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# HIZB UT-TAHRIR

## Islam's Political Insurgency

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*Zeyno Baran*

The Nixon Center  
December 2004

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“Hizb ut-Tahrir: Islam’s Political Insurgency”

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# INTRODUCTORY NOTE

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This Nixon Center monograph, *Hizb ut-Tahrir: Islam's Political Insurgency*, breaks new ground in exploring the danger posed by the spread of radical Islamist ideology. The focus of this monograph is Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islamiyya (The Islamic Party of Liberation), which has successfully sown the seeds of an ideology encouraging a clash of civilizations in over forty countries. HT takes advantage of the open societies of the West to spread its strongly anti-American and anti-Semitic ideology. HT thereby provides terrorist networks such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan with ideological cover.

The findings and recommendations of this monograph are crucially important to ensuring long-term U.S. security. Zeyno Baran, Nixon Center Director for International Security and Energy Programs, has termed HT a “conveyor belt” for radicalism and terrorism, and suggests that “the tolerance of intolerance is no longer acceptable if we are to win the battle of ideas.” Her focus on this battle of ideas as the essential part of the War on Terror makes an important contribution to the ongoing debate on how best to secure America’s future position. Her recommendations are both visionary and realistic if we are to succeed in what she calls “our generation’s existential struggle.”

Forthcoming Nixon Center monographs include one by David M. Lampton and Travis Tanner of the Chinese Studies Program. The monograph will appear this spring and will examine the impact that Taiwan's March 2004 presidential elections and December 2004 Legislative Yuan elections will have on cross-Strait relations.

Dimitri K. Simes  
President  
The Nixon Center

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This monograph is based on personal interviews with Western and Central Asian government officials, political scientists, policy analysts, theologians, historians, sociologists and representatives of non-governmental organizations as well as with Hizb ut-Tahrir members. It also incorporates the findings of a number of Nixon Center workshops held on the subject of Hizb ut-Tahrir since 2003. The papers presented at the Nixon Center workshop entitled, “The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir: Deciphering and Combating Radical Islamist Ideology” in Turkey in February 2004 were published as a conference report, which is available in print and online at [www.nixoncenter.org](http://www.nixoncenter.org).

It would not have been possible to complete this project without the assistance of a number of people who are committed to winning the war of ideas—our generation’s existential struggle. First, Matthew Bryza and Hedieh Mirahmadi have given me tremendous intellectual and personal support. Evgueni Novikov helped me to coordinate my research in Central Asia. At the Nixon Center, my colleague Fritz Ermarth has given me valuable insights. Program assistant Jarod Krissman and associate Emmet Tuohy have also contributed greatly through their research, writing and editing. Program interns Ben Schwarz and Katherine Winkler helped with research. Liz Coleman contributed to the monograph during summer 2004. Tom Rickers edited and formatted the monograph.

My purpose in writing this monograph is to shine light on a group that is acting as the intellectual vanguard of the radical Islamist movement. I believe, as children of Abraham, Muslims, Christians and Jews, all need to move towards building a global civilization based on shared values of freedom, justice and human dignity.

Zeyno Baran  
Washington, DC  
December 2004

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The United States began its War on Terror immediately following the 9/11 attacks. Yet, more than three years later, it still has not sufficiently grasped the enemy's nature and ultimate goals, and thus has not developed effective strategies to combat it. So far, the main tools used against the terrorists have been the military, the intelligence agencies and the nation's law enforcement personnel, which have carried out a range of operations from the invasion of Afghanistan to the reduction in financial flows to terrorist organizations. Though such methods will reduce the ability of the terrorists to hit the U.S. and its allies again, they do not address the existential problem of the spread of an ideology that is fundamentally in contrast to the democratic capitalist system and the Western conception of freedom. This ideology exploits certain Islamic teachings to unite the global Muslim community, or *umma*, to bring down the existing world order.

While our attention over the last three years has focused on well-known terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda, Hizballah, Hamas and Jamaat al-Islamiyya, we have not paid sufficient attention to the ideological and theological aspects of their challenge to the West. The 9/11 Commission Report concluded that the enemy is "not just 'terrorism', but is the threat posed specifically by Islamist terrorism, by Bin Laden and others who draw on a long tradition of extreme intolerance within a minority strain of Islam that does not distinguish politics from religion, and distorts both." The report's emphasis on *ideology*, rather than on specific terrorist tactics, as the primary threat to the United States is indeed the correct one. Terrorism itself is only a tool; one must look at the political objective for which it is being utilized.

This monograph is the result of one year of research on a group that is winning the hearts and minds of Muslims, in pursuit of radical political objectives. It is doing so by using the rhetoric of democracy and a message of non-violence to mask its more radical objectives. But these objectives can only be achieved through violence. This research focused on Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islamiyya (HT), the Party of Islamic Liberation, which effectively combines Marxist-Leninist methodology and Western slogans with reactionary Islamic ideology to shape the internal debate within Islam. HT was founded in East Jerusalem in 1953, and over the subsequent half century has become a global network with headquarters in Jordan and London. It spreads a radical Islamist ideology that is fueling anti-American and anti-Semitic sentiments. While HT as an organization does not engage in terrorist activities, it has become the vanguard of the radical Islamist ideology that encourages its followers to commit terrorist acts.

While HT is active in most parts of the Muslim world (where it aims to overthrow governments) and in the West (where it aims to unite the Muslims

around their Islamic identity and thus prevent their assimilation), its most significant operations take place in the strategically vital region of Central Asia. Of the five post-Soviet states of Central Asia, the main battleground is Uzbekistan, in which HT strives to replace the secular regime, by force if necessary, with an Islamist state, or Caliphate. Uzbekistan's poor human rights record has certainly helped HT's recruitment.

HT's extremely undemocratic nature and its puritanical interpretation of Islam challenge America's goal of bringing freedom and stability to Central Asia. Historically, the United States has not paid a great deal of attention to Central Asia; the region has only occasionally been viewed as important. However, it was the key prize of the "Great Game" between Russia and Great Britain of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and is still highly sought after by both Russia and China. While the U.S. is officially opposed to the revival of such competition, its energy and security policies are indirectly playing into this contest of influence.

The main American achievement in Central Asia has been the establishment of military cooperation, which bore great fruit after 9/11. The Uzbekistani government permitted the U.S. Air Force to use the Karshi-Khanabad (K2) base in southern Uzbekistan, a facility that proved crucial to U.S. operations in neighboring Afghanistan. The Kyrgyzstani government made its Manas base available, while Kazakhstan and Tajikistan provided other valuable assistance.

The importance of the military support of Uzbekistan was aptly demonstrated during the Afghan War. With the largest population in the region, Uzbekistan could in the future become even more strategically important in the fight against the growing presence of anti-American Islamic ideology in the region. Although today's repressive political environment gives few clues to indicate this, for centuries Uzbekistan was the center of an enlightened, tolerant and spiritual Islamic culture. Under Soviet rule, however, this tradition was heavily repressed and in time forgotten. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan's 26 million Muslims fell victim to the alien, radical Islamic ideologies promoted by groups such as HT.

President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan realized in the late 1990s the severity of the threat that his country was facing from radical Islamist ideology. As a product of the Soviet era, he knew only repression as a way to deal with this threat. Since 9/11, however, the Uzbekistani leadership has gradually begun to recognize the errors of its overly repressive tactics, and has shifted towards other, less iron-fisted responses. The government of Uzbekistan provides, for example, alternative, moderate religious instruction that is true to local traditions. Other Central Asian countries have, to varying degrees, reassessed their policies as well, and have begun to introduce a similar slate of new measures, ranging from political and economic reform to alternative sources of Islamic education in an effort to defeat extremist groups like HT.

Dealing with theological aspects of the fight against radical political Islam is crucial to winning the existential battle with those who seek to topple secular regimes in Central Asia. But in order to defeat an ideology that consistently denounces democracy and capitalism, people also need to experience the positive aspects of these concepts. Currently, HT's ideology is fueled by the restrictive economic, social and political conditions of the region, in which words such as "freedom", "prosperity" and "democracy" are often heard but seldom seen in practice. In order for liberty and financial success to take root, Central Asia's leaders must advance political and economic openness. Yet in the midst of ongoing terrorist attacks in the region, it is especially difficult to convince such leaders to open up politically. The key challenge is to advance democratic and market-economic freedom without undermining the ability of these traditionally strong governments to fight terrorists.

While the people of Central Asia want political and economic liberalization, their governments often prefer to see reforms happen only after they leave office. Uzbekistan is a country that the human rights community loves to hate. NGOs have identified numerous incidents of torture and arbitrary arrest, particularly of suspected HT members. The major challenge for the U.S. is to convince authoritarian leaders that despite the difficulties, it is in their best interests to open their systems. This poses a serious dilemma. The U.S. needs to develop personal relationships at the highest levels with these leaders to urge them to change. While reassuring Central Asian governments that their fundamental security needs in the area of counter-terrorism will be met, the U.S. must also support and energize civil society and NGO groups to advance reforms from the ground up. Naturally, the more the U.S. works with the governments of the region, the less the people and their grassroots organizations will trust America; but the more the U.S. works within civil society, the more difficult it will be for Central Asian leaders like Karimov to trust the U.S. Finding the right balance is a serious challenge for U.S. policymakers.

Central Asian leaders' default position would be to fall back to what they know—short-term tactical arrangements to buy time, followed by an increase in the level of political repression and of central control of the economy to maintain "stability." Neither development would be discouraged by Russia, China or Iran, all of which compete to varying degrees with the U.S. for influence in the region.

The U.S., which places importance on democratic practice and market economics, is at a clear disadvantage in the battle for influence in the region. The American leadership needs to convince Russia and China that simply clamping down on groups such as HT is not the answer, since it will only lead to further radicalization. After all, if HT members are imprisoned, they only return with a deepened commitment to the cause; if they are killed, their families seek revenge. Since Russia and China have their own internal problems with radical Islamists, it is in their own interest to ensure that Central Asian Muslims remain moderate.



If, however, the two powers continue to encourage local regimes in their unwise tactics, the war against radical Islamism will be lost.

There are not many Muslim countries that successfully combine Islam with democracy, secularism and economic development. Over the past eighty years, Turkey has accomplished precisely such a successful fusion, one that may prove to be an apt example to Central Asians. Turkey shares cultural, historical and linguistic roots with the region, and also has compatible, moderate religious traditions. Turkey is also one of the few Muslim countries in which HT has not succeeded. Yet even after over eighty years of secular rule, Turkey still struggles with its own Islamists who may harbor a desire to overthrow the democratic secular system and replace it with a theocratic one.

It is a major policy challenge for the U.S. to find the right balance of promoting openness and democracy in Muslim societies while keeping them safe from radical groups, especially those who may want to engage in terrorist acts. Turkish lessons can provide the U.S. with insights for sensibly promoting democracy in the Muslim world, especially in Eurasia, where, unlike the Middle East, the U.S. does not have a long track record of mistaken policies.

Ultimately, to win the ideological battle, the U.S. needs to make itself attractive to Muslims. The U.S. was able to prevail in the Cold War after studying communism's ideology and organization, and then promoting a better alternative, democratic capitalism. This time around, the new enemy is familiar with what the U.S. offers but opposes it because it feels it cannot benefit from what is on offer. There is a growing anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism, especially in Europe, and groups like HT benefit from this trend. Furthermore, the U.S. in many quarters is no longer seen as a just and moral power, and its actions in Iraq are creating for the first time a truly global *umma* that shares HT's political views.

There are many measures that one can take in the War on Terror, but in the end, this war cannot be won unless the U.S. changes how it relates to the Muslim world. With its consciousness raised about the past glories of Islamic civilization, the proud Muslim *umma* can no longer be easily repressed. The worldwide U.S. commitment to, and promotion of, democracy must therefore not be tacked on as an afterthought, but must be at the core of the U.S. national security strategy. This means returning to the fundamentals of what America is about. To defeat Islam's political insurgency, America should be once again seen as the guarantor and promoter of freedom and dignity.

The goal of this monograph is to assist American policymakers in better understanding the challenges we are facing and to offer some solutions. To do that, the first chapter, "The War of Ideas", briefly describes the evolution of the radical Islamist ideology that HT espouses. It then explains how HT is winning the hearts and minds of the Muslim people while the U.S. is losing them.

The second chapter, “The Party of Liberation”, explains in detail HT’s doctrine, methodology and party structure. HT’s use of technology, funding and recruitment methods is discussed in demonstrating the success of this political movement. The chapter describes HT’s views on how the Caliphate would run the economy, the role of the women and the anti-Semitic nature of this group. The manner in which HT grew out of the Middle East to become a global movement is also discussed.

The third chapter, “Global Threats”, demonstrates HT’s radicalization. HT’s most significant splinter group, al-Muhajiroun, is also discussed in detail, as it is an indication of where people who are trained with HT ideology may end up. Members and sympathizers of HT and al-Muhajiroun are part of the global Islamist insurgency that has gotten stronger since the start of the war in Iraq.

The next chapter, “The Battle for Central Asia”, focuses on Central Asia as the key “battleground” for the radical Islamist ideology. This post-Soviet region is still struggling with its identity and direction, and HT is one of the most successful movements in taking advantage of the political and ideological vacuum. HT’s main target has been Uzbekistan, as this country at the heart of Central Asia is the region’s most religious and most populous. From Uzbekistan, HT has spread to the rest of the region, now posing a serious security risk in all of Central Asia.

The “Government Strategies” chapter discusses the steps various Central Asian governments have taken or are considering taking in combating HT. It also discusses the importance of regional and international cooperation in this battle and highlights how the emergence of a new Great Game in the region would benefit HT. Government strategies from Azerbaijan and Turkey are also briefly mentioned as possible examples for the Central Asian region.

The monograph advances a number of key recommendations. First, the U.S. needs to rehabilitate its credibility and moral authority so that Muslims can once again be inspired by the ideals for which the U.S. stands. Such rehabilitation will clearly take several decades. As a start, the new secretary of state should travel frequently to Muslim countries and should describe clearly and humbly what the long-term U.S. agenda is and how it will be beneficial to Muslims. Second, to change the perception that American foreign policy is “unjust”, the most important step the U.S. can take is to ensure a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that will be seen as fair by a majority of Muslims. Third, the U.S. needs to help Muslims improve their socio-economic conditions in visible ways, and in particular should focus on eradicating inequitable wealth distribution, corruption and cronyism, which HT falsely considers to be inextricably tied to capitalism.

The U.S. also needs to realize that the battle of ideas is primarily a civil war within Islam. Thus, a fourth recommendation is for the U.S. to help strengthen the moderate elements within Muslim societies. One way to do this is to take action against the spread of radical literature on the Internet and provide moderates with media outlets. The U.S. can also create space for Islamic groups that promote tolerance and interfaith dialogue, instead of letting the radicals dominate the mainstream. There also needs to be a legitimate forum such as an improved UN at which moderate Muslim states can express their views.

Education is an essential element in this battle. American government officials need to undergo a basic training course on Islamic culture, values and traditions so they do not inadvertently cause further damage. The U.S. also needs to support the educational outreach efforts of moderate Muslims who espouse peaceful coexistence with other religions and cultures and embrace democratic norms and scientific advancement as part of Islamic teachings.

There is also need to come up with a more up-to-date international legal and constitutional approach to combat groups like HT. As long as HT can function in one or more Western countries, the best efforts of others trying to protect their Muslims will fail.

In Central Asia, the West should focus primarily on improving socio-economic conditions so that people can see the benefits of democratic capitalism and become less tempted to oppose it. While the U.S. and the EU must avoid moral preaching to Central Asians, they need to make clear to the leaders of these countries that it is in their self-interest to show zero tolerance towards human rights violations. The West also needs to understand that the Islamic missionaries like HT are not the same as Christian missionaries; HT does not seek religious freedom for its own sake, but instead exploits it in order to further a political agenda.

In designing assistance programs and policies, the West also needs to respect the region's unique culture and history. In particular, Sufi traditions can be an effective antidote to the radicalism of HT. Teaching the basic principles and ethics of Islam in secular schools is important to immunize people from extremist interpretations of the religion. Free and reliable media are essential for the Central Asians so that they do not turn to HT for political analysis.

In sum, the U.S. must work with its non-governmental and governmental partners in Central Asia to preserve and strengthen those moderate Islamic traditions that have been the foundation of a tolerant culture for over one thousand years. In the long run, such efforts can facilitate a long-term partnership between the U.S. and the people and governments of Central Asia in pursuit of their shared goals in the global War on Terror.

# 1

## THE WAR OF IDEAS

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Until the issuance of the 9/11 Commission Report, the U.S. government and the media focused on the idea of a “war on terror”. But terrorism is merely the tip of the iceberg. Violence is only one of the tools used by radical Islamists in the broader “war of ideas” against Western liberal democracy. Winning the war against terrorism is not possible unless the U.S. “prevail[s] in the longer term over the ideology that gives rise to Islamist terrorism.”<sup>1</sup> To succeed, then, we must come to understand the roots of this ideology, which Hizb ut-Tahrir embodies today.

As the Commission Report correctly concludes, the threat posed by radical political Islamist ideology is not new. It has evolved from the works of Ibn Taimiyyah (in the 13<sup>th</sup> century), to Ibn Wahhab (in the 18<sup>th</sup> century), through to the Muslim Brotherhood’s Hassan al-Banna (1906–49) and Sayyid Qutb (1906–65). Born and educated in Cairo, Egypt, Qutb is considered to be the most prominent modern-day Islamist. He was a key ideologue of the oldest Islamist organization, the Muslim Brotherhood, which was formed four years after the Turks dissolved the Caliphate in 1924. In fact, almost all contemporary political Islamist movements were formed after the end of the Caliphate, the recreation of which is HT’s principal goal.<sup>2</sup>

Qutb believed that mankind was “on the brink of a precipice” because it sought progress through a system “devoid of vital values.”<sup>3</sup> He maintained that only Islam possessed such values, thus obligating Muslims to fight “those oppressive political systems which prevented others from freely choosing Islam.”<sup>4</sup> Qutb believed the change would not come by a revolution of masses but rather by a small group of “real” Muslims. Adherents to this salafist<sup>5</sup> brand of Islam claim to be emulating the way of the Prophet Muhammad, who established the first Caliphate in Arabia. They seek to overthrow existing governments in Muslim lands, and once in power, they plan to declare armed jihad against non-Muslim states. They believe it is the duty of all Muslims to bring about such change to remedy the decline of Muslim societies and the world. Before he was executed in 1966 on charges of treason against the government of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, Qutb actively promoted the radical salafist ideology that legitimized the use of violence in order to achieve such a revolution.

Qutb's execution was a turning point for many Islamists who had previously rejected the use of violence. They were further motivated by the Arab defeat by Israel in 1967, and became even more radicalized following the occupations of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights, and the temporary takeover of the Sinai Peninsula. Increasingly, people began to agree with Qutb that a return to "pure Islam" was necessary in order to avoid further decline and humiliation. Muhammad Abd al-Salam Faraj (1954–82) took Qutb's ideas one step further, claiming that the problem was not with Muslim societies but their *kufri* (unbeliever) governments and laws. The Egyptian published in 1977 his famous "The Neglected Duty", urging individual Muslims to engage in violent jihad with the ultimate goal of creating the worldwide Caliphate. He made a compelling case that given the state of Islam today, it is necessary to organize secret groups and take power by inculcating representatives into the army and key government structures.

Up until the Six-Day War, the U.S. had been viewed for decades as a just and moral power throughout the Muslim world. It was well known that America was founded by people who fled British religious persecution and came to a new continent in the hope of creating a country that would respect individual freedoms and rights. Unlike colonial European powers, Americans were seen to be on the side of those who were oppressed and discriminated against. For an even longer time, Jews were not viewed with any enmity; for example, the Ottoman Caliphate played a leading role in helping Jews escape Spanish persecution. These attitudes quickly began to change with the creation of the Israel in 1948, and increasingly worsened as more and more Muslims perceived the U.S. to be improperly backing Israel and their own corrupt, repressive rulers. However, in that era there were limited possibilities for global communication and travel, and these sentiments were to a great extent limited to the Arab world and did not have a significant impact on the greater Muslim community. In fact, a pro-U.S. attitude persisted through the 1980s; Muslims overwhelmingly supported the U.S. against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, because they saw America as trying to bring peace to the region.

The major shift in popular opinion against the U.S. started with the Bosnia War. Even secular, non-political Muslims were furious about Western indifference to the mass killings of their co-religionists. While the U.S. (unlike major European countries) did finally come to the help of the Muslims, the damage to the U.S. reputation had already been done. Watching the media coverage of the brutalities, and with international communication and travel becoming easier, Muslims all over the world shared a sense of injustice.

The slaughter of Muslims in the heart of Europe was a major turning point for the global Muslim consciousness. Soon afterwards, Muslims began to sense that, in the face of the brutal Russian crackdown in Chechnya, the killings in Kashmir, and other incidents in which Muslims were attacked, the U.S. was remaining quiet. Furthermore, U.S. actions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

were increasingly perceived as biased. Muslims began to believe that the U.S., like the British Empire, was simply not interested in their freedom. In fact, they felt the West wanted to keep Muslims repressed in order to ensure that Islamic civilization would never rise again and pose a challenge to the Judeo-Christian rule.

Due to their disappointment at the perceived “double standards” of U.S. foreign policy, American-trained Muslim fighters in Afghanistan decided to take matters into their own hands. They had already brought down one of the two superpowers, and were confident they could defeat the other. Armed with strong Islamic beliefs, they adopted as their goal the replacement of all oppressive regimes with Islamic ones. While some attempted to bring this about through education, others became more actively involved in political opposition. A significant minority took this opposition to the extreme, blowing up buildings filled with innocent civilians and justifying the attacks with their political theology.

The attacks of September 11, 2001 received a mixed response from Muslims. A majority was deeply saddened by the tragic loss of innocent human life, and while still angry with U.S. foreign policy, most Muslims felt solidarity with the American people. However, these sentiments soon were replaced with confusion and rage following President Bush’s importune reminder that “this crusade, this war on terrorism, will take a while.”<sup>6</sup> To Muslim ears, this sounded like America was waging the final phase of a war against Islam that had begun in the medieval era. During the planning phase of the war against the Taliban, a rumor surfaced in the media that the military campaign would be named Operation Infinite Justice, another unfortunate religious reference. This did not escape notice in the Muslim world. Although the authenticity of the report was never established, and although the Bush Administration denied the charge, announcing that the name of the campaign would be Operation Enduring Freedom, the damage had been done. Finally, when Bush starkly insisted that “you are either with us or against us”, many of the Muslims who wanted to both oppose terrorist attacks and remain Muslim felt trapped in no man’s land.

The next major setback to America’s standing in the Muslim world followed President Bush’s labeling of Israel’s Prime Minister Ariel Sharon as a “man of peace”<sup>7</sup> when Israel was engaged in a bloody military campaign, in response to the start of the second *intifada* in September 2000. This frustration reached new heights after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. The war was perceived as illegitimate from the start, and the subsequent killings of innocent civilians further united the Muslim community in its opposition to American policy. Many Muslims are convinced that neoconservatism is in some way an American Jewish plot. Stories emerging from Washington that blamed neoconservative elements within the administration for the decision to go to war in Iraq only served to reaffirm the Muslim perception that the U.S. foreign-policy process was permanently tainted by pro-Israeli and anti-Islamic ideology.

The fact that U.S. Army Lt. General Jerry Boykin, had said “I knew my God is bigger than [Osama bin Laden’s]. I knew that my God was a real God and his was an idol”, and “George Bush was not elected by a majority of the voters in the United States. . . . He was appointed by God” infuriated Muslims.<sup>8</sup> His pronouncements that the United States was engaged in a holy war only made matters worse. In summer 2003, Gen. Boykin was promoted and then assigned to serve as deputy undersecretary of defense for intelligence. Appointing this man to such a sensitive position and not removing him, even after there were many news stories about his views, made Bush’s 2002 National Security Strategy document that “the war on terrorism is not a clash of civilizations” meaningless in the eyes of many Muslims. Even after the eventual withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq, this resentment is likely to remain. While visiting the Dome of the Rock Mosque and the Al-Aqsa Mosque (Islam’s third-holiest site after Mecca and Medina) in Jerusalem, foreign observer’s are routinely shown the bullet holes from an American-born Jewish ex-army officer’s April 1982 shooting.<sup>9</sup> Many more generations of Muslims will be shown the damage to the shrines and holy sites in Israel and Iraq, which symbolize to the Islamic faithful not a crackdown on terrorism, but an attack on Islam itself.

The perception that the U.S. wants to destroy Islamic civilization was further reinforced by pictures and video of U.S. attacks against Islamic holy sites in Najaf and elsewhere. The situation got worse with shootings in Fallujah’s Sunni mosques, especially the Abu Hanifa mosque, which is the burial place of the founder of the most liberal Hanafi school of Islam. These had the same effect on the Muslim consciousness as Muslims shooting and spilling blood in the Vatican would have had on Christians.

In the socio-political context described above, it is clear that the majority of the Muslim world is no longer “with us”. At the same time, an equal majority is opposed to the use of violence and not quite ready to be “against us”. However, this silent majority, which wishes to find a way to prevent the much-feared “clash of civilizations” is increasingly being forced to choose sides—and the side that many are choosing is that of the radicals. Groups that promise the creation of a worldwide Islamic *umma* (community) and even the re-establishment of the Caliphate are gaining increasing traction in the internal Muslim debate.

One such radical Islamist group, Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT), has for over half a century been engaged in the war of ideologies, but it came to benefit greatly from the post-September 11 atmosphere of divisiveness. Harkening back to the supposed glory of the Ottoman Caliphate, HT doctrine stipulates that the only way to re-establish the kind of Islamic society promulgated by the Prophet Muhammad is to liberate Muslims from the thoughts, systems and laws of *kufri* (non-believers), by replacing the Judeo-Christian dominated nation-state system with a borderless *umma*.<sup>10</sup> Similar to Qutb and other Islamists, HT rejects capitalism as exploitative and democracy as godless.

While the movement shares the same political objectives as terrorist groups, HT does not fit into the “death-loving” stereotype of radical Islamists. HT members claim ultimately to want freedom and justice, rather than violence. Since it is not a terrorist organization, it is much more appealing to the average Muslim, who may agree with the ultimate goal of al-Qaeda but would not support the killing of innocent civilians. This aspect of HT has made it extremely hard for Westerners to categorize the movement. However, upon closer analysis, it is clear that HT’s renunciation of violence is only superficial. Violence has been repudiated by the HT, but other groups working towards the same goal that *do* use violence are never condemned by HT. The group never denounces terrorist attacks. In many ways, HT is part of an elegant division of labor. The group itself is active in the ideological preparation of the Muslims, while other organizations handle the planning and execution of terrorist attacks. Despite its objections to this description, HT today serves as a *de facto* conveyor belt for terrorists.<sup>11</sup>

HT’s success on the ideological playing field is largely due to its ability to adapt its political message to a range of political environments. This is accomplished by its well-organized propaganda machine, which relies heavily on modern technology, to wage its “war of ideas”. In western Europe, HT conveys a message of “justice” to Muslims alienated from mainstream society, which it views as imperialistic and anti-Islamic. In Central Asia, HT presents an Islamic alternative to the secularist repression of the region’s governments.

Radicals endorse a version of Islam that is not merely a spiritual faith tradition, but also as a political system. They arrive at this politicized view of Islam through their belief in God. Since God is absolutely sovereign, so too should his sole representative on earth, the Caliph, who leads the Islamic state. Democracy, socialism and other systems of government are seen by these Islamists as fundamentally flawed because of their solely human origin, and hence imperfection. This dichotomy of sanctioned and unsanctioned forms of government helps form the beginnings of a fundamentalist worldview as divided between “us” and “them”.

Giving color to the dichotomy, radical Islamists stipulate that those who participate in man-made government are in *jahilliyah*, a state of ignorance. According to classical Islamic theology, such a condition prevailed in Arabia before the Prophet Muhammad propagated the message of Islam and created the Caliphate. Making the theological leap, radicals believe that the absence of a Caliphate similar to that created by the Prophet has fueled the ignorance that is directly responsible for the decline of Islam.

Muslims who do not work to remove themselves from this “state of ignorance” are considered by radical Islamists to be *takfir*, or not truly Muslim. These strict standards are defining the parameters of Islamic membership. According to Omar al-Bakri Muhammad, the leader of the recently dissolved HT splinter group al-Muhajiroun, September 11 brought about several changes, “not



least of which is the clear crystallization of the two camps of Islam and *Kufr*, of believers and hypocrites, of those who follow the Messenger Muhammad and his companions, and those deviant from their path.”<sup>12</sup>

With the politicization of Islam, Muslims now find themselves battling over which characteristics should constitute proper Islamic theology. Central to the battle is the much-contested understanding of how Muslims should respond to conflict. Historically, there has been no ambiguity in classical Islam about the legal precepts governing political conflict. In Arabic, the word *jihad* means “to strive for some objective”, which Islamic scholar Ibn Rushd divides into four categories: *jihad* by the tongue, *jihad* by the heart, *jihad* by the hand and *jihad* by the sword.<sup>13</sup> The last of these, armed *jihad*, should only be used when the other options have been exhausted or when Muslims and Islam are under attack. Prophet Muhammad intended for armed *jihad* to be used only rarely; it is well-known to Muslims that, returning from a military battle, the Prophet told his followers, “This day we have returned from the minor *jihad* to the major *jihad*”, or from “armed battle to the peaceful battle for self-control and betterment.”<sup>14</sup> *Jihad*, therefore, has not traditionally been understood as “holy war” against other nations or religious bodies.

Yet radical Islamist groups have hijacked the concept of *jihad*, transforming it into a strident call that often precipitates the application of violence against innocents. Instead of focusing on the elements of *jihad* that call for self-improvement and discipline of the *nafs*<sup>15</sup> (ego), radical Islamist groups convey their interpretation of Islam in the way of the first Caliph, Abu Bakr, who warned in a letter to his nemesis, Persian leader Kisra, “I have come to you with a people who love death as much as you love life.”<sup>16</sup> Far from abiding by the narrow Quranic limitations guiding the application of armed *jihad*, radical Islamists today wage violence indiscriminately, with specific value placed on targeting Jews and “crusaders”, or Westerners.

Al-Qaeda’s attacks on U.S. targets at home and abroad have therefore “embroiled the United States in [this] intra-Muslim ideological battle, a struggle for the hearts and minds in which al-Qaeda has already scored a number of victories.”<sup>17</sup> The U.S. counterattacks in Afghanistan and Iraq helped radical Islamists mobilize their followers by arguing that armed *jihad* is their responsibility because “Muslims and Islam are under attack”. Radical Islamist Azzam al-Tamimi, the head of the Institute of Islamic Political Thought, states it clearly: “The blood of martyrs provides nourishment and sustenance for those who continue the struggle.”<sup>18</sup>

There is further contention about precisely who should hold the authority to authorize armed *jihad*. If armed *jihad* has traditionally been used to protect Muslims and the religion of Islam when under attack, it logically follows that someone must decide when Muslims are “under attack”, and who is doing the attacking. Some radical groups, such as HT, believe that peaceful struggle suffices

until a Caliph emerges to lead the *umma* to arms. Others, however, believe that armed jihad is essential. They argue that contemporary political leaders lack the legitimate authority to order armed jihad, and so these groups take the responsibility into their own hands. Thus, the key actors in the battle for Islam are vying to be the legitimate representative of Muslim interests. They aim to represent neither a nation-state nor a sect of Islam, but a borderless community of Muslims.<sup>19</sup>

While al-Qaeda can be thought of as the overarching symbol representing militant, radical Islam, HT's global networks directly convey the radical Islamist message to Muslims on the ground and deliver this message in each country's native language. While lumping HT together with recognized international terrorist organizations is a mistake, the party in fact has significantly militarized the ideological space in Muslim societies. The message conveyed by HT is clear: Western capitalistic states, as currently led by the United States, are Islam's "most vicious enemies".<sup>20</sup> HT has stopped at nothing to persuade even the less devout of the accuracy of its characterization of the U.S. In a May 4, 2004 press release, the party accused the U.S. of torturing and abusing "many" Iraqi women, ranging from "girls of twelve to women in their sixties".<sup>21</sup>

HT's animosity towards the U.S. runs deeper than superficial allegations of imperialism. HT sees the U.S. as the primary impediment to its goal of conquering the world, first by establishing a Caliphate within the "House of Islam", and then by gradually expanding its sovereign domain. HT sees its own interests as mutually exclusive of American interests and bringing to an end U.S. global dominance as its foremost objective.<sup>22</sup>

The U.S. therefore needs to develop a new strategy and possibly a new ideology that will be attractive to Muslims. HT's objective of creating a transnational Islamic identity did not have much success until recently. Since the Iraq war, however, HT has made serious progress as the main combatant in the "war of ideas". Unlike the threat posed by the Soviet Union, America's new and more fluid enemy demands a multi-faceted, and more importantly, ideological response.

With radical Islamism having undergone politicization cleverly disguised as a viable alternative, the U.S. is "caught up in a clash within a civilization".<sup>23</sup> Thus, while the U.S. finds itself scrambling to protect its homeland against terrorist threats, the war's front lines occupy an ideological space in the Muslim world where classical Islam is under attack. The U.S. must help create political space for moderate Muslims so that mainstream Islam is no longer in the hands of the radicals such as HT. All religions have radicals, but in contemporary Islam the radicals have become the mainstream, and the moderates are pushed to the sides of the debate. HT's worldview is so starkly black and white that it repeatedly dares all Muslims to choose between their Islamic identities and Western civilization. The key to a Western victory on this battlefield of ideas is to convey

to Muslims the understanding that they need not make such a choice, because the values cherished by Western civilizations are the same as those embraced by classical Islam. To win the war against terrorists *and* the war of ideas, the U.S. and its remaining Muslim allies need to cooperate, so that moderates can reclaim the mainstream. Understanding and subsequently defeating Hizb ut-Tahrir would be a good start.

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<sup>1</sup>The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), p. 363.

<sup>2</sup>Husain Haqqani, "Understanding HT Ideology", in *The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir: Deciphering and Combating Radical Islamist Ideology*, ed. Zeyno Baran (Washington, DC: The Nixon Center, 2004), p. 30.

<sup>3</sup>Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, [http://www.youngmuslims.ca/online\\_library/books/milestones/index\\_2.asp](http://www.youngmuslims.ca/online_library/books/milestones/index_2.asp).

<sup>4</sup>Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), pp. 9, 12.

<sup>5</sup>From *salaf*, meaning "of the predecessors". Salafists today espouse a similarly strict form of Islam like that of the Wahhabis. In fact, many Wahhabis refer to themselves as "*salafis*".

<sup>6</sup>Peter Ford, "Europe Cringes at Bush's 'Crusade' Against Terrorists", *Christian Science Monitor*, September 19, 2001.

<sup>7</sup>Peter Slevin and Mike Allen, "Bush: Sharon a 'Man of Peace'", *Washington Post*, April 19, 2002.

<sup>8</sup>Sidney Blumenthal, "The Religious Warrior of Abu Ghraib", *Guardian* (London), May 20, 2004.

<sup>9</sup>The author, too, had this experience in 2000.

<sup>10</sup>*The Methodology of Hizb ut-Tahrir for Change* (London: Al-Khilafah Publications, 1999), p. 5. See [http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/english/books/pdfs/method\\_for\\_revival.pdf](http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/english/books/pdfs/method_for_revival.pdf).

<sup>11</sup>In response to an article of mine entitled, "The Road from Tashkent to Taliban", April 2, 2004 on National Review Online, <http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/baran200404020933.asp>, describing how HT serves as conveyor belt for terrorists, Dr. Abdullah Robin, a member of Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain, posted an open letter to me on HT's website, <http://www.1924.org>.

<sup>12</sup>"Warm Words for bin Laden as fundamentalists gather in Britain", Canada.com, September 11, 2002, <http://www.canada.com/national/features/september11/story.html?id=228C5B1D-F471-47B8-8E45-FB7103D91BA8>.

<sup>13</sup>"Legal Rulings, Jihad in History and Law", The Islamic Supreme Council of America, [http://www.islamic supremecouncil.org/bin/site/wrappers/default.asp?pane\\_2=content-legal-jihad\\_history](http://www.islamic supremecouncil.org/bin/site/wrappers/default.asp?pane_2=content-legal-jihad_history).

<sup>14</sup>"Legal Rulings, What Jihad Is", The Islamic Supreme Council of America, [http://www.islamic supremecouncil.org/bin/site/wrappers/default.asp?pane\\_2=content-legal-jihad\\_Is\\_isnot](http://www.islamic supremecouncil.org/bin/site/wrappers/default.asp?pane_2=content-legal-jihad_Is_isnot).

<sup>15</sup>The definition of *nafs* depends on the context, but it has two main meanings. First is the ego, especially desires and weaknesses. It also means the soul of a human being.

<sup>16</sup>Adam Pashut, "Dr. Azzam al-Tamimi: A Political-Ideological Brief", MEMRI Inquiry and Analysis Series, no. 163, p. 3. <http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Area=jihad&ID=IA16304>.

<sup>17</sup>Michael Scott Doran, "Somebody Else's Civil War", *Foreign Affairs*, 81, no. 1 (2002): p. 23.

<sup>18</sup>Pashut, "Dr. Azzam al-Tamimi".

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<sup>19</sup>Doran, "Somebody Else's Civil War".

<sup>20</sup> Suha Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamentalist Quest and the Search for the Islamic Caliph* (n.p.: Grey Seal Books, 1994) p. 72.

<sup>21</sup>"Torture and Abuse of Muslim Women in Coalition Prisons—True Face of Iraqi Enduring Freedom", May 4, 2004, <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.info/english/leaflets/index.html>.

<sup>22</sup>"America's domination of the international situation is a danger to the world and only the Khilafah can save it", June 1, 2003, [http://www.1924.org/leaflets/index.php?id=514\\_0\\_10\\_0\\_M](http://www.1924.org/leaflets/index.php?id=514_0_10_0_M).

<sup>23</sup>National Commission, *9/11 Report*, p. 363.

# 2

## THE PARTY OF LIBERATION

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Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) was founded in the Jordanian-ruled East Jerusalem suburb of Bayt ul-Maqdis in 1952 or 1953 by Sheikh Taqiuddin al-Nabhani al-Falastani. Born in Haifa in 1909, al-Nabhani was educated at the Al-Azhar University and Dar ul-Ulum University in Cairo, Egypt. He served as a judge in various courts in Lebanon and Palestine, and also taught at the Islamic University in Amman, Jordan. Over time, al-Nabhani became convinced that Islam's decline was due to the submission of the *umma* to greedy colonial powers. Unlike many of his peers, who believed Islam's shortcomings could be remedied through nationalist or economic policy prescriptions, al-Nabhani asserted that Islam could only be revived if it was restored as a comprehensive guide for daily life. Although hesitant to label most of his Muslim contemporaries as *kufir* (unbelievers), he believed that their lives were dominated by a mixture of Islamic, Western, socialist, nationalist, partisan, regional and sectarian thoughts and emotions,<sup>1</sup> leaving them detached from true Islamic living. In 1950 al-Nabhani published *The Treatise of the Arab* explaining his vision of "establishing the Islamic state in Arab territories and afterwards in non-Arab Islamic territories."<sup>2</sup> To achieve this goal, he established Hizb ut-Tahrir.

Al-Nabhani's political and religious philosophy was largely shaped by the Muslim Brotherhood, a fundamentalist organization of Egyptian origin founded in 1928. Al-Nabhani was at first a member of the Brotherhood but found its ideology too moderate and too accommodating of the West. He articulated his views in a book called *Khilafah* and founded HT as a more radical alternative to the Brotherhood, winning the loyalty of its many radical members, who soon became the rank-and-file of the new organization.<sup>3</sup> In this early stage, HT made contact with the members of the *umma* and presented to them, on an individual basis, the group's ideology and methods.<sup>4</sup>

Al-Nabhani viewed Western civilization and Islam as dichotomous entities with mutually exclusive ideological underpinnings, both of which competed to dominate Muslim societies.<sup>5</sup> According to al-Nabhani, Western societies employed two antagonizing ideological systems during the Cold War, capitalism and socialism, in order to assert control over Muslims. Although the capitalist forces eventually prevailed, al-Nabhani maintained that had the communists acknowledged God and embraced Islam, socialist forces would have triumphed. With the fall of communism, HT identified Western capitalism, led by the United States, as the primary impediment to establishing a truly Islamic society.

While his anti-Western sentiments were becoming more and more widespread throughout the Islamic world, many of his contemporaries did not share his degree of extremism.

Other known HT founders include Khaled Hassan, a founding member of the Palestine Liberation Organization's (PLO) militant Fatah faction, and Sheikh Assad Tamimi, Islamic Jihad's spiritual leader. Al-Nabhani died in 1977 and was succeeded by Abu Yusuf Abdul Qadim Zallum, another Palestinian cleric, who also taught at Al-Azhar University.<sup>6</sup> In a book-length treatise, *How the Khilafah Was Destroyed*, he made a powerful case for the importance of cleansing Islam of Western influences. For HT, the book "provides valuable lessons from this bitter history to ensure that the *umma* is never again afflicted by the same pitfalls and shortcomings that led to our intellectual and political decline, and which resulted directly in the destruction of the *Khilafah* in 1924."<sup>7</sup>

Zallum left HT's leadership in March due to his deteriorating health and died on April 26, 2003. He was succeeded by Ata Ibnu Khaleel Abu Rashta, who, according to a press release from HT in the United Kingdom (HTUK), "previously served as the party's official spokesman in Jordan."<sup>8</sup> Abu Rashta, alias Abu Yasin, is a Palestinian who is believed to have lived most recently in the West Bank. Under his leadership, HT activities have become more aggressive. During fall 2003, the governing body (*kiedat*) is believed to have instructed members to engage in acts of aggression towards diplomatic representatives and other buildings of those countries who supported the Iraq war. HT's global leadership is believed to be in Jordan.

### *HT Doctrine: Ideology based on Theology*

HT is an elitist movement that operates as a self-declared political party grounded in radical Islamist ideology while using theology to justify its position. According to Abdullah Robin, a London-based HT leader, HT is "the only political party wanting to unite the *umma*", as opposed to merely uniting the Muslims of a single nation-state, a political unit that HT believes to be anathema to Islam.<sup>9</sup> HT therefore faces the challenge of uniting the multitude of diverse Muslim groups, each following different interpretations of Islam with the appeal of its own ideology. Being a pragmatic political movement, HT is prepared to accommodate other interpretations of Islam to reach its goal.

