

Tajikistan in the 21st Century: Society, Politics and Economy
Prof. K. Warikoo and Prof. Kh. Umarov (Editors)

ISBN 978-81-8274-821-7

First Published in 2015

Copyright © Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without first obtaining written permission of the copyright owner.

The views expressed in this book are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation, Delhi.

Published by
PENTAGON PRESS
206, Peacock Lane, Shahpur Jat
New Delhi-110049
Phones: 011-64706243, 26491568
Telefax: 011-26490600
email: rajan@pentagonpress.in
website: www.pentagonpress.in

Branch:
Prime Arcade
Office #11
1154 Saifce Street
Opp. M.G.Road, Camp
Pune-411001
Email: pentagonpresspune@gmail.com
Printed at Avantika Printers Private Limited.

CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	vii
<i>Contributors</i>	ix
<i>List of Figures</i>	xi
1. Water and Energy Resources of Tajikistan <i>Kholnazar Muhabbatov</i>	1
2. Tajikistan and Historical Problem of the National-Territorial Delimitation <i>Hamzakhon Kamolov</i>	10
3. On the Threshold of Epochs: An Analysis of Texts of Soviet and Post-Soviet Fiction in Tajikistan <i>Rashmi Doraiswamy</i>	17
4. Language, Culture and Identity in Tajikistan <i>Muzaffar Olimov</i>	29
5. Religious Revivalism in Tajikistan: Society, Religion and Politics <i>Muzaffar Olimov and Saodat Olimova</i>	41
6. Civil War in Tajikistan, 1992-1997 <i>Makhsud Arifov</i>	56
7. Afghanistan Factor in Tajikistan Crisis, 1991-1997 <i>K. Warikoo</i>	66
8. Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation in Tajikistan <i>Mansi Mehrotra</i>	85
9. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and its Impact on Tajikistan <i>Michael Fredholm</i>	105
10. Political Parties of Tajikistan <i>Abduali Toirov and Masudjon Sobirov</i>	113

9

THE ISLAMIC MOVEMENT OF UZBEKISTAN AND ITS IMPACT ON TAJIKISTAN

Michael Fredholm

Background

During the 1992-1997 civil war in Tajikistan, foreign volunteers from primarily Uzbekistan played a prominent role in the fighting on the side of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), of which the *Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan* (IRPT) formed an important part.¹

Most prominent among the Uzbek volunteers was the warlike Juma Hojiyev, an ethnic Uzbek born in 1967 in the city of Namangan, after which he named himself Namangani. Another was Tohir Yo'ldosh (also known in Arabic as Muhammad Tahir Farooq), born in the same year and Namangani's compatriot and close associate. An early member of the Uzbekistani branch of the All-Union Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), founded in Astrakhan in June 1990, Yo'ldosh had grown disillusioned with this party's refusal to demand an Islamic state. Together with other likeminded young Uzbeks such as Namangani, Yo'ldosh had in Uzbekistan soon formed a movement which he called *Islom Adolati* ("Islamic Justice"). He had promised his supporters to introduce Islamic law in first Namangan, then the rest of Uzbekistan through the means of an Islamic revolution.

Yo'ldosh may have been the leader of the young Uzbeks, but it was the combat qualities of Namangani which were most useful in Tajikistan at the time of the civil war. When Namangani in 1992 arrived in Qurghonteppa, Tajikistan, he brought with him some thirty young Uzbeks and several Arabs, who had served as emissaries to *Islom Adolati* from Saudi Islamic charities. These men formed the core of Namangani's force, which within months attracted additional recruits from Uzbekistan, soon totalling some two hundred, as well as additional Arabs out of Afghanistan. Namangani then volunteered the services of his men and

himself, as a subordinate commander, to the IRPT. The IRPT in its turn attached several Tajiks to Namangani's group and moved the volunteers to a camp in the village of Sangvor near Tavildara, in what presently is called the Rasht valley, which became Namangani's base after 1993. Namangani was a useful field commander to the UTO. He also made several valuable friends within the IRPT, most importantly, Mirzo Ziyoyev, the IRPT's army chief of staff from 1996 and thereby Namangani's direct superior. Ziyoyev after the civil war became minister of emergency situations in the new coalition government.

