CRITICAL GEOPOLITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE POST-SOVIET ISLAMIC RADICALISM IN THE FERGANA VALLEY

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ABSTRACT

CRITICAL GEOPOLITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE POST-SOVIET ISLAMIC RADICALISM IN THE FERGANA VALLEY

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This thesis analyzes the problem of radical Islam in the Fergana Valley using Critical Geopolitics. In this context, first the historical background of the Valley is presented. Then, the involvement and experiences of the United States, Russia, and China, the three most important global powers regarding the Fergana Valley and Islamic extremism are analyzed. Finally, the policies imposed on the Valley by the three Central Asian countries are examined in terms of legal, political, and militaristic measures as well as border-related problems. Considering the context provided by Critical Geopolitics, it is concluded that the Fergana Valley has become a central focus of policy-making processes for Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, three countries which border the Valley, as well as for the three major global powers within the context of fears of extremism and the rising threat of Islamic terrorism. Since the post-2001 War on Terror, Central Asia, particularly the Fergana Valley, has gained geopolitical importance and is spatialized for political purposes. As such, counterterrorism policies developed specifically targeting the Fergana Valley and its population should be questioned.

Keywords: critical geopolitics, Fergana Valley, radical Islam, terrorism, Central Asia

ÖZ

FERGANA VADİSİ'NDEKİ SOVYET SONRASI İSLAMİ RADİKALİZMİN ELEŞTİREL JEOPOLİTİK ANALİZİ

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Bu tez, Fergana Vadisi'ndeki radikal İslam sorununu Eleştirel Jeopolitika kullanarak analiz etmektedir. Bu bağlamda, öncelikle vadinin tarihsel arka planı sunulmaktadır. Ardından, en önemli üç küresel güç olan Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, Rusya ve Çin'in Fergana Vadisi ve İslami radikalizme ilişkin endişeleri ve deneyimleri analiz edilmektedir. Son olarak, üç Orta Asya ülkesi tarafından Vadiye yönelik politikalar, yasal, siyasi ve askeri önlemler ile sınırla ilgili sorunlar açısından incelenmektedir. Eleştirel Jeopolitika bağlamında bakıldığında, Fergana Vadisi'nin, radikalizm korkusu ve yükselen İslami terörizm tehdidi bağlamında üç sınır ülke olan Özbekistan, Tacikistan ve Kırgızistan'ın yanı sıra, üç büyük küresel güç için de politika oluşturma süreçlerinin odağı haline geldiği sonucuna varılmaktadır. 2001 sonrası dönemde ortaya çıkmış olan Terörle Savaş düzeninden bu yana Orta Asya, özellikle de Fergana Vadisi, jeopolitik önem kazanmış ve siyasi amaçlar için mekânsallaştırılmıştır. Bu nedenle, özellikle Fergana Vadisi ve nüfusunu hedef alarak geliştirilen terörle mücadele politikaları sorgulanmalıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: eleştirel jeopolitika, Fergana Vadisi, radikal İslam, terörizm, Orta Asya

To women who struggle every day to be themselves
To the experiences they never expected
And to the paths they were never directed to

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"If Fergana Valley catches fire, Central Asia will explode."[1]

This thesis aims to analyze the radical Islamist organizations, movements and terrorist acts in the Fergana Valley from the general perspective of Critical Geopolitics, by also looking at the policies and discourses of the three Central Asian countries surrounding the Valley. Fergana is located within the borders of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan.[2] As such, the main research question of the study is formulated as follows: what are the policies and discourses developed by Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan in dealing with radical Islamist organizations, movements and terrorist acts in the Fergana Valley and to what extent these policies and discourses are shaped by some of the relevant regional and/or global developments.

Throughout history, the valley has occupied a crucial geopolitical position, dating back to ancient times. The region's strategic location along major trade routes, combined with its abundant and fertile natural resources, has contributed to its reputation as a pivotal area in geopolitical discussions.[3] It has been even referred to as the heart of Eurasia. Apart from these factors, Fergana Valley has regional importance due to several reasons. Fergana Valley has always been seen as a hub

[1] GZT Eurasia, "Why Is Fergana Valley, Is the Most Critical Point of Central Asia, Important?," YouTube, 2023. Retrieved June 8, 2024 from https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=if%2Bfergana%2Bcathes%2Bfire%2C%2Bcentral%2Basia%2Bwill%2Bexplode&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8.

[2] Levent Demirci, "Özbekistan, Kırgızistan ve Tacikistan'ın Kesişimindeki Sorunlu Vadi," *The Journal Of Defense Science* 11, no. 2 (2012): 33–69, 34.

[3] Uulu Abil Urmat, "1990 Sonrası Kırgızistan Dış Güvenliği ve NATO" (Unpublished Master's Thesis, 2006), 67.

since it is surrounded by different cultures, making it a cradle of civilizations.[4] It has also been diverse in terms of ethnic, and religious identities within itself as well. As a matter of fact, Fergana has been the most cosmopolitan and overpopulated area in the region.[5] In addition to its vital importance within the region, the Fergana Valley has also been a cause of instability in the area. For instance, the Soviet legacy[6] has led to border disputes and various conflicts following the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) due to factors such as the presence of artificial borders, the distribution of natural resources, and the ethnic diversity present in the Fergana Valley.[7] However, there is another important issue rising in the region that falls within the main scope of the thesis. The rise of extremist Islamist organizations and movements have consistently hampered the stability of the region. The atheist policies of the Soviet regime, the geographical proximity of the valley to Iran, Afghanistan, and the Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region, the secular nation-building process and pro-Western policies of the newly independent Central Asian countries, have paved the way for an increase in religious radicalization during the first ten years of their independence.[8] While the newly independent countries were struggling with nation-building processes, the rise of radical Islam in the region challenged especially the secular and democratic aspects of the process. The nation-building projects of the post-colonial era in Central Asia, however, also provided opportunities for certain communal groups in the region to monopolize the state apparatus and dominate, as well as marginalize the rest of the population within its framework.[9] So, the secularization efforts of Central Asian states, their marginalization of "non-traditional

[4] İlker Türkmen, "19.Yy'da Fergana Vadisi'nde Ticari Faaliyetler ve Tarım," *Cappadocia Journal of History and Social Sciences* 16, no. 16 (2021): 159–71, https://doi.org/10.29228/cahij.51439, 160.

[5] S. Frederick Starr et al., *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 2011), xii.

[6] The details of these issues will be discussed in the following chapter.

[7] Stratfor, "Central Asia: The Complexities of the Fergana Valley," 2013. Retrieved from June 15, 2023 https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/central-asia-complexities-fergana-valley

[8] Murat Bakhadyrov, "A New Phase in the History of the Fergana Valley: 1992-2008," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 205–31, 206.

[9] Scott Appleby, "Fundamentalist and Nationalist Religious Movements," in *A Companion to Political Geography*, ed. John Agnew, Katharyne Mitchell, and Gerard Toal (Malden, Mass, the US: Blackwell, 2009), 378–93, 387.

Islam", and religious radicalization have mutually turned into a challenge, triggering one another.

It is surely beyond doubt that the Fergana Valley has been the most affected area by these dynamics and subsequently the instabilities, and extremism in Central Asia. Nevertheless, the main event that would change the imagined geopolitical importance of the Fergana Valley happened after the first decade of independence. The 9/11 attacks followed by the War on Terror measurements and discourses, and the invasion of Afghanistan by the United States (US) have altered world politics, understanding of security, and the perception of the global map. The profound alterations inevitably brought about by these events and the establishment of a New World Order through the US declaration of War on Terror have reshaped the fate of the Fergana region and its neighboring areas.[10] Alongside extremist organizations born out of local dynamics, other radical Islamic groups were exported to the Fergana Valley from outside.[11] As a result, both the Fergana region and the surrounding countries became a breeding ground for the Islamic terrorist threat. Faced with such a threat, the Fergana Valley inevitably has become an "imagined" area targeted by specific policies of, particularly Uzbekistan but also of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

These three countries surrounding the Valley together with other Central Asian countries gained their independence and sovereignty following the dissolution of the USSR in 1991. As soon as they became independent, the local intelligentsia of these five countries preferred to integrate into the global capitalist system led by the West in order to take the region out of its economic and political backwardness.[12] The West, particularly the US as the winning side of the Cold War, also aimed to spread its democratic values and rhetoric in the region.[13] Therefore, the efforts of the Central Asian countries to integrate were also supported by the West itself. In other words, the

[10] Selim Öztürk, "The State Building of Uzbekistan: Nation-State, Democratic State, Secular State, State with a Market Economy, Independent State Building Process," *International Journal of Russian Studies* 2, no. 3 (2014): 71–89, 81.

