CHAPTER – III

ROLE OF RADICAL ISLAMIC MOVEMENTS

Religion can be described as “….a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles with the ultimate problems of human life – suffering, injustice and meaninglessness” (Yinger, 1997: 256). Belief in God or Allah may not be spiritual relations with the creator but is looked as problem solver. In Islam, Quran and Allah are not only projected as problem solver but as Guide to right Path. Allah is considered as source of values-justice (‘adl), benevolence (Ishan), compassion (rahman) and wisdom (hikmah) for his followers (Engineer, 2004: 93). Central Asian people realized these features of Islam and made it vital part of their lives. Uzbekistan is the site of one of the world’s oldest civilized regions. The ancient Persian province of Sogdiana was conquered in the 4th century BC by Alexander the great. After that, Turkic nomads entered the area in the 6th century AD. When Arabs entered the region in the 8th century, they brought gift of new faith named Islam for the people of this region (Syed, 2007: 31). In 751 AD, Arab army defeated a Chinese army at Talas, in present day Kyrgyzstan decisively ending Chinese ambitions and established Islam in Central Asia (Rashid, 2002: 21). Arabs could not survive for more than a century but the Islamic culture continued to flourish after the Arabs left the region. Mongols overran the region in 13th century but the Mongol rulers were quickly Turkicized by the locals. The Timurid dynasty, another Turkic empire led by Tamer lane, ruled Central Asia in 14th century (Onaran, 1994: 21).

The 15th century the Uzbek Empire was founded and controlled most of the region for two centuries. Islam was popularized among the Mongols by Uzbek Khan in the northern region of Asia. Uzbek Khan was one of the descendent of Juji, the elder son of famous Chingiz Khan (Mehta, 1998: 16). Thus, the Uzbeks are the descendents of famous Chingiz Khan, great conqueror of the sixteenth century (Haider, 2002: 55).

During the 17th and 18th centuries no empire ruled the region. Instead, there were smaller states controlling parts of Central Asia. Central Asia’s isolation from the rest of
the Muslim world started at this time due to the consolidation of Shi‘ism in Iran. The Shi‘i Iran lay between Sunni Central Asia and Sunni Ottoman Turks as well as other Sunni Muslims (Onaron, 1994: 21). And, one more very important man-made development of 16th century lessened the growth of Central Asian Islam. It was the discovery of sea route around the Cape of Good Hope, which reduced Central Asia’s land-based contacts with the Muslim world along with the decline of Silk Route (Bal, 2004: 90).

Russians also continued their gradual expeditions to rule this Central Asian region. In 1842, the frontier reached the northern coasts of the Aral Sea and in 1847 had been pushed forward to command the lower reaches of the Syr Darya. In 1873, the capture of Khiva under the command of famous Russian Governor General Kaufmann was scarcely opposed by the people of the oasis (Caroe, 1953: 72). Then, until 1917 the Tsars of Russia ruled the region according to their wicked policies. But, in the beginning of March 1917, the revolution initiated, which dethroned the dictatorial rule of Tsars. The main actors of this Bolshevik revolution were the poor workers and labourers of factories and industries and the accepted leader of Bolsheviks was Valdimir Lenin (Rooprekha, 1975: 11). Thus, Central Asia came under the Soviet rule in 1917 and finally, freed from the Soviets in December 1991. But, during the period of Tsars and the Soviet rule, Islam was suppressed and policies were framed with a view to undermine the hold of religion on people’s mind. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there has been an Islamic resurgence in Uzbekistan and political Islam began to assume as an important factor in Uzbek social and cultured life (Dwivedi, 2005: 125).

Uzbekistan is primary a Muslim nation because Muslims account for about 88 percent of the population. Ethnic Uzbeks are primarily adherents of the Hanafi sect of Sunni Islam, but the Wahhabi sect has flourished as well in recent years (Syed, 2007: 116). Islam in Central Asia does not have a monolithic structure, various others trends, like Sufism or even pre-Islamic faiths like Shamanism, and other religious, particularly Buddhism, exerted influence and wielded power” (Sengupta, 2003: 17). There are two popular branches of Sufism in the region, the Yasaviyya and the Nagsh bandiyya and their adherents are marked as obscurantist cults (Bhattacharya, 2008: 126). Apart from
major split between the Sunnis and the Shias, there were also different doctrinal tendencies like traditionalism, fundamentalist, and the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, modernist. There is also the inter play in the region between dogmatic religion, Sufism and popular piety, “official” Islam, and “popular” Islam. All of these streams share one faith, but the social structures in which their common Islamic sentiment developed differed, as did their political experiences (Sengupta, 2003: 17). There are many Islams in the region of Central Asia today. The syncratic culture of the region would also mean that religion would have a syncratic form and would become more of a way of life than a system of well integrated structures (Sengupta, 1999: 3652).

Islam of Central Asia is a *sui generis*. It is somewhat different and liberal from Islam existing in countries like Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Some Central Asian Muslims even embraced communism and Muslim Communist Party was also established (Rashid, 2002: 35). According to Barun De, in Uzbekistan, Islam is a badge of social ethnicity not just an undifferentiated religion to be read off from the Koran, as the Taliban would like to be. What was being reasserted in Uzbekistan was social practice, not theological identity, which the Taliban were reasserting in Afghanistan (De, 2005:103). Among the Muslims of this region, the Jadids brought new ideas in the beginning of 20th century. They openly objected the ill traditions existing in Islam, which protected its followers to do study of arithmetic, geography and especially natural sciences etc. They said Bukharan clergy was misreading Quran and Hadith. An eloquent young Jadid, Mahmud Khoja Behbudiy vigorously and persistently attacked the personal and social abuses of Islam in his writings like “The Dispute” and the journal “Ayina” (Allworth, 1990: 142).

