

Counterinsurgency, Counterterrorism, State-building and Security Cooperation in Central Asia[†]

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ABSTRACT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

² See for example, "The Andijan Massacre: One Year Later, Still No Justice," *Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper*, May 11 2006
<<http://hrw.org/backgrounder/eca/uzbekistan0506/>> (May 22 2006).

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

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

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

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

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

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

Structural Factors and Grievances in Central Asia

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

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

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

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

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

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

Poverty, Unemployment and Inequality. At the macro level, cross-nationally comparable data for Central Asia, especially on inequality and unemployment have often been poor and unreliable. Recently, however, the World Bank did a household survey to determine the extent of poverty and inequality in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.¹⁰ As revealed by the survey there is considerable diversity in Central Asia. Kazakhstan is considerably richer than its neighbors with a GDP per capita of around US\$6500 in 2000.¹¹ Turkmenistan is so oppressive and secretive that it was not even willing to participate in the survey. Tajikistan is the poorest of the former Soviet Republics with a GDP per capita of around US\$1000 while Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are not much richer with figures around US\$1600.

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

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

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

¹¹ All figures are given in power purchasing parity (PPP).

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 141

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.ii.

²⁰ Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index 2005, <www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2005> (April 17 2006).

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

Criminals have also been more aggressive in entering politics. For example, a reputed criminal boss, Ryspek Akmatbayev, won a special by-election with almost 80 percent of the vote in Kyrgyzstan on April 9 2006.²² A month later he was shot dead outside a mosque.²³ Connected with the heroin trade, he had been unable to take his seat because of charges brought against him for murder.

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

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

Resource Mobilization

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁶ *Ibid.*

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

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

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

³⁰ Raman, "Jihadi Terrorism in Central Asia: An Update".

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

Political Opportunity

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

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

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

For its part, the IMU has apparently tried to make political opportunity through terrorism and guerilla action but showed no follow-through. For example, on February 16, 1999, six car bombs exploded in Tashkent, one near where President Islam Karimov was supposed to preside over a Cabinet meeting. No group claimed responsibility but the evidence strongly suggests that this was the work of the IMU. Naumkin gives several versions of these events but concludes: “It is clear that IMU militants were involved and that many of them were cold-blooded killers who were closely linked to transnational terrorist networks.”³³ No

³¹ Cf., Khamidov, “Kyrgyzstan: Organized Opposition And Civil Unrest”.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ideology and Political Opportunity

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

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

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

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.115.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.118

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

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

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

Counterinsurgency, Counterterrorism, State-building and Geopolitics

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

State-building

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

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

³⁷ Raman, “Jihadi Terrorism in Central Asia: An Update”.

³⁸ Mateen Siddiqui, “The Doctrine Of Hizb Ut-Tahrir”.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Countering Structural Factors

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

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

Countering Resources

Both the IMU and the HT have been accused of securing resources from drug trafficking, and the HT also apparently generates considerable resources from its members abroad. Since the removal of the Taleban, there has been a considerable increase in the production of opium in Afghanistan⁵⁰ and about 25 percent of the heroin and opium trade take the northern route through Central Asia.⁵¹

⁴⁵Cf., Millennium Challenge Account: Indicator Descriptions
<www.mcc.gov/countries/selection/Extended_Descriptions_Selection_Criteria.pdf> (May 14 2006).

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

⁴⁷ Asian Development Bank, Annual Report 2005
<www.adb.org/Documents/Reports/Annual_Report/2005/default.asp> (May 14 2006).

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

⁴⁹ Kyrgyzstan is the only WTO member of the Central Asian states to date.

⁵⁰ UNODC, World Drug Report 2005 (New York: UN Publications, 2005).

⁵¹ UNODC, *Opium Economy of Afghanistan*.

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

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

Countering Political Opportunity, Ideology and Legitimacy

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

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

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

⁵³ International Crisis Group, "Uzbekistan: In for the Long Haul".

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.5.

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

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

But some observers believe that the choices of the group's leadership were not the only reasons that the group stood apart from the political process.⁵⁷ Rather they see a decline in interest in the organization. To be sure, the government has cracked down on the organization, but the political process in Kyrgyzstan, unlike in Uzbekistan, has offered people political alternatives to seek redress of their grievances. Moreover mainstream Muslims have managed to put religious issues on the political agenda. The HT said it would not support politicians unless they shared the HT's Islamist political goals.