While HT's founders and ideologues believe they have thoroughly studied Islamic primary sources and have provided the best and most easily understandable interpretations of Islam—codified in their proposed constitution to guide the *umma*—they do accept "any Islamic school of thought that bases its teachings similarly on the principal sources." In the times of Prophet Muhammad, believers could have asked him for the "Islamic opinion"; today, the best they can do is interpret the Islamic teaching using proper methods

(*ijtihad*). HT accepts that there will be disagreements on what the “Islamic opinion” might be, based on “one’s own opinion”, and thus one needs to accept all forms as legitimate. For HT, this is the only way to bring unity to the *umma*.<sup>10</sup>

While recognizing that Islam and democracy share many core values, HT insists the two are incompatible due to the fundamental issue of sovereignty. HT believes that “governance is a function in which humans are subordinate to the primacy of God.”<sup>11</sup> All societies that do not subordinate humans to the primacy of God (accomplished through the application of *sharia* law by a Caliph) live in *jahilliyah*, a state of ignorance. It therefore rejects all alternative forms of governance as man-made and imperfect, particularly democracy, which it sees as the system of the *kufir*.<sup>12</sup> To HT there are two aspects of any given political system: sovereignty and authority. In a democracy, both rest with the people. By contrast, in Islam true sovereignty is held by God, although authority is temporally vested in the people. For HT this is such a great contrast that it is simply wrong even to attempt to conceptualize Islam within a democratic framework.

Due to this incompatibility, HT believes “we are *already* in an ideological clash between the secular democratic ideology and the God-given system.”<sup>13</sup> For HT, civilizations are built on ideas, and the frontline of the clash is intellectual; in order to win this battle, HT wastes no effort promoting grassroots projects that compete with America’s democracy projects. Its members believe that “the new world order” they will help create will be “with the participation of the people, the values of the people and the resources will be for the people and not be used by corrupt rulers that are installed by the West and the multinationals that manipulate the prices.”<sup>14</sup> Arguing that a political system has to reflect values, and that the Western system is “full of corruption”, HT is increasingly confident that, with the U.S. losing the hearts and minds of Muslims, the majority will ultimately choose what they offer, the system of God.

It is now clear for all to see, especially the Muslims who work to restore the rule of Islam and bring life to their ideology, that Western ‘Civilisation’ is dead. Dead and buried. The West has failed to convince the Muslims of their ideology, Capitalism. They have failed to convince us of Secularism. The hypocrisy of democracy has become transparent. The charade of international law and the UN has been exposed. The entire Muslim World today calls for a change, and this change is no longer inspired by the western people or the western ideology, but in spite of it.<sup>15</sup>

Not surprisingly, therefore, HT adheres to the belief that those Muslims that are complicit in what the party sees as Western imperialism should be condemned by fellow Muslims. For HT, the notion of *takfir*, “the condemnation of a Muslim by another Muslim as an unbeliever”, most strongly pertains to government leaders across the Middle East and Central Asia who cooperate with Western nations.<sup>16</sup> For example, the group has labeled Uzbekistani President Islam Karimov as *kufir*.

HT considers the propagation of democracy by the West tantamount to cultural invasion.<sup>17</sup> Al-Nabhani believed the West's animosity to Islam has been a constant ever since the Crusades and that the West today is engaged in a "cultural crusade" against Islam. For example, HT sees the Broader Middle East Initiative not as a tool to bring democracy to Muslims, but rather as a U.S.-driven conspiracy to dominate Muslim lands. HT members believe the "war on terrorism" is a euphemism for war on Islam and is used to fool the world's 1.3 billion Muslims. They contend U.S. National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice's statement that "this is a generational commitment" shows the U.S. is engaged in a neo-colonial project in the Muslim world.

HT members believe contemporary international politics is being dominated by U.S. efforts to wage a "fourth crusade" against Muslims.<sup>18</sup> As noted above, Islamists were galvanized by President Bush's reference to the war on terrorism as a "crusade" in September 2001. Similarly, when he declared that "you are either with us or against us", HT inferred from this comment and subsequently conveyed to its grassroots elements that Bush meant "You are either with Western civilization and democracy, or Islamic civilization." Feeding off such rhetoric, HT fans the flames with publications such as "The Inevitability of the Clash of Civilization", which is riddled with conspiracy theories.<sup>19</sup>

*The Ruling System of Islam* by Zallum provides an appropriate framework for understanding HT's political philosophy.<sup>20</sup> Like al-Nabhani, Zallum believes that Muslims live in a state of *jahilliyah* as a direct result of the fall of the Caliphate. They can only return from ignorance by ending their subjugation to (and collaboration with) the West, regaining their collective identity, and re-establishing the Caliphate. HT's proposed constitution stipulates that Muslims and non-Muslims of the Caliphate will be governed by *sharia* law. Within the Caliphate, only those religions mentioned in the Quran would be tolerated. Thus, Jews and Christians "must not be tempted away from their beliefs."<sup>21</sup> Yet by implication, faiths other than Judaism and Christianity would be outlawed. With respect to intra-Muslim relations,

the only true Muslims are those who adhere to the four *madhabs* [the four separate schools of legal interpretation]. Those who depart from the *madhabs* would be considered as apostates and liable to punishment according to Islamic law. All citizens in the caliphate would have to abide by *sharia* law when outside their homes. For example, all women would have to wear long dresses and scarves when in public places."<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, in the conduct of international relations, "HT would allow non-Muslim countries to stay outside the Caliphate but collect taxes from them, and this would put them under the protection of the Caliphate. But, if these non-Muslim countries would refuse to pay taxes, then the Caliphate would launch military attacks against them."<sup>23</sup> In fact, a major disagreement HT has with other



radical Islamist groups is its belief that only the Caliphate can rightfully declare “jihad” and engage in military attacks. Therefore HT opposes violence until the creation of the Caliphate.

While it is not clear how HT would relate to Muslim countries that do not accede to the Caliphate, HT openly opposes all existing Islamic regimes. For example, it opposes the government of Saudi Arabia, seeing its rulers as secular but calling themselves Islamic in order to gain legitimacy. HT observes that the Saudi leadership does not even follow the Wahhabi *madhab* closely: “they externalized it and have exported it, but did not internalize it.” HT similarly disapproves of Iran because it was established as a republic with a constitution modeled after that of France.<sup>24</sup>

Overall, like Wahhabism, HT’s theology departs from the common Islamic doctrine, the *aqidah*. In Islam it is important to follow the two main sources of Islamic belief, the Quran and the *hadith*, and *aqidah* is the shared belief of the majority of Muslims. One of HT’s main deviations from the *aqidah* is to oppose existing authority, which in Islam’s past was always associated with extremism and terrorism. HT’s main goal is to overthrow all existing Muslim governments; the Quran, however, states the opposite:

*Obey God, obey His prophet, and obey those in authority over you. (4:59)*

HT’s actions in the West are also in opposition to the above *sura*. For second-generation Muslims living in the West, many of whom do not speak Arabic, HT’s easily accessible literature (in PDF format on HT websites) provides an alternative source of political and historical information and theological interpretation. These Muslims often complain their only source of information about Islam is books written by Western specialists, the “Orientalists”. HT fills this void with its own interpretation of religion and world events, thus purportedly raising the consciousness of these and other Muslims. But HT’s teaching is focused on bringing out the “Islamic identity” of a person, in opposition to “British” or “German” identity, encouraging Muslims to oppose the existing rules of the country they live in and establish a parallel structure consisting of “Islamic laws”.

### ***Methodology***

In its methodology, HT seeks to emulate the steps by which the Prophet Muhammad established the Caliphate in thirteen years. Prophet Muhammad patiently spread his beliefs in Mecca without undertaking armed retaliation for the persecution endured by his followers. He then moved to Medina, where he continued to organize and educate supporters until the Caliphate was finally established. Al-Nabhani’s methodology tries to emulate the Prophet’s work,

which to the HT leader was performed in “clearly defined stages, each of which he used to perform specific clear actions”.<sup>25</sup>

### *Stage One: Building a Party*<sup>26</sup>

O you wrapped up, arise and deliver the warning. (Al-Mudatthir: 1–2)

At the first stage, HT is focused on recruitment and propaganda, and HT’s brand of Islam is taught to prospective members. After a few months, those deemed worthy are asked to join the party. In this stage, HT seeks to educate individuals to “produce people who believe in the idea and the method of the Party, so that they form the Party group.”<sup>27</sup> HT reminds its prospective members how Prophet Muhammad “at the start of his call would visit people in their homes, telling them that they had been commanded by Allah to worship Him . . . . Every time someone embraced Islam, Allah’s Messengers would send him or her someone from those who had embraced Islam earlier to teach them the Quran.”<sup>28</sup> Prophet Muhammad took three years to create his Islamic base, educating people in both Islam’s teachings and preparing them to become mentally and spiritually strong to endure opposition.

Accordingly, the party initially makes “contact with the members of the *umma*, presenting to them, on an individual basis, its idea and method. Whoever accepted the basic idea, the Party would organize for him intensive study in its circles, so that the candidate became purified by the thoughts and rules of Islam as adopted by the Party and thus in the process became an Islamic personality.”<sup>29</sup> The first stage can last from six months to three years, depending on the individual’s progress. By the end of the first stage, the HT member is ideologically, theologically and spiritually prepared to deal with any hardship that may befall him or her by being certain that this is God’s path.

### *Stage Two: Interacting with Society*

Proclaim openly what you have been told and turn away from the *Mushrikeen!*  
(Al-Hijr: 94)

The second stage calls for the party to interact with the Muslim community, “to let the *umma* embrace and carry Islam, so that the *umma* takes it up as its issue and thus works to establish it in the affairs of life.”<sup>30</sup> Thus, while in the first stage the party seeks merely to cultivate “Islamic” personalities that identify with HT principles, in the second stage it seeks an “intellectual transformation through political and cultural interaction”, thereby encouraging the *umma* to work towards HT’s revolution.<sup>31</sup>

Again, the second stage is modeled after Prophet Muhammad. HT describes that

after Muhammad . . . created a radical transformation, Allah (swt) ordered him to go out and challenge the ideas in which the people of Makkah held dear as well as the political elite of Makkah who rules over the people with *kufri*. . . . Muslims circumambulated around the Ka-ba . . . . The Makkan society was shocked since they had seen nothing like this before. . . . For the first time they saw white and black, slave and leader, rich and poor, united as brothers with a common purpose challenging the *Aqidah* and the political authority of the *Quraish*.<sup>32</sup>

Once followers of Muhammad were able to challenge the establishment, they were attacked, imprisoned and even tortured to give up their cause, but they remained steadfast.

In this stage, HT members form new cells and engage in open propaganda to build tension between the people and the governments. They promote an Islamic way of life to bring justice and order. At the same time, members of HT are “ordered” to drink alcohol and change their behavior in other ways to blend in, because the goal is to penetrate into government positions and military special forces.<sup>33</sup> In this second stage, HT members must focus on what they believe, not on what they do, in order to achieve their aim of infiltrating and controlling law enforcement, military and bureaucratic institutions.<sup>34</sup> In most parts of the world in which HT operates, it is in this second stage.

### *Stage Three: Seeking Power*

When the second stage is complete and the ground is ripe for the establishment of a *sharia*-ruled Islamic government, the third and final stage begins. This stage is reached once the *umma* has embraced HT’s interpretation of Islam as an intellectual philosophy, a manner of behavior, and a political issue. The environment is then deemed ripe for “establishing government, implementing Islam generally and comprehensively, and carrying it as a message to the world”—or, in other words, revolution.<sup>35</sup> However, unlike most global jihad groups, HT believes it can carry out political revolution in a non-violent manner through the penetration of government institutions and the recruitment of key officials who could turn the government in favor of HT. At the same time, HT does recognize that the state would naturally protect itself, making violence unavoidable. While HT members say that force will not be used “unless it is necessary”, it will almost certainly be used.

In describing how its methodology is following that of Prophet Muhammad, HT states that “after building his party and undermining the society, [Muhammad] exhausted all his efforts in seeking the reigns of power. Indeed, without seeking power from those who have it, it would not be possible to establish the *Khilafah*, and by it Allah’s (swt) *Deen* [system of rule] on the

earth.”<sup>36</sup> Prophet Muhammad then spent three years building coalitions and uniting the various tribes to seize power, which he managed to do in the end.

While some members believe the second stage has not yet been completed, the war in Iraq has emboldened others to believe that the third stage has arrived. According to the editorial board of *Khilafah* magazine, it would take the decision of only a handful of military or security personnel in a Muslim country to bring the Caliphate into being:

The time has come for a change. The time has come to remove the rulers plaguing the Muslim world, either directly through the masses or through the strongest elements. And it is to these strongest elements that the Muslims in the West must direct their attention. In reality, *Khilafah* has been established—it now needs to be announced. The people are ready, the rulers have failed, what is left is for a general in Syria or Egypt, Pakistan or Turkey to feel sufficiently agitated that he picks up the phone. The Muslims in the West need to call louder for *Khilafah*, louder than they ever have—to send that final message that the *umma* is ready. Any work that detracts us from the *Khilafah* detracts us[sic] from saving the Muslims of Iraq.<sup>37</sup>

The process of seizing power is dependent on the party’s main executive agency, which is supposed to work on establishing contacts with the centers of power such as the army and the political leaders. This agency is the most secretive, and it reports directly to the leader, known as the *Amir*. At the take-over phase, all supporters—open and hidden—are asked to move at the same time to topple the government.<sup>38</sup>

As is clear from the preceding three-stage methodology, unlike those of other radical movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood, HT’s political goals cannot be achieved by the reform of existing state structures. Its entire platform calls for the radical transformation of Islamic societies via the overthrow of governments that the group believes to be tyrannical or un-Islamic.<sup>39</sup>

HT originally sought to achieve its revolution in 13 years, just as the Prophet had done. Al-Nabhani, however, realized that modern impediments made working within such a short timeframe impossible, and later extended it to thirty years.<sup>40</sup> When thirty years proved insufficient, HT stopped giving a timeframe, declaring instead, “The Party still continues in its work and hopes that Allah (swt) will grant to it and to the Islamic *umma* the help, success and victory, and at that moment the believers will rejoice.”<sup>41</sup> In other words, HT’s triumph will occur when God decides the *umma* is ready.

## *Party Structure*

HT's party structure is both hierarchical and decentralized, resembling the Marxist-Leninist groups that operated during the Cold War.<sup>42</sup> In fact, HT has borrowed its philosophical methodology directly from Marxism-Leninism. Al-Nabhani "drew on the organizational principles of Marxism-Leninism, marrying Islamist ideology to Leninist strategy and tactics. It is a totalitarian organization which tolerates no internal dissent."<sup>43</sup> Therefore, if HT members deviate from the party philosophy, they must renounce their membership.

HT is also very similar to the Bolsheviks. Both have a utopian ultimate goal (communism vs. Caliphate) and both dislike liberal democracy and seek to establish a mythical just society. The very idea of reconstruction of the Caliphate is comparable with Bolshevik's slogan: "Workers of the world, unite!" Lenin believed that in order to start the global revolution, they first and most importantly needed to arm people with ideas. He found the weak part of the chain and then formed the ideology that resulted in the October revolution. Like the Bolsheviks, HT also seeks to change people's consciousness by means of propagation and uses similar tactics, such as distribution of leaflets and the special literature for propaganda and propagation.

Also like the Bolsheviks, HT functions in a secretive cell system. It is a well-organized and well-controlled party, which allows it effectively to raise the number of its members and sympathizers. Three to seven people form a cell, which has a leader. This leader is in a cell of his own that also has a leader, who in turn is in a cell farther up the chain. Rank-and-file HT members often only know their few colleagues in a cell, and only the leader of the cell knows the leader of the cell one level higher, making it extremely hard for government intelligence agencies to penetrate the group

At the top of the HT hierarchy is the *Amir*, who is currently based in Jordan. Under the *Amir*, there are three bodies: the administrative body, the enforcement body and the body that elects the *Amir*. These are the most secretive parts of the organization. The administrative body and the *Amir* choose prominent HT members to form the *kiedat*, the leadership committee. According to HT's administrative law, the leadership committee "lead[s] the party, and administer[s], observe[s] and supervise[s] the progress of all its activities."<sup>44</sup> The leadership committee has the exclusive right to amend the party's constitution and to enforce disciplinary measures on deviant rank-and-file members.<sup>45</sup> The *kiedat* has a political department that collects information on world events and fashions ideological responses to guide the Muslims.

While HT's secret headquarters is believed to be in Jordan, its London-based headquarters oversees HT activities in Muslim countries. The leadership maintains contact with the leaders of all national HT branches and directs their actions by providing them with funding, education materials and other necessary

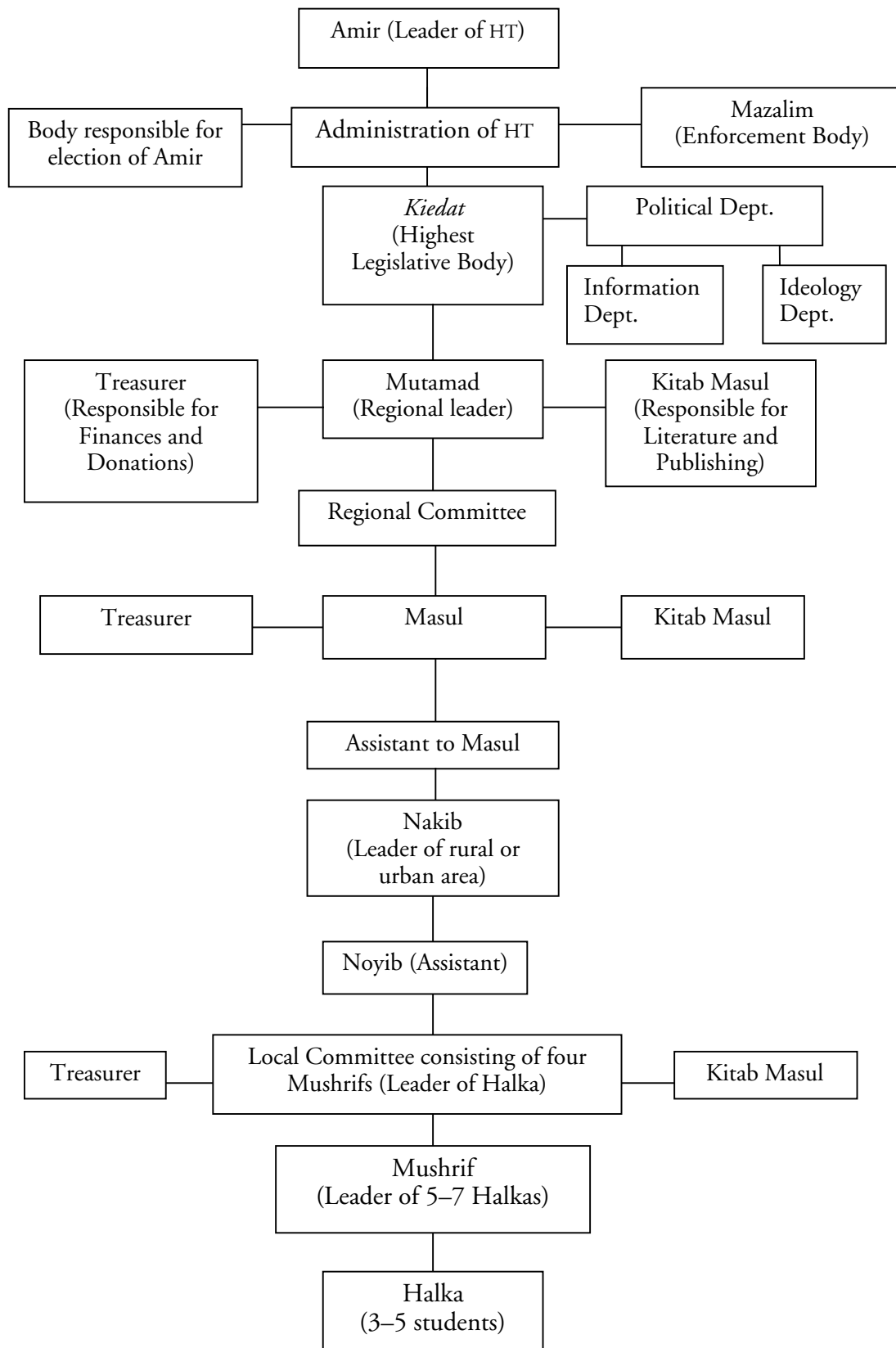
support. The London *kiedat* also gives orders to HT members to carry out anti-governmental demonstrations.

At the next level are the *mutamads*, or regional leaders, who together with the committee are responsible for overseeing the political affairs and party activities that occur within a “province”. (Because HT does not recognize nation-states as such, it refers to them as *wilaya*, or administrative provinces.) HT has only a handful of *mutamads*. The *mutamad* has three separate groups under his supervision. First is the cell that is responsible for party finances and donations. Second is the cell that is responsible for information collection and publications of party literature. Third, *mutamads* also lead the regional committee meetings, the dates of which are determined by the *Amir*. The regional committee members are elected by all subordinate members. They hold the only elected positions within HT. Those elected do not concern themselves with the details of activities within their province, but rather ensure that the party is well directed. In a sense, their role echoes the obligations intended for regional governors in HT’s sought-after Caliphate, “designing and executing ‘directly political’ activities” for the party.<sup>46</sup>

At the next level is the country head, or *masul*. The *masul* also has a separate party financing and donation group and one that is responsible for information collection and publication of party literature. At this level, HT leaflets are produced that focus on addressing issues relevant to a particular country’s Muslims and thus have more appeal to potential recruits. In Europe they may focus on the issues of assimilation and alienation, in the Middle East on the misuse of oil resources, and in Central Asia on socio-economic difficulties.

The *masuls* also have deputies, who interface with the *naqib*, HT’s leaders in rural and urban areas. Under the *masul* is the base of HT, which is composed of local committees and study circles. Each local committee is presided over by a *naqib*, who is appointed by the provincial committee. The *naqib* both manages the local committee and communicates with the provincial committee. Local committees are typically located in city centers so they can best conduct routine party affairs.<sup>47</sup> The *naqib* also has a deputy, *noyib*, who works with the local body consisting of four *mushrif*s, supervisors entrusted with the task of indoctrinating members and prospective members who attend the study circles.

Local committees oversee the indoctrination process of the *halkas*, or study circles, the building blocks of the HT system. A *mushrif* leads anywhere from five to seven *halkas*, with a firewall between them. Each *halka* consists of three to seven members, depending on the need for secrecy. Study circles typically meet once a week after work or school in a member’s home, a local mosque, or another place where the secrecy of the circle’s activities can be ensured. They follow special regulations and a specific education program.



In order to maintain maximum secrecy, there is no communication between cells. Under HT's rules, there are only a few ways to interact with a higher cell, and there is no interaction with a different cell at the same level. Members of the cell communicate with each other only by nicknames. If one is not happy with the *mushrif*, then one can prepare a letter and ask the *mushrif* to deliver it to the higher level. The higher level then helps resolve the dispute.<sup>48</sup>

Local committee members will often drop in on study circle sessions in order to maintain the integrity of HT's ideology as conveyed by al-Nabhani. If a member of the group is held in suspicion by other members, the *mushrif* or those who supervise him can choose to hold "one man" study circles with the suspect, thereby indoctrinating him alone. This tactic is often employed by circles that seek to indoctrinate government officials or members of the military that, by virtue of their position, are seen as suspect.<sup>49</sup>

The *mushrif* must report to the local committee once a week on the progress of the circle as a whole and on the individual merits of members and candidates. Local committee members, regarded as having sufficient doctrinal knowledge of the party's mission and philosophy, are responsible for accepting or rejecting candidates for HT membership.<sup>50</sup>

The recruitment method varies from country to country, but in general, a young person who is looking for answers to existential questions meets an HT member, who is either a co-worker, another student or a neighbor, who then brings that person to the party. Prospective candidates are formally introduced to the party apparatus by interacting with a study circle. Most people initially join to learn about Islam, but then are gradually indoctrinated.

Once a recruit joins the party and undergoes the required training, he or she then needs to take the HT membership oath,

In the name of Allah, I swear to protect Islam and to maintain fidelity to it; I swear to accept and follow goals, ideas and principles of HT in words and deeds; I swear to recognize the rightness of the party leadership's actions; I swear to carry out even those decisions of the party leaders that I find objectionable; I swear to direct all my energies for the realization of the party program. Allah is the Witness of my words.<sup>51</sup>

Clearly, the highly compartmentalized structure of HT, combined with the absolute commitment of its members, is a very attractive base from which radical networks can operate. The built-in security structure may also explain why there is no indication of punishment of members who leave the party.



## *Economic Policy*

HT's rejection of democracy is conjoined with its distaste for Western economic models. Yet the organization has not offered any concrete plans for an economic system that can mend the rampant poverty, corruption and ethnic strife that predominates in, for example, Central Asia. The closest it comes to providing any such proposals can be found in al-Nabhani's book, *The Economic System of Islam*, which HT considers to be a comprehensive document of economic policy. Commenting on the work, the International Crisis Group warns that "The main planks of Hizb ut-Tahrir's economic policy are a return to the gold standard and a distaste for capitalism, but what would replace it is a very vague, somewhat Islamicized socialism. It is not clear how the state would finance its wide-ranging responsibilities."<sup>52</sup> Indeed, the greatest problem with *The Economic System of Islam* is the lack of coherent proposals.

The book *Iqtisaduna* (Our Economics), written by Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, has also heavily influenced HT's economic philosophy. Like *The Economic System of Islam*, *Iqtisaduna* falls short of dealing with the complexities of creating a new economic system. Jalaluddin Patel, leader of HT in Britain (HTUK), defended al-Sadr against this charge by arguing,

The book does not aim to address all the details, but rather to lay down the foundations of the subject. These details exist in other works, like the aforementioned book [The Economic System of Islam]; furthermore, the Islamic economic system comes from the Creator. And of course, the Creator has a better insight into the human condition than humans.<sup>53</sup>

HT's inability to produce detailed alternatives to Western models derives in part from al-Nabhani's own "*a priori* conviction that Islam is the only valid thought system", resulting in superficial analysis that merely attempts to "tailor general discussion to the demands of the *a priori* conviction" that assumes the Islamist worldview to be flawless.<sup>54</sup>

## *Anti-Semitism*

HT's penchant for anti-Semitic remarks represents one of the party's most egregious deviations from classical Islamic philosophy. According to classical Islam, Jews and Christians are considered "people of the book", descendants of Abraham, and therefore legitimate in the eyes of God. Yet in the party's early days, al-Nabhani was influenced by Sheikh Haj Muhammad Amin al-Husseini, Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and Nazi war collaborator.<sup>55</sup> Party members have often publicly denied the Holocaust, calling it a "tool used by Jews to justify their own hegemony over Muslims in Palestine."<sup>56</sup> HT refers to Jews as "enemies of Allah."<sup>57</sup> In an interview with *Forum 18*, one Uzbekistani HT member "expressed his regret that Hitler had not succeeded in eliminating all Jews."<sup>58</sup> In

Copenhagen, party leaflets were handed out calling on Muslims to “kill [the Jews] wherever you find them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out.”

HT members insist that the movement is not anti-Semitic, drawing a distinction between anti-Zionism and hatred for Jews in general. In defense, HT claims that this terminology is used in leaflets coming from the Middle East, where people use the words “Jew” and “occupier” interchangeably. HT says they are opposed to the occupation of Iraq and their statements need to be read in this context. This is a dangerous trend indeed: Today in Iraq people have started to use the words ‘Jew’, ‘Israel’, and ‘America’ interchangeably, targeting all as “occupiers”.<sup>59</sup> Given the party’s animosity towards Uzbekistan’s President Islam Karimov, it comes as no surprise that HT refers to him as a “disbelieving Jew”.<sup>60</sup> HT defends the name designated for Karimov by pointing to his close ties with Israel and claiming that any leader that cooperates with the Jewish state while Palestine is occupied is in their eyes illegitimate.

Whatever the explanation, the anti-Semitic nature of HT is undeniable. In trying one HT member for breaching Denmark’s free-speech statutes by distributing anti-Semitic leaflets, the Danish court “did not accept that the leaflet was, as the defendant argued, aimed solely at the Israeli state and not Jews generally.”<sup>61</sup> Regardless of whether HT believes that its inflammatory words are directed towards Israel or Jews as a whole, the message has contributed to the dangerous resurgence of anti-Semitism worldwide.

### *A Modern Islamist Movement*

HT correctly identifies itself as a truly modern Islamic movement. Although HT’s philosophy is not compatible with Western notions of modernity, unlike Wahhabism it pursues its objective through modern methods. HT’s propaganda machine reaches its prospective constituency through the party’s print media circulations, the Internet and personal recruitment. There are at least seven websites that are related directly to Hizb ut-Tahrir. One of these websites is devoted exclusively to interaction with the mass media.

HT’s print media outreach generally takes the form of leaflets. Party leaflets, emulating a tactic used by Marxist-Leninist groups during the Cold War, will usually convey three concepts: a statement of the party’s mission, a detailed expression of its position on current political issues, and a call for recruitment. The leaflets in English are unusually well written and indicate a good understanding of global affairs. These leaflets, accessible over the Internet in various languages, provide the *umma* with timely and coherent explanations of current events in a way that fits HT’s framework.

What is remarkable about the leaflets reacting to significant political developments is the level of knowledge of issues that many other Islamist political analysts fail to understand or put in an easily digestible context. One of the recent leaflets posted on HT's website ([www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org](http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org)), entitled, "Oh Muslims! Shape the Middle East by your own hands, for you are its rightful owners", was primarily written as a rebuttal to what HT believes were the motivations behind the G-8 summit in June 2004. The leaflet warns of American efforts to use the summit as a platform to "expand control and hegemony" of the Middle East. The leaflet then contrasts "*kufri*" policy with its own stated objective, to restore the glory of the Caliphate.<sup>62</sup>

Party leaflets can either be accessed over the Internet or by contacting HT members. The Internet effectively complements HT's print media propaganda because it allows HT, a party that denies the legitimacy of political borders, to conduct outreach through a medium that largely ignores international boundaries.<sup>63</sup> HT has several well-built and continually updated websites ([hizb-ut-tahrir.org](http://hizb-ut-tahrir.org), [1924.org](http://1924.org) and [hilafet.com](http://hilafet.com), to name just a few) for the purpose of spreading the party's message. HT Internet sites, unlike its leaflets, can be easily accessed by Muslims who fear state surveillance and arrest. The Internet is also especially useful to communicate with members in repressive societies where there is no free press; HT fills the information vacuum by commenting on important global and local events.

The Internet allows the publication of material in many languages that is accessible all over the world. An article denouncing President Musharraf's cooperation with the U.S., for instance, can be read by members of the Pakistani diaspora in England, thus fueling anger against this secular leader. A screed describing torture of an HT member in an Uzbekistani jail can be accessed anywhere; even Muslims who do not know anything about Uzbekistan will circulate the same story throughout the global *umma*, creating a perception of an Uzbekistan where "Muslims" are tortured. In fact, thanks to HT's effective propaganda, the average Muslim today believes that Uzbekistan indeed imprisons and tortures pious Muslims, an absurd idea given that in a country of 26 million, of which 90 percent are Muslim, there are only several thousand radical Islamists in jail to date, and the number of torture cases has decreased significantly.

Cyberspace has allowed the party to construct a virtual Islamist community that is frequented by members, prospective members and sympathizers.<sup>64</sup> HT's targeted web-surfers are often Muslims who feel alienated from the societies in which they live. The virtual community constructed by HT provides its virtual citizens with a forum to exchange ideas and a "news room" to provide "education" on current events. All those with access to the Internet can feel that they are part of the brotherhood and the *dawa* (the spreading of Islam).<sup>65</sup>

The party also diligently recruits on college campuses in open societies such as Germany (at least prior to the group's banning) and the United Kingdom. Before HT was banned from staging public meetings in Germany, it held rallies at Berlin's Technical University, where party representatives made inflammatory anti-Semitic remarks.<sup>66</sup> HT's activities at London campuses comprise the party's most fervent recruitment efforts. The BBC reported that in 2003 an HT recruiter by the name of Rizwan Khaliq visited Kingston University campus nearly every day. Although the university had banned HT from its student organization fairs several years earlier for posting racist propaganda, the Islamic Society did not report Khaliq. A former Islamic Society president defended his society's toleration of HT: "What could we have done, tell me? You're telling us to go to the *kufri* against a Muslim, is that what you are saying we should have done?"<sup>67</sup> Even if HT is banned on campuses, illicit organizations have learned to elude the oversight of university authorities either by attempting to register organizations under false names, or by setting up stalls "outside the campus, where the students can reach us but the authorities can do nothing."<sup>68</sup>

### *Funding the Movement*

Despite the extensive scope of HT's global network, little is known of how the party funds its activities. Experts and members of the international intelligence community have speculated that HT is funded by supporters from Iran, the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia; it may also have received funding from Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. Saudis were believed to be supporting HT publications (translations, printing and even picking titles), but they seem to have stopped after 9/11. In the late 1950s there were even rumors that HT was funded by the CIA.

In general, HT's clandestine modus operandi has made tracking its assets and money flows difficult. Some speculate that HT is financed by affluent businessmen (who often are not HT members, but general supporters of the *dawa*) who either channel money to the party through charity organizations or send funds directly to the party.<sup>69</sup> Local entrepreneurs, party members and other sympathizers tend to make individual donations to HT's local organs, while more detached businessmen and Islamic charities are most likely to direct their money to HT's leadership committee, which in turn sends money to the movement's various regional branches. In the West, members who have jobs contribute part of their income, possibly as much as 10 percent. The salary percentage given to the party is believed to be less in Muslim countries.

One can also deduce that HT does not need much money to sustain its activities. Its ability to create a virtual Islamic community on the Internet has allowed the movement to reach the hearts and minds of many without investing in an elaborate communications network or party offices. It can cost as little as \$35 to register and operate even the most sophisticated website, which can make

the visitor believe there is a huge network behind it. Unlike other Islamist groups, HT does not engage in any charity work and therefore does not need large sums of money. HT's policy of non-violence means it does not need to invest in militant operations, although this may soon change if HT moves into its third stage. In the West, where most of HT's members have day jobs, HT actually raises more money than it spends. The publications are mostly printed and exported from the Gulf and the West to the more destitute places. In Central Asia, members smuggle in printing machines to secretly print leaflets in their homes, which again costs very little.

### *The Role of Women*

Unlike many Islamist movements that shun female participation in politics, women are thought to make up 10 percent of HT's membership.<sup>70</sup> Since HT's establishment, women have been welcomed into the ranks of party membership, albeit in different roles than men, and never in leadership positions. Female party candidates and members attend separate "sister" study groups. The party believes "the natural function of a woman is to be a mother and a housewife."<sup>71</sup> Women are permitted to work so long as they adhere to Islamic morality and virtue, and so long as they do not hold leadership positions.

The party does not permit men and women to interact freely. For example, "a man cannot shake a woman's hand, and he cannot be friends with a woman he could marry."<sup>72</sup> HT's gender policy derives from its rejection of what it perceives to be the West's decadence. In Islam "women are honored and are not paraded as sex objects for men."<sup>73</sup> According to Sultanah Parvin, an HT activist in the UK,

The Muslim woman with the Islamic identity is not consumed with her own image, appearance or life, but rather is an individual who knows about the affairs of the world, appreciates the problems of humanity and thinks carefully about her role in bringing the light of Islam to a world plagued by capitalism and its ills.<sup>74</sup>

An HT instructor who trains members in the party's ideology in Kyrgyzstan believes that women are more susceptible to HT's ideology because they are "far more religious than men and because they don't work and are less tainted by secular influences."<sup>75</sup>

Women's activism is increasing in terms of attending seminars and holding rallies. As recently as June 2004, hundreds of Muslim women attended an HTUK seminar that aimed to expose the "true motives behind the June 28 'handover' in Iraq." Dr. Nazreen Nawaz, Women's Media Representative of HTUK and an attendee of the seminar, decried U.S. motives in the Middle East as purely colonial and strategic, declaring that "Muslim women in Britain have a vital political responsibility, shared with Muslim women globally, to expose the

injustice and oppression imposed upon the Muslim world by the foreign policies of Western colonial governments who use the mask of democracy.”<sup>76</sup>

The role of women within HT is continuously being strengthened as female activism grows within the movement, in what terrorism expert Reuven Paz calls the “growing presence of Islamist feminism on the Internet”.<sup>77</sup> HT’s extensive use of the Internet facilitates this activism. Unlike many Islamic traditions that prescribe distinct protocols for men and women, the Internet has no gender biases. HT’s elaborate cyber community has allowed women to take part in political activism, something they have long been denied by the autocratic rulers of Muslim societies. As Paz notes,

By way of the anonymous cloak of the Internet, many . . . females who come from very traditionalist societies are able to express themselves . . . on a level equal to that of males. They are reminded that they too can become effective participants in a global struggle. Although they cannot become imams or preachers, these females, even and especially those living in the West, can feel a sense of belonging to the Muslim world through the Internet.<sup>78</sup>

Women may also join HT in protest for not being permitted to work or go to school in Muslim countries where headscarves are not allowed, such as Turkey. This is a growing problem in western Europe, especially France, which is taking a very strict policy against headscarves. HT has issued a letter of protest to the French president, and many women HT members have joined forces with other Islamists on the headscarf issue. For example, in Pakistan a female HT member delivered a petition to the education minister demanding that “the President and the government of Pakistan apply diplomatic pressure on the French government to reverse its decision banning the headscarf.”<sup>79</sup> The headscarf ban in France has become a leading mobilizer for Islamist women.

Women also increasingly join the party to carry on the ideas of their detained husbands, thereby grasping the opportunity for membership as a form of political protest.<sup>80</sup> In Uzbekistan, female Hizb ut-Tahrir members “have staged protest rallies against use of torture and violent and cruel treatment of their husbands.”<sup>81</sup> Women protested *en masse* against the arrests of their family members by Uzbekistani authorities in January 1998, November 1999, March and April 2001, and July 2002. At some of the demonstrations, women reportedly carried banners that read, “2001: Year of the Widow and Orphan.”<sup>82</sup> Echoing the tactic used by *las madres de la Plaza del Mayo* during Argentina’s Dirty War, Hizb ut-Tahrir understands that it is also safer for women to hold rallies since the police will not treat them with the same kind of toughness as they would with a man.

## *Local to Global*

HT has gone from a local organization operating within the West Bank to a truly global political movement currently active in over forty countries. One of its main websites, [www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org](http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org), has seven languages listed: Arabic, Turkish, Russian, English, German, Urdu and Danish. This is an indication of whom the party is trying to target on the Internet. It has long been outlawed throughout Turkey, the Middle East and North Africa. In 2003 it was banned in Russia, Pakistan and Germany. As HT members themselves recognize, “HT is today banned in all of the Middle East and Turkey, as these countries know we are at the core a political party trying to change the nation-state systems and unite the *umma* under the Caliphate. . . . In the UK, however, we do not have to register and thus can function without any problems”, which is why the “nerve center” of HT is currently in London.<sup>83</sup>

## *Middle East*

At the time of HT’s founding, the West Bank was under the control of Jordan. Accordingly, some consider the movement a Jordanian one. Initially, HT was tolerated by the Jordanian government, and in fact, HT participated in the electoral process with one of its members, Ahmad Ad-Da’ur, winning a seat in parliament.<sup>84</sup> But as noted above, the party considers the Jordanian state, like all existing Muslim states, illegitimate, and uses its inroads into the system to call for disobedience, telling its members not to recognize the constitution, the national charter or any state laws. Thus it was not a surprise that in both 1968 and 1969, HT unsuccessfully attempted, with the help of the military, to overthrow the government, leading to arrests and prison terms for individuals found guilty of affiliation with the party.<sup>85</sup> In 1977 and again in 1993, Jordanian security agents uncovered HT plots to use military elements to assassinate King Hussein and seize power. Party members were again arrested, prosecuted, and given heavy sentences.<sup>86</sup>

In 1955, two years after it was founded in the Jordanian West Bank, HT expanded into Egypt.<sup>87</sup> It was accused of being behind an attempted coup staged in 1974 at the Military Technical College in Heliopolis, and it was banned immediately afterwards.<sup>88</sup> Egyptian security agents arrested HT members in 1983 for again conspiring to overthrow the government.<sup>89</sup> Although Egyptian Islamists have asserted that the party’s influence in Egypt is negligible, Egyptian security forces continue to carry out crackdowns on its members. The movement maintains its strength in the country in part due to the unpopular government policy of recognition of and cooperation with Israel.

Most recently, in March 2004, 26 HT members, including three British nationals, were jailed in Egypt after being accused of “attempting to revive HT”.

All were convicted of plotting “to revolt against the regimes in place across Arab and Islamic states under the pretext they are infidels.”<sup>90</sup> These men were among the 118 HT members first detained by Egyptian authorities in April 2002, when they were caught spreading leaflets decrying Egyptian relations with Israel despite brutalities against the Palestinians.<sup>91</sup> After the jail sentence, HT members declared in several leaflets that their numbers would only grow larger the more they are sent to jail. They ask whether it “is a crime to try to bring about a state of rule that is asked by Allah” and blame the U.S. for “Muslims going after Muslims” instead of “uniting under one flag, one leader [to] fight against the enemies together.”