After the Tajik civil war ended in 1997, Namangani at first refused to accept the end of the *jihad* against the government. Ziyoyev finally persuaded him to cease fighting, and Namangani settled his men at his camp in the Tavildara valley. As for himself, he acquired a residence in Hoit, a small village north of Gharm in what was then the Karategin valley, the historic name of the Rasht valley. He soon appeared to have become heavily involved in the transportation of heroin from Afghanistan to Tajikistan and onwards to Russia and Europe, at times travelling to Afghanistan himself. Namangani learnt some Tajik and settled down with a wife or two. He also formed a substantial personal military force, mostly Uzbeks but also Arabs, Tajiks, and Chechens. Many of his men were accompanied by their families.

In comparison, Yo'ldosh aimed for a political career. When the civil war had moved against the IRPT, he had joined the other key IRPT leaders in exile in Afghanistan. He also travelled to Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, and later to Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, and perhaps the Caucasus as well, to make contacts with other radical groups and to request funding from the intelligence services in these countries. Pakistan's Inter-services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) offered continuous funding and a sanctuary in Peshawar, where Yo'ldosh remained based from 1995 to 1998. Yo'ldosh also received funds from various Islamic charities and, according to Russian and Uzbekistani officials, the intelligence services of Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey.

In the summer of 1998, Yo'ldosh and Namangani met in Taliban-held Kabul, Afghanistan, to formally establish a new group, to be called the *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan* (IMU). Under this name, the Uzbek volunteer jihadists continued fighting and from their bases in Rasht formed a destabilizing factor in Tajikistan's relationship with neighbouring countries. The IMU in time migrated into first Afghanistan, then – following the Taliban government's defeat and the death of Namangani – into Pakistan.

However, the IMU also maintained its base of sympathizers and supporters in Tajikistan. In recent years, some of them have made their continued presence felt. Jihadist fighters of various origins have for several years passed through, or infiltrated, Tajikistan. Some have been on their way from Afghanistan to other countries, notably Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, while others, including a number from the North Caucasus, appear to have found safe havens in Tajikistan.

Events in Rasht

Beginning in 2009, a number of events took place in the Rasht valley, the old sanctuary of the IMU. What exactly happened to some extent remains murky to this day. In May 2009, a former UTO commander who had rejected the 1997 peace agreement named Mullo Abdullo Rahimov reportedly returned to Tajikistan with some hundred fighters from Afghanistan. Recruiting more men in Rasht, Mullo Abdullo reportedly attacked a government installation in Tavildara. He may possibly have been in touch with his old associate, Mirzo Ziyoyev. The latter, who had protected the IMU on several occasions before he left government in 2006, was killed in a clash in Rasht on 11 July 2009. After his death, the Tajikistani government accused him and his supporters of narcotics trafficking and the provision of support to the IMU. Two of his sons were sentenced to long prison terms.² Meanwhile, combat operations continued in the Rasht valley. A number of militants were killed, and some 49 were captured. Apparently, the militants led by Mullo Abdullo included not only Tajiks but also Uzbeks, Afghans, and young Russian citizens from reportedly Dagestan, Chechnya, and St. Petersburg, which contains a sizeable Muslim population.³

At around this time, in October 2009, IMU chief Tohir Yo'ldosh was killed in a Predator drone strike in Pakistan. There is no reason to connect this strike to the events in Rasht, since the IMU was extensively involved in operations in Afghanistan. The IMU kept silent for more than half a year on the matter of his death. On 17 August 2010, the IMU finally confirmed the death of its first leader, and announced that he had been replaced as *Amir* by one Usmon Odil (Usman Adil).⁴ Only then, we may assume, had the new *Amir* consolidated his position within the IMU and was ready to commence new operations.

On 20 August 2010, 46 of those captured in the Rasht valley in the previous year were given sentences ranging from ten years to life in prison. However, already on 22 August, 25 prisoners broke out of prison. Among them were five Russian citizens from Dagestan, four Afghans, and two Uzbeks. Most had belonged to Mullo Abdullo's unit. Another was Ibrohim Nasriddinov, who reportedly had been extradited from Guantanamo in 2007 and sentenced to 23 years. Remarkably, the prison guards had allowed him to move around more or less freely. Yet more remarkably, the prisoners escaped from a high security ward under the control of the State Committee of National Security of the Republic of Tajikistan, located within a larger Ministry of Justice prison placed only 150 metres from the President's official residence. They apparently took several hours to leave the area, without being challenged by the security forces. When they finally left, they were dressed in regulation camouflage uniforms.⁵ The whole incident reeked of assistance from supporters within the security forces.

