a global scale. This war is and will be not only a long protracted war but also a test of both national and international will.<sup>7</sup> Even so, the actual enemy is not or should not be called terrorism per se, even though the popular name for the U.S.-led war against Al-Qaeda is the Global War on Terrorism.<sup>8</sup>

After all, terrorism is merely a tactic used by insurgents due to their inability to compete at the level of regular combat forces with their enemies – not just the United States, but also governments like Israel, Russia, and India. By falling into this semantic and thus cognitive trap we misunderstand the enemy's nature and his real objectives. We thus confirm again that our vision is, in Colin Gray's words, astrategic and focused on tactics and battles rather than on strategy and strategic outcomes.<sup>9</sup> This approach to understanding the nature of America's current strategic challenges has had extremely negative consequences in Iraq and Afghanistan. Indeed, in the latter case, there is evidence to believe that the situation, contrary to Washington's invincible, often unfounded, and obstinate optimism, is actually deteriorating with the Taliban and its allies making a comeback.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, as regards Iraq, we find a situation where the Secretary of Defense says the Army is not overstretched only to be contradicted by

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<sup>7</sup> As stated in a briefing for the new Quadrennial Review by Under Secretary of Defense Gordon England, Washington, D.C., February 1 2006, see also United States Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review*, Washington, D.C., 2006, available at <[www.defenselink.mil](http://www.defenselink.mil)> (Henceforth QDR).

<sup>8</sup> The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, Washington, D.C., 2002, available at <[www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)> (henceforth NSS).

<sup>9</sup> Colin Gray, *Transformation and Strategic Surprise* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2005), pp. 14-17; Antulio J. Echevarria II, *Toward an American Way of War* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> B. Raman, "International Terrorism Monitor: Paper No 14, Jihadi Terrorism – 2005 and 2006 – an Overview," *South Asia Analysis Group Paper No 1668* (January 10 2006); "A Charter in London, Troops for the Badlands," *The Economist*, February 4 2006, pp. 37-38; see also, "Heading South," *Ibid.*, p. 12; Sean D. Naylor, "The Waiting Game," *Armed Forces Journal* (February, 2006): 30-39.

the commander in the theater the very next day.<sup>11</sup> Even more revealing is the fact that in virtually every analysis to date of the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq, the common and generally acknowledged thread is that U.S. officials and commanders were unprepared for and surprised by the advent of and scope of the insurgency that developed there. And this surprise or unpreparedness occurred despite ample warnings of insurgency from the CIA, State Department, U.S. Army War College, and numerous independent experts.<sup>12</sup> Thus it is clear that America has repeatedly been surprised by the enemy, a telling sign of cognitive and strategic failure. But as Andijan shows as well, America has also been surprised by events of importance affecting its partners and allies. And this surprise has unequivocally added enormous costs to the strategies it must now conduct to extricate itself from those past failures. Thus it is clear that the cost and/or consequence of surprise is reckoned in added material and intangible costs, risks, and burdens upon Washington and its partners and allies.

As these observations suggest, for many reasons, surprise, and the reaction to it either at the tactical, operational, or strategic level will typify both sides' conduct of this war. For the terrorist groups fighting America and its allies, it is obvious that contemporary terrorism, by definition, is based on the concept of the surprise attack whose purpose is to engender both strategic and psychological results of shock, awe, dislocation, disorientation, fear, etc. As Lenin observed, the purpose of terror is to terrify. And terrified people are generally incapable of coherent strategic response.

At the strategic level, or what some call mega-terrorism, these terrorists seek, to exploit large-scale surprise and terror attacks to achieve results that are comparable to traditional conventional invasion on a grand scale like Pearl Harbor, Operation Barbarossa and Hitler's invasions of Denmark, Norway, Poland, France, and the Low Countries. These attacks embolden them to hope that by such stratagems they can achieve goals wildly disproportionate to the actual correlation of their forces and capabilities relative to that of their enemy. Such attacks allow them to contemplate decisive strategic actions against America or its allies as seen in the 9/11 attacks or the Madrid bombings of 2004. Surprise is also "the enabler of unconventional operations that allow for small forces to conduct missions at a crucial time or place which will decisively influence the course of a battle or even of a campaign." When most successful, surprise "eliminates an active opponent from the battlefield"

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<sup>11</sup> Ann Scott Tyson, "Rumsfeld: Army Not 'Broken'," *Washington Post*, January 26 2006, p. 18; David Furst, "U.S. Commander Admits Military Stretched in Iraq," *Agence France Presse*, January 26 2006.

<sup>12</sup> James Fallows, "Blind Into Baghdad," *The Atlantic Monthly* (January-February, 2004): 72-94, lists many of those studies.



and converts the process of strategic interaction between opposing wills that is war into a matter of accounting and logistics where war “goes away.”<sup>13</sup>

In this respect the terrorist campaign against the West and the non-Islamic world confirms Michael Handel’s observations about the nature of surprise from the 1980s before non-state entities could wage transnational wars or launch attacks of this scale. Handel observed that,

“From a military point of view, the advantages to be derived from achieving strategic surprise are invaluable. A successful unanticipated attack will facilitate the destruction of a sizable portion of the enemy’s forces at a lower cost to the attacker by throwing the inherently stronger defense psychologically off balance and hence temporarily reducing his resistance. In compensating for the weaker position of the attacker, it will act as a force multiplier that may drastically reverse the ration of forces in the attacker’s favor. Stated in more general terms, the numerically inferior side is able to take the initiative by concentrating superior forces at the time and place of its choosing, thereby vastly improving the likelihood of achieving a decisive victory. Clearly then, the incentive to resort to strategic surprise (as well as to deception) is particularly strong for countries that are only too cognizant of their natural vulnerability. Stronger armies, however, lack the ‘natural incentive’ to employ such methods, and must therefore make a conscious effort to exploit the full potential of strategic surprise if they are to maintain a superior position and achieve more decisive results at a minimal cost.”<sup>14</sup>

Thus surprise attacks intend to impose costs of protracted war or stress between allies or increased antipathy to America in the Muslim world, not least Central Asia which has always been an important theater for rebels based in Afghanistan.

A second reason for expecting the widespread use of surprise at either the tactical or higher levels in this war flows from Handel’s last point. The U.S. military too is now seeking the air and naval capability and the accompanying concepts of operations (CONOPS) with which to be able respond to anticipated surprise threats by destroying targets halfway

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<sup>13</sup> James Wirtz, “Theory of Surprise,” in Richard K. Betts and Thomas G. Mahnken Eds., *Paradoxes of Intelligence: Essays in Honor of Michael Handel* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 2003), pp. 103-105.

<sup>14</sup> Michael I. Handel, “Intelligence and the Problem of Strategic surprise,” *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

around the world within 60 minutes of an order to strike.<sup>15</sup> Thus the U.S. military is harkening to Handel's advice and will wage surprise, even preemptive strikes, and even possibly attacks against targets who are themselves preparing to surprise us. In principle, given sufficient justification, the theaters of operation for such attacks could include Central Asia if the threat is of sufficient magnitude. Thus the U.S. military too seeks to employ surprise for strategic effect. And even earlier, as the many U.S. statements about shock and awe indicate, it believed that its strategy, for example, as displayed in Iraq in 2003, would achieve a comparable disorientation of the enemy's psychological bearings. Therefore the achievement of surprise and of counter-surprise will be critical to both sides who will duly strive to achieve the material and psychological results of defeat, disorientation, and demoralization associated with strategic surprise.

Several immediate conclusions flow from these facts. First the problem of strategic surprise has not and will not ever go away. Instead it is inherent in America's and everyone else's strategic predicament, including that of America's enemy/ies. Since surprise will be a hallmark of this and all future wars, we must understand and learn how to counter it or how to recover from it. America's strategic predicament or condition derives from its standing as the hegemonic global power with an interest in and responsibility for world order. But nobody is exempt from vulnerability to surprise. As Colin Gray and Richard Betts observe, the phenomenon of strategic surprise and its attendant dislocations of both a material and psychological nature is endemic to the human and the strategic condition.<sup>16</sup>

Thus the critical factor that must not be overlooked in discussing surprise in general and strategic surprise in particular is the effect of that surprise upon the victim. In regard to Central Asia then the real issue is not the surprise attack or crisis but the reaction and ensuing events afterwards. In Liddell Hart's words, "The point and the distinction between actual surprise and surprise effect are of significance to the theory of warfare."<sup>17</sup> Even more critical a point has been made by Chinese specialists. Zhai Kun, Director of Southeast Asian Studies at the Chinese Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) in the People's Republic of China, recently stated, on the basis of a previous study by Chinese scholars of contemporary crisis management, that Southeast Asia's recent experience in confronting crises since the financial crisis of 1997 shows that, "against the backdrop of globalization,

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<sup>15</sup> Elaine M. Grossman, "Air Force to Weigh Rapid-Strike Option for Global 'No-Warning Threats,'" *Inside the Pentagon*, February 2 2006, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Richard K. Betts, "How to Think About Terrorism," *The Wilson Quarterly*, Winter, 2006, pp. 44-49; Colin Gray, *Transformation and Strategic Surprise*, pp. 8-11.

<sup>17</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 11.

transnational crises are typically characterized by [such] features as sudden appearance, broad reach, rapid transmission, and great harmfulness.”<sup>18</sup>

Therefore the advent of strategic surprise is intrinsic to the nature of the contemporary world order and we should not be *unduly* surprised if another such large-scale crisis breaks out, especially in Central Asia where there is already what Lord George Robertson, as Secretary – General of NATO, called “a guaranteed supply chain of instability.”<sup>19</sup> Scholars like Jeremy Black have observed that this region is one of many areas that could easily be gripped by both political and/or military crisis in the not too distant future.<sup>20</sup> As Negroponte warned, a failed state or insurgency here is by no means inconceivable, the point is either to anticipate and forestall it or to react vigorously and correctly at the first sign of trouble.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, if America is not to be surprised by the next major surprise in the area, it needs to develop a coherent policy and policy process in Washington that encompasses its three main objectives: ensuring the geopolitical independence and sovereignty of all the Central Asian regimes, i.e. their freedom from terror and from Russian and Chinese neo-imperial pressures; Central Asian energy access to the world and not just Russia and China; and democratization. While there are signs of this kind of strategy emerging in Washington; it must be pointed out that both to support democratic reforms and to avoid being blindsided by unpredictable events Washington must seek to engage simultaneously with both governments, including their so called power structures, armed forces and Ministries of Interior or police forces, and the human rights and reform communities. This is the only way to sponsor the kind of multilateral dialogue within and among these countries that alone can produce reforms that are enduring. At the same time such a dialogue generates tremendous intelligence and information for Washington and the participants in these dialogues, along with enhanced understanding of what is taking place in these societies.

And, as Zhai Kun was talking about financial-political crises, we cannot but emphasize strongly that the next strategic crisis to take us by surprise, wherever it occurs, may originate in a non-military form but may quickly and unexpectedly evolve or mutate into an operational template that engulfs more than one country. Therefore we must realize that the contemporary global status quo is always subject to an inherent

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<sup>18</sup> Zhai Kun, “The Rise of China and the Development of Relations Between the PRC and ASEAN, 1991-2020: A Historical Survey and a Strategy for the Future,” *Far Eastern Affairs* 33, 4 (2005): 33.

<sup>19</sup> Gareth Harding, “The NATO Revolution Part I,” *UPI*, November 15 2002.

<sup>20</sup> Jeremy Black, *War in the New Century* (London and New York: Continuum Books, 2001), *passim*.

<sup>21</sup> Negroponte, Testimony.

fragility and dynamism whereby crises of a certain strategic magnitude that originate in one sphere can evolve the way the Chinese scholars describe from one sphere into another sphere with unexpected rapidity. For example, the transition from financial to political or military crisis can possibly be confined to one country as in Indonesia's 1997-98 crisis where the financial crisis led to state collapse, or else a crisis can spread from one country to one or more other states triggering a massive global shock. Thus, for example, the Asian financial crisis spread from Southeast Asia and South Korea to Russia and South America in 1997-98. Thus the entire globe is inherently subject at all times to consequential and unexpected strategic surprises.

This is the logic of what former Under Secretary-General of the UN, Giandomenico Picco calls asymmetry. Specifically, he observes that,

“Asymmetry does not mean terrorism alone. It means that a mistake by an individual who is part of the system could accidentally provoke a chain reaction that might affect many in a short time. Asymmetry includes the hubs of our critical infrastructures that are not only connected but are also vulnerable to mismanagement and involuntary mistakes of large consequences. Access to information, real-time communication, and cyberspace allow small entities, be they state or not, to affect global reality. Asymmetry implies a lower level of predictability and an increased complexity of risks management at almost all levels: nation-states, institutions, corporations, and individuals.”<sup>22</sup>

These observations apply *a fortiori* to terrorism which aims at deliberate destabilization. Furthermore diminished predictability equates to heightened vulnerability to surprise and thus to the greater likelihood of and opportunity for its use against us or by us.

Second, all of the chatter about the transparent battlefield and the end or reduction of fog and friction thanks to the achievements of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) should now be exposed for the advocacy rather than the analysis that they represent. Indeed, the cult of the RMA has prevailed because it seems to offer a low-cost way to rapid and total victory in Napoleonic fashion; in a single, quick, and uninterrupted campaign. But in fact the wars of the previous 15 years have been anything but such campaigns. Instead they have almost been inconclusive and protracted, a fact that also applies to other wars such as Chechnya or Afghanistan under Soviet rule where America is not involved. Thus the paradigm of war under which we have operated has

<sup>22</sup> Giandomenico Picco, “A New International System,?” *Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations* 4, 2 (Fall, 2005): 31.

been clearly disconnected from the reality of the wars in which we or many other actors have participated.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the RMA paradigm, as we now see, necessarily involves an intrinsic cognitive disjunction on the part of its adherents that invites dislocation, surprise, guerrilla warfare, terrorism, to name a few, as a riposte to the arrogant and unfounded claims made on its behalf.<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, U.S. claims about having a presumed information superiority or dominance in the theater are unwarranted because of America's demonstrated and consistent failures to understand critical aspects of these theaters and the nature of the wars it is fighting. Indeed, the very reliance upon the wonders of technology invites and almost mandates surprise attacks and the whole panoply of manifestations of so called asymmetric warfare that confound American or even Western knowledge and understanding.<sup>25</sup>

Third, and consequently, American information superiority is diminished, if it even really exists, by an inability to understand the theater. Similarly its ability to distinguish reality or real signals from "noise" is still greatly impaired, notwithstanding the euphoria of enthusiasts of the supposedly transparent battlefield.<sup>26</sup> Intelligence reorganizations and the latest technological breakthroughs, no matter what their provenance, will do little or nothing to prevent the advent of strategic surprise.<sup>27</sup> Such failures are, sadly, inherent in today's strategic environment as many states have learned. Indeed continuing policy failures in the United States regarding Iraq, Uzbekistan, and Afghanistan, or the failure to expect the Hamas movement's victory in Palestinian elections in early 2006 shows a continuing vulnerability to strategic surprise despite constant reorganizations.

This does not mean America should forego either organizational reforms of the intelligence and defense community or technological innovation. Rather those reforms are by nature imperfect, even insufficient, to prevent a repetition of unpleasant surprises though they are habitually oversold to politicians and publics seeking a quick fix. Similarly we must stop thinking that information equates to knowledge or understanding. Having more information at your disposal does not make you know or understand complex theaters better than everyone else.

<sup>23</sup> General Sir Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), passim.

<sup>24</sup> Barry D. Watts, *Clausewitzian Friction and Future War* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for National Security Studies, National Defense University, McNair Papers, No. 52, 1996); Black, pp. 102-120; Smith, *The Utility of Force*.

<sup>25</sup> Watts, *Clausewitzian Friction and Future War*; Mark M. Lowenthal, "Grant vs. Sherman: Paradoxes of Intelligence and Combat Leadership," in Richard K. Betts and Thomas G. Mahnken Eds., *Paradoxes of Intelligence: Essays in Honor of Michael Handel* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 2003), pp. 190-201.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Betts, "How to Think About Terrorism," pp. 44-49.

Information, to equate into usable tactical, operational, and strategic knowledge, must be verified and understood before being used.

Fourth, there are ample grounds for believing that the threat posed by terrorists, rather than decreasing is increasing, particularly in the Middle East and Afghanistan.<sup>28</sup> This may also be the case in increasingly critical areas like Central Asia as Negroponte suggested.<sup>29</sup> In that case, Washington and its allies or partners will almost certainly again experience not just terrorist attacks whose *modus operandi* is tactical surprise, but rather large-scale terror attacks of a strategic aspect having a strategic goal in mind as in Madrid, and on 9/11.

