Conclusion
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Tajikistan is geographically, ethnically and linguistically a land of contrast. As far as, their religion is concerned, most Tajiks are Muslims and in this respect, they not only resemble with other Central Asian Muslims, but most of the Muslims in the Middle East and South Asia. Before, the Islam first took roots in the seventh century CE, Tajikistan has already been exposed to other religions; Like Shamanism, Hellenism, Zoroasshianism Manichaeanism, Budhism, Judaism, and Christianity. The seventh century witnessed glaring change with the coming of Islam in the region. Since then, Islam as a religion influenced the socio-religious conditions of the region and continues to be the traditional religion of the great majority of the indigenous population of Central Asia. Islam first came to the territory of what was then Turkistan present day Central Asia in the seventh century. The Arab conquest spanned roughly the period 600-800CE, with further penetration via traders until 1200. It was however, gradually embraced by the Iranian and Turkic speaking people and became the dominant religion of the region by the ninth century. After the invasion of Arabs in the Amu-Darya and Syr-Darya region, a new model of faith and way of life and, a new type of society came into being in Central Asia. In the words A.H. Jalilov, "an absolutely new religious ideology, which influenced and fashioned their private, public and state life."\(^1\) The Central Asians embraced their philosophies and accepted their language for the comprehension and propagation of Islamic culture and Islamic teachings. As a result, from tenth century Central Asia emerged as one of the great centers of Islamic learning and culture, with special reference to the great

Silk Road cities of Bukhara and Samarqand. It was during this time that the city of Bukhara, with its many mosques and religious schools gained its reputation as one of the most sacred city of Islam. Subsequently, the beginning of thirteenth century saw sweeping changes in Central Asia. This was the time of the great Mongol migration, who brought great devastation and destruction. At the beginning, Mongol rule had strong anti-Islamic character, Islam survived largely through the efforts of the Sufi brotherhoods, which proselytized extensively among the masses. Resulting, the conversion of Mongols to Islam which was indeed one of the few unpredictable events of history. Later on, like all the conquerors before them, the mighty Mongols, had their moment of glory followed by sudden decline. Meanwhile, the Russians increasingly became aware of Muslim expansion into Eastern Europe. In the sixteenth century king, Ivan “The Terrible” succeeded in breaking the hold of the ‘Golden Horde,’ beginning a three hundred year Russian expansion in Central Asia. The last Muslim stronghold to be annexed was Turkistan (or Central Asia) which was divided, into the three Khanates of Khiva, Bukhara and Kokand. During Tsarist rule, Muslims underwent unprecedented persecution; mosques were destroyed or used for non-religious purpose. Scores of Mullahs were liquidated and imprisoned. Muslims were subjected to all sorts of discrimination. Islam was considered a mortal enemy because of strong resistance involving several rebellions inspired and led by Muslim religious leaders.

The Communist authorities of the Soviet Union, later on, inherited Central Asia from the Tsarist Russia which collapsed during the First World War. The Communists after the acquisition of Central Asia promised equal treatment to the people, and Lenin (communist revolutionary leader) in a decree declared to put an end to the policy of religious, racial and national discrimination. However, the real purpose of his appeal was to get immediate Muslim support for consolidating the Soviet power. Once victorious, they forgot the promises
made to the common masses. After October 1917 revolution, the foundation for
an anti-Islamic strategy was laid out as the Bolshevik (Communist Revolutionaries) government implemented radical programme separating
religion from the state, and launched violent campaigns against all religious
institution in general and Islam in particular. The rationale behind this strategy
was derived from the Marxist belief that religion is an obstacle to modernization
and social development. As such, Islam became the victim of militant 'atheism'
that was integral component of the materialist ideology of the Communists. The
Muslims felt the blow of this Bolshevik policy when mosques, Madrasah's, Shariah
courts and religious endowment lands (wafts) were confiscated. Muslim scholars
were deported and many were killed during the purges of the 1920s and 1930s.
One of the most serious consequences of this campaign was the Basmachi revolt,
who fought fiercely to resist the establishment of Soviet rule. Under Stalin,
Lenin's successor, the outward attributes of Islam, such as- the payment of the
Zakat (alms), the Hajj (pilgrimage) to Mekkah, and the observance of the fast
Ramadan, were outlawed. Further Communists in order to cut off the Muslims
from their cultural heritage and religious bonds with the Ummah, the script of
the Arabic language was changed and the teaching and publishing in Arabic
language- the Lingua-Franca of the Islamic World was banned, even printing
presses were forbidden to publish the Holy Quran. Since 1925, the Communist
Party and state authorities mounted a large scale campaign aimed at the
'emancipation of Muslim women’ who were encouraged to abandon the
customary veils and to come out of their traditional seclusion - a campaign which
was met by a bitter but ultimately futile exercise of the predominantly
traditionalist population. However, in the year 1941, in order to re-establish its
credibility among the Muslims within and outside the country, the Soviet Union
installed an “official clergy” to control the religious activities of Muslims to
formally recognize their spiritual needs. As a result of which, the Spiritual
Directorate of Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan (SADUM) came into
being. However, the representatives of ‘official’ Islam were regarded by the Muslim in general as agents of the Communists because they neither showed any concern for the defense of Islam against the militant atheists nor cared to voice their grievances. Instead, they endorsed the policies of the Soviet regime.

