

# CENTRAL ASIA: TERRORISM, RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM, AND REGIONAL STABILITY

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## HEARING BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND CENTRAL ASIA OF THE COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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## **CENTRAL ASIA: TERRORISM, RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM, AND REGIONAL STABILITY**

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2003**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST  
AND CENTRAL ASIA,  
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:10 a.m. in Room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (Chairman of the Subcommittee) presiding.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. The Subcommittee will come to order. Thank you so much for being here, the witnesses as well as the members in the audience and the Members of our Subcommittee, our Ranking Member Congressman Gary Ackerman, my good friend from New York.

Since September 11 and the ensuing war on terrorism, United States policy has increasingly focused on Central Asia. U.S. policy has shifted to a comprehensive approach to the region, encompassing assistance and projects addressing security concerns, while highlighting the integral part that political and economic reform, respect for human rights, and the promotion of democracy play as bulwarks against regional instability.

The region faces a number of serious transnational threats chief among them, religious extremism and terrorism. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, there was a great revival of religious activity in Central Asia. Mosque construction mushroomed, partly supported by Pakistani and Saudi money. A brand of radical international Islam, Wahabbism, gave birth to many radical movements, including the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.

The former's views are highly radicalized, advocating the overthrow of governments throughout the Muslim world and their replacement by an Islamic state. Islam has grown quickly in Central Asia and has been met by heavy-handed repression which threatens to radicalize adherents still further and sow the seeds of greater Islamic extremism in the region. In theory, the group rejects terrorism, considering the killing of innocents to be against Islamic law. However, behind this rhetoric there is ideological justification for violence. It is also alleged to have contacts with some groups much less scrupulous about using violence, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, or IMU.

In 1999 and 2000, fighters of the IMU attempted incursions into various areas. Terrorist attacks in 1999 were attributed by the authorities to Islamic radicals linked to the IMU.

There was also a direct link between the increasing threats in Central Asia and the deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan. Afghanistan was a source of extremist ideas, arms, and narcotics which provided resources and created fertile ground for international terrorists and militants such as those from the IMU. It is therefore not surprising to see reports that the United States-led military action in Afghanistan and the defeat of the Taliban seem to have curtailed, at least temporarily, the threat of Islamic extremism in the neighboring countries in Central Asia.

Nevertheless, while many of the IMU camps were destroyed and an IMU leader was reportedly killed during the United States bombing in Afghanistan, recent reports indicate that the IMU is currently attempting to once again expand its activities. There are, therefore, legitimate concerns about Islamic radicalism. However, authorities in the region have been accused of using the fight against terrorism to crack down on political opposition and justify their control over religious activity.

Since September 11, Central Asia leaders have frequently argued against liberalization of political views by citing the region's so-called religious revival and the increased popularity of radical Islamist groups which, in their view, could be empowered by a more open political process. The response is to fight radicalism with extreme measures.

There is the case of Uzbekistan. According to Human Rights Watch, religion becomes criminal in that country as soon as it strays out of the official state-controlled Islam.

Others, including one of our witnesses today, Dr. Martha Brill Olcott, add that the Uzbek Government is behaving much as did its Soviet predecessors, believing that it can dampen the fires of religious fervor through state regulation of religious practice and pushing extremist groups underground through its efforts.

Following massive arrests in Uzbekistan of followers of the two leading militant groups, adherents of the movements have gone underground. Yet their numbers are swelling in the region, particularly among unemployed youth paid to distribute the information put forth by these militants who manipulate religion for a terrorist political agenda.

Thus, the reliance of governments throughout the region on force to meet the challenge posed by these radicals does not only fail to adequately address the problem of Islamic extremism, but it does not bode well for the prospects of democratic reform in the five countries of Central Asia, given the use of force to also stifle peaceful political dissent.

In order to stem the possible influence of groups such as the IMU and others, governments throughout the region will have to exercise a different and, some would say, subtle approach to combatting these threats; namely, opening the political system to greater participation. While opening the political system throughout the region may prove to be difficult, it is not without precedent.

Worth mentioning are the steps taken by the Islamic Movement in Tajikistan. By agreeing to operate within the legal framework of the state, it has demonstrated that it favors the politics of compromise and inclusion and it is prepared to work within a secular legal and political system. And this is the only Central Asian coun-

try to official register an Islamic political movement. One of the party's leaders and a member of the Parliament told the United States' Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in June of this year that although some leaders try to hamper the party's activities, "the constitution protects the party's existence and activities." He further added that, "despite the barriers from some local authorities, his party is working to solve problems according to the law with moderation and with understanding."

While this party does not have significant influence on the country's politics, some would note that its presence in the Parliament through its two seats, shows considerable progress compared to the neighboring countries, for example Uzbekistan, which is considered one of the worst countries for even the most basic Islamic activities.

Indeed, enhancing regional counterterrorism cooperation has been a critical priority for the United States, and we are taking tangible steps to strengthen our common efforts against international terrorism.

At the third annual Central Asia Counterterrorism Conference in June 2002, counterterrorism officials from four Central Asian countries, as well as Russia, Canada, Egypt, Turkey, the United Kingdom, as well as the United States, explored topics such as human rights, the rule of law, and combatting terrorist financing.

The development of these security arrangements serves the added purpose of creating the essential precondition for advanced political development in Central Asia.

As the Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor recently told the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Central Asia:

"There is a firm consensus among all U.S. decisionmakers that a broadening of cooperation will only be possible if these same governments undergo political reforms that will allow the emergence of democratic institutions, without which there can be no lasting stability in the region."

We and the other open societies must therefore condition our systems to Central Asian states not only on their cooperation on the terrorism front, but also on their taking concrete steps toward the establishment of the rule of law, supporting the growth of civil society, and building democratic institutions.

Expectations of greater openness must extend beyond domestic affairs to relations within the region.

With the role of the United States in Central Asia, the region faces the best possible scenario to solve their problems jointly. We are uniquely placed to press for regional cooperation and to monitor regional states' commitment to the real improvement of social, economic, and political conditions.

Only by assisting the region's development into a bastion of stable, free-market democracies, which respect the fundamental human rights of their citizens, can we hope to address the underlying factors which help the rise of extremism and related violence.

We look forward to hearing the views of the panelists on our policy toward the region and how we can contribute to making progress in all of those areas.

And I am very happy to yield to my Ranking Member, Mr. Ackerman.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Ros-Lehtinen follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF FLORIDA, AND CHAIRWOMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND CENTRAL ASIA

Since September 11th and the ensuing war on terrorism, U.S. policy has increasingly focused on Central Asia. U.S. policy has shifted to a comprehensive approach to the region, encompassing assistance and projects addressing security concerns, while highlighting the integral part that political and economic reform, respect for human rights and the promotion of democracy, play as bulwarks against regional instability.

The region faces a number of serious transnational threats—chief among them religious extremism and terrorism.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, there was a great revival of religious activity in Central Asia. Mosques mushroomed, partly supported by Pakistani and Saudi money. A brand of radical, internationalist Islam, Wahabbism, gave birth to the Hizb ut-Tahrir, and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).

The former's views are highly radical, advocating the overthrow of governments throughout the Muslim world and their replacement by an Islamic state.

It has grown quickly in Central Asia and has been met by heavy-handed repression, which threatens to radicalize members still further, and sow the seeds of greater Islamist extremism in the region.

In theory, the group rejects terrorism, considering the killing of innocents to be against Islamic law. However, behind this rhetoric, there is ideological justification for violence in its literature.

It also is alleged to have contacts with some groups much less scrupulous about violence, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan or IMU.

In 1999 and 2000, fighters of the IMU in Tajikistan attempted incursions into Uzbekistan. Terrorist attacks in Tashkent in 1999 were attributed by the authorities to Islamic radicals linked to the IMU.

There was a direct linkage between the increasing threats in Central Asia and the deterioration of the situation in Afghanistan. Afghanistan was a source of extremist ideas, arms and narcotics, which provided resources and created fertile ground for international terrorists and militants, such as those from the IMU.

It is, therefore, not surprising to see reports that the U.S.-led military action in Afghanistan and the defeat of the Taliban, seem to have curtailed, at least, temporarily, the threat of Islamic extremism in neighboring countries in Central Asia.

Nevertheless, while many of the IMU camps were destroyed and an IMU leader was reportedly killed during the U.S. bombing in Afghanistan, recent reports indicate that the IMU is currently attempting to reconstitute itself.

There are, thus, legitimate concerns about Islamic radicalism. However, authorities in the region have been accused of using the fight against terrorism to crack down on political opposition and justify their control over religious activity.

Since September 11th, Central Asia's leaders have frequently argued against political liberalization by citing the region's so-called religious revival and the increased popularity of radical Islamist groups, which, in their view, could be empowered by a more open political process.

The response is to fight radicalism with extreme measures.

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Following massive arrests in Uzbekistan of followers of the two leading militant groups, adherents of the movement have gone underground.

Yet, their numbers are swelling in Tajikistan, and in the border regions of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, particularly among unemployed youth paid to distribute the information put forth by these militants who manipulate religion for a terrorist political agenda.

Thus, the reliance of governments throughout the region on force to meet the challenge posed by Islamic radicals, does not only fail to adequately address the problem of Islamic extremism, but it does not bode well for the prospects of demo-

cratic reform in the five countries of the Central Asian region, given the use of force to also stifle peaceful, political dissent.

In order to stem the possible influence of groups such as the IMU and others, governments throughout the region will have to exercise a different, some would say, “subtle” approach to combating these threats—namely, opening the political system to greater participation.

While opening the political systems throughout the region may prove to be difficult, it is not without precedent.

Worth mentioning are the steps taken by the Islamic movement in Tajikistan. By agreeing to operate within the legal-framework of the state, it has demonstrated that it favors the politics of compromise and inclusion, and is prepared to work within a secular legal and political system.

Tajikistan is the only Central Asian country to officially register an Islamic political movement.

One of the party’s leaders and a member of the parliament told the United States’ Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty in June of this year that, although some local leaders try to hamper the party’s activities, “the constitution protects the party’s existence and activities.”

He further added that, despite the barriers from some local authorities, his party “is working to solve problems according the law, with moderation, with understanding.”

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We and other open societies must, therefore, condition our assistance to Central Asian states, not only on their cooperation on the terrorism front, but also on their taking concrete steps towards establishing the rule of law, supporting the growth of civil society, and building democratic institutions.

Expectations of greater openness must extend beyond domestic affairs to relations within the region.

With the renewed role of the U.S. and the presence of American troops in Central Asia, the region faces the best possible scenarios to solve their problems jointly. We are uniquely placed to press for regional cooperation and monitor regional states’ commitment to the real improvement of social, economic, and political conditions.

Only by assisting the region’s development into a bastion of stable, free-market democracies, which respect the fundamental human rights of their citizens, can we hope to address the underlying factors which foment the rise of extremism and related violence.

We look forward to hearing your views on how our policy toward the region can contribute to progress in these areas.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I thank you very much, Madam Chair, and I am very pleased that the Subcommittee is holding this hearing today under your dynamic leadership. And I want to extend a warm welcome to all of our witnesses. I also want to thank them for coming back after we had to cancel this hearing sometime last July because of the large amount and fast changes of the schedule that was occurring on votes on the House Floor.

The United States has a broad range of important issues in Central Asia, and as you, Madam Chair, and I have both noted previously, those issues have come into sharp focus since September 11 in 2001. All the countries in Central Asia are to be commended for the assistance provided the Coalition forces in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

Even before the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, it was apparent to the leaders in Central Asia that the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and related groups like the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan were a threat to regional peace and stability. Coalition operations in Afghanistan and large increases in United States training and security-related assistance have improved the ability of regional governments to secure their borders and resist the threats posed by terrorist organizations. But this is only a portion of the United States agenda in Central Asia, and for the long term I would suggest perhaps it is not even the most important portion. The remainder of the U.S. agenda has to do with the democratization, establishment of the rule of law, respect for human rights, creation of a free press and transparent market economies.

On these issues, our progress in the region has been sorely lacking. Across the region we see incumbent presidents extending their terms through questionable referendums or constitutional changes. We see political opponents of those in power arrested and prosecuted. We receive reports of American investors who have had their investments expropriated or who have been pressured to change the terms of contracts agreed to long ago.

On top of all this, there are the persistent reports of pervasive corruption at all levels of government. It is in this environment, one of repression, lack of opportunity, and the unfettered corruption that radical movements can take root, be they Islamist or some other ideology.

For the people of Central Asia to truly benefit from democracy and the global economy, these issues must be addressed.

Madam Chair, we must have a clear and consistent message for all our friends and our partners in the global war on terror. Just because you help the U.S. with al-Qaeda doesn't mean you get a pass on all of the other hard issues. This message is equally true to our friends in Central Asia.

And with that, Madam Chair, I look forward to hearing the testimony of today's witnesses.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much Mr. Ackerman.

And Ms. Harris and I have just gotten back from a fact-finding mission in Iraq, and we have a meeting about that in a few minutes, so we will excuse ourselves at the appropriate time and leave it in someone's able hands.

I would like to recognize Ms. Harris for an opening statement.

Ms. HARRIS. Thank you, Madam Chairman. I wish to express my appreciation for your willingness to conduct this hearing. And I also wish to thank the members of the panel for their testimony this morning.

Having just returned with Madam Chairman from a productive, informative, and enriching trip to Iraq, I have become more convinced than ever before that creating stability, prosperity, and freedom in such places as Iraq, Afghanistan, certainly throughout Cen-

tral Asia, must remain the core objective of our Nations war on terror. Thus, today's hearing is particularly timely.

Religious extremism constitutes a major source of the intolerance and oppression that impoverishes and enslaves whole populations. It also crushes the diversity that is vital to the creation of the vibrant representative democracies that provide the engine of hope and opportunity and transforming populations into seedbeds for terror. We must continue to combat religious extremism and the hate it produces, and in order to do so we must continue our efforts to win the hearts and minds of those populations that remain particularly susceptible to the illusory promises that the leaders of religious extremism perpetually convey.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much Ms. Harris.

And it is my pleasure to introduce our first panelist, Assistant Secretary Jones, who was sworn in as Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs on May 31, 2001. Previously she served as Senior Advisor on Energy Diplomacy, after having been a principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the State Department's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs from 1998 to 2000. Secretary Jones was Ambassador in the Central Asian region as well as Executive Assistant to Secretary of State Warren Christopher from 1993 to 1994, and her overseas assignments were concentrated in the Middle East, South Asia and Germany. We welcome you today.

And I wanted to just throw out a question that perhaps you could address in your testimony, because as Ms. Harris and I explained, we will have to leave and come back, and it relates to the role of Interpol. As we know, this is an important resource in the war on terror, but we have had some reports that it is being abused by some countries for political purposes; for example, at the request of the Government of Uzbekistan, Interpol has issued red notices for Mansur and Farid Maqsudi. And as you know, the Maqsudis are U.S. citizens who used to be the in-laws of the Uzbek President, and even though the U.S. Justice Department has determined that the charges against them do not justify the enforcement of red notices here in the U.S., they are still subject to detention when they travel abroad. And I wanted to see what our government is doing to make sure that Interpol is not being used for political purposes in this case or any other case, and certainly that is explicitly prohibited in Interpol's own regulations.

But it is our pleasure to have Secretary Jones with us, and we will have your entire testimony placed in the record, and feel free to summarize. Thank you, Ambassador.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE A. ELIZABETH JONES, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF EUROPEAN AND EURASIAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

Ms. JONES. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would like to summarize my statement. Particularly I want to talk about our policy in the region, and particularly as all three of you have noted, the strategic importance of this region to the United States. This area is even more strategically important to us since 9/11.

I would like to point to some important successes we have had not only in cooperation in counterterrorism, but in pursuing the re-

form agenda that has been very much part of U.S. policy and U.S. relations with each of the five countries of Central Asia since their independence over 10 years ago. But as I will discuss in my summary, progress is uneven and it will take time.

Just in the last year we have spent \$286 million in the region for civil society, for promotion of political and economic change, and on fighting terrorism. We are making headway but I won't tell you that it is easy.

I want to talk about—to discuss these issues and three categories, starting with security. You have all talked about the war on terror and the importance of this region in terms of cooperation with us. Air access to Afghanistan has been very important. That is why we have been using several bases in Central Asia for that access. The overflights that they have given us have been extremely important, and in recent months Kazakhstan has sent an engineering battalion to Iraq.

Terrorism is a very serious issue for this region particularly because of Afghanistan, and because of its proximity to Afghanistan the IMU was active, as you have noted, in the region for quite some time. The IMU leader was killed in Afghanistan at the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom, Namangani, but it is true that the IMU is still active in the region, particularly in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan, and it represents a serious threat to the region and therefore to our interests.

But at the same time, we can talk about this in greater detail. We talked to these governments at various levels, with all of the intensity that we can muster, about the importance of not generating new recruits for these terrorist organizations and particularly about the role of repression in generating potential new recruits. One of the big areas that we work on in security is securing borders. We have spent a considerable amount of this assistance in providing training and detection equipment for border controls.

The Central Asian governments are also very aware of the drug threat and the spillover effects of narcotics trafficking and narcotics in HIV/AIDS, corruption and violence in the region.

Internal reform is sort of the second big category of issues that I wanted to mention briefly this morning, particularly democratic and market economic transformations, because of the extreme interest that the United States has in expanding freedom, tolerance, and prosperity in this region. One of the biggest tools that we use is exchanges. This has been an essential tool for us. Since 1993, 13,000 people from Central Asia have come to the United States for professional academic training or have been trained in country. Just 150 of those have been trained this year. The biggest benefits to us is to increase their understanding of market economy, of democracy, and the relationship between the two.

We are very grateful for the support we have had from Congress for this program and we are hoping to gain the support of the Congress for the \$100 million request we have in right now to support exchanges this year.

We are still facing, though, a lack of cooperation in economic reform and integration that hampers economic growth. Uzbekistan has closed its borders with its neighbors. It has imposed high tariffs on trade. This is a severe problem not only in terms of pros-

perity, but I believe lack of prosperity, poverty, also generates recruits for terrorist organizations.

It is an issue that we discussed in detail and with great intensity with the Government of Uzbekistan. Only the Kyrgyz Republic is a WTO member. Kazakhstan has been slow to agree to the World Trade Organization precepts, but we are hopeful that they will move quickly in that direction.

Cooperation on transportation and other infrastructure is sorely needed in this region. This is where regional cooperation becomes ever more important, particularly where electricity and water are concerned. The integration systems from the Soviet era have broken down, but that doesn't mean that it can't be recreated in an appropriate way based on market economic principles.

Energy is the third area that I would like to talk about briefly this morning. It is U.S. policy to promote reliable and economically sound transit of Caspian oil and gas to global markets. We promote the use of energy revenues for sustained and balanced economic growth and to support education and infrastructure development and repairs in these countries. We are working hard now to engage Kazakhstan in the arrangements that are necessary for it to participate in the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline that the United States has supported for quite some time.

Some of the success stories that I wanted to point to before we get into questions and comments are in Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan is one of the most difficult countries of the five that we—is the most difficult country of the five that we work with. But here we find that our assistance to nongovernmental organizations, our exchange programs and alumni activities provide us the basis for the future of this country. It is these students, these exchanges, that will be the future of this country, and it was in Turkmenistan that one of the Turkmen leaders of the exchange—of our exchange program said to me, “The best sanction against the Turkmen President is to triple this exchange program.” This is how we are going to assure democratic principles finally take root in Turkmenistan.

In the Kyrgyz Republic we are particularly—Kyrgyzstan, after all, has joined the World Trade Organization, but there are still serious poverty issues in Kyrgyzstan. We focus on business skills training, and we are working now on appraisals of the Russian market for a cotton fabric plant in the Ferghana Valley. The Ferghana Valley is particularly important because it is an area where Islamic extremism can easily take root. There are Islamic extremist groups operating there, and so we have put a particular focus on the Ferghana, both on democratic development, democratic infrastructure, civil society, and economic reform.

In Uzbekistan we are particularly working on water resource management, development of water users' associations, water-saving demonstration models for farmers to show how to use the water that comes from Kyrgyzstan more effectively and with greater efficiency. We are working with them on canal cleaning equipment and potable water in Karakalpakistan near the Aral Sea, because that is one of the most serious problems for the people living around the Aral Sea.

In summary, our strategic interests—counterterrorism, non-proliferation, energy and integration into the world community—

are very, very important to us in Central Asia. These are not temporary efforts that we have underway. It is a long-term commitment. Because of the strategic importance of this region and because of the threats that can work through this region and take hold in this region, it is our strong contention that we need to stay engaged no matter how difficult the going is. We talk at every possible level we can. We use our programs as effectively as possible. Every single program that we fund in this region is as much in the U.S. interest as it is in the interest of these countries.

My colleague, Assistant Secretary for Human Rights, Democracy and Labor, Lorne Craner, and I will be traveling to Central Asia the week after next to discuss exactly these issues with each of the leaders of the region and to meet with the civil society nongovernmental organizations on some of our assistance programs.

Thank you very much. I look forward to this session.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Jones follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE A. ELIZABETH JONES, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF EUROPEAN AND EURASIAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Madam Chair, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear today to discuss with you developments in Central Asia and the Administration's policy toward that region.

Since the Soviet Union's collapse, the United States has supported the transition of the Central Asian countries—Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—from Communism toward democratic political systems and market economies. With the exception of Turkmenistan, we have already achieved a great deal, but much still remains to be done.

The United States has three sets of strategic interests in Central Asia:

- *Security*, including our fights against terrorism, proliferation, and narcotics trafficking;
- *Energy*, involving reliable and economically sound transit of Caspian oil and gas to global markets, and the use of energy revenues to foster sustained and balanced economic growth; and
- *Internal reform*, encompassing democratic and market economic transformations in these countries that can support human rights, and expand freedom, tolerance, and prosperity in these countries.

#### *War on Terror*

Despite the long distance that separates the Central Asian states from the United States, we have vital strategic interests there. Since September 11, 2001 the United States has focused in Central Asia on prosecuting the War on Terror and eliminating the influence of terrorist groups, as well as other destabilizing groups. Continuing air access to Afghanistan through Central Asia is an important interest so long as war there continues. Three of the five Central Asian republics border on Afghanistan, and all five have provided support to Operation Enduring Freedom in various forms—bases, overflights, and re-fueling facilities. Recently, Kazakhstan dispatched an engineering battalion to Iraq, where it is engaged in de-mining and water purification projects. Uzbekistan also has an offer on the table to provide a 135-man peacekeeping and medical battalion.

#### *U.S. Efforts*

Moving beyond the immediate post-September 11 period, we have no doubt that true security and stability, and eventual prosperity for the nations of Central Asia lie in democratic and economic reforms, respect for human rights, rule of law, and willingness to cooperate with one another. Moreover, as we continually emphasize to the governments there, progress in these areas is essential to our ability to sustain strong, positive and lasting relationships with them.

When we talk with leaders of Central Asian countries, we always remind them of the need to do a better job of living up to their own promises as well as international commitments to democratic pluralism and economic openness. We emphasize the centrality of such reforms to long-term stability. Today, parallel to our concerns with internal reforms, we also find ourselves increasingly involved with border

security and preventing weapons proliferation, and trafficking in narcotics and other illicit goods. Working closely with a number of partners, such as international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international financial institutions, and other U.S. government agencies, we are helping the nations in the region to overcome these challenges. Through one mechanism or another, we can address “top to bottom” issues, from recommending drug control legislation to training border guards on how to use more sophisticated inspection devices.

To address all these concerns in FY 2003, we spent \$286 million on assistance to Central Asia to build civil society, promote political and economic change, and combat criminal activities and terrorism. Our vision is simple: namely, that these countries remain independent and become democratic, stable and prosperous partners of the United States who respect human rights, are increasingly integrated into the global economy, and avoid the poverty, isolation, and intolerance that breed terrorism and fundamentalism.

*Exchanges: A Vital Tool To Effect Change*

Exchange programs and their alumni activities strengthen democracy, tolerance, and the development of civil society. Since 1993, we have brought over 13,000 citizens from the five Central Asian states to the United States for short-term professional or long-term academic training, including over 150 this year. These programs give participants the opportunity to see first-hand how a market democracy operates in practice. They also establish valuable, long-lasting relationships with American counterparts. One Turkmen participant in an exchange program told me: “If you really want to punish the Niyazov regime, triple the number of exchanges.”

We have also supported the foundation of an independent university, the American University of Central Asia, located in Bishkek, which has become a center of academic integrity and excellence for the region.

Madam Chair, these vital educational and exchange programs are probably our most important tool for effecting the long-term transformation of these countries into market-based democracies. Unfortunately, these programs are under threat of being zeroed out in this year’s Commerce, Justice, State appropriations bill. I know the Congress is facing extraordinary budget pressure this year, but we need your help so that we do not lose these critical programs. We hope that you and other members of the Subcommittee will seek to ensure full funding for the President’s request of \$100 million in FY 2004.

*Terrorism*

Countering Islamic intolerance and extremism are growing and serious challenges in Central Asia. We are working with governments to eliminate the root causes as well as to assist them in dealing with terrorist and guerrilla activities. Despite the death of its military leader during Operation Enduring Freedom the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), a U.S.-designated terrorist organization, is active in the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and reportedly Kazakhstan. No longer capable of meaningful military action, the IMU continues to threaten the states of the region as well as American interests as a terrorist organization. We are working closely with these governments by providing training and equipment to overcome this adversary and to create the social conditions necessary to erode support for the IMU. On the last point, we are using our assistance to create jobs, improve health care, support schools and find money for small businesses to combat the attraction of extremist groups. At the same time, we explain constantly to the leaders of these countries that repression merely radicalizes the population and generates recruits for the IMU.

*Religious Extremism*

Another group, Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT), active in Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (as well as more than 30 other countries worldwide), presents a more complex problem. It is stridently anti-Western. Although there is no confirmed evidence of HT’s involvement in violent actions as an organization, HT propaganda has praised martyrdom operations against Israel and called for attacks against coalition forces in Iraq. HT leaflets have also claimed that the United States and the United Kingdom are at war with Islam, and have called for all Muslims to defend the faith and engage in jihad against these countries. It seeks to replace the regimes of the region with a supranational Islamic caliphate. Its appeal for revolutionary transformation could be a significant danger to states in the region that do not undertake the political and economic reforms necessary to de-fang its ideological message. Governments need to open a political space and give citizens a way to participate in constructive political dialogue so that they are not attracted to HT or other extremist groups.

*Regional Stability: Economic Cooperation and Integration*

Reluctance to cooperate across borders in the region has impeded economic growth. Uzbekistan's decision to close the border and erect tariff barriers along with its refusal to cooperate on transportation questions is particularly onerous. Why deny farmers in southern Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Tajikistan access to markets, when these very same farmers would then have the income to purchase goods from Uzbekistan? Traditions of cronyism and statist control stifle the economic growth that arises from market reforms and regional economic cooperation. Moreover, only the Kyrgyz Republic has become a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and opened its economy. Even Kazakhstan, despite its many economic reforms, has moved slowly to reach agreement with its negotiation partners on WTO accession protocols.

Cooperation on transportation and other infrastructure areas such as electricity and water is needed. The integrated systems of the Soviet period have broken down. Lacking the political will to compromise for the good of all, governments in the region have failed to replace these systems with new modes of cooperation. For example, despite a general shortage of water and a strong push from the United States and the international community, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have yet to resolve their dispute over diversions from the Amu Darya River, a failure that contributes to the strangulation of the Aral Sea.

*Success Stories*

I have described the challenges. But, despite the many difficulties, we have scored some important successes. Our policy of engagement on all fronts is helping to tie the countries of Central Asia into the world economy and community. Our programs to develop non-governmental organizations promote citizen participation and more vibrant civil societies. In some particularly difficult countries, such as Turkmenistan, our assistance to NGOs is crucial to those brave and lonely citizens striving to carve out some sphere of public life not dominated by the state. In the Kyrgyz Republic, where there is more space for civil society, a network of NGOs carried out a successful campaign to repeal an onerous government decree that would have limited freedom of speech and the press.

Concerning economic reform, in the Kyrgyz Republic, the United States is providing business skills training and conducting appraisals of the Russian market in support of a cotton fabric plant in the Ferghana Valley region of Osh. Support for local governance has led to a new law that drastically increases the ability of local governments to manage their finances. Micro-lending programs have helped more than 170,000 clients, primarily poor women, obtain capital to improve their businesses, earn a living and feed their families. The repayment rate for the micro-lending programs is extraordinarily high—roughly 99 percent.

In the energy field, the United States is helping Kazakhstan and international oil firms develop the legal framework required to provide access for oil producers in Kazakhstan to the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline. This effort will extend the reach of our multiple Caspian pipeline strategy to Central Asia. Our objective in supporting this network is to afford the Caspian states reliable, commercially attractive, and environmentally sound alternatives to a previous pipeline system that exclusively transited Russia. By so doing, we can help enhance global energy security, bolster the independence of Caspian energy producing countries, and deepen the integration of countries along these pipeline routes into the global economy.

The United States is helping Uzbekistan more effectively manage its water resources. Programs include establishment of water users associations, water-saving demonstration models for farmers, improved water district management, procurement of equipment needed to clean the canals and maintain the infrastructure, and providing potable water in Karakalpakstan near the Aral Sea. If we succeed, our program to use water more wisely in Uzbekistan will benefit the entire region in terms of agricultural output and job creation. Uzbekistan introduced currency convertibility in consultation with the IMF, announced a promising agricultural reform program that we want to support, and plans to replicate decentralized health care reforms that we hope to pilot test in three districts in the Ferghana Valley.

Dealing with the roots of extremism is perhaps the clearest example of our diplomacy and assistance programs working hand-in-glove. In Central Asia, poor economic and social conditions and widespread corruption strengthen the appeal of extremist Islam in the Ferghana Valley. We seek to head off conflict by improving infrastructure, creating employment opportunities, and helping to develop and strengthen civil society. We are creating jobs through marketing assistance. In Dushanbe, we helped a local technology company plan and organize for growth. The company now has 50 new employees and has quadrupled equipment sales with a 150% increase in its internet services outlets.

To promote educational reform and fight corruption, we have introduced merit-based education to the region. Working with the Kyrgyz Government, we developed and aided in administration of the National Scholarship Test. On July 3, President Akayev of the Kyrgyz Republic congratulated 200 high school graduates who received top scores on the test and will now be entering the Kyrgyz university of their choice based on merit, rather than family or political connections. In 2003, for the second time, the test was funded by FREEDOM Support Act assistance and administered at 83 sites throughout the country. These students and more than 5,000 others out of over 35,000 test takers will receive national scholarships this year.