Therefore we may conclude that surprise is inevitable despite America's best efforts and that what counts is the nature of the response to it (here one might usefully contrast the American to the Spanish response to large-scale terrorism) and second, that the current war will go on for years and that despite Washington's best efforts, its performance to date leaves much to be desired.

### **Terrorism, Surprise, and the Contemporary Strategic Environment**

Contemporary terrorism in many ways functions as a rational response to the issues raised by contemporary strategy and the U.S.' unipolar preeminence. Terrorism and/or suicide terrorism, are often cheap and handy tactics in the struggle to realize these movements' strategic aims, namely the ouster of Western or other foreign presence from their lands and societies.<sup>30</sup> Here it should be noted that these strategic objectives are quite concrete, often nationalist rather than religious as such, a fact that makes Al-Qaeda's Pan-Islamic approach, wide base of support, and easy resort to trans-national attacks all the more unique, striking, notable, and dangerous. Equally importantly, virtually every analyst who has written about Al-Qaeda cites its dynamic, protean, chameleon-like, and constantly evolving character. Indeed, many have noted that it functions more like a network than like a traditional enemy, even a traditional terrorist group.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, the resort to trans-national terrorism as an almost exclusive form of operation or tactic felicitously (from the terrorists' viewpoint) conforms to developments in modern warfare, specifically what might be called military globalization.

“Military globalization in the international system can be

<sup>28</sup> Raman, “International Terrorism Monitor: Paper No 14, Jihadi Terrorism – 2005 and 2006 – an Overview”; Naylor, “The Waiting Game,” pp. 30-39.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*; Olcott, *Central Asia's Second Chance*, passim; Negroponte, Testimony.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random house, 2005).

<sup>31</sup> John Arquilla, and David Ronfeldt, Eds., *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime and Militancy* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1999).

regarded as a military relation [that is an] interactive outcome of political institutions and a procession of increasing extension. After a long development, military globalization has changed the world to a single geographical strategic space. Thus the first aspect of this strategic revolution is the transformation of the geostrategic space or battlespace of Central Asia.”<sup>32</sup>

Thus it is now possible to achieve strategic effects in theaters that are quite distant from where the operation is actually launched, e.g. from assets based in Central Asia or to achieve them in Central Asia from distantly based assets. While that was the case for the September 11, 2001 attacks; this principle also holds true for any theater in the world. This ability to achieve distant effects through local means is now a distinguishing hallmark of contemporary warfare.<sup>33</sup> The traditional idea that war occurs solely between mutually exclusive spatial entities, either states or blocs, no longer holds. In General (Ret.) Sir Rupert Smith’s phrase, the current paradigm of war takes place “among the people,” i.e. everywhere.<sup>34</sup> Permeable boundaries and shifting alliances mark the struggles of local militias and the local political economies of warfare in specific places. Enemies no longer so obviously control territories; violence is often constrained to particular places but its connections spill over the territorial boundaries of conventional geopolitical categories.<sup>35</sup> A Pan-Islamic ideology and a global operational perspective admirably conform to this trend and enhance the possibilities for global surprise attacks by shadowy, ill-defined, often invisible networks operating across tremendous distances.

At the same time Al-Qaeda might, in some respects be a unique or new phenomenon in the history of warfare in that it combines aspects of both new and old trends in that history in ways not habitually associated with terrorist movements. For example, terrorism and insurgency are usually hallmarks of wars of attrition which trade time for space and seek to exhaust opponents psychologically and materially over a protracted period. However Al-Qaeda’s inclination to commit acts of so called mega-terrorism and to achieve surprise at the highest strategic level by enormous acts of mass killing resembles the old Napoleonic quest for the decisive battle which eliminates the enemy as a factor. In this respect it is

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<sup>32</sup> Damien Cai, “Military Globalization of the U.S. and International Security in East Asia Region,” *Taiwan Defense Affairs* 2, 3 (Spring, 2002): 58.

<sup>33</sup> Michael Evans, “From Kadesh to Kandahar: Military Theory and the Future of War,” *Naval War College Review* 55, 3 (Summer, 2003): 132-150.

<sup>34</sup> General Sir Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World*, (London: Allen Lane, Penguin Books, 2005).

<sup>35</sup> Evans, “From Kadesh to Kandahar: Military Theory and the Future of War,” pp. 132-150.

almost an inverted mirror image of the U.S.' own quest for rapid decisive victory.

In this respect Picco has argued that Al-Qaeda represents a qualitative difference from previous terrorist groups who ultimately had a specific political objective connected with a particular territory in mind. Therefore their terrorism was tactically generated to achieve that specific political- territorial objective and compel the other side to negotiate with them on an equal basis. Picco observes that Al-Qaeda represents something new and different. It epitomizes the new strategic terrorism that is at war with the entire status quo in that it, like Hitler and his war machine craved war for the achievement of an eschatological goal that could only be achieved through perpetual war, be it the 1000 year Reich or a new Caliphate. Therefore Al-Qaeda's terrorist attacks, be they small-scale or mega-terrorism like 9/11 seek total victory in a theater through a single gigantic act if possible as in New York and Washington or Madrid. In this context, if it or one of its allies were to gain hold of a state in Central Asia it would become a launching pad for worldwide attacks against Al-Qaeda's multifarious enemies. Thus Picco writes that,

"Can Al-Qaeda exist without an enemy? I doubt it. Indeed, Al-Qaeda may well be in the business of *strategic terrorism*, the perpetual war, the struggle to the end (a never-ending end), for it appears to be a struggle against the 'other', yesterday the Hazaras, Shiite, or Tajiks in Afghanistan, then the Russians, then the Chinese, then the Indian, then the West and so forth – and since the 'other' will always be there, the perpetual war is guaranteed. Is this strategic terrorism? The very structure of Al-Qaeda allows for no welfare state to be created anywhere unless, of course, it succeeds in taking over a failed state of some sort. Its disconnection from a nation, or a state, or a tribe represents advantages but also risks. Strategic terrorism per se has nothing to lose in a perpetual struggle. In fact it feeds on it. It represents part of the appeal for those who join as the ultimate real battle – a confrontation that includes no compromise or other options. Indeed, no occasion has arisen so far where we have seen any negotiation attempted, sought, or even imagined with Al-Qaeda. Why? Because there is nothing to negotiate about."<sup>36</sup>

At the same time, the U.S., the leading conventional military machine in today's world, also has a cult of rapid, decisive operations (RDO) based on its presumed superiority and asymmetry to all other

<sup>36</sup> Giandomenico Picco, "The Challenges of Strategic Terrorism." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 17, 1 (2005): 13, italics in the original.



existing militaries. The whole notion of shock and awe closely resembled the achievement of the same results of psychological demoralization through the application of military power in ways asymmetric to every other state.<sup>37</sup> We fully intend to extend that asymmetry vis-à-vis the world's other militaries and widen the gap in capability between U.S. forces and other possible challengers to U.S. interests. Indeed, the United States Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM) stated this openly in its discussion of its showcase concept of RDO.

“RDO will integrate knowledge, command, and control, and effects-based operations to achieve the desired political-military effect. In preparing for and conducting a rapid decisive operation, the military acts in concert with and leverages the other instruments of national power to understand and reduce the regional adversary's critical capabilities and coherence. The United States and its allies asymmetrically assault the adversary from directions and in dimensions against which he has no counter, dictating the terms and tempos of the operation. The adversary, suffering from the loss of coherence and unable to achieve his objectives, chooses to cease actions that are against US interests or has his capabilities defeated.”<sup>38</sup>

Similarly, as the 1997 National Military Strategy stated,

“Everything is staked on a short, decisive war. As a global power with worldwide interests, it is imperative that the United States be able to deter and defeat nearly simultaneous, large-scale, cross-border aggression in two distant theaters in overlapping time frames, preferably in concert with regional allies (...) In this regard, a particularly challenging requirement associated with fighting and winning major theater wars is being able to rapidly defeat initial enemy advances short of their objectives in two theaters in close succession, one followed almost immediately by another. Maintaining this capability is absolutely critical to our ability to seize the initiative in both theaters and minimize the amount of

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<sup>37</sup> Harlan K. Ullman, James P. Wade et al, *Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1996) is the original exposition of this strategy using that terminology.

<sup>38</sup> Rapid Decisive Operations (RDO) White Paper, United States Joint Forces Command, J9 Joint Futures lab, Coordinating Draft (Version 2.0) August 9 2001, quoted in Col. Antulio J. Echevarria II, US Army, “Rapid Decisive Operations: US Operational Assumptions Regarding Future Warfare,” *Defence Studies* 2, 1 (Spring, 2002): 128.

territory we and our allies must regain from aggressors. Failure to halt an enemy invasion rapidly would make the subsequent campaign to evict enemy forces from captured territory much more difficult, lengthy, and costly. Such failure would also weaken coalition support, undermine U.S. credibility, and increase the risk of conflict elsewhere.”<sup>39</sup>

But whereas America relies largely on technological and conventional superiority its enemies seek to either to “go for broke” with a single catastrophic terrorist attack that will catch it by surprise and so disorient America as to impel its flight from the battlefield or else, by grinding terror attacks against America, its allies, and interests, they aspire to wear America down and disorient us over time, particularly if America were to rise to the provocation and invade a Muslim country and fail to achieve decisive strategic victory quickly. Either way these two rival forces seek to use surprise, either tactical or strategic, to achieve a decisive psychological failure of the understanding and of the will to achieve their objectives. So if we are to counter or at least minimize these failures to avert surprise, even strategic surprise, we must be ready to understand exactly what surprise is all about and what the wielder of surprise intends to achieve thereby. Moreover, we must grasp the dynamics of key strategic regions in order to minimize the possibilities of having to reexperience strategic surprise which catches America or its allies unawares.

### Strategic Surprise and Central Asia

As noted above, surprise can come in many guises and evolve with startling speed from a non-military crisis into one that shakes the foundation of a state or of whole regions. Given the incredibly dynamic nature of contemporary world affairs the potential for such an occurrence which can start anywhere and quickly evolve into something else somewhere else is considerable and requires extraordinary vigilance on the part of all governments. Central Asia is a case in point in this connection. As we have seen, and have been warned by Negroponte, crises originating in Central Asia can rapidly spread elsewhere with profound consequences.<sup>40</sup>

For example, at least three states in Central Asia: Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan appear to be increasingly unstable. While it is difficult to gauge how stable Tajikistan is, it clearly has regressed still further from democratization and far too many of its people and too

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<sup>39</sup> *National Military Strategy of the United States*, 1997 (Henceforth NMS), p. 2 <[www.dtic.mil/jcs/nms/executiv.htm](http://www.dtic.mil/jcs/nms/executiv.htm)> (May 15 2006).

<sup>40</sup> Negroponte, Testimony.

much of its economy depend on the drug trade for sustenance to be complacent about its chances.<sup>41</sup> Given the precarious situation in Afghanistan and the continuing drug problem there, one cannot be too sure how Tajikistan can or will make progress in meeting its many challenges.<sup>42</sup> Finally, Kazakhstan looks stable and it is not likely that we will see electoral revolutions there or elsewhere in 2006. But we should not be deluded about Kazakhstan's stability. That stability was purchased at the resort to ever more overt authoritarianism and probably less legitimacy than would have been the case in a more open election – which Nazarbayev would have probably won anyway.<sup>43</sup>

The reasons for asserting Turkmenistan's instability are quite simple. Stability depends on one man, President Saparmurad Niyazov. This 66 year old tyrant has ruled in sultanistic fashion virtually destroying any kind of rational economic or political policymaking and the emergence of any kind of civil society or private sector.<sup>44</sup> For example, he has just unilaterally torn up the country's health care system, making doctors swear an oath to him rather than Hippocrates and depriving people of their pensions and insurance. Thus the entire country is vulnerable to a public health catastrophe.<sup>45</sup> When Niyazov goes the entire system is likely to collapse with him and it is extremely difficult to envisage any kind of peaceful succession given the utter lack of legitimacy of any possible contender for power or established institution that could govern in the event of a succession crisis. Here the growing international rivalry among major powers for influence in Central Asia has led to a paradoxical outcome. While Russia, Iran, China, and the United States, as well as local actors all have important, if not vital, interests in the stability of Turkmenistan, they all appear to have little knowledge of how to bring it about and even less leverage upon anyone or institution there to do so. Thus internal chaos could well be encouraged or abetted by external disarray and contention. Certainly it is probably too much to hope for that any of these states interested in Turkmenistan has any plan for stabilizing the country. Thus if Niyazov's rule comes to an end in 2006 we can predict enormous chaos in Turkmenistan and most likely a high degree of violence.

<sup>41</sup> Olcott, *Central Asia's Second Chance*, pp. 113-117.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*; Michael Hall, "Tajikistan at the Crossroads of Democracy and Authoritarianism," in Birgit N. Schlyter Ed., *Prospects for Democracy in Central Asia* (Istanbul: Transactions of the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, XV, 2005) pp. 32-35.

<sup>43</sup> Paul Starobin, "Sultan of the Steppes," *Atlantic Monthly* (December 2005): 98-104.

<sup>44</sup> Torgny Hinnemo, "The Blocked Road to Turkmen Democracy," in Birgit N. Schlyter Ed., *Prospects for Democracy in Central Asia* (Istanbul: Transactions of the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, XV, 2005), pp. 63-67.

<sup>45</sup> "Turkmenistan Vulnerable to a Public Health Catastrophe," *Eurasia Insight*, February 6 2006.

Turning to Uzbekistan, the Andijan uprising and subsequent trends there underscore the importance of these trends as well but in different ways. Islam Karimov's regime, thanks to its violence and repression, has lost any semblance of legitimacy they have abroad except in Moscow and Beijing and probably at home. This regime, whose corruption is pervasive, now stands revealed as relying almost exclusively on violence. This reliance upon brute force and support from Moscow and Beijing occurs amid conditions of what analysts like Boris Rumer call a comprehensive antimodernization of Uzbekistan.<sup>46</sup> Since this antimodernization occurs in a political system based on a delicate balance between factions and clans which Karimov has been able to manipulate adroitly for fifteen years, it is clear that in order to keep benefits flowing to these rival factions he has to go abroad to get tangible assets.<sup>47</sup> As one recent account suggests, the domestic political landscape is extremely complex.

"The Uzbek elite, for example, comprises at least three separate groups: Westernizing liberals dominant in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and parts of the Ministry of Defense, former communists with a power base in the security services; and a nationalist-religious faction, which by no means is close to Islamic radicalism, but nevertheless sees an important role for Islam in the future of the Uzbek state."<sup>48</sup>

And external observers also warn that Karimov may be trying to create a new clan drawn from existing sources of power but which is based primarily, if not exclusively on loyalty to him.<sup>49</sup> But doing so comes at a price.

Moscow and Beijing seem ready to reward him by lending money, manipulating energy rents to Uzbekistan at the price of taking control of its energy, and by providing military assistance. But all this comes at the price of Uzbekistan's real sovereignty and independence. Until 2005 Karimov was able to repeatedly play off Moscow against Washington and it is unlikely his insight into Moscow's neo-imperial tendencies, which he often voiced publicly, has gone away.

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<sup>46</sup> Rumer, "Central Asia: At the End of the Transition," pp. 27-31; Stanislav Zhukov, "Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan: Landlocked Agrarian Economies With an Unlimited Supply of Labor," in Rumer, Ed., pp. 297-328; and Eshref Trushin and Eskender Trushin, "Institutional Barriers to the Economic Development of Uzbekistan," in Rumer, Ed., pp. 329-384.

<sup>47</sup> Kathleen Collins, "The Logic of Clan Politics: Evidence From the Central Asian Trajectories," *World Politics* 51, 2 (January, 2004): 251-254.

<sup>48</sup> Svante Cornell, "The United States and Central Asia: In the Steppes to Stay?," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 17, 2 (July, 2004: 248).

<sup>49</sup> "Uzbekistan Futures: DFI Conference Report—Implications of Instability in Uzbekistan," Washington, D.C. Summer, 2004, pp. 1-2.

