

## Islamic Revivalism and the Role of Islamic Extremist Groups in Tajikistan

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this research paper is to give an idea about the whole scenario of the revival of Islam in Tajikistan after the independence of the country in 1991. As well as, Tajikistan after the independence immediately has witnessed the civil war in 1992 to 1997. As a result, the country became an open ground for the Islamist revivalist groups to flourish. Therefore, how the government managed to counter the Islamist radical groups like Hizb-ut-tahrir, Al Qaeda, Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan, Jamaat-i-Islami, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Taliban. These all groups has active involvement to create instability in the region Central Asia in general and Tajikistan in particular with common Islamic cart. Here, i will discuss how the major actors Afghanistan and Pakistan fuelled the Tajik civil war. This paper will be having the basic introduction of the country, and I will deal separately the role of major Islamist groups' role with the support of major border sharing countries to initiate the revival of Islam with the making of Madrassas, Islamic University, mosques, and reestablishment of Islamic monuments. It will be having detailed information about the Islamist Radical groups and their ideology to spread radical Islamist thought which has affected the young population of the country.*

**Keywords:** Al-Qaeda, Civil War, Hizb-ut-tahrir, Islamic Revivalism, Jamaat-i-Islami, Tajikistan

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### Introduction

Tajikistan just after its independence witnessed instability in the region, and its economy and social condition got adversely affected by the civil war from 1992 to 1997. During this period, most of the radical Islamist groups played active role for revival of Islam in this region. This chapter deals with these Islamic radical groups, which played a role in the revival of Islam in the country. With the rise of Taliban to power in Afghanistan with the direct support of Pakistan, many young people of the region joined the frenzy of *Jihad*<sup>1</sup>. Pakistan with its religious party Jamaat-i-Islami actively engaged in this revivalist movement. In Central Asia, IMU operated in the fertile Ferghana Valley in the name of establishing Islamic state. Al Qaeda with its followers established its base in Afghanistan, attracted young and new militants and developed active links with other militant organisations, providing financial support and expertise. Internally in Tajikistan, Islamic Revivalist Party spread the idea of Sharia and it joined hands with the United Tajik Opposition group against the established government. From West Asia, Hizb-ut-Tahrir which originated from East Jerusalem became active in forty countries including Tajikistan. It attracted young Tajik people with the agenda of establishing Islamic Caliphate.

### Hizb ut- Tahrir

This group was founded in 1953 by Sheikh Taqiuddin al- Nabhani in East Jerusalem. He died in 1977 and the group was taken over by Abu Yusuf Abdul Qadim Zallum, another Palestinian cleric. In 2003 after Zallum left the leadership, Ata Ibnu Khaleel Abu Rashta became the leader. Previously he was the party's official spokesperson in Jordan. Abu Rashta joined hands with a Palestinian Abu Yasin, who was living in West Bank, and during his leadership the party became more aggressive. At present this radical group is active in 40 countries, its ideological footprint is in London, and headquarters is in Jordan. It emphasises on the unity of the Umma and advocates the path followed by Prophet Muhammed to establish the Islamic Caliphate. The first and foremost leader of the party al Nabhani says that "the work of the Prophet was clearly defined in a way which is showing precisely clear behaviour of the creation of Sharia based Islamic government" (Baran). Hizbut Tahrir advocates utopian political agendas, and it is opposed to democracy and secular society.

Hizb- ut- Tahrir firstly held its position against the infidels and advocated jihad by circulating leaflets, books, brochures, internet sources, websites maintained by the organisation. It aims at converting Dar al- Kufr (the country of unbelievers) into Dar al- Islam (the country of Islam). It even started armed struggle against the

<sup>1</sup>A war or struggle against unbelievers.

unbelievers who refuse to follow Islam. To attract the Muslims, they use Koranic verses to galvanise the Muslims across the world. They emphasise on following the ‘Sharia’ in all activities of human life, whether it is politics, social systems, economy. And finally it calls for the establishment of the ‘Islamic state’. HT with its Sunni Islamist agenda seeks to unite all the Muslim countries. Therefore, it wants to create a theocratic Islamic Caliphate in Central Asian region, following Prophet Mohammad’s model of 7<sup>th</sup> century, which would be ruled by a Caliph with both the religious and political powers. The founder of the group Nabhani even prepared a constitution in which the draft of the Caliphate is provided detailing various Islamist concepts.