Weak controls on the proliferation of weapons, weapons technology and expertise hurt our own security as well as that of the countries of the region. Therefore we are helping all of the countries in the region with security assistance. For example, our programs—which complement our counter-terrorism assistance—include continuing the demilitarization of the former chemical weapons facility in Nukus and enhancing the air patrol and interdiction capabilities of Uzbekistan's Ministry of Defense and Border Guards. We continue to work with Kazakhstan on the conversion of the former biological warfare facilities in Stepnogorsk into a technology park. And just this month, the Department of State led a delegation of American experts that visited former biological and chemical weapons institutes in Georgia, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan as part of a program intended to redirect former weapons scientists toward peaceful, sustainable and commercially viable research.

#### *Continuing Challenges*

Despite our successes, we have much more to do. For example:

We are working to promote political pluralism. Silencing of critics by all the governments of Central Asia continues in varying degrees. The centuries-long tradition of autocratic rule, capped by Soviet totalitarianism, still informs the thinking of many. The propensity of political elites to perpetuate their rule should not be underestimated, and none of the governments in the region can be considered tolerant of dissent. Regrettably, Kazakhstan has not responded to an OSCE report that imprisoned opposition journalist Sergei Duvanov's trial was marked by procedural violations and lacked sufficient evidence to convict him by ensuring that he receives due process during the appeals process. Opposition leader Galymzhan Zhakiyanov faces four new politically motivated charges of tax evasion and has yet to receive a reply from the presidential administration to his request for a pardon. In Uzbekistan, two May deaths due to torture of suspects under detention represent a serious setback to Uzbekistan's human rights record; we have received no response to high-level demarches calling to account those responsible for the deaths. We had high hopes for Uzbekistan to address the serious problem of torture after its cooperation with the visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture. Unfortunately, the Government of Uzbekistan has not yet implemented his recommendations in response to his conclusion that torture remains systematic in Uzbek jails. We urge Uzbekistan to swiftly carry out the Action Plan to combat torture. Harassment of the media continues, including the fact that the courts have convicted independent journalist Ruslan Sharipov in a trial falling far short of international procedural norms; he has reportedly been beaten while in jail.

No country in the region has held a free and fair democratic election. Moreover, attempts by governments to curtail political activity through spurious or selective prosecutions, and through removing opposition candidates from the ballot are common. Kazakhstan has pledged to adopt a new liberal elections law that meets OSCE standards. Though the current draft before parliament is not OSCE-compliant, we hope that Kazakhstan will continue its close cooperation with the OSCE to ensure that it is. We have also emphasized the importance of a normal, constitutional transfer of power in the Kyrgyz Republic upon President Akayev's promised departure from office in 2005. After the disappointing and flawed constitutional referendum there in February, we hope that the Kyrgyz government will cooperate with OSCE expert advisors to ensure that resulting legislation meets international standards.

Religious tolerance has diminished in some countries and improved somewhat in others. Most governments in the region are uncomfortable with proselytizing by non-Orthodox, non-Sunni religions, although Kazakhstan's President Nazarbayev has displayed leadership through his sponsorship of a September conference on religion focusing on tolerance and mutual understanding. We have worked where we can to promote registration requirements that are clear and reasonable and that do not prevent minority religious groups from carrying out their legitimate activities. There may be openings in several countries to help rekindle the tolerance and moderation that is indigenous to Central Asia through development of primary and secondary school curricula and preservation of cultural sites and manuscripts. In

Uzbekistan, we urged the Government to submit its restrictive law on religion to the OSCE/ODIHR panel of experts for review, which the Government did in June. Now we will continue to press it to use those findings in amending the restrictive law. In addition, the State Department has created a program to promote religious pluralism in Uzbekistan. Activities include partnerships between American and Uzbek universities to develop comparative religious studies curricula and exchanges that bring religious and community leaders to the United States to observe inter-faith relations, how Muslims live in America, and the separation between church and state.

Although all countries of Central Asia fall short on key human-rights indicators, there are distinctions among them. Tajikistan has shown considerable progress in protection of human rights, but the June 2003 constitutional referendum enabling the president to serve another 14 years was a disappointment. To my dismay, Kazakhstan has fallen short of the mark in a number of high-profile cases that have marred its overall record. Over the last year, Uzbekistan has moved itself toward the negative end of the spectrum with the widespread arrest, torture, and imprisonment of political opponents.

Worst of all, the situation in Turkmenistan warrants particular attention because of the concentration of power in the hands of one man, whose regime is responsible for a large number of documented abuses of political, civil and religious rights. The re-imposition of exit visas, which we were told was a temporary measure after the November 2002 alleged attempt on President Niyazov's life, shows no sign of disappearing. Oppression of religious minorities continues, and appears to intensify with the passage of a proposed law to criminalize unregistered religious activities that are now merely administrative infractions. The government of Turkmenistan even refuses to register groups that have met legal requirements and have filed the proper documents. We remain deeply concerned about the poor human rights situation in Turkmenistan and will continue to call upon Turkmenistan to comply with the recommendations of the OSCE report resulting from the Moscow Mechanism and with the resolution of the UN Commission on Human Rights, both of which the United States cosponsored.

#### *Conclusion*

Not surprisingly, the challenges of the transition process in Central Asia are far greater than in Eastern Europe and some of the European parts of the former Soviet Union, and 9/11 and Afghanistan sharpened our appreciation of the importance of not letting these states fail. Our big strategic interests in Central Asia—counterterrorism, non-proliferation, energy, the integration of this isolated and long-dominated region into the world community, and the expansion of freedom and prosperity—are not temporary. For this reason, we in the Administration are committed—as I know Congress is—to long-term engagement in Central Asia in the face of many difficult challenges. We are grateful for your funding support and that of your Congressional colleagues for our initiatives in Central Asia. Our continuing assistance through the FREEDOM Support Act and other assistance accounts is essential to promoting U.S. interests in Central Asia. Indeed, our engagement is already bearing fruit. Working together with our international partners, the United States will continue to be a force for change in the region. Truly, we have no alternative.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you and we look forward to hearing from you and Secretary Craner when you come back from the region as well. Perhaps we could have a roundtable discussion with both of you and our Subcommittee Members. And I know that you will address my question later, but I wanted to make sure that Ms. Harris would have an opportunity to also ask a question before we both have to leave. So perhaps you could address mine. But before, I will recognize Ms. Harris for a question.

Ms. HARRIS. Thank you, Madam Chair.

A number of violent incidents in Central Asia have occurred over the past few months that point to the strong signs of resurgence of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the IMU. Where is the IMU currently active and where are they receiving their funding, and what is the possibility that the soft targets that the IMU is reportedly active in searching for include U.S. military Embassies,

bases, or other interests, and have their tactics and skills evolved over time?

Ms. JONES. Yes, thank you. I will address that as soon as I address the issue of the Maqsudi family and the Interpol red notices. As you very correctly noted, we have succeeded in removing the Maqsudi family from the Interpol database as far as the United States is concerned. We are unable to do that in other countries. Interpol is active and has the Maqsudi family on their roles in other countries.

There is no question, however, in our mind that the request by the Uzbek Government for these red notices was based—was a politically motivated request. We have discussed this with the Uzbek Government, and I am sure I will have an opportunity to discuss that when I am there in a week and a half.

On the IMU and violent incidents, the IMU was seriously damaged during OEF. However, you are absolutely right; there is a resurgence of the abilities of the IMU to operate in four of the five of the Central Asian countries. We are attacking the IMU with these governments by upgrading their ability to work both in terms of intelligence development of what is the IMU, where is it operating, exactly who are the people involved; but, more importantly, we are working with them on border controls to know who is crossing the border, whether they are members of the IMU, whether they are teams focused on carrying out attacks. That is one of the reasons that we have provided helicopters to the Kyrgyz border control so that they can control their borders precisely for this reason.

But at the same time, as I mentioned earlier, we are also very aggressive in discussing with the governments of the region that repressive actions only hurt the cause of reducing the ability of IMU to operate and because repression absolutely leads to the ability of the IMU to recruit disaffected people in each of these countries.

Do we think that the IMU is targeting U.S. installations? We assume that. I don't know at this point exactly how much hard intelligence we have that a particular facility is being targeted. There is no particular hard intelligence right this minute. But we all always assume that that is a possibility. That is one of the legacies of 9/11, and frankly it is one of the legacies of way before 9/11 that we always assume that we are targets.

The soft targets are the greatest concern, because it is clear—we know that terrorist organizations move away from the hardened targets to the softer targets, so we have very aggressive efforts with the American communities in each of these countries to make sure they know what the threat is, they know whether or not—what the possibilities are of their being targeted, and we work with them on developing their own security abilities and their ability to see what is potentially a threat to their operations or their personnel.

Ms. HARRIS. Mr. Chair, if I may. And just the last question: Do you see their techniques evolving, becoming more sophisticated as we are seeing in Iraq?

Ms. JONES. I don't know that that is the case in Central Asia, but that is something that I haven't checked on in the last couple

of months, to see if in the last couple of months there is new information about techniques evolving. We haven't seen it on the ground yet. It doesn't mean that my colleagues, who are focused on this much more intensively on a day-to-day basis than I am, know this. But that is something that I would be happy to check on.

Mr. CHABOT [presiding]. Okay. The gentlelady's time has expired.

The distinguished gentlelady from Nevada is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. BERKLEY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And welcome to our Committee. I appreciate having you. I didn't have the opportunity to hear your remarks, but I will read the testimony with great interest.

But I would like to follow up on a couple of things that were said, and if you could give me an idea of what we are going to do about these two issues I would greatly appreciate it. I understand from what I heard from your comments that the red notices have been lifted in the United States and the Maqsudi family is able to travel with relative ease if they are going from New York to L.A. But as you know, the red notices still exist if they travel abroad. And it is my understanding that they are subject to detention and harassment whenever they do travel abroad.

Could you give more—or specific information about what our government is doing to make sure that Interpol is not used for political purposes? And I am afraid in that part of the world, Interpol is used for political purposes in this particular case, and in general, since using Interpol for political purposes is something that is explicitly prohibited by Interpol's own bylaws.

Ms. JONES. The work that we do with Interpol on specific cases is basically done on specific cases. I can't tell you.

Ms. BERKLEY. And can you direct your remarks to this particular case?

Ms. JONES. Yes.

Ms. BERKLEY. The Maqsudis.

Ms. JONES. We are not engaged internationally in a campaign to—with other countries on the specifics of Interpol arrests of the Maqsudi family.

Ms. BERKLEY. And why is that?

Ms. JONES. Because it is an issue that each government must address specifically. But if I can use a couple of other examples, where we have had—where we have seen others who have been detained by other governments based on Interpol arrest requests from a variety of countries that we believe to be politically motivated, we work directly with each of those governments to provide the information as we know it as to why we believe X or Y arrest request is politically motivated. We had a recent case in Greece in which we worked to that end.

Ms. BERKLEY. Have you done that with the Uzbek Government in this particular case?

Ms. JONES. We have discussed in detail with the Uzbek Government the Maqsudi case. There is no question about that. And I will be out there, as I say, in 2 weeks to discuss this and many, many other cases. But we have not discussed with any other government the Interpol red notices on the Maqsudi case.

Ms. BERKLEY. I would like to urge that the State Department do that. This is obviously not only an abuse of power by the Uzbek President, this not only has political overtones but personal overtones as well, and Interpol should not be used for that purpose.

Let me ask you one other question. And I have received disturbing reports about the activities of the daughter of the President of Uzbekistan, Gulnora Karimova. Am I saying it right?

Ms. JONES. Close.

Ms. BERKLEY. Close enough. Who, as you know, is currently holding the two children of her former husband illegally in Uzbekistan. At the same time, I have reason to believe that she is making a tremendous amount of money trafficking in prostitutes. Her travel agency has been awarded a monopoly on travel from Uzbekistan to Dubai, and I understand that most of the people who use this service are Uzbek girls between the age of 18 and 25 who are being transported to the United Arab Emirates for the purpose of prostitution.

Given President Bush's speech which I applauded at the United Nations last month, in which he strongly condemned the sex trade and the priority Congress gives this issue, what is the State Department doing about this situation in Uzbekistan, or are we turning a blind eye?

Ms. JONES. The trafficking in persons programs that we have throughout the world—but the ones I know best, of course, are in the Europe-Eurasia region—are very, very aggressive. We have a whole set of benchmarks that we have worked on with the Uzbek Government—we have worked on to present to the Uzbek Government that are the kinds of issues that we would like to see them address—to address trafficking in persons problems in Uzbekistan.

That said, we do not see that there are very many cases of trafficking in Uzbekistan yet, but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't attack the problem head on. And as I said, we have got a whole set of benchmarks that we are working on very aggressively with them.

The issue of Gulnora Karimova and the allegations that she herself is engaged in trafficking is something I first heard about yesterday. It is something that I have asked our trafficking experts to look into to see if this information can be corroborated, and we will pursue it as we are able to verify the information.

Ms. BERKLEY. Well, I have affidavits from women that state clearly that they were transported for the purpose of prostitution by the daughter of the Uzbek President. If you don't have those affidavits I would be delighted to provide them to you.

Ms. JONES. I would be very grateful to have them, because it is exactly that kind of hard information that we can pursue with great vigor.

Ms. BERKLEY. All right, thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you. The gentlelady's time has expired.

The gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Pitts, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PITTS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will submit my opening statement for the record.

Madam Ambassador, to expand on the last line of questioning, not just in Uzbekistan, but in Central Asia as a whole, what is the United States doing to combat human trafficking? What are the obstacles that we face in these countries that must be overcome to alleviate this problem? Is the trafficking problem so ingrained and profitable that a solution is out of sight? Or, might these states face reductions in U.S. security assistance if they do not reform?

Ms. JONES. The trafficking problem is not so great in these countries that we can't attack it and attack it very vigorously. We have very good cooperation with each of the governments in the region about the importance of attacking this problem. As we have benchmarks with Uzbekistan, so we have them with each of the other countries, and they relate to each of the three categories that we work on with trafficking, both in terms of making sure that the—that potential trafficking victims recognize what is a genuine job opportunity and what is a trap for trafficking, where they could be diverted. Second, to make sure that, for example, Embassies of each of these countries in destination countries know how to handle and what to do about—what to do with and how to help their citizens when they are released from or when they are rescued from prostitution in destination countries. But most importantly, to make sure that there is a legal infrastructure in each of these countries so that when traffickers are found, that they can be detained and prosecuted for their crime; that there is a specific legal bar in each of these countries to trafficking persons, and that it is not just part of some other criminal act.

As I said, we are getting extremely good cooperation from each of these countries. It is a fairly new issue to each of them in terms of the legal ramifications, the need for prosecution, and the need for taking care of the victims.

The last area that I will mention is the assistance that we are providing as necessary to nongovernmental organizations and other civil society groups who are focused on helping traffic victims once they return to each of these countries. And a lot of that, of course, is related to job creation, some of the economic reform and economic structural issues that I discussed in my opening remarks.

Mr. PITTS. Which of the five Central Asian countries is making the best progress as far as prosecution of traffickers? Also, are we helping these countries cooperate across national boundaries to combat human trafficking?

Ms. JONES. That is a very good point, is exactly the cooperation across national boundaries. They are sharing information about traffickers. One of the biggest problems is exactly the level of regional cooperation that we are doing a tremendous amount of work on.

Prosecution—we haven't gotten to the level of prosecution of traffickers. We have got to find them first and develop information intelligence on the trafficking rings, but that is something that I have great confidence that we can do, because we have done so much work in these countries already on legal reform, on judicial reforms, on anticorruption measures, because all of that is related to our ability and these countries' ability to—these governments' ability to attack trafficking.

Mr. PITTS. Due to poverty and heavy unemployment, the youth of the Ferghana Valley are especially vulnerable to extremist recruitment attempts. What is the United States doing to help inoculate this vulnerable group from outside influence?

Ms. JONES. What we have done in the Ferghana Valley is picked a few towns or villages where we have put in very comprehensive assistance programs. So that we don't have just some agricultural reform programs through the Ferghana Valley, and some education programs and some exchange programs and some judicial reform programs, we have put a whole comprehensive package in place in several towns and villages where we thought that the danger of Islamic extremism was the greatest, so that we could sit down with the leaders of these places, the civil society organizations and these places in the Ferghana Valley, to work out what is the best way for us to go after this. And it is job generation, education, and a lot of discussion with civil society and with government leaders about the importance of not using repressive police tactics as a way to control Islamic extremism, trying to persuade them that that is exactly what creates Islamic extremism, opposite of what the intention is.

Mr. PITTS. Russia appears to be reexerting its role in Central Asia. What is our policy toward the region in light of Russia's recent actions, particularly in relation to the recent agreement for the Kant Air Base Bishkek?

Ms. JONES. We have a very comprehensive and active dialogue with the Russians on Central Asia and on the United States—what the United States role is in Central Asia; what our goals are there and why we are doing what we are doing.

Transparency is the key to these discussions. They are held most intensively under the chairmanship of Deputy Secretary Armitage, with his Russian counterpart, Deputy Foreign Minister Trubnikov. These are formal discussions that we hold twice a year. But that doesn't mean that there aren't an awful lot of suggestions that go on in the meantime.

Transparency is key to this. We have broad agreement with the Russians that the work that we are doing in Central Asia is precisely to counter terrorism, which is something that we and the Russians agree is a top goal, a top strategic goal, a mutual goal of the United States and Russia. And we consult as much as we possibly can about what exactly we are doing in Khanabad, the base in Uzbekistan, what exactly we are doing in the Manas Air Base, and we are engaging them in discussions of what the exact purpose is of their presence at Kant Air Base so that we can coordinate and collaborate and make sure that our policies against terrorism, against proliferation, against narcotics, are in sync.

Mr. CHABOT. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. PITTS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CHABOT. The gentleman from South Dakota, Mr. Janklow, is recognized for 5 minutes if he would like to ask questions.

Mr. JANKLOW. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Ma'am, I have just got a couple of questions for you as I have gone through your testimony. I wasn't here for your oral testimony, I was at an ag meeting, but as I have gone through and reviewed your testimony, you list—at the end of it, you talk about the good

things that are happening. But in reality, with these countries, these five countries in this area, they are having trouble with prostitution, they are having trouble with trade between their borders, they are having trouble settling water disputes, they are having trouble dealing with infrastructure that needs to be rebuilt because it is falling apart, they are having trouble in that they repress the religion, some of them within their borders.

I mean in reality, where are we really making headway in terms of the people themselves thinking that there is a friend out there that is us, a long ways away? Don't they really associate us with the actions of their government? Aren't they the same as people elsewhere around the world?

Ms. JONES. Actually, on the contrary. The kind of progress that we have been able to make with our technical assistance and other programs are particularly notable in Kazakhstan on the economic reform side. The economic infrastructure, legal infrastructure for economic life there is really very good.

It is good in the Kyrgyz Republic as well, although there, because of lack of resources, contrary to Kazakhstan, it is much more difficult for the government to create the kinds of jobs that bring the prosperity that is so vital and necessary to these countries.

What the United States—the representation of the United States is made not only on the technical assistance that we have provided, but, more importantly, on the support that we provide civil society, that we provide free media, that we provide human rights organizations. These are virtually all local organizations. They are all—the members of these organizations are people who are committed, personally committed to development of civil society and the political transitions to put in place—the political transitions institutions and mechanisms that allow for the central election economics, for example, to put in place the kinds of voter lists that are necessary, the kinds of debates that are necessary for every political campaign. Were it not for the support that the United States provides these organizations, they would not be able to function. And as tough as it is, they are the ones who come to us and say, please don't abandon us; you are the ones that are helping us to keep going.

Mr. JANKLOW. So you think that—and I mean I am not arguing with you at all. I am glad you have made this explanation. But you really believe that we are making a big difference in the lives of the ordinary citizens out there every day with respect to the kinds of repressive things that really turn people off against their governments?

Ms. JONES. The kind of repressive activities or actions that some of the governments undertake are ones that we try to influence as much as we can through a very intense diplomatic effort.

Mr. JANKLOW. I find it amazing—I mean, to the extent that one of these countries, one or more of them, are out there recruiting or rounding up young women and shipping them off to another country for purposes of prostitution, and our government doesn't know about it, but organizations and other people do, I mean it leads me to believe either, one, it isn't happening, or, two, we are really missing the boat in terms of what it is that we should know that we don't know.

Ms. JONES. We are very fortunate that we don't have a situation in which governments are rounding up young women to send them off to prostitution. As I said, I would be very interested to see these documents about Gulnora Karimova. But there are many, many problems in these countries; there is no question about it. The transition has been going on for 13 years. So to some it sounds like a lot. But the progress, I grant you it is incremental, but I would never advocate walking away. We cannot walk away.

Mr. JANKLOW. One additional question, ma'am. With respect to what I will call religious fundamentalism that can be dangerous—because not all fundamentalism is dangerous, a large amount of it isn't—but to the extent where you can have religious zealot activity that can be dangerous, is this an increasing thing, a decreasing thing, or a constant in these areas, if I can clump them all together for the question?

Ms. JONES. Each of the countries is different because of the different cultural histories that they have had over centuries. So there is a greater discussion of religion in Uzbekistan. There always has been. There is a greater community of religious scholars. Therefore, there is also a greater ability of extremist organizations to engage in that kind of discussion.

It is much tougher in a place like Kazakhstan where the Soviets succeeded in rubbing out a lot of religious practice. So it is much harder for the IMU, for instance, to take hold in a place like Kazakhstan.

Mr. JANKLOW. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you. The gentleman's time has expired. I am going to withhold my questions until the next panel.

I spent the last week in Iraq and Jordan and Turkey, and just flew back. Got in late last night. And I am not sure if I am jet lagged, and I don't want to do anything too bizarre up here. So at this point what I am going to do is thank you, Madam Ambassador, for your testimony this morning, and I will go ahead and introduce the second panel here. So thank you very much.

We have a very distinguished second panel, four witnesses, and I would like to introduce them as they are coming up to the table. Our second witness will be Dr. Ariel Cohen who has been at the Heritage Foundation since 1992. As a native of Yalta on the shores of the Black Sea, Dr. Cohen brings firsthand knowledge to his studies of the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia. Doctor Cohen earned his Ph.D. at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, and is a member of the Council of Foreign Relations, International Institute of Strategic Studies in London, and American Association for Advancement of Slavic studies. We welcome you here this morning, Dr. Cohen.

Our next witness following Dr. Cohen will be Dr. Steven Blank who has served as the Army War College Strategic Studies Institute's expert on the Soviet bloc and the post-Soviet world since 1989. Prior to that he was the associate professor of Soviet Studies at the Center for Aerospace Doctrine, Research and Education, Maxwell Air Force Base, and taught at the University of Texas, San Antonio, and at the University of California, Riverside. He holds a B.A. in history from the University of Pennsylvania and an

M.A. and Ph.D. in history from the University of Chicago, and we welcome you here also, Dr. Blank.

Our following witness would be Dr. Martha Brill Olcott, who is a Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, DC, and a Professor Emeritus in the Department of Political Science at Colgate University where she taught from 1974 through 2001. Professor Olcott received her B.A. from SUNY, Buffalo, in 1970, and her Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1978. In July 1994 Dr. Olcott was named by President Clinton to be Director of the Central Asian American Enterprise Fund where she served until 2000, having been named Vice Chairman in 1999. Earlier, she held a formal appointment as consultant in Central Asian Affairs for former Acting Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger. We welcome you here, Dr. Olcott.

And our final witness will be Dr. Fiona Hill. She is a Senior Fellow in the Foreign Policy Studies Program at the Brookings Institution. Prior to joining the Brookings institution, Dr. Hill was the Director of Strategic Planning at the Eurasia Foundation in Washington, DC from 1999 through 2000, and continues to serve as Advisor to the President on issues of strategy. From 1994 through 1999, she was the Associate Director of the Strengthening Democratic Institutions Project, SDI at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, and from 1991 through 1994 she was Director of Harvard's Project on Ethnic Conflict in the Former Soviet Union, the coordinator of Harvard's Trilateral Study on Japanese-Russian-United States relations, and a research associate at the Kennedy School of Government.

And we welcome all the witnesses here this morning, and we will begin with Dr. Cohen.

**STATEMENT OF ARIEL COHEN, PH.D., RESEARCH FELLOW,  
THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION**

Mr. COHEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CHABOT. And I don't mean to interrupt you, but I am sure the witnesses are aware of the 5-minute rule and there is a lighting system in front of you. The green light will be on for 4 minutes, followed by the yellow light, and the red light means if you could wrap up we would greatly appreciate it. Thank you.

Mr. COHEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to focus on what I call the "battle for hearts and minds" because the threat of radical Islam around the world and in Central Asia has been addressed for military means, but less so addressed as the war of ideas, as President Bush's national security strategy defines.

The United States has projected power to Central Asia primarily after 9/11, and because of the engagement in Afghanistan we are remaining in Central Asia primarily because of the ongoing operations in Afghanistan as well as to support our missions in that part of the world.

We do have a good military and strategic relationship with a number of governments in the region. However, the governments themselves, in a way, suffer from a lack of democratic legitimacy, and that breeds opposition, including the underground opposition.

Talking about that opposition, I particularly refer to an organization called Hizb-ut-Tahrir al-Islami, the Islamic Army of Libera-

tion, which is a transnational Islamic underground organization that had been started by Palestinian clerics back in 1952/53, and the idea is to create a global Islamic state, an Islamic military dictatorship called the Caliphate, the Khilafah in Arabic.

Hizb-ut-Tahrir has been particularly active in Central Asia at this stage of the game through propaganda, through underground meetings, through their interpretation of the Koran and other Islamic holy scriptures. Hizb-ut-Tahrir is extremely anti-American. It targets the United States, as well as the Jews, as the enemies of all Muslims. The Central Asian governments try to go after them and have arrested a number of Hizb-ut-Tahrir members, probably in the high hundreds or low thousands, but because of the poor economic performance of these governments and because of the lack of democratic legitimacy, these governments have not been very successful so far in decreasing the support or otherwise undermining Hizb-ut-Tahrir.

As I said, Hizb-ut-Tahrir is aiming at overthrowing the existing regimes in Central Asia. It would like to establish an Islamic dictatorship there first, and then expand it, use it as a base and expand it to other Muslim countries.

And in order to address these threats, I am suggesting that the United States Government has to work with the governments in Central Asia to strengthen democratization, to address the criticism of Hizb-ut-Tahrir in terms of lack of economic development. But at the same time, we need to increase our intelligence collection on this organization. We need to condition security assistance to Central Asia on economic reform, encourage democracy and popular participation, and discredit radicals and encourage moderates.

So many of these prescriptions can apply to a broader war of ideas, a broader battle for hearts and minds elsewhere in the Islamic world.

We did have a Commission on Public Diplomacy out of the State Department, but besides the commission, and besides some increases in international broadcasting, we have very little in terms of having actual programming on the ground, funded activities, that would be based on the activities we have done during the Cold War to undermine the ideology of communism.

This country had great successes in undermining communism. What am I talking about? I am talking about increasing expertise, including language, including religious scholarship, including understanding how the public opinion develops in Central Asia and elsewhere in the Islamic world. I am talking about creating components both in the public diplomacy legal level, let us say at the State Department, but as well as a clandestine political action capability of the Central Intelligence Agency, a capability that is missing since the 1970s. I am talking about tracking the radical preachers in the madrasas, these factories of terrorism that have been spawned with Saudi funding in places like Pakistan and elsewhere in the Middle East. I am talking about bringing students—as Secretary Jones mentioned, bringing students—an increase in the number of students we are bringing here to educate them not just about business and economics but also about how democracy, democratic process works.

Finally, we need to support both international broadcasting and independent media to the extent we can in those parts of the world. We have to be very much on the message with the governments that they have to liberalize, they have to expand the space for moderate Islam and work with moderate Islamic scholars, while pursuing vigorously the threats that are coming from radical Islamic organizations as well as people who educate Muslim kids to kill the infidels and to kill moderate Muslims. Thank you very much.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much, Dr. Cohen.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Cohen follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ARIEL COHEN, PH.D., RESEARCH FELLOW, THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION

#### INTRODUCTION

U.S. power projection on a global scale due to the war on terrorism raises new issues, especially with regards to the attitude of regional powers, elites, and population, to American presence. Much was said, often critically, about American alleged global power aspirations. What is the actual American presence in Central Asia and how much does it change the balance of power in the region? How will it affect the future of Central Asia? What are political currents and organizations, which oppose U.S. presence in that region, and what are the ways to counter them? How U.S. presence may be influenced by radical Islamic organizations there? What is the influence of the war in Iraq on perceptions of U.S. presence in Central Asia? All these questions are awaiting their answers.

U.S. presence in Central Asia is the direct result of the 9/11 attack on the United States. Almost two years after, Al Qaeda is still not fully neutralized, many of its top leaders at large, and a threat of attack on U.S. interests at home and abroad remains significant. Al Qaeda commanders twice escaped encirclement: at Tora-Bora and during Operation Anaconda. As long as this is the case, U.S. presence in Afghanistan and Central Asia will remain crucial. While the majority of Central Asian governments welcome the U.S. forces, the war in Iraq has complicated the picture. However, beyond the immediate pressure of the war on terror, U.S. interests in Central Asia, defined as the five former Soviet republics, remain limited.

The presence of a U.S. military contingent in the region, and close cooperation with the local political leaders and U.S. operation to topple Saddam Hussein, may in the long term heighten tensions between Americans and local, primarily Islamic, political forces, and bring friction with Islamic leaders and organizations. Perception that the U.S. actually supports authoritarian local leaders, such as President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan, may provide an anti-American and anti-Western dimension to a local political rift. Transnational Islamic movements, such as Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, which was closely linked to Al Qaeda, and Hizb-ut-Tahrir al-Islami (Islamic Party of Liberation) also contribute to globalization of conflicts in Central Asia.

*The U.S. strategic shift in Central Asia.* The military necessities of the war in Afghanistan dictated the renewal of American interest and involvement in Central Asia. As the United States faced the challenge of a speedy power projection into the main front against the Taliban in the north, U.S. policy makers turned to Central Asian states and Russia.

From the end of September 2001, the U.S. started deploying special forces in the countries adjacent to Afghanistan and move them into the Northern Alliance territory. Considering difficulties of access, sluggish pace of diplomatic relations prior to 9/11, the lack of modern air bases, and sheer distances, this was an impressive U.S. performance.

*America's challenge.* Since the fall of 2001, the U.S. projected elements of air power and special forces into Central Asia. According to General Richard Myers, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, An U.S. and NATO air force base was established in Manas International Airport, Kyrgyzstan, and Qarshi Khanabad, Uzbekistan.<sup>1</sup> Elements of the U.S. military were positioned in Tajikistan. Some of these deployments came under the aegis of NATO and Partnership for Peace program, while others through bilateral U.S.-Uzbekistan military contacts.<sup>2</sup> General

<sup>1</sup> DoD News briefing, part 2 of 2, M2 Presswire, February 22, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> DoD News briefing, February 22.

Anthony Zinni, then-CINC of the Central Command, which is geographically in charge of Central Asia, has started these contacts in the mid- and late 1990s.