Under Saddam Hussein’s repression, HT was unable to establish an effective base in Iraq due to extensive government crackdowns, but with Hussein’s fall in 2003, HT has been able to operate more freely. For HT, like all other radical Islamist organizations, Iraq has become a very attractive battleground, and HT’s anti-American, anti-capitalist and anti-democratic message has increased its appeal. Party leaflets have been distributed that declare cooperation with coalition forces a crime under Islam and call upon Muslims to join HT to “destroy your enemies” and re-establish the Caliphate.<sup>92</sup>

In recent leaflets, HT has also warned against intersectarian fighting and reminded the *umma* that

they are fighting the biggest army in the world today with weapons that are less than a tenth of what the aggressors have. But with their bodies, *imaan* [belief] in their Lord, united with their brothers as Sunni and Shi’a, they have inflicted death and injury on this army causing it to be hurt and frightened. They have humbled and humiliated [this army’s] arrogance and haughtiness.<sup>93</sup>

### *Turkey*

In April 1967, several Jordanian HT members tried and failed to establish a significant presence in Turkey. They distributed leaflets with political communiqués and booklets outlining HT’s constitution and political philosophy but there was little response. The initial group of HT leaders was arrested in August 1967. Despite difficulties over the next decades, HT never gave up on Turkey. In fact, HT is obsessed with the end of the Caliphate and counts the days since its demise.<sup>94</sup> A statement on March 3, 1999 declared “on this day in 1924, a puppet of Englishmen, the Jew, who named himself as ‘Father of Turks’ [Ataturk], Mustafa Kemal had declared the overthrow of [the Caliphate]. He had replaced the order of Moslems’ administration that existed more than 13 centuries by an artificial regime that was created by unbelievers.”<sup>95</sup> Faced with this global campaign, the Turkish government has periodically engaged in operations against HT members, and in May 2003 arrested Turkish HT’s then-leader Amir Yilmaz Celik and 93 others.<sup>96</sup>



As researcher Rusen Cakir notes, HT members have also benefited from the amnesty law under the 2003 Reconciliation Act that was intended for PKK terrorists. Although they were released from jail, their ideology remains unchanged. Moreover, Cakir notes, “following the reform of the penal code, the government no longer arrests HT members, since they do not use violence.”<sup>97</sup> Thus, Turkey will increasingly become more vulnerable than any other country, as it is the prime target for HT. Furthermore, its effort to join the EU will require Turkey to enact reforms that will make the country as open as western Europe. In fact, since 2003 HT has again attracted the attention of Turkish security services.

HT’s main agenda today is to convince the Turks that they should not try to enter the European Union. They point to the “split personality” of Ataturk’s Turkey, stating that it is ironic that the Ottoman Caliphate’s successor is trying to move away from the *umma* to be in a European Union that does not truly desire Turkish membership. For example, two days after the EU Commission report stated Turkey made great reforms and progress, HT’s October 8, 2003 leaflet once again urged Turkish Muslims not to try to join the EU. They accused the Turkish prime minister of acting against the Muslims’ interest as the EU is against the rise of the Islamic civilization. HT also reminds Turkish Muslims that the only way Turks would ever be accepted into the EU would be by giving up their Islamic identity. They also criticize Turkey for having close relations with the U.S. and Israel. In many ways the key battle of ideas for HT is taking place in Turkey; if the abolisher of the Caliphate is accepted by the presumed Christian club, then their “clash of civilizations” ideology will effectively be proven wrong.

### *Britain*

In the 1970s, unable to establish a base in Turkey, HT began operating in western Europe, where it was able to take advantage of the political openness of the region. In fact, as mentioned earlier, HT’s *kiedat*, or supreme legislative body, is located in London and in the surrounding cities of Birmingham, Bradford and Sheffield, each of which has large Muslim populations (mainly of Pakistani and Indian origin). A large number of them fled their politically repressive countries over the last three decades, and since their arrival in England have campaigned heavily for their causes, raising money and recruiting among disaffected youths, especially Muslims and potential converts to Islam. Al-Khilafah Publications, HT’s print media center, which produces HT leaflets and publications explaining the party’s philosophy and its position on world events, is also based in London. Leaflets are transmitted via Internet to Kyrgyzstan, and forwarded to Uzbekistan and beyond for distribution. For example, HTUK publishes a monthly bulletin called “Ong al-Waie” that is intended for distribution in Indonesia.<sup>98</sup>

Since Britain has not banned HT, the party has been able to operate in London with few limitations. HT does not recruit people with less than a high school degree. It holds conferences and demonstrations throughout the city and actively recruits in London schools.<sup>99</sup> The main ban on HT activities in Britain so far has come from the colleges and schools, where student unions were able to convince the authorities to deny HT platforms (meeting space, distribution of literature) because it was spreading anti-Semitic messages. At the same time, HT cleverly uses different names and shows up at legitimate Islamic students' meetings and takes over the agenda. Given freedom of thought, religion and speech, there is little the school authorities can do, especially since HT may say that they hate American policies but do not say that they hate Americans.

HTUK has picked Uzbekistan as one of the key countries to attack. Their activities intensified in June 2002 (before the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Uzbekistan's independence) with organized meetings and demonstrations in front of Uzbekistan's embassy in London. On August 25, 2002, HT sent a copy of an "Open Letter" to the Uzbekistani embassy in London; on June 18, 2003 about 600 HT members demonstrated in front of the Uzbekistani embassy. The slogans they used included, "Uzbekistan—prison for Muslims", and "Karimov and Bush—murderer brothers in the war against terrorism".

British security services previously dismissed HT as a threat, even after the 9/11 attacks, but over the last two years the threat assessment has been revised due to a better understanding of HT's role as providing "inspiration" to potential terrorists, and certainly since an increasing number of British citizens have been arrested for being a member of the global terrorist network. Manzoor Moghal of the Muslim Council of Britain said "the mistake by the Home Office was to treat these guys as at worst a joke and at best a nuisance. Now they've woken up."<sup>100</sup> But given that HTUK's leadership consists of professionals (HTUK spokesman Dr. Imran Waheed is a psychologist and HTUK leader Jalaluddin Patel is an engineer) without criminal records, it is difficult to take any steps against them.

British security services also are concerned about HT's long-term impact on society, as its members want two separate systems: one is British law and the second is *sharia* and the Caliphate. Hence, HT does not care about British government policy, and HT's leadership never meets with anyone from the British government or any government-funded entities.<sup>101</sup>

So far there are very limited resources put to the task of investigating HT. Tasks that require appropriate funding and attention include: understanding international financial ties between HTUK and other branches of HT, especially in Central Asia; looking into connections between HT and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (which organized attacks in Britain); tracking their numerous websites (which change frequently and often are not in English); and penetrating private home gatherings. The inability to address these and other issues leads

security officials to say “we are frustrated . . . this issue has still not become a priority. . . . We probably will not act until it is too late.”<sup>102</sup>

### *Germany*

On January 15, 2003, the Federal Ministry of the Interior banned HT from activities in Germany, making it the only Western country so far to ban the group.<sup>103</sup> According to sources in the interior ministry, thirty apartments of HT followers were searched at that time, and HT’s assets located within Germany were seized. A second round of searches (involving approximately eighty locations) was conducted in April 2003 as part of an investigation into the organizational structure. But because HT’s administrative headquarters are located outside Germany and no organizational structure was apparent, it was possible to prohibit only its activities in Germany and not the organization itself. HT has filed a suit with the Federal Administrative Court to lift the ban.

What made it possible for Germany to ban HT was Germany’s historic circumstances and the laws passed accordingly, especially with regards to anti-Semitism. The ban on HT came in response to the organization’s violent propaganda in Germany, disseminated in flyers and pamphlets. The German-language publication *Explizit* served as the organization’s mouthpiece and ideological platform. In October 2002 a member of the organization presented HT’s positions at a public lecture—also attended, interestingly enough, by representatives of the right-wing extremist National Democratic Party of Germany—surely the worst of alliances. Moreover, as German Interior Minister Otto Schily publicly stated, HT “spreads anti-Jewish and anti-Israel hate propaganda.”<sup>104</sup> According to Schily, HT “promotes the use of violence to achieve political goals and also wants to provoke violence”, and “pursues the political goal of destroying Israel and calls for the expulsion and killing of Jews.”<sup>105</sup> Individual “Hizb ut-Tahrir” followers in Germany were also integrated within international campaigns; for example, in July 2002, demonstrations were held at the Uzbekistani embassy in Berlin, as in other European capitals, to protest the imprisonment of HT activists in Uzbekistan.

In Germany, terrorism has traditionally been fought using the means offered by criminal law. Police and public prosecutors use measures available to them like searches and pre-trial detention. Often, these ultimately lead to sentencing in criminal courts for violent crimes or for belonging to or supporting a terrorist organization. Aside from that, the public administration may take measures at different levels, which are now being better coordinated to provide a comprehensive approach to combating terrorism. One of the preventive measures against terrorism is the ban on organizations opposed to the free and democratic foundation of the state. This has been fundamental for taking action against HT. The basic human and civil right to form associations is limited through a special law called the Act Governing Private Associations. This law

specifies conditions and consequences in detail, because state interference in guaranteed basic rights requires a detailed legal foundation. Organizations that abuse the freedom of association can be banned by the highest authorities of the German interior administration. The consequences of such a ban are the dissolution of the organization and confiscation of its assets by the public authorities. Any further activities by or on behalf of the banned organization are punishable by law.

In order to impose a ban on a group like HT, it is necessary to show that the organization aggressively and belligerently opposes the constitutional order or the idea of international understanding. Less stringent conditions apply to bans on organizations based in Germany whose membership is made up primarily of non-EU nationals and organizations based outside the country. It is therefore possible to ban associations that support terrorist organizations abroad under the cover of other activity (such as charitable aid organizations). Moreover, status as a religious organization does not automatically protect against being banned, although religious freedom must be taken into account in each individual case.

The Federal Ministry of the Interior used two legal criteria for the ban of HT in light of the above-mentioned Act Governing Private Associations. First, HT opposes the idea of international understanding. Second, HT advocates the use of violence as a means of achieving political goals and attempts to incite such violence. HT was not considered a religious organization, and therefore the basic right of religious freedom was not a factor taken into account in the decision. HT was not banned for being an organization directly engaged in terrorist activity, nor did it operate in Germany as such an organization. However, the ban is intended to wipe out the breeding-grounds for Islamist terrorism. In doing so, the German government was fully aware that one cannot prohibit the thoughts of those people, but believed that rigorous action was necessary where violent thoughts are expressed.

In Germany, like in other western European countries, HT recruits most of its followers—around 200 members at the beginning of 2004—on university campuses. Many of its members have an academic background. Before the ban, HT regularly distributed hateful propaganda at mosques and Islamic centers, using them as party indoctrination centers. Shaker Assem, leader of HT in Germany, lectured at Mohamed Atta's Islamic study group at Technical University in Hamburg during summer 2001.<sup>106</sup> Any organizational structures in Germany remain hidden, and HT activists in Germany behave in a highly secretive manner.

Even before being banned, HT was under surveillance by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, the German domestic intelligence agency, due to indications that its activities were directed against the free and democratic order of the state. In addition, the Federal Ministry of the Interior has its own investigative authority, which it exercised via the police agencies in the individual

German states. The searches led to discovery of computer data, leaflets, papers, books and other publications. No valuable assets were found. Security services have concluded that in Germany, HT appears as a secret society, kept up only through personal contacts, which are based on shared ideology. Following the ban, the organization does not conduct any public activities in Germany and has stopped the German edition of *Explizit*. Nevertheless, HT continues to recruit and raise funds.

### *Denmark*

HT has also come under serious government scrutiny in Denmark. “In 2002”, writes Michael Whine, “Danish HT produced a ‘hit list’ of 15 to twenty leading members of Denmark’s Jewish community.”<sup>107</sup> In that same year, Fadi Abdel Latif, the leader of Danish Hizb ut-Tahrir was convicted of incitement of racial hatred and sentenced to sixty days in prison after the group circulated the now-infamous leaflet urging people to “Kill them, kill the Jews wherever you find them.”<sup>108</sup> According to Daniel Pipes, “Muslim violence threatens Denmark’s approximately 6,000 Jews, who increasingly depend on police protection. Jewish parents were told by one school principal that she could not guarantee their children’s safety and were advised to attend another institution.”<sup>109</sup> Yet even after bringing HT to trial, Denmark was not able to ban the movement. According to the state prosecutor, “there is no evidence that can serve as a basis to prove that Hizb ut-Tahrir employed illegal means or that it undertook illegal activities as a natural part of its work.”<sup>110</sup> HT has declared this a huge success, and was sufficiently emboldened by this victory to further challenge the German decision.

HT is one of the most successful organizations in western Europe in recruiting the frustrated youth who have lost faith in their home country’s system. In an effort to prevent their children from being recruited, Danish parents have formed groups designed to steer children into other activities. Leading immigrant spokesman and Danish MP Naser Khader was quoted in the *Copenhagen Post*: “We have to be aware that the radical anti-society activities of this organization can prove tempting to many of our Danish teenagers . . . .”<sup>111</sup> It is also attracting criminals, as the *Copenhagen Post* reported in its story entitled, “Delinquents Go in for Islam”:

[O]n the streets of high-crime immigrant areas in Nørrebro, Århus and the notorious Vollsmose district in Odense, [Hizb ut-Tahrir] is receiving more and more support from young immigrant delinquents, attracted by its rejection of Western values and anti-integration message. A Muslim spokesman says, ‘The more those youngsters lose faith in Denmark, the easier it is for them to be attracted to fundamentalist organizations like this.’ And a great number of youths with an ethnic background have lost faith in Denmark.<sup>112</sup>

Similarly, Hizb ut-Tahrir is increasingly recruiting among young ethnic Danes. A recent Danish article indicates that “around one out of six members of the Danish branch . . . is a person of [ethnic] Danish background” and Omar Shah, a longtime observer of Hizb ut-Tahrir and co-author of the book “Islam, Christendom and Modernity”, was quoted as stating that “today, Hizb ut-Tahrir has around one hundred members of Danish background, compared to about 35 one year ago.” He believes that, “as many Danes have lost faith in Western values because of the Iraq war, they’ve run straight into the arms of Hizb ut-Tahrir. In addition, Hizb ut-Tahrir is the only large-scale Muslim organization that embraces all ethnic backgrounds.” Moreover, HT’s success may be directly linked to its being the “only organization that offers organized Quran instruction in Danish, which makes a difference.”<sup>113</sup>

These are some examples of HT’s growing influence in Europe. While Britain, Germany and Denmark were briefly discussed, HT is a growing group in other European countries as well.

### *Russia*

In February 2003, the Russian Federation also outlawed Hizb ut-Tahrir and included it on its list of terrorist organizations. Russia may historically be best equipped to understand the challenge Hizb ut-Tahrir poses to global security, given that the movement is based on Marxist-Leninist methodology and hopes to usher in a global revolution like the Trotskyites. Moreover, while Hizb ut-Tahrir insists on non-violence until the third stage, it does justify the use of force, just as Lenin and the Bolsheviks did in 1917.

Russia’s Federal Security Services (FSB) discovered HT’s presence in their country in 2001 and has accused them of links with Wahhabis, Arab fighters supporting the Chechens, and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. In 2001 they arrested an Uzbekistani citizen, Kholmirezayev, who had reportedly been trained in Afghanistan. In May 2001 they arrested Uzbekistani citizen Nodir Aliyev, who was accused by Uzbekistani authorities of conspiring to overthrow the Uzbekistani government. The Russian Foreign Ministry has reportedly described Hizb ut-Tahrir as “the most radical clandestine extremist structure, funded by overseas centers, which aims at Islamization of Russia and neighboring countries.” On December 16, 2003, FSM head Nikolai Patrushev claimed Hizb ut-Tahrir “organized armed units and took part in these units”.<sup>114</sup> On June 9, 2003, the FSB reported the arrest of 121 Islamist militants, including 55 suspected members of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Moscow, all foreigners living illegally in Russia. Top FSB spokesman Sergei Ignatchenko said, “These are terrorists who want to overthrow the existing regime by military means.”<sup>115</sup> Reportedly, among those arrested were the cell’s leaders, Alisher Musayev, a Kyrgyzstani citizen, and Akram Jalalov, a Tajikistani citizen, who were found in possession of explosive material, detonator devices, three grenades and 15 HT

leaflets.<sup>116</sup> Since the outlawing of the group, more than 55 HT members have been arrested and prosecuted in court.

## *Asia*

HT is establishing a growing presence in South Asia, particularly in Pakistan, where activities were officially launched in late 2000 and increased after 9/11. HT opened up its own publishing house in Peshawar to develop a strategy of Islamic ideology directed at Central Asian states. Early in 2004, members of HT were arrested for criticizing Pakistan's Wana operation aimed at uprooting extremism and terrorists from South Waziristan, a tribal area along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. Hizb ut-Tahrir activities in Pakistan focus on urban centers and politically and socially influential people. In general they ignore the rural areas, as these are not necessary to take over power. Although Musharraf's top generals remain loyal to the government, HT views the rest of the military as potential allies.<sup>117</sup> The Pakistan chapter is headed by Navid Butt, an electrical engineer who studied at the University of Chicago. Today, HT Pakistan is believed to be supported by extremist groups such as Jamaat-e-Islami, Sepah-e Sahaba, and Tanzeem'e Islami Pakistan in its work to recreate the Caliphate in Central Asia.

Pakistan intensified its crackdown on HT during fall 2004. HT has consistently condemned Musharraf for aiding U.S. military operations in Afghanistan. In response, HT declared that Musharraf's strategy of supporting "enlightened moderation" in Islam is simply a way to serve American interests to "suppress Islam" and questioned why human rights organizations remain silent when there is "oppression and torture perpetrated by the government on Muslims to suppress Islam."<sup>118</sup> They also have accused the rulers of resorting to extrajudicial methods and torture, thus "responding to Hizb's intellectual and political struggle with such extremism and oppression."<sup>119</sup> One HT press statement went as far as to suggest that "America and other imperialistic countries consider . . . comprehensive and radical implementation of Islam and the unification of the Muslim *umma* through establishing [the Caliphate] . . . more dangerous than the possession of a nuclear bomb."<sup>120</sup> Pakistan therefore presents both an important "hearts and minds" challenge, and as a nuclear power, potentially a serious security problem—especially if groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir indeed have penetrated the military.

HT also operates in several other pivotal countries, and almost every head of a Muslim state considers the movement to be a serious national security threat. As the International Crisis Group has noted, HT was introduced in Indonesia in 1983 by Abdur-Rahman al-Baghdadi, of Jordanian-Lebanese descent. Today it is led by Ismail Yusanto, who became a member in 1985 while he was a geology student at the one of Indonesia's leading institutions, the Gajah Mada University in central Java. What started as an underground campus movement today

remains largely campus based and enjoys well-attended rallies and meetings without government restrictions. This is despite the fact that it may have ties to violent extremist groups such as Jemaah Islamiyah, the group responsible for the Bali bombing in October 2002.<sup>121</sup> There are recent reports of arrests in Syria. Security forces detained 19 people there in 1999 on charges of support for or membership in HT.<sup>122</sup> From 2001 to 2002, more arrests were made, bringing the total number of detainees to at least 59.<sup>123</sup> In Azerbaijan the most recent arrests were in August 2001. Chinese authorities have become concerned about increased HT activity in the Muslim-majority Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR). However, the primary battleground today is Central Asia and specifically Uzbekistan, the country with the region's largest population.

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<sup>1</sup>"The Founder of Hizb ut-Tahrir", <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.info/english/founder.htm>.

<sup>2</sup>Mateen Siddiqi, "The Doctrine of Hizb ut-Tahrir", in *The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir: Deciphering and Combating Radical Islamist Ideology*, ed. Zeyno Baran (Washington, DC: The Nixon Center, 2004), p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Shmuel Bar, *The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan* (Tel Aviv: Moshe Dayan Center, 1999). Quoted in Siddiqi, "The Doctrine of Hizb ut-Tahrir".

<sup>4</sup>Bismillahi al-Rahman al-Raheem, "Hizb ut-Tahrir", <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/urdu/tareef/content.html>.

<sup>5</sup>For the most comprehensive study on Hizb ut-Tahrir to date, see Suha Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamentalist Quest and the Search for the Islamic Caliph*, (n.p.: Grey Seal Books, 1994), p. 37.

<sup>6</sup>Ahmed Rashid, "Reviving the Caliphate", in *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (New Haven: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 119.

<sup>7</sup>"Fall of the Khilafah", <http://www.islamic-state.org/portal/fall-of-the-khilafah.html>.

<sup>8</sup>"Weak and Discredited Uzbek Regime Fails to Malign Hizb ut-Tahrir", August 10, 2004, [http://www.1924.org/press/pressreleases/index.php?id=1337\\_0\\_28](http://www.1924.org/press/pressreleases/index.php?id=1337_0_28).

<sup>9</sup>Abdullah Robin, interview by Zeyno Baran, London, UK, December 21, 2003.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Husain Haqqani, "Understanding HT Ideology", in *The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir*, p. 29.

<sup>12</sup>Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, *The System of Islam*, (London: Al-Khilafah Publications, 1999), <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/english/books/system/system.htm>.

<sup>13</sup>Robin, interview by Baran.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>"The Khilafah Has Been Established", *Khilafah Magazine*, April 2003, p. 4.

<sup>16</sup>"Let not the Muslims take the Jews as Supporters", July 20, 2000, <http://www.khilafah.com/home/category.php?DocumentID=81&TagID=2>.

<sup>17</sup>Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, *Political Thoughts* (London: Al-Khilafah Publications, 1999), pp. 116–17.

<sup>18</sup>"Annihilate the Fourth Crusade", March 20, 2003, <http://www.khilafah.com.pk/leaflets/030320iraq.html>.

<sup>19</sup>"The Inevitability of the Clash of Civilizations", April 20, 2004, <http://216.239.41.104/search?q=cache:5UCEoh1Owq8J:www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/english/books/clashofcivilisation/clashofcivilisation.pdf+the+inevitability+of+a+clash&hl=en>.



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- <sup>20</sup>Qasim Khawaja, interview by Zeyno Baran, London, UK, December 21, 2003.
- <sup>21</sup>Robin, interview by Baran.
- <sup>22</sup>Igor Rotar, "Central Asia: Hizb-Ut-Tahrir Wants Worldwide Sharia Law", *Forum 18*, October 29, 2003.
- <sup>23</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup>Robin, interview by Baran.
- <sup>25</sup>"The Method of Hizb ut-Tahrir", <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/english/>.
- <sup>26</sup>Imran Wahid, speech at National Indoor Arena, Birmingham, UK, August 27, 2000; see <http://www.Islamic-State.org/method>.
- <sup>27</sup>"The Method of Hizb ut-Tahrir", <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/english/>.
- <sup>28</sup>Wahid, speech.
- <sup>29</sup>"The Method of Hizb ut-Tahrir", <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/english/>.
- <sup>30</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>31</sup>Siddiqui, "Doctrine of Hizb ut-Tahrir", p. 3.
- <sup>32</sup>Wahid, speech.
- <sup>33</sup>Information provided by a senior Jordanian government official.
- <sup>34</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>35</sup>"The Method of Hizb ut-Tahrir", <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/english/>.
- <sup>36</sup>Wahid, speech.
- <sup>37</sup>"The Khilafah Has Been Established".
- <sup>38</sup>Information provided by a senior Jordanian government official.
- <sup>39</sup>International Crisis Group, "Radical Islam in Central Asia: Responding to Hizb ut-Tahrir", *Asia Report 58*, June 2003, p. 4.
- <sup>40</sup>Siddiqui, "Doctrine of Hizb ut-Tahrir", p. 11.
- <sup>41</sup>"The Method of Hizb ut-Tahrir", <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/english/>.
- <sup>42</sup>David Isby, "The Hizb ut-Tahrir: Stronger in Central Asia", *Terrorism Monitor*, November 7, 2003, [http://www.jamestown.org/images/pdf/st\\_002\\_008.pdf](http://www.jamestown.org/images/pdf/st_002_008.pdf).
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- <sup>44</sup>Taji-Farouki, *Fundamentalist Quest*, p. 117.
- <sup>45</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 120.
- <sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 123.
- <sup>48</sup>Muhammad Ali, interview by Zeyno Baran, Uzbekistan, October 8, 2003.
- <sup>49</sup>Taji-Farouki, *Fundamentalist Quest*, p. 129.
- <sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 124.
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- <sup>52</sup>International Crisis Group, "Radical Islam in Central Asia", p. 5.
- <sup>53</sup>Mahan Abedin, "Inside Hizb ut-Tahrir: An Interview with Jalaluddin Patel, leader of Hizb ut-Tahrir in the UK", *Terrorism Monitor*, August 11, 2004, [http://www.jamestown.org/images/pdf/st\\_002\\_008.pdf](http://www.jamestown.org/images/pdf/st_002_008.pdf).
- <sup>54</sup>Taji-Farouki, *Fundamentalist Quest*, p. 38.
- <sup>55</sup>"Who was the Grand Mufti, Haj Muhammed Amin al-Husseini?", [http://www.palestinefacts.org/pf\\_mandate\\_grand\\_mufti.php](http://www.palestinefacts.org/pf_mandate_grand_mufti.php).
- <sup>56</sup>"Hizb ut-Tahrir", *Newsnight*, BBC News, August 27, 2003; see <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/3182271.stm>.
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- <sup>58</sup>Rotar, "Central Asia".
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- <sup>60</sup>Bismillah al-Rahman al-Raheem, "The Criminal Ruling Clan of Uzbekistan wages a brutal war against Islam and those who convey it", <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/english/>

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<sup>61</sup>“Hizb ut-Tahrir”, *Newsnight*.

<sup>62</sup>“Oh Muslims! Shape the Middle East by your own hands, for you are its rightful owner”, June 26, 2004, <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.info/english/leaflets/2004/june0904.htm>.

<sup>63</sup>Jean Francois Mayer, “New Forms of Communication”, in *The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir*, p. 110.

<sup>64</sup>For the general impact of the internet on the global salafist movement, see Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), p. 161; Mayer, “New Forms of Communication”, pp. 108–11.

<sup>65</sup>Reuven Paz, “The University of Global Jihad”, in *The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir*, p. 97.

<sup>66</sup>Reuters, “Germany Targets Islamist Group in Nationwide Raids”, *Daily Times* (Pakistan), April 11, 2003, [http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story\\_11-4-2003\\_pg7\\_8](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story_11-4-2003_pg7_8).

<sup>67</sup>“Hizb ut-Tahrir”, *Newsnight*.

<sup>68</sup>Abu Taher, “A Call To Arms”, *Guardian* (London), May 16, 2000.

<sup>69</sup>Marina Pikulina, “Uzbekistan: Center of Confrontation between traditional and extremist Islam in Central Asia”, (presentation at The Nixon Center, Washington, DC, July 16, 2003).

<sup>70</sup>Ulugbek Babakulov, “Kyrgyzstan: Hizb ut-Tahrir Bolstered by Female Recruits”, *Religioscope*, August, 30 2002, [http://www.religioscope.com/notes/2002/070\\_hizb\\_kyrgyz.htm](http://www.religioscope.com/notes/2002/070_hizb_kyrgyz.htm).

<sup>71</sup>Hashem Kassem, “Hizb ut-Tahrir al Islami”, *East-West Record*, August 12, 2004, [http://www.eastwestrecord.com/get\\_articles.asp?articleid=219](http://www.eastwestrecord.com/get_articles.asp?articleid=219).

<sup>72</sup>Omar Abdullah, “Dangerous in the Extreme”, *Evening Telegraph* (Dundee, UK), October 6, 2004, <http://www.thisisderbyshire.co.uk/displayNode.jsp?nodeId=124378&command=displayContent&sourceNode=158268&contentPK=10569145>.

<sup>73</sup>Abdullah, “Dangerous in the Extreme”.

<sup>74</sup>“Muslim Women to launch the ‘Western Beauty Myth’ book”, *Muslim News* (Middlesex, UK), August 15, 2003, <http://www.muslimnews.co.uk/news/news.php?article=5501>.

<sup>75</sup>Babakulov, “Kyrgyzstan: Hizb ut-Tahrir Bolstered”.

<sup>76</sup>“Women’s Seminar in Glasgow to Expose the True Reality of Iraq’s 30<sup>th</sup> June ‘Handover’”, [http://www.1924.org/press/pressreleases/index.php?id=1317\\_0\\_28](http://www.1924.org/press/pressreleases/index.php?id=1317_0_28).

<sup>77</sup>Paz, “The University of Global Jihad”, p. 97.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Naveed Butt, “Women delegation of Hizb ut-Tahrir delivered a signed petition to Zubaida Jalal”, February 27, 2004, <http://www.khilafah.com.pk/pr/04010pr.html>.

<sup>80</sup>Babakulov, “Kyrgyzstan: Hizb ut-Tahrir Bolstered”.

<sup>81</sup>Vitali Ponomariov, quoted in *ibid*.

<sup>82</sup>Human Rights Watch, “Creating Enemies of the State: Religious Persecution in Uzbekistan”, March 2004, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2004/uzbekistan0304/>.

<sup>83</sup>Robin, interview by Baran.

<sup>84</sup>Azzam Tamimi, “Opponents of Democracy: The Religious and Political in Contemporary Islamic Debate”, <http://www.mpacuk.org/mpac/data/c6fd87b2/c6fd87b2.jsp>. In 1954, five members of Hizb ut-Tahrir ran for seats in Jordan’s parliament. Ahmad ad-Da’ur was able to win a seat because he entered into an agreement with the Muslim Brotherhood, and agreed to take the oath of allegiance to the king.

<sup>85</sup>International Crisis Group, “Radical Islam in Central Asia”, p. 10.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Taji-Farouki, *Fundamentalist Quest*, p. 167.

<sup>88</sup>“Briton’s Egypt Trial Delayed Again”, BBC News, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/>

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<sup>89</sup>Taji-Farouki, *Fundamentalist Quest*, p. 166.

<sup>90</sup>“Egypt Jails Islamic Group Members”, BBC News, March 25, 2004, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/em/fr/-/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/3567961.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/em/fr/-/1/hi/world/middle_east/3567961.stm). The Britons are Majid Nawaz, 26, a university student studying law and Arabic, from Essex; Reza Pankhurst, 28, and Ian Nisbet, 29, both IT consultants from London. The three received sentences of three years.

<sup>91</sup>“Briton’s Egypt trial delayed again”, BBC News. For exact number of HT members detained, see <http://www.khilafah.com.pk/pr/02016pn.html>.

<sup>92</sup>“Oh Muslims! Shape the Middle East by your own hands for you are its rightful owners”, <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org>.

<sup>93</sup>“The war on Iraq is a curse on the rulers in the Muslim countries”, April 7, 2004, <http://hizb-ut-tahrir.org/english/leaflets/april0704.htm>.

<sup>94</sup>See <http://www.1924.org>.

<sup>95</sup>“Give the answer calling to authority of Allah”, leaflet, March 3, 1999.

<sup>96</sup>Rusen Cakir, “The Rise and Fall of Turkish Hizb ut-Tahrir”, in *The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir*, p. 33.

<sup>97</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>98</sup>Melvin Singh and Arul John, “After JI, new terrorist group in our midst?”, *New Paper*, July 17, 2004, <http://newpaper.asia1.com.sg/topstories/0,4133,TopStories-1090079940,00.html>.

<sup>99</sup>S. Zubaida, “Islam in Europe”, *Critical Quarterly*, 45, no. 2: (July 2003).

<sup>100</sup>“Al Qaeda cells regroup for next phase in the war”, *Financial Times*, February 19, 2002.

<sup>101</sup>Based on interviews with British government sources.

<sup>102</sup>Interview in April 2004 in London.

<sup>103</sup>The information on Germany is based mainly on material provided from the German Ministry of the Interior at the beginning of 2004.

<sup>104</sup>Yosi Melman, “Germany Bans Islamic Group it says is anti-Semitic”, *Haaretz* (Jerusalem), January 15, 2003, <http://www.haaretzdaily.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=252437&contrassID=1&subContrassID=8&sbSubContrassID=0&listSrc=Y>.

<sup>105</sup>Melman, “Germany Bans Islamic Group it says is anti-Semitic”.

<sup>106</sup>Peter Finn, “Germany Bans Islamic Group: Recruitment of Youth Worried Officials”, *Washington Post*, January 1, 2003.

<sup>107</sup>Whine, “Hizb ut-Tahrir in Open Societies”, in *The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir*.

<sup>108</sup>*Ibid.* See also <http://www.ict.org.il/articles/articledet.cfm?articleid=515> [http://www.denmarkemb.org/news/news\\_11\\_01\\_02.html](http://www.denmarkemb.org/news/news_11_01_02.html).

<sup>109</sup>Daniel Pipes and Lars Hegegaard, “Something Rotten in Denmark?”, *New York Post*, Aug. 27, 2002, <http://www.danielpipes.org/article/450>.

<sup>110</sup>“Press conference release by Hizb ut-Tahrir in Denmark regarding the decision of the Justice Ministry not to ban the party”, January 21, 2004, <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.info/english/leaflets/2004/january2104.htm>.

<sup>111</sup>“Kids Join”, *Copenhagen Post*, March 7, 2003.

<sup>112</sup>“Delinquents Go in for Islam”, *Copenhagen Post*, September 14, 2001.

<sup>113</sup>Lars Wikborg and Nagieb Khaja, “Flere Danskere I Hizb ut-Tahrir”, *Urban* (Denmark), October 1, 2004, [www.urbanavis.dk/article.php?id=2260](http://www.urbanavis.dk/article.php?id=2260). See also on <http://www.1924.org>.

<sup>114</sup>Blagov, “Moscow Turns up Heat on Radicals”.

<sup>115</sup>Agence France Presse, “Russia Arrests 121 Members of Muslim Cell”, *Dawn Internet News*, June 9, 2003, <http://www.dawn.com/2003/06/10/int10.htm>.

<sup>116</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup>International Crisis Group, “Radical Islam in Central Asia”, p. 9.

<sup>118</sup>Pervez Musharraf, “A Plea for Enlightened Moderation”, *Washington Post*, June 1, 2004.

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<sup>119</sup>“Countrywide crackdown on Hizb ut-Tahrir continues, 4 members along with two relatives of a member are abducted from their houses in Rahim and Yar Khan”, Office of the Spokesman of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Pakistan, October 2004, <http://www.ramadhan.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=1504>.

<sup>120</sup>“Six people of Hizb ut-Tahrir picked up from Lahore”, October 17, 2004.

<sup>121</sup>International Crisis Group, “Radical Islam in Central Asia”, p. 13.

<sup>122</sup>“Syria detains 19 persons under the charge of Hizb ut-Tahrir affiliation”, *Khilafah News*, June 6, 2004, <http://www.khilafah.com/home/category.php?DocumentID=9805&TagID=2>.

<sup>123</sup>“Arrested Hizb ut-Tahrir”, Syrian Committee for Human Rights, <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/english/dawah/september0602.pdf>.

# 3

## GLOBAL THREATS

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As the previous chapter demonstrates, Hizb ut-Tahrir is a transnational radical Islamist political movement that aims to overthrow Western and Muslim governments and restore the Islamic Caliphate. It describes itself as a “political party”, yet is not registered as such anywhere. Its main focus is political agitation; it thus ignores common Islamic teachings, as well as the spiritual aspects of the religion. HT may be non-violent, but it certainly is not peaceful. Though it is not engaged in violence, its ideology is violent. If HT ever takes power in a country, it will certainly launch military attacks.

HT’s greatest achievement to date is to have shifted the debate within the Muslim world. When Osama Bin Laden or Abu Musab al-Zarqawi now talk about the Caliphate, HT can be proud to have been their inspiration.<sup>1</sup> HT can also be proud that, after years of telling Muslims “You are one *umma*”, a global consciousness of this community is growing. HT is politicizing Islamic discourse and thereby paving the way for other, more militant groups to take advantage of the opening it has made. For example, in the article “USA and the War with Islam”, HT-splinter group al-Muhajiroun stated:

Sheikh Osama bin Laden is not just another warrior for present-day Muslims; he is a hero who stands for divine justice and freedom from oppression. Any action against him is seen as action against the global body of Muslims. . . . Oh Muslims, support Sheikh Osama bin Laden and your Islamic movements wherever they may be, whether physically, verbally or financially, in the jihad against the occupiers of Muslims’ land.<sup>2</sup>

Hizb ut-Tahrir presents a set of threats to U.S. interests, which centers on its role in providing ideological and theological justification (and thus inspiration) to terrorists. Combined with the efforts of its more radical splinter groups, HT contributes to the separation of Muslims from the West, and to the growth of anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism. Furthermore, the materials it posts on the Internet or the instructions it distributes in leaflets can incite those not part of the HT network to establish radical organizations of their own. In short, if HT ever succeeds in its three-stage effort to gain control of a given state, the result would be a disaster both for the country in question and for American interests more generally.

Hizb ut-Tahrir as an organization is not likely to take up terrorism. Terrorist acts are simply not part of HT's mission, which is to serve as an ideological and political training ground for Islamists. In order to best accomplish this, HT will need to remain non-violent, acting within the legal system of the countries in which it operates. Moreover, HT does not need to become a terrorist group—winning hearts and minds is a much more effective method towards achieving its ultimate goal. Since acts of terrorism are only one tool in the radical Islamist toolbox, HT will be even stronger if it can turn people and systems around without violence. At the same time, HT members readily admit that, in the event they cannot establish their Caliphate by words, they would not rule out the use of force.

While Hizb ut-Tahrir operated carefully before 9/11, after the wars in Afghanistan and especially in Iraq, and under the direction of its new *Amir* (since April 2003), the movement has used increasingly radical language. HT benefits from the overall growth in anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism worldwide and actively promotes the clash of civilizations and the destruction of what they view as American hegemony. While the U.S. has so far not advanced any convincing arguments for either its invasion of Iraq or its subsequent management of the occupation, HT for its part has built a strong ideological case. This is accomplished first by drawing parallels to Israeli military actions: “They have besieged Fallujah, and bombarded it with rockets and artillery, turning it into a theatre of war and a place of great massacre reminiscent of Jenin at the hands of the brutal Jewish entity.”<sup>3</sup> Second, HT explains away the intra-Muslim fighting in Iraq to be part of America's policy goal to have “Muslims killing themselves in a civil war in the country so that [the U.S.] can continue its occupation.” The faithful are accordingly urged not to “assist Americans and their agents in Iraq and elsewhere. . . . Rather, target your arrows at the *kufri* occupiers, those who are lying in wait for you.” Finally, HT spurs Iraqis into action by recourse to Quranic verses, particularly Taubah 9:38 (“O you who believe! What is the matter with you, that when you are asked to march forth in the Cause of Allah (jihad) you cling heavily to the earth? Are you pleased with the life of this world rather than the hereafter? But little is the enjoyment of the life of this world as compared with the Hereafter”). This verse, along with Nur 9: 14 (“Fight against them: Allah will punish them by your hands and help you fighting against them”) and Maidah 5:51 (“You, the believers, do not make friends with the Jews and Christians. They are friends between them. If one of you makes friendship with them, then he is one of them.”) are some of the verses taken out of context to justify all manner of violent action.

Hizb ut-Tahrir's ability to wage a more effective war of ideologies has two specific implications. First, HT is creating an alternative identity of “Muslim”, which competes with specifically national identities such as “Uzbekistani”, “British”, or “American.” HT's anti-integration message is fundamentally opposed to the “melting pot” concept of American identity, and more generally to the nation-state concept that has defined the world order since Westphalia. If

the world's 1.3 billion Muslims were to think of themselves as "Muslims" and not as citizens of their own countries, this would certainly have serious consequences. In addition, if the Muslims who live in Western countries choose not to integrate, and instead seek to lead "parallel lives", then there will be inevitable clashes between Muslims and non-Muslims in the long term. This should be a particular concern for Europe, which is struggling to assimilate its Muslim citizens, and could face serious instability if its Muslim communities remain ghettoized.

Second, more than three years after 9/11, the "war of ideas" is still not given correct attention in the U.S.; there has been no effort to counter worldwide perceptions of it as an arrogant empire eager to display its military might and power. With increasing military reverses in Iraq and elsewhere, however, Muslims are coming to perceive the U.S. as a declining empire in contrast to an Islamic civilization on the rise. The American values of materialism, competition and individualism are no longer appealing to the average Muslim. Meanwhile, under the guidance of HT, traditional Islamic values such as "dignity" and "justice" are becoming more popular.

### *The Radicalization of HT*

As it has become more confident of its future success, Hizb ut-Tahrir has increased the radicalism of its rhetoric. The shift within HT started in the late 1980s, when the new generation was no longer satisfied by the non-violent theories of al-Nabhani. The renewed rules of HT were expressed as a report from its conference in Missouri on December 22, 1989. This report was later published and disseminated in many languages as "The Way to Renew Hizb ut-Tahrir". This report also discussed the theological foundations of armed insurrection against any "unfaithful" government.

In June 2001, in its publication *Al-Waie*, Hizb ut-Tahrir stated clearly that it is acceptable to carry out suicide attacks with explosive belts. In the "Martyrdom Operations" article, HT gave its own *fatwa* on suicide attacks:

all ways and means which a Muslim uses to kill unbelievers is permitted as long as the enemy unbeliever is killed—whether they are killed by weapons from afar or if their ranks are penetrated; whether their stronghold is captured and penetrated before their eyes, or whether you blow up their planes or shoot them down; or whether you blow yourself up amongst their military encampments or blow yourself and them up with a belt of explosives. All of these are permissible means of fighting unbelievers.<sup>4</sup>

To justify this position theologically, HT referred to the following Quranic verses:

Allah Most High says, 'O you who believe! Fight those of the disbelievers who are near to you, and let them find harshness in you' (al-Taubah 9:123). He also says, 'And wage war on all of the idolaters as they are waging war on all of you' (al-Taubah 9:36). And: 'Then fight the heads of disbelief' (al-Taubah 9:12). And: 'Warfare is ordained for you' (al-Baqarah 2:216). The Prophet said, 'If they refuse, seek help from Allah and fight them.'

Hizb ut-Tahrir does not refer to "suicide attacks" as such, as it believes

Suicide is killing oneself out of hopelessness with regard to one's life and not out of an aspiration to go to Paradise; this is killing oneself as opposed to killing unbelievers. This is for the sole purpose of causing oneself to suffer, not of causing the enemy to suffer by killing him. . . . The difference between blowing oneself up while killing the enemy and committing suicide to kill oneself should be clear: The former leads to Paradise whereas one who commits suicide goes to hell. . . . When he blows himself up in these military operations against the enemy, he becomes a martyr (God willing) as long as his intentions are righteous and sincere towards Allah.

Hizb ut-Tahrir's "Martyrdom Operations" also gave its *fatwa* on carrying suicide attacks against Jewish women, children and old people. First it mentioned a *hadith* in which the Prophet says "Set forth in the name of Allah and the people of Allah and do not kill very old people, children or women." HT then placed the *hadith* into a contemporary context, arguing "It is well known that among the Jews in Palestine, men and women fight alongside one another. . . . This indicates that if a woman is a fighter, then one is permitted to kill her. . . . As for very old men, if they are involved in planning attacks in which Muslims are killed, then one is allowed to kill him." This particular issue of *Al-Waie* was translated into Uzbek and Tajik in Central Asia; Western intelligence and academics, who often cannot follow the material in Arabic, missed this critical turning point of HT until several years later.

