

# **The Long War in Central Asia: Hizb-ut-Tahrir's Caliphate**

**A Monograph  
by  
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## Abstract

The Long War in Central Asia: Hizb-ut-Tahrir's Caliphate, by MAJ Daniel Ruder, United States Army, 54 pages. (Word Count 13,274)

One of the effects from the September 11th terrorist attacks was an intensified United States strategic partnership with the Central Asian states. Geographically, Central Asia is critical to the GWOT. In support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in neighboring Afghanistan, many of the Central Asian states provided over-flight access, including basing rights at Kyrgyzstan's Manas Air Base and Uzbekistan's Karshi-Khanabad (K2) air base. Partnership with Central Asian states afforded the United States the strategic and operational freedom of action to win in Afghanistan.

After more than four years of an intensified U.S.-Central Asian partnership, regional stability in Central Asia is still threatened by Islamic extremism. Central Asian leaders have argued against liberal reforms in fear of Islamic extremist threats to foment more rebellions. Once such threat is the Hizb-ut-Tahrir, a transnational, radical Islamist political movement that aims to overthrow a Central Asian government and restore the Islamic Caliphate. The problem is that Hizb-ut-Tahrir is gaining popularity in Central Asia.

The monograph's thesis is that the Central Asia region is at risk of devolving into a major front in the GWOT in the long-term if the United States fails to use its influence to counter the Islamic extremist threat presented by Hizb-ut-Tahrir (Islamic Party of Liberation). The question this monograph answered was: can the Hizb-ut-Tahrir's ideology form the basis for a destabilizing collective movement in Central Asia? The answer was yes.

To counter the growing threat from Hizb-ut-Tahrir, the following U.S. and Central Asian government responses were proposed:

1. Diminish Hizb-ut-Tahrir's political space by opening up the political process.
2. Win the strategic communication battle. Employ media resources to disseminate positive values of religious understanding. The United States should incorporate Central Asia into public diplomacy statements on political and socio-economic reform in the Muslim world.
3. Declare the Hizb-ut-Tahrir as an anti-constitutional political party and use political discourse and legal recourse to counter the regional influence of the party.
4. The United States should consider its strategy to transform its military footprint in Central Asia in the broader context of a counter-ideological campaign as opposed only to the level of security achieved in Afghanistan.
5. Diminish the effectiveness of Hizb-ut-Tahrir's functional space on the Internet by expanding intelligence collection efforts.

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## Introduction

When the shooting started, the first rows fell. I lay on the ground for two hours, fearing to move. From time to time, the soldiers continued to shoot when someone raised their head. When it got dark, I was wounded in my arm and started crawling away. I got to the construction college and hid there for the night [and was unconscious much of the time].

Around 5:00 a.m., five KAMAZ trucks arrived and a bus with soldiers. The soldiers would ask the wounded, “Where are the rest of you?” When they would not respond, they would shoot them dead and load them into the trucks. There were no ambulances there. ...Soldiers were cleaning the [area of] bodies for two hours, but they left about fifteen bodies on the spot.<sup>1</sup>

On 13 May 2005, Uzbek security forces killed hundreds of unarmed protestors in the Uzbek city of Andijan. The indiscriminate nature of the killing and disproportionate use of force was described as a massacre by Human Rights Watch.<sup>2</sup> The Uzbek government denied responsibility for the killings and claimed the attackers were “Islamic extremists.” The government tried to hide the truth about the massacre by sealing off the city from international inquiries and intimidated its citizens not to talk with outside investigators. Though the actual death toll was difficult to establish, perhaps in the hundreds, the Uzbek security forces were undeniably responsible for the massacre.<sup>3</sup>

The protest began three months before as a peaceful demonstration over the trials of twenty-three businessmen indicted for “religious fundamentalism” and involvement in the Hizb-ut-Tahrir.<sup>4</sup> The Hizb-ut-Tahrir (Islamic Party of Liberation) is an international Islamic organization that advocates the non-violent overthrow of Uzbekistan and other Central Asian

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<sup>1</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with “Rustam R.” (not his real name), as quoted in “Bullets Were Falling Like Rain,” *The Andijan Massacre, May 13, 2005*, Human Rights Watch, Vol. 17 No. 5(D), June 2005, 35.

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

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> International Crisis Group, “Uzbekistan: The Andijan Uprising”, *ICG Asia Briefing*, No. 38, May 25, 2005, 1.

governments to establish an Islamic caliphate.<sup>5</sup> The businessmen were widely perceived as falsely accused and the demonstration gradually turned into a massive 3,000 person protest.<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunately, the protest turned violent the on 12 May when an armed group broke into an Andijan prison and freed the 23 businessmen and nearly 500 other prisoners. By early the next morning, the attackers seized the provincial government building and thousands of others gathered in Babor city square. The crowd grew into the thousands in a massive expression of dissatisfaction with the burgeoning poverty, unemployment, and government repression.<sup>7</sup> The protesters also demanded the resignation of Uzbek President Islam Karimov and his government.<sup>8</sup> However, the government was more interested in suppressing the uprising than conducting negotiations.

Expecting to see Uzbek President Islam Karimov arrive to negotiate with the protesters personally, some Andijan citizens became excited when a helicopter appeared overhead. But it wasn't the presidential helicopter they had hoped for. Instead, Uzbek security forces had rolled into the town in armored personnel carriers and assaulted into the provincial building. The armored vehicles also secured Babor Square while security forces formed a perimeter around the demonstrators. According to witness accounts, Uzbek security forces reportedly fired indiscriminately into the crowd, killing as many as 750 unarmed civilians including children; even those waving a white flag in surrender. Reportedly, security forces walked through the wounded and finished them off with shots to the head.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org>, or <http://hizb.org.uk/>.

<sup>6</sup> ICG, Andijan Uprising, 3.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 1-6. See also Human Rights Watch, Andijan Massacre, 16.

<sup>8</sup> CNN, "Thousands of Uzbeks fleeing," CNN World News, 14 May 2005, [article on-line]; available from <http://www.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/asiapcf/05/14/uzbekistan/index.html>; accessed 11 November 2005.

<sup>9</sup> ICG, Andijan Uprising, 3, and RFE/RL, "Witness at Andijon Trial Says Troops Shot Civilians," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, October 2005 [article on-line], available from <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/10/1DEBF7A6-72AA-4B41-9E36-DC70E55E5A34.html>; Internet; accessed 25 November 2005. If the accounts of the number of people killed at Andijan are accurate, this was the greatest loss of life at the hands of a communist or post-communist state since the Tiananmen Square

Soon after suppressing the Andijan uprising, President Karimov pronounced that his security forces acted to end a revolt sponsored by Islamist extremists. President Karimov blamed the violence on Islamic extremists, particularly the Hizb-ut-Tahrir, a claim also supported by Russian President Vladimir Putin.<sup>10</sup> In a press conference, President Karimov stated that the Islamic extremists were trying to repeat the political upheaval that occurred in Kyrgyzstan in March 2005 that led to the expulsion of its president. President Karimov concluded that the main intention of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir extremists was to establish a Muslim caliphate in Uzbekistan.<sup>11</sup> However, a spokesman for the Hizb-ut-Tahrir blamed President Karimov and his oppressive regime for the uprising because of Uzbekistan's record of torture and jailing thousands of innocent victims. "We want to undermine and overthrow the regime of Islam Karimov by peaceful means," the Hizb-ut-Tahrir spokesman stated.<sup>12</sup>

The International Crisis Group concluded that Uzbekistan relations with the United States are now the worse than they have been since Uzbekistan gained independence in 1991.<sup>13</sup> In July 2005, Uzbekistan evicted U.S. forces from the Karshi-Khanabad (K2) air base in apparent reprisal for the U.S. evacuation of 439 Uzbek refugees from Kyrgyzstan to Romania and over the U.S. condemnation of human rights violations at Andijan.<sup>14</sup>

The purported human rights violations at Andijan also represented the most recent catalyst further wedging apart the Uzbek government from the hearts and minds of its people.

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massacre in China in 1989. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) concluded that Uzbek military and security forces "committed grave human rights violations in Andijan - mostly of the right to life." For further review of the Andijan uprising and the status of current Uzbek trials of the incident see Louise Arbour, "UN Human Rights Official Cautions Uzbek Government on Latest Trials," *UN Daily News*, 23 December 2005, [article on-line], available from <http://www.un.org/news>; Internet, accessed 8 January 2006.

<sup>10</sup> President of Russia, "Beginning of a Meeting with Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov," *Diplomacy and External Affairs*, 28 June 2005, [article on-line]; available from [http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2005/06/28/1824\\_type82914\\_90517.shtml](http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2005/06/28/1824_type82914_90517.shtml); accessed 16 November 2005.

<sup>11</sup> Human Rights Watch, *Andijan Massacre*, 37.

<sup>12</sup> CNN, *Thousands of Uzbeks fleeing*.

<sup>13</sup> ICG, *Andijan Uprising*, 10.

<sup>14</sup> Alexander Cooley, "Base Politics," *Foreign Affairs*, November / December 2005, Volume 84 No. 6, 1.

Regrettably, disaffected civil societies exist at varying degrees in all Central Asian states, and the status quo of authoritarian style repression may all but assure the popularization of Islamic extremism. Islamic extremist groups, such as the Hizb-ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation), represent for many the only coherently organized group to turn to in absence of legitimate political opposition. Thus, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Islamic extremism is the one element of civil society in Central Asia that has thrived. The status quo of authoritarian style government response methods will probably ensure that Islamic extremism continues to flourish, which poses a threat to U.S. national interests in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

### **U.S. Strategic Interests in Central Asia**

The great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign nations, is, in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible. ...It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world...

The Farewell Address of U.S. President George Washington  
(September 17, 1796)

The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world... So it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.

Second Inaugural Address of U.S. President George W. Bush  
(January 20, 2005)

Arguably, the U.S. disengagement from Afghanistan in the 1980's was a hard learned lesson; that is, the United States must engage regional governments and its people to promote enduring stability and prevent a security vacuum that allows extremism to flourish. This lesson has contemporary applicability to the effects from the September 11th terrorist attacks, which led to an intensified United States strategic partnership with the Central Asian states.<sup>15</sup> Many of the

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<sup>15</sup> The Central Asian states are Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

Central Asian states, long regarded as being in Russia's "sphere of influence," partnered in the U.S.-led Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). Central Asian states also acquiesced to U.S. military-operational priorities to combat Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. Geographically, Central Asia is critical to the GWOT. In support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in neighboring Afghanistan, many of the Central Asian states provided over-flight access, including basing rights at Ganci Air Base in Manas, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan's Karshi-Khanabad (K2) air base. Partnership with Central Asian states afforded the United States the strategic and operational freedom of action to win in Afghanistan.

The United States subsequently took a regional approach to address the daunting ideological and strategic sources of instability in Central Asia. To make the region less vulnerable to the burgeoning threats of Islamic extremism and terrorism the United States provided funding and training to improve regional military capabilities.<sup>16</sup> The rationale for continued U.S. military presence in Central Asia is based on the fact that Al Qaeda is not fully neutralized. The 9/11 Commission Report concluded that countering terrorism is the top U.S. national security priority and that the 9/11 terrorist acts taught America an important lesson. That is, terrorist acts against U.S. interests abroad should be regarded as terrorism against America at home.<sup>17</sup> As long as Al Qaeda and its leadership remain at large, U.S. interests at home and

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<sup>16</sup> Military capabilities included developing counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics capabilities, improving border security and enhancing military professionalism, fostering security sector reform, encouraging regional cooperation, and constructive involvement in U.S. efforts to stabilize Afghanistan. See General John Abizaid, United States Army, "Statement Before the Senate Armed Services Committee on the 2005 Posture of the United States Central Command," 1 March 2005, [article on-line] available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/dodgc/olc/docs/test05-03-03Abizaid.doc>; Internet; accessed 10 November 2005. Also A. Elizabeth Jones, "U.S. Foreign Assistance Programs," *Testimony Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Oversight of Foreign Assistance Programs*, 2 March 2004, [article on-line] available from <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/30059.htm>; Internet; accessed 10 November 2005.

<sup>17</sup> The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, July 2004, Section 12, 362.

abroad remain threatened and a U.S. military presence in Central Asia will remain crucial.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, the fact that Afghanistan is land-locked and surrounded by volatile countries such as Pakistan and Iran, the “South Asian tinderbox,” underscores the importance of Central Asia as an alternative military basing area for operations in Afghanistan.<sup>19</sup>

The strategic rationale for U.S. interests in Central Asia rest on political and economic reform, promoting democracy, and respect for human rights as bulwarks against regional instability.<sup>20</sup> In October 2005, the U.S. Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs, Daniel Fried, stated that the U.S. has three sets of strategic interests in Central Asia: security, energy and economic cooperation, and internal reform. Underpinning all U.S. cooperation with Central Asian countries, however, is the “common interest in fighting terrorism and in securing a stable and democratic future for Afghanistan.”<sup>21</sup>

The long-term presence of a U.S. military contingent in Central Asia, either supporting operations in Afghanistan or acting in a support of other elements of U.S. national power, is not without risk. U.S. strategic cooperation and military-operational interests in Central Asia could in the long-term foster a perception that the United States is supportive of the region’s authoritarian leaders. The U.S. relationship with Uzbekistan from 2001 to 2005, was widely watch in the

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<sup>18</sup> Congress, House, Committee on International Relations, *Central Asia: Terrorism, Religious Extremism, and Regional Stability*, 108th Cong., 1st sess., 29 October 2003, 24. Testimony by Ariel Cohen, Research Fellow at the Heritage Foundation.

