Chapter Two

MILITANCY, CROSS-BORDER TERRORISM AND CRIME:
AN UNHOLY NEXUS
The end of Cold War following the disintegration of Soviet Union led to marked decrease in international conflicts involving superpowers. However, at the regional level, the scenario is quite different. There has been an unprecedented increase in terrorism and militancy promoted by external and internal forces and fuelled by several factors i.e. religious fundamentalism, ethnic and national chauvinism. The end of the ideological warfare between the two superpowers has created a political vacuum on both the international and regional fronts. The entire region of South-west Asia has faced tremendous upheavals during the last fourteen years. The Iranian Revolution, the Afghan crisis, Iran-Iraq war are some of the main events which destabilised the whole region. The independence of the Central Asian republics from the Soviet orbit is also one of the most dramatic developments of the last decade. In the post-independence period, the newly independent countries of the Central Asian region have encountered a myriad of new problems on their road to democracy and free market economy.¹ The emergence of terrorism in its criminal and political forms is one of these problems. Criminal and political terrorism were not the major security concerns for the Soviet Union, as the authoritarian nature of the political and social systems made it difficult for such activities to surface.² Moreover, due to the strict government control over the media and travel restrictions on the foreigners, public knowledge on the existence of such groups or incidents was severely limited. Not only were there few reported political terrorist incidents carried out in the Soviet Union, there were also a few terrorist incidents directed at Soviet targets outside USSR.³

¹ Dennis A. Pluchinsky, "Terrorism in the Former Soviet Union, a Primer, a Puzzle, a Prognosis". Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, No. 21, September 1998, p. 119.
² Ibid.
³ The two most extensive terrorist campaigns carried out against Soviet targets were carried out by Jewish extremist groups in the United States of America such as the Jewish Defence League in the 1970s and 1980s and a group in France that called itself the 'Bakunin-Gdansk- El- Salvador' and was active in the 1980s.
With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the security environment in the region, especially related to criminal and political terrorist activities changed. The resultant poor economic situation in many of the newly independent states contributed to deterioration of the law enforcement and border situation, general unemployment and social malaise. Controls over weapons and explosives weakened. Criminal gangs that had previously operated in a non-lethal mode and out of the public eye came out of the closet and quickly engaged in lethal operations.4

The analysis of the former Soviet Union is hampered by certain problems that make reading the terrorism environment in the region difficult. Sir Winston Churchill in his first speech as the Lord of Admiralty on October 1939, stated in a BBC Radio broadcast that he could not forecast the actions of the Soviet Union because it is “a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma”. As far as the problem of terrorism in the Soviet Union is concerned, the issue can be studied with scepticism and difficulty in verifying the facts.

The first ever incident of terrorism in an organised form that took place in former Soviet Union and mostly in the Central Asian region was the famous Basmachi revolt, which some even call as Basmachi movement. Soon after the dissolution of the Kokand ‘Autonomous’ government, there arose in Fergana, the Basmachi movement. The Great Soviet Encyclopaedia simply describes the Basmachi movement as “an armed counter-revolutionary nationalist movement in Middle Asia from 1917-1926”.5 It was a form of class struggle of the feudal lords, beys, kulaks, mullahs and nationalist bourgeois against Soviet government. They were supported and directed by British and American internationalists, reactionary

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circles of Turkey, China and Afghanistan and the Russian White Guards. As it had no broad base among the working masses, it depended largely on support from foreign imperialists. Its followers were mainly drawn from ex-officials of the Tsarist administration such as the aksakals, mirabs and volost administrators and from the Muslim clergy. Almost conspicuous by their absence in the ranks of the Basmachi were the poor peasants and artisans with the exception of some, who either on account of their extreme backwardness, or through fear, remained with them temporarily.

The ideological bases of the Basmachi revolt were pan-Islamism, pan-Turkism, and bourgeois nationalism. Among the direct leaders of the Basmachi revolt were the counter-revolutionary organisations such as Shura-i-Islam, Shura-i-Ulema and Alash. After the creation of the counter-revolutionary “Kokand Autonomous Government” in 1917, these governments formed bands of Basmachi and initiated armed struggle against the Soviet government with the intention of separating Turkestan from the Soviet Russia and establishing a government of the nationalist bourgeoisie and feudal lords under the protection of foreign governments. F. Baily, the chief of the British government’s military diplomatic mission, and R. Tredwell, the American Consul, took part in the organisation and arming of the Basmachi bands in the summer of 1918. The Basmachi employed tactics such as surprise raids on Soviet military units, industrial installations, railroad stations, depots and popular areas, accompanied by mass murders, arsons, and destruction. The Basmachis dealt cruelly particularly with the party and Soviet workers and also women who had given up the Yashmak (veil). The first Basmachi detachments appeared in Kokand at the end of 1917 under the leadership

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7 Ibid.  
8 *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia*, op. cit.  
9 Ibid.
of Irgash. In the spring of 1918, the Basmachi extended their active operations to the region of the city of Osh. In the autumn of 1918, a group of Basmachi headed by Madomin-bek, the ring leader of the “Turkestan Muslim White Guard” concluded a military and political agreement for combined operations against the Soviet government with K. Monstrov, who led the Kulak army (Southern Kirghizia). The Basmachi achieved their greatest development in September and October 1919, when the joint armed forces of the Fergana Basmachi and the Kulak army seized Osh and Jalalabad, blockaded Andijan, and began to threaten Fergana. Soviet forces on the Turkestan front (commanded by M. V. Frunze) defeated the Kulak-Basmachi army in early March 1920. The Turkestan Commission of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the Council of People’s Commissars of the RSFSR formed in October 1919 rendered a great assistance to the people of Central Asia in the struggle for Soviet power and liquidation of the Basmachi.10 The frequency of Basmachi raids in Fergana increased in the summer and autumn of 1920. By the end of 1920, the valley portion of Fergana had been cleared of Basmachis. By April 1926, up to 7000 Basmachis remained in Fergana, approximately 7000 in Bukhara, and 1000 in Khiva. Enver Pasha, the former Minister of War of Turkey, arrived in Bukhara in October 1921. He succeeded in consolidating separate uncoordinated bands of Basmachis into an army (approximately 16,000 men), which seized a considerable amount of territory in the Bukhara People’s Soviet Republic in the spring of 1922.11 The Soviet government and the Central Committee of the RCP (Bolsheviks) adopted decisive measures for the liquidation of Enver Pasha’s Basmachi army. In June 1922, Enver’s bands were dealt with a lethal blow and in the middle of July, Dushanbe was liberated; Enver was killed in one of the skirmishes during August. By the end of 1922, the main forces of Basmachi in Fergana and Khorezm were defeated.

10 Ibid.
However, the reactionary circle of Afghanistan, China and Iran permitted the shattered remnants of the Basmachi gangs to take shelter in the territories of their states, and helped them to reinforce their troops, rearm themselves, and to continue attacks on Soviet territories of Central Asia.\textsuperscript{12} The Basmachi bands of Ibrahim Bek in Bukhara and Junaid Khan in Khorezm managed to hold out for some more time. The band of Junaid Khan was liquidated early in 1924; the gangs of Ibrahim Bek (approximately 4000 men) were routed in 1926. In 1929 and early 1930s, Basmachi detachments again penetrated from abroad and attempted to ruin the collectivisation of farming in Central Asia, but they were liquidated.

The Basmachi caused enormous damage to the national economy of Central Asia. Thousands of Dekhkans (peasants) supporting the Soviet government were wiped out by the Basmachis. From 1917 to 1923, the population was reduced by one-third in Fergana oblast alone.\textsuperscript{13} The leaders of the Basmachi taking the advantage of the complex military and political situation in Central Asia and the ignorance and the religious fanaticism of the Dekhkan masses attracted some of the working population to their side. The imperialists of many countries supplied the Basmachi with all the necessities (weapons, food and money).

In the struggle with the Basmachi, the Soviet government combined military actions with economic measures and political efforts. The implementation of the Leninist principles of national policy and party measures for the development of the Dekhkan labour economy (favourable taxation, commercial development, water and land reform and so on) played a large role in the liquidation of the Basmachi.\textsuperscript{14}

Thus, the earliest organised case of terrorism was led by the Basmachis that finally lost to the formidable strength of the Soviet power. But what is very

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Great Soviet Encyclopaedia}, op. cit., p. 58.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
important in the whole of the Basmachi episode is that, it was basically a pan-Islamic movement, wherein, religion i.e. Islam played an important role of being a rallying point. Since then, the Soviet Union had been affected by religious fundamentalism, terrorist onslaughts from time to time.

The Muslims of Central Asia also revolted several times against the regime which came to power through Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. The main areas where the conflicts occurred were Bashkiria, Kirghizia, Khiva (1918-20), Fergana (1918-26), Bukhara, the Crimea and Azerbaijan. The Red Army crushed most of the revolts in the Muslim areas with great ferocity. On the other hand, in order to neutralise their brutalisation, an attempt was made by the Soviets to deal with the question politically by setting up a Central Muslim Commission in Moscow.

Soviets divided the region on the basis of ‘nationalities’ that continued until 1991. However, the militant Islamic movements broke out against the Bolsheviks in several parts of the Soviet Union. The Red Army took several years to crush these forces in Central Asia. ‘Basmachi’ revolt was also one of them. Eventually, the Bolsheviks with the help of influential Muslim radical nationalists crippled the revolt, but the movement left an indelible psychological and political heritage which remains alive even today.

Apart from these measures, the Soviet official Islamic establishment signed a number of agreements—approximately fifty in number—most of which related to cultural exchanges agreements that were signed between the Islamic countries and the Soviet Union.