But now he has no choice. As Uzbekistan is now sanctioned by the European Union and its regime is “radioactive” insofar as Washington is concerned, he has lost his room for maneuver. Recent moves, the expulsion of the U.S. and NATO forces from their bases, attacks on Kyrgyzstan that were clearly at Moscow’s behest, and attacks that the West fomented the Andijan uprising, the acceptance of one-sided gas deals with Moscow and Uzbekistan’s increasing integration into the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) all indicate that Uzbekistan no longer can uphold a truly independent foreign policy line in its dealings with its neighbors and other states.<sup>50</sup> For example, Russia has signed energy agreements with Uzbekistan giving it a monopoly over the export of Uzbekistan’s gas and a “lopsided” defense agreement as well. The defense agreement, ratified in Sochi in May, 2006, leaves open the possibility of a Russian base in Tashkent or military assistance by Russia to support the regime, but in no way commits Russia to act to defend Karimov’s government. As Jane’s observed,

“Nowhere does the formal defence pact specifically impel Moscow to come to the rescue of Uzbekistan. Instead, it calls on both sides to activate “the mechanism of consultations” in the event of a threat to co-ordinate “practical measures to settle the situation”. In other words, Russia gets all the tangible gains of a base, a stranglehold over Uzbek natural gas production and exports, and an aircraft factory in return for debt, while Uzbekistan merely gets to invoke a mechanism of consultations.”<sup>51</sup>

Moreover, Uzbekistan’s internal resources will be increasingly commandeered by Russia if not China for their purposes as the recent gas deals with Gazprom indicate. This is inherently a situation that breeds ever more instability. Karimov might be able to ride out the storm but when he goes it is likely his regime will go with him. Neither is this just one opinion. Chris Patten, Director of the International Crisis Group, basing himself on the ICG’s own reporting and analysis has publicly written that the regime there will certainly snap in the medium to long term, if not sooner.<sup>52</sup> Another authoritarian ruler might well ensue from what will almost certainly be a violent struggle, but that denouement could so weaken Uzbekistan as to render it vulnerable to internal insurgency. Uzbekistan’s intensifying repression only makes the advent

<sup>50</sup> “Russia Gains a New Uzbek Client,” *Jane’s Foreign Report*, December 8 2005.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Chris Patten, “Saving Central Asia from Uzbekistan,” *International Herald Tribune*, March 22 2006 <[www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4039&l=1](http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4039&l=1)> (May 30 2006).

of this scenario more likely. And when that happens, neither Russia, nor the West will be able to intervene effectively in what could become another protracted war in a Muslim country. Worse yet, as Patten and others have observed, a crisis in Uzbekistan is likely to engulf its neighbors. Patten writes that,

“Thanks to decades of Soviet policies and post-Soviet support for regional integration, Central Asian countries are strongly interlinked, so Uzbekistan’s neighbors are vulnerable to any instability next door. Weak and struggling, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are essentially dependent on Uzbekistan for energy and transport. Even relatively prosperous Kazakhstan could be seriously troubled if violence were to drive Uzbeks across its border.”<sup>53</sup>

Indeed Uzbekistan has already become an exporter of instability to its neighbors. Vladimir Bozhko, First Deputy Director of Kazakhstan's National Security Committee, publicly warned that as long as Uzbekistan and Afghanistan's populations remain economically depressed and the local situation in those countries remains politically volatile, Kazakhstan will be at risk from terrorist attacks. Moreover he and other Kazakh authorities have repeatedly caught Uzbeks engaged in terrorism within Kazakhstan or who go back and forth to Uzbekistan, a pattern repeated as well in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>54</sup> Their anxiety should also trigger American and other policymakers' concern for as Ahmed Rashid writes,

“The closing down of Uzbekistan is more than a threat to the country's own population. It also represents a growing danger to all Central Asian nations. *The arbitrary behavior of Karimov's*

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> This is based on accounts from recent travelers to Central Asia who met with elites and officials in Uzbekistan and neighboring governments. But see also, Marat Yermukanov, "Kazakhstan Faces Potent Mix of Extremism, Nationalism and Terrorism," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, November 18 2004, pp. 2-4; Igor Rotar, "Demographics, Borders, Complicate Anti-Terrorism Efforts in Central Asia," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, November 18 2004, pp. 4-6; "Paper Warns Russia May Face "Terrorist" Threat From Uzbekistan," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, in Russian, Moscow, August 1 2004, Retrieved from Lexis-Nexis; Kadyr Toktogulov, "Kyrgyzstan Straddles Role on Terror Issue," *Associated Press*, March 6 2004; Bruce Pannier, "Central Asia: Is Uzbekistan The Source of Regional Extremism,?" *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, April 27 2004; "Will US Policy Backfire in Central Asia," *RCA* No. 273, March 30 2004, [www.iwpr.net](http://www.iwpr.net), see particularly Fiona Hill's remarks; *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty Newslines*, November 12 2004; and Ahmed Rashid, "Karimov Contributing to his Own Demise in Uzbekistan," *Eurasia Insight*, December 20 2004.

*administration is increasingly seen as a destabilizing factor for the entire region*"<sup>55</sup> (emphasis added).

Thus paradoxically Uzbekistan may be becoming an exporter rather than an importer of Islamic extremism throughout Central Asia, including Afghanistan. This would be a reversal of the recent pattern whereby Afghanistan under the Taliban with help from Bin Laden and Pakistan's Inter-Services Institution (ISI), exported instability throughout the world and Central Asia in particular.<sup>56</sup> If this trend continues, the destabilization of Uzbekistan could, as Uzbek scholar, Farkhod Tolipov warns, become a catalyst for the spread of similar trends and forces to other Central Asian countries and back to Afghanistan, thus undermining, if not undoing, what has been accomplished since 2001 there.<sup>57</sup> Thus this developing pattern underscores the dangers we face from the uninterrupted continuation of Karimov's illegitimate governance in Uzbekistan and its region-wide consequences.

If Uzbekistan is indeed a failing state and falls to an insurgency that could open the door to terrorist attacks throughout the region if not beyond it. This is because of Uzbekistan's undoubted centrality to the area as recognized by both Uzbek and foreign analysts. Assistant Secretary of State Lorne Craner told Congress in 2004 that,

"Central Asia has a major strategic importance for the United States and Uzbekistan inevitably plays a key role in our policy toward the region. It occupies, as we know, a core position in Central Asia. It has, by far, the largest population, and it is the guardian of a centuries long tradition of enlightened Islamic scholarship and culture. And it boasts the largest and most effective military among the five countries."<sup>58</sup>

Similarly Uzbek analysts also share an exalted view of their country's strategic potential and clearly want the United States to, in effect,

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> See the summary of the remarks by Zeyno Baran and David Lewis at the DFI International conference "Uzbekistan Futures: A DFI Conference Report," Summer, 2004, p. 4, Pannier.

<sup>57</sup> Farkhod Tolipov, "Uzbek-American Strategic Partnership: To Be or Not to Be," Unpublished paper based on his presentation to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C., December 10 2004.

<sup>58</sup> Testimony of Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Lorne W. Craner, to the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Federal News Service*, June 24 2004, Retrieved from Lexis Nexis (Henceforth Craner, Testimony).

deputize it as its most favored regional ally in Central Asia. Thus Farkhod Tolipov writes that,

“Uzbekistan can be perceived as a pillar of Central Asia and of its geopolitical stability. If Uzbekistan falls so will the whole Central Asia. 25 million people reside in this country which is half of about [the] 50 million Central Asian population.”<sup>59</sup>

Therefore we have good reason to fear that if violence breaks out anywhere in Central Asia, it would be likely to spread throughout the region, bringing in other adjoining areas like Kyrgyzstan.

Kyrgyzstan, a poor country, is constantly under pressure from all the foreign actors with whom it must interact. But its revolution hardly resolved anything. The ensuing election was a travesty of democracy and in any case all the evidence from outside observers, including the International Crisis Group, underscores just how entrenched criminality and corruption have become there, defying all efforts at reform.<sup>60</sup> If Kyrgyzstan remains a “faltering state” as the ICG calls it, and cannot successfully attack the plague of crime and corruption, it will inevitably become more dysfunctional and unstable, again drawing in all the external actors into a chaotic situation.<sup>61</sup> Finally Kazakhstan, although it has the means to move forward, could also experience more political turbulence because it will be harder for the regime to maintain its balance between Washington, Moscow, and Beijing due to the increased signs of anti-democratic politics there. The corruption of the regime and the likelihood of further revelations of it in forthcoming American court hearings will also damage the legitimacy of the regime despite its enormous possibilities for socio-economic progress. Thus it could be the case that Nazarbayev, too frightened of American and indigenous pressures for reform, paid too high a price for reelecting himself by overt chicanery. And any sign of heightened instability at home only increases the anxiety of all the foreign players with interests in Kazakhstan and could lead to further external rivalries there.

## Conclusions

Undoubtedly the pace of political action and of international rivalry in Central Asia quickened in 2005. And this trend is likely to continue into 2006 even if there will not be local elections there. This is because the

<sup>59</sup> Tolipov, “Uzbek-American Strategic Partnership: To Be or Not to Be”.

<sup>60</sup> International Crisis Group, *Kyrgyzstan: A Faltering state* (2005); Taliabek Koichumanov, Joomart Otrobayev, S. Frederick Starr, *Kyrgyzstan: the Path Forward* (Uppsala and Washington, D.C.: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, 2005).

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*.



regimes there depend too much on personalities and not on stable legitimate institutions. Moreover, economic growth has only strengthened Kazakhstan, certainly not Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan. And in Kyrgyzstan political violence is already taking place openly with the assassination of members of Parliament for involvement in criminal activity. The forms of despotic rule may be durable in that successor regimes might not be any more liberal than what they replace, but we cannot count on the stability of the Niyazov or Karimov regimes beyond the stability of their leaders' tenure in office. Indeed, there is good reason to expect that these two states might already be slipping down into the irretrievable status of failing states.

Thus the local and interested foreign governments are all vulnerable to strategic surprise in all the forms in which we have envisaged it, military, political, or economic. This capacity for being surprised inheres in every state's intrinsic strategic condition. But the local regimes have undergone repeated strategic surprises during the last few years without altering the factors making them vulnerable to new surprises. And surprise, as we see, takes many unexpected and protean forms and spreads rapidly across a vulnerable region, which certainly is the case in Central Asia.

Moreover, despite the fact that America, Russia, and China have intensified their military capability for rapidly projecting power into Central Asia since 2001, it is hardly clear that they either have the resources, will, or understanding if what is needed should an insurgency or a failed state situation break out here. Indeed, it is highly unlikely that anyone in position of power in the capitals most interested in Central Asia, Moscow, Beijing, Washington, Tehran, Islamabad, or New Delhi, not to mention those states themselves, has any clear idea of what to do in the event of a succession or some other crisis. Moscow may have the right to insert troops into Uzbekistan in the event of an insurgency or threat to the regime, but it is hardly clear that when the actual threat materialize at it will have a clear and coherent policy for dealing with it.<sup>62</sup> Maybe such crises might not occur in 2006 and be deferred to a later date. But no matter what, actuarial tables do not lie. At least two of the local regimes are sailing with a corpse in the cargo and the rationality of their helmsmen or of the captains of neighboring ships in the Central Asia political sea cannot be counted on.

Given this condition we should not be strategically surprised when the inevitable crisis breaks out even if we experience an immediate shock upon its arrival. For if we and other interested parties cannot deal with the surprise, we will very likely be confronting further surprises engendered by either tactical or strategic terrorists. And the inevitable

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<sup>62</sup> "Russia Gains a New Uzbek Client," *Jane's Foreign Report*.

result of those surprises, even under the best of circumstances will be a protracted and costly operation as in Afghanistan, to restore a semblance of order to a disturbed state. However, if we continue not to understand either local political dynamics or how to deal with the effects of strategic surprises, the inevitable challenges which will unexpectedly confront us will, in turn engender prolonged and protracted crises and more long wars. And that is an outcome neither the foreign parties nor the local parties and peoples should have to endure again.

# Counterinsurgency, Counterterrorism, State-building and Security Cooperation in Central Asia<sup>†</sup>

*Michael Mihalka\**

## ABSTRACT

This article assesses the prospects for insurgent movements in Central Asia and what countries in the region, both alone and in cooperation with others, can do to counter those movements. The study of social movements provides the main paradigm to assess the prospects for insurgency and how to understand the threat. The first part of the article addresses the factors leading to the emergence, persistence and success of social movements. Many studies and commentaries on radical Islamism tend to focus on structurally induced grievances, such as poverty or inequality, which alone cannot explain why radical Islam takes traction in some countries and not others. Social Movement Theory takes us further in understanding the prospects for insurgency and status of terrorism in Central Asia. The second part of this article addresses what can be done to counter these movements, while the third part assesses the current multilateral efforts to counter the threats.

*Keywords* • counter-insurgency • state-building • Social Movement Theory • Central Asia

Radical Islamism does not look set to recover any time soon in Central Asia.<sup>1</sup> This is not because countries in the region are pursuing particularly effective counterterrorism or counterinsurgency policies either domestically or in cooperation with their neighbors. Rather the problem appears to lie with the nature of the local radical Islamist movements themselves, poorly led, poorly organized and with ideologies that remain alien to the customs of local Islam. Moreover, the blow dealt to the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf., a recent report by the International Crisis Group (ICG) calls Islamic extremism more of an “irritant” than a “major threat.” ICG, “Uzbekistan: In for the Long Haul,” February 16 2006; Havilah Hoffman, “Islamic Radicals In Central Asia ‘Not All That Significant’ – Expert,” *Eurasia Insight*, April 25 2005  
<[www.eurasianet.org/departments/recaps/articles/eav042506.shtml](http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/recaps/articles/eav042506.shtml)> /April 29 2006)

Taliban and Al-Qaeda after 9/11 has decreased the ease with which these movements can rely on outside sources for support.

This article's assessment of the low threat posed by radical Islam in Central Asia contrasts sharply with the sentiments in the region. Claims of an ever-growing threat are used by governments there to crack down on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and restrict human rights.<sup>2</sup> For example, the Kyrgyz Deputy Security Council Secretary Col. Alik Orozov said recently: "The danger that the situation in the republic and in the region as a whole could worsen still remains. It could be achieved by the combat wing of the Hizb ut-Tahrir party, or by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), or by other extremist organizations acting in the Ferghana Valley."<sup>3</sup>

This article assesses the prospects for insurgent movements in Central Asia and what countries in the region, both alone and in conjunction with others, can do to counter those movements. In particular it examines the prospects for the two main radical Islamist movements that have attracted the most attention, the Islamic Movement for Uzbekistan (IMU) and the Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT).<sup>4</sup>

The study of social movements provides the main paradigm to assess the prospects for insurgent movements in Central Asia.<sup>5</sup> In particular the first part of the article will address the factors leading to the emergence, persistence and success of social movements: structural factors that lead to grievances, the availability of resources for mobilization, the presence of political opportunities to exploit for action, and factors which tend to legitimize the movement and de-legitimize the government. Many studies and commentaries on radical Islamism tend to focus on structurally induced grievances, such as poverty or inequality, which alone cannot explain why radical Islam takes traction in some countries and not others. The second part of this article will address what can be done to counter these movements.

Counterterrorism and counterinsurgency are often associated with simply addressing those factors which lead to the success of an insurgency. These often fall into two categories: punitive measures, be it

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<sup>2</sup> See for example, "The Andijan Massacre: One Year Later, Still No Justice," *Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper*, May 11 2006

<<http://hrw.org/backgrounder/eca/uzbekistan0506/>> (May 22 2006).

<sup>3</sup> "Kyrgyzstan: Official Says Threat From Militant Extremists Still Exists," *Interfax*, May 17 2006.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, The ICG report mentions these two groups as causing the most concern. An earlier ICG report on radical Islam cited only the IMU and HT as radical Islamist groups. The ICG also noted that there were some adherents to "Wahhabism" which forms the core of ideas for the IMU. See ICG, "Is Radical Islam Inevitable In Central Asia? Priorities For Engagement," Asia Report N°72, December 22 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Cf., Doug McAdam, John D. MacCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements* (Cambridge University Press: New York, 1996).

police or military, directed against the insurgents, in essence decreasing their access to resources; and “hearts and minds” intending to redress perceived grievances. However weak and failed states are most at risk for insurgent movements and it would seem that a broader paradigm related to state-building would provide more insights into how to deal with the radical Islamism found in Central Asia.<sup>6</sup> This emphasis on strengthening state institutions is critical because a number of prescriptions offered by NGOs to deal with radical Islam in Central Asia advocate greater openness and a more robust civil society without a corresponding increase in the strength of the state’s institutions to defend that openness and civil society against the government.<sup>7</sup> The sustained exercise of arbitrary power by the government reflects the state’s weakness, not its strength.