While these units have an immediate relevance to the war in Afghanistan, civilian public servants, the military, and analysts in the Pentagon and beyond have suggested that some of these units may be of use in the future action against terrorist organizations and regimes which support them. Off the record, the Pentagon officials have said that while the U.S. has not requested permanent basing rights in the region, its presence will be open-ended.<sup>3</sup> U.S. policy makers and officials have suggested different avenues of rationalization for the current and future presence. They named protecting energy resources and pipelines; deterring the resurrection of Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia; preventing Russian and/or Chinese hegemony; facilitating democratization and market reforms; and using Central Asia as a re-supply depot for possible action in Afghanistan, as preferred rationale for U.S. presence. Moreover, Central Asia was mentioned as a launching pad in the future operations against Iraq and Iran.<sup>4</sup> Most of these explanations are insufficient by themselves; however, it is possible that a combination of such policies does require at least a level of the U.S. military and political presence in the region. The size, scope, and duration of such a deployment is an issue to be defined by U.S. needs, and host countries' desires and capabilities.

Radical Islamist organizations, however, staunchly oppose American presence on any Muslim soil. One particular organization in Central Asia made a campaign against U.S. deployment there, and against local political leaders who allowed such deployment, the focus of its quest. This organization is Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami.

#### PART I: HIZB UT-TAHRIR: AN EMERGING THREAT TO U.S. INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA

Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami (Islamic Party of Liberation) is an emerging threat to American interests in Central and South Asia and the Middle East. It is a clandestine, cadre-operated, global radical Islamist political organization that operates in 40 countries around the world, with headquarters apparently in London. Its proclaimed goal is Jihad against America and the overthrow of existing political regimes and their replacement with a Caliphate (*Khilafah* in Arabic), a theocratic dictatorship based on the Shari'a (religious Islamic law). The model for Hizb is the "righteous" Caliphate, a militaristic Islamic state that existed in the 7th and 8th centuries under the Prophet Muhammad and his first four successors, known as the "righteous Califs."

The 9/11 terrorist attack taught the United States a painful lesson—it must be alert to emerging threats, including terrorism and other destabilizing activities against its military assets, citizens, and allies. Some of these emerging threats, combined with the actions of terrorist *Jihadi* organizations, such as Al-Qaeda, may also generate political instability in key geographic areas and threaten friendly regimes. In Central Asia, the security situation has deteriorated because the war against Saddam Hussein's regime has intensified the resolve of anti-American forces already active in the region.<sup>5</sup>

The United States has important national security interests at stake in Central Asia, including access to the military bases used to support operations in Afghanistan, preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and technologies for their production, and securing access to natural resources, including oil and gas. The U.S. is also committed to spreading democracy, promoting market reforms, and improving human rights standards in the vast heartland of Eurasia.

Therefore, to prevent Hizb ut-Tahrir from destabilizing Central Asia and other areas, the U.S. should expand intelligence collection on Hizb. The U.S. should encourage Central Asian governments to pursue reforms that will expand civil society and diminish the alienation on which Hizb and fundamentalist Islamist movements are preying. Specifically, the U.S. should condition security assistance on economic reform, encourage democracy and popular participation, discredit radical Islamist movements, and support religious and political moderation and pluralism.

#### *A Modern Fundamentalist Movement*

Hizb-ut Tahrir al-Islami is an emerging threat to American interests and the countries in which it operates. It has 5,000–10,000 hard core members, and many more supporters in former Soviet Central Asia (e.g., Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan) and is expanding its operations to oil-rich Kazakhstan. Over 10,000

<sup>3</sup>Personal interviews with the Pentagon officials who requested anonymity, March 2002, Washington, D.C.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>"Hizb-ut-Tahrir s korichnevym ottenkom" (Hizb-ut-Tahrir with a brown tinge), *Vecherniy Bishkek*, April 4, 2003.

members are active in Pakistan, Syria, Turkey, and Indonesia.<sup>6</sup> At least 500 are already behind bars in Uzbekistan alone, and hundreds are in custody in the Middle East.<sup>7</sup> By breeding violent anti-American attitudes, attempting to overthrow existing regimes, and preparing cadres for more radical Islamist organizations, Hizb poses a threat to U.S. interests in Central Asia and elsewhere in the Islamic world where moderate regimes are found.

Sheikh Taqiuddin an-Nabhani al Falastini, the founder of Hizb, has written that every Muslim should strive to establish a Caliphate, and that this religious imperative (*fard*) upon the Muslim nation (*Ummah*) is so strong, that Mohammad's close allies delayed burying his body until a new Calif was appointed and the Caliphate established.<sup>8</sup> The Caliphate would be led by a Calif, a supreme, pious leader who would combine religious and political power.<sup>9</sup> A Calif, an-Nabhani believes, is a substitute for Prophet Mohammad as both political and religious leader. The Calif would appoint an Amir, or military leader, who would declare Jihad and wage war against all non-believers, including the United States. According to Hizb's political vision, such an entity, if established, would not recognize existing national, regional, tribal, or clan differences and would include all Muslims.

An-Nabhani has drafted the constitution of this future Caliphate. It is not the constitution of a democratic state. The Calif would be appointed by acclamation by "prominent men," with male voters casting a vote of approval. The ruler would not be directly accountable to the people, and there would be no checks or balances between branches of government. Succession would be by designation of the Calif or acclamation of the oligarchy. Thus, Hizb explicitly rejects democracy. In fact, one of An-Nabhani's books is titled *Democracy: The Law of Infidels*.<sup>10</sup> Yet, some regional observers have called for the legitimization of Hizb and its integration into the existing political model.<sup>11</sup> In doing so, they ignore the obvious—Hizb's goal is to smash the existing state apparatus, not to become a player within it.

*Radical Islamic Roots.* Since its inception in 1952 in Jordanian-occupied East Jerusalem, Hizb has gained tens of thousands of followers from London to Lahore.<sup>12</sup> From its beginning, an-Nabhani's organization was influenced by the rabid anti-Semitism propagated by Sheikh Hajj Amin Al-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, who was a major Nazi war collaborator.<sup>13</sup> An-Nabhani, who was serving at the time on the Islamic appellate court in Jerusalem, was an associate and contemporary of Hajj Amin's.<sup>14</sup> He also drew on the organizational principles of Marxism-Leninism, which were quite well-known among the middle- and upper-class Arabs in British Mandate Palestine. Khaled Hassan, one of the founders of the Fatah faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization was also among the founders of Hizb ut-Tahrir, as was Sheikh Asaad Tahmimi, who became Islamic Jihad's spiritual

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Husain Haqqani, The Carnegie Endowment, May 2003; see also "Fourteen members of Hizb ut-Tahrir Caught," Anatolia Press Agency, March 6, 2000; "More Arrests Reported in Hizb ut-Tahrir Operations," Anatolia Press Agency, March 7, 2000; FBIS/World News Connection, March 7, 2000.

<sup>7</sup> Union of Councils Central Asian Information Network, "Uzbekistan: List of 14 Possible Political Prisoners Who Died in Jail, 5 Disappearances and 505 Possible Political Prisoners," at [www.eurasianet.org/resource/uzbekistan/links/uzrt916.html](http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/uzbekistan/links/uzrt916.html).

<sup>8</sup> Taqiuddin an-Nabhani, *Khilafa*, quoted in Alima Bissenova, "Hizb al-Tahrir Political Thought from the Pan-Islamic Perspective," paper presented at the 8th Annual Convention of the Association for Study of Nationalities, New York, April 2003, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> Al-Mawardi, *The Ordinances of Government* (UK: Garnett Publishing, 1996). An-Nabhani based his judgment on the work of Al-Mawardi, the first Islamic scholar who decreed the necessity of establishing the Caliphate. Quoted in Bissenova, "Hizb al-Tahrir Political Thought from the Pan-Islamic Perspective," pp. 8–11.

<sup>10</sup> "Hizb-ut-Tahrir na 'Svobode,'" (Hizb-ut-Tahrir at Radio Liberty); *Vremia Po* (Almaty, Kazakhstan), July 22, 2001; Interview with Vitaly Ponomarev, coordinator of Central Asian program of the Moscow human rights group Memorial, available at FBIS.

<sup>11</sup> Alisher Khamidov, "Countering the Call: The U.S., Hizb ut-Tahrir, and Religious Extremism in Central Asia," draft, the Brookings Project on U.S. Policy Towards the Islamic World, April 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Ahmed Rashid, "Asking for Holy War," at [icas.org/english/enlibrary/libr-22-11-00-1.htm](http://icas.org/english/enlibrary/libr-22-11-00-1.htm).

<sup>13</sup> Michael R. Fischbach, "Biography of Taqiy al-Din an-Nabhani," in Phillip Mattar, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Palestinians*, at [www.palestineremembered.com/Haiifa/Ijzim/Story819.html](http://www.palestineremembered.com/Haiifa/Ijzim/Story819.html).

<sup>14</sup> "While in Baghdad, al-Husseini aided the pro-Nazi revolt of 1941. He then spent the rest of World War II as Hitler's special guest in Berlin, advocating the extermination of Jews in radio broadcasts to the Middle East and recruiting Balkan Muslims for the infamous SS 'mountain divisions' that tried to wipe out Jewish communities throughout the region." "Who was the Grand Mufti, Haj Muhammad Amin al-Husseini?" at [www.palestinefacts.org/pf-mandate-grand-mufti.php](http://www.palestinefacts.org/pf-mandate-grand-mufti.php).

leader.<sup>15</sup> Hizb supported the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1991 and backs the Islamic Salvation Front of Algeria, a radical movement on the U.S. State Department's terrorism list.<sup>16</sup>

An-Nabhani was also member of the radical Islamic Brotherhood (*Al Ihwan al-Muslimeen*), a secretive international fundamentalist organization founded in Egypt in 1928, which spread throughout the Islamic world and preaches the establishment of a Caliphate. He joined the Brotherhood while studying in Cairo's Al-Azhar University, but later left the Brotherhood because he considered it too soft.<sup>17</sup> Hizb was likely supported initially by the Saudi-based radical Islamist Wahhabi movement, although the extent to which that support continues today is unclear.<sup>18</sup>

#### *A Shadow Global Organization*

Hizb ut-Tahrir's spread around the globe, in Western Europe and often in authoritarian states with strong secret police organizations, is an impressive feat. It could only be accomplished by applying 20th century totalitarian political "technology" melded with Islamic notions of the 7th and 8th centuries, as interpreted by medieval Islamic scholars. The genius of Hizb founder an-Nabhani was marrying Orthodox Islamist ideology to Leninist strategy and tactics.

*The Leninist model.* Hizb ut-Tahrir is a totalitarian organization, akin to a disciplined, Marxist-Leninist party, in which internal dissent is neither encouraged nor tolerated. Because its goal is global revolution, a leading Islamic scholar has compared it to the Trotskyite wing of the international communist movement.<sup>19</sup> Its candidate members become well-versed in party literature during a two-year indoctrination course in a study circle, supervised by a party member. Only when a member "matures in Party culture," "adopts the thoughts and opinions of the party," and "melts with the Party" can he or she become a full-fledged member.<sup>20</sup> Women are organized in cells supervised by a woman cadre or a male relative. After joining the party, the new recruit may be requested (or ordered) to relocate to start a new cell. When a critical mass of cells is achieved, according to its doctrine, Hizb may move to take over a country in preparation for the establishment of the Caliphate. Such a takeover would likely be bloody and violent. Moreover, its strategy and tactics show that, while the Party is currently circumspect in preaching violence, it will justify its use—just as Lenin and the Bolsheviks did—when a critical mass is achieved.<sup>21</sup>

Hizb's platform and action fits in with "Islamist globalization"—an alternative mode of globalization based on radical Islam. This ideology poses a direct challenge to the Western model of a secular, market-driven, tolerant, multicultural globalization.<sup>22</sup> Where radicalization has taken hold in the Islamic world, Hizb gains new supporters in droves. It operates clandestinely in over 40 countries around the world, with members organized in cells of five to eight members each. Only a cell commander knows the next level of leadership, ensuring operational security. "Representatives" in Great Britain and Pakistan claim to speak for the organization, but have no official address or legal office. Its leadership for large regions (e.g., the former Soviet Union), countries, and local areas is kept secret.

Hizb's primary characteristics include the fiery rhetoric of Jihad, secret cells and operations, the murky funding sources, rejection of existing political regimes, rapid transnational growth, and shared outlook and goals with Al-Qaeda and other organizations of the global *jihadi* movement.

*Anti-Americanism.* Hizb has called for a Jihad against the U.S., its allies, and moderate Muslim states. The purpose of the Jihad is "to find and kill the Kufar (non-believers)," in fact rejecting the Islamic notion of Greater Jihad against one's own sin.<sup>23</sup> In documents drafted before 9/11, Hizb leaders accused the United States of imposing hegemony on the world. After 9/11, Hizb claimed that U.S. has declared war against the global Muslim community (Umma), has established an international

<sup>15</sup> Hashem Kassem, "Hizb-ut-Tahrir al Islami (The Islamic Liberation Party)," 2002, at [www.eastwestrecord.com/get—articles.asp?articleid=219](http://www.eastwestrecord.com/get—articles.asp?articleid=219).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Michael R. Fischbach, "Biography of Taqyy al-Din an-Nabhani."

<sup>18</sup> Ahmed Rashid, "Asking for Holy War," at [icas.org/english/enlibrary/libr—22—11—00—1.htm](http://icas.org/english/enlibrary/libr—22—11—00—1.htm).

<sup>19</sup> Husain Haqqani, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, personal interview, April 2003.

<sup>20</sup> The Method of Hizb ut-Tahrir, at [english.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/definition/messages.htm](http://english.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/definition/messages.htm).

<sup>21</sup> Compare V. I. Lenin, *What Is To Be Done*, (New York: International Publishers, 1988, pp. 111–113 and 122–123 on legal work, and pp. 126–129 on the spread of illegal cells and activities.

<sup>22</sup> Alexei Malashenko, "Musul'mane v nachale veka: Nadezhdy & ugrozy" (Muslims in the beginning of the century: Hopes and threats), Moscow Carnegie Center *Working Paper* No. 7, 2002, pp. 5–6.

<sup>23</sup> Sidik Aukbur, "The True Meaning of Jihad," *Khilafah*, May 2003, at [www.khilafah.com/home/category.php?DocumentID=7059&TagID24](http://www.khilafah.com/home/category.php?DocumentID=7059&TagID24).

alliance under the “pretext” of fighting terrorism, and is reinforcing its grip on the countries of Central Asia. Hizb further claimed that the U.S. accused Osama bin Laden of being responsible for the 9/11 attacks “without any evidence or proof.” The party attempted to use its influence by calling upon all Muslim governments to reject the U.S. appeal for cooperation in the war against terrorism.<sup>24</sup> It called for expulsion of U.S. and Western citizens, including Western diplomats, from countries in which it will take power and shredding diplomatic treaties and agreements with Western governments. It further declared,

Muslims! You are religiously obliged to reject this American question which takes you lightly and despises you. America does not have the sublime values that entitle it to tell you what to support and whom to fight against. You possess a divine mission. You are the ones to bring guidance and light to mankind. God described you with the following words: “You are the best people brought forth for the benefit of mankind. You enjoin good and forbid evil. And you believe in God.

“As for Jihad . . . it is legal, in fact it is an obligation, it is the apex of Islamic ethics, as Almighty God says, “Keep in store for them whatever you are capable of, force and equipment with which you can frighten those who are enemies of God and enemies of yourselves . . . God’s Messenger (Mohammed) said, ‘Islam is the head, prayer is the backbone and Jihad is the perfection.’”

Muslims! The law of religion does not allow you to give to America what it is trying to impose upon you. You are not allowed to follow its orders or to provide it with any assistance whatsoever, no matter whether it be intelligence or facilities of using your territory, your air space or your territorial waters. It is not permissible to cede military bases to the Americans, nor it is allowed to coordinate any military activities with them or to collaborate with them. It is not allowed to enter into an alliance with them or to be loyal to them, because they are enemies of Islam and Muslims. God said, “Believers, Do not befriend my enemy and your enemy . . . They have rejected the truth that has come to you.”<sup>25</sup>

In a June 2001 article published in the party’s journal, Hizb ideologists claim that all methods are justified in the struggle against the *Kuffaar*, including murder. Furthermore, they specifically mention that a pilot diving a plane hit by enemy fire into a crowd of *Kuffaar* without bailing out with a parachute is a legitimate form of armed struggle. Furthermore, Hizb demands that Muslims come to the support of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.<sup>26</sup>

According to Hizb, the main targets of Jihad—in addition to moderate Muslim regimes such as Jordan, Pakistan, Egypt, and Uzbekistan—are America and the Jews. “America, Britain and their allies are leading a crusade in Afghanistan . . . These acts by America and Britain reflect their deep hostility toward the Muslim *Ummah*. It means that they are enemies. The relations between them and the Muslims constitute a state of war, and therefore, according to Islamic canons, all problems with regard to them should be dealt in accordance with war laws. This state of war also applies to countries that have formed an alliance with these two states.”<sup>27</sup> The war of America and her allies against Islam and the Muslims has shown the corrupt nature of her civilization and her colonial world-view. The War on Iraq . . . has demonstrated that America and her allies only strive to colonize and plunder the resources of the Islamic world, not to bring about justice and security . . . America is intending to deceive you . . . she is inherently weak as her ideology is false and corrupt . . . The time has come for Islam not just in Iraq but in this entire *Ummah*. It is time for the Islamic State (*Khilafah*) to lead the world and save the world from the crimes and oppression of the capitalist system.<sup>28</sup>

According to one of the Hizb Central Asian leaders, “we are very much opposed to the Jews and Israel . . . Jews must leave Central Asia. The United States is the enemy of Islam with the Jews.”<sup>29</sup>

<sup>24</sup> “Alliance with America is a Capital Crime Prohibited by Islam,” Hizb ut-Tahrir leaflet, September 18, 2001, at [www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org](http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org).

<sup>25</sup> “Alliance with America is a Capital Crime Prohibited by Islam,” Hizb ut-Tahrir, leaflet September 18, 2001 <http://www.khilafah.com/home/category—list.php?>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.khilafah.com/home/>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.khilafah.com/home/category—list.php?>

<sup>28</sup> “An open letter from Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain to the Iraqi Opposition Groups conferring in their conference in London,” at [www.islamic-state.org/leaflets/021213—OpenLetterToIraqiOppositionConfLondon.pdf](http://www.islamic-state.org/leaflets/021213—OpenLetterToIraqiOppositionConfLondon.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> Ahmed Rashid, “Asking for Holy War,” International Eurasian Institute for Economic and Political Research, at [icas.org/english/enlibrary/libr—22—11—00—1.htm](http://icas.org/english/enlibrary/libr—22—11—00—1.htm).

Anti-Americanism, extremism, and preaching the violent overthrow of existing regimes make Hizb ut-Tahrir a prime suspect in the next wave of violent political action in Central Asia and other Muslim countries with relatively weak regimes, such as Pakistan and Indonesia.

*Stages of Struggle, Jihad, and Violence.* Hizb ut-Tahrir sees its struggle in parallel with the three stages that the Prophet Muhammad experienced en route to the establishment of the Caliphate 1,400 years ago. These included spreading the word of God to the communities of Arabia; the flight from Mecca to Medina in order to establish the first Islamic community there; and finally, the conquest of Mecca, Jihad, and the establishment of the Caliphate. Similarly, Hizb divides its strategy into three stages:

1. "Production of people who believe in the idea and the method of the Party so that they form the Party group" (recruitment and agitation, establishment of cells);
2. "Interaction with the Ummah; to let the Ummah embrace and carry Islam" (Islamization); and
3. "Establishing government, implementing Islam generally and comprehensively, and carrying it as a message to the world" (revolutionary takeover and Jihad).<sup>30</sup>

In the past, members of Hizb participated in coups against pro-Western regimes in the Middle East, such as the failed 1968 officers' coup against King Hussein II of Jordan.<sup>31</sup> Despite its authoritarian and highly disciplined cadre structure, Hizb claimed that those members who participated in the coup did so in an "individual capacity." However, more recently, Hizb representatives together with Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan participated in coordination meetings sponsored by Al-Qaeda in the Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. Numerous Middle Eastern countries and Germany, where Hizb is establishing links with the neo-Nazis, have taken steps to outlaw its activities. Moreover, the Party clearly states that

Jihad has to continue till the Day of Judgment. So whenever disbelieving enemies attack an Islamic country it becomes compulsory on its Muslim citizens to repel the enemy. The members of Hizb ut-Tahrir in that country are part of the Muslims and it is obligatory upon them as is upon other Muslims (not resident in that country) in their capacity as Muslims, to fight the enemy and expel them. Whenever there is a Muslim amir who declares jihad *to enhance the Word of Allah* and mobilizes the people to do that, the members of Hizb ut-Tahrir will respond in their capacity as Muslims in the country where the general call to arms was proclaimed.<sup>32</sup>

At this time, Hizb ut-Tahrir aims at seizing power and supplanting existing governments in Central Asia and elsewhere with an Islamist version based on Shari'a for the purpose of Jihad against the West which includes:

- "A struggle against *Kufr* (non-believer) states which have domination and influence over the Islamic countries. The challenge against colonialism in all its intellectual, political, economic, and military forms, involves exposing its plans, and revealing its conspiracies in order to deliver the Ummah from its control and to liberate it . . .<sup>33</sup> "A struggle against the rulers in the Arab and Muslim countries by exposing them, taking them to task, acting to change them whenever they have denied the rights of the Ummah or neglected to perform their duty towards her, or ignored any of her affairs, and whenever they disagreed with the rules of Islam, and acting also to remove their regimes so as to establish the Islamic rule in its place."<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, Hizb seeks to penetrate state structures and convert government officials and military officers into its creed. Its platform openly states that "the Party started to seek the support of the influential people with two objectives in mind:

- So that it could manage to continue its daw'ah (Islamic appeal) while secure from affliction
- To take over the rule in order to establish the Khilafah and apply Islam."<sup>35</sup>

<sup>30</sup>The Method of Hizb ut-Tahrir, at [english.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/definition/messages.htm](http://english.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/definition/messages.htm).

<sup>31</sup>Hashem Kassem, "Hizb-ut-Tahrir al Islami."

<sup>32</sup>The Method of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Italics added.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*

Hizb has begun penetrating the elites 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.

*What is at Stake*

U.S. strategic interests in Central Asia include access to the military bases needed for operations in Afghanistan and to deter the establishment of safe havens for terrorist organizations. The U.S. is seeking to prevent a country, a group of countries, or a transnational movement or organization from establishing hegemonic control in the region. This includes barring transnational Islamic fundamentalist organizations and drug cartels from emerging as ruling bodies or dominant power centers in the region. The U.S. must also prevent Central Asia from becoming an arsenal of dangerous weaponry and should prevent the development and production of weapons of mass destruction in the region, which could fall into the hands of rogue regimes or terrorists. Furthermore, the U.S. needs to ensure equal access to the energy resources of the region, primarily in the Caspian Sea area, and encourage development of the East-West transportation and economic corridors, also known as the Silk Road. Finally, the U.S. should encourage economic reform, expansion of civic space, democratization, and development of open society in the region.<sup>36</sup>

The secular regimes of Central Asia have little to no democratic legitimacy. Most of their rulers are Soviet-era communist party leaders. Almost no political space is left for secular opposition in these states. U.S. objectives are thus jeopardized not only by the authoritarian parties of radical Islamic revolution such as Hizb, but also by the authoritarian nature of these Central Asian regimes themselves—with their rampant corruption, declining living standards, poor delivery of public goods and services, and stagnant or declining economic growth rates. By governing so poorly and being intolerant and undemocratic, these regimes inadvertently breed religious extremism.<sup>37</sup>

In this environment, Hizb ut-Tahrir has captured a protest niche that otherwise would be occupied by the legitimate political opposition. Despite this, the U.S. government, along with the policy analysis and expert communities as well as governments in the region and around the world, has yet to attain a clear picture of Hizb's real size and strength and threat it poses.

*What the U.S. Does Not Know.*

While reports of increasing Hizb activity abound, the extent to which local Hizb activities are part of a coordinated global plan is still unknown, just as the question of whether every region and country has an autonomous leadership that defines programs and sets deadlines remains unanswered. Hizb is rumored to be operating on a thirteen-year grand plan, but if it exists, this program is still unknown.

At inception, Hizb likely had strong connections to the Saudi Wahhabism, but it is unclear whether these links remain today. It is equally unclear whether Hizb has one or more state sponsors, and if so, who they are. At various times, experts have speculated that the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia have been involved. The international intelligence community is also uncertain as to who finances the organization, who controls the funds internally, what the mode of financing is (e.g., regional self-sufficiency or centralized funding), and how funds are transferred (e.g., via the *Hawala* informal banking system or couriers).

The current leader of Hizb is also unknown, as is where he resides and the identity the senior officers of Hizb. Upon an-Nabhani's death, he was succeeded by Sheikh Abd-el Qadim Zaloom, another Palestinian cleric and a former professor of Al Azhar in Cairo.<sup>38</sup> Zaloom was with Hizb for 50 years and has died on April 29, 2003.<sup>39</sup> While anecdotal reports place the organization's headquarters in London and indicate that many European converts to Islam are staffing mid- and senior levels of the organization, very little evidence confirms this. These need to be an-

<sup>36</sup>“U.S. Interests in the Central Asian Republics,” Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, Committee on International Relations, U.S. House of Representatives, 105th Cong., 2nd Sess., February 12, 1998, at [commdocs.house.gov/committees/intlrel/hfa48119.000/hfa48119—0f.htm](http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/intlrel/hfa48119.000/hfa48119—0f.htm).

<sup>37</sup>Ariel Cohen, “U.S. Interests in Central Asia,” Testimony before the U.S. House Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, March 17, 1999, at [www.heritage.org/Research/AsiaandthePacific/Test031799.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/AsiaandthePacific/Test031799.cfm).

<sup>38</sup>Ahmed Rashid, “Reviving the Caliphate,” chapter 6 of *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (Penguin Books, 2003), p. 119.

<sup>39</sup>“Hizb ut-Tahrir Announces the Death of Its Ameer,” at [www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/english/leaflets/leaflet4.htm](http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/english/leaflets/leaflet4.htm).

swered, and a joint international program of collecting intelligence on Hizb and countering its activities must be developed.

*What the U.S. Should Do*

The U.S. and its allies in the war on terrorism need to recognize that Hizb ut-Tahrir is a growing threat in Central Asia. In order to develop a comprehensive strategy and counter Hizb's influence the U.S. should:

- *Expand intelligence collection on Hizb ut-Tahrir.* This needs to be done both in Western Europe and in outlying areas, such as Central Asia, Pakistan, and Indonesia. Most important is information on state sponsorship, leadership, finances, intentions and capabilities, timelines, links with violent terrorist groups, and penetration of state structures. The U.S. intelligence community should work with the United Kingdom's MI5 and MI6 and with the intelligence services of Russia, Pakistan, Indonesia, and the Central Asian states. U.S. analysts and policy makers, however, should be aware that some of the regimes in question will attempt to portray Hizb as a terrorist organization with links to Osama bin Laden.<sup>40</sup>
- *Condition security assistance to Central Asia on economic reform.* Hizb is growing in Central Asia due to the "revolution of diminishing expectations," increasing despair, and the lack of secular political space and economic opportunity in the region.<sup>41</sup> While some are attracted to Hizb's harsh version of radical Islam, others see it as an outlet for their frustration with the status quo and an instrument for upward mobility. U.S. assistance to Central Asian countries, which has doubled since 9/11, has not changed the economic dynamics in the region, and most of the funds were understandably earmarked for security cooperation and military assistance.

To jump-start economic development, the Bush Administration should condition security assistance provided by the Pentagon on the adoption of free market policies, strengthening property rights and the rule of law, encouraging transparency, and fighting corruption. These measures are likely to make the Central Asian economies more attractive to private investment, stimulate domestic economic growth, and increase prosperity and economic opportunity, thus diminishing the ability of Hizb to use economic decline as an engine for recruitment, as it does in the Ferghana Valley and Kyrgyzstan.

- *Encourage Democracy and Popular Participation.* The scarcity of secular and moderate Islamic democratic politics and credible non-governmental organization (NGO) activities and the lack of freedom of expression may be driving thousands of young recruits to join Hizb in Central Asia, especially in Uzbekistan. There have been no democratic elections in the region for several years, and the opposition press is either non-existent or severely curbed. Hizb, as well as Jihadi organizations, recruit from among alienated students and urban youth, frustrated with the status quo and facing limited futures. While economic opportunity, religious freedom, and freedom of expression are not a panacea against Islamist radicalism, as the swelling ranks of young Islamic fundamentalists in Western Europe demonstrate, expanding the civic space and allowing more political pluralism, media diversity, and grass root initiatives may diminish the draw of the Hizb. According to a representative of a major U.S. NGO, some liberalization of the non-profit sector has been attained in the Central Asian countries after 9/11. This trend needs to be encouraged.<sup>42</sup>

The U.S. Agency for International Development and the State Department should, however, coordinate their activities with the Pentagon, World Bank, and the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development, all of which are interested in political stability, reducing corruption, and development of property rights and a more investment-oriented environment. Together, they are more likely to convince the Central Asian regimes to undertake further political liberalization, including competitive, free and fair elections.

- *Discredit Radicals and Encourage Moderates.* The U.S. should encourage local governments to not only crack down on radical Islam (as they already do), but also encourage alternatives. Uzbekistan has reportedly jailed hundreds of Hizbi activists. The Union of Councils' Central Asian Information Network

<sup>40</sup> Rashid, "Reviving the Caliphate," p. 135. Under the auspices of the Taliban, representatives of Hizb attended meetings in Kabul, Afghanistan, in which the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Al-Qaeda also participated.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 135–136.

<sup>42</sup> Personal interview, April 2003, anonymous source.

has documented disappearances, 14 deaths in detention, and over 500 political prisoners in Uzbekistan.<sup>43</sup> Human Rights Watch claims that thousands of Central Asian prisoners could qualify as political, including many members of Hizb, who receive 15–17 year sentences for minor offenses such as leaflet distribution.<sup>44</sup>

The State Department and U.S.-funded NGOs should encourage more U.S. media exposure (e.g., Uzbek and other local language broadcasts by Radio Liberty and the Voice of American) and educational contacts, speaking engagements, and exchanges between local clergy and moderate Muslim leaders in the West.<sup>45</sup> The Central Asian public needs to be directly exposed to traditional moderate local brands of Islam, Sufi mythical branches (*Tariqat*), and reformist moderate Jadidi Islam.