There is also a number of leaflets that Hizb ut-Tahrir has released since September 11, 2001 that demonstrates a clear trend within the group towards radicalization. One week after 9/11, on September 18, 2001, an HT leaflet entitled, "Alliance with America is a great crime forbidden by Islam" advised Muslims not to help the United States. In a "Political Comment" issued the same day, HT admired the attacks and justified them by arguing that "The American tyranny and arrogance has reached a level that led many to believe that the only way to dent her pride is to rub her nose in the sand." On October 9, HT declared that the "U.S. and Great Britain declare war against Islam and Muslims" and considered from now on all Muslims are "are in a state of war". An article in *Al-Waie's* 204<sup>th</sup> issue in February 2002 identified a woman suicide bomber as a "female martyr". The 22-year old Palestinian mother of two was called "heroic" and her acts were touted as "worthy of genuine Muslims".<sup>5</sup> This



issue was believed to have been translated into Uzbek and Tajik for distribution largely in Central Asia. In March 2002 HT argued that suicide bombs in Israel are a legitimate tactic of war, given that the enemy has sophisticated weapons and hence can only be defeated through attacks on its so-called “soft targets.” It stated that “The Jews are a people of slander” and, as usual, took the Quran out of context to remind Muslims of the *ayat*, “and kill them wherever you find them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out” (2:191). To HT, this verse means that Muslims “should destroy the monstrous Jewish entity. . . . If you neglect this duty then you will bear the sin of remaining silent.”

Over the next two years HT leaflets and writings continuously emphasized that given the current clash of civilizations, offensive jihad against the Americans and the Jewish people is acceptable. It went as far as stating, in a May 2003 leaflet, that jihad against unbelievers is the only type of jihad. (It thereby contradicted Islam’s main *aqidah* (belief), as stated by the Prophet Mohammed: the real jihad is internal jihad.) It also chillingly reminded Americans that “September 11 comes every year”. On October 11, 2003, HT confidently declared that the U.S. will be defeated in Iraq and suggested that the Turkish military should kill Americans and work with HT to rebuild the Caliphate. *Khilafah* magazine’s recent online version featured a picture that superimposed an image of American soldiers over the burning of the twin towers, carrying in red ink: “U.S. Troops: Die Hard”. What is even more troubling is that over the past year, HT has paid increased attention to weapons of mass destruction. The fact that no WMD were found in Iraq only strengthened the group’s interest. With its emphasis on the inevitability of the clash of civilizations, HT may further “inspire” some Muslims to take this next fearsome step.

HT has the best chance for success in Central Asia, which is its main battleground. Many Central Asian governments are illegitimate and cannot provide their people with socio-economic improvements, which contribute to support possible coup attempts. HT has already succeeded in diverting the world community’s attention in Uzbekistan thanks to its brilliant public relations and propaganda campaign, where observers are more concerned with HT supporters’ prison conditions than are alarmed by the possibility of a successful HT coup d’etat. Furthermore, in Central Asia’s neighborhood are Afghanistan and Pakistan, two primary bases for terrorism and for radical sympathizers. Since Pakistan, Russia and India also have nuclear weapons, the addition of possible loose WMD material makes Central Asia a very attractive place for HT indeed.

### *Splinter Groups*

One of the most dangerous aspects of HT is that it leads to the formation of splinter groups that are much more radical and militant than HT itself—and that themselves commit terrorist acts. HT produces individuals who are strongly

opposed to the existing world order and want to overthrow the regimes of all existing Muslim countries; some of them remain within the party, while others leave to join different groups. One former HT associate, Kamran Bokhari, calls this a “revolving door” phenomenon, where people spend time learning with HT before then “graduating” to the next phase of their lives.<sup>6</sup> It is in fact more of a conveyor belt, whereby people who have for several years been indoctrinated with HT ideology are produced and who then move to more radical platforms on which they can carry out a common mission.

Splinter groups from HT have emerged largely due to the growing impatience with the lack of success HT has had so far in overthrowing governments. This led to leadership splits, as those who believe they can do better attempt to gain the power to do so. According to Jordanian sources, in 1996 there was a leadership split. Now, with a new and relatively unknown leader, Ata Ibnu Khaleel Abu Rashta, in power, HT may experience further internal challenges, and the organization could split into different smaller entities.

To date, the known splinter groups include:

- Palestinian Islamic Jihad (1958)—Sheikh Assad Bayyoud Tamimi, a former HT member, was one of the PIJ’s leaders and also the founder of a second splinter group, the Islamic Jihad Organization (the al-Aqsa Battalions), begun in 1982. Tamimi died in Amman in March 1998 at the age of 86. According to news reports, “more than a thousand people, including members of the Jordanian Parliament and Palestinian officials, attended the funeral.”<sup>7</sup>
- Al-Muhajiroun (1996)—Omar Bakri Muhammad, a former HT member, founded this very radical organization. In a press release on October 8, 2004, al-Muhajiroun announced its dissolution. A detailed description of al-Muhajiroun, along with a brief analysis of what this dissolution might mean, is given below.
- Akramiye (1996)—Formed in the Ferghana Valley, Uzbekistan, as a group with a primarily local focus.
- Hizb un-Nusrat (1999)—The Party of Assistance, formed in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

### *Al-Muhajiroun: Ideology and Activities*

In April 2003, Asif Muhammad Hanif and Omar Khan Sharif were recruited by Hamas to carry out suicide bombings at a Tel Aviv seafront bar.<sup>8</sup> There, Hanif blew himself up, killing three Israelis and wounding a dozen more. The explosives-filled vest worn by Sharif failed to detonate, and the would-be suicide bomber fled the scene.<sup>9</sup> Both Hanif and Sharif were students of Omar Bakri Muhammad, the spiritual leader of al-Muhajiroun.

Like HT, al-Muhajiroun's ultimate objective was to restore the "Islamic way of life" by establishing a pan-Islamic Caliphate to "liberate" Muslims from the influence of "*kufri*."<sup>10</sup> Al-Muhajiroun was, according to Bakri, active in 21 countries (including the U.S.) and was most visible in England and Pakistan.<sup>11</sup>

Born to a wealthy Syrian family in 1958, Bakri was recruited at an early age by the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. After obtaining a bachelor's degree in Islamic law from Shariah University in Damascus, he participated in a failed coup against President Hafez al-Asad and was then expelled from Syria.<sup>12</sup> He fled to Lebanon, where he obtained a master's degree in Islamic jurisprudence from the University of Al-Imam Al-Ouzai. While in Beirut, he became a member of the local HT branch. Then, during the Syrian invasion of Lebanon in 1979, Bakri assumed the name Omar Fustuk and moved to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where he established al-Muhajiroun as a front for HT. Bakri's final move was to the UK, where he received asylum in 1985 after being exiled by the Saudi government.<sup>13</sup>

Bakri was at first a leader of HTUK. But the Tottenham resident's style of leadership did not appeal to the party's leadership committee. While al-Nabhani sought to develop HT as a clandestine and elitist political party, Bakri made HTUK a populist movement that preached activism. Under Bakri's stewardship, HTUK held rallies, demonstrations and "public conversions".<sup>14</sup> HT's leadership believed that Bakri's activities constituted the "more advanced stages of the party's strategy" that should be confined to Muslim countries where there was greater potential for revolution. Bakri countered that "the attempt to engage with society to change its ideas must be linked with action: The struggle to pitch the party's ideas against those that underpin society creates an obligation to enter a direct political struggle in Britain as in any Arab or Muslim country."<sup>15</sup> This disagreement over tactics compelled the party leadership to remove Bakri from his post.

When Bakri was disowned by HT, he focused his energies exclusively on building al-Muhajiroun's infrastructure and network. The commonalities between HT and al-Muhajiroun inevitably meant that when Bakri left HT, he would not be the only one to leave. Although Bakri launched al-Muhajiroun in the UK with only three members, "the establishment of al-Muhajiroun sent shockwaves through the global HT movement. Almost immediately, Omar [Bakri] started receiving phone calls from members throughout the world, and the new al-Muhajiroun movement quickly attracted disaffected HT followers and Omar's former students."<sup>16</sup> Drawn to a more risky and activist Islamism, al-Muhajiroun's newest adherents had "graduated" from HT.

Al-Muhajiroun's doctrine derives almost exclusively from that of HT.<sup>17</sup> It espouses a radical salafist political theology that thrives on anti-Semitism and a categorical rejection of Western culture and systems of governance. Al-

Muhajiroun rejects the right of Israel to exist and considers the Jewish state the poster child of a “bloodthirsty Western conspiracy” to dominate Muslims.<sup>18</sup> Al-Muhajiroun’s hatred of Israel is demonstrated by its commitment to raising funds for Hamas and Hizballah,<sup>19</sup> both of which are included on the U.S. government’s list of foreign terrorist organizations.<sup>20</sup> In October 2000 Bakri proudly stated,

The International Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and the Crusaders [IIF] created by Osama bin Laden was actively supporting Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. We collect funds to be able to carry on the struggle, we recruit militiamen, and sometimes we take care of these groups’ propaganda requirements in Europe.<sup>21</sup>

Bakri has also argued that the desire for domination has made the United States “the head of Satan”, and described the September 11 attacks as “a great achievement by the *mujaheddin* against the evil superpower.”<sup>22</sup> Bakri’s followers annually celebrate September 11. At the first anniversary they held a conference entitled, “A Towering Day in History”, where speeches were made on “the positive outcomes of September 11” and the “U.S. conspiracy against Islam and Muslims”. Al-Muhajiroun was not allowed to hold a meeting at the second and third anniversaries, but its members nonetheless hailed “The Magnificent 19” perpetrators of the attacks on their website.<sup>23</sup>

Bakri has claimed to be “the eyes of Osama bin Laden” and reports indicate that the two have communicated at least as far back as 1998. After 9/11, the *Los Angeles Times* released the text of a 1998 fax from Bin Laden in Afghanistan to Bakri, urging him to “Bring down their airliners. Prevent the safe passage of their ships. Occupy their embassies. Force the closure of their companies and banks.”<sup>24</sup> As Mateen Siddiqui notes, “On July 15, 1999, Bakri published a letter to Bin Laden on al-Muhajiroun’s website, calling him to act against the West. In response to pressure from the U.S. government, it was removed, but it was later read aloud in mosques in North London, Bradford, Sheffield and Leicester.”<sup>25</sup> The letter read:

The Islamic Movements have not used the real weapon yet. . . . Oh Osama . . . you and your brothers are now breathing life and dignity into the body of the *umma* .

Our main mission as Muslims is to carry the Islamic message to the entire world. . . . We are an *umma* of jihad and beyond doubt, we have been chosen by Allah to lead the whole world if we hold to his command. . . . The opportunity is here and we must not pass it by. . . . Our Muslim brothers are firm in their jihad so we must not lose time aimlessly and [we must] act now. The *umma* is our *umma*, the war is our war, and the enemy is our enemy, the *mujaheddin* are our brothers, the victory or defeat is our victory or defeat, and the *Khilafah* is our *Khilafah*. Oh Osama. . . . Let us hear the good news from you and your brothers, for a new dawn is near at hand.<sup>26</sup>

In 2000, Bakri was quoted as saying:

Clinton is a target of the jihad, and American forces are a target of the jihad wherever they are. . . . American people must reconsider their foreign policy, or their children will be sent back to them in coffins. They need to think about the consequences of maintaining forces in Lebanon, the Golan Heights, and the Middle East as a whole. Clinton is responsible and he will pay. . . . [The existence of Israel] is a crime. Israel must be removed . . . .<sup>27</sup>

Not surprisingly, after the September 11 attacks, Bakri is reported to have said, “What happened was a direct consequence of the evil foreign policy of the USA. This is the compensation and payback for its own atrocities against Muslims.”<sup>28</sup>

Bakri has consistently encouraged Muslims to join the global jihad and has acknowledged recruiting jihadis to fight in such hotspots as Kashmir, Afghanistan and Chechnya. At least one al-Muhajiroun member went to Israel to engage in suicide terrorism, and 9/11 hijacker Hani Hanjour appears to have been connected to the organization.<sup>29</sup> In January 2004, al-Muhajiroun’s website gave further encouragement for militant jihad:

[T]hose Muslims living abroad, they are not under any covenant with the *kufir* in the West, so it is acceptable for them to attack the non-Muslims in the West whether in retaliation for constant bombing and murder taking place all over the Muslim world at the hands of the non-Muslims, or if it is an offensive attack in order to release the Muslims from the captivity of the *kufir*. For them, attacks such as the September 11 hijackings [are] a viable option in jihad . . . .<sup>30</sup>

In fact, there is considerable evidence to suggest that al-Mujahiroun recruited students to train in camps run by Osama bin Laden in parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan.<sup>31</sup>

During their time as Bakri’s students, Sharif and Hanif learned to detest the “Zionist entity” through religious instruction that called on Muslims to “fight against Israeli forces, their government, Israeli Embassies, military airports and jets, etc. . . . as they are legitimate targets for Muslims wherever they may be.” Bakri refers to the *sura* stating, “And kill them wherever you meet them and turn them out from where they have turned you out” (2:191) to justify his “Jihad *Fatwa* Against Israel”.<sup>32</sup> It is not a coincidence that many of the HT leaflets use this same *sura* (which is taken out of context and even more radical than other Quranic translations to English) to theologially justify its anti-Semitic position.

Although some al-Muhajiroun activists claim to reject only Israel in particular rather than Jews in general, public statements made by the group suggest otherwise. At a May 2000 al-Muhajiroun demonstration in Wembley, England, one al-Muhajiroun member rallied the crowd:

Our state is a blasphemy according to Jewish law, so that makes you [Muslims] not only cowards, garbage, scum, thieves, I could go on, it also makes you blasphemers as well, according to your own religion. Then again what do we expect from the garbage of humanity, the most gangrenous part of humanity that has always killed its own prophets, betrayed its own people? It's no surprise to any of us that you [Jews] constantly lie and cheat in your religion, [and] that is why in our religion you are described as pigs, swine and apes.<sup>33</sup>

Al-Muhajiroun has drawn the attention of Scotland Yard for its anti-Semitic tendencies and its calls for Muslims to commit terrorist attacks in Britain.<sup>34</sup> What is more, al-Muhajiroun's political statements are just as provocative as its bigotry. Staying true to their political objectives, the group has openly declared that it "would like to see Prime Minister Tony Blair dead or deposed and an Islamic flag hanging outside 10 Downing Street."<sup>35</sup>

The British government has until recently not considered al-Muhajiroun a security threat, but this view has changed dramatically due to the mounting evidence pointing to the group's complicity in international terrorism. Consequently, over the last year, al-Muhajiroun's activities were strictly monitored. In fact, the dissolution of al-Muhajiroun may have been a preemptive step: Instead of being shut down by the government, al-Muhajiroun may have "dissolved" itself in order to escape prosecution.

Recognizing the threat posed by al-Muhajiroun is crucial to fighting terrorism worldwide. Yet before surveying al-Muhajiroun's complicity in Islamist militancy, it is crucial to ascertain why al-Muhajiroun developed a following, and why some of its followers are still, even after the group's dissolution, committed to causing global unrest.

### *The Jihad-Identity Nexus*

Britain's security services knew years before the Israeli suicide bombing that Sharif and Hanif had links to al-Muhajiroun and HT but "decided that they were not potential terrorists."<sup>36</sup> Indeed, neither elicited the concern of those closest to him. Sharif's sister refused to believe her brother was involved in a terrorist plot against Israelis until she saw him in a Hamas video detailing his motivation to kill. Sharif, the son of a successful Derby businessman, attended King's College and "grew up in a comfortable house, and enjoyed football and skateboarding like any British teenager."<sup>37</sup> Similarly, Hanif's brother Taz described him as "just a big teddy-bear."<sup>38</sup> He was a business student and part-time employee for Heathrow airport.<sup>39</sup> Taz told reporters, "We used to watch the news and our parents always said that 'the suicide stuff is not good.'"<sup>40</sup> Both Hanif and Sharif grew up in normal households, leaving their loved ones bewildered by their actions.

But as terrorism expert Martha Crenshaw has argued, “the outstanding common characteristic of terrorists is their normality.”<sup>41</sup> The study of radical Islamists cannot begin with the presupposition that members are “fanatics” or mentally deranged. Scott Atran, director of research at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris, concurs, suggesting that “suicide terrorists on the whole have no appreciable psychopathology and are often wholly committed to what they believe to be devout moral principles.”<sup>42</sup> For many Islamists, radicalization occurs through a series of conscientious choices, often beginning from a religiously moderate background. What then drives normal adolescents towards a radicalized belief system?

The answer lurks partly within the depths of personal socio-psychology. Individuals initially begin to question previously accepted beliefs and open up to alternative views while undergoing an identity crisis.<sup>43</sup> Such a “cognitive opening” can be brought on by personal loss, such as the death of a close relative, or in many cases, by feelings of social alienation.

Western Europe’s difficulty with absorbing and assimilating Muslim immigrants has left many Muslims without a sense of belonging and purpose, which HT and al-Muhajiroun can and do provide. While at home, European Muslims receive religious traditions and values. At school and in other social settings, they learn the ways of secularism.<sup>44</sup> Confused about their identity, they become attracted to HT and al-Muhajiroun, which are able to provide them with answers. The increasingly anti-Muslim mood in western Europe further leads Muslims to feel they must adopt an identity that is prescribed for them. If they are perceived first as Muslims (and only second, if ever, as Europeans), and if that identity is equated with terrorism, radicalism and even backwardness, Muslim pride kicks in. As children of a great civilization, these Muslims then join the camp that rejects the continued rule of Western civilization.

The challenge of integrating Muslims into secular European societies is further complicated by the dearth of moderate imams who can reach out to those who feel alienated from their societies. Instead, the mosques of Europe are filled with radical clerics whose views and activities are inimical to European security interests. As the *New York Times* reported,

France has expelled more than a dozen Muslim clerics for violations of human rights or public order since 2001, most recently Abdelikader Bouziane, an Algerian-born imam and father of 16 who asserts that the Koran permits men to beat unfaithful wives. In Italy last November, the Interior Ministry expelled a Senegalese-born imam after he called for suicide bombings and declared a ‘blood pact’ with Osama bin Laden.<sup>45</sup>

Most recently, Britain has decided to charge Abu Hamza al-Masri with terrorism, specifically for “urging followers to kill non-Muslims, in some cases

specifically targeting Jews.”<sup>46</sup> European states are finally attempting to address the problem by training imams themselves, as “the imported ones are seen as conveyor belts for bad ideas.”<sup>47</sup>

Lacking a strong Islamic cultural foundation, and feeling the sting of European apprehension towards Muslim immigrants, many Muslims living in Britain have begun to perceive the society in which they live as discriminatory and racist. In a sense, their perception is not without foundation. For example, despite the fact that most British Muslims view religion to be a dominant factor in their identity, the Race Relations Act of 1976 recognized “Gypsies, Sikhs and Jews as special ‘ethnic groups’ and provided them with ‘special racial protection’, excluding Muslims altogether.”<sup>48</sup> Many Muslims link their perception of discrimination with international affairs, pointing towards a British bias in favor of Israel and against Palestinians.

Against the backdrop of social alienation and internal disorder, “Islam has become a template for the culturally confused, a language of protest for the politically frustrated.”<sup>49</sup> For Egyptian radicals during the Cold War, “Islam was the most emotionally comfortable and comprehensible reference point for political protest. It resonated with their deep sense of injustice.”<sup>50</sup> Similarly, looking for orientation, migrant Muslims today are led to “religious seeking—a process in which an individual searches for some satisfactory system of religious meaning to interpret and resolve his discontent.”<sup>51</sup> However, given that many migrants lack a strong understanding of theology, and that the communities in which they live lack a proper social and theological infrastructure, many are left to self-declared spiritual leaders, who provide them with a quick fix for their identity crises while pushing them slowly towards radicalism.

Interviews conducted by Quintan Wiktorowicz with members of al-Muhajiroun confirm radical Islam’s role in exploiting the vulnerabilities carried by Muslim “seekers”. He found that “Virtually all of the members who were interviewed recalled a point in their lives where they felt they had no purpose in life and lacked a sense of belonging.”<sup>52</sup> Bakri concedes, “People are looking for an Islamic identity . . . Here is my role. [To say] ‘Come on, Abu Jafar. You are not ‘Bobby.’ You belong to a very great nation [Islam].’”<sup>53</sup> Al-Muhajiroun has successfully increased its following by providing Muslims at critical junctures in their lives with a particular (salafist) interpretation of Islam.

### *Ziggurat of Zealotry*<sup>54</sup>

Groups like HT and al-Muhajiroun radicalize the so-called “seekers” through a process by which individuals adopt radicalism as an alternative to previously held beliefs. A good way to understand how people become radicalized is to think of the process as a stepladder, where each step up the ladder brings



individuals to further radicalization. The process is methodical, and individuals make a conscious choice at each step. They are free to step up or down at any point.

At the bottom of the pyramid are the disenfranchised, who want Muslims to live in better conditions. They are involved in social work and proselytizing. Some of these people come into contact with an HT or al-Muhajiroun member and develop a relationship and with it a sense of community. The recruiter then gradually introduces ideology, though without mentioning the name of the movement. After a certain period, the seeker is convinced that social work alone will not make any real difference; the political conditions need to change. At that point, the person takes the second step and becomes politically involved.

Once trust is established, and with the encouragement of the recruiter (who is now a “friend”), the seeker is introduced to the organization, its political philosophy and its objectives. During this process, the organization emphasizes an identity that is tied to a sense of pride in the glorious days of the Islamic civilization. In study groups and literature the emphasis is on consciousness-raising, or teaching the individual the “right” way to think about Islam. The current state of Muslims is blamed on the forces of democracy and capitalism and those Muslims who ally with America and Israel. The teachings are based on theological explanations and aim to create a sense that Islam and Muslims are under attack.

To reinforce the study groups, consciousness-raising activities continue in mosques, where imams and self-declared sheikhs can instill a combination of radical theology and sense of mission. Looking at the role mosques played in radicalization, Marc Sageman points out that

mosques served many functions in the transformation of young alienated Muslims into global *salafi mujaheddin*. A mosque was an ideal place to meet familiar people, namely fellow Muslims—an important desire in upwardly and geographically mobile young men who missed the community of their friends and family. Friendship groups formed around the mosques, as we saw in the millennium plot and Hamburg cell accounts.<sup>55</sup>

After a while, some people become recruiters themselves to help the *umma*’s consciousness-raising, while others lose patience with just talk and take the next step up.

The third level of the radicalist ladder consists of people who have decided to engage in local violence. They may target their own government by bombing an office building, or focus on an American or Israeli target. While some people are caught at this phase and others are engaged in one-time violence and move down one level to the political stage, many others move on to the fourth and the final step, global jihad. What seems to encourage people to take the final step are the

hateful rants delivered by imams and leaders of the Islamist organizations. For example, London's Finsbury Park mosque over the years had become a virtual social club for radicals: Omar Bakri and Abu Hamza al-Masri lectured there, and terrorists such as Richard Reid, Zacarias Moussaoui, Nizar Trabelsi, Ahmed Ressam, Anas al-Liby, Abu Doha, Rashid Ramda and American Earnest James Ujamaa all regularly attended the mosque. Guantanamo detainee and suspected al-Qaeda member Feroz Abassi "effectively moved into the Finsbury Park mosque in Spring 2000" before leaving to fight for the Taliban in Afghanistan.<sup>56</sup> Before they left for Israel, Hanif and Sharif also attended the Finsbury Park mosque's study sessions.

### *A Global Islamist Infrastructure*

On the journey from increased consciousness to militancy, it is rare for individuals to commit acts of violence for exclusively ideological reasons. Young Muslims who engage in risky activities usually do so for a combination of both ideological and social reasons. An individual who is indoctrinated with militant Islamist ideology but is not embedded within a network of like-minded peers ultimately lacks the vehicle through which he can act. In the reverse scenario, someone who feels strongly attached to the "brothers" comprising a local cell may become a political militant or gang member, but will not become a "religious fanatic, ready to sacrifice himself for the glory of God" without the necessary ideological foundation.<sup>57</sup> In order to ensure that both factors are present, both HT and al-Muhajiroun fuse ideological training with social networks. By virtue of the study groups and social activities that assume the base of their organizations, both groups have covered the globe with like-minded Islamists that help and encourage their peers to step up towards militancy. The internal structure of both organizations not only encourages radicalism, but strengthens inter-Islamist networking.

Like HT, al-Muhajiroun has recruited from schools and made extensive use of the Internet. Their recruitment-oriented websites "promise[d] to answer the prayers and questions of zealous young Muslims who wish to 'travel abroad'."<sup>58</sup> According to the *Daily Telegraph*, al-Muhajiroun attracted "many A-level [college entrance exam] students, often as young as 16, who can be sent to military training camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan." Bakri confirmed this approach, acknowledging that "We find young men in university campuses or mosques, invite them for a meal and discuss the situation for on-going attacks being suffered by Muslims in Chechnya, Palestine or Kashmir. We . . . make them understand their duty to support the jihad struggle verbally, financially and, if they can, physically in order to liberate their homeland."<sup>59</sup>

Reports indicate that al-Muhajiroun's network fed militants into the heart of conflicts around the world. Bakri openly admitted that he "recruited hundreds of Britons to fight for Islamic causes in recent years."<sup>60</sup> In 2000, Bakri estimated

“that between 1,800 and 2,000 go abroad for military training every year. They either go for national service in Pakistan or to ‘private camps’ in South Africa, Nigeria or Afghanistan where they learn of weapons and explosives.”<sup>61</sup> Although Bakri’s numbers may be inflated, it is clear that al-Muhajiroun activists were drawn into conflict.

At least three al-Muhajiroun recruits went to Afghanistan to join the Taliban’s fight against America in October 2001.<sup>62</sup> Hassan Butt, al-Muhajiroun’s former Pakistan spokesman, was open about al-Muhajiroun’s intention to aid enemies of the coalition. “They went out there to fight for the Taliban and were prepared to give their lives. We still believe the Taliban have not been defeated. We will be sending more volunteers, money and weapons to them.”<sup>63</sup> One member, Abdul Saleem, died fighting U.S. forces in Mazar-i-Sharif.<sup>64</sup> According to the *Times*, “it was Al-Muhajiroun that influenced London resident Abu Mindar, 26, to join the jihad.”<sup>65</sup> The three British detainees recently sent home from Guantanamo Bay had confessed to the British Foreign Office they traveled to “Afghanistan to fight jihad”—and al-Muhajiroun paid their expenses.<sup>66</sup>

Most recently, the U.S. government arrested, tried and convicted a Pakistani American with strong ties to al-Muhajiroun for providing material support to al-Qaeda. On June 2, Mohammed Junaid Babar pled guilty to providing a high-ranking al-Qaeda official with “night-vision goggles, sleeping bags, waterproof socks, waterproof poncho and money” for operations against the U.S. in Afghanistan. A 29-year-old Brooklyn resident, Babar also admitted to establishing a “Muslim militant training camp in Afghanistan, which he supplied with materials such as aluminum nitrate, which can be used for making bombs. Babar’s ammonium nitrate was earmarked for a plot to blow up London train-stations and pubs. British authorities broke up the plot in March and arrested eight men.”<sup>67</sup>

### *Al-Muhajiroun’s Dissolution*

Like HT, al-Muhajiroun has always been one step ahead of Western governments and their legal systems. It had seemed very likely the British government was set to move against the group. After the arrest of Abu Hamza, al-Muhajiroun was the likely next target of the British anti-terrorism campaign. In fact, British newspapers reported on October 8, the day al-Muhajiroun announced its dissolution, that the British Home Secretary David Blunkett had ordered the authorities to “closely monitor every word and statement” made by Bakri and al-Muhajiroun members. The *Daily Express* reported that “Mr. Blunkett is sick and tired of the group’s attempts to drive a wedge between Muslim communities and other citizens and is waiting for an opportunity to pounce.”<sup>68</sup> The decision to monitor them came after Bakri said the killing of

children in the Beslan school tragedy was justified.<sup>69</sup> As a result of its timely dissolution, al-Muhajiroun may have escaped prosecution.

While al-Muhajiroun has officially dissolved itself, it is likely that the group has simply gone underground. It is even more likely that al-Muhajiroun members will be associated with future terrorist acts. Indeed, the October 8 press statement, entitled, “An Official Declaration Dissolving Al-Muhajiroun” signed by Bakri himself, makes clear that while “all al-Muhajiroun are removed from all administrative obligations” to the group, they are not free from “any divine obligations they have to Allah.” Throughout the statement Bakri makes clear to his followers that these “divine obligations” include violent jihad.

The statement is carefully framed, beginning with a short historical reminder:

After the dismantling of the Soviet Union and the collapse of Eastern camp, the USA has led the world unilaterally. After they declared the new world order, they moved forward very quickly in an attempt to control and destroy Islam as the only real enemy for her and then increased her animosity towards the Muslim *umma*, i.e. a fifth of humanity. In fact the USA was very close to establishing her dominance under the pretext of political globalization, which was to lead to cultural globalization (according to her claim) and which would help her to change the curriculum in the Muslim world in order to spread secularism and eradicate the call of Islam, the call of *tawhid*, the call of *al-wala wal bara*<sup>70</sup> and the call of jihad, in order to facilitate a total and open attack against Islam.

Bakri further stated that al-Muhajiroun has been dissolved so all salafists can be united, declaring, “In light of the new reality after the blessed 9/11, the evil forces having united against the *umma* . . . there is nothing left except that the sincere Muslims who fight with their lives, flesh and wealth unite for the sake of Allah (swt).” Bakri believes his followers “can see them [the enemy] gathering more forces and using international public opinion against us to change the *umma*’s culture and identity, under the cover of calling for democracy and looking after the minorities, by using the slogans of human rights and the freeing of women from oppression.”

Bakri is certain that he and his followers will win in the end, as “the USA’s values have declined in the hearts of many Muslims and after her idle threats have died in the hearts of Muslims—Muslims have not only stopped doubting that they can stop the crusade of the *kufir* if they unite, but they are convinced that they can do so.” Bakri concluded the press statement by reminding Muslims that success “requires a brave decision and the moulding together of all the Islamic movements and groups and the propagation of the jihadi notion of the *umma*, for the sake of uniting the body/lines around the world . . . . We are keen for the safety of the path to the way of the *salaf* and in support of the *mujaheddin* and jihad.”

Like al-Qaeda, al-Muhajiroun will now have its recruits globally dispersed, working for the same goal. The ultimate consequence of the group's dissolution is an end to the separation of al-Muhajiroun and al-Qaeda members—and confirmation of the West's worst fear, that radical Islamist unity is indeed taking place.

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<sup>1</sup>This point is also made by Shiv Malik in "For Allah and the Caliphate", *New Statesman* (London), September 13, 2004.

<sup>2</sup>Press Release, Al-Muhajiroun, September 16, 2001.

<sup>3</sup>"The war on Iraq is a curse on the rulers in the Muslim countries", July 4, 2004.

<sup>4</sup>*Al-Waie*, June 2001, available at <http://www.al-waie.org/home/issue/170/doc/170w02doc.zip>. Translated by the Community Security Trust of the UK.

<sup>5</sup>From Martha B. Olcott and Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, "Hizb ut-Tahrir in Uzbekistan: 'Non-Violent Methods of Struggle' or Instigation to Terror?" in *State and Religion in Countries with a Muslim Population*, ed. Z. I. Munavvarov and R. J. Krumm. (Tashkent: n.p., 2004).

<sup>6</sup>Kamran Bokhari, interview by Zeyno Baran, October 5, 2004. Kamran Bokhari is currently an analyst with Stratfor. He has been accused of being the leader of al-Muhajiroun in the U.S., which he denies.

<sup>7</sup>"Palestinian Islamic Jihad Leader, Sheikh As'ad Bayyud Tamimi dies in Amman", International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism, March 22, 1998, <http://www.ict.org.il/spotlight/det.cfm?id=26>.

<sup>8</sup>Conal Urquhart, " Hamas Said it Ordered Britons' Suicide Mission", *Guardian* (London), March 9, 2004.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Michael Whine, "Al-Muhajiroun: The portal for Britain's suicide terrorists", International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism, May 21, 2003, <http://www.ict.org.il/articles>, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup>Lisa Beyer with Scott Mcleod, "Can We Trust Saudi Arabia?", *Time*, September 15, 2003; Michael Elliot, "Al-Qaeda Now", *cnn.com*, May 27, 2002, <http://archives.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/05/27/time.alqaeda/>.

<sup>12</sup>Jeremy Reynolds, "Debate on Muslim Extremism Gets Heated in UK", *Talon News*, April 22, 2004, [http://www.gopusa.com/news/2004/april/0422\\_muslim\\_extremism.shtml](http://www.gopusa.com/news/2004/april/0422_muslim_extremism.shtml).

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Suha Taji-Farouki, "Islamists and the Threat of Jihad: Hizb al-Tahrir and al-Muhajiroun on Israel and the Jews", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 36, no. 4: (October 2000), p. 31.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Radical Islam Rising: Al-Muhajiroun and High Risk Activism", working draft.

<sup>17</sup>I am grateful to Mateen Siddiqui, who pulled together for this monograph relevant material on al-Muhajiroun, which is used extensively in the following paragraphs. His work was published as part of *The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir: Deciphering and Combating Radical Islamist Ideology*.

<sup>18</sup>Siddiqui, "The Doctrine of Hizb ut-Tahrir", in *The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir*, p. 13.

<sup>19</sup>Helen Gibson, "Apostles of Anger", *Time Europe*, July 28, 2004.

<sup>20</sup>"Foreign Terrorist Organizations", Office of Counter-Terrorism, U.S. Department of State, July 28, 2004, <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/fs/2003/12389.htm>.

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<sup>21</sup>“We recruit the Kamikaze bombers ready to die for Palestine in Italy”, *Il Giornale* (Milan, Italy), October 14, 2000. According to Bakri, during the previous month, the IIF had recruited 160 volunteers in Britain and sent them to Jordan, where they awaited opportunities to infiltrate into the West Bank and join the uprising against Israel. Recruits had also been sent in recent months to Lebanon, where they were training in Palestinian refugee camps.

<sup>22</sup>Thair Shaikh, “London to Host Islamic ‘Celebration’ of Sept 11”, *Daily Telegraph* (London), September 9, 2002, <http://news.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2002/09/08/nextre08.xml>.

<sup>23</sup><http://www.almuk.com/obm/index.html>. Since the dissolution of al-Muhajiroun on October 8, 2004, the group’s website has been taken down.

<sup>24</sup>Stephen Braun *et al.*, “Haunted By Years of Missed Warnings”, *Los Angeles Times*, October 14, 2001.

<sup>25</sup>Siddiqui, “The Doctrine of Hizb ut-Tahrir”, p. 21.

<sup>26</sup><http://www.almuk.com/obm/index.html>.

<sup>27</sup>Aaron Klein, “My Weekend with the Enemy”, *Jerusalem Post*, May 30, 2000.

<sup>28</sup>*Today*, BBC Radio 4, September 14, 2001.

<sup>29</sup>Daniel Pipes, “The U.S. Institute of Peace Stumbles”, *American Daily*, March 22, 2004, <http://www.americandaily.com/article/629>.

<sup>30</sup>“Al-Jihad”, 2004, <http://www.muhaajiroun.com>. Website no longer functioning.

<sup>31</sup>See Whine, “Al-Muhajiroun”; Siddiqui, “The Doctrine of Hizb ut-Tahrir”, pp. 18–19.

<sup>32</sup>Omar Bakri, “Jihad Fatwa Against Israel”, December 2, 2000, <http://www.emergency.com/2000/fatwa2000.htm>.

<sup>33</sup>Siddiqui, “The Doctrine of Hizb ut-Tahrir”, p. 8.

<sup>34</sup>Andrew Buncombe, “FBI memo links British-based Islamic group to al-Qaeda terror suspects”, *Daily Times* (Pakistan), [http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story\\_25-5-2002\\_pg4\\_3](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story_25-5-2002_pg4_3).

<sup>35</sup>Patrick E. Tyler and Don Van Natta Jr., “Militants in Europe Openly Call for Jihad and the Rule of Islam”, *New York Times*, April 26, 2004.

<sup>36</sup>“MI5 Admits: We let suicide bombers slip through nets”, *Daily Telegraph* (London), July 29, 2004, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2003/05/04/wbomb04.xml>.

<sup>37</sup>Helen Gibson, “Why did two quiet, well-liked young British men travel to Israel to become suicide bombers?”, *Time Europe*, May 4, 2003, <http://www.time.com/time/europe/html/030512/suicide.html>.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup>“UK Muslims shocked by ‘bombers’”, BBC News, May 1, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/2990841.stm>.

<sup>41</sup>Rex A. Hudson, “The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes a Terrorist and Why?”, p. 30; see [http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/pdf-files/Soc\\_Psych\\_of\\_Terrorism.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/pdf-files/Soc_Psych_of_Terrorism.pdf).

<sup>42</sup>Scott Atran, “Mishandling Suicide Terrorism”, *Washington Quarterly*, 27, no. 3: (Summer 2004), p. 75.

<sup>43</sup>Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Joining the Cause: al-Muhajiroun and Radical Islam”, <http://www.yale.edu/polisci/info/conferences/Islamic%20Radicalism/papers/wiktorowicz-paper.doc>.

<sup>44</sup>Wiktorowicz, “Radical Islam Rising”, p. 98.

<sup>45</sup>Elaine Sciolino, “Europe Struggling to Train New Breed of Muslim Clerics”, *New York Times*, October 18, 2004.

<sup>46</sup>Associated Press, “Radical Cleric in Britain Charged with Terrorism Offenses”, *New York Times*, October 19, 2004.

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<sup>47</sup>Sciolino, "Europe Struggling".

<sup>48</sup>Wiktorowicz, "Radical Islam Rising", p. 99.

<sup>49</sup>Caryle Murphy, *Passion for Islam* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), p. 276.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>51</sup>Wiktorowicz, "Joining the Cause".

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Wiktorowicz, "Radical Islam Rising", p. 104.

<sup>54</sup>This phrase is taken from a Western intelligence source. The ziggurat was a form of temple in a pyramidal structure, built in receding tiers upon a rectangular, oval, or square platform, with a shrine at the summit. Access to the summit shrine was provided by a series of ramps on one side or by a continuous spiral ramp from base to summit.

<sup>55</sup>Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), pp. 114–15.

<sup>56</sup>The list of men can be found in Robert S. Leiken, *Bearers of Global Jihad? Immigration and National Security after 9/11* (Washington DC: The Nixon Center, 2004). The quote on Abbasi can be found in "Former Student to Terror Suspect", BBC News, January 21, 2002, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/politics/1773477.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/1773477.stm).

<sup>57</sup>Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, p. 115.

<sup>58</sup>Peter Foster and Maurice Weaver, "Young Britons Heed the Call to Arms for Holy War", *Daily Telegraph* (London), December 29, 2004.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Liz Sly, "Arrests Signal Crackdown on Extremists", *Chicago Tribune*, October 5, 2001.

<sup>61</sup>Cahal Milmo, "Five Britons Die Fighting for Taliban in Mazar", *Independent* (London), November 17, 2001.

<sup>62</sup>"UK Muslims 'Killed' in Afghanistan", BBC News, October 29, 2001, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/1625115.stm>.

<sup>63</sup>Milmo, "Five Britains Die".

<sup>64</sup>Vikram Dodd, "Five British volunteers killed in attack on Mazar, says Islamist group", *Guardian* (London), November 17, 2001.

<sup>65</sup>Daniel McGrory, "The Taleban Deserter from East London", *Times* (London), November 2, 2001.

<sup>66</sup>Tania Branigan and Vikram Dodd, "Afghanistan to Guantanamo Bay—the Story of Three British Detainees", *Guardian* (London), August 4, 2004.

<sup>67</sup>"Court Transcript: NY Man Admits aiding al-Qaida", NBC News, August 11, 2004, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5675769/>.

<sup>68</sup>James Slack, *Daily Express* (London), "Blunkett Orders Special Watch on Muslim Leaders", October 8, 2004.

<sup>69</sup>Rajeev Sayal, "Cleric Support Targeting of Children", *Daily Telegraph* (London), May 9, 2004.

<sup>70</sup>This concept of love and hate for Allah's sake is interpreted by radicals as claiming Muslims must love all other Muslims no matter what and hate all non-Muslims no matter how kind they may be.

# 4

## THE BATTLE FOR CENTRAL ASIA

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Throughout the ages, Central Asia has been a focal point for global strategic interests. In response to the frequent struggles among great powers for geopolitical gain, the region has often had to adapt and defend itself both culturally and militarily. Islam has long been one source of strength used to respond to the threat of domination by outside aggressors. In the current political environment, this traditional recourse to Islam has led to an opening for HT, which has targeted Central Asia because of its traditional and strategic importance.

### *Central Asia: The New Great Game*

Central Asia's strategic location and its rich natural resources have often placed it at the heart of competition among would-be world powers. Over the centuries, Central Asia was raided by famous warriors such as Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan, and by the powerful armies of the Persians and Arabs, among others. All wanted to have strategic advantage over the region encompassing the heart of the major trade route, the famous Silk Road connecting Europe and China. Rudyard Kipling labeled the 19<sup>th</sup> century imperial contest between Czarist Russia and Colonial Britain over Central Asia as the Great Game. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Russia, China, Iran, Turkey and the U.S. are, to varying degrees, engaged in a struggle for influence over this strategic landmass.

Today, a new Great Game has emerged in Central Asia. The leading challenger is not a nation-state, but a transnational religious ideology, which benefits from the poverty and hopelessness of the average person. The U.S. is the leading power with the ability to shape the outcome of the battle, which it can do by effectively engaging with the peoples and governments of Central Asia, as well as with other states that can also influence developments in this region.

The main ideological battle of competition over the region's future is fought in Uzbekistan, the double-landlocked country that is the heart of Central Asia. Uzbekistan is the only country that borders each of the other Central Asian countries, as well as Afghanistan. With over 26 million people, nearly 90 percent of whom are Muslims, Uzbekistan has about half of the Central Asian population.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, ethnic Uzbeks comprise a considerable share of the



populations of its neighbors; they constitute 25 percent of the population of Tajikistan, 13.8 percent of Kyrgyzstan, 9.2 percent of Turkmenistan, 9 percent of Afghanistan, and 2.5 percent of Kazakhstan. Since, as will be described below, Uzbekistan is the ancient spiritual and cultural center of the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam, it has a more religious population than the rest of Central Asia.<sup>2</sup> It also has the region's largest and most effective army. Clearly, then, developments in Uzbekistan have a direct impact on the whole region. If a group like Hizb ut-Tahrir were to take over Uzbekistan, it could move easily into the rest of Central Asia as well as Afghanistan and Pakistan.