Hizbut- tahrir is mainly constructing a hierarchical pyramid structure including a number of cells. All the cells are having five members. During the first six months, they study the book *Islom Nizomi* (the structure of Islam), after that every member of this group takes oath in the name of Allah, I swear to carry out any orders of HT leaders even if these orders do not correspond to my belief. With the completion of the primary training, the group members form a halka, which consist of five or six members. Every member has allies, but only the main member of this organisation has access to the senior member of the organisation. And Mushrif (supervisor of the halka) keeps knowledge about the subsequent level of leadership, not even the full hierarchy. Mushrif also supervises the group member’s familiarity with HT ideology. Naqib heads the local committee at the district level, which is accountable for the administration of the group relationships in urban level and villages. In this hierarchy, Mutamad, is a provincial delegate of the committee who supervises HT activities, and is selected by the Amir of HT.

In this group members have to study the organisation’s agenda, literature, geography, politics, religion, and history being compulsory. Women members of the group have separate unit for themselves. So the members of this group start at the primary level going on to the regional level, all the members following the instructions of Kiedat (HT legislative assembly) and Amir.

HT is spread in many countries of the world, and most importantly is very active in Central Asia. Many analysts believe that among “all the banned organisation of former Soviet Union, HT is the only mass organisation”. (American foreign policy council)<sup>2</sup> Its organisational centre is in London, and literature is published there with people getting training for the group. It had a national conference in the US and Canada in July 2009, which indicated its global reach and activism. Some people say the alleged global leader Ata Abu Rashta is based in Lebanon. It is active in Russia, Ukraine, and Southeast Asia. In Indonesia they claimed that “it recruited tens of thousands of members and 2007 conference witnessed the 80,000 and 100,000 members from all over the world. It also held public protests and demonstrations in Bangladesh and Pakistan. It is also present in Syria, Iraq, Turkey, UK, Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, and Tunisia. This group has vast members all over the world, but the exact number is unknown, and the members of Central Asia are stated to be about 20,000 to 100,000.” (American foreign policy council)

After the disintegration of Soviet Union, Hizbut Tahrir became active in late 1990’s in Tajikistan. This organisation has been getting funds from the Mahalla mosques and followers. Due to Tajikistan sharing its border with Uzbekistan and Ferghana Valley being the hub of radical groups, Islamic radicalism has been influencing the people of Tajikistan. HT has also grown because of the dissatisfaction of Tajik people with the Islamic Renaissance Party. (ICG 2001)

### Tajik Government’s Response

Tajikistan government responded towards the activities of HT by declaring the group illegal in 1999. The government stated that this group is trying to establish an Islamic state, thus challenging the Tajik constitution, which states in article 1 that “Tajikistan is a secular republic. (Karagiannis 2006) In 1999 the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan also spread to Tajikistan. The government of Tajikistan has increased its surveillance over these radical groups, to ensure peace and stability of the region. (Karagiannis 2006) The government arrested some 150 to 200 people in the Sughd province for distributing leaflets and other materials, calling for overthrow of the Uzbek government. Most of the young people of the region have

<sup>2</sup>World Almanac of Islamism, “American foreign policy Council: Hizbut- Tahrir”, [Online: web], Accessed 15 May 2016 URL: <http://almanac.afpc.org/sites/almanac.afpc.org/files/Hizb-ut%20Tahrir.pdf>

become members of this group. They were given five year imprisonment. However, after coming out of the jail, they again started looking for sponsors for their radical activities. (ICG 2001)

According to the Karragianis, who interviewed “security officials, diplomats and group members, as well as the arrested members in Tajikistan, “there are around 2,500–3,000 members and many more sympathizers. Many Hizbut-Tahrir’s arrested members have been ethnic Uzbeks, but the number of Tajiks is growing fast. Some of the arrested members in the northern city of Khojand were students and teachers. In recent years, the group has spread its activities in Dushanbe and southern Tajikistan”. According to a well-informed source from the Tajik security services, the group first appeared in Dushanbe in 2001– 2002. Hizbut-Tahrir’s members even managed to penetrate the Russian forces based in Tajikistan. In March 2004, Tajik police arrested a Hizbut-Tahrir’s activist who was a civilian staff member of Motor Rifle Regiment 149 of Russian Motor Rifle Division 201 stationed in Kulyab. Members of Hizbut-Tahrir disseminate leaflets and books that have been printed in Tajik, Uzbek and Russian, thus trying to recruit members from all ethnic groups. Due to Tajikistan’s high literacy rate, the dissemination of Hizbut-Tahrir’s literature has been a successful way of spreading its message”, (Karagiannis 2006).

