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Vol. XXIII, No. 1 FALL 1999

1. **Islamic Activism in Central Asia and the Pakistan Factor** 1
   Dietrich Reetz

2. **The Bitter Harvest of Indo-Egyptian Relations** 38
   Jacob Abadi

3. **Taliban's Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan: Its Impact on Eurasia** 65
   Hafeez Malik

4. **Book Section** 79
   Edited by Susan K. Hausman

Contributions

Articles are invited from all parts of the world. They should be between 2,000 and 6,000 words and be submitted in triplicate, double spaced. The Journal will be published in English. Articles written in other languages may not be submitted. Submission of an article will be taken to imply that it has not been previously published and is not on offer to any other publisher.

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The major objective of the Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies is to provide a forum for scholars engaged in study of the modern Islamic and non-Islamic societies in South Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa. It hopes to create a dialogue among specialists and leaders in public affairs in a wide range of areas and disciplines. The physical sciences, the biological sciences, the social sciences, business administration, public administration and the arts and humanities will be included. Special issues might concentrate on such topics as regional cooperation, religious and intellectual developments, public works, engineering advances, and the impact of transnational cooperation on national communities.

The journal welcomes contributions, not only from scholars, but also from leaders in public affairs. Editorial policy avoids commitment to any political viewpoint or ideology, but invites discussion of these issues in the modern context on the understanding that all responsibility for opinions expressed, and accuracy of facts, rests exclusively with the author and not with the journal or its Editor or the Editorial Board.

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Islamic Activism in Central Asia and the Pakistan Factor

Dietrich Reetz

There has been a lively academic discussion about the nature of changes in Central Asia. Most of the analysis has either focused on case studies of the countries and regions involved or on very generalized arguments about geostrategic policy implications of a revived Central Asia. The consequences of the region's major Islamic movements for the redefinition of Central Asia have so far received surprisingly little attention, except on a case-to-case basis. Many of the activities related to political Islam have taken place in the part of Central Asia comprising Afghanistan, Tajikistan and the Xinjiang province of China.[1] The present review will concentrate on this region.[2] These areas are geographically contiguous. The major movements operating in these areas, namely the Afghan Taliban; the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan; and the Uighur opposition; share to a certain extent common conditions, concepts, and roots, while they still differ on many other issues. In many ways

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1 Such a survey could perhaps be also extended to cover the Uzbek Ferghana valley or the disputed territory of Kashmir controlled by Pakistan and India by one- and two-thirds, respectively. While the Ferghana activities represent a very localized phenomenon, the Kashmir movement is heavily tied to the antagonism between India and Pakistan and with its main focus on control over the Indian-controlled Kashmir it can hardly be called a generic Islamic movement.

2 An earlier draft was delivered at an International Seminar on Central Asia, organized by the Area Study Centre (Central Asia), University of Peshawar and the Hanns Seidel Foundation, Germany, in Peshawar, Pakistan, on October 7-9, 1997. The manuscript has benefited from comments by Dr. Ildikó Bellér-Hann and Prof. Ingeborg Baldauf, Berlin.

their activities have been facilitated or made possible by support from forces in Pakistan sympathetic to their cause. While support from Saudi Arabia or Iran is also visible, it is the territorial closeness of Pakistan and the relative freedom of association in Pakistan that have served as incentive and facilitator for communication.

A brief introduction of the movements may help to compare them on points of: (i) religious doctrine, (ii) political concept and (iii) their interest in the region of Central Asia. This may help view their similarities and differences, to understand why they succeeded on certain issues and failed on others. A section discussing the nature of the Pakistan nexus will conclude the review.

Profiling the Movements

The Taliban became known to the public in October 1994.[3] Gulbadin Hekmatyar and Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani, leaders of opposing Islamic factions in Afghanistan, were locked in violent confrontation. Pakistan was unable to make any progress on its ambitious plans to create an outlet to Central Asia through the construction of road and railway links, through oil and gas pipelines. The civil war in Afghanistan showed no sign of abating; it seemed impossible to break the deadlock between the warring parties. When Pakistan decided to send a 30-truck consignment of goods to Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan on Afghan roads, it was held up by local commanders Mansoor and Amir Lalai. Conflicting reports about this incident spoke of demands for ransom money or 'road tax,' but also mentioned calls by the commanders for the withdrawal of religious students who were alleged to meddle in the administration of Kandahar with support from Pakistan, including arms and ammunition supplies.[4] These trucks appeared to be the straw that broke the camel's back. Within two days the students who came to be known as the *Taliban* swept the forces of the local commanders off their feet and took over Kandahar.[5] They subsequently took ninety percent of Afghanistan.

In hindsight it looks as if the trucks were sent deliberately by the beleaguered administration of Pakistan's Prime Minister, Benazir

3 For a recent review of the movement's inception, see William Maley (ed.), *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban*, London: C. Hurst & Co. 1998; Kamal Matinuddin, The Taliban Phenomenon: Afghanistan 1994-1997, Karachi/New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

4 *Dawn*, November 4, 1994.

5 *News*, November 15, 1994.

Bhutto, to create a pretext for the involvement of the Taliban who, though being mostly Afghans, *i.e.* Pakhtuns in particular, came from border areas inside Pakistan where they had been attending courses at religious seminaries: the *madrasah* controlled by the Islamic party of clerics, the *Jamiat-ul Ulama-i Islam* (JUI) Fazlur Rehman, (the son of the erstwhile prominent politician and divine), and Mufti Mahmud. The political background of their intervention appeared to be connected with internal politics in Pakistan rather than with Afghanistan. Benazir, it was alleged, wanted to wrench control over military and security-related policy issues from military headquarters through her new strongman, Interior Minister Naseerullah Babar. For this reason she went on the offensive both in Kashmir and in Afghanistan. As soon as the stunning military successes of the Taliban came to be known, allegations were rife about Pakistan's involvement and logistical support. It did indeed seem improbable, how the Taliban, who otherwise looked rather helpless whenever they appeared in public and confronted the media, were capable of launching such complex operations requiring a high degree of coordination and logistical air and ground support.[6]

Its leader right from the beginning was Maulana Mohammad Omar, hailing from the Arghandab area of Kandahar. He has become a symbol of a strict and unrelenting interpretation of Islamic law for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The movement is ruled through a small Islamic council, a *shura,* still based in Kandahar. Decisions on day-to-day affairs are reportedly taken in an authoritarian and centralized manner. Participation of the rank-and-file of the Taliban in decision-making remains apparently limited. The Taliban administration in Kabul is known as the *Kabuli shura,* supposedly led by Mulla Mohammad Rabbani, who lately is reported to have been increasingly sidelined, and the military leadership under Defense Minister Obaidullah, constitutes the military *shura.*[7] Both are subordinate to the Kandahar *shura* which has the final word in all matters of principle. Maulvi Wakil Ahmed Mutawakil has enjoyed a special status as a chief negotiator

6 Such accusations took a violent turn when the Afghan President Rabbani allowed more than 1,000 demonstrators to vent their anger against Pakistan's alleged support for the Taliban. They went on to attack the Pakistan embassy leaving 'several dead bodies... lying in front of the building.' *Dawn*, September 7, 1995.

7 Taliban Deny Differences Between Mulla Rabbani, Omar, *The News International (NNI)*, Islamabad, November 27, 1998, at http://www.nni-news.com.

for the Taliban in talks with the opposition forces, with Central Asian leaders, the U.S. and the UN.[8] At times he is described as secretary general and spokesman of the Taliban.[9]

So far, the civil war in Afghanistan defied all attempts to find a negotiated solution. The opposition to the Taliban is represented by the 'Northern Alliance', including mainly non-Pakhtun minorities like the Tajik, the Uzbek and the Shiite Hazara. Its main leader at present is Shah Masood, although any leader of the Northern alliance during the past several years faced bitter in-fighting by its member groups. Near military defeat in 1998, it continues to receive military aid, apparently from Iran and perhaps from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan also. Despite many statements of intention, the Taliban have failed to accommodate non-Pakhtun ethnic groups and non-Sunni Islamic sects, notably the Hazara Shia with whom conflict is particularly bitter.

The Taliban seem determined to have no established or codified agreements for conflict resolution other than on the basis of their own interpretation of the *shari'a,* the canonical Islamic law. A suggestion by the former Afghan President Rabbani from the Northern Alliance to set up a commission of Islamic legal experts, an *ulama,* seemed to show a way out of the impasse after it was accepted by the Taliban. Though they could not agree on its composition at first, direct talks between the two sides in Islamabad on April 29, 1998 led to a breakthrough as far as the commission was concerned. It was agreed that both sides would be represented by an equal number of 20 *ulama* selected by each side independently.[10] Yet again, after the Taliban refused to talk about practical problems of access to the opposition-held Hazarajat region under blockade where the civilian population was threatened by starvation, as well as on the exchange of prisoners, the talks broke down and fighting resumed.[11] The latest round of talks took place through the mediation of United Nations Special Envoy to Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi and the government of Turkmenistan in Asghabat in March 1999. Both sides agreed to share judicial, legislative and executive branches of a government in Afghanistan.

8 See for instance, *Frontier Post,* November 27, 1998.

9 United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCHR), 'Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan,' March 12, 1998, E/CN.4/1998/71, at http://www.unhchr.ch.

10 *Dawn,* April 30, 1998.

11 *The Hindu,* May 4, 1998.

Yet, no details were given and neither side has signed an agreement. Although initially hailed as successful the Asghabat talks appear doomed as the Taliban refuse to make any concession on their essentials: (1) to have full international recognition; (2) to have an agreement with the opposition only on the basis of their submission to Taliban authority; and (3) their interpretation of Islamic laws. Opposition leaders like the former President Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani and Shah Masood have rejected the proposition to join the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan under the leadership of Omar.[12]

The Tajik Islamic movement was mainly represented by the 'Islamic Renaissance Party' (IRP). After a clandestine existence for almost 15 years, its position became public in 1990 when it was constituted as a regional branch of the All-Union Islamic Revival Party in Astrakhan, Russia. On October 26, 1991 it declared its independence from the Russian movement, maintaining confederate ties with other ex-Soviet republican organizations.[13] Not unlike the Afghan Taliban, the IRP owed much of its strength and influence to a civil war that raged in Tajikistan from 1992 right up to the end of 1997. A peace accord was signed between the Tajik government and the opposition on June 27, 1997 which is being implemented steadily but haltingly.[14] However, the nature of the civil war in Tajikistan and its Islamic forces substantially differed from those in Afghanistan.

