Lecture 8:

Meeting on the Road:

Islamic Culture and the Politics of Sufism

Topics: -

1. Introduction - Islam and Threat Perceptions
2. Sufism and its Role in Central Asia
3. Russia, Central Asia and Islam
4. Strategies of Social Resistance
5. The Need for Sustainable Engagement
6. Bibliography and Further Resources

1. Introduction - Islam and Threat Perceptions

Islam was one of the major cultural and religious forces within the orbit of an enlarging Russia once this religion came to the north Caucasus region (Dagestan) as early as the 8th century, and by the Tatars in the tenth century. In contrast, the Russians adopted Orthodox Christianity from 988 A.D.[1] They now form an expanding minority, and form part of complex relations with the northern Caucasus region and Central Asia.

This can be seen in a range of analysis concerning the Middle East, instability in the Persian Gulf, fears of a power vacuum in Central Asia,[2] negative perceptions of human rights in Pakistan, fears of resurgent Islam in Indonesia, and most recently the nexus with international terrorism.[3] There is also the **fear that many states in the Middle East, Central Asia and South-East Asia might be influenced by Islamic revivals** and create either Islamic states or new 'caliphates'. Others suggest that there is a serious, historically based, **clash of civilisations** underway between Islam and the Judaeo-Christian west, even if such a clash is unfortunate.[4] **For such a clash to be**

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[1] SHAIMIEV, Mintimer "Islamophonia Pays No Dividends", International Affairs: A Russian Journal of World Politics, Diplomacy & International Relations, 52 no. 4, 2006, pp115-118 [Access via Ebsco Database]; ABDULLAEV, Nabi & SARADZHYAN, Simon "The Trade-offs Between Security and Civil Liberties in Russia's War on Terror: The Regional Dimension", *Demokratizatsiya, 14 no. 3*, Summer 2006, pp361-404 [Access via Infotrac Database].

[2]The term 'Central Asia' will be used to include five of the Newly Independent States of the former USSR, i.e. Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. Afghanistan, though part of 'Greater Central Asia', has a rather different historical experience.

[3]For the strongest statement of threat, see PIPES, Daniel "There Are No Moderates: Dealing with Fundamentalist Islam", The *National Interest*, Fall 1995, pp48-57. For a small sample of articles discussing such perspectives, see MILLER, Judith "The Challenge of Radical Islam", *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 1993, pp42-56; WRIGHT, Robin "Islam, Democracy and the West", *Foreign Affairs*, *71*, Summer 1992, pp131-145; PIPES, Daniel "The Muslims Are Coming! The Muslims Are Coming!", *National Review*, 19 November 1990, pp28-31. A critical outline of negative Western views will be found in ESPOSITO, John *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1992, pp168-212. Even LEWIS, Bernard "The Roots of Muslim Rage", *Atlantic Monthly*, *266 no. 3*, September 1990, pp47-60, which tries to develop a moderate viewpoint, assumes a strong 'us-verses-them' analysis.

[4]LEWIS, Bernard "The Roots of Muslim Rage", *Atlantic Monthly*, *266 no. 3*, September 1990, p60. Yet it should be noted that the most common conflicts in the Muslim world are regional and intra-civilizational, i.e. between

fully developed, however, it needs leaders who are willing to use religious tensions to generate conflicts. Thinkers as diverse as John Esposito and former President Khatami of Iran favoured a **'dialogue of civilisations'** rather than a 'clash of civilisations'.[5] On this basis, some would argue that the real clash is between different 'fundamentalisms', i.e. between extremist religious views and extremist secular views that do not allow some space for religious belief in the political sphere due to reasons of foreign policy.[6]

Indeed, **Osama bin Laden tried, unfortunately with some success, to promote his terrorist campaign against the U.S. as part of a supposed 'Jihad'** that had to be made on behalf of Islam against Western power and imperialism. Jihad does not just mean Holy War: it also the idea of personal religious struggle internally and the need to speak out in defence of the truth. Indeed, Osama's encouragement for Muslims to kill U.S. citizens was not well-based on Islamic law and in so far as it was indiscriminate **goes against Islamic notions of just war**.[7] Informed opinion in the U.S. made is clear that the 'war on terror' should not be viewed as a war against Islam: unfortunately, this one of several messages that has been received in the Islamic world. The **new security climate** has made it possible for many states to tighten their security regimes against dissidents, e.g. in Israel against Palestine, within most Central Asian states, the U.S., Australia, Malaysia, the Philippines and PRC. In this setting, likewise, stabilisation within Afghanistan and Iraq remains highly problematic, while local efforts for an open democracy has been reversed within Iran through 2004-2007, though growing signs of protest for greater civil liberties have emerged through late 2006 down through February 2007, often carried forward by women or those seeking a more open electoral process. As we have seen (lectures 2-4), **the threat of Islam has been used by Central Asian governments** as one justification for limitations on freedom of speech and association, and has been a mechanism for reducing that range of opposition parties that can operate in elections.

Furthermore, for those that hoped for a triumph of liberal-democracies and capitalism,[8] **entrenched Islam seemed one of the few 'obstacles' to a globalisation of modernist values**. However, these threat perceptions are often accompanied by 'a pervasive ignorance about Islam's central tenets and the diversity of Islamic doctrine and praxis'.[9] These negative views are deepened by the rather narrow presentation of Islam in mainstream Western and Russia media over two decades.[10]

Islamic societies, FULLER, Graham E. & LESSER, Ian O. *A Sense of Siege: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1995, p159.

[5] See AHRARI, M. Ehsan "Iran, China and Russia: The Emerging Anti-US Nexus", *Security Dialogue, 32 no. 4*, December 2001, pp453-466; ALAM, Shah "The Changing Paradigm of Iranian Foreign Policy", *Strategic Analysis, 24 no. 9*, December 2000, pp1629-1653; ESPOSITO, John *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1992.

[6] See ALI, Tariq *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and Modernity*, London, Verso, 2003.

[7] See KELSAY, John " Osama bin Laden and the Just Conduct of War : Osama bin Laden appeals to the tradition of Islam. Is he right?", *America*, 8 October, 2001 [Internet Access via www.findarticles.com]

[8] FUKUYAMA, Francis *The End of History and the Last Man*, London, Penguin, 1992; FUKUYAMA, Francis "The End of History?", *The National Interest, No. 16*, Summer 1989, pp3-18; FUKUYAMA, Francis "Democractization and International Security", *Adelphi Papers 266, New Dimensions in International Security, Part II*, Winter 1991/92, pp14-24.

[9] GERNER, Deborah J. "Islamic Revivalism and International Politics", *Mershon International Studies Review*, 40 Supplement 1, April 1996, p104.

[10] For a brief analysis of these images which have largely excluded positive Islamic elements, see KIBBLE, David G. "Understanding Islamic Fundamentalism", Al-Saud House Website, (Internet Source), 1996. See also

There are indeed **some groups whose interpretation of Islam directly conflicts with liberal values**, e.g. the reduction of the status of women in Afghanistan under the Taliban rule and rather strong restrictions on democratic candidates in Iran over the last two years. These repressive trends, however, are not universal in Islam, and have been condemned by Islamic scholars, both reformist and traditional, including some Iranian clerics who regard the Taliban as addicted to a 'fossilised' form of Islam showing little genuine knowledge of the Quran.[11] Such a rigid view of Islam is not acceptable to the populations of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and of Central Asia.[12] The Taliban movement itself, based largely on Pashtun refugees, was trained in the very conservative Deoband form of Islam as taught in religious schools in Pakistan.[13] Yet unlike most of Central Asia, **Sufism charted a different course in Afghanistan and Pakistan**, coming to a certain alignment with strict orthodox trends.[14] Although the Chishtiyya, Qadiriyya and Naqshbandiyya orders had a strong historical presence in Afghanistan, the intelligentsia and Islamists there in any case became highly **politicised and ideologised,**[15] and moved away from the inward directed paths favoured in contemplative Islam. The **Taliban, in fact, represent the antithesis of the main trends of Sufism generally,** and in particular as found in West and Central Asia.[16] With the overthrow of the Taliban, tolerant Sufi groups have again been able to perform their religious ceremonies and music in Afghanistan, ceremonies which had been rigorously banned by the Taliban. These moderate Sufis viewed the Taliban's form of religious belief as 'hypocritical, violent, corrupt and unacceptable.'[17] Likewise, **it is possible that argue that radical Islam as a whole is on decline as a governing ideology, in contrast to its role as a resistance movement**: -

> Radical Islamism is an ideology of wrath directed against an existing order. So long as the political order remains closed, the radical guerrillas will have a place in society, as their defiance of the oppressive order and their criticism of the stagnant autocratic rule will have resonance with a segment of the populace. In an open arena of competition, radical Islam will find its ideas contested by a range of alternatives from secular liberalism to moderate Islam. It is unlikely that the radicals can sustain their base of support in light of such systematic dissection of their creed. Radical Islamists have found it exceedingly difficult to transform their slogans into a governing dogma. The intellectual poverty of this movement makes it a perfect ideology of opposition but an

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WRIGHT, Robin "Islam, Democracy and the West", *Foreign Affairs*, *71*, Summer 1992, pp133-134. For the misuse of this term and its rise in the literature after the Iranian revolution of 1978-79, see VEITCH, James A. "A Case of Mistaken Identity: Muslims and Fundamentalism", *Journal of Arabic, Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, no. 1*, 1993, pp1-6.

[11]PANNIER, Bruce "Sharia, the Great Schism, Sufism and the Taliban: Part Four: Taliban", *OMRI Analytical Brief, I no. 464*, (Internet Source), 14 November 1996.

[12]PANNIER, Bruce "Tajikistan's New Concerns over Afghanistan", *OMRI Analytical Brief, I no. 357*, (Internet Source), 2 October 1996.

[13]MEHROTRA, O. N. "Madarsa in Pakistan: The Chief Promoter of Islamic Militancy and Terrorism", *Strategic Analysis", 23 no. 11*, February 2000, pp1879-1894; PANNIER, Bruce "Sharia, the Great Schism, Sufism and the Taliban: Part Four: Taliban", *OMRI Analytical Brief, I no. 464*, (Internet Source), 14 November 1996; OLESEN, Asta *Islam and Politics in Afghanistan*, Richmond, Curzon Press, 1995, p50.

[14]OLESEN, Asta *Islam and Politics in Afghanistan*, Richmond, Curzon Press, 1995, p48, p50.

[15]Ibid., p46, p234, pp249-250.

[16]Ibid., p51. See further below.