[11] Martha Brill Olcott, "The Roots of Radical Islam in Central Asia," 2007, 68.

[12] John A. Agnew, *Geopolitics: Re-Visioning World Politics* (London: Routledge, 2003), 7.

[13] Ibid.

dissolution of the USSR helped the West and its hegemonic discourses to find a place in a much wider area and to be reproduced, which in turn formed the basis for its next strategy, which was to establish a new order to fill the void in US-led world politics after the Cold War.[14] During this process, the West laid the foundations of a strategy that challenged Eastern geographies and their cultural codes, where democracy struggled to take hold.[15] In particular, Islam and the regions where it is prevalent have been marginalized by the West because this religion is perceived as inherently anti-democratic.[16] After 9/11, in addition to this marginalization, the concept of terrorism became increasingly associated with Islam. Islam ceased to be solely an adversary of the West and instead emerged as the primary threat to the existence of the free world and democracy.[17] In the aftermath of this attack, therefore, it became crucial for the West to establish the world order they had been striving for. Consequently, they developed policies aimed at eradicating the Al-Qaeda organization responsible for the 9/11 attacks and countering the Islamist terrorism that the organization represents in general, asserting their commitment to taking all necessary measures to achieve these goals.[18]

It is also crucial to state that non-Western countries such as Russia and China have found these policies of the West legitimate for their own security interests.[19] The long-standing struggles of both countries with Islamist and separatist terrorism, such as Russia's experience with the Chechens and China's with the Xinjiang-Uyghur region, would fit into the global liberal order promoted by the West.[20] As a result, they have expressed support for Western policies in combating Islamic terrorism. The collective

[14] Ibid.

[15]Richard Jackson, "Constructing Enemies: 'Islamic Terrorism' in Political and Academic Discourse," *Government and Opposition* 42, no. 3 (2007): 394–426, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2007.00229.x, 397.

[16] Ibid, 400.

[17] John A. Agnew, *Geopolitics: Re-Visioning World Politics* (London: Routledge, 2003), 7.

[18] Klaus Dodds, *Geopolitics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 72.

[19] Ibid, 106.

[20] Ibid, 107.

acceptance of the "enemy" and the implementation of the War on Terrorism policy have resulted in significant and transformative changes in the perception of security, global politics, and the geopolitical landscape.[21]

In light of the regional and global dynamics and historical context summarized above, some general points must be addressed. Firstly, it is evident that Islamic terrorism serves as a common ground for the aforesaid powerful actors in international politics, enabling them to create and circulate a dominant ideology within the international order. Alongside these powerful actors, there are other actors who, later referred to as marginal actors in this thesis, are defined as actors involved in international politics and consequently bear the responsibility of disseminating the rules, norms, and policies of international politics at the regional level.[22] In accordance with the specific scope of this thesis, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan can be cited as examples of marginal actors. Considering the regional dynamics, it can be said that the interests of these three marginal actors overlap with those of powerful international actors. That is to say, they share the same enemies.

Secondly, given their shared adversary, it can be inferred that three Central Asian states are integrated into this geopolitical world order established by the discourse and policies of counterterrorism. Hence, Rafis Abazov[23] suggests that since 2001, there has been a shift in the discourse and policies of these three actors towards the Fergana Valley which has become a hotbed of radical Islam. Lastly, it is observed, and will be discussed in the following chapters of the thesis that these discourses and policies targeting Islamic terrorism and radicalization tend to protect states' and regimes' interests and survival, as Islam and the terrorism associated with it are perceived as the archenemy of the free world, namely the West.[24]

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[21] Christian Reus-Smit, Duncan Snidal, and Robert Cox, "The Point Is Not Just to Explain the World but to Change It.," in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations* (Oxford, the UK: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 84-105, 92-93.

[22] Scott Appleby, "Fundamentalist and Nationalist Religious Movements," in *A Companion to Political Geography*, ed. John Agnew, Katharyne Mitchell, and Gerard Toal (Malden, Mass, the US: Blackwell, 2009), 378–93, 387.

[23] Rafis Abazov, *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 76.

[24] Mikhail Konarovsky, "Central Asia and the War against Terrorism: A View from Russia," in *Islam, Oil, and Geopolitics: Central Asia after September 11*, ed. Davis Elizabeth Van Wie and Rouben Azizian (Lanham, MD, The UK: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 13–27, 14.

Here, however, there emerge certain problematic issues that need to be raised. First of all, it is necessary to explain how and why Islam is stigmatized as an enemy of the West. Following this, it is important to analyze the relationship between the concept of security and the geopolitical imagination of a specific region. It is crucial to understand why an imagined region or a common enemy is the target of certain discourses and policies. To achieve this understanding, it is necessary to carry an analysis from the macro level to the micro level because global discourses dominate regional dynamics by establishing an international order. Similarly, discourses and policies towards an enemy or region that are reproduced at the regional level reinforce the global discourse. To summarize, a common understanding of security embraced by the actors in world politics eventually creates order, and hegemonic discourses on security at the international level. The term order basically refers to the routinized institutions, rules, activities, and strategies in different historical periods of the international system.[25] As John Agnew and Stuart Corbridge[26] discuss, it necessarily contains geographical assumptions and features because all the institutions, rules and strategies contained by the order also contain powerful actors and their alliance, the agenda as well as the norms of the international arena, and the "us-them" discourses that are constantly reproduced by all the actors, threats, and geographical hierarchy. The order of every historical context reflects the geopolitical order of the corresponding period.[27] Therefore, in the case of today's world order, it is characterized by anti-Islamism, which is fueled by the global War on Terror and the perception of Islamic-majority regions as security threats. Another problematic point is that in the process of establishing this geopolitical order and constructing enemies, the rights, freedoms, and interests of any actor, group, or object other than the interests and survival of the state and regime are not taken into consideration. Critical studies, encompassing both the security and geopolitics aspects, emphasize the importance of widening and deepening the concept of the "referent object." This is necessary because maintaining a narrow, state-centric perspective in the realm of security has several

[25] John A. Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, *Mastering Space: Hegemony, Territory and International Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 2010), 18.

[26] Ibid, 15.

[27] Ibid, 16

negative consequences. Security is primarily based on the development of policies derived from threats identified by the state and the subsequent politicization of these policies. Through this politicization, policies, which are initially constructed through marginalization and polarization, further perpetuate the concept of the "threatening other."[28] The discourse and policies developed based on the declared threat of the "other" lead to the legitimization of any kind of restriction and authoritarianism imposed by the state.[29] The increasing restrictions on the public clearly deviate from the notion of a state that works for the people, disregarding their safety and freedom. Furthermore, the expansion of the state's control mechanisms can hinder any form of opposition, resulting in the marginalization of innocent individuals and making them targets of security policies.

All of these points mentioned above are also relevant in the Fergana Valley in the post-Soviet era. The purpose of this thesis is to provide a critical perspective on how the Fergana Valley is spatialized[30] and why certain policies are developed by three regional countries when it comes to Islamist terrorism, drawing on both global and regional dynamics. In this context, the main reference will be Critical Geopolitics. However, before delving into this theoretical discussion, it is important to grasp the concept of security. Therefore, following this section, a brief discussion will be provided in the literature review regarding the subject of security, exploring how the security subject is perceived from different perspectives and presenting critiques of these perceptions, aiming to provide the reader with a foundation for understanding both the thesis and the theoretical framework.

1.1. Theoretical Framework of the Thesis

The word security is one of the constituent concepts of International Relations (IR). The discussion on this concept has been ongoing since the establishment of the

[28] Merje Kuus, "Critical Geopolitics," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*, 2017, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.137, 12.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Spatialization, a term that will be elaborated below, refers to the targeting of a particular region for the purposes of policy-making for political goals.

discipline of IR. Since the core aim of IR from the very beginning was to avoid wars, the debate on security had strictly been related to the question of how to prevent the state from its enemy (or any other danger). Thus, the concept of security and protecting the state itself appeared as *rasion d'etre* of IR. Hence, the state-centric approach and traditionalist view come into existence and it remains the deep-rooted perspective in the literature today.[31] Critical Theory, on the other hand, began to call into question postulates that had previously been widely accepted in the IR literature in the 1970s. Its premise is that traditional perspectives have treated the concept of state and its security as a reified and de-historicized concept. Thus, this understanding had to be deconstructed in order to emancipate people, ecology, economic, political, and social conditions so that we can talk about security without any power relations immanent in the concept. With the rise of Critical Theory, the discussion of security has widened and deepened in terms of answers given to the question of "whose security?". The next part will cover this widened and deepened discussion.