<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the West’s realization that state failure in Central Asia would significantly hinder efforts to defeat al Qaeda-style terrorist networks is another reason Central Asia is important to Western interests. Eugene Rumer, a senior fellow at the Institute for National Strategic Studies, argued that U.S. interests in Central Asia since 11 September 2001 fall along lines of military basing and political and economic reform. He also put forward that U.S. interests in Central Asia are challenged by external interests from Russia, China, and Iran and that geopolitics loom large in the quest for great power influence over the region. See Eugene Rumer, “Flashman’s Revenge: Central Asia after September 11,” *National Defense University, Strategic Forum No. 195*, December 2002, [article on-line]; available at <http://www.ndu.edu/inss/strforum/SF195/sf195.htm>; accessed 27 August 2005.

<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth Wishnick, “Growing U.S. Security Interests in Central Asia,” *Strategic Studies Institute*, October 2002, 1.

<sup>21</sup> See Daniel Fried, “A Strategy for Central Asia,” *Statement Before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia of the House International Relations Committee*, October 2005, [article on-line] available from <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/55766.htm>; Internet; accessed 10 November 2005.

media as a test case whether the United States would continue to overlook Uzbekistan's human rights violations record and stagnant approach to liberal reform in favor of maintaining military basing rights at K2.<sup>22</sup>

Alexander Cooley, writing for *Foreign Affairs*, posed a reminder that promoting democracy while maintaining U.S. military bases in non-democratic countries is an enduring problem. Perceived U.S. backing of Central Asia's authoritarian governments can breed the extremism that U.S. bases were established to indirectly stem.<sup>23</sup> U.S. basing agreements in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan also offered propaganda opportunities for extremist groups attempting to delegitimize U.S. presence and the host nation government. Transnational Islamic movements, such as the Hizb-ut-Tahrir, continue to exploit U.S. military presence in Central Asia through anti-American propaganda, which feeds the current of conflict spreading across Central Asia today.<sup>24</sup>

Unfortunately, even after more than four years of an enhanced U.S.-Central Asian partnership, regional stability in Central Asia is still threatened by Islamic extremism. The Andijan uprising demonstrated that the region could quickly deteriorate into a state of even greater unrest. Kyrgyzstan's political situation also remains in flux, as the new government attempts to regain control after the March 2005 "Tulip Revolution" ousted President Askar Akaev. Central Asia's tyrannical leaders have argued against liberal reforms on claims that a more open political process will empower Islamic extremist opposition groups and foment more

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<sup>22</sup> Robin Wright and Ann Scott Tyson, "U.S. Evicted From Air Base In Uzbekistan," *Washington Post*, A01, 30 July 2005.

<sup>23</sup> Alexander Cooley, "Base Politics," *Foreign Affairs*, November / December 2005, Volume 84 No. 6, 1.

<sup>24</sup> See [www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org](http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org); [www.hizb.org.uk](http://www.hizb.org.uk); [www.khilafah.com](http://www.khilafah.com). A case in point where anti-American propaganda influenced American basing policies in a foreign country is the Saudi Arabia example. The 1996 terrorist attack on the Khobar Towers, where U.S. troops were housed, emboldened Islamic extremists to call for the complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from the Arabian Peninsula. The attack raised security concerns for Washington but also suggested to the Saudi government that the U.S. military presence was a domestic political threat. Ultimately, in 2003, Washington was compelled to withdraw 5,000 troops from Saudi Arabia.

rebellions. Instead, Central Asian governments rely on force to counter Islamic extremism and to stifle political dissent, which not only fails to address the problem, but actually perpetuates it.<sup>25</sup> Thus, Islamic extremism in Central Asia is receiving a swelling number of adherents who attempt to manipulate religion for an extremist political agenda.<sup>26</sup>

If the status quo is maintained, Islamic extremism may develop into a serious threat to the region and beyond. A political and social melt-down in Central Asia would seriously threaten U.S. strategic interests, particularly the security and stability of Afghanistan. Conditions are being set for greater Islamic extremism in Central Asia, which should signal a degree of caution when assessing the evolving role it plays.

### **The Hizb-ut-Tahrir Problem**

It is evident that Jihad is a material war against Kuffar [unbelievers] in order to establish the rule of Islam. Its cause is to fight the Kuffar who have refused Islam after it has been presented to them in a manner that draws attention, i.e. Islam should be offered in a state that attracts attention, and then Jihad will take place. This is what any ideology that is believed in by any nation dictates upon her. She prepares the material power and attains a strong military spirit in addition to this. Based on this material power she begins political battles and diplomatic manoeuvres, thus creating a situation through which the Da'wah [invitation] is conveyed and the political status of the state is promoted.

Hizb-ut-Tahrir, *A Warm Call from Hizb ut Tahrir to the Muslims*.<sup>27</sup>

The monograph's thesis is that the Central Asia region is at risk of devolving into a major front in the GWOT in the long-term if the United States fails to use its influence to counter the Islamic extremist threat presented by Hizb-ut-Tahrir (Islamic Party of Liberation). Faced with a

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<sup>25</sup> See Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, "A U.S. role in Central Asia," Op-Ed, *The Washington Times*, 31 March 2005, [article on-line]; available at <http://www.washingtontimes.com/op-ed/20050330-102208-7699r.htm>; accessed 15 August 2005. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen argued that U.S. assistance to Central Asia must be grounded on free-market and democratic reform; only then can respect for human rights and the rule of law become inspired and address the root factors of extremism in the region.

<sup>26</sup> Congress, House, Committee on International Relations, *Central Asia: Terrorism, Religious Extremism, and Regional Stability*, 108th Cong., 1st sess., 29 October 2003, 24. Testimony by Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a Representative in Congress from the State of Florida.

<sup>27</sup> Hizb-ut-Tahrir, "A Warm Call from Hizb ut Tahrir to the Muslims," *Al-Khilafah Publications*, 13 October 1962, 13-14, [article on-line]; available at <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/english/books/warmcall/warmcall.pdf>; accessed 8 January 2006.

failing political and economic system and lack of legitimate channels to voice dissent, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir is gaining popularity among the repressed Central Asian society. The problem is that Hizb-ut-Tahrir's ideology is incompatible with democratic values and Western ideas of civil society and is building critical mass in Central Asia, which may allow them to take over a regional government.<sup>28</sup> Hizb-ut-Tahrir's ideological platform is in every respect anti-American. By fomenting violent anti-American attitudes and attempting to overthrow existing regimes in Central Asia, Hizb-ut-Tahrir poses a threat to U.S. interests in Central Asia and elsewhere.<sup>29</sup>

In testimony to Congress, Ariel Cohen of the Heritage Foundation stressed that the Hizb-ut-Tahrir is a clandestine global radical Islamist political organization operating in 40 countries with the goal of Jihad against America and replacing existing political regimes with a Caliphate (Islamic theocratic state) based on the Sharia (religious Islamic law).<sup>30</sup> From the United States' perspective, the growing popularity of Hizb-ut-Tahrir's ideology in Central Asia should not be overemphasized as an impending destabilizing movement that threatens U.S. national interests.

The Hizb-ut-Tahrir's ideology provides a mechanism for mobilizing collective action and is seizing the opportunity to promise the organization of a fair society under an Islamic caliphate. The Hizb-ut-Tahrir believes in winning over mass support, "the hearts and minds," of Central Asian citizens, military members, and even government figures. When a secular government is sufficiently weakened, according to its doctrine, Hizb-ut-Tahrir will have the popular support to assume control establish a caliphate. This message likely resonates with Central Asian leaders, especially when taken in context with the successful overthrow of Kyrgyzstan's President Akaev in March 2005. The repressed authoritarian climate in Central Asia, combined with Hizb-ut-Tahrir's growing popularity, could all but assure the potential for another Andijan-style incident.

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<sup>28</sup> C.J. Chivers, "A Call for Islamic Revolt Spreads in Central Asia," *New York Times*, 9 October 2005, Sec 1, 1.

<sup>29</sup> Cohen Testimony, "Central Asia," 25.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

The Hizb-ut-Tahrir represents a growing medium to long-term threat to U.S. national interests.<sup>31</sup> If its extremist ideology goes unchecked, it could trigger a widespread insurrection across Central Asia, or cause a government collapse thus creating a foothold for the Hizb-ut-Tahrir to consolidate and control the state. In this scenario, as Eugene Rumer of the Institute for National Strategic Studies conceived, regional military forces could indeed become the last pillar of stability in a country, a potential trigger point for its intervention in domestic politics.<sup>32</sup> In the short-term, however, Hizb-ut-Tahrir's radical rhetoric may at least encourage the rise of other radical groups opposing U.S. interests in Central Asia and elsewhere.

The question this monograph addresses is: can the Hizb-ut-Tahrir's ideology form the basis for a destabilizing collective movement in Central Asia? The conclusion was yes. The Hizb-ut-Tahrir's stated goal is the non-violent overthrow of an existing Central Asian country and the establishment of a caliphate based on Sharia law. If one views the Hizb-ut-Tahrir ideology from the perspective of disenfranchised Central Asians, Hizb-ut-Tahrir provides a medium for alleviating social, political and economic grievances. In a region where legitimate channels for dissent against the government are mostly nonexistent, Hizb-ut-Tahrir's ideology offers Central Asians an opportunity for change. Hizb-ut-Tahrir is expanding its baseline of adherents by exploiting societal ills and creating conditions to pull together resources to collectively mobilize a social revolution. A collective societal movement, or social revolution, that led to a Hizb-ut-Tahrir controlled government in Central Asia could subsequently mobilize a larger regional extremist movement, a possibility the United States should do everything to avoid.

## **Assumptions**

The assertion in this monograph that the Hizb-ut-Tahrir is capable of arousing a popular following as an Islamic extremist opposition party made certain implicit assumptions about the

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 43.

<sup>32</sup> Rumer, "Flashman's Revenge."

political trends in Central Asia. The assertion assumed a correlation between the tactics of Central Asian states to stifle political opposition, the disparity of economic wealth and vast poverty, and a disaffected populace, to the attractiveness of Hizb-ut-Tahrir as a coherent alternative to government political opposition parties. The resulting theory is that repressive authoritarian governance not only encourages opposition but also Islamic extremist opposition. Another assumption made is that Hizb-ut-Tahrir, as an Islamic extremist movement, is a serious threat to the established governments in Central Asia and a Hizb-ut-Tahrir inspired social revolution threatens U.S. interests in the region. Professor Stephen Blank of the Strategic Studies Institute emphasized that such analysis of Central Asia and the popularity of “Islamist movements” in the region often make the preceding assumptions. However, as he argued, “there is simply no empirical proof one way or the other that can validate these assumptions for all five Central Asian governments...”<sup>33</sup>

Indeed, many scholars, pundits, and policy makers who attempt to link Central Asia’s repressive authoritarianism and its stimulation of Islamic opposition movements do so through axioms. For example, tyrannical authoritarian governance that stifles political opposition inherently creates a disaffected society. In turn, society will inevitably seek recourse through an alternative opposition party whose message speaks coherently to the populace. Hence, Islamic extremist opposition movements, like the Hizb-ut-Tahrir, are left by default the only alternative regardless of its legal status.

Such axioms, propositions, or hypotheses usually approach the connection between authoritarianism and the rise in Hizb-ut-Tahrir adherence through logical deduction, assuming that truths are so self-evident that no further reasoning is necessary to make the connection plainer. The effect of this type of theoretical approach is usually, however, associated to one’s

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<sup>33</sup> Congress, House, Committee on International Relations, *Radical Islamic Challenges in Central Asia*, 108th Cong., 1st sess., 29 October 2003, 24. Testimony by Professor Stephen Blank, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1-2.

world view, or their view of reality. A deduction such as the beforehand might fit the perspective of a Western pundit who values pluralism and democracy, whereas a Central Asian who has mostly known Communist rule may view the rise in the Hizb-ut-Tahrir through a different lens or perspective. To account for varying world views and Professor Blank's acknowledgement that empirical proof alone does not exist to validate the necessary beforehand assumptions, this monograph's methodology employed a framework that combined both empirical examples and analytical propositions within the context of Hizb-ut-Tahrir's ideological appeal.

## **Methodology and Structure**

The framework used to guide analysis of Kyrgyzstan's risk to the growing influence of Hizb-ut-Tahrir, was adopted from the books *States, Ideologies, & Social Revolutions*, by Misagh Parsa<sup>34</sup> and *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, by Quintan Wiktorowicz.<sup>35</sup> The framework follows three theories of social movement: the structural theory, resource mobilization theory, and political opportunity theory. This monograph argued that the Hizb-ut-Tahrir is best described as a revolutionary social movement given its professed ideology and the social context in which it thrives. This monograph concluded that the party's ideology can be understood as a powerful foundation for a collective societal mobilization and suggested a government strategy from the U.S. and Central Asian perspectives to win the "war of ideas" against the Hizb-ut-Tahrir.

The following section of this monograph continued with a description of historical Islam in Central Asia and the emergence of Hizb-ut-Tahrir. Kyrgyzstan is the subject country of subsequent analysis because it is the only Central Asian country where the United States maintains a major military base. Therefore, a destabilizing social movement in Kyrgyzstan, it is

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<sup>34</sup> Misagh Parsa, *States, Ideologies, & Social Revolution*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

<sup>35</sup> Quintan Wiktorowicz, "*Islamic Activism, A Social Movement Approach*," Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004.

argued, would have the most immediate and direct impact on U.S. interests, particularly U.S. military-operational priorities. Subsequent to the fall-out in Uzbek-U.S. relations, the United States has essentially all of its “eggs” in one Central Asian basket, which has arguably increased the risk to U.S. strategic and operational readiness and freedom of action in the GWOT.