[17] ELVIN, John "Sufis Emerge from Afghanistan's Shadows", *Insight on the News*, 7 January 2002 [Internet Access via www.findarticles.com]

> impossible alternative to mainstream realism. In the last several years, some Islamists have renounced their Utopian vision in favor of more moderate approaches.[18]

For most of Central Asia, Islamic belief (smaller Shi'a groups exist, while Iran has a Shi'a majority) followed a rather **relatively liberal form of the Hanafi legal school of Sunni Islam**: -

> There, aspects of Hanafi Islam were crucial in generating its widespread popularity in Central Asia. First, its founder, Abu Hanifah, was a Persian. His non-Arab heritage was high valued by the Central Asian population, most of whom had lived under the umbrella of Persian culture and civilization for centuries. Second, the liberal orientation of the Hanafi doctrine allowed for the incorporation of pre-Islamic traditions of Central Asia, many of which have been preserved until now. Lastly, it allowed for a more lax practice of Islamic precepts. Such liberal tendencies were incorporated into the belief system of a number of Sufi orders in the region, the most popular of which, the Naqshbandiya, share many of the Hanafi doctrinal underpinnings.[19]

These problems need to be placed in a **wider developmental context**. Political abuses, poverty, slow development, authoritarian regimes and ethnic strife have also complicated national development in the Middle East and Central Asia (see lectures 1-4). Likewise, **new or transitional nation-states with fragile national-identities often have extreme difficulties in forging political consensus**, especially if the government intentionally tries to restrict or **exclude opposition parties** (as has occured in much of Central Asia). Thus, as we have seen, opposition parties, such as Birlik (Unity) and Erk (freedom) parties, have been banned or effectively restricted from participating in elections in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.[20] Likewise, there has been reduction of the ability of the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) to function in Tajikistan through 2004-2007.[21] **Religion, in exclusive forms, either fills too much of the identity vacuum, or else has been excluded too rigorously**. In general terms, **Islam is one layer of the identity of Central Asia**, and effort to suppress or 'manage' it may backfire on government of the region.[22] Indeed, this may lead to the call a return to an Islamic state, or indeed, some more radical vision of political order such as the Caliphate, as had been claimed by regional governments opposing the followers of the Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation, but more a social movement, which has come under pressure from governments in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan).[23]

The term fundamentalism is problematic when applied to Islam in that it draws an awkward parallel with the history of Western Biblical interpretation: 'there is no such word as fundamentalism in any of the Islamic languages' - Arabic, Persian, Turkish or Urdu.[24] Furthermore, in so far as all practising Muslims accept the Quran and Sunnah

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[18] TAKEYH, Ray & GVOSDEV, Nikolas K. "Radical Islam: The Death of an Ideology?", *Middle East Policy*, *11 no. 4,* Winter 2004, pp86-95 [Access via Infotrac Database]

[19] HAGHAYEGHI, Mehrdad "Changing Dynamics of Islamic Politics in Central Asia", *Muslim World,* 92 *no 3/4*, Fall 2002, pp315-331 [Access via Ebsco Database].

[20] *Eurasianet* "Polls Close in Uzbek Parliamentary Election", EurasiaNet Partner Post from RFE/RL26 December 2004 [Access via http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/civilsociety/articles/pp122604.shtml].

[21] ARMAN, Kambiz "Political Leader's Conviction Stirs Opposition Ire in Tajikistan", *Eurasianet*, 20 January 2004 [Internet Access via www.eurasianet.org]. See further lecture 4.

[22] See GUNN, T. Jeremy "Shaping an Islamic Identity: Religion, Islamism, and the State in Central Asia", *Sociology of Religion, 64 no. 3*, Fall 2003, pp389-411 [Access via Infotrac Database]

[23] SAIDAZIMOVA, Gulnoza "Central Asia: Hizb Ut-Tahrir Calls for Islamic State Find Support", Eurasia Insight, 17 January 2006a [Internet Access via www.eurasianet.org].

as exact normative models 'for living',[25] the term fundamentalist does not really discriminate between different groups within Islam. As noted by John Esposito 'many fundamentalist leaders have had the best education, enjoy responsible positions in society, and are adept at harnessing the latest technology to propagate their views and create viable modern institutions such as schools, hospitals, and social service agencies'.[26]

Indeed, most Islamic reform groups are not fundamentalist in any literal sense, but 'resemble Catholic Liberation theologians who urge active use of original religious doctrine to better the temporal and political lives in a modern world'[27]. Rafic Zakaria suggests a more fruitful dichotomy, distinguishing **between conservative and liberal trends in Islam**, where the 'battle between the fundamentalists and the secularists can perhaps be more accurately described as a struggle between forces who resist change in Islam and those who wish to accelerate it.'.[28] The **terms radical and Renaissance Islam** also indicate a certain revival in Islamic self-definition, though these movements are not all conservative and do not always correlate with groups supporting authoritarian religious systems. Indeed, Islam has an indigenous tradition of 'revival' (*tajdid*) and 'reform' (*islah*).[29] **Islamic revivalism incorporates a much wider movement than anti-Western militant groups**.[30] There is a danger that all reform groups might be viewed as militant to outsiders. In this context, some Muslims perceive, in turn, a 'Crusader mentality' in the West, which still remains strong in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.[31] Trends towards an anti-Western, militant Islam are therefore exacerbated, indeed aided, by Western threat reactions. **Poor, undeveloped countries with a strong sense of grievance are more likely to allow militant religious groups to operate,** though such leaders and activists may themselves may be relatively-well off or well-educated.

Events through 2001-2007 may inhibit a genuine dialogue between Islamic societies and Western democracies focusing on 'human rights'. Since Islam comprises over 1.3 billion persons globally, with 45 to 50 countries predominantly Muslim,[32]

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[24]ZAKARIA, Rafic *The Struggle Within Islam: The Conflict Between Religion and Politics*, N.Y., Penguin, 1988, p7.

[25]ESPOSITO, John *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1992, p7.

[26]ESPOSITO, John *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1992, p7; see also ESPOSITO, John "Beyond the Green Menace", *MSANEWS*, (16-5-1996), reposted from *Current History*, (Internet Source), January 1994, contra the type of image found in LEWIS, Bernard "The Roots of Muslim Rage", *Atlantic Monthly*, *266 no. 3*, September 1990, p59.

[27]WRIGHT, Robin "Islam, Democracy and the West", *Foreign Affairs*, *71*, Summer 1992, p131, footnote 1.

[28]ZAKARIA, Rafic *The Struggle Within Islam: The Conflict Between Religion and Politics*, N.Y., Penguin, 1988, p14. One aspect to which fundamentalism can be applied is the political ideology of some extremists groups who use revolutionary doctrine, coloured by Islamic trappings, to justify terrorism. But this is actually an ideological and political fundamentalism, not a religious fundamentalism.

[29]ESPOSITO, John *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1992, p8.

[30]Ibid., p23.

[31]FULLER, Graham E. & LESSER, Ian O. *A Sense of Siege: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1995, pp166-167; p174; ESPOSITO, John *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1992, p40, p51, p171; ALAWI, Ridha "The Political and Cultural Dialogue Between Islam and the West", *Echo of Islam* (Tehran), *No. 119*, May 1994, pp28-30.

[32]GERNER, Deborah J. "Islamic Revivalism and International Politics", *Mershon International Studies Review*, 40 Supplement 1, April 1996, p104; ESPOSITO, John *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1992, p4; ESPOSITO, John "Beyond the Green Menace", *MSANEWS*, (16-5-1996), reposted from *Current History*, (Internet Source), January 1994.

with sizeable Muslim minorities even in countries such as France,[33] Britain, Germany, the U.S. and India, this is a serious problem. Furthermore, the 2001-2004 period may represent a particular turning point in global affairs where a serious engagement by Western nations with Islam communities[34] is sidelined by short-term success in the 'war on terror'. A stable, politically tolerant form of Islam, if encouraged to develop in Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, could well help stabilise Eurasia in the long term. However, **if militant extremists can control the 'debate' through violence in the West and the Islamic world, then a new round of future conflict is being prepared**.

Historical and political accounts of Islamic societies[35] suggest certain facets of Islamic culture that **may allow a dialogue with modern and Western values**: -

1) Islam as a tradition is compatible with a **trading culture**
2) Islam has a **cosmopolitan tradition** with syncretic, inclusive elements at the level of culture, drawing in diverse Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Malay cultural features in different settings (as distinct from also having a small core of religious beliefs which are held to be universally true and immutable)
3) Islam as a tradition can be compatible with the development of knowledge and **scholarship**. It must be remembered that the acquisition of knowledge is a fundamental obligation for Muslims. They are to seek knowledge, 'even in China'.[36] (However, Islam itself has not gone through the comprehensive Renaissance and Reformation that modified Christianity in Europe's politics).
4) Islamic ethics has a strong focus on **individual responsibility and social justice,** even though this has not always been carried through into political life, and some national systems to seem highly distorted by traditional biases based on genre or tribal/status group, e.g. treatment of women within localised patterns of law in Pakistan.
5) Islam **limits the authority one person may rightly wield over another**, especially in the area of ideas and belief. True authority in many interpretations of Islam remains with God, and Muhammad remains the only infallible Imam.[37] Outside of areas where there is a clear Qurannic or Sunnah text, there is considerable scope for **independent interpretation** (*ijtihad*), which must be based on the person's own opinion.[38] Under some interpretations, *ijtihad* is obligatory for Muslim scholars who must adapt the application of divine truths to each new age.[39]

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[33]For misunderstanding of Islam in France and social conflicts, see PIERRE, Andrew & QUANDT, William B. "Algeria's War on Itself", *Foreign Policy, 99*, Summer 1995, p140; WIEVIORKA, Michel "French Intellectuals: End of an Era", *Dissent*, Spring 1994, p250; MOISO, Dominique "Chirac of France: A New Leader of the West?", *Foreign Affairs, 74 no. 6*, November/December 1995, p11.

[34]WRIGHT, Robin "Islam, Democracy and the West", *Foreign Affairs*, *71*, Summer 1992, pp144-145.

[35]In general see MAYER, Ann Elizabeth *Islam and Human Rights: Tradition and Politics*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1995; ZAKARIA, Rafic *The Struggle Within Islam: The Conflict Between Religion and Politics*, N.Y., Penguin, 1988; ESPOSITO, John *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1992.

[36]See AL-HUJWIRI, Ali B. Uthman Al-Jullabi *The Hashf Al-Mahjub: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism*, trans. Reynold Nicholson, London, Luzac and Company, 1976, Chapter I "On the Affirmation of Knowledge", especially p11.

[37]AL-GHAZALI *Deliverance from Error*, p17; WATT, William Montgomery (trans.) *The Faith and Practice of Al-Ghazali*, Oxford, Oneworld, 1994, p12; see also AL-HUJWIRI, Ali B. Uthman Al-Jullabi *The Hashf Al-Mahjub: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism*, trans. Reynold Nicholson, London, Luzac and Company, 1976, Chapter XI, p102.

[38]AL-GHAZALI *Deliverance from Error*, pp48-9.

[39]OLESEN, Asta *Islam and Politics in Afghanistan*, Richmond, Curzon Press, 1995, p237.