The IRP was drawn into a battle of opposition forces against the ex-Communist establishment. Polarization had started along regional lines, pitting the so far dominant elite of the northern Khojent region against an assemblage of forces from the south. Although Rakhmon Nabiev, formerly ex-CP secretary of the republican organization in Soviet times, won presidential elections in 1991, which were considered formally fair and legal, he was challenged by opposition groups until he finally resigned at gun

12 'Northern Alliance rules out joining Taliban-led government.' *News Network International,* Islamabad, March 25, 1999.

13 For the initial stages of post-Soviet political formation in Tajikistan, see Eden Naby, 'Tajik Political Legitimacy and Political Parties,' in *Central Asia Monitor,* No. 5, 1992, pp. 10-12, Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, 'The "Tajik Spring of 1992",' *ibid.,* No. 2, 1993. pp. 21-29.

14 For an annual review of the situation, see U.S. Department of State, *Tajikistan Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1998,* February 26, 1999, at *http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights.*

point in 1992. His opponents, clamoring for political and economic reform, aimed mainly at a redistribution of power and influence among regional elites. The IRP under Turajonzoda had thrown in its lot with the opposition of which it became the rallying point, partly because its influence was less limited by any one particular region than it was the case with other opposition forces. Continued fighting with pro-government forces pushed the (mainly Islamic) opposition front into exile in northern Afghanistan, along with thousands of refugees fleeing the fighting.

In January 1993 an opposition umbrella front by the name of *Harakat-Nuzhat-i-Islami-yi Tojikiston* (Movement for the Islamic Revival of Tajikistan) held its first congress in Northern Afghanistan. The IRP was joined there by the Democratic Party and the Rastokhez popular movement and various independent individuals and groups. Since then it became known as the *United Tajik Opposition (UTO)*. The headquarters of the movement had shifted to Taluqan in the Takhar province in Afghanistan.[15]

The Islamic movement was represented by various leaders. Qazi Akbar Turajonzoda, the most well-known of them is, similar to the Taliban, a religious figure. Yet, the contrast between him and Mulla Omar could not be more striking. Before the demise of the Soviet Union he had been a rather soft-spoken pro-establishment figure who favored Islam to be open and flexible, attuned to the needs of modernization and development in Tajikistan. He was born into a religious family in Kafirnihan, near Dushanbe. He received his theological training in Tashkent, in the *madrasah* Mir Arab in Bukhara and then at the *shari'a* Faculty of Amman University in Jordan. As Mufti of Dushanbe he attained the highest position in the republican Islamic hierarchy in 1988, when he was in his early thirties.[16] Military operations were conducted under the leadership of Sayyid Abdullo Nuri.[17] He had long acted underground as an Islamic activist and for several years went to prison for his beliefs and activities. He has been the supreme leader of the UTO. The opposition front was further represented by the chairman of the IRP, Muhammad-sharif Himmatzoda, and vice-chairman Davlat

15 David Nalle, 'Interview with Qazi Akbar Turajonzoda,' in *Central Asia Monitor - On-Line Supplement*, No. 2, 1995, at *http://www.chalidze.com/cam.htm*.

16 Shahram Akbarzadeh, 'Why Did Nationalism Fail in Tajikistan?' in *Europe-Asia Studies*, 1996, Vol. 48, No. 7, p. 1120.

17 *Ibid.*, pp. 1112-14.

Usmon. They acted in coalition with Shodmon Yusupov, leader of the Democratic Party of Tajikistan, a liberal and secular party which viewed any references to the creation of an Islamic state with suspicion.

After several cease-fires, which were often disrupted by disgruntled field commanders, the 1997 peace agreement holds the promise of more stability as the opposition, with one third of available positions, has been incorporated into a transitory national government. The new free elections currently under preparation have been running into troubles again when the government announced its intention to debar religious parties from participation.[18] This would constitute a serious threat to the IRP. A compromise is being worked out that religious premises would not be used in electioneering.[19]

In comparison, the Uighur Islamic movement appears to be least organized. Individual acts of bombing and local demonstrations where the establishment of an Islamic state was demanded are only loosely linked with émigré opposition groups in Kazakhstan and Kyrghyzstan, in Germany, Turkey and the U.S. Activists (of Eastern Turkestan Refugee Committee) connected to the short-lived East Turkestan Republic of 1944-1949 live in Istanbul, in Turkey. Although Turkey refused to be drawn into the controversy surrounding the Uighur riots, it pointedly stated, in line with ambitions for a leading role in Central Asia, that it maintained an interest in the welfare of all 'outside Turks,' which would include the Uighurs.[20] In Kazakhstan, three groups have gained some prominence. The largest of them is the Cultural Union for Uighurs in the Republic of Kazakhstan under Farhad Hasanov, also known as the United Association of Uighurs (UAU). UAU is the only one officially registered and recognized by the Kazakh authorities. The Eastern Turkestan Liberation Committee is known mostly by its chairman, Yussupbek Mukhlissi. It is also called the United National Revolutionary Front (UNRF). Mukhlissi figures more frequently than others in the news and many radical statements critical of Chinese

18 See statement by James P. Rubin, spokesman of the U.S. Department of State, on May 27, 1998: 'Tajikistan: Concern about Political Party Law: Its Effect on the Peace Process', at *http://www.state.gov*.

19 'Russia Drops Hint To Tajik Parliament,' June 23, 1998, in *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (REF/RL) Newsline*, at http://www.solar.rtd.utk.edu/cgi-bin/friends/rferl/.

20 *Transition*, August 23, 1996.

rule over East Turkestan are attributed to him. In the 1970s, he co-operated with the Soviet authorities in waging a propaganda war against China. A third one is named the Organization for Freedom of Uighuristan (UFU), or Uighuristan Liberation Front.[21] The Ittipaq (Unity) movement is based in Kyrghyzstan.

Local militancy peaked in 1990 and 1996. An underground group of pro-independence activists based in Urumchi, who the Chinese call 'splittists,' was reported to have killed six or seven people in 1996. Armed with guns and home-made bombs, militants battled with police in late April 1996 in the western Kucha district.[22] In one of the attacks, Muslim activists were reported to have stabbed and injured Aronghan Aji, a moderate Islamic religious leader and member of regional and national government advisory bodies, and his son, in Kashgar on May 12, 1996.[23] However, factual accounts of the 1996 incidents vary.[24] In response, the Chinese authorities apparently executed a blanket crackdown arresting about 3,000 people.[25] Officials banned the construction of new mosques, tightened border patrols with stricter searches for weapons, religious and anti government materials entering Xinjiang, and sought to eliminate religious influence from colleges and campuses. The last prominent incident was the haul-up of hundreds of Uighurs in 1997. It was triggered by riots in February 1997 and partly responded to the April 26, 1997 summit between China, Russia and the Central Asian States of Kazakhstan, Kyrghyzstan and Tajikistan. The five-nation summit agreed to demilitarize their mutual border zone. They also reached an understanding 'to combat separatist, terrorist, and fundamentalist activities.' In this connection, China outlawed the independent publication of books or cassettes on Islam.[26] Simultaneously, Kyrghyzstan introduced curbs on the *Ittipaq* Uighur opposition group. It is believed that China felt encouraged by the summit to stamp out dissent, also playing on fear and suspicion about Islamic militancy among the other summit participants. The Xinjiang Communist Party Chief Wang Lequan acknowledged in March 1998 that 'some of them have been sentenced to death with a reprieve. And some have been sentenced to imprisonment with variable length.'[27] *Amnesty International* has documented some of the arrests since then.[28]

The fragmentation of Uighur Islamic activism is no coincidence. It only partly reflects internal political pressure which makes it difficult both for political dissent and for radical religious activism to organize. Rudelson aptly summarized trends of ethnopolitical formation among the Uighurs when he contended that the homogeneity of Uighur nationalism is often overrated.[29] In particular, he emphasized that Xinjiang is by no means a geographic entity, a fact which in turn heavily influenced Uighur nationalism and Uighur participation in cross-border contact. He outlined 4 distinct regions marked by a clear differentiation of their cultural and political cross-border orientation: north-west of the Tarim basin, south of the Tarim basin, north-west of the Zhungarian Basin, and east. This is reflected in the prevalence of strong local oasis identities and their different strategies to respond to outside forces and change. In terms of their cultural responses, he mainly sets apart the easterly region of Turpan and Qumul (including the provincial capital Urumchi) from the south-westerly region of Kashgar, the latter being socially more conservative, as far as the religious practice of Islam is concerned. The usage of the term 'Uighur' has undergone significant changes and was officially revived to notify various Muslim Turkic people of Xinjiang only in 1921.[30]

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21 Partly based on an interview with Erkin Alptekin, former Chairman of the Eastern Turkestani Union based in Germany, on June 30, 1998.

22 *Reuters*, June 2, 1996.

23 *Reuters*, May 31, 1996.

24 Cf. also James P. Dorian, Brett Wigdortz & Dru Gladney, 'Central Asia and Xinjiang, China: emerging energy, economic and ethnic relations,' in *Central-Asian Survey*, 1997. Vol. 16, No. 4, p. 465.

25 Chen Jinchi, director of the Xinjiang provincial government's Public Security Department, confirmed that the number of people arrested was "far more than" 2,773, the figure which the China Business Times had reported earlier. *UPI*, June 3, 1996.

26 *Open Media Research Institute (OMRI) Daily Digest*, No. 85, Part I, April 30, 1996, at http://www.omri.cz/Index.html.

27 Roger Wilkinson, 'Xinjiang Crackdown,' Voice of America (VOA) March 13, 1998, at the internet site of the Eastern Turkestan Union, at *http://www.uygur.com*.

28 Amnesty International Report - ASA - 17/02/99, January 1999, *People's Republic of China: Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region - Appeal for Arbitrarily Detained, at http://www.amnesty.org*.