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17 Alexander Bennigsen, op. cit., p. 56.
The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979 caused a significant setback to the gains made by the Soviet Union in the previous decade. It is estimated that the Central Asian soldiers formed nearly 30 to 40 percent of the Soviet forces sent to Afghanistan and a large number of Uzbeks and Tajiks were sent to run the administration. However, within a few months it was decided to replace them with the forces from European republics of the Soviet Union. This action was taken because the Soviet authorities were afraid that these Muslim soldiers would identify themselves with local population. Furthermore, the ‘iron curtain’ created between the Soviet Muslims and the Muslims of the adjoining countries began to crumble and the authorities in Moscow became fearful of a backlash.  

**Militancy and Terrorism in Central Asia since Independence**

After the Basmachi revolt was suppressed and liquidated by the Soviet forces, no organised terrorist or militant activity could take place due to a strong vigilance by the Soviet law enforcement authorities and the government. But after independence, the situation changed totally and the Pandora’s Box of militancy and terrorism opened up once again, taking advantage of the political confusion and uncertainty that engulfed the region initially. One such incident which influenced the politics of the region tremendously for nearly five years was the Tajik civil war. It was a militant and violent struggle that took the lives of 50,000 people and injured as many as 2,00,000.

Tajikistan which lies to the north of Afghanistan, just across the Panj River was a relatively underdeveloped corner of the former Soviet Union. It rapidly dropped from a low-income republic of USSR to one of the world’s poorest

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Tajikistan would have probably moved towards post-Communist reform sooner if it had not succumbed to an internal contest for power in the first year of independence. The contest plunged the country into five years of civil war (1992-97).\(^{\text{19}}\)

The events that precipitated the Tajikistan war, took place in April and May 1992, but the underlying causes of the conflict were lodged in territorial and ethnic identities that go back to the Soviet period. Before the Soviet takeover, no single authority had ruled the people of Tajikistan’s rugged mountains and fertile agricultural valleys. The Soviet government brought unified rule but never displaced traditional regional and clan-based loyalties. The territorial division of Central Asia during the Soviet period had long enduring implications.\(^{\text{20}}\)

Democratisation and economic reform in the core regions of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s brought greater self-rule to the outlying regions. In Tajikistan, this was manifested primarily in a resurgence of local territorialism rather than Tajik national self-determination.

In the chaotic changes following the disintegration of Soviet power, a former First Secretary of the Tajik Communist Party, Rakhmon Nabiyev, assumed political control in 1991. The country was swept up by the waves of exalting

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\(^{\text{21}}\) Tajiks and Uzbek populations in Central Asia have historically been intertwined. At the time of the territorial division of Central Asia into republics, only about 3,00,000 of the total population of 1,100,000 ethnic Tajiks in Central Asia found themselves within the newly established state of Tajikistan. The gerrymandering of the border is "explained by the desire of the Uzbeks to have the historically important cities of Bukhara and Samarkand as part of Uzbekistan, despite the fact that for centuries the majority of the cities' population was Tajik. This was a matter of prestige rather than a political necessity, when the Russians conquered Turkestan, replacing the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand, which had been regional centres for centuries". Sergei Gretsky, "Civil War in Tajikistan: Causes, Development and Prospects for Peace", in Roald Z. Sagdeev and Susan Eisenhower (ed.), Central Asia: Conflict, Resolution and Change, Centre for Political Studies, Washington DC, 1995, pp. 217-48.
tension that resulted in armed groups vying for control in the streets of capital. In September 1992, Nabiyev, a native of the northern Leningrad region, was forced to resign at gunpoint. Dushanbe then fell under the control of a coalition led by Tajikistan’s Islamic Renaissance Party.\textsuperscript{22} Civil war ensued and Tajikistan was briefly divided into north and south.

Then aided by the military assistance from Russia and Uzbekistan, a coalition of forces from the southern region of Kurgan Tyube and the northern industrial Leningrad oblast collaborated to recapture the capital and reunite the country. These combined forces attacked Dushanbe on 24 October 1992. Thousands of civilians and soldiers were killed while thousands more fled the capital. This early violent phase of the civil war was resolved in favour of a coalition based in the valley region centred in the city of Kulyab. The coalition selected as its leader, a former Kulyab district Communist Party official, Emamali Rahmanov.

During the fighting in Tajikistan, the Russian\textsuperscript{201st} Motorised Rifle Division, already deployed in the country to guard the Soviet Union’s southern border, was given a new domestic peacekeeping mission. Russia assumed primary responsibility for Tajik military operations, and its military presence gradually transformed the country into what Lena Johnson characterises as a “Russian Protectorate”.\textsuperscript{23}

The fighters displaced by the recapture of the Tajik capital - the groups that eventually comprised the United Tajikistan Opposition were scattered in the

\textsuperscript{22} Outside military and financial assistance played a role in the consolidation of the opposition forces during this early period, but the newspaper accounts, particularly by Moscow journalists, indicating that Iran and other Islamic states bankrolled the IRP are not well founded. Virtually all the weapon and ordnance in the Tajikistan war was of Soviet manufacture.

mountain areas to the north and east of the capital. Large parts of the country remained under military control, because commanders who were victorious in the war divided the country among themselves. In the wake of the war, normal governmental and political activities were suspended. The civil war divided Tajikistan into several dimensions simultaneously, splitting region against region, clan against clan, religion against religion, and internationalists against nationalists. Significantly, the conflict divided the country into victor and the vanquished. Many of the vanquished retained their weapons.

After the intense fighting in the autumn of 1992, Tajikistan followed a tortuous path of gradual normalisation. Some vanquished fighters fled to Afghanistan, Uzbekistan or Iran. Others continued the conflict from small pockets in Tajikistan. Rebel groups continued to control certain regions of the countryside, particularly the Garm Valley. The country’s urban areas were subject to continuous harassment and conflict. Hostage taking became an important mechanism for setting outstanding wartime disputes. Assassinations and contract killings became common.

At the insistence of the international organisations, the government and the leaders of the opposition entered into a dialogue on national reconciliation. On 27 June 1997, President Rahmanov and Sayid Abdullo Nuri, the leader of the United Tajikistan Opposition, signed the general agreement on the “Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan”.

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24 The UTO comprised of three main groups: The Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan, the Democratic Party of Tajikistan, and the Rastokhez National Revival Movement. These groups were mostly defeated by the Tajik government forces in the spring of 1993, but isolated units continued fighting from bases in Afghanistan and areas in the south-east of the country until 1997, when the UTO became the recognized opposition in the reconciliation plan. Some UTO figures such as Said Abdullo Nuri, continued to play a significant role in post-war reconstruction politics.


26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.
The signing of the agreement and the subsequent convening of the Commission on National Reconciliation launched a period of transition. According to the terms of the agreement, refugees were to return to their homes, UTO fighters were to be demobilised and their leaders were to be reintegrated into the governmental structures, the armed forces, police and security service were to be reformed and the democratic processes in the country were to be reinvigorated. Despite numerous setbacks, the peace process moved forward. During 1999, more than 6000 ex-fighters were registered and granted amnesty. A September 1999 referendum provided a positive mandate for Rahmanov government. The final peace agreement provided a model for other Central Asian states. For the first time in Central Asia, a coalition government was established between two warring factions that included an avowedly Islamist party. The most powerful reason, which was in fact the propelling force for this early and smooth settlement of the crisis, was the simultaneous rise and conquest of Afghanistan by Taliban.

Tajikistan witnessed several hostage crises during and after the civil war. In February 1997, 15 people were taken hostage in Central Tajikistan by northern warlord Bakhram Sadirov. The captives included four UN military observers, two employees of the International Committee of Red Cross, four UN refugee workers, four Russian journalists and Maj. Gen. Saidamir Zuhurov. Sadirov seized the hostages demanding that his brother Rizvan Sadirov be allowed to return to Tajikistan with a group of rebel guerrillas from neighbouring Afghanistan. Rizvan

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28 Factions like Khujandis led by former Prime Minister Abdernalik Abdullajanov, and a group of Uzbeks led by renegade army officer Col. Makhmud Khudayberdiev repeatedly tried to disrupt the peace process and even attacked Khojand in November 1998.

29 In 1996, the regional equation changed dramatically when the Taliban captured Afghanistan and ousted the Afghan-Tajik government. Central Asian leaders were fearful that the Taliban, drawn from the ethnic Pashtun group, would try to spread their harsh interpretation of Islam into Central Asia. Both the government and the UTO realized that it was in their common interest to negotiate and end the civil war. 
Sadirov had reportedly been fighting the Afghan Taliban forces alongside former Afghan Defence Minister Ahmad Shah Masud. The crisis ended when President Imamali Rahmanov agreed to Sadirov's demand.  

Another very important terrorist incident was the grenade attack on Tajik President Imamali Rahmanov. On 30 April 1997, the President was injured when a man threw a grenade at him in the city of Khojand (the administrative centre of Leninabad province in northern Tajikistan). Two people were killed in the attack and 49 injured. Rahmanov sustained injury in his leg. The man, who threw the grenade, Firdaus Dustboboyev, is rumoured to have been one of the organisers of the May 1996 anti-government demonstrations in Khojand.  

This incident was followed by another attack on the barracks of the Presidential guards in October, killing 14 service men. There were several cases of bombing in Tajikistan and its capital Dushanbe as well. On July 17 and 26, two bombs exploded in the capital city. While the first caused little damage, the second injured four children.  

Similarly, on September 9 and 25, a series of bomb explosions took place in Dushanbe, injuring more than 28 people. While these kinds of attacks continued, Dushanbe also witnessed several cases of kidnappings and abductions. On 3 October 1997, a meat dealer and his son were abducted. In the same year, several UN aid workers were also abducted.  

In 1997, there was a peace accord in Tajikistan, which for all theoretical purposes ended the civil war, but the acts of terrorism and militancy (which was rampant and extremely gory in nature) continued, though on a smaller magnitude.