The Traditionalist view emerged alongside the Realist perspective, which analyzes international relations and politics based on the assumption that states are the primary actors in world politics.[32] According to this view, the state is assumed a central role in the international arena due to its superior organization. This organization primarily stems from its assertion of sovereignty over a specific territory. The legitimacy of the state heavily relies on this sovereignty, thus there is an emphasis on the crucial significance of maintaining territorial integrity, sovereignty, and the overall survival for the state in question.[33] Also, according to this perspective, individuals have initially come to perceive the state as a political institution that prioritizes its own security over their own rights.[34] Therefore, this viewpoint fundamentally connects the security of

[31] Paul D. Williams, *Security Studies: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 6.

[32] Klevis Kolasi, "Eleştirel Teori ve Güvenlik: Kimin Için Güvenlik?," *Uluslararası İlişkiler Kütüphanesi*, 2014, 121–54, 122.

[33] John Agnew, "The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory," *Review of International Political Economy* 1, no. 1 (1994): pp. 53-80, https://doi.org/10.1080/09692299408434268, 59-60.

[34] John Dunn, *Western Political Theory in the Face of the Future* (Cambridge, The UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 23.

individuals to the survival of the state. It goes further by comparing the state to organism. Using this metaphor, just as different parts of an organism serve the same purpose, the nation, being a part of the state, serves the same interest as the state.[35] In other words, the security of the state is equated with the security of the nation. Such an understanding of security, called classical security, developed during the Cold War. Classical security argues that since security is provided by a domestic hierarchy, with the state at the top, states had to adopt stringent military measures and pursue policies against threats in an international arena where they contend with anarchy.[36] The constant power struggle in the international arena has made state survival, that is, protecting the state from all forms of internal and external threats was the primary goal of politics.[37] Consequently, this view raises the question of how to ensure state security rather than whose security, which they argue is unequivocally the state's.

Over time, security has been redefined through the analysis of multiple dimensions by alternative perspectives that are willing to broaden and deepen the discussions on security. The critique originated from the Constructivists and Instrumentalists, who can be characterized as taking a moderate approach. Constructivists, while acknowledging that states make friend-enemy distinctions based on their identities and that this process is constructed, argue that once such distinctions are constructed, they become reality and shape politics.[38] Instrumentalists, on the other hand, have elevated this debate by asserting that the entire process, starting from state formation to enemy identification and policy-making, is driven by political motivations. As they claim, the process of producing security is always constructed by someone for a purpose.[39] Both perspectives share a common characteristic in that they primarily examine the process

[35] Klevis Kolasi, "Eleştirel Teori ve Güvenlik: Kimin İçin Güvenlik?," *Uluslararası İlişkiler Kütüphanesi*, 2014, 121–54, 143.

[36] Stephen M. Walt, "The Renaissance of Security Studies," *International Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (1991): 211, https://doi.org/10.2307/2600471, 224.

[37] Klevis Kolasi, "Eleştirel Teori ve Güvenlik: Kimin Için Güvenlik?," *Uluslararası İlişkiler Kütüphanesi*, 2014, 121–54, 123-124.

[38] Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 391–425, https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020818300027764, 392-396.

[39] Jeroen Gunning, "A Case for Critical Terrorism Studies?," *Government and Opposition* 42, no. 3 (2007): 363–93, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2007.00228.x, 377.

of security and policy-making, but they do not offer a direct critique or alternative approach to the subject of security.

Critical Theory, however, has criticized both the traditionalist perspective and the aforementioned middle-of-the-road approaches. Critical Theory is an alternative perspective that emerged towards the end of the Cold War, questioning the subject and presuppositions of security. As mentioned, the main question it emphasizes is "whose security?" Academically, Critical Theory is a field that encompasses the contributions of various schools of thought which are rooted in the German tradition. The Aberystwyth School, founded by Kenneth Booth, and the Frankfurt School, which examine the concept of security from a Neo-Marxist or Coxian perspective can be named as the school of thoughts that Critical Security Studies barrowed its foundations.[40] In addition, scholars from the French post-structuralist tradition have also contributed to Critical Theory.[41] For instance, groups like the Paris School have engaged in feminist, queer, post-colonial, and post-structuralist security debates. These critical perspectives emphasize that evaluating the concept of security independently from historical, political, social, and economic conditions is not objective.[42] They question security policies and threat construction by investigating in which context they emerged, why they emerged, and what purposes they serve.

Critical Theory does not view the Constructivist perspective to be a critical approach to problem-solving[43], as it perceives it to yield similar outcomes as the traditionalist perspective. On the contrary, the Instrumentalist view aligns with the critical perspective to a certain extent, but the distinction lies in their emphasis on the role of political figures in the process of constructing threats. The critical perspective criticizes the Instrumentalists' perception of security, which views it as politically produced, by arguing that it should be understood as a historical production rather than

[40] Klevis Kolasi, "Eleştirel Teori ve Güvenlik: Kimin Için Güvenlik?," *Uluslararası İlişkiler Kütüphanesi*, 2014, 121–54, 140.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid, 123.

[43] Paul D. Williams, *Security Studies: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 65.

merely a speech act.[44] It is highly challenging to generate such a powerful perception solely through the discourse of political actors, like US senators. Critical reasoning suggests that the discourses employed by political figures have a profound historical foundation and are influenced by social practices that have been ongoing for thousands of years. Political figures construct politically motivated policies and discourses by utilizing prejudices that already exist within individuals.[45] As a result, Instrumentalists have been criticized by Critical Theory for their tendency to de-historicize certain concepts.[46]

The fundamental criticism of Critical Theory is that the Traditionalist view considers state and interstate relations as immutable truths; however, they should actually also be seen as products of history and inherently debatable due to their ideological nature. Agnew[47] refers to this misconception of the traditionalist perspective as the "territorial trap." Traditionalist views neglect the fact that the state is a product of history by relying solely on the concept of sovereignty while highlighting the importance of state security. Unfortunately, the reliability of the government and state, as well as the security of the people in relation to them, continue to remain questionable.[48] Critical Theory has problematized this issue precisely and reached the following conclusion: Sovereignty over a territory has created an environment conducive to attributing a political identity to that territory and labeling minorities within the borders and everything outside of the borders as threats. As a result, the trio of security, territorial integrity, and sovereignty has become tightly intertwined, further strengthening the state-centered understanding of security.[49]

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[44] Rainer Hülsse and Alexander Spencer, "The Metaphor of Terror: Terrorism Studies and the Constructivist Turn," *Security Dialogue* 39, no. 6 (2008): 571–92, https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010608098210, 577.

[45] Ibid, 579.

[46] Ibid, 577.

[47] John Agnew, "The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory," *Review of International Political Economy* 1, no. 1 (1994): pp. 53-80, https://doi.org/10.1080/09692299408434268, 77.

[48] Ibid, 64.

[49] Ibid, 61-62.

Another common criticism is the equation of state interest with national interest. This equation establishes an inherent connection between the existence of the two, creating a normative relationship between the state and society while disregarding the fact that the state is a product of history. This conclusion is not only problematic in itself but also contradicts the traditionalist argument. If the interests of the state and the society living within it are considered to be the same, it raises the question of the source of internal threats.[50] Another criticism is that state-centered military strategies overlook non-military dimensions of security. This expanded definition of security, referred to as structural violence by Johan Galtung, now encompasses economic, social, and individual security.[51] This criticism has brought many marginalized groups and issues, which had been neglected in traditional security studies, to the forefront. For instance, Marxists, experiencing a revival in the 1970s, questioned state-centered policies that ignored rights such as education, healthcare, and pensions.[52] They also scrutinized public services and challenged the primacy of the state. Following class politics, critical security studies shifted their focus to environmental problems, women's and LGBTQ+ rights, children's rights, animal rights, and racial inequalities as identity politics gained prominence in the 1980s.[53] Moreover, discussions have emerged on political identities and marginalization within the borders of nation-states, as well as the inequalities stemming from global capitalism in the following decades.

In essence, this paradigm shift from the nation-state to global capitalism has not only problematized the centrality of the state but also questioned the conventional understanding of security, which is primarily associated with the state.[54] For instance, the School of Securitization led by Ole Waever criticizes the state's definition of security and its presumed right to intervene in any matter it deems necessary,

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[50] Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams, *Critical Security Studies Concepts and Cases* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 43.

[51] Paul D. Williams, *Security Studies: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 83-84.

[52] Klevis Kolasi, "Eleştirel Teori ve Güvenlik: Kimin Için Güvenlik?," *Uluslararası İlişkiler Kütüphanesi*, 2014, 121–54, 128.

[53] Ibid, 130.