## Definitions

U.S. agencies are continually refining their respective definitions of Islamic extremism as they acquire more information on the identifiers, motives, and sources of funding and support of Islamic extremism. For example, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) defines an “Islamic extremist” as “any individual or group using Islam to justify violence or terrorist acts,” whereas the National Intelligence Council’s report, *Mapping the Global Future*, defines “Muslim extremists” as Islamic activists who are committed to restructuring political society in accordance with their vision of Islamic law and are willing to use violence.<sup>36</sup> Despite the lack of a common definition, this monograph adopts the National Intelligence Council’s definition of “Muslim extremist” with the caveat that the term “Muslim” is replaced with “Islamic” within this monograph.

## Geography<sup>37</sup>

Central Asia is comprised of five independent countries, often referred to as the Central Asian states. The Central Asian states are Kazakhstan (Capital Astana), Kyrgyzstan (Capital Bishkek), Tajikistan (Capital Dushanbe), Turkmenistan (Capital Ashgabat), and Uzbekistan (Capital Tashkent). The Central Asian region is extremely large and land-locked, bordered in the north by Russia, in the east by China, in the south by Afghanistan and Iran, and in the west by the

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<sup>36</sup> As quoted in United States Government Accountability Office, “International Affairs: Information on U.S. Agencies’ Efforts to Address Islamic Extremism,” *Report to Congressional Requesters*, September 2005, 16.

<sup>37</sup> See “Central Asia,” at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central\\_Asia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Asia).

Caspian Sea - (see Figure 1). Central Asia's topography is a patchwork of high plateaus and mountains (Tian Shan), vast deserts (Kara Kum, Kyzyl Kum, Taklamakan), and treeless, grassy steppes. Much of Central Asia is too rugged or dry for farming and many population centers form on the fringes of the deserts, around the lakes, and in the river valleys. The most fertile stretch of agricultural land is the Ferghana Valley, which stretches for nearly 1,000 kilometers through Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan - (see Figure 2). The Ferghana Valley is known as the meeting place of the three republics and is home to Oblasts (provinces) of each country: the Andijan, Ferghana, and Namangan oblasts of Uzbekistan; the Leninabad oblast of Tajikistan; and Jalal-Abad, Osh and Batken oblasts of Kyrgyzstan.

The region's socio-geographic legacy was dictated by its location between China, Russia, and the Middle East. The historic Silk Road that crossed through Central Asia had become the connective land mass facilitating trade between China and the Muslim world and beyond. Traders, settling tribes, and Mongol and Persian invaders came into the region in the tenth and eleventh century and brought with them an array of influential cultural contributions. Chief among the contributions was the Islamic faith, which then formed the landscape of historic religious belief in Central Asia. Today, native Central Asians are, by religious tradition, Islamic.



Figure 1 – Central Asia Map



Figure 2 – Ferghana Valley Map

## Central Asia's Islamic Landscape<sup>38</sup>

Since approximately 500 B.C., when the Persian Empire first conquered Central Asia, to the time Joseph Stalin ruled the region under the Soviet Empire, Central Asia “has been a center for war and empire, art and culture, religion and commerce.”<sup>39</sup> Pakistani journalist Ahmed Rashid, author of *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia*, declared that Central Asia was once considered the “center of the world” because of its centrality in the Eurasian landmass and where its historic Silk Route connected China and Europe.<sup>40</sup> In addition to the transit of silk and spices through the region, traders also introduced new technologies and religion to Central Asia. The ideas and influence of Islam on the landscape of Central Asian society, in particular, are the focus of this section's discussion.

### Pre-Soviet Era

The first people known to have occupied Central Asia were Iranian nomads who traversed into the region through northern Uzbekistan sometime in the first millennium B.C. The historically famed Persian cities of Bukhara and Samarkand, in what is now modern day Uzbekistan, appeared as government and cultural centers. As silk trade developed between China and West, Bukhara and Samarkand became the wealthiest Persian cities on what became known as the Silk Road.

Prior to the 6th Century, the dominating religion of the region was Zoroastrianism; however, Buddhism and Christianity also attracted a large number of followers. Unfortunately, the region remained under a perpetual state of conflict and great power rivalry between Persian

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<sup>38</sup>Numerous authors and analysts make reference to a similar source when citing Central Asia's Islamic history. Therefore, unless otherwise cited, discussion of Central Asia's Pre-Soviet Islamic history in this monograph is derived primarily from that same source: “A History of Islam in Central Asia” *Islam and Muslims in Central Asia*, [article on-line]; available at <http://www.islamawareness.net/CentralAsia>; accessed 24 October 2005.

<sup>39</sup> Ahmed Rashid, “Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia” (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 15.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

and Chinese invaders. A brief respite from conflict occurred when Alexander the Great conquered the region in 328 B.C. and brought Central Asia under control of his Macedonian Empire.

Central Asia's accessibility via its Silk Road and caravan routes attracted the first Muslims to Central Asia proselytizing the message of Al Islam (truth). By the eighth century A.D., the implementation of Islam was complete and Muslim life under Islamic Sharia law spread throughout the region. The native cultures were replaced in the ensuing centuries as Islam consolidated the people into a single ummah (Muslim community) led by a Khalifah, a religious leader considered to be a representative of Allah on earth. Under Islamic rule, Central Asia was an important center of culture and trade for centuries and the original Persian language of government, literature, and commerce was replaced by Arabic. However, the Persian language began to regain its pre-eminent role in the region as subsequent Caliphates weakened and Arabic became neglected.

During the eighth and the ninth centuries, Central Asia experienced a golden age as Bukhara became one of the leading centers of learning, culture, and art in the Muslim world. Rivaling other contemporary cultural centers such as Baghdad and Cairo, the region became host to some of the greatest historians and scientists in the history of Islamic culture. Notably, one of the original copies of the Qur'an prepared in the time of Caliph Uthman (the third reigning Caliph from 644 until 656 A.D.) is kept in Tashkent.<sup>41</sup>

## **Soviet Era**

After collapse of the Tsarist Empire during the First World War, the Communist authorities of the Soviet Union (1917-1991) inherited Central Asia. In spite of the ongoing political and social turmoil that continued after the fall of the Tsarist Empire, and heightened

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<sup>41</sup> See *The Samarkand Manuscript*, <http://www.islamworld.net/UUQ/3.txt>.

during the Russian Civil War from 1918-1920, the new Communist regime maintained tight control over the Central Asia region. Central Asians suffered under Communist repression not for reasons of national identity, such as being Uzbek, Tajik, or Kyrgyz, but rather for being Muslim. “The Communists viewed Islam with hostility and suspicion and subjected the Muslims of the Soviet Union to countless secularization campaigns. They also tried to replace the regions Islamic identity and loyalty, with ethnically created republics.”<sup>42</sup>

Ahmed Rashid wrote, the Soviets launched punitive campaigns after World War Two to reduce Islam to the legal status of a cult and eliminate all vestiges of Islamic culture from Central Asian society. Rashid noted that in the 1960s, as Moscow sought to win popular Muslim support for its foreign policies, the Soviets attempted to co-opt Islam in Central Asia with official state policies that became known as “official Islam.”<sup>43</sup> This led to Soviet sanctioned madrassas (Islamic schools for the Muslims) in Central Asia in an attempt to illustrate how Islam and Socialism could co-exist, yet, traditional pre-Soviet Islam was sustained through underground Islamic practices and unregistered mosques.<sup>44</sup>

The Soviet era also created ethnic cleavages through Central Asia that still exist today. Stalin created Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan in 1924, Tajikistan in 1929 and Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in 1936 using a border structure that crossed over ethnic lines and best resembled a jig-saw puzzle. The intent was to divide and weaken the region’s ethnic groups, thereby dissuading the formation of Islamic identities in favor of loyalties to the new republics and Marxist ideology. Thus, Muslims in Central Asia were forced to assume a contrived identity with

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<sup>42</sup> Ronald Suny, “Provisional Stabilities: The Politics of Identities in Post-Soviet Eurasia,” *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 1999, 167-68, as cited in “A History of Islam in Central Asia, Part II.”

<sup>43</sup> Ahmed Rashid, “Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia” (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 39.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 39-40.

allegiance to a republic that they may have not had nationalistic ties to. As Martha Brill Olcott, Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, argued:

Stalin drew the map of Soviet Central Asia not with an eye to consolidating the natural regions, but rather for the purpose of reducing the prospects for regional unity. Five separate republics were formed, creating national units for ethnic communities that had yet to think of themselves as distinct nationalities. Moreover, boundaries were set to insure the presence of large irredentist populations in each republic.<sup>45</sup>

## Post-Soviet Era

The Central Asian states gained their independence in 1991 upon the collapse of the Soviet Union. The situation was unique for the Central Asian states because they had not sought independence, nor had there been a previous popular nationalist mobilization demanding independence. Moreover, the new Central Asian countries did not have a history of national existence prior to being ruled under the Soviet Union, rather, they had always identified themselves along clan, tribal, and familial lines. Even under Soviet rule, Central Asians did not place their loyalty to the Communist State.

In the assessment of one Western author on Central Asian loyalties prior to the break-up of the Soviet Union, a “national-religious symbiosis” within the Central Asian Muslim community frustrated Moscow’s attempts to integrate Central Asians into the mold as Soviet people. “Conquered over a century ago, Sovietized for six decades, modernized, educated, and indoctrinated by a succession of regimes, Central Asian Muslims seem just as remote from Russian reality and intentions as at the outset of Soviet rule.”<sup>46</sup> Hence, Central Asians share

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<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Mohammed Ahrari, James Beal, “The New Great Game in Central Asia,” *McNair Paper*, No. 47, Washington: Institute for National Strategic Studies, 9-10, cited in “A History of Islam in Central Asia, Part II.”

<sup>46</sup> Michael Rywkin, *Moscow's Muslim Challenge: Soviet Central Asia*, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1982, 84f, quoted in Mark Dickens, *The Impact of Russo-Soviet Culture In Central Asia*, 1989, 10, [article on-line]; available at [http://www.oxuscom.com/Russo-Soviet\\_Culture\\_in\\_CA.pdf](http://www.oxuscom.com/Russo-Soviet_Culture_in_CA.pdf); accessed 25 October 2005.

multiple loyalties ranging from tribes and ethnicities, to the republic and to Islam, with Islam having a powerful influence identity.<sup>47</sup>

## Radical Islam Post-Independence

Ahmed Rashid pointed out that although Islam always remained a source of identify for Central Asian's under Soviet rule, the collapse of the Soviet Union allowed Central Asian's to embrace their Islamic past. Islamic missionaries from the Arab Gulf States, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Iran found new inroads to Central Asia society and influenced the revival and radicalization of Islam. In addition to providing funding and religious training to support mosques and madrassas, these sources distributed free copies of the Qur'an, which had been translated into Russian and other Central Asian languages.<sup>48</sup>

Sources in Saudi Arabia were prime contributors to the rise of Islam in Central Asia. In early 1990, Saudis funded the Islamic movement called Adolat (Justice), a movement that originated in the Uzbek territory of the Ferghana Valley.<sup>49</sup> The movement arose not only to reintroduce Islam activities but also to expose the corruption and social injustices previously levied by the repressive ruling regimes. In 1991, after Adolat adopted a vigilante ideology, it quickly gained popular societal support and began to branch throughout the Ferghana Valley. However, Uzbekistan banned Adolat in March 1992 when it became apparent that the movement was out of reach for the government to control.<sup>50</sup> Leaders of this movement then fled to Tajikistan where they helped anti-government forces prepare to a civil war in Tajikistan. Foreign sources also supported the education of other extremist groups such as the Islamic Movement of

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<sup>47</sup> Ronald Suny, *Provisional Stabilities: The Politics of Identities in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 1999, International Security, Vol. 24, No. 3, 167-68, as cited in as cited in "A History of Islam in Central Asia, Part III."

<sup>48</sup> Rashid, "Jihad," 5, 55.

<sup>49</sup> Michael Fredholm, *Uzbekistan & the Threat From Islamic Extremism*, Conflict Studies Research Center, England: Defense Academy of the United Kingdom, 3.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 4.

Uzbekistan and the Hizb-ut-Tahrir, who trained abroad and then exported their jihadist ideologies into Central Asia to mobilize popular support.<sup>51</sup>

The post independence sources of radical Islam in Central Asia are also based on regional internal factors. Poverty, repressive political policies, and government corruption are some of the factors that create a fertile breeding ground for Islamic extremism in the region. In most cases, extremist groups are seen as the best alternative to the otherwise nonexistent presence of political opposition groups. As Central Asian leaders fail to accommodate the possible roles that traditional Islam, democracy, and ethnicity can have in government and society, the regional leadership only add fuel to the fires of extremism.<sup>52</sup>

### **Hizb-ut-Tahrir Origins and Ideology**

Hizb-ut-Tahrir is a self-professed nonviolent “political party (not Islamic group) whose aim is to re-establish the Khilafah (Caliphate - Islamic State) that was lost by the Muslims in 1924 when the Ottoman Khilafah was destroyed.”<sup>53</sup> Founded in Jerusalem in 1953 by Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir is banned in most Muslim countries and throughout Central Asia and Germany.<sup>54</sup> An-Nabhani was an educated man and a prolific writer whose works now form the written doctrine of Hizb-ut-Tahrir. One of an-Nabhani’s most famous works invokes the life of The Prophet Muhammad to interpret the stages in which Hizb-ut-Tahrir will operate to ultimately reestablish the caliphate. “The Prophet first spread the message of Islam secretly, then came into the open about His aims, and finally preached the call for jihad.”<sup>55</sup> Today, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir openly proclaims this three-stage process for replacing secular regimes, which can be

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<sup>51</sup> Rashid, “Jihad,” 10.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 11.