However some scholars believe that Jadids were anti-Russian and had sympathy for the revolt. But, not much evidence is provided to support this view point. The Jadid movement was exclusively urban. It had little contact with the nomads, who played the leading role in the revolt of 1916. The revolt therefore took place in surroundings with which the Jadids were unfamiliar. Given this fact, it seems quite unlikely that the Jadids should have played any important part in the events of revolt (Haugen, 2003: 57). Rather, the Tatar reformers played a crucial role in the development of the Central Asian reform
movement and ideology. Ismail Gasprinsky was the main actor in this reform movement. He was a journalist with practical experience from Paris and Istanbul. His time period was 1851 to 1914; he established the famous journal *Terjuman*, which played vital role in reform programme. A key element in this programme was education, and the goal was to replace traditional religious education with modern, secular education. Indeed the reform movement took its name from the sphere of education. *Usul-i-jadid* (“the new method” in the teaching of Arabic language) signified a break with tradition (ibid. 52). The Jadids of Central Asia set themselves against the social order that had emerged in the generation after the Russian conquest. In Central Asia Jadids most commonly called themselves ziylilar (Intellectuals) or taraqqiparwarlar (progressives). Behbudi remained the most respected Jadid in Central Asia. In Samarkand he formed good support from a number of active colleagues and disciples. His circles included Abdulqadir Shakuri, Ajzi and Hazi Muin. He opened one of the first new method schools and also published several text books for use in such schools. Tashkent was the largest centre of Jadid activities. Its publishing trade was the largest, and its new method schools most numerous in Turkestan (Khalid, 1999:94-95). Thus the Jadid project was predicated on a new sense of the world and of Central Asia’s position within it. The cornerstone of this worldview was an assimilation of the idea of progress. The Jadids were part of the cosmopolitan community of Muslims. They were located squarely in the realm of Muslim modernism. It was Muslim because its rhetorical structures were rooted in the Muslim tradition of Central Asia and because the Jadids derived ultimate authority for their arguments in Islam. The Jadids never disowned in the way that many young Turks have done well before the end of the nineteenth century. Rather modernity was fully congruent with the true essence of Islam, and only an Islam purified of all accretions of the ages could ensure the well being of the Muslims, Informed by a new vision of the world, the Jadids arrived at a new understanding of Islam and what it meant to be a Muslim (ibid., :114). But when independence came in 1991 external religious influences and Muslims activities of Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the United States had orientations toward Islam and thus, started penetrating in the region for gaining foothold. However, they fail to acknowledge or respect indigenous Central Asian religious histories (Zanca, 2004: 105).
According to Uzbek President Islam Karimov “we could witness in Uzbekistan …
over 100 nationalities and nations and almost 15 religious confessions are represented” (Karimov, 1998: www.umid.com). But, Uzbek government always showed its respect towards moderate and pro state Islam. Karimov took his oath as President on Quran and also did a hajj. But the Uzbek government hated the mixing of Islam and politics (Sengupta, 2003: 201). Simultaneously, Karimov also recognizes non-religious secular thinking as ‘parallel with religion, and possessing the same right to exist. He believes that the interaction between secular and religious thinking will promote the richness, variety and development of the human race (Pottenger, 2004: 65). He values the crucial role that religion, especially Islam, plays in assisting individuals to ‘overcome the trials of human existence as well as their isolation and alienation from one another (ibid., : 66). There are five basic pillars of Islam. They are: Faith (iman) in the oneness of Allah and the finality of the Prophethood of Muhammad, Keeping of the five scheduled daily prayers (salah), Almsgiving (zakat), Fasting (sawm) and Pilgrimage (hajj) to Mecca for those who are able (www.jihadwatch.org). However, public opinion surveys conducted in Uzbekistan revealed that in Uzbekistan, 44% of those claiming to be religious Muslims did not pray at all and 23% did so occasionally. About two-thirds of the respondents in Uzbekistan who claimed to be religious either did not fast at all or fasted occasionally and even one third Uzbek believers could not correctly translate the sentence, “There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet” from Arabic, through this shahda is the first and most important belief in Islam (Patnaik, 2003: 168). According to one survey, only 20% of the Uzbeks believe that “Uzbekistan” should be for the Uzbeks alone’ through more than 90% would prefer their children to marry some one of the same nationality. In their everyday life, people identity with the smaller identities and this allows for a lot of heterogeneity in the broader ethnic identity and positive inter-ethnic harmony (ibid. 148). These things clearly indicate the Muslim heterodoxy, tolerance and adaptability of Uzbek Muslims. However, many writings reveal that there are strong commitments of distinguish ethnic groups to stick to their own rites, culture and traditions in Uzbekistan. No group is happy to adopt the culture of other group due to fear of their extinction. As the government’s policies favor only the Uzbeks, make the other ethnic groups more rigid to their own spheres.
ISLAMIC REVIVALISM AND TERRORISM

Religion always plays a vital role in solidification of people belonging to any community, race, tribe or region. It has a close relationship with nationalism and ethnicity. As, Professor Anthony D. Smith have observed that religion is a defining feature of a nation and when the feeling of nationalism penetrates into the masses, it becomes more and more religious in tenor (Kaur, 2008: 42). Professor Ernest Barker has also given the similar view point and considered religion as an important ingredient of the nation. He remarked: “The connection between religion and national life is obviously close. In some cases religion is the nation and the nation is what it is in the virtue of its religion (Barker, 1948: 151). Similarly, ethnicity and religion has close cooperation in identity formation and both are not antithetical to each other. In the societies, where people are ethnically and religiously of the same stock, these two attributes of identity formation reinforce and solidify each other. Religion certainly have an impact on the number of characteristics that separate ethnic groups, on the clarity of distinction made among them, and on how much the whole system of ethnic stratification is taken for granted. Hence, in reality, religious communities are much larger than the simple entities based on kinship and neighbourhood. But, there always remain a close connection between both (Kaur, 2008: 53-54).