Finally, when Gorbachev came to power in 1985, he set out to transform Soviet society through his policies of perestroika (radical economic restructuring and reform), and glasnost (openness). These reforms initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev, put an end to atheistic propaganda against Islam. If previously Islam had been blamed for acting as a roadblock for social and economic progress, it was now sought to be used for fight against social evils as bride preppies, alcoholism and as wasteful expenditure incurred on lavish wedding celebrations. The relaxed atmosphere created by the glasnost policies led to a resurgence of Christianity, Islam and Buddhism in Central Asia in general and Tajikistan in particular. But the pace of Islamic resurgence over shadowed the other two. The subsequent declaration of independence in the year 1991, by the Central Asian Republics including Tajikistan signaled liberation for Central Asian Islam.

Thus, in the post-Communism scenario the Muslim renaissance in Tajikistan and elsewhere in Central is to be perceived as natural and inevitable phenomenon. With the end of Soviet power, Tajikistan witnessed a resurgence of Islam a reaction to Islam’s long oppression under Soviet rule. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Islamic revivalism which had earlier begun in 1980s when Gorbachev came to power - gained further momentum in Tajikistan.

- The rising influence of Islam on Tajik society can be seen from the substantial increase in the performance of religious rituals and practices by the people. Like, the nimaz, fasting during the month of Ramadan, Zakat etc.
- Construction of new mosques.
- Likewise, renovation of religious schools.
- Authorization to perform the pilgrimage to Mekkah.
- Development of religious literature,
- Implementation of public call to prayer (Adhan) in Arabic,
- The growing of beards by men, appearance of the traditional veil
- And the revival of Islamic co-operative engagements etc, were implemented and practiced with religious zeal and fervor.

Therefore, the revival of Islam and Islamic culture in Tajikistan and elsewhere in Central Asia can be seen as the peoples' willingness to reassert their Islamic identity. One may make following assumptions about the role of Islam in the life of Tajik Muslim, in the post-independence period;

- It influenced every day life in Tajikistan at a satisfactory level.
- It promoted and Islamised the moral and ethnic norms of society.
- It regulated the socio-cultural phenomenon of the region.
- It conquered the youth of Tajikistan through its human teachings.

However, politically, neither Islam nor liberal-democracy has been able to fill the ideological vacuum of the Post-Soviet era. It rather, developed and encouraged authoritarianisms, with varying degree of severity. Since, Central Asian societies do not have a history of democratic popular participation in politics. Popular sovereignty was not even an issue in the Khanates, where leadership was hereditary. Khans claimed their throne and asserted legitimacy on the basis of their lineage and upholding of the Sharia. The ulema were important players in sanctifying khans and directing the population to submit to their rule. Popular sovereignty was alien to Central Asia. This remained true for the 20th century experience of the region, for not even the Soviet system with its doctrinal rule
allowed popular sovereignty to become a political reality. Soviet style democracy made a mockery of citizens’ rights and free political participation. This pre-Soviet and Soviet experiences have left a legacy of authoritarian culture.

However, after the collapse of the USSR the Central Asian states for the first time in their history faced a challenge and the possibility of determining their own independent national politics. The collapse of Communism left many segments of society without any particular direction. If in the past the Communist leadership and society was taught to serve the state and the party, now neither the same state nor the party existed. Such situation created a total ideological and moral vacuum in Central Asia which did not have any experience and knowledge about any alternative to Communism. Soon in Tajikistan and elsewhere in the former Soviet Union, a power struggle developed over who would rule and over how much of the old system would be preserved; that is, would the government be neo-Soviet or evolve something post-Soviet? Such circumstances created a unique and complicated problem both in Tajikistan and other countries of the region as how to build a state corresponding to the local traditions and political culture. It was very important to find a slot for Islam and define its relations with the structures of power. After all, Islam is one of the main components of the country’s cultural, civilizational, and ethnic identity. In the backdrop of this, the increasing influence of Islam in the post-Soviet Tajikistan persuaded all political forces in the region- and not merely the ex-communists- to make serious allowance for this factor in their policy-making. As such, the role and position of Islam in the political scenario of Tajikistan can be evaluated by the fact that,-All the Central Asian republics including Tajikistan have officially declared themselves Muslim states, -All the present ex-communist presidents of the Central Asian republics swore oath on the (secular) constitution with a copy of Qur’an in their hands.
Another significant fact is that, without any exception, all the presidents of the Central Asian states have been on the pilgrimage (the hajj) to the holy cities of Mekkah and Madinah.