6) Islam generally supports **free enterprise but provides alternative forms of social, communal support,** including aid for the poor and alternative forms of Islamic banking.[40]
7) Islam provides a diverse **cultural world** of art architecture and literature, allowing it a major role in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Indian, Central Asian and Malaysian cultural systems.
8) Islam has certain **proto-democratic elements** which can support democratic, pluralistic and parliamentary procedures.[41] When more authoritarian forms of government exist, these elements place limits and positive moral demands on leaders and elite groups in society. This debate revolves around the role of the **Umma, the international community of believers**, and the Islamic conception of **consultation**, *shura*, in influencing political life, and in creating a kind of consensus based solidarity.[42]
9) It is possible that we will see **the attempt to create a genuinely pluralist society within Islam** in which different cultures can operate together. This debate has emerged, for example, in **Iran during 1998-2007, where young educated women have taken the lead in discussing the creation of 'civil society' within an Islamic framework**. From 2004 Iran has slid into crisis as religious hardliners limited those who are allowed to run in elections (thousands at all levels had been initially barred by the Council of Guardians), a process that has lead to a constitutional crisis and tainted the outcome of parliamentary elections, where conservatives gained a majority after many progressive politicians were barred or resigned in protest.[43] These trends have undermined the credibility of former President Khatami, and set back hopes for a more open political system.[44] Reform efforts were resisted by the supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who 'began to use the judiciary, the Council of Guardians (a watch-dog institution dedicated to protecting the ideological foundations of the Islamic Republic), and his allies in the media, the Parliament and various government agencies to limit reform'.[45] This debate has now emerged as a major issue in Iran, Turkey and Central Asia as new states develop their national identity and political culture.[46] The outcome of events in Iran may be important for Islam as a whole: -

> Current debates on democracy in Iran are critical not only to Iran but also to developments across the Muslim world. . . .
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> Those currently involved in the democracy debate in Iran can be placed into two principal camps. First are those who would like to reform Islam in order to reconcile it

[40]ISMAEL, Jacqueline S. & ISMAEL, Tareq Y. "Cultural Perspectives on Social Welfare in the Emergence of Modern Arab Social Thought", *The Muslim World, 85 no. 1-2*, January-April 1995, pp82-106.

[41] HEFNER, Robert W. " Public Islam and the Problem of Democratization", *Sociology of Religion*, Winter, 2001 [Internet Access via www.findarticles.com].

[42]ESPOSITO, John *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1992, p62, p126, pp185-189. For a narrower interpretation, see GELLNER, Ernest *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and Its Rivals*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1994, pp26-29. For a reformulation of democracy 'not as a human invention, but divine intention', see KHORASANI, Rajaei "Democracy in an Islamic System", *Echo of Islam* (Tehran), *No. 118*, April 1994, pp24-26. On the 'Pious Sultan theory', see OLESEN, Asta *Islam and Politics in Afghanistan*, Richmond, Curzon Press, 1995, p9.

[43] COLE, Juan "Iran's Tainted Elections", *The Nation*, 1 March 2004 [Access via Infotrac Database].

[44] AMUZEGAR, Jahangir "Khatami: A Folk Hero in Search of Relevance", *Middle East Policy*, *11 no. 2*, Summer 2004, pp75-93 [Access via Infotrac Database]

[45] GHEISSARI, Ali & NASR, Vali "Iran's democracy debate", *Middle East Policy*, *11 no. 2,* Summer 2004, pp94-106 [Access via Infotrac Database]

[46] HANKS, Reuel "Civil Society and Identity in Uzbekistan: The Emergent Role of Islam", in RUFFIN, M. Holt & WAUGH, Daniel C. (eds) *Civil Society in Central Asia*, Seattle, Centre for Civil Society International, 1999, pp158-179.

> with democracy, so as to have a pluralistic and more open Islamic Republic. Second are those who would like to reform the constitution in order to separate religion from politics and have a secular democracy--i.e., to move beyond Islamic reform and the Islamic Republic. The debate is occurring in the context of mounting social, economic and political problems facing Iran's theocracy, on the one hand, and the growing importance of electoral politics, on the other. Whereas Islamic reformers were more prominent earlier in the debate during the 1990s, the tide has now begun to shift to more substantive constitutional reforms.[47]

10) Islam has its **own formulation of universal human rights** which are somewhat different from Western liberal conceptions, emphasizing human dignity, right to life and welfare, the right to resist tyranny, as well as basic equality between races and peoples.[48] Major divergences with the Western tradition emerge in the **role of women**,[49] and Islamic rights agendas are often limited by how Islamic law is interpreted, i.e. the phrase 'according to law' may limit human rights depending on the particular formulation of ***Sharia*** that is accepted, based on different legal schools.[50]

11) **Reformist developments** in Islamic thought also lean towards human rights balanced by economic rights, social justice, and cultural legitimacy.[51] **It is not clear to what degree reformist thought will counterbalance militant views** in the current international context.

Having said this, it is still **too simple to divide Muslims into 'moderates' and 'militants'**.[52] Strong division exist even among these groups, e.g. Shiite verses Sunni, traditional verses Sufi, official verses underground Islam groups, etc., while many Muslims are divided on particular issues, e.g. modernisation, role of women, attitudes towards Europe and the U.S. These issues will be put into context by studying the **role of Islam and Sufism in Central Asia**. Although engagement strategies are important (see below), the **most important debates will continue among different Muslim groups** themselves as they negotiate new cultural realities alongside core religious beliefs.

2. Sufism and its Role in Central Asia

Sufism is basically an individualised, socially critical form of Islam which has spread through major sectors of the Islamic world, and has a **very strong role to play in the politics of Central Asia.** Sufism is essentially a **mystical form** of Islam emphasising the relationship between the individual and God.[53]

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[47] GHEISSARI, Ali & NASR, Vali "Iran's democracy debate", *Middle East Policy*, *11 no. 2,* Summer 2004, pp94-106 [Access via Infotrac Database]

[48]See for example the Institute of Islamic Information Education's "Human Rights in Islam", Chicago, 1995 [Internet Source], and ISMAEL, Jacqueline S. & ISMAEL, Tareq Y. "Cultural Perspectives on Social Welfare in the Emergence of Modern Arab Social Thought", *The Muslim World, 85 no. 1-2*, January-April 1995, pp82-106.

[49]Though Islam had not been without its own reformers since the 19th century, e.g. Qasim Amin, 1863-1908 in his works *The Emancipation of Women* and *The New Woman* 'denounced the subjugation of Muslim women as un-Islamic', ESPOSITO, John *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1992, p58.

[50]See MAYER, Ann Elizabeth *Islam and Human Rights: Tradition and Politics*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1995, pp64-66.

[51]See MONSHIPOURI, Mahmood "Islamic Thinking and The Internationalization of Human Rights", *The Muslim World, 84 no. 2-3*, July-October 1994, pp217-239.

[52] HARISH, S.P. "A Question of Values? Changing Strategies in the Ideological Battle Against Terrorism", *RSIS Commentaries, No. 13*, 2007.

[53]ARBERRY, A.J. *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1950, p58.

The **origin of the term 'Sufi'** is uncertain. One derivation is that of the *suffe*, or platform of the Mosque at Medina where the Companions of the Prophet met to explore the revealed knowledge of Muhammad.[54] A more probable source is the Arabic word *suf* for wool, referring to the rough ordinary clothes often worn by prophets, saints, and many later sufis.[55] Other connotations include notions of 'purity', 'method', or 'inner beliefs'.[56] Regardless of these linguistic mysteries, 'the reality of Sufism is clear, for its paramount aim is felicity (*sa'ada*) which is determined by the knowledge of proximity to God'.[57] Hence, **Sufism was a mystical path within Islam that moderates its legal and normative tradition.**

Sufism is a **central aspect of Islamic International Relations and Eurasian politics**. Sufism is particularly important because it is among the most cosmopolitan, eclectic and synthetic aspects of Islam, thereby allowing **discourse with other cultures**. This trend developed particularly strongly in Central Asia, as **Islam spread along the Silk Road**. Central Asia at a very early date was incorporated into the Islamic domain of influence. Islam reached eastwards from Merv after 750 A.D., and reached much of the Crimea, the Steppes, and Kazakhstan during the Ottoman period between the 14th and 18th centuries. Central Asian cities, such as **Bukhara and Samarkand**, would become major centres of Islamic scholarship, housing hundred of *madrasahs*, Islamic colleges which educate teachers and religious leaders. For many Muslims Bukhara became the most important city for pilgrimage after Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem.[58]

Sufism in part grew out of the scholastic and metaphysical researches of great **scholars** such as Razi (885-925), Ibn Sina (Avicenna, 980-1037), al-Ghazālī, (born in 1058), Ibn Rushd (Averroes, died 1198), and Rumi (born 1207) but soon developed its poetic stamp, practical philosophies, and forms of social critique. These developed in part out of earlier trends found in Greek and Christian gnosticism, but was also influenced the complex social milieu of Central Asia, where Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Chinese influences[59] mixed with Persian and Islamic ones. Such **eclectic trends** were most noticeable among the more recently converted Khirghiz.[60] In large part, Sufism in this context became a **popularist and grass-roots movement**, which meant that Sufism continued to be successfully spread along the

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[54]ANGHA, Nahid "About Sufism", from *Principles of Sufism*, (Internet Source), February 1991; IMOS, Zos "Sufi Traditions", (Internet Source), 1994.

[55]ARBERRY, A.J. *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1950, p35; AL-HUJWIRI, Ali B. Uthman Al-Jullabi *The Hashf Al-Mahjub: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism*, trans. Reynold Nicholson, London, Luzac and Company, 1976, Chapter III "On Sufism", p30; DANNER, Victor "The Necessity for the Rise of the Term Sufi", *Studies in Comparative Religion, 6 no. 2*, 1973, p70; LINGS, Martin "Sufism", in ARBERRY, A.J. (ed.) *Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Conflict*, Cambridge, CUP, 1969, Vol. 2, p253, though Nahid Angha denies that this is the main derivation ANGHA, Nahid "About Sufism", from *Principles of Sufism*, (Internet Source), February 1991.

[56]ANGHA, Nahid "About Sufism", from *Principles of Sufism*, (Internet Source), February 1991; IMOS, Zos "Sufi Traditions", (Internet Source), 1994.

[57]RIDGEON, Lloyd "The Felicitous Life in Sufism", *Sufi, No. 28*, Winter 1995-96, p30.

[58]RASHID, Ahmed *The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism?*, Karachi, OUP, 1994, p6.

[59]For a detailed comparison with the Taoism of Chuang Tzu, see IZUTSU, Toshihiko *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984.

[60]IMART, Guy "The Islamic Impact on Kirghiz Ethnicity", *Nationalities Papers, 14 nos. 1-2*, Spring-Fall 1986, p69; OLESEN, Asta *Islam and Politics in Afghanistan*, Richmond, Curzon Press, 1995, p47.