### Al Qaeda

Al Qaeda is an Arabic word which means ‘base of operation’. Abdullah Azzam the main ideologue of modern Sunni Muslim radicals was given the title term of Al- Qaeda al-sulbah in 1987, which means an ‘advance guard of the strong’, while Osama Bin Laden and his followers created their base in Afghanistan attracting new militants and strengthening links between the existing militant organisations. It provided these militant groups with funds, expertise, and contacts with other Islamic groups. At present the Al Qaeda base in Afghanistan has been destroyed after bin Laden was killed by the US forces in Pakistan. But the organisation continues to be a strong terrorist Islamist organisation. (Burke 2004)

### Main Ideology

This organisation and its members are very much involved in *jihad* against the anti - Islamic regimes and the west. This group has mainly two key beliefs, “first is Wahabbism, which is Saudi Arabia’s official version of Islam and the idea of Egypt’s Sayyid Qutb. Wahhabism came from the Sunni ideologue Mohammad ibn Abd al-Wahab with origins in Saudi Arabia. The second most important personality, which influenced the group is Sayyid Qutb (1906- 1966), a main Islamist member of Muslim brotherhood in Egypt. He advocated the Islamic state in Egypt, and he believed the western civilization to be the main enemy of Islam. He exhorted Sunni Muslims to take up jihad to protect and clean Islam.” The organisation’s main aim is to:

- Go back into the form of ‘pure and authentic’ Islam, which was followed in the era of Prophet Mohammed and his followers in seventh century.
- Al Qaeda wants to overthrow the non - Islamic regimes.
- Push out the non - Muslims and western people from the Muslim countries, since westerners have been dominating the lands of Islam, and western ideology would corrupt the original form of Islam.
- Set up a ‘pan Islamic Caliphate’ with the support of all militant groups throughout the world. (Haynes 2005)

The leaders of Al Qaeda never visualized the sudden collapse of the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2001, which was the main fertile ground for the group. Most importantly Al Qaeda had trained around 60,000 fighters here. Al Qaeda leaders thought that they will catch up with US and coalition forces in Afghanistan in war, as they did with Soviets earlier. “Al Qaeda and Taliban made a plan to remove the Afghan opposition and trouble its ability to fight with the assassination of the Northern Alliance commander Ahmed Shah Masoud, two days before 9/11. After that in 2002, Mullah Muhammad Omar, the Taliban leader, to whom Laden had sworn commitment, lost Kandahar, the capital of the Taliban’s operation. According to Ahmed Rashid, before 9/11, top experts of the Taliban were Pakistani volunteers who served in its armed forces, besides, dozens of energetic on duty Pakistani army advisers and also some Pakistani army commando units. After they left the Taliban, the group lost its strength and conventional military capability and political support. And most importantly Al Qaeda lost its safe operating place, where it was giving arms training and propagating its agenda, and they shifted towards Pakistan”, (Riedel 2007).

Ayman al-Zawahiri has taken the position of Emir after the death of its first leader Osama bin Laden, and Abu Yahya al-Libi the head of group's religious committee became his deputy. And these people are guarded by younger operatives like Hassan Gul, Hamza al-Ghamdi, Abu Zayd al- Kuwaiti al Husaynan, Abd al-Rahman al-Maghrebi. They all are involved in planning and plotting the operations of the group, and to conduct its media campaign and develop its religious doctrine as well. (Jones 2012)