<sup>53</sup> “The Reality of the Sect, Hizb-ut-Tahrir,” *Hizb-ut-Tahrir Leaflet*, [article on-line]; available at <http://www.htexposed.com/htexpose.doc>; accessed 27 December 2005.

<sup>54</sup> “Hizb-ut-Tahrir,” *Wikipedia*, [article on-line]; available at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hizb-ut-Tahrir>; accessed 23 November 2005.

<sup>55</sup> Rashid, “Jihad,” 117.

characterized as an invitation to the party, forming communal ties, and actions of jihad. This message is repeated on the Hizb-ut-Tahrir's web page:

The First--The stage of culturing; this involves finding and cultivating individuals who are convinced by the thought and method of the party. This is necessary in order to formulate and establish a group capable of carrying the party's ideas.

The Second--The stage of interaction with the Umma (nation) in order to encourage the Umma to work for Islam and to carry the Da'wah as if it was its own, and so that it works to establish Islam in life, state and society.

The Third--The stage of taking the government and implementing Islam completely and totally, and carrying its message to the world.<sup>56</sup>

In the first stage, Hizb-ut-Tahrir recruits adherents into its organization and indoctrinates them with the party's ideology. The second stage consists of clandestine propaganda campaigns to expand the umma and gain public support of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir's political and religious agenda. In the third stage, Hizb-ut-Tahrir is overtly active, working to overthrow secular regimes subordinating them to the caliphate. The Hizb-ut-Tahrir struggle is focused directly against Kufr (non-Muslim) states that attempt to control or influence Islamic states, as well as against Muslim governments that oppose sharia law.<sup>57</sup>

The Hizb-ut-Tahrir is a clandestine network of propaganda producing cells, organized into classic cell structures that support promulgation of the group's radical ideology. Thousands of decentralized five to seven man cells operate autonomously, which makes them difficult for authorities to penetrate.<sup>58</sup> According to research conducted by the Nixon Center, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir cells operate with a great deal of autonomy, where cell members often only know their few colleagues within the same cell, and only the leader of the cell knows the next higher cell

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<sup>56</sup> Hizb-ut-Tahrir, "Method of Hizb-ut-Tahrir for Change," London: Al-Khilafah Publications, 1999, 32, [article on-line]; available from [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); accessed 14 January 2006.

<sup>57</sup> Hizb-ut-Tahrir, "Method of Hizb-ut-Tahrir for Change," 9-10, 31-33.

<sup>58</sup> Rashid, "Jihad," 119. Also Ahmed Rashid, "Asking for Holy War," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 9 November 2000, [article on-line]; available from [http://iicas.org/english/enlibrary/libr\\_22\\_11\\_00\\_1.htm](http://iicas.org/english/enlibrary/libr_22_11_00_1.htm); accessed 16 December 2005.

leader.<sup>59</sup> The Nixon Center research also disclosed that Hizb-ut-Tahrir's secret headquarters is thought to be based in Jordan, while its key deputies operate a London-based headquarters and oversee Hizb-ut-Tahrir operations in Muslim countries. Moreover, in addition to providing funds and education material from its London base office, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir manages one of its main websites in London, as well as a publishing house.<sup>60</sup>

The Hizb-ut-Tahrir also obfuscates its financial links and sources of funding. Interviews with arrested Hizb-ut-Tahrir members, however, indicated that funding is primarily drawn from both private donations and dues of party members.<sup>61</sup> Private donations from sympathizing local entrepreneurs benefit the regional Hizb-ut-Tahrir branch offices, while the Hizb-ut-Tahrir leadership committee receives funding mostly from businessmen and Islamic charities. Internally, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir party funds itself through a tithe on members' salaries, usually between five and twenty percent of a member's monthly income.<sup>62</sup> Also, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir likely receives external financial support from wealthy patrons in Saudi Arabia who subscribe to the group's pan-Islamic message.<sup>63</sup> There are even rumors that the Central Intelligence Agency funded the Hizb-ut-Tahrir in the late 1950s.<sup>64</sup>

Hizb-ut-Tahrir has harnessed the power of globalization and created its virtual home in cyberspace. The organization's print media are available over the Internet in at least five different languages, allowing the Hizb-ut-Tahrir to reach its prospective constituency and creating

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<sup>59</sup> Zeyno Baran, "Hizb-ut-Tahrir, Islam's Political Insurgency," *The Nixon Center*, December 2004, 24.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. The London based Hizb-ut-Tahrir website is at <http://www.hizb.org.uk>. Also, Hizb-ut-Tahrir publications and documented material all bear *Al-Khilafah Publications* as the publishing authority, which has a London based address: 56 Gloucester Road, London SW7 4UB.

<sup>61</sup> Zeyno Baran, "Radical Islamists in Central Asia," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, Vol. 2, Hudson Institute, Washington D.C.: Kirby Lithographic Company, Inc., 12 September 2005, 43.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ahmed Rashid, "Asking for Holy War," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 9 November 2000, [article on-line]; available from [http://iicas.org/english/enlibrary/libr\\_22\\_11\\_00\\_1.htm](http://iicas.org/english/enlibrary/libr_22_11_00_1.htm); accessed 16 December 2005. Apparently, evidence does not exist that links funds between the Hizb-ut-Tahrir and more militant Islamic movements.

<sup>64</sup> Zeyno Baran, "Hizb-ut-Tahrir, Islam's Political Insurgency," 31.

a virtual gathering place for the umma. The relative inexpensiveness of hosting a website on the Internet allows organizations like the Hizb-ut-Tahrir to establish a global communications network with relative ease, and to leverage the advances of globalization to spread its ideology. The goal of Hizb-ut-Tahrir, however, is not the establishment of a virtual caliphate. Rather, the caliphate the Hizb-ut-Tahrir desires is a political institution attached to sovereign territory.

Ideologically, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir seeks a return to the Khilafat-i-Rashida, a caliphate which reigned over Arab Muslims for a short time after the Prophet Muhammad's death in 632 AD and lasted until 661 AD.<sup>65</sup> Hizb-ut-Tahrir's draft constitution envisions a modern caliph who has dictatorial powers over the caliphate's political framework, foreign policies, economy, its army, its judiciary apparatus, and most importantly its religion.<sup>66</sup> Under the constitution, the caliph is empowered for life and is not held accountable to the people except to ensure that Islamic law governs the course of the caliphate. How Islamic law is interpreted and applied is entirely up to the caliph.<sup>67</sup> Also, according to the draft constitution, the caliphate under sharia will alleviate all grievances that the ummah may have and will tackle all of man's problems.

In 2002, the number of Kyrgyz adherents to Hizb-ut-Tahrir grew as the party sought out female recruits, who comprised around ten percent of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir membership.<sup>68</sup> Under the modern caliphate the primary role of women will be that of a mother and wife, and they cannot hold positions within the caliphate, though they will be allowed to pursue work and education as long as they adhere to Islamic morality. The caliphate's defense minister, titled

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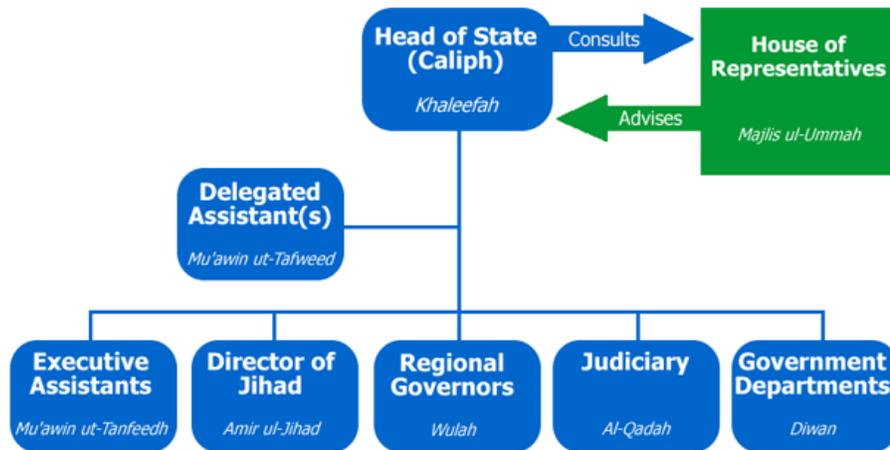
<sup>65</sup> Rashid, "Jihad," 115-116.

<sup>66</sup> Taqiuddin an-Nabahani, "The System of Islam (Nidham ul Islam)," *Hizb-ut-Tahrir*, London: Al-Khilafah Publications, 2002, 121, [article on-line]; available at [http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/english/books/system/system\\_of\\_islam.pdf](http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/english/books/system/system_of_islam.pdf); accessed 14 January 2006. Also, Rashid, "Jihad," 118.

<sup>67</sup> See Tyler Rauert, "The Next Threat From Central Asia," *The Journal of International Security Affairs*, Fall 2005, No. 9, [article on-line]; available at <http://www.securityaffairs.org/issues/2005/09/rauert.php>; accessed 20 December 2005.

<sup>68</sup> Ulugbek Babakulov, "Kyrgyzstan: Hizb-ut-Tahrir Bolstered by Female Recruits," *Relioscope*, 30 August 2002, [article on-line]; available at [http://www.relioscope.com/notes/2002/070\\_hizb\\_kyrgyz.htm](http://www.relioscope.com/notes/2002/070_hizb_kyrgyz.htm); accessed 13 November 2005.

Amir of Jihad, would prepare Muslims to wage jihad against the non-Muslim world, including the United States and other secular governments. The Amir of Jihad would also enforce military conscription and training for this jihad for every male age fifteen-year and over.<sup>69</sup>



**Figure 3 - Organizational Chart of Hizb-ut-Tahrir's Vision for the Caliphate.**<sup>70</sup>

Although Hizb-ut-Tahrir believes in jihad as a means to mobilize a collective social movement, it does not support jihad against Muslim regimes.<sup>71</sup> Instead, the organization seeks to increase adherents to its ideology in hope that its supporters will one day mobilize in peaceful demonstrations and overthrow the regimes in Central Asia.<sup>72</sup> However, as journalist Tyler Rauert warned, it would be a mistake to assume that the Hizb-ut-Tahrir is opposed to political violence since the party has previously beckoned for attacks on Coalition forces in Iraq.<sup>73</sup> Hizb-ut-Tahrir also “developed the concept of nusrah (seeking outside assistance), including military assistance,

<sup>69</sup> Taqiuddin an-Nabahani, “The System of Islam (Nidham ul Islam),” 131, and Rashid, “Jihad,” 118.

<sup>70</sup> Hizb-ut-Tahrir, “The Caliphate Structure,” available on-line at <http://www.hizb.org.uk/caliphate>; accessed 27 December 2005.

<sup>71</sup> Rashid, “Jihad,” 117.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs A. Elizabeth Jones, Testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on International Relations, Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia, Washington, DC, October 29, 2003, cited in Rauert, “Next Threat.”

from other groups.”<sup>74</sup> Moreover, Hizb-ut-Tahrir endorses defensive jihads, where Muslims are required to mobilize material resources and fight against an invader if attacked. The Hizb-ut-Tahrir also advocates that violent jihad is practically inevitable should the Kuffar (unbelievers) refuse Islam after it has been presented to them, a position that is open to wide interpretation.<sup>75</sup>

Ariel Cohen of the Heritage Foundation claimed that the Hizb-ut-Tahrir “is an emerging threat to American interests” and is preparing “cadres” for more radical organization in Central Asia.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, Cohen asserted that the Hizb-ut-Tahrir proclaimed jihad against America and its allies, and has accused the United States of imposing hegemony on the world and declaring war on the Islamic community under the pretext of fighting terrorism. The Hizb-ut-Tahrir called on all Muslims to attack Coalition forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, called for the expulsion of all U.S. and Western citizens, including diplomats, from Muslim lands, and demanded disavowal of any diplomatic agreements or treaties made with Western governments.<sup>77</sup>

### **Hizb-ut-Tahrir’s Vision for Central Asia**

Operationally, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir is very active in Central Asia. Generally, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir strategy for Central Asia is to politicize the region’s extreme poverty, repressive political systems, and perceived social injustices in order to radicalize the population.<sup>78</sup> In doing so, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir convinces society that their problems are the fault of their governments and that the current political structure must be destroyed followed by a just and fair caliphate based on sharia. The Hizb-ut-Tahrir strategy is focused on radicalizing a dispossessed population and

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<sup>74</sup> ICG, “Radical Islam in Central Asia: Responding to Hizb-ut-Tahrir,” *International Crisis Group Asia Report No. 58*, June 30, 2003, 8, cited in Rauert, “Next Threat.”

<sup>75</sup> Hizb-ut-Tahrir, “A Warm Call from Hizb ut Tahrir to the Muslims,” 13-14. Also cited in Rauert, “Next Threat.”

<sup>76</sup> Cohen, “Central Asia,” 25-26.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. See also Rauert, “Next Threat.”

<sup>78</sup> Hizb-ut-Tahrir, “Method of Hizb-ut-Tahrir for Change,” [article on-line]; available at [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); accessed 27 December 2005.

collectively mobilizing them to eventually overthrow one of the secular Central Asian governments.<sup>79</sup>

The Hizb-ut-Tahrir increasingly launched propaganda campaigns on regional issues and has targeted the government of Uzbekistan and President Karimov. Radio Free Europe reported, “Leaflets from Hizb-ut-Tahrir, now found virtually everywhere in Central Asia, call for the overthrow of the Uzbek government, regularly insult President Karimov, and call for the creation of an Islamic caliphate” in Uzbekistan.<sup>80</sup> Experts assert that one reason the Hizb-ut-Tahrir is focused on Uzbekistan, is because Uzbeks fill the rank and file of the organization. Therefore, as logic goes, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir would direct most of its efforts against Uzbekistan rather than against a country they are less affiliated with. Another reason suggested those experts, is that Uzbekistan has the most formidable military and best trained police in the region and poses the greatest obstacle to the Hizb-ut-Tahrir achieving their goals.<sup>81</sup> In other words, Uzbekistan is the lead domino in the line of Central Asian states. If it can be knocked down then others will follow.