This way Islam can be a good choice for the unification and revivalism of diverse, segregated and multi-ethnic society of Uzbekistan. Islam was evolving and flourishing in the region; when Soviets entered the region the down fall began. The Soviet policy towards Muslims was not static as it changed from one phase to another. When the Soviets needed their support they granted concessions to Muslims, otherwise, the anti-religious propaganda and repression against the Islam continued to be its main policy (Rather, 1999: 238). During the preparatory stage of the Bolshevik revolution, Muslim nationalism was protected and encouraged by the party leaders in order to win the support of the Central Asian Muslims. But when there came up the question of sharing power with the local Muslim organization the Soviets began to show unwillingness and demonstrated the incompatibility of the two ethoses (Bhattacharya, 2008: 104).
Soviets after acquiring the Central Asia in 1917 promised equal treatment to the people there. Lenin declared an end to the policy of religious, racial and national discrimination. He denounced the repressive policies of Czarist regime against the religion in 1917. He promised that beliefs and usages of the national and cultural institutions would be there not to be violated. The Mosques and Muslim schools were reopened, Friday was declared as weekly holiday. Muslims were also allowed to go to Mecca for Hajj pilgrimage. However, the motive behind these efforts was to get immediate Muslim support for consolidating Soviet power and to bring Muslim close to the Communist Party (Rather, 2004:93). The next phase of Soviet policy was the frontal attack on Islam. All the Islamic traditional schools and Mosques were closed. Prohibition of Islamic publications and their import was resorted to. Restrictions were imposed on the observance of prayers, fasts and other Islamic rituals. The Muslim women were forced to abandon veils (ibid: 94). The institutions like Commissariat of Justice, Commissariat of Education and Communist Youth League were given the responsibility of this propaganda. There were regular publications like Khoda-syzla, Allah-syzlar, where Islam was frequently depicted as an anti social, anti feminist, intolerant and xenophobic religion with barbaric and unhealthy customs were encouraged (Bhattacharya, 2008:105). An organization called “Society of Godless Militants” was constituted, which had the duty of conducting anti-Islamic propaganda. This society was composed of Jews and Communists. Several journals were published for guidance and training of the people for the tactics and methods of anti-Islamic propaganda. The different tactics of anti-Islamic struggle were: (i) Attack on Islamic custom and rites, (ii) Attack on holy places and Sufism (iii) the Ulema were attacked on various anti-people allegations as untrustworthy, exploiters and enemies of people, (iv) the liberation of women from traditions like child marriages, veil, bride price and for this purpose the so called liberated women were used (Rather, 1999: 35). Thus, during the Soviet period traditional Islam and its followers went to a drastic decline in Uzbekistan as well as in the whole region.

Soviet particularly targeted Islam because they considered Islam as backward and reactionary. They depicted Islam as a reactionary Mullah-led force supported by British imperialists that was trying to undermine the revolution and prevent progress and education (Rashid, 2002: 36). Lenin wrote, that the saying of Marx ‘religion is the opium
of the people was the cornerstone of Marxism, which believes that all religions and churches of today, every religious organization, always are the organs of bourgeois reaction, which serve to protect the exploitation and deception of the working class’ (Rather, 2004 :92). According to Professor A. M. Rather the Communists did not fundamentally differentiate between good and bad religion. They aimed to destroy all religions through the process of education and propaganda. They wanted to prosecute the religion as: 1) Religion hinders the cultural development of the workers, it is the opposite of science; 2) It harms economic life; 3) It supports bourgeois traditions and sacrifices property owing egoism; 4) It diverts from the construction of the socialist teaching that the better life is beyond the grave; 5) It is used by the kulaks and class enemies as a cloak or weapon against the communists and; 5) The clergy of all countries are helping the capitalists in their struggle against the workers (ibid.). Thus, under the Soviets, there were campaigns designed to eradicate Islam from Central Asia. The aim was clear: wean the Central Asian from reactionary Islam and convert them into urbanized proletarians. Then the Basmachi revolt came in forefront and indicated that Islam is a mobilizing force and has capability to unify people of Central Asia against Soviet rule (Johnson, 2007: 63).

In February 1918 Basmachi rebellions as an Islamic revolt led by Mullahs and clan leaders erupted. It consisted of a number of independent guerrilla groups of the region (Rashid, 2002: 35). They organized themselves as the “Army of Islam” (Sengupta, 2003: 191). They were fighting for a variety of causes: Jihad, Sharia, Turkic nationalism, anti communism. But, they could not survive for more than a decade and got defeated by Soviets in 1929 (Rashid, 2002: 35). According to great scholar Rahul Sankrityayan Basmachis were a pack of dacoits, which were headed by a famous dacoit Ibrahim Gullu. They were major contributor for the nuisance in Uzbekistan. The mullahs, landlords and big businessmen were constrained to support the Ibrahim Gullu and Basmachi rebellion because they realized that the Bolsheviks will not tolerate their dictatorial rules and huge properties. In retaliation Basmachis declared Bolsheviks and their supporters kafirs (infidels). They started plundering and killing of innocent women and children of kafirs. These dacoits assassinated lacks of men, women, old and children with cruelty in the name of Islam. Thousands of villages and homes were destroyed by Basmachis. On the
other hand, Soviet government was granting free lands and concerned facilities of farming to the local peasants. Obviously, Uzbek people realized who was beneficial to them. Therefore, thousands of Uzbek peasants allied with the government to fight against Basmachis. Thus, with the help of local people Basmachis were ousted by the Soviet government (Sankrityayan, 1948: 102). According to Olaf Caroe, the great Basmachi movement was a socio-political reform movement, which comprised of educated, intellectuals, along with the peasantry and tribesmen. They showed the spirit of self-sacrifice, they fought for all Turkestan. Their stamping ground was in the mountains of Glens around the Ferghana valley. Officially Soviet government claimed to have extinguished them by 1924, but the spark was constantly lit again, and the strong Basmachi leader Ibrahim Beg did not succumb until 1931. There was a talk on the Peshawar border of the continuance of the Basmachi movement as late as the time of Hitler’s invasion of Russia in 1941, and even today the fire may not be wholly quenched. But the tribal virtues which sustain and prolong such resistance are not those which can supply the sinews of a modern or national state (Caroe, 1953: 100-01).

Another phase of Soviet policy towards Islam was started when relaxations were given again to Islam, to gain Muslim support in Second World War. To start with the laws the Soviet Constitution guaranteed ‘freedom of religious worship and freedom of anti religious propaganda’ in Article 124 of the 1936 Stalin Constitution, whereby, ‘citizens of USSR guaranteed freedom of conscience, that is religion and to conduct religious worship and atheistic propaganda. Incitement of hostility or hatred on religious grounds was prohibited (Bhattachrya, 2008: 108). Moreover, the official clergies were engaged in order to encourage patriotism with religious fervor among the general population of the region. For instance, Rasulayev began his patriotic propaganda in 1941, as Chief of Central Council of Islamic Religious Centre in the USSR by asking the Muslims to support the Soviet war efforts and the publication of Koran and Islamic documents were also allowed. Some Islamic rituals like Hajj to Mecca were resumed. Rebuilding of 3000 mosques were started while in pre war stage their number remained about 1700. Thus ruthless suppression was replaced by some apparent gesture of sympathy and acceptance of autonomy (ibid :106). In May 1944, the Soviet government created the Council for Affairs of Religious Cults by special decree, which later became
the leading Soviet state organ dealing with Islam and Muslims. The Soviets reduced Islam to the legal status of a cult. The policy of “official Islam” was developed by Soviet government and government opened two “official Madrassahs in Tashkent and Bukhara in which Mullahs would train in both Islamic and Soviet studies. But the “parallel Islam” or “unofficial Islam” was working clandestinely in the region (Sankrityayan, 1948: 39).