### *Uzbekistan: Historic Center of Islamic Enlightenment*

Islam has historically played an important role in the lives of the people of Central Asia. It was first introduced to Central Asia by the Arab incursions in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, but it was not until the 9<sup>th</sup> century that Sunni Islam emerged as the dominant faith among the Central Asian tribes. Enriched by the influences of Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Shamanism, the Central Asians came to accept the relatively liberal Hanafi school of Islamic thought. In comparison with the other three main Islamic schools (Shafi'i, Maliki and Hanbali), the Hanafi school was the most accommodating of the pre-Islamic rituals and habits of the local population, thus fostering social cohesion among the region's diverse populations. The Hanafi school follows the Matrudi *aqidah*, which highlights the importance of belief rather than actions. In this setting, the *ulema* naturally served as spiritual rather than political leaders.

Great theologians have come from Central Asia. The outstanding Islamic theologian Imam al-Bukhari was born in Uzbekistan in 810. Al-Bukhari collected and ascertained the authenticity of more than 600,000 *hadiths* (sayings and deeds of Prophet Mohammad) and recorded 200,000 more from teachers and other spiritual people. He warned Muslims not to follow the wrong *hadiths*, as this would lead them astray. Al-Bukhari's collection of *hadiths* entitled, "The Authentic Code" is regarded by many Sunni Muslims to be the most reliable Islamic source after the Quran. Such was his reputation that the great city of Bukhara was named in his honor and his tomb near Samarkand is an important place of pilgrimage. There have also been other celebrated Islamic scholars from the region, such as the theologians Burhoniddin Marghinon and Imam Termizi and the jurist Abu Lays Samarkandi.

Central Asia became the center of scientific learning and spiritual Islam in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Uzbek "Golden Age" took place under the rule of Amir Timur (known to the West as Tamerlane) and his grandson, Ulugh Beg. Tamarlane was able to consolidate the various Central Asian kingdoms into a centralized and powerful state, with its capital in Samarkand. In the second part of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, he extended outwards, acquiring territory in Iran, the Caucasus, Syria, Iraq, Turkey and Northern India. Under the political and

economic unity brought about by Tamerlane, the Movarounnahr region (the area covering most of contemporary Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan) became one of the most important centers of Islamic civilization. This was in fact Islam's period of enlightenment; secularism was clearly established, while religious values and scientific thinking were encouraged.

Nourished by an environment favorable both to critical thinking and to deep spirituality, the region became home to many pioneers of science and religious enlightenment. Ulugh Beg, who governed Movarounnahr for over four decades, was a great political leader and scientist. He constructed the *Gurkhani Zi* astronomical observatory and made remarkable discoveries comparable to those of Copernicus. Ulugh Beg plotted the positions of the moon, the planets, and over a thousand stars, and calculated the length of the year to within fifty-eight seconds.<sup>3</sup> The intellectual traditions initiated by Ulugh Beg (who founded a university at Samarkand) were carried on by other Islamic scholars, such as Abu Ali Ibn Sina (known to Westerners as Avicenna), who is considered to be one of the forefathers of modern medicine, and Al-Khorezmi, who coined the terms "algebra" and "algorithm", and who is credited with helping to establish the Indian number system and the use of decimal notation.

The intellectual and cultural heights reached during this period were made possible in part due to the richness and strength of the Islamic tradition known as Sufism, which had a long history in Central Asia. First appearing in the region in 1258 after the Mongol conquest of Baghdad, Sufism rapidly accepted converts from a variety of religions, while remaining tolerant of those who did not accept Islam. Its growth continued apace for several centuries, and Central Asian cities, such as Bukhara and Samarkand, became major centers of Islamic scholarship, housing hundreds of *madrassas*. Bukhara, located in present-day Uzbekistan, became a renowned center of Islamic scholarship and home to the influential Naqshbandi Order, which is one of the oldest traditional Sufi orders still in existence.

Compared to other Islamic traditions, Sufism spread more rapidly due to its openness and acceptance of other religions and its emphasis on simplicity, piety and purity. Sufism is "remarkable", as noted historian Bernard Lewis asserts, because "it offers something better than tolerance. . . . [I]t is acceptance."<sup>4</sup> Timothy Gianotti concurs, adding that Sufism was largely responsible for the adoption and growth of Islam in the region due to the fact that it "preached with cultural sensitivity, promoted tolerance and inter-religious cooperation, and never abandoned the inner life and the spiritual core for the sake of solely political activism."<sup>5</sup> Since the traditions and practices of Sufism were spread predominately by merchants and traveling scholars, it was able to gain a ready audience in both urban and rural areas.

For Sufis, the core value of Islam is righteousness, or *al-ihsan*. This concept is understood to be the "inner awareness or mental orientation that strives to

place every moment of one's life in the presence of God, an awareness unobstructed by ego, vain imaginings, preoccupations with the past or the future and worldly distractions". Thus the goal of Islam is "to prepare the individual . . . for his or her ultimate encounter with the divine."<sup>6</sup> This preparation takes the form of an intense personal struggle against human weakness. Only in striving for spiritual purity do Sufis wage *jihad*; the perversion of this term to mean a struggle against non-Muslims is a recent one, one which would have been unknown to the Central Asian Muslims of the Golden Age.

However, with the gradual encroachment of the Russian Empire and other powers, this golden culture fell from its height. While theocracy is a notion alien to Central Asia, the very necessity of the struggle against the unfriendly imperialism of Russia led to the transplantation of intolerant, alien forms of Islam to the region. Before then, the *ulema* always operated in the spiritual realm; there is not one example of a theocratic regime in the long history of Central Asian Islam.<sup>7</sup>

### *Cultural Assault and Islamic Revival*

Using the Red Army and security forces, the Soviets suppressed organized religion throughout Central Asia during their reign. They inhibited the formation of Islamic networks, which were viewed as a potential challenge to their rule. In particular, the decade between 1920 and 1930 is remembered as the "cultural assault", in which the Soviets attempted to destroy the position of religion in people's daily lives. New laws were established that banned Islamic education, prayers and numerous Islamic activities. Muslims were prevented from embarking on the *Hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca that comprises one of Islam's five pillars. Mosques were closed and the property of Islamic authorities was confiscated. Sufis bore the brunt of this harsh repression,<sup>8</sup> so much so that one can talk of a resulting "loss of the collective memory of Sufism in Central Asia".<sup>9</sup> Sufi leaders were arrested, and many were executed. Furthermore, the religious schools in which they transmitted knowledge were closed, and Sufi texts banned. Instead, Muslim children were indoctrinated with anti-Islamic material as an integral part of Soviet education policy.

Attempts to exterminate Islam in Central Asia failed, as Muslims learned to operate underground. As a result, Islamic movements became more political and much more resilient. Mullahs used clandestinely written brochures and secretly recorded tapes.<sup>10</sup> The furtive skills acquired during this period later became essential in the propagation of radical preaching during the 1990s and were utilized by groups such as HT, which has replicated, modernized and perfected this underground operating system.

The first signs of open disobedience by Central Asian Muslims to Soviet rule emerged in the 1980s, at a time when the Afghan *mujaheddin* were fighting the

communists and the Soviet Union was experiencing internal pressures. Gorbachev's reforms marked the first relaxation in decades of the religious lives of Soviet Muslims. In this period the Secretary of the Uzbek Communist Party, Sharaf Rashidov, even dared to demand a burial according to Islamic ritual.<sup>11</sup> Mosques were restored and Islamic political parties came out into the open.

However, this "Islamic revivalism" did not succeed in resurrecting the same spiritual and enlightened Islam of Central Asia's past. When the five states of Central Asia—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan—achieved independence in 1991, much of their populations lacked a proper understanding of Islam. Though many considered themselves Muslim by culture, few understood what it meant to be a Muslim. There was a strong demand for mosques, especially in Uzbekistan, where there were only 89 mosques in Soviet times. Within a year after independence, this number had exploded to 5,000. Similarly, while there were 119 religious institutes in 1990, after about a decade, the number went up to over 2,000. But due to the Soviet-era repression, there was an insufficient number of native imams and Islamic scholars to instruct people about their indigenous Islamic culture and traditions. As Charles Fairbanks explains,

All *madrassas* and all institutions of secondary or higher Islamic learning closed in the late 1920s. Two Islamic institutes with a very distorted and shortened curriculum began again from 1952 on a tiny scale. Education in Arabic continued only in secret or (after a thorough period of government scrutiny) at the Oriental Institutes of Moscow, Leningrad and a few other places. As a result, the *ulema* diminished substantially; for example, in Bukhara, the number went down from 45,000 at the time of the Russian revolution to 8,000 in 1955.<sup>12</sup>

During this period, information about Islam was mainly given by parents.

### *Radical Islamists Move into Post-Soviet Central Asia*

By the end of the Soviet era the number of local clergy had shrunk, while the demand for them across Russia and Eurasia was mushrooming. To meet the demand, Central Asian Muslims had to rely on foreign imams and religious texts. Funded by petrodollars and inspired by a radical ideology, outside Islamists filled the vacuum with their own radical religious interpretations. They flooded the mosques and religious institutes and discredited those imams who practiced the traditional, Central Asian form of Islam. Most of the people did not see any difference; they wanted to learn about Islam and accepted any group that declared it was teaching their religion.

The radicals were able to succeed as the rapid Islamization of the region occurred without any oversight or regulation. For many decades, The Ecclesiastical Board of Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan (SADUM), which

was founded during the Second World War, had structured religious activity in the region. The Board had concentrated on shaping the “loyalist attitudes” of the faithful, serving the population with religious rites and ceremonies, appointing mullahs, and setting the Islamic educational curriculum. After independence, on February 27, 1992, the Fifth Congress of Muslims of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Karakalpakstan changed the name of SADUM to the Board of Muslims of Movarounnahr. Immediately afterwards the Board was attacked both by secular authorities and by Islamist groups. It was disbanded by the new state governments, each of which founded their own religious boards, called *mufiats*. However, the various *mufiats* were theologically too weak to combat the entry of the fundamentalist and extremist movements. As the Uzbek saying goes, “when you open up the widow for sun, dust comes in as well.”

The developing schism within Central Asian Islam was exacerbated by the failure of the governments to perform vital tasks. Due to the limited financial resources, the newly independent states were unable to provide adequate educational, law enforcement and judicial services to the people. Like in other Muslim societies, the mosque became the most important place, as it was a school, a place of worship and a gathering point where social and political issues could be discussed and solutions formulated. With the state’s legitimacy at a low point, state-sponsored mosques bore the burden of illegitimacy as well. “Independent” Islamic organizations and religious movements competed to fill the governmental and ideological vacuum that continued to spread through the region. The dearth of civil services became so severe that these organizations arrogated to themselves the responsibility of fighting crime and providing youth and family services in many cities and villages across Central Asia.

While it has only recently received greater notice, the radical Islamist presence in Central Asia is far from new. In fact, beginning in the 1950s, foreign Islamic activists had been smuggling literature into Soviet Central Asia. As early as the 1970s, Muhammad Hindustani Rustamov, a respected theologian, noted that several members of the Uzbek clergy had begun to diverge from Hanafi Islam towards Wahhabism.<sup>13</sup> This move was in part due to the efforts of the *Ikhwan al-Muslimun* (Muslim Brotherhood), which had been active in the country since the 1970s. The *Ikhwan* branch in Uzbekistan consisted of an ethnically diverse group of Muslim students from countries such as Jordan, Iraq and Afghanistan. These students created the “Tashkent Group” and tried to secretly establish cells in universities. The goal was to recruit Uzbekistanis with the hope of someday establishing the Caliphate. While at first they acted secretly, as the reforms of *perestroika* became more widely implemented, these Islamists began to carry out their activities more openly. They were further emboldened by the Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan in the 1990s.

The most radical of the Islamists to target Central Asia were the Wahhabis, followers of the Ibn Abdul Wahhab, who in the 18<sup>th</sup> century sought to cleanse Islam from the changes that had occurred since the time of the Prophet.

Believing the Islamic world fell behind the Western world due to the “tolerance” Muslims showed to non-Muslim elements, thereby corrupting Islam, Wahhab wished to purify Islam. He not only went against the *aqidah* developed over fourteen centuries but also considered Sufi spirituality as non-Muslim. The movement gained political influence when in the 1920s, Abdul Wahhab made a pact with the fledgling House of Saud. In exchange for military support and legitimacy, the House of Saud established Wahhabism as the official creed of Saudi Arabia.<sup>14</sup> With the end of the Ottoman Caliphate, and with control over the two holiest places in Islam, Mecca and Medina, Wahhabist Saudi Arabia over time became the *de facto* center of Islam.

The administration of the *Hajj* activities has allowed the Wahhabis to indoctrinate tens of millions of Muslims from every corner of the Islamic world when they arrive in Mecca for the annual pilgrimage. As Bernard Lewis describes,

The Muslim pilgrimage was and is a corporate activity taking place at a certain time every year, drawing Muslims from every corner of the Muslim world. This experience established a level of communication within the Muslim world, which had no parallel in the Christian world until the invention of modern mass media. There is a degree of intercommunication within the Muslim world through the pilgrimage, the importance of which is difficult to exaggerate.<sup>15</sup>

Arriving from all points on the globe, Muslims entering the holy city are provided with literature espousing the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam. Those with little previous religious education, such as the Central Asian Muslims, return home under the assumption that these texts represent the true nature of Islam.

Another threat to Central Asia came from the militant Islamists who defeated the Soviet army and wanted to continue their violent *jihad* against any perceived enemy of Islam. As Samuel Huntington explains,

The [Afghan-Soviet war] left . . . a legacy of expert and experienced fighters' training camps and logistical facilities, elaborate trans-Islamic networks of personal and organizational relationships . . . and, most important, a heady sense of power and self-confidence over what had been achieved and a driving desire to move on the other victories.<sup>16</sup>

Capitalizing on the ideological vacuum left by the Soviets, these militants moved easily from Afghanistan to Central Asia, which became the next battleground.

The radical Islamists, like the Soviets, were most concerned with fighting the Sufis, their archenemy. Since many Central Asians did not know about their culture and identity, it was essential for the radicals to prevent the rekindling of this tolerant form of Islam in order to achieve their own goals. As stated earlier, for Sufis jihad is an internal striving for personal spiritual purification, while for

Wahhabis it represents the struggle for the worldwide victory of Islam. Therefore, to get Central Asian Muslims to join their causes, the Wahhabis and other radical Islamist movements wanted to eliminate any traces of Sufism and focus primarily on politicized Islam.

Their main point of entry was the Ferghana Valley, an area densely populated with deeply religious people and shared among Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. From the early 1990s, four radical Islamist groups were active in Ferghana: Adolat (Justice), Baraka (Blessings), Tauba (Repentance), and Islom Lashkarlari (Warriors of Islam).<sup>17</sup> These groups originally existed underground during the Soviet period and emerged in the era of Gorbachev's reforms. *Perestroika* and *glasnost* allowed for greater freedom of speech and religion, which permitted the rise of Islamist parties. Over time, others also became active in the region, including Uzun Soqol (Long Beards), Nurcular, Tablighi Jamaat, Hizballah and HT splinter groups Akromiylar and Hizb un-Nusrat.<sup>18</sup> The Islamic Resistance Party primarily operated in Tajikistan (1989–91) and was committed to establishing an Islamic state in which clerics would be responsible for administering all governmental affairs. While their methods and strategies may differ, almost all of the groups listed above have the shared goal of opposing the secular system and establishing an Islamic state.

From Ferghana, many of these Islamist groups targeted Uzbekistan, clearly understanding that it is the Islamic heart of Central Asia. The most active groups, Adolat and Islom Lashkarlari, were founded and led by underground Islamic cleric Tahir Yuldashev, who operated out of the Otavaliyon mosque in the Namangan *viloyat* (region).<sup>19</sup> At first these groups consisted of only a few hundred members, but in the absence of decisive action by the Uzbekistani government, they were able to disseminate their propaganda in the Ferghana Valley and recruit more people. In their drive to power, the radicals called themselves *amirs*, arrested the local mayor and built a mosque and a *madrassa* funded by the Saudis. Adolat members were accused of burning the homes of local Jews and attacking women wearing "un-Islamic" clothing. They patrolled the streets in the evenings, and under the pretext of fighting alcoholism they would often stop and beat passersby. Reportedly, they would even occasionally tie people to the mosque columns or lock them up in a basement and torture them.<sup>20</sup>

Many trace the beginning of the struggle between the Uzbekistani government and Islamists back to 1991 when riots erupted after President Karimov visited Namangan and affronted Adolat. At the time, protesters had made the first calls for a political role for Islam, advocating the establishment of an Islamic state and the introduction of *sharia* law. Faced with a swiftly deteriorating situation, the Uzbekistani government finally responded in the spring of 1992 by arresting 27 Adolat members and banning the group. This action prompted Yuldashev, his ally Juma Khodjiev Namangani and others to flee to Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Most of those who went to Afghanistan

underwent radical indoctrination and military training with other Islamist groups, while the majority of those who went to Tajikistan joined the local Islamic movement, participating in the country's civil war that began in May 1992.

While Yuldashev's radical message continued to spread through the network of mosques and *madrassas* in the Ferghana Valley, he was traveling to Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Afghanistan and became increasingly influenced by Wahhabism and Deobandism. He also expanded his political and financial links with other militant Islamists; with the help of al-Qaeda, the Taliban, Harakat ul Ansar and al-Jihad, Yuldashev then brought together Adolat, Baraka, Tauba and Islom Lashkari under the unified title of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). Namangani, who became the military commander of the IMU, was one of his main supporters, along with the Saudi-trained militant Abdul Ahad.<sup>21</sup> By 1998 there were reports of hundreds of Uzbekistani *mujaheddin* training in and operating between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

The first signs of the IMU's violent inclinations appeared in August 1999, when Namangani and his associates abducted Japanese and Kyrgyzstani government officials and military personnel near Osh, Kyrgyzstan. The IMU was also believed to be involved in launching carefully orchestrated attacks against Uzbekistan from neighboring Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and most notably the 1999 Tashkent bombings. Soon thereafter, when Namangani declared his aim to capture the region, thousands of refugees fled the Ferghana Valley. Namangani then headed for Afghanistan where, with the permission of the Taliban, he established an IMU training camp. Militants from all over the Ferghana Valley began to flock to the camp to receive instruction in terrorist tactics under the guidance of the Taliban. Yuldashev, in the only interview he has ever given, declared "The goal of IMU activities is the creation of an Islamic State. We declared a jihad in order to create a religious system and government. We want the model of Islam which is nothing like in Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan or Saudi Arabia."<sup>22</sup>

In late 2001, the IMU joined forces with the Taliban and al-Qaeda against U.S.-led forces during the Afghanistan campaign. After suffering grave losses (including the death of Namangani in Afghanistan), some IMU fighters fled to South Waziristan (located between Pakistan and Afghanistan) with other jihadists who escaped U.S. entrapment at Tora Bora. On orders from Bin Laden, IMU militants have taken control of South Waziristan, with Yuldashev in command of military activities. Since the conclusion of Operation Enduring Freedom, the IMU's infrastructure and manpower has been significantly weakened, but today there are approximately 150 IMU militants who still have the capacity to fight. Yuldashev, his son-in-law and chief lieutenant Dilshod Hodzhiev (who is in charge of IMU finances) and Ulugbek Kholikov, alias Muhammad Ajub (who heads the IMU's military section) are believed to be hiding in Wana, Pakistan. Yuldashev is thought to be in negotiations with other



international terrorist organizations and illegal arms traffickers in order to purchase Russian-manufactured “Igla” portable anti-aircraft missile launchers to use against American targets in Afghanistan.

While many at first assumed the American military presence in the region would make the IMU’s operations more difficult, thus pushing more group members into the non-violent camp, the opposite has in fact happened. The setbacks of their Islamist brothers have led to a growing desire among various militants to consolidate their efforts and move into Central Asia. As the chairman of the Kyrgyz National Security Service (NSS), Kalyk Imankulov, stated, in 2002 Islamic radicals made a decision to unite in a framework a new underground organization called the Islamic Movement of Central Asia (IMCA), which would bring together the IMU with Kyrgyz and Tajik radicals as well as Uighur separatists in China. The East Turkestan Islamic Movement, which in the past was entirely made up of Uighurs in western China, now includes Afghans, Chechens, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks and Kazakhs who share its new goal of forming an Islamic state in Central Asia. Kyrgyzstani authorities believe that the IMCA was indeed formed in 2003, with the immediate goal of creating a Caliphate in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, saving expansion to Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and northwest China for a second stage.<sup>23</sup> The headquarters of IMCA, which is led by Yuldashev, are believed to be located in Afghanistan’s northeastern Badakhshan province.<sup>24</sup>

The tactics of the unified militant Islamic force are to destabilize Central Asian governments and attack American and Israeli targets. According to the deputy chairman of the Kyrgyz NSS, Tokon Mamytov, the main insurgent targets are the American bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, as well as the embassies in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.<sup>25</sup> Uzbekistan has already seen two sets of terrorist attacks. On March 28, 2004 a series of attacks in Tashkent and Bukhara took place. During four straight days of explosions, bombings and assaults, which included the region’s first-ever female suicide bombings, 47 people were killed. Later, on July 30, terrorists attacked the American and Israeli embassies and the prosecutor general’s office in Uzbekistan, killing seven. The scale and the level of preparation of these attacks indicated support from outside Uzbekistan.<sup>26</sup> The country’s chief prosecutor alleged that all 85 individuals (including 17 women) arrested had been trained as suicide bombers. Uzbekistani authorities believe that women suicide attackers are trained in Pakistan, possibly by an Uzbekistani woman.<sup>27</sup> In the home of a suspect, authorities also found computer files detailing information on training camps in Pakistan and Kazakhstan that are administered by Arab instructors who were themselves previously trained by al-Qaeda militants. The director of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization’s antiterrorist center, Vyacheslav Kasymov, further stated that mobile phones found at the homes of suspects in Uzbekistan showed they had called phone numbers in Kazakhstan.<sup>28</sup> Suspects reportedly testified that they had come to Uzbekistan via Iran and Azerbaijan in order to target

police stations and prisons. They are also believed to have revealed plans to attack embassies and the offices of Western organizations.

Uzbekistani authorities at first mentioned Islamic Jihad, the IMU and Jamaat (Society) as possibly responsible for the attacks. The last later took full responsibility. Uzbekistani Prosecutor-General Rashid Kadyrov stated that the Jamaat militants, who number between 300–400, are influenced by HT’s ideology and by the racialism of the Islamic Movement of Turkestan, which is yet another extremist organization. (It grew out of the IMU and incorporated IMU and extremists from Kazakhstan to China.) Further investigations indicated that the responsible group was most likely Tablighi Jamaat.

The confusion seems to be due to mistranslation from Arabic. The Uzbekistani use “Jamaat” instead of the full name of “Tablighi Jamaat”. “Tabligh” is the Arabic word for the act of Muslims inviting others to Islam. Some counter-terrorism officials wonder if Tablighi Jamaat and Jamaat Tabligh may be the same group since both call for the restoration of the Caliphate. However, the two differ in tactics. The Kazakhstani authorities’ arrest of over two dozen members of an Uzbekistani group calling itself the Jamaat of Central Asian Mujaheddin added a new name to the steadily growing catalogue of extremist groups.<sup>29</sup> It is worth noting, however, that the multiplicity of different organizations is sometimes a ruse to make it seem as though there are more organizations than actually exist. Often, the same individuals make up several “different” organizations.

Ultimately, all of these militants share the same goal, obey the same regional leaders, and communicate via the same networks. While they act under different names and use different tactics, none of them has a coherent ideology. Neither Bin Laden, nor former Taliban leader Mullah Omar nor Yuldashev have come up with an ideological and theological framework that justifies their actions. Instead, they often rely on the comprehensive teachings provided by Hizb ut-Tahrir, currently the most popular radical movement in Central Asia.

### *Hizb ut-Tahrir’s Success in Central Asia*

The newly independent states of Central Asia provided new horizons for the expansion of HT’s ideology. HT material was first brought to Uzbekistan in the late 1970s by Jordanians and Palestinians who were studying at the region’s higher institutions. The second wave of HT expansion began in 1992 but took off in earnest in 1995, when a Jordanian named Salahuddin brought HT’s literature to the Ferghana Valley and disseminated it among the ethnic Uzbek population. While HT is still most active in the Ferghana Valley, over the last decade it has successfully spread to the rest of Uzbekistan and to Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. The movement found many recruits following the February 1999 attacks in Tashkent, especially after Uzbekistani authorities

wrongly accused HT of participating in the explosions. (This charge was later retracted.) In order to respond to the government's accusations, Hizb ut-Tahrir published its first leaflet about Uzbekistan in April 1999. The group then began the regular issuance of such leaflets, at times releasing over 100,000 copies of each leaflet about twice a month.

As a result of the repressive methods of the Uzbekistani authorities, since early 2000, many HT members have left the country and moved to more open Central Asian states, thus becoming excellent missionaries for the movement. At first, many Uzbekistanis settled in ethnic Uzbek regions of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, and through person-to-person contact were able to win people over to HT's cause. Over time, non-ethnic Uzbekistanis have joined the movement. Today, even ethnic Russians and Koreans are found among arrested HT members. While these HT exiles initially confined their operations to northern Tajikistan, the Osh area of Kyrgyzstan, and the southern areas of Kazakhstan (all areas with large Uzbek populations), they have begun to expand from this base. Within the last year, Hizb ut-Tahrir members have been arrested in northern Kazakhstan, the Bishkek area of Kyrgyzstan, and in the Tajikistani capital of Dushanbe, areas that are not near the Uzbekistani border or known for having significant numbers of ethnic Uzbeks.

The precise number of Hizb ut-Tahrir members in Central Asia today is difficult to estimate. In general, like other Islamist movements, HT has been less successful in recruiting nomadic peoples (Turkmen and Kazakhstani), who traditionally have been less religious and more successful among the more settled Uzbekistani, Kyrgyzstani and Tajikistani peoples. It is therefore not surprising that as of late 2004, HT is strongest in Uzbekistan, with estimates ranging from 7,000 up to 60,000.<sup>30</sup> There are 3,000–5,000 members in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The number is much smaller in Kazakhstan, where there are estimated to be no more than 300 HT members. HT has also yet to establish a noticeable presence in Turkmenistan. Based on information gathered from recent arrests, however, support for HT is growing, including among teachers, military officers, politicians (especially those whose relatives have been arrested), and other members of the elite.<sup>31</sup> Given that HT aims to penetrate political power centers as a method of bringing about coups, even several hundred can make a big difference.

Many factors have contributed to HT's success in Central Asia. Overall, it was the best-organized movement to enter the post-Soviet vacuum. As it operates in local languages, potential members have no need to know Arabic to rise within the movement. In comparison to the other Islamist groups, Hizb ut-Tahrir has offered the most comprehensive and easy to understand answers to a myriad of complex questions resulting from the collapse of the Soviet Union. It has provided a holistic answer to the socio-economic challenges facing Central Asians, such as extreme poverty, high unemployment, corruption among government officials, drug addiction, prostitution and lack of education. This

dangerous mix of conditions has been exploited by HT, which urges the people of the region to “blame America and the system it leads, overthrow your governments, and resurrect the Caliphate to bring an end to all your problems.”

Many people, especially the young, have joined Hizb ut-Tahrir to learn about Islam. In Central Asia the movement puts an emphasis on recruiting jobless young people, ages 17–35, who come from traditional families. Before entering HT, a majority of young members were not especially religious and thus did not possess the background in Islam to evaluate independently the accuracy of the movement’s doctrines. For many youths, the idea of “great jihad” (or “jihad of the heart”, that is, spiritual self-improvement) became the reason to join this party. They were not comfortable with the militant activities and the strictness of the other Islamist groups. They were, however, fascinated with HT slogans of justice and equality, a public order and help to the poor. It goes without saying that such slogans, like those used by the Bolsheviks, are deceptive.

HT’s secretive organizational character, underground operations, and Marxist-Leninist methodology made sense to the Muslims of the post-Soviet space. HT’s anti-state nature made it further appealing as a genuine Islamic movement to all those remembering the strict control of the religion that existed under Soviet rule. Given that the governments were filled with former communists who feared religion, HT’s Islamic message seemed genuine to unsuspecting Central Asians. But HT’s key strategy is to politicize and radicalize the population so as to create fertile ground for the further spread of its views. Its primary aim is to convince Uzbekistanis that all of their problems are the fault of the Uzbekistani government and that the only solution is the destruction of the present political order in Tashkent and the creation of a Caliphate based on *sharia*.

If asked directly most Uzbekistanis oppose the creation of an Islamic state. The majority of Uzbekistanis wish to maintain their secular, independent state. Once they understand HT’s true goals, many distance themselves from the movement.<sup>32</sup> As one Uzbekistani academic said, “We just got liberated from the Russian Caliphate; we do not want another one.” But few members or potential recruits fully appreciate HT’s ultimate goals and philosophy.

HT also serves more immediate needs, filling the serious psychological holes of loneliness and aimlessness left in the lives of many Central Asians. In particular, the young acutely feel the lack of a social network, which is neatly provided by HT study circles. HT has also been able to provoke in its recruits “a psychological response related to loss of status, lack of belief in the future, and a desire to ‘do something’ about changes in society that deeply affect people’s lives.”<sup>33</sup> With no jobs and no prospects for improvement, many people want to know the purpose of their lives.

The author's own interviews with HT members in prison indicate that HT was able to provide them with the answer. One HT member, Mohammad Ali, who is five years into a fifteen-year prison term, told the author precisely that. A smart, spiritual and dignified man, Ali said that in his neighborhood, the only Islamic options were the Wahhabis and HT. He did not like the Wahhabis, so he joined HT in order to satisfy his deeply felt desire to learn about the Quran and the *hadiths*. He was unable to attend school and was questioning the purpose of life and "why the world is like it is." After he studied HT literature, he said "it all made sense, and I found my path." During his time in prison his belief has only strengthened, and he proudly stated that "I am now even more sure that I am right; they send some imams and I confuse them with my logic. I know I am right because no one has been able to prove me wrong." In fact, he was resigned to his imprisonment, as "in Allah's teachings, desperation, pain, problems are foretold; the previous generations passed through this and now we are being tried." He also is clear about the difference between HT and the IMU; in HT, "for every act there is a reference in the Quran and on Judgment Day, we can say that we did what we believe we were told to do by God". Ali's certainty in the correctness of his beliefs seems to give him all the strength he needs to spend the next ten years of his life in prison.<sup>34</sup>

HT provides Central Asians with connection to the global *umma*. Once a resident of the most remote Central Asian village joins HT, he feels part of the umma, and in times of despair can believe that he, along with masses all over the world, is suffering and working towards the same goal: the establishment of the Caliphate. Those who have access to the Internet can share the story of their own personal struggle with brothers and sisters from London to Indonesia, thereby further strengthening the sense of belonging.

A related factor contributing to the appeal of HT's pan-Islamic message is the distress people have experienced as a result of the rigid borders imposed by the newly independent states. Skillfully following the old rule of "divide and conquer", Stalin had transplanted populations from one state to another in order to create minorities to further undermine republics that were already undermined by artificial boundaries. He believed these measures would make it impossible for the Central Asian states to survive on their own, consigning them to permanent dependence on Moscow. Indeed, while today each republic carries the name of a local nationality, none is based on the borders of any historical state or principality. Regions that for centuries operated as a political and economic unit, such as the Ferghana Valley, are divided between two or three republics.

After independence, these boundaries leaped off the map to attain political, economic and even humanitarian significance. Politically, the confusion and conflict among regional governments has often hindered the joint resolution of common problems. Economically, the division has been detrimental. Anara Tabyshalieva notes that today, "The idea of a unified state, reminiscent of the

Soviet era with no national border between Central Asian states, is supported by traders, customers and many others involved in cross-border trade, which supplies the livelihood of a significant part of Central Asia's population."<sup>35</sup> However, this ideal is negated by the trading monopolies that each country operates in frontier areas. These businesses, some of which are semi-criminal entities, profit from tensions among countries of Central Asia and lobby hard against any liberalization of intra-regional trade.<sup>36</sup>

HT offers a powerful alternative to this balkanization of Central Asia with its concept of brotherhood, which is far closer to the traditions of informal clan and tribe relations that form the fabric of Central Asian society. According to local traditions, a member of a family, clan or tribe is expected to take care of other members. Such help often includes preferential treatment in employment. In the West, these types of relations are considered emblematic of corruption and backwardness; the common belief is that democratization and modernization would inevitably push the region toward a merit-based system. However, many Central Asians perceive such changes as individualistic and selfish, and fear that the safety net of their societies is ultimately being destroyed. As people seek new informal networks, HT offers an alternative sense of community; its members do indeed assist each other in numerous ways.

HT's success comes also from its ability to adjust its message to the region in which it operates. In Central Asia HT's primary focus is devoted to socioeconomic and human rights issues. In a region with limited access to a free press, HT's discussion of everyday issues provides a much needed outlet for news and opinion. HT continuously promotes a message of "justice" against what many Central Asians view as their corrupt and repressive state structures. When HT draws attention to the illegitimacy of the existing political order, the group is making a point that resonates with people of many different political perspectives, social classes, ethnic groups and educational backgrounds, all of whom want to *feel*, rather than just hear, that they are equal in the eyes of Allah. As an HT pamphlet states,

A person differs from another person not according to the color of his skin, not according to the race, not according to the nationality, not according to the language and not according to the geographical region of his residing. A person differs from other person according to his views about the person, about his life, about the universe and according to the opinions and the belief following from these ideas.<sup>37</sup>

HT makes great use of political developments and important dates to issue leaflets and "guide" the Central Asians towards the Caliphate. For example, in a leaflet issued on the anniversary of Kyrgyzstani independence, HT asserts that the people of Kyrgyzstan have nothing to celebrate, since they are not yet independent:

Today all the military, political, economic power of the state remains in hands of the enemies of the Muslim people. Russia had appointed the head of Kyrgyzstan—the President of state Askar Akaev. In accordance with the instruction of Russians, he had gathered around himself group of former communists who protect Russian interests . . . Propagandizing democracy, they introduce laws and constitutions of unbelievers. They struggle against Islam, Islamic laws, and Islamic opinions. They bring up children of Muslims at schools, institutes, technical schools and in all other educational institutions in the spirit of atheism, according to programs which had been written by unbelievers. Thus they prepare new slaves for their masters<sup>38</sup>

In this leaflet HT also attacks the economic policies of the Central Asian countries.

They carry out economic reforms according to instructions of colonizers. They introduce market economy by creation of joint-stock companies and joint ventures together with colonizers. They plunder and rob riches of Muslims. They bring the investments based on usury into non-industrial fields of national economy, they receive credits under high percent and they exhaust Muslims in debts. . . . They meanly deceive Muslims who are the owners of the fertile grounds and of the huge deposits of minerals. These authorities transform local Muslims into poor men who beg to eat crumbs of waste products from a table of constitutions of unbelievers [and] colonizers.

With these messages, HT tries to achieve the following goals: fomenting sociopolitical disorder and instability within the country; encouraging extremist views in people's minds and misleading them from the true essence of religion; agitating the masses to be against the state and its forces, and in so doing, preventing the success of political and economic reforms. The states' failure is essential for HT to convince Muslims that the only solution for the problems that beset them is the formation of a united Caliphate and the end of *kufir* rule. As mentioned above, HT refers to the Quran to legitimize its message:

*And Allah will never admit authority of godless to rule above Muslims. (4:141)*

Hizb ut-Tahrir's use of the Quran and *hadiths*, combined with its stated policy of non-violence, enables its members to portray HT as a moderate Islamist movement.

The organization is also less strict than the Wahhabis or other radical Islamist movements that require adherence to dress code and other legalistic aspects of the Islamic tradition. These restrictions are not easily acceptable to post-Soviet Central Asians. In contrast to the more traditional Islamist explanations offered by conservative mullahs, HT activists ably blend their political philosophy with religion and local conditions, thereby making the group's message much more appealing to Central Asian youth.

HT is in step with other radical Islamic groups in anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism. This is in part because of the parallels HT and others draw between American and Israeli foreign policies in the Middle East and Central Asia, which are framed as an attack against Islam. While many Uzbekistanis, and indeed many Muslims, disapprove of the recent policies of the Israeli government, they do not transfer this disapproval to Jews as a whole. The Bukharian Jewish community in Uzbekistan is well respected, and its members freely worship in synagogues. But anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism are gaining appeal among Central Asians. The dominance of the Russian mass media, which has an anti-American bent, and the lack of any other reliable mass media sources further strengthen the hold of these perceptions.

HT has also been able to shape international public opinion in its favor by framing government reactions to its activities as efforts to repress religion rather than efforts to combat radical ideology and anti-constitutional activities. Western liberal organizations and governments, instead of voicing concern over the potential impact HT infiltrators could have on Central Asian governments and populations, have almost exclusively focused on the tough administrative measures taken by governments to halt Islamic extremism.

Certainly, the monitoring and reporting of on-the-ground human rights abuses are important, and the West has to be concerned about the treatment of individuals. However, many NGO reports fail to portray realistically the political context in which Central Asian governments operate. Western media channels call for the protection of “independent imams” and refer to members of extremist groups as “fighters for faith.” They do not, however, consider the deleterious impact such imams have on the psychological and spiritual well-being of Muslim youth throughout the region.

HT has presented itself as a legitimate opposition movement of people suffering religious oppression. It has established contact with members of the democratic opposition parties, NGOs and regional representatives of Western media. HT members (often without disclosing their affiliation) also manage to receive grants to “research” human rights and religious freedom violations taking place in Central Asia.

The single-issue advocacy of the human rights groups, aided and abetted by HT itself, has only made matters worse, especially in Uzbekistan. Certainly there are serious human-rights issues in Uzbekistan, particularly regarding torture, but the anti-Uzbekistani sentiment currently prevalent in the West is counter-productive. Today, many Americans and others believe that the Uzbekistani government brought the HT problem upon itself. This argument is similar to a suggestion that the U.S. government was responsible for 9/11. As a result, few are willing to acknowledge even when the Uzbekistani government takes steps to improve the conditions that give rise to radicalism. Moreover, few pay attention



to the rise in HT activity in the more open Central Asian states, such as Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, as well as in western Europe itself.

Hizb ut-Tahrir's success in portraying itself as a "peaceful" group that simply engages in the "battle of ideas" against an Uzbekistani government composed of torturers is in large degree due to its methods of communication. For example, following the July 30, 2004 suicide bombings in Uzbekistan, President Karimov accused HT and its ideology as the source of inspiration for these attacks. During a nationally broadcast address on July 31, he asked, "If the religious movement [Hizb-ut-Tahrir] intends to set up a caliphate in our Uzbekistan, overthrow the current system, give up the modern style of life and create a state based on *sharia* law, then how will they be able to do this in a peaceful way?"<sup>39</sup> Most news groups and Western governments that picked up the HTUK statement in English, which as usual denied that the group would ever engage in violence to achieve its goals of establishing the Caliphate, believed that Karimov was once again trying to use the terrorist incident to crack down on the so-called independent Muslims.<sup>40</sup> (It is important to note that "independent Muslim" is a term with no meaning in the Islamic context but has been adopted by human rights organizations to differentiate between those Muslims who practice government-approved Islam and those who do not.) Those who read the more obscure HT statement released in Tajik, however, had a better understanding of HT's activities in Uzbekistan:

If we ever decide to include violence in our program, we shall not blow up things here and there; we shall go directly to his [Karimov's] palace and liquidate him because we are not afraid of anyone but God Almighty. Karimov himself understands that we can do it. He can find from his security services that it is in our power to crush or to liquidate him, should our chosen path allow us to act in this manner. . . . However, we are preparing a terrible death for this tyrant under the Caliphate that is approaching nearer every day—with the permission of Allah. Then this tyrant would get his just punishment in this life. The Allah's punishment in the hereafter would be stronger many times more.<sup>41</sup>

What this statement clearly shows is that while HT in Uzbekistan hopes to establish the Caliphate through non-violent means, as soon as the Caliphate is achieved, the group will unleash its militant jihadism. Moreover, HT admits that if necessary, its members will use force to arrive at their end goal of forming the Caliphate.

### *HT Recruitment and Activities in Central Asia*

The pattern of HT activity does not vary significantly from state to state in Central Asia, whether in distribution of materials or in approaches to recruitment. HT first begins its drive by approaching individuals most likely to embrace radical Islam, communicating and establishing links with them, and

disseminating propaganda literature translated into local languages. HT distributes party literature, including its publication *Al-Waie* (Consciousness) all across the region. For Central Asian target audiences, leaflets are convenient propaganda tools as they can be printed locally and distributed easily. This is especially true in regions where Internet access is limited or nonexistent. Local HT branches print out materials from its website and disseminate them after translation into local languages. The London *kiedat* recently started to send propaganda materials via Internet to Osh, Kyrgyzstan, which are then smuggled to Andijan and Tashkent for further dissemination. The International Crisis Group reports that “most recently, the organization has produced videocassettes, tape recordings and CDs of leaders’ speeches and sermons.”<sup>42</sup> Government sources regularly report the seizure of HT printing facilities located within private residences. For example, in 2003 alone, Uzbekistani authorities shut down two underground printing houses and confiscated 144,757 leaflets containing appeals to overthrow the country’s constitutional order. Also found were over 10,000 copies of HT’s constitution, thousands of different issues of *Al-Waie* and two dozen copies of HT books by al-Nabhani and Zallum.

While educational materials are key to the ideological development of members, the *recruitment* of HT members is based primarily on person-to-person communication. Each existing member is asked to bring in new recruits personally known to them from places of employment, schools or mosques. This methodology has enabled HT to develop party contacts in all sectors of society. While its popularity is on average higher in rural areas, HT also has significant appeal in urban areas as well. After all, since the movement is spread primarily by individuals, it can adopt an entirely different tone and content in different areas.