Silk Road.[61] Likewise, it would later on spread through the cultural domain established by the Seljuk (from the 11th century) and then the Ottoman Turks.[62]

Sufism emphasises raising awareness of the 'Real', as distinct from a distorted understanding of what is taken to be real everyday life, through genuine knowledge of the self and the 'veils' which divide it from any experience of the truth.[63] This is also the search for genuine Existence.[64] It also **emphasised compassion from one human being to another, regardless of all other distinctions**. This trend greatly widened Islam and aided its attraction throughout Eurasia, India, Southeast Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe. This trend has been summarised: -

> Though unconcerned with affairs of state, the sufis had a profound influence on the Muslim polity. They humanized its rigours and reduced the area of conflict between religion and politics. They gave Islam a broader base. Non-Muslims flocked to sufi hospices in large numbers and in due course hundreds of thousands came into the fold of Islam. . . . By the beginning of the fourteenth century, large numbers of people, particularly in Central Asia and South and South-East Asia, had accepted Islam through the preaching of the sufis. Under their impact, the Mongols, who had been the scourge of Islam, became patrons of Islam.[65]

This form of Islam was spread by the Mongols, the Ottoman Turks, and Sufism had a **special role in bringing Islam into India**, first by traders, then under the Mughal conquerors, and thereafter into Southeast Asia.[66]

There is **some greater scope for an independent role by women** within the Sufi tradition than in some strict interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence. Rabi'a al-'Adawiya (717- 801 A.D.), for example was a prominent woman saint who never married, while Fatima Nishapuri (d. 838 A.D.) was respected as a great Sufi teacher.[67] Furthermore, in Central Asian areas strongly influenced by Sufism, there tends to be a **less strict interpretation on public codes for women** - in Central Asia (excluding Afghanistan under the Taliban), for example, women work and travel publicly, and are not expected to conform to a total covering of the body - usually a simply headscarf is enough. **Sufism also allows a considerable range of social criticism**, whether expressed through humorous stories, satire, or the special education actions of the 'Malamatiyya . . . those who "draw blame" or deliberately draw the contempt of others while preserving purity of heart, those who do not care if other Muslims accept their faith or actions as legitimate'.[68] Likewise, the inspired exclamations and views (*shatahat*) of Sufis will not necessarily be conformist.[69] These trends allow Sufi-influenced groups a **greater ability to resist the authoritarian misuse of Islam**.

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[61]ZAKARIA, Rafic *The Struggle Within Islam: The Conflict Between Religion and Politics*, N.Y., Penguin, 1988, p100.

[62] See LEWIS, Franklin D. *Rumi: Past and Present, East and West*, Oxford, Oneworld, 2003.

[63]ELWELL-SUTTON, L.P. "Sufism and Pseudo-Sufism", *Encounter*, *44 no. 5*, 1975, pp9-11; ANGHA, Nahid "About Sufism", from *Principles of Sufism*, (Internet Source), February 1991.

[64]RIDGEON, Lloyd "The Felicitous Life in Sufism", *Sufi, No. 28*, Winter 1995-96, p30.

[65]ZAKARIA, Rafic *The Struggle Within Islam: The Conflict Between Religion and Politics*, N.Y., Penguin, 1988, p101.

[66]BALJON, Johannes M.S. "Islam in Afghanistan, India and Pakistan", in ARBERRY, A.J. (ed.) *Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Conflict*, Cambridge, CUP, 1969, Vol. 2, pp122-3; ZAKARIA, Rafic *The Struggle Within Islam: The Conflict Between Religion and Politics*, N.Y., Penguin, 1988, p101, p132.

[67]IMOS, Zos "Sufi Traditions", (Internet Source), 1994; HELMINSKI, Camille Adams "Women & Sufism", (Internet Source), 1996.

[68]IMOS, Zos "Sufi Traditions", (Internet Source), 1994.

Sufism, though found in Egypt, Africa and elsewhere, was a major progressive force in Central Asia, and **Sufism also helped spread Islam in the Indian, Malay and Javanese areas**.[70] In many ways, it underpins the more everyday form of Islam lived in villages and communities in these societies. This trend continues today in the privacy of small communities, as well as in a revival of Sufi literature and academic societies. Through its **love of music, dance, poetry, story-telling and humour**, Sufism helped create a vigorous culture which penetrated much of Central Asia, the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia. In this guise Sufis are often known to the West as 'dervishes', or spinning dervishes, whose practises like the special chants and breathing exercises lead to a trance state (*wajd*) designed to bring the participant closer to God.[71] Likewise their humorous, insightful stories have been spread to the West by Idries Shah.[72]

All these aspects, however, were directed towards achieving *wilayah*, or 'identification of man with God'.[73] Though devout, most of these Schools of Sufism are much more able to accommodate modern and secular trends compared to radical forms of Islam found in other parts of the world, e.g. the **Wahhabism** exported from Saudi Arabia. Previously, **the Sufi orders in Arabia were fiercely suppressed by the Wahhabi movement**, which helps explain the fact that **Central Asia and Chechnya did not at first prove to be very fertile of grounds for Wahhabism**, in spite of financial resources pumped into the region from Saudi Arabia. Wahhabis, in particular, are opposed to the notion of ecstatic mysteries, as well as the visiting of the tombs of saints which is viewed as potentially leading to idolatry.[74] Wahhabi influence has also been resisted by traditional orders in Chechnya, though it gained some foothold in the region once conflict with Russia deepened. From the early 1990s till 1997 there was an attempt by the Wahhabis to gain ground in Chechnya, but they lost credibility when they tried to confront the Sufi groups, and when they rejected Chechen nationalism.[75] However, with the heavy Russian military control of Chechnya since 2002, **international networks and contacts have increased across the north Caucasus**, while the Wahhabi influence has been felt especially in Dagestan and via former Chechen warlord Basayev, and has since been revived through 2006-2007 (see further below).[76]

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[69]LINGS, Martin "Sufism", in ARBERRY, A.J. (ed.) *Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Conflict*, Cambridge, CUP, 1969, Vol. 2, p264.

[70]In general, see SYED, Naguib al-Attas *Some Aspects of Sufism As Understood and Practised Among the Malays*, Singapore, Malaysian Sociological Research Ltd, 1963.

[71]IMOS, Zos "Sufi Traditions", (Internet Source), 1994.

[72]Idries Shah is sometimes viewed as not presenting an authentic Sufi tradition, i.e. as a pseudo-Sufi, see ELWELL-SUTTON, L.P. "Sufism and Pseudo-Sufism", *Encounter*, *44 no. 5*, 1975, pp9-17.

[73]ZAKARIA, Rafic *The Struggle Within Islam: The Conflict Between Religion and Politics*, N.Y., Penguin, 1988, p109.

[74]LINGS, Martin "Sufism", in ARBERRY, A.J. (ed.) *Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Conflict*, Cambridge, CUP, 1969, Vol. 2, p268; RENTZ, George "The Wahhabis", in ARBERRY, A.J. (ed.) *Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Conflict*, Cambridge, CUP, 1969, Vol. 2, pp270-271; RASHID, Ahmed "Revival of Islam", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 17 December 1992, p33.

[75] BENNIGSEN, Marie "Chechnia: Political Developments and Strategic Implication for the North Caucasus", *Central Asian Survey, 18 no. 4*, December 1999, pp548-549.

[76] ABDULLAEV, Nabi & SARADZHYAN, Simon "The Trade-offs Between Security and Civil Liberties in Russia's War on Terror: The Regional Dimension", *Demokratizatsiya, 14 no. 3*, Summer 2006, pp361-404 [Access via Infotrac Database].

Sufi orders have had a **major influence on 20th and 21st century Central Asia**, though to lesser extent in Kazakhstan than Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, and today form one of the main currents of Islam in contemporary political life. Estimates of the number involved in Sufi circles are difficult to make, but Russian surveys of the 1970s suggested that there would have been some 500,000 directly involved in Sufi brotherhoods, which Bennigsten and Wimbush suggest is a 'reasonably understated figure'.[77] Earlier **Sufi orders** included the Qadiris, the Chishtis (both of which avoided direct political involvement), and the Suhrawardis and Naqshbandis, who helped give advice to Muslim rulers. In the case of the Naqshbandis, this political activity can be seen in the wide range of contemporary publishing they engage in, including English texts. Likewise, modern Sufi societies also engage in the maintenance of professional on-line Web-sites (Internet resources) promoting their order, and explaining the Sufi role in resisting Russian penetration of the Caucasus.[78] There are contemporary political implications in some of this Internet material, e.g. carrying either direct or indirect criticism of attacks on Muslims in Bosnia and Chechnya.[79] Part of the aim here has been to **bring Sufism to the West**, as well as **re-establish its open presence in Central Asia and Afghanistan.**

With these background factors in mind we can understand why **Sufism remained robust even during periods of adversity**. The main Sufi Brotherhoods (*tariqa*) were active in the former USSR and remain so in Central Asia today. During the Soviet period, Rafic Zakaria noted: -

> The other wellspring of Islam in the USSR is the clandestinely organized network of sufi brotherhoods which has been popular in Central Asia since medieval times. These continue to exercise considerable influence on the Muslims. Of these, the Naqshbandiya is the most popular, followed by the Qadiriyya (mostly in the Caucasus) the Khalwatiya (in Turkmenistan . . .), and the Yasawiya (in Uzbekistan, Kirghizia and Kazakhstan). The Soviet authorities are aware of the potential of these institutions for religious revival but have so far left them alone, since suppressing them in the past had only inflamed fundamentalism. Nevertheless, Communist party workers have been actively decrying what they call 'parallel or unofficial Islam', as opposed to official or state-controlled Islam.[80]

There are numbers of smaller groups in Central Asia, including the secret society of the 'Hairy Ishans', previously an anti-Soviet group functioning among the Kirghiz in the Ferghana Valley.[81] There are approximately **70 orders active in the world,** with

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[77]BENNIGSTEN, A. & WIMBUSH, S. *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, p57.

[78]See for example http://www.arches.uga.edu/~godlas/Sufism.html; http://www.ias.org/; FENARI, Kerim "The Jihad of Imam Shamyl", (Internet Source) 1995.

[79]For one printed Iranian view of the Western failure to protect safe havens in Bosnia as a direct attack on Muslims, see AYATOLLAH KHAMENE'I "In Fulling Our Obligations and Duties Regarding Bosnia, We Will Not Wait For Others", *Echo of Islam* (Tehran), *No. 119*, (Extracts from Speech of 20 April 1994), May 1994, pp10-12).

[80]ZAKARIA, Rafic *The Struggle Within Islam: The Conflict Between Religion and Politics*, N.Y., Penguin, 1988, pp268-269. See also BENNIGSTEN, A. & WIMBUSH, S. *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, p7.