### Event of 9/11 and Al Qaeda in Tajikistan

After 9/11 terrorist attacks, US launched 'war on terror' against Al- Qaeda, Taliban and other terrorist outfits, in Afghanistan in 2001. It threw out the Taliban regime and struck at the root of the Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda had spread from Afghanistan to Pakistan and Central Asian region. Tajik troops had battled with this terrorist group in the remote areas. Abdullo Rakhimov is one of the followers of bin Laden, as he was trained in the camp of Rasht valley, which is 30 miles north in Tajikistan along its border with Afghanistan. The Rasht valley training camps were actually set up by Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan's militants. (Swami 2010) The Tajik militants had joined hands with IMU and Al Qaeda against the Tajik government. The Tajik security committee said that "the rebel leader Mahmud Khudoyberdiyev has taken the initiative to join the terrorist outfits. He was a colonel in the defence Ministry and led the group of troops". (Roggio 2009) Tajikistan has become a central point for the terrorist organisations like Taliban and IMU to disturb the NATO's new supply line from the northern part of Afghanistan. As we know Al Qaeda was well connected with IMU and Taliban, therefore it was operating actively in this region. (Roggio 2009)

Its fighters are searching a new route to escape from the US troops, so they thought about Tajik mountainous region being their best option. This border region is well known route for arms and drug trafficking. After the collapse of the Taliban, Al Qaeda is operating from Pakistan territory. (BBC news 2002)

### Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan

Islamic Renaissance Party or Islamic Revival Party basically consists of Tajik Islamists. It consists of Tartar intellectuals, who wanted to organise Muslims in former Soviet Union to propagate 'Sharia'. The Tajik unit of Islamic Renaissance Party was called Hizb-i-Nehzat-i-Islami and its leaders were Himmatzade, Nuri, and Dawlat Osman. This party set up its military base in Garm Valley and changed its name to Islamic Movement of Tajikistan in 1995 IRP was in the forefront of armed conflict with Tajik government forces during the civil war of 1992 – 1997. Peace negotiations started between the Tajik opposition and government and IRP joined hands with the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) group. (Rashid 2001)

Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) is the leading force of the so called 'Islamic Democratic Bloc', and actually held reins of power in Dushanbe between May and October 1992. Before 1991 it operated illegally. The first congress of the IRPT was held in the autumn of 1991, and in the following November it was registered as a political party advocating economic reform, development of all forms of ownership, and marketisation of the economy. IRPT advocated 'the creation of an Iranian type state, and reorientation of economy and foreign policy on Islamic lines. In 1992, the party membership was 20,000" (Vassiliev 2001)

In the presidential election held after the independence of Tajikistan, IRPT supported the candidature of Davlat Khudonazarov. After the election, this party became more active in implementing its radical programme. One of its leaders, Davlot Usmon, headed a group of Islamic fighters, who included Wahhabis from Karategin, Dushabe and armed squads of Pamirians. This party was basically formed by peasants, students, and rural intellectuals. It influenced most provinces of the country mainly in Garm, Pyanj and Kurgan Tyube. After losing election in 1992, the Islamist leaders and armed fighters fled to the mountains and further went to Afghanistan and Gorno Badakhshan to carry out their armed movement against Tajik government (Vassiliev 2001).

In 1999, Said Abdullo Nuri was re-elected as its leader. After Nuri's death in 2006, leadership shifted to and Muhiddin Kabiri who took the responsibility to fight the conservatives inside IRPT. Kabiri was not involved in the civil war and he believed in separation of religion and politics and emphasised on secular education. He has been modernising the programme of IRPT. Today the Islamic character of this party remains invisible. It acts like a protest movement, which criticises the economic and social programme of the government, as it seeks development of Tajik society on the basis of Islamic principles. The call for Islam played an important role in the recruitment of the members of this party. For this party religious education is

must. The party worked along with existing institutions and compromised with the government, which resulted in the official recognition of the party. This party is different from Hizbut Tahrir, Salafiya, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Jamaati Ansorullah, which are radicals involved in violence. IRPT has initiated the culture of protest using modern media in its social networks, and people to people contacts for its propaganda. It has got support of Ismaili minority in the Pamir region of Gorno Badakhshan. It increased its members from 20,000 in 2000 to 41,000 in 2014, with women being around 53 percent. This makes this party the largest opposition party. From the year 2000 onward, it has been participating in parliamentary elections. However, it failed in 2015 elections receiving only 5 percent votes. IRPT always got support from the clergy, mosques and madressas propagating its radical ideas. (Schmitz 2015)