[54] William Robinson, "Küresel Kapitalizm ve Ulusötesi Kapitalist Hegemonya: Kuramsal Notlar ve Görgül Deliller," trans. Erdem Türközü, *Praksis* 8 (2002): 125–68, 126.

highlighting the problematic tendency to use coercion and violence in both domestic and foreign policymaking when non-military issues are examined through a military lens.[55] To put it differently, various aspects such as immigration, police enforcement, control mechanisms, national defense, citizenship, diplomacy, and so on, have all contributed to safeguarding the central role of the state when it comes to matters of security. As a matter of fact, the revival and reappearance of these ideas and mechanisms in scholarly discussions escalated after the tumultuous period following the Cold War, specifically in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. In other words, the emergence of Islamic terrorism and the subsequent efforts to counter it have led to a renewed emphasis on state-centric security concepts in the modern era.

To sum up, Critical Theory is not intended to prove that a threat itself, for example, terrorism, is constructed and artificial but rather that discourses on the topic are inherently controversial and political. To put it differently, the material existence of enemies and threats is meaningless without the environment of fear constructed by state policies and discourses.[56] Additionally, following the discussion of the politicization and construction of any subject as a threat, it aims to eliminate the legitimate base of political actors by showing how discourses, language, policies and so on result in otherization, exclusion, social and political corruption and extremism. Thus, as Critical Theory argues, the elimination of the legitimacy of discourses and policies leads to the widening of referent objects from state to individual, ecology, society, women etc.[57]

The different perspectives on the concept of security summarized above can be considered as a fundamental argument for Critical Geopolitics, which serves as the theoretical framework of this thesis. Critical Geopolitics acknowledges the issues arising from the state-centric view of security and aims to develop an analysis of it,

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[55] Paul D. Williams, *Security Studies: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 69.

[56] Klevis Kolasi, "Eleştirel Teori ve Güvenlik: Kimin Için Güvenlik?," *Uluslararası İlişkiler Kütüphanesi*, 2014, 121–54, 136.

[57] Richard Jackson, "Constructing Enemies: 'Islamic Terrorism' in Political and Academic Discourse," *Government and Opposition* 42, no. 3 (2007): 394–426, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2007.00229.x, 398.

with a particular focus on the relationships between security, geography, and politics. Geopolitics, in its broadest sense, refers to the examination of discourses, rhetoric, and practices related to geographical representations that shape global politics.[58] Critical geopolitics endeavors to challenge problematic perspectives on geography and the centralization of the state within the power dynamics in which they are entrenched. In order to develop an in-depth analysis of geopolitics, this part will first provide a brief history of the classical state-centered interpretation of the field. Once this historical context and the concept of geopolitics are in place, the analyses of Critical Geopolitics will be examined concept by concept.

The term geopolitics was first coined by political scientist Rudolf Kjellen who was influenced by Friedrich Ratzel's 1887 work *Political Geography*. Ratzel argued that interactions between states are directly tied to the idea of social Darwinism (neo-Lamarckism).[59] As he considered, the state is a living organism which emerges, expands and dies.[60] States are dependent on the power they have in order to survive in the international arena; therefore, powerful states have to expand their power to a broader scale by claiming the weaker one's land. By referencing Darwinism, he discussed that the expansion of a state is a general principle of nature, and the state should be expanding its natural borders which he called living space (*lebensraum*), for its survival.[61] Starting from Ratzel's point of view, Kjellen used the term geopolitics to emphasize "the facts" of the science of geography such as land and resources, as well as the destiny of weaker formations in international politics.[62] The term geopolitics, in Dodds' words, was employed as a "portmanteau term" by imperial countries which were intended to come to the fore in world politics.[63] In other words,

[58] John A. Agnew, *Geopolitics: Re-Visioning World Politics* (London: Routledge, 2003), 5.

[59] M. Hayati Taban, "Klasik Ve Eleştirel Jeopolitiğin Karşılaştırılması Ve 'Stratejik Derinliğin' Bu Bağlamda İncelenmesi," *Kastamonu Üniversitesi İktisadi Ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi* 1, no. 21 (2013): pp. 21-31, 26.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Colin Flint, *Introduction to Geopolitics* (London: Routledge, 2006), 60.

[62] Klaus Dodds, *Geopolitics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 24-25.

[63] Ibid, 25

countries such as Great Britain and Germany aimed to provide a legitimate scientific basis for political activities conducted outside of academia since the term emerged in response to the imperial rivalry of the nineteenth century.[64]

In the wake of Kjellen's work, geopolitics popularized more and more with the rise of the Great Game. British geographer and politician Halford Mackinder set the tone for upcoming geopolitical studies by writing his paper *Geographical Pivot of History* in 1904. Mackinder, in his work, assigned a geostrategic meaning to Eurasia due to imperial motives.[65] According to him, whoever wants to rule the world must first have control over the Heartland which is essentially Eurasia.[66] While Mackinder focused on the importance of railroads on Eurasia in his theory, American historian Alfred Mahan emphasized the significance of sea power in the imperial era. Mahan indicated that the main reason behind the rise of Great Britain was the naval power it had, and if America had the intention to create a commerce network in the world, it should increase its naval power.[67] As can be observed, influential players of the time emphasized various geographical characteristics of the world in order to advance their interests in imperial rivalry.

All the aforementioned scholars made major contributions to the development of the notion of geopolitics. Inspiring the post-imperial era with their theories, they have played an important role in determining the geopolitical orders of the Second World War and the Cold War. In fact, Adolf Hitler justified his expansionist ambitions on the basis of Haushofer's geopolitical works which were inspired by both Mackinder's geopolitical imagination of Eurasia as well as Ratzel's *lebensraum.* In his book, *Mein Kampf*, Hitler mentioned Haushofer's big idea of expanding Germany to Asia.[68]

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[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid, 33.

[66] Halford John Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," *The Geographical Journal* 23, no. 4 (1904): pp. 421-437, https://doi.org/10.2307/1775498., 435.

[67] Alfred Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power: 1660-1783* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1898), 416.

[68] It is also argued that Haushofer himself may have written the referent part of Hitler's book. M. Hayati Taban, "Klasik Ve Eleştirel Jeopolitiğin Karşılaştırılması Ve 'Stratejik Derinliğin' Bu Bağlamda

Haushofer's idea of Great Eurasia relied on the premise that if Nazi Germany were capable of controlling the land, they could have developed a railroad with which they can carry oil from the Middle East and Central Asia to Germany.[69] In addition, this expansion was justified by the "scientific fact" that it was in the nature of stronger nations to exploit and control the weaker ones. During the Cold War years, Mackinder's and Mahan's theories also influenced Nicholas Spykman's Rimland theory with which he suggested Rimland, the area surrounding Heartland, had far more strategic importance than the Heartland.[70] As a result, the region which encircles Eurasia also gained geostrategic importance in the early years of the Cold War. The logic behind it was to hamper the enlargement of the Soviet Union (SU) to its neighboring states in a domino effect. In fact, the emergence of both the Truman Doctrine and the Containment Policy[71] in 1947 can be attributed to the genuine concern about the SU's potential expansion towards Western alliances.[72]

The geopolitical order of the Cold War and all these theories of the time paved the way for the rise of radical Islamic movements since the US funded them to fight against the SU, especially during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.[73] Hence, these strategic policies set the tone for the geopolitical order of the post-Cold War era because the network of extremist movements had become inexorable since then. Consequently, the terrorist networks have emerged as the new enemy of the US-led democratic liberal

İncelenmesi," *Kastamonu Üniversitesi İktisadi Ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi* 1, no. 21 (2013): pp. 21-31, 26.

[69] Klaus Dodds, *Geopolitics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 50.

[70] Nicholas John Spykman, *The Geography of the Peace*, ed. Helen R. Nicholl (Harcourt: Brace and Company, 1944), 41.

[71] In 1947, the Truman Doctrine and the Containment Policy were both introduced with the primary goal of thwarting the influence of Soviet socialist ideology on Western alliance states, with particular emphasis on Turkey and Greece, and to counteract Soviet expansion. The Truman Doctrine, often regarded as the official commencement of the Cold War, sought to extend tangible assistance to nations confronting direct Soviet threat.

[72] M. Hayati Taban, "Klasik Ve Eleştirel Jeopolitiğin Karşılaştırılması Ve 'Stratejik Derinliğin' Bu Bağlamda İncelenmesi," *Kastamonu Üniversitesi İktisadi Ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi* 1, no. 21 (2013): pp. 21-31, 25-26.