### **The Study of Social Movements and the Prospects for Insurgency and Terrorism in Central Asia**

Central Asia continues to face a wide range of social, political and economic problems. As one of the leading authorities on Islam in Central Asia, Vitaliy Naumkin, has noted, “poverty, unemployment, relative deprivation, social inequality, the collapse of the welfare system, corruption, and harsh authoritarianism have created fertile ground for converting new members to the ranks of Islamic radicals who offer simple solutions to everyday problems.”<sup>8</sup> Richard A. Boucher, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, underscored similar factors in a recent testimony before the U.S. Congress: “Central Asia faces numerous threats to its stability, including Islamic extremism, a population that remains poor and has little economic opportunity, the post-Soviet legacy of authoritarianism, public perceptions of injustice, and high levels of corruption.”<sup>9</sup>

#### *Structural Factors and Grievances in Central Asia*

As noted above, many commentaries have cited the grinding poverty, increasing inequality (nationally, regionally and across ethnic lines),

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<sup>6</sup> Cf., Francis Fukuyama, *State-building: Governance and World Order in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, NY, 2004). For a current bibliography, see <[www.au.af.mil/au/aul/bibs/postconflict.htm](http://www.au.af.mil/au/aul/bibs/postconflict.htm)> (May 22 2006).

<sup>7</sup> Cf., ICG, “Is Radical Islam Inevitable in Central Asia?” advocates that the international community engage Central Asia in four main categories to deal with radical Islam: improving public diplomacy, exchange programs, education, and promoting discussion.

<sup>8</sup> Vitaliy V. Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia: Between Pen and Rifle* (Rowan and Littlefield: Lanham, MD, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> Richard A. Boucher, U.S. Policy in Central Asia: Balancing Priorities (Part II), Statement to the House International Relations Committee, April 26 2006 <[www.state.gov/p/sca/rls/rm/2006/65292.htm](http://www.state.gov/p/sca/rls/rm/2006/65292.htm)> (April 28 2006).

rampant corruption and arbitrary nature of the governments in Central Asia as structural factors that lead to grievances in the region and spur recruitment. Moreover, the considerable drug trade, the penetration of governments by organized crime, and the failure to provide adequate social services further undermine confidence people may have in their government.

**Poverty, Unemployment and Inequality.** At the macro level, cross-nationally comparable data for Central Asia, especially on inequality and unemployment have often been poor and unreliable. Recently, however, the World Bank did a household survey to determine the extent of poverty and inequality in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.<sup>10</sup> As revealed by the survey there is considerable diversity in Central Asia. Kazakhstan is considerably richer than its neighbors with a GDP per capita of around US\$6500 in 2000.<sup>11</sup> Turkmenistan is so oppressive and secretive that it was not even willing to participate in the survey. Tajikistan is the poorest of the former Soviet Republics with a GDP per capita of around US\$1000 while Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are not much richer with figures around US\$1600.

Not only are these countries poor they suffer from considerable regional and income inequality. Around 70 percent of the population in Kyrgyzstan and 74 percent in Tajikistan fall below the poverty level set at US\$2.15 per day in power purchasing parity (PPP). In contrast, even though Uzbekistan has roughly the same GDP per capita as Kyrgyzstan, only 47 percent fall below the poverty level. Nonetheless, all of these countries suffer from considerable inequality. By some measures, Kyrgyzstan has the least amount of inequality and Uzbekistan the most,<sup>12</sup> although there is a sharp difference between rural and urban poverty.

In looking at the rise of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Kyrgyzstan, Emmanuel Karagiannis makes several key observations.<sup>13</sup> First he notes that HT is most active in the southern provinces of Osh, Jalal-Abad and Batken where perhaps as much as 20 percent of the population support the movement. A structural explanation for this support would focus on three main elements: the grinding poverty of the region, the overrepresentation of ethnic Uzbeks in the movement, and the income inequality between the northern and the southern regions.

<sup>10</sup> World Bank, *Growth, Poverty and Inequality: Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union* (World Bank: Washington, D.C., 2005).

<sup>11</sup> All figures are given in power purchasing parity (PPP).

<sup>12</sup> World Bank, *Growth, Poverty and Inequality: Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*.

<sup>13</sup> Emmanuel Karagiannis, "Political Islam and Social Movement Theory: The Case of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Kyrgyzstan," *Religion, State and Society* 33, 2 (June 2005): 137-149.

**Ethnic Discrimination.** HT has a singular appeal to ethnic Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan because they feel disadvantaged relative to the ethnic Kyrgyz. Although Uzbeks make up only 14 percent of the population, Kyrgyz security forces claim that they make up 90 percent of the HT membership.<sup>14</sup> Uzbeks do not hold public sector jobs in proportion to their percentage in the local population. For example, even though Osh is over 50 percent Uzbek, they have only 8 percent of the public jobs. At least one commentator has concluded that Uzbek “marginalization” is one reason they have turned to radical Islamist groups.<sup>15</sup>

In Soviet times, the Uzbeks formed one community across the Uzbek and Kyrgyz borders but the breakup of the Soviet Union divided them. Even in Soviet times, the interaction between the Uzbek and Kyrgyz communities in Kyrgyzstan could lead to tensions, cross border movements and violence. In 1989, violence broke out around Osh over plans to transfer land from Uzbeks to landless Kyrgyz where hundreds of people died. After the Andijan events in May 2005 where Uzbek security forces allegedly killed several hundred demonstrators, over 1500 ethnic Uzbeks fled across the border to Kyrgyzstan.<sup>16</sup>

**Structural Problems with the Economy.** The fact that the Central Asian economies rely heavily on primary commodities for growth does not in of itself constitute a grievance that can be exploited by a radical social movement. However, such reliance tends to be associated with rampant corruption and makes the country susceptible to wild swings in commodity prices. In recent years, the Central Asian countries have benefited by rising prices for their commodities – petrochemicals, gold, aluminum and cotton – and this largely explains the recent high growth rates.<sup>17</sup>

Central Asian economies depend on the international market through their export of primary commodities.<sup>18</sup> Kazakhstan relies heavily on oil, Turkmenistan on natural gas, Kyrgyzstan on gold, Tajikistan on aluminum and Uzbekistan on gold and cotton. Uzbekistan has a limited amount of diversity, but still it is spread among primary commodities.

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141

<sup>15</sup> Alisher Khamidov, “Kyrgyzstan: Organized Opposition And Civil Unrest,” *Eurasianet* February 26 2002) <[www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/eav121602.shtml#underground](http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/eav121602.shtml#underground)> (April 22 2006).

<sup>16</sup> “Displaced Uzbeks In Kyrgyzstan Face Difficult Living Conditions,” *Eurasianet*, May 18 2005, <[www.eurasianet.org/departments/civilsociety/articles/eav051805.shtml](http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/civilsociety/articles/eav051805.shtml)> (April 22 2006).

<sup>17</sup> World Bank, *Growth, Poverty and Inequality: Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*.

<sup>18</sup> Asian Development Bank, *Central Asia: Increasing Gains from Trade Through Regional Cooperation in Trade Policy, Transport, and Customs Transit* (2006).

Textiles, primarily cotton, comprise 26.3 percent of Uzbekistan's total exports and mineral products, including energy, another 14.1 percent.

In addition, the Central Asian countries export to only a few trading partners – China, Russia and Turkey. Reliance on a few primary commodities and a few trading partners complicates efforts by the Central Asian countries to sustain economic development. It also makes them highly susceptible to economic conditions in their trading partners.<sup>19</sup>

**Corruption.** The concentration of the economy in a few commodities also facilitates corruption. Transparency International conducts an annual survey of businessmen country experts to rate the severity of corruption in individual countries.<sup>20</sup> Central Asian countries are among the most corrupt in the world. Out of 158 countries surveyed with the rank one being the least corrupt, Kazakhstan ranked 107; the other countries in the region did not rank above 130.

**Drug Trafficking and Criminality.** In addition to corruption, drug trafficking and criminality continue to destabilize the countries in the region. Seizures of opium and heroin give only a rough sense of the nature of the drug traffic but there is clearly an adverse effect on the poorer countries and regions in Central Asia. In 2001, 26 metric tons of heroin and morphine were seized in the countries surrounding Afghanistan, 48 percent in Iran and 33 percent in Pakistan.<sup>21</sup> Tajikistan accounted for 16 percent of the total and the other countries together less than 6 percent. Of opium seizures 84 percent were in Iran, 9 percent in Pakistan and 4 percent in Tajikistan. On the basis of these figures and a model they use of traffic flows and enforcement, UNODC estimates that 23 percent of Afghanistan's drugs transit Tajikistan and 10 percent the other Central Asian countries.

The size of the trade has a significant financial effect in the region. According to the UNODC, gross profits from the illegal drug trade in Central Asia exceed US\$2 billion a year and make up more than 7 percent of the region's GDP with particularly severe impacts on the poorer countries in the region such as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, the relative size of the drug abusing population in Central Asia is about three times higher than in Western Europe, with 2.3 percent of the population over 15 in Kyrgyzstan, 1.2 percent in Tajikistan and 1.1 percent in Kazakhstan estimated to be drug users.

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.ii.

<sup>20</sup> Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index 2005, <[www.transparency.org/policy\\_research/surveys\\_indices/cpi/2005](http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2005)> (April 17 2006).

<sup>21</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan: An International Problem* (New York: United Nations, 2003).



Criminals have also been more aggressive in entering politics. For example, a reputed criminal boss, Ryspek Akmatbayev, won a special by-election with almost 80 percent of the vote in Kyrgyzstan on April 9 2006.<sup>22</sup> A month later he was shot dead outside a mosque.<sup>23</sup> Connected with the heroin trade, he had been unable to take his seat because of charges brought against him for murder.

With so many problems, why isn't radical Islam stronger in Central Asia? For one, structural problems alone do not produce violence.<sup>24</sup> Despite the best efforts of a number of sociologists, little connection has been found in cross-national statistical studies between structural factors leading to grievances and political violence.

For another, we need to turn to the study of social movements to understand how structurally-induced grievances can be turned into collective action that leads to violence. Social movements emerge and are sustained when they 1) seek to redress perceived grievances, 2) have sufficient resources to organize successfully, 3) are able to exploit political opportunities as they arise, and 4) maintain coherence through an attractive ideology. All of these conditions are necessary but none alone is sufficient. Therefore a focus only on structural factors that lead to grievances will prove inadequate in accounting for the emergence and staying power of radical Islamist groups in Central Asia such as the IMU and the HT.

#### *Resource Mobilization*

Grievances alone do not account for action. Instead groups must mobilize available resources in order to act, especially because collective action is costly. The two groups of greatest concern in Central Asia are the IMU and the HT.

The IMU is a local Central Asian and largely Uzbek movement with a Wahhabist ideology that wishes to set up an Islamic caliphate in the region. One of its leaders, Juma Namangani, fought with Islamist elements during the Tajik civil war, and in 1998 the IMU joined Osama bin Laden's International Islamist front. The IMU launched incursions into Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and 2000 but after siding with the Taleban in 2001, the IMU was decimated in battles with coalition forces, where Namangani also was killed. The IMU and related groups have been associated with a number of terrorist bombings in 1999 and 2004.

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<sup>22</sup> "Opponents To Kyrgyz President: Tackle Crime And Corruption Or Resign," *Eurasia Insight*, April 18 2006

<[www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav041806.shtml](http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav041806.shtml)> (April 17 2006).

<sup>23</sup> "Kyrgyz MP shot dead in Bishkek," *BBC News Online*, October 5 2006.

<sup>24</sup> Cf., J. Craig Jenkins and Kurt Schock, "Global Structures and Political Processes in the Study of Domestic Political Conflict," *Annual Review of Sociology* 18 (1992): 161-185.

The HT began as a movement in Palestine in 1952. It hopes to achieve a global Islamic caliphate through political action, but spends most of its efforts in propaganda and building its organization. It maintains a clandestine cell-like structure and although the organization deliberately eschews violence as a tactic, some commentators view the movement as tolerant of violence by its members. All Central Asian countries ban the organization and view it as responsible for many of the terrorist attacks in the region.

Some commentators have focused on the criminal element of these movements, especially on the IMU's exploitation of the drug trade from Afghanistan as a source of funding.<sup>25</sup> One commentator argues that the IMU controlled roughly 70 percent of the drug trade entering Kyrgyzstan.<sup>26</sup> Other commentators say that the IMU secured funding from Al-Qaeda, as well as the Saudi and Pakistani security services.<sup>27</sup>

For its part, the financing of HT is a bit murky.<sup>28</sup> Although members tithe on their incomes this may not amount to much since according to one Kyrgyz report, perhaps 90 percent of members in that country are unemployed. In a separate classified report, the Kyrgyz security services argued that most funding comes from drug trafficking and the Persian Gulf.<sup>29</sup> The HT may also secure financial support from adherents in Western Europe and the UK.<sup>30</sup>

The IMU and the HT are pursuing quite different insurgent strategies so their need for resources differs significantly. The IMU for a long time focused on guerilla war with its attendant need for training camps and arms. Guerilla war is relatively expensive to conduct and thus the IMU arguably had to rely on such sources as the drug trade and kidnapping to fund its activities. However, the IMU never had the resources and backing to launch a full scale insurgent guerilla war in Uzbekistan. Instead, IMU had to content itself with terrorist attacks in 1999 and subsequently in 2004, in addition to its military incursions into Kyrgyzstan in 1999-2000. The IMU seems to have adopted violent action with its attendant overreaction on the part of Uzbek authorities as a way to stimulate recruitment.

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<sup>25</sup> Tamara Makarenko, "Crime, Terror and the Central Asian Drug Trade," *Harvard Asia Quarterly* 6, 3 (Summer 2002).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> B. Raman, "Jihadi Terrorism in Central Asia: An Update," *International Terrorism Monitor: Paper No – 22*, February 1 2006 <[www.saag.org/%5Cpapers17%5Cpaper1691.html](http://www.saag.org/%5Cpapers17%5Cpaper1691.html)> (April 22 2006).

<sup>28</sup> Mateen Siddiqui, "The Doctrine Of Hizb Ut-Tahrir," in Zeyno Baran Ed., *The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir: Deciphering and Combating Radical Islamist Ideology*, The Nixon Center, September 2004.

<sup>29</sup> Karagiannis, "Political Islam and Social Movement Theory: The Case of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Kyrgyzstan," p. 143.

<sup>30</sup> Raman, "Jihadi Terrorism in Central Asia: An Update".

HT on the other hand has adopted a much more patient approach with a primary goal of organization and recruitment. It eschews violence as a method, at least officially. Indeed, the actions of the IMU have probably greatly aided recruitment in the region because the authorities tend to equate the IMU and the HT as terrorist organizations. Terrorist action by the IMU leads to repressive action against the HT and this, in turn, reinforces the sense of injustice that many in the region, particularly Uzbeks, feel.

#### *Political Opportunity*

Another aspect of the study of social movements is the concept of political opportunity. Grievances and resources alone are not enough to explain violent collective action. Movements must either exploit opportunities as they arise, such as in the political turmoil surrounding regime-changes, or create opportunities through terrorist or guerilla action.

The minimal role of political Islam in the recent Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan is revealing. While Westerners tend to romanticize such color revolutions as grass-roots democratic movements, it was in fact a contest among local clans for power.<sup>31</sup> Sergei Luzyanin, from the Moscow Institute for International Relations (MGIMO) for instance interprets the “Tulip Revolution” as a conflict between the northern and southern clans, pointing out those assumed power were former senior officials who had been ousted by Akayev.<sup>32</sup> Thus, this revolution was actually “a palace coup.”

In Kyrgyzstan, the clans have the resources, not Islamist organizations like the IMU or the HT. So when the political opportunity presented itself with flawed elections, it was the clans out of power that had the resources to act, not radical Islamist forces.

For its part, the IMU has apparently tried to make political opportunity through terrorism and guerilla action but showed no follow-through. For example, on February 16, 1999, six car bombs exploded in Tashkent, one near where President Islam Karimov was supposed to preside over a Cabinet meeting. No group claimed responsibility but the evidence strongly suggests that this was the work of the IMU. Naumkin gives several versions of these events but concludes: “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.”<sup>33</sup> No

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<sup>31</sup> Cf., Khamidov, “Kyrgyzstan: Organized Opposition And Civil Unrest”.

<sup>32</sup> Jeremy Bransten, “Kyrgyzstan: Was 'Revolution' A Worthy Successor To Rose And Orange? (Part III),” *RFE/RL*, April 8 2005  
<[www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/04/ce2bcfdb-6ed6-4f2c-b63e-b66dde862248.html](http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/04/ce2bcfdb-6ed6-4f2c-b63e-b66dde862248.html)>  
(April 26 2006).

<sup>33</sup> Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia: Between Pen and Rifle*, p. 81.

apparent attempt was made to coordinate these bombings with other actions or to secure more recruits.