29 Justin Jon Rudelson, 'The Uighurs in the future of Central Asia,' in *Central Asia Monitor*, 1993, No. 6, pp. 16-25; and his dissertation: J.J. Rudelson, *Bones in the Sand: the Struggle to Create Uighur Nationalist Ideologies in Xinjiang, China*. Cambridge, Mass. Harvard Univ.. 1992, pp. 292; followed by his *Oasis Identities: Uyghur Nationalism along China's Silk Road*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

30 Dru C. Gladney. 'The Ethnogenesis of the Uighur.' in *Central-Asian Survey*, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 4.

Yet, although the public form of Islamic dissent in Xinjiang is not much organized, it is obvious that in terms of incidents of protest or numbers of participants or sympathizers, it constitutes a distinct, albeit nascent form of mass mobilization. Uighur Islamic activism was shaped by internal political conflict, just as in the case of the Afghan Taliban, or the Tajik IRP, although it never reached the stage of civil war and remains confined to apparently spontaneous and uneven periods of public protest and unrest. Rudelson traces the beginning of the current Islamic mobilization in Xinjiang back to the Chinese reforms of 1978, which restored a substantial measure of religious freedom and initiated rapid economic growth, as well as to 1985 when Xinjiang province was included in the economic reforms and opened to the outside world. First substantial public protest was registered in 1985 when 1,000 Uighur students demonstrated in Urumchi with demands ranging from the ban of the use of Lop Nor as a nuclear test site to controversial population and resettlement policies. Rudelson argues the opening of Xinjiang had a mobilizing effect on Islam. The growing welfare of the peasantry and a certain degree of religious tolerance on the part of the state led the peasants to switch monetary assistance from secular institutions like village schools to mosques and the *mullahs*. Traditional social and religious practices of Islam have again surfaced in the countryside. In addition, the external orientation of the Xinjiang regions towards Central Asia, and the Turkic and Islamic world gained new currency.

Religious doctrine

All three movements discussed above seem to have in common being Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi law school named after the theologian Imam Abu Hanifah (c. 700-767). More remarkable perhaps is the strong influence of Sufi traditions, particularly of the Naqshbandiyya and the Chishtiyya orders, a pervasive network of *shaikhs*, of *pir-murid* relationships between teachers and disciples. Orthodox social and religious views are equally common, although in a varying degree. All three could be classified as revival movements in the sense that they want to restore the meaning of the fundamentals of Islam as they understand them, though their understanding of these fundamentals varies widely. What they regard as fundamentals is selective and contingent on their social practice and local tradition.

The Taliban claim to follow the traditions of the Deobandi school, as taught to them in the Pakistani seminaries of the *JUI*,

mainly located in the border area towards Afghanistan. Lately the significance of Deoband schools has grown inside Afghanistan as a recruiting ground for the Taliban, especially in areas where conditions are stable. Several members of the Kandahar *shura* of Taliban leaders also graduated from eminent Deoband colleges in Pakistan and continue to look to them for doctrinal guidance and inspiration.

Given the strictness of Taliban policies, their assertion regarding their Deobandi antecedents has led to confusion as to the nature of Deobandi thought and practice. Here one has to distinguish between the Deoband tradition as it developed before independence around the Islamic college Dar-ul Ulum in the North Indian town of Deoband founded in 1867, and the different routes Deobandi thought took in India and Pakistan thereafter. In Pakistan, the Deobandi school became heavily involved in politics over the years. It took to new forms of activism and militancy during the governance of Zia-ul-Haq and his Islamization policies. Differences between schools of thought such as the Deobandis and the Barelwis, between the Sunni and Shia sects and between mainstream Sunni orthodox and the reformist Ahmadiyya, grew more bitter and increasingly violent. The use of force was further legitimized by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan when the battle cry of the Afghan resistance became the 'Defense of Islam.'

The Taliban's connection with the Deobandi tradition remains ambiguous at best: their political practice partly reflects the Deobandi faith where it concerns the observance of religious rites, but it contravenes the spirit of the Deobandi tradition where they apply force and violence against Muslims and non-Muslims for full compliance with their religio-political orders. The Deobandis were conformist in the sense that they followed a particular school, the Hanafi *fiqh*. They therefore gave preference to the interpretation of Islam through the teachings of the *ulama* who based themselves firmly on the legal texts. As Barbara Metcalf writes: 'The follower was expected to abandon suspect customs, to fulfill all religious obligations, and to submit himself to guidance in all aspects of his life.[31] Yet, the Deobandis equally favored a responsible and comprehensive approach, particularly combining the orthodox law of the *shari'a* and the Sufi path of the *tariqa*. Besides *taqlid*, that is adherence to the established opinion of the law schools, they

31 Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982.

encouraged independent and individual reasoning, *ijtihad*, though within the tradition of the law schools.[32]

The Taliban claim to religious legitimacy with reference to the Deobandi tradition becomes particularly doubtful when it comes to enforcing Islamic legal opinion, notably in issues like public appearance and the role of women, etc. Here the Deobandis were not known to be in favor of violence or coercion. This reflected a tolerance of a multi-confessional and multi-sectarian society in colonial India. Explaining the approach of the Deoband college towards educating its graduates, its long-time vice-chancellor, Muhammad Tayyib, commented:

> *Hence, in the young alumni of the madrasah neither rigorism was produced, so that harshness might appear from them, nor was there sheer softness, so that they might be accused of cajoling; neither did they condone the unlawful things (munkarat), so as to receive the blame of being overawed, nor did they indulge in imprudent hindering so as to be liable to objection. On the contrary, along with religious slaunchness affection for all the creature and along with poverty (taqashshuf) courtesy (mulatifat) mutually went into their making which is the true picture of "but follow a way between" (XVIII:110)...*[33]

When participating in the campaign of 1922-23 against the Arya Samaj, an activist and reform-oriented religious Hindu organization trying to reclaim Muslim converts to the Hindu faith, Deoband focused on preaching and discourse, rather than on violence. To improve the performance of their activists in religious debates with members of the Arya Samaj, Deoband even made arrangements for the study of Sanskrit, the language of the Hindu holy scriptures, and of the basics of the Hindu faith for which it hired a former missionary of the Arya Samaj, Dr. Ghulam Muhammad, who had 'been affected by the beauties of Islam' so much that he entered 'the pale of Islam.'[34]

The unrelenting strictness of Taliban Islam is partly explained by their Pakhtun roots. Michael Collins Dunn maintains that the Taliban are not an Islamic movement 'but a Pakhtun traditionalist movement seeking to restore a romanticized version of the tribal village.'[35] He believes 'it would not be a gross exaggeration to compare their world view to such groups as the Cambodian *Khmer Rouge* at the time they evacuated the cities, or Peru's *Sendero Luminoso*, except that the Taliban are clearly less brutal in their methods and less revolutionary in their goals.'[36] Another explanation for their lack of compromise and even tribal etiquette is given with reference to their social uprootedness, as their rank and file and many of their leaders have grown up in the unsettled circumstances of the armed resistance or in far-away *madrasahs* out of touch with their local tradition.[37]

The pre-eminent role of the Taliban leader Mullah Omar points to the importance of the spiritual guide, mentor and shaikh in today's Taliban Islam, reflecting Sufi influences. Although Deoband is known for its fervor in removing un-Islamic accretions and innovations, it always remained wedded to a strong Sufi connection, albeit within orthodox parameters. Deoband's founding fathers insisted that in matters of independent reasoning, or *ijtihad*, one should not only follow a particular law school, but equally abide by the counsel of a chosen spiritual guide, a hallmark of Sufi leadership, who at the same time would be a learned man of religious knowledge, an *alim*. Apparently, both elements, spiritual guidance and religious knowledge, are considered to be important sources of legitimacy for the Taliban as well. It should therefore come as no surprise that the Taliban leader Mullah Omar is presented as saint-like and divine, his authority is almost never challenged and he has the last word on all important matters. Charisma and even spiritual powers seem to be important for his hold over his close disciples within the Kandahar *shura* and over the Taliban as a whole. It was reported that a special gathering in

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32 *Ibid.*, pp. 142-3.

33 Sayyid Mahboob Rizvi, *History of the Dar al-Ulum, Deoband*, (English translation) Deoband: Idara-e Ihtemam, 1980, Vol. I, p. 23.

34 *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 207.

35 Michael Collins Dunn, 'Great Games and Small: Afghanistan, Tajikistan and The New Geopolitics of Southwest Asia,' in *Middle East Policy*, 1997, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 146.

36 *Ibid.* William Maley makes a similar point when he refers to the famous definition of the Communist Party by Isaiah Berlin as 'a cross between a church and an army.' William Maley (ed.), *Fundamentalism Reborn? Op. cit.*, p. 21.

37 Maley aptly says 'it is not the values of the village, but the values of the village as interpreted by refugee camp dwellers or madrassa students most of whom have never known ordinary village life.' William Maley (ed.), *Fundamentalism Reborn? Op. cit.*, p. 20.