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30 Kessing's Record of World Events (henceforth Keesing's) Vol. 43, No. 2, February 1997.
31 ITAR-TASS News Agency (henceforth ITAR-TASS), Moscow, 30 April 1997, reproduced in (henceforth rep. in) SWB/SU/2907/G/1/1 May 1997.
32 Kessing's, Vol. 43, No. 7 July 1997.
34 ITAR-TASS, Moscow, 3 October 1997, rep. in SWB/SU/3041/G/2, 4 October 1997.
in 1998 and thereafter. Surprisingly, the other four Central Asian republics, which had not witnessed such incidents, now started facing the brunt of the problem.

In the Namangan region, on 30 December 1997, a series of killings occurred in which several policemen were killed. Soon after this incident, President Islam Karimov adopted a plan to fight against “organised crime”.

On 16 February, a powerful bomb explosion occurred in Tashkent, killing 15 people and injuring 100 others. Zakir Almatov, head of Uzbekistan’s Ministry of Internal Affairs declared that it was “terrorism perpetrated by religious extremists”. At 11.55 a.m., a car bomb exploded as a result of a police shoot-out with one of the assailants. The first blast ignited the second and within an hour or so, there were a series of explosions in other central areas of Tashkent, in front of Internal Affairs Ministry building. President Karimov announced that it was carried out by Hezbollah, but later said that most of those arrested in connection with the incident had undergone training in Chechnya, Afghanistan and Tajikistan. He also said that they all belonged to various terrorist religious extremist groups.

Later, a report by the Russian Republic TV said that the attack in Tashkent was originally aimed at President Karimov who reached on the spot within minutes after the blast occurred. The investigators suspected that it was a provocation by the religious extremists. It was also underlined that the terrorist acts were thoroughly prepared and not without help from abroad.

Kyrgyzstan witnessed a major terrorist incident in August 1999. A reconnaissance unit of the Kyrgyz government troops, numbering about 20 men.

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38 Russian Public TV, Moscow, 23 February 1999, rep. in SWB/SU/3468/G/1, 25 February 1999.
39 Ibid.
was taken hostage in the village of Karamyk.\textsuperscript{41} Further, on 25 August, militants from four Tajikistan-controlled villages in southern Kyrgyzstan. According to Interior Minister Omurbek Kutuyev, the militants, on 24 August, seized the village of Darley, where two schools were blown up.\textsuperscript{42} In the same month, four Japanese nationals were taken as hostages by Kyrgyz fundamentalist extremists.\textsuperscript{43}

Another incident in the month of August, which shook the entire region and brought into light the clear vulnerability of the republics, was that of the ‘Batken incursion’.

A silent invasion of the Islamists into Kyrgyzstan began from the Garm area in Tajikistan in 1999, which is also known as the Karategin Valley. This sub-region has been a traditional base of the Islamic radicals as the message of national reconciliation was not well received there. The presence of Uzbeks in Karategin was well known to the government in Dushanbe, but other countries were also informed that a large number of so-called refugees were actually from a group of terrorists headed by Juma Namangani. They took part in the Tajik civil war on the side of the Islamic opposition. About 1,500 members of these terrorist groups who had intruded into Kyrgyzstan formed the main force.\textsuperscript{44}

While the negotiations continued with the terrorists for the release of the hostages, the government took measures to locate the terrorists and mounted an army operation to destroy their base. On 13 August, after a negotiated settlement for a ransom of US $ 50,000 and free passage to Uzbekistan, the hostages were released.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{41} ITAR-TASS, Moscow, 26 August 1999, rep. in SWB/SU/3624/G/3, 27 August 1999
\textsuperscript{42} Interfax, Moscow, 25 August 1999, rep. in SWB/SU/3626/G/3, 27 August 1999.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} Alexander Knyazev, “International Terrorism in Central Asia”, Aakrosh. Vol. 4, No. 1, April 2001, p. 78.
On 15 August, Uzbek Air Force bombed the terrorist’s sites and the Kyrgyz troops began the second stage of their operation for liquidation of the terrorist groups. The Secretary of the Council of Security of Kyrgyzstan, Esen Topaex, declared that as the terrorists had violated the laws of Kyrgyzstan, they should be punished according to the laws of the republic.46

On 22 August, a group of 30 terrorists occupied the villages of Zardaly and Khalja-Achkan, the camp site of the Japanese geologists’ exploration. The terrorists took the Kyrgyz General Shamkeev, one soldier and four Japanese geologists along with their interpreter as hostages. Leaders of the Kyrgyz law enforcement agency believed that it was the same terrorist group, which had entered into Kyrgyzstan from Tajikistan in 31 July. Other sources revealed that another group of 200 insurgents had entered Kyrgyzstan from Tajikistan to support the terrorists at Zardaly.47

On the night of 23-24 August, as the fight began east of village Kan, terrorists retreated by moving into deep gorges without suffering casualties, but there was no information about the hostages. The confrontation continued for two months, during which Kyrgyz troops appeared powerless to expel the insurgents from several villages.48 On the night of 24 August, terrorists blew up the bridge across the Sokh River, which connects the Canyon with Batken. The terrorists successfully evaded the government troops. On 28 August, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan confirmed that joint operations were being conducted against the terrorist groups in south Kyrgyzstan.

The joint manifesto issued in the city of Osh at the meeting of the ministers of foreign affairs and defence, along with the chiefs of the national security

46 Alexander Kunyazev, op. cit., p. 79.
47 Ibid.
services of the four Central Asian countries confirmed that the terrorists were supported by external forces.\textsuperscript{49} At this meeting, modalities of the joint action and the situation in south Kyrgyzstan were discussed. The meeting declared that the terrorist groups included not only people from Central Asian countries, but also nationals from many other foreign countries.\textsuperscript{50} This indicates the pan-Islamic character of terrorism and extremist organisations which pose a common threat to all the republics in the region.\textsuperscript{51}

The participants of the meeting were convinced that the objective of the international Islamic terrorist groups was to destabilise the Central Asian countries whose efforts were directed towards building and developing civilised, democratic and secular societies. It was evident that the Islamic terrorists were trying to turn the clock back to the medieval age.\textsuperscript{52}

The participants appealed to the people of their respective countries to stand united in giving a decisive rebuff to the provocative actions of the international terrorists. They also declared that the terrorist violation of the state boundaries and violence towards the peaceful population will be countered by hard and resolute actions in accordance with international law.\textsuperscript{53} President Akaev said that this activity was just not regional but global and Kyrgyzstan was being confronted with international religious terrorism and extremism.\textsuperscript{54} However, the confrontation which continued for two months came to an end when the insurgents withdrew getting six million US dollars as ransom from the Japanese government to release Japanese hostages.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{49} ITAR-TASS, Moscow, 28 August 1999, rep. in SWB/SU/3626/G/1/30 August 1999.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{51} Alexander Knyazev, op. cit., p. 80.
\textsuperscript{52} ITAR TASS, Moscow, 28 May 1999.
\textsuperscript{53} ITAR-TASS, Moscow, 28 August 1999, rep. in SWB/SU/3626/G/1, 30 August 1999.
\textsuperscript{54} The Open Media Research Institute’s Daily Digest, 7 March 1995.
\textsuperscript{55} ICG Asia Report, op. cit.
As a result of these events, tensions grew sharply even between the three Central Asian states. Uzbekistan criticised Kyrgyzstan for harbouring Uzbekistan’s enemies. Tajikistan protested to the unsanctioned over-flight and bombing of its territory by Uzbekistan (which Uzbekistan first denied, but later admitted). Eventually, however, the incursions prompted the security agreements between these states (and with Russia), as they braced for new incursions in the following summer.56

The incursions began again in August 2000, this time initially in Uzbekistan’s southern province of Surkhan-Darya, a high mountain area on the border with Tajikistan. Within a week, separate incursions began in separate places in southern Kyrgyzstan.57 According to Osmonakun Ibraimov, the Press Secretary of the Kyrgyz President, on 11 August 1999, 40 rebels invaded the Batken district.58 The Kyrgyz army was better prepared this time. Therefore, they swiftly reacted to the incursions and a fight continued between the terrorists and the troops. Defence Minister of Kyrgyzstan flew to the spot to assess the situation on the order of the President.59

Immediately after the terrorist incursions had taken place, a group of American mountain climbers entered the area. The insurgents took these climbers hostage, but they escaped by overpowering and killing an armed guard.60 Though, this fortuitous escape avoided the possibility of direct US involvement in the

56 Ibid
57 Ibid
58 Interfax, Moscow, 11 August 2000, rep. in SWB/SU/3917/G/2, 12 August 2000.
59 Ibid.
hostilities, the capture of the Americans prompted the US State Department to include the IMU in its official list of terrorist organisations. 61

Nevertheless over a month passed before the military drove the fighters from the Uzbekistani territory. On 12 August, the ministers of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan started joint military meetings on the effort to fight the insurgents in Batken. Military representatives of Tajikistan also participated in the meeting being an aggrieved party. 62 Two days later, insurgents withdrew under assault from the Kyrgyz armed forces. The commander of the Southern group of Kyrgyz army troops Colonel Orn1akoyev said that among the dead guerrillas on the border were Uzbeks, Tajiks, Arabs, Afghan, Taliban and Chechens fighters. All of them belonged to IMU. 63

It was reported in the middle of August that up to 800 international terrorists were concentrated in Tajik regions bordering Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan and were ready to invade the Uzbek and Kyrgyz territories “at any time”. Kyrgyz Security Council Secretary Balot Dzhamuzakov confirmed that the supporters of IMU had combat aircraft supplied by the Afghan Taliban movement. Namangani, who controlled 70 percent of the drug traffic from Afghanistan to Central Asia, was trying to undermine stability in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, according to Dzhamuzakov. 64