Beyond that, secular regimes in Central Asia should stop persecuting new evangelical Christian denominations, Buddhists, and Zoroastrians. Development of independent media and activities aimed at youth, women, business community, and ethnic and religious minorities—groups more likely to be discriminated against by Hizb and other radical Sunni groups—should be encouraged and supported.<sup>46</sup> However, Hizb, as well as Salafi/Wahhabi and other radical Islamic schools that preach Jihad against America and the West, should not be allowed to operate. The U.S. should provide support to local media to cover negative examples of application of Shari'a law, such as amputations for minor offenses or alcohol possession in Chechnya, Afghanistan under the Taliban, Saudi Arabia, and other places. The consequences of Jihad-type civil war, such as in Algeria, which left 100,000–200,000 dead, should also be covered. Positive coverage of the West should also be supported.

The conflict with radical Islam in Central Asia is far from over. While IMU was militarily defeated, it is likely to grow back slowly, while Hizb remains popular despite government actions to eradicate it. The question is how the U.S. can support secular and moderate Islamic regimes and movements; foster tolerance; promote freedom of expression and freedom of religion, without being identified too closely with oppressive actions of Central Asian regimes? How can the U.S. defeat radical Islamists in the realm of ideals, words and symbols—not only on the battlefield?

#### PART II: PROMOTING FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY: FIGHTING THE WAR OF IDEAS AGAINST ISLAMIST TERRORISM<sup>47</sup>

Even if the war in Iraq is over, the United States finds itself still fighting a war of ideas, a war against those who want to destroy America's society and its core values. President George W. Bush recognized the necessity of engagement on this front in his *National Security Strategy*, which calls to “wage a war of ideas to win the battle against international terrorism” by:

- *Using* the full influence of the United States and working closely with allies and friends, to make clear that all acts of terrorism are illegitimate so that terrorism will be viewed in the same light as slavery, piracy, or genocide: behavior that no respectable government can condone or support and all must oppose;

<sup>43</sup> Union of Councils Central Asian Information Network, “Uzbekistan: List of 14 Possible Political Prisoners Who Died in Jail, 5 Disappearances and 505 Possible Political Prisoners.”

<sup>44</sup> “Uzbekistan: Harassment Before EBRD Annual Meeting,” Human Rights Watch, May 2, 2003, at [www.hrw.org/press/2003/05/uzbek050203.htm](http://www.hrw.org/press/2003/05/uzbek050203.htm); see also “Persecution of Human Rights Defenders in Uzbekistan,” Human Rights Watch *Briefing Paper*, May 1, 2003, [hrw.org/backgrounders/eca/uzbek050103-bck.htm](http://hrw.org/backgrounders/eca/uzbek050103-bck.htm).

<sup>45</sup> “Muslim Clerics Visit U.S.,” *Caspian Business News*, p. 12, December 16, 2002, at [www.caspianbusinessnews.com/NewSite/preview/sections/regional/docs/16-12-2002.pdf](http://www.caspianbusinessnews.com/NewSite/preview/sections/regional/docs/16-12-2002.pdf). However, USAID, which is funding Central Asia clergy visits to the U.S. to learn about how Islam functions in democracy, should be careful not to expose them to U.S.-based Wahhabis, who are actively abusing the democratic system.

<sup>46</sup> Ariel Cohen, “Promoting Freedom and Democracy: Fighting the War of Ideas Against Islamic Terrorism,” *Comparative Strategy*, July 2003, forthcoming.

<sup>47</sup> For their valuable comments, the author thanks Robert Satloff of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Alan Makovsky of the House International Relations Committee professional staff, Meyrav Wurmser of the Hudson Institute, Harvey Feldman of Heritage, and Fritz Ermarth, former Chairman of the National Intelligence Council. Special thanks to Dan Fisk and Jim Phillips of the Heritage Foundation for their critique. Finally, many thanks to Heritage interns Elena Simonova and Dennis Menis, who provided important research assistance.

- *Supporting* moderate and modern government, especially in the Muslim world, to ensure that the conditions and ideologies that promote terrorism do not find fertile ground in any nation;
- *Diminishing* the underlying conditions that spawn terrorism by enlisting the international community to focus its efforts and resources on areas most at risk; and
- *Developing* effective public diplomacy to promote the free flow of information and ideas to kindle the hopes and aspirations of freedom of those in societies ruled by the sponsors of global terrorism.<sup>48</sup>

This is a war in defense of everything that makes America so attractive to the rest of the world—freedom and equality, opportunity and the pursuit of happiness. It is a war that the United States cannot afford to lose. Terrorism—the use of violence against civilians to achieve religious and political goals—threatens the very survival of American society.

As a Gallup poll has shown, large majorities in the Islamic world, from Morocco to Indonesia, are strongly anti-American, believe that the war in Afghanistan was wrong, and that Arabs did not commit the 9/11 terrorist attacks.<sup>49</sup> The poll results released in February 2002 indicate that there is a large gap between reality and perceptions in the Islamic world and those of the West.

This testimony will examine the roots of the radical anti-American ideology which drives political Islam and justifies terrorist activities by its adherents. Furthermore, it will identify major threats emanating from the world of Islamist extremism, and will offer the rationale, as well as strategies to develop messages and institutional capabilities to engage in the battle for hearts and minds.

#### *The Ideological and Religious Sources of Terrorism*

It is important to study and understand the adversaries in order to engage them intellectually. Credible spiritual and political alternatives to radical Islam already exist in the Middle East and in the Muslim emigrant communities around the world, and it is highly significant that the radical Islamists failed to obtain majority popular support even in the most devout Muslim countries. Only Afghanistan under the Taliban, Sudan and possibly Iran can be considered fully Sharia (Islamic law) states, while some Gulf states, including Saudi Arabia are close to being ones. Expansion of the Sharia was underway prior to September 11 in Nigeria, Pakistan and Malaysia. Sharia states tend to be more supportive of terrorists: Sudan and Afghanistan provided a safe haven to Bin Laden and his Al Qaeda, while Pakistan supported the Taliban. Funding and foot soldiers from Saudi Arabia and Gulf states are fueling Bin Laden's effort.<sup>50</sup>

Terror has deep ideological roots in the radical interpretations of Islam, which date back to the early Middle Ages. The extremist Kharajite sect (eighth century) and the *Hashishin* group (eleventh century), used assassinations to get rid of political enemies.<sup>51</sup> It manifested in the modern era with the Muslim Brotherhood (1929), and gave birth to the al Qaeda network as well as to other Islamic terrorist organizations. According to the U.S. Department of State, these organizations include Hizballah (the Party of God), with branches in Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza; Islamic Jihad, Hamas, the Gama'at al-Islamiyya of Egypt, the Pakistan-based terrorist organizations which are now attacking India; the Chechen faction led by Shamil Basaev and Hattab, which is connected to bin Laden and fought with al Qaeda in Afghanistan, the Islamic Front of Uzbekistan (IMU), and many others.<sup>52</sup>

The incitement of Islamic believers to hatred and violence, the plotting and the killing are all being done under the banner of jihad—Holy War. The word jihad has two main connotations: that of personal self-improvement (the greater jihad), and

<sup>48</sup>The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 20, 2002, p. 6, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf>.

<sup>49</sup>"Muslims doubt Arabs mounted Sept. 11 attacks, poll," Reuters English News Service, February 27, 2002.

<sup>50</sup>Matthew Levitt, "Tackling the Financing of Terrorism in Saudi Arabia," Policy Watch no. 609, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, March 11, 2002.

<sup>51</sup>Karen Armstrong, "Islam. A short history," The Modern Library, New York, 2002, pp. 35–47, 87.

<sup>52</sup>For the full list of terrorist organizations see the U.S. Department of State's 2001 *Report on Foreign Terrorist Organizations*, released by the Office of the Coordinator for Counter-terrorism, <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/rpt/fto/2001/index.cfm?docid=5258>.

of armed warfare against the infidels (the lesser jihad).<sup>53</sup> Extremist Islamic clerics and terrorist leaders advocate the murder of innocent civilians and suicide bombings in the prosecution of jihad. The stakes are high: nothing less than the creation of a modern day Caliphate, a pan-Islamic nuclear-armed state, is the strategic goal. Bringing down moderate and pro-Western regimes in the Islamic world, and replacing them with Islamic dictatorships is the interim objective. As militant Islamists have given themselves carte blanche to repress and kill those who challenge their political interpretations of the Quran, secular and moderate Islamic ideas, leaders and regimes are under threat everywhere. The leaders of the Jihadist movements—and their ideas—need to be to be effectively challenged and debunked in their own back yards if they are to be defeated.

Militant Islamist movements include tens of thousands of active members, hundreds of thousands of supporters, and millions of sympathizers throughout the Middle East, South Asia, Europe, and the Americas.<sup>54</sup> The advocates of terror are operating not just in the most radical Muslim countries, such as Iran or Sudan. U.S. allies, including Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and even Western powers such as the United States itself, Great Britain, France and Germany, shelter some of the most extremist anti-Western elements. The ideological dimension of this conflict is important, as foreign governments as well as an extensive network of “charitable” contributors provide financial support, shelter, arms and military training to the terrorists. Ideology is also key to the recruitment of new members.

Secular regimes, such as Saddam’s Iraq, Syria and Libya, also support terrorist organizations and use terrorism to further their political ends. For example, Syria shelters and supports Hizballah, Hamas, the Democratic Front for Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and the Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).

*Understanding the Enemy: The Word and the Sword* Radical Islamic organizations and the preachers who inspired them played a key role in the development of today’s terrorist Internationale. For example, The Islamic Brotherhood (*il Ihwan al-Muslimin*, founded in 1929), the oldest fundamentalist organization, has been a hotbed of Islamic radicalism for decades, though the ruling regimes remained secular. Today, Egypt remains an important country for militant Islam. It is the birthplace of the Muslim Brotherhood founders and ideologues, Hassan el-Bana, killed by an Egyptian secret police agent in 1952, and Sayyid Qutb, executed for conspiracy to overthrow the Gamal Abd el-Nasser regime in 1966. It was Qutb who ruled that not only infidels, but also “not sufficiently Islamic” (*kufur*) Arab rulers should be killed. Moreover, violence is sanctioned against those Muslims who do not share radical Islamist ideology or oppose a particular fundamentalist organization or group. This premise was used to justify the 1952 killing of King Abdallah, grandfather of the late King Hussein of Jordan (and great-grandfather of Abdallah II, the current monarch.)

Today, the Muslim Brotherhood is headed by Sheikh Yussuf Al-Qaradhawi, a leading Sunni religious authority. He, in concert with many radical religious authorities, has adjudicated that suicide bombings (“martyrdom operations”) are permitted by Islamic law. In an interview aired on the Al-Jazeera TV channel, the Sheikh warned that Islamic law dictates that all Muslims must join the Taliban’s jihad, not the U.S.-led coalition: “In my opinion, (the attacks) resulted from hatred towards the U.S. If they kill Osama bin Laden, another thousand Osama bin Ladens will arise.”

As for Muslim governments, the Sheikh said:

It is not a matter of advice. There are religious rules that must be observed. A Muslim is forbidden from entering into an alliance with a non-Muslim against another Muslim. Allying with others to kill (Muslims) is collaborating in sin and aggression. Islam treats Muslims everywhere as one nation, and it does not recognize geographical borders . . . It is absolutely forbidden for Arab and Islamic countries to allow their bases to be used to attack Afghanistan. We should fight the American military if we can and if we cannot we should fight the United States economically and politically. Let us boycott the United States. This is a tremendous act.<sup>55</sup>

He went on to add:

<sup>53</sup> Timothy Appelby, “Jihad not just a word for war,” *The Globe and Mail*, September 20, 2001, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/special/attack/pages/other—0920—a8—5.html>.

<sup>54</sup> “Islamists” refer to those forces which use and abuse Islamic ideology to achieve political power. They often advocate use of violence against their political opponents.

<sup>55</sup> Al-Jazeera Television (Qatar), September 16, 2001, quoted in “Terror in America (10),” Special Dispatch No. 277, Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), September 25, 2001.

We must differentiate between two types of terror: the terror of those defending their homeland and their rights . . . This kind of terror is legitimate . . . Every man has the right to become a human bomb and blow himself up . . . Hundreds of Muslim clerics have ruled that these martyrdom operations are one of the most sublime types of Jihad for the sake of Allah.<sup>56</sup>

Cairo Al-Azhar University's clerics and professors, some of the most important authorities in the Islamic world, have also issued numerous statements calling for Islamic unity and war against America. They warned that support of the West in the war against the Afghan-based Taliban constituted *Ridah*, or turning away from Islam, a crime punishable by death. This is the crime radical Islamists are accusing Central Asian rulers. One of the professors distinguished between terrorism, "which is a modern term," and intimidation.

In Islam, the meaning of terrorism is intimidation. Not all intimidation is forbidden by religious law . . . The most recent example of the so-called terrorism is the recent attacks against America. It is America that killed itself with its distorted policy . . . What America has done against Afghanistan is a crime, and one of the most loathsome kinds of international terrorism . . . Even if the present (Arab) regimes support America, these regimes are only passing clouds. They do not enjoy stability; stability is in the hands of the people.<sup>57</sup>

Ikrima Sabri, the Palestinian Authority's appointed mufti (chief Islamic legal authority) of Jerusalem delivered a sermon in 1997 on "America, the chief of terrorists," calling on Allah to "destroy America." Sabri maintains close links with Hizballah. On September 17, 2001, he told Israeli officials, "The White House will turn black, with God's help; America, Britain and Israel should be destroyed."<sup>58</sup>

Furthermore, a great number of radical preachers, terrorist ringleaders, and their supporters, have abused the freedoms found in the west, to promote radical Islamic causes. Abdurrahman Alamoudi, former Executive Director of the American Muslim Council and a former US Department of State "goodwill ambassador" to the Muslim countries, consistently and publicly called for support of the terrorist organizations Hamas and Hizballah. He defended Hamas leader Musa Abu Marzuk, who was arrested by the FBI in 1995 and subsequently expelled from the U.S. Alamoudi's organization also arranged for fundraising visits for radical Islamic organizations such as Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>59</sup>

Sheikh Omar bin Muhammad Abu Omar, known as Ibn Qatada, a Palestinian-Jordanian living in London, has been nicknamed "bin Laden's ambassador to Europe" and is the mufti for elements of the Algerian Gama'at Islamia (GIA). Ibn Qatada is linked to Zacharias Moussawi, who is currently being prosecuted in the United States for his alleged involvement in the September 11th attacks.<sup>60</sup> Another prominent radical cleric is Egyptian former Afghan volunteer, Sheikh Abu Hamza, who is one of the GIA's chief propagandists abroad, and who also resides in London and runs the mosque at Finsbury Park. Little has been done to disrupt their networks of mosque-based "charities," which fund terrorist activities.<sup>61</sup> But it should not be forgotten that for many, the sword is as important as the word.

The Iranian Shia religious leadership has supported terrorist operations against the United States and still funds Hizballah's activities against Israel. President Khatami's most loyal supporter in the Parliament, Ali Akbar Mohtashemi, is the founder of Hizballah.<sup>62</sup> In 1993, the Iran-backed Hizballah bombed U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, the capital of Lebanon. On June 25, 1996 Hizballah blew up Khobar Towers, the American military barracks in Dahrhan, Saudi Arabia, killing 19 servicemen and wounding 500. Prior to the September 11 attacks, over 300 U.S. servicemen were killed in terrorist attacks around the world, and over 1,000 were wound-

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Al-Azhar University, [www.lailatalqadr.com](http://www.lailatalqadr.com), quoted in "Terror in America. Special Dispatch 296," MEMRI, November 2, 2001.

<sup>58</sup> Avi J. Jorisch, "The Language of Terrorism," *Policy Watch* no. 567, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, October 5, 2001.

<sup>59</sup> Lawrence Auster, "The Clintons, Abdurrahman Alamoudi, and the Myth of 'Moderate' Islam," *NewsMax.com*, [www.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2000/11/6/170946.shtml](http://www.newsmax.com/archives/articles/2000/11/6/170946.shtml).

<sup>60</sup> Andrew Morse, "Terror Training Ground? London Probe Reveals Unsettling Secret," ABC News, October 22, 2001, <http://abcnews.go.com/sections/world/DailyNews/WTC—london011022.html>.

<sup>61</sup> "Hardline Cleric in London Rejects 'terrorist mastermind' Charge," *The Guardian*, August 10, 1999, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/yemen/Story/0,2763,202941,00.html>; confirmed in a personal interview with a House of Lords staff member who requested anonymity, Washington, D.C., November 21, 2001.

<sup>62</sup> "Broken Record," *The New Republic Online*, December 5, 2001.

ed.<sup>63</sup> In 1992 and 1994, Hizballah bombed the Israeli Embassy and a Jewish cultural center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, killing over 150 people.<sup>64</sup> According to the Gallup poll results released in February 2002, over 80 percent of Iranians have a negative opinion of the United States. With that, popular support of the Islamic regime, especially among the elites, remains questionable.

Fundamentalists such as Ayman al-Zawahiri, leader of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad organization, and Mohammed Atef are loyal bin Laden deputies. Atef, bin Laden's father-in-law, was reportedly killed in Afghanistan. Zawahiri's Egyptian Islamic Jihad assassinated President Anwar el-Sadat in 1981 for concluding a peace with Israel and being "un-Islamic." The Egyptian Islamic Jihad and al Qaeda formally merged in 1998 to create the World Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders.<sup>65</sup> A crusader, of course, is an Islamist code-word for Christians in general, and for any Western presence in the Middle East in particular.

In a 1997 attack at Luxor, fundamentalists from the al-Gama'a al-Islamiya killed 58 tourists to weaken the regime of President Housni Mubarak, and destroy Egypt's lucrative tourism industry.<sup>66</sup> An assassination attempt against Mubarak, allegedly by Islamists tied to the Sudanese Islamic regime, took place in 1995, during his visit to Addis Abbaba. Ahmed Shah Masoud, commander of the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan, a devout Muslim and a hero in the war against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Osama bin Laden's assassins murdered Masoud, the main enemy of the Taliban, on September 9, 2000, two days before the attack on the World Trade Center.

It is clear that the majority of Muslims around the world do not support terrorism against the U.S. Need to add a few sentence transition from this section to the next, as is it too abrupt. Their voices, however, are not heard, and neither is the voice of another important minority—that of progressive liberals who recognize the need to integrate countries with Muslim majority into the global community which shares democratic and human rights values and recognizes that a sophisticated market economy is the answer for economic development and increase in the living standards.

*Moderate Islam and the Need for Religious Pluralism.* Today, the voices of moderate Islam and of liberal secularism inside the Islamic world are scattered and weak. It is laudable that some prominent religious authorities in Saudi Arabia have moved to distance themselves from bin Laden's suicide attacks, especially after Al Qaeda hit close to home in May 2003.

However, the call for moderation in Saudi Arabia must be taken in context. The House of Saud is well aware that the United States and the West in general, may quite justly lay the blame for support of terrorism upon a number of prominent individuals and "charities" operating freely within the kingdom. For example, the wealthy Muwafaq Foundation, run by prominent Saudi businessman Yasin al-Qadi and the bin Mahfous family, was accused of channeling funds to terrorists. This charity, which works openly in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, has been placed on the U.S. Department of State list of terrorism-sponsoring organizations.<sup>67</sup> Charitable entities such as the Muwafaq Foundation have funded terrorists like bin Laden's al Qaeda for years, and continue to do so even in the aftermath of the September 11th attack.<sup>68</sup>

There are others, however, calling for co-existence and mutual respects inside various Islamic communities and between religions, for observance of democratic norms, and for respect of human rights. The Ibn Khaldoun Society, led by Dr. Fatima Mernissi of Morocco, is calling upon the West to cease supporting backward governments in the Arab world who violate the rights of women and minorities.

There are people such as Muqtedar Khan, who termed the 9/11 attack "a horrible scar on the history of our religion," while calling upon Muslims "to remember the verses in the Qu'ran in which Allah says in unequivocal terms that to kill an innocent being is like killing humanity itself." Khan reminded his fellow Muslims that Israel treats its one million Arab citizens with greater respect and dignity than most

<sup>63</sup> *Report to the President and Congress on the Protection of U.S. Forces Deployed Abroad* (The Downing Report), <http://www.fas.org/irp/threat/downing/uncl913.html>.

<sup>64</sup> "Patterns of Global Terrorism 1994," Department of State Publication 10239, <http://www.fas.org/irp/threat/terror-94/year.html>.

<sup>65</sup> Michael Dobbs, "A Few Loyal Men Direct Bin Laden's Sprawling Network," *The Washington Post*, September 27, 2001, p. A1.

<sup>66</sup> Jorisch, "The Language of Terrorism."

<sup>67</sup> Jeff Gerth and Judith Miller, "Philanthropist, or Fount of Funds for Terrorists," *The New York Times*, October 13, 2001, <http://college4.nytimes.com/guests/articles/2001/10/13/873578.xml>.

<sup>68</sup> Dave Eberhart, " Hamas Touts Untouchable 'Secret' Funding Sources," *NewsMax.com*, Dec. 5, 2001. See also, John K. Culley, "Islamic Terrorists: Creature of the U.S. Taxpayer?" <http://www.webcom.com/hrin/magazine/july96/hamas.html>.

Arab nations show to their own people. He mentioned that while Palestinian refugees can become citizens in the United States, Australia and dozens of other countries, the Arab regimes, with the single exception of Jordan, have preferred to keep them in refugee camps. He pointed out the double standard of the Islamic world, which remains silent when fellow Muslims are murdered or treated harshly by the regimes of Islamic countries: Iraqi Kurds, the Bengalis under Pakistani rule, the Afghans under the Taliban.<sup>69</sup>

It is often difficult and dangerous for alternative voices to be heard. Hardliners in Iran were cracking down on liberal media well before the September 11 attacks. Despite the much-heralded liberalization in Iran under president Khatami, four years after his election 50 newspaper remain closed by officials affiliated with the supreme leader Ayatollah Khamanei. In October 2001, the police seized thousands of satellite TV dishes, which remain illegal despite Khatami's promises to legalize them.

Nevertheless, more needs to be done to de-legitimize the anti-american and anti-western militant ideology, which supports violence against the "enemies of Islam" in Iran and beyond its borders, as is the case of the famous writer Salman Rushdie. His book, *The Satanic Verses*, drew the ire of the late Ayatollah Rukhollah Khomeini, who in 1983 issued a *fatwa* (religious ruling), authorizing Rushdie's murder.

The Islamic world is still waiting for the emergence of a robust liberal intellectual movement and the media, which would promote tolerance and champion Western values. Just as Solidarity in Poland and Charter 77 in then-Czechoslovakia benefited from Western assistance and support, reformers in the Muslim world are awaiting a helping hand from the free world. Such assistance has to come in languages, which is understood by target audiences, and without value judgments which may be culturally offensive.

#### *Media, Education, and Civil Society in the Islamic World*

Most practicing Muslims do not read classical Arabic, and therefore cannot not read the original Qu'ran. In addition, the tradition dictates that the faithful are dependent on clerics and the media for interpretation of the scriptures. It is the governments, especially their information/propaganda ministries, the mosques and the media, which largely determine the attitude of the "street." As many preachers, journalists and editors in the Muslim world are either government employees, or work within the narrow confines of state censorship and official regulation, they cannot openly criticize their domestic regimes or challenge the dogmas of Islam. Still, many of them are aware of the economic backwardness, educational failures, and lack of human rights that characterize their respective societies. They air their frustrations in the only fashion allowed: by attacking the United States, the West, and Israel—as well as their alleged conspiracies against the Muslim world. They support jihad against the West, fanning the flames of terrorist activities against innocent civilians.

*The Islamic Media's Anti-American Bias* Most of government-sponsored and opposition media in the Islamic world were vehemently anti-American before September 11. However, the reaction of the media to the attacks brought its anti-U.S. and anti-Western bias into sharp focus. Many columnists proceeded to lay the blame on everyone but the real culprit for the crime. Samir Atallah, a columnist for the London-based *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* wrote, "I have a sneaking suspicion that George W. Bush was involved in the operation . . . as well as Colin Powell . . . Every George Bush in the family has his own world war."<sup>70</sup> The journalist went on to claim that Bush had little popular support before 9/11, but received bipartisan backing thereafter.

Another common explanation in the Arab media is that Israel, "international Zionism," or "the Jews" did it. Ahmad Al-Musli wrote in the Jordanian *Al-Dustour*, "this is the act of the great Jewish Zionist mastermind that controls the world's economy, media, and politics."<sup>71</sup> Another Jordanian, Jihad Jabara, wrote, "I personally eliminate the possibility that Arab and Islamic organizations stood behind these acts . . . Why couldn't it be that Zionist organizations perpetrated it so that Israel

<sup>69</sup> Muqtedar Khan, "Muslims Condemn Israel but Ignore Their Own Crimes," *The Daily Telegraph*, November 17, 2001, <http://www.portal.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=%2Fnews%2F2001%2F11%2F17%2Fwkh17.xml>.

<sup>70</sup> *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, September 14, 2001, quoted in "Terror in America (4), Arab Columnists: Perpetrators of the attacks are not Arabs or Muslims." Special Dispatch 270, MEMRI, September 20, 2001.

<sup>71</sup> *Al-Dustour*, September 13, 2001, quoted in *ibid*.

could destroy the Al-Aqsa Mosque while the world is preoccupied with what is happening in America?"<sup>72</sup>

As if these preposterous theories were not enough, some Arab media also suggested that U.S. militias may have committed the crime by hacking into air traffic control computers;<sup>73</sup> or that perhaps it was Japan—in revenge for the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki;<sup>74</sup> or Russia, China or anonymous opponents of globalization who did it.<sup>75</sup>

Khalid Amayreh, a Palestinian Islamist journalist, published an article in the London-based *Palestine Times*, entitled "Why I Hate America." He writes, "I do hate it (the American government) so really, so deeply and yes, so rightly . . . America is the all-powerful devil that spreads oppression and death . . . America is the tyrant, a global dictatorship that robs hundreds of millions of Arabs and Muslims of their right to freely elect their government because corporate America dreads the outcome of democracy in the Muslim world . . . It is almost impossible for me, as indeed is the case for most Palestinians, Arabs, or Muslims, not to hate America so much."<sup>76</sup>

The Hamas terrorist organization's weekly went so far as to praise the anthrax attack on America, and to advocate wreaking further damage by introducing anthrax bacteria into the U.S. water supply.<sup>77</sup>

There are many more examples of the Islamic media rejoicing at America's suffering or attacking President Bush with unparalleled vitriol.<sup>78</sup> However, the problem of anti-American influence in the Muslim world—and even in the united states—does not start with the adults who read newspapers. Unfortunately, it is inculcated much earlier—at the elementary and secondary school level.<sup>79</sup>

*Education for Terrorism* Tens of thousands of religious schools, or *madrassas*, throughout the Islamic world, have been overtaken by radical Islamists and turned into schools of jihad, funded directly or indirectly by nationals and foundations from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. The phenomenon is most pronounced in the Sunni world, but applies to the Shi'ites in Iran and Lebanon as well.<sup>80</sup> In Pakistan, the *madrassas* were turned into factories to prepare holy warriors first against the Soviets in Afghanistan, and later against the Indians in Kashmir. Today, the jihad seminaries also target the United States, Central Asian states, Turkey, Russia and Israel. In April 2001, the Pakistani government acknowledged that the schools had become a serious security threat, but no action to stop their practices was taken. In December 2001, President Pervez Musharraf finally ordered the former interior minister to investigate the *madrassas'* connection with the Taliban.<sup>81</sup> It remains to be seen what the results of that investigation will be, assuming it proceeds, and what, if anything, will be done.

Over the last two decades, between 15,000 to 25,000 *madrassas* churned out 4 million alumni of these terrorism training grounds, and between half a million to a million students are currently in their classrooms, according to veteran journalist Arnaud De Borchgrave, who recently traveled in Pakistan to study the phenomenon.<sup>82</sup> Dar-al Ulum Haqqania (University for Education of Truth) in Akora Khatak, proudly counts 9 out of 10 of the Taliban leaders among its alumni.<sup>83</sup> According to Arasiab Khattak, chairman of the Human Rights Commission of Paki-

<sup>72</sup> *Al-Rai*, September 13, 2001, quoted in *ibid*.

<sup>73</sup> Nur Al-Din Sa'e writing in *Al-Safir*, September 12, 2001, quoted in *ibid*.

<sup>74</sup> Hassan M. Yussef, writing in the state-owned Syrian *Tishrin*, September 13, 2001, quoted in *ibid*.

<sup>75</sup> Abd Al-Jabbar Adwan, writing in the London-based *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, September 13, 2001, quoted in *ibid*.

<sup>76</sup> "Terror in America (28). Palestinian Islamist Journalist: 'Why I Hate America,' Special Dispatch 303, MEMRI, November 27, 2001, quoting Khalid Amayreh's article from the *Palestine Times*, available at <http://www.ptimes.com>.

<sup>77</sup> Dr. 'Atallah Abu Al-Subh, "To Anthrax," *Al-Risala* (Gaza), November 1, 2001, quoted in Special Dispatch 297, MEMRI, November 7, 2001.

<sup>78</sup> See [www.memri.org](http://www.memri.org), Special Dispatches 274, 279, 281, September-October 2001.

<sup>79</sup> On culture clash in the Muslim education in the United States, see Valerie Strauss and Emily Wax, "Where the Two Worlds Collide. Muslim Schools Face Tension of Islamic, U.S. Views," *The Washington Post*, February 25, 2002, p. A1.

<sup>80</sup> The reported pro-American sentiments among the less-religious, middle class Iranian urban youth can be seen as a protest against the ruling clerics, and does not contradict the phenomenon elsewhere.

<sup>81</sup> Arnaud de Borchgrave, "Holy Warriors of Pakistan," *Commentary*, United Press International, December 28, 2001.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>83</sup> Barry Shlichter, "Inside Islamic seminaries, where the Taliban was born," *Knight Ridder News Service*, <http://inquirer.com/content/inquirer/2001/11/25/naitonal/schools25.htm?template=aprint.htm>.

stan, “The *madrassas* indulge in brainwashing on a large scale, of the young children and those in their early teens,” Khattak says.<sup>84</sup> This is a terrorist time-bomb waiting to explode.