Afghanistan of 1,500 *ulama* 'offered *bai'at* [allegiance] on the hands of the *amir-ul mu'minin*.[38]

At the same time, Omar does not consider himself an *'alim* because he lacks deeper theological training and a degree of one of the recognized Islamic colleges. When Omar assumed the title of *amir-ul mu'minin*, or the Commander of the Believers, a term in use during Muhammad's time as leader of Islamic expeditions and later taken by Umar and other caliphs, it was interpreted as concentrating on control over the Islamic state and intentionally foregoing recognition as being the highest theological authority, in contrast with Iran's erstwhile religious leader Ayatolla Khomeini's claim to be the recognized *mujtahid*.[39]

Knowledge about the religious concept of the Tajik movement is so far elementary only.[40] Both the Sufi and the orthodox aspect are present, albeit in a different, modified interpretation. The Sufi background of the movement becomes clear from an interview with Qazi Akbar Turajonzoda when he visited the U.S. in February 1995. He explained that the Islamic movement in Tajikistan

> *can be divided into three groups. The first was the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), the second, the so-called official clergy headed by the Qazi of the Tajik Muslims, and the third group was composed of clergy who belonged to neither the first nor the second group; they were known simply as the traditionalists, but dominant among them were the Sufi ishans (...) Naqshbandi and Qadiri.*[41]

Another hallmark of the Sufi background is the quality and status of leadership. Authority wielded by Turajonzoda and by Said Abdullo Nuri seems to be based on a high personal profile and inspiration that perhaps takes cognizance of the spiritual qualities of a Sufi mentor. Turajonzoda stressed his interest in religious and moral renewal rather than in political representation and leadership:

> *I won't accept any government position. On the contrary, I would strive to concentrate on the spiritual revival of the Tajiks, and work to that end.*[42]

A 1985 study by Bennigsen and Wimbush deals extensively with the role of Sufi practices in the preservation of Islam under Soviet rule, mainly in Chechnya and the Caucasus, and, by extension, in Central Asia. They viewed it as a tradition opposed to official Islam. Sufism found it particularly difficult to reconcile with the Soviet system, partly because its antagonism to official order preceded the ascent of Soviet rule as it had been 'fighting Russian aggression for almost exactly two centuries (1783-1983) [at the time of the study DR], and this long struggle, with its holy war character, has left a solid legacy of mutual hatred and distrust.'[43]

Independent Tajikistan inherited a significant number of 'unofficial' Islamic institutions and clergy. So-called unaccredited *mullahs* operated in temporary 'tea-house mosques,' facing frequent closures and arrests.[44] This part of the Islamic establishment no doubt retained strong connections with Sufi traditions.

From this development it could be assumed that a bifocal structure has been typical for Tajik Islam, a certain polarization between official and unofficial Islam. While official Islam stuck to the orthodoxy of the established law-schools, it was challenged by both purist trends, demanding a return to the original sources of Islam and by popular Islam including Sufi practices, saint and grave worship etc. Official Islam attempted to reconcile doctrine with the requirements of a process of state-induced economic and social modernization. The institutions of *jihad* and *dawat*, i.e. holy war and proselytization, were not emphasized while science, technology and reason were not seen to stand in the way of belief and God. However, it is less clear in what way purist trends were being articulated. It appears as if the need and desire to purify

38 This was mentioned by Maulana Muhammad Moosa from Faizalabad in Pakistan in a *fatwa*, i.e. a piece of legal advice. The question was about the '*shar'i* status' of the Taliban. By securing the allegiance of these *ulama*, Moosa argued, 'the *amir-ul mu'minin* is the *shar'i amir* (leader)' that is, his rule is in full conformity with the commandments of the *Quran*. See article 'What is the status of the Taliban?' at the Taliban website *http://www.taliban.com*.

39 In the history of Islam it is difficult to separate the title of *amir-ul mu'minin* from the claim to the highest status of both state and religious authority in the way it was associated with the Caliphs.

40 For recent German studies of the Tajik movement, cf. Johannes Reissner, *Bürgerkrieg in Tadschikistan: Ursachen, Akteure, Verlauf und Friedenschancen*. Ebenhausen: SWP, 1997; Reinhard Eisener, *Auf den Spuren des tadschikischen Nationalismus: aus Texten und Dokumenten zur Tadschikischen SSR*. (Ethnizität und Gesellschaft, Occasional Papers, 30) Berlin: Das Arab. Buch, 1991.

41 David Nalle, 'Interview with Qazi Akbar Turajonzoda,' *op. cit*.

42 David Nalle, 'Interview with Qazi Akbar Turajonzoda.' *op. cit*.

43 Alexander Bennigsen, S. Enders Wimbush, *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, London: C. Hurst & Company, 1985, p. 112.

44 Allen Hetmanek, 'The political face of Islam in Tajikistan: a review of Muriel Atkin's "The Subtlest Battle",' in *Central Asian Survey*, 1990, Vol. 9, No. 3, p. 99 ff.

Islam mainly surfaced after the demise of the Soviet Union. The 'Islamic identity' was up for grabs by the old/turned-new elites who hoped to support their claim to power with Islamic references and to fill the ideological gap after the demise of communism.[45] In their understanding, Islam was to be reduced to vague cultural practices, to a kind of regional cultural nationalism. This apparently in some Muslim intellectuals triggered concerns for the survival of Islam as a religious concept.

One article published under the title 'Are we Muslims?' by Sh. Abdullayev, in the youth newspaper, *Javononi Tojikiston* on June 27, 1990, became more widely known in the West and is believed to be something of a religious manifesto. Here the author seeks the purification of Tajik Islam through the elimination of various 'un-Islamic' beliefs and practices which are regarded as profane. These include excessive expenditure on various Muslim holidays and feasting connected with rites of passage as well as with *kalym* or bride price. Such perceived impurities also include the non-Islamic content of popular Islam, such as the belief in various spirits and 'saints,' often carried over from Central Asia's pre-Islamic religions. According to Abdullayev, these beliefs had existed in Central Asian Islam since the 13th century but assumed enormous proportions during the Soviet period as a result of the regime's suppression of orthodox Islam. Abdullayev touts the true justice and wisdom of Islam as contrasted with the 'false wisdom' of the 'West.' He also condemns nationalism which he maintains leads to violence and wars.[46]

That purist leanings also existed under Soviet rule can be gleaned from the demonstrations against the 'Satanic verses' by Salman Rushdie which took place in Tajikistan. The Tajiks had their own 'Salman Rushdie' - Fazliddin Muhammediev, who had his hand severed and was stabbed by Muslims for his book 'Journey to the Other Side.'[47]

45 Turkmen informants from the government bureaucracy explained the rational behind such thinking in the Central Asian states to the author in November 1997: It is not possible to rule over the country without ideology. Given the multiethnic structure, nationalism is divisive. Also to counter the threat of fundamentalism, as they call all theological Islam, "official Islam" can replace the communist ideology.'

46 Allen Hetmanek, 'Islamic Revolution and Jihad come to the Former Soviet Central Asia: the case of Tajikistan,' in *Central Asia Survey*, 1993, Vol. 12, No. 3, pp. 369-70: S. Olimova/M. Olimov, 'Obrazovannyi Klass Tadshikistana v Peripetiyakh XXv,' *Vostok*, 1991, No. 5, p. 100ff.

47 Allen Hetmanek, 'Islamic Revolution and Jihad Come to the Former Soviet Central Asia,' *op. cit.*, p. 366.

Tajik Islamists have been labeled by their local and Russian detractors as *wahhabis*, assuming they represent a variety of purist Islam developed by the Arab reformer 'Abd-al Wahhab (1703-92). Doctrine-wise this label is not correct as the Wahhabi tradition is known to reject all forms of popular Islam. Tajik Islamists insist that whatever emphasis on orthodoxy came up in their movement it developed inside Tajikistan independent of external influences and was merely sharpened through access to *wahhabi*-literature. The repeated reference to Wahhabism betrays a fear of radical and orthodox Islam as a potent political and cultural force.[48] At present, this fear largely seems to be a projection of the apprehensions of the Uzbek, Tajik and Russian political elite. As far as the Tajik Islamic Renaissance Party is concerned, there is little evidence to support such charges. It is rather a pragmatic and typically 'post-Soviet' attitude which seems to prevail in the Tajik party at present. This was confirmed during an interview with its representative in Peshawar, Pakistan.[49] He put the emphasis on a 'modern' Islam. He said that the IRP wanted to make use of the 'potential for progress' within Islam. According to him, they want to use Islam to further education and material progress, *e.g.* through computer technology, as well as for improved living conditions. The IRP emphasized basic values like peace and equality. He was careful to keep his distance from the violent trends in Islam in Pakistan, sectarianism and similar tendencies. He argued that religious prescriptions for dress and other occasions should be reduced to the essentials. He advocated tolerance for other religions and emphasized common points rather than differences. He made clear that religious knowledge, even within the IRP, is only slowly revived.

It remains to be seen to what extent the IRP can keep together the pragmatic approach, popular Sufi Islam, and the, albeit minority, orthodox view. Although a theological radicalization does not look imminent, it could accelerate due to the resistance of – mainly ex-Communist – regional elites in Tajikistan to power-

48 Olimova and Olimov in their 1991 article, although they appear to be critical of the Soviet political system and its attitude towards religion in general and Islam in particular, are caught in the categories of the Soviet discourse when they treat 'fundamentalists' and 'Wahhabites' as synonyms: 'The renaissance of Islam is accompanied by its split into different trends: official Islam, whose formal and informal leader is the Qazi-kolon of Tajikistan, Turajonzoda, and opposition Islam (fundamentalists, Wahhabites).' Olimova/Olimov, 'Obrazovannyi Klass Tadshikistana,' *op. ,cit.*, p. 99.

49 Interview by author with Sayyid Jalal Mirjan on November 20, 1997.

sharing with the IRP. Measures like the proposed ban by the Communist-dominated Tajik parliament in 1997-8 on parties 'with a religious character'[50] could clearly help a more orthodox approach to gain influence within the party.

Because of the low level of institutional formation of Islamic dissent among the Uighurs, a conceptualization of its religious doctrine can be attempted indirectly only by looking at Islamic practices and the character of Islamic dissent from the doctrinal point of view. And here too, one finds the ambivalence of Sufi influences and orthodox strivings characteristic of the Central Asian terrain.

For Islamic practice in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR), a mixed observance of normative Islamic rituals and local customs shaped by both Sufi and local traditions is typical, where substantial local variations are noticeable. This delicate balance is aptly described by Bellér-Hann. She studied local peasant communities in the Kashgar area in terms of agricultural policy as well as in terms of cultural norms observed.[51] While Sufism in the popular Islam of Central Asia has played a prominent role for long, the current revival of Islamic orthodoxy is of relatively recent origin and sparsely documented so far. The findings of both Rudelson and Bellér-Hann suggest that the revival of orthodoxy can be partially attributed to the institutional revival of Islam in the Xinjiang region since 1978 where the number of mosques and religious schools or madrasahs multiplied. It is particularly the *mullahs* who are seen as guardians of normative Islam.[52] As Bellér-Hann notes, there is a discernible collusion of the local *mullahs* and representatives of the state, particularly in the country-side as far as their opposition towards local rituals is concerned. She particularly mentions the remembrance festival for the dead, the *Barat*, on the 15th of the Islamic month of *sha'ban*, when a one to three night long vigil is held and people pray for their sins to be pardoned.[53] While the *mullahs* oppose this festival because they regard it as a 'de generation' of Islam, state authorities oppose it as backward and 'feudal.' Both state authorities and the *mullahs* are also seen colluding in the emphasis on morality in daily life where meritorious deeds and duties are constantly required and enforced, a clear reflection of the moralistic and authoritarian elements in the Communist and Confucian state ethics of China. Pressure comes, for instance, from both types of authority to limit expenses at *rites of passage*, a development similar to the Tajik situation.