Security and the law enforcement agencies of the four countries agreed to set up a Rapid Reaction Group to coordinate efforts to trace and destroy the militant groups. Dzhamuzakov further added that the militants invading Kyrgyz territory

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61 Only 28 groups worldwide have been assigned this designation. The activities attributed to IMU are actually generally more in line with many more militant opposition groups that have not been placed on this select list. Cited in ICG Asia Report, op. cit., for the list of the US State Department Announcement, see http://www.usembassy.org.uk/terror121.html.
62 ITAR-TASS, Moscow, 12 August 2000, rep. in SWB/SU/3918/G/4, 14 August 2000
63 Russian Public TV, Moscow, 14 August 2000, rep. in Ibid.
64 Interfax, Moscow, 15 August 2000, rep. in Ibid.
were financed by international terrorist Osama bin Laden. Quoting one report from the Kyrgyz intelligence sources, he said that the leaders of IMU, Taliban, and Osama bin Laden had met in Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan where they discussed the operations to undermine stability in Central Asia, which "means the beginning of hostilities against Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and possibly Kazakhstan".\textsuperscript{65}

There was a pressing need to set up an operational group with the participation of the military from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to hunt down and destroy the gangs of international terrorists who numbered about 700 to 800 in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, split into small groups of 40 to 50 people, and ready to join hostilities against these two states".\textsuperscript{66} This news, on the very next day, was contested by the Tajik authorities who denied that there was any such concentration of terrorists on the border with Kyrgyzstan.\textsuperscript{67}

In August 2000, some Kyrgyz soldiers had managed to lay their hands on the offensive plans of the extremists; they were confronted on the river Khodjin-Achkan and suffered heavy casualties. On interrogation of the prisoners, it was revealed that they were supporters of Juma Namangani. According to the Chairman of the Council of Security, Balat Dzhamuzakov, extremists like Rustan Adullin, a Bishkir who came from the village of Aznalino Kurgan region of Russia. Apparently, he was trained for three months in a camp run by citizens of Pakistan. After the interrogation, it became clear that in the Tajik Pamirs\textsuperscript{68} and in the district of Talimgokh, there were many training camps for the extremists.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{66} ITAR-TASS, Moscow, 16 August 2000, rep. in SWB/SU/3922/G/2, 18 August 2000.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid
Similar theories were also forwarded by Uzbek intelligence, which said that the militants underwent training in camps in Afghanistan. Then in small groups they slipped into Tajikistan's mountains to move on to their final destination, 'Fergana Valley', through Kyrgyzstan.69

Terrorist activities, however, continued and deliberate attempts were made to infiltrate into the territory of Kyrgyzstan. Two groups of terrorists (about 50-60 strong) made attempts to attack the Jily-Suu post in Liya-Liyak region in 2000. Simultaneously, attacks were unleashed from three different directions in the areas of Saddle-point Jangiabad, Jily-Suu and Abramov glacier. Kyrgyz Air Force attacked areas of probable concentration of these terrorists. The armed forces of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan acting jointly successfully countered various intruding groups in Tashkent area.70

By the end of September 2000, the Kyrgyz army managed to flush out terrorists from the glacier on the Kyrgyz-Tajik frontier. Some terrorist units which stayed in Kyrgyz territory were destroyed. All the passes were closed.71

Batken incident was one of the major terrorist incidents which had a tremendous bearing on the psychology and strategic considerations of Central Asian region. Askar Aytmatov, who was the Advisor on International Affairs to President of Kyrgyzstan republic, summed it up very accurately. He wrote, “the 1999, Batken incident in south Kyrgyzstan was a serious test for the whole of our peaceful nation. At that time, Kyrgyzstan was not ready for military action or neutralisation of armed bandit groups of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. They captured hostages including Japanese citizens and demanded that the authorities provide them a hefty amount and a corridor for free access to

70 Alexander Knyazev, op. cit, p. 83.
neighbouring Uzbekistan. Still, at the cost of human lives, we succeeded in displacing the terrorist groups from our territory and released all the hostages they captured. In the autumn of 2000, these events occurred again but with the military technical support of the friendly countries, the Kyrgyz army resisted the efforts of the international terrorists to intervene on our territory again”.

“The Batken events of 1999-2000 have again drawn the attention of the world to the strengthening of the ‘Islamic factor’ in Central Asia. Unfortunately, there is every reason to assume that in the near future, similar events will be repeated. The current military political situation in the south of our country is the result of the intersection of a number of urgent problems, which cover all of Central Asia”. 72

A number of people were arrested in East Kazakhstan oblast on 19 November 1999, who were reported to be ethnic Russians and veterans of the Afghan and Chechen wars. They had allegedly been planning an armed rebellion in the town of Pavlodar in the north Kazakhstan oblast and Oskune and Leningorsk in east, with the aim of setting up an ‘Independent Republic of Russian Altai’. It was further alleged that the rebels had secured the support of a number of prominent local residents. 73

Long after the Tajik civil war, on 16 February 2000, a powerful bomb exploded in Dushanbe which killed the Deputy Security Minister, Shamsullo Dzabirov, who was also a candidate for the legislative elections. The Mayor of Dushanbe, Muhammad Sayed Ubaydulloyay, was travelling in the same car as Dzabirov but escaped unhurt. President Rakhmanov described the attack as an act of terrorism aimed at destabilising the socio-political situation before the

73 Keesing’s Record of World Events, Vol. 45, No. 11, November 1999, p. 43257.
parliamentary elections. In the same month, an attack was made on the car of the first Deputy Prime Minister, and UTO member Ali Akbar Turadzhonzada, as it travelled in a motorcade from Dushanbe to his hometown of Kofarnikhon. No one was injured. In Dushanbe, on 7 February, three powerful explosions occurred in the central places. Asia Plus News Agency reported that the first explosion occurred outside a house at 70, Rudoki Avenue, the second between the Avesto Hostel, where the Russian embassy is situated and the Koh-I-Vahdát (Place of Unity) complex. The explosive was planted in a square. The third explosion occurred between the buildings of Tajikistan’s Tax Committee and Pamir Cinema. No one was hurt or killed.

Though Kazakhstan has been the less extremist and terrorist prone republic of Central Asia, there have been several incidents which do not rule out the intention of the terrorists to spread their wings to Kazakhstan.

A senior official of the south Kazakhstan told the media on 26 October 2000 that in the run-up to the celebrations of the 1500th anniversary of Turkestan (in south Kazakhstan region), Kazakh special services in conjunction with the law enforcement agencies rendered harmless several armed extremists. He further added that after receiving a tip-off, officers from the National Security Committee Department (NSCD) for south Kazakhstan region found a Kalashnikov rifle and two full magazines in a private house in Turkestan on 13 October. Along with the

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75 Ibid.
76 Asia Plus News Agency, Dushanbe, 8 February 2000, rep. in SWB/SU/3761/G/2. 11 February 2000.
77 Interfax-Kazakhstan News Agency (henceforth Interfax-Kazakhstan), Almaty, 26 October 2000, rep. in SWB/SU/3983/G/1, 28 October 2000.
assault rifle, the security personnel seized literature and leaflets calling for a *jihad*, in Kazak, Arabic and Uzbek languages.\(^ {78}\)

The *Interfax*-Kazakhstan News Agency also reported that several days before the celebrations, leaflets calling for a *jihad* against the ‘infidels’, the overthrow of the existing state order and the establishment in Central Asian countries of a single Islamic state were found in the Central market, at the railway station and in Turkestan’s main mosque.\(^ {79}\) Tulebay Kulbayev, an official, also told that another two local residents were detained in Turkestan, from whom a handmade explosive device, detonator and drugs were seized. According to his information, one of the detained men was a member of Hizb-ut-Tahrir.

Tajik security forces, on 4 October, carried out a special operation to detain a group of terrorists in Karamov Street in Dushanbe. The terrorists put up armed resistance and fired at the security officers. The terrorists intended to carry out a number of terrorist acts on festive days.\(^ {80}\) One terrorist was killed, second was wounded and a third was arrested.\(^ {81}\)

At a conference in Bishkek in March 2001, the Chairman of the Kyrgyz National Security Service, Bolat Dzhamuzakov, told the journalists that about 3000 militants were undergoing training at bases in Afghanistan and that they might try to break into the border at any moment.\(^ {82}\)

As late as on 8 September 2001, terrorist activities went on in its different forms. On that day, the Tajik Minister of Culture, Abdurahim Rahimov, was shot

\(^{78}\) Ibid
\(^{79}\) Ibid
\(^{80}\) 6 November is the Tajik Constitution Day.
dead outside his residence in Dushanbe by a lone gunman who then escaped.\textsuperscript{83} The very next day, a young man identified as Ghaffar Abdughafforov died when a country made bomb exploded as he was carrying it to the Frunze Central Stadium in Dushanbe. The stadium was hosting festivities to mark the 10\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the country’s independence and was attended by the President and other senior officials.\textsuperscript{84}

After 11 September 2001, there was a remarkable shift in the security scenario all over the world, the focal point being Afghanistan, Central Asian countries and Pakistan. The attack on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon headquarters in US by the Al-Qaeda and Taliban forces created a tremendous after-effect, resulting in America supported by UK and most the countries in the world taking up cudgels against terrorism, particularly the Taliban and their ‘guest’ fundamentalist terrorist Osama bin Laden, the chief of Al-Qaeda. In the American effort in stamping out terrorism, the Central Asian republics wholeheartedly extended their support. There was greater action by these republics against their own suspected terrorists and the terrorist organisations after 11 September episode. The American intervention in Afghanistan brought the dissipation and collapse of Taliban and also brought the end of the intervention by the other foreign actors in the region. It had its direct impact on Central Asian republics, as a result of which, incidences of terrorism came down heavily in these republics and the republics also found excuses to heavily crackdown on their religious, separatist fundamentalist groups.