Islam is being used as a means to strengthen authority of Central Asian States in the Muslim World.

Religion was reinforced as an integral part of the ethnic identity of the Central Asian people.

And, Official commemoration of important dates of great religious figures of Central Asia.

Moreover, political organizations reflecting Islamic interests began to emerge. However, Tajikistan is the only state that permits an Islamist party to participate in politics, though this "accommodation" was achieved only after a bloody civil war.

Since the collapse of Communism the religious policy of the government has become more reconciliatory in approach and accommodative in orientation. Most significant change has been the financial support of the state for the construction and repair of mosques and madrasah's.

It is worth mentioning, that the largely Communist and Secular elite of Central Asia are in a sticky situation. On the one hand, they have to develop Islamic credentials in order to reinforce their legitimacy, on the other; they have no intention to allow Islamic activism to challenge their own position. As a result, as Martha Olcott has pointed out that, "the authorities are not scared of the revival of Islam as long as it is limited to the rediscovery of ancient culture and a great participation in religious rituals". While, the political forces currently in power are doing their best to separate religion from politics. "We are Muslims not fundamentalists" is the official stand of Imomali Rakhmonov, Tajikistan's

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present head. To, Islam karimov, Uzbekistan's President,” fundamentalism begins when religion starts interfering in Politics”.

It is obvious, for the ruling circles’ turning to Islam is probably tactical in character, and the Islamic factor is decisive for some parts of the opposition. Islamic parties in opposition openly state that ‘Islamic alternative’ is the only possible solution if the present situation is to be radically improved, in view of the severe socio-political and economic problems that are being faced by almost all the republics including Tajikistan. The incompetence of new leadership to solve ensuing problems created the new class which came to be known as opposition. The idealistic hopes of this new class which imagined free elections even if difficult to attain, but at least a future without repression, soon vanished under the exercise of state repression by the regimes of these newly independent republics. The understanding of the ruling elite that the implementation of a new system would require new methods of governance which subsequently made them realize that if such a new system would come into existence the need for their presence in power will disappear. For, the emergence of new political groups and other organizations not controlled by the old political order, appellation of fundamentalism” has become a convenient way to stigmatize all those who have some sort of connection with Islam and who challenge the status quo.

The recent struggle within Central Asia is not the outcome of conflicts between civilizations, as propounded by the Samuel Huntington, but conflicts within a civilization that redefine itself. The conflict is infact between Islamists and the


4 Maksud Djavadov. "Islamic State in Central Asia “. June 2, 2003
state who attempt to suppress the activities of Islamists. In case of Tajikistan, soon after independence, tension over the role of Islam in the state-building was a contributory factor to the outbreak of civil war in 1992 (although regionalism and ethnicity played at least as great a role as religious or ideological factors in the turbulent Tajik politics). The Islamic Revival Party (IRP) led opposition to the former Communist regime but failure on both sides to compromise produced bitter fighting that continued until a peace accord was reached in 1997. That agreement legalized the IRP, but in practice President Rakhmonov has gradually undermined its position in the political system. With the emasculation of the IRP, more radical groups have gained influence such as Hizb-ul-Tahrir and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.\(^5\) That is why; growing popularity of religion is characterized as a response to unjust political, social and economic situation of the region. The political conflict in Tajikistan for much of the 1990s also stimulated increased use of “Wahabis”, as the defenders of the old order tried to justify their stance and stigmatize the diverse coalition which advocated change by calling the religious elements of that coalition Wahabis (fundamentalists). Notwithstanding the fact, none of the Islamic forces in Tajikistan have demanded the establishment of an “Islamic State” nor have they promoted so-called “Islamic Fundamentalism”. The leadership of the IRP said repeatedly that an Islamic state was only a distant goal. After years of enduring Soviet anti-Islamic policies they simply advocate freedom of religion for Muslims, which was far from a desire to create a theocracy. As Qazi Turajonzoda, declared, ‘even if all mullahs want to establish an Islamic state, it is impossible today. The republic has travelled far down the secular path and people would not give up their habits and way of life easily. When Qazi Turajonzoda spoke of an Islamic state, he described a synthesis of democratic institutions and Islamic values. The head of the IRP, Muhammad Sharief Himmatzoda, and other party members also

rejected the equation of Islamic politics with radicalism. The Islamic-based segment of the opposition shared the basic aims of its secular allies which include; political democratization and market-oriented reforms. It acknowledged that Tajikistan presently need a good working relationship with Russia. Islamic political leaders also sought good relations with United States in contrast to the anti-Americanism usually associated with radical Islamic politics. Further, the leader of IRP states, "the aim of our organization is the Islamisation of Tajik society and politics in terms of real Islam. For this purpose, the party will engage only in constitutional methods of achieving its programme. It rejects extremism and terrorism, and the IRP seeks co-operation with like minded political groups." Thus, the IRP openly declares its adherence to Islam as an important political force, and the Tajik Muslim leaders' stress, that they simply want the revival of Islam in their newly independent country, not a revolution. Nevertheless, shortly after independence, the government of Tajikistan, in alliance of convince with Russia and Uzbekistan, joined forces to combat the emergence of political Islam in Tajikistan.