Hizb-ut-Tahrir has made substantial inroads into Central Asia since the fall of the Soviet Union. The group’s recruitment drives target young people between ages eighteen and thirty,<sup>82</sup> in a support base consisting of mostly college students, the unemployed, factory workers and teachers.<sup>83</sup> According to Ariel Cohen, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir has actively pursued government officials in Central Asia to convert them to its ideology. “Hizb has begun to penetrate the elites

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<sup>79</sup> Rashid, “Jihad,” 124.

<sup>80</sup> Bruce Pannier, “Central Asia: Is Uzbekistan the Source of Regional Extremism?” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, April 27, 2004, [article on-line]; available from <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2004/04/acb8c328-4064-4956-9b64-7c19a749650f.html>; accessed 16 October 2005.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Evgenii Novikov, “The Recruiting and Organizational Structure of Hizb-ut-Tahrir,” *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol.2, Issue 22, 18 November 2004.

<sup>83</sup> Rashid, Jihad, 124.

in Central Asia. Observers in the region have reported successes in penetrating the Parliament in Kyrgyzstan, the media in Kazakhstan, and customs offices in Uzbekistan.”<sup>84</sup>

Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) reported that the Hizb-ut-Tahrir is finding increased support in Central Asia, where it has been most active in Uzbekistan and has the largest number of supporters.<sup>85</sup> Experts, according to the RFE/RL report, claim that Hizb-ut-Tahrir’s popularity in Uzbekistan is based on the regimes repressive political policies and lack of a secular mechanism in the country for expressing political dissent. Ariel Cohen, in citing the Hizb-ut-Tahrir as a modern fundamentalist movement, estimated that Hizb-ut-Tahrir had 5,000 to 10,000 hardcore members across Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.<sup>86</sup> Hizb-ut-Tahrir is estimated to have at least 3,000 members in Kyrgyzstan alone, according to RFE/RL.<sup>87</sup>

One of the more interesting aspects behind the popularity of Hizb-ut-Tahrir, is its use of printed media and, increasingly, the Internet to promulgate its messages. Ahmed Rashid noted that arrests of Hizb-ut-Tahrir cell members yielded “computer disks, videos, CDs, the latest printing and photocopying machines, and extensive use of email—all of which are very rare in Central Asia, where people have little access to technology.”<sup>88</sup> Most of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir’s equipment was sourced from abroad, which implied, according to Rashid, that government customs agents had some level of collusion with Hizb-ut-Tahrir.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Cohen, “Central Asia,” 29-30.

<sup>85</sup> Gulnoza Saidzimova, “Central Asia: Hizb Ut-Tahrir’s Calls For Islamic State Find Support,” RFE/RL, 17 January 2006, [article on-line]; available at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/01/e73441be-0bd5-4e98-8046-4eba329d890c.html>; accessed 19 January 2006.

<sup>86</sup> Cohen, “Central Asia,” 25.

<sup>87</sup> RFE/RL, “Hizb-ut-Tahrir Has 10,000 Supporters in Region, Kyrgyz Official Says,” *RFE/RL Newslines* 8, no. 228, 2004, [article on-line]; available from <http://www.rferl.org/newslines/2004/12/2-tca-071204.asp>; accessed 10 November 2005.

<sup>88</sup> Rashid, “Jihad,” 121, and Rauert, “Next Threat.”

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

## Significance

The Hizb-ut-Tahrir can be described as a movement with the intent to mobilize social contention to support its ideology. The Hizb-ut-Tahrir aims to garner adherents to its ideology in Central Asia by exploiting societal grievances over unstable economic situations, unemployment levels, and lack of secular space for political dissent. Even passive support from the population, perhaps, could prove advantageous for the Hizb-ut-Tahrir. Hizb-ut-Tahrir is then best viewed in terms of a social movement because in its ultimate quest to reestablish a utopian political system under the caliphate, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir effectively seeks to remold society into a new social system in what is called “Islamic activism” - the mobilization of contention to support Muslim causes.<sup>90</sup>

Of course, understanding why Central Asians would join the Hizb-ut-Tahrir is part of a necessary condition to craft a strategy to counter its growing influence. Understanding the conditions of why Central Asian’s would adhere to Hizb-ut-Tahrir’s ideology is simply better than the alternative, which is incomprehension. If the United States fails to comprehend the political, economic, social, cultural, and ideological factors behind the growing popularity of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir in Central Asia, it may than fail to respond wisely.

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<sup>90</sup> Wiktorowicz, “Islamic Activism, A Social Movement Approach,” 2

## Risk Analysis: Kyrgyzstan

Understanding the Hizb-ut-Tahrir as a social revolution in Central Asia and analyzing all the political, economic, social, cultural, ideological factors is a monumental and complex task. To move beyond incomprehension and understand Hizb-ut-Tahrir's potential to mobilize a destabilizing movement in Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan was chosen as the focus for subsequent analysis. Kyrgyzstan is the subject country because it is the only Central Asian country where the United States maintains a major military base. Therefore, U.S. diplomatic and military relations with them are all the more critical, because a destabilizing Hizb-ut-Tahrir movement could increase the risk to U.S. strategic and military-operational readiness in the GWOT, a pillar of U.S. national security.<sup>91</sup>

The difficulty with analyzing Islamic activism "mobilization of contention" is in accounting for Hizb-ut-Tahrir's ideology and its relationship within the social structure it seeks support from. According Dartmouth Professor and Sociologist Misagh Parsa, "the rise of revolutionary ideology could not generate opportunities for popular collective action. But once favorable opportunities emerged, ideology driven groups were in the forefront of the struggles."<sup>92</sup> It in this regard, Kyrgyzstan was analyzed for conditions that could be favorable to popular collective action or a social revolution; conditions that ideology driven Hizb-ut-Tahrir could exploit.

The framework used to guide analysis of Kyrgyzstan's risk to the growing influence of Hizb-ut-Tahrir, was adopted from the book *States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions*, by Misagh Parsa and the book *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, by Quintan Wiktorowicz. Misagh Parsa's framework of structural theory and political opportunity theory

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<sup>91</sup> See *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002, Washington D.C., State, vii.

<sup>92</sup> Misagh Parsa, "States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions," (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press), 2000, 287-288.

were employed in this monograph, and resource mobilization theory was adopted from Quintan Wiktorowicz. Three variables were chosen because, as Misagh Parsa and Quintan Wiktorowicz both posited, a single theory by itself cannot explain the complexity of social revolutions. Analysis of the revolutionary process must rely on additional variables if the analysis is to be comprehensive.<sup>93</sup> Subsequent sections describe each theory.

Before proceeding, it may be useful to frame the Hizb-ut-Tahrir as a social movement or perhaps as a revolutionary movement. According to Misagh Parsa, most scholars define social revolutions as “rapid, basic transformations of a society’s state and class structures that are carried through class-based revolts from below.”<sup>94</sup> According to this definition, a Hizb-ut-Tahrir inspired collective movement in Kyrgyzstan would be classified as a social revolution. The overturn of Kyrgyzstan from a secular state into an Islamic caliphate, under dictatorial rule by a caliph, with reformed institutional structures, and altered classes of society would certainly be called a transformational. A social revolution then is the expected occurrence if Hizb-ut-Tahrir should be successful in stages one through three of its strategy for the caliphate.

## **Structural Theory**

People are always poor. But they used to always be Muslim. Fewer are Muslim now, which means more people are poor, which means Hizb is more popular.<sup>95</sup>

In *States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions*, structural models of revolutions typically focus on the nature of the state, the economy, and social classes. Structural analyses consists of viewing states’ vulnerabilities in terms of the world system (such as economic relationships), their internal structures, and their relation to society, and have previously been very useful in

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<sup>93</sup> Parsa, 7

<sup>94</sup> Parsa, 6.

<sup>95</sup> Comment from a Tajik citizen when asked by a Russian traveler if the Hizb-ut-Tahrir were poor. See Misha Pozhininsky, “Hizb ut-Tahrir, The View from the Tajik Street,” *Sobaka Magazine*, 29 August 2003, [article on-line]; available at <http://www.diacritica.com/sobaka/2003/hizbuttahrir.html>.

understanding large-scale social conflicts and revolutions.<sup>96</sup> This theory claims that structural strains produce psychological grievances, which in turn produces collective action (a social movement). Therefore, the underlying assumption in structural-functional theory is that social movement contention is derived from irrational actors; those people seeking a method for alleviating a psychological grievance. The following variables were used for analysis of Kyrgyzstan's vulnerability to Hizb-ut-Tahrir ideology: the nature of the state, economic variable, and variables of society's classes.

After its independence, Kyrgyzstan became known as a "bastion of democracy in Central Asia" for its example in Central Asia of progressive liberal reform efforts.<sup>97</sup> By regional standards today, Kyrgyzstan still remains fairly liberal. Though widely admired, their extraordinary degree of openness also left the state vulnerable to an influx of extremism.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 so did the flow of its investment funds, trading, and subsidies to Kyrgyzstan. Subsequently, Kyrgyzstan's economy was exposed to world market prices, which exposed the hollowness of its previously administered prices and the non-competitiveness of its industrial structure.<sup>98</sup> Sixty percent of Kyrgyzstan's industrial enterprises were closed and nearly 320,000 jobs were lost, leading to high unemployment and harsh poverty. By 2001, Kyrgyzstan's finance minister indicated that the country was on the verge of a socio-economic crisis because the country's national budget had been mostly absorbed by national debt.<sup>99</sup> In 2003, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) reported that nearly half of the Kyrgyz

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<sup>96</sup> Parsa, 7

<sup>97</sup> Beth Jones, "U.S. Relations with Central Asia", *U.S. Department of State, Briefing to the Press*, 11 February 2002, [article on-line]; available from <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2002/7946.htm>; accessed 15 August 2005.

<sup>98</sup> Olga Olikier and Thomas S. Szayna, *Faultlines of Conflict in Central Asia and the South Caucasus: Implications for the U.S. Army*, Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2003, 47-51.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.* 61.

population was poor; with forty-four percent of the country living in poverty and fourteen percent living in extreme poverty.<sup>100</sup>

The enduring levels of economic crisis and poverty in Kyrgyzstan had no doubt frustrated civil society. Those citizens who did not understand the broader implications of the Soviet Union break-up may have had feelings of indignation towards the government. The Hizb-ut-Tahrir provided alternative, simpler views of the economy under the caliphate. Owning property and possessing wealth are uncomplicated matters in Islam. Also, the State Treasury (Bait ul-Mal) is responsible for the support of all citizens under the Islamic economic system.<sup>101</sup> Taqiuddin an-Nabhani, Hizb-ut-Tahrir founder, wrote that “the success of a collective movement is measured by its ability to instigate resentment among the masses and to extort them to express their resentment each time the regime undermines or manipulates their ideology according to its own whims and interests.”<sup>102</sup> For many impoverished Kyrgyz, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir message may sound convincing as it represented a better change to their economic deprivation.

Inter-ethnic fault lines between Kyrgyz people and ethnic Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan have created societal grievances that the Hizb-ut-Tahrir could exploit. Ethnic Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan traditionally relied on the People’s Assembly, a representative body for ethnic minority interests, to voice their concerns in the government. Many Uzbeks are frustrated, however, noting that the People’s Assembly has lost much of its former influence and that the new government under President Bakiev has shown little interest in continuing inter-ethnic relations.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Asian Development Bank, “Kyrgyz Republic,” *Country Strategy and Program 2004-2006*, October 2003, 5.

<sup>101</sup> Taqiuddin an-Nabhani, “The Economic System of Islam,” 4<sup>th</sup> ed., *Hizb-ut-Tahrir*, London: Al-Khilafah Publications, 1997, 56-57.

<sup>102</sup> Taqiuddin an-Nabhani, “Structuring of a Party,” *Hizb-ut-Tahrir*, London: Al-Khilafah Publications, 2001, 25.

<sup>103</sup> Eurasianet, “Ethnic Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan Voice Complaints over Discrimination, Corruption,” *Central Eurasia Project*, 25 January 2005, [article on-line]; available at <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/civilsociety/articles/eav012506.shtml>; accessed 26 January 2006.

Ethnic Uzbeks also cite that the taxes they pay are siphoned off by “corrupt fiscal, law enforcement, and executive power agencies.”<sup>104</sup> This is especially concerning for ethnic Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan, where Uzbeks comprise the largest ethnic minority group in Kyrgyzstan, at nearly fourteen percent of the overall population. Uzbek prominence in the southern business sector, therefore, is affected most by corruption. Today, the Uzbek minority view the March 2005 revolution as not a beneficial development for their community.<sup>105</sup> Minority Uzbeks in Southern Kyrgyzstan complain about rising ethnic discrimination and have asked President Bakiev to adopt a clear policy on minority rights. Unresolved inter-ethnic issues, therefore, will likely make ethnic Uzbek’s more restive and foster discontent with the government;<sup>106</sup> conditions that Hizb-ut-Tahrir can exploit.