With the decline in support for the HT, a lively debate has emerged over strategy and tactics. Some advocate a revolution-in-one-country approach in contrast to the global pursuit of the caliphate. In fact, at least two splinter groups espousing such beliefs have appeared in the Ferghana valley, Hizb-an-Nusra and Akromiya, the latter gaining notoriety as the group to which the businessmen belonged in the Andijan crisis. Other members of HT say they should give up their non-violent approach and adopt a more forceful strategy. Some have likened the dissension within the HT ranks to the divisions that appeared among early 20th century Marxists.⁵⁸ These controversies within the organization have shown no sign of abating.

For its part, the IMU has failed largely because of its strategic blunders, first by adopting a Salafist-jihadist ideology that does not

⁵⁵ Human Rights Watch, "Uzbekistan: Neighborhood Committees Violate Rights," September 23 2003 <<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2003/09/23/uzbeki6394.htm>> (May 23 2006).

⁵⁶ Alisher Khamidov and Alisher Saipov, "Islamic Radical Group Bides Time On The Sidelines Of Kyrgyz Republic's Revolution," *Eurasia Insight*, April 14 2005. <www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav041405.shtml> (April 29 2006).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

resonate with the Central Asian people, second by attempting to launch guerilla campaigns without securing a necessary base among the people in 1999-2000 and third by fighting alongside the Taleban in a losing effort in the Afghan war in 2001.

Thus one of the more effective counterinsurgency strategies against both the IMU and the HT would be to counter their ideology. In both cases supporting mainstream Islam in the region would have that effect, and that is indeed a strategy that both the Uzbek and Kyrgyz governments have followed in their own way. Moreover, even the limited open political process in Kyrgyzstan has apparently led to a decline in support for the HT and a splintering of the organization.⁵⁹

Security Cooperation Against Terrorism

The Central Asian countries are poor and their elites believe they lack the resources to deal with the threat posed by IMU and the HT. Thus they seek help from outside, from Russia through the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), from China through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and bilaterally from the United States. Because they fear losing their ability to act independently they prefer to play these outsiders off against each other rather than embracing any one too closely.

Even though they profess to fight terrorism, the two multilateral organizations have more to do with how their major founding members want to extend their influence in the region. The Russia-backed CSTO had a stunning reversal of its fortunes when Uzbekistan seemed ready to return to the fold in late 2005. The China backed SCO reached at least a rhetorical high when it called on the Americans to leave the region in July 2005.⁶⁰ China has also increasingly used the SCO to target its own dissidents, especially the Uyghurs.⁶¹

The Collective Security Treaty and its Organization

The Russian-backed Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) on paper seems to contribute a great deal to the regional fight against terrorism.⁶² It has an anti-terrorism center with a local branch in Bishkek

⁵⁹ Cf., Baran, *The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir: Deciphering and Combating Radical Islamist Ideology*, inter alia.

⁶⁰ Daniel Kimmage, "SCO: Shoring Up The Post-Soviet Status Quo," *Eurasia Insight*, September 7 2005 <www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/pp070905.shtml> (April 29 2006).

⁶¹ Gulnoza Saidazimova, "Central Asia: Uyghurs Hit By Autocratic States' Cooperation With Beijing," *RFE/RL*, April 28 2006. <www.rferl.org/features/features_Article.aspx?m=04&y=2006&id=D94D313A-BBDA-4BC2-A743-C1D8D6B0E56E> (May 1 2006).

⁶² J H Saat, "The Collective Security Treaty Organization," Conflict Studies Research Centre, February 2005.

that has developed a database of local terrorists and organizations, and the treaty itself guarantees support in the event of aggression.

However, the CSTO remains a hollow organization because its Central Asian members remain suspicious of Russian designs on the region. Russian proposals to strengthen the organization have met with Central Asian resistance.⁶³ And the CSTO failed to deliver on its one true opportunity to show its worth – the IMU incursions into Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and 2000.⁶⁴

Although the treaty was not invoked, the 1999-2000 incursions did spur the Collective Security Treaty states to take some tentative action. In May 2000, the security space was divided into three regions: the European, the Caucasus and the Central Asian. In October of that year, the group decided to stand up a collective security rapid response force for Central Asia. Meanwhile they also agreed to set up an anti-terrorism center. The following year the forces were augmented, at least on paper, by units from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization has its own Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) located in Tashkent. Despite protestations to the contrary, the function of RATS overlaps considerably with the CIS anti-terrorism center. The RATS has no firm concept about how to proceed against terrorism because its member states have not agreed on one.⁶⁵