### Civil War in Tajikistan

After the independence of the country in 1991, Rahmon Nabiev a former communist leader was elected as president after getting 56.9 percent votes. The opposition which got 34 percent of votes demanded re-election. "President Rahmon Nabiev agreed to accommodate the opposition's coalition of democratic, nationalist, and Islamic groups by offering them one-third of ministerial posts in his government. But Nabiev's supporters in southern Tajikistan rejected outright the proposed compromise with the opposition. Thus within two years of independence, civil war started in Tajikistan. Realizing the sensitivity of the situation due to the opposition gaining an upper hand, Russian officers, commanding the CIS military units in Dushanbe, advised dialogue between the opposition and Nabiev's government. After several rounds of negotiations peace agreement was signed by Mohammad Sharif Himatzade, Chairman of IRP, Shodmon Yousuf, Chairman of the Democratic Party of Tajikistan (DPTJ), and Amirbek, Chairman of La'le Badakhshan or- ganization (a political group made up of Ismailis from the Pamirs)", (Ahmed 1994).

Emomali Rahmon became the president, and the opposition would have 24 ministries but communists did not want to share power with the opposition. On the other hand, opposition IRP wanted power without delay. Therefore, the peace settlement was not successful and the crisis continued in Tajikistan (Ahmed 1994). Finally, peace accord was signed in 1997, which brought on end to civil war in 1997, which had resulted in the economic devastation of the country. "Various estimates indicate that almost 23,500 to 100,000 people were killed. This conflict was not only political but it was also due to the differences between different regions, clans, and elitist groups. More importantly it was the conflict between those who wanted to establish an Islamic State and those who wanted to establish a secular state", (Malashenko 2012). After the civil war, the government of Tajikistan legalised IRPT in Peace Accord of 1997, and its leaders got some posts in the government. The peace accord of 1997 ended the first five years of battle between UTO and government. However, the party faced a number of challenges in some regions, regarding the registration of the party. Kulyab and its neighbouring region were denied registration of the party for many years but in 2003 it was allowed to register. Later, deputy chairperson of the party Shamsiddin Shamsiddinov was arrested from Khujand and charged with serious crimes. (ICG 2004)

After independence Kulyab which used to contribute many police and security officials to Tajik government became one of the main regions of civil war and the centre of battle between the government and opposition forces. In mid- 1992, this region established its own armed forces, under the leadership of Sangak Safarov. According to the media reports, originally this force was receiving support from Russia and Uzbekistan Safarov's warriors, heavily armed and poorly disciplined military force were known as Popular Front. They were the major opponent of United Tajik Opposition, which was getting support from Afghanistan. Emmomali Rakhmon emerged as the leader of Kulyabis and later was elected as the President of Tajikistan. (ICG 2009)

President Rahmon has banned the IRPT considering it as a terrorist organisation. In 2015 many members of party IRPT were arrested by the government. In 2000 the party got several parliamentary seats, and an ex-UTO member gave 30 percent posts to security services. This included a controversial commander, Gen. Mirzo Zivoyev as well. After the death of the leader of IRPT, Said Abdullah Nuri in 2006, the moderate leader of this party Mukhiddin Kabiri has given the party a different shape on the lines of liberal democracy, and secularism, which poses a challenge to President Rakhmov. Therefore in "1 March 2015 parliamentary elections, the government ordered Imams at state-registered mosques to preach against voting for the IRPT, which was labelled "the party of war". The IRPT was reported to have received just 1.5 per cent of votes and it lost its two parliament seats (ICG 2016).

## United Tajik Opposition

It was formed in 1993 in Afghanistan and it's a combined party of opposition and Islamic leaders of Tajikistan. UTO has its military base situated in north-eastern Afghanistan. So the violent clashes between drug smugglers, Tajik and Russian border guards continue. This group was very active in Gorno Badakhshan and Kurgan Tyube (Human rights Watch 2001).

## Jamaat-i-Islami

The Jamaat-i-Islami means the community of Islam, and is a religious party of Pakistan. It is basically a kind of similar religious party of Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt. Its leader believes that development and progress can be possible under Islamic Law. There is nothing new in this organisation. Most of the conservative Muslim leaders are supporters of this group and they give support to this organisation. "It is an appealing example of Pakistan's Jamaat, that go with Muslim thought and leadership to attract non-Muslim world and as an active organisation to Muslim State", (Abbott 1957).