Rather, the IMU launched incursions into Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and again in 2000 without any clear political objective and withdrew into their sanctuaries in Afghanistan and Tajikistan with the approach of winter. If an objective of these incursions was to provoke a mass uprising, they clearly failed.

In March-April 2004, at least 47 persons died in suicide attacks carried out by the Islamic Jihad Union in Tashkent, Bukhara and elsewhere.<sup>34</sup> On July 30, 2004, four days after the trial began for 15 people arrested in connection with the March-April bombings, bombs exploded outside the U.S. and Israeli embassies and the prosecutor's office in Tashkent.<sup>35</sup> These latter attacks seemed to have the intent of contesting the support that the Karimov government was giving the U.S., especially by providing it with access to the Karshi-Khanabad airbase. Again there appeared to be no real follow-up to these attacks.

So with the IMU, we have action without organization and with the HT organization without action.

#### *Ideology and Political Opportunity*

Another factor affecting social movements is the development of an ideology to legitimize collective action and de-legitimize the state. The IMU has so far apparently avoided serious grass roots organization work, in part because its underlying ideology is not inherently attractive to Central Asian Muslims. The Wahhabist philosophy espoused by the IMU is too extreme and puritanical for most Central Asian Muslims who adhere to the Hanafi traditions that permit considerable local latitude in practice.

As a means to de-legitimize the government and gain support for itself, the IMU relies on terrorism to advance its political aims as its actions typically provoke a massive repression. This may have proved counterproductive and dried up the source of recruits as the IMU does not appear to have an effective underground organization in Uzbekistan.<sup>36</sup> Efforts to launch guerilla campaigns have thus apparently failed to provoke wider support.

The HT has taken almost the exact opposite strategy from that taken by the IMU even though their overall strategic goal remains the same. Although they eschew violence as a party, Raman argues that the group "sees no contradiction between its opposition to terrorism as an

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p.115.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p.118

<sup>36</sup> Gulnoza Saidazimova, "Central Asia: Is Islamic Movement Of Uzbekistan Really Back?," *RFE/RL*, February 2 2006 <[www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/02/81E06ED8-77DA-4BF3-ADE9-5B74EBC07FE0.html](http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/02/81E06ED8-77DA-4BF3-ADE9-5B74EBC07FE0.html)> (May 23 2006).

organization and its followers resorting to jihadi terrorism in countries where such a dichotomy may be required or justified.”<sup>37</sup> While the IMU is Wahhabist, the HT is much more heterodox.<sup>38</sup> The IMU stresses action, especially to secure recruits, while the HT focuses on grass roots organization.

Karagiannis, moreover, stresses the role ideology has played in HT recruitment. He argues that the ideology of HT “has provided a mechanism for mobilizing collective action” by explaining the world and how to change it.<sup>39</sup> Departing from the Islamic ways has led to chaos; only a return will make it better.

### **Counterinsurgency, Counterterrorism, State-building and Geopolitics**

The study of social movements also provides guidance on how to counter insurgencies. An effective counterinsurgency strategy would work to decrease the adverse structural factors that lead to grievances, decrease the resources available to the movement, anticipate and counter the political opportunities that may be available to the movement, and finally undermine its legitimacy as an alternative to the government while increasing the government’s legitimacy.

#### *State-building*

An effective counterinsurgency strategy is through state-building. As Fukuyama has noted “the central project of contemporary international politics” has become state-building, by which he means, “how to promote governance of weak states, improve their democratic legitimacy, and strengthen self-sustaining institutions.”<sup>40</sup> Some commentators such as Lee Kwan Yew may contest Fukuyama’s need for “democratic” legitimacy but most now agree strong states require a strong rule of law.<sup>41</sup>

Unfortunately, in the case of Central Asia, the two main outside actors that border the region, Russia and China, have their own strategic agenda in the region that does not include state-building as Fukuyama has described. Thus it is difficult to see how the elites in any of the states in the region would develop a consensus to demand stronger state

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<sup>37</sup> Raman, “Jihadi Terrorism in Central Asia: An Update”.

<sup>38</sup> Mateen Siddiqui, “The Doctrine Of Hizb Ut-Tahrir”.

<sup>39</sup> Karagiannis, “Political Islam and Social Movement Theory: The Case of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Kyrgyzstan”.

<sup>40</sup> Fukuyama, *State-building: Governance and World Order in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, p.99.

<sup>41</sup> Susan Rose-Ackerman, “Establishing the Rule of Law,” in Robert I. Rotberg Ed. , *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences* ( Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, 2004), pp. 182-221; Kenneth W. Dam, “The Judiciary and Economic Development,” John M. Olin Law & Economics Working Paper No. 287, The Law School, The University Of Chicago, March 2006.

institutions.<sup>42</sup> For them, state building is a means to help entrench themselves in power (i.e. strengthening security services). In this sense, their state-building priorities are different from those prescribed by Fukuyama. Russia and China are more than happy to help prop the existing regimes in place, especially in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Overall the states in Central Asia are weak and have not much improved their institutions since 1996 when the World Bank began conducting an annual survey on good governance and state capacity.<sup>43</sup> Several features stand out from the data. First there is considerable diversity in the region. Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan measure quite low with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan doing slightly better. Second, none of these countries, including their large neighbors, China and Russia, has improved markedly from 1996 to 2004. Third, perceptions of political stability overall and especially in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan declined sharply from 1996 to 2004. The historic entry of the U.S. into the region during the Afghan conflict did not lead to a marked increase in the state capacity of the Central Asian countries.

Any effective state-building project for Central Asia must take a regional approach to include the cooperation of Russia and China. So long as Russia and China have their own domestic problems with building strong state institutions it is unreasonable to expect the Central Asian elites to proceed alone. To a certain extent this was tried by the Kyrgyz under Akayev but his regime reverted back to the regional standard and was overthrown during the "Tulip Revolution." Since then the Kyrgyz elites have moved closer to Russia. Geography matters and so long as there is not a strong local champion for building strong state institutions, starting with the rule of law, progress will be slow.

Nevertheless, Kyrgyzstan is trying to qualify for the U.S. Millennium Challenge Account, an attempt by the U.S. to provide financial incentives to build state capacity.<sup>44</sup> It has already been named a "threshold country" which means it qualifies for limited aid but not the whole program. No country in Central Asia is even close to becoming eligible although Armenia and Georgia in the Caucasus have. Armenia received US\$235 million for a rural road rehabilitation project and an

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<sup>42</sup> For a discussion of internal and external sources of demand for institutions, see Fukuyama, *State-building: Governance and World Order in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, p.35-36.

<sup>43</sup> Daniel Kaufmann, Aart Kraay, and Massimo Mastruzzi, "Measuring Governance Using Cross-Country Perceptions Data," The World Bank, August 2005. See also Foreign Policy and The Fund for Peace, "Failed States Index," *Foreign Policy* (May/June 2006).

<sup>44</sup> Cf., James W. Fox and Lex Rieffel, "The Millennium Challenge Account: Moving Toward Smarter Aid," Brookings Working Paper, July 14 2005 <[www.brookings.edu/views/papers/20050714rieffel.htm](http://www.brookings.edu/views/papers/20050714rieffel.htm)> (May 14 2006).

irrigated agricultural project. Yet one of the major obstacles for Kyrgyzstan is its inability to deal with corruption.<sup>45</sup>

*Countering Structural Factors*

A number of structural factors create grievances that support social movements in Central Asia. Particularly prominent among these are the poverty, corruption and inequality in these countries. None of these countries have any effective program to counter corruption or redress inequality, either nationally or regionally. Although some studies have shown poverty reduction over the last several years, growth rates in these countries depend heavily on single commodities and therefore their recent economic gains are at the mercy of the vicissitudes of the international markets.<sup>46</sup>

The Asian Development Bank argues that Central Asia needs to further privatization to ensure sustainable economic growth.<sup>47</sup> All of these countries need to diversify their economies away from their reliance on a limited number of primary commodities and trading partners.<sup>48</sup> Moreover they need to build up their state capacity and improve governance, including better regulation and administrative oversight. In addition all of the countries should work to join the World Trade Organization.<sup>49</sup> These prescriptions are good in the abstract but are unlikely to work in practice. Central Asia's main trading partners, Russia and China, have little interest in the countries in the region diversifying their economies and reducing their dependence.

*Countering Resources*

Both the IMU and the HT have been accused of securing resources from drug trafficking, and the HT also apparently generates considerable resources from its members abroad. Since the removal of the Taleban, there has been a considerable increase in the production of opium in Afghanistan<sup>50</sup> and about 25 percent of the heroin and opium trade take the northern route through Central Asia.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Cf., Millennium Challenge Account: Indicator Descriptions  
<[www.mcc.gov/countries/selection/Extended\\_Descriptions\\_Selection\\_Criteria.pdf](http://www.mcc.gov/countries/selection/Extended_Descriptions_Selection_Criteria.pdf)> (May 14 2006).

<sup>46</sup> Cf., World Bank, *Growth, Poverty and Inequality: Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union*.

<sup>47</sup> Asian Development Bank, Annual Report 2005  
<[www.adb.org/Documents/Reports/Annual\\_Report/2005/default.asp](http://www.adb.org/Documents/Reports/Annual_Report/2005/default.asp)> (May 14 2006).

<sup>48</sup> Asian Development Bank, Asian Development Outlook 2006  
<[www.adb.org/Documents/Books/ADO/2006/default.asp](http://www.adb.org/Documents/Books/ADO/2006/default.asp)> (May 14 2006).

<sup>49</sup> Kyrgyzstan is the only WTO member of the Central Asian states to date.

<sup>50</sup> UNODC, World Drug Report 2005 (New York: UN Publications, 2005).

<sup>51</sup> UNODC, *Opium Economy of Afghanistan*.

None of the countries in the region can be said to have effective control of their borders but several initiatives are underway. The Russians used to patrol the Tajikistan border but turned over that responsibility to the Tajiks in 2005. Although there was considerable speculation that drug trafficking would increase after the transfer, at least one official said it would not make any difference because the Russians were not very good at their job anyway.<sup>52</sup> For their part, the Tajik forces are poorly paid and trained and lack the kind of equipment necessary to cover the rugged terrain along the border.

The U.S. has been funding checkpoints in the region including two in Turkmenistan and has joined the EU in funding outposts in Tajikistan. The U.S. provided well over US\$9 million for communications and transportation equipment in 2005 and the EU is supporting a Central Asian Border Guards academy in Dushanbe. These efforts by the U.S. and the EU to improve border security can only marginally improve the situation. A much more effective approach would be the eradication of the drug economy of Afghanistan.

*Countering Political Opportunity, Ideology and Legitimacy*

The approach that most of the countries in the region have taken towards IMU and HT is increasing repression. Uzbekistan has been particularly brutal in this regard as typified by the reaction to the Andijan crisis. On May 12-13, 2005, the trial of 23 local businessmen came to halt when local gunmen stormed the prison, freeing them and hundreds of other prisoners.<sup>53</sup> The businessmen were allegedly connected to a radical Islamist group called "Akromiya". Some commentators have argued that this action was related to the regional clan-politics and the trial resulted from the removal of the long serving governor who had sponsored the Andijan group. Whatever the reason, the security forces acted with "indiscriminate" force and government accounts cite 187 dead and other sources many hundreds.

Uzbekistan has also effectively shut down the local NGO community and silenced the local press. According to the Open Society Foundation, "more than 60 percent of all active NGOs [have] been closed down during 2005 alone."<sup>54</sup> The ICG report quotes one commentator as saying: "soon the only functioning NGO in Uzbekistan will be Hizb ut-Tahrir". In addition, Uzbek authorities have worked to provide a local Islamic community structure by reviving the mahallas, local Islamic

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<sup>52</sup> Turko Dikaev, "Is Drug Trade on Tajik-Afghan Border Set to Expand?" *Institute of War and Peace Reporting*, May 7 2005.

<sup>53</sup> International Crisis Group, "Uzbekistan: In for the Long Haul".

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.



neighborhood watch groups.<sup>55</sup> So Uzbekistan has squashed political opportunity through repression and provided an alternative to radical Islam through the state-controlled mahallas. Uzbekistan's approach to dissent favors a conspiratorially organized group like Hizb-ut-Tahrir which may fail to attract a significant support in a more open environment.

Such seems also to be the case in Kyrgyzstan. One of the most remarkable aspects of the March 2005 "Tulip Revolution" was the failure of the radical Islamists to advance their cause. Rather the HT stood by, as one commentator noted, "preoccupied with internal squabbling over the underground group's strategy and tactics."<sup>56</sup> The HT leadership only sponsored one action in the run-up to the parliamentary election, a 50 person demonstration in Osh on February 9, 2005, to protest the jailing of some of its adherents; otherwise it remained apart from the fray.

But some observers believe that the choices of the group's leadership were not the only reasons that the group stood apart from the political process.<sup>57</sup> Rather they see a decline in interest in the organization. To be sure, the government has cracked down on the organization, but the political process in Kyrgyzstan, unlike in Uzbekistan, has offered people political alternatives to seek redress of their grievances. Moreover mainstream Muslims have managed to put religious issues on the political agenda. The HT said it would not support politicians unless they shared the HT's Islamist political goals.

With the decline in support for the HT, a lively debate has emerged over strategy and tactics. Some advocate a revolution-in-one-country approach in contrast to the global pursuit of the caliphate. In fact, at least two splinter groups espousing such beliefs have appeared in the Ferghana valley, Hizb-an-Nusra and Akromiya, the latter gaining notoriety as the group to which the businessmen belonged in the Andijan crisis. Other members of HT say they should give up their non-violent approach and adopt a more forceful strategy. Some have likened the dissension within the HT ranks to the divisions that appeared among early 20<sup>th</sup> century Marxists.<sup>58</sup> These controversies within the organization have shown no sign of abating.

For its part, the IMU has failed largely because of its strategic blunders, first by adopting a Salafist-jihadist ideology that does not

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<sup>55</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Uzbekistan: Neighborhood Committees Violate Rights," September 23 2003 <<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2003/09/23/uzbeki6394.htm>> (May 23 2006).

<sup>56</sup> Alisher Khamidov and Alisher Saipov, "Islamic Radical Group Bides Time On The Sidelines Of Kyrgyz Republic's Revolution," *Eurasia Insight*, April 14 2005. <[www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav041405.shtml](http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav041405.shtml)> (April 29 2006).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

resonate with the Central Asian people, second by attempting to launch guerilla campaigns without securing a necessary base among the people in 1999-2000 and third by fighting alongside the Taleban in a losing effort in the Afghan war in 2001.

Thus one of the more effective counterinsurgency strategies against both the IMU and the HT would be to counter their ideology. In both cases supporting mainstream Islam in the region would have that effect, and that is indeed a strategy that both the Uzbek and Kyrgyz governments have followed in their own way. Moreover, even the limited open political process in Kyrgyzstan has apparently led to a decline in support for the HT and a splintering of the organization.<sup>59</sup>

### Security Cooperation Against Terrorism

The Central Asian countries are poor and their elites believe they lack the resources to deal with the threat posed by IMU and the HT. Thus they seek help from outside, from Russia through the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), from China through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and bilaterally from the United States. Because they fear losing their ability to act independently they prefer to play these outsiders off against each other rather than embracing any one too closely.

Even though they profess to fight terrorism, the two multilateral organizations have more to do with how their major founding members want to extend their influence in the region. The Russia-backed CSTO had a stunning reversal of its fortunes when Uzbekistan seemed ready to return to the fold in late 2005. The China backed SCO reached at least a rhetorical high when it called on the Americans to leave the region in July 2005.<sup>60</sup> China has also increasingly used the SCO to target its own dissidents, especially the Uyghurs.<sup>61</sup>

#### *The Collective Security Treaty and its Organization*

The Russian-backed Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) on paper seems to contribute a great deal to the regional fight against terrorism.<sup>62</sup> It has an anti-terrorism center with a local branch in Bishkek

<sup>59</sup> Cf., Baran, *The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir: Deciphering and Combating Radical Islamist Ideology*, inter alia.

<sup>60</sup> Daniel Kimmage, "SCO: Shoring Up The Post-Soviet Status Quo," *Eurasia Insight*, September 7 2005 <[www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/pp070905.shtml](http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/pp070905.shtml)> (April 29 2006).