Though the incidences of terrorism have lessened, there is still a growing fear of these latent fundamentalist groups reappearing anytime. Moreover, the

\textsuperscript{83} Kessing's, op. cit., September 2001, p. 44344.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.
tendencies and their perpetrators mostly at present have gone underground waiting for the suitable moment.

Militancy and terrorism in Central Asia has survived on many factors. But the basic and primary requirement for such activities is huge amount of fund. In Central Asia, this requirement was fulfilled basically from the unholy nexus that existed between terrorism and narcotics.

**Drug Trade**

In the post Cold War era, the security scenario in the world and particularly in Central Asia has undergone a drastic change. While the old jeopardising tendencies have weakened, several new tendencies have cropped up. Jose Cintro observed that the Cold War had suppressed "many potential third world conflicts. Their geo-political entrenchment will ensure that other conflicts will probably arise from de-compression and from a loosening of the controls and self-controls exercised by two super powers." After the Cold War, the notion of security has undergone a tremendous change. As Barry Buzan noted, the traditional notion of security i.e. the security of a state in relation to external actors, has no relevance in recent years. In fact, internal factors like environmental problems, scarcity of resources, weak institutional structures of governance, proliferation of small arms and drugs, cross-border terrorism - problems once referred to as domestic law and order problems - have assumed great significance in recent years and posed an insuperable challenge to national security.

While the drug trade promotes political, social and economic instability, it is also true that, nation-states, for a variety of reasons, become prone to a flourishing

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drug business by allowing it to feed on the weakness prevalent within the state system. There are many such factors which have allowed the five newly independent states of Central Asia to become major drug production and trafficking centres, so much so that the area is being referred to as "a new Columbia".  

The traditional poppy growing areas in Central Asia were Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Cannabis also grows in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Until the early 1970s, Kyrgyzstan produced some 16 percent of the world's legal opium. When the Soviet Union banned the opium production in 1974, legal cultivation ended in Kyrgyzstan republic. Neither the mountainous terrain of Tajikistan nor Uzbekistan's arid climate provides a hospitable environment for opium or cannabis cultivation nor neither country has ever been a major producer.

Afghanistan has always been an opposite story in this regard. In the 1980s, the Mujahideen fighting against the Soviet occupation were largely financed by drug cultivation and trafficking. In 1998, about 1400 tonnes of opium was produced, accounting for 25 percent of the world's opium output, legal and illegal. Between 1992 and 1995, 2200-2400 metric tonnes, in 1996, 2250 tonnes, in 1999, 4.600 tonnes of opium were produced by Afghanistan.

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88 UN Information Service, Central Asian Republics, UN-launched Sub-regional Drug Control Plan, UN Press Release, SOC/NAR/741, 29 April 1996. A certain amount of opium is legally declared and produced in the world for legitimate medical purposes under strict international legal controls, notably the single Convention on Narcotics Drugs and Associated Agreements.
89 Ramtanu Maitra, "Afghan Drugs: Gold to the Taliban", Strategic Studies, EIR, 8 September 2000, p. 36.
90 Ibid
Though theoretically anti-Islamic, poppy cultivation was continued under Taliban regime for its financial importance to the Taliban movement. They derived approximately 20 million US dollar or more each year as taxes on poppy crops.91

The region’s traditional drug routes to lucrative western markets were through Iran and Pakistan. In the post-Soviet period, the route changed through the Central Asian republics during 1992-97, through Kharog-Osh route and the Panj and Muscovskii route.92 The UNDCP, in its report, estimates that 80 percent of Europe’s heroin flows through Central Asian republics.93

In 1991, Tajik Interior Ministry apprehended 10.9 kg of drugs, but in 1995, it went up to 1750 kg. In 1998-99, the total seizure was 1949 kg.94 In 2000, Tajikistan seized 1883 kg heroin and 4773 kg opium. By 1 September 2001, 3033.5 kg heroin had already been seized. The amount of confiscated narcotics has risen from 113 kg to 1.5 tonnes over the past five years since 1996. In 2001, there was a big surprise as regards the nature of the seized products. While the amount of heroin seized went up sharply, the opium seizure came down drastically.95 The drop in confiscated opium coupled with the rise of confiscated heroin in Tajikistan indicates that opium is being replaced by heroin as the major drug export from

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94 Asia Plus, Dushanbe, 12 October 1999, rep. in SWB/SU/3665/G/2, 14 October 1999.
95 From January through June 2001, Kyrgyz officials confiscated 58 kg of heroin; Kazakh officials seized 57 kg and Uzbek officials 160kg during that period, Tajik officials seized 1,745 kg of heroin. At the same time, the amount of opium being impounded fell from close to 5,000 kg in 2000 to a mere 762 kg for the first half of 2001, State Drug Control Agency Report, Republic of Tajikistan, July 2001.
Afghanistan and in turn, points to an increase in heroin processing laboratories in that country.\textsuperscript{96}

In Kyrgyzstan also, a large amount of drugs is produced. At the same time, it acts as a transit for drugs traffic. Here, the militant groups also support narcotics trade. Chu Valley and Issyuk Kul are the two main drug processing centres. Around 40,000 hectares of land are under cultivation of Cannabis in Kyrgyzstan.\textsuperscript{97} Osh is emerging as an important transit point. The thriving drug trade in Osh is evident from the flourishing living style of the people.\textsuperscript{98} In 1991, only 5 kg of narcotics were seized, but in 1995, it rose to 627 kg. It was revealed by the Bureau of International Trade and Security that in 1997, around 700 tonnes of opium came from Afghanistan to Kyrgyzstan. In 1998, it went up to 3000 tonnes.\textsuperscript{99} In Kyrgyzstan, 60 percent of the adolescents (around 14 years of age) are in danger of being addicted, and 11 percent of the respondents reported having used narcotics in 1995, compared to 3 percent in 1994.\textsuperscript{100}

In Uzbekistan, the drug menace is as grave as in any other Central Asian republic. Due to its strategic location and communication networks with other republics, Uzbekistan is an attractive transit for drugs traffic. Although a small amount of narcotics is produced in Samarkand region, it acts as a major route for transport of drugs. Narcotics transport takes place through a number of routes in

\textsuperscript{96} One kilogram of heroin brings Central Asia drug smugglers about six times the money that one kg of opium brings. While it takes ten kg of opium to produce one kg of heroin, to which, the cost of the precursor chemicals must be added, the result is a much more compact as well as valuable commodity for the traffickers, cited in ICG Asia, op. cit., p. 3.


Uzbekistan. One is from Afghanistan to Uzbekistan via the Gorno-Badakhsan region of Tajikistan, through Kyrgyzstan's Osh, into Uzbekistan's Andijan region. Another route goes directly from Afghanistan through the Uzbek city of Termez. In addition to the above, the drug producing region of Tajikistan lies just across the Uzbekistan border. All these led to an increase in drug trafficking in Uzbekistan. It has been reported in ITAR-TASS, the Russian News Agency that around 29 tonnes of drugs have been seized and destroyed since 1991.\textsuperscript{101}

Kazakhstan occupies a prominent position in narcotics production and transport. In the southern part of Kazakhstan, huge areas of land are under narcotics cultivation. In 1997, around 500 metric tonnes of marijuana were cultivated in the Chu Valley in southern Kazakhstan.\textsuperscript{102} Drug cartels use Kazakhstan as a transit for traffic, which originates in Pakistan, China and Afghanistan. According to the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs, 93 percent of the marijuana in Russian drug market comes from Kazakhstan and 85 percent of Russia's hashish and 73 percent of its opium are either grown in Kazakhstan or pass through it.\textsuperscript{103} According to the Interior Ministry, 17,000 drug users were brought to book in 1995. In 1996, their number was 1678.\textsuperscript{104} In the first five months of 1997, security forces seized around 17 tonnes of drugs. This indicated a significant rise in drug smuggling to 12 tonnes seized in 1996.\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{101} Irina Andinayeva, "International Drug Trafficking and Central Asia: Forced Involvement", Building Common Future: Indian and Uzbek Perspectives on Security and Economic Issues, IDSA, New Delhi, p. 81.
\textsuperscript{102} Narcotics in Central Asia, op. cit., p. 19.
\textsuperscript{105} Interfax, Moscow, 30 June 1997, rep. in SWB/SU/3451/G/2, 3 July 1997.
Kazakhstan’s Drugs Control Authority noted that about 1,38,000 hectares of land in the Chu Valley were under drugs cultivation. In 1998, there were 18,579 drug related offences. Similarly, in 1998, the drugs sale increased by around 90 percent.\textsuperscript{106} In 1999, the Interior Ministry (Inter-Regional Department) seized over 1000 kg marijuana and about 40 kg heroin. Over 260 kg drugs were seized from January to May 2000.

Turkmenistan is also plagued by drug trafficking. The smugglers use Turkmenistan route to transport narcotics from Afghanistan to Europe. Not only is the narcotic trafficking on rise, many areas of Turkmenistan are widely used for drug productions. The Ahal Velayat region, where the capital Ashgabat is situated and the custom posts of Lebap are areas where large amount of drugs are cultivated.