Jamaat-i-Islami is an oldest and most significant Islamic revivalist movement of Pakistan. Its ideology and activities amount to an Islamic revolution. It calls for an Islamic revolution to create an Islamic state. (Nasr 1995)

Jamaat-i-Islami was formed in 1941 by its founder Maulana Sayyid Abu ala Mawdudi who was the chief ideologue of this party till 1972. After its formation this party worked as a revivalist party. It seeks to establish a state based on the principles of Islamic law. After the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, Maududi along with his other Jamaat leaders and members moved to Pakistan, though some other Jamaat-i-Islami members remained in India, Kashmir, and Bangladesh (Nasr 1995).

Jamaat has established its impact on the national politics and the society in Pakistan state. Jamaat's literature is being circulated in twenty-six languages including Arabic, Persian, Spanish, Malay, Malayalam, Swahili, and Japanese. Maududi's ideas had impressed Sayyid Kutb, the leader of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, Iranian revolutionary leaders, Afghanistan's revivalist activists, Hasan Turabi and Muslim Brotherhood of Sudan, Algeria, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Malaysia, Tunisia and Turkey. More importantly, Tajikistan's Islamic Movement Nihzat-i Islami got influenced with the Jamaat and its ideology. The Jamaat's ideology influenced Pakistan's constitutional debate from 1948 to 1956 and once again in 1972 - 1973, which shaped the Islamic polity in Pakistan. It also took part in the anti - Ahmediya agitation in Punjab (Nasr 1995).

Jamaat-i-Islami's ideas found a proper place during the Zia ul-Haq regime in 1977 to 1988. In his time Islamization of laws, public policy and popular culture took place. His regime accepted the Islamist idea of nation and society. The alliance of Jamaat-i-Islami and military rulers shaped the new fundamentalist Islamist policies in Pakistan (Nasr 2004). In the 1980's during the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, Zia-ul-Haq with US and western and Saudi Arabia support created militant Afghan Mujahideen to oust the Soviet forces and also across in Tajikistan. Pakistan's Jamaat-i-Islami party used this opportunity to spread Islamic revolution in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Hizb-i-Islami of Afghanistan (Afghanistan Islamic Party) led by Gulbadin Hikmatyar benefited from Zia's efforts (Synnott 2009).

## Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan is run by Islamist militants from Uzbekistan and wants to overthrow the existing government of Uzbekistan with force and want to set up an Islamic state. Being involved in bombing incidents in Uzbekistan, the organisation has been declared as a terrorist organisation. It is not only involved in 1999 bombing which basically targeted the president of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov, but was also involved in Kyrgyzstan's southern Batken region's armed raids USA in the year 2000 declared IMU as terrorist organisation. On September 20, 2001, the US president George W. Bush stated that IMU will be a target of US counter terrorism operations after the 9/11 attack, as IMU was considered to be linked with Al-Qaeda and Taliban. The organisation fought along with the Taliban against US forces in Afghanistan. The only well-known leader of IMU Juma Namangani died while fighting together with Taliban during the US bombing in Mazar-i-Sharif region of Afghanistan. The organisation collects funds from Uzbek Diaspora, donations from Al Qaeda and from narcotics trade. (Mann 2002)

The organisation's founding leader is Tahir Yuldashev, a mullah from the town of Namangan in Uzbekistan. He split his way out of the Islamic Renaissance Party in 1990s. After that he established the Adolat (Justice) party, which preached puritan Islam. Subsequently, the party was banned by Uzbek government. Yuldashev and his followers moved to Tajikistan in March 1992, where they supported and fought along with the Islamic opposition in the civil war from 1992 to 1997. Jumaboi Ahmadzhanovitch Khojaev who had served in the Soviet army in Afghanistan, became group's main military leader in the adopted name of Juma Namangani. After Tajik opposition accepted the peace accord of 1997, Yuldashev and his followers were disappointed and they joined the forces of Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan and set up their military camp in the Tavildara valley until 1999. The members of the group increased from hundreds to nine thousand and started operating very actively in Central Asian region directly affecting peace and security in Tajikistan (Weitz 2004).