Knowledge about current forms of organization of Sufi Islam is of recent origin, as Michael Dillon asserts.[54] The traditional brotherhoods, or *tariqa*, known in Xinjiang as *menhuan*, are reported to be an informal but still important factor. One must assume that they maintain contacts with orders in Central Asia and the Middle East. They were instrumental in preserving Islam through prolonged periods of repression. At present, they are known to carry out their rituals, in particular, the repetitive commemoration of the name of *Allah* known as *zikr*, or the recitation of some relevant Quranic verses, when they assemble at their local *khanqah* (convent or hospiz)[55] Most of the Sufi orders in Xinjiang are affiliated with the Naqshbandiyya.[56]

The relaxation of political control of the peasantry since the beginning of the reform era went along with increased state tolerance of religious observance and instruction. Going on the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, the *Haj*, is an important element in the revival of orthodoxy.[57] The state supported a growing number of

50 U.S. Department of State, Press Statement by James P. Rubin, Spokesman, on May 27, 1998 'Tajikistan: Concern About Political Party Law: Its Effect on the Peace Process,' at internet site *http://www.state.gov*.

51 Ildikó Bellér-Hann, 'The Peasant Condition in Xinjiang,' in *Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1, October 1997, pp. 87-112; '"Making the oil fragrant," dealings with the supernatural among the Uighur in Xinjiang,' draft-paper at the Research Colloquy of the Departments of Middle Asian Studies and of the History of South Asia at the Asia-Africa-Institute of Humboldt University in Berlin, Germany, on May 28, 1998.

52 J. J. Rudelson, *Bones in the sand, op. cit.*, p. 179 where he discussed how the power of mullahs in the Turpan oasis has grown since the opening. They 'have taken the opportunity to voice their fervent opposition to certain social practices of the Uighurs which have gained popularity in the villages,' such as the heavy drinking of young men at the groom's home before a wedding.

53 Bellér-Hann, 'The Peasant Condition in Xinjiang,' *op. cit.*, p. 106; '"Making the Oil Fragrant,"' *op. cit.*, pp. 7-11.

54 Michael Dillon, 'Muslim Communities in Contemporary China: The Resurgence of Islam after the Cultural Revolution,' in *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1994), pp. 70-101.

55 Confirmed by Dr. Bellér-Hann in an interview on June 29/30, 1998 who observed this during a recent research trip to the region.

56 Michael Dillon, 'Muslim Communities in Contemporary China,' *op. cit.*, p. 87.

57 According to official statistics, between 1979 and 1990 more than 20,000 mosques were reopened. This number must have almost doubled since then as now almost every *mohalla* (community quarter) has its own mosque. Dillon estimated that every year nearly 2,000 Uighurs go on the Haj. *Ibid*, p. 71. Gladney gives a figure of 6,000 per year in 1979, including those financed privately. Dru C. Gladney, 'Transnational Islam and Uighur national identity: Salman Rushdie, Sino-Muslim missile deals, and the Trans-Eurasian Railway,' in *Central Asian Survey*, 1992, Vol. 11, No. 3, p. 6.

pilgrims, but, more importantly perhaps, private support from Saudi Arabia and other sources for would-be pilgrims and Islamic studies abroad is now being tolerated by state authorities.[58]

Among the Uighurs, Islamic orthodoxy is today mainly seen as derivative of the discourse on Uighur autonomy or separatism. The conceptual thrust of Islamic dissent in Xinjiang could perhaps be summed up in the defense of the autonomy, integrity and validity of normative Islam in Uighur interpretation. In that sense, threats to the status of the Uighurs are also interpreted as threats to Islam. Therefore, in contrast with Tajikistan, functionaries of the Islamic hierarchy who had been cooperating with the state in an official capacity became targets of militant attacks as the 1996 killing of Aronghan Aji mentioned above demonstrates. The latter's cooperation with the Chinese state symbolized the dependent and subordinate status of Uighur Islam. It must be equally assumed that a drive for Islamic purity and concern for the survival of Islamic customs was at the heart of at least some of Uighur Muslim dissent, given the episode of May 12, 1989, when the Uighur student, Wu'er Kaixi, (Urkash Davlat) led a group of students in Beijing, declaring their fast in protest against the book *Sexual Customs (Xing Fengsu)* which the Muslims found as offensive as the 'Satanic Verses' of Rushdie. The protest involved up to 3,000 participants and was replicated in Urumchi a week later when some 4,000 people took part in a three hour protest. It is interesting to note that this particular incident was treated with a certain lenience by the Chinese Communist authorities, at the very time of the Tienanmen massacre where the same student was one of the opposition leaders and when dissent was dealt with ruthlessly.[59] Only selected Islamic activists were prosecuted. Yet, some of the Uighur activists remained in jail long afterwards, although their Hui companions had been released early on, giving rise to accusations of an unequal treatment of Hui and Uighur Muslims by the authorities.

58 In 1991, out of 34 students from China at the prestigious Al Azhar University in Cairo, only six were Hui, the rest were all Uighurs, with expenses covered by relatives and the Mecca-based Muslim World League. Dru C. Gladney, 'Transnational Islam and Uighur National Identity,' *op. cit.*, p. 12.

59 Dru C. Gladney, "Transnational Islam and Uighur National Identity," *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5; 'Sanqian Musilin Xuesheng Beijin Youxing Ti Yaoqiu Yancheng Xinfengsu Zuozhe' (3000 Beijing Muslim Students Protest, Request Severe Punishment of the Author of *Sexual Customs*), in *Huaqiao Ribao*, May 13, 1989, quoted in J. J. Rudelson, 'The Uighurs in the Future of Central Asia,' *op. cit.*, p. 23.

Irrespective of the fact that two of the movements are in power, i.e. the Taliban in Afghanistan and the IRP participating in the Tajik government, they have been unable to present a political concept of Islamic rule that would spell out the details of political control and administration with reference to Islam. Creating an Islamic state appears explicitly or implicitly on the agenda of all three campaigns. But the perspectives are far from uniform. The Taliban want to do it immediately, right now. They feel that they have a unique historic opportunity, almost 'god-sent', to implement long-held beliefs of Islamic orthodoxy on state and society. The *mullahs* and *ulama* supporting them feel they have the chance to take on broader responsibilities beyond their often limited role in life-cycle rituals, a chance not to be squandered by indifference or slackness. The Tajik Islamic leader Nuri started praying for an Islamic state well back in Soviet times. He felt that an Islamic state provides a solution to many current problems, even lobbied the 27th Communist Party Congress in 1986 for it.[60] Yet, the Tajik IRP has been careful not to make it appear as if it were an immediate task. They were thus trying to allay fears of their coalition partners and took into account the Soviet and Atheist background of society. Turajonzoda repeatedly emphasized that it would be a long-term perspective which would not be implemented against the wishes of the population. Democratic instruments would be used to ascertain the position of the majority on the introduction of the principles of Islamic law and government. Single Uighur activists raised the banner of an Islamic state in connection with the reported acts of violence, although the organized Uighur opposition is not known to favor an Islamic state.[61]

Yet, beyond and before the slogan on an Islamic state there are many stages, aspects and nuances of how to implement the goals of Islam in the political sphere, or, more generally speaking, in the public arena. If politics is about power and control, the Islamic

60 Allen Hetmanek, 'Islamic Revolution and Jihad Come to the Former Soviet Central Asia,' *op. cit.*, p. 370.

61 Muslim protest in southern Xinjiang in April 1990 is reported to have culminated in calls for *jihad* and the establishment of an East Turkestan state. It was started by Kyrgyz men at a mosque at Baren township in Akto county and developed into a mass protest. Interference by *mujahidin* in Afghanistan and Uighur exiles in Turkey was alleged. Michael Dillon, *Xinjiang: Ethnicity, Separatism and Control in Chinese Central Asia.* (Durham East Asian Papers, 1) Durham: Department of East Asian Studies, University of Durham., 1995, p. 21.

movements face issues of how to achieve political hegemony within their nation-states. This mainly involves solving the question of how to deal with 'the other', those who do not count among their adherents, political adversaries, or opponents, competitors for power from a different ethnic, linguistic or cultural background. Although they may have differences on the immediate practicality of the concept of an Islamic state, they have to solve similar tasks on the road to control and power.

Among the similarities of the movements under study is a marked assertiveness on their part which is grounded in nationalist or ethnic connotations. They derive their strength and much of their mission from being the representative not only of a particular religious community but a certain people. They are proto-nation-builders. Within the multiethnic communities they inhabit they choose to advance the cause of the dominant Muslim ethnic group. This course of differentiation and identity-building ranges from opposition to and suppression of minorities, to preferential treatment of the majority community, to emphasizing distinction and separation of their identity. The Taliban have frequently denied that they favor Pakhtun interests. Yet, numerous clashes with other ethnic, or ethnoreligious groups, like the Shiite Hazaras, the Uzbeks and the Persian speaking Tajiks from northern Afghanistan, have reinforced the belief that Pakhtun sentiments form a significant part of the Taliban.

Also the IRP in Tajikistan has repeatedly given prominence to ethnic Tajik causes.[62] This would or could create problems for the minorities living in Tajikistan. The Uzbeks in particular have voiced concern over the introduction of an official language as it is feared that it would disadvantage them in the search for employment in the public sector.

Uighur activists view Islamic assertiveness as a means to protect the Uighur people from getting 'dissolved' in the hugely dominant Chinese Han community. They equally stress their distinction from other major Muslim communities in China, and notably the Hui.