[73] Klaus Dodds, *Geopolitics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 39-40.

global order following the collapse of the SU in 1991.[74] The geopolitical order of the current period, therefore, evolved into something different than imperialism, colonialism or ideological war. Now, it turned into a "homeland security" discourse which indicates that separatist movements and terrorists against "our democracy" are the new targets. The discourse shifted from "uncivilized" regions of the world during colonialism to "the red iceberg"[75] during the Cold War. In the post-Soviet era, these theories of Classical Geopolitics are still used not only by powerful actors in international politics but also by marginal actors for some purposes. To set an example, Russian and Central Asian politicians and academics use such theories to highlight the strategic positions and natural resource wealth of the related lands in order to attract investments from the US, China and Russia.[76] After the disintegration of the SU, Critical Geopolitics emerged as a reaction to the imperialist Euro-centric perspectives of geography as well as the main assumptions of Classical Geopolitics, both of which legitimize state-centric policy-making processes with which powerful actors politicize geographical features for the sake of manipulative visions of international actors.[77] In contrast, Critical Geopolitics argues that the use of geographic information as a tool of power has shifted geography away from objective analysis and towards a more inherently linked relationship with power dynamics.[78] Critical Geopolitics, therefore, aims to challenge the fixed assumptions and dominant narratives of traditional thinking by uncovering the concept of Orientalism and exploring the complex connections between geography, power, security, danger, freedom, and oppression.[79]

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[74] Ibid, 41.

[75] It is the name of a political cartoon which was used as an anti-communist propaganda poster in the 1960s.

[76] Ibid, 50-51.

[77] Simon Dalby, *Creating the Second Cold War: The Discourse of Politics* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 3.

[78] Merje Kuus, "Critical Geopolitics," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*, 2017, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.137, 3.

[79] Gerard Toal and John Agnew, in *Handbook of Cultural Geography*, ed. Kay Anderson et al. (London: Sage Publications, 2003), pp. 455-462, 455.

The term "critical geopolitics" was first used Simon Dalby during his analysis of the strategies of the Committee on Present Danger (CPD)[80] that was formed during the Cold War.[81] In his study, Dalby criticized the relationship between intellectuals and politics, viewing the CPD's mission as contributing to foreign policy-making that marginalizes the Soviets by constructing a perception of security through anti-communist discourses.[82] As he argued, mobilizing every element of power for a political goal, utilizing the "knowledge" of intellectuals as an element of power, and substituting the economic and social agenda with the political agenda in policy-making provided a legitimate basis for authority, paving the way for authoritarianism and disregarding real problems.[83]

Following Dalby's work numerous academic studies have been produced on this topic for tracing the origins and roots of the traditional understanding of geography. Ultimately, it was concluded that the origins of geopolitical concepts were laid at the early stages of the Euro-centric political order.[84] According to these works, the West had played a significant role in shaping world politics starting from the geographical discoveries of the 15th and 16th centuries.[85] Their focus on their own interests, knowledge, culture, norms, and political governance styles led to the establishment of Euro-centric geopolitical assumptions that influenced geopolitical orders based on historical contexts. These assumptions continued to impact global politics up until the present day. In summary, the West's actions and perspectives have had a profound impact on shaping the geopolitical landscape of the world.[86] Since the 1990s, Critical

[80] The Committee on Present Danger, established in 1950, was an interest group of American neo-conservatives that directly lobbied the government to shape anti-communist foreign policy. The committee made significant progress, particularly during President Reagan's administration, and continues to lobby in order to influence current American foreign policymaking.

[81] Merje Kuus, "Critical Geopolitics," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*, 2017, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.137, 4.

[82] Simon Dalby, *Creating the Second Cold War: The Discourse of Politics* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 7.

[83] Ibid, 8.

[84] John A. Agnew, *Geopolitics: Re-Visioning World Politics* (London: Routledge, 2003), 22.

[85] Ibid, 15.

Geopolitical Studies which have recognized the Western-centric tendency, have been focusing the complicities of academics, particularly geographers, policymakers, and all international actors. Their aim is to reveal the real motivations behind the actions, discourses, dichotomies and labels, performances, and policies implemented.[87] To put it another way, the goal is to study how policymakers and international actors conceptualize global politics, where different spaces are associated with specific representations. This approach sheds light on how geography is used for political purposes and how political ideas can shape geographic concepts.[88] While doing so, as mentioned above, Critical Geopolitics is an approach that draws on various theories including feminism and queer, post-colonialism, post-structuralism, Marxism, and post-modernism to analyze current global political issues.[89] The scholars who established Critical Geopolitical Studies, Simon Dalby, John Agnew, and Gerard Toal to be particular, brought together fundamental ideas, criticisms, and understandings of non-positivist approaches to provide a solid groundwork for the field to build upon. It is important to grasp the essential concepts and ideas of them to be able to analyze geographical assumptions, how the discourses are re-produced on different levels of world politics, how the world is spatialized and so on.

First and foremost, for Critical Geopolitics the term geography itself needs to be seen from a critical perspective. In accordance with their way of thinking, geography as a region is not inherently strategic in its nature, and the geographical labels of the region are constructed based on how the identity of the region is perceived. Embarking from this Wendtian Constructivist perspective, Critical Geopolitics sees classical geopolitical reasoning as a form of discourse that can generate and circulate spatial representations of global politics, which is a more post-modernist and textuality-based

[86] Merje Kuus, "Critical Geopolitics," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*, 2017, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.137, 2.
[87] Ibid, 3-4.

[88] Simon Dalby, "Critical Geopolitics: Discourse, Difference, and Dissent," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 9, no. 3 (1991): pp. 261-283, https://doi.org/10.1068/d090261, 274.

[89] Deborah Cowen and Emily Gilbert, *War, Citizenship, Territory* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 17-18.

understanding.[90] For instance, Critical Geopolitics claims that geopolitical reasoning constructs narratives and assigns meanings to certain regions which eventually leads to military interventions, marginalization and otherization of the people, disregard for freedoms by authoritarian regimes, and justification of interest-based policies.[91] As they argue, these constructed geographical terms are used metaphorically rather being ontological.[92] For instance, when certain terms such as power, wealth, underdevelopment, or barbarism are used to describe certain regions and the people live in, they are not meant to be taken literally as accurate representations of their geography or location.[93] Instead, they are being used metaphorically to refer to certain imaginations that are attributed to them.[94] Therefore, the construction of discourses and the understanding of spatiality are constructed extra-geographically by social stratification based on factors such as dominant class, ethnicity, ideology, or patriarchy.[95] In other words, these factors influence how territories are defined and valued, and the discourses surrounding them are constructed outside of geographical considerations. Apart from its post-modern roots, the field also argues that our current conception of a specific territory comes from the activities and understandings of the actors' past experiences and collective memories which are aspects of larger historical structures.[96] This Coxian emphasis on the historical materialist view asserts that distinctive geopolitical orders' politics and language contribute to the production of current understandings of geography.[97] To put it simply, as aforementioned, the

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[90] John A. Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, *Mastering Space: Hegemony, Territory and International Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 2010), 16-17.

[91] Klaus Dodds, *Geopolitics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 112-113.

[92] John A. Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, *Mastering Space: Hegemony, Territory and International Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 2010), 13.

[93] Stephen J. Rosow, "The Forms of Internationalization: Representation of Western Culture on a Global Scale," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 15, no. 3 (1990): pp. 287-301, https://doi.org/10.1177/030437549001500303, 295.

[94] Akhil Gupta and James Fergunson, "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference," *Cultural Anthropology* 77, no. 1 (1992): pp. 6-23, 9.

[95] John A. Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, *Mastering Space: Hegemony, Territory and International Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 2010), 13.

[96] Ronald W. Cox, *Production, Power, and World Order: Social Forces in the Making of History* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1987), 109.

geopolitical order is founded on common security concerns in international politics. Cox emphasizes that historical events and social structures determine today's security challenges and, by extension, the existing geopolitical order. For example, the origins of marginalization of Islamic ideology, as an important element of some Eastern cultures, which pose the biggest security threat under the name of Islamic terrorism to the current liberal-democratic geopolitical order is traced back to the 16th century and the development of the understanding of Orientalism. In a nutshell, the Coxian perspective and Neo-Marxist assumptions of Critical Geopolitics claim that geopolitical orders and the understanding of security do not come out of the blue. Therefore, although Critical Geopolitics shares Wendt's view on the significance of intersubjectivity and identity in global politics, it also draws from Neo-Marxist and Post-modernist perspectives to interpret the connection between international politics and geography.

Agnew, one of the founding figures of Critical Geopolitics, asserts that the most powerful geographical assumption is the concept of a state and its sovereignty over a certain territory.[98] Critical Geopolitics challenges the concepts of state mentality and sovereignty, which create divisions between local and foreign, national and international since it causes a territorial perspective that is re-produced on different geographic scales.[99] Hence, Critical Geopolitics problematizes these terms, as well. Agnew argues that the concept of the state is de-historicized and reified as a structure that existed before societal relations by the state-centric view.[100] The state, however, assigns political identities to the people which results in "an exclusive definition of political identities" and hierarchical meaning among them.[101] To give an example, the importance of tribal identities and ethnicity in traditional societies as well as citizenship, ID number and passport in nation-states are seen as outcomes of the territorial mindset of the state. Establishing a political identity paves the way for

[97] Klaus Dodds, *Geopolitics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 45.
[98] John Agnew, "The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory," *Review of International Political Economy* 1, no. 1 (1994): pp. 53-80, https://doi.org/10.1080/09692299408434268, 59.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Ibid, 76-77.