Under the policy of ‘official Islam’ Muslim religious boards were organized as four regionally based, independent administrations. These institutions served as regulators of Soviet Muslim religious life. Their functions included the training and appointment of clerics, the operation of mosques, the holding of conferences and seminars and the publication of religious books, periodicals and calendars. The Muslim religious boards and their administrations operated independently. But, in reality, their activities reflected and promoted the interests of the Soviet state. In this sense, the Muslim boards could be included in what Louis Althusser has termed ‘ideological state apparatuses’- that is, non state organizations that serve to reproduce the hegemony of the state not through direct repressive means but through the production and transmission of state oriented ideology (Saroyan, 1997: 28). The Soviets decided to create a group of Soviet religious intelligentsia that would be the paid workers of the Soviet government and would work as a supportive organ of the Communist Party (ibid.). According to Timur Kocaoglu:

These Muslim administrative bodies exist in name only, since they have no powers whatsoever to safeguards the interests of Islam, i.e., to defend Islam against anti-Islamic attacks in public life (Kocaoglu, 1984:147).

On the other hand ‘unofficial or parallel Islam’ remained alive. It became quite popular and was actually more powerful than official Islam. People would arrange religious teachings at their homes, come together and pray at night and visit shrines and tombs as sites of pilgrimage. The centers of parallel Islam were shrines and underground mosques, which were concealed in non religious public places such as clubs, chaikhanas (tea houses), bakeries etc. The number of unofficial mosques much exceeded the number of registered ones. In the 1980s alongside 230 registered mosques, there were at least 91
1800 unofficial mosques in Central Asia. These mosques were guarded by unofficial *mullah, pirs, shaykhs, ishans, and khojas* who conducted major Islamic rites (Botoiarova, 2005: 73-74). However, when Nikita Khrushchev came to power in 1954, a period of relative liberalization ensued as a part of his de-Stalinization campaign, which aimed to eliminate some of the harsh policies. Though, such liberalization did not mean that anti-religious propaganda subsided. It simply differed from Stalin’s harsh treatment of religion, under which Islam was severely repressed and clergy executed. Khrushchev wanted propaganda to be directed against religious ideology and not against the clergy (ibid: 66). The last anti-Islamic crusade was launched by Mikhail Gorbachev under his “liberalizing” program of perestroika, in which Islam was perceived as the enemy of modernization a rallying point for anti-Russian feelings amongst Central Asia’s ethnic groups (Sankrityayan, 1948: 39).

For seven decades, Central Asia was cut off from the outside world, as the Soviet Union closed its border with Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, and later China. Thus, when independence came in 1991, the Central Asians, ideologically speaking were still in the mould of 1920s (Sankrityayan, 1948: 35). It was like an ideological vacuum created by the Soviets exit from the region. Thus, Islam was the natural choice to fill that vacuum. According to Shireen Hunter, Islam would be the main controller to fill the vacuum created by the discrediting of communism. Islam has certain characteristics that make it a credible alternative for many Muslims. It is a coherent system of legal codes and moral principles (Hunter, 1996: 35). So, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was an Islamic resurgence in Uzbekistan and political Islam began to assume an important factor in Uzbek’s social and cultural life (Dwivedi, 2005: 125). Then, unofficial Islam came out and started acting openly, number of mosques and Madrassahs were reopened, which were closed by the Soviets. In fact the Islamic revivalism started during Gorbachev era with his reforms of Perestroika (restructuring) and Glasnost (openness) which gave a new impetus to Islamic revivalism. Such reforms were primarily aimed at restructuring the Soviet society in order to deal with the challenges inherited from the stagnation period of 1960s and 1970s. In other words, reforms were needed first and foremost to revitalize the declining economy, to eradicate corruption and to enhance the social safety network, as well host of other problems with a purpose of achieving the ultimate goal of communism.
Although the priorities of Perestroika and Glasnost were not necessarily aimed at stimulating religious revivalism some observers suggested that the significance of Islamic resurgence was underestimated during Gorbachev era and that Islam would play a decisive role in the future course of events (Botoiarova, 2005 : 8).

Karimov taking the charge of Uzbek President held almost all powers in his own hands. He banned opposition parties, placed tight controls on media, and outlawed public discussion and debate on future policy. Yet by turning his own political survival into state policy, Karimov ensured that the politically active elements, intellectuals, mullahs, new political parties were forced, like the Islam of Soviet era, to go underground. He did not realize that with such measures these groups would eventually become radicalized and violent. Many young people looked to Islam and the Muslims countries of Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia for new ideological inspirations (Rashid, 2002: 54). Such harsh measures in fact resulted in the mushrooming of a number of radical and extremist groups. Some of them are as following:

**Islamic Revival (Renaissance) Party (IRP)**

The IRP was established just before the dissolution of the Soviet Union on June 9, 1990. On its first convention, which was held in the city of Astrakhan in southern Russia, representatives belonging to different parts of the Soviet Union took part and established a unified IRP with three structures, Central Asians, North Caucasians and Europe. The first paragraph of the party programme started that the party was a religious organization for uniting Muslims, propagating Islam, observing its rule and taking part in cultural, socio-political and economic life on the basis of the principles of Islam. However, when the Soviet Union was dissolved in 1991, the unified structure of the IRP also got fragmented along regional lines (Rao, 2005:103). Thus, the IRP in Uzbekistan was established on 26 January 1992, in Tashkent, provoking a reaction similar to that of the Tajikistan authorities. The party was denied official recognition and due its activities was banned under Uzbek law on public associations. Ever since that, the party has been conducting its affairs underground. Syed Abdullah Nuri was the founding member and leader of IRP. He was born in Tavildara in 1947. He was one of the students of famous Mullah Muhammed Rustamov Hindustani (Mohanty, 2006: 109). Although, the IRP
spread rapidly in Uzbekistan especially in the Ferghana valley, it lost force when its leader Abdullah, disappeared in 1992, widely believed to have been kidnapped and killed by the Uzbek secret service. Other, more radical, groups emerged in the valley in 1991-92, largely displacing the IRP. These included Tauba (Repentance), Islam Lashkarlary (fighters for Islam) and Adolat (justice) (Rashid, 2002: 102). Some IRP members, contrary to the law on political parties, have used mosques and madrassas for political activities. The government realizes that it is difficult to maintain a complete separation between politics and other social issues and is generally tolerant of preaching that touches on politics. It nevertheless maintains a strict watch on explicitly political activities in religious institutions. Moreover, there are concerns that worsening socio-economic conditions, deepening corruption and an ideological vacuum (combining disillusionment with both Communist and Democratic ideas and the lack of powerful secular movements) may lead to a more militant and radical Islamic movements. The IRP could continue to channel this dissatisfaction into peaceful political struggle (Olimova and Olimov, 2001: www.c-r.org).