62 Turajonzoda emphasized in the interview the 'natural historical process of merging the Tajik people into a single nation and the emergence of Tajikistan as a unified state'. David Nalle, 'Interview with Qazi Akbar Turajonzoda,' *op. cit.*

Table 1:
Ethnic composition of Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Xinjian

		population number (mill)	percent
Afghanistan		23.7 (1997)	100
	Pakhtun		38
	Tajik		25
	Hazara		19
	Uzbek		6
Tajikistan		5.9 (1997)	100
	Tajik		64.9
	Uzbek		25
	Russian		3.5
Xinjiang		15.3 (1991)	100
	Uighur		47.2
	Han Chinese		37.8
	Kazakh		7.5
	Hui		4.6
	Kyrgyz		0.9
	Mongol		0.9
	Xibe, Russian, Uzbek, Taik, Tatar *et al*		1.1

Sources: CIA World Factbook 1997, http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/; Thomas Hoppe, *Die ethnischen Gruppen Xinjiangs*, Hamburg: Institut für Asienkunde, 1998, p. 35.

Such nationalist ambition forced on the Islamic movements the need to deal with the challenges of the ethnic and religious heterogeneity of their societies; a difficult task for the religious activists. The Taliban are facing several non-Pakhtun peoples who make up more than 50 percent of Afghanistan (see Table 1). The IRP has to reach an equation with the Uzbek and Russian minorities, and the Uighur share the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region with other Muslim minorities, particularly Kazakhs and Kyrghyz, and also with Han Chinese.

In dealing with the challenges of multiethnicity they achieved success only to a limited extent. The Taliban perceive themselves as basically Pakhtun. All attempts to placate ethnic differences in the name of an Islamic code of government basically failed. The failure is due not only to the reluctance of the non-Pakhtun groups to

obey the particular brand of the Islamic law, the *Shari'a*, promoted by the Taliban but also the commanders of the Taliban themselves often deviated from the supposedly unitary platform of Islam as interpreted by them. Whenever the Taliban felt a threat from a particular group or community, they did not hesitate to act against it, by arresting for instance, Hazaras in their hundreds, regardless of the common bonds of Islam.[63]

In Tajikistan, the Uzbek minority felt suspicious of demands to give priority status to the Tajik language regarding them as attempts to accord them second-class status. The Russian minority felt uneasy about the emphasis on religion and Islam, although some of the IRP's general political objectives were shared by many Russians, like demands for a better administration, for the extension of economic and democratic reforms, started under the *perestroika* in Russia, to Tajikistan.

Antagonism between Uighurs and other Muslim opposition forces in Xinjiang is less prominent, partly because of major differences among Uighur opposition groups themselves, and partly because of the articulation of political dissent in China, in Xinjiang in particular. That the Uighurs have difficulties also in coming to terms with multiethnic reality in Xinjiang is evident from their relationship with Han Chinese in their province. Rudelson describes the private climate often as distanced, partly caused by a considerable communication gap created by the relatively poor knowledge of Chinese among Uighurs, even intellectuals, and the rather low level of mastering the Uighur language by Han Chinese bureaucrats. A peculiar situation has evolved for assimilated younger Uighurs in urban centers who grew up speaking mainly Han Chinese. They are ironically called the '14th national minority of Xinjiang' and often meet with derision and contempt on the part of Uighurs.[64]

All three movements felt that on the way to political hegemony they must hold out the perspective of a substantial improvement in living conditions for the broad masses which would, hopefully attract the 'common man' to the causes of their movements. The albeit distant perspective of a better life was to be achieved through

63 This was so when they marched on to Kabul in 1995 and when they executed their ill-fated attack on Mazar-e-Sharif in May 1997 and again, when they at last took the city in 1998 in the course of which beside several hundred Hazaras also 10 Iranian diplomats were killed by supposedly 'renegade troops,' creating a major controversy between the Taliban authorities and Iran.

64 J. J. Rudelson, *Bones in the Sand, op. cit.*, pp. 147-8.

a radical transformation of their societies. The existing order was considered inept to facilitate that change. They, therefore not only fought for the respect of their religion and emancipation of their ethnic or national identity, but for a measure of substantial political, structural reform, no matter how differently these were perceived and articulated. The Taliban started out with the intention to put an end to the internecine warfare of various corrupt warlords. They wanted to elevate the interests and status of the common Pakhtun, basically the villager and the nomad.[65] The Tajik IRP originally wanted, as mentioned already, that the economic and political reform process started in Russia should also extend to Tajikistan which in their opinion required the termination of the autocratic clan-like rule of the former communist administration.[66] The Uighur opposition, broadly speaking, desired at least to re-negotiate the deal Xinjiang province was receiving from the central authorities in China, aiming at a larger measure of autonomy, greater share in local resources, investment, and decision-making.[67]

Yet, in their quest for *de facto* societal and systemic change, they encountered fundamental difficulties in reconciling their ideological mission with political realities where they succeeded only to a very limited extent. The Taliban put an end to tribal warfare on a large part of the territory under their control which no doubt many Afghans still find reason enough to continue limited support to or

65 The Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar confirmed this in one of his rare interviews with the west describing his divine mission 'to rid Afghanistan of its bandit warlords and restore a truly Islamic government.' Tim McGirk, 'Mullah with a Mission,' in *Time*, March 31, 1997, Vol. 149, No. 13.

66 In its major 1992 documents the IRP identified the following goals and aims:
– A spiritual revival of the citizens of the republic;
– An independent economic and political system;
– A complete political and legal awakening with the aim of applying to the everyday life of Muslims of the republic the principles of Islam; and
The spread and advertising of Islamic thought among different nationalities of the republic.' Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh. 'The "Tajik Spring of 1992",' *op. cit.*, p. 25.

67 Repeatedly criticism has been voiced on the 'exploitation of Xinjiang's vast natural resources. Neither these resources nor the post-1979 reforms, critics argue, have benefited the Turkic population in Xinjiang much since many still live scarcely above subsistence. The Xinjiang Daily newspaper and Urumchi radio in 1988 publicly acknowledged such discord. Moves like the substantial expansion of cross-border trade in 1992 when several new border posts were opened, and the foundation of especial Investment corporations for minority regions were widely seen to respond to this criticism. Michael Dillon: *Xinjiang: Ethnicity, Separatism and Control in Chinese Central Asia, op. cit.*, pp. 14-16, 25-26.

toleration of the Taliban. But they achieved this not by implementing their ideological goals in accordance with their proclaimed mission but through compromise and corruption. Local leaders were reportedly bought off from opposition to the Taliban through large amounts of money, or they were given special posts or charges. This undermined the stability and cohesion of the Taliban themselves. They failed to persuade many of their opponents to adopt their point of view. Hegemony is achieved only to a small degree through conviction or shared goals, and much more through coercion and the threat of violence and retribution. The main disadvantage of this approach is that such enforced hegemony may be difficult to sustain.

The IRP succeeded in forcing on the Tajik regime a power-sharing agreement which again is the result mainly of the recognition of sheer force. The Islamic opposition has not affected any significant acceleration of economic and democratic change in Tajikistan.

As far as the objective of a greater measure of autonomy for Xinjiang Uighurs and greater participation in the social and economic life of China was concerned, the pressure of Uighur opposition was successful only to the extent that it prompted the central Chinese authorities to accelerate certain economic reforms in Xinjiang province in order to actively diffuse potential sources of discontent. The promises and first results of a new prosperity for Xinjiang, it was hoped, would keep common citizens from supporting political Uighur dissent. While this became partly true for the urban centers, and that too in different measure, it had the opposite effect in the countryside, as discussed above, where it strengthened religious identity structures.

What is the reason for the varying degree of success of these movements in achieving political hegemony? It is argued here that the virulence and explosiveness of these movements is largely rooted in their protonationalist character, not in their religious and Islamic character. They aspire to be nation-builders in a radical sense. For this to be successful, the political and social agenda has to be very clear. It is not only the distinctive histories and traditions of these movements which stand in the way of much more substantial progress. These movements were successful when they succeeded in converting the need for change and reform into concrete social and political programs and action. They were successful where they showed sufficient flexibility and compromise. Where they withdrew to the limited identity of their group they ran into trouble. This is their general dilemma. They were caught between representing a particular group, a certain religious community and the need to take over far broader tasks of articulating aims of nation building. Partly, this dilemma flows from the state of affairs in the Central Asian region.

The Central Asian connection

The turmoil faced by the home territories of these Islamic movements has been a reflection of conditions in the whole region. Central Asia re-emerged after the cold war as a result of a complex and painful process of transition (not unlike Central Europe between Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech republic, and Austria, although on a different level). The countries and peoples of the region had been aligned according to loyalties within an overarching political and ideological system, culminating in the global confrontation of the *cold war*. Removing this locus of identity opened the gates for alignments of a different kind, based on geographic, cultural, linguistic and religious realities.

But unlike Central Europe which was rather quickly incorporated into a pan-European, Western network of economic and political ties, Central Asia had to find its identity largely because of the absence of such a supporting network. There were bits and pieces, suddenly hanging somewhat loose. With economic reforms progressing in Russia, enthusiasm to take the CARs back into the common fold suspiciously diminished. Advances of Tajikistan to rejoin the Rouble zone fell on deaf ears, lest Tajikistan lived on the dole of Russia, it was feared. The Americans basically had political and geostrategic interests but very few resources to share. The Chinese had to look first to the consolidation of their own border area, before contributing to the consolidation of the region as a whole, although this is what they increasingly decided to do.

In addition, the emergence of Central Asia has taken the form of a reconstruction, or rather re-definition, of its nation-states, rewriting their histories, redrawing political and cultural hierarchies.

This combination of local and regional insecurity could explain to a large extent the proliferation of crisis and tension, the lack of progress in terms of political and economic consolidation. It is also against this background that political recourse to Islam served as the proverbial last straw to stay afloat, to find a starting point for consolidating both the regional framework and the local agenda, irrespective of what Islam actually meant to the actors involved.