[101] Ibid, 75.

concern towards security, and this apprehension necessitates a definition of "insecurity."[102] Once the understanding of insecurity is fallen into place, "extremely hazardous opponents" who threaten the stability of the state system and must be suppressed are defined as "others", "threat", "traitor", "terrorist", "primitives", or "aberrant."[103] Such labels are often driven by geopolitical imagination of mental maps of the regimes and are used to mark areas where such threats exist.[104] Consequently, these areas are perceived as posing an immediate danger to the security of one's own country and its sovereignty, and become known as a "homeland security" concern.

The creation of these discourses stems from the issue of establishing legitimacy. In the global system, political actors try to behave in a way that is recognized as legitimate by seeking the approval of their citizens, and preferably other international actors. Discourses enable political actors to spread fear and chaos in order to create control mechanisms over individuals and civil society and to justify their policies since legitimacy is stronger than the opposition.[105] Thus, as the oppressive and authoritarian aspects of governance increase, policy-makers who prioritize the survival of the state, its sovereignty, and its regime gain greater influence over the public and social sphere. In essence, states prioritize their own interests and survival by placing the state at the heart of security at the cost of marginalization of certain individuals or groups.[106]

Along with the role of discourse in establishing legitimacy, some scholars, such as Bialasiewicz and Campbell, who study geopolitics, have published a collaborative article that introduces a new understanding called performativity into the discursive

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[102] Jason Dittmer, "Maranatha! Premillennial Dispensationalism and the Counter-Intuitive Geopolitics of (In)Security," in *Spaces of Security and Insecurity*, ed. Klaus Dodds and Alan Ingram (London, The UK: Ashgate, 2009), 221–38, 233.

[103] Stephen J. Rosow, "The Forms of Internationalization: Representation of Western Culture on a Global Scale," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 15, no. 3 (1990): pp. 287-301, https://doi.org/10.1177/030437549001500303, 299.

[104] Merje Kuus, "All We Need Is NATO'?: Euro-Atlantic Integration and Militarization in Europe," in *Spaces of Security and Insecurity*, ed. Klaus Dodds and Alan Ingram (London, The UK: Ashgate, 2009), 185–203, 189.

[105] Christian Reus-Smit, Duncan Snidal, and Robert Cox, "The Point Is Not Just to Explain the World but to Change It.," in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations* (Oxford, the UK: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 84-105, 92.

[106] Ibid, 93.

focus of geopolitical studies.[107] As they conceptualize it, the term "discourse" refers to the set of representations and activities that construct meaning, shape identities, build social relations, and have tangible political and ethical consequences in real life.[108] In other words, discourse is not related to the ideal/material distinction or the role of language and textuality, but to performativity. In this study, the term "performativity" refers to the description of how political figures define "normality" and "threat" not only through their discourse, speeches, or direct policy-making, but also through their demeanors. For example, behaviors of political leaders publicly engaging in religious worship, avoiding visits to regions declared as threats or enemies, or refusing to shake hands with individuals of the opposite sex during political meetings can be seen as attempts to demonstrate the leader's political culture, ideology, or policies. Different from the Foucauldian understanding of discourse, they argue that discourses constitute objects and reality.[109] Thus, policymakers' actions and policies, in addition to their speeches, labels, and imaginings towards a specific geography, directly affect life in that geography and others' conception of it. Furthermore, with the role of media, discourses together with performed acts by political agencies reach the global level by going beyond the regional level.[110] As a result, powerful actors tend to shape their understanding of specific territories according to their own interests, thereby reinforcing their geopolitical influence. This process creates a hierarchy of identity and exclusions, resulting in violent actions towards the referent territory.[111] In essence, the reproduction of discourses and geopolitical imaginations, and performative geopolitics have a significant impact on the way a particular region is perceived and treated.

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[107]Luiza Bialasiewicz et al., "Performing Security: The Imaginative Geographies of Current US Strategy," *Political Geography* 26, no. 4 (2007): pp. 405-422, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2006.12.002, 405.

[108] Ibid, 406.

[109] Ibid, 407.

[110] John Agnew, "The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory," *Review of International Political Economy* 1, no. 1 (1994): pp. 53-80, https://doi.org/10.1080/09692299408434268, 63.

[111] Luiza Bialasiewicz et al., "Performing Security: The Imaginative Geographies of Current US Strategy," *Political Geography* 26, no. 4 (2007): pp. 405-422, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2006.12.002, 419.

The concept of order is another focal point of Critical Geopolitics. In traditional, normative sense, the term refers to collectively accepted universal rules, norms, and meanings that aim to create and maintain harmony among global actors in the international arena.[112] Correspondingly, the order should not be threatened by unorthodoxies and ideas contradicting universal acceptances.[113] Therefore, whatever challenges the harmony aimed to be sustained will naturally be perceived as a threat. Since the concept of order inherently involves geographical attributes such as a state's importance to social and economic activities, the degree of connectedness or isolation between actors in a spatial sense, and the evaluation by dominant states of the level of threat posed by certain regions or states to their security, geographically-determined measures will be taken to bring the threat under control through harsh policies in order to protect "us" from "the threat" (them).[114] Thus, geopolitical order is established. Nevertheless, geopolitical orders are characterized by their tendency to undergo changes over time. As the human world is variable, the relationship between humans and geography, as well as their values, will vary according to the political and economic structure. Since the order is constructed through social practices, various technological, political, and economic developments, and the interaction between states, the geopolitical landscape of the international order also undergoes changes over time.[115] Globalization, for example, as a new and modern phenomenon has changed our current perception of geopolitical architecture of world politics and order.[116] As the integrated capitalist system emerged alongside globalization, the role of states has also changed. According to Cox, the power of states is contingent on their ability to operate within the international political and economic structure.[117] Thus,

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[112] John A. Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, *Mastering Space: Hegemony, Territory and International Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 2010), 15.

[113] Ibid, 16.

[114] Ibid, 15-16.

[115] Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 391–425, https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020818300027764, 396-397.

[116] Klaus Dodds, *Geopolitics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 56.

[117] Ronald W. Cox, *Production, Power, and World Order: Social Forces in the Making of History* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1987), 289.

states must further integrate themselves into the global system to increase their power and survival. In the imperialist era, states were concerned with imperial rivalry and becoming the hegemonic power. However, today, states are responsible for ensuring the survival of capitalism, democracy, and their collective reproduction.[118] Therefore, marginal actors are as significant as the hegemonic ones in the globalized world, and all political actors can impact the reproduction of established geopolitical orders and how world politics operate.[119]

In Critical Geopolitics, the notion of hegemony is relevant to the construction of geopolitical order and power structures within. The analysis of how power is established and sustained in the geopolitical order involves examining the concept of hegemony, as there are dominant ideas that consider each geopolitical order to be normal.[120] Agnew and Corbridge argue that what confers legitimacy upon the notion of normality are the routine social practices and ideologies that are in place.[121] The established rules of the prevailing system determine international tendencies.[122] This idea originates from Gramsci's study of hegemony, which distinguishes between coercive and consensual elements.[123] When a dominant structure is in place, it often compels political actors to comply with its demands. Those who resist the structure may face consequences such as military intervention, embargoes, or social exclusion.[124] Besides the coercive power of the hegemonic understanding of the

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[118] Robert W. Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 10, no. 2 (1981): 126–55, https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298810100020501, 145.

[119] Rainer Hülsse and Alexander Spencer, "The Metaphor of Terror: Terrorism Studies and the Constructivist Turn," *Security Dialogue* 39, no. 6 (2008): 571–92, https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010608098210, 577.

[120] Henk Overbeek, "Restructuring Capital and Restructring Hegemony Neo-Liberalism and the Unmaking of the Post-War Order," in *Restructuring Hegemony in the Global Political Economy: The Rise of Transnational Neo-Liberalism in the 1980s* (London, The UK: Routledge, 1993), 1–27, 1-2.

[121] John A. Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, *Mastering Space: Hegemony, Territory and International Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 2010), 16-17.

[122] Nicholas Greenwood Onuf and Frank F. Klink, "Political Society," in *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2015), 196–227, 226.