According to International Crisis Group sources, Hizb-ut-Tahrir membership is between 1,000 and 1,200 in the Jalal-Abad and Osh, southern regions where most Uzbeks live and Hizb-ut-Tahrir activity is the greatest.<sup>107</sup> Jalal-Abad and Osh are considered Hizb-ut-Tahrir strongholds, where they have been persecuted by the Kyrgyz government since the late 1990’s.<sup>108</sup> Hizb-ut-Tahrir has only limited support outside this region, and its membership is reportedly comprised of ninety percent ethnic Uzbeks while Kyrgyz make up only five percent.<sup>109</sup> These indicators suggest that ethnicity may have a role in the popularity of Hizb-ut-Tahrir in Kyrgyzstan.

The ethnic representation in Kyrgyzstan’s local institutional framework is imbalanced, creating the conditions for discontent and possible civil rights violations. According to the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe, Osh’s Department of Interior is eighty

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> ICG, “Kyrgyzstan: A Faltering State,” *Crisis Group Asia Report no.109*, 16 December 2005, 8-10.

<sup>107</sup> ICG, *Radical Islam*, 17.

<sup>108</sup> Rafis Abazov, “*Nations in Transit 2004, Kyrgyzstan*,” Freedom House, 10, [article on-line]; available at <http://unpan1.un.org>; accessed 8 November 2005.

<sup>109</sup> ICG, *Radical Islam*, 17, 18.

percent ethnic Kyrgyz and ten percent are ethnic Uzbek. The twenty-three provincial and city court judges in Osh are all Kyrgyz, while nine of the ten judges in Jalal Abad province are Kyrgyz. Moreover, Uzbeks hold eleven seats in the Osh City Council compared to nineteen Kyrgyz seats. The prosecutor's Office in Osh follows a similar make-up. Since ethnic Uzbek's comprise fifty-two percent of Osh's population, seventeen percent more than the Kyrgyz, one would expect to see a proportionate balance of representation in these key institutions.<sup>110</sup> It is also clear that Uzbeks are aware of this imbalance as they have called for greater representation in law enforcement and judiciary jobs.<sup>111</sup>

Ethnic disparity in government and judiciary jobs in the region can generate an "us" versus "them" perception between ethnic Kyrgyz and ethnic Uzbeks. The issue goes deeper in terms of safeguarding civil and humanitarian rights of a minority group, especially if the Uzbeks are perceived as filling the ranks of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir. The ethnic imbalance in key institutional positions is a factor for potential instability, such as the human rights violations at Andijan in March 2005. On the other hand, Hizb-ut-Tahrir ideology teaches that the Islamic state would have a caliph of its leader, who is elected by an assembly chosen by the people. The people are directly responsible to hold the caliph accountable to sharia.<sup>112</sup>

In 1924, Soviet powers delineated Central Asia's border structure along ethnic lines that divided families and tribes to reside on separate sides of borders. Many residents in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have relatives on the other side of the border, but the threat of Islamic extremism has created difficult and costly border crossing procedures.<sup>113</sup> Borders were an issue in 1990, when a bloody conflict erupted between ethnic Uzbeks and ethnic Kyrgyz over a Kyrgyz

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<sup>110</sup> OSCE, *Kyrgyz Republic: Ethnic Minorities Issues*, Bishkek: Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe, 2002, 3-4, [article on-line]; available at <http://www.osce.org/item/13865.html>

<sup>111</sup> Eurasianet, "Ethnic Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan Voice Complaints over Discrimination, Corruption."

<sup>112</sup> Taqiuddin an-Nabahani, "The System of Islam (Nidham ul Islam)," 120-121.

<sup>113</sup> Eurasianet, "Six Raions on Kyrgyz-Uzbek Border Ask For Simplified Crossing Procedures," *Kyrgyzstan Daily Digest*, 9 July 2003, [article on-line]; available at <http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/kyrgyzstan/hypermail/200307/0018.shtml>; accessed 5 December 2005.

government plan to create an ethnic Uzbek autonomy in the Osh region and redraw the border in Uzbekistan's favor.<sup>114</sup> In 1999 and 2000, incursions by an armed extremist group from Kyrgyzstan into Uzbekistan caused the Uzbek president to mine the border with Kyrgyzstan.<sup>115</sup> More recently, in 2002, the Kyrgyz public outraged upon discovery of a secret government concession of territory to China and Uzbekistan during border delimitation negotiations.<sup>116</sup> In Hizb-ut-Tahrir's vision of the caliphate, all Muslims are united in a single Islamic state and building the Islamic state is the responsibility of the wider ummah; a concept that ethnic Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan may be drawn to. "We conduct a political struggle; our task is not to build the state ourselves, but explain to people how to build the state."<sup>117</sup>

Classes of society in Kyrgyzstan are bound by their clan and tribal ties and usually respond with loyalty to their local leader.<sup>118</sup> In Kyrgyz contemporary politics clans are separated into either the northern province (northern clan) or the southern province (southern clan). The northern province has representatives from 4 oblasts: Chuy, Isyk Kol, Naryn, and Talas. Representatives from the southern province come from the Batken, Jalal Abad, and Osh oblasts. By virtue of clan ties and loyalty to local (tribal) leaders, political life is centered almost entirely on local bureaucrats. Thus, opposition political parties have had a difficult time mobilizing regional clan support or overcoming political differences outside of the regional context.<sup>119</sup>

The tribal and clan class structure of Kyrgyz civil society does not lend itself to developing strong political parties in oppositional politics; a situation which could leave many with a sense of hopelessness about ever challenging the ruling regime. It took a massive social rebellion to unseat the previous Kyrgyz president, who ruled since the country gained

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<sup>114</sup> "Interethnic Tensions in Kyrgyzstan's Osh Region," Prism Vol. 4, Issue 8, The Jamestown Foundation, 17 April 1998, [article on-line]; available at [http://www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=5&issue\\_id=269&article\\_id=3044](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=5&issue_id=269&article_id=3044); accessed 5 December 2005.

<sup>115</sup> Olga Oliker and Thomas S. Szayna, *Faultlines of Conflict*, 318.

<sup>116</sup> Rafis Abazov, "Nations in Transit 2004, Kyrgyzstan," 18.

<sup>117</sup> ICG, *Radical Islam*, 6.

<sup>118</sup> Abazov, "Nations in Transit 2004, Kyrgyzstan," 7.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

independence. Hopelessness of the type may be a windfall opportunity for the Hizb-ut-Tahrir to exploit, allowing them to conduct first stage operations, recruit new members, and mobilize civil contention.

Structural theory is just one framework to view social movements and do have shortcomings. Structural conditions set the stage for movements and do not determine the revolutionary process or outcome. If structural analysis of revolutionary conflicts is to be comprehensive, other variables must be considered.<sup>120</sup>

## **Resource Mobilization Theory**

Resource mobilization theory helps address the shortcomings in structural analysis. According to Quintan Wiktorowicz, analysis of social revolutions must extend beyond structural theories and look at the process of mobilization and collective action. He also suggested that rather than viewing social movements as consisting of angry individuals who join together in response to structural strains, resource mobilization theory approaches them as rational, organized manifestations of collective action.<sup>121</sup> Resource mobilization theory considers variables such as communication mechanisms and organizational staffs designed to coordinate and organize collective action and contention.<sup>122</sup>

A 2004 U.S. International Religious Freedom Report concluded that 1,611 registered mosques are known to exist in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>123</sup> However, according to a 2004 *Central Asia – Caucus Analyst* report, many new unregistered mosques began springing up in Kyrgyzstan since 2001 and remain unregistered. The report also concluded that mosque funding sources are derived from countries that follow the “Wahhabi” movement of Islam and that mosque

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<sup>120</sup> Parsa, “States, Ideologies, & Social Revolution,” 7.

<sup>121</sup> Wiktorowicz, “Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach,” 9-10.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Kyrgyzstan,” *International Religious Freedom Report, 2004*, [article on-line]; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/004/35464>; accessed 12 October 2005.

attendance in Kyrgyzstan has steady increased.<sup>124</sup> The Hizb-ut-Tahrir are known to operate within a network of charity groups and mosques; allowing them to communicate with each other, conduct distributed recruiting operations, and remain concealed from government security forces.<sup>125</sup> There have also been claims that mosques serve as the Hizb-ut-Tahrir headquarters in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>126</sup> Mosques provide the Hizb-ut-Tahrir with focal points in which to meet religiously faithful Muslims and an opportunity to influence the hearts and minds of those who will listen to them.

The British Helsinki Human Rights Group maintained that Hizb-ut-Tahrir acquired domestic financing in Central Asia as well as from abroad, including Saudi Arabia.<sup>127</sup> In Kyrgyzstan, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir likely receives private donations from local businesses, as well as from internal tithing to sustain local operations.<sup>128</sup> A British newspaper investigation into Hizb-ut-Tahrir's London operations uncovered that party members are employed at the international news agency Reuters, and computer giant IBM.<sup>129</sup> Given the investigation's character sketch of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir no one should be surprised; the London based Hizb-ut-Tahrir was characterized as middle-class, well-qualified, and college educated. Many also work in areas such as finance, information technology, health and education, according the news agency.

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<sup>124</sup> Aziz Soltobaev, "Collective Security Exercises in Central Asia: Wrong Medicine?," Central Asia - Caucasus Analyst, 19 May 2004, [article on-line]; available at: [http://www.cacianalyst.org/view\\_article.php?articleid=2380](http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid=2380); accessed 15 October 2005.

<sup>125</sup> Zeyno Baran, ed. "The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir: Deciphering and Combating Radical Islamist Ideology," *The Nixon Center*, September 2004, ix.

<sup>126</sup> Alisher Khamidov, "Religion Plays Growing Role In Kyrgyzstan's Parliamentary Election Campaign," Eurasianet, 24 February 2005, [article on-line]; available at <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/civilsociety/articles/eav022405.shtml>; accessed 12 October 2005.

<sup>127</sup> BHHRG, "Uzbekistan: Victimiser or Victim?," *British Helsinki Human Rights Group*, [article on-line]; available from <http://www.oscewatch.org/CountryReport.asp?ChapterID=749&CountryID=23&ReportID=243&keyword=>; accessed 10 January 2006.

<sup>128</sup> Zeyno Baran, "Hizb-ut-Tahrir, Islam's Political Insurgency", 24.

<sup>129</sup> BBC, "How Militant Islamists are Infiltrating Britain's Top Companies," *The Independent On-Line Edition*, 11 September 2005, [article on-line]; available from <http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/crime/article311824.ece>; accessed 10 January 2006.

From years 2000 to 2005, Internet usage in Kyrgyzstan grew by 410 percent. A more astounding fact is Uzbekistan's Internet usage, which increased 11,633 percent over those same years - (see Figure 4). The only other country in the world to surpass Uzbekistan's increase was Somalia at 44,400 percent. Besides revealing that Central Asia has joined the "Global Village,"<sup>130</sup> the rise in Internet users suggests more Central Asians are exposed to the same cyber community that Hizb-ut-Tahrir exists in.

Indeed, Hizb-ut-Tahrir's presence in cyber-space helped it to defy traditional border structures and become a "truly global political movement active in over forty countries."<sup>131</sup> For instance, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir's propaganda campaign can reach a larger audience, they can conduct cyber-planning, and the Internet may serve as a resource for the Hizb-ut-Tahrir coordinate mobilization of its equipment, people, and contention. As one analyst stated, "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 in party offices."<sup>132</sup>

Moreover, in repressed societies where free press is all but non-existent, Hizb-ut-Tahrir uses the Internet to fill the information void by highlighting important global and local matters.<sup>133</sup> The Internet can also be viewed as bridging the void between the Hizb-ut-Tahrir and those in Kyrgyzstan who may feel isolated from the party. One of their web sites, *www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org*, is presented in six languages – Arabic, Deutsch, English, Russian, Turkish, and Urdu – which may be viewed as a method to target a specific audience.

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<sup>130</sup> The metaphor "Global Village" became popular in the 1960's in different works by Marshall McLuhan and gained wide-spread acknowledgement in his subsequent work published in 1989. His theory of the world eventually becoming part of an integrated electronic network formed a partial basis of what today is understood as globalization. See Marshall McLuhan and Bruce Powers, *The Global Village: Transformations in World Life and Media in the 21st Century*, New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1989.

<sup>131</sup> Zeyno Baran, "Hizb-ut-Tahrir, Islam's Political Insurgency," *The Nixon Center*, Washington D.C.: The Nixon Center, December 2004, 34.

<sup>132</sup> Baran, "Radical Islamists in Central Asia," 43.

<sup>133</sup> Baran, "Hizb-ut-Tahrir, Islam's Political Insurgency," 30.

Country	Population (2006 Est.)	Internet Users (Year 2000)	Internet Users (Latest Data)	Penetration (%) Population	Use Growth ( 2000-2005 )
Uzbekistan	26,311,197	7,500	880,000	3.4 %	11,633 %
Tajikistan	6,620,008	2,000	5,000	0.1 %	150 %
Turkmenistan	6,723,715	2,000	36,000	0.5 %	1,700 %
Kyrgyzstan	5,377,484	51,600	263,000	5.0 %	410 %
Kazakhstan	14,711,068	70,000	400,000	2.7 %	471 %

**Figure 4 - Internet Usage Growth in Central Asia.**<sup>134</sup>

Quintan Wiktorowicz warned that social movements do not occur in a vacuum; they are part of a broader environment characterized by constantly shifting opportunities and constraints. Thus, dynamic external factors force social movements to constantly alter its structure.<sup>135</sup> In this context, any consideration given to the grievances, resource availability, or the availability of mobilizing factors is not wholly sufficient without looking at the external factors. External factors can be constraints or empowering opportunities and hence important to this discussion of Hizb-ut-Tahrir’s potential to mobilize contention in Kyrgyzstan.