However, in recent years in the Karakum desert, poppy cultivation is also going on. In October 1997, the government of Turkmenistan seized around 78.5 kg narcotics.\textsuperscript{107} An estimate shows that some 80 tonnes of heroin enter Turkmenistan each year with about 30 percent staying in the country.\textsuperscript{108} In 2000, the National Security Committee of Turkmenistan seized slightly less than 2900 kg of opium and 220 kg of heroin down from the previous year’s total of 4,600 kg respectively. The reduction has largely been attributed to drought and bad harvesting.\textsuperscript{109}

The amount seized constitutes, of course, only a small fraction of what is believed to transit Turkmenistan, and the country’s neighbours, who are undertaking more serious efforts to curb the drug flow. They are critical of Asghabat’s uncooperative attitude. Their officials speculate that the transit traffic is

\textsuperscript{107} Narcotics in Central Asia, op. cit., p. 21.
\textsuperscript{109} “Turkmen Addiction Rising”, \textit{Institute for War and Peace Reporting}, RCA No. 64, 10 August 2001.
facilitated by Turkmenistan's isolationistic foreign policy as well as its links to both the Taliban and Northern Alliance.  

Though the drugs trade in Central Asia has emerged largely because of the financial advantages it has for the various guerrilla forces, there are also several other reasons for its growth, prominent among them is the economic reason. The countries have been forced into the drug trade due to their failure to find legitimate means of making a living in their shattered economies. Many peasants cultivate narcotics as few other crops can provide the economic gains that come with narcotics cultivation. Whether the involvement of the low-salaried government law enforcement officers, or the 201st Division of Russian military in illicit drug trade, or the involvement of women in this business, they are all linked to poverty and unemployment, further aggravated by poor agriculture, withdrawal of subsidies, poor governance and porous borders among the states. The importance of the drugs trade lies in the fact that the terrorist organisations and the radical fundamentalist organisations have been able to sustain their activities out of the profits earned from drug trade. The Kyrgyz officials have charged that the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan is little more than a group of drug runners. Even Taliban, in spite of its strong belief in staunch Islamic way of belief and faith, had to sustain its activities on the basis of the funding received from drug taxes and drug trading. Though towards 2000 AD they were under severe international pressure to curb the drug related activities, they, by then, were flushed with enough money to sustain their campaign. Even during the Tajik civil war, warring factions on both sides were believed to have engaged in the drug trade to support their operations.

112 ICG Asia, op. cit., p. 12.
Small Arms Proliferations

Apart from the illegal narcotics industry, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons have contributed immensely to the growth of terrorism and militancy in the region. The proliferation of arms provides two kinds of support to militancy. One, in their operations, the militants who basically are guerrilla fighters, resort to light weapons and small arms to counter the security forces. Furthermore, they also use them to create impact on the civilian masses. Secondly, the trade in arms and weapons provide them with the much needed funds they require to sustain their activities. It is much like drugs which is treated as high value commodity with readymade buyers. Drugs and small arms proliferations are both intricately interlinked subjects. Both are complimentary and supplementary to each other.

There is no precise and formal definition of small arms and light weapons. However, according to Peter Chalk, an expert on trans-national terrorism at the Rand Corporation in Washington, they refer to direct fire weapons that can be carried by an individual on a small vehicle and that have a secondary capability to defeat light armour and helicopter. The NATO definition fixes the size power at 50 mm calibre. They include not only rifles and guns, but also shoulder fired anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons. Today, it is these weapons that form the bulk of the shipment that transit into conflict areas.

Drug trafficking is invariably linked to the spread of small arms in the producing or transit countries. In many areas of the world, non-state actors like insurgent groups, separatist forces, local warlords, and drug cartels have emerged as major users of arms. The availability and use of sophisticated weapons has contributed to the erosion of state authority. There is a growing worldwide

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incidence of armed violence within and between groups, tribes and communities. The countries of Central Asia are no exception to this worldwide phenomenon. With their transparent frontiers, the Central Asian republics are bound to be smuggling routes for large arms shipments as drugs and guns are transported using the same clandestine routes.\(^{115}\)

Though the history of small arms proliferation in Central Asia is long, the present phenomenon is a continuation of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. In order to counter the Soviet forces, the US supplied the Mujahideen with weapons worth 250 million dollars in 1985, 630 million dollars in 1987 with matching contributions from Saudi Arabia.\(^{116}\) The US, Britain and China supplied weapons ranging from shoulder-launched surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) to rifles. Prior to 1965, the USA supplied Soviet made SA-7 SAMs. After 1985, it supplied FIM-92, Stinger SAMs and large quantities of rifles and Britain supplied Blown Pipe SAMs; China supplied the Mujahideen a range of small arms.\(^{117}\)

Not only USA, but also China and Saudi Arabia supplied weapons to the Mujahideen. Pakistan also reportedly supplied 40,000 rockets and 700 trucks of ammunitions to its favourite warlord Hekmatyar after August 1990.\(^{118}\)

After Soviet withdrawal, followed by Nazibullah’s deposition and the capture of Afghanistan by Taliban, the weapons fell into the hands of the Afghan militia. More arms procured by the Taliban using of drug money finally found their way into the Central Asian republics through several Islamic fundamentalist

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\(^{115}\) Sumita Kumar, op. cit., p. 217.


\(^{118}\) Bennett, R. Rubin, op. cit., in Tara Kartha, op. cit, p. 1280.
organisations like IRP, IMU, HT and others. Their link with the Afghan militia and the aid from Afghanistan in terms of arms, ammunition and other logistical aspects has already been discussed in this chapter. But a country wise analysis of the degree of the arms proliferation would provide a deeper understanding of its role in promoting militancy in the region.

Tajikistan is worst affected by the arms proliferation in the region. The internal conflict which started in Tajikistan in 1992, led to a large scale use of weapons, fuelled by supplies from Afghanistan. It has been reported that, around 10,000 weapons distributed among government forces came from Moscow and Uzbekistan. On the other hand, Afghanistan was the main weapon source for the Tajik opposition forces.\textsuperscript{119}

Even the Russian forces took advantage of the volatile situation by selling their weapons to various opposition warring factions for huge sums of money.\textsuperscript{120} Well informed sources in Tashkent commenting on the easy availability of weapons in Tajikistan stated that, “a Kalashnikov sells for just 100 dollars in Dushanbe”.\textsuperscript{121} In recent years, most of the small arms came from Afghanistan. The Tajik branch of Islamic Renaissance Party maintained very close relationship with the Afghan Mujahideen leaders who trained Islamic militants in their camps. Ahmed Shah Masood was known to have trained some 70,000 Tajik rebels in Kunduz province of Afghanistan. According to KGB officials, Hekmatyar armed


\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
400 IRP militants. This testifies the role of Afghanistan in spreading Islamic fundamentalism and proliferating small arms.

The most important problem for Tajikistan is how to disarm the armed militant groups after the signing of peace accord between the government and the UTO. Both the parties to the conflict believe that the country faces danger from proliferation of small arms and light weapons and it should be controlled. Despite the signing of the General Agreement on Peace and National Reconciliation in Moscow in June 1997 between the government of Tajikistan and UTO, the disarmament process has not succeeded. For example, armed teenaged boys who were brought up during the years of fighting have known nothing but conflict since they were young. Also weapons seem to be so widely spread that many working on the farms in the countryside, are engaged in ‘part time’ fighting. This makes it impossible to register them and their arms.

According to United Nations Mission for Tajikistan (UNMOT), most of the UTO fighters were not gathered in the designated assembly areas, and even dispersed more than one year, after the peace agreement was signed. The 5,979 fighters handed over only 1,911 weapons, most of them obsolete. The ratio of fighters to weapon was 3:1.

The above figures show that large numbers of weapons are still in the possession of various groups and it may pose a thumping challenge to the security of Tajikistan. The radical wing of Islamic Renaissance Party, heavily armed with

124 Cited in Ibid.
125 Buckhard Conrad, op. cit.
AK-47 assault rifles, landmines, explosives and rockets, amassed funds mainly through drug trafficking.\textsuperscript{126}

As far back as July 1992, border guards shot down two infiltrators to Tajikistan from whom three assault rifles, a sub-machine gun and 10 hand grenades were recovered. In 1994, “Operation Mak” in northern Tajikistan resulted in the seizure of 200 tonnes of opium and cannabis and in the arrest of dozens of well armed gangs.\textsuperscript{127} Officials from Tajikistan continued to note that Afghan opium had been traded for arms and supplies on the Tajik-Afghan border.\textsuperscript{128} This is further substantiated with the fact that in 1995, more than 10,000 automatic rifles, rifles, machine guns, grenade launchers, mines, hand grenades and even one anti-aircraft gun with an armoured personnel carrier were seized.\textsuperscript{129} One official even said that the Tajik civil war was instigated by the Tajik drug lords who find it easier to fish in troubled waters.\textsuperscript{130}

Kazakhstan is also facing a threat from illicit circulation of small arms. In March 1995, a large scale preventive operation named “Law and Order” involving about 45,000 people, many of whom were brought in to assist law enforcement officials, resulted in seizure of a number of weapons and 70 kg narcotics.\textsuperscript{131} There is a growing number of firearms in circulation in Kazakhstan and the increasing use of these weapons in criminal activities. In 1995, there were 167 organised criminal groups. The groups comprised 2500 people and possessed over 500

\textsuperscript{126} Jane’s World Insurgency and Terrorism, September-December 1999, p. 186.
\textsuperscript{127} Report of the International Narcotics Control Board, Vienna, p. 54.
\textsuperscript{130} Central Asian Post, 30 January 1997.
\textsuperscript{131} Sumita Kumar, op. cit., p. 257.
firearms.\textsuperscript{132} Apart from organised mafia groups that are involved in trafficking of arms and drugs, the biggest danger that the Kazakh society is facing today is the emergence of radical Islamic fundamentalist groups which possess sophisticated arms and ammunitions. The Chairman of the Committee of National Security, Alnor Musaev Caawly, made a statement on Islamic fundamentalism in Kazakhstan in October 1999.\textsuperscript{133} On 25 May 2000, the Kazakhstan National Security Committee detained 16 Afghan and Pakistani nationals on their arrival at Almaty airport from Karachi.\textsuperscript{134} It has been alleged that Afghans and Pakistanis play a major role in spreading Islamic fundamentalism in Kazakhstan. Their arrest proves the charges made by General Musaev. In September 2000, Kazakhstan police killed four Uighur separatist militiamen charged with murder of two policemen. These show the potential danger posed by small arms in Kazakhstan. In fact, Kazakhstan is emerging as a hub of illegal transportation of small arms and drugs to Europe and other CIS countries.