Thus, the formation of Islamic Renaissance Party of Uzbekistan was the first attempt to build a political platform on Islamic foundations. Initially, the IRP under the leadership of Abdullah Utaev (Uta Ogly) carried strong nationalist tendencies, but later on, IRP proved ill prepared for the task. This was evident in its organizational structure and ideological/political framework. Politically, the IRP maintained ambiguous and at times, contradictory goals. As a general rule, the rallying cry of all Islamic groups has been social justice and the formation of an Islamic state. The IRP in Uzbekistan was no exception to the rule and favored an alternative to the political corruption of Communism and the moral and social decadence of Capitalism to achieve social justice. But some important questions remained unanswered in the IRP platform. For example, it was far from clear that how the projected Islamic polity would operate and guarantee social justice. Would the borders of this Islamic state be demarcated along the existing boundaries? What tools were legitimate in the pursuit of this objective? The IRP’s often contradictory position on these issues undermined its popular appeal. In short, the IRP was unable to present a serious challenge to the Uzbek regime and disappeared after a
short span of time, but, it inspired many later Islamic movements like IMU in the country (Akbarzadeh, 2005:25-26).

**Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)**

The IMU is a coalition of Islamic militants from Uzbekistan and other Central Asian states. It formally came into existence in 1996 under the leadership of Tohir Yuldashev. He and his field commander Jumaboy Ahmadjonovich Khojiyev also known as Juma Namangani and Tojiboy were instrumental in expanding and strengthening the base of IMU in the region (Dwivedi, 2005: 128). However, the precursor organizations were active in the former Soviet Republics of Central Asia, since the Soviet collapse, which mainly contributed in establishment of IMU. The IMU’s founding leader Tohir Yuldashev was a mullah from the town of Namangan in Uzbekistan. Actually, he broke with the Uzbek branch of the Islamic Renaissance Party in the early 1990s. Yuldashev then established the Adolat (justice) Party, which in some areas soon became a local vigilant group of enforcing its members strict interpretation of Islamic principles. After the Uzbek government banned Adolat in March 1992, Yuldashev and his followers fled to Tajikistan, where they fought for the Islamic cause during the country’s civil war. After the end of civil war, Yudashev, Namangani and his followers joined forces with Osama Bin Laden in neighboring Afghanistan (Weitz, 2004: 506). Yuldashev continued to travel first to Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and later to Iran, the United Arab Emirates, and Turkey trying to learn about Islamic movements and make contact with other Islamic parties, but his heart was still set on continuing the Islamic movement in Uzbekistan (Rashid, 2002:140). In an interview with the Voice of America, Yuldashev set out the IMU’s goals, such as fighting oppression within country, against bribery, inequalities and also the freeing of Muslim brothers from prison. He wanted to avenge the atrocities on the Muslims who died in the prisons. He said that the obligation to avenge deaths could not be denied to them. He did not repent declaration of Jihad against the Uzbek government which he wanted to carry out for taking *Jihad* to its conclusion (Mohanty, 2006: 112). Yuldashev also claimed that “we have a movement of one hundred thousand people. It takes only a spark to burn down a forest, and for that one match is sufficient. We have enough strength to settle the scores with Karimov, and God willing, there are
many more thousands of Mujahedeen who share this dream. In the interview Yuldashev traced the origin of IMU back to the Basmachi and called them his grand fathers" (ibid: 113). The IMU has a close relationship with Hizb-Ut-Tahrir al Islami, another extremist Islamic religious movement that seeks to establish an Islamic Caliphate throughout Central Asia including China’s Xinjiang province. These two organizations seem to share members and cooperate in various ways. IMU leaders have also influenced and adhere to the radical Wahhabism. Wahhabism arose as a puritanical fundamentalist movement in the eighteenth century among some inhabitants of present day Saudi Arabia. The IMU’s ideology also has been influenced by Deobandism, a version of Islam popular in Pakistan and Afghanistan (Weitz, 2004:507-08).

On 25th August 1999, the IMU issued an official communiqué declaring Jihad on the Karimov regime and calling for its overthrow (Mohanty, 2006: 113). The IMU says they are fighting to overthrow Karimov and bring Islam to Uzbekistan, but that is only the first part of their plan. They have other aims also for the whole of Central Asia (Rashid, 2002: 133). Reportedly, now the goal of IMU has been evolved to include the whole of Central Asia under an Islamic regime. Some even argue that similarly to Taliban, the IMU is interested in bringing about a world-wide Islamic state. The IMU letter sent to the government of Uzbekistan during the raids in August 2000 sheds light on its ideology and aims:

We demand that hundreds of thousands of innocent believers, including women, who are being tortured in prisons, people who have been falsely charged and put in prisons and sentenced to death, should be immediately freed, mosques and sacred places which have been shut should be given back to the people, female believers should be allowed to wear veil and men to grow beards, as prescribed by our Prophet, and the ongoing repressions against the Muslims should be immediately stopped. We warn that various slanders and fabrications addressed to our Muslims and our Islamic movement should be stopped. Otherwise we will take revenge and create difficulties for the police force, prosecutor’s office, national
security service, as they deserve. Our fight will continue until blasphemy, violence, aggression, cheating, bribery have been wiped out [and until] the holy Koran has been established, consists of pure Islamic justice, morals, law, peace and honesty (Komash, 2004:5).