[81]RORLICH, Azade-Ayse "Islam and Atheism: Dynamic Tension in Soviet Central Asia", in FIERMAN, William (ed.) *Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1991, p191; BENNIGSTEN, A. & WIMBUSH, S. *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, p12.

perhaps several hundreds of thousands of people directly involved and millions more influenced by their traditions.[82]

From 1986, Central Asian leaders were aware of a **religious revival** throughout the region, including a noted influence on members of the Communist Party and on the young communist association, the Komsomol. The Uzbek Communist Party Central Committee secretary of the time, M. Khalmukhamedov tried to focus his attack not on the believers, but on a 'coercive clergy'.[83] By 1988 other regional leaders, such as Turkmen Party First Secretary Niiaszov were quietly dropping their standard attacks on Islam.[84] At a lower level, other officials were sometimes re-directing state funds to transform 'guest houses' and 'tea shops' into prayer houses.[85] Through the late 1980s, surveys showed that the majority of university students in Uzbekistan attended Islamic religious rituals.[86] By December 1989 the Uzbek Communist Party's election platform stated that it 'favors the freedom of religion and the legal rights of the believers, [as well as] cooperation with religious organisations'.[87] These trends show that in spite of **Russian attempts at eradication** and then re-education, Islam remained a strong social and religious force throughout the region. Sufism has indeed thrived 'on adversity', e.g if could be not exterminated by the Taliban, and Sufi groups are now flourishing in Afghanistan.[88] Furthermore, mass deportation of Muslim populations, e.g. from the North Caucasus to Central Asia, would only result in the exportation of Sufi brotherhoods into these new areas.[89] In this context, it is not surprising that **security and police crackdowns on non-official Islam through 2001-2007** in Dagestan, Chechnya and Moscow, have **dispersed rather than destroyed** such groups.[90]

We can see how some Sufi orders, especially the Naqshbandis, could become involved in political life in the turmoil of the latter half of the 19th century. This included **strong resistance to imperial domination**, e.g. the Sudanese resistance to British colonial power (e.g. the destruction of General Gordon in the Battle of Khartoum, 1885), resistance to British penetration into Afghanistan, and the leadership in Central Asia of Shamil Waifi (1797-1871) against Russian control of the region.[91] Under the leadership of Khalid Baghdadi (1776-1827), the **Naqshbandi**

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[82]IMOS, Zos "Sufi Traditions", (Internet Source), 1994.

[83]RORLICH, Azade-Ayse "Islam and Atheism: Dynamic Tension in Soviet Central Asia", in FIERMAN, William (ed.) *Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1991, p189.

[84]Ibid.

[85]Ibid., p190.

[86] HANKS, Reuel "Civil Society and Identity in Uzbekistan: The Emergent Role of Islam", in RUFFIN, M. Holt & WAUGH, Daniel C. (eds) *Civil Society in Central Asia*, Seattle, Centre for Civil Society International, 1999, p162.

[87]Ibid., p210.

[88]BENNIGSTEN, A. & WIMBUSH, S. *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, p112; HUNTER, Shireen "Islam in Post-Independence Central Asia: Internal and External Dimensions", *Journal of Islamic Studies, 7 no. 2*, 1996, p293. See also FULLER, Graham E. & LESSER, Ian O. *A Sense of Siege: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1995, p164.

[89]BENNIGSTEN, A. & WIMBUSH, S. *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, p30.

[90] ABDULLAEV, Nabi & SARADZHYAN, Simon "The Trade-offs Between Security and Civil Liberties in Russia's War on Terror: The Regional Dimension", *Demokratizatsiya, 14 no. 3*, Summer 2006, pp361-404 [Access via Infotrac Database].

[91]OLESEN, Asta *Islam and Politics in Afghanistan*, Richmond, Curzon Press, 1995, pp52-53; RASHID, Ahmed *The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism?*, Karachi, OUP, 1994, p16; ZAKARIA, Rafic *The Struggle Within Islam: The Conflict Between Religion and Politics*, N.Y., Penguin, 1988, p157.

order in particular became involved in the struggle against the liberalism of Moghul leader Akbar in India, and then against Czarist forces in the Caucasus. **Imam Shamil**, himself a Sufi, with the aid of Naqshbandis fighters expelled Czarist forces from the Caucasus and set up a strong resistance down to his surrender in 1859.[92] Naqshbandi adepts and other *murids* (disciples) continued strong resistance to Soviet control of the north Caucasus from 1917 down to 1925, with a subsequent revolt lasting from 1929 till 1936, and another bout of resistance in 1942-43.[93] Likewise, Bahal Din Vaishi (1804-93), had led a revolt against Russian influence in Kazan.[94]

It is not at all surprising, therefore, that **Islam and Sufi feeling formed part of the strong resistance of Chechnya to Russian control from 1994 through to 2004**. In part this **national feeling in the Chechnya region was sustained** by the presence of two mystical Islamic orders, the **Naqshbandiya and Quadiriya**. Both are reformist Muslim groups that taught people to resist oppression. The more radical Quadiriya began to dominate in the mountains, where the more 'pure' and nationalist clans lived.[95] Their presence in turn deepened the Russian distrust of Chechen resistance to central control. Since 2004, there has been **a turn away from a narrow quest for an independent Chechen state by some militants towards the creation of a wider north Caucasus Islamic state that might be the basis of a new caliphate**,[96] but this remains a remote possibility unless Russian power is seriously constrained.

In general, the **organisation of the Sufi brotherhoods** was highly effective in the spreading of religious concepts, as well as for revolution and armed resistance.[97] In part, this was due to the fact that religious training and ritual was often taught in underground schools attached to the key social unit in Central Asia, the **mahalla or neighbourhood** based around a group of extended families, a grouping which also provided a 'social security net'.[98] Mullahs, female religious teachers, and elders within the mahalla were the source of religious authority and custom.[99] On this basis, **indigenous Islam was impossible to eradicate**. Its place in the social ad political life of the future of Central Asia is thus a crucial issue.

3. Russia, Central Asia and Islam

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[92]WHEELER, G.E. "Islam in the USSR", in ARBERRY, A.J. (ed.) *Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Conflict*, Cambridge, CUP, 1969, Vol. 2, p149; BENNIGSTEN, A. & WIMBUSH, S. *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, p19.

[93]BENNIGSTEN, A. & WIMBUSH, S. *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, pp24-8.

[94]ZAKARIA, Rafic *The Struggle Within Islam: The Conflict Between Religion and Politics*, N.Y., Penguin, 1988, p158.

[95] BENNIGSEN, Marie "Chechnia: Political Developments and Strategic Implication for the North Caucasus", *Central Asian Survey, 18 no. 4*, December 1999, pp548-549.

[96] ABDULLAEV, Nabi & SARADZHYAN, Simon "The Trade-offs Between Security and Civil Liberties in Russia's War on Terror: The Regional Dimension", *Demokratizatsiya, 14 no. 3*, Summer 2006, pp361-404 [Access via Infotrac Database].

[97]ZAKARIA, Rafic *The Struggle Within Islam: The Conflict Between Religion and Politics*, N.Y., Penguin, 1988, pp157-8.

[98] HANKS, Reuel "Civil Society and Identity in Uzbekistan: The Emergent Role of Islam", in RUFFIN, M. Holt & WAUGH, Daniel C. (eds) *Civil Society in Central Asia*, Seattle, Centre for Civil Society International, 1999, pp158-179, pp166-167.

[99] Ibid., pp168-169.

This profile of **tension between Russian and Islamic interests** did not seriously change after the communist revolution of 1917. There was a brief period when the Marxists sought support from nationalist causes in the Caucuses and Central Asia, promising an end to Tsarist oppression. However, Marxist and nationalist trends soon came in conflict in Central Asia. Bolshevik policies of accommodation with nationalist aspirations were soon reversed by the Second Congress of the Third International in 1920, in favour of a policy of controlling these nationalities and destroying such 'reactionary and medieval elements'.[100] **Stalin moved to segment Turkestan** in ways which divided ethnic groups, brought different nationalities together in the same administrative framework, and generally tried to subordinate these interests to the needs of the Communist Party and the Soviet Union. The short-lived Turkestan SSR was broken up in January 1924 into five smaller republics: the Uzbek, Turkoman, Kazakh, Kyrgz and Tajik 'Soviet Socialist Republics',[101] which are the basis of the contemporary states of the region. Stalin's logic for this has been accurately summarised by Ahmed Rashid: -

> The new borders divided the people into separate ethnic groups which they themselves were reluctant to recognize as such. How were the Kazakh and Kyrgz nomads, who had lived together for centuries, to be differentiated now? There was confusion in cities like Tashkent where people had to choose, for the benefit of their identity cards, whether they were Tajik or Uzbek, when they themselves were frequently a mixture of both. The integral cultural and social unity of Central Asia and hopes of Pan-Islamic or Pan-Turkic movements were shattered, which is exactly what Stalin wanted. The loss of Turkestan deprived the people of a common homeland, a common language and a common destiny. Stalin's policies were to pit one republic and one ethnic group against the other.[102]

Regarding religion as the opiate of the masses, and Islam as no more than a relic of a reactionary feudal order, Soviet policy strongly supported an **anti-religion campaign** throughout the region, run by the 'Union of the Godless'.[103] It sought to purge education of religious tendencies and closed even Reformist Islamic Schools promoted by the Jadid movement, which from 1883 had sought to formulate a modernised Islamic culture able cope with the demands of modern technology.[104] It closed down as many mosques, tombs of saints and other religious figures, and teaching centres as possible. In spite of relaxation of this programme during World War II, the Communist Party from the 1950's renewed a vigorous campaign against all forms of Islamic culture, including wearing of the veil and headdress for women, traditional robes and beards for men, all Islamic festivals, and even traditional marriage and funeral ceremonies. This campaign caused considerable resentment, and was **largely ineffective since many of these religious ceremonies simply went underground**, with marriage festivals often being held at dawn to hide them from officials.[105] These attacks may have inadvertently made Sufism more popular.

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[100]ZAKARIA, Rafic *The Struggle Within Islam: The Conflict Between Religion and Politics*, N.Y., Penguin, 1988, p265.

[101]RASHID, Ahmed *The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism?*, Karachi, OUP, 1994, p32.

[102]RASHID, Ahmed *The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism?*, Karachi, OUP, 1994, p32. See also WHEELER, G.E. "Islam in the USSR", in ARBERRY, A.J. (ed.) *Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Conflict*, Cambridge, CUP, 1969, Vol. 2, p147.

[103]For Islamic values as opposed to the emergence of 'socialist man', see HUNTER, Shireen "Islam in Post-Independence Central Asia: Internal and External Dimensions", *Journal of Islamic Studies, 7 no. 2*, 1996, p290.

[104]RASHID, Ahmed *The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism?*, Karachi, OUP, 1994, p21.

[105]Ibid., p41.

Second, **Stalin aimed to crush all overt revolts**, while ensuring centralised control of affairs from Moscow through a mainly Russified Party apparatus. In fact many Muslims strongly resisted Soviet dominance, forming the 'Basmachestov' (Basmachis) revolt, which forced a moderation of the repression of Islam down till at least 1927.[106] Determined guerrilla groups led by mullahs and tribal chiefs continued their activities down till the 1930s.[107] The total level of violence and oppression of Central Asian nationalities should not be underestimated: in the 1916 revolt against Tsarist forces, the Civil War period of 1918-20, the Basmachi revolts in the 1920s, and during the forced collectivisation of peasants in 'communes', the total deaths would have been more than 7 million.[108] Political repression and purges also resulted in many Central Asians being sent to Siberia, while thousands of other nomads, especially Kazakhs and Kyrgyz moved with their entire herds into China.[109] The result by the end of the 1940s was impoverishment, the destruction of most of the local intelligentsia and much of the educated strata of society.[110] Combined with the mass movements of Crimean Tatars, the deportation of Muslims in Georgia, and the suppression of religious freedoms until the late 1980s, the Soviet policy could justly be called **'systematic persecution'**.[111]

In spite of such pressures, the hoped for level of **control through Russification was never achieved**, especially outside the major cities. Even with more constructive policies which were developed after the death of Stalin, the massive ecological, social and cultural damage done to the entire region is such that it is fair to speak of the Soviet impact on Central Asia as a **failed transformation**.[112] The attempt to establish the region as a mass producer of primary resources, including cotton, oil, gas, and hydro-electric power was only achieved at a massive investment and ecological cost, and the hope that the surplus population of the region would be absorbed into the labour starved trans-Ural and Siberian regions was never achieved. Furthermore, the sense of Muslims in Russia and Central Asia that they were part of a wider international community of Muslims[113] was never fully eradicated by Soviet efforts.