Uzbekistan had been, other than Tajikistan, the most terrorism prone republic in the Central Asian region. In fact, it is presently the principal target of militants who are operating in the region. The presence of many Islamic militant groups like Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Hizb-ut-Tahrir, Islamic Renaissance Party, Adolat, Islam Loshkars etc. and their objective of establishing an Islamic state in Uzbekistan through armed struggle, led to increasing use of small arms, partly aided by Afghanistan and neighbouring Islamic countries. On 21 November, Interfax News Agency reported that four grenade like detonators, two TT

\textsuperscript{132} Phil Williams, op. cit., pp. 10-11.
\textsuperscript{134} Central Asia Monitor, No. 4, 2000, p. 33.
handguns with cartridges, a silencer and a certain amount of marijuana were recovered from a passenger travelling in Valgograd - Tashkent train. An Uzbek Interior Ministry official said in this context, that the person was taking the arms to the Fergana Valley. Moreover, Osama bin Laden, the Saudi Arabian terrorist had allocated 20 million dollars to destabilise the situation in Fergana region of Uzbekistan. It is understood that this money was transferred in terms of arms and weapons which were to be used for the said purpose. Moreover, the close link between Taliban and the Islamic fundamentalist organisations of Uzbekistan was quite conducive to such proliferations of arms and weapons aided by drug trafficking.

The problem of small arms is also grave in Turkmenistan. In January-March 1996, national security officers and border guards ran in on members of these armed groups. During these operations, 12 automatic guns were confiscated apart from narcotics. Although Turkmenistan is relatively free from the problem of Islamic fundamentalism, its location facilitates an easy transportation of arms and narcotics from Afghanistan to other CIS countries.

Kyrgyzstan is also no different case. According to the Kyrgyz Television report on 19 April 1997, alongside narcotics, the arms trade is also gathering momentum. The report said that the anti-narcotics forces seized two ground-to-air missiles, two anti-tank bombs, an anti-aircraft device, seven hand-grenades, an AK-47 gun with 100 cartridges and a 20-loader “Pechkin”. In recent years, some Wahhabi fundamentalist groups have also become active in Kyrgyzstan. In 1998,

136 Interfax, Moscow, 17 August 2000, rep. in SWB/SU/3923/G/1 and G/2, 19 August 2000
they exploded two bombs in Osh. It has also been noted that the drug smugglers who are quite active in Kyrgyzstan have equipped themselves with sophisticated weapons, which match with that of security forces. They are able to handle hi-tech small weapons.

In Batken, where a major case of intrusion took place in 1999, the Kyrgyz border guards seized more than 3 tonnes of arms hidden near the village Khadjiahachkan. The cache included four grenade launchers, several missile launchers, and a large number of anti-personal and anti-tank mines.139

Thus, large or small, huge or less, small arms and weapons have proliferated in all the republics of the Central Asian region. Coupled with the trafficking of narcotic drugs, the arms proliferation has created a dangerous situation in the region and encouraged the terrorist and militant activities. Loaded with religious fanaticism, funded profusely by narcotics trade and arms trade, flushed with all kinds of latest arms, operating in an area with huge numbers of followers due to grinding poverty and unemployment, divided hatefully into ethnic and tribal communities and poorly challenged by the weak political authorities, the militants have created a scenario in this region that is not only critical but also volatile in nature.

Role of External Factors

While all the above factors have largely contributed to the emergence, growth and perpetuation of militancy and terrorism in the region, one other factor that has played a silent but crucial role behind this is the involvement of the neighbouring states, in the affairs of the region.

Afghanistan has been the single most important external factor in the growing instability in Central Asia. Afghanistan has long been linked to Central

139 Central Asia Monitor, No. 4, 2000, p. 33.
Asia, historically and culturally. Over the centuries, the two regions have been joined by various empires. The ethnic, social, cultural and political ties between Afghanistan and Central Asia are thus deeply rooted, and the give and take between the two regions today can not be seen as an aberration of history but rather as a continuation of the historical process that was briefly interrupted by the seventy four years of the Soviet Union.140

The Taliban played host to most of the extremist Islamic groups in the Muslim world, and their motives have had clearly been militant. In Afghanistan, these groups fought for Taliban, and in return, they receive military training, battle experience, weapons, funding, access to the drug trade, and contacts with the whole world of Islamic radicalism.

In the 1980s, the American CIA funded arms to the Afghan Mujahideen via Pakistan’s Interservices Intelligence (ISI), the ISI gave preference to the Islamic radical parties in Afghanistan, which could more easily be turned into an engine of anti-Soviet jihad, and pushed aside moderate Afghan nationalist and Islamic parties. The Taliban were the heirs of that war and that favouritism.141

Taliban’s international Islamic agenda went into high gear after aligning with Osama bin Laden and other non-Afghan Islamic groups following the former’s capture of Kabul in 1996.142 Tens of thousands of Pakistani militants and the thousands of Central Asians, Arabs, Africans, and the East-Asians joined the Taliban since that time. This consolidated the global perspective of Islamic radicalism that the Taliban propounded. It pushed to expand its goals beyond Afghanistan into Central Asia.143 The Taliban, therefore, needed these foreign

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140 Ahmed Rashid, Jihad, op. cit., p. 209.
141 Ibid.
fighters especially the Central Asians to expand its ideology and these Central Asian fighters needed Taliban for sanctuary.\textsuperscript{144}

Thus, before the Taliban, other Afghanistan rulers were involved in Central Asian states due to their clan affiliations and also because they had their bases in Central Asia. Rashid Dostum, an Uzbek, Ahmad Shah Masood, a Tajik and two other warlords operated from their bases in Central Asia. After that, the Taliban tried to push through its agenda of Islamism on the basis of their interpretation of Islam by promoting the radical groups. The organization like IRP, IMU, HT, and Adolat all had their plans drafted in Kabul.

In sum, it can be said that more than the Central Asians themselves, Afghanistan has had radicalised the Islamic followers there who have taken recourse to violence and terrorist methods toeing the line of the Taliban to achieve their objectives.

Another country which was extremely involved in the radicalisation of Central Asian radical groups providing them all kinds of support was Pakistan. Though the role of Pakistan is not as direct as that of the Taliban, still it was deeply involved in Central Asia.

Pakistan not only organised Taliban but also made it survive amongst Afghanistan’s warring factions. Indeed, fear of Pakistan’s influence in the region had been a critical factor in the mobilisation of the Central Asian states (with the exception of Turkmenistan) against the Taliban.\textsuperscript{145} Central Asian leaders also believe that the ISI had until recently been supporting the IMU and other radical Islamic groups in their countries. In the 1980s, the military regime of Zia-ul-Haq

\textsuperscript{145} Ahmed Rashid,\textit{ Jihad}, op. cit., p. 212.
encouraged the Afghan Mujahideen attack Central Asia and the CIA supplied arms to the Mujahideen for this purpose through the ISI.

Although successive Pakistani governments have repeatedly promised the Central Asian leaders that they would curb the support given by the ISI to Pakistan’s Islamic parties, the Taliban and other militant groups in Central Asia and forbid Central Asian militants to study in Pakistani madrassahs, Islamabad failed to implement these measures out of self-interest and the fear of an Islamic backlash within Pakistan. In recent years, Central Asian and Uighur militants have been pouring into Pakistan to study in the huge network of Deobandi madrassahs. The IMU, the HT, the Chechen rebels have sent many of their young men to study in Pakistan, whilst Pakistani Islamic parties continue to show off their Central Asian students as proof of their influence in the region. Even more than the battlefields in Afghanistan, this madrassah education and the culture of jihad it inspires are turning out ideologically committed Islamic radicals for future fighting in Central Asia.

After the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, Zia-ul-Haq’s reference to the need for strategic depth in Central Asia as well as Afghanistan took on a greater significance. In 1991, again the elected government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif sought a new relationship with Central Asia based on economic interests which got undermined again by the arrival in Central Asia of Pakistani Islamic parties, who viewed the region as virgin territory, ripe for recruitment to their particular brand of Islam. Qazi Hussain Ahmad, the chief of the Jamiat-i-Islami party urged Sharif to provide Central Asia with Islamic guidance rather than

\[\text{\footnotesize 146 Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 147 ICG Asia Report, op. cit., p. 41.}\]
economic aid. At the same time, several Pakistani and Arab groups sympathetic to Wahhabism, were being funded by Saudi Arabia to make inroads into Central Asia. The Pakistani extremist groups like Lashkar-i-Jhangvi and Sipah-i-Sahaba initially funded by Saudi Arabia have militants fighting with the IMU.

By 1994, when the Taliban emerged, Pakistan instead of constructively being engaged with Central Asia opted to support Taliban which was looked down upon suspiciously by Central Asian powers. Further, it is widely believed that ISI’s discreet support of IMU, which included giving refuge to Yuldeshev in 1990s and allowing Namangani’s frequent clandestine visits to Pakistan, had fairly remained consistent. Yuldeshev even opened an office in Peshawar from where he operated for quite a long time. The ISI still sees IMU as a force that may not be strong enough to seize power in Uzbekistan but that can nonetheless be a catalyst in the shake up of Central Asia’s leadership.