Then, on 3 September, Tajikistan's first known suicide bomber attacked a police station in Khujand. A new organisation named *Jamaat Ansorullo* ("Society

of Helpers of God,⁹ that is, of those wishing to help the armed *jehad* later claimed responsibility, but the Tajikistani security service asserted that the attack had been organised by the IMU, two members of which were then killed in October. Both came from Isfara east of Khujand, in Sughd Province. One of the two was the alleged organiser of the attack; the other the widow of an IMU leader killed already in 2006.⁶ The conclusion would then seem to be that the new IMU leader had begun to assert his influence in Central Asia, which he perhaps regarded as having been neglected under the leadership of Yo'ldosh.

But more was to follow. On 19 September, an 80-man-strong military convoy in Rasht was ambushed in the Kamarob Gorge, north of Gcharm. At least 28 government troops were killed by the militants. Suspicions soon fell on Mullo Abdullo. Meanwhile, an IMU spokesman named Abdulfatoh Ahmadi telephoned Dushanbe's Radio Ozodi to claim responsibility.⁷

Further fighting followed, as security forces began to hunt for the militants. On 15 April 2011, Mullo Abdullo and sixteen of his men were killed in the village of Samsolik, in Nurobod district, some 50 km south-west of Gcharm. The Tajikistani security service then identified him as Al-Qaida's commander in Tajikistan.⁸ But there was more. Samsolik was the stronghold of a preacher named Zaynalbiddin Mannonov, arrested in September 2010 and sentenced in January 2011 to five years for inciting religious hatred and extremist activities. In addition, three of the fighters killed with Mullo Abdullo carried the surname Mannonov and almost all came from the same village, described as being located not far from Samsolik.⁹ It would thus seem likely that whatever was going on, there had been some kind of link between Mullo Abdullo, the IMU, and the religious community at Samsolik. Was Samsolik an IMU stronghold?

IMU Membership

It soon became clear that the IMU had retained a significant presence in certain parts of Tajikistan. In November 2011, the IMU released a list of 87 members who had been killed over the past year. Some of the members were stated to have participated in the fighting in Rasht. Most, however, had died in the IMU's main theatre of operations, that is, Afghanistan. Among the IMU members listed as killed, the majority (64 individuals) came from Afghanistan – but twenty came from Central Asia. Of these twenty, ten were from Tajikistan, as compared to six from Kyrgyzstan and only four from Uzbekistan. The final three included one each from Germany, Tatarstan in the Russian Federation, and Waziristan in Pakistan.¹⁰ That volunteers came from far away was not a new development; Germans, Turks, and others had already previously joined the IMU.¹¹

In January 2012, no less than 34 alleged local members of the IMU of the Isfara district were put on trial in Tajikistan.¹² This was not an isolated event. Smaller numbers of alleged IMU members had already been arrested from time

to time. In February 2012, an alleged IMU member was extradited from Pakistan to Tajikistan. He came from the village of Qizil Nishon in Khatlon Province's Qubodiyon district, on the border with Afghanistan. Several other IMU members too reportedly hailed from this particular village.¹³

Since an independent researcher does not have access to Tajikistani police reports, the best information on those individuals in Tajikistan who joined the IMU paradoxically derives from the IMU's own press releases. Such information is published for reasons of propaganda, so not all information can be taken at face value. Yet, the IMU press releases, and in particular the list of killed IMU members, do indicate a few common patterns with regard to the group's Tajikistani recruits. This can be inferred from the following brief descriptions of the IMU members killed, using the information from and the numbering system adopted in the November 2011 IMU press release.

#2. Abbas Musanno, reportedly from Tojikobod, Rasht valley. Also called Maulavi Mansur. Died in combat with "enemies of the religion" in the Tojikobod district in 1432 a. H. (2011). Restored, in IMU parlance, the honour of Islam in the area of Tajikistan where the late IMU war leader Juma Namangani once had waged *jihad*. Recruited hundreds of new men, many of whom became dedicated jihadists.

#62. Abdul Qoyyum, reportedly from Kulob. Went to Afghanistan to organise loyal recruits. Died there.

#63. Aliy. A good *madrasah* student who reportedly devoted all his life to pilgrimages and *jehad*.

#64. Umar, reportedly from Yazghilom. Devoted *madrasah* student and jihadist since childhood. Was sent to Afghanistan, where he gave up his life for the good cause.

#65. Abdul Majid. A young *mujahid* ("holy warrior" engaged in armed *jehad*) who in a short time and with seldom seen courage devoted himself to a religious life.