Although the SCO is viewed as a vehicle for the Chinese, the Uzbeks have also used it to bully and embarrass their neighbors. The Uzbek head of RATS has reportedly used his position as a bully pulpit to lecture and intimidate his neighbors. He has called, not without some irony, Turkmenistan a closed society,⁶⁶ and he has accused the Kazakhs of being complicit in the Andijan events.⁶⁷

In addition, the Uzbeks used the SCO as a cover for the Americans to leave. At the June 2005 summit, the SCO issued a statement clearly directed against the Americans calling for the departure of U.S. forces as

⁶³ "Antiterrorism Center Remains Elusive Fortnight In Review," *Fortnight in Review-Jamestown Foundation* 6, 14 (July 7, 2000)

<www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=32&issue_id=2476&article_id=19723> (January 1 2006).

⁶⁴ Bakhrom Tursunov and Marina Pikulina, *Severe Lessons of Batken*, Conflict Research Centre, November 1999; Bakhrom Tursunov, "Extremism in Uzbekistan," Conflict Studies Research Centre, July 2002.

⁶⁵ "Efforts of Shanghai Organization's Tashkent-Based Regional Anti-Terror Structure Detailed," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, February 7 2005.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ "Kazakhstani Foreign Ministry Denies Accusation of Harboring Terrorists," *Interfax-Kazakhstan*, February 9 2005.

the full-scale operations against the Taleban were considered complete. To be sure, the Russians and Chinese also welcomed the exit of the Americans from the region, but the SCO provides sufficient weight so that all the countries in the region could speak in concert. Moreover the June 2005 statement showed a common sense that the real threat from local radical Islamists was largely eliminated and could be handled with the tools at hand.

Neither the CSTO nor the SCO do much to strengthen state institutions and thus cannot help the Central Asian countries to combat terrorism in the mid-to-long term. In the short term the sharing of lists of supposed terrorists appear to be honored haphazardly.

The United States and the War on Terror in Central Asia

After initially welcoming the arrival of the United States in its war against the Taleban in 2001, the countries in the region and Uzbekistan in particular became increasingly disenchanted with U.S. policy, especially efforts to support human rights and liberal democracy. After the so-called color revolutions of Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan these countries began to believe that U.S. policy undermined their own hold on power and exacerbated their domestic terrorism problem.

The war against the Taleban and the concomitant defeat of the IMU and Al-Qaeda by coalition forces in 2001 effectively changed the security map in Central Asia, at least for a while. The U.S. and its coalition partners concluded basing agreements with a number of Central Asian countries and began to pour money into the region. In particular the U.S. set up bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan from which to conduct operations into Afghanistan. Karimov had found a new friend to balance off against the Russians in his quest for regional hegemony. But U.S. interest began to decline when the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003 and the relationship with Karimov quickly soured.

Although U.S.-Uzbek relations were becoming increasingly difficult, matters were only brought to a head by the events at Andijan in May 2005, as the Americans had already begun to restrict aid in 2004 because of human rights violations. The Uzbeks, always prickly, bristled at the accusations and thought this was a poor way for the Americans to treat a strategic partner. Both sides began to back away from the relationship, in large part because the original *raison d'être*, the removal of the Taleban had been met. For the Uzbeks, this meant the end of the IMU. Central Asia (like the Balkans) had always been a strategic backwater for the Americans and once the problem of the moment was solved they could move onto other things. They had done this in the late 1980s and they were doing it again in 2003 as they invaded Iraq. The Central Asians and the Uzbeks in particular never fully realized just how unimportant strategically they were.

So in June 2005, the Uzbeks told the Americans they had to leave, especially after the Americans airlifted several hundred refugees from the Andijan events out of Kyrgyzstan.

Meanwhile the Uzbeks found new friends in the Russians and signed a bilateral defense pact in November 2005. The Russians continue to pressure the Uzbeks to rejoin the Collective Security Treaty Organization but so far the Uzbeks have resisted. Many view this shift as a great coup for the Russians, but instead it should be viewed as a great coup for the Chinese. Absent the Americans, the Chinese have gained greater prominence in Central Asian affairs and thus in Uzbek eyes can now provide the counterweight to the Russians that the Americans provided temporarily.