The above mentioned traits of fundamentalism clearly indicate the radical approach and objectives of the IMU. IMU is at present a banned organization by the US Department of State for being a terrorist organization under its law dated 25 September 2000 (Mohanty, 2006: 114). The US invasion of Afghanistan after 9/11, also, put an immediate impact on the activities of IMU, which had established links with Taliban and Al Qaeda. IMU used Afghanistan as a base to launch attacks into Uzbekistan in 1999 and 2000. According to Emmanual Karagiannis, “the IMU was physically and organizationally devastated by the 2001 US invasion of Afghanistan” (Moore, 2007: 315). On 16 February 1999, IMU members apparently detonated six car bombs in Tashkent, in a failed effort to assassinate Karimov. The explosions killed 13 and wounded 128 people (Weitz, 2004: 511). In reaction to the bombings, the Uzbek government imposed an indiscriminate ban on all independent Islamic organizations. The Karimov government began an aggressive campaign against Muslims, arresting and imprisoning thousands, accusing them of extremism, terrorism and Wahhabism. They all were charged under a new law on combating terrorism. Amendments were made to the penal code to create harsher penalties for anyone convicted of a terrorist act. In July 1999, prosecutions began, the trials were criticized by both human rights monitors and foreign governments as fundamentally unfair, as defendants were reportedly denied access to legal counsel. Government agents also reportedly tortured detainees to intimidate them and extract confessions, which courts then relied upon to make convictions (Pyati, 2005: 5). Meantime, the Uzbek Supreme Court found Namangani, Yuldashev and other regime opponents guilty of perpetrating the detonations and sentenced them to death in absentia in November 2000. In the spring and summer of 2000, IMU guerrillas entered the mountains of Surkhandarya province in southern Uzbekistan and reportedly penetrated as close as 60 miles to Tashkent before they were detected and, with difficulty driven back. The rebels apparently had planned to establish
basis in the Ferghana valley in order to gather recruits and wage a protracted insurgency against the Uzbek government (Weitz, 2004: 511). In the late November 2001, a report said that the group leader, 32-years old Juma Namangani died from wounds received during US bombing in Mazar-e-sharif region of Afghanistan (Mohanty, 2006: 114). But, some still create doubts on Namangani’s death. In April 2003, Uzbek authorities discovered a possible IMU bomb plot when construction workers found a probable improvised explosive device in the basement of a Tashkent hotel. The explosives were reportedly similar to those used in the 1999 car bombings. The state department issued a warning in April 2003 that the IMU might be regrouping and planning attacks against the US citizens in Uzbekistan. In December 2003, the department said that the threat to terrorist attacks against the foreign embassies, businesses, and foreign occupied hotels in Uzbekistan had reached a critical level (Weitz, 2004: 512-13). In April 2004, three suicide bomb blasts outside the embassies of Israel and the US and the office of Uzbek state prosecutor killed three terrorists and three innocent Uzbek citizens. IMU’s successor group Jihad Islamic Group (JIG), took the responsibility for a series of explosions from March 28 to April 1, 2004, which resulted in casualties of 33 terrorists and 14 bystanders and policemen (Apostolou, 2004: www.old.nationalreview.com). All these incidents reflect the stronghold of IMU in Uzbekistan. Since independence, it has held the main force behind the turbulence and terrorist activities in the country. It seems that IMU is continuing to prepare plan and foster the commission of acts involving human life and serious damage to property and civil society of Uzbekistan.

**Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT)**

Hizb-ut-Tahrir al-Islami popularly known as the Hizb-ut-tahrir is very much active organization in Central Asia. It can be judged by the fact that there are more HT prisoners in Central Asia’s prisons than those of any other movement, including the much better known IMU (Rashid, 2002: 116). HT was founded in 1953 by Taqiuddin An-Nabhani, a famous Islamic scholar and judge in the Shariah appeal court in east Jerusalem. Its original members were mainly Palestinians from Jordan and Syria, and the movement quickly found supporters in most Arab countries (Karagiannis, 2006: 264). However, the first HT pamphlets appeared in the Uzbek ground in 1995-96. According to
Uzbek officials, the movement was introduced into Uzbekistan in 1995, by a Jordanian named Salahuddin, who came to Taskhent and set up the first HT cell with the help of two Uzbeks (Rashid, 2002: 120). Unlike the IMU, HT rejects violence and the use of force. According to its ideologues, the party wants to achieve its aims through dialogue and debate, by conducting a strong propaganda campaign against secularism and by promoting the idea of several benefits and advantages under the rule of Islam (Botoiarova, 2005: 144).

HT aims to establish a single, unified caliphate across Central Asia, from Xinjiang province to the Caucasus. Ultimately, they wish to see the entire Muslim world united as one Umma without national borders. HT feels that the prophet Mohammed provided a blueprint for overthrowing regimes in that, first, he spread his message secretly, second, the revelation was espoused openly, and third, he launched a Jihad (Johnson, 2007: 67).

According to HT from the end of the eleven century hijri (seventeenth century C.E.) up to the present day, the Islamic world has been subjected to cultural and missionary invasions, followed by the political invasion of the west, which added insult to injury and created further complications in the Islamic society. Thus, Muslims lost their true understanding of the Islamic fikrah. The duty of the every Muslim is to carry the da’wah of Islam, and the duty of the Islamic state is to implement Islam and execute its rules internally and carrying the da’wah for it externally, and that the method for this is Jihad, performed by the state (Nabhani, : www.hizb-utitahrir.org). HT wants to topple the Karimov government and HT leaders are confident that they are winning support from within Karimov’s inner circle, and they do have sympathizers in the army, the intelligence services, and the upper echelon of the bureaucracy for example, in the custom department-who help to promote their program (Rashid, 2002: 123). Though, the extent of the support for the movement is unknown, through some sourced have suggested that its membership in the region may have reached 12,000-15,000. Its own leaders have alleged that it has up to 80,000 supporters (Lewis, 2003: 194).

After the episode of Andizan in May 2005, Karimov claimed that Hizb-ut-Tahrir orchestrated the riots in Andizan, a city in Ferghana valley, which led the country into a new phase of instability. Karimov argued that HT must bear the responsibility of this
violence (Karagiannis, 2006: 264). In response, an Uzbek leader of the HT movement noted, ultimately there will be a war because the repression by the Central Asian regimes is so severe and we have to prepare for that (Johnson, 2007: 78).