That is why, when political analysts warn of an 'Islamic threat' in Central Asia, they often use the Tajik civil war to back their claims. They refer to this conflict in order to illustrate how Islam, a cultural religious phenomenon, manifests itself in politics. To the west and to Russia, the event of 1992 in Tajikistan showed the radicalization of the Islamic movement. What is more, the media portrayed the conflict in Tajikistan as a model for future conflicts in Central Asia where Islamic fanatics would use force to challenge state authority. Indeed, on the surface the civil war pitted an "Islamic-democratic" coalition, whose essential component was the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), fighting against the old Communists. And certainly the Islamist exploited the ideological dimension of the conflict.
Unlike the past, when fundamentalist Islam won power through revolution in Iran, or through military coup in Sudan and Afghanistan. Fundamentalist Islam in Algeria and more recently in Palestine at the same time almost came to power through democratic process. What happened in Algeria was an eye opener for the West to visualize a drastic change to happen in the post-cold war era. In fact, questions were raised whether Islam and democracy were compatible; whether Islamic parties are part of the global democratization; whether Islam will become a global ideology like Communism and challenge the liberal democracy and secularism. The ideological vacuum created by the collapse of Marxism-Leninism nurtured the Islamic consciousness which simultaneously created conducive atmosphere for Islamic renaissance to influence the political developments of the region. However, while the cultural aspects of Islam have been on the rise in Tajikistan and elsewhere in Central Asia, its political manifestations remained relatively limited in scope. Although if political Islam emerged as a threat, it probably would not succeed since Russia, still the dominant force in the region along with United States, has reiterated their commitment to protect the republics against Islamic fundamentalism — The Tajik crisis is a case in point, in which Russia played a crucial role, first as an ally of the neo-Communists against Islamist-led opposition and then as peace broker. Another twist was the Russian approval of Tajikistan's support to the US campaign against terrorism and extremism, after 9/11 attacks in the United States. After the analysis of all available sources one may conclude that, the role of Islam and its effect on the life of the native people can not be ignored since it has emerged as a potential force which influenced the cultural, economic and political behaviour of the people. Islam survived in Tajikistan and elsewhere in Central Asia despite 150 years of Russian and Soviet efforts to eliminate it. Governments that today hope to somehow contain Islam, especially its

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fundamentalist or radical version, should take a page from those earlier efforts. Indeed, Islamisation is not the cause, but the symptom, of problems throughout the region. As a reputed Central Asian expert, Shahrani noted that, ‘if Islam was taken out of Central Asia, they would still have the same problems’. While, it is the growing secular authoritarianism, and institutional “de-Islamisation” that have caused radical form of Islam to gain a following in the region. In this environment, only political Islam has been able to emerge as a credible rival for government powers and have been the only channel for voicing opposition sentiments of the population dissatisfied with official policy. It is an internationalist and universalistic ideology that recognizes no territorial limits and is hostile to national, ethnic, class or social cleavages dividing the Ummah. Above all, it has no serious ideological competitor in the region or elsewhere in the world today.

Communism and Socialism were discredited by seventy years of Soviet power. While liberalism and democracy are blamed for bringing disorder, poverty and the glorification of a materialistic culture that violates traditional norms and is responsible for profound social ills; drug, HIV pornography, prostitution, violent crime, vulgar materialism, lack of respect for elders and authority and the arrival of non-indigenous religions and cults. Under these circumstances, in combine with religious motivations, Islam proves to be an effective ideology of resistance. It offers a credible explanation for why things have gone wrong (the penetration of alien cultural norms, defeat and humiliation at the hands of infidels, corruption and immorality, straying from the path of true Islam, identifies who is to be blamed - secular governments, corrupt elites, the purveyors of western culture, Jews, Christians globalization, or the hegemony of kafirs) it also recommends measures to set things right - to be pious, make contributions to
Islamic charities, join an Islamist party, establish an Islamic republic, enforce the Sharia, return to the true path of Islam.

Therefore, it is suggested that, in order to avoid future instability; Central Asian states need to re-examine their policies towards Islam and all repressive majors that are detrimental to the very existence of Islam as the saying goes, 'religion is like a nail; the more you hit, the deeper it goes'.