For the three movements under study, the regional nexus to Central Asia assumes wide significance in terms of their own group consolidation and outside solidarity. The re-emergence of Central Asia to all three of them is a major life line without which it would have been difficult for them to pursue their agenda. Pan-Islamic and pan-ethnic solidarity constitute the framework for closer cooperation.

The Taliban have declared several times that they do not want to meddle in the affairs of other countries of the region, and particularly their neighbors. Yet, presenting themselves as representatives of a purist Islam, their movement has strong missionary aspects. Scornful remarks on Shia Islam against internal opponents by implication extend to neighboring Iran. The Uzbek and Tajik groups controlling the north of Afghanistan do not in their opinion qualify as good Muslims, nor do the newly independent post-Soviet states of their kin in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.[68] Mullah Omar's personal participation in the annual congregation of the *Tablighi Jamaat* at Raewind near Lahore, the hugely influential and popular orthodox Islamic missionary society in Pakistan, underlines this missionary inclination. The Taliban certainly share the causes of orthodox and more outspoken Islamists in Pakistan, such as Kashmir, Uighur resistance to the Chinese and Islamization of Tajikistan. For tactical reasons they are trying to keep a low profile towards their neighbors, but relations with Iran repeatedly turn terse and even hostile. Without politico-military, as well as religious support from Pakistan, the Taliban could hardly operate the way they do. The Pakhtun and the Islamic infrastructure in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan which many consider an integral part of Central Asia, is the lifeline for the Taliban.

The Tajik IRP took refuge on Afghan territory, although within the domain of the northern alliance. Although the alliance is at war with the Taliban, some of their groups also follow an Islamist agenda such as Shah Masood and Gulbadin Hekmatyar, whose groups were instrumental in allowing the Tajiks to set up their camps in northern Afghanistan. Although relations between the IRP and the Taliban remained distant, pragmatic recognition of realities drove them to engage with each other, mainly on Pakistan's territory.

Uighur Islamists maintain apparently few contacts with the IRP and the Taliban. Their ethnonational concerns constrain them to cooperation with areas which have a sizable Uighur minority, that is in Kazakhstan and Kyrghyzstan, or in Pakistan where they receive direct support from the Islamic opposition and from Saudi Arabia.

The Pakistan Nexus

The reason why Pakistan assumes special significance for Islamic movements in the Central Asian region is to do with several factors, historical, cultural and current political. Pakistan, and to a large extent also India, share the legacy of close bonds between Muslim India and Central Asia during the times of the Delhi sultanates and the Moghul empires in India. Most of Pakistan's Muslims are Sunnites of the Hanafi law school. Many religious texts taught in both India and Pakistan at religious institutions have a Central Asian background. And *vice versa,* Islam in Central Asia had often been influenced by developments in pre-independence India. Similarly, Sufi traditions are very strong in South Asia and have deep-rooted connections with Central Asia. The Naqshbandiyya and the Chichtiyya orders, which are fairly widespread in Central Asia, are also influential in South Asia. Within the framework of religious tradition, Iran with its Shiite background could hardly play the same role for Islamic movements in Central Asia as forces in Pakistan and India could.

Perhaps ironically, it is also due to the implementation of democratic rights like freedom of association in Pakistan that Islamic forces of different persuasions could develop a widespread and resilient network of independent and often private institutions, irrespective of the changing mood of governments and of the electorate. Freedom of association is severely limited in the home countries of the movements under review, but also in Iran and Turkey which are potential alternatives for cross-border regional cooperation of Islamic forces. In Pakistan, the multitude of Islamic groups represent different doctrinal shades as well as political opinions. Varying programs can be found ranging from terrorism, militancy and committed democracy to passive and contemplative

68 Although, to some degree, Turkmenistan is an exception here, as it took care not to alienate the Taliban in order to get its pipeline deal through. There have been several diplomatic contacts between the two sides and Turkmenistan did not participate in "Taliban-bashing" at certain post-Soviet summit meetings. Cf. also the recent Turkmen mediation efforts between the Taliban and the Afghan opposition.

religiosity. Therefore, different Islamic forces can find partners for cooperation here. Most of them have a well developed infrastructure: administrative, financial, organizational, political, military, and doctrinal experience, several of which are lacking in their Central Asian counterparts.

Another factor favoring pan-Islamic activities in Pakistan is the internal crisis of the political system in Pakistan which is spreading irrespective of the well-defined and elaborate democratic institutions in the country. The political crisis makes itself felt in the receding reputation of these political institutions and in their decreasing level of legitimacy. Political parties, parliament and government are no longer seen to solve even the most basic tasks of economic development and nation-building, a judgment passed by an ever increasing share of the population. Although this may be partly a distorted perception of the potential of the Pakistani nation-state, it helps to increasingly promote Islamic groups and institutions as some kind of counter-culture or sociocultural alternative. At the same time, traditional Islamic parties in Pakistan are not trusted with political power by the electorate, as their combined electoral support does not extend beyond ten to fifteen percent of the votes.

The *Jamaat-e-Islami* is the long established and most prominent party of political Islam in Pakistan. Based on the teachings of its Maulana Maudoodi who founded it in 1941 it is structured as a cadre-based party and is characterized by a relentless modernizing drive in the name of Islam. It is known to have been deeply rooted in the civil and military bureaucracy, notably also in the intelligence services, and also in the technical *intelligentsia*. It tried several times to become a political mainstream party but was not prepared to make the compromises necessary to capture an electoral mass base. At the same time it is capable of mobilizing huge masses on occasions of protest against the government of the day. It has repeatedly vowed to abide by the rules of democratic politics and so far it has kept these promises. It is perhaps one of the few parties where party elections are regularly held, which is at least not the case in the two major parties of Pakistan, the Muslim League and the People's Party.

A number of openly militant Islamic organizations like the *Harkat-ul Ansar* and the *Dawah-ul Irshad* stand somewhat apart.[69] They publicly declare their intention to enforce an Islamic order by military means. Be it fighting in Afghanistan or Kashmir, or against the "corrupt secular state" in Pakistan, they see these tasks as different sections of the same battle line. Inside Pakistan they argue increasingly energetically for a forcible introduction of a theological state. Their public mobilization is directed against democracy as a western value, western cultural degeneration and reformist sect of the *Ahmadiyya* which they regard as standing outside of Islam. This militancy is shared by a rapidly growing number of diverse local Islamic groups in Karachi, Peshawar, Baluchistan, claiming to be the Pakistani Taliban. They start policing the neighborhoods and try to enforce the closure of video shops and cinemas, a ban on satellite TV and modest Islamic clothing for women in the style of *pardah* and *burqah*.[70]

Among the so-called *Ulama*-parties of Islamic clerics two stand out, the *Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Islam* (JUI) of the Deobandi tradition, and the *Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Pakistan* (JUP) of the Barelwi ilk. Their support is conservative, often rural based, with regional variations, where the JUP rely on support mainly from Sindh and parts of Punjab and the JUI mostly from the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan.

The Missionary Society of the *Tablighi Jamaat* demonstrably stands for contemplative Islam with no involvement in politics. Yet, their mass congregations and missionary activities are, if nothing else, politically highly relevant since they have a huge mobilizing effect which other groups and parties increasingly try to copy or exploit. Members of militant groups or established parties like the *Jamaat-e-Islami* are known to regularly participate in their activities, taking time-out from politics or militancy to recharge their ideological batteries.

The pan-Islamic vision and program of these groups for Central Asia varies, although most activists agree that they should support all Muslim causes globally, and more so at their regional borders, in particular in exchange for support for what they regard their pet cause, the Pakistani position on Kashmir.

The *Jamaat-e-Islami* contributes considerably towards the translation of Islamic literature into the languages of Central Asia to

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69 For the *Dawah-ul Irshad* see report on their annual 1998 Lahore congregation 'Lashkar not terrorists, will teach U.S. a lesson,' *News*, November 7, 1998.

70 Taliban Groups in Pakistan want Islamic System: BBC,' *NNI*, April 23, 1999. This was also confirmed to the author by several Peshawar contacts in 1998 and 1999.

facilitate a religious regeneration. The JUI is mainly engaged in helping their affiliated institutions among the Taliban. The *Tablighi Jamaat* sends missions to post-Soviet Central Asia and also to China. The Saudis and the *Jamaat-e-Islami* are heavily engaged in promoting training facilities in Pakistan and Afghanistan for foreign Islamic activists.

All three Islamic movements from Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Xinjiang rely on support from various forces in Pakistan. Young members from all three movements are enrolled as students in *madrasahs* for training in formal Islamic religious studies. With some *madrasahs,* the border line between religious instruction and militant involvement has blurred since the Afghan war. During those years many *madrasahs* were specially founded in the border belt between Pakistan and Afghanistan to groom new members for the resistance against the pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan. Many of them instructed their students also in the handling of weapons, from the most basic like the K-12 machine gun (the *Kalashnikov*) to the more sophisticated like heat seeking anti-helicopter stinger missiles. In addition, Saudi Arabia has opened or financed a number of institutions catering to their understanding of a Wahhabite Islam combined with a certain zest for missionary activities. International Islamic causes ranging from Palestine to Bosnia to Kashmir to Chechnya to Cyprus were helped by incorporating their representatives in these institutions. The more prominent one is the International Islamic University in Islamabad. A Saudi-financed *madrasah* seems to exist in Peshawar where several Tajiks, but also Uighurs and Chechens, are receiving religious instruction. The Saudis do not openly identify with armed militancy. This is rather an area where they are partly forced to fight a rear-guard battle facing an armed Islamist opposition themselves. At the same time, they continue their missionary activities, mainly for power reasons, partly for competition with Iran, and partly to placate the Saudi Islamist opposition.