As poverty remains extreme throughout the Islamic world, *madrassas* often are the only sources of free education for the poor. However, these schools often fail to teach any economically marketable skills, but are increasingly focused on arms training and religious indoctrination. According to Pakistani accounts, over the last two decades, hundreds of these schools have become jihad training camps in disguise.<sup>85</sup>

The textbooks prescribed for 6-year olds in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan were an example of this type of education. To teach first-graders the Pashto language, the following sentences were used, “Ahmed has a sword. He performs Jihad with his sword.” To teach the word weapon, the authors used, “My uncle has a weapon. He performs Jihad with his weapon.” Further, the book says, “Jihad is an obligation for everyone. Growing a beard is mandatory. My father has a beard.” “Anyone who wants to do the will of God should start jihad under the flag of Islam against the infidels.” Children as young as 8 were taught about Kalashnikov rifles and how many people can be killed with a hand grenade. An Afghani elementary school science text explained the difference between a cloud from rocket shelling and a cloud that makes rain.<sup>86</sup> Other well-known examples of this kind of mis-education include the Palestinian Authority’s K–12 guerilla training summer camps, the practice of wrapping five- and six year olds in suicide bomber belts in street processions, and Palestinian TV Sesame Street-like programs, television commercials and school textbooks promoting suicide attacks.<sup>87</sup>

However, not everyone accepts turning kids into kamikazes. No less a figure than Abd Al-Hamid Al-Ansari, Dean of the faculty of the Islamic Law at the University of Qatar, has called for deep changes in school curricula as well as educational and media reform to oppose the current trend toward justifying and training for terrorism. Al-Ansari compares today’s radicals with the ancient terrorist sect of Khawarij, which is blamed for the death of the imam ‘Ali, the nephew of the prophet Muhammad, and pioneered the political killing of Muslims considered heretic. Professor Al-Ansari has openly criticized the Al-Jazeera satellite TV channel for opening the airways to Al Qaeda supporters, Taliban fans, bin Laden groupies and other propagandists of violence. He believes that the terrorism in the prevailing culture is “rooted in the minds of those who suffered from a closed education that leaves no room for pluralism.”<sup>88</sup>

Not only Pakistani and Middle Eastern *madrassas* are a source of radicalism. Recently several British Islamic officials complained that the mosques in that country have lost control over teaching religion to youngsters. Leading British Muslims decried the proliferation of *jihadi* extra-curricular instruction, which is used, as it is from Pakistan to Lebanon, to recruit terrorists. Muslim officials also admitted that “volunteers” enter Britain from the Middle East to engage in brainwashing the youth.<sup>89</sup> Thus, the education factor, much like the prolific anti-American media, will prove to be a daunting hurdle in the war of ideas, but this does not suggest that the fight is unwinnable.

#### *Winning Hearts and Minds in the War on Terrorism*

Sun Tsu says in *The Art of War*, “know your enemy, know yourself. In a hundred battles you will not be defeated.” The Chinese sage also says that the war is won when the morale of the enemy is undermined. In the War of Ideas one needs to understand and analyze target audiences. Their wedge issues need to be identified and understood. Only after that key messages can be developed and delivered, which can expose and devalue the enemy’s ideology.

<sup>84</sup> Rick Bragg, “Nurturing Young Islamic Hearts and Hatreds,” *The New York Times*, October 13, 2001, <http://college3.nytimes.com/guests/articles/2001/10/14/873817.xml>.

<sup>85</sup> Najum Mushtaq, “Moderate jihad,” *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, 56, no. 4 (July/August, 2000) <http://www.thebulletin.org/issues/2000/ja00/ja00mushtaq—report.html>

<sup>86</sup> Keith B. Richburg, “Textbooks With a Subtext: ‘Ahmed Has a Sword,’” *The Washington Post*, November 19, 2001, p. A14.

<sup>87</sup> Matthew Dorf, “Congress seeks to cut funds to Palestinian T.V.,” Jewish Telegraphic Agency Inc., April 21, 1998. Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation, which also runs a radio station, has received about \$ 500,000 from various U.S. federal agencies. <http://www.njchq.org/Pal—TV.html>.

<sup>88</sup> Abd Al-Hamid Al-Ansari, writing in the London-based *Al-Hayat*, November 29, 2001, quoted by Special Dispatch—Jihad and Terrorism Studies No. 307, MEMRI, December 4, 2001.

<sup>89</sup> Daniel McGrory, “Militants Outside Control of Mosques Target Teenagers,” *The Times of London*, December 28, 2001, <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/0,,2001570018-2001602324,00.html>.

*Audiences and Messages: Tools in the War of Ideas* In thinking about the Muslim world, and particularly about the Middle East, it is erroneous to view these as a single monolith of “Arabs” or “Muslims.”<sup>90</sup> The majority of the world’s Muslims reside in Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh, not in Arab countries. Writers and broadcasters must differentiate the target audiences by the levels of education and religious observance. The Middle East is home to many ethnic groups, languages, religions and denominations, who are oppressed. According to the bipartisan Freedom House, seven out of 10 of the least-free countries in the world are predominantly Islamic. These are Afghanistan (under the Taliban), Iraq, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, and Turkmenistan. They achieved the lowest ratings of “unfree” in the 2001 *global survey* of political rights and civil liberties.<sup>91</sup>

The Islamic world is also socially and economically diverse. In designing communications strategies and messages, this must be kept in mind, as well as the fact that many of these groups have different, and often competing interests. It is in U.S. interests to promote debate and plurality of opinions, and to appeal to those who are likely to be receptive to the American message.

As the economies of most Islamic countries (with the exception of Malaysia) stagnate, and their populations continue to grow fast, the quality of life in many of these lands deteriorates from year to year. Often, the youth is most frustrated with the status quo, specifically the corruption and lack of popular participation in government and politics. In some countries, such as Pakistan, Central Asia, and the Arabian peninsula, young people easily fall prey to totalitarian Islamic preachers. However, in Iran, they are the ones who strive for a chance to pursue a meaningful career, to access the knowledge and the opportunities offered by the globalizing world. These are tomorrow’s leaders for change, whether through peaceful evolution or violent revolution.

The Islamist radicals understand the importance of gaining the allegiance of the youth, and actively recruit their cadres, including terrorists and suicide bombers, from among the *madrassa* students.

#### *What To Do*

The attacks on the United States were a clarion call to engage in the battle for hearts and minds of the peoples of the Middle east, Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent, and South-East Asia. After all, the anti-American radicals openly state that their goal is destruction of America, its values, and its way of life. As demonstrated by the allied victory in World War II and the Cold War, changing the political nature of foreign societies and their value systems, when it serves the vital national interests of the united states, is a most legitimate foreign policy pursuit. When it comes to nations that have either already fallen prey to radical Islam, or are actively targeted by it, the United States will have to be engaged in this pursuit for years to come.

The War of Ideas will require presidential leadership and a comprehensive strategy, including development and mobilization of area and linguistic expertise, and a long-term investment of wealth and stamina, comparable with that of the Cold War, a consideration that extends well beyond any U.S. war against Iraq. Some regimes will be more willing to work with the United States than others. And while the elements of civil society in some regions for now may be anti-American, it is important to develop indigenous institutions that can work with American bodies.

It is time to engage in a war of ideas to undermine and destroy credibility of those who use and support the use of terrorism against the United States and its allies. The battle for hearts and minds is not a short-term campaign but a protracted conflict that will take the years, decades, and possibly generations to come. It should be guided by an integrated strategy of public diplomacy and political covert action, something that the United States has not attempted for half a century, since the early stages of the Cold War. This will be a campaign in the information and media battlefield, fought not against a state or a coalition of states, but against an array of radical organizations and the governments, which support them. It is also important to note that the War of Ideas should not be confused with psychological operations (psyops), which are a battlefield, tactical instrument deployed specifically to undermine the morale of an enemy fighting force, but rather a much broader objective.

The nature of the enemy, the spectrum of threats, and the environment in which the conflict is waged require that the war of ideas conducted overtly where possible,

<sup>90</sup>Robert Satloff, “Devising a Public Diplomacy Campaign Toward the Middle East,” *Policy Watch* no. 579, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, October 30, 2001.

<sup>91</sup>Freedom House, “Freedom in the World 2002: The Democracy Gap,” <http://theweeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/000/701luvvl.asp>.

and covertly where necessary. Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations operate by stealth. So do funders who subsidize radical Islamic brainwashing in the guise of religious “education.” Foreigners are not allowed to religious seminars in Pakistan and the Gulf, where agent penetration may be required. And regimes in Iran, Saddam’s Iraq, Libya and Syria do not welcome the U.S. foreign service officers with public diplomacy expertise. Thus, Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA) political action capabilities need to be rebuilt.

The main weapon of the United States in the battle of ideas should be the truth—truth about the societies, their rulers, and terrorist leaders. The truth should be disseminated through open channels where possible, and covertly where necessary, but the promotion of individual freedom and respect for other peoples’ life, faith and property must remain at the heart of the suggested strategy. The United States has to set the record straight about American achievements, values, and policies, including its protection of Muslims in Kuwait, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan.<sup>92</sup> Abandoning the field to those who cheered al Qaeda and bin Laden is simply not an option. The United States and its allies must formulate strategies to engage radical Islamists and secular extremists who support terrorism, at their core, to discredit their basic premises and dismantle their organizational infrastructure.

The first attempts to develop capabilities to launch the battle for hearts and minds demonstrate how difficult it is to regain massive public diplomacy capabilities. In the aftermath of the Cold War, the United States Information Agency (USIA), which was created to counter communist propaganda, was collapsed into the U.S. Department of State. Many public diplomacy functions were dispersed throughout the regional units or integrated in the Public Diplomacy bureau at the State Department. Many important initiatives, such as storefront libraries and book translation programs were cancelled or defunded. International broadcasting suffered drastic cuts.

Post-September 11th, the State Department Arabic media initiatives, which brought from retirement a couple of Arabic speaking former U.S. Ambassadors, and launched stolid, text-heavy websites will not be enough.<sup>93</sup> The Middle Eastern Broadcast Network has turned out to be exceptionally slow to launch. Whereas the Voice of America got on the air in February 1942, three months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Arabic radio network was not broadcasting six months after the attack. And international broadcasting professionals raised questions about the efficiency of music heavy, information-sparse programming, and quality of editorial control over new radio talent locally hired in the Muslim world.<sup>94</sup>

The track record of Muslim regimes and terrorist organizations intimidating foreign and domestic journalists and their family members is well-known.<sup>95</sup> The recent admissions of CNN and the New York Times executives and journalists about toning down coverage in exchange for access and to prevent expulsion, and brutal murder of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl, make it clear how serious threats of this type can become.

The Pentagon’s short-lived Office of Strategic Influence hardly got off the drawing board. Critics charged that it was an attempt to blend public affairs and psyops, which did not belong under the same roof.<sup>96</sup> Still, the task the Office was created for remains vital. Efforts to win hearts and minds will require humility and realism, as well as the talents and skills of dedicated public affairs and area experts. Changing hostile perceptions will not be easy. At this stage, the National Security Council may need to provide leadership on this vital battlefield.

In fighting the War of Ideas, the Bush Administration must re-evaluate, revive, and upgrade its public diplomacy “tool box,” as well as invent new specific tools for fighting aggressive, anti-Western sentiment among fundamentalist groups and regimes, which support and tolerate them.

The overarching principle and the key to disarming an ideological enemy is changing the perception of the elites and the general population—through publications of new ideas in their languages, broadcasting, personal contacts and exchanges, or any other means. This should be the highest priority for U.S. action.

<sup>92</sup> Robert Satloff, “Devising a Public Diplomacy Campaign Toward the Middle East.”

<sup>93</sup> “Charlotte Beers’ Toughest Sell,” *BusinessWeek* online, [www.businesweek.com/magazine/content/01—51/b37762098.htm](http://www.businesweek.com/magazine/content/01—51/b37762098.htm).

<sup>94</sup> Personal interviews, Voice of America personnel, January–February 2002.

<sup>95</sup> See Ronni Gordon Stillman, “Arafat’s Press. What the Palestinian Authority gets away with,” *National Review* Online, September 20, 2001, <http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/comment-stillman092001.shtml>; and “Middle East and Northern Africa Overview,” <http://www.hrw.org/wr2k1/mideast/>.

<sup>96</sup> Eric Schmitt and James Dao, “A Nation Challenged: Hearts and Minds. A ‘Damaged’ Information Office is Declared Closed by Rumsfeld,” *The New York Times*, February 27, 2002, p. 1.

While it is difficult to quantitatively measure the efficiency of disparate tools of public diplomacy and covert political action, Cold War experience teaches us that the most effective tools in America's arsenal are electronic and print journalism, which could have flourished in the target country if media freedom existed there. This is journalism that espouses alternative points of view and promotes a marketplace of ideas. However, when dealing with journalists from the region or expatriates with political agendas of their own, it has to be exercised with U.S. editorial control.

When engaging in the new War of Ideas, one needs not reinvent the wheel. Many approaches are time-tested, and have worked well in the past. Others need to be fundamentally rethought and restructured, primarily in the area of stimulating inter-faith and intra-faith dialogue, and the long-term goal of separation of mosque and state, which was hardly an issue in the Cold War. Other U.S. public diplomacy tools, such as expensive cultural exchanges, may need to be re-evaluated and restructured. After all, the audience for American jazz and modern ballet in the Muslim world may not be that large.

While the war of ideas reflects an ideological competition between the radicalized, political Islam and globalizing, increasingly secular world, the resolution of this deep-rooted conflict will only come about if and when societies which breed Islamist terrorism can be influenced from within and from the outside, and in due time, changed. Fighting such a battle will take time and must be done carefully, so as not to give the impression that the United States and its allies juxtapose the Judeo-Christian civilization against Islam in general. The Huntingtonian "clash of civilizations" should be avoided as much as possible.

Significant changes will have to be made in the Middle East with regards to education, promotion of religious dialogue, and dissemination of information. In particular, Washington and U.S. allies should prepare managers and experts to administer public information campaigns and productively work with local talent.

In the United States, the intelligence community should be developing capabilities for political covert action at the CIA and beyond—capabilities which were lost as long ago as the 1970s.<sup>97</sup>

Dissemination of information within the oppressed countries and pre-selected communities will be vital to ensure both understanding of where extreme Islam went wrong in its advocacy of violence and terrorism, and what the West truly stands for. In order to do so, it will be necessary to further develop Radio Sawa (Arabic) and Radio Farda (Farsi) as surrogate AM/FM broadcasting, similar to the short-wave Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty of the Cold War era; expand the publication of books, journals and newspapers that promote views opposing radical Islam; and provide the truth about America. In the realm of education, diplomatic action should be initiated against the state-supported incitement to violence prevalent in mosques, education systems, and Islamist media, under the banner of jihad. Demands also should be made for Islamic states to cease and desist from incitement to violence in the guise of religious teaching; reform educational systems and develop new curricula for both religious schools and colleges, as well as for public schools. Another beneficial change that would improve both the educational and religious aspect of the Islamic faith would be to expand inter- and intra-confessional religious dialogue. The United States and other states which would confront the spread of religious intolerance and incitement to violence should identify and recruit talent for the new war of ideas by utilizing the talents of people from the Islamic world residing in their countries.

#### CONCLUSION

The challenges of enhancing security, controlling Islamic extremism, and building the civil society which allows for sustainable development and human rights, remain dire. Almost two years after September 11 attacks, the military component of the U.S. power projection into a Central Asia, a previously neglected region, is impressive.

However, economic and social development remain an Achilles heel of the impoverished region. Tension generated by corruption, political repression, and Islamic radicalism will haunt the region in the foreseeable future.

The Administration faces difficult choices as to whether—and to what extent—it should support authoritarian regimes in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and elsewhere in the region. While immediate military contingencies are dictating closer ties, long term planning may advise caution: As the Soviet-era elites, with their common communist experience are aging, it is not clear what will be the nature of

<sup>97</sup> Personal interviews, retired senior intelligence officers who requested anonymity.

the new, emerging leadership. It can be reasonably suspected that unconditional support of unpopular leaders may generate the 'Pahlavi effect', and stain U.S. with association with dictators. It is equally difficult to predict what are the chances of anti-American radical Muslims to come to power in the first round of post-Soviet transition.

Contingencies of the war force convince at least some decision makers in the Bush administration that its policy towards Central Asian states will be more coordinated with U.S. policies towards Iran and Afghanistan. Ultimately, the U.S. will continue playing a role in the regional balance of power, however, its extend will depend upon the relationship with Russia, China, Iran, as well as upon the intensity of the conflict with radical Islam. The U.S. will have to monitor Islamist organizations, such as Hizb, and support those state and non-state actors which can counter their activities, including their propaganda.

Only twelve years after the end of the Cold War the United States, the West, and a large number of allies are facing a new existential threat. So far, the military successes in the war in Afghanistan were both necessary and exemplary. However, they should not distract policy makers from the ideological nature of the conflict. This is not a war against Islam, but against those who are trying to topple moderate governments and launch a new Jihad against the U.S. and the Western world. These are not only the poor and the uneducated youth in the Islamic world, but also some of the blue collar and middle and upper-middle terrorists and supporters, as well as some emigrants in the U.S. and other countries of the West.

As in the wars against Nazism and communism, this struggle must also be fought as a war of ideas. As many world leaders said, the swamp has to be drained. Because ideas have consequences, this war should be fought not only with bullets and missiles, but through words, images and symbols. Without a U.S. victory in the new battlefield of ideas, it is only a matter of time until new terrorist organizations raise their heads—this time, possibly armed with weapons of mass destruction. A political climate should be created to prevent such a scenario.

So far, attempts to launch effective public affairs operations aimed at foreign audiences in the Department of State, the Pentagon and the White House have met with only limited success. Institutional capabilities and budgets were slashed in the aftermath of the Cold War, public servants with expertise retired, and the federal government rarely rewarded language and area expertise. Above all, no one expected that the USIA, which had a Cold War mission, would be so necessary once again—and so soon.

The creation of effective mechanisms to fight this war, the recruitment of talented and credible personnel, the formulation of key messages and their successful delivery to the target audiences in Central Asia and around the world is one of the greatest foreign policy challenges now facing the Bush Administration.

Hizb ut-Tahrir represents a growing medium- and long-term threat to geopolitical stability and the secular regimes of Central Asia and ultimately poses a potential threat to other regions of the world. It seeks to overthrow and destroy existing regimes and establish a Shari'a-based Caliphate. Hizb may launch terrorist attacks against U.S. targets and allies, operating either alone or in cooperation with other global terror groups such as Al-Qaeda. A Hizb takeover of any Central Asian state could provide the global radical Islamist movement with a geographic base and access to the expertise and technology to manufacture weapons of mass destruction. The U.S. and its allies must do everything possible to avoid such an outcome.

Mr. CHABOT. Dr. Blank you are recognized for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF STEPHEN BLANK, PH.D., PROFESSOR,  
STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE, U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE**

Mr. BLANK. Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me here today to speak about the radical terrorist and radical Islamic threat in Central Asia.

The terrorists in Central Asia, like those elsewhere, seek power in the name of religion, and they disdain mass politics in favor of violence. Their ambition is to destabilize regimes and then to exploit the ensuing chaos. Given the possibility of terrorism in Central Asia, there is certainly a terrorist threat to the United States' forces and to the United States interests' in the region.

However, the greater threat beyond the possibility of the incidence of terrorism is the likelihood of state failure to what one of

my colleagues calls illegitimate governments, the complex of authoritarian, repressive, rent-seeking, corrupt criminal governments which have led to mass poverty, collapse of social and environmental security throughout the region of Central Asia, and the explosion of such anomic behaviors like widespread criminality, trafficking in narcotics, trafficking in women, and so forth.

Therefore, the threats that we face today are not so much terrorism. There have been very few incidents of terrorism, if any, since 2001—or 2002, rather, thanks to Operation Enduring Freedom. Rather, the threat is the likelihood of state failure due to the reasons I outlined here and that Secretary Jones discussed in her testimony. State failure opens the way to terrorism, mass violence, and insurgency, which then could create the opportunities to threaten both American forces and vital American interests in security, energy, and democratization of the region.

As Ariel Sharon said years ago, terrorism has an address. These terrorist movements, to the best of our knowledge, cannot survive in Central Asia without support from some form of government, a foreign government or quasi-governmental movement. This was true with the IMU before 2001 which depended on the Taliban; and the Taliban itself depended on the Pakistanis, ISI, and al-Qaeda. There is a lot of evidence before 2001 of the ISI and Pakistan supporting these movements. There is continuing evidence of Saudi Arabia supporting Wahhabi indoctrination in madrasas and educational, “facilities which . . .” as Dr. Cohen said, “. . . are factories for terrorism.”

There is also some evidence as well and charges that perhaps even elements of the Russian Secret Services have been linked to the IMU. Certainly the Russian army in Tajikistan is linked to the drug trade, and we know that to be a fact. Even in 2000, President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan suggested as much, that the war on terrorism was being used by mosques as a pretext for advancing its interests in Central Asia. So one of the things we have to guard against is there a possibility of foreign support for these terrorist movements.

The tasks, therefore, for the United States is to engage Central Asian governments and Russia and the other neighboring states in comprehensive dialogues about the need to promote democratic reform, liberal capitalist development on the basis of sound economic principles to ensure equal access for not just American but other foreign investments in energy and other industries based perhaps on the principles of the open door, one of the great American foreign policy traditions.

We must also intensify our assistance to humanitarian projects through nongovernmental organizations and continue the dialogue for comprehensive democratic engagement both with the Central Asian governments and with the neighboring governments, in particular with Moscow. This engagement will reduce chances for dictators to carry out authoritarian repressive policies which will inevitably lead to state failure.

It also prevents them from looking to Moscow for support against us as we try to pressure them to engage in these democratic reforms, and it reduces the likelihood for Moscow to carry on the much tougher but what might be called neoimperial and even hege-

monic attempts to insert its influence in Central Asia in both economic and military policies which guarantee the continuing backwardness of the region and its lasting instability.

Those kinds of policies are the long-term policies which are necessary to help achieve the overarching goals, not just of securing the region against terrorism but against state failure, insurgency, mass violence, and larger socioeconomic degradation and catastrophe.

Thank you.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much, Dr. Blank.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Blank follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF STEPHEN BLANK, PH.D., PROFESSOR, STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE, U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE

#### INTRODUCTION

Virtually every writer on Central Asia has postulated that the combination of ubiquitous misrule, corruption, poverty, and repression there runs the risk of encouraging opposition groups to gravitate toward Islamic parties and movements for want of any other option. The lack of an option is therefore allegedly due to the fact that the regimes there have stifled all other opposition movements. Hence Islamist movements, which are generally and inherently underground operations, are left as the only force capable of arousing opposition to this misrule. Alternatively this repression and misrule stimulates this gravitation to Islamic parties because only they have the most coherent and resonant message that the population can assimilate in terms it understands.

This conclusion emerges because it is assumed that all other avenues of political expression are closed off due to repression, socio-economic decline, environmental degradation, the breakdown of social norms through crime, corruption, and drugs, ethnic cleavages, and/or the absence of a genuine civil society. Hence Islamic parties and movements, that supposedly speak to the populace in their own language are left by default as the only alternative. Yet their message, while coherent, is simultaneously an inherently violent, reactionary, anti-Western, and anti-modern alternative. Moreover, their message, though couched in Islamic terms and tropes, is inherently a political one whereby the symbols and vocabulary of the religion are appropriated for political purposes. Inasmuch as every Central Asian regime is characterized by authoritarianism and what Max Manwaring of the Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College has called illegitimate governance—repressive authoritarianism, rent-seeking, crony capitalism, collapse of the social security network, environmental degradation, etc.—this assertion, if true, has potentially profound consequences. This assertion about the likelihood of Islamic opposition being the only one capable of succeeding also makes certain implicit assumptions about political trends in Central Asia.

#### RELIGION AND RADICALISM

This assertion assumes that a direct correlation exists between the failure of the state to deal adequately with pressing social issues, environmental decay, demographic transformation, mass migration to cities or refugee issues, economic decline, mass unemployment, extremes of wealth and poverty with unusual concentration of wealth, pervasive corruption, criminality, etc. and violent opposition. And it also assumes an ultimate elite helplessness or unwillingness to intervene in the face of this opposition once a certain threshold of state failure has been breached. The correlative element here is the Islamic message which answers the quest for identity at both individual and collective levels that is abused by this pervasive state failure. This pattern of society-state breakdown in an atmosphere of anomie and loss of identity or of ideological anchors of certainty provides recruits for an identity-based politics of opposition and resistance, often violent, based on Islam and/or Islamic appeals to the population.

First, comes the assumption that Islamic oppositionist movements arise from either misrule or economic hardship which is a direct outgrowth of this misrule, i.e. Manwaring's illegitimate governance. Thus misrule, authoritarianism, etc. almost inevitably breeds not just opposition but Islamic opposition. Second, is the assumption that movements professing an Islamic ideology—even if the meaning of what that signifies varies wildly with each group—possess an inherently potent vehicle

for political mobilization. It is not clear whether this means successful mass mobilization or simply reaching out to some crucial number of disaffected recruits short of a mass of the population. The third assumption is that radical Islamic movements pose real and serious threats to established governments there.

Even though most of these assumptions are held by outside observers and probably by the local regimes as well, there is simply no empirical proof one way or the other that can validate these assumptions for all five Central Asian governments and for other Muslim regimes as well except perhaps that radical Islamic groups do pose serious threats to stability by virtue of their willingness to resort to crime, brigandage, insurgency, and terrorism. And *if they can mobilize a credible movement*, then they certainly pose an even greater threat to local regimes. We have seen in Tajikistan's civil war, in Afghanistan where the Taleban and behind them Pakistan's ISI and Al-Qaida supported such movements and posed real threats to Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan that the argument about the danger represented by these groups is incontestable. Yet we have rarely seen that the Islamist parties or movements or their recruits are the result of the kind of poverty and societal degradation that we find in Central Asia. If anything we find the opposite, that these recruits are often from educated upwardly mobile backgrounds whose ascent is somehow blocked or "cramped" by the structure of the existing society. It is by no means clear that they are capable of bringing the masses into politics or into the street to the point where their unrest can topple a regime. Neither is it even certain that they aspire to organize and lead a mass movement even though their will to power is clear.

Throughout Central Asia the so called radical Islamist threat has not posed as a mass movement but as an armed insurgency threatening the life of the leader of the regime or the stability of the local government by virtue of its ability to mount armed raids, not its ability to forge a viable mass movement. Thus the threat to those governments is not mass insurgency but rather terrorist coups that could lead to assassination or to state failure over time. Thus the threat to American interests lies in the possibility of state failure which alone opens the door to radical Islamic terrorism on a significant scale, not the terrorism itself. In many cases the violent insurgent movements, often linked to criminal activities as well, frequently look like groups who commit anomic violence for its own sake, not purposeful mass politics. Or else it may be motivated as much by criminal intent as by anything else, e.g. a struggle among opposition movements and drug gangs in Central Asia for control of the routes of the drug trade. Thus, if these parties truly aim to become genuine mass movements as in colonial and post-1954 Vietnam or Kuomintang China they are still at a very early stage of political development. Alternatively their resort to what is old-fashioned brigandage and violence with some modern accretions, i.e. drugs, conspiracy, and terrorism, is their true *modus operandi*. In the latter case the threat they pose would be no less serious but it would obviously be qualitatively different than the threat of mass uprisings or genuine revolution as in Iran in 1979 or of subsequent examples of "people power".

Likewise, scholars have been citing a religious or Islamic revival in Central Asia for more than a generation. But whatever the dimensions of this religious revival may be, it has yet to translate itself into *active* mass political opposition or even a mass political movement outside of Iran and perhaps a decade ago in Algeria. Indeed, it is arguable that the resort to terror through Al-Qaida and the reservoir of passive encouragement for it in the Arab world, if not elsewhere, represents a reaction to the utter failure of political Islam to advance its cause through political means and to the dashing of the hopes of yet another ideological movement, imported in no small measure from the West. Even though Islam is the natural language, cultural signifier and religious-ethnic marker for Central Asia it has not yet become a positive force for mass political arousal as opposed to the recruitment of disaffected individuals. Although we would need to distinguish the dimensions of this revival in each Central Asian and perhaps Trans-Caspian state to be sure, it is possible that Islam in certain cases may be a force for quietism, especially if the regime in question, as has been the case with the Soviet regime and the current governments in Central Asia, can co-opt the Muslim clergy and suppress any dissenters. Thus Lyle Goldstein of the Naval War College observes with regard to Central Asia that,

Muslims in Central Asia practice Sufism, a form of moderate Islam, that contrasts directly with Wahhabism, an import from the Arab world. Sufis tend to be alienated by Wahhabi practices, such as unshaven beards and the veil. As opposed to the militant Wahhabi interpretation of jihad, Sufis tend to understand this concept in terms of spiritual self-perfection. Most people in Central Asia are not only Sufis, but Hanafi Sunnis, or followers of the teachings of

Imam Abu Hanifa. They take a more accommodating attitude toward political power and do not condone rebellion against established authority. This may help explain why political instability has been relatively rare in post-Soviet Central Asia. Thus it is not very surprising that the IMU threat has been exaggerated and that relatively few fundamentalists have been recruited from Uzbekistan, an alleged hotbed of Islamic radicalism.

There also is survey evidence from Dagestan and Kyrgyzstan that tends to corroborate these findings about the term Wahhabi being understood as signifying a radicalism that many Muslims find unwelcome. Therefore, Goldstein argues, such violence as we find in Central Asia, e.g. Tajikistan's civil war or ethnic rioting, is largely due to ethnic tensions. Other analysts, to be sure, ascribe violence not only to ethnic cleavages but point also to the consequences of this illegitimate governance and the breakdown of law and order that also finds expression in large-scale criminality.

Obviously a breakdown of governance coupled with ethnic tension can serve by itself to generate mass violence. And equally obviously in other cases, notably the Saudi Wahhabist version of Islam, religious ideology can easily become a revolutionary force. And as Saudi Arabia has poured in large sums of money to post-Soviet Islamic countries poured in to disseminate Wahhabism, we might justifiably be dealing with a revolutionary ideology. But then we have to account for the fact that surveys in both Dagestan and Kyrgyzstan suggest that terms like Wahhabism and appeal to revolt in the name of Islam are perceived as political designations and calls and labels and not primarily as religious ones. Although the language and emotional imagery are theological, in fact religion has been instrumentalized by a mixture of puritanical Islamism and the Tiers-mondialism of the 1960s and 1970s with revolutionary Arab thought and practice dating back to the interwar period. Thus at the roots of these movements we find a commingling of the three anti-democratic or anti-Liberal streams of thought, Leninism, Fascism, and Islam including an Islamicization of Fascism's cult of heroic death.

Therefore it is not surprising that every regime in Central Asia has branded manifestations of Wahhabism or Salafi Islam as subversive and repressed it. Neither is it surprising that as yet there is no visible mass opposition to America's presence there. But the key point is that until now none of those manifestations of Islam in the region has sufficed, even in Chechnya, to create a viable mass movement. Therefore it is not sufficient to say that the threat in Central Asia due to the undoubted misrule there must be one of radical Islam even if that ultimately turns out to be the case. It is as likely as not that if mass opposition does arise using the language of Islam, its main purpose is political and it represents a politicization, and hence secularization of Islam behind which new counter-elites can aspire to pose. Religion is at best only one of the factors that will underlie and seriously challenge to the status quo. While one short paper cannot settle these questions the purpose here is to raise issues that must be considered in any future analysis.