From World War II onwards, the USSR sought to control Islam within its borders through the creation of an **Official Islam** whereby a small number of teachers, mosques and publications would be allowed. These officially appointed muftis were controlled through the Council for Religious Affairs whose main task 'was to make use of religion to communize society and to cover up communist indoctrination in State-run schools and colleges'.[114] However, the total number of mosques in the Soviet Union was far **too small to cater for the needs of its Muslims**. Exact figures vary:

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[106]ZAKARIA, Rafic *The Struggle Within Islam: The Conflict Between Religion and Politics*, N.Y., Penguin, 1988, p265.

[107]RASHID, Ahmed *The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism?*, Karachi, OUP, 1994, p22.

[108]Ibid., p33.

[109]Ibid.

[110]Ibid., p34.

[111]Resulting in negative reports being placed before the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1981, see INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON MUSLIM MINORITIES *Muslims in the Soviet Union: A Survey*, London, 1981.

[112]FIERMAN, William "The Soviet 'Transformation' of Central Asia", in FIERMAN, William (ed.) *Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1991, pp11-35.

[113]BENNIGSTEN, A. & WIMBUSH, S. *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, p107.

one estimate suggests that in the 1980s there were some 400 active mosques,[115] still far too few for the population, while another suggests that there were '230 functioning mosques' in Central Asia by the mid-1980s.[116] The one functioning *madrasah* in Bukhara would have to try to effectively serve all of Central Asia from 1958 down into the 1980s.[117] Likewise, only limited numbers of people were permitted to undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca, an act incumbent on all Muslims at least once in a lifetime if they can afford to do it. It must also be remembered that there were **sizeable minorities of Muslims in Russia** itself, especially in the Volga, Crimea and Central Siberian regions. Islam 'claims the allegiance of 20 million citizens of Russia, primarily Tatars, Bashkirs, Chechens, the peoples of Daghestan, and others.'[118] Nor were these groups easily able to migrate, as were many Russian Jews in the 1980s. In 1989 Muslims represented at least 53 million out of a total Soviet population of 290 million, thereby forming the second largest group after the Russians themselves.[119] It was precisely **in such an environment that the Sufi brotherhoods were extremely effective.** Indeed, scholars such as Alexandre Bennigsten and Enders Wimbush have suggested that Islam was largely kept alive in Central Asia by the influence of Sufism in Central Asia.[120] This is likely given the covert **networking abilities of Sufi brotherhoods**, and the way that low-conflict strategies of resistance could be used by these groups which otherwise seemed compliant with the regime. Russian authorities had real fears that Sufi communities were essentially closed societies which largely lived outside of Russian and communists systems, while seeming to be part of them.[121]

The very limitations of this 'official Islam' helped create the success of **unofficial Islam**. The latter is 'a thriving network of religious communities which have no official recognition, numerous Sufi brotherhoods, and a growing number of unregistered, "self-appointed" or "itinerant" *mullahs*"'.[122] This interest came out completely into the open in June 1990 with the formal creation of the 'all-Union' **Islamic Renaissance Party** (IRP) which aimed to create a revival of Islam throughout the region, with three main structures: the first in Central Asia, plus a Moscow based centre to help Muslims within Russia, and another group based in the North Caucasus. The group soon set up branches in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, aimed at helping

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[114]ZAKARIA, Rafic *The Struggle Within Islam: The Conflict Between Religion and Politics*, N.Y., Penguin, 1988, p266. Since 1992 there has also been some attempt by regional leaders to coopt Islamic symbols, e.g. the building of mosques and Islamic centres, in order to structure more support for their regimes, HUNTER, Shireen "Islam in Post-Independence Central Asia: Internal and External Dimensions", *Journal of Islamic Studies, 7 no. 2*, 1996, p301.

[115]RASHID, Ahmed *The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism?*, Karachi, OUP, 1994, p32.

[116]RORLICH, Azade-Ayse "Islam and Atheism: Dynamic Tension in Soviet Central Asia", in FIERMAN, William (ed.) *Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1991, p188.

[117]RASHID, Ahmed *The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism?*, Karachi, OUP, 1994 p40; WHEELER, G.E. "Islam in the USSR", in ARBERRY, A.J. (ed.) *Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Conflict*, Cambridge, CUP, 1969, Vol. 2, pp155-6. A smaller centre of advanced studies had been operating in Tashkent since 1971, see BENNIGSTEN, A. & WIMBUSH, S. *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, p85.

[118] COHEN, Ariel "Russia, Islam, and the war on terrorism: an uneasy future", *Demokratizatsiya, 10 no. 4*, Fall 2002, pp556-567 [Access via Infotrac Database].

[119]TAHERI, Amir *Crescent in a Red Sky: The Future of Islam in the Soviet Union*, London, Hutchinson, 1989, p130.

[120]The definitive text remains BENNIGSTEN, A. & WIMBUSH, S. *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985.

[121]BENNIGSTEN, A. & WIMBUSH, S. *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, p108.

[122]Ibid., p188.

propagate Islam and be involved in 'cultural, sociopolitical and economic life'.[123] This organisation, however, had a **strongly internationalist orientation**, based on the view of a global community of believers (the *umma*), leading to early contact and cooperation between members in Tajikistan and the mujahidin in Afghanistan. For many Central Asians, the ability of Afghanistan to resist the Soviet invasion during the 1980s, showed it was possible for Islamic communities to resist Russian domination in the 1990s.[124]

Regional concerns peaked in the late 1990s with Taliban successes in Afghanistan prompting a **joint response from Central Asia and CIS leaders** that any attempt made by the Taliban to push northwards towards CIS borders would be strongly resisted. Considering the fact that several of these Central Asian states have strong Islamic populations, the trend indicates a divide between secular verses religious ideologies, not between Islamic and non-Islamic cultures. As we have seen (lectures 3-4) the states of the region have sought to repress political Islamic parties, especially in Uzbekistan. Likewise, no political Islamic parties were allowed to form in Chechnya while it remained under Russian control.[125]

In spite of the disastrous war in Tajikistan, and various ethnic clashes in Central Asia, the fears of militant Islam overthrowing governments has abated somewhat. Small numbers of active militants, operating in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have been able to exert some pressure on these governments, but have not been able to yet emerge as a truly mass movement. Militant Islamic groups such as the **Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)** have been active in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in 1999-2001, forcing a stronger security clamp down in the region (see lecture 6).[126] In the long run, the activities of groups such as the IMU were not allowed to destabilise positive relations, for example, between China and Kyrgyzstan. The strong US presence in Kyrgyzstan through 2002-2006 was partly invited due to these local threats. Likewise, there needs to be an improvement in the control of illegal drug flows,[127] smuggling (arms and people), and illicit financial flows that may support terrorist groups. However, **these problems do not hinge on mainstream Islam**. Indeed, Muslim's surveyed in Kyrgyzstan were not only opposed to the IMU, but were indeed among those willing to see military force used against them.[128] As a whole, **the collapse of the Taliban in Afghanistan can be seen as reducing some of the political pressures on Islam in other Central Asian states**, since it reduces the external security threat that mobilised a strong Russian, Western, and Central Asian reaction. However, **ongoing instability in Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and the Ferghana Valley** has suggested that Islam remains a card that might be played **if**

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[123] AKCALI, Pinar "Islam as a 'Common Bond' in Central Asia: Islam Renaissance Party and the Afghan Mujahidin", *Central Asian Survey, 17 no. 2*, p271.

[124] See Ibid. pp267-284

[125] ABDULLAEV, Nabi & SARADZHYAN, Simon "The Trade-offs Between Security and Civil Liberties in Russia's War on Terror: The Regional Dimension", *Demokratizatsiya, 14 no. 3*, Summer 2006, pp361-404 [Access via Infotrac Database].

[126] RASHID, Ahmed "The New Struggle in Central Asia: A Primer for the Baffled", *World Policy Journal, 17 no. 4*, Winter 2001, pp41-43.

[127] Ironically, the collapse of the Taliban may lead to an increase of drug flows out of Afghanistan in the short term. For details, see KOHN, David "Taliban Collapse May Help Heroin Trade", *Eurasia Insight*, 5 December 2001 [Internet Access via http://www.eurasianet.org/].

[128] FLETCHER, Joseph F. & SERGEYEV, Boris "Islam and Intolerance in Central Asia: The Case of Kyrgyzstan", *Europe Asia-Studies, 54 issue 2*, pp251-250 [Access via Infotrac Database].

states are either too fragile, or too authoritarian, to meet the needs of their population base in an inclusive fashion (see lectures 2-4).

In the long run Russian leaders, and the texture of Russian historiography, often assumes a **suspicion of Islam** which has bordered on paranoia. At the least, there has been a consistent overestimate of 'the temporal power of Islam as a unifying political force among the countries professing it'.[129] Sufi brotherhoods had been consistently represented by Russian authorities as either bandit criminals or at least radical breeding grounds of anti-Russian feeling, which must be eliminated, as in Chechnya.[130] In the international context, this has developed into serious concern that Islam could be a destabilising influence along Russia's southern border, as well as posing an internal threat. This view was partly realised by Western support for the Muslim rebels in Afghanistan via Pakistan, with strong CIA involvement and well as the ISI of Pakistan, as well as a distinctive Islamic texture to the conflict.[131] These concerns over 'Islamization' continued under the Yeltsin and Putin administrations, in particular with Russian desires to assure a secure extended border along the outer frontiers of the Commonwealth of Independent States, e.g. concern over the stability of Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, and the border with Afghanistan, which was a real problem for Russian and CIS control.[132] **President's Putin's strongly aggressive policy against Chechnya in part reflects this concern about Islamic politics destabilising parts of the Russian Federation**. Tough anti-terrorism laws, censorship in the media, and strong enforcement by security and police agencies, however, were **often not well targeted**, leading to increased militancy and polarisation, particularly among Muslim youth and unemployed young men, e.g. 80% unemployment in Chechnya in 2005.[133] In this context, Washington found a ready ally in Putin for its intervention in Afghanistan through 2001-2003, though **Russia has begun to chart a more critical and independent path on Eurasian issues through 2004-2007**. However, **through 2006-2007 there has been some slight softening of Russia's public statements on Islamic issues**: thus **Russia has joined the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) as an observer from 2005,** has sought to gain some extra prestige in the Middle East through some diplomatic support for Palestine and Iran, and President Putin from 2006 sought to present Russia as a multi-religious society with a long interaction between Orthodox and Islamic cultures. In this context Russian religious leaders sought to place the issue of social justice and religious inclusion on the G8 from 2006.[134]

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[129]WHEELER, G.E. "Islam in the USSR", in ARBERRY, A.J. (ed.) *Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions in Concord and Conflict*, Cambridge, CUP, 1969, Vol. 2,, p166.