### **Political Opportunity Theory**

In highly repressive situations, large scale movements are initiated when opportunities appear and the balance of power favors the disadvantaged group.<sup>136</sup> Political opportunity is focused on the external factors bearing on social movements and the conditions that stimulate social movement contention. For example, in summation of Misagh Parsa’s analysis, conditions include the nature of state repression, instability of the of the ruling elite’s hold on power, the

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<sup>134</sup> Source: “Internet World Stats,” *Usage of Population Statistics*, [on-line]; available from <http://www.internetworldstats.com>; accessed 14 January 2006.

<sup>135</sup> Wiktorowicz, “Islamic Activism” 13.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. 284.

state's institutional strength, and societal access to institutionalized politics.<sup>137</sup> Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution was an example where instability of the ruling regime led to an organized movement that challenged the state.

In 2002, Kyrgyzstan's National Security Committee (successor to the KGB), took action against the Hizb-ut-Tahrir and justified its increased crackdown on the party based on alleged ties to the Taliban and Al Qaeda.<sup>138</sup> In November 2003, the Kyrgyz Supreme Court formally declared the Hizb-ut-Tahrir an "extremist organization" and banned it, but it has not yet officially declared if Hizb-ut-Tahrir members could be arrested.<sup>139</sup> The apparent inconsistency in state policy about how to contend with Hizb-ut-Tahrir created a political opportunity for the party.

After being banned in Kyrgyzstan, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir became more openly engaged in Kyrgyz campaign related politics, marking a departure from their anti-democratic doctrine. In the run-up to Parliamentary elections in February 2005, Hizb-ut-Tahrir members joined opposition party activists in a visible protest to the incumbent regime. Members of Hizb-ut-Tahrir, or perhaps splinter groups of Hizb-ut-Tahrir, now plan to register as a political party and nominate their own candidates in upcoming elections; they cite wide-spread Kyrgyz support for their party and that government repression has otherwise diminished their exposure.<sup>140</sup>

In comparison to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan has exhibited greater tolerance for the Hizb-ut-Tahrir. Convicted Hizb-ut-Tahrir members in Uzbekistan are subject to long prison terms of ten to twenty-five years, whereas in Kyrgyzstan for the same charges they receive up to a five year

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid. 22-25.

<sup>138</sup> Abazov, "*Nations in Transit 2004, Kyrgyzstan*," 337.

<sup>139</sup> Baran, "Hizb-ut-Tahrir, Islam's Political Insurgency," 109. and Gulnoza Saidazimova, "Kyrgyzstan: Hizb Ut-Tahrir Rallies In South, Urges Election Boycott," Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 9 February 2005, [article on-line]; available at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/02/2ff7fdef-dae8-4323-8f61-346a404f3ee9.html>; accessed 10 November 2005.

<sup>140</sup> Alisher Khamidov, "Religion Plays Growing Role in Kyrgyzstan's Parliamentary Election Campaign," Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, 24 February 2005, [article on-line]; available at <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/civilsociety/articles/eav022405.shtml>; accessed 10 November 2005, and Saidazimova, "Kyrgyzstan: Hizb Ut-Tahrir Rallies In South, Urges Election Boycott."

sentence and in most cases only a fine.<sup>141</sup> Joldoshbek Busurmankulov, a spokesperson for the Interior Ministry of Kyrgyzstan, explained the difference between the Kyrgyz and Uzbek strategy to counter the Hizb-ut-Tahrir. “We should prove their destructiveness. We should fight for the hearts and minds of the people.”<sup>142</sup> Notably in 2003, the Kyrgyz State Committee on Religious Affairs estimated that 2,000 Hizb-ut-Tahrir activists existed in Kyrgyzstan. In contrast, an estimated 5,000 of Uzbekistan’s 6,000 political prisoners were thought to be sympathizers of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir.<sup>143</sup>

However, the fact that Kyrgyzstan has incarcerated fewer Hizb-ut-Tahrir members may only partly explain why the Hizb-ut-Tahrir has become increasingly active in southern Kyrgyzstan. Much of the reason may have less to do with the degree of regional authoritarian-style repression and more to do with local political repression in Kyrgyzstan. Ethnic Uzbeks play an insignificant role state level politics, yet they constitute twenty percent of Kyrgyzstan’s total population.<sup>144</sup> Uzbeks have demanded greater political representation in government and that Uzbek be constituted as an official state language, just as Russian was in 2002; a population nearly eight percent smaller than Uzbeks.<sup>145</sup>

An International Crisis Group report concluded that people follow the Hizb-ut-Tahrir not for their ideological appeal, but because of vast discontent created by government repression.<sup>146</sup> Accordingly, repression of opposition political parties leaves few opportunities for groups like

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<sup>141</sup> Zamira Eshanova, “Central Asia: Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan Differ in Approach to Hezb ut-Tahrir”, *RFE/RL*, 12 July 2002, [article on-line]; available at <http://www.rferl.org/features/2002/07/12072002171856.asp>; accessed 10 November 2005.

<sup>142</sup> Zamira Eshanova, “Central Asia: Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan Differ in Approach to Hezb ut-Tahrir.”

<sup>143</sup> BBC, “Uzbekistan Keeps Threat of Terrorism From the Door: Leader’s New Year Message,” *BBC International Reports*, 1 January 2003, available in ProQuest. Cited in Eric McGlinchey, “Constructing Militant Opposition: Authoritarian Rule and Political Islam in Central Asia,” Paper Prepared for the Yale Lecture Series on Central Asia, April 6, 2004.

<sup>144</sup> Alisher Khamidov, “Ethnic Uzbeks Stoke Unrest in Southern Kyrgyzstan,” *Eurasianet*, 26 June 2002, [article on-line]; available at <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/eav062602.shtml>; accessed 10 November 2005.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> ICG, “Radical Islam,” i.

ethnic Uzbeks, who want to seek change from within government. Parties like the Hizb-ut-Tahrir serve as an outlet for people to voice their dissent, and given the lack of alternatives it can be viewed as a viable political party to oppose the existing regime. The party is, however, banned under Article 8, section 2 of Kyrgyzstan's constitution, which states “religious organizations do not have the right to set themselves political aims or to form political parties.”<sup>147</sup>

## Summary

The case of Hizb-ut-Tahrir in Kyrgyzstan and its rising popularity is a complex phenomenon. Hizb-ut-Tahrir's growing appeal to Central Asians is based on repressed internal political and socio-economic conditions. The structural model argued that its emergence is a direct response to political and economic disenfranchisement. Facing a failed political and economic system, people join Hizb-ut-Tahrir for an alternative to their present conditions. The party has seized the opportunity to promise the establishment of a fair society under an Islamic caliphate. Socio-economic circumstances are important for understanding why people join Hizb-ut-Tahrir, but pointing to them as the main cause is too simplistic.

Resource mobilization theory suggested that social movements like Hizb-ut-Tahrir emerge when individuals who have grievances are able to pull together the resources they need to mobilize effectively for collective action. The group is well structured and its membership is growing fast in Kyrgyzstan. Hizb-ut-Tahrir has been able to mobilize support through mosques and social networks. The group also has financial resources.

Political opportunities theory argued that a social movement develops when opportunities are available and individuals respond rationally to maximize openings. Indeed, some people are

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<sup>147</sup> Cited by Igor Rotar, “Kyrgyzstan: Women Protest Hizb-Ut-Tahrir Leaflet Arrests,” *Keston News Service*, 28 March 2001, [article on-line]; available at <http://www.starlightsite.co.uk/keston/kns/2001/010328KZ.htm>; accessed 13 November 2005.

attracted to the prospect of an Islamic government propagated by the group, due to the lack of legitimate channels for protest against Kyrgyzstan's political elite.

## **Significance**

The influence of Hizb-ut-Tahrir and its ideology has potential to form the basis of a destabilizing collective movement in Central Asia. Viewed from the perspective of disenfranchised Central Asian's, Hizb-ut-Tahrir provides a medium for alleviating social, political and economic grievances. Hizb-ut-Tahrir's platform offers Central Asians an opportunity for change. Through exploitation of societal ills, Hizb-ut-Tahrir is creating conditions to pull together resources to collectively mobilize a social revolution, a possibility the United States should do everything to avoid.

The rise of Hizb-ut-Tahrir among Kyrgyz society provides a good case study of ideology and political, economic, and social factors and their importance for collective action in mobilizing a society. A combination of all three perspectives, structural, resource mobilization, and political opportunities, provide an additional explanation about the rise of Hizb-ut-Tahrir in Kyrgyzstan. Hizb-ut-Tahrir provided people with a mechanism for alleviating grievances derived from structural strains in Kyrgyz society (the structural perspective). The Hizb-ut-Tahrir also mobilized necessary material and human resources (the resource mobilization perspective). The party, moreover, faced an environment that offered political opportunity (the political opportunity perspective).

The emergence of Islamic activism (extremism) in Kyrgyzstan is an outcome of some members of society looking for an alternative option to the current secular state; while others may simply desire a state response to their grievances. Culturally, a western influenced society embraces the concept of individuality; however, this can be viewed as contradictory to traditional Islamic values that uphold the notion of the umma, the Muslim community. Hizb-ut-Tahrir's

ideology is also filling an ideological vacuum in Kyrgyz society produced by the collapse of communism.<sup>148</sup>

Hizb-ut-Tahrir argues that the root of mounting social problems in Kyrgyzstan lies in a lack of religious faithfulness, corrupt secular elites, ceding to western manipulation, and the absence of a strong universal Islamic community. Following the Soviet period, Kyrgyzstan was involved in a quest for religious identity, an apparent reemerging quest signified by the increasing popularity of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir. Since the official Kyrgyz muftiyat (Islamic clergy) cannot match up to representatives of Hizb-ut-Tahrir in religious matters and discourse, Hizb-ut-Tahrir finds it relatively easy to convince people to join the party.<sup>149</sup>

According to doctrine posted on their web site, Hizb-ut-Tahrir's ideology is founded on two pillars. The first is Islamic law, based on the conviction that the sharia should regulate all aspects of human life (politics, economics and ethics) which are tied together in Islam. The second is the Islamic state, because a proper society can be achieved only within such a political entity. There is no separation between din (the faith) and dawla (the state); this is why Islam involves a unique inseparability of religion and politics. The ultimate objective of Hizb-ut-Tahrir is the establishment of a true Islamic state. The party rejects contemporary efforts to establish Islamic states, claiming that Afghanistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia do not meet the necessary criteria. From Hizb-ut-Tahrir's, an Islamic state means liberation from both secular and corrupted regimes.<sup>150</sup>

Also, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir believes in the "sovereignty of God", the notion that the principles of faith or religion are relevant to statecraft, making governance a function in which

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<sup>148</sup> Antoine Blua, "Kyrgyzstan: Survey Reports Positive Findings on Religious Freedom," *EurasiaNet*, 11 January 2004, [article on-line]; available at <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/culture/articles/pp011104.shtml>; accessed 14 November 2005.

<sup>149</sup> Igor Grebenshikov, "The Hizb-ut-Tahrir Through The Eyes of Kyrgyz Journalists," *Media Insight Central Asia* no. 22, January 2002, 1.

<sup>150</sup> See <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/english/english.html>.

humans are subordinate to the primacy of God. In the Hizb-ut-Tahrir system of governance, Islamic law, or sharia, is sovereign, not the Islamic community, or umma. For Hizb-ut-Tahrir, the authority of the people is to be exercised through the appointment of a Caliph. Hizb-ut-Tahrir considers the struggle for the re-creation of the Caliphate to be a religious obligation incumbent upon all Muslims. According to Hizb-ut-Tahrir, the adoption of divine rules is the exclusive area of the Caliph; he is thus the one who enacts a constitution and various laws. There is no room for separation of powers or for a “worldly” parliament.<sup>151</sup>

Why do people in southern Kyrgyzstan turn to political Islam rather than secular ideologies such as liberalism or socialism? Perhaps Democracy has been discredited in the eyes of many people in Kyrgyzstan because, while the country has adopted a form of democratic government, it has not embraced the minority rights and liberal democratic practice.

Hizb-ut-Tahrir has seized the political opportunity, but its response has been confined by ideology. The party asserts that western countries have systematically promoted their western culture, their political ideology (part of which is liberal democracy) and their viewpoint about life in order to divert Muslim people away from Islam; thus it is easier to control Muslims.<sup>152</sup> The party opposes liberal democracy because it gives rise to a system of dictatorship by an elite group. Members of the parliament can blackmail the rulers with dismissal at any time, by using the no-confidence vote. As a result, governments tend to focus on satisfying the needs of the majority of an elite group, rather than securing the people’s welfare.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Hizb-ut-Tahrir, [www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org](http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org).

<sup>152</sup> Hizb-ut-Tahrir, “Democracy is a System of Kufr,” 2-21.

<sup>153</sup> Hizb-ut-Tahrir, [www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org](http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org).

## Elements of a Response towards Hizb-ut-Tahrir

Hizb-ut-Tahrir's ideology is the basis for a destabilizing collective movement in Central Asia. As previously noted, Hizb-ut-Tahrir's pursuit is a three-staged approach to revive the Islamic state that the Prophet Muhammad realized in the seventh century. Also noted was that Hizb-ut-Tahrir is a revolutionary social movement. It monopolizes Islam and its interpretation to mobilize a collective jihadist action in pursuit of creating the caliphate; thus a changed world order.

The Hizb-ut-Tahrir is a growing medium to long-term threat to U.S. national interests and its extremist ideology must be checked before it triggers an insurrection across Central Asia, or worse, a government collapse. In the short-term, Hizb-ut-Tahrir's radical rhetoric may foment the appearance of other radical groups opposing U.S. interests in Central Asia and elsewhere. Consequently, the challenge of Hizb-ut-Tahrir extends beyond the immediate practical danger it poses.