The importance of this individual approach cannot be too highly stressed. As one U.S. intelligence official explains, “Before an HT member gives a leaflet to a person (someone whom he most likely met at a mosque), the activist generally gets acquainted with the person and sits down to explain that HT is a political, not military, organization.”<sup>43</sup> HT recruiters then suggest that the person read some local-language leaflets. After about a month, if the target remains interested, the HT representative proposes party membership itself. To join the party, the potential member must take the HT oath of loyalty.<sup>44</sup> This individual recruitment method ensures internal security and correct teaching of HT’s ideology.

Though recruitment takes place in urban mosques, this type of approach is more dangerous than activity in rural areas. HT is therefore more active in the countryside. In rural areas, interpersonal networks are stronger than in the more anonymous cities. Each HT member usually has more access to potential recruits through family and clan ties, as well as through other informal networks. Furthermore, those approached who reject HT’s overtures are certain not to report their family or clan members to the authorities. In rural areas HT has no need to distribute leaflets (thus neutralizing the most frequent cause of the arrest

of its members). In small villages, HT study circles are held under the framework of traditional weekly assemblies in a private house or the community tea-house.

The high incidence of poverty and unemployment among the rural population further increases HT's ability to recruit. According to Orozbek Moldaliev, a leading Central Asia scholar, HT is even more active in villages during the autumn and winter periods, when seasonal peasants and craftsmen are not employed. While the majority of HT members are to be found among the young, unemployed or underemployed masses,<sup>45</sup> the widespread rural appeal of the organization has resulted in a new wave of recruitment among small- and medium-sized business owners as well. According to prominent Uzbekistani analyst Rafik Saifulin, in Uzbekistan HT has increased its support within the commercial class, especially among those who are engaged in wholesale trading operations.<sup>46</sup>

HT is using the prison system for recruitment in the same way as did the Bolsheviks prior to 1917. Since the late 1990s, prisons have become the best places to convert people to radical Islam. The vast majority of inmates deeply resent the establishment. There is also a serious torture problem in Central Asian prisons, especially in Uzbekistan. After enduring such treatment, even the least religious individual is susceptible to HT recruitment efforts. Those who are jailed for small offenses may develop close contacts with HT members while in prison and over time begin to identify with party ideology. By the time they leave prison, former petty criminals can become strong Islamists tied to the larger HT network.

HT pays a significant amount of money (by Central Asian standards) to those who distribute its leaflets. Many of those arrested with HT leaflets are not members, but simply spreading the material for financial reasons. Even though their crime was simply passing on a piece of paper they often did not or could not read, these individuals are sentenced to long prison terms. Of the several thousand suspected radicals arrested by the Uzbekistani government following the February 1999 attacks, many were essentially innocent—but after their prison experience, became radicals themselves.

Relatives of the imprisoned, especially women, are particularly easy to recruit. Women are most useful for HT's strategy in creating tension between society and the government as they can hold demonstrations in protest of their loved ones. The *kiedat* is believed to give orders to female relatives of convicted HT members to carry out various protest actions and anti-governmental demonstrations in Central Asia.

The economic conditions in Central Asian countries also attract to the movement influential people within state institutions. This is critical for HT's success; as HT's third stage states, to overthrow the government and to establish the Caliphate, the group will need the support of prominent individuals. HT is

increasingly enjoying more success among this category; as one Uzbekistani HT member declared, “There are many people in the government who are good people so it’s [a] good time to break the government from inside, as some people are certain to join us.”<sup>47</sup> Today, HT is known to have successfully penetrated the Kazakhstani media, the Uzbekistani customs bureau, and the Kyrgyzstani parliament.<sup>48</sup> In Kyrgyzstan, NSS Chairman Imankulov publicly declared in 2002 that Deputy Speaker of Parliament Zhogorku Kenesh and ombudsman Tursunbaj Bakir Uulu were connected to Islamists. Indeed, Bakir Uulu is known to protect HT, saying, “In my native area of Karasujskom in the Osh region, where over 300,000 persons live, every fifth or sixth inhabitant is an HT supporter. We must reconcile ourselves to the fact that there are Communists and others living in this state that would like to change its constitutional status.” Given that the Communist party is registered with the Ministry of Justice, operates on the basis of Kyrgyzstani laws, and struggles for power in lawful ways, the comparison with HT is clearly not correct. Local observers therefore consider Bakir Uulu to be one of those hoping to receive HT’s support in the February 2005 parliamentary elections.

HT’s numbers in Central Asia have grown over the last three years. The U.S.-led war in Afghanistan against the Taliban and the IMU, especially the invasion of Iraq, provided HT with the ideal opportunity to intensify its anti-American propaganda campaign. With Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan actively cooperating with the U.S. in anti-terror operations, HT has further increased its attacks on these two regimes for serving the interests of the *kufri*. The group blames Karimov for betraying the interests of the Muslims and aiding the West in its implementation of expansionist aims. While the infrastructure and manpower of the Islamist groups in the region have been weakened since the conclusion of Operation Enduring Freedom, HT was never directly targeted. In fact, the group benefited from its declared non-violent status. The fact that HT is not considered a terrorist organization by the U.S. gives HT enormous space in which it can act as the kind of political opposition that tries to win over the hearts and minds of Central Asians.

The implementation of HT’s three-stage method can easily be seen in Central Asia. During the first stage (early 1993–February 1999) they mainly engaged in religious and socio-economic propaganda activities to recruit new members. They also had to attract new members to the organization and to form self-reliant groups of three to seven people, called *halkas*. In addition, members have been ordered to bring all their family members, including females, into the organization. The second stage (February 1999–April 2003) followed the terrorist attacks in Tashkent. HT operatives started filling their ranks with new members using open agitation and propaganda methods such as distributing leaflets in public places (all over Central Asia), and organizing mass picketing at buildings of government agencies (mainly in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan). HT has now entered the third stage, during which they will try to overthrow governments. In Uzbekistan, two sets of terrorist attacks took place in spring and

summer 2004. Among the arrested were men and women “inspired” by HT literature. Since the spring of 2004, HT’s activity in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan has also intensified, which led the governments to take additional security measures, which will be described in detail in the next chapter.

So far there is little indication of HT activity in Turkmenistan, which could be due to a number of reasons. First, the Turkmen people have a longer nomadic tradition, and their Islamic roots are not as deep as those of other Central Asian peoples. Second, Turkmenistan’s regime is far and away the most repressive in the region. The Quran and the *hadiths* have been supplemented and even replaced by President Saparmurat Niyazov’s two-volume “Ruhnama”, a “national epic” designed to “serve as the spiritual conscience of the nation.” There is thus little space in which HT can act, although the steady growth in opposition sentiment in the country may change this situation. In 2004, leaflets appeared urging the violent overthrow of Niyazov’s government. These leaflets reportedly say that the Turkmen people “deserve to be liberated from tyranny. . . . The time has come to take responsibility for the future of the country’s children. . . . The time has come to overthrow Niyazov and bring him to trial.”<sup>49</sup> Hizb ut-Tahrir is likely to be behind these leaflets, as there is a growing HT presence at the Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan border, with many ethnic Turkmen joining the movement. In fact, such leaflets reportedly have been distributed for the last two years and HT’s real strength in Turkmenistan may be bigger than is commonly believed.

### *Funding of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Central Asia*

The tightly compartmentalized structure of HT ensures that little information is known about its financial structure. As illustrated earlier, new members take oaths of secrecy on the Quran, oaths that are generally not broken even under interrogation. The “need-to-know” basis on which information is transmitted in the party ensures that data obtained from all but the most senior members is of little importance. This is why until today neither Central Asian nor Western authorities have been able to deny the group access to its funding sources.

HT is centrally organized with a strict hierarchal structure and clearly-defined responsibilities for all party members. Each level of the movement is responsible for securing its own funding; the *Amir*, the *Mutamad*, the *Nakib* and the local committees all have treasurers and all rely on a combination of private donations and taxation of party members for financial support. The latter is particularly significant, because in Central Asia, each member is obliged to donate between 5 percent and 20 percent of monthly income to the party. (See page 31.)

An exception to the self-sufficiency rule applies to local cells consisting of young unemployed people of 17 to 25 years of age. The money received from

the central committee is used by these cells to cover everyday expenses for duplication and distribution of party literature; payment of salaries, rent and utilities; translation of foreign materials; and support for the families of arrested members.

Local HT cells also depend on non-monetary sources of support. Members have become skilled in barter trading and illicit cross-border dealings in order to evade authorities' notice. There are reports of the smuggling of meat and other food items across Central Asian borders in order to assist impoverished HT members. HT also receives help from sympathetic non-members who, while not directly participating in HT's work, provide other types of assistance such as safe houses for meetings and study circles.

HT uses other creative methods as well. The organization sets up private enterprises. One front company is suspected as the source of a wire transfer in the amount of \$4,000 made from a New York branch of Western Union in 2003; the recipient was an affiliate in Kyrgyzstan. There are also reports indicating that Hizb ut-Tahrir may be receiving funds from intelligence services, such as Pakistan's ISI. As a pragmatic organization, HT believes that the ends justify the means, and thus during the time of preparation for the Caliphate, they can even take money from the "infidels".

### *Splinters and Cooperation with Militants*

There are already a number of instances of the formation of HT splinter groups in Central Asia. In 1996, Akram Yuldashev, an HT sympathizer, founded Akromiylar in Andijan oblast. Profoundly influenced by al-Nabhani, Yuldashev preached widely among the youth of the area. In 1997–98, Akromiylar carried out a variety of activities in five categories: undercover, open, material, spiritual and rebellious. Akromiylar shares HT's conspiratorial methodology and its multi-stage process for achieving the ultimate objective of the Caliphate. The aim of Akromiylar is to gather enough strength to influence greatly, if not control directly, the oblast authorities. With this aim in mind, Akromiylar promotes a simplified version of Islam in order to maximize its potential support base. For this reason, the group tolerates cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption and temporary marriages. However, its structure is communal and cult-like, with limited exposure to outsiders.<sup>50</sup>

In 1999, another HT splinter group was established in Tashkent, called Hizb un-Nusrat (Party of Assistance). Its current leader and founder is Mirzazhanov Sharipzhon Atoyevich.<sup>51</sup> Like Hizb ut-Tahrir, this group is fundamentally clandestine in nature, and prospective members must undergo six months of training in *The System of Islam*, HT's guidebook. Members are also required to donate money to the party's communal fund. Unlike HT, however, this group does not spread propaganda among the general public. Instead, it only recruits

those whose backgrounds are first investigated. The group is thus mainly comprised of former members of other Islamic fringe groups and those accused by the Uzbekistani government of engagement in radical Islamic activities. Its supporters also include HT sympathizers who fear public exposure.

It is yet to be established whether HT has already formed a militant wing or is simply “inspiring” members to independently engage in terrorist acts. However, many observers believe that in the long run, HT will move away from its policy of non-violence in order to accomplish its ultimate goal. After all, as HT itself admits, Central Asian governments would most likely use force to protect themselves against any coup attempt. In turn, HT would need to use force as well. As suggested by the capture of HT members attempting to attack the American base in Kyrgyzstan, HT may well be forming a military wing, or, as earlier argued, radicalizing as a whole. Authorities have found guns and explosives in the homes of HT members in recent arrests all over Central Asia. Given their well-known practice of planting evidence on opponents of the regime, however, Central Asian governments are now suffering from lack of credibility of these claims. And certainly some evidence planting is still taking place. At the same time, evidence uncovered by law-enforcement authorities in western European countries revealed that HT members in these countries also possessed guns and explosives, thus bolstering the latest Central Asian claims that the organization may have taken a critical further step towards violence.

HT and the IMU do not have a formal alliance—after all, it runs against HT’s interests to be directly associated with a terrorist group—but the two organizations share a similar ideological foundation. Some also assert that HT “delivers” staff for the IMU. The main difference between the two groups is one of focus. The IMU openly advocates and carries out militant operations, while HT concentrates on the ideological battle. The two nonetheless admit to the closeness of their goals, and both are propelled closer to the achievement of their ends by state failure.<sup>52</sup> Local experts believe the IMU wanted to overthrow the Karimov regime and unite Uzbekistan with Afghanistan under Taliban rule, a union which would be the first step in the creation of a worldwide Caliphate.

There have been several meetings between the leadership of the two organizations. In 1997 near Islamabad, Pakistan, a meeting was held at which Yuldashev and representatives of Tablighi Jamaat and HT Uzbekistan discussed ways of bringing about an Islamic regime in Tashkent. At this meeting, Yuldashev reportedly said that the use of armed force would be absolutely necessary, and expressed his confidence that HT would soon realize this. As Ahmed Rashid reported, a group from HT Uzbekistan was trained in terrorist tactics in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, at a camp directed by the late Juma Namangani.<sup>53</sup> During a search of HT’s leader from the Sogd region in Tajikistan, a letter from Namangani calling for unity was found along with guns and explosives.

Despite the clear links HT has with other radical and militant Islamist organizations, the movement has so far succeeded in portraying itself as a non-violent group. This is in part due to the fact that HT's primary role is to provide the ideology for the militants. But in terrorism, the facilitators are as guilty as the perpetrators. Therefore, it is critically important to develop an international understanding of the danger HT presents, and come up with comprehensive policies to effectively combat the spread of its ideology.

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<sup>1</sup>CIA July 2004 estimates: Turkmenistan 4.9 million; Uzbekistan 26.4 million; Tajikistan 7 million; Kyrgyzstan 5.1 million; Kazakhstan 15.1 million. Total: 58.5 million.

<sup>2</sup>A December 2002 survey in Uzbekistan, sponsored by the German Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, found 99.3 percent of the respondents believe in Allah, while 12.6 percent live by strictly religious principles.

<sup>3</sup>Robert D. Kaplan, *The Ends of the Earth* (New York: Random House, 1996), p. 258.

<sup>4</sup>Bernard Lewis, "Keynote Lunch Discussion" in *Understanding Sufism and its Potential Role in U.S. Policy*, ed. Zeyno Baran (Washington, DC: The Nixon Center, March 2004), p. 18.

<sup>5</sup>Timothy Gianotti, "History, Theology and Orders", in *Understanding Sufism*, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Zahidulla Munavvarov, "The Clash of Radical and traditional Islam as a threat to the national security of the Republic of Uzbekistan (the case of Hizb at-Tahrir al-Islami activity)", (presentation at Nixon Center conference, Washington, DC, July 16, 2003).

<sup>8</sup>Sufi Imam Shamil waged a successful jihad against Russia in North Caucasus in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and became a very famous leader of political Sufism during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Russian experience with Sufism in the North Caucasus led them to suppress all Sufi orders across the Soviet Union.

<sup>9</sup>Alan Godlas, "Sufism in Eurasia", in *Understanding Sufism*.

<sup>10</sup>Roald Sagdeev and Susan Eisenhower, *Islam and Central Asia: An Enduring Legacy or An Evolving Threat?* (Washington, DC: Center for Political and Strategic Studies, 2000). p. 10.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>12</sup>Fairbanks, "Sufism in Eurasia", p. 14.

<sup>13</sup>Bakhtiyar Babdjanov and Muzaffar Kamilov, *Muhammadjan Hindustani (1892–1989) and the Beginning of the "Great Schism" among the Muslims of Uzbekistan* (n.p., n.d.) p. 200.

<sup>14</sup>There are several excellent books written on this subject. See, for example, Stephen Schwartz, *Two Faces of Islam: The House of Saud from Tradition to Terror* (New York: Doubleday, 2002).

<sup>15</sup>Lewis, "Keynote Lunch Discussion", p. 18

<sup>16</sup>Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), p. 247.

<sup>17</sup>Abdujabar Abduvakhitov, "Uzbekistan: Center of Confrontation Between Traditional and Extremist Islam in Central Asia", (presentation at Nixon Center conference, Washington, DC, July 16, 2003).

<sup>18</sup>Adbulmutal Zakrulaev, "Movarounnahr", in *Battle of Ideas* (Taskent: n.p., 2000).

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Marina L. Pikulina, "Hizb ut-Tahrir Organization and Financing", (paper distributed at Nixon Center conference, Washington, DC, July 16, 2003).

<sup>21</sup>Abdovakhitov, "Center of Confrontation".

<sup>22</sup>In Pikulina, "Hizb ut-Tahrir Organization and Financing".



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<sup>23</sup>“Assassination Attempt on top Kyrgyz official”, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, September 13, 2002; Imankulov’s deputy, Tokon Mamytov, conveyed the same information to the upper house of the Kyrgyz parliament on July 1, 2004.

<sup>24</sup>Orozbek Moldaliev, interview by Zeyno Baran, Washington, DC, November 23, 2004.

<sup>25</sup>“Kyrgyzstani Security Official on ‘Political Foundation’ of Central Asian Terrorism”, *Interfax* (Moscow), July 1, 2004.

<sup>26</sup>For example, after the spring attacks, authorities found 55 self-made suicide belts, along with more than 900 kilograms of explosives and 271 electric detonators.

<sup>27</sup>“Pakistan Hunting Woman Trainer of Suicide Bombers”, *Arab News* (Dubai, UAE), May 19, 2004.

<sup>28</sup>Bruce Pannier, “Central Asia: Is Uzbekistan a Source of Regional Extremism?”, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, April 27, 2004, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2004/4/ACB8C328-4064-4956-9B64-7C19A749650F.html>.

<sup>29</sup>Raushan Nurshayeva, “Kazakhs Break al Qaeda-linked Islamist Cell”, *Reuters*, November 11, 2004.

<sup>30</sup>The low numbers are estimates used by Western intelligence, the high numbers are estimates used by the Uzbekistani government.

<sup>31</sup>Anonymous U.S. intelligence officer, interview by Zeyno Baran, October 12, 2004.

<sup>32</sup>Based on various interviews. See also Zamira Eshanova, “Central Asia: Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan Differ in Approach to Hezb ut-Tahrir”, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, <http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2002/07/12072992171856.asp>.

<sup>33</sup>International Crisis Group, “Radical Islam in Central Asia: Responding to Hizb ut-Tahrir”, *Asia Report* 58, June 2003, p. 14.

<sup>34</sup>Muhammad Ali, interview by Zeyno Baran, Uzbekistan, October 8, 2003.

<sup>35</sup>Anara Tabyshalieva, “Hizb-ut-tahrir’s Increasing Activity in Central Asia”, *Central Asian Caucas Analysis*, January 14, 2004.

<sup>36</sup>Tolkun Namatbayeva, “Shooting on Kyrgyz-Uzbek border renews Central Asian security fears”, *Agence France-Presse*, July 18, 2003.

<sup>37</sup>“Whether Kyrgyzstan is Independent”, HT leaflet.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>“Karimov Believes Hizb ut-Tahrir Behind Latest Tashkent Bombings”, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, August 2, 2004, [http://www.eurasianet.org/redux/departments/insight/articles/eav080204\\_pr.shtml](http://www.eurasianet.org/redux/departments/insight/articles/eav080204_pr.shtml).

<sup>40</sup>“Weak and Discredited Uzbek Regime Fails to Malign Hizb ut-Tahrir”, August 10, 2002, <http://www.1924.org/text/1337/0/28/M>.

<sup>41</sup>“Hizb-ut-Tahrir Explains its Position on Tashkent Bombings”, *Newscentralasia.com*, August 5, 2004, <http://www.newscentralasia.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=775>.

<sup>42</sup>International Crisis Group, “Radical Islam in Central Asia”, p. 22.

<sup>43</sup>Anonymous U.S. counter-terrorism analyst, interview by Zeyno Baran, July 13, 2004.

<sup>44</sup>See p. 27.

<sup>45</sup>According to the data of the Osh offices of Public Prosecutor and the Osh city court, almost all arrested HT members were unemployed and did not complete middle school.

<sup>46</sup>Rafik Saifulin, interview by Evgueni Novikov, Fall 2004.

<sup>47</sup>See <http://www.src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/publicctn/86/abdullaev.pdf>.

<sup>48</sup>Reuven Paz, “The University of Global Jihad”, in *The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir: Deciphering and Combating Radical Islamist Ideology*, ed. Zeyno Baran (Washington, DC: The Nixon Center, 2004).

<sup>49</sup>“Anti-government Leaflets Distributed in Ashgabat, Memorial”, Memorial Human Rights Center, July 13, 2004. Translation from Russian by the Open Society Institute’s Turkmenistan Project.

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<sup>50</sup>Pikulina, “Hizb ut-Tahrir Organization and Financing”.

<sup>51</sup>Bakhran Tursunov, “Extremism in Uzbekistan”, The Conflict Studies Research Centre, July 2002, pp. 14–16.

<sup>52</sup>International Crisis Group, “The IMU and the Hizb-ut-Tahrir: Implications of the Afghanistan Campaign”, *Asia Briefing Paper*, January 03, 2002, p. 13.

<sup>53</sup>Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam Central Asia*, (New York, Penguin Books, 2002), p. 133.

# 5

## GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES

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Each country in Central Asia has taken steps to address the threat posed by Hizb ut-Tahrir—albeit in some cases only at long last. However, as German foreign minister Otto Schily declared, “We have to act in harmony”. HT cannot be permitted to exploit differences among the strategies employed by each state.<sup>1</sup>

In order to further the creation of a common policy among the many governments affected by HT, this chapter will evaluate the policies of several governments. Since the information in this chapter is based primarily on the author’s own research and work with the U.S. and with key Central Asian governments over the last two years, it necessarily focuses on those issues most relevant to the struggle against radical Islamist ideology. The primary focus of this research has been the dynamic between Uzbekistan and the U.S., as these are the two key players whose participation is a *sine qua non* of any successful battle against HT.

This chapter will also discuss the strategies of other Central Asian and regional powers in dealing with HT. Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan all have taken different measures and are still trying to develop a comprehensive approach. It will also address the policies of Russia and China *vis-à-vis* the region. Due to their own strategic importance, these two major powers can have a significant impact on the outcome of the battle of ideas. Given that Iran promotes its own radical Islamist ideology, it is not mentioned among the regional countries that can help in defeating HT. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, is a secular country that has taken steps to prevent the spread of HT. The Turkish example of secular success in holding off radical Islamist groups is also introduced, since Western and Central Asian governments are seeking to draw lessons from it.

### *Uzbekistan: Exclusive Focus on the Battle of ideas*

After independence, Uzbekistan attracted Islamist groups like a floodlight attracts insects. Due to this rapid influx, President Islam Karimov became the first Central Asian leader to pay attention to the threat posed by the radical Islamist groups such as the IMU. But the authorities realized the ideological threat posed by Hizb ut-Tahrir only after the February 1999 Tashkent bombings. While the Karimov government has consequently taken some

important steps in the battle of ideas, it has yet to fully comprehend the link between improving political, economic and social conditions and achieving victory in this war. In the absence of significant improvements in these areas, which serve as catalysts for the spread of radical Islamist ideology, the government's campaign (which has focused exclusively on matters of ideology and theology) has so far not had sufficient impact on hindering HT's growth.

The rulers of newly independent Uzbekistan were certainly not new to power. The same set of people has ruled the country since the 1950s. Given that this generation of rulers had been thoroughly indoctrinated by decades of experience with communism, it was probably not surprising that they were unable to change their methods of governance overnight. Instead, when faced with the radical Islamist threat in the late 1990s, they implemented policies with which they were familiar: strong repression and vigorous crackdowns on any suspected Islamists. While introducing restrictive laws on the registration of religious groups (The Law of Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations) on May 1, 1998, Karimov even declared, "Such people [IMU leaders] must be shot in the forehead! If necessary, I'll shoot them myself, if you lack the resoluteness!"<sup>2</sup>

Not fully appreciating the ideological essence of the war, following the February 1999 attacks, the government carried out mass arrests of several thousand people. The Uzbekistani government's harsh methods have made things very easy for HT, which has been able to turn locals against the state and promote an opinion in Western circles that Karimov was targeting innocent, pious Muslims. It was primarily in response to these mass arrests that HT began its "leaflet war" calling President Islam Karimov a "disbelieving Jew" and urging the toppling of his government and its replacement with the Caliphate. HT also told its members not to fear arrests. HT's most active period was in June 1999, when its members openly distributed leaflets in the Chorsu bazaar, which led to further mass arrests.<sup>3</sup> HT made great propaganda out of these provoked arrests, issuing a leaflet on June 14, 1999 stating that about 1,000 members were arrested. According to Uzbekistani law enforcement authorities, in October 1999 the number of HT members in Uzbekistan was already about 15,000, which represented a doubling of the group's size from February 1999.

Corruption among security forces made matters worse. A significant number of these men extort huge sums by threatening to arrest people who have nothing to do with HT. Some even plant HT literature to fill their monthly quotas of arrests. As late as 2003, the U.S. State Department found that "Corruption among security forces remained a problem. Police routinely and arbitrarily detained and beat citizens to extort bribes. Police in the past routinely planted narcotics, weapons, ammunition or Islamic literature on citizens either to justify arrest or to extort bribes; however, the number of reports of such cases decreased during the year."<sup>4</sup>

Despite the fact that, as the U.S. State Department recognized, the Uzbekistani authorities began to correct past mistakes, Uzbekistan lost the public relations battle very early on. While many other countries have terrible human rights violations, including torture in prisons, Uzbekistan has become known as “torture central” by both HT and by Western organizations and media. A British news story on Uzbekistan in 2003 started with the following lines, “They boil people to death here. . . . They also beat them up in the street, suffocate them, drag them to mental hospitals and forcibly inject them with drugs, ram bottles up their behinds in squalid prisons and plant drugs on them, not to mention all the usual things such as censoring the newspapers and rigging the elections.”<sup>5</sup> Human Rights Watch (HRW) issued a report in 2004 entitled, “Creating Enemies of the State”<sup>6</sup>, which was based on five years of research, “including interviews with some 200 independent Muslim victims and their relatives.”

As most of the Western media, NGOs, and governments focused primarily on the human rights failings of the Uzbekistani government, they missed both the threat posed by HT and also the steps taken by the Karimov regime. Due to the near-omnipresent perception that there is no hope for the current Uzbekistani administration, the West has collectively condemned Karimov’s new initiatives as either dishonest or hopeless.

They became further convinced of this following the American-led campaign in Afghanistan. At the time many mistakenly believed that once the IMU was defeated (which it was not) the Karimov regime would have no more excuses left and would have to end political restrictions. What these observers did not realize was the direct link between the political activities of groups such as HT and terrorism. Thus, it was perhaps naïve to expect the Uzbekistani government to open its system to those who would like to see it destroyed.

While one cannot deny that the political and economic structures of Uzbekistan are in serious disrepair, the West must acknowledge and support the steps the Karimov government has taken in crafting the long-term ideological approach to deal with HT and related groups. Karimov had declared early on, “we need to fight ideas with ideas.” While he was unable to deal with torture or corruption issues, he was able to begin changing the government’s attitude towards religion, specifically by replacing the aggressive atheism of the Soviet system with a state-guaranteed freedom of conscience enshrined in the constitution. The new Uzbekistani state, Karimov realized, ought to recognize religion’s place in society while defining its role according to the principles of a secular state.

To realize this vision, he established two agencies. First, on March 7, 1992, the Committee of Religious Affairs of Cabinet Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan was formed to create policy that would “strengthen mutual understanding and tolerance between the major faiths.” The committee was also empowered to collect information concerning religious organizations and the

publishing houses of religious literature, so that it could oversee the production of audio, video and print media regarding religion. This committee was specifically charged with keeping track of imported materials, such as that of HT.

Second, the non-governmental Muslim Board of Uzbekistan, an organization that formally unites the Muslims of Uzbekistan and performs ecclesiastical guidance and charitable activities, was given freedom of operation. The board was first organized in 1943 and originally covered all of Central Asia; after independence, however, each country established its own. The Muslim Board of Uzbekistan has operated under its current name since 1996. At the local mosque level, the board assists Muslims in the classical interpretation and practice of Islam. At the national level, the board seeks to restore sacred places, rare manuscripts and books. It also organizes the *Hajj*. While recognizing the doctrines of all legal schools of Islam, the board is committed to the struggle against foreigners espousing radical ideas in contradiction to Uzbekistan's traditional Hanafi Islam. The board views the activities of such missionaries as opening the door for religious extremism and as promoting hatred between the Muslim community and those of other faiths. The board's ultimate aim is to prevent the politicization of the religion and to strengthen mutual respect and recognition among representatives of different religious traditions. Unfortunately, like in other Central Asian countries, the chief mufti of the board is too closely associated with the state and does not enjoy broad support.

The Muslim Board is also in charge of the Movarounnahr publishing house, which edits and preserves the great religious-scientific heritage of Uzbekistan's famous theologians. The publishing house provides the textbooks and other educational supplies for the religious institutes. The board also edits the monthly magazine *Khidoyat* and the bimonthly journal *Islom Nury*, in which current issues of religion in Uzbekistan and the Islamic world are discussed.

Third, Karimov established a set of educational institutes to familiarize Uzbekistanis with their own unique Islamic culture and traditions, a familiarity which will help them avoid succumbing to the teachings of radicals. To this end, the most significant educational institution created was the Tashkent Islamic University (TIU), established in 1999 under ministerial supervision. It has three main purposes. The first of these is to preserve the spiritual and cultural heritage of Islam through an intensive study of the faith, thereby increasing religious literacy in the country. The university offers specialty programs in religious studies and the history and philosophy of Islam. Graduates of these programs can then address the theoretical issues raised by their studies in the practical settings of state, social and religious institutions. The second purpose is to produce highly skilled specialists in Islamic science on the basis of the great scientific, spiritual and theoretical heritage of Uzbekistan. The university offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in fields other than religion, such as international economic relations, computer science and information technology, thereby enabling students to choose non-religious careers as well. The

university's third goal is to analyze the role of Islam in the history of world civilizations, to define its place among the other religions of the world, and to investigate the ideas, laws and developmental trends of Islam from both the theoretical and practical points of view, investigation which is facilitated by a UNESCO-funded Chair on the Comparative Study of World Religions.

To accomplish all of these goals, TIU has developed and published teaching materials and textbooks on Islam, particularly Islamic doctrine and philosophy; these materials are intended both for the educational system and for the general public. Most importantly, deputy rector Abdulaziz Mansur translated the Quran into Uzbek and included interpretations. While this was first done in 1991, over the ensuing decade it became clear that the text was inadequate. Under Mansur's direction, and following the work of a committee of scholars, a second edition came out in 2001 that paid special attention to those portions of the Quran most often misinterpreted by radicals. Now, a third edition is being prepared to provide even clearer explanations to those *suras* and *ayats* that HT frequently takes out of context. This edition will also include selections from the relevant *hadiths*, further adding to its explanatory power.<sup>7</sup> The end product could become a critical guidebook in the efforts to defeat HT, which often confuses Muslims with its misuse of sections from the Quran and the *hadiths*.

Since 2002, some in the government also realized the need to teach Islamic ethics and values at school—both in secular and religious institutions. They decided that it was important to teach young Uzbekistanis about the history of world religions, and about the role of religion in society. Many others, however, have opposed this initiative, fearing further “Islamization” of the Uzbekistanis. While internal bickering is ongoing, TIU has nonetheless been able to run experimental pilot programs in the Tashkent region. These programs utilize textbooks that were developed by a special working group consisting of religious and secular scholars, who focus on traditional Islam, especially the scientific tradition fostered by luminaries such as Avicenna and Ulugh Beg. Students learn *adapnama*, or ethics and values, in grades 1–4 (ages 7–10), and in the following grades study history of religions, Uzbekistan religious history, the science of *hadith* and the great religious personalities. This pilot project started first in one school in each of Tashkent's districts, before soon expanding to each of the country's twelve regions. Currently, it has been implemented in more than 3,000 secondary schools. The working group's members regularly meet with teachers and parents to improve the textbooks. The objective of these textbooks and of the course in general is not to inculcate religious propaganda, but rather to promote a scientific approach to religion and education. If these pilot programs prove successful, they can certainly serve as examples to other Muslim countries struggling to come up with new educational programs to defeat the hold of extremism in their own societies.

TIU's Islamic Scientific Research Center has discovered a unique mechanism to bring science and religion together. Students are asked to develop electronic

products as a graduation project; once completed, these can in turn be used all over the country. For example, one student has created an electronic book of Mansur's "The Quran and its Interpretations" in all three Uzbek scripts (Latin, Cyrillic and Arabic). Through the e-version of the Quran, Uzbekistanis now can listen to the Quranic recitations in Arabic while following the translated versions on the computer screen. Through the search mechanism, they can easily locate *suras* and *ayats*. Students and teachers have come up with other creative ways to take advantage of electronic resources in order to preserve the legacy of their ancestors, to compile and research old manuscripts, and to provide scientific analysis and interpretation of the Quran and the *hadiths*.

Despite scarce resources, students also engage in the battle of ideas through the use of TV, radio and publications. In Studio Ziyò (Enlightenment) they prepare films and programs on national and religious values; these are then shown on Uzbekistani TV. Other media are also utilized: Ziyò Radio began operation in 2003, and the newspaper Islam Ziyosi printed its first edition in December 2003. All of these outlets provide students with opportunities to discuss religious and spiritual issues, and give them valuable practice in responding to listeners' and readers' questions—experience which will prove useful as they battle HT and similar groups after graduation.

TIU equips its graduates with the theological background to argue effectively against imported and intolerant forms of Islam, including ideas brought in by HT. Some of the graduates of TIU receive appointments as imams, while others join the civil service. University students and teachers also provide training courses for the Ministry of the Interior, imams and teachers in the *madrassas* to blunt the effects of HT. Furthermore, graduates of TIU are being sent to other countries to further develop their knowledge of Islamic sciences.

It will take another decade to see the full results of these efforts. It takes between four and five years for university students to complete their training. TIU's first graduating class (in 2003) consisted of 97, and the second increased to 109. While these students are highly qualified, their numbers are still too few to replace all the old guard. At present there are officially 1,971 mosques operating in Uzbekistan, with more than 4,000 *imam-khatibs*, *muezzins* and other ministers of religion working in these institutions. In addition to the TIU, there are ten *madrassas*—including two for women—that facilitate the replacement of uneducated imams with younger, better-educated specialists who have had both religious and secular education.

The success of the educational and religious programs has been limited. This is in part due to insufficient resources—both financial and human—to carry them out. In fact, the general educational system is deteriorating due to lack of investment. Moreover, in the absence of a comprehensive system combining economic, political and social measures, the educational steps are insufficient.



Nonetheless, they do indicate that the Uzbekistanis understand the progress they need to make in the battle of ideas.

While the fact that these institutions are government-run and government-approved may seem too restrictive by Western standards, the West must understand that a certain degree of state restriction is necessary in order to accomplish the twin goals of keeping out radicalism and protecting the relatively free practice of religion. Like other secular states with a majority-Muslim population, such as Azerbaijan and Turkey, the Uzbekistani government pays for the salaries and the facilities of religious institutes that teach non-political Islam. While ideally the funding for the religious institutes and the *ulema* ought to come from private sources, given the ongoing war within Islam, such a step is too risky to take at this point—even for more advanced countries like Turkey.

### *Uzbekistani-U.S. Cooperation: The Unfulfilled Promise*

When 9/11 hit the U.S., Uzbekistan was already engaged in battling the terrorists and radical Islamists, especially since the attacks of February 1999. Thus, Karimov quickly recognized his interest in supporting Operation Enduring Freedom. With this move, Karimov tied his own future with that of the United States, at the risk of upsetting Moscow. For Uzbekistanis, the post-9/11 environment was one in which the United States and Uzbekistan shared the same concerns. The need to cooperate in the fight against terror was keenly felt.

Karimov therefore eagerly agreed to the “Declaration on the Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework” with the United States on March 12, 2002. He provided the U.S. with basing rights in exchange for a U.S. pledge to “regard with grave concern any external threat to Uzbekistan”. According to U.S. government sources, Karimov greatly surprised American negotiators by insisting on inserting strong language on the improvement of human rights as one of Uzbekistan’s commitments to its new strategic partner. As a result, the document obligated President Karimov “to intensify the democratic transformation of [Uzbekistani] society politically and economically.”<sup>8</sup> It is still not clear whether Karimov intended to use this condition as a way to push for internal changes or simply to give such an impression to his new strategic partner.

It is certain, however, that he realized the country’s main human rights problem, torture in prisons, was causing him a tremendous international headache. More importantly, it was turning many previous moderates into radicals. The Uzbekistani leadership proudly declares that it was the first former Soviet republic to have invited and received the UN special rapporteur on torture, Theo van Boven. He went to Uzbekistan in November 2002 and while acknowledging his visit as a “clear indication of [the Uzbekistani government’s]

increased cooperation . . . in the field of human rights”, Van Boven concluded that “torture and similar ill-treatment [are] systemic.”<sup>9</sup>

Since the issuance of the report, the government has continued to send mixed messages to the international community. After Van Boven’s visit, the government promptly adopted a “National Plan” on the implementation of conventions against torture. Penitentiary institutions became more open to foreign visitors. For example, visits by the International Committee of the Red Cross increased from four in 2001 to fifty in 2003. Additionally, the author was able to visit the Zangiota penal institution near Tashkent in 2003, where she was able to interview several imprisoned HT members. However, Human Rights Watch concluded that the National Plan “fails to address many key recommendations” of Van Boven’s report, and added that the government plan “proposes little concrete action, and contains an unjustifiably delayed timeline for action.”<sup>10</sup> Karimov had also made a clear statement that he was prepared to end torture, one of the conditions set by the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) as part of the deal bringing its annual meeting to Uzbekistan in May 2003. To the great disappointment of the EBRD and Washington, however, Karimov remained silent on this sensitive issue during the meetings, which then led EBRD to limit its investments in Uzbekistan.

There has been little progress in dealing with torture since then. In order for U.S. aid to be made available to Uzbekistan under the framework established in 2002, the Secretary of State must certify the country is making “substantial and continuing progress” in respecting human rights. The Uzbekistani government was certified in 2003, but the same was not true in 2004. Originally scheduled to take place in April 2004, the U.S. government delayed its decision while Congress held further hearings on the Karimov regime’s suitability to receive assistance. Ultimately, on July 13, 2004, despite recognizing that “Uzbekistan has made some encouraging progress over the past year”, the Secretary of State “on balance . . . has decided that, based on Uzbekistan’s overall record of reform”, the country’s government would not be recertified.<sup>11</sup>

One measure of Uzbekistan’s efforts at reform is its increasing willingness to engage NGOs. Though the Karimov government lately has become wary of NGOs since the developments in Georgia, it nonetheless has made progress in this area. Over 300 national and international NGOs have been registered, along with well over 3,000 local human rights associations. As a result of cooperation with these NGOs, Uzbekistan has even started to allow independent human rights advocates to monitor places of detention. However, it is true that, for example, George Soros’ Open Society Institute (OSI) is not allowed to operate in the country. “We are not obliged to work with all the NGOs in the world”, explained a high-level Uzbekistani official. Moreover, problems with OSI intensified after the so-called Rose Revolution in Georgia in November 2003, in which a Soros-backed group of young reformers peacefully overthrew the existing government. Since then,

not only Karimov but also many other leaders in the ex-Soviet sphere have viewed the activities of OSI with suspicion.

The experiences of NGOs in dealing with the Uzbekistani government have varied. The U.S.-based group Freedom House established a constructive dialogue with the interior ministry, obtaining the trust of government officials and, in many cases, ensuring better outcomes. The Freedom House approach must be contrasted with that of Human Rights Watch (HRW), which was expelled from Uzbekistan for its perceived bias. This bias is illustrated by the group's response to the affair of Andrei Shelkavenko, who died in police custody near Tashkent in May 2004. Perhaps in an effort to influence the ongoing State Department evaluation process, the group immediately issued a press release labeling the incident a "torture death", and called for the government to "conduct a thorough and independent investigation" and "allow international forensic experts to examine the body."<sup>12</sup> Because the Uzbekistani government believed that Shelkovenko had committed suicide, it made the unprecedented decision to follow both recommendations. The government quickly invited representatives from the U.S. embassies in Moscow and Tashkent, Freedom House, and HRW, along with forensic experts from Canada and the U.S., to conduct their own investigation. This international panel of experts did not find any indication of torture and concluded that Shelkovenko indeed had committed suicide. HRW was thus forced to acknowledge its error, and it later accepted the results of the international investigation.<sup>13</sup>

Uzbekistan has also continued to reduce the number of arrests, and at the same time has announced several amnesties, as a result of which the number of prisoners today is half that in 2000. According to Zukhriddin Khusnidinov, presidential advisor on religious affairs and the rector of TIU, in 2002 the number of people arrested who were members of HT did not exceed 5,000. With the first presidential amnesty decree, issued in 2002, some 460 were released. At the beginning of 2003, a more far-reaching effort to reform the prison system resulted in the establishment of a special commission. Khusnidinov was appointed as the chair of this commission, whose members included scholars and lawyers. They interviewed approximately 3,500 people over the course of eight months and discussed with them the true principles of Islam. As a result, according to government sources, 1,314 people decided to leave HT, and of those, 736 were set free in 2004; theological work is ongoing with the rest of the radically educated ones. According to Uzbekistani government figures, the recidivism rate is low; just three out of 400 ended up back in prison for similar offenses.<sup>14</sup>

However, while some imprisoned HT members have changed their minds, others grew firmer in their convictions after years of imprisonment and torture. The principal reason can be traced to the earlier policies of the Karimov regime. While the recent amnesty offers were genuine, previous instances were not. In 1999, the government promised that those HT and IMU activists who

acknowledged that they had followed the “wrong religious path” would be forgiven. But those who turned themselves in were detained and tortured. Some were sent to prison for over 15 years, all the while having almost no idea what was happening to them. This led many Muslims to lose faith in the justice the Karimov system provided, a point HT fully exploited.

The post-9/11 alliance with the United States has occasioned a clear change in behavior. Most visibly, after the spring and summer 2004 terrorist attacks, to the surprise of many, the Uzbekistani government did not conduct mass arrests. The changing Uzbekistani attitude towards mass arrests and torture is a result of increased interaction not just with the United States, but especially with other Muslim countries. Scholars from Algeria, Egypt, Turkey and others have made clear to Uzbekistani officials that, based on their own experience with radical Islamists, mass crackdowns and torture lead to a backlash against the regime. This understanding has not yet reached all levels of the Uzbekistani government. Reinforcement and dissemination of this message will undoubtedly be a long process. In Uzbekistan, top-down measures are not always effective due to the fact that there are many centers of power, drawing strength from local clans. Corruption and the low level of education of security personnel are additional reasons to believe that torture in Uzbekistan will continue for some time.