[123] Antonio Gramsci, Quintin ed Heare, and Geoffrey ed Newell-Smith, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gransci* (New York: International publishers, 1971), xiv.

geopolitical order, legitimizing the hegemony also involves gaining consent from others.[125] This part refers to the ability of hegemons to determine the political and economic agenda of other states, set norms and standards, and shape the framework of international relations that others must follow to receive recognition and rewards from powerful actors. The crucial point to note is that the concept of hegemony does not necessarily refer to a particular state, like the United States.[126] Instead, it is the normalcy of any geopolitical order that creates hegemony.[127] This order may or may not be established by a hegemonic state, but it typically persists regardless. In the present scenario, even though the order created by the US is supported by other Western powers, the discourse surrounding the normalcy of this order has been in circulation since the 16th century. Furthermore, it is also backed by non-Western and less powerful actors, who have their own interests at stake.[128] These actors, known as marginal actors in Critical Geopolitics, are not merely passive consumers of the order but play a significant role in reproducing the hegemonic discourse and legitimizing it at different levels.[129] This is because the first requirement for any order to be established is its legitimacy, and without the participation of marginal actors, it is not feasible to establish legitimacy in the international arena.

To sum up, Critical Geopolitics breaths a different perspective into the geopolitical studies. While problematizing the normalcy of today, it also helps us to comprehend power relations immanent in the politics-geography relationship. As aforestated,

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[124] Christian Reus-Smit, Duncan Snidal, and Robert Cox, "The Point Is Not Just to Explain the World but to Change It.," in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations* (Oxford, the UK: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 84-105, 90-91.

[125] Antonio Gramsci, Quintin ed Heare, and Geoffrey ed Newell-Smith, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International publishers, 1971), 477.

[126] John A. Agnew and Stuart Corbridge, *Mastering Space: Hegemony, Territory and International Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 2010), 17.

[127] Henk Overbeek, "Restructuring Capital and Restructring Hegemony Neo-Liberalism and the Unmaking of the Post-War Order," in *Restructuring Hegemony in the Global Political Economy: The Rise of Transnational Neo-Liberalism in the 1980s* (London, The UK: Routledge, 1993), 1–27, 2-3.

[128] Merje Kuus, "Critical Geopolitics," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*, 2017, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.137, 19.

[129] Rainer Hülsse and Alexander Spencer, "The Metaphor of Terror: Terrorism Studies and the Constructivist Turn," *Security Dialogue* 39, no. 6 (2008): 571–92, https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010608098210, 577.

routinized practices, geopolitical imaginations are built upon legitimizing states' power, interests and survival both within their own borders and within the global capitalist system. World politics is based on geographical assumptions and imaginations, and the world is spatialized by academics, media, and policymakers to spread power to "other" geographies that are not part of the system.[130] The otherization creates discourses and policies by establishing hierarchies, categorizations, and marginalization. In other words, the other becomes the subject of both foreign and domestic policy-making in geopolitics. The categorization of the "other" is a result of historical context, social and political practices, as well as technological and economic developments. These cumulative biases have led to the creation of today's perceived threats and terrors.[131] For instance, as mentioned above, Radical Islamism emerged as a challenge to the global and liberal world order after the collapse of the SU in 1991. As a result, Islamic militancy poses significant challenges to the current geopolitical architecture, as discussed in academic agenda.[132]

In this context, Islamic fundamentalism, seen as a major security threat by the West as well as by the three Central Asian states of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, is also placed within the analytical framework of Critical Geopolitics. As is well known, the collapse of the SU brought about a significant change in the world's geopolitical dynamics as the former Soviet Socialist Republics (SSRs) were thrust into an established liberal democratic system. This led to a significant shift in the global political landscape, where communism was no longer the primary adversary. Instead, the focus turned towards combating terrorism, particularly in its Islamic form.[133] Despite the changes in the global political landscape, the perception of two distinct worlds, which was at the core of the Cold War mentality, continued to persist.[134] One of these worlds was redefined, with a minor alteration, to become focused on

[130] John A. Agnew, *Geopolitics: Re-Visioning World Politics* (London: Routledge, 2003), 2-3.

[131] Ibid, 9-10.

[132] Klaus Dodds, *Geopolitics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 82.

[133] Ibid, 108.

[134] Raymond W. Baker, "Getting It Wrong yet Again: America and the Islamic Mainstream," in *Islam in the Eyes of the West: Images and Realities in an Age of Terror*, ed. Tareq Y. Ismael and Andrew Rippin (Hoboken: Taylor & Francis, 2010), 251–68, 259.

combating what was perceived as "Islamic barbarity", rather than "communist wildness". In short, the fundamental concept of an "us vs. them" mentality remained, albeit with a change in the target of the perceived threat.

The War on Terror marked a significant turning point in the shift of culturally and ideologically loaded hegemonic discourse.[135] After the events of 9/11, terrorism became closely associated with the Islamic form, leading to increased hostility towards anti-Western geographies, norms, and values in various parts of the world. This shift had a significant impact on global politics since Islam and Islamic extremism are seen as disrupting factors to the harmony of international relations. The war against terrorism filled the void after the Cold War. As Critical Geopolitics interprets, the War on Terror for the US was nothing but to demand the legitimate right to intervene anywhere and anytime without geographical limitations and to re-organize the whole world for this purpose, and that was nothing more than the geopolitical imagination of the US.[136] In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, President Bush made his famous statement that reflected the United States' view of the geopolitical imagination of world politics by saying "Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists."[137] Essentially, Bush was conveying that there was no middle ground in the fight against terrorism, and urging countries to choose their side. Thus, the international order was divided into two by the US, and priority interests and enemies were identified by labelling specific geographies as *Rogue States* and *Axis of Evil.*[138]

Besides, the War on Terror has had other significant geopolitical implications, particularly in terms of the concept of security and the measures taken to ensure it. The way in which security is understood and implemented has undergone a significant shift since the onset of the War on Terror.[139] Since it is aimed at states accused of harboring

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[135] Ibid, 255.

[136] John A. Agnew, *Geopolitics: Re-Visioning World Politics* (London: Routledge, 2003), 1.

[137] "Bush: 'You Are Either With Us, Or With the Terrorists' - 2001-09-21," *Voa News*, October 27, 2009, https://www.voanews.com/a/a-13-a-2001-09-21-14-bush-66411197/549664.html.

[138] Andreas Bieler and Adam David Morton, "Axis of Evil or Access to Diesel?," *Historical Materialism* 23, no. 2 (2015): 94–130, https://doi.org/10.1163/1569206x-12341412, 116.

terrorist groups and their affiliated networks, the political actors involved have altered their priorities regarding their security agenda. Unlike how it used to be in the past, Islamic terrorist networks as the new threat have not only associated with a specific geography or a state, but also with transnational networks, and even with specific types of clothing and behaving with all that.[140] This means that terrorism can occur unpredictably and in any location, and the measures taken to combat terrorism, particularly in the aftermath of the War on Terror, may result in casting suspicion on innocent individuals. This situation has invalidated domestic and foreign policies that were aimed at ordinary threats with well-defined geographies and targets until that day. Since that time, the most significant discourses, assumptions, labels, and categorizations of modern times have been constructed. These concepts were re-produced at various levels, from local cities to broader regions such as the Middle East or Central Asia.

In addition to the Global War on Terror, another implication of the 9/11 attacks was the rise of a monolithic conception of national security.[141] Policies aimed at countering terrorism have resulted in a significant increase in efforts to address homegrown extremism and separatism. The concept of the state regained popularity and was rebranded as "internal" or "national" security, leading to the emergence of new discussions on the geopolitics of terrorism.[142] Critical Geopolitics as part of the academic agenda has contributed to these ongoing discussions since 9/11 that are related to Islamic terrorism and national security issues regarding it in terms of geopolitical studies. Critical Geopolitics directs its attention towards the connection between Islam and acts of terrorism and violence. As they argue, this association is influenced by the dominant Western perspective in global politics, resulting in the formation and perpetuation of narratives regarding the fight against Islamic

[139] Richard Jackson, "Constructing Enemies: 'Islamic Terrorism' in Political and Academic Discourse," *Government and Opposition* 42, no. 3 (2007): 394–426, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2007.00229.x, 394.
[140] Ibid.

[141] Christopher Ankersen, *Understanding Global Terror* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 6.

[142] Christopher Ankersen and Lawrence Freedman, "Globalization and the War Against Terrorism," in *Understanding Global Terror* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 217–29, 224.

terrorism.[143] Additionally, these narratives are replicated in various regions by marginal actors who have limited influence or power.[144] Furthermore, Critical Geopolitics analyzes how the War on Terror explicitly fuels imperialist and militaristic geopolitical analyses, and it examines the negative outcomes of state-centric security policies on specific geographical areas and their social, political, and economic life.[145] The following discussion will thoroughly examine the geopolitical aspects of terrorism, focusing on the deconstruction of specific biases against Islam- like the identity marginalization experienced by Muslims- and counter-terrorism measures associated with them.