#### CENTRAL ASIAN SECURITY ISSUES

On the other hand, there can be no doubt that the situation in Central Asia is approaching urgency if it is not already urgent. The UN Development Program's Index shows declines for Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. Other forthcoming studies argue that Uzbekistan already is experiencing, if not imminently facing, a major economic crisis that will further devastate its society and economy. Portrayals of Azerbaidzhan also paint a lurid picture of a failing state and society. And the recent elections there cannot inspire too much confidence in the legitimacy or cohesion of Ilham Aliyev's new regime. It also is clear that radical Islamist groups like Hizb-Ut Tahrir and an apparently regenerated IMU and Taleban are waiting in the wings and enjoy considerable outside support. Simultaneously the domestic political situation in many Central Asian and Transcaucasian regimes is precarious and getting worse.

Georgia remains in chaos and its regime has lost any shred of popular support. Politics in Georgia revolves around the question of waiting for President Edvard Shevardnadze to resign. In Azerbaidzhan the resort to a Syrian scenario for the succession to President Heidar Aliyev is has already revealed itself to be fraught with danger. Kazakstan is becoming ever more repressive and corruption trials in America that will surely implicate President Nursultan Nazarbayev and his family will probably further tarnish the regime's standing and legitimacy. In Uzbekistan widespread rumors allege that President Islam Karimov is suffering from an incurable if slow-acting disease. Yet harsh repression continues with little chance for reform in sight there. And in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan recent trends suggest that local leaders are moving rapidly to get rid of even the minimal opposition they have and

make their regimes still more authoritarian thereby. Certainly many of them like Karimov, are in no mood to listen to foreign sermons on democratization. Finally Turkmenistan's regime has descended into a caricature of Stalinism or what Max Weber called sultanism.

It also is noteworthy that many of these regimes simultaneously depend on outside powers for defending their tenure in office even as they are also at the same time under severe pressure from the same as well as other external actors. The Russian air base at Kant is widely believed to be for training Kyrgyz domestic security and counter-insurgency forces and even for possible use by Russian forces to rebuff President Askar Akayev's internal and external opponents. Azerbaidzhan, Uzbekistan, and Georgia look to Washington for security and have each tried to obtain binding security guarantees from the United States or NATO. Many of the rulers in these states also simultaneously look to Russia to defend them against both internal and external threats. Turkmenistan's recent deal on gas with Russia represents its surrender to Russian economic dictation in return for further extension of Niyazov's powers over the population. Armenia is essentially a Russian client state. Moscow, for its part, has made clear its opposition to "exporting democracy". And it is equally as vocal that fostering these states' economic or military independence or their ties to other foreign powers clashes with Moscow's deepest policy goals. Indeed, high Russian officials have made it clear that they want our military presence out of the area as soon as possible and they are also moving to curtail our economic access as well.

At the same time these states are highly suspicious of each other, particularly of Uzbekistan which has unilaterally moved borders, occasionally cut off their power and gas, and which clearly looms as an aspiring regional hegemon vis-a-vis the other Central Asian states. Thus regional security cooperation, let alone cooperation on vital issues like water, electric power, trade, and energy is elusive and fleeting despite Russian efforts to organize a security system under its auspices. And this disunity continues even as these states are simultaneously menaced by external attempts to unseat their governments. These threats go beyond Pakistan's and Al-Qaida's efforts, operating through or with the tolerance of the Taleban. Azerbaidzhan not only fears Russia but also Iran which it accuses of efforts to foment internal unrest as well as to threaten its energy exploration ships.

Russia has planned coups against Georgia, Azerbaidzhan, and more recently Turkmenistan and is the main bastion of support for all the separatist regimes and movements in the Caucasus except the Chechens. Its earlier relationship with the Islamic Movement for Uzbekistan, a known terrorist group affiliated with Al-Qaida, was extremely suspicious and not at all as hostile as one would expect. And even here the relationship between Russia's special services and various Chechen "terrorists" is not one of unvarnished combat since 1994 but rather one that exhibits considerable and frequent long-standing cooperation and protection. Moscow also has become for Central Asian and Caucasian opposition leaders what Miami is for Latin American opposition movements, namely a home base enjoying foreign support. There also are several reports that Moscow is funding the reestablishment of a "new Taleban" force in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Its relationship with Turkmenistan shows that it is perfectly willing to work with organized criminal elements to advance its policies in Central Asia. *Thus the possibility of covert or even overt Russian or Iranian support for insurgent groups cannot be discounted.*

In Russia's recent gas deal with Turkmenistan the firm chosen to move gas from Turkmenistan to Russia and Ukraine is Trans-Ural, a firm chartered in a Hungarian village named Csadba and headed by one of the most notorious crime lords in Russian organized crime, Semyon Mogilevich. Mogilevich's firm stands to make from \$320 million to \$1 billion on this deal. Thus this raises the most disturbing implications. First it attests to the commingling of government, major energy corporations, and criminal enterprises in Russia and to the mutual enrichment of each of these actors at the expense of the citizens of the CIS, not just Russia. As these firms are already contributing significant sums to President Putin's reelection it is impossible to pretend that he and his colleagues are unaware of Trans-Ural's background. And given the long-standing ties between Gazprom and Russia's special services, the widely reported collaboration of these institutions with organized crime and Russian energy and other firms that has been widely reported throughout Central and Eastern Europe, and the involvement of those services in the earlier attempted coup in Turkmenistan in 2002, not to mention earlier ones in Georgia and Azerbaidzhan, the implications of this deal become much more stark for all concerned.

Obviously we are seeing in Central Asia the expansion of the similar kinds of relationships between official organizations, business, and criminal networks described by numerous Central and East European observers and officials. We also see

graphic evidence of the criminalization of Russian energy policy, the state, and the special services and their mutual collaboration in efforts to impose neo-colonialist economic and political relationships towards Russia upon Central Asian and presumably other CIS governments as well. And it is also clear that the criminalized Russian elite and the criminals have substantial connections within Central Asia that work to attenuate the possibilities of good government. Given other forms of economic pressure possessed by Moscow, Russian efforts to coerce these states through the instigation of popular unrest,—as Jane’s recently reported about demonstrations in Georgia—pressure to join Russian dominated defense arrangements, or to submit to Russian-led monopolies in the energy, defense industrial, and electricity sectors of the economy and the numerous other pressure points throughout these weak states that Russia can access, it is clear that Moscow is playing a very hard version of the great game using time-tested instruments of Russian policy.

Finally it also is conducting a steady military buildup in the Caspian. A report from 2002 observed that,

In the past five years Moscow has reinforced its Caspian Flotilla with new ships, amphibious aircraft, and patrol ship helicopters. Russia has also finished the construction of a military airfield in Kaspiisk and has deployed a brigade of marines there. And in July, Russia’s Caspian Flotilla received its newly commissioned flagship—the corvette Tatarstan. The commander of the Russian Naval Forces Admiral Vladimir Kuroyedov, has additionally assured regional ship-builders that a new “state order” is under consideration. “Several dozen more ships will be commissioned, there will be enough work for more than one five-year plan” said Kuroyedov.

Moscow’s unrelenting efforts to create hegemonic military and economic structures and relationships over Central Asia and its reliance upon subversion, support for separatism and insurgency there, suggest that it could provide a strong base of support for allegedly Islamic regimes or movements. Iran’s backing for such organizations in the Middle East is also well known though its policies in Central Asia since 1991 have been much more circumspect. Such policies are hardly out of character for a government with a long record of fomenting such internecine struggles among the peoples on its borders and in a situation where the multiple organizations of political police have never experienced true democratic reform. Indeed, Karimov repeatedly charged Moscow in 2000–01 of puffing up the Islamic threat in order to gain a pretext for enhancing its position within Central Asia.

Likewise there are pro-Moscow factions who either do or could enjoy support from Moscow if they decided to make a move for power. Those factions go beyond governments in exile in Russia who enjoy the largesse of Russia’s special services. Certainly Russia has frequently tried to install in the “power structures” people loyal to its view of the desired political order. These groups are just the latest manifestation of what the historian of the Tsarist empire John Le Donne calls the client system whereby factions in regimes just over the border attach themselves to Moscow to further their interests as well as Russia’s.

These facts allow us to make certain arguments relating to the question of radical Islamic movements. First of all, regimes all around the Caspian Sea are distinguished by their pervasive misrule in both political and economic issues. This misrule fosters opposition to be sure, but equally, if not importantly, by alienating the population at large, these regimes undermine their own legitimacy and forfeit the possibility of genuine mass support. They also bring about conditions that are all too dangerously conducive to state failure. Second, nationalism may not be as potent a force as was suspected although this remains unproven and a questionable assertion. Third, religion, of its own accord, is also unlikely to be the driver of opposition in Central Asia. And certainly other ideologies of liberation like socialism have long since exhausted their capacity for mobilizing people. As a result there is a profound ideological vacuum which cannot give people a meaningful sense of their social situation or identity, a situation that creates opportunities for insurgent movement since nature abhors a vacuum. This vacuum does create conditions for using traditional Islamic rhetoric to advance a radical political agenda. Third, these regimes therefore attempt to create an invented nationalism or ideological basis for their rule. Uzbekistan’s cult of Tammerlane, Kazakstan’s new nationalism, and Turkmenistan’s cult of personality exemplify this trend toward artificially contrived or imagined nationalisms. But it is unlikely that these ersatz nationalisms overcome the ideological vacuum at the center of all these regimes.

At the same time attempts at religious revival or for the use of Islam for essentially political purposes is another response to this ideological vacuum. Islam may or may not be a vehicle for mass opposition, but it provides at least an alternative ideological framework and language, terms of reference by which opponents may

speak to people in terms that still have some resonance in their lives. Thus it is a highly deployable vehicle for identity politics. At least some analysts maintain that for these reasons “Islamism is the most potent ideology of resistance in the world today.” Therefore it will remain a threat to the regimes of Central Asia and the Caucasus for a long time even if the issues that may galvanize the Arab world do not have much resonance in Central Asia or Azerbaidzhan, many of whose states welcome Israeli assistance. Moreover, these regimes make clear that in their view Islamic movements are their main enemies. As all the leaders are veteran Communist Apparatchiks who imbibed the viewpoint of “scientific socialism”, they have always, and hitherto successfully co-opted religion into the state’s official structure and denuded it of political significance. Accordingly an opposition movement cloaked in Islamic rhetoric and at least the trappings of it may have some limited success in these areas *all things being equal*.

However such success, if it exists, must be analyzed for each state. The Kazaks and Kyrgyz have never been particularly devout or prone to extremism in the Arab sense. Neither has Azerbaidzhan identified with Arabic culture. Moreover, these peoples look to Turkic models much more than Arab ones. Tajikistan is oriented culturally to Iran, but Iran no longer plays the fundamentalist card and has been outflanked on that issue by the Saudi-inspired Al-Qaida. These facts suggest mass apathy in the struggle to live, not mass mobilization, at least as long as charismatic leaders are absent. But they also suggest that opposition will express itself in the language of traditionalism and find significant resonance among the masses if not active support. Moreover, this opposition is likely to find external support that will make it a constant and real threat to local governments, especially if those governments come into crisis or visibly begin to fail due to succession or other crises. Furthermore, to the extent that evidence suggests that Islamic movements arise where an upward ascent has been checked, it is unlikely that in regimes struggling to survive that Islamism will enjoy mass support.

#### THE RADICAL THREAT IN CENTRAL ASIA

Contrary to much of the writing on terrorism, I would argue that these terrorist and insurgent movements cannot flourish without the logistic, financial, intelligence, and military support of external governments, generally neighboring ones, like Pakistan, Iran, or Russia. This was true for Al-Qaida as well. It may be even better for these states if the host regime is weak or even a failing state, but the trappings and shelter provided by a state are of immeasurable value to these organizations. As Ariel Sharon once famously said, terrorism has an address. Nothing in Al-Qaida’s modus operandi has changed that fact for everything it did suggests that it needed either a cooperative or at least oblivious network in a foreign state in order to plan and wait for attacks to materialize. Until now we have seen a greater or lesser readiness of those regimes who have supported terrorist or insurgent movements of “fundamentalist” stripe in and around the Caspian to support various forms of insurgency movements there to leverage their interests. The same holds true for Russia and the Chechens where the relationship between Russia’s police and intelligence agencies and Chechen terrorists which we noted was much more complex and intimate than is reported.

This would suggest that while these movements pose a threat to governments they do so by virtue, not of their mass support, but rather by virtue of their foreign support and ability to build a network of tightly organized, disciplined, and violent cadres who can exploit state weakness or even state failure in these countries. This assessment does not make those movements any less dangerous but it suggests that they are at a very early stage of any attempt to organize a true mass movement and would probably not be very successful at the patient organization of such movements that characterized Ho Chi Minh or Mao Zedong. Nor is it likely that they are even interested in playing this long-term game. Indeed, political organization as such might not even be on their agenda. Their chosen instrument is apparently the “propaganda of the deed” in order to create chaos, exploit it, and further attenuate the stability of the target regime. They may hope for their chance in the ensuing chaos, but they do not seem interested in mass political organization, an inherently long-term, and very prosaic kind of activity.

Finally we need to remember that there is virtually no possibility of an “Islamist international” despite Al-Qaeda’s efforts to function as a kind of clearing house for Islamic terrorist groups. While all these movements have common antipathies, often speak a similar language and rhetoric, possess a common psychology, and, as shown in the Israeli case, certainly collaborate with each other for the achievement of tactical gains, they also share an abiding inability to forge effective strategic cooperation, long-term rivalries, and intense nationalism which precludes the attainment

of Pan-Islamic or Pan-Arab outcomes. Indeed, the latter movement obviously precludes strategic collaboration with the Turkic or Iranian Central Asians. While a Pan-Islamic movement aiming for the return of the Caliphate may ostensibly cast an appeal to all Muslims, it is unlikely that Muslims who have been so thoroughly secularized as have the Central Asians and the Azeris will be very responsive to a cause that they have forsaken for over a century. Moreover, whatever Al-Qaeda may profess, it clearly focuses on a Saudi, Pakistani agenda and is intensely at odds with Iran or has been until now.

What this means is that there is no true unity among various Muslim communities. They may agree more or less on what they hate and fear, though even this is open to dispute, but they certainly cannot put together a coherent Muslim agenda across the former domain of the Caliphate. Even if Al-Qaida is a kind of clearing house for various terrorist groups to come together and plan their attacks, it does not function as Moscow did for international socialism. And given the constant pressure that it now faces, Al-Qaeda may not be able to take on this coordinating role.

Moreover, given the past history of radical Arab and Muslim regimes if one of these groups should come to power chances are it will pursue a very nationalist policy that exploits the rhetoric of Islamism for rather parochial ends. Iran exemplifies this historical pattern. Undoubtedly this new regime will also soon come into conflict with other regimes, Islamic or otherwise, as did Iran. Indeed, two radical Islamic regimes that are adjacent to each other are more likely than not to enter into long-term conflict with each other. While we will confront numerous violent and dangerous snakes, we will not be facing what used to be called the international Communist conspiracy, i.e. a truly disciplined organization with a real headquarters in a single center, but rather something less organized and hence more plastic and elusive. A Muslim international, though it remains Al-Qaida's main hope, will be at best a decidedly stunted affair, more a band of trans-national terrorists and gangsters masquerading as holy men, not an organized political movement.

Thus we might suggest that the main reason or reasons for opposition in Central Asia and elsewhere is the pervasive misrule, or illegitimate governance that not only perpetuates different forms of despotism but that also creates perpetual economic crisis, mass corruption, pervasive criminality, and vast disparities of wealth while the social safety network collapses. If the situation becomes bad enough we will then probably see all the symptoms of a failing or failed state. Then, and one is tempted to say only then, will *mass opposition* arise. However, there is no doubt that other forms of opposition will arise before that time as has already happened. And those forms of opposition include terrorism, drug running, kidnapping and other forms of purely criminal activity for profit, and insurgency. But there can be no denying that to some degree much of this kind of violence is rather anomic and not oriented to a political purpose other than with facilitating further such actions, e.g. drug running. To say this is not to deny that the narcotics trade also provides immense funding resources for political movements and insurgents. But we do have to point out that a number of reports of terrorist activities suggested that at least one motivation for the IMU and other such groups' attacks of 1999–2001 had to do with rivalry for control over drug routes.

There also seems to be no doubt that at least some of this opposition can invoke Islamic rhetoric, symbols, ideologies, etc. even if the aims served thereby have little to do in fact with religion as such but all to do with a rejection of the current status quo including a highly ambivalent view of modernity. Ultimately political Islam drains its message of any but a political context, i.e. violence and power for their own sake. Indeed, at least some commentators on Islamic political movements contend that this has already largely happened in much of the Arab world and that what we are witnessing today arises out of the failure of political Islam.

While opposition groups will arise and at least some of them will assume an Islamic form, they will be limited in their ability to attract mass support and have to depend on continuing foreign backing, criminal activity, terrorism, and violent insurgency in order to accelerate the conditions of state failure which alone might give them an opportunity to seize power. However, it also is possible that if there are disaffected elements in any of these governments with access to the instruments or means by which a coup d'état can be launched: armies, paramilitary forces, state-run communications, etc. then the possibilities for forging an alliance leading to a coup involving these opposition movements is significant. Lastly, the confluence of external support and ongoing misrule in an environment with little or no concept of Western democracy ensures that these movements will pose a constant danger to local governments because of their propensity to violence and the absence of effective instruments with which to counter them due to that previous misrule.

Thus in the absence of meaningful economic-political change we can expect a continuing amount of opposition expressed often in violent forms and owing as much

to internecine struggles among criminal groups, clans, ethnic rivalries and external backers as to terrorists. In actuality it may often be difficult to distinguish between any of these as many people will wear different hats. But the presence of continuing illegitimate governance economic misery, opportunities for violence and criminality, in the form of the drug trade—which often is an adjunct to or support for corruption of the political process—and insurgency, and the presence of oppositionist ideologies will ensure ongoing and dangerous threats to local regimes.

#### THE IMPACT OF US POLICY AND PRESENCE

The American presence in Central Asia constitutes a potential opportunity for radical movements if local governments do indeed fail. Some have opined that in the wake of U.S. deployments to Central Asia that American forces will become the target of Islamic radicals whose motto is death to America or to other similar groups. This has not yet happened and many elites seem to welcome the U.S. presence because it not only prevents terrorism it also offers or seems to promise more economic assistance, represents a check on Russian and Chinese designs, and elevates the importance of the region making these elites feel that their countries are key players at the center of world politics rather than its circumference.

At the same time America has incurred a responsibility due to its enhanced presence in Central Asia. That presence has obligated U.S. representatives to call more often and more publicly for more democracy and more reforms. But it has also obligated them to balance those calls because this presence in some sense represents and is seen to represent a defense of local governments against terrorism. And since the first priority appears to be the war on terrorism, progress on getting dictators to democratize has been limited. They clearly do not want to do so and see no reason or incentive for doing so. It also must be said that the NGO community pushing for the use of U.S. power to reform Central Asia all too often fails to realize how difficult it is for anyone to persuade these governments to behave differently, especially when they have nearby options of would be protectors like Russia and China who are happy to have them continue in their established ways. Very often major coercion ultimately is the only answer such dictators and thugs understand as in Milosevic's or Charles Taylor's cases. And while there are many brave, courageous, attractive and distinguished personages among the opposition movements to these regimes, their future success or commitment to democratic politics is by no means certain. We cannot teach the Central Asians to elect good men or have democracy fall from the sky, especially in current international conditions. Nevertheless the United States is obliged for reasons of interest and conscience to keep advocating reform.

The twin responsibilities of defense and expanded foreign assistance on the one hand and of arguing for reform on the other are facilitated by the opportunities for doing so that U.S. presence gives to America. And it also offers these regimes a chance to pursue options other than that of being Russian or Chinese satellites, an option that consigns them to perpetual backwardness. To be sure, that American presence also facilitates opportunities for U.S. access to Caspian energy and other raw materials, a game in which the United States has so far done well, all things considered.

That success in achieving a substantial economic foothold in the region does, however, open up constructive opportunities for urging greater economic liberalization in order to create conditions that work against an ultimate explosion due to misrule and lack of opportunity. Specifically that economic success gives us opportunities for arguing for property rights and economic liberalization without which no progress towards democracy is sustainable. While economic liberalization is indispensable, and indeed a necessary condition for democracy, it is not sufficient. Although international experience shows that democracy is inconceivable without property rights; establishing them is only a major step toward democracy, not the culmination of the journey.

Clearly domestic forces are too weak to convince local regimes to launch the necessary transformative measures to set this process in motion. Arguably whatever impetus for democratization, or at least for liberalization that ultimately concludes in some recognizable form of democratization, must inevitably come from abroad as internal forces cannot launch the process without foreign assistance. But whatever external impetus might develop cannot offer genuine democracy of its own. It can only stimulate, support, or at best galvanize existing, even if latent, domestic impulses for reform. However, we must also grasp that the opportunities to pursue the U.S.' agenda of open markets, open politics, and security against terrorism, not least through domestic reform for which American organizations consistently argue, also bring dangers in their wake.

Many of these dangers are well known. First, a large and visible American presence can make that presence a target for and a goad to insurgents who can then ratchet up the violence in the belief that the U.S. leadership and public cannot stand the casualties and costs of what is admittedly a somewhat peripheral theater. This belief that the U.S. has no stomach for war and casualties, dies hard among authoritarians even though there is no evidence for it. And we can be sure that radicals will try to derail any sign of progress lest it undermine their hopes for power. Paradoxically successful reform may initially create more violence in areas that America has taken upon itself to defend. A second danger is that the United States, even if it tries valiantly to impose reforms, will be seen as a support for and pillar of an increasingly despised and decrepit regime as in Iran in 1978–79. If a Central Asian or Transcaucasian ruler spurns U.S. pleas and arguments for reform yet his country fails further and further, radical insurgents, Islamist or others, will exploit that situation against the United States and the government in power. After all, if America is seen as the exemplar and driving force of the forces of globalization and of a cultural invasion of the world beyond its shores, then the perceived failure of globalization or the reaction against it—not necessarily the same thing—will drive opposition to America and to the ruling regime as a symbol of corruption, degradation, etc.

This transformative presence of American culture, mores, sexual standards economics, etc. is not something that is under any government's control. Certainly Washington cannot and will not try to prevent it. But it clearly stimulates diverse, ambivalent, but often strong reactions in host countries and not only in Muslim ones. But to the extent that the manifestations of that economic-social-sexual-cultural presence arouse passions in already overly stressed societies then all things American could serve as a negative antipode for the entrepreneurs of identity-based politics like Political Islam. Thus good governance is ultimately a security issue because it reduces the likelihood that the transforming American presence will place excessive stresses upon a society that cannot bear them.

To some degree these risks are unavoidable. Nobody can control globalization or its manifestations and it simultaneously generates new social patterns of both integration and fragmentation within and between states and societies. But those who represent America in countries so different from it must realize that they are constantly under a rather large magnifying glass with more than enough observers on the other side of that glass to make a real difference in local politics. Thus the conduct of troops abroad also plays into this process if there are reasons for unhappiness over their behavior among their hosts.

The American presence can serve to impel societies and states to undertake the kind of reforms that Americans believe will avert failing states and civil violence. The American presence can also ensure defense of the realm against foreign insurgents, terrorists, etc. Yet on the other hand, and particularly if the regime refuses to grasp the need for reforms, that presence can become simultaneously a symbol of oppression or support for it and a symbol of all those forces that have brought about a social situation where “all that is solid melts into air”. We have long known that the whirlpool that is contemporary capitalism and globalization is disorienting in the extreme. When vulnerable personalities are caught up in it the results are often tragic and their behavior often becomes anomic, rootless, even violent.

The Trans-Caspian states as a whole are experiencing that disorienting process and we can see the results in all the myriad pathologies of socio-economic-political life there now. But even if the United States might be blamed for the disappointments of freedom and globalization, it cannot and ultimately will not stand aside from the effort to bring both security and liberty to the area. Ultimately not just its values but its interests demand this. And though it will undoubtedly make mistakes and even frequently fail to rise to the occasion or to understand it, that failure does not absolve local governments from their obligations to their peoples. Ultimately America cannot be more of the Uzbek or Kazakh regime than those leaders are now. While it can pressure, cajole, try to persuade, etc., it must first secure those regimes against violence from without before it can persuade the leaders of those states to secure their people, if not themselves, against violence from within.

Mr. CHABOT. Our next witness will be Dr. Olcott.

**STATEMENT OF MARTHA BRILL OLCOTT, PH.D., SENIOR ASSOCIATE, CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE**

Ms. OLCOTT. Thank you very much for this opportunity.

Religious extremism has the potential to eventually pose a threat to the security of three or maybe even four of the Central Asian states, but it would not undermine the secular nature of any of these states if all of the governments of the region made a concerted effort to respect the basic civil rights of their citizens, which should include freedom of religion, and if all took more seriously the challenge of developing democratic and explicitly participatory institutions of government. The existence of such institutions, along with a political atmosphere which provides for freedom of conscience on religious issues, should confer sufficient political legitimacy on each of the region's governments to allow them to withstand the socioeconomic challenges that their incomplete economic reforms pose to their growing populations.

The failure of reform in one state could put reforms in other states at considerable risk. In this regard, it is important to underscore the potential influence that Uzbekistan's failure to reform could have on developments in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Should extremist Islam become a dominant social and political force in Uzbekistan, democratic reforms in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, no matter how far reaching they might become, would be threatened. The development of an Islamic regime in Tajikistan would also complicate the reform process in Uzbekistan, but this for the moment at least is highly unlikely because of the existence of a legal framework which provides some role for Islamic groups in Tajik society and in the government.

For the moment, though, I think it is really important to note that, for the immediate future, extremist Islam does not pose a threat to the survival of a secular state in Uzbekistan. The Islamic movement of Uzbekistan suffered a decisive defeat during the United States-led campaign against terror in Afghanistan; and United States assistance to the Central Asian states to improve border security as well as continued United States and international vigilance to try to destroy the remains of the al-Qaeda network in Afghanistan and in the region help ensure that, while individual members of the IMU survive and may continue to recruit in the region, their activities are much better able to be controlled today than was the case previously.

Similarly, I would argue that, despite the ambiguity of the ideology of Hizb-ut Tahrir and its ultimate goal of creating a caliphate and its clandestine structure today, the Hizb-ut Tahrir does not pose an armed threat to Uzbekistan or to its neighbors. But the long-term threat posed by a movement like Hizb-ut Tahrir cannot be diffused without a fundamental change in the relationship between religion and the state in Uzbekistan and in the region more generally. Moderate Islam could not be legislated into existence by a secular state, let alone one that is headed by atheists or former atheists. The development of moderate Islam in Uzbekistan requires the state returning full rights of management of religious affairs to the community of believers, while requiring that their activities, of course, be constitutional.

But there can be no defeat of radical Islam in Central Asia until believers are free to define the norms of communal practice for themselves, to choose their own clerics and decide where to open

religious schools and how to open religious schools in order to ensure what they see is the spiritual well-being of their own children.

But one of the most frustrating aspects of working in this region is how limited our levers are to influence developments in the region. Given the levels of U.S. spending in the area, our greatest area of influence is in the area of security, and when we tackle state building issues, especially issues of political reform, it is much harder for our voice to be heard, given how limited the funds are that we are spending in this area in any of these countries and funds that are declining now in fiscal year 2004 rather than increasing. But our spending alone will not change the attitudes of these governments, but they will increase and help strengthen those channels of reform within society whose voices have to be heard for this situation in the region to change.

Thank you for your attention.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much, Dr. Olcott. Right on the button, too. The red light goes on, and you stop. So that was perfect. So thank you very much. That was very good testimony.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Olcott follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MARTHA BRILL OLCOTT, PH.D., SENIOR ASSOCIATE,  
CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

The challenge of building democratic societies in Central Asia is becoming more profound with each passing year, and unfortunately there are no easy answers to the question of how to alter this situation.

Twelve years ago the Central Asian societies all had the opportunity to develop democratic institutions, as well as to become market economies. While some of these countries, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in particular, have made major strides in becoming market economies, even these countries have faltered along the way of creating participatory political systems. The countries that have been the most reluctant to precede with economic reform, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, have performed most abysmally with regard to opening their political systems up for participation by their citizens. Tajikistan, which experienced a deadly civil war from 1992–1997, is somewhere in between.

In all of these cases decisions to restrict the arena of economic competition have led to the restriction of political competition as well. This pattern was established within the first five years of independence, in a period in which the U.S. presence in Central Asia was a tenuous one. There are political prisoners in all five countries. Almost everywhere the first, if not the most celebrated cases, have involved prominent political and economic figures, who have been jailed, forced into exile, or been placed under house arrest. Added to their number have been prominent critics from the fourth estate, and certain “troublesome” human rights activists. Religious “extremists,” those who preach the introduction of the rule of religious law by either peaceful or violent means have been arrested in all five countries.

HOW BIG A THREAT OF ISLAMIC EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM

The practice of Islam is still state-regulated in Central Asia, and Central Asian leaders have not taken pains to distinguish between religious activists, religious extremists, and Islamic terrorists. Effectively, anyone who advocates the primacy of religious values over secular norms is understood to be “an enemy of the state,” whether or not this primacy is to be achieved through persuasion or through force.

The Uzbek government is most frightened of the threat posed by radical Islam, fearing that their own Islamist population could make common cause with Islamists in Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan, although radical Islamic groups have been outlawed throughout the region.

Over the last decade the Uzbek government has arrested thousands of devout Muslims, who were “suspected” of having ties to radical Islamic groups. Sometimes those arrested have been members of illegal groups, like the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, or Hizbut Tahrir. Others were arrested for simply distributing religious literature, or because they were believed to have studied in an unsanctioned religious school, or were “known” disciples of “fundamentalist” clerics (clerics who were

of the Salafiya tradition or ascetics who accepted the locally dominant Hanafi tradition). In some cases, people have been arrested simply for “looking” like a fundamentalist. Members of the IMU and Hizbut Tahrir are subject to arrest elsewhere in the region, as well, as are those distributing radical Islamic materials.

The Central Asian elites are exaggerating the threat to the state that is posed by those advocating radical Islamic ideologies, and U.S. policymakers will be making a great mistake if they allow shared goals in the war on terror to blind us to the short-sided and potentially dangerous policies that are being pursued in the region with regards to religion.

Central Asia’s leaders may label the religion practiced in their countries moderate Islam, but more accurately it is state directed Islam. Although some who work in the state apparatus that supervise religious institutions are themselves religious believers, many are not, and are still holdovers from the atheistic communist regime. Because of this many believers see the state as an opponent of the faith, rather than its protector, a perception which often works against the encouragement of moderate trends within Islam, and serves the goals of radical Islamic groups.

Many people jailed for treason or sedition have been guilty of little more than wearing “Islamic” clothes, or having a beard, or protesting the arrest of a relative. Uzbekistan still has thousands of political prisoners, and untold numbers of them fit into this category. These prisoners also include, again untold numbers of people, who have had evidence of religious extremism planted on them by corrupt police or security officials seeking bribes, and then were jailed for refusing to buy their way out of trouble. This practice is common throughout the region, but in countries with large populations of political prisoners it is even more widespread, and destructive of support for the very secular values that harsh anti-extremist legislation is designed to eliminate. One of the major messages of Islamic fundamentalist groups is the corruption of the state, and in the police states of Central Asia there is all too frequent demonstration of this.