Despite Pakistan’s persistent denials that it supports the IMU, until 11 September 2001, the military regime appeared set on a course where it followed a state policy of friendly relations with the Central Asian governments but at the same time backed dissident groups such as the IMU in order to win more leverage over these regimes. Islamabad believes that the present generation of Central Asian leaders must be replaced by more Islamic oriented leaders who would look to Pakistan, rather than India and Russia, for support.

The non-state actors in Pakistan like the extremist Islamic parties, with their madrassah culture and jihadi strategy; Arab terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda; the smuggling mafias; and drug traffickers had close links with Taliban and the IMU

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150 Ahmed Rashid, op. cit., p. 216.
151 Ibid.
quite independent of ISI and its policies. The result has been an explosion of self-interest groups in Pakistan, both Islamic and non-Islamic, who have benefited from the Afghan civil war and Islamic insurgency in Central Asia. These groups see no need for peace. The awakening of the state authority not just in Pakistan but across the entire region would undermine their business interests and Islamic agendas to flourish.

Pakistan, thus, was not only geo-politically interested and involved in the Central Asian region but the historical, cultural, religious links between the two were strong enough factors for Pakistan to get involved there. Apart from political and economic objectives, the need to satisfy its ambition of a security ring to counter the massiveness of its two arch rivals India and Iran made Pakistan see a potential in Central Asia for expanding its technological, strategic and economic influence. The only way it could transform this former Soviet republics that never patronised Pakistan for the later being a theocratic state and a protégé of US, was to encourage the dissident Islamic religious fundamentalist powers in the name of establishing an Islamic umma and a secured Islamic society. Operating through the Taliban, Pakistan gave a fillip to the militant and terrorist activities of the region till it got caught in a riddle after 11 September 2001.

The other country which has equally important stakes in Central Asia is Iran. Despite its Islamic rhetoric, Iran has played the most cautious and prudent role in Central Asia. Iran moved swiftly into the region as the Soviet Union hovered on the verge of break up. Iran intervened briefly in the Tajik civil war, siding with the IRP, but quickly realised that it had to stay out of the conflict if it wanted to keep Russia as an ally. Of course, there is a faction within the Iranian leadership that seeks to export its vision of the Islamic revolution and gain new adherents in
Central Asia. The then Iranian President Rafsanjani restrained the hotheads in the radical camp. Though Iran has maintained a low profile as far as interfering in the religious affairs of Central Asian regimes are concerned, it earlier made several such gestures which though small in magnitude, express a desire to participate in the proselytisation race. It allocated 120 million US dollar and sent several hundred mullahs to proselytise in Central Asian region in 1991. Iran has also built new mosques and Islamic educational institutions in Tajikistan, while some of the Tajik intelligentsia have advocated Iran as a “model”. In the mid-1990s Iranian intelligence agents met with Yuldeshev with the hope that they could play on IMU’s Uzbek ethnic origins to enlist it in Iran’s anti-Taliban and anti-Pakistan agenda-perhaps even make IMU a future surrogate for Iran in Central Asia. Although some Uzbekistan officials believe that IMU received financial aid from the Iranian intelligence service, the organisation subsequently linked itself with the Taliban, Sunni extremism and anti-Shiaism.

Iran has not been very successful in propagating its own interpretation of Islam in Central Asian countries. On the other hand, it has harped more on economic relationship and cultural tie-ups. The basic obstacle to Iran’s intention of cultural and military influence is that while the Central Asians are predominantly Sunnis, Iran is a Shia dominated country. The present day radical Sunnis even refuse to acknowledge Shiaism as a legitimate branch of Islam; they denounce the Shias as kafirs, non-believers.

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156 Ahmed Rashid, Jihad, op. cit, p. 220.
Another similar case is that of Turkey. It also intervened in Central Asian radical upsurge in a very limited manner. For a time the Central Asian leaders seemed to accept Turkey as a model. Thousands of Central Asians arrived in Turkey on Turkish scholarships and training programmes. Turkish Muslim leaders started building state sponsored madrassahs and schools in Central Asia that taught Turkish Islam.\(^{157}\)

However, Turkey has always played both sides in Central Asia. Turkish intelligence has kept in close touch with the Central Asian opposition movement, giving refuge to leaders who have been driven out of Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan. In 1999, the Uzbek government shut down a chain of Turkish schools run by the Sufi cleric Fetullah Gulen, accusing him of supporting Islamic radical groups and the banned opposition party Erk. IMU leaders had, in fact, travelled to Turkey in mid-1990s in search of funding and they had received some. Turkey, simultaneously, was also funding the Afghan Uzbek leader Rashid Dostum in his fight against the Taliban. The IMU appealed in a spirit of pan-Turkism rather than Islamic fundamentalism. Turkey initially supported the IMU both to cover its options and to keep tabs on the IMU activities, but Turkish support stopped after IMU linked itself to the Taliban and Laden.\(^{158}\) The attitude of Turkey towards Central Asian states have undergone a radical change with the economic and political crisis in Turkey itself, and the unwillingness of the Central Asian leaders to emulate Turkey and the mutual rivalry between the five nations.

One more country which has been intensely in the race to spread its influence in Central Asian countries is Saudi Arabia. Being a seat of Islamic power and wealth as well as the cynosure of the whole Islamic world for having the 'purest'

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form of Islam, it naturally had to meddle in the affairs of Central Asian Islamic revivalism after the independence. Central Asia being a largely Muslim dominated country, that too, from Sunni school of thought, received the Saudi intervention with tremendous alacrity. Saudi Arabia also responded with huge enthusiasm and generosity.

Saudi Arabia neglected the state to state relations with Central Asia, instead allowed Saudi Islamic charities and groups that promote Wahhabism to pursue a policy of funding Islamic groups, mosques and madrassahs, and sponsoring people coming to Mecca for the annual haj (pilgrimage). Saudi Islamic charities have provided Central Asia with missionaries, scholarships and Islamic literature, including millions of copies of the Koran translated into native languages. But the Saudi generosity had come at a price, as the Saudi seek to turn Central Asian towards their own radical Wahhabism.159

Initially, the Saudis saw their mission in Central Asia as winning back their people to Islam (preferably Wahhabism), rather than cultivating trade, economic or political ties. Such policies have proven short-sighted, even dangerous for Saudi Arabia. The groups the Saudis funded have now linked themselves to Laden, the enemy of the Saudi royal family, whilst the Central Asian governments have become critical of Saudi Arabia, regarding the Saudis as a threat to future stability rather than an ally.160

Saudi Arabia has had consistently backed the most extremist Islamic groups in the region, beginning in the 1980s, with the funding of Hekmatyar’s Hizb-i-

Islami party in Afghanistan. They also backed Taliban until 1996, when they fell out over the issue of bin Laden. The Saudis provided funds to the IRP during the civil war in Tajikistan to keep them away from joining with Iran, and the Saudi regime made no attempt to stop the lavish funding of the IMU from the Saudi-Uzbek diaspora in Mecca and Medina. Many of the large wealthy Islamic charities in the forefront of the funds transfers were controlled by the Wahhabi Ulema, and the royal family was reluctant to interfere because of its sensitivity to criticism from that Ulema.

Saudi Arabia as early as 1980s encouraged its own dissidents to go and fight in distant places like Afghanistan and to keep them from stirring up trouble at home. However, the thousands of Saudis fighting for Taliban and IMU pose a grave threat to Saudi national security itself. The Saudis have never developed a clear foreign policy towards Central Asia which still is formulated largely on the basis of the dictates of the Ulema. Thus, even as the US shores up Central Asian armies, its most important ally in the Muslim world, Saudi Arabia, continues to allow funds from the Saudi citizens to reach the IMU.

Though the situation has undergone a lot of change after 11 September 2001, Saudi interests in Central Asia is still dictated by religion, rather than any other factor. Wahhabism, the strictest form of fundamentalist Islam, is rooted in Saudi Arabia. As the US is cracking down on the terrorist organisations world wide and trying to dry up their source of funding it seems that the Saudi government also may have to follow the instruction of US and cut off the funds supply to the IMU, thereby weakening the latter's organisational strength.

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162 Ibid.
The Arab states also tried to buy off radical Islamic groups, allowing private funding to reach them or giving them facilities in their ports and cities. The Taliban, Osama bin Laden and IMU used these cities as hubs for drug trafficking, smuggling of consumer goods, arms trading, and money-laundering centres of Islamic extremist groups around the world. Dubai, rather than Peshawar or Karachi was the centre for fund raising and arms purchase by the Taliban and the IMU.

The problem of militancy and terrorism pose the biggest security challenge to these nascent states, and hence the concern arising out of it. There are several factors responsible for this situation such as economic stagnation, religious upheaval, intervention by neighbouring powers to satisfy their objectives, the situation in Afghanistan, the emergence of the Taliban, and massive drug trafficking coupled with equally extensive small arms proliferation in the region. The arrival of Taliban in Afghan scenario, added the last straw, providing the much needed fillip to the fundamentalism and terrorism in Central Asia. The worst affected republics in terms of terrorism are Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. The problem of militancy and terrorism in Central Asia has not just affected the security of constituent states of this region, but has also spread its poisonous tentacles to the neighbouring Russia, China and also India. The incidents of terrorism in these Central Asian republics may seem to be their internal problem but they can not be isolated, as an analysis of these events shows that they have also been aided, abetted, prompted, financed and executed from outside, thereby giving a cross-border touch to these incidences/acts of terror. Also, the

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geographical contiguity of the region and porous borders make possible easy movement for the perpetrators of these acts leaving their impact on the whole region. One incidence of terrorism can not be seen as an isolated act from the one which has happened in some other republic of Central Asia. Hénce, terrorism in Central Asia is certainly cross-border in nature.