**Islamic Jihad Union (IJU)**

The Islamic Jihad Union- also known as Al-Dihad Al Islami, Dzhamaat Modzhakhedov, and the Islamic Jihad Group of Uzbekistan. It is an extremist organization that splintered from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. It was formed on April 11, 2004 (www.start.umd.edu). It adheres to an anti-western ideology and opposes secular rule in Uzbekistan. It seeks to replace the Karimov’s regime with a government based on Islamic law (www.netc.gov). The IJU’s most important base is in north Waziristan, where it receives local support from a variety of Pakistani tribal commanders. The leaders of IJU are Najmiddin Kamolitdinovich Jalodov (emir), Suhayl Fatilloevich Buranov (deputy emir), and Muhammed Fatih. Presently the group has 150 to 200 members, among them mostly are Uzbeks. The group is known to have strong relationships with Chechen fighters in the FATA. In the past five years, it has organized a variety of attacks and planned to attack US military bases and other targets in the region (www.waziristanhills.com). The group first conducted attacks in April 2004, targeting a popular bazaar and police at several roadway checkpoints in Tashkent. These attacks killed approximately 47 people. These attacks marked the first use of suicide bombers in Central Asia (www.netc.gov).

**Akramiya**

Akramiya is another Islamic militant group in Uzbekistan. It is banned under the current Uzbek government. Akramiya is a splinter group of the outlawed Hizb-ut-Tahrir political movement. The group believes that the aims of Hizb-ut-tahrir are correct. It is reported that leaflets distributed by Akramiya condone and encourage suicide bombers (Syed, 2007: 122). The suicide bomb attacks in Tashkent during March 28-April 1, 2004 followed by suicide bomb attacks in front of US and Israeli embassies in Tashkent on July 30, 2004 were reportedly organized by a splinter group of the HT (Dwivedi, 2005: 132).
People’s Front of Uzbekistan

The People’s Front of Uzbekistan is also a radical organization operating out of Tashkent. Due to its clandestine nature, little has been publicized about its activities apart from the fact that it supports the establishment of an Islamic Republic (Mohanty, 2006: 109). Thus, the radical form of Islam has become one of the major threats to the security of Uzbekistan. British scholar Stephen Graham spent a lot of time in Central Asia. He appreciated the unique beauty of this region and also revealed some bitter truths of this region. He applauded the characteristics of Central Asian Muslims on an end number of times but he could not restrict himself to write some anti-Mohammedan words. He says death is not so great a calamity to Muslims as to us. Life is not a serious thing to them. They look on playfully at suffering, and laugh to see men’s limbs blown away by bombs. They like the gamble of modern warfare. And, of course, they were warriors and robbers before they were Muslims. Fighting is one of their deepest instincts, and as they do not change with time as we do, they have an almost anachronistic love of battle. They consider lethal weapons as toys, and they laugh at the sight of cannon. They love battleships as children love toy steamboats, and they sail them on the waters of the Levant as children would their toys (Graham, 1916: 43).

The main factors responsible for such turmoil in the region are: Firstly, the suppression of Islam by the Soviets that was the immediate reason for the Islamic resurgence in the region (Naumkin, 2005: 25). After the communism collapsed, the people of Central Asia suffered an identity crisis, and Islam became one of the most important components of new identity that eventually emerged for Muslims in the region. The rise of Islamic Militancy, it is argued, was directly rooted in the self-assertiveness of nations searching for a collective identity. Unofficial Islam grew and it provided the basis for the revival of Islam on a larger scale in the Post-Soviet period (Patnaik, 2003: 162). According to Alexandra Bennigsen, “Central Asia was deeply distressed by and thoroughly discontented with the Soviet experience and the suppression of Islam was the foremost reason of their anger. As Islam provided the strongest anchor to hold traditional life in Central Asia, the Soviet government was bent upon eliminating its influence root and branch (Bhattacharya, 2008: 120). Secondly, the search for the collective identity
become the another factor responsible for Islamic revival in the region. There was a
dispute started among the Muslims themselves in Uzbekistan on the basis of their
difference came in Muslims ideology (Allworth, 1990: 142). There was a conflict
between the Jadidist modernizers and Qadimist (from Arabic Qadim-old) conservatives
(Naumkin, 2005: 15). Similarly, in June 1989, Uzbek and Tajik youths went on the
rampage against fellow Muslims, Mashketian Turks in the Ferghana valley, with many
deaths and much destruction. The same lesson was brought riots, also in the Ferghana
valley, between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz, both traditionally Muslim people (Critchlow, 1994:
224). It revealed that there is lack of one homogenous group with one overriding identity
Islam. Apart from being divided, they are affected by strong ideological and clan/regional
loyalties that negate and oppose the unifying appeal of Islam (Patnaik, 2003: 164).

Thirdly, the economic deprivations also lead to extremism in the region. Economic
approaches stress the importance of socio-economic conditions as the cause of
Islamic militancy. The general assumption is that poverty, underdevelopment,
unemployment and other grievances give birth to extremism (Naumkin, 2005: 22). In
1992 acute food shortage led to riots in Tashkent, which were finally put down by
military force. In 1994, after Uzbekistan was forced to introduce its own currency, the
Uzbek som, inflation rose to 1500%. The rising level of poverty and unemployment was
as high as 80% in the Ferghana valley. Now, it has become major concerns for the
regime, but it appears to be doing little to tackle the issue, four hundred thousand young
people come on the job market every year and 60% of the population is now under 25
years old. These young people are jobless, restless, and hungry and their numbers are
growing (Rashid, 2002: 82). Situation is more critical in the rural parts of the country,
where more than 80 percent of the republic’s population resides. The meat has practically
disappeared from the rations of rural residents. The main food for peasants is a loaf of
bread. It is also not uncommon to see that flour is mixed with agricultural nutritional
supplements intended for feeding domesticated animals so as to lower the price of baked
bread. It is likewise worth noting that Russia, which is considered a relatively poor
country by European standards, is perceived as a prosperous country in Uzbekistan.
Moreover, large numbers of Uzbeks seek to find work in Russia. According to estimates
by the Research Center on Migration in CIS and Baltic Countries, 600,000-700,000
citizens of Uzbekistan (that is, more than 20 percent of the country’s male population) travel abroad, mainly to Russia, for temporary work on an annual basis (Rator, : www.jamestown.org).