It is also difficult to gauge the threat to the secular state that some of these radical groups pose. Many of those arrested are members of Hizbut Tahrir, an organization, whose origin and funding are from outside the region. Although long in existence, the Hizbut Tahrir has only recently become active in the region. The organization advocates the creation of an Islamic caliphate, which is the reason why the organization has been viewed as seditious by definition, despite the fact that publicly members of the Hizbut Tahrir maintain that they are committed to the peaceful transformation of secular societies. The structure of the organization, which operates in discrete cells, is akin to that of a revolutionary organization, and that raises strong suspicion that its membership would at a later stage endorse the use of arms, and there are strong suspicions that some of the same groups that fund al Qaeda also channel money to the Hizbut Tahrir.

One of the major focuses of the campaign against radical Muslims is the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), an organization that was designated as an international terrorist group after a series of bombings in Tashkent in February 1999. The linkage between these explosions and the IMU has never been conclusively demonstrated, but allegations that the IMU was tied to the al Qaeda network were well documented by materials seized in their camps in northern Afghanistan in late 2001 and early 2002.

There was convincing evidence that the Uzbek security forces needed to use considerable force to break up terrorist training camps in the mountainous border regions of southeast Uzbekistan (in an area that abuts both Afghanistan and Tajikistan). There was also strong evidence linking the IMU with armed incursions on the territory of the Kyrgyz republic in 1999, attacks accomplished through Tajikistan, where the state of relative lawlessness allowed them freedom to operate openly in certain parts of the country.

The captured documents, some of which I have been able to personally examine, depict the active collaboration of the two groups as being a very recent one, from 2000 or even early 2001. This said, it is important to note that the leadership of the IMU was sent into disarray as a result of the U.S. led campaign in Afghanistan in 2001–2002, and many were killed. Improved intelligence capacities by Uzbek security forces have also increased the arrest rate of IMU fighters and IMU sympathizers in Uzbekistan. While it is important to be sensitive to the fact that members of the IMU who have passed through terror camps in Afghanistan or elsewhere do pose a persistent threat to the security of the Uzbek state, this is a threat that at this point in time the Uzbek state is more than competent to defend itself against.

Despite the existence of real threats to the security of the Uzbek state and to the rule of President Islam Karimov over the past twelve years, the response of the regime must be judged as excessive. And through their own excesses the state has

contributed to the severity of the threats that they and future regimes are likely to face.

There is even less excuse for the excesses in Turkmenistan, where religious extremism, no matter how it is defined, has never posed a threat to the state.

Turkmenistan, too, has a large prison population, which is almost entirely political in composition. In recent years the Turkmen government has made indiscriminate threats against relatives of the accused, and made even more use of intimidation and torture than had been the case in Uzbekistan. In the latter country, the UN rapporteur on treatment of prisoners has recently been allowed to visit and to make a report to the government. With far less interest in developing a multi-faceted strategic alliance with the U.S., Turkmenistan's President Saparmurad Niyazov has been able to proceed with virtual impunity.

The situation in Tajikistan has also been a very ugly one. There are far fewer political prisoners than in Tajikistan than in either Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan, but the legacy of the brutality which followed the seizure of power by President Imomali Rakhmonov in late 1992, is a permanent stain on his regime and in the memory of the Tajik people. In the beginning of the second phase of the Civil War, that of political consolidation by the victors, the streets and back roads of the country flowed with blood, as religious "extremists" and other "enemies of the state" had vigilante justice administered to them.

Since the beginning of the War on Terror, the degree of U.S. engagement with these societies has increased. U.S. foreign assistance to the region has increased, and there has been increased use of conditionality in administering U.S. assistance programs. And although some of the countries of the region have begun to behave with less contempt toward democratic principles, the prospects for building democracies in this region have not really appreciated substantially. This creates enormous challenges for U.S. policy-makers who seek to influence outcomes in this part of the world.

#### WHY HAS DEMOCRACY BUILDING BEEN SO DIFFICULT IN CENTRAL ASIA

As we look for explanations about why the road to democratic nation-building has been so hard in this part of the world, it is tempting to point to cultural or religious factors. Frequently it is argued that these nations are Asian, that not long ago, these were feudal societies, and that democracy is alien to them. Such arguments are an oversimplification of Soviet history.

Initially "transitologists" viewed the post-communist countries as states that were all going through similar, if not identical processes of economic and political transition. And because the transition in Central Europe had begun a few years before than in the Soviet successor states, people with experience in the former group of states hurried in to apply their expertise in the latter. But they found their successes from Central Europe hard to duplicate. So fairly quickly, it became commonplace to argue that the nature of the transitions being experienced in the Central European states, as well as in the Baltic republics, was really quite different from that of the post-Soviet states, because the former group of countries had a history of prior statehood, which the Soviet successor states, save Russia, all lacked. And that this was the reason why many of these Central European states had an easier time transforming their centrally planned communist economies into market-based ones, and seemed to be making relatively smooth transitions to democratic or quasi-democratic political systems.

By while it was abundantly clear by the mid-1990s that the post-Soviet states were having a harder time of it than those in Central Europe, it was less clear why. And when the cookie cutter approach was proved wrong many began to doubt the wisdom of the goals rather than the implementation process that was being followed to reach them. They argued that many of the post-Soviet states, especially those in Central Asia, were not really "ready" for political and economic reform, given their long experience under the Russian and Soviet colonial "yoke." They were encouraged to embrace such views by Central Asia's own apologists of failed reform. Many of these arguments were no less simplistic than the sociological and historical renderings of Soviet scholars, long mocked by the same kinds of Western analysts that were now willing to accept reconstructions of the past, that although different, were equally crude.

Facts that got in the way were conveniently forgotten, such as the fact that the Central Asian states were inhabited by highly educated populations, with the same, or nearly the same access to technologically advanced professions as any other nationality living in the Soviet Union. As to the Russian yoke, it was an ambiguous tethering at best. Though the Central Asian nations were not ruled by an elite of their choosing (and neither were the Russians or any other Soviet group) they were

largely ruled by an elite that was not ethnically dissimilar from the population that they were ruling. And while this elite took dictate from Moscow, they were also able to be absorbed into the very ruling elite at the center, which issued the ruling decrees. In fact, all of Central Asia's current rulers thrived under the Soviet system, and gained many of the skills during their initial rise to power that have enabled them to be effective (albeit not very democratic) rulers. Uzbekistan's Karimov, Kazakhstan's Nazarbayev and Turkmenistan's Niyazov all are Communist party first secretaries who first renamed themselves presidents in 1990, whereas Kyrgyzstan's Akayev was a senior functionary in the Communist party apparatus that supervised science and education. Only Rahkmonov came close to being a common man, and even he ran a large Soviet farm in his home region in Tajikistan.

As to not being ready for economic reform, for the last ten years two Central Asian states, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, have been way ahead of the other post-Soviet states according to many macro-economic indicators, or at least keeping quite close to Russia. Kyrgyzstan was the first post-Soviet state to engage in financial restructuring, Kazakhstan has one of the two strongest banking sectors in the Soviet successor states. Both countries have introduced private ownership of land, albeit with some restrictions, and both countries have reorganized pension systems, health care systems and education systems to make them financially self-sustaining.

Nonetheless, despite these areas of high performance, Western observers have not been willing to hold any of the Central Asian nations to the same high standards that were applied in Central Europe in the area of political reforms, allowing them to hide behind the curtain of their "Asianness" and to emphasize the role of the amorphous factor of "history of prior statehood."

Given the strong performance of a number of Asian economies, the invocation of Asianness is a slippery concept, and is generally used by the Central Asian leadership to justify a model of economic development partnered with strong one man or oligarchic rule, and sees little value in political liberalization, at least until such time as economic growth rates are judged sufficient.

The absence of prior statehood is an even more amorphous idea, as the region's leaders simultaneously stress the newness of their nations as well as the ancientness of all of these peoples. Here too a great deal of rewriting of the history of this part of the world in the past thousand years is going on to create an argument of "statehood restored," but nonetheless few would disagree with the claim that the ideological glue of nationalism based on "statehood denied" was in relatively short supply in most post-Soviet states, including throughout Central Asia.

But it is less clear how important a factor this is in predicting success in economic and political reform. Nationalism in Russia was both a complicated and complicating factor, as it was very difficult to separate what was Soviet from what was Russian, making both potentially destabilizing to the redefined Russian state. Moreover, those post-Soviet states, like Georgia and Armenia, which viewed independence as statehood restored regardless of how the broader international community viewed it, have been having at least as difficult an economic as well as a political transition as the other post-Soviet states.

There were small nationalist movements throughout Central Asia in the late Soviet period, the largest proportionally in Tajikistan (although in absolute figures the movements in Uzbekistan were larger) and the smallest in both absolute as well as relative terms was in Turkmenistan. Ordinary Central Asians also had complex feelings about both Russian domination and about Soviet rule, which they saw as overlapping but not identical. And it should be instructive that most of the nationalist movements in Central Asia were movements for cultural and political autonomy, and those that became independence movements did so only after it was fully apparent that the USSR could not survive.

But this did not mean that the various Central Asians were somehow less fit to build democratically rooted polities than their counterparts in other parts of the Soviet Union. Levels of educational attainment here were somewhat lower than most other parts of the Soviet Union, but were very high when compared with most non-European countries. The Central Asian societies were relatively rural but all were also industrialized, and many factories were located in what were classified as rural settings. More importantly, the gap between rural and urban was easily breeched, through mobility provided by Red Army service, universal access to merit-based higher education, and through the hospitality provided by even distantly related urban family members through obligations of kinship. If anything, the gap between urban and rural was much smaller in Central Asia than in Russia or other European parts of the Soviet Union, where there were not always the same cultural supports for upward mobility.

Structural distinctions, rather than cultural ones, may have been far more important. In the case of the post-Soviet states, a much more difficult transition was

being attempted than was the case in Central Europe. Not only did the constituent parts have no tradition of modern statehood, but a very complicated vertically integrated whole was being divided into its constituent parts.

It is often argued that the whole of an economy is more than the sum of its parts. It was certainly the case that the economies of many of the newly independent parts of the USSR were much less valuable than they had been proportionately while functioning as part of the Soviet Union. Even those parts that would benefit from being able to integrate their economic assets directly with the global economy faced a difficult transition period before the value of their assets could readily be realized, given the relative geographic remoteness of all the Central Asian and Caucasian states.

But should it have been harder for the Central Asian states to be able to adjust to independence than the European parts of the Soviet Union? In the mid-1990s, just about the same time that transitology began to fade, it also began to be frequently argued that one shouldn't expect too much of these Asian republics of the Soviet Union. Unfortunately this coincidentally occurred at about the same time as western policymakers began to realize how vast the mineral assets were.

But were the Central Asian states really more poorly prepared for the transition to market than the other post-Soviet states? In fact Uzbekistan, much like Azerbaijan and Georgia, seemed better prepared for the transition to a market economy than countries like Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, because in Uzbekistan (and these other states) there was capital accumulation in the Soviet period, through the functioning of the gray economy.

One could almost say that the Uzbeks were natural entrepreneurs, as tens of thousands of Uzbeks found ways to bend the rules in the Soviet period to accumulate capital even during the Soviet period, selling goods that they themselves produced, or those they managed to steal from the state. In fact, the Uzbeks built a virtual parallel economy that existed alongside the formally sanctioned Soviet one, where surcharges for goods and services levied on top of the official Soviet price structure effectively reflected what the market would bear.

Ironically, many fared far worse during independence, because Soviet era constraints were not removed so much as they were modified. Quite possibly this was because the Uzbek regime led by Uzbek president feared that the entrepreneurial class would be too successful in their adaptation to market conditions, and that as their economic power increased they would demand a commensurate share of political power. As a Soviet-era economist, Karimov may not have fully understood the workings of the global market, but he was well versed in political economics.

To be sure, Karimov also feared what would happen if the Uzbek population was forced to absorb the shock of rapid deregulation of the economy. In the early 1990s radical Islamic groups were gaining in popularity, especially in the densely populated Ferghana Valley, where over sixty percent of the population was under 21. The Civil War in Tajikistan, which was at its bloodiest in 1992–1994, created a frightening specter for Karimov (and his fellow Central Asian leaders) of what could happen if the struggle for political power spun out of control. For Karimov, though, the problem was more than just imitation, he feared that Uzbekistan would become a place of refuge for Tajikistan displaced religious elite as well as its masses, and the influx of ethnic Uzbeks or ethnic Tajiks from Tajikistan posed a threat to Uzbekistan's own delicate ethnic balance.

Similarly, it is claimed that the presence of extremist groups, in countries like Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, makes it too risky to turn the governing process over to the people, who might through their inexperience be tricked into abandoning a secular path.

Such arguments are more facile than truthful. It is true that Islamic radicalism was a fact of life in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and even in isolated pockets in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, from the early days of independence. But its rise and increase in popularity were the product of developments within the Soviet Union in the last years of its existence, rather than the influence of foreign forces.

In the late 1990s the situation changed, and international Islamic groups (those seeking violent overthrow of the state, as well as those asking Muslims to embrace their faith by peaceful means,) became a factor in the region. But by then the pattern was established, the Central Asian regimes had defined religion in highly restrictive terms, as part of the states' assumption of increased control of their citizens lives. As was true in Soviet times, those running the state had decided that it was their job to set the limits on the practice of Islam (and to varying extents other religions as well), by requiring that clerics be licensed by the state, and allowed to work in only state registered mosques and religious schools.

While there is some variation from state to state, this same model of social engineering is applied in the areas of political reform as well. On these political ques-

tions it is less the will of the state (as reflected by oftentimes fairly broad elite consensus on questions of regulating Islam), than the personality of the president himself that is being exerted.

The region's presidents all seek the right, either directly or indirectly, to designate their successors, to manipulate parliaments so that their structure and membership are people amenable to them and supportive of the cause of strong presidential power, to shape political parties so that they represent political continuity rather than change, and to insure that media can not be used to endanger their control of the political and economic processes. In some places in Central Asia this manipulation is less total and less crudely attained than elsewhere.

But the Central Asian states are all entering a challenging phase of political transition. Those states that have gone the furthest with economic reforms, also have the most open political systems. And for all the reverses in their movement toward democracy, there is likely to be strong and continuous internal pressure for democratic change, as newly empowered economic interests keep the pressure on for economic reforms. Of the two states that fit into this category, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, one is resource rich, and the other is resource poor. And Central Asia's resource rich state, Turkmenistan, is the region's worst performer in terms of both economic and political reform.

Those states that have been slowest to reform, will face greater challenges as they move toward modifying their systems, as they will still have to face the challenges of transition, and do so in an atmosphere of populations that have grown more frustrated and poorer. Moreover, as they move forward either toward reform or toward continued stagnation they will be doing so in an international environment more fraught with danger than a decade ago, and in which the threats of terror and extreme ideologies are now at their very door-steps. Given this situation, there will be a tendency to claim that the risks of premature democratic reform out way the benefits, but given the kinds of internal challenges these regimes all face, policies of political exclusion will only create new and more frightening risks, as none of these states has a security apparatus capable of indefinitely repressing their populations.

#### HOW CAN U.S. BE MORE EFFECTIVE IN THE REGION

In their dealings with the Central Asian states, U.S. policy makers must be careful not to inadvertently buy into local agendas. It is not the place of the U.S. to help them enhance their repressive capacities. It is one thing to target individuals with known terrorist links, and quite another to repress an entire nation, because there is a risk that ordinary citizens might decide at some point to cast their lot in with extremist groups because their living conditions are becoming so dire that they have nothing to lose.

At the same time U.S. policy makers should take a sober look at our strategies in the region, and ask whether or not we are effectively serving to enhance U.S. long-term goals.

Current spending on democracy assistance programs are predicated on the idea that we can influence long-term outcomes, by planting "seeds" of participation in society. But in viewing developments in Central Asia we must be aware of the fact that short term and medium term developments may create very different long-term developmental trajectories. Some of the money that is currently being spent might be put to better uses, both within the area of legal reform, and with regard to support for education reform more generally. Moreover, U.S. assistance to the region would have to be increased substantially if we expect any of these programs to enhance state capacity over the medium term.

At the current rate of U.S. expenditures on foreign assistance in Central Asia there are really very few effective levers that U.S. policy-makers have to try and influence near-term outcomes in Central Asia. This does not mean that we should not use the diplomatic and assistance-based tools at our disposal to try and nudge these societies to move in the direction of greater political participation and economic reform.

But we are not spending anywhere near the kind of money in the region that would allow us to apply strong sticks alongside the carrots. Moreover, it is not clear that all of the money that has gone into the region has been well-spent. A large portion of the democracy assistance money stays in U.S. hands, either in overhead or in salaries for U.S. citizens based in the region, making the pool of U.S. dollars that are spent in country more modest even than the budget allocations imply. In some countries the money has been given year after year to a narrow group of non-governmental organizations, who cater their message more to the perceived man-

date of the U.S. funding agency than to finding ways to make this message more comprehensible to the local population.

Pressure from the U.S. does lead to better outcomes for certain political prisoners or human rights activists, and the U.S. policy-makers should be proud of U.S.-sponsored programs which broaden the range of participation for even limited numbers of people. But those of us engaged with Central Asia, legislators, policy-makers, and analysts, should not delude ourselves into believing that through "soft needling" we will get the ruling elites in these countries to modify the core practices at the heart of their regimes.

Mr. CHABOT. Dr. Hill, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF FIONA HILL, PH.D., SENIOR FELLOW, FOREIGN POLICY STUDIES, THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION**

Ms. HILL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My colleagues here and Ambassador Jones have already emphasized many of the points that I wanted to raise in my testimony, so I will just review some of these very quickly.

Like the rest of my colleagues, I really do believe that, in spite of the link between terrorism and religious extremism in Central Asia, much of the extremism that we see emerging is indeed fueled by the radicalization of politics that was mentioned. Governments have squeezed the space for legitimate political opposition and broad-based opposition parties, and it is really that kind of void that radical movements have been able to fill.

So, like my colleagues, I would reemphasize that harsh government repression of dissent is as much of a threat to Central Asian stability today as the radical movements that we have heard so much about; and I think, unfortunately, this is underscored by the fact that, in spite of the same nature of problems across the whole of Central Asia, it has really been in Uzbekistan where there has been the most fertile ground for the emergence of radical groups and it is really there that government repression of the opposition has been more acute than elsewhere. Radical groups have also flourished in places like northern Tajikistan and southern Kyrgyzstan, where heavily Uzbek populations feel disenfranchised from the mainstream politics based on their ethnicity.

I would like to highlight several points quickly from my written statement which I first submitted in July.

We have heard a lot, especially from Dr. Cohen, about Hizb-ut Tahrir. Although, as he pointed out, this international movement has particularly virulent anti-Western, anti-American, anti-Semitic literature, a great deal of the rhetoric in Central Asia in its platform has actually been very regional in its focus. Hizb-ut Tahrir has gained popular support there not just for criticizing the United States or criticizing Israel, but by addressing social grievances and criticizing the governments' failures to pursue reform.

And much of the Hizb-ut Tahrir financing, although it comes from the outside, is also generated locally from recruits. The largest base of support of Hizb-ut Tahrir has also been among ethnic Uzbeks, and it is rapidly becoming a champion for social justice for Uzbeks in the areas where they feel that they have been disenfranchised or where people are frustrated by lack of opportunity and the failure of the government to move forward quickly on reform.

We have had a lot of concerns, because of mounting anger in the region over social problems, about whether Hizb-ut Tahrir will turn to terror. As Dr. Olcott mentioned, so far the group's leaders have rejected violence, although we do fear that splinter groups may emerge. And certainly mass arrests, often in the thousands of people doing nothing more than handing out leaflets of Hizb-ut Tahrir, have increased public sympathy for many of the people who are participating in these groups, as have harsh punishments, including torture, that we have had well-documented by Human Rights Watch and other groups.

We have been asked here in the U.S. to declare Hizb-ut Tahrir a terrorist group in the region, and I think we should think very carefully about this. Because though Hizb-ut Tahrir does pose a threat, as my colleagues have pointed out, the designation of it as an explicitly terrorist group at this juncture would open the door for more repression and contribute to increased radicalization and the prospect for violence.

Although repression and persecution on a large scale of radical supporters has been quite effective, over the long term this is not a sustainable strategy. This repression has exacerbated social and political problems, it has discredited regional governments domestically as well as internationally, and it has increased suspicion of all official institutions, including the police and the security services among the general population.

Like my colleagues, I believe that the U.S. should encourage more programs to expand political participation. I think Dr. Olcott has spelled this out. We need to bring extremist groups out of the shadows by encouraging religious education at all levels, allowing people to make their own decisions and to publicly debate social problems in mainstream settings so that these issues will be taken out of the domain of radical interpretation.

Unfortunately, in summing up, I think that the war on terrorism in Central Asia has really given an added impetus to authoritarianism. It hasn't really opened up Central Asia to a new phase of political and economic reform, as many of us had hoped.

Like the rest of my colleagues, I believe that Uzbekistan is the linchpin state and whatever happens in Uzbekistan in terms of reform on the economic and political level will really have an impact elsewhere on its neighbors. We have so far failed to get President Karimov of Uzbekistan to put an end to torture in the country. We were expecting this to happen. We have seen increased pressure on civil society after people have spoken out, especially on social issues. Many journalists and others who have, for example, raised questions about social issues have been accused of being members of Hizb-ut Tahrir; and many of them have been hounded to the point where they have left the country seeking asylum. And this political backsliding has been mirrored elsewhere in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

As your colleague said at the beginning, also, on this panel, Turkmenistan is a particular problem in the region. Ambassador Jones mentioned that, too; and we mustn't forget the problems in Turkmenistan as the country is indeed heading on the same sort of path as we see in North Korea in terms of an isolationist, reac-

tionary regime though, fortunately, without the weapons of mass destruction.

I think, overall, all of us are well aware that without political change and reform, especially in countries like Uzbekistan, we can have no real progress in the war on terrorism; and we need to keep pushing the governments of Central Asia to address basic issues like human rights, condemning torture, and increasing political participation if we are to have any success.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much, Dr. Hill.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Hill follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF FIONA HILL, PH.D., SENIOR FELLOW, FOREIGN POLICY STUDIES, THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

For my testimony today, I would like to underscore the fact that although there is certainly a link between terrorism and religious extremism in Central Asia, much of the extremism that we see is fueled by the radicalization of politics in the region rather than by political Islam, as governments have steadily squeezed the space for legitimate political opposition and broad-based public participation in politics. I would suggest that harsh government repression of dissent is as much, if not more of, a threat to Central Asian stability today and in the immediate future as the radical Islamic movements that have developed indigenously or moved into the region. This contention is underscored by the fact that in spite of faltering political and economic reforms, mounting social problems, and constraints on opposition forces in all the Central Asian states, the most fertile ground for radical groups has been Uzbekistan where government repression has been more acute and targeted than elsewhere. Radical groups have also flourished in northern Tajikistan and southern Kyrgyzstan among heavily Uzbek populations who feel disenfranchised and excluded from the political mainstream in both of these countries on the basis of ethnicity.

Having just returned from two extended research trips to the region (to Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan in May and June, 2003), I would also urge Committee members and others concerned with developments in Central Asia to pay particular attention to reports drawn from on the ground research and interviews rather than to conclusions based on second-hand sources or on face value analyses of the literature of extremist movements. The picture that one draws from a distance and the realities close-up are strikingly different. I sometimes wonder if the Central Asian countries and people that I read about in commentary in the United States and the countries and people that I visit are entirely different entities. These may be states united by a common geography, poverty, and the challenges of post-Soviet transition, but they also have complex internal political and economic dynamics and striking regional differences. All the states are moving in quite different directions. The only way to understand the complexities of Central Asia is to visit the region and to meet with as wide a range of people from Central Asia as possible. I hope that Committee members will consider a fact-finding visit in the near future.

*Terrorism, Religious Extremism, and the IMU in Central Asia*

Radical Islamic opposition movements have a long history in Central Asia dating back to the Tsarist era. During World War I, for example, Islamic militants took up arms to oppose the Russian government's attempts to mobilize Muslims to work in the rear of the front. Again, in the 1920s, Muslim partisans in the so-called Basmachi movement opposed the Bolshevik takeover and the advance of Soviet power into Central Asia. And, the most recent resurgence of Islamic opposition was spurred by the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. This tied Central Asia's and Afghanistan's fates together in many respects. Central Asian Muslims sent to fight in Afghanistan gained a new appreciation for their history and religion and drew inspiration from the mujaheddin fighters that opposed the invasion. After the 1989 Soviet withdrawal and the subsequent collapse of the USSR, the creation of international Muslim brigades to fight the occupying Soviet forces in Afghanistan set the tone and provided manpower for Islamist insurgents in Central Asia.

In 1992–1997, during the Tajikistan civil war, Tajik Islamic opposition forces found a safe haven and staging ground across the border in Afghanistan. At the end of civil war, those who refused to participate in a new united Tajik government stayed in Afghanistan and joined the Tajik-dominated Northern Alliance. Others joined forces with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). The IMU was a self-proclaimed radical Islamic and political group, which was formed around 1997 by

two ethnic Uzbeks from the Ferghana Valley with the express goal of overthrowing the government of President Islam Karimov and establishing an Islamic state in Uzbekistan. Having been expelled from Uzbekistan in the early 1990s, the two founders of the IMU (Juma Namangani, the group's military leader and a former Afghan veteran, and Tahir Yuldash, its political leader) followed the pattern of other Islamic militant leaders. They traveled variously and separately in Muslim countries including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates—as well as to Chechnya—and established contacts with Islamic movements, financial sources, and intelligence services. After the 1996 Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, the IMU founders established close relations with Taliban leaders and were reported to have secured the support and financial backing of Osama bin Laden in their creation of the IMU.

From 1997–2001, using the remote mountainous regions of Tajikistan as its base, the IMU carried out kidnappings, assassinations and other atrocities, including a series of armed raids deep into Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan that also targeted foreign visitors and tourists. Eventually, the IMU relocated its base of operations permanently to Afghanistan, extended its mandate to overthrow all regional governments—changing its name to the Islamic Party of Turkestan (IPT)—and threw in its lot with the Taliban. President Bush named the IMU as one of the terrorist movements linked to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network in his speech to Congress on September 20, 2001. At this juncture, reports from the region and Western intelligence sources put the numbers of IMU militants at between 3,000–5,000. Even in the lower projected numbers the IMU threatened to overwhelm the capabilities of poorly-trained and equipped Central Asian militaries, and IMU activities seemed ready to turn Central Asia into an extension of the turmoil in Afghanistan, with potentially disastrous consequences.

It was only the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan that curtailed IMU activities in Central Asia. The IMU's military commander was killed in action with the Taliban near Mazar-e Sharif in Afghanistan in November 2001, and its political leader went into hiding. The U.S. overthrow of the Taliban and the demise of the IMU had the single greatest effect on Central Asian security since the collapse of the USSR. It removed, or at the very least diminished, a threat that had hung over the region since the 1990s. Although there have been recent reports in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan of remnants of the IMU regrouping—and the introduction of U.S. bases and an increased international presence in Central Asia in 2002–2003 offers a new range of potential targets for regional militant groups—the regional terrorist threat is not as acute as in the past.

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

While the IMU's status and its capacity for future action as the Islamic Party of Turkestan remains unclear, attention in Central Asia has since shifted to *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* (HT). This London-based Islamic movement, which steadily increased its influence in the region in the 1990s, is now seen as a potential source of threat. Like the IMU, HT in Central Asia, espouses the creation of a region-wide Islamic form of governance (based on the model of the Ottoman-era caliphate). But unlike the IMU, HT seeks to secure its goal through grassroots activism and purportedly peaceful means. After bomb explosions in Tashkent and IMU raids in 1999, HT drew an explicit distinction in its outreach and recruitment between its peaceful activities and the violence of the IMU.\*

One important issue to bear in mind in looking at Central Asia is that, although *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* is an international movement notable for its often virulently anti-Western, anti-American, and anti-Semitic literature and rhetoric, a distinction has to be made between HT's global agenda and activity and its local action. Those who have studied HT's activity in London and elsewhere in the West closely, and then compared it carefully with activity on the ground have concluded that HT's platform in Central Asia is a specifically regional one. While many of the pamphlets circulated there are generic HT screeds translated into the local languages, HT has gained popular support in Central Asia not by denouncing the United States or Israel, but by distributing leaflets and holding meetings to address the range of post-Soviet social grievances in the region—including poverty, official corruption, the spread of drug addiction, prostitution and HIV/AIDS—and to criticize the governments' failures to pursue reform. Although observers like the International Crisis Group have noted that rhetoric in local pamphlets and in discussions with Central Asian HT leaders has increasingly begun to mirror the anti-U.S. and anti-Semitic pronouncements of international HT leaders and activists since the outbreak of war in Iraq, the focus still remains on Central Asian issues. Indeed, denunciation of the United States in local HT pamphlets has led to increased criticism of the Uzbek government for joining forces with the U.S. in the war on terrorism and for “doing

America's bidding." Similarly, the United States, for its part, is heavily criticized for embracing the corrupt Uzbek government as an ally and for giving personal support to Uzbekistan's President, Islam Karimov.

Although HT's recruitment has encompassed most regional ethnic groups including Tajiks, Kyrgyz, and Kazakhs, the movement's largest base of support in Central Asia has been among ethnic Uzbeks. This is both within Uzbekistan itself, where the movement has recruited among the underground opposition to the government, and in the southern regions of Kyrgyzstan and the northern regions of Tajikistan (in the once integrated and densely populated Ferghana Valley of Central Asia that is now split among Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan). In these regions, the substantial Uzbek minority feels its interests are inadequately promoted and protected by the local, as well as central, Kyrgyz and Tajik governments. HT is now viewed as the champion of social justice for many Uzbeks in these regions. In addition, HT recruits not only from the poorest strata of society but among Uzbek college students, small businessmen and traders, NGO activists, and professionals.

What has attracted people to HT? In many respects HT is rapidly becoming an alternative political movement for regional populations rather simply a religious movement (albeit a radical one). Observers on the ground in Central Asia have noted that while some recruits may have come to HT initially in search of information on Islam—given the lack of access to basic instruction (in 'Sunday School' equivalents) and advanced religious education, in Uzbekistan in particular but also in other Central Asian states?—many have sought out HT as a means of pushing for a faster pace of reform. Most recruits are not necessarily in favor of the creation of an Islamic state, but are instead frustrated by their lack of opportunity and poor prospects for advancement under prevailing political and economic conditions. They are disgusted by wide-spread corruption in local and central government. With interest-based political parties throughout Central Asia variously marginalized or outlawed, or dominated by a handful of individuals, or controlled by powerful elite or business groups, there is little scope for the average politically-aware Central Asian to express these grievances and press governments for change. In the absence of effective interest-based parties, political Islam and groups like *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* have filled the void. HT's organizational structure based on a tight hierarchy of small cells with no horizontal linkages—reminiscent of the basic structure of Lenin's Bolsheviks as well as of al-Qaeda—and its low-tech and low cost approach to activism (focused on the publishing and distribution of pamphlets and small meetings) mean that it has been able to operate beneath government's radar screens in ways conventional parties cannot. Although some of HT's financing clearly comes from outside, including reportedly from Saudi Arabia, most of its funding is generated locally, including from tithing among its membership. The government has not been able to cut off HT's revenue streams.