Furthermore, some Uzbekistani elites feel that Islam itself is the problem with HT, and they only pay lip service to freedom of religion. In addition, many still approach radical Islamism as a criminal issue, not an ideological one, thus rejecting the examples provided by other countries and the evidence of an internal backlash. As late as July 2002, Ilya Pyagay, the interior ministry’s deputy anti-terrorism chief, equated the battle against HT with the battle against crime: “just as harsh punishments against car thieves have almost eradicated such crime in Uzbekistan, tough measures can also achieve the same result in the fight against extremist Islamic organizations.”<sup>15</sup> Despite this tendency, the government has made an effort to paint its own actions as anti-anti-constitutional, rather than as the criminalization of Islam *per se*. When the authorities sentenced 16 people with up to 18 years in jail on October 12, 2004 for “attempts to overthrow Uzbekistan’s constitutional system, membership in a religious extremist organization, terrorism, and possession of explosives”, they made sure to underline these people were being jailed for illegal and anti-constitutional activities, and not “for being Muslim”.

As Uzbekistanis themselves admit, economic development is extremely important to take away the recruiting ground from HT. Today, the average person is considerably worse off than under communism. Uzbekistani farmers (who contribute the largest share of GDP) have not been able to get fair prices for their products due to the state policy that does not allow for the free convertibility of the som. While convertibility was announced on October 15, 2003, two months after a liberalization plan was approved by the IMF, it emerged that it had been secretly suspended.<sup>16</sup> Another short-sighted government policy

was to limit cross-border traffic once it became known that HT was using small traders to smuggle in its literature and funds. These severely restricted border crossings worsened the condition of the average small businessman and made the borderless Islamic state proposed by HT even more appealing.

In response to the increasingly apparent negative effects of its policy, the Uzbekistani government has taken rudimentary steps to open up the economy. Uzbekistan signed the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) with the other four ex-Soviet Central Asian states and the U.S. At the signing ceremony on June 1, 2004, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick recognized that “More than a decade after independence in Central Asia the countries in the region are exploring new ways in which to open and liberalize trade. . . . The TIFA will not only deepen our economic relationship with the Central Asian countries but will also create stronger trade ties among the five countries in the region. . . .”<sup>17</sup> At the 2004 Summit of the Central Asian Cooperation Organization in Tajikistan, Karimov also called for a common market to be created in the region, in order to increase the economic possibilities for all Central Asian states. He mentioned three stages for the creation of the common market: first, a customs union (with a common external tariff); second, a zone of free trade; and finally, a common market in which capital and labor are able to circulate without hindrance. Uzbekistan is also advocating the formation of multilateral food, water, energy and trade consortia in Central Asia, including Afghanistan.

Despite the promise of these initiatives, unless Karimov shows the will and ability to take on the clan networks, Uzbekistan will become a failing state. As Karimov was brought to power in large part by the support of the various clans, he has played a careful balancing game until now. These clans, as in other parts of Central Asia, tend to be informal (through marriage ties or joint business interests) and do engage in corrupt and sometimes illegal activities. When Karimov tried to take reformist steps in the past that would have upset the status quo, some clans reputedly participated in attempts to assassinate the president. There certainly is a risk that some clans may even use groups like HT to destabilize the Karimov regime, but not taking action to open up the country economically can have worse consequences.

A clear sign of this came in November 2004 following new restrictions on trade, which are believed to be backed by some of the strong clans. The government announced that it would be illegal for traders to use intermediaries, that is, if traders buy goods abroad, they must sell them personally without going through any other retailer. Each trader must also have a special government license. While the authorities claimed that these measures will keep prices down, many small traders believe their businesses will collapse. These concerns led to unprecedented civil disorder in Ferghana (especially the city of Kokand) and Kashkadarya provinces; it was termed as “the most serious expression of popular discontent in recent memory in Uzbekistan”.<sup>18</sup>

While economic liberalization has been difficult, it has been much harder to encourage the Uzbekistani government to open up politically, especially after Georgia's Rose Revolution. To date, while there are seven political parties, there is no political party registered in the country that has expressed disagreement with Karimov's policies. Since the government shut down the secular opposition parties Birlik (Unity) and Erk (Freedom) in 1992, HT has been the only viable political alternative for disaffected citizens. Because Muhammad Salih, the leader of Erk, was involved in attempts to overthrow Karimov, his party is not likely to be registered anytime soon. Since the U.S. began increasing its engagement with Uzbekistan, however, political conditions have improved such that Birlik was able to hold its party congress in summer 2004.

In 2003, the author began second-track American efforts to engage with the Uzbekistani leadership to come up with better strategies to combat HT's hold in Central Asia. Since her research project on Hizb ut-Tahrir began, the author has enjoyed the cooperation of the Uzbekistani government in its efforts, particularly that of former Uzbekistani Ambassador to the U.S. Shavkat Khamrakulov and his successor, former Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Komilov. The assistance of current Foreign Minister Sadik Safaev has also been invaluable (who served in Washington from 1996 to 2000). Thanks to the close relationship it enjoys with these and other officials, the Center has been able to host a series of informative and productive events. It has also provided policy recommendations to the U.S. and Uzbekistani governments. Most importantly, the author was able to witness first-hand how Uzbekistani thinking has started to change in a positive direction during the period of this engagement.

In July 2003, Abdujabar Abduvakhitov of Tashkent's Westminster International University, Zokhidilo Munavvarov of the International Fund of Imam al-Bukhari, and Marina L. Pikulina of the Swedish FAST project traveled to the United States for a workshop entitled, "Uzbekistan: The Confrontation between Traditional and Extremist Islam in Central Asia." Attendees heard how these experts viewed the threat Hizb ut-Tahrir presents and discussed policies designed to combat the appeal of the organization. The Uzbekistani scholars kept underlining that once the U.S. makes clear that it appreciates the challenge of combating radical Islamist ideology, then the Uzbekistani authorities will be more open to suggestions. The recommendations the U.S. and western European countries had made up to that point seemed too naïve. At the same time, recognizing that mass imprisonments and torture had been further worsening the situation, the scholars urged the U.S. to help with education (both secular and religious) and with socio-economic conditions in the country.

Upon his return, Abduvakhitov was appointed special advisor to the president on educational and cultural affairs. Zokhidilo Munavvarov invited the author to an international conference entitled "Islam and Violence", which took place in Samarkand in October 2003. Most impressive about this conference was the set of international experts it brought together (from Central Asia, Russia,

Germany, Turkey, Algeria, Egypt and other places) and the tough issues it addressed. The International Fund of Imam al-Bukhari, Tashkent Islam University and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung organized this international conference in order to enable Uzbekistani scholars and government officials to exchange ideas and learn from other countries' experiences, including in defeating radical Islamist ideology. The papers presented at both conferences were published in Russian and English so that Central Asians and Western scholars could benefit.

Foreign Minister Sadik Safaev and Presidential Advisor Zukhriddin Khusnidinov were among several others who expressed great interest in trilateral cooperation between Washington, Ankara and Tashkent. Consequently, The Nixon Center organized a two-day workshop in Turkey in February 2004, entitled, "Deciphering and Combating Radical Islamist Ideology: Should the War against Terrorism be Extended to Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT)?". It also invited Khusnidinov to participate and meet with Turkish Islamic specialists and national security experts. The workshop, which was organized with support from the Turkish think tank ASAM (Center for Eurasian Strategic Studies) and the Washington, DC-based Ethics and Public Policy Center, brought together a small group of scholars, policymakers and law enforcement officers from a wide range of countries that focus on HT. By then, Kyrgyzstani, Tajikistani and Kazakhstani policymakers had begun to concentrate on the threat posed by the group, and all three presidents sent their representatives. At this workshop, Central Asian government representatives were able to learn from other countries' experiences in dealing with HT, including about the activities of the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet), which is discussed in more detail below.

Most recently, Khusnidinov, along with official representatives of the various religious communities of Uzbekistan, came to Washington, DC for a series of meetings organized by The Nixon Center. Kamilov and Khusnidinov underlined the importance of teaching Uzbekistanis the enlightened and tolerant Hanafi form of Islam. Highlighting that their main weapon is the "deep Islamic values of enlightenment, tolerance and justice", the Uzbekistani officials stated the need to launch a "global informational and educational campaign", like that carried out by HT. They noted that "Uzbekistan has been a center of Islamic civilization for many centuries. We are reviving our heritage and we will not allow foreign fanatics to take it away from us. . . . Together, we have to create a strong barrier to all their attempts to impose 'ideology of hatred' on us."

As a result of this two-year engagement with senior Uzbekistani officials, the author has concluded that Uzbekistani authorities are still trying to overcome the legacy of communist ideology and economy, and that the whole society is in the midst of an unprecedented social and economic transformation. The Uzbekistanis can become a true strategic partner in the battle of ideas. The unprecedented steps they have already taken in the theological and educational fields are commendable. But with 70 percent of the Uzbekistani people under

thirty years of age, unless their main economic needs can be satisfied, the country will not be able to fulfill its historic role. In other words, unless there is economic development, including liberalization of conditions for small- and medium-size businesses and regional economic cooperation, the state's existing ideology will have no appeal. With Karimov and his government continuing to tell the Uzbekistanis that the country is making progress while people themselves feel little impact, the system of democracy and capitalism and the secular governance will continue to lose legitimacy and the theories of HT will increasingly find appeal.

### *Kyrgyzstan: Too Much Openness?*

Due to its small size and natural beauty, Kyrgyzstan became known as the "Switzerland of Central Asia" soon after independence. This nickname was not solely awarded on the basis of the magnificence of its mountains and lakes. Unlike Uzbekistan, which has encountered a wide range of criticism from Western governments on human rights and other issues, Kyrgyzstan was labeled a "poster child . . . for democracy [and] for how democratic reform works well in Central Asia."<sup>19</sup> Though widely admired, this unusual degree of openness also left the state vulnerable to an influx of radicalism. As Kyrgyzstani Deputy Foreign Minister Talant Kushchubekov explained, "In the 1990s our country had enacted policies of openness to the external world, while the adoption of liberal laws had created favorable conditions for the development and propagation not only of traditional faiths, but also the new, less-traditional radical religious groups."<sup>20</sup>

Indeed, as a result of these liberal policies, the strength of radical Islamist groups dramatically increased during the late 1990s. While there were only 39 mosques in the entire country in 1991, this number jumped to over 2,000 in 2004.<sup>21</sup> Of these, over half are unregistered with the state religious authority and are thus exempt even from the relatively lax requirements it imposes.<sup>22</sup> In its regulation of religious institutions, the Kyrgyz Republic fell behind even Western countries such as Austria; for instance, in Kyrgyzstan the minimum number of members required of a recognized religious organization is ten, compared to the Austrian requirement of 300.<sup>23</sup>

The neglect towards religion shown by Kyrgyzstani authorities while formulating policy was only exacerbated by their specific failure to address affirmatively the practical threat of groups such as HT. The group entered Kyrgyzstan in 1996, first in the south then gradually pushing to the north. After the July 1999 arrests in Uzbekistan, many more HT members moved to Kyrgyzstan. At first the leaflets were in Uzbek and discussed the situation in Uzbekistan, but after 2000, they were distributed in Kyrgyz. But the authorities did not understand the significance of these leaflets and consequently did nothing to stop their distribution. Indeed, among radical circles, Kyrgyzstan



quickly developed a reputation for the leniency with which it treated Islamist groups and their members.

Compared to its neighbors, especially Uzbekistan, the Kyrgyzstanis were also much less willing to impose strict sentences on those activists they did arrest. The maximum sentence imposed on convicted radicals was set at a mere five years. The rationale for this policy was explained by interior ministry spokesman Joldoshibek Busurmankulov, who declared that “we should fight for the hearts and minds of people.” According to Busurmankulov, a twenty-year prison sentence would do nothing to deter the colleagues of those arrested, who will instead “think quietly about why [the convicted party] was jailed and will look for the same literature.”<sup>24</sup> At the same time, he did say that if HT members “abuse the tolerant attitude of the Kyrgyzstani government and break the laws regulating their activities, they are subject to criminal penalties”, and indeed the government has arrested many HT members in the Osh, Batkent and Chuy oblasts.

While paying lip service to the “fight for hearts and minds”, however, the government undermined its ability to win that battle by its confused institutional approach towards Islam. It was not until 1996 that the government created the State Commission on Religious Affairs (SCRA), which was established only after moderate clergy fearful of the radical threat lobbied for such an entity. Since its establishment, however, the SCRA itself has been staffed by radical Islamists. The first commission chairman, Emil Kaptagaev removed Kyrgyzstan’s then-Chief Mufti Kimsanbai Abdrahmanov and replaced him with an under-qualified ethnic-Kyrgyz refugee from Tajikistan, Abdysatar Mazhitov. The contrast between the two could not be more clear: Kimsanbai was a strong opponent of Wahhabism, while Mazhitov did not even condemn the 1999 IMU attacks in Batkent—and in fact, spoke out against those who warned of the increasing influence of Wahhabism in Kyrgyzstan. Kaptagaev was duly replaced by Zholbors Zhorobekov, who fully understood the threat of religious extremism and international terrorism, and who brought back Kimsanbai as chief mufti in April 2000. Zhorobekov also accused ombudsman Tursunbai Bakir Uulu of being an HT member. However, Zhorobekov’s successor, Omurzak Mamayusupov filled the commission with Wahhabis, such as Sadykjan Kamalov.<sup>25</sup> In October 2004, a new chairman was appointed to the SCRA, and Kamalov became the head of the Islamic Center in Karasu.

The Kyrgyzstani government also believed in establishing a dialogue with HT and in bringing the group into parliament. Kyrgyzstani leaders assumed that, since their policies were democratic (in contrast to the repressive approach of the Uzbekistanis), HT would agree to be co-opted. This initiative was proposed in 2001–02 by then-SCRA Chairman Mamayusupov, who lobbied for the legalization of HT. This approach had two main flaws. First, the Kyrgyzstani constitution is secular and opposes any religious party’s participation in politics. In order to find a way to integrate HT, there was a need to change the political

system. In fact, so strong was the support for the peaceful integration of HT that there was serious debate on the question of amending the constitution. However, what advocates of amendment did not realize was that the second main issue, HT's refusal to participate in the "illegitimate" democratic process, made the whole question ultimately moot.

The problems at the top level of the religious bureaucracy filtered down to the local level. With a Wahhabi-trained grand mufti at the top of the pyramid, it was unreasonable to expect that the local imams would be able to counter the polished, carefully-designed approach of HT. Indeed, as the International Crisis Group reported, "few imams are capable of arguing with HT . . . . [T]hey do not read its literature and are not sufficiently versed in theology to point out where [the group] goes wrong."<sup>26</sup> In Kyrgyzstan in 2004, there were twenty HT books published on issues dealing democracy and socio-economic conditions, whereas none of the local imams published a single book. When HT members asked the local imam in Karasu to argue against them, it was not a surprise that he was unable to step up to the challenge.

In November 2003, Kyrgyzstan finally took direct and decisive action, and named HT as an "extremist organization". But the High Court has not yet clarified whether HT members can be arrested; the country's criminal code contains no provision stating that members of extremist groups can be jailed. For this next step to be taken, the parliament has to approve an amendment to the code. But some members of parliament argue strongly that HT members cannot be persecuted for their ideas. Until a permanent solution is found, HT members are being imprisoned for violating the statute forbidding the "inspiring of interethnic and inter-religious conflict." As a potential solution, the government wanted to create a commission of experts with training in theology, psychology, sociology and law in order to study whether it should be criminal to advocate the establishment of the Caliphate.<sup>27</sup> The OSCE, however, has strongly opposed this initiative, stating that it is likely to increase the strength of radical elements in HT. The Kyrgyzstanis have so far not managed to convince the OSCE that appeasement will not work against a group like HT. The government has therefore decided not to create the commission so as not to risk losing their reputation as a tolerant, open country.

For now, the Kyrgyzstanis have undertaken a set of administrative reforms. After structurally reorganizing the national security services to include a separate counter-terrorism department, the government began work on its new state program on religious extremism, which was announced in April 2004. The program contains a clear recognition on behalf of the administration that it did not do a good job addressing religious issues throughout the first ten years of independence. To remedy past defects, the program focuses on eliminating religious extremism and on promoting interfaith dialogue. It recognizes that heads of the local state administrations need to cooperate in their struggle against radical Islamist activity, which the government acknowledges has had a "negative

impact on all processes of democratic and economic transformations in society.” It further calls for a “balanced approach, built on wide use of law enforcement, preventative measures and counterpropaganda.” It also identifies the need for international cooperation against terrorism. For the two-year period envisioned by the document, there are specific goals for the reduction in the numbers of young members of radical religious organizations, for the improvement of the legal system’s ability to deal with religious extremism, and for the destruction of extremist groups’ ability to publish and disseminate propaganda.

The corollary “plan of measures on realization of the State Program” consists of twenty items. They include the need for the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the National Security Service to coordinate their activities in creating a database on various extremist organizations, including information on their funding, support and internal structures. Together with SCRA, these two government bodies and the national broadcast media will wage an “offensive” against extremist ideology. Moreover, the SCRA will develop a new state policy on the treatment of recognized religious organizations by 2005—provided it secures the necessary financial resources.

Kyrgyzstan still has not fully appreciated the importance of educated imams and theologians in the battle of ideas. For example, even though there is a prominent faculty of theology at Osh State University, the authorities have failed to take full advantage of this key asset. The SCRA can offer so little in the way of compensation that it still employs people with little or no religious education, while university-trained theology graduates end up working in fields unrelated to their studies. As the Kyrgyzstanis proceed with their new program, they need to ensure that their indigenous theologians are properly employed. Until recently, village imams only had to go through a simple, three-month course in order to obtain their positions; in an encouraging sign, they are now required to complete two years of education. Additionally, the Ministry of Education has taken an active interest in promoting traditional Islamic values and morality in schools, and has issued tenders for textbooks. While this is a necessary step, there is a risk that radicals will obtain approval for their materials.

Though it falls short on the ideological and theological side of the battle, the Kyrgyzstani leadership shares the Western belief that one of the best protections against the Islamic threat is to bolster the country’s economy. As Prime Minister Tanaev noted, “If we manage to create jobs for young people, then we’ll take away half of [the] breeding ground” for radicalism. In order to deal with widespread poverty, the government developed the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) and the National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS). Kyrgyzstan has also been able to secure financial and technical assistance from international organizations such as the IMF, World Bank, EBRD and the Asian Bank of Development. While progress has been slow, the government has been able to bring about a reduction in the overall poverty level. Further progress

is likely, but sustainable, long-term development can only occur with increased regional economic cooperation.

So far the most important element of Kyrgyzstan's struggle against HT has been its effort to develop a powerful counterweight to the group's universalist ideology: revival of national identity leading to patriotism. The Kyrgyz language, culture and traditions have far deeper roots than its newly arrived competitor, extremist Islam. However, like so many other aspects of traditional Central Asia, they were partially suppressed under Soviet rule. To assist in their revival, President Askar Akaev published his *Kyrgyz Statehood and the National Epos "Manas"* in 2003. In this work, Akaev explains that "For the Kyrgyz people, Manas is not just a historical epic poem; it is a way of life . . . [I]n many respects Manas helped the Kyrgyz to survive the centuries and to stand tall during difficult times."<sup>28</sup> The three-part epic, "an integral part of [Kyrgyz] national history"<sup>29</sup> that has been orally transmitted for centuries, relates the tale of the legendary warrior Manas, who led Kyrgyz troops in battles against foreign invaders and thus helped to preserve the independence of the Turkic Kyrgyz people. According to Akaev, the epic has seven main lessons for contemporary Kyrgyz peoples: "importance of unity and national support; trans-ethnic consensus, friendship and cooperation; national honor and patriotism; through hard, relentless work and knowledge comes prosperity and well-being; humanism, magnanimity, tolerance; harmony with nature; and strengthening and protecting the Kyrgyz statehood."<sup>30</sup>

Before the publication of this book, only a select few scholars focused on Kyrgyzstani national traditions. During Soviet rule, the Kyrgyz learned Russian history rather than their own. Currently, in order to address the challenges of globalization and of radical ideology, it is essential that the Kyrgyzstani people, particularly the youth, begin to reestablish an awareness of the basis for their own identity. The current Kyrgyzstani government is therefore determined to promote their traditionally nomadic, secular culture.

In seeking to promote and reinforce pride and awareness of their distinct identity, the Kyrgyzstanis have identified perhaps the key weakness in HT doctrine and ideology: its failure to account for national differences. In doing so, the Kyrgyzstani government is nevertheless taking care to avoid the fatal mistakes made by other states that have used nationalism as a basis for revitalization. First, Akaev and others have made clear that, while celebrating the particular accomplishments of the Turkic Kyrgyzstani nation, they are also promoting an inclusive view *of* that nation. For example, the cover of Akaev's book displays a rich ethnic display of Kyrgyzstani children, who range from Chinese to Slavic to Arab in appearance. Akaev is also proud of "the great ethnic symphony of the Kyrgyz."<sup>31</sup> Second, the government has taken care to avoid excluding any one group from government. President Akaev has established the consultative Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan, which gives each minority group a voice in national policy. Furthermore, there are cultural districts for minorities,

religious groups and schools where they can teach in their own languages. Unlike Westernized states such as Latvia and Estonia, which have essentially excluded ethnic minorities from public life, it seems as though Kyrgyzstan is successfully building an inclusive state for all its citizens—who share a culture strong enough to combat the radicalism of HT.

Yet of all the Central Asian countries, Kyrgyzstan may be the most vulnerable to a possible takeover by HT due to the upcoming 2005 parliamentary and presidential elections. With high popular resentment and opposition groups inspired by the events in Georgia and Ukraine, HT may be the strongest organization to make the best use of this political environment. As Interior Minister Lieutenant General Bakirdin Subanbekov reported, HT propaganda activities have increased over the past two years.<sup>32</sup> Prime Minister Tanayev also recently decried the lack of adequate measures to combat HT in his country, warning that their activities constituted a threat to “the nation’s very existence.”<sup>33</sup>

The deputy chairman of the Kyrgyz NSS, Tokon Mamytov, discussed the challenges of combating HT at a government session on June 28, 2004. He said that society is not well aware of such organizations and that people in general do not trust the law enforcement bodies, making the government’s task much harder. According to NSS data, an instruction to step up propaganda—leaflets, rallies and more radical measures—has been sent to Central Asia from Jordan because the conditions for HT in Kyrgyzstan are believed to be “favorable.”<sup>34</sup> NSS officials believe that HT is now expanding its focus to university students and even to professionals such as lawyers, journalists and economists. They also believe, the local cells were directed to organize women’s rallies—just like those held in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan—to demand the release of party members from prison. NSS further reported that this communiqué instructed HT Kyrgyzstan to step up recruitment efforts among military and law enforcement officials. HT members are also instructed to organize anti-American activities in Kyrgyzstan. Indeed, on April 26, 2004, four HT members, one Kazakhstani and three Kyrgyzstanis, were sentenced to ten-year prison terms for their attempt to carry out a terrorist act against the American military base at Manas. To many observers, this has signaled that HT has either set up a new military wing, or moved to its third phase.

These are worrisome developments in light of the upcoming elections, which may provide HT with an excellent opportunity to seize power. According to government data, HT has gained over 1,800 new members in the country over the past year, with most followers concentrated in the Osh and Jalalabad regions. Hizb ut-Tahrir activists are winning new recruits in the north of the country, although its base of support remains in the south.<sup>35</sup> Petr Tiablin, head of the International Affairs Directorate in Bishkek stated on October 6, 2004 that HT may have “up to ten underground cells in the Kyrgyzstani capital.”<sup>36</sup> As it will need to ensure free and fair elections, and at the same time be vigilant against the

threat posed by HT and other radical Islamist groups, the Kyrgyzstani government will have an extremely challenging year ahead.

### *Tajikistan: Trying to Integrate the Islamists*

As part of the settlement of the country's disastrous civil war in 1997, the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) was included in Tajikistan's new political system. Although the party had shown clear signs of radicalism during the civil war, it soon changed its rhetoric—and even its beliefs—in order to take part in the political process. It openly accepted the secular, democratic nature of Tajikistan's government. It thus became the only political party in all of Central Asia that represented political Islam. The new Tajikistani government assumed that this unprecedented concession would guarantee domestic tranquility by providing an outlet for all those who desired the involvement of Islam in politics. However, as the IRPT became increasingly associated with the state it served, the party lost some of its legitimacy. Consequently, a vacuum again appeared in the political space within Tajikistan, space which HT was perfectly prepared to exploit as it moved into the country through the Ferghana Valley in the beginning of 1998. Unlike the IRPT or the government, HT was fully prepared to offer the Tajikistani people definitive answers to questions of the country's future—answers that are eagerly accepted by a growing number within the country.

HT's activities began to attract the notice of the government and the IRPT in 2000. At first, representatives of the government and the IRPT held several meetings, primarily in Sogd oblast, at which they attacked the ideas of HT in front of large public audiences. As Muhiddin Kabiri notes,

Though largely unsuccessful, the joint work of state structures, official religious bodies and the IRPT in their confrontation with Hizb ut-Tahrir is an important event in itself. It demonstrated that for religious and secular bodies in Tajikistan, there is an incentive for cooperation, and circumstances may force them to develop a dialogue.<sup>37</sup>

But this joint work did not last long, as the government began to restrict the activities of the IRPT as an opposition party. Thus, as the IRPT became increasingly docile in its language and actions, HT was able to further portray it as simply a tool of the government and as a party that was not addressing the real needs of the Muslim people of Tajikistan.

The government continued to attempt to battle HT on its own and set up an expert commission in order to better understand HT's structure, goals and operations. Its recommendations led to mass arrests of people caught with HT leaflets. The ICG reported that in this period (2000–01) “prison sentences rose from five to eight years to anywhere from twelve to eighteen years”.<sup>38</sup> However,

the Tajikistani government has been unable to penetrate the organization due to its cell structure and to HT's own infiltration of the security and military services. While some top HT leaders in Tajikistan were arrested in 2002, the group continues to grow. The number of party sympathizers in the country is now estimated at over 3,000. HT members have reportedly turned up in the ranks of the military personnel.<sup>39</sup>

One reason for HT's growth in Tajikistan is because the group has broadened its appeal from ethnic Uzbeks in the Ferghana region to Tajikistanis in general. HT leaflets now increasingly focus on local concerns. In 2000, an HT leaflet would discuss OPEC and oil prices, topics that have no meaning or relevance to the average Tajikistani. These leaflets were clearly meant for the Middle East and not for Tajikistan. Even later leaflets specifically designed for Central Asia focused almost exclusively on the repression of the Uzbekistani regime and the need for it to be overthrown. However, since 2002 the quality and relevance of Tajik-language leaflets has vastly improved. They now address local social issues, such as human rights concerns and energy shortages—and do not hesitate to blame the government for its inability to tackle these problems. In September 2003, ethnic Tajik HT members were arrested in Dushanbe and, in March 2004, in Kulob.<sup>40</sup> Kulob is mainly a Tajik city in dire economic conditions; it is not surprising, therefore, that HT would find it a reliable base.

Like the rest of the Central Asian countries, Tajikistan too is short on properly trained imams for the ideological and theological battle against HT. Most have difficulty discussing current events and relating to young people. Furthermore, they suffer from a lack of popularity and even legitimacy since they are perceived to be working for the government. While the government has made some progress in turning imprisoned HT members away from radical Islam, government employees do not have the necessary education on basic religious principles.

There is growing tension between the religious groups attempting to be part of the system and those supporting HT's line in overthrowing the system. Thus, while some in the government recognize the need to develop a comprehensive strategy embracing both economic and political reform issues, short-term progress in the struggle against HT is unlikely. Corruption, clan interests and regional parochialism will prevent any serious reforms. Like his other Central Asian counterparts, President Emomali Rakhmonov realizes that HT will try to make best use of the February 2005 parliamentary and the 2006 presidential elections; this makes reforms necessary but at the same time even more difficult.

### *Kazakhstan: Promising Latecomer*

For many years, Kazakhstan believed that its ethnic and religious diversity would make it impossible for radical Islam to succeed in the country.

Consequently, after independence the Kazakhstani government permitted the unrestrained growth of mosques and religious institutes—which often did not register with the authorities. Thus, there were over 5,000 mosques in Kazakhstan soon after independence, a huge amount for a country with eight million Muslims. (In comparison, Uzbekistan with 20 million Muslims has 2000 mosques.) Since two imams are needed for each mosque, Kazakhstan needed 10,000 additional imams after independence. Imams from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the Gulf countries poured into the country. Like the other Central Asian countries, Kazakhstan also inherited the problems of a weak state regulatory structure that was unable to deal with this radical influx—and with its own poorly trained indigenous clergy.

HT and other radical Islamist movements filled the void left by the state's inability to direct and manage the country's religious infrastructure. For example, in the absence of state-provided religious literature, many mosques simply distributed HT material, which was provided to them free of charge and in the Kazakh language.<sup>41</sup> The imams themselves simply did not understand the danger of the ideology spread by HT leaflets, magazines and books.

However, since 2003, HT became increasingly problematic for the Kazakhstani authorities. Formerly confined to southern Kazakhstan, HT began to spread to the rest of the country and increased its activities significantly, especially since the spring of 2004.<sup>42</sup> Recent leaflets found on the arrested men called for Kazakhstanis to “fight against infidels. The noted increase of HT activity may be due to the incubation period of the movement: It takes between six months to two years to indoctrinate people and prepare them to operate as HT members. Those who were targeted after 9/11 and especially those recruited after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq may only now be coming out into the open.

There are several reasons for the increase of HT's appeal in Kazakhstan. It was initially due to an influx in Uzbekistani refugees and workers, as noted earlier. Thousands of Uzbekistani seasonal workers come to Kazakhstan every year in search of jobs, and they often cross visa-free into the country—since the long border is uncontrolled. But HT has become increasingly popular among other ethnic groups—Russian and Kazakh—as well. This is in part due to the endemic corruption and rigid clan control of the economy, which have given rise to a strong undercurrent of resentment. HT recruitment is still most effective in the southern areas of Turkestan, Kentau and Shymkent, where the economy is quite weak.<sup>43</sup> In addition to the economic roots of HT's support, popular disdain for the pro-government Spiritual Board for the Muslims of Kazakhstan has motivated Muslims to seek a more radical leadership.

President Nursultan Nazarbayev and the Kazakhstani leadership finally realized the need to take measures towards preventing the spread of extremist religious ideas, and began to focus on improving social conditions, restoring national traditions, and assuring harmonious interfaith relations in the country.



Clearly, Kazakhstan's main overall advantage is its rich energy resources, and the development of these resources has so far been promising. By 2015, if annual production targets of 1.3 billion barrels are met, Kazakhstan will be one of the world's top five oil producers.<sup>44</sup> Cognizant of the example of many oil-rich Middle Eastern countries, Kazakhstan does not want to develop a single-source economy and become vulnerable to the famous oil-resource curse. It has thus taken steps to develop the non-petroleum sector of the economy as well. The economy as a whole has grown steadily at around 10 percent annually, which in turn has helped to create an emerging middle class. Many today consider the Kazakhstani economic policy to be a model for developing countries.

Like Karimov, Nazarbaev too wants to reach a strategic agreement with the U.S. and thus is similarly willing—at least on paper—to undertake improvements in the areas of democracy and human rights. For example, during his December 2001 visit to the White House, Nazarbayev signed a joint statement with Bush, emphasizing the importance of international standards of governance and affirming his commitment to promoting the rule of law, freedom of religion, human rights and strengthening democratic institutions.<sup>45</sup> While there are still shortcomings, the few reformers within the Kazakhstani government seem to push in this direction.

The Kazakhstani government has also demonstrated some understanding of the importance of the democratic progress in dealing with threats like HT. While there were serious irregularities, the September 19, 2004 parliamentary elections nevertheless raised the bar for the other Central Asian countries.

While the government began to take formal action against HT in spring 2004, as of this writing Kazakhstan is the only country in Central Asia that has not banned the organization. However, all signs point to the fact that this step may soon be taken. For the country's neighbors, it could not be more timely. Uzbekistani President Karimov had long been complaining that Kazakhstan was "too soft" on Islamic extremism. Yet, it required the hard evidence of the Tashkent terrorist attacks for the Kazakhstanis to realize that their open policies were being abused by radicals and terrorists. As evidence emerged that those who carried out the strike against the U.S. and Israeli embassies had been trained in Kazakhstan, and one of the three suicide bombers involved in the attacks was a Kazakhstani citizen, Kazakhstani deputy security chief Vladimir Bozhko acknowledged "We must face up to the fact that terrorist organizations and people with terrorist intentions are in Kazakhstan, living among us."<sup>46</sup> In time, this acknowledgement reached the highest levels of government. President Nazarbayev warned the Kazakhstani parliament on September 1, 2004 that "the illegal activity of the extremist religious organization Hizb ut-Tahrir is becoming more open in our country" and urged them to adopt a law that would allow the government to regulate the activities of religious organizations inside the country. The head of the Kazakh National Security Committee, Nartai

Dutbayev, also concluded that HT has recently increased its clandestine activities in Kazakhstan and poses “a real threat to Kazakhstan’s security.”<sup>47</sup> On October 20, 2004, the lower house of the Kazakhstani parliament (Majlis) approved a bill aimed at curbing the growth of religious extremists groups.<sup>48</sup> This bill, which is certain to obtain the approval of the upper house and the signature of the president, will make it possible for the government to outlaw HT.

### *Regional and International Cooperation*

To best deal with the challenge of HT, Central Asian leaders must articulate a clear vision of a common future for the region. Although it is without a doubt that national differences exist among the Central Asian states, it is equally beyond question that they share a common threat. As described earlier, each country wants to respond to that threat by reviving its own unique historical and cultural characteristics. These separate efforts ignore the effects of globalization and can often engender resentment. The only beneficiary of broken regional ties is HT, which offers a compelling, competing vision of a Central Asia in which families will no longer be torn apart by artificial borders and in which small businessmen are not hampered by harsh restrictions on trade. The appeal of this vision is only now being noted by Central Asian leaders, and they are still a long way from constructing an alternative.

Ultimately, due to its geographic position, Uzbekistan will remain the key to economic and security cooperation. It is therefore quite significant that Uzbekistan has taken steps to improve its relations with its neighbors. Tashkent has worked well on HT issues with Bishkek, especially since the 2002 exodus of Uzbekistani HT members into Kyrgyzstan. It has also developed closer ties to Tajikistan, which are especially significant in light of the serious disputes between the two countries involving their common frontier. Relations with Turkmenistan remain lukewarm, and not surprisingly there is increasing HT presence at the Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan border.

Of all bilateral pairings within the region, the Uzbekistani-Kazakhstani relationship is possibly the most critical to regional security and economic prosperity. There is strong competition between Central Asia’s largest state and the country with Central Asia’s largest population. Currently, Kazakhstan has the upper hand, as its economic and political progress overshadows that of Uzbekistan. Unlike its neighbor, Uzbekistan is not moving towards privatization or internal economic liberalization, which is one of the stumbling blocks in trade relations. While there is still tension along the two states’ common border, both countries have demonstrated a willingness to move past their disputes in order to form closer economic and political ties. If the two can reach an understanding that Uzbekistan is the region’s center of classical, enlightened Islam, and Kazakhstan is the region’s economic leader, the two Central Asian countries can

cooperate on many areas critical in the battle of ideas. At the same time, there is a risk that the crony capitalists and the clan members around the two presidents may in the end prevent the realization of such cooperation. In such a case, HT would be one of the main beneficiaries.

In the field of counter-terrorism, Central Asian countries also share an interest in cooperating with Russia, which banned HT in February 2003—after one notable security operation in which more than 120 Central Asian members were captured in Moscow along with a substantial weapons cache. Earlier than most, the Russians became aware of the threat posed by HT; in May 2001, General Boris Mylnikov, head of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Anti-Terrorist Center, stated that Hizb ut-Tahrir was “an organization of international terrorism, potentially threatening Russia and CIS.” All Central Asian countries are part of the CIS, the Russian-led organization that is focused on increasing regional economic and political ties. Due to its strategic awareness and tactical capabilities, Russian military presence in Central Asia can contribute to addressing the growing terrorism threat—so long as it does not become part of the local corruption and crime.

In combating HT, Central Asian scholars can and must cooperate with their Russian counterparts in their efforts to promote justice and development in the Muslim world. With their historical experience of Marxism-Leninism and Bolshevism, Russians are uniquely positioned to combat HT on the ideological front. As Russian scholar Leonid Sjukijainen eloquently argued at a workshop encouraging U.S.-Russian cooperation against HT in Central Asia, “It is impossible to battle radical Islam without defeating its ideals on its own intellectual territory.”<sup>49</sup> While the current Russian government itself may not have much credibility on these issues, the Islamic scholars and the clergy representing Russia’s 20 million Muslims certainly are well positioned to take on the challenge.

In addition to taking advantage of Russian resources and expertise, Central Asians also seek to profit from cooperation with China, which is itself facing a growing threat from HT. The main forum for such cooperation is the newly created Anti-Terrorism Center (ATC) of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The ATC was created in 2004 and is based in Tashkent. Following the attacks in Uzbekistan, the center’s director, Vyacheslav Kasymov, a former deputy head of the Uzbek intelligence agency, declared that economic and democratic reforms are essential to the fight against terrorism. While such statements are encouraging, it remains to be seen whether this center will indeed encourage such reforms, especially given that neither China nor Russia would benefit from such changes. Moreover, as explained in more detail below, both would like to use the center as a way to counterbalance the growing American influence in the region.

Though it is unlikely to take on HT directly, NATO can also lend critical assistance. During the NATO Istanbul Summit in June 2004, NATO heads of state agreed to place a special focus on cooperation with Central Asia. For over a decade, the countries of the region have already been part of NATO's Partnership for Peace program. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan both want to take the partnership one step further, and each expressed a desire to develop Individual Partnership Programs in order to get their countries ready for eventual membership. Nazarbayev attended the Istanbul Summit, but Karimov chose to stay home, most likely to avoid further irritating Putin. NATO Secretary General Jaap De Hoop Scheffer visited Central Asia in October 2004 to discuss ways to form closer ties with the region. Given the importance of cooperation with Central Asian states on issues such as terrorism, Afghanistan and defense reform, it is clear that a prosperous and secure Central Asia is in NATO's interest. There is a growing understanding in NATO that "The new challenges to our security know no borders. Meeting these challenges, and defeating them, requires the closest possible international cooperation."<sup>50</sup>

### *Or Competition?*

Located within the so-called "arc of instability", Central Asia has taken on new importance as U.S. policymakers begin to understand that it is in their interest to strengthen these states internally. As Stuart Eizenstat, co-chair of the Commission on Weak States and U.S. National Security, noted, "9/11 showed us how weak and failed states are the threat that puts our security most at risk."<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately, neither Russia nor China has yet understood the difference between repression and internal strength. They also are deeply suspicious of U.S. intentions in the region.<sup>52</sup>

In fact, in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, Russia initially opposed U.S. basing in Central Asia. It only accepted the American presence after Washington directly assured Moscow that the deployment would be temporary, and only after Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan accepted the American request before the Russian pressure intensified. China was also reluctant to see the bases established, but nonetheless began to share valuable counter-terrorism intelligence with the United States and began cooperating with the U.S. on the UN Security Council (along with Russia). To reiterate Chinese commitment to the war on terror, President Jiang Zemin stood beside President Bush on October 19, 2001 to declare, "we are opposed to terrorism of all forms."<sup>53</sup> A similar joint statement was released by Presidents Bush and Putin two days later.<sup>54</sup> However, three years into this war, both Russia and China are now voicing increasing concern with U.S. intentions in the region.

These concerns were amplified after the U.S. made clear that it had no intention of leaving Central Asia any time soon. As Secretary of State Colin

Powell declared, “America will have a continuing interest and presence in Central Asia of a kind that we could not have dreamed of before.”<sup>55</sup> The intensity and clarity of such statements has had an unsettling effect on the leadership in Moscow and Beijing. While visiting Tehran in April 2002, President Jiang Zemin declared that “Beijing’s policy is against strategies of force and against the U.S. military presence in Central Asia.”<sup>56</sup> While Russia has refrained from similar public expressions, it has nevertheless acted to head off the increase in American power in the region by measures such as the latest redeployment of its 201st motorized rifle unit in Tajikistan and the establishment of a military base less than 20 miles from the U.S. facility in Kyrgyzstan. As Robert Legvold wrote in September 2001, “Russians realize that they still have potent influence within their immediate neighborhood and if that neighborhood is important to the larger world, Russia must be important as well.”<sup>57</sup>

China attempted to enhance its status as a global player by filling the power vacuum in Central Asia left by the fall of the Soviet Union. As its economy began growing at an unprecedented pace and energy supplies showing no signs of catching up to ever-increasing demand (China became a net oil importer in 1993), Beijing began to look to its newly independent neighbors as potential sources. In 1996, China established the Shanghai Five group, made up of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The original purpose of the Shanghai Five was to facilitate a reduction in troop concentrations along shared borders through a regional security agreement. On June 17, 2001, however, the presidents of the Shanghai Five welcomed Uzbekistan as a new member and signed an agreement committing the countries to fight terrorism and extremism in the region. As stated above, the group subsequently changed its name to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and expanded its mission to include Beijing’s previous vow to crack down on what it has termed the “three evils”: religious extremism, separatism and terrorism.<sup>58</sup> The SCO was also intended to become an unofficial “vehicle to oppose U.S. foreign policy in the region.”<sup>59</sup>

Having already mended relations with its former foe Russia through the SCO, the PRC government took Sino-Russian relations one step closer in July 2001, and then-President Jiang and Russian President Putin signed the Treaty of Good-Neighborly and Friendly Cooperation. According to a *Washington Post* article covering the treaty, its purpose was to reflect “their shared opposition to U.S. supremacy and a mutual desire to secure border regions that have been the source of instability for centuries.”<sup>60</sup> This general cooperation is emblematic of the two countries’ shared interest in neutralizing and ultimately reducing the U.S. presence in Central Asia.

With U.S. financial assistance held back by human rights concerns and corruption in Central Asia, and with the White House keeping Central Asian leaders at arm’s length, both Russia and China have intensified their efforts to woo these men. At the same time, using economic incentives and pressures, both

want Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan to close down the U.S. bases. For its part, Russia signed a strategic partnership agreement with Uzbekistan at the June 17, 2004 SCO summit in Tashkent. This agreement contains key economic and military provisions that will enhance Russia's standing not only in Uzbekistan but throughout Central Asia. While the U.S. has provided Uzbekistan with about \$1 billion in assistance since 1992, the Russian oil giant Lukoil itself equaled that total in a deal concluded this year. The Russian gas monopoly Gazprom has also expressed interest in investing similarly high figures in the country.