The main ideology of IMU is to promote pan- Islamism, and establish an Islamic state in Uzbekistan. In 2000, Tahir Yildashev said in an interview that "the IMU has declared a *Jihad* in order to create an Islamic religious system based on pure *Sharia* laws stemming directly from the Prophet a system he did not think had existed either in Afghanistan or any present-day country", (Mann 2002).

Now the group has changed its name to Islamic Party of Turkestan (IPT), it is expanding its area of operation from China's western Xinjiang province to the Caspian Sea. According to Ahmed Rashid, "Juma Namangani recruited people from all over the Central Asian region as well as Uyghur Muslims from Xinjiang and most importantly in this group we can find now Kazakhs, Tajiks, Uyghurs, Kyrgyz, Chechans and Uzbeks. And here some are trying to create an Islamic state in the region but the primary step for the group is to overthrow the Uzbek government and establishing an Islamic state". (Mann 2002)

Tahir Yuldashev operated from the Otavaliyon mosque of Namangan region of Uzbekistan. His ideas shaped during his extensive travels in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Afghanistan, being influenced with Wahhabism and Deobandism. In Ferghana valley, his ideas of radical Islam spread their network through madrassas and mosques. IMU got active support of Al Qaeda, Taliban, Al Jihad and Harakat ul Ansar. Yuldashev, the military commander Namangani and Saudi trained militant Abdul Ahad started recruiting from other countries as well. Hundreds of Uzbek militants were reportedly operating in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. On orders from Bin Laden, IMU militants took control of South Waziristan, with Yuldashev in command of military activities. After the conclusion of Operation Enduring Freedom, the IMU's infrastructure and man power has been significantly weakened. However, there are still approximately 150 IMU militants who still have the capacity to fight. Yuldashev, his son-in-law and chief lieutenant Dilshod Hodzhiev (who is believed to be in charge of IMU finances), and Ulugbek Kholikov, alias Muhammad Ajub (who is believed to head the IMU's military section) are reportedly hiding in Waziristan, Pakistan. Yuldashev is thought to be in negotiations with other international terrorist organizations and illegal arms traffickers to purchase Russian-manufactured "Igla" portable anti-aircraft missile launchers to use against American targets in Afghanistan" (Baran).

The group reportedly gets its finances from narcotics trade, Al Qaeda and ethnic Uzbeks living in Saudi Arabia, and illegal activities like kidnapping of foreign nationals. The group has recruited the unemployed young people or extremely poor persons by paying approximately \$ 200 every month. According to reports, IMU is very much involved in Central Asian narcotics trafficking to Russia and Europe being the final destination. And they are controlling some 70 percent of heroin and opium trafficking to the whole region and mainly to Tajikistan". (Weitz 2004).

The organisation became weak after the death of its leader Yuldashev in 2009, but the group is an umbrella unit for a number of other organisations such as Jamaat Ansarullah which was formed in 2010 by one of the IMU member Amriddin Tabarov. Besides IMU leader Usman Ghazi pledged its support to Islamic State in September 2014, and the group members started recruiting people from Ferghana valley for the Islamic State. The Jamaat Ansarullah militants have been arrested from Tajikistan for recruiting Tajik people to fight in Syria. Recruiting members from Central Asia is easier for ISIS a compared in Pakistan and Afghanistan" (ICG 2015).

IMU is very much involved in drug trafficking, in the Central Asian region, particularly after the Iranian government curtailed trafficking through Iran which was the main route for smuggling. Therefore, the

Central Asian route with its porous border became a new option. In 2002, 5.5 tons of *heroin* was recovered from Central Asian, mainly from Tajikistan. The main trafficking route is the highway between Khorog on the Afghan - Tajik border and Osh, the largest city of Kyrgyzstan. But in 1990's Khorog- Osh highway got the attention of Kyrgyz government and the United Nation Drug control programme, which considered the place as a major transit point and it took steps to limit the smuggling through enhanced security of this place. In 1997 one project named "Osh Knot" was started. The production of opium rose sharply after Taliban came into power in 1996 and the opium production grew to 2,700 tons in 1997 and in 1998 – 1999 it broke the record of 4,600 tons. Afghanistan thus accounted for 79 percent of world opium production. The Batken route from drugs crossed the Tajik - Kyrgyz border with Jirgatal and Garm in Tajikistan which were strong points of the presence of IMU at the time of civil war in Tajikistan. (Cornell 2005)