In sum, HT has been able to satisfy the curiosity of those eager to learn more about Islam but unable to access official channels for information, and to provide an outlet for those who want to play a more active political role. Rapidly growing frustration with government at the popular level now raises the immediate question of whether or not HT is poised to become Central Asia's next IMU. Although HT leaders continue to eschew violence in public statements and private interviews, many regional observers fear that some of these same leaders could be provoked into breaking-away from HT and launching a violent IMU-style campaign to overthrow governments as anger at the lack of reform mounts and as government repression continues. Reports from Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan already suggest that HT has spawned a number of small splinter groups with more radical aims. Mass arrests of HT members have also increased public sympathy for the group and directly led to public protests in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. (Government repression in Uzbekistan after the IMU raids of 1999 had a similar effect in increasing support for the IMU, whose numbers rapidly increased in the subsequent period.) At this stage, Central Asian governments have requested that the U.S. declare *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* a terrorist group (HT has already been outlawed in Germany), which would certainly contribute to increased radicalization and open the door for even more aggressive state action against members and sympathizers.

#### *Countering the Pull of Hizb-ut-Tahrir and Extremism*

In looking ahead, it is extremely important that the United States distinguish between different groups operating in Central Asia and encourage Central Asian governments to do the same. The United States should not be pulled by regional governments into designating *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* in Central Asia a terrorist group and putting it into the same category as the IMU—no matter what decisions have been made by other states about HT at the international level. Such a designation will become a self-fulfilling prophecy and only increase tensions in the region.

Regional governments and their institutions have limited financial and personnel resources and thus limited capacity for collecting, processing, and acting on intelligence related to terrorism.\* States like Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan have compensated for these deficiencies with an often brutal and blanket approach to clamping down on terrorist suspects. Terrorism is frequently equated with ordinary political dissent and protest, with no real attempt to distinguish among observant Muslims or political moderates and those with more radical views or affiliations. Mass arrests in the thousands (often of people doing nothing more than handing out HT leaflets), harsh punishments, including the torture of suspected IMU and HT members and the active persecution of their families, have all been well-documented by international groups like Human Rights Watch. Although there has been some improvement over the last couple of years in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, corruption in law enforcement also remains rampant. Police forces are in general poorly paid and trained, and while there has been much progress in narcotics interdiction training (especially in Tajikistan) there has been little effort at more sophisticated training in counter-terrorism in spite of the links between militants and the drug trade. Individuals and their families are consistently targeted by police in anti-terror sweeps to obtain bribes.

If HT is designated as a terrorist group there will be more of the same and worse. And although repression and persecution have proven effective in Uzbekistan in suppressing militant activities to date (this fact is stressed repeatedly in interviews with government officials in Uzbekistan, as well as in other Central Asian states) I would argue that they are not sustainable long-term strategies. Repression and persecution exacerbate existing social and political problems, discredit regional governments domestically and internationally, and increase suspicion of official institutions among the general population. As already noted, government activities have also swelled support for more radical and violent approaches to political confrontation. This is already evident in Kyrgyzstan, where the government is weaker than in Uzbekistan and there is less willingness and even less capacity to clamp down. A heavy-handed approach to public protests in 2002, for example, generated more, larger-scale demonstrations and forged coalitions among disparate opposition groups, some advocating extreme measures to overthrow the now beleaguered government of President Askar Akayev.

Instead of facilitating an even more aggressive campaign of repression against HT and its members in Central Asia, by designating the group as a terrorist organization, the U.S. should be encouraging programs that seek to expand political participation. These may help to bring groups like HT out of the shadows and into the political mainstream as well as to force them to participate in tackling social issues directly. Likewise, initiatives that encourage religious education in mainstream settings and foster the open public debate of social issues to remove them from the domain of radical interpretation should also be emphasized in U.S. assistance policy. This was one of the approaches pioneered in Tajikistan as part of the international intervention in the civil war by the United Nations, the United States, Russia and a variety of NGOs. Public dialogue, sponsored and coordinated by outside parties, helped to take the edge off radicalism in the 1990s.\*

Recognition of the need for nuance and more open political systems in Central Asia is already evident in U.S. policy in the region—including in many of the efforts funded by U.S. assistance. Coordination and emphasis of these efforts, however, remains a basic problem. Unfortunately, we currently fund a disparate catalogue of initiatives aimed at promoting broad-based economic and political reform and development in addition to tackling regional security threats. Overlapping mandates, duplicative programs—both within the U.S. government and assistance community, and internationally—and unintended consequences are the norm rather than the exception. For example, counter-narcotics trafficking and counter-terrorism initiatives that aim to harden border regimes and detection and interdiction capabilities have run counter to broader political and economic development goals.\* They have often opened up more opportunities for corruption among customs officials and made the small-scale cross-border trade that populations in the Fergana Valley depend on extremely difficult—exacerbating economic and social problems. This is especially the case in Uzbekistan, where antipersonnel mines planted on borders with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to block the transit of the IMU killed and injured numerous civilians in 2001–2002; and on the Kyrgyz/Tajik border where the introduction of new border posts and controls (along a non-demarcated and still-disputed section of the border) sparked riots in January 2003. A basic lack of coordination is the primary obstacle to enhancing local capacity and formulating and building effective counter-terrorism strategies and programs for Central Asia.

*Negative Fall-Out From the War on Terrorism*

In assessing the impact of the war on terrorism in Central Asia at this juncture, it has to be concluded that it has given an added impetus to government repression. The war on terrorism, and America's embrace of states like Uzbekistan as allies in this effort, have provided further justification for eliminating political dissent and social protest, and for clamping down on unsanctioned forms of religious expression and observance. This is extremely unfortunate. In 2002, after the success of the U.S. campaign in Afghanistan, the mitigation of the Taliban and IMU threat was seen as paving the way for a new phase of political and economic reform in Central Asia. With the advent of the war on terrorism, there was great hope (if not expectation) among regional observers like myself that the new spotlight on the region—combined with increased foreign policy attention and financial assistance from the United States—would open up Central Asia. We saw a change in the position of the Uzbek government as especially critical in this regard.

Uzbekistan is the linchpin state for Central Asia. It is the most strategically located state, bordering all the other four Central Asian countries, as well as Afghanistan (although it has no direct border with either Russia or China). It has the largest population, and the most significant military capabilities and resources. In the Soviet period, Uzbekistan's capital, Tashkent, was the principal administrative, communications, and intellectual center for the whole of Central Asia. What happens in Uzbekistan has a direct impact on all of its neighbors. But in the 1990s, Uzbekistan became a source of regional tension and the logjam for regional economic development. At home, the Uzbek government became increasingly authoritarian and succeeded in enshrining economic stagnation as the status quo. The government muddled along without significant reforms thanks to a mixture of currency and exchange rate controls, state orders for its two main export commodities (cotton and wheat), and the good fortune of having substantial energy and gold resources. Abroad, the Uzbek government engaged in water, energy, and border disputes with its neighbors. It threatened military intervention in response to IMU raids from Tajik and Kyrgyz territory, ruptured communication routes with Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan and blocked regional trade with high tariffs and customs regimes. In doing so, Uzbekistan succeeded in constraining the abilities of other Central Asian states to interact with each other as well as with the outside world.

Although the war on terrorism has brought more cooperation between individual Central Asian states and the United States, it has not increased cooperation among the states themselves. Nor has it yet brought political and economic reform to Uzbekistan. This is in spite of some small cosmetic changes, including the long-awaited registration of an independent Uzbek human rights organization, a decrease in the arrests of religious activists, and some initial efforts to work with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in crafting a new market reform in 2002. Indeed, throughout 2002–2003 there were many well-documented reports by regional and international human rights groups, like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, of political prisoners being rearrested after early releases from prison, as well as of deaths in police custody. Independent Uzbek journalists were openly persecuted and arrested for pursuing stories on corruption and religion.

In 2002–2003, Uzbekistan's government was pressed by international organizations to end torture as a systematic feature of its law enforcement. It failed to cooperate fully with the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on torture during a visit in December 2002 and to address the Rapporteur's subsequent recommendations. During the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development's (EBRD) Annual Meeting in Tashkent in May 2003, which I attended, an anticipated statement by President Karimov condemning torture was not forthcoming. This led to sharp public rebukes from EBRD President Jean Lemierre and Chairman, British Development Minister Clair Short, during a live telecast of the event. Rather than outlining the possibilities for political and economic reform in Uzbekistan, Karimov's speech at the EBRD meeting also emphasized the persistence of threats to Central Asia from terrorism and instability in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan's strategic alliance with the United States in the war on terrorism, and Uzbekistan's support for the U.S.-led war against Iraq. Karimov's message was clear—an alliance with the United States in the war on terrorism means a "pass" on reform, even on such a fundamental issue as torture. As I personally observed, Karimov blatantly removed his translation headset as Lemierre began his speech at the meeting, and continued to look down at the table and doodle and shift papers for the rest of presentations.

In addition, to this flagrant disregard for international sentiment, by May 2003, the Uzbek government had failed to meet the benchmarks laid down by the IMF and had imposed new restrictions on imports, exports and small business activity. And some of the small cosmetic changes on human rights and the development of

civil society in 2002 are now dissipating. In June, the Institute of War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), one of the foremost international organizations in promoting the development of an independent media in existing and potential conflict zones like Central Asia, which has received substantial funding from the U.S. State Department for its activities in the region, was denied its long-awaited registration in Uzbekistan. This registration was pending before the EBRD meeting and was notably denied after the international spotlight had moved away from Tashkent. One IWPR-affiliated journalist in Uzbekistan, a social activist from the Ferghana Valley who was particularly outspoken at the EBRD conference, is one of the Uzbek journalists who is routinely arrested and accused of being a member of HT or the IMU by local authorities in response to her stories on corruption and social discontent.

Uzbekistan has set a tone for political backsliding elsewhere in Central Asia. In Kazakhstan, opposition leaders have been jailed on charges of corruption and abuse of power charges following a power struggle between political factions with links to the presidential administration. More ominously, harassment of independent journalists has increased. Publications have been suspended by the authorities, arson attacks carried out on newspaper offices, and journalists have received death threats. In one well-publicized case a decapitated dog was hung outside a journalist's office and the dog's head deposited at her home. Finally, a prominent critic of the Kazakh government was arrested and imprisoned on rape-charges on the eve of a trip to the United States this spring to discuss government corruption and abuses of energy revenues. Similarly, journalists and other activists in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have found themselves under increasing pressure, leading the U.S. government to conclude in its annual human rights report for 2002–2003 that "human rights observance remains poor in all five countries." Although none of the other Central Asian states have been quite as blatant as Uzbekistan in trying to justify their actions by the exigencies of the war on terrorism, it is clear that the anti-terror campaign has neither provided the basis nor the encouragement for a new phase of reform in Central Asia.

Turkmenistan, which I have not mentioned specifically so far, remains another source of instability in Central Asia that the Committee should pay attention to. The threat to the region from Turkmenistan is not clearly identified inside Central Asia and is only dimly perceived outside. Under the increasingly despotic and quixotic regime of Saparmurat Niyazov, Turkmenistan has isolated itself to a far greater extent even than Uzbekistan—rejecting participation in regional as well as international organizations on the spurious grounds of neutrality. It is increasingly following a path blazed by regimes like the Taliban and North Korea, in introducing an all-encompassing personality cult, stifling dissent and public discussion, destroying the education system, picking fights with its neighbors, brazenly expelling ethnic Russians and other non-ethnic Turkmen from the country, and generally operating beyond the scrutiny of the international community. Opposition manifested itself in a recent assassination attempt against Niyazov, with all indications pointing to a possible eventual bloody overthrow of the regime and a failed state scenario. The fact that prior to the U.S. campaign in Afghanistan, Turkmenistan had forged relatively close relations with the Taliban—including the involvement of high-level Turkmen officials in the Afghan drug trade—suggests that Turkmenistan could be well on the way to becoming the next regional base for militant groups. Indeed, credible reports from regional analysts in 2002–2003 indicated that many Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters escaped from the early fighting in Afghanistan across Turkmenistan's barely guarded border and found refuge in the country. For now, given Turkmenistan's location on the edge of the region (albeit bordering Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Iran), the particular and peculiar quirks of the Niyazov regime have not thwarted broader Central Asian developments to the degree that Uzbekistan's policies have. But Turkmenistan's regime is a menace to its own population and an increasing menace to the whole region.

#### *Conclusions and Recommendations*

The U.S. government and analysts of Central Asia are well aware of the fact that success in the war on terrorism in the region is contingent on linking strategies to counter extremist and militant groups with political reform and improving social conditions. Central Asian governments and state institutions remain weak. Economic collapse, isolation from global markets, high birthrates and high unemployment, the absence of social safety nets, inadequate education and increasing illiteracy, heroin trafficking and intravenous drug use, public health crises, the erosion of traditional social institutions, and the infiltration of radical ideologies, challenge each of the states to a greater or lesser degree. Broader regional development issues like water resource management, energy development, and trade can also not be tackled without the concerted effort of all states.

Given the interaction between political repression, mounting social problems and the infiltration of outside radical groups, the United States needs to establish a balance between its military goals—in continuing to stamp out the remnants of the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan—and encouraging economic and political development in countries like Uzbekistan. As I have outlined in this written statement, extremist Islamic groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* have found fertile ground for their development in Central Asia precisely because regional governments like Uzbekistan's have drastically reduced the space for civic activism, leaving the population with few outlets for political expression and no organized alternative political structures.

Many U.S.-based and international organizations are involved in civil society development and human rights protection in Central Asia, as well as trying to offer populations reliable sources of information and contacts with the outside world. These efforts already have some U.S. government and international support, but they could have more. They could also be specifically emphasized in U.S. funding as the central element in both development-focused and security policies in the region. Furthermore, without political change in Uzbekistan and real progress on reform in this pivotal state, including on reversing the trend of human rights abuses, there can be no real progress elsewhere in Central Asia. There can be no hope of fostering inter-state cooperation on the range of trans-national threats to public health and safety—such as environmental degradation, water quality and supply, drug-trafficking and intravenous drug use, and the growing menace of infectious diseases like HIV/AIDs and SARS—that also put the region's future in jeopardy. We must keep up the pressure on the government of Uzbekistan to reform and not give President Karimov a pass on serious, basic human rights issues like condemning torture.

Finally, there are three very specific areas where members of this Committee could play an important role in enhancing our current policy in Central Asia:

*First:* in encouraging the creation of a central coordinating mechanism for all U.S. government agencies and related entities operating in Central Asia—beyond the information clearing house that already exists in the form of the Assistance Coordinators office (which was set up under the provisions of the 1993 Freedom Support Act). Central Asia has been given priority in U.S. policy and yet it has also been lost in the mix of government structures, where it is subsumed into Europe and Eurasia and other regional bureaus. Although key people in State, the National Security Council, and the Department of Defense (DoD) have been assigned to deal with region, it is, again, usually part of much larger portfolios. As a result of the campaign in Afghanistan, DoD initially took the lead in U.S. strategic thinking about Central Asia, but as the Pentagon focus has shifted to Iraq, inter-agency responsibility for the region must now be adequately assumed in the State Department, or elsewhere, and given sufficient resources and high-level attention to maintain a focus on the region—especially as the military and counter-terrorism campaign and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan are still underway.

*Second:* in sponsoring a comprehensive inventory and analysis of who is doing what in the U.S. government or with U.S. government funding in Central Asia. Such an inventory is, in part, contained in the annual Assistance Coordinator's report, but there has yet to be a thorough, detailed analysis and assessment of individual activities and how they fit together to further U.S. goals or to tackle identified regional problems. Frankly, we don't really know where we are spending our money and applying the bulk of our energies and to what effect.

*Third:* in promoting a similar inventory of international and privately-funded programs operating in Central Asia. This was identified as a major priority at a meeting of all the large international donors—including the U.S. in Berlin in March 2002—but no funding or personnel was specifically set aside to undertake this effort. There are many instances where U.S. assistance efforts and other international initiatives are at cross-purposes even at a time when foreign aid budgets for Central Asia are increasingly constrained and limited by competing demands (including Afghanistan and Iraq).

An objective and thoughtful analysis of the roots of religious extremism, a long-term commitment to assistance, and careful assessment, coordination, and contingency planning are the only solutions to dealing with the challenges of Central Asia and to achieving success in the war on terrorism in the region.

Mr. CHABOT. We thank the whole panel here, and I recognize myself for 5 minutes for the purpose of asking questions.

Let me begin by asking—and any of the panel members are welcome to answer if you would like to—could you briefly discuss the

relationship between al-Qaeda and the various radical fundamentalists terrorist-type groups that are in the region, what the relationship is, what the dangers are and anything that you would like to address?

Dr. Cohen?

Mr. COHEN. Historically, the IMU Islamic movement of Uzbekistan had close ties to al-Qaeda; and their fighters not only went to fight with al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, their commander, Juman Amenguni, was the original commander for the combined al-Qaeda-Taliban force in the war and died fighting.

Generally, radical Muslims view what they call the defensive jihad the defensive war against what they perceive as foreign aggression. In other words, if Americans come to fight in Afghanistan, and for that matter the Soviets when they came to fight in Afghanistan, on the soil that is perceived as a Muslim soil, they view the duty of any believing Muslim to go fight there.

When my colleague Fiona Hill said that the leadership of Hizb-ut Tahrir, the Islamic Party of Liberation, has rejected violence, they parse their words very carefully. They say, we are rejecting violence in the political struggle where we are; however, we recognize the duty of every Muslim, including our membership, to go fight jihad in general and defensive jihad in particular. So this is a very convenient tool for the leadership of a mass organization like Hizb-ut Tahrir to go send their people to fight in, let us say, Afghanistan or in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or in Kashmir and we find members of Hizb-ut Tahrir fighting there.

Moreover, when Hizb-ut Tahrir is talking about overthrowing the existing regimes, they are not talking about doing it at the ballot box. They are not recognizing democracy. They have very specific articles in English that are called democracy, the tool of non-believers. So if and when, God forbid, the moment comes for them to overthrow these regimes they are not going to do it just by announcing on television. These people ready to kill. Therefore, to say in advance we are not recognizing them as a terrorist organization I believe requires further study.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you.

Dr. Hill and then Dr. Olcott.

Ms. HILL. Thank you.

I think we have to make a very careful distinction here between Hizb-ut Tahrir on the international level and the means of Hizb-ut Tahrir recruiting in Central Asia and some of the goals there. What we are talking about in Central Asia is a very narrow, very small group of people from the outside who are operating there, who are basically taking advantage of a rather different perspective in the people that they are recruiting, and it is in talking to leaders of Hizb-ut Tahrir in Central Asia itself where one gets something of a different nuance from what one sees, in fact, looking at their activities on the international level.

I would say, based on my own interviews with people—I have just come back from two trips to Central Asia this past summer, and I have been working with a number of groups who have done extensive interviews with people in Fergana Valley and elsewhere on these issues, that people are attracted to groups like Hizb-ut Tahrir not just because of this ideology, which Dr. Cohen is quite

right to point out, and the ideas of global jihad, but because of very specific social grievances within their own region. And people are looking for a way to get involved in changing things on the ground.

In fact, most of the people that I have talked to are not so much enamored by the idea of radical Islam but they are frustrated by the slow pace of social change and there are no other legitimate opposition groups in places like Uzbekistan where they can find any political outlet for their grievances. So this is one very specific problem there.

Many of the people are attracted not by the rhetoric against Israel and the United States, which is heinous and is indeed a major problem, but because of criticisms about specific acts of local government and national government, corruption in the regions where they are, and their own frustrations of not being able to move ahead in a way that they would expect.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you.

Dr. Olcott.

Ms. OLCOTT. I would both agree and disagree with each of my two colleagues. I would say, first, that radical Islam has very deep roots in the region. I have been going back and forth in the mosques since 1992, and I think these radical movements have taken various forms. Hizb-ut Tahrir's popularity is the most recent one, in large part created by arrests of indigenous radical clerics. That is why I urge really the unleashing of Islam to allow the community of believers to find some sort of balance for itself.

That said, I think it is very important to distinguish, as Dr. Hill did, between the Hizb-ut Tahrir and the IMU. The IMU at the end of the 1990s began to have formal ties to al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda was not its source. They sought out each other in Afghanistan in the late 1990s, and in the aftermath of the United States bombing in Afghanistan these ties seemed to have become closer rather than less close. Al-Qaeda has become a bigger umbrella for surviving members of the IMU.

But there is no good nonsecurity—I mean no good open source evidence to suggest that the Hizb-ut Tahrir has strong ties or deep ties to al-Qaeda or has close ties to them, although there is lots of evidence of Hizb-ut Tahrir having external funding, and some of that funding may come from the same sources.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you. I would ask unanimous consent for an additional 2 minutes. I would like to ask one more question if I could.

Mr. JANKLOW. Sure. I have no objection. Just go ahead. I learn from your questions.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you.

I would like to ask Dr. Blank one final question, if I could. Russia and Kyrgyzstan recently agreed on terms for the use of the camp air base near Bishkek by a rapid reaction force under the collective security treaty which includes Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Could you comment on Russia—are they attempting to reexert their role in Central Asia and how might this affect our policy toward the region?

Mr. BLANK. Moscow has strongly reasserted its position in Central Asia ever since Mr. Putin came to power 3 or 4 years ago. The CIS as a whole is the priority area for Russian foreign policy, as

the government officially states, and they have deployed all of their economic and military instruments toward that end. Thus they have built up the Caspian force. They are putting together new bases in Central Asia. Kant is the first. There will be others. They are trying to secure one right now in Tajikistan, for example; and they are trying to create a cartel of gas in Central Asia under Russian auspices which would effectively reduce all the Central Asian states to a dependency on Moscow for gas. They have less leverage with regard to oil, but they are certainly trying to do the same thing.

Although the base in Kant is allegedly for purposes of rapid reaction and counterterrorism, the fact is that the Russian army is not countering terrorism except in the war in Chechnya, which is a separate issue from what we are discussing today.

The widespread belief is that it is really there for two purposes, that the base, one, is an assertion of Russian interest in returning to Central Asia in a kind of dominant military role through organizations like the CSTO that you mentioned where Russia would have a role not dissimilar to that role enjoyed in the Warsaw Pact before the end of the Cold War vis-a-vis Central Asia; second, that it is there in order to sustain the government in power against domestic threats. It is training Kyrgyz forces in what might be called counterinsurgency and perhaps might be available if the government comes under sustained public pressure, as was the case in 2002 and earlier this year.

The overall program clearly is one that aims to monopolize Central Asia's sphere of Russian influence. The defense minister got up a couple of weeks ago and said that we fully expect American forces to leave once the war on terrorism is over. There is no sign that he consulted with anybody in Central Asia about this.

Furthermore, Mr. Putin himself had a press conference on October 9 essentially outlining the doctrine with Mr. Ivanov of using Russian armed forces preemptively to defend against . . .

“. . . terrorism or threats to Russian diaspora in other states which could include Central Asia and made the claim that Russia had the right to defend the oil installations and gas installations that were built by the Soviet Union because, after all, the Soviet Union built them.”

So I would argue that there is a very strong and determined push by Moscow to reassert a kind of hegemonic presence throughout Central Asia and, for that matter, throughout the CIS as a whole.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much, Mr. Blank.

The gentleman from South Dakota, Mr. Janklow, is recognized for 5 minutes—or a little longer if he would like to dig.

Mr. JANKLOW. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

If I could just ask you, Mr. Blank—let me start with you. With respect to the Soviets, you do see the hand of the Soviets working throughout all of Central Asia at this point in time in a very extensive way, is that correct?

Mr. BLANK. Yes.

Mr. JANKLOW. You were nodding your head, Mr. Cohen, when he was saying that. Do you agree with him?

Mr. COHEN. First of all, I would refer to the Russian Federation, not to the Soviet Union.

Mr. JANKLOW. I am sorry. I meant the Russians. I am a product of my youth.

Mr. COHEN. I think the Russian Federation has real limitations in terms of their funding, in terms of their GDP and the effectiveness of their military forces. So I would take with moderation concerns about their presence in Central Asia.

Mr. JANKLOW. Let me ask you all, with respect to the HT organization, do they have animosities toward the Soviets and others, or is it basically an anti-United States type of thing? I don't assume it is anti-British, or it wouldn't be headquartered out of London still.

Mr. BLANK. My understanding of Hizb-ut Tahrir is that its main target is the United States and secondly Israel. I have seen very little writing anywhere about their attitude toward the Russian Federation.

Mr. JANKLOW. Dr. Hill?

Ms. HILL. I think that is correct. Dr. Blank had actually made a passing reference to Chechnya, and that is where those people have some animosity toward Russia itself, mostly concentrated in the struggle there, but there has been no real evidence that Russia is being targeted in Central Asia anywhere.

I would actually like to take this opportunity to make a quick point on Russia's involvement in Central Asia. We focus too much on the security aspects of this, often, obviously, because that is a preoccupation of ours, but there is a really different dynamic in Central Asia now. Many of the Central Asian economies have become completely tied to the Russian economy as a result of their own economic collapse over time, and we are seeing a lot of migration of Central Asians into Russia now in search of work, which in fact was a major motivation for the Kyrgyzstan government in signing this new agreement with the Russians for the Kant base.

Kyrgyzstan is, in fact, in a very similar position vis-a-vis Russia as Mexico is toward the United States. There are an awful lot of migrant workers going to work in Russia, and the Kyrgyz would like to have as good a relationship with Russia as possible because so much of their GDP now is dependent on remittances and on trade with Russia. So we have to factor that in as a different element.

Mr. JANKLOW. It appears from the testimony of virtually all of you who have touched on it, the United States had little interest in Central Asia, especially in this particular area, until after 9/11, and then the military aspect of dealing with the Afghanistan situation, and then we had to move forward strategically in a very, very rapid way. Dr. Jones was pretty optimistic after outlining what I will call problem areas, was pretty optimistic in the impact our country is having at dealing at the people level in these countries in varying degrees. Do you folks share that optimism? I don't read it in your testimony, and that is why I am wondering. Are there any of you who share the optimism that she had in her testimony?

Yes, Dr. Hill.

Ms. HILL. I think to some degree there is optimism on the people-to-people level that Ambassador Jones outlined. I can speak

from my own experience at the Eurasia Foundation, which has been operating in Central Asia now for the past 10 years. There have been some considerable successes in support for nongovernmental organizations, small business development in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan in particular, and even in Uzbekistan where the economic prospects have been more restricted.

The problem, of course, is that a lot of this is on a small scale and that when you ask the very question that you do about how does this translate on the national level it is much more difficult to say; and, as Ambassador Jones mentioned in her testimony, this all takes a great deal of time. We cannot expect Central Asia to have undergone the kind of wrenching transition that it already has since the collapse of the Soviet Union and then come out with a rosy economic and political picture in the space of 10 years, especially given the fact that the Central Asia states were the least developed of the republics in the Soviet Union.

Mr. JANKLOW. Another question, and I asked this of Ambassador Jones. Two of you in your testimony mentioned basically what I will conclude to be government condemnation of international trafficking in prostitution. Is this a problem or isn't it?

Mr. COHEN. I would say if I had to rank it, it would not be in the top three of my list, sir. I would say that Islamic radicalism, lack of democratic legitimacy of the government and drug trafficking, Central Asia is a major producer and transit region for drugs coming out of Afghanistan.

Mr. JANKLOW. Let me ask one other question that is really kind of a loaded question to the panel. Given the nature of their history, their governments and their structure, their societal structure, how do we from here, this distance, and given the relationship we have had with them historically, what is it we really can do to move them forward in a substantive way along what we will call democracy with a big "D"?

Mr. BLANK. Well, first of all, we can provide major assistance to them for military security. Because, without military security, you can't move forward. As former Assistant Secretary of Defense Joe Nye once said, security is like oxygen. Once you don't have it, you can't breathe and nothing else becomes possible.

But beyond that systematic engagement pressure, dialogue toward democratization does pay off over the long term. I would look back, for example, toward the Reagan Administration and the Carter Administration which put human rights into the Soviet Union at the top of the agenda along with major security issues like arms control at the nuclear and conventional level; and both of these were able to set in motion a process that did contribute to the advent of reform inside the Soviet Union and ultimately to its disintegration. Therefore, the provision of security must be balanced by constant engagement backed up by credible resources. I understand we are cutting those resources, which is against the logic of the policy. Therefore, over the long term you need to provide both the security and the incentive and the pressure to reform. That is the only way it is going to happen.

I would suggest also that we need to have a strong dialogue with Russia about the need not only for democratization inside Central Asia but for democratization inside Russia. Because as long as the

Russian government is moving in a democratic direction the tendencies in Russia toward authoritarianism which include neoimperialism are diminished.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much.

That concludes the questions here this morning. I want to thank the members of the panel for their very good testimony here, very helpful testimony. It will be made available to all the Members of the Committee on both sides so they will have access to it, and most I can assure you will read it even though they weren't all here necessarily this morning. But your testimony has been extremely helpful to Congress.

If there is no further business to come before the Committee, we are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:45 a.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]



## A P P E N D I X

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### MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

RESPONSE OF THE HONORABLE A. ELIZABETH JONES, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF EUROPEAN AND EURASIAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, TO QUESTION ASKED BY THE HONORABLE KATHERINE HARRIS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF FLORIDA

*Question:*

*Do you see their [the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan] techniques evolving, becoming more sophisticated as we are seeing in Iraq?*

*Answer:*

Our success in Afghanistan and in the global war on terror has adversely affected the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). Because of the losses it suffered in Operation Enduring Freedom, the IMU is likely not capable of the significant strength-on-strength military operations that they have conducted in the past. There have been some public reports that the IMU has begun to depend more heavily on other terrorist groups for financial support. The IMU's reportedly close ties to Al Qaida give it access to financial and training resources that will facilitate its evolution as a terror organization.

Incapable of military actions, the IMU may find terror attacks more attractive. While they have not carried out a successful attack against Americans, Central Asian authorities have arrested IMU members believed to be planning various terrorist operations. Due to the threat that they pose, the IMU is one of 36 organizations designated by the U.s. Government as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO). As an FTO, the IMU has been and will continue to be a focus of USG efforts to combat terrorism. We will continue to actively cooperate with the Central Asian governments to stem the growth of groups such as the IMU in order to ensure the safety and stability of the region.