#68. Hikmatulloh, reportedly from Qurghonteppa. Known as Qozi. He took part in social life, even though he was of a most serious mind. Always willing to serve others, doing whatever was necessary. Close to the Uzbeks within the IMU, despite being a Tajik.

#69. Husain, reportedly from Qurghonteppa. A *madrasah* student who fought in Pakistan. Imprisoned for nearly two years. He abandoned his parents for God and the holy mission. Unmarried. When his father came to Pakistan to persuade him to return home, he refused.

#72. Mujoihiddin, reportedly from Yazghilom. *Madrasah* student and Koran reciter. Very taciturn. When his mother came to Pakistan to persuade him to go back to Tajikistan to get married, he refused to follow her. Instead he remained with the IMU and married an Uzbek girl.

#77. Ustroz Ahmad Abdulloh, reportedly from Tojikobod, Rasht valley. Received the highest possible grade from a *madrasah*. Formerly known as Mazhariddin; he changed his name upon joining the IMU. Brave. Served with Abbos Musanno, his compatriot from Tojikobod. Was imprisoned in Tajikistan, where he died.

#78. Dodar, reportedly from Tojikobod, Rasht valley. Died as a *mujahid*, as had his son before him (in 2007).

The killed IMU members came from different regions in Tajikistan. Four places were mentioned: Tojikobod (in Rasht; four individuals including a father and son), Kulob (one individual), Yazghilom (in western Gorno Badakhshan; two individuals), and Qurghonteppa (two individuals). The number of IMU members from Rasht was significant and indicated that this was a particular stronghold of the group in Tajikistan – which indeed was noted by the group itself, this being the region where the late IMU war leader Namangani once waged *jihad*.

Yet another IMU stronghold may have been the village of Qizil Nishon in Khatlon's Qubodiyon district, as mentioned by prosecutors in the case of the IMU member extradited from Pakistan.

Of the ten killed IMU members, no less than five were specifically identified as *madrasah* students. A sixth was identified as a *matulavi*, a religious teacher. As for the others, nothing is mentioned about their education. It does seem likely, based on the descriptions of their character traits (of a most serious mind, devoted to a religious life, and so on), that others too may have come from *madrasah* backgrounds.

The communication lines between IMU supporters in Tajikistan and the group's bases in Pakistan were never cut. New recruits clearly did not find it overly difficult to travel to the IMU bases in Pakistan. Nor, if the IMU biographies can be trusted, did their parents face particular trouble in going there, in vain attempts to persuade their offspring to return home. Unlike in Pakistan, where there has often been open conflict between IMU fighters and locals, the IMU appears to be embedded in parts of Tajikistan's society.

Judging from the appearance of these men (their photographs were published on the IMU web site), the young Tajik IMU recruits formed a new generation of jihadists. They were typically men in their twenties, possibly even teens, who were most unlikely to have participated in the civil war of Tajikistan in 1992-1997. Many would indeed not even have had personal memories of the civil war.

This leads to two conclusions. First, the IMU has retained and no doubt even extended its networks in Tajikistan. The group remains a magnet for fresh jihadist recruits from Tajikistan, in the same way that the group also attracts recruits from countries as different as Germany and the Russian Federation.

Second, many members of the young generation of Tajiks have already forgotten the horrors of the civil war. The gradually diminishing importance of the IRPT is accordingly not a sign that a new radical generation of Tajiks will refrain from challenging the Tajik government militarily, thus possibly beginning a new civil war.

On the other hand, in Waziristan the IMU learnt, by observing, the prudence of negotiating cease-fires with the security forces. The group may feel that there is no need to challenge the government, as long as security forces do not interfere with IMU strongholds in places such as the Rasht and Isfara valleys and possibly Khatlon Province. The IMU acted as a foreign legion in the civil wars of Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The group thus appears more interested in strongholds, possibly financed in part through involvement in the narcotics trade, than in assuming control of any national government.

The Future of Armed *Jihad* in Tajikistan

Due to the abiding memories and legacy of the 1992-1997 civil war, historiography in Tajikistan remains a complex process. The interpretation of events in recent history is seldom unambiguous.¹⁴ It is often difficult to interpret the information available on ongoing activities within criminal and terrorist groups, and to deduce their importance, if any, to the security and future political developments in Tajikistan is yet harder.