<sup>61</sup> Gulnoza Saidazimova, "Central Asia: Uyghurs Hit By Autocratic States' Cooperation With Beijing," *RFE/RL*, April 28 2006. <[www.rferl.org/features/features\\_Article.aspx?m=04&y=2006&id=D94D313A-BBDA-4BC2-A743-C1D8D6B0E56E](http://www.rferl.org/features/features_Article.aspx?m=04&y=2006&id=D94D313A-BBDA-4BC2-A743-C1D8D6B0E56E)> (May 1 2006).

<sup>62</sup> J H Saat, "The Collective Security Treaty Organization," Conflict Studies Research Centre, February 2005.

that has developed a database of local terrorists and organizations, and the treaty itself guarantees support in the event of aggression.

However, the CSTO remains a hollow organization because its Central Asian members remain suspicious of Russian designs on the region. Russian proposals to strengthen the organization have met with Central Asian resistance.<sup>63</sup> And the CSTO failed to deliver on its one true opportunity to show its worth – the IMU incursions into Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and 2000.<sup>64</sup>

Although the treaty was not invoked, the 1999-2000 incursions did spur the Collective Security Treaty states to take some tentative action. In May 2000, the security space was divided into three regions: the European, the Caucasus and the Central Asian. In October of that year, the group decided to stand up a collective security rapid response force for Central Asia. Meanwhile they also agreed to set up an anti-terrorism center. The following year the forces were augmented, at least on paper, by units from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan.

#### *The Shanghai Cooperation Organization*

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization has its own Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) located in Tashkent. Despite protestations to the contrary, the function of RATS overlaps considerably with the CIS anti-terrorism center. The RATS has no firm concept about how to proceed against terrorism because its member states have not agreed on one.<sup>65</sup>

Although the SCO is viewed as a vehicle for the Chinese, the Uzbeks have also used it to bully and embarrass their neighbors. The Uzbek head of RATS has reportedly used his position as a bully pulpit to lecture and intimidate his neighbors. He has called, not without some irony, Turkmenistan a closed society,<sup>66</sup> and he has accused the Kazakhs of being complicit in the Andijan events.<sup>67</sup>

In addition, the Uzbeks used the SCO as a cover for the Americans to leave. At the June 2005 summit, the SCO issued a statement clearly directed against the Americans calling for the departure of U.S. forces as

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<sup>63</sup> "Antiterrorism Center Remains Elusive Fortnight In Review," *Fortnight in Review-Jamestown Foundation* 6, 14 (July 7, 2000)

<[www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=32&issue\\_id=2476&article\\_id=19723](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=32&issue_id=2476&article_id=19723)> (January 1 2006).

<sup>64</sup> Bakhrom Tursunov and Marina Pikulina, *Severe Lessons of Batken*, Conflict Research Centre, November 1999; Bakhrom Tursunov, "Extremism in Uzbekistan," Conflict Studies Research Centre, July 2002.

<sup>65</sup> "Efforts of Shanghai Organization's Tashkent-Based Regional Anti-Terror Structure Detailed," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, February 7 2005.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> "Kazakhstani Foreign Ministry Denies Accusation of Harboring Terrorists," *Interfax-Kazakhstan*, February 9 2005.

the full-scale operations against the Taleban were considered complete. To be sure, the Russians and Chinese also welcomed the exit of the Americans from the region, but the SCO provides sufficient weight so that all the countries in the region could speak in concert. Moreover the June 2005 statement showed a common sense that the real threat from local radical Islamists was largely eliminated and could be handled with the tools at hand.

Neither the CSTO nor the SCO do much to strengthen state institutions and thus cannot help the Central Asian countries to combat terrorism in the mid-to-long term. In the short term the sharing of lists of supposed terrorists appear to be honored haphazardly.

*The United States and the War on Terror in Central Asia*

After initially welcoming the arrival of the United States in its war against the Taleban in 2001, the countries in the region and Uzbekistan in particular became increasingly disenchanted with U.S. policy, especially efforts to support human rights and liberal democracy. After the so-called color revolutions of Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan these countries began to believe that U.S. policy undermined their own hold on power and exacerbated their domestic terrorism problem.

The war against the Taleban and the concomitant defeat of the IMU and Al-Qaeda by coalition forces in 2001 effectively changed the security map in Central Asia, at least for a while. The U.S. and its coalition partners concluded basing agreements with a number of Central Asian countries and began to pour money into the region. In particular the U.S. set up bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan from which to conduct operations into Afghanistan. Karimov had found a new friend to balance off against the Russians in his quest for regional hegemony. But U.S. interest began to decline when the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003 and the relationship with Karimov quickly soured.

Although U.S.-Uzbek relations were becoming increasingly difficult, matters were only brought to a head by the events at Andijan in May 2005, as the Americans had already begun to restrict aid in 2004 because of human rights violations. The Uzbeks, always prickly, bristled at the accusations and thought this was a poor way for the Americans to treat a strategic partner. Both sides began to back away from the relationship, in large part because the original *raison d'être*, the removal of the Taleban had been met. For the Uzbeks, this meant the end of the IMU. Central Asia (like the Balkans) had always been a strategic backwater for the Americans and once the problem of the moment was solved they could move onto other things. They had done this in the late 1980s and they were doing it again in 2003 as they invaded Iraq. The Central Asians and the Uzbeks in particular never fully realized just how unimportant strategically they were.

So in June 2005, the Uzbeks told the Americans they had to leave, especially after the Americans airlifted several hundred refugees from the Andijan events out of Kyrgyzstan.

Meanwhile the Uzbeks found new friends in the Russians and signed a bilateral defense pact in November 2005. The Russians continue to pressure the Uzbeks to rejoin the Collective Security Treaty Organization but so far the Uzbeks have resisted. Many view this shift as a great coup for the Russians, but instead it should be viewed as a great coup for the Chinese. Absent the Americans, the Chinese have gained greater prominence in Central Asian affairs and thus in Uzbek eyes can now provide the counterweight to the Russians that the Americans provided temporarily.

At the same time even Kyrgyzstan has felt sufficiently comfortable to move closer to the Russians by demanding that the American and coalition forces pay more for their base at Ganci.<sup>68</sup>

## **Conclusions and Observations**

Currently, radical Islam has lost most of its strength in Central Asia and is not showing any real signs of recovery. The critical event for the IMU was its defeat and decimation by coalition forces during the Afghan campaign in 2001. The Taliban can no longer provide sanctuary for the IMU within Afghanistan and outside funding from sources such as Al-Qaeda is now being drawn into the Iraqi conflict. Moreover, the United Tajik Opposition can no longer provide overt support for the movement. In any case the IMU never showed any talent for political organization, even in those areas where the people might show them sympathy. In addition, their jihadi-Salafist brand of Islam runs counter to mainstream trends in the region.

For its part, Hizb-ut-Tahrir had a grand opportunity with the turmoil accompanying the overthrow of Akayev during the so-called "Tulip Revolution" in March 2005 and did very little. Interest in the HT had leveled off in any case; even the limited burgeoning civil society in Kyrgyzstan provides real alternatives to this movement. The HT is now beset with internal divisions over strategy and tactics and is spawning splinter movements, among them one associated with the group linked to the Andijan events of May 2005.

Added to the organizational and political blunders made by the two main radical Islamist movements is the apparent decline in poverty in the region over the last several years. To be sure, this decline is related to the recent increases in commodity prices of petrochemicals, gold and cotton, which could easily be reversed. And in some countries, such as

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<sup>68</sup> "Kyrgyz President Reiterates Demand for Higher Rent for U.S. Air Base," *Kabar News Agency*, May 19 2006.

Turkmenistan, none of the economic growth is trickling down to the people and inequality continues to increase. However, economic growth, marginally effective redistributive policies, and engaging mainstream Islam can go a long way in ameliorating perceptions of social injustice.

Uzbekistan has launched a two-prong approach to deal with radical Islam – brutal repression and the mahallas. These policies seem to be working at least in the short term, especially if the Andijan events are explained in terms of local clan politics. Of course in the mid to long run Uzbek governmental policies to continue the Islamification of Uzbek society (as opposed to the secularization of it) will lead to the likely downfall of the current government or its successor and the rise of another Islamist state in the region.

Against this backdrop, security cooperation against terrorism has played only a marginal role. The two main multilateral entities associated with counterterrorism in the region, the Collective Security Treaty Organization with its regional anti-terrorism center in Bishkek, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization with its Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure in Tashkent are viewed by countries in the region as vehicles for assertion of regional hegemony by their main sponsors, Russia and China. Moreover these organizations have done very little beyond exchanging lists of names of suspected terrorists (read: also political opponents of the regime), holding conferences and conducting the occasional exercise.

Prospects for security cooperation against terrorism in Central Asia remain poor in any case. The countries in the region play Russia off against China by agreeing to two overlapping security organizations and not giving either one any teeth. The U.S. was welcomed for its role in ousting the Taliban but quickly became a difficult partner with its demands for democracy and human rights. Moreover, it became expendable as a counterweight to the Russians once the Chinese became more active in the region through the SCO. For their part, relations among the countries in the region remain tense, with Uzbekistan in particular being perceived as and often playing the role of regional bully.

Most of the proposals suggested by NGOs for countering radical Islam in Central Asia seem naïve and potentially counterproductive. Increasing opportunities for civil society and democracy will not succeed unless the state is strengthened to protect local NGOs. So far the local elites have shown little or no real interest in building greater state capacity. Moreover without the active cooperation of Russia and China in building state capacity in Central Asia, any efforts to improve the situation there are likely to fail. What needs to be done in the region is clear; what is lacking is any real interest on the part of the local elites and those in neighboring countries to build strong state institutions to counter insurgency and terrorism. The U.S. Millennium Challenge

Account looks like an innovative program to provide incentives for local elites to build state capacity. Unfortunately, no Central Asia country has yet become eligible, although Kyrgyzstan may qualify soon.





# Multilateralism, Bilateralism and Unilateralism in Fighting Terrorism in the SCO Area

*Farkhod Tolipov\**

## ABSTRACT

Following the events on September 11, a “market for anti-terrorist services” emerged in and around Central Asia. The states of Central Asia have lately been engaged in setting up a number of bilateral and multilateral formats and mechanisms for cooperation on these issues. While some of these for sure may be fruitful most of them are negatively affected by expectations of some kind of economic assistance for cooperation. This development also clearly reflects another and possibly deeper issue, namely a penetration of geopolitics into terrorism and anti-terrorism. This very fact is, perhaps, the main reason why the fight against terrorism in the SCO area has taken multilateral, bilateral and unilateral forms. In the end, however, it is in the best interest of the states in Central Asia to effectively manage their security on their own and escape effects of geo-politics and reliance on extra-regional powers.

*Keywords* • Central Asia • Shanghai Cooperation Organization • multilateralism • bilateralism • unilateralism

The events on 9/11 are often argued to be a turning point in the reshaping process of the international system in the post-Cold War era. The overall anti-terrorist activities within the so-called zone of responsibility of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) give us an interesting example of how countries do, and can fight terrorism, should these threats occur. The SCO appears to be a geopolitical invention<sup>1</sup> and has been affected by geopolitical processes since its inception. This very nature of the SCO clearly reflects another and possibly deeper issue, namely a penetration of geopolitics into terrorism and anti-terrorism. This very fact is, perhaps, the main reason why the fight against terrorism in the SCO area has taken multilateral, bilateral and unilateral forms, and thereby made the perception of the organization more complicated and vague.

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<sup>1</sup> Farkhad Tolipov, “On the Role of the Central Asian Cooperation Organization within the SCO,” *Central Asia and Caucasus* 3 (2004).

Despite the existence of 12 international conventions on terrorism, there is as yet no consensus on a single and universal definition of the term. Neither is there any consensus among experts and analysts. Due to the contentious nature of the matter we can safely assume that both terrorism and anti-terrorism have a geopolitical dimension. In both the current wave of Islamic terrorism sweeping the world, as well as the response to it—in the global war on terror—alliances are transitory and partnerships of brief duration. On the one hand, there are severe contradictions that divide Islamic geopolitical forces. Turkey and Saudi Arabia are Iran's rivals in the Middle and Near East, and Tehran is a Russian ally in fighting pan-Turkism and Wahabism.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the same situation applies to forms and scales of particular countries participation in fighting terrorism, especially after 9/11.

Today, countries often link their cooperation with the U.S. in fighting terrorism to an expectation of some economic and political rewards for this. Indeed this is one of the essential flaws of the current international anti-terrorist coalition. This coalition currently operates on a very shallow basis where states supporting the U.S. implicitly expect some compensation. That is why the current anti-terrorist coalition cannot but suffer from geopolitical pressure. This pressure, in turn, cannot but lead to a distortion of the coalition's configuration and composition. Central Asia as part of the SCO area is a pivotal example of this "commercial anti-terrorism."

### Multilateral Formats

A large share of this "market for anti-terrorist services" emerged in and around Central Asia following the events on 9/11. This led to a shared understanding among most experts that the current security problems facing Central Asia should not be considered only in a regional but also in a wider international context. The states of Central Asia have lately been engaged in setting up a number of bilateral and multilateral formats and mechanisms for cooperation on these issues. Several of these initiatives deserve mentioning.

First of all, it should be noted that the Central Asian countries themselves have a strong potential for cooperation in the field of fighting terrorism. On April 21, 2000, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan signed the Treaty "On Joint Actions in Fighting Terrorism, Political and Religious Extremism, and Transnational Organized Crime." This Act is one of the more important elements in the formation of a regional security system in Central Asia. Specifically, the Act lays the foundation for a joint approach as it stipulates: (1) a harmonization of

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<sup>2</sup> С.А. Модестов Геополитика Ислама. – Москва: «Молодая гвардия» (S. Modestov, *Geopolitics of Islam* (Moscow: Molodaya Gvardiya, 2003), p. 178, 183.

national legislations for counteracting terrorism and other forms of extremism and transnational organized crime; (2) the development and realization of practical measures for preventing the territory of Central Asia to become a breeding ground for terrorist bases; (3) the exchange of information about crimes and suspected persons and organizations involved in them and terrorist activity; and (4) the execution of joint special operations of competent agencies against terrorists and other criminals.

Although all these goals remain mostly on the declaratory level, the Treaty provides an important potential legal base for future cooperation in this sphere. Besides, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan have an Agreement "On the Eternal Friendship" and bilateral interstate and inter-agency agreements on spheres of interactions which enable cooperation between law enforcement and special agencies. In the wake of the 1999-2000 terrorist attacks on Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan these three states also formed a coordination center to conduct joint operations against terrorists. This center was however relatively short-lived and plans for a joint task force were soon smashed. Instead, the Presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan were forced to request the support of Russia and return to previous anti-terrorist agreements.<sup>3</sup>

The situation worsened when the foundational regional cooperation and integration mechanism—the Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO)—dissolved and merged with the Eurasian Economic Community (EEC) in October 2005.<sup>4</sup> CACO had existed in Central Asia since independence, and that merger was a final blow to any permanent and long-lasting regional cooperation mechanism.

Second, the emerging strategic importance of Central Asia since 1991 to the U.S. global strategy became a key factor in the overall geopolitical transformation of the region, and this has been of crucial importance in the post-9/11 period. Prior to 2006, and especially before the Andijan event in Uzbekistan, the U.S. interacted successively with the Central Asian countries within the framework of several different programs on security and military matters. The struggle against terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), as well as the politico-military situation in the vast space from the Middle East to Afghanistan and Central Asia are of key concern to the United States. This in turn reveals the impact of geopolitical processes on American

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<sup>3</sup> Roger N. McDermott, *Countering Global Terrorism: Developing the Antiterrorist Capabilities of the Central Asian Militaries* (Strategic Studies Institute: US Army War College February, 2004), p.10.

<sup>4</sup> Farkhad Tolipov, "CACO Merges with the EEC: The Third Strike on Central Asia's Independence," *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, October 19 2005.

strategic thinking and Washington's strategic partnership with Tashkent in March 2002 did not, in this context, come as a surprise.

Meanwhile the establishment of a U.S.-Uzbek strategic partnership was preceded by a number of American undertakings in the country and region. The U.S. Foreign Military Sales and Assistance Programs, the International Military Education and Training Program (IMET), the NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) program, courses offered at the Marshall Center in Germany, the creation of the Central Asian Peacekeeping Battalion (CENTRAZBAT) are just some examples of the preparatory work. As one analyst has pointed out, "while all these programs, as well as others, had specific goals in minds, the cumulative effect was to establish relationships and procedures for working with these countries, as well as to create a cadre of military within each of the countries involved who had experience in working with U.S. forces (...) These efforts facilitated establishing a U.S. military presence in Central Asia, once it was decided that this was necessary in the battle against terrorism."<sup>5</sup> The logical extension of these activities has been the deployment of American troops on Uzbekistan's and Kyrgyzstan's soil.