With the Taliban, Pakistan's relationship is apparently of a complex nature. One can distinguish at least two levels of support or influence. One is dedicated to close cooperation on military and security issues coordinated by Pakistan's military establishment and its inter-services intelligence agency, the noted ISI. According to interviews with Pakistani bureaucrats in Islamabad and Peshawar in 1998 and 1997, a view seems to prevail, that given the negative repercussions of the Afghan conflict on Pakistan's medium and long-term interests, it has to contribute to putting an end to the fighting in Afghanistan, and if that requires all-out logistical support to the Taliban forces, so be it.[71] This 'official' channel however only partly taps into the decision-making process of the Taliban. There are other contacts and influences going into the formation of the Taliban as an Islamic movement. The Taliban leaders enjoy regular and in-depth communication with Islamic parties in Pakistan, but also with selected *madrasahs* and divines on matters of policy-making perhaps more extensive than through government channels. If Pakistan's officialdom supported the Taliban it had not been able to control them. Otherwise the picture of Taliban policies would have been much more coherent and the Afghan problem had been solved differently. Pakistan's influence did not seem to go beyond intervention capability. Even if that is substantial – as documented through the military victories in Afghanistan, it is limited.[72] As far as the internal administration of Afghanistan was concerned, particularly on issue of culture, women's rights, public order, relations with religious and ethnic minorities, the Taliban apparently acted outside any brief, according to their own understanding and compulsions of what they regarded the requirements of an Islamic order or Islamic society. On these occasions they resisted pressure both international and local, as well as threats of negative consequences. They stuck to their agenda. They have repeatedly proven to be a sociocultural and political force in their own right, no matter how stable they are or how likely they appear to disintegrate after capturing over – all control of Afghanistan.

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71 First of all, one should mention here that the 2 billion dollar project to build a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan and possibly India for which two consortia compete, was led by the U.S. company Unocal and the Argentinean Bridas. The Taliban expected to receive substantial annuities although the project has been suspended temporarily by foreign investors due to the unsettled conditions in Afghanistan. Cf. 'Turk-Afghan-Pak gas pipeline project stands suspended.' Iranian News Agency IRNA, November 9, 1998. The cruise missile attacks by the U.S. at Afghan camps of ex-Saudi Islamic activist Osama bin Laden on August 20, 1998, and the ensuing public confidence crisis for Pakistan's government over questions of collaboration with the U.S. was another strong reminder of the need for Pakistan to get the conflict solved quickly.

72 This assessment was shared, for instance, by Syed Talat Hussain, in *Dawn,* April 3, 1998 ('Afghanistan Spells Trouble For Pakistan'), who spoke of the 'increasingly diminishing clout' Pakistan held over the Taliban. He quoted senior officials from the Pakistani establishment seeing 'a certain mistrust emerging' between Islamabad and the Taliban, fearing that the Taliban could easily switch their loyalties provided they received monetary incentives from alternative sources.

Major points of reference for the leading Taliban in religious terms are three Karachi seminars, *i.e.* the *Jamiat-e Ulum al-Islamia*, in the Binnoori Township of Karachi, the *Darul Uloom* in the Korangi Township, and the *Jamia Faruqia,* in the Shah Faisal Colony. The largest of them is the *Binnoori madrasah,* founded by Muhammad Yusuf Binnoori, who was a famous scholar of *hadith*, the sayings of the prophet. Its former President, Dr. Habibullah Mukhtar, was known for his close connections with the Taliban. At least three members of Mullah Omar's six-member council have studied at the Binoori Town *madrasah*. According to Prof. Shaheed Numani, Director of the Islamic Center at Karachi University, Mukhtar was among several Karachi divines regarded by leading Taliban figures as their mentors.[73] Mukhtar was killed in Karachi on November 2, 1997 in a terrorist attack. He was apparently targeted for his very connection with the Taliban, where supposedly the attack was also conceived as a reprisal for the killing of Iranian air cadets by terrorists in Rawalpindi several weeks earlier.[74] In connection with the civil war in Afghanistan, an increasing polarization between two Islamic camps evolved where Pakistan was caught in the middle. On one side, the Taliban, the orthodox Sunni Islamic parties and groups from Pakistan like the *JUI* (Fazlur Rehman group), the missionary society of the *Tablighi Jamaat,* the Sunni extremist group *Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP),* on the other side, the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan with its Shia, Tajik and Uzbek components, the Shia extremist group in *Pakistan Tehrik Jaferia Pakistan (TJP),* and Iran.[75]

Another reference institution for the Taliban is the headquarters of the JUI (Fazlur Rehman group) in Akora, near Peshawar in the North-West Frontier Province. Apparently, more secular matters, particularly government and war affairs, are coordinated from here.

Taliban leaders are known to consult recognized *shaikhs* in Pakistan on matters of religious policy where it is less important to what order they belong than to what extent their line of succession from a true Sufi is established and verified.[76]

For the Tajik IRP it should be noted that its office in Peshawar seemed to play an important role in its regional networking efforts. Not only did the Peshawar office receive party members for courses of religious training at a local Saudi-financed *madrasah,* it also regularly received highly-placed visitors from IRP party headquarters in Tajikistan, and earlier, from its exile headquarters in Afghanistan. IRP chairman Himmatzoda visited the office and discussed plans for the peace process and the IRP participation in the Tajik government. Turajonzoda spoke of 'more than one thousand of our students are being educated in universities of Pakistan.[77] The young Tajiks who have been undergoing a five-year course in Islamics at the Peshawar *madrasah* were trained to be future functionaries of the party, well-versed in the knowledge of the basics of Islam which until now is often lacking. But the Tajik students there also cherished their exposure to a relatively modern, pro-western environment, taking extra lessons in English and computer science known to enhance their job market perspectives once they return to Tajikistan.[78]

Uighur exiles, pretending to Chinese authorities to go on the pilgrimage to Mecca, the *Hajj,* were known to stop by in Pakistan where they would eventually stay on for religious instruction and militant training. For some time Uighur *hajjs* and students had occupied a separate compound near Peshawar University with a mosque of their own, from where they were removed after strong protests by the Chinese Ambassador, although officially their presence was fiercely denied by the Pakistan authorities.[79] Some

73 Interview with Prof. Numani on October 31, 1997 in Karachi.

74 Kamal Siddiqi, 'Will Karachi Killings Strain Pak-Taliban Ties?' in *News,* Karachi, November 4, 1997. Siddiqi had interviewed the 2 victims of the attack, Dr. Habibullah Mukhtar and Mufti Abdul Sami in June 1997 when Mukhtar told him that he and his colleagues were 'treated as state guests' whenever they went to Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. Sami added that 'the Taliban leadership looked towards them for guidance. "We are like their father-figures," he said.'

75 Cf. the statement of the chief Patron of the SSP, Ali Sher Haideri who instantly accused the TJP of involvement in the killings, *Nation,* November 3, 1997.

76 The following are mentioned who are regularly consulted on the religious propriety of Taliban policies: Mufti Rashid Ahmad from the small *Madrasah Rashidiyya* of the Nazimabad area, Karachi, and Hakim Akhtar, who is not a religious scholar, but a *shaikh* in the Deobandi tradition in a line of succession from the venerated Ashraf Ali Thanwi. Interew by the author with Prof. Numani, *op. cit.*

77 David Nalle, 'Interview with Qazi Akbar Turajonzoda,' *op. cit.* Turajonzoda made this remark when being asked about the revival of Islamic education in view of the closure of many institutions in Tajikistan during Soviet times, and he continues: '900 orphans are being educated in orphanages which have an Islamic orientation. We have some dozens of students in the universities of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Iran. And, what is most interesting, in Kazakhstan and Russia we have many clandestine *madrasahs* in each of which thirty to fifty students are being educated.'

78 See interview with Sayyid Jalal Mirjan, *op. cit.*

79 Based on accounts of Uighur contacts in Peshawar during two research trips there in October and November 1997.

enrolled as students at the International Islamic University in Islamabad; others attended courses at the Saudi-financed *madrasah* there. They were also reported to shuttle to Islamic camps across the border inside Afghanistan where they allegedly were instructed in handling explosives and bomb-making. Communication between Xinjiang and Pakistan has generally become more regular during recent years as a growing number of traders from Pakistan goes to Xinjiang for business via the Karakorum highway.

Yet, all this activity should not lead to hasty conclusions. This hardly represents a concerted effort or organized agenda of "Islamic infiltration." These are rather parallel and often conflicting activities which reflect group interests and often work at cross purposes. They may have been instrumental in a certain number of cases of Islamic militancy in Xinjiang but they could not provide what was and still is absent from the Xinjiang political and cultural scene; a united or combined Islamic party. They may provide Tajik Islamic party members with religious education which so far has been lacking there, but they could not substitute the rather moderate and secular, fairly étatist type of political Islam with a more ideologized and radical variant. And they may have provided leading members of the Taliban with religious education. But they cannot keep them from committing blunders and mistakes, undermining the public prestige of Islam in Afghanistan which is close to the heart of their mentors in Pakistan.

In other words, the background and resources of Pakistan may provide chances for communication and training/education, but they cannot predetermine the way these are used by Islamic activists. The conditions in Pakistan will remain important, perhaps increasingly so, for Islamic forces in Central Asia, but conditions and requirements in their countries of origin will have the final say on their formation and on their success or failure.

Conclusion

In summary, the movements may appear too disparate to merit any common conclusion. They are deeply divided by local political culture and social tradition. However, local differences did not preclude claims to Islamic universalism. Their representatives regularly meet "in exile" on the territory of Pakistan or in other places. Driven by a joint belief in the necessity of an Islamic revolution, they may well differ on what that actually means, but they continue seeking some common ground to exchange experience, garner outside assistance or train adherents and functionaries. The movements, therefore, stand for both, the local potency of Islam and its claim to a universal role in Central Asia. This polarization between the local and the universal is not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary and situational.

This complex intertwining of local and regional instability forced the region's Islamic movements to develop and maintain a regional outlook. They have realized their own peril that they cannot successfully consolidate as religious groups without taking on urgent tasks of nation building and without taking a share in regional responsibilities for the whole of Central Asia.

The Taliban discovered that local actors in Afghanistan opposed to them rely on cross border support from the region. The Tajik opposition would not have been so successful, had it not at one stage been possible to take refuge in northern Afghanistan and the Uighur opposition continues to exist as such only due to its, albeit limited, support in Kazakhstan and Kyrghyzstan. This should alert them to the need to look beyond their immediate group interests to the needs of the region. This might further their understanding that they must forcefully pursue a constructive agenda of political and economic stability both in their own countries and in the wider region because their fate and survival as a group depends on it.