The question is then, what should the government response be from the United States and Central Asian governments? In providing a few recommendations, this monograph borrowed from the logical framework titled "Government Response" put forward by Dr. Bard O'Neill in his book, *Insurgency & Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare*.<sup>154</sup> Hizb-ut-Tahrir is neither a terrorist group nor an insurgent force. Dr. O'Neill's framework for crafting a government response, however, aptly transcends the various means and ways of disparate extremist groups. Dr. O'Neill's framework also tackled the counter-ideological challenge of a government response.

Though Kyrgyzstan was the subject country for the previous analysis, the following recommendations take a regional approach to counter Hizb-ut-Tahrir's growing influence. To

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<sup>154</sup> Bard O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare*, (Virginia: Brassey's Inc.), 1990.

hedge against a broader perception that any Central Asian government requires U.S. assistance in this counter-ideology strategy, specific and separate actions are required between the United States and Central Asia. Moreover, the following government responses consider both direct and indirect actions governments should pursue; causing a “denial of service” effect against the Hizb-ut-Tahrir may not always be prudent.<sup>155</sup>

## **Create an Unfavorable Environment**

Dr. O’Neill stressed that consideration of the “human environment” is necessary in crafting effective government response plans, especially against efforts to organize popular support.<sup>156</sup> In context of the human environment, resource mobilization theory suggests that a government response should counter the Hizb-ut-Tahrir’s propaganda campaign. Structural theory suggests that reform from authoritarian governance is necessary to deter repressive policy making and the appeal of extremist groups like the Hizb-ut-Tahrir.

Central Asian governments should, therefore, employ media resources to promote inter-faith dialogue and the values of the Islamic faith. Central Asian governments should also allow legal channels, or forums, for expression of civil discontent by opening the media to discussion of religious and political issues. Dr. O’Neill drew the conclusion that blocked channels of communication can lead to “misleading and poorly informed images of the popular mood... ..problems that are unknown are hard to solve.”<sup>157</sup> Opening up communication channels could expose the degree of contention among Central Asian society, possibly exposing the level of support enjoyed by Hizb-ut-Tahrir within the Central Asian human environment.

The United States should continue its pursuit of political (including democratic) reform in Central Asia. Reform is important not only because it reflects core U.S. values, but it also

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<sup>155</sup> Unless otherwise cited, various discussions and case studies presented by Parsa and Wiktorowicz generally informed development of the government responses presented in this section.

<sup>156</sup> O’Neill, “Insurgency & Terrorism,” 136.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. 135.

contributes to regional security and supports the global war on terrorism.<sup>158</sup> Creating more civil participation within government and tolerating distinct ethnic and religious political groups may reduce the Hizb-ut-Tahrir's ideology and reduce regional security vulnerability to other forms of extremism. Without political reforms, the post-Soviet regimes may remain attractive breeding grounds for extremism and the operational epicenter for Hizb-ut-Tahrir. This long-term interest serves as the bedrock of U.S. policies in Central Asia and should be emphasized as a long-term strategy to counter the Hizb-ut-Tahrir.<sup>159</sup>

### **Diminish Popular Support**

Appeals to religion are difficult problems for governments, as Dr. O'Neill attested, because they appeal to the masses, unlike secular ideologies. He also stated that the government should consider whether the policy it pursues will seek to maintain its legitimacy within its own appeals and if their policy is perceived as "relevant and credible."<sup>160</sup> Therefore, how the government deals with the Hizb-ut-Tahrir, whether on religious or political terms, can either legitimize the government response or potentially drive people closer to Hizb-ut-Tahrir.

Central Asian governments should capitalize on the argument that Hizb-ut-Tahrir is an anti-constitutional political party and use political discourse and legal recourse to counter the regional influence of the party. The Hizb-ut-Tahrir is not a religious group, but a self-acclaimed political party with a revolutionary desire to overthrow legitimate governments, which requires state legal countermeasures against them.

The United States should also, in principle, deal with the Hizb-ut-Tahrir as a political group and evaluate the party using the same criteria as any other political opposition party.

American policy should not object to Islamic activism in government, however, the Hizb-ut-

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<sup>158</sup> See Fried, "A Strategy for Central Asia". Also, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, 21.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> O'Neill, "Insurgency & Terrorism," 137-38.

Tahrir as a political party does not participate in secular political systems; instead, it wants to overthrow them. Hizb-ut-Tahrir politicizes a radical version of Islam. As such, the United States should follow the German example and legally ban the Hizb-ut-Tahrir on the basis that the group opposes the constitutional order of legitimate sovereign states. An overthrow of a Central Asian government by Hizb-ut-Tahrir directly threatens U.S. interests and is outside the realm of U.S. tolerance of ideological differences between Islam and the West.

Additionally, U.S. economic aide packages should be conditioned on political and economic reform in Central Asian governments.<sup>161</sup> As U.S. economic assistance is stepped up, together with that of other states and organizations, such as the European Union and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), linkage strategies to measures of performance will have to be implemented.<sup>162</sup> Economic assistance could cushion the impact of structural reforms on Central Asian society and reduce potential grievances as the government moves forward in reforms. The United States must monitor the host nation's progress in event they back-slide towards more repressive forms of governance and the U.S. is perceived as supporting a despotic regime. This would be a propaganda windfall for the Hizb-ut-Tahrir.

To affect external popular support for Hizb-ut-Tahrir, the United States should also fight at the ideological level. In the War on Terror, military and law enforcement measures, such as interdicting terrorist group financing, is not enough and the "hearts and minds" of the Muslim people need to be directly addressed at the ideological level. The United States should therefore incorporate success of Central Asia's socio-economic reforms, as attained, into public diplomacy statements as the United States addresses other regions of the Muslim world. Doing so will

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<sup>161</sup> Ariel Cohen suggested a similar strategy, but focused on solely conditioning security assistance to economic reform. He noted that despite a doubling of U.S. security cooperation and military assistance to Central Asian countries since 9/11, necessary reforms have not been realized in the region. See Cohen, "Central Asia: Terrorism, Religious Extremism, and Regional Stability," 31.

<sup>162</sup> For the levels of aid since 2001, see [www.usaid.gov/locations/europe\\_eurasia/sectors.html](http://www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/sectors.html), [www.europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/ceeca/tacis/index.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/ceeca/tacis/index.htm), and [www.ebrd.org/about/strategy/index.htm](http://www.ebrd.org/about/strategy/index.htm).

demonstrate the visible benefits of capitalistic and pluralistic governance and may encourage political reform in key regions of the Muslim world, rather than opposition to it.

## **External Support**

According to Dr. O'Neill, a government should assess its capabilities and resources before deciding on its response to the external support received,<sup>163</sup> in this case by the Hizb-ut-Tahrir. In terms of resource mobilization, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir relies heavily on the Internet for its propaganda campaign and probably for planning. In terms of government resources, the United States should take the lead to exploit Hizb-ut-Tahrir's use of the Internet.

The United States should therefore diminish the effectiveness of Hizb-ut-Tahrir's functional space on the Internet by expanding intelligence collection efforts. Previously stated, Hizb-ut-Tahrir is Internet-savvy, and is known to support its propaganda by producing web pages, video tapes, and CDs for recruitment. Collection efforts should focus gathering information on Hizb-ut-Tahrir's leadership, sources of funding, who they are targeting for potential recruits, their efforts to mobilize contention or "Islamic activism," impending propaganda campaigns, other epicenters of operation, and other cyber-planning activities. Subsequently, the United States should share this information with other Western nations as well as partner Central Asian countries. The intent should be not to force the Hizb-ut-Tahrir further underground by denying them functional space on the Internet, rather to exploit their use of cyberspace in support of the broader campaign against the Hizb-ut-Tahrir.

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<sup>163</sup> O'Neill, "Insurgency & Terrorism," 148.

## Flexibility

Flexibility suggests that a government response should be tailored to the relevant problem, and not simply relying on a previous response model.<sup>164</sup> Therefore, the roles of diplomatic, informational, military, and economic instruments of national power will vary according to the threat. Political opportunity theory suggests that Central Asian governments should consider flexibility in the political space they provide to Islamic groups, instead of a blanket-type policy that bans all of them.

In closed political systems without legitimate means for expressing discontent, the strength of Hizb-ut-Tahrir is based on the fact many Central Asians see the Hizb-ut-Tahrir as the only viable voice for opposition. Central Asian governments should implement political reforms that integrate Islamic political opposition groups. The Hizb-ut-Tahrir, however, cannot be integrated because of its rejection of secular nation-state politics. Central Asian governments can, however, incorporate Islamically oriented political parties that respect nation-state constitutions and who do not exploit the Islamic faith for political ends. Central Asian governments should also take active measures to reform political structures that include more ethnic balance in government positions.

The United States should remain flexible regarding its military presence in Central Asia. A U.S. response should consider transforming its military footprint in Central Asia within the broader context of a counter-ideological campaign, as opposed only to the level of security achieved in Afghanistan.<sup>165</sup> Though United States currently has about 800 personnel on the

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid. 152.

<sup>165</sup> Elizabeth Jones, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Eurasian Affairs, noted that the United States intended to establish temporary bases in Central Asia, and only for as long as it took to stabilize Afghanistan. “Temporary” is difficult to define in a timescale given that once U.S. troops are deployed to a location it usually takes a long time to bring them home, i.e., Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq. The term “base” is also not easily qualified in the sense that the U.S. could establish a Forward Operating Site (FOS) “warm facility” with limited military presence or a Cooperative Security Location (CSL) with nearly no military presence. See Roger McDermott, “Washington Vague on U.S. Basing Plans in Central Asia,”

ground at Manas, Kyrgyzstan,<sup>166</sup> the long-term U.S. basing strategy in Central Asia is unclear.<sup>167</sup> The air base at Manas successfully served as a logistical and refueling station for U.S. operations into Afghanistan, but Kyrgyz people have expressed criticism about the U.S. presence as hegemonic.<sup>168</sup> Transnational organizations like the Hizb-ut-Tahrir use perception and propaganda to delegitimize U.S. presence and the host nations who support U.S. interests. In this light, Hizb-ut-Tahrir will likely continue to propagandize against the presence of U.S. personnel based in Central Asia and attempt to breed further discontent among Central Asia society. Reduction of the air base in Manas to a Forward Operation Site (FOS) “warm base” or a Cooperative Security Location (CSL) would minimize the number of military based in the region.<sup>169</sup> However, the timing of when to transform the military footprint in Central Asia should be considered in terms of how it reduces propaganda opportunities of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir, in addition to the level of security and stability achieved in Afghanistan.

These recommended strategies are by no means exhaustive. Rather, they serve as a guide to positive measures that the United States and the Central Asian states can take to counter Hizb-ut-Tahrir’s ideology and prevent Central Asia from becoming another front in the GWOT. The political, social, and economic grievances of Central Asians must be addressed as the causes for Hizb-ut-Tahrir’s growing influence in the region.

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Eurasia Daily Monitor, Volume 1, Issue 68, 6 August 2004, [article on-line]; available from [http://www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=401&issue\\_id=3040&article\\_id=2368371](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=401&issue_id=3040&article_id=2368371); accessed 6 December 2005.

<sup>166</sup> Kathleen Rhem, “Rumsfeld Wraps Up Middle East, Central Asia Trip in Kyrgyzstan,” *American Forces Press Service*, 14 April 2005, [article on-line]; available from [http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Apr2005/20050414\\_602.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Apr2005/20050414_602.html); accessed on 12 November 2005.

<sup>167</sup> McDermott, “Washington Vague on U.S. Basing Plans in Central Asia.”

<sup>168</sup> See “Yankees Go Home, Some Kyrgyz Say,” *RFE/RL Central Asia Report*, 28 February 2002, vol. 2, no. 8, [article on-line]; available from <http://www.rferl.org/reports/centralasia/2002/02/8-280202.asp>; accessed 9 August 2005. The RFE/RL article made note that Kyrgyz skepticism about the U.S. presence in the region may also have been attributed to Russia’s concern over losing its influence in the region to the United States. The previous Kyrgyz regime under President Akaev had reassured President Putin that U.S. presence in Kyrgyzstan was only temporary and did not threaten Russian interests.

<sup>169</sup> Department of Defense, “Strengthening U.S. Global Defense Posture,” September 2004, 10.

## **Concluding Observations**

Hizb-ut-Tahrir is vastly becoming an unavoidable world-wide phenomenon and a threat to U.S. interests in Central Asia; its ideology is best viewed as a powerful basis for collective mobilization action. Though the emergence of a fundamentalist Islamic state in Central Asia in the near future is unlikely, preventing its emergence and the extremist threat it represents is consistent with the broader aims of the GWOT. Continued government repression, unemployment, poverty and sluggish economic development; however, will contribute to an environment amenable to Islamic extremists' recruiting efforts. The Central Asian states are faced with contradictory forces: the authoritarian regimes will continue to face pressures to democratize, but they lack the adaptive capacity to survive and develop, especially if faced with a burgeoning threat of extremism.

The U.S. disengagement from Afghanistan in the 1980's was a hard learned lesson; that is, the United States must engage not only regional governments but also the people, to promote long-term stability and prevent a security vacuum that allows extremism to flourish. The influence of Hizb-ut-Tahrir will depend on the extent they can mobilize Central Asian society. Together, the United States and the Central Asian states must send a message to Hizb-ut-Tahrir and other Islamic extremists that the GWOT coalition is strong, united and ready to fight terrorism and extremist threats at any time. Success in countering the Hizb-ut-Tahrir in Central Asia would be a major success in preventing the region from becoming critically destabilized with spill-over effects into Afghanistan.

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