[130]BENNIGSTEN, A. & WIMBUSH, S. *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, pp101-103, p111.

[131] For a small sample of a large literature, see MEHROTRA, O. N. "Madarsa in Pakistan: The Chief Promoter of Islamic Militancy and Terrorism", *Strategic Analysis", 23 no. 11*, February 2000, pp1879-1894; WEINBAUM, Marvin G. *Afghanistan and Pakistan: Resistance and Reconstruction*, Pak Book Corp, 1994; LOHBECK, Kurt *Holy War, Unholy Victory: Eyewitness to the CIA's Secret War in Afghanistan*, Washington, D.C., Regnery Gateway, 1993; ROY, Olivier *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, Cambridge, CUP, 1986; BONOSKY, Phillip *Washington's Secret War Against Afghanistan*, New York, International Publishers, 1985.

[132] See AKCALI, Pinar "Islam as a 'Common Bond' in Central Asia: Islam Renaissance Party and the Afghan Mujahidin", *Central Asian Survey, 17 no. 2*, pp267-284.

[133] ABDULLAEV, Nabi & SARADZHYAN, Simon "The Trade-offs Between Security and Civil Liberties in Russia's War on Terror: The Regional Dimension", *Demokratizatsiya, 14 no. 3*, Summer 2006, pp361-404 [Access via Infotrac Database].

[134] HETHERINGTON, Ruth "Martin Among Religious Leaders in Appeal to G8", *Irish Times*, 7 July 2006 [Access via Ebsco Database].

Here we can contrast the **very different path of two states within the Russian Federation: Tatarstan and Chechnya**. As we have seen, when Chechnya tried to assert its independence from Russia, largely on nationalist and then religious grounds, it was subject to massive military force that has stopped independence, but has now created a generalised pattern of unrest in the northern Caucasus region (Dunlop & Menon 2006; see lectures 2 & 4).[135] Tatarstan, though seeking some economic autonomy from Moscow, has managed (with some difficulty) **to balance a strong Orthodox presence within an otherwise Muslim population**. It has also sought dialogue among all religions there, including Judaism, Catholicism and Lutheranism.[136] Thus, the Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner had noted ongoing tensions in the republic and cases of police brutality, but also stated that he was impressed by 'initiatives by Tatarstan aimed at promoting harmony between ethnic groups. I think Tatarstan can fairly be titled a laboratory for cooperation between different nationalities'.[137] In part, this may go back to a **modernising trend that survived within Islam among the Tatars,** but was largely suppressed in Central Asia: -
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> The Tatars practice a special brand of Islam. 200 years ago, a reform of Islam began in Russia. This phenomenon came to be called "jadidism' (al jadid means a new method or renewal in Arabic). Tartar theologians proclaimed openness with regard to different cultures, first of all to Russian and European culture. It is openness that creates understanding between people. One of the merits of jadidism lies in the fact that it assigned primary importance to the acquisition of knowledge, education, sciences, religious toleration, it liberated workmen, gave the young people not only morals but also advanced knowledge to make them competitive. It is no coincidence that all progressive Tatar intellectuals, writers, outstanding political figures, and the vest business people had their training in jadid schools. Jadidism created a tolerant, moderate and enlightened brand of Islam. The Russian Islamic University in Kazan and the system of Muslim educational institutions of Tatarstan are committed to carrying on these remarkable traditions.[139]

This suggests a longer tradition of dialogue, but also **some bias towards 'official' Islam partly controlled by the Russian state**. In contrast, in Chechnya and Dagestan, **militant groups have sometimes targeted 'muftis and mullahs who practice traditional Islam'**, viewing them as collaborating with Russian interests.[140] In Dagestan in particular 'remains a battleground between competing clans that form the local ruling elite, organized crime gangs, religious groups representing different brands of Islam . . . and individuals who seek to avenge personal grievances caused by

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135 DUNLOP, John B & MENON, Rajan "Chaos in the North Caucasus and Russia's Future", *Survival, 48 no. 2*, Summer 2006, pp97-114; see lectures 2 and 4.

136 SHAIMIEV, Mintimer "Islamophonia Pays No Dividends", International Affairs: A Russian Journal of World Politics, Diplomacy & International Relations, 52 no. 4, 2006, p116 [Access via Ebsco Database].

137 Daily Review "Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner On Human Rights In Tatarstan", Tatar-Bashkir Daily Report, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 27 April 2005 [Access via http://www.rferl.org/reports/tb-daily-report/2005/04/0-270405.asp].

138 *Manama* "Putin Congratulates Russian Muslims", Bahrain News Agency, 10 January 2006 [Access via Ebsco Database]

139 SHAIMIEV, Mintimer "Islamophonia Pays No Dividends", International Affairs: A Russian Journal of World Politics, Diplomacy & International Relations, 52 no. 4, 2006, pp116 [Access via Ebsco Database].

140 ABDULLAEV, Nabi & SARADZHYAN, Simon "The Trade-offs Between Security and Civil Liberties in Russia's War on Terror: The Regional Dimension", *Demokratizatsiya, 14 no. 3*, Summer 2006, pp361-404 [Access via Infotrac Database].

the authorities'.[141] The local government **of Dagestan has sought to counter this by strict laws countering extremism**, combined with support for official Islam via the 'local, pro-government religious organization, the Spiritual Board of Dagestani Muslims'.[142]

In general, however, **ongoing prejudice against Muslims has continued in many parts of Russia,** with Muslims in other parts of the country having difficulty in getting permission to build mosques or to further Islamic eduction for their children.[143] On this basis, it has been argued that Muslims need to **take a stronger role in federal level politics**, showing a different face to the terrorist threat often repeated in media and official reports.[144] Chechens, in particular, have been subject to a growing phobia and prejudice within Russian consciousness, plus some attacks by skinhead nationalist groups, a problem in particular for the some approximately 100,000 Chechens living in Moscow, while more than 1.5 million Muslims living in the city of 12 million.[145] The trends to have mobilized a lobby group, Movement Against Illegal Immigration, to rally against 'Islamisation' of the city and of Russia as a whole, with fears that the **current 25 million Muslims out of 143 million might grow to become one fifth of the country by 2020**.[146]

4. Strategies of Social Resistance

Sufi Orders continued to exist in Central Asia throughout the period of the Soviet Union, including the period of Stalin, and the age of sophisticated espionage surveillance of the 1970s and 1980s. In spite of Soviet attempts to limit and control religion in the region there is no recorded case of the inner workings of a Sufi group having been deeply penetrated or exposed by security agents of the KGB.[147] Nonetheless, the early revolts of the 19th and early 20th centuries could not be sustained: popular support was strong but variable, while the industrial and military strength of the West and of the Russian empire in the long run were too dominant. It was for this very reason that the more invisible, **indirect form of resistance** offered by many of the Sufi brotherhoods was more effective.

We can sense the resilience of Islamic social life through some apparent paradoxes. Several **Sufi strategies** have been consciously used to help Islamic culture survive under conditions of oppression. Two of these are **'invisibility-in-the-crowd'**, sometimes formulated as *khalwat dar anjuman*, 'solitude within society', and *safar dar watan*, **'journey within the homeland'**, which reminds the Muslim that the

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141 Ibid.

142 Ibid.

143 SHAIMIEV, Mintimer "Islamophonia Pays No Dividends", International Affairs: A Russian Journal of World Politics, Diplomacy & International Relations, 52 no. 4, 2006, p117 [Access via Ebsco Database].

144 SHAIMIEV, Mintimer "Islamophonia Pays No Dividends", International Affairs: A Russian Journal of World Politics, Diplomacy & International Relations, 52 no. 4, 2006, p117 [Access via Ebsco Database].

145 ABDULLAEV, Nabi & SARADZHYAN, Simon "The Trade-offs Between Security and Civil Liberties in Russia's War on Terror: The Regional Dimension", *Demokratizatsiya, 14 no. 3*, Summer 2006, pp361-404 [Access via Infotrac Database].

146 MAINVILLE, Michael "Islam Thrives as Russia's Population Falls", *Toronto Star*, 3 December 2006 [Access via Ebsco Database].

147 BENNIGSTEN, A. & WIMBUSH, S. *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, p36, p74.

journey into the inner world is more important than any external condition.[148] These trends are particularly important in the Naqshbandiya order, where the adepts remain 'in the world' living apparently everyday roles, adapting to everyday modern society.[149] Taken together, these strategies structure a psychological and social 'endurance'.

A related tradition is that of being **willing to disguise or hide belief** in order to avoid persecution or extinction. In general, Sufis are ordered not to seek martyrdom, and to practise *taqiya*, that is, caution. Under extreme conditions, they may even deny membership in Islam, without this being regarded as sinful.[150] A Sufi leader's constant engagement in prayer and meditation means that 'he is permanently "mobilised" and engages in unending intensive spiritual and mental concentration'.[151] For the Sufi all earthly empires are ultimately impotent before universal prophecy and before God's will - sincere trust (*tawakkul*) is sufficient to convert fear[152] into hope. In fact inner corruption and sin is more to be feared than any external oppression. Within the expectation of future judgement, time is always on the side of the righteous and its professors. This has meant that in most contexts, Sufi groups and the communities they influence have been willing to **use non-violent forms of accommodation with secular state authorities**. Exceptions to this trend can be found when Sufi groups try to resist external imperial powers which disrupt regional cultures,[153] e.g. against the Russians in the Caucasus and the Turkmen steppes, and the Ferghana valley,[154] in the Sudan against the British in the 19th century, and in Chechnya during 1994-2005 (see lecture 4).

Attempts to repress these movements have brought the application of democratic principles into jeopardy, a problem also faced in Algeria in the early 1990s. Ironically, the **banning of political activity and electoral restrictions on Islamic groups** has helped maintain the stability of soft-authoritarian styles of government throughout the region (see lectures 3 & 4). Generalised fears of Islam have 'led the Western powers to compromise on their own democratic principles and concern for human rights and support governments which totally disregard them'.[155] An alternative approach is to allow **a moderate Islamic opposition** to develop and engage in elections and parliamentary procedures - in such an environment **more moderate forms of Islam** are likely to dominate. Yet states such as Uzbekistan (with laws from 1998) and Turkmenistan (via revised laws from 1996) moved to **ban religious associations**

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[148]OLESEN, Asta *Islam and Politics in Afghanistan*, London, Curzon Press, 1995, p50; BENNIGSTEN, A. & WIMBUSH, S. *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, p59.

[149]BENNIGSTEN, A. & WIMBUSH, S. *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, p8, p59.

[150]BENNIGSTEN, A. & WIMBUSH, S. *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, p36, p76, p52, p58, p67, pp76-77; FALARTI, Maziar M. "Sufism in Central Asia", Unpublished Research Paper, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Bond University, Queensland, Australia, 1996, p19.