At the same time the U.S. has sought to increase assistance to the newly independent states by pushing for democratic and market reforms, believing that this could be an important means of strengthening stability and security in the region. For example, American-based organizations such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), the International Republican Institute (IRI), the National Democratic Institute (NDI), Freedom House, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the American Bar Association and others have provided scholars, civil society, as well as governmental functionaries with extensive grants within the framework of various projects.

Third, Russia has undertaken several efforts in fighting Central Asian terrorism both through acceleration of integration processes within the CIS Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) as well as through the establishment of a Collective Rapid Deployment Forces division, not to mention the joint guarding of the Tajik-Afghan border. Yet, at first glance, it appears as if the increasing engagement of Russia in Central Asia is driven not primarily by security concerns but more a response to the endure and expansion of American military presence there; the more America engages with Central Asia, the more Russian military presence will follow suit.

Moscow always directly or indirectly demonstrates that it does not leave any of Washington's undertakings in the region with indifference. It is telling that following the United States, Russia accepted the concept

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<sup>5</sup> Daniel Burghart, *In the Tracks of Tamerlane: Central Asia's Path to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, 2004), p.16.

of the nuclear weapon, which has traditionally been a means of deterrence, to be a weapon of choice. Russia also started to adhere to the concepts of pre-emptive and preventive strikes. Regarding Central Asia, Russia reacted to the establishment and strengthening of American military presence by reinforcing its own military presence in the region. Similarly, by the end of 2003 Russia revised its National Security Doctrine along the lines of the U.S. National Security Strategy.

Moreover, Russia has openly and officially decided to develop the 201<sup>st</sup> Motorized Division deployment in Tajikistan into a full-fledged military base. Along with its base expansion in Tajikistan, Moscow has also reinforced its air-base in Kant, Kyrgyzstan and deployed jets including 7 SU-27, 5 SU-25, 4 L-39 and 2 helicopters. 500 military and 200 civil servants have also been stationed there.<sup>6</sup> Russia will also expand its base at Kant further by doubling its presence by 160 percent to the end of 2006.<sup>7</sup> The specific motives behind these planned reinforcements are uncertain; yet it seems that they intend to fill the dual purpose of keeping U.S. presence in check while simultaneously providing a security guarantee for the region.

Fourth, the European Union (EU) has expressed strong interest in strengthening the regional security situation in Central Asia. The interests of the EU, primarily Germany, Great Britain and France, are driven by a growing acknowledgement of the strategic importance of the region for European security. This interest from the EU stems from recognition of the fact that all – positive and negative – developments in Central Asia and Afghanistan have a direct impact on European security. The Europeans have engaged the region in the following ways: (1) participation in the anti-terrorist military contingent in Afghanistan; (2) financing of the post-conflict reconstruction programs in Afghanistan; (3) cooperation with the UN and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in implementing their Central programs in Central Asia; (4) military-technical assistance to the Central Asian states and support of education and training of military cadres, including within the NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) program; (5) cooperation with Central Asian states in fighting drug trafficking; (6) support of economic and democratic reforms, including within the European Commission's Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) program; and (7) support in the construction of East-West energy and transport infrastructure and pipeline systems.

Fifth, the UN has implemented a number of programs directly or indirectly relating to anti-terrorist activities. These programs deal

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<sup>6</sup> Centrasia Website: <http://www.centrasia.ru>, October 7 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Roger McDermott, "Russia Plans Expansion of its Military Presence in Kyrgyzstan," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, May 16 2006.

primarily with overall political and economic reforms in the newly independent states, humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, a special program termed "Border Management in Central Asia" (BOMCA), and through the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) operations, among others. In general, the UN can and should become a leader in fighting terrorism worldwide. At the same time, the role of the UN in former-Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and Iraq reveals the necessity for improving the efficacy of international law, decision making procedures in peacekeeping as well as the overall anti-terrorist activity.

Sixth, the OSCE has its own particular task in contributing to anti-terrorism, and the OSCE has recognized the growing strategic significance of the Central Asian region for the European and, by and large, international security. Yet the Organization still faces a strategic deficiency in this region, especially in the sphere of security. The matter is, to my mind, that the OSCE needs to focus more on regional projects and programs recognizing thereby the necessity of a regional approach to many post-Soviet challenges, including security issues. This has so far not been adequately accomplished and the OSCE should aim at strengthening regional cooperation and integration in Central Asia, rather than having a strict country-to-country approach. Despite this shortcoming, the OSCE has implemented a number of important programs in Central Asia aimed at: (1) preventing the proliferation of light weapons; (2) strengthening of border control systems; (3) training of law enforcement agencies' personnel; (4) implementation of the 1999 Vienna document on confidence building measures in military affairs; and (5) a number of other programs. All these can be sizeable contributions to the overall anti-terrorist undertakings.

Seventh, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a fairly unique regional security organization possessing political, financial, military, scientific, and other resources at its disposal. Its new, post-cold war strategic concept implies a comprehensive approach to security stipulating a wide range of activities other than military ones, for example, crisis management, scientific cooperation, environmental and social challenges, as well as educational and training programs.<sup>8</sup> The expansion of the Alliance eastwards, its developing partnership with Russia and the imperative of fighting international terrorism have pushed the Alliance to extend its 'zone of responsibility' far beyond the Euro-Atlantic space. It is expected that the ongoing global struggle against international terrorism will lead to an increased role of NATO in building the new international and regional security architecture, including the Central Asian region. NATO's command of the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) in Afghanistan and its

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<sup>8</sup> See for details, *NATO Handbook*, (NATO: Brussels, 2001).

mission to protect peace, stability and security during the reconstruction period is but one example of this. Following NATO's entry into Afghanistan the former NATO Secretary-General Lord Robertson also said NATO needs to take a bigger role in peacekeeping efforts in the war-torn country because there is "no credible alternative."<sup>9</sup>

Eighth, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) has its own politico-military process in the field of counter-terrorism. All six member-states of the CIS – Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan – participate in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) created in 2002, on the basis of the Collective Security Treaty signed in May 1992. In 2005 the Secretary-General of the CSTO Nikolay Bordyujia also announced the launch of a big military unit within the CSTO structure, consisting of subunits bigger than battalions, namely divisions (usually 10.000-15.000 soldiers ed. note).<sup>10</sup> Uzbekistan, which cancelled its membership in the CST in 1998, is soon expected to return into the CSTO fold.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, in 2003 the CSTO moved into counter-terrorism with the initiation of the Collective Rapid Deployment Forces (CRDF). Although the CRDF is generally perceived to be a regional force, it is in practice a Russian dominated and funded body designed to be a tool of Russia's combat formation.<sup>12</sup> The CIS also has its own Anti-Terrorist Center in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. However, even at times of severe threats from Afghanistan in 1996-2001 the CST mechanism was not effectively used once to protect the Southern border of the CIS.

Finally, there is one more actor in the "market of anti-terrorist services" in Central Asia, namely the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Created in 1996 as the Shanghai Five, the organization aimed to strengthen confidence building measures along the border zones of member-states and solve the remaining border disputes that plagued the region. The Shanghai Five eventually developed into the SCO in 2001 when Uzbekistan joined the organization. Since its inception the organization has successively moved beyond confidence building to now include a joint fight on terrorism, religious extremism, and separatism. As the SCO was launched in Shanghai on June 15, 2001, the Organization

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<sup>9</sup> *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, February 8 2003.

<sup>10</sup> Centrasia Website: October 11 2005, <[www.centrasia.org](http://www.centrasia.org)>.

<sup>11</sup> There is a widespread perception that Uzbekistan's isolation from the West in the aftermath of the Andijan events will force it to seek for a CIS/Russian "security umbrella". The obsessed apprehension of the mythic American threat pushed it into Russian embrace. See, Farkhod Tolipov, "Uzbekistan and Russia: Alliance against a Mythic Threat?," *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, January 11 2006.

<sup>12</sup> McDermott, *Countering Global Terrorism: Developing the Antiterrorist Capabilities of the Central Asian Militaries*, p.13.

also adopted a Convention on fighting these “three evils.”<sup>13</sup> The Convention even contains definitions of terrorism, extremism and separatism – concepts, to which the international community still lack a common approach.<sup>14</sup> Besides, in 2004 the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) of the SCO opened in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan.

The activity of RATS remains limited so far, but it can, to my mind, fruitfully expand further and move into new directions. This could include the commissioning of a study on different forms of terrorism (typologies) including nuclear terrorism; publication and dissemination of materials pertaining to the competence of RATS; an operational assessment of effectiveness of joint measures against terrorism and monitoring of overall anti-terrorist activities; and developing new joint approaches for fighting terrorism, including recommendations for the harmonization of legislation in this sphere.

However, despite a common interest of the SCO member states in strengthening regional security, the organization has, as with the CSTO, remained passive and ineffective at moments of severe threat. For example, little of SCO’s operational capacity was demonstrated during the terrorist attacks that struck the region in 2004 (Tashkent, Bukhara) and 2005 (Andijan), nor in the escalation of military action in Afghanistan against Al-Qaeda or in the rise of Islamic extremism and separatism in the entire SCO region (including terrorism in Russia and China).

Although the SCO and RATS have not accomplished much up until now, some recent events point to the organization’s willingness to become a security provider for the region. As Nicklas Norling argues, “with instability in Uzbekistan, the possible resurrection of the IMU, as well as a deteriorating relationship with the U.S., SCO and RATS is seeking to replace the U.S. and show preparedness in case it faces a similar situation as for example the Beslan raid (...) RATS is increasingly showing that it is the pragmatic arm of SCO. In divergence from the power-politics involved in exercises such as Peace Mission 2005, RATS seems to engage in exercises that could prove valuable for anti-terrorism in the future [referring to a recent counter-terror exercise at the Institute of Nuclear Physics, Tashkent].”<sup>15</sup> The SCO has also showed increasing

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<sup>13</sup> Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism, Adopted on June 15, 2001 < [www.sectsc.org/news\\_detail.asp?id=93&LanguageID=2](http://www.sectsc.org/news_detail.asp?id=93&LanguageID=2) > (May 1 2006).

<sup>14</sup> The Shanghai Convention defines terrorism as a crime directed to cause death of civic persons who do not participate in military actions, and/or to do the harm to any object, as well as to plan and support such actions, when the purpose of such actions is intimidation of population, breaking social stability and coercing power bodies in order to force them to do some actions or refrain from doing actions.

<sup>15</sup> Nicklas Norling, “RATS Exercise in Tashkent: Concern Over Nuclear Terrorism?” *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, April 5 2006.



geo-political assertiveness. The unexpected message sent at the Astana heads of state summit in summer 2005 with a declaration calling for the withdrawal of U.S.'s military bases from member-states' territory testify to an increasingly confident SCO.

However, such a demarche seems both untimely and inadequate because, to my mind, so far neither the operation in Afghanistan is complete nor do foreign military contingents pose any direct threat to SCO member states. Official Washington also played on these strings rejecting the demarche and all calls for withdrawal. Here, U.S. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack told a press briefing that it is up to individual states, not the SCO, to determine their relationship with foreign troops.

In trying to win support for the American position U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld visited Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in late July, and he also managed to convince these two states that it was in their best interest to give in. This was not the case with Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan changed its position on the Karshi-Khanabad base and demanded withdrawal of U.S. contingents. The main reason for that was, undoubtedly, the terrorist attack in Andijan on May 13 earlier the same year and the belief of Tashkent that America inspired the uprising. In any case, surprisingly, the Central Asian countries did not share the view that the operation in Afghanistan was winding down. Thus, terrorism in Andijan undermined not only stability in Uzbekistan but also the unity and cohesiveness of the anti-terrorist coalition.

The conclusion of this brief analysis of multilateral processes suggests both strengths and weaknesses of the different formats. NATO looks better prepared to deal with terrorism whereas both SCO and CIS/CSTO need to overcome geopolitical motives of their counter-terrorism undertakings. The OSCE and EU have potential to make their contributions to the region more effective. However, to escape geopolitical dependence (in the form of a security umbrella) the Central Asian countries need to reinvigorate their own regional integration process. This indeed could be the best way to ensure their long-run common security.

### **Bilateral Formats**

Afghanistan remains a key issue in any contemplation regarding the potential of SCO as a security provider for Central Asia. Afghanistan has always been a kind of a testing ground for watching the real state of affair in the realm of counter-terrorism. It is in Afghanistan where the geopolitical dimension of terrorism and counter-terrorism manifested, and manifests, itself sharply.

It is well known that the Afghan situation became a driving force for not only multilateral but also bilateral and unilateral efforts. Bilateral formats dealing with terrorism were set, for example, between Russia and the United States, between Russia and China, between Uzbekistan and Russia, Uzbekistan and China, and other combinations.<sup>16</sup> The actual activity of bilateral “commissions” established remains however unclear. Such a juxtaposition of bilateral and multilateral mechanisms of fighting terrorism, particularly in Afghanistan, also raises the question of whether these mechanisms are complementary or competitive in nature.

In this context we have to remind ourselves George W. Bush’s visit to Russia in May 2002 and the adoption of the Joint Statements ending the summit.<sup>17</sup> These statements clearly underlined the common interests of Russia and the U.S. in Central Asia in the fields of counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, and other matters related to security. In the course of the summit the parties also recalled the importance of the Russian-American Working Group on Afghanistan. The agenda of this Group was however subsequently extended and the Group was renamed “The Russian-American Group on Combating Terrorism.” Today, it is supposed to deal, in particular, with the threats of nuclear, biological and chemical terrorism.<sup>18</sup>

Whether this was a signal of converging strategic interests or merely rhetoric remains unclear. Yet it is safe to say that the geo-political aspect of operations requires some separation of zones of responsibility. For example, in the case of the American and Russian bases in Kyrgyzstan, the former Kyrgyz President Askar Akaev, when asked on the co-existence of two bases on Kyrgyz soil, tried to explain that the two parties perform different missions. While the American forces (2000 personnel at the Manas base), according to Akaev, are focused on Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, the Russian forces (700 troops and 20 aircrafts deployed at Kant airbase) have peacekeeping objectives and are part of CSTO commitments in combating terrorism and other regional security threats. However, differing “peacekeeping” and “anti-terror operation” seems like an oxymoron. By even carrying out “different missions” both in fact contribute to the same ultimate goal – fighting terrorism and strengthening regional security.

At the same time, the common interest of fighting terrorism has not prevented geopolitical reasoning and rhetoric of the new “Great Game” in Central Asia. Take for instance the turnarounds of Uzbekistan

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<sup>16</sup> Some of them have been called ‘bilateral commissions (or groups) on Afghanistan. There is, for instance, a RF-US Working Group on Afghanistan.

<sup>17</sup> Joint Statement by President George W. Bush and President Vladimir V. Putin on Counterterrorism Cooperation, May 24 2002.

<sup>18</sup> Joint Declaration on a New Relationship Between the United States and Russia, May 24 2002.

between Russia and the United States. On the one hand, Uzbekistan signed a Declaration “On Strategic Partnership” with the U.S. in March 2002 where both sides declared their common adherence to combating international terrorism, its financing, as well as drug trafficking and transnational crime.<sup>19</sup> Yet this did not prevent Uzbekistan from evicting its partner three years later.

On the other hand, Uzbekistan also signed two similar documents with the Russian Federation – one as an Agreement “On Strategic Partnership” (June 2004) and the other as an Alliance Treaty (November 2005). The main motive behind the Karimov-initiated Uzbek-Russian alliance is undoubtedly the strained relationship of Uzbekistan with the West in general and America in particular in the aftermath of the Andijan events.<sup>20</sup> The Treaty mentions terrorism only once saying the sides should coordinate their efforts to increase effectiveness of neutralizing threats such as terrorism, extremism, proliferation of WMD, drugs, etc.. Instead, the Treaty focuses on another possible threat, namely that of state aggression against one of the signatory states. Until recently Uzbekistan participated actively in a number of U.S.-Uzbek bilateral military exercises and trainings with a counterterrorism agenda. Today, counterterrorist cooperation has switched to the Russian-Uzbek bilateral frameworks. The recent bilateral exercise conducted in Uzbekistan in September last year is quite symptomatic of Uzbekistan’s current allegiances.