## Taliban

Post 9/11 the US led 'war on terror' in Afghanistan defeated the Taliban. However even after their defeat the Taliban continue to be actively posing challenge to the reconstruction process in Afghanistan. According to Ashley Tellis, since the successful presidential election in October 2004, the Taliban insurgency has metastasized in scale, intensity and fury. The Taliban tactics remains limited to "hit and run attacks". Yet their influence is increasingly being felt in areas from where it was previously absent. A new phenomenon is the emergence and rise of Taliban movement within Pakistan itself. The Taliban is even targeting Pakistani forces themselves, historically their main source of support. The two phenomena are linked and share some characteristics both follow different logic in each of the two countries. The organisation's ideology about Islamic integration in Afghanistan under the rule of Taliban was rigid. Taliban also targeted non- Pashtun ethnic and linguistic minorities in Afghanistan. Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaraas and others. Taliban is also involved in illicit trafficking of drugs. According to the UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes) report "opium is playing an important role of Afghanistan's economy and more than half GDP is coming from this, almost 53 percent. Afghanistan in the year 2007 trafficked and produced opiates worth about \$4 billion. The militants are handling the production, distribution and control over this business, the rest is handled by drug traffickers. Most importantly its value increases after each border crossing and the main transit for this is Tajikistan". (UNODC report 2007)

It was in 1994 that Pushtun Taliban emerged as a force from Islamic madrassas and seminaries in Pakistan. After capturing Kabul in 1996, and encouraged by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and with the involvement of Bin Laden, the Taliban conquered the whole of Afghanistan. As a result, in 1998 Taliban's occupation of northern Afghanistan pushed the non- Pashtun minorities into the northeast. The Taliban version of Islam basically emerged from Deobandism followed by Pakistani mullahs in Afghan refugee camps. Deobandis set up a political party Jamiatul-ulema-e-Islam (JUI), set up many madrassas in Pakistan's Pashtun belt giving Afghan refugees and young Pakistanis free education, food, military training and shelter. And with the Saudi funds it has been propagating Wahhabism. Deobandis have literate clerics to teach the puritan Islamic tenets. In 1996, after victory over Afghanistan, JUI became the main recruiter of Pakistani and foreign militant cadres for Taliban. Around 80,000 to 100,000 Pakistani trained militants fought in Afghanistan during the period, 1994 to 1999. Pakistan's ISI played active role in this operation both in Afghanistan and Central Asia creating new type of radical movement in Afghanistan and in its neighbouring Central Asian countries. (Rashid 1999)

## Conclusion

In the whole chapter I have focused on how the external major actors have influenced the revival of Islam in Tajikistan. Because of these actors at present people of the Tajikistan are highly influenced with the radical Islamist thought. As I have already discussed Afghanistan with its Afghan mujahidin with anti-Soviet sentiment spread the Islamic radicalism. This step has given the birth of Taliban, Al Qaeda. Another major actor Pakistan collaborating with Afghanistan in anti-Soviet regime started creating instability in the region with Taliban factor, fertile Af - Pak region for the disturbance in Tajikistan. Uzbekistan from the Fergana valley started operating Islamist movement with IMU, Hizbut Tehrir. Iran with the very important Islamic Revolution in 1979 has given the direction for Islamic revivalism in Tajikistan, and most visible ideological phenomenon. And Saudi Arabia with the financial assistance, pilgrimage destination, Wahhabism, pan Islamism, role of madrassas, religious fundamentalist thoughts. Therefore, Tajikistan youth at present joining the militant groups with the radical thoughts, and these all things has created a huge instability in the region.



Thus, the role of Islamist radical groups and their activities in the name of Jihad, formation of Islamic State, agenda of Islamic Caliphate, Islamic law, revivalist movements etc to destabilise the situation in Tajikistan. Tajik people were affected due to their poverty and by their Islamic faith. Now ISIS is also recruiting people from this region. Tajik government has reported that 190 Tajiks are fighting in the Syrian conflict for ISIS, which is cause of serious concern.

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