There are other extremist groups in Tajikistan beside the IMU, but according to the convictions in court, most detained and convicted terrorists have indeed belonged to the IMU. In 2011, Tajikistan detained some two hundred members of extremist and terrorist organisations. A total of 168 were convicted. Among those detained, 86 were members of the IMU, of whom 53 were sentenced to long prison terms for participating in violence in Rasht in 2010 and early 2011.¹⁵

Which are the implications of the IMU's remaining support base in Tajikistan? Is the IMU developing, or rather re-developing, safe havens in Tajikistan in case the group will have to flee Pakistan? This remains a distinct possibility, and the renewed IMU interest in Rasht valley would seem to indicate this. The links between the IMU in Tajikistan and other jihadist groups elsewhere are undisputed. Members of the group travel in and out of Pakistan and Afghanistan. As has been shown, the IMU's continued ability to attract young recruits from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan is notable, as is the group's ability to gain recruits from Germany and the Russian Federation. Such recruitment campaigns would be impossible without networks of sympathizers and supporters among other extremist and terrorist groups, elsewhere. Incidentally, the group's effort to recruit Afghans have paid off as well, with the IMU now possessing a convincing Afghan face for its operations in Afghanistan. As for the existence of a recruit from

Waziristan, this was hardly surprising, since the IMU leadership remained based there.

The IMU leader Usmon Odil was killed at some point in the winter of 2011-2012.¹⁶ His deputy, Usmon Ghoziy (Ghazi), succeeded him as IMU head.¹⁷ The IMU remains a potent force for violence in Afghanistan and Central Asia, and possibly beyond. With the planned withdrawal of international security forces from Afghanistan in 2014, the issue of the IMU and its strongholds in Tajikistan may prove vital to the maintenance of security both there and in the rest of Central Asia.

REFERENCES

1. On the early history of the IMU and the civil war in Tajikistan, see Michael Fredholm, *Islamic Extremism as a Political Force in Central Asia: A Comparative Study of Central Asian Extremist Movements*. Stockholm: Stockholm University, Asian Cultures and Modernity 12, 2006; Michael Fredholm, "From the Fergana Valley to Waziristan and Beyond," *Islam, Islamism and Politics in Eurasia Report* 22. Monterey: Monterey Institute for International Studies, 2010; Michael Fredholm, "The Role of Uzbek Islamic Extremists in the Civil Wars of Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan." In Anita Sengupta; Suchandana Chatterjee; and Sumita Bhattacharya (eds), *Eurasia Twenty Years After*. Delhi: Shipra, 2012. pp.252-74. RFE/RL, 7 July 2010.
2. International Crisis Group (ICG), *Tajikistan: The Changing Insurgent Threats*. Bishkek/Brussels, ICG Asia Report 205, 24 May 2011. pp.3-5.
3. IMU web site, www.furqon.com, 17 August 2010.
4. ICG, *Tajikistan: The Changing Insurgent Threats*, 5-6; *Jamestown Terrorism Monitor* 4 October 2010, citing *Avesta* (Dushanbe), 25 August 2010.
5. Fergana Information Agency (Moscow), 22 October 2010 (www.ferghananews.com).
6. Lenta.ru, 23 September 2010 (<http://lenta.ru>). Radio Ozodi maintains several web sites, www.ozodi.tj and www.ozodi.org, and is part of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (www.rferl.org).
7. Radio Ozodi, 20 April 2011 (www.ozodi.tj).
8. ICG, *Tajikistan: The Changing Insurgent Threats*, 9.
9. IMU web site, www.furqon.com.
10. Fredholm, "From the Fergana Valley to Waziristan and Beyond."
11. Fergana Information Agency (Moscow), 30 January 2012 (www.ferghananews.com).
12. Universal Newswires, 14 January 2012 (www.universalsnewswires.com).
13. Tim Epkenhans, "Zwischen Mythos und Mienenfeld: Historiographie in Tadschikistan," *Osteuropa* 62: 3 (2012), 137-50.
14. Statement by Abdulkadir Muhamadyev, Tajikistan's first deputy prosecutor general, *RIA Novosti*, 10 January 2012.
15. *Vesti.uz*, 30 January 2012 (<http://vesti.uz>).
16. IMU web site, www.furqon.com, 3 August 2012. It remains unclear when Usmon Odil died. He appeared in a video released by the IMU on 30 May 2012 but it seems likely that this video was produced much earlier since it was devoted to Abbos Mansur, a Kyrgyz who became chief military commander of the IMU, and Abdul Aziz, an Uzbek who served the IMU as cameraman. Both were dead by late 2011.