In contrast to the deteriorating Uzbek-U.S. relationship, Kazakh-U.S. relations are developing strongly. On May 9, 2006, the U.S. Vice-President Dick Cheney visited Kazakhstan where both sides re-emphasized the urgency of counter-terror cooperation. In the course of the state visit Cheney pointed out that combating threats of international terrorism, religious extremism, separatism, drug trafficking and organized crime had been an important part of the negotiations. The U.S. Vice-President also expressed his gratitude for Kazakh cooperation in Iraq and in the sphere of counter-terrorism.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> For instance, Article 2.2. of the Declaration states: “The Sides expect to develop cooperation in combating international terrorism, trafficking in persons, narcotics trafficking, organized crime, money laundering, illegal trafficking in weapons, munitions and explosives, and other transnational threats to security...”. In addition, Article 3.5. emphasized the necessity of “combating regional and transnational crime, especially narcotics trafficking, organized crime, human trafficking, and terrorism, through law enforcement cooperation among nations of the region and beyond,” see Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework Between the United States of America and the Republic of Uzbekistan/ 12 March, 2002.

<sup>20</sup> See for details, Farkhad Tolipov, “Uzbekistan and Russia: Alliance Against a Mythic Threat,” *Central Asia- Caucasus Analyst*, January 11 2006.

<sup>21</sup> For the comments on the Dick Cheney’s visit to Kazakhstan, see Centrasia Website: May 9 2006 <[www.centrasia.org](http://www.centrasia.org)> (May 9 2006).

In the frameworks of its PfP program, NATO has developed a number of bilateral individual programs under the NATO/PfP umbrella dedicated towards strengthening engagement with the post-Soviet NIS in its comprehensive security strategy. In general, as Roger McDermott rightly argues, “growing support exists within the Central Asian militaries for deeper engagement with the United States as well as expanded participation within NATO’s PfP. Although the challenges are significant, options for greater levels of successful engagement can be found in examples from the experiences of the former Warsaw Pact members, and indeed elsewhere within the former Soviet Union.”<sup>22</sup>

Finally, Russian-Chinese counter-terror cooperation reveals not only a counter-terrorism agenda but a geopolitical dimension of counter-terrorism as well. This was not least seen in the first Russian-Chinese military exercises “Peace Mission-2005” conducted in the Far Eastern Military District of Russia and the territory of China from August 18-25. Although the exercises were announced to be involved with counter-terrorism, they were as Martin Andrew puts it, “...nothing of the sort. The naval power and operation on display were patently unrealistic against a terrorist organization, but quite suitable for operations against a regional naval power.”<sup>23</sup> Whether concerned with counter-terrorism or not, another important observation to make is the exercises’ role in Sino-Russian bilateral relations and their role, in turn, for the SCO. Some experts even ascribe this bilateral cooperation to be a driving force of the very SCO, with the implication that Russian-Chinese security cooperation paradoxically manifests itself as bilateralism within SCO multilateralism.

These are just some examples of bilateral cooperation in the sphere of counter-terrorism. Conclusions to be drawn suggest that bilateral mechanisms seem sometimes to contrast each other as if they were competitive rather than cooperative. They also sometimes contradict allegiances paid to multilateral mechanisms, presumably as a result of geo-politics. But despite these contradictions bilateral and multilateral mechanisms intermingle, and in one way or another they tend to serve the same purposes of counter-terrorism.

### Unilateral Formats

Another interesting aspect of counter-terrorism in the region is how countries, especially in the SCO area, deal with the threat of terrorism

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<sup>22</sup> McDermott, *Countering Global Terrorism: Developing the Antiterrorist Capabilities of the Central Asian Militaries*, p.27.

<sup>23</sup> Martin Andrew, “Power Politics: China, Russia, and Peace Mission 2005,” *China Brief* 5, 20 (2005).

unilaterally. All SCO countries have to date been successful in combating terrorism within their own jurisdiction without outside help.

There have been two wars in Russian Chechnya and the military campaign against Chechen terrorists and separatists goes on. As a sign of concerns over professionalism in the Russian armed and counter-terrorist forces, Vladimir Putin emphasized in his last address to the Federal Assembly that only professionals will serve in the Army's contingent to Chechnya. He also stated that Russian Armed Forces will refrain from using young conscripts in counter-terrorist actions.<sup>24</sup> In terms of terrorist threats Russia can fully rely on its own forces as it has enough capacity to cope with such a threat on its own.

As with Russia, China does not have any major problem in coping with the terrorism challenge. The Chinese terrorist threat has primarily been located to Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China (XUAR) where the East Turkestan Islamic Movement is perceived as the most outright terror threat. There is widespread perception of a severe security situation and instability in the region due to fierce Uyghur separatism mixed with Islamic extremism and terrorism. Even so, Beijing perceives the threat posed by Xinjiang to be of a lower order than its concerns over Taiwan (and the coastal zone) and has downgraded its military presence in Xinjiang accordingly. As Yitzhak Shichor noted, "only 220,000 PLA troops – the second lowest among China's strategic zones – are based at the Lanzhou Military Region, the largest in China."<sup>25</sup> This means, among other things, that China can cope with the "three evils" in the North-Western Province, so to say, without external interference. At the same, however, the West and international organizations regularly express their concern over China's violation of human rights in Xinjiang and crackdowns on Uyghur organizations.

Uzbekistan – another SCO member – has experienced terrorism several times since independence. During the 1990s, a number of Islamic radical organizations appeared in Uzbekistan's provinces and mainly in the Ferghana Valley seeking to establish a Caliphate, an Islamic state there. On February 16, 1999, Uzbekistan experienced a first serious strike from the IMU. This was followed by a row of attacks in the 2000s: IMU fighters launched an attack from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in 2000; suicide bombings were carried out in Tashkent and Bukhara in 2004; and on May 13, 2005, terrorists from the alleged Islamic sect of "Akromiya" attacked government buildings and instigated a popular uprising in the provincial town of Andijan. In all cases, the special forces of Uzbekistan were used to neutralize these terrorist groups. The clamp-down in

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<sup>24</sup> Centrasia Website, May 10 2006 <[www.centrasia.org](http://www.centrasia.org)> (May 10 2006).

<sup>25</sup> Yitzhak Shichor, "The Great Wall of Steel: Military and Strategy in Xinjiang," in S.F. Starr Ed., *Xinjiang: China's Muslim Borderland* (N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), p.122.

Andijan was dubious, however, to say the least, because it marred the state's international image. Here, official Uzbek information confirming the figure to 170 dead contrasts sharply with the figure of about 700 (or even more) charged by the unofficial opposition. Therefore, the West and international organizations are insisting on an international investigation of what was evaluated as "an indiscriminate use of force."

In periods of terrorist threats the other Central Asian states – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan – has also relied mostly on their own capacity in fighting terrorist groups. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are currently resisting the Hizb-ut-Tahrir Islamic extremist party and fighting some remnants of the IMU on their territory. Kazakhstan is also strong enough to control the activity of Uyghur separatists and Hizb-ut-Tahrir.

As far as the U.S. is concerned, all means in the post-9/11 period are used – unilateral, bilateral and multilateral – in its global "War on Terror" campaign. The Bush administration's National Security Strategy adopted in September 2002 evolved during the rise of a new wave of international terrorism and stipulated to a great extent a transformation of U.S. deployment of overseas forces. According to official approaches, U.S. power projection strategy is to undergo reassessment and reconsideration, so long as, "...post-Cold War conflicts require rapidly deployable forces since forward-deployed forces are not likely to be fighting where they are located." And in this regard, "reconstruction of Afghanistan could be a laboratory for reconstruction in Iraq, and thus support from Central Asian bases for such efforts will continue to be highly important."<sup>26</sup> The immediate impact of the terrorist attacks on 9/11 was the decision by the U.S. to strike Al-Qaeda and the Taleban government harboring them. Meanwhile, the U.S. has provided substantial funds for Central Asian security programs. These funds were provided not just after 9/11 but since the very independence of these countries.<sup>27</sup> In talking about the foreign military presence in Central Asia and unilateral mechanisms against terrorism there is also a need to mention the Russian military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Although these bases were deployed on the agreements between Russia and Kyrgyzstan, and Russia and Tajikistan, they are solely Russian bases and serve rather as Russia's geo-strategic tools in the region.

This brief analysis of unilateral actions reveals the issue of self-sufficiency in combating terrorism. On the one hand, there can be no doubt that so far states have been able to cope with terrorist activities on

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<sup>26</sup> Cited in, Elizabeth Wishnick, *Strategic Consequences of the Iraq War: U.S. Security Interests in Central Asia Reassessed* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, May 2004) p. 8, 13.

<sup>27</sup> See for some details, McDermott, *Countering Global Terrorism: Developing the Antiterrorist Capabilities of the Central Asian Militaries*, p.22.

their territory, although some counter-insurgent campaigns have inflicted high costs. However, in most of cases they have dealt with small groups of terrorists. Although these groups always have presented a certain danger, their capacity was incomparable to states' regular Armies and Special Counter-Terrorist Forces, which in concentrated efforts 'easily' have reduced the threat.

On the other hand, should large-scale terrorism become more prevalent in the SCO area, this may require more dynamic and flexible cross-border cooperation, including joint counter-terror efforts. In any way, despite successful unilateral efforts, regional and international cooperation is crucial to counter the networked and fluid nature of terrorism, especially in the Central Asian conditions. There should be no doubt that any state's military power is much stronger and morale much higher compared to that of terrorists'. But as long as the fight against terrorism is limited to the narrow national scope of self-sufficiency, it will likely be obsessed with geopolitical burden and will be unable to rid itself of emergent international terrorist threats. Moreover, unilateralism should not be, so to speak, overused as violations of international law and human rights are a recurrent phenomenon in this form of counter-terrorism.

## Conclusions

Based on the review and discussion above I agree with Olga Oliker that "... from the U.S. perspective, the Central Asian states are not a prize to be won but a problem to be managed. It is in Central Asia's interests, as well as in America's, Russia's and others, that the countries of Central Asia eventually graduate to managing their problems on their own."<sup>28</sup> Any "security umbrella" for Central Asia, be it from the SCO, CIS, NATO or the U.S. can be effective somehow. But it also means that weaker states inevitably will be dependent on external powers. So, the question is "to what extent?"— to what extent can the states of Central Asia build their own regional security structure, and to what extent will they depend on others' security umbrellas?

The success of the American-led campaign in Afghanistan (and by extension also Iraq) will be of crucial importance for Central Asia. These overall operations can however have unintended effects, if anti-American sentiments will gain currency. Indeed, it seems that varied political, extremist, and criminal forces are trying to set public opinion in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Arab and other countries against the United States. By playing on the long-suffering local people's fatigue of war and

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<sup>28</sup> Olga Oliker, "Friends Like These: Defining U.S. Interests in Central Asia," in Daniel Burghart, Theresa Sabonis-Helf, eds. *In the Tracks of Tamerlane. Central Asia's Path to the 21-st Century* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, 2004), p. 460.

poverty while charging the U.S. and its antiterrorist operation for prolonging this, these actors may mobilize significant opposition. Those who initially supported the United States and the antiterrorist coalition may turn into their opponents if not enemies. Civilian lives claimed in Afghanistan have not increased support for U.S. efforts, and in some occasions even converted those initially favorable towards the U.S. intervention.

Can we speak of a situation where terrorist organizations nurture on the ongoing antiterrorist efforts? Fear and horror caused either by anti-terrorist operations or by terror itself do in fact have identical social and psychological implications. One should ask whether the terrorists themselves want the war to go on as long as possible so as to stir up dissatisfaction and even indignation among the local people and complicate the conditions in which the international coalition have to act. One can also ask whether Operation Enduring Freedom will disappoint countries in the region and levy support for another counter-terrorism mechanism to replace it.

As the war on terror was initiated the U.S. National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice pointed out that this war would have many fronts: information and financial, military and others. Speaking about the need to pool the world community's efforts to carry out struggle she said that different countries would have different roles to play. This war, she said, would go through several phases and continue for a long time. It would involve many countries, the contribution of whom would never be disclosed yet whose role might prove pivotal.<sup>29</sup> What will the SCO contribution be in the global and regional struggle against terrorism? Can it be a responsible and strong actor in the global anti-terrorist coalition?

According to Vyacheslav Kasymov, Executive Committee Director of RATS, over 250 terror attacks were pre-empted in SCO's member states in 2005. IMU and Hizb-ut-Tahrir, besides al Qaeda, are listed as terror organizations in all of the SCO's member states. Moreover, about 400 suspected terrorists are on the Agency's wanted list, according to Sergei Smirnov, the Russian Federal Security Service's Deputy Director.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, the SCO Defense Ministers on their ministerial meeting in March 2006 agreed upon the 2007 joint exercises on the territory of the Russian Federation. So the tendency for fruitful cooperation in the global war on terror is obvious. However, whether this "proto-alliance" can provide a "security umbrella" for Central Asia remains unclear.

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<sup>29</sup> Quoted by *RIA Novosti*, September 20 2001.

<sup>30</sup> "Over 250 Terror Attacks Pre-empted in SCO Countries in 2005," CACI-Analyst Website, March 30 2006 <[www.cacianalyst.org/view\\_article.php?articleid=4157](http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid=4157)> (May 1 2006).



It seems that this will depend on several developments: (1) how member-states will assess the level of terrorist challenge to their individual and common security: red, orange, yellow (or threat, risk, tension); (2) whether they will really be able to overcome the geopolitical games in and over Central Asia; (3) their perspective of harmonizing the overall fight of terrorism on the global, regional and national levels including harmonization of unilateral, bilateral and multilateral mechanisms; (4) working up common approaches to the definition of international terrorism as well as to the methods of fighting it; (5) if all conditions, including juridical ones, favorable to the functioning of terrorist and extremist organizations can be eliminated; (6) if the SCO can provide counter-terrorist training and equipment, as well as overall security assistance to the Central Asian countries; (7) and finally if joint intelligent activities can be consolidated. By-and-large, for the time being, the expansion of the market of security/anti-terrorist services in Central Asia has just complicated the security environment of the region concerned and entangled Central Asia's own efforts in creating a regional collective security system.



# Submission Guidelines and Process of Selection

Many of the articles are solicited, but authors are encouraged to send their work directly to the Editor who will suggest changes and determine the relevance of the articles for each issue. Articles can also be sent to any of our senior advisors via the Editor, but the Editor has full responsibility on accepting or refusing individual articles. Shorter articles will be responded to within a week, whereas the response to longer analytical pieces could take up to three weeks. Some articles will be dealt with by the editors immediately; most articles are also read by outside referees. Copyright of articles remains with *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program*, unless another agreement has been reached.

**Manuscript.** Each submitted article should be sent to the Editor by e-mail attaching the word document. All correspondence will be conducted through e-mail during the process. The Editor reserves the right to edit the article to conform to the editorial policy and specifications of the CEF Quarterly and to reject the article should it not be acceptable to our editorial committee for publication.

**Regular Articles:** Articles should be in-depth and offer a long-term analysis of the particular problem. References are preferred to support your evidence according to the Chicago system. The articles should aim at 7000 words. Each article should be summarized in an abstract of not more than 150 words and include keywords.

**Commentaries:** Commentaries require a three to four sentence introduction to the article based on a news hook. Rather than a general, overarching analysis, the article must offer considered and careful "judgment" on the issue supported with concrete examples. Recommended length is 2000 words.

**References.** All authors should adhere to the Chicago reference system in their articles. These should appear in the form of footnotes. References to books and articles should be contained in the notes and not in a separate reference list. Provide translations of non-English language titles.

Articles from Journals: Phil Williams, "Transnational Criminal Organizations and International Security," *Survival* 36, 1 (1994): 96.

Books: Patrick L. Clawson and Rensselaer W. Lee III, *The Andean Cocaine Industry* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998)

Newspapers, News-agencies & Magazines: Toby Harnden, "Drug Trade 'Reaches to Afghan Cabinet,'" *Daily Telegraph*, February 5 2006.

Electronic Sources: George Bush, "Principles of Ethical Conduct for Government Officers and Employees," Executive Order 12674, April 12 1989, pt. 1, <[www.usoge.gov/exorders/eo12674.html](http://www.usoge.gov/exorders/eo12674.html)> (October 30 1997).

**Subsequent references:** a reference to a single source in the previous note should be replaced by '*Ibid.*'; in later notes by author's surname, title and page number.

**Style:** American spelling throughout; percent rather than per cent or %; Capital letters for the East, West, North and South, when global; western, eastern, northern and southern; Dates: November 6 2005.

**Figures & Tables.** All figures and tables must be discussed or mentioned in the text and numbered in order of mention. Define all data in the column heads. Figures and tables should be of good quality, and contain full references to the original source.

**Affiliation.** On the title pages include full names of authors, academic and/or professional affiliations, and the complete address of the author to whom correspondence and hard-copies should be sent.

NOTE: Submissions which are likely to require undue editorial attention because of neglect of these directions or poor presentation or language will be returned.

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