[151]BENNIGSTEN, A. & WIMBUSH, S. *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, p77.

[152]ARBERRY, A.J. *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1950, p27.

[153]FALARTI, Maziar M. "Sufism in Central Asia", Unpublished Research Paper, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Bond University, Queensland, Australia, 1996, p19.

[154]BENNIGSTEN, A. & WIMBUSH, S. *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, p3.

[155]HUNTER, Shireen "Islam in Post-Independence Central Asia: Internal and External Dimensions", *Journal of Islamic Studies, 7 no. 2*, 1996, p302.

which have political activities, e.g. the IRP, the Adolat organisation and the more dispersed activities of the Hizb-i Tahrir al-Islami which favours 'a dual strategy of consciousness raising at the grass roots level to bring about revolution and/or tapping into the power structure to seek sympathetic individuals willing to stage a coup against current leaders'.[156] **These factors made Sufism suspect** to those who wished to insist on a narrow and orthodox form of Islam, as well as those who wished to reinforce the authoritarian power of the state through the control of religion.[157] Likewise, the new government of Afghanistan, even if democratic, will need to be sensitive to the social and cultural demands of Islam among its diverse groups. Reforms to the constitution through 2003-2004 recognised Islam as the religion of Afghanistan in vague terms, but does not 'address the role of Islamic law and its relationship to human rights protections', and issue of concern to human rights groups.[158] This may be a problem for the future role of the women (even if not overtly oppressed), and more modernising youth who may have much more contact with the West than before.

5. The Need for Sustainable Engagement

We can see that **Islam provides a multi-layered religious, cultural and political complex** with its own formulation of law and norms of international conduct. Certain elements within Islam, including Sufism in its main Central Asian forms, provide a basis for a humanitarian, individualistic approach to life which is at once resilient and open to a range of cultural influences. As such, **a modernising and reforming of Islam** could provide a stabilising influence for 'Greater Central Asia' and the Middle East. It can also contribute to a cosmopolitan but pluralist world culture. This idea has already begun to gain **some support to a limited degree among Western policy makers**: -

> The conflict has caught the attention of U.S. policymakers, who, while they can't endorse Sufism directly, are pushing to strengthen those associated with it. "The moderates don't have a chance unless America steps in," says Hedieh Mirahmadi, director of WORDE, a Washington, D.C.-based group that seeks to foster greater Muslim-western understanding. A practicing Sufi, Mirahmadi has advised U.S. officials on how best to proceed. "The goal is to preserve things that are the ideological antithesis of radical Islam," she says. Among the tactics: using U.S. aid to restore Sufi shrines overseas, to preserve and translate its classic medieval manuscripts, and to push governments to encourage a Sufi renaissance in their own countries. The idea has already caught on with King Mohammed VI of Morocco, who has quietly brought together local Sufi leaders there and offered millions of dollars in aid to use as a bulwark against radical fundamentalism.[159]

There is a danger that such strategies could backfire - if viewed as a superficial manipulation of religion by outsiders, then these efforts may **intensify internal**

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[156] HAGHAYEGHI, Mehrdad "Changing Dynamics of Islamic Politics in Central Asia", *Muslim World,* 92 *no 3/4*, Fall 2002, pp315-331 [Access via Ebsco Database].

[157] HUNTER, Shireen "Islam in Post-Independence Central Asia: Internal and External Dimensions", *Journal of Islamic Studies, 7 no. 2*, 1996, p293.

[158] "Afghan constitution enshrines Islam as state faith", *Church & State, 57 no. 2*, Feb 2004, p21 [Access via Infotrac Database]

[159] KAPLAN, David E. "The Enemy of My Enemy . . .", *U.S. News & World Report*, *138 no. 15*, April 25, 2005, p32 [Access via Infotrac Database].

conflicts within Islam, which drives the conflict of the last several years.[160] Moreover, such engagement should not even indirectly support terrorism, state authoritarianism, or groups that undermine the emergence of genuinely-grounded democracies. Moreover, a short term victory in the 'war on terror' does not guarantee long-term regional peace. Aside from a potential humanitarian disaster in terms of civilian casualties and refugees, there is a real risk of funds and resources then flowing on to militant cells elsewhere in the Middle East and Eurasia as a whole.[161] **Greater political freedom, economic development, and religious tolerance** may need to be developed consistently over the coming decade if extremist, militant groups on not to emerge again in force.

Islam is a major factor in the future of Eurasia, and needs to be carefully considered in the formation of **future trends** in the following areas: -

* The future nature of the **Turkey as modernising state** and its relations with Europe and Central Asia. A moderate 'Islamist' political party has taken on stronger roles in government (the Justice and Development Party, which won elections in November 2002), but the state has retained a secular (a 'laicism' approach which separates religious and political affairs, and tries to manage religious life, somewhat similar to French traditions) model for its republic.[162]
* Whether **Iran** can re-engage the wider international community, and whether it can develop an Islamic form of democracy and civil society, a trend which seems less likely with the victory of conservatives through early 2004-2007. At the same time there is considerable social and civic pressure for change which needs accommodation in the long term.
* The stability of **Xinjiang** region in China,[163] which has come onto the international agenda as an example of human and religious rights abuses.[164] Issues mainly concern humans rights and prospects of autonomy/independence for the Uighur population, with security clamp downs on such groups through 2001-2007, aligned with the global 'war on terror'.
* The long-term **legitimacy and stability of governments in Central Asia, especially in Uzbekistan.**
* The prospects of lasting peace, democratic balance and adequate economic development in **Tajikistan.**
* The future role of **Afghanistan as a positive or negative model** for Central Asia, as a state moving towards democracy but with a distinctive Islamic culture (see further lecture 10).

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160 AHMED, Nazeer *Islam in Global History: From the Death of Prophet Muhammed to the First World War*, 2 vols., Concord, American Institute of Islamic History and Culture, 2000; KINYON, Rebecca "Osama bin-Laden: Legitimate within Islamic Legal Thought?", *al Nakhlah*, Spring 2004, pp1-5 [Internet access via http://fletcher.tufts.edu/al_nakhlah/]

161 See the views expressed by a resigned analyst from the Office of National Assessments (ONA, Australia), Andrew Wilkie, "Analyst 'Vilified' for Quitting over Australia's Stand", *SMH,* 12 March 2003 [http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/03/12/1047144999476.html]. See further RASHID, Ahmed "Comparisons Between Iraq and Afghanistan Tell a Disheartening Story", *Eurasia Insight*, 10 March 2003 [Internet Access at http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav031003a.shtml]

162 EWING, Katherine Pratt "Legislating Religious Freedom: Muslim Challenges to the Relationship between 'Church' and 'State' in Germany and France", *Daedalus*, 129 no. 4, Fall 2000 [Access via Infotrac Database].

163 On the significance of this province, see RACZKA, Witt "Xinjiang and Its Central Asian Borderlands", *Central Asan Survey, 17no. 3*, September 1998, pp373-408 (Vertical File).

164 "On to Beijing", *Washington Post*, 23 February 1997, pCO7.

* The future **cohesion of the Russian Federation**, with its large Muslim minorities, particularly in the south and southeast, and in Chechnya. Ironically, the security crackdown of the last several years may have negative effects in the long term by giving greater credibility to militant groups: -

> These groups' efforts to gain recognition as freedom fighters succeeded in regions where the opposition had been driven underground. Radical groups in Chechnya and Dagestan have won support not only by criticizing the suppression of religion and other freedoms but also by point out specific violations, such as grossly falsified election results.[165]

* Reduction of **general tensions created by poor communication or stereotyping across religions**. This remains a major challenge in Russia, China, and across the Caucasus, but also is part of a wider dispute between modern secularism and religious traditionalism. Through 2006, the reaction to Danish cartoons of the Prophet Muhammed (and their later re-publication) have demonstrated how sensitive these issues are, with widespread protests in the Islamic world including Azerbaijan, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The UN, EU, and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference have called 'for restraint and dialogue', but to little effect.[166] In the case of Afghanistan, these issues have led to widespread protests and to at least 4 deaths, including crowd attacks on coalition military bases, while major protests also occurred Azerbaijan, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Pakistan and Indonesia through early 2006.[167]

In Central Asia the politics of the region are **unlikely to follow a straight path to modernism, complete secularisation and Westernisation**. On the other hand, leaders in the region have all aimed at maintaining modern secular states, though without complete democratisation. It remains to be seen whether Tajikistan and Afghanistan will sustain this transition. Individuals and communities, though keen to enjoy their own culture and religion, have also expressed a strong desire for improved economic and environmental conditions. In such a situation, it is not surprising that many Central Asians **reach out for Islamic, Persian or Turkic influences as part of their identity.** They have also **eagerly sought Western and East Asian diplomatic involvement, investment, education, and technical aid**. The trends at present have not solidified: it seems likely that the events of the next decade will place a strong stamp on the future of 'Greater Central Asia' and wider Eurasia. Coercion or suppression of religious belief is not in the long-term a sustainable way to create democratic governments.[168] Sufism, as a generally indigenous, eclectic and tolerant form of Islam[169] might aid this stability since it tends to be more open and tolerant of diverse cultural influences. Bearing in mind the dire social repression experienced in Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan, dialogue with political Islam may need to be

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165 ABDULLAEV, Nabi & SARADZHYAN, Simon "The Trade-offs Between Security and Civil Liberties in Russia's War on Terror: The Regional Dimension", *Demokratizatsiya, 14 no. 3*, Summer 2006, pp361-404 [Access via Infotrac Database].

166 ABC "Four Killed in Afghan Cartoon Protests", *ABC News Online*, 8 February 2006 [Internet Access via www.abc.net.au]

167 MURADOVA, Mina & ABBASOV, Rufat "Azerbaijan: Protesting for the Prophet, Not for Political Change", *Eurasianet*, 17 February 2006 [Internet Access via http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/civilsociety/articles/eav021706.shtml].

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considered. Likewise, the difficult progress of these states will be test cases for the **dialogue among reforming Islam, modernisation and democratic pluralism**. Growing Islamic minorities globally (perhaps rising from 20-30% of global population by 2025), in Europe, and within Russia, mean that this issue cannot be avoided.[170] We can take these themes further when we look at Turkey and Afghanistan over the next two weeks.

6. Bibliography and Further Resources

Resources

A range of material on Sufism and Sufi orders is collected at http://www.arches.uga.edu/~godlas/Sufism.html/sufism/sufism/ibnarab.html

The *Central Eurasia Studies Review* provides a range of useful articles and reviews (in html and pdf format) on Eurasia and Central Asia on their website at http://cess.fas.harvard.edu/CESR.html

A general study of *al-Ghazali* will be found at http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/gz/articles/hmp-4-30.htm#mp

The writing and life of *Mevlana Jalal-e-Din Mevlavi Rumi* are explored at http://www.rumionfire.com/

Surveys of Russian public attitudes, including to Chechnya, can be found at the *Levada Center* Homepage at http://www.russiavotes.org/

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