China is also offering economic and security incentives to the Central Asians in the hopes that they will close the American bases. Beijing's fear is that the United States will use them to back Uighur separatists against China. At the recent SCO summit, Chinese President Hu Jintao also offered nearly \$1 billion to the region. In addition, the Chinese are also finally seriously moving forward with the construction of a major oil pipeline from Kazakhstan to its Pacific ports, thereby drawing the region closer to the East.

Another issue that brings Russia and China closer is their concern about American supported democratic forces in the region that have the capability to change the status quo. Since the status quo clearly benefits Russia, China and indeed the Central Asian leaders themselves, the threat of a Georgia-style revolution greatly scares them.

It would be a major mistake, however, if Russia and China were deliberately to take advantage of the anti-Americanism HT is fueling in the region. Some in Central Asia still believe that certain Russian elements supported the IMU during 1995–96 so that the weak states of Central Asia would ask for Russian security support and bring them back under Moscow's sphere of influence. Regardless of whether these allegations are true, what Moscow and Beijing and the Central Asian leaders need to understand is that in this battle of ideas, democratic and transparent governance will succeed, and repressive and corrupt methods will fail. Moreover, while in the short term an American departure would clearly benefit both Russia and China economically and politically (for example, in securing an oil or gas pipeline or a major investment project), in the long term a U.S. withdrawal would mean victory for HT—and defeat for every non-Muslim government, as well as that of Russia and China.

### *Regional examples*

It is beyond question that the people of Central Asia face a grave threat from Hizb ut-Tahrir and other radical Islamist groups. As has been demonstrated already, HT and its ideological allies are undermining the strong traditional foundations of Central Asian society. However, in seeking

to combat this emerging threat, the region's governments may well undermine these traditions themselves. The traditional Soviet methods of repression, which is the only response that many regional leaders know, will not work. In order to create stable societies that protect civil and religious liberties, while simultaneously addressing the challenge of radical Islamism, Central Asian governments must look elsewhere for guidance.

There are not many countries that can serve as successful examples for the Central Asian countries. Azerbaijan and Turkey share a common linguistic, cultural and religious heritage, and can in different ways share with these countries.

### *Azerbaijan*

Like the Central Asian states, Azerbaijan has had to address a variety of transformational challenges as it moved from Soviet rule towards independence. Unlike its neighbors to the east, however, Azerbaijan has not been subject to the same degree of influence from HT. Also, from the beginning, Azerbaijani authorities moved quickly to confiscate HT material as soon as it was distributed in the country, thus dooming to failure HT's attempts to set up a base. Despite these measures, radicals have not yet given up. On the contrary, extremist movements from Saudi Arabia, the Persian Gulf, Iran and Turkey have all tried to influence Azerbaijan's Sunni and Shi'a Muslims.

In order to head off the threat posed by this constant radical effort, former President Heydar Aliyev took decisive action on June 21, 2001 to establish the State Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan for the Work with Religious Associations. This committee was put in charge of registering (and re-registering) all religious organizations throughout the country. Before the creation of this committee, there were already 26 *madrassas* operating in Azerbaijan. Of these, the four that were officially registered by the Ministry of Justice were controlled by Turkish religious associations, while the 22 operated by Iranian groups were doing so without government permission. The latter were far from comprehensive educational institutions; in fact, they only taught religion and the Persian and Arabic languages, as well as the history, geography and literature of Iran. Upon graduation from these schools, the estimated 3,000 alumni were not capable of speaking proper Azeri, did not receive recognized state diplomas, and were thus unable to continue their education. As a result, more than 2,000 emigrated from Azerbaijan, depending on funds from Islamic charities to study in Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and elsewhere.

Shortly after its creation, the state committee closed these *madrassas* pending presentation of proper registration documents. In order to obtain them, the schools needed to submit a curriculum that complied with state requirements on secular education. They were also required to adopt the Azeri language as a medium of instruction. Finally, all were required to make their finances transparent. To date, none of these schools have fulfilled these conditions and hence none have been allowed to resume their activities. Consequently, today there are only three Islamic schools in Azerbaijan, with 300 students. The Azerbaijani state thus was able to take control of the *madrassas* by applying a legal framework. Indeed, this framework has arguably been successful; since the state committee began operating, only four people have gone abroad for religious education. A possible deterrent is that holders of foreign religious degrees cannot work in Azerbaijan without passing the state exams.

Azerbaijan has also studied various Muslim countries' experiences in combating radical Islamist trends, and decided that the Turkish one was the most applicable. Even though the vast majority of Turks are Sunni, Azerbaijan is ethnically and politically much closer to its eastern neighbor than to the large Shi'a country on its southern border, Iran. Indeed, the many moderate Turkish Islamic movements operating in Azerbaijan enjoy far more popular appeal than do radical groups such as HT. Citing the Turkish example, the director of the Religious Affairs State Committee, Rafik Aliyev, has expressed the strong wish that religion classes based on these moderate traditions be introduced into regular secondary schools. While the purpose is to immunize Azerbaijanis against radical ideas, the post-communist secular establishment is still reluctant to take this step. Nevertheless, Azerbaijan, like the Central Asian states, must begin providing its citizens with basic Islamic teachings, ethics and values, since such education is the best vaccination against radicalism.

### *Turkey*

There are important insights that can be drawn from the Turkish example, since Turkey is the only Muslim-majority country that has been able to fuse together democracy, Islam, secularism and modernity while simultaneously providing education on a nationwide basis and liberalizing its political and economic systems. In achieving this remarkable synthesis, Turkey has prevented any serious appeal of groups espousing radical Islamist ideologies. In searching for a means to address the present Islamist threat to Central Asia, the governments of the region can greatly benefit from Ankara's example.



However, many observers and scholars have raised the following objection to the use of the Turkish model: Because of the unique historical circumstances surrounding its birth, the Turkish secular republic cannot be replicated elsewhere. There is clearly truth to this statement. Modern Turkey was created by an accomplished military leader, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who, inspired by the French secular republican ideal, used the military's backing to abolish the Caliphate and to transform Turkish society and institutions from the top down. Consequently, the Turkish military has historically taken on the responsibility of defending secularism. There is no equivalent military tradition in Central Asia. Thus, if the region is to imitate the Turkish example, each country must create an equivalent civilian watchdog.

A number of other factors separate Turks from Central Asians. First, the civil society that was formed during the Ottoman era might have been a necessary prerequisite to secular republicanism. Central Asia currently lacks any such civil society as a result of decades of Soviet imperialism. Second, Turkey was united politically before secularism was imposed; in Central Asia, the current artificial borders divide the region to a greater extent than ever before in its history. Third, the Turkish secular republic was a top-down enterprise carried out by a popular leader who retained the capability to enact wide-scale social engineering. Globalization and the use of internet have empowered individuals to such an extent that such engineering is no longer possible. Fourth, modern Turkey quickly moved to a representative democratic system, in which people were able to express at the polling places their frustrations and desires about the country's rapid modernization. The Central Asian countries are, to varying degrees, still struggling with their transition to representative democracy.

Despite these and other differences, there are also many notable and relevant similarities between Turkey and Central Asia. Like the Sunni Central Asians, a majority of the Turks belong to the liberal Hanafi school of Islam. Furthermore, most Central Asians (with the exception of the Persian Tajiks) share the same Turkic ethnic and pre-Islamic cultural traditions with Turkey. They share a similar mythology; epic stories of both Turkey and Central Asia place consistent emphasis on justice, honor and dignity, and never espouse hatred or radicalism. The cultural commonalities between the two can therefore be defined in large part by the fusion of Islam with ancient Turkic civilization. Islam was spread among the Turkish tribes mainly through Sufi mystics, who as individuals had the flexibility to compromise with local customs and beliefs. In fact, Wahhabism came about in part as a reaction to Ottoman and Central Asian tolerance of mystical traditions. Today, both Turkey and Central Asia are struggling to defend this tolerance as it is besieged by the Wahhabist ideology being spread by extremist groups

like Hizb ut-Tahrir. As the author concluded at a conference on the topic held in the historic Silk Road city of Samarkand, “Given there are many religious and cultural similarities, it would make sense to looking at the Turkish model, which would mean strengthening secular and democratic regimes, coupled with vigilance and constitutional and institutional safeguards, as well as good governance and socio-economic development.”<sup>61</sup>

It is beyond the scope of this monograph to examine the Turkish example in a detailed fashion. However, it is necessary to highlight four main elements that are relevant in dealing with HT: education (both secular and religious); government approaches to religion (as coordinated by the state religious directorate, or Diyanet); democracy and good governance; and ideology.

First, the provision of quality education has been a key reason for Turkey’s success in defeating radicalism. In Turkey, every child has the right and the obligation to attend eight years of education where courses on “religion and ethics” and “citizenship” are taught. The “religion and ethics” class contains content on world religions, Islamic history, Islamic morals and ethics, and basic elements of Islam. While these classes comprise a relatively small portion of the curriculum and thus do not provide the youth with all the necessary background in Islam, they do help in reducing the chance that students will be attracted to hate-filled ideologies. Central Asian countries also need to make a basic investment in such an educational program.

Second, under Ataturk, the new Turkish Republic brought all religious education under state control. It also ensured that the country’s imams would remain moderate, preventing the spread of extremist ideas, by bringing Turkish mosques under the Diyanet. Since 1924, the Diyanet has overseen the production and transmission of religious knowledge and has organized and provided religious services to Muslims in Turkey. The Diyanet, like the Ottoman-era Sheyh ul-Islam, serves as an intermediary between the government and the clergy in the organization and administration of religious affairs. Today, the directorate’s most pressing responsibility is to assure state authority over mosque activities, particularly the Friday sermons to prevent political or hate-filled speeches. The rationale for such oversight is to prevent any attempt of a religious group to pose a threat to a secular state while at the same time providing religious freedom.

Some of Turkey’s steps in preventing the hold of radical Islamist movements need to be better understood by the West and Central Asians. The Turkish approach to the regulation of religion, as outlined above, often seems highly restrictive to Western governments that take a laissez faire approach to religion. In order to prevent foreign money and foreign groups

from taking over Turkish religious education, the Turkish government has, since Ottoman times, paid the salaries of imams and Islamic teachers, and has published religious literature designed for public distribution. By these measures, they have provided people with reliable information on Turkish Islamic culture, teachings and traditions. Until a better solution is found, Central Asian countries may also need to play a similar role in funding Islamic activities in order to keep the religion safe from the extremists.

However, while religious directorates operating as part of the secular state may be a necessary interim measure, given that we are in the midst of the critical battle of ideas, they can only succeed if set up within an appropriate framework. Unlike the Turkish Diyanet, most of its Central Asian counterparts are leftovers from Soviet-era institutions and are staffed with people who are either insufficiently trained in Islam or who have been educated by foreign radicals. Furthermore, these institutions are weakened by their association with unpopular governments. If they are to succeed, they need to gain a measure of independence such that they can recover public legitimacy.

There already exists some measure of cooperation between the Diyanet and the Central Asian countries. The Turkish directorate has set up schools of theology in Central Asia to help the countries of the region educate their own imams. For example, the Osh State University's School of Theology was established by the Diyanet, and from the start it promoted native Islamic traditions for its students. This emphasis stands in stark contrast to the competing Saudi-funded establishments, where strict Wahhabism is taught. In 2004, upon realizing that most graduates of this school could not find jobs, the Diyanet even offered to pay the salaries of any graduates of the Osh School of Theology to be employed by the relevant state commission, so as to improve that country's ability to fight extremism in a scientific and educated matter.

A third general lesson provided by Turkey is in democracy and good governance. Turkey's democratic culture promotes tolerance, moderation and civic participation. Turkey was able to provide its Muslim citizens with a "diverse and very effective Islamic intelligentsia that complemented Turkey's state-regulated, moderate Islamic education system."<sup>62</sup> It has managed to integrate its Islamists into a democratic system, leaving HT with no political space for a radical alternative. In fact, Turkey's current ruling Justice and Development Party was able to emerge from its Islamist roots and become a legitimately moderate party, embodying in its name two of the most important elements for all Muslims which HT so effectively highlights in Central Asia.

A fourth Turkish element, a clear national ideology fused with basic patriotism is also relevant for the Central Asians, as they are trying to chart their own way towards dealing with HT. In constructing the Turkish Republic, Ataturk chose to promote Turkey rather than the *umma*, recognizing that Turks do not appreciate being lumped in with the rest of the Muslim world. This pride is another principal reason for the failure of HT to take root in the country, as a majority of Turkish citizens consider HT to be an Arab and communist ideology that does not appeal to their own culture and traditions. Central Asians take similar pride in their identity and are trying to move away from ideologies inspired by communism and imposed on them by foreigners. The challenge for them is to come up with a new ideology that can address the needs of their own Muslim populations.

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<sup>1</sup>Faisal al-Yafai, "The West Needs to Understand It Is Inevitable: Islam is Coming Back", *Guardian* (London), November 11, 2004.

<sup>2</sup>"Uzbekistan: President Karimov Says He Will Shoot Islamic Fundamentalists", BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, from Uzbekistan Radio second program, May 1, 1998.

<sup>3</sup>Orozbek Moldaliev, interview by Zeyno Baran, Washington, DC, November 23, 2004.

<sup>4</sup><http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27873.htm>.

<sup>5</sup>Peter Hitchens, "The Uzbekistan Princess, Rigged Elections And Dissidents Boiled Alive—Meet Our New Best Friends . . . Our Writer Visits The West's Latest Ally, A Country Where Free Speech Is Brutally Suppressed—As Britain's Own Ambassador Found To His Cost", *Mail On Sunday* (London), December 14, 2003.

<sup>6</sup><http://hrw.org/reports/2004/uzbekistan0304/>.

<sup>7</sup>Abdulaziz Mansur, interview by Zeyno Baran, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, October 6, 2003.

<sup>8</sup>See <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2002/8736.htm>.

<sup>9</sup>Theo van Boven, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Question of Torture", United Nations Economic and Social Council, February 3, 2003, p. 2; See [http://www.unhcr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/0/29d0f1eaf87cf3eac1256ce9005a0170/\\$FILE/G0310766.doc](http://www.unhcr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/0/29d0f1eaf87cf3eac1256ce9005a0170/$FILE/G0310766.doc).

<sup>10</sup>"Uzbekistan: New Torture Death Belies Claims of Progress", Human Rights Watch, May 21, 2004, available at [http://hrw.org/english/docs/2004/05/21/uzbeki8604\\_txt.htm](http://hrw.org/english/docs/2004/05/21/uzbeki8604_txt.htm).

<sup>11</sup>Richard Boucher, "Secretary of State Decision not to Certify Uzbekistan", available at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2004/34363pf.htm>.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>"Human Rights Watch Statement on the Death of Andrei Shelkavenko", Human Rights Watch, June 1, 2004, available at [http://hrw.org/english/docs/2004/06/01/uzbeki8679\\_txt.htm](http://hrw.org/english/docs/2004/06/01/uzbeki8679_txt.htm).

<sup>14</sup>"Uzbekistan President Amnesties Some 700 Islamists", *ITAR-TASS*, February 3, 2004.

<sup>15</sup>Zamira Eshanova, "Central Asia: Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan Differ in Approach to Hezb ut-Tahrir", July 12, 2002, <http://www.rferl.org/features/2002/07/12072002171856.asp>.

<sup>16</sup>Economist Intelligence Unit, "Uzbekistan Country Report", February 2004.

<sup>17</sup>"United States and Central Asian Countries Sign Regional Trade and Investment Framework Agreement", Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, June 1, 2004, [http://www.ustr.gov/Document\\_Library/Press\\_Releases/2004/June/United\\_States\\_Central\\_Asian\\_Countries\\_Sign\\_Regional\\_Trade\\_Investment\\_Framework\\_Agreement.html](http://www.ustr.gov/Document_Library/Press_Releases/2004/June/United_States_Central_Asian_Countries_Sign_Regional_Trade_Investment_Framework_Agreement.html).

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<sup>19</sup>Beth Jones, "U.S. Relations with Central Asia", U.S. Department of State, Washington, DC, February 11, 2002, <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2002/7946.htm>.

<sup>20</sup>Talant Kushchubekov, "The Kyrgyz Response", in *The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir: Deciphering and Combating Radical Islamist Ideology*, ed. Zeyno Baran (Washington, DC: The Nixon Center, 2004).

<sup>21</sup>V. Jumataeba, "Problemi Islamizatsiya v Kirgizistane", *Navigator*, January 10, 2001; Z. Galieva, "Polikonfessionalniy Kirgizistan: novie tendentsii i problemi", <http://polysphere.freenet.kg/no2/J102.htm>.

<sup>22</sup>Kushchubekov, "The Kyrgyz Response".

<sup>23</sup>Ibid. The requirement in Uzbekistan is a minimum of one hundred people, while in Turkmenistan it is 500.

<sup>24</sup>Eshanova, "Central Asia".

<sup>25</sup>He recently changed his name to Sheikh Sadikjan Kamaloddin

<sup>26</sup>International Crisis Group, "Radical Islam in Central Asia: Responding to Hizb ut-Tahrir", *Asia Report No. 58*, June 30, 2003, p. 38.

<sup>27</sup>Moldaliev, interview by Baran.

<sup>28</sup>Askar Akaev, *Kyrgyz Statehood and the National Epos "Manas"* (New York: Global Scholarly Publications, 2003), p. 4.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid, p. 276.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid, pp. 283–84.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid, p. 347.

<sup>32</sup>*Argumenty i Fakty* (Bishkek), June 30, 2004.

<sup>33</sup>"Kyrgyz Prime Minister Warns of Threat of Extremism", *Interfax* (Moscow), June 28, 2004.

<sup>34</sup>*Argumenty i Fakty* (Bishkek), June 30, 2004.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>"Concern over Hizb ut-Tahrir in Kyrgyz Capital", *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, October 8, 2004, <http://www.rferl.org/newslines/2004/10/2-tca/tca-081004.asp>.

<sup>37</sup>Muhiddin Kabiri, "HT and the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan", in *The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir*.

<sup>38</sup>International Crisis Group, "Radical Islam in Central Asia", p. 35.

<sup>39</sup>See Evgeniy Abdullaev, "Central Asian Integration and Islamic Revivalism", <http://www.src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/publicn/86/abdullaev.pdf>.

<sup>40</sup>International Crisis Group, "Tajikistan's Politics: Confrontation or Consolidation", May 19, 2004, p. 11.

<sup>41</sup>Nurlan Alniyazov, "The Muslims' Board and the Muslim Community in Kazakhstan" in *State and Religion in Countries with a Muslim Population*, ed. Z. I. Munavvarov and R. J. Krumm. (Tashkent: n.p., 2004), p. 174.

<sup>42</sup>Anonymous U.S. intelligence officer, interview by Zeyno Baran, October 12, 2004.

<sup>43</sup>Mike Redman "Hizb-bu-tharir: Making Inroads into Kazakhstan?", *Central Asia Caucasus Analyst*, June 4, 2003.

<sup>44</sup>"Kazakhstan May Triple Oil Output by 2015", UPI, August 9, 2004.

<sup>45</sup>Joint Statement by President George W. Bush and President Nursultan Nazarbayev on the New Kazakhstan-American Relationship", White House press release, December 21, 2001, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/12/20011221-10.html>.

<sup>46</sup>Raushan Nurshayeva, "Kazakhs break al Qaeda-linked Islamist cell", *Reuters*, November 11, 2004.

<sup>47</sup>"Islamic Militant Group Arrested in Kazakhstan", *RIA Novosti*, July 11, 2003.

<sup>48</sup>"Lower house of Kazakhstan's Parliament approves anti-extremism bill", *Associated Press*, October 20, 2004.

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<sup>49</sup>Leonid R. Sjukijainen (presentation at The Nixon Center, Washington, DC, February 4, 2004).

<sup>50</sup>“Eurasian Security Organization Makes Strides Forward”, October 22, 2004, <http://www.kazakhembus.com/102204.html>.

<sup>51</sup> See <http://198.65.138.161/org/news/2004/040614-weak-states-terrorism.htm>.

<sup>52</sup>While Iran is clearly another important player in Central Asia, until its policy of supporting terrorism and radicalism changes, it needs to be considered on the side of HT.

<sup>53</sup>[http://www.sinomania.com/CHINANNEWS/bush-zemin\\_press\\_conference\\_in\\_shanghai.htm](http://www.sinomania.com/CHINANNEWS/bush-zemin_press_conference_in_shanghai.htm).

<sup>54</sup><http://embajadausa.org.ve/www907.html>.

<sup>55</sup>Vernon Loeb, “Footprints In Steppes of Central Asia”, *Washington Post*, February 9, 2002.

<sup>56</sup>See <http://www.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/east/04/22/china.iran/>.

<sup>57</sup>Robert Levgold, “Russia’s Unformed Foreign Policy”, *Foreign Affairs*, 80, no. 5 (2001).

<sup>58</sup>See <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/FD03Ad05.html>.

<sup>59</sup>David M. Lampton and Richard Daniel Ewing, *The U.S.-China Relationship Facing International Security Crises*, (Washington, DC, The Nixon Center, 2003), p. 15.

<sup>60</sup>John Pomfret and Peter Baker, “China’s Leader in Moscow to Sign Pact; Treaty Reflects Two Nations’ Opposition to U.S. Supremacy”, *Washington Post*, July 16, 2001.

<sup>61</sup>Zeyno Baran, “Taking Back Islam: Combating Jihadists and Radical Islamists”, (presentation at conference, Samarkand, Uzbekistan, October 5, 2003).

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# 6

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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Like al-Qaeda, whose founding charter defines it as the “pioneering vanguard”<sup>1</sup> of Islamic movements, HT declares itself to be the “ideological vanguard” of the Islamist movements. Just as al-Qaeda “showed the way” for other armed groups by destroying two of America’s most prominent landmarks, HT blazes a path for other radical groups by destroying America’s most prominent ideological principles: democracy and capitalism. The challenge of a pioneering movement such as HT therefore extends beyond the immediate practical danger it poses.

Ultimately, the challenge facing Hizb ut-Tahrir is creating a new world order. HT has provided Muslims with a compelling, satisfying explanation of why the Islamic world fell behind the West. In HT’s view, the only way to close the gap is to destroy the existing order. HT thus viciously opposes the current American-led international system and fundamentally disagrees with Francis Fukuyama, who claimed that, due to the defeat of the Nazi and communist threats to democracy and capitalism, the “End of History” had arrived.<sup>2</sup> The spokesman of HTUK, Dr. Imran Wahid, recently stated that “Fukuyama says we have reached the end of history because there’s a lack of a viable alternative ideology to capitalism and western civilization. We view our work as a direct challenge to that statement: we have to prove him wrong.”<sup>3</sup>

Hizb ut-Tahrir believes that democracy eventually will be replaced by an Islamic order. In HT’s view, the United States is waging a war on Islam precisely because it fears its ultimate eclipse by a united Islamic world. To promote this view and to gain support, HT uses a mixture of communist methodology, Wahhabi theology and fascist rhetoric. Unlike other radical Islamist movements, who fight against the militaries in Muslim states, HT brings these forces to its side by infiltrating the security services with a radical political interpretation of Islam. The group’s cell structure is similar to that of the Bolsheviks. HT believes the Bolsheviks failed to extend their dominance even further because they lacked sufficient faith—and since HT has faith in abundance, its victory is inevitable.

As HT closely tailors its tactics to local conditions in each of the 40 countries in which it operates, its overall strategy is necessarily international and is closely coordinated with its “nerve center” in London and its headquarters in Jordan. The challenge for the international community is thus to develop and coordinate the implementation of an international counter-strategy. The first task is to

counter HT's ability to discredit the U.S. and what it stands for. Given that the credibility and moral authority of the U.S. is at an all-time low in the wake of the Iraq War, this will clearly not be an easy task. America won the Cold War because many of the people on the other side of the Iron Curtain were inspired by the U.S. and the political, economic and social alternative. Today, a growing number of Muslims are inspired by HT and the dream of a united Caliphate as an alternative to the U.S.-dominated, globalized international system of today. HT has thus turned the international political structure of the Cold War era on its head. As the U.S. did for dissidents behind the Iron Curtain, HT raises hope among disaffected Muslims for a dignified alternative to the perceived world order.

To deal with this first challenge, the U.S. has to engage in a propaganda war of its own, one that highlights common American and Muslim values and explains the recent changes in U.S. policies towards the Middle East. Few Muslims outside of the United States have even heard of the new Broader Middle East Initiative, and even fewer know of its aspirations. Many Central Asian Muslims only hear the HT-inspired message that the sole concern of the United States is to impose a neo-colonial order and oppress Muslims by means of the "fourth (cultural) crusade". In the absence of any direct communication from the U.S., Muslims often end up believing these conspiracy theories. **In the second term of the Bush administration, the new Secretary of State should travel frequently to Muslim countries and describe clearly and humbly what the long-term U.S. agenda is and how it will be beneficial to Muslims.**

President Bush's "forward strategy of freedom" is meaningless for Muslims. What is often meant by freedom in the West translates as "justice" and "dignity" for Muslims. In fact, justice is one of the many meanings of the term Islam. As Bernard Lewis accurately explains, "in the Western world, we are accustomed to thinking of freedom and oppression, freedom and tyranny as opposite poles. In the traditional Islamic statement, it would be instead justice and oppression, and justice and tyranny, as opposite poles."<sup>4</sup> **The U.S. will not succeed in its democracy initiative in this region unless it adapts its diplomatic language to explain to Muslims that its policies pursue justice.**

The most pressing issue is the need to change the perception that American foreign policy is "unjust". Muslims perceive injustice in U.S. foreign policy first and foremost in Washington's approach to the Israeli and Palestinian question. With Yasser Arafat's passing, there is a unique window of opportunity for the U.S. to work out a two-state solution that will be seen as "just" by a majority of Muslims and Israelis. This issue is the single most important battlefield of the war of ideas. As long as this conflict continues to fester, groups like HT will attract followers, both because the average Muslim will continue to resent American support for Israel, and because Arab leaders will use this conflict as an excuse to delay reforms. (Other long-lasting conflicts with Muslim participants,



such as Kashmir, Chechnya, Nagorno-Karabakh and now Iraq, also must be resolved in a way perceived by Muslims as “just”.)

In the West, HT’s recruitment efforts benefit from discrimination against Muslims and from the unfulfilled expectations of Muslim migrants, who often see the functioning of their host societies as “unjust”. **European countries must do a better job of integrating their Muslims.**

**The United States, its G-8 allies and other wealthy countries ought to devote one percent of their GDPs to the task of improving the socio-economic condition of Muslims.** Such a visible effort would convincingly refute the message that the Western democratic capitalist system is just for the “haves”. These countries also need to come up with new ways to encourage economic development. One way to do this is to condition military cooperation on progress in the fight against corruption.

**The battle of ideas is primarily a theological civil war within the Muslim world, a war that the U.S. is ill equipped to fight.** It can, however, help moderates reveal the true nature of their extreme opponents. As a start, **HT’s self-created image of a “peaceful” organization needs to be destroyed;** Western journalists and human rights organizations need to immediately stop using this woefully inaccurate label. The U.S. can also help moderate Muslims by providing them with media outlets and publication and distribution possibilities to counteract the effects of HT’s and other extremist groups’ propaganda. There also has to be a new international strategy to combat the spread of extremist literature on the Internet. Every time HT issues a leaflet, it should be countered by a publication issued by a credible Islamic organization explaining how HT is taking a particular *ayat* or *hadith* out of context. These quick responses can deconstruct HT’s ideology while also offering a counter-ideology.

**The United States can help advance this counter-ideology by encouraging governments in Muslim countries to allow peaceful Muslim organizations to promote tolerance and interfaith dialogue. The U.S. can also encourage businesses in Muslim countries to fund activities that promote diversity, tolerance and civic education. Further, the U.S. can help Muslim countries to develop school curricula that emphasize critical thinking, local traditions of patriotism, ethics and those values of Islam that are compatible with democracy and secularism.**

Unlike during the Cold War, the U.S. cannot contain HT’s ideological spread through traditional diplomatic tools that focus on states. The major players in the over one billion-member Muslim *umma* are non-state actors. The U.S. needs to change how it relates to the Muslims; oppressive, illegitimate and corrupt governments can no longer be the right channels to reach the hearts and minds of the Muslim people, especially those who have raised the level of their

political consciousness. The necessity of dealing with Muslims as a “civil society” will lead to the formation of a new framework of international politics.

At the same time, there has to be a legitimate international forum at which moderate Muslim states can express their views. Under the Presidency of Malaysia and Secretary Generalship of Turkey, the Organization of the Islamic Conference can potentially fill this need. Additionally, **the United Nations should add a major Muslim country as a permanent member of the Security Council.** Many Muslims currently believe that they receive international attention only in the aftermath of terrorist bombings. If a Security Council seat is assigned to a country such as Indonesia or Turkey, this perception will change for the better.

This new war requires new skills. A **“basic training” course on Islamic culture, values and traditions should be required of all American officials interacting with Muslims.** Since HT members are well prepared for ideological warfare by their two years of training, U.S. diplomats, military officers and policymakers must be equipped with even better tools. In an environment in which suspicions of the U.S. long-term agenda *vis-à-vis* the Islamic world are greatly heightened, Americans need to take great care in handling any issue related to Islam. The U.S. approach need not be complicated; in everyday interaction, treating Muslims with dignity and respect will be a huge starting point towards undermining HT’s contention that Americans are arrogant and disdainful of the Islamic world. Even those Muslims living in abject poverty feel pride and dignity in their connection with what was once a great civilization. If these Muslims are approached in the wrong way, this pride can easily turn into hatred.

Senior American policymakers must realize that they are being drawn deeper into a war with Islam because of the increasing frequency of U.S. military attacks on mosques, shrines and other important Muslim symbols in Iraq. Even though it may make perfect tactical sense to go after insurgents hiding in religiously significant places, the U.S. will lose the ideological war if it continues these actions. Since, as had been made clear throughout this monograph, the United States is losing the battle of perceptions in the Muslim world, military operations in sites of religious significance to Muslims will be interpreted as continuing a war on Islam. To minimize this perception, the American leadership ought to weigh political considerations as well as tactical ones when making military decisions in Muslim countries.

**The West should not tolerate the further spread of HT’s intolerance.** HT has been able to spread hate-filled, anti-Semitic and anti-constitutional ideas thanks to Western “tolerance” of HT’s intolerance. HT is using the West’s own slogans and principles to weaken the West’s fundamental social structures. Western governments, educators and religious leaders need to combat HT’s hate-

filled ideology with the same sorts of social weapons they use to combat other, non-Islamic forms of intolerance.

**The West needs to support the educational outreach efforts of moderate Muslims.** Theologians and imams educated in moderate schools of Islamic thought, such as those in Turkey, Central Asia, Indonesia or Malaysia, offer a tolerant interpretation of Islam that has strong elements of Sufism and thus welcomes peaceful coexistence with other religions and cultures.

The current legal strictures against HT in the West are gravely inadequate. **New tools, such as legislation against hate crimes and hate propaganda, are needed.** Ultimately, Western countries should unite to ban HT altogether. The existing bans in Germany and elsewhere are insufficient; currently, HT performs “jurisdiction-shopping” to carry out its activities without serious fear of criminal prosecution. **If the West continues to let HT function, it will see further radicalization not only among Muslims in far-off countries, but also in the midst of Europe itself.**

The EU’s handling of Turkey’s candidacy will be an important test of Western policy. If the Turkish Muslim tradition that emphasizes a convergence of civilizations is accepted by the EU, then HT will lose in its argument that there is a clash of civilizations. If the EU decides to bring in Turkey as a member, the EU will demonstrate that the Islamic and Western civilizations are fully compatible. On the other hand, if the anti-Muslim sentiment in Europe continues to increase, and Turkish Muslims are lumped together in the European mind with radicals, then the ideological war will be truly lost.

### *Combating HT in Central Asia*

With its rich and tolerant Islamic traditions and its relatively pro-American population, Central Asia is possibly the best region to begin the battle for ideas in this existential struggle. It is also the primary target for HT. **In waging ideological war, the U.S. needs to highlight the importance of internal reform in the context of national security.** Central Asia’s moderates cannot win the fight against radicalism unless there is a change in the political and economic conditions that have created a ripe environment for the acceptance of radical ideas. Democratic and economic reforms are therefore essential for long-term stability, since people with no opportunity to participate in civic life or to practice their religion openly and freely will go underground. Ultimately, as Abduvakhitov notes, “if fifty years from today we win this battle, it will be mainly thanks to good governance taking place in the Muslim world.”<sup>5</sup>

**In the battle against HT in Central Asia, the West should focus primarily on improving socio-economic conditions, so that people can see the benefits of**

**democratic capitalism and become less tempted to oppose it.** It is in the economic realm that Western political and intellectual capital is best spent. Since HT rejects the democratic process, Western efforts to engage the organization are pointless. By so intently focusing on democracy, the West is wasting valuable political capital and losing credibility with Central Asian governments without addressing HT's fundamental arguments. The group has no desire to become part of something that it opposes and plans eventually to destroy.

Realistically, in the short term there will not be any significant political openings in the region. While Central Asian governments ideally should welcome the political participation of independent, secular parties for their own survivability, they are all very nervous about such participation following the Georgian and Ukrainian revolutions. Furthermore, these leaders feel more insulated from the need to open their political systems due to the strong backing all enjoy from Russia and China. Each country's government worries that when a formerly repressed political system is opened, it is the underground, clandestine groups that flourish. Unfortunately there is not a strong civil society in Central Asia now that could provide effective alternatives to Central Asia's current authoritarian leaderships. **It is therefore counterproductive for Westerners to try to weaken the current regimes at a time when HT may be on the verge of reaching its third stage of development: its version of jihad. Instead, a long-term and evolutionary strategy needs to be developed.**

This postponement of the political question certainly does not mean that the West ought to remain silent on human rights abuses, especially torture in prisons. However, the United States and the EU must avoid moral preaching to Central Asians. **Instead, the U.S. should gain popular support in Central Asia by making clear that it is in the rational self-interest of the region's governments to show zero tolerance towards human rights violations.** This would best be achieved in cooperation with other, more open Muslim countries that have already helped Central Asians understand that mass arrests and torture only strengthen HT members' convictions.

As stated in Chapter 4, prisons have become breeding grounds for HT ideology. Uzbekistan has now started to investigate and properly punish those law enforcement members found guilty of human rights abuses. However, these prosecutions are often conducted quietly and fail to register in the minds of Western observers.

Before lecturing Central Asian leaders, U.S. officials should take more time to learn about the true state of the situation in the region. In order to gain accurate knowledge, top-level personal relationships are necessary. Often, Central Asian leaders simply do not have personal relationships with their Western counterparts and are therefore unable to engage in constructive dialogue with them. A perfect example of the importance of such trust-based relations is Georgia, where President Mikheil Saakashvili and his team have long-term

friends and associates at the highest levels in Washington. Whenever Georgians are confused about signals coming from the U.S. government, they simply pick up the phone and ask them directly. Similarly, in cases of problematic developments in Georgia, senior U.S. government members can talk to their counterparts and resolve issues before they develop into crisis situations. There are no such relationships with the Central Asian leaders, who are far more easily influenced by outside powers or internal groups to take wrong-headed actions that end up isolating them from Western states and non-governmental organizations.

The U.S. and its allies should engage the Central Asian states on the highest levels in order to gain the best understanding of the incentives needed to ensure successful reforms. In the Turkish example, EU engagement was essential to the highly successful reform effort carried out by Ankara in recent years. The Central Asian states clearly need the benefits of a Western perspective. During the Cold War, the U.S. made the right decision to support Turkey as a frontline state in the battle against communism. Similarly, the U.S. must decide to assist these critical frontline states in the battle of ideas. This does not mean softening criticism of human rights and democracy problems; it does require, however, the U.S. to approach these issues effectively, i.e., through respectful diplomatic communications that offer a way forward rather than simply criticizing bad practices.

The West also needs to learn to differentiate between Islamic movements or schools that originate in the region from those that are organized and financed from abroad to create radicalism. The U.S. needs to understand that the Islamic missionaries like the Wahhabis and HT are not the same as the Jehovah's Witnesses or the Salvation Army; these radical Islamist missionaries do not seek religious freedom, but instead wish to abuse religion in support of a political agenda.

Assistance programs and overall policies can be designed to respect a country's culture, traditions and unique history. Otherwise, these countries too will believe that the U.S. intention is to destroy Islam; if the U.S. lets the radicals dominate the moderates, then the only realistic conclusion Muslims will draw is that the U.S. wants the image of Islam to further deteriorate so it can thus justify a holy war to eradicate it.

More importantly, as Central Asians become re-acquainted with their own cultures and traditional interpretations of Islam, they will be better able to combat narrow and violent interpretations of Islam imposed from abroad. Many Central Asians need support for the preservation and reconstruction of shrines and for the preservation and translation of ancient manuscripts. Some of the most beautiful poetry in all of the Islamic world, as well as crucial theological texts that form the foundations of classical Islam, still remain obscure in their Central Asian repositories due to the lack of funding to publish and disseminate

them. Once such material achieves greater circulation among Muslims, HT propaganda that relies upon distortion of the Quran and the *hadiths* will be less successful.

The U.S., as well as the West in general, must understand that democracies must reflect national values, history and traditions, or they will not fulfill the needs of the people. Central Asians are still in the midst of the difficult process of reconstructing their own national identities, which requires a move away both from Marxism-Leninism and from Islamism. They are trying to combine Western concepts of civil society and democracy with their traditional cultures; U.S. assistance programs need to be targeted to promote these efforts at achieving a synthesis. The people of the region have traditionally functioned in clan-based systems, which provide a social safety net in difficult times. If these people associate democracy with individual atomization, they will choose HT instead, since it emphasizes a sense of belonging.

Despite the repression of Sufism over the centuries in Central Asia and elsewhere, the tradition continues to wage a battle for Islam's soul. So far the extremists have the advantage of financial strength and of governments that circulate their writings and send their imams around the world. Today, if the West is to win the battle of ideas, Sufi traditions need to be revived and supported. While the U.S. should not directly be supporting the Sufis, it ought nevertheless to help enable Sufism to maintain the political space necessary for its revival; this can only be done by keeping extremists out of the region. A number of Central Asian countries, as well as other nations such as Morocco, Indonesia and Malaysia, are already thinking along these lines. Faghfoory states that Sufism is capable of "Islamizing" democracy and also of "democratizing" Islam. He also argues it can "contribute to political stability by bringing about understanding among competing political groups and factions and much-needed tolerance toward other religions, ideas and currents."<sup>6</sup> Sufism, like HT, can thus also act as a source of inspiration for other Islamic movements.

Central Asian countries need to resist radical Islam by appealing to this indigenous, traditional version of Islam. This resistance will only be successful if the level of education of the region's clergy is dramatically improved. Today a number of the Central Asian countries have established theological schools that are grappling effectively with the extremism problem, and producing experts and imams who can defend their own moderate traditions against the influx of radical ideas. At the same time, the number of graduates is not sufficient to replace all the existing imams. Also, many graduates do not later become imams since the positions are often unpaid. To make sure the trained clergy will engage in the battle of ideas and not be corrupted, Central Asian countries need to pay the salaries of imams and other religious authorities.

Central Asian countries must be assisted in the utilization of media in the waging of the battle of ideas. All available media resources need to be used to

disseminate positive values of Islam and to increase basic levels of religious understanding. Central Asian states should encourage constant interfaith and intercultural dialogue to dispel dangerous myths and to strengthen inter-religious harmony. The region has to have free and reliable media sources to which people can turn to receive objective information. In the absence of such sources, most people turn to HT or to the Russian mass media. To head off this trend, the United States must end consideration of a proposed measure to eliminate Voice of America's Uzbek-language service altogether, and should increase the presence of both Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in the region.

The U.S. needs to understand better the Turkish example of containing extremism. This will enable American policymakers to realize precisely what the Central Asians hope to achieve through their state religious institutions. The Turkish example proves that Islam, democracy and modernity are compatible and complementary, and disproves the teachings of HT. The Turkish example also shows that the teaching of the basic principles and ethics of Islam in secular schools is necessary to immunize people from extremist interpretations. In Central Asia, most people join HT to learn about Islam, given the lack of educational alternatives. Turkish experts can help their central Asian partners rekindle their indigenous culture, which may provide the most effective tool for preventing the import of radical Middle Eastern ideology.

Ultimately, when considering these recommendations in combating HT, U.S. policymakers must keep firmly in mind the existential and ideological nature of the struggle against this group. While it has not yet engaged in terrorist acts, Hizb ut-Tahrir has steadily increased its influence in every area of its operation. If the United States takes seriously its commitment to promote freedom in one of the most critical strategic regions, it must address the threat of HT. Without a successful effort to contain and neutralize this group, there will simply be no victory in the most important struggle of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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<sup>1</sup>It continues, "Every principle needs a vanguard to carry it forward and, while focusing its way into society, puts up with heavy tasks and enormous sacrifices. There is no ideology, neither earthly nor heavenly, that does not require such a vanguard that gives everything it possesses in order to achieve victory for this ideology. It carries the flag all along the sheer, endless and difficult path until it reaches its destination in the reality of life, since Allah has destined that it should make it and manifest itself. This vanguard constitutes Al-Qaeda al Sulbah for the expected society." Abdullah Azzam, "Al Qaidah al Sulbah", *Al Jihad*, 41 (April 1988): p. 46 (trans. Reuven Paz). Quoted in Rohan Gunaratna, "Inside al Qaeda", (New York: Berkley Press, 2003), pp. 4–5.

<sup>2</sup>Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?", *The National Interest*, 16 (1989).

<sup>3</sup>Shiv Malik, "For Allah and the caliphate", *New Statesman*, September 13, 2004.

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<sup>4</sup>Bernard Lewis, "Keynote Lunch Discussion", *Understanding Sufism and its Potential Role in U.S. Policy*, ed. Zeyno Baran (Washington, DC: The Nixon Center, 2004).

<sup>5</sup>Abdujabar Abduvakhitov, "Uzbekistan: Center of Confrontation Between Traditional and Extremist Islam in Central Asia", (presentation at Nixon Center conference, Washington, DC, July 16, 2003).

<sup>6</sup>Mohammad H. Faghfoory, "Sufism in Eurasia", in *Understanding Sufism*.