At the same time even Kyrgyzstan has felt sufficiently comfortable to move closer to the Russians by demanding that the American and coalition forces pay more for their base at Ganci.⁶⁸

Conclusions and Observations

Currently, radical Islam has lost most of its strength in Central Asia and is not showing any real signs of recovery. The critical event for the IMU was its defeat and decimation by coalition forces during the Afghan campaign in 2001. The Taleban can no longer provide sanctuary for the IMU within Afghanistan and outside funding from sources such as Al-Qaeda is now being drawn into the Iraqi conflict. Moreover, the United Tajik Opposition can no longer provide overt support for the movement. In any case the IMU never showed any talent for political organization, even in those areas where the people might show them sympathy. In addition, their jihadi-Salafist brand of Islam runs counter to mainstream trends in the region.

For its part, Hizb-ut-Tahrir had a grand opportunity with the turmoil accompanying the overthrow of Akayev during the so-called "Tulip Revolution" in March 2005 and did very little. Interest in the HT had leveled off in any case; even the limited burgeoning civil society in Kyrgyzstan provides real alternatives to this movement. The HT is now beset with internal divisions over strategy and tactics and is spawning splinter movements, among them one associated with the group linked to the Andijan events of May 2005.

Added to the organizational and political blunders made by the two main radical Islamist movements is the apparent decline in poverty in the region over the last several years. To be sure, this decline is related to the recent increases in commodity prices of petrochemicals, gold and cotton, which could easily be reversed. And in some countries, such as

⁶⁸ "Kyrgyz President Reiterates Demand for Higher Rent for U.S. Air Base," *Kabar News Agency*, May 19 2006.

Turkmenistan, none of the economic growth is trickling down to the people and inequality continues to increase. However, economic growth, marginally effective redistributive policies, and engaging mainstream Islam can go a long way in ameliorating perceptions of social injustice.

Uzbekistan has launched a two-prong approach to deal with radical Islam – brutal repression and the mahallas. These policies seem to be working at least in the short term, especially if the Andijan events are explained in terms of local clan politics. Of course in the mid to long run Uzbek governmental policies to continue the Islamification of Uzbek society (as opposed to the secularization of it) will lead to the likely downfall of the current government or its successor and the rise of an another Islamist state in the region.

Against this backdrop, security cooperation against terrorism has played only a marginal role. The two main multilateral entities associated with counterterrorism in the region, the Collective Security Treaty Organization with its regional anti-terrorism center in Bishkek, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization with its Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure in Tashkent are viewed by countries in the region as vehicles for assertion of regional hegemony by their main sponsors, Russia and China. Moreover these organizations have done very little beyond exchanging lists of names of suspected terrorists (read: also political opponents of the regime), holding conferences and conducting the occasional exercise.

Prospects for security cooperation against terrorism in Central Asia remain poor in any case. The countries in the region play Russia off against China by agreeing to two overlapping security organizations and not giving either one any teeth. The U.S. was welcomed for its role in ousting the Taleban but quickly became a difficult partner with its demands for democracy and human rights. Moreover, it became expendable as a counterweight to the Russians once the Chinese became more active in the region through the SCO. For their part, relations among the countries in the region remain tense, with Uzbekistan in particular being perceived as and often playing the role of regional bully.

Most of the proposals suggested by NGOs for countering radical Islam in Central Asia seem naïve and potentially counterproductive. Increasing opportunities for civil society and democracy will not succeed unless the state is strengthened to protect local NGOs. So far the local elites have shown little or no real interest in building greater state capacity. Moreover without the active cooperation of Russia and China in building state capacity in Central Asia, any efforts to improve the situation there are likely to fail. What needs to be done in the region is clear; what is lacking is any real interest on the part of the local elites and those in neighboring countries to build strong state institutions to counter insurgency and terrorism. The U.S. Millennium Challenge

Account looks like an innovative program to provide incentives for local elites to build state capacity. Unfortunately, no Central Asia country has yet become eligible, although Kyrgyzstan may qualify soon.

Burke Chair reports on Terrorism and Counterinsurgency provide up-to-date analyses on the global threat posed by militants, non-state actors, and terrorist groups, and the mix of asymmetric warfare and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Issues covered in these reports include but are not limited to, the changing nature of warfare; alternative counterterrorism strategies; the overall net assessment of developments in the Global War on Terrorism; asymmetric warfare; biological counterterrorism; international cooperation in counterterrorism; U.S. homeland defense; and the proliferation