Fourthly, the repressive policies of the Uzbek government towards Islam cause the extremism. The policies of the Uzbek government to curb the growth of religious fundamentalism and terrorism, rather than being helpful, in curbing the menace, have contributed substantially to its growth and spread due to the reaction they generate among the suffering masses (Mohanty, 2006: 130). Since, independence, the regime has worked hard to reassert the authority of the national board, bringing about another era of “official Islam”. The Muslims directorate has a monopoly over religious instruction and the organization of contacts with the rest of the Muslims world. New Madrassas have appeared under its auspices, and it organizes the Hajj for several thousand citizens every year. In also controls all mosques and their personnel in the country. Mosques not controlled by the directorate, by contrast, are deemed illegal and have in many instances been closed (Adeep, 2003: 587). Although, Karimov is attempting to build a secular state, but he is intended to prevent the growth of any radical Islamic opposition that, if able to gather mass support, could pose a serious threat to his regime and the stability of Uzbek society. In such a context, the dichotomous nature of his policy towards Islam becomes more clear, and his repressive actions more explicable (Everett, 2003: 194).

There are number of provisions mentioned in the constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which provide some religious freedoms along with several restrictions. According to Article 31, freedom of conscience is guaranteed to all. Everyone shall have the right to profess or not to profess any religion. Any compulsory imposition of religion shall be impermissible (Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 1992). Instead, Article 61 separates religion from state this Article defines religious organizations and associations shall be separated from the state and equal before law. The state shall not interfere with the activity of the religious organizations (ibid.). Similarly, Article 29 says everyone shall be guaranteed freedom of thought, speech and convictions. Everyone shall have the right to seek, obtain and disseminate any information, except that which is directed against the existing constitutional system and in some other instances specified
Freedom of opinion and its expression may be restricted by law if any state or other secret is involved (ibid.). Furthermore, Article 12 states, In the Republic of Uzbekistan, public life shall develop on the basis of a diversity of political institutional, ideologies and opinion. No ideology shall be granted the status of state ideology (ibid.).

There are several other provisions also existing in Uzbek constitution, which opposes the extremism. The Uzbek government also passed a special law to regulate financing of religious institutions and clergymen and also to ensure strict control over the substance of the sermons in mosques. With this regard, the Karimov government set up a committee for religious affairs in the republic’s council of ministers (Mohapatra, 2006: 267). This 1998 law of the Republic of Uzbekistan on freedom of conscience and religions organizations regulates several protective measures. Articles 14 states, with the exception of those working in religious organizations, citizens of Uzbekistan are not permitted to wear “ritual” dress in public places. In May 1998, government further amended provisions of the criminal code and code on administrative responsibility treating the practice of religion. Under Article 84 of the amended code on administrative responsibility, violators of the prohibition on ritual dress are fined five to ten times the minimum monthly wage or subject to administrative arrest for up to fifteen days (www.hrw.org).

According to Karimov religion strengthens people’s faith, purifies and elevates, and makes them stronger in overcoming the trails of human existence. It transfers universal and spiritual values from generation to generation. That is why religion is a reliable comparison to human beings, and a natural part of human life. Unfortunately, the religious consciousness is being used not as a constructive power, but as a destructive as fanaticism accompanying intolerance towards all other (Karimov, 1998: www.umid.com). He argues that Islam has started to use for a political purposes. Some of Islamists are aiming to discredit democracy, the secular state and a multinational and multi-confessional society. It would be fatal for the history of the twenty first century, if, Islam and the states of Islamic culture were to be represented as a new “empire of evil” and an overall zone of danger (ibid.). Karimov states, numerous Islamic organizations want to impose ‘alien spiritual ideals and values that will disrupt Uzbek society and
ultimately return Uzbekistan to medieval obscurantism. He argues that Islamic militants, calling themselves ‘fighters for faith’, attempt to justify their political activism. Karimov has condemned both international terrorism and religious extremism and fundamentalism and declared them to be greatest treats to Uzbek stability and sovereignty (Pottenger, 2004: 68). Karimov told to a press conference on 17 April 1998, that one way to avoid religious fanaticism was to integrate with European structures and in the strongest ever gesture statement, president Karimov in May 1998, told the parliament that he was ready to shoot the leaders of an Islamic fundamentalist movement himself, if, MPs lack the courage to do so. He said, “such people must be shot on the forehead if necessary, I will shoot them myself if you lack the resoluteness!” (Mohanty, 2006: 164).

Efforts at the International level are also made by Uzbek government to curb the terrorism in the region. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has become the first international legal document the Republic of Uzbekistan has joined after gaining independence. Uzbekistan has chosen a path of building democratic and legal state and powerful civil society. Uzbekistan dedicated the 60th anniversary of adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 2008 (www.jahonnews.uz).

On November 1999, on Istanbul Summit of OSCE, President Karimov introduced proposal to create an international center in the structure of UNO for the fight against terrorism (www.gov.uz) In addition, on October 2000, International Conference in Tashkent was organized by UNO, OSCE and Uzbek government for safety, justification and stability in Central Asia. Experts from 70 countries and 40 International Organizations worked out proposals on general approaches for reluctant strategy to the international terrorism (ibid.). Similarly, the meeting of Shenghai Co-operation (SCO) was held in Tashkent on June 17, 2004 to eliminate religious extremism (Onaron, 1994: 134). In short, there are 13 documents of the UNO, directed to counter terrorism. They are 11 conventions and 2 protocols and it is very important to emphasize that Uzbekistan is a participant of all acting conventions and protocols of the UNO on the fight against terrorism (www.gov.uz).
Conclusion:

Islam is an integral part of the lives of the people of Uzbekistan as well as the whole Central Asian region. It influences the every aspect of Central Asian people. It is deep rooted in the minds of Central Asians from age old times; it helped them to create their indigenous identity and always helped them in difficult and problematic situation. Karimov also recognizes this thing and argues that the concept of religions being presented as a universal means to solve all economic, political and International problems and contradictions. Further, the cultural values of Islam, its traditions and its huge spiritual heritage greatly contribute not only to the historical evolution of our region, but also to the qualitative shaping of its new image (Karimov, 1998: www.umid.com). Though, the Uzbekistan and the whole region is going through a very crucial phase due to several reasons like Islamic extremism, authoritarianism, sham democracy etc. and most of scholars especially western scholars are holding Islam as the main culprit for this situation. But Islam per se is not a threat to the security and stability of the Central Asian region rather misinterpretation made by the organizations like IMU and HT for their political gains are responsible for the crisis of this region.
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