One of the primary focuses of Critical Geopolitics is the examination of the role of othering in modern identity formation, particularly in relation to Islamic identity and its historical context. There are many academics who have conducted extensive research on the marginalization of Islamic ideology, and its association with terrorism and violence and have made significant contributions to this field. One of the most well-known figures in this area is Edward Said, who introduced the concept of Orientalism to our understanding of these issues.[146] According to Said, the Western perception of the East has been constructed through language, mass media, state institutions, colonialism, and discourses.[147] This construction has led to the marginalization and misinterpretation of Eastern cultural, religious, social, and political aspects, particularly Islam. As he argues, Islam has experienced marginalization in multiple facets of society, such as politics, media portrayal, social interactions, and public discussions.[148] Muslims frequently have encountered

[143] Simon Dalby, "Regions, Strategies and Empire in the Global War on Terror," *Geopolitics* 12, no. 4 (2007): 586–606, https://doi.org/10.1080/14650040701546079, 603-604.

[144] Richard Jackson, "Constructing Enemies: 'Islamic Terrorism' in Political and Academic Discourse," *Government and Opposition* 42, no. 3 (2007): 394–426, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2007.00229.x, 396-397.

[145] Simon Dalby, "Regions, Strategies and Empire in the Global War on Terror," *Geopolitics* 12, no. 4 (2007): 586–606, https://doi.org/10.1080/14650040701546079, 591.

[146] Gül Turanlı, "Edward Said'in Oryantalist Söylem Analizi," *Şarkiyat Mecmuası* 30, no. 1 (2017): 101–19, 102.

[147] Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London, The UK: Penguin Books Ltd, 2003), 1-2.

[148] Ibid, 35.

stereotypes, prejudice, and bias due to their religious beliefs and practices. This marginalization results in Muslims feeling excluded, discriminated against, and disconnected from society as a whole. Based on this argument, contemporary academics working in Critical Theory have made additional suggestions. They propose that the Orientalist misinterpretations identified by Said have given rise to a constructed East and Islamophobia, which has evolved through and become deeply embedded in various political, social, and economic processes.[149] They argue that this Islamophobic construction has contributed to the emergence of today's hegemonic discourses towards Islam, and of Islamic extremism.

When analyzing the discourse surrounding Islam-West relations, Critical Geopolitics argues that Islam has been portrayed as fundamentally opposed to secularism, democracy, and freedom by the West.[150] It has been depicted as embodying thought and behavioral patterns that diverge from the Western-influenced world order and are seen as outdated. According to Critical Geopolitics, this construction of Islam has resulted in its politicization since Islam has generally been perceived as an adversary challenging the dominant Western-oriented discourse, often equated with words such as fear and oppression. Orientalist scholars such as Huntington and Lewis are found to be the key contributors to the thought system that has led to this process of politicization.[151] These academics, drawing from the nature and laws of Islam based on concepts such as Sharia, Caliphate, and Jihad, have put forward certain assumptions. For example, Huntington emphasized the existence of an inherent and natural connection between Islam and violence with the following words:

> "Islam's borders are filled with bloodshed, and this violence also extends within its communities. The main issue for the West is not just Islamic fundamentalism, but rather Islam itself -a distinct civilization whose followers firmly believe in the superiority of their culture while harboring a sense of inferiority regarding their power."[152]

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[149]Richard Jackson, "Constructing Enemies: 'Islamic Terrorism' in Political and Academic Discourse," *Government and Opposition* 42, no. 3 (2007): 394–426, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2007.00229.x, 397.

[150] Ibid.

[151] Ibid, 403-407.

Counterterrorism consultant, Marc Sageman, who highlights this violence, identifies the dichotomy between *Dar al-Harb* (the abode of war) and *Dar al-Islam* (the abode of Islam) as the main cause of Islamist violence.[153] Bernard Lewis goes even further by suggesting that the fundamental goal of contemporary Jihad is to restore the dignity of Muslims whose culture and values have been denigrated in the democratic New World Order.[154] As he argues, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, which argues for the implementation of Islamic law (Sharia) and the caliphate to establish an Islamic state encompassing all Muslim territories, is linked to this idea.[155] A similar remark is shared by Swedish scholar Magnus Ranstorp who claims that each Islamic movement and sect has its own armed forces[156] while especially some schools of thought such as Wahhabism and Salafism are directly associated with a propensity for engaging in terrorist acts and violence. According to Ranstorp's perspective, there is a higher probability that specific sects which are morally corrupted due to their adherence to Islam are more prone to possessing weapons of mass destruction.[157] Therefore, he believes that Islam is inherently corrupted and challenges the current world order, regardless of Western policies and historical context.

Critical Geopolitics, however, approach the issue differently and argues that the association of Islam with the aforestated discourses bends the truth, as Islamic fundamentalism rose as a response to Western-centric world politics and demonizes Islam by de-historizing it.[158] To set an example, many Islamist parties in Central Asia

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[152] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations: And the Remaking of World Order* (London, The UK: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 235.

[153] Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 17.

[154] Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," September 1990. Retrieved from June 15, 2023 https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1990/09/the-roots-of-muslim-rage/304643/

[155] Ibid.

[156] Magnus Ranstorp, "Terrorism in the Name of Religion". *Journal of International Affairs* 50, no. 1 (1996): 41–62, 58.

[157] Ibid, 54.

[158] Raymond W. Baker, "Getting It Wrong yet Again: America and the Islamic Mainstream," in *Islam in the Eyes of the West: Images and Realities in an Age of Terror*, ed. Tareq Y. Ismael and Andrew Rippin (Hoboken: Taylor & Francis, 2010), 251–68, 255.

and the Middle East, despite actively participating in democratic processes both in terms of internal dynamics and national dynamics, are referred to as terrorists in many Western sources.[159]

Besides the discursive construction of the marginalization of Islam and the emergence of its extremist forms, there are historical events that play a role in shaping these phenomena. Islam, unlike other religions, possessed an inherent characteristic of comprehending the concepts of state, law, and their establishment within institutions.[160] This attribute provided Islam with an alternative nature to the West. As a result, it was relatively easier for Muslim communities residing within their own cultural domains and who were reluctant to live under Western imperialism and adhere to Western norms, to oppose the West and initiate anti-Western revolutions. During the era of decolonization in the 1970s, uprisings occurred not only among communities directly under colonial rule but also against local governments that aligned themselves with Westernization. The Iranian Revolution, which took place in 1979 and has remained in power ever since, serves as the most prominent and widely recognized example of such resistance against Westernization.[161] According to Mundy, the US has effectively gained geopolitical power through its control over Middle Eastern oil, positioning itself as the protector of a vital energy source for the global economy.[162] For that reason, the US's direct military interventions, along with its geopolitical influence and support for neoliberal authoritarian regimes in Muslim-majority regions, particularly the Middle East, have contributed to the increase in anti-Western and anti-

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[159] The upcoming sections of the thesis will delve into the examination of Islamic parties in Central Asia, their involvement in democratic processes, and the associations made between these parties and terrorist groups. Richard Jackson, "Constructing Enemies: 'Islamic Terrorism' in Political and Academic Discourse," *Government and Opposition* 42, no. 3 (2007): 394–426, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2007.00229.x, 415.

[160] Mücahit Bilici, "İçselleştirilmiş "Öteki"lik ve Her Şey Olarak İslâm," September 1998. Retrieved May 20, 2023, https://birikimdergisi.com/dergiler/birikim/1/sayi-113-eylul-1998-sayi-113-eylul-1998/2307/icsellestirilmis-otekilik-ve-her-sey-olarak-islam/5790

[161] Richard Jackson, "Constructing Enemies: 'Islamic Terrorism' in Political and Academic Discourse," *Government and Opposition* 42, no. 3 (2007): 394–426, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2007.00229.x, 400.

[162] Jacob Mundy, "The Oil for Security Myth and Middle East Insecurity," September 6, 2020.

American sentiments, as well as the radicalization of Muslim populations following the Oil Crisis in 1973.[163]

The initial wave of Islamic radicalization, however, emerged following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the region. Islamist organizations established in the 1970s and 1980s started receiving funding from the US towards the end of the Cold War, as a strategy to distance them from Soviet influence.[164] By providing support to these organizations, particularly Al-Qaeda, the US inadvertently bolstered their organization, resources, and anti-Soviet ideology, ultimately laying the groundwork for today's transnational terrorist networks and setting the stage for the 9/11 attacks. During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the primary goal of the Afghan mujahideen was not to live under the colonial rule of another state. Furthermore, when the US pursued a similar approach following the Soviet withdrawal, they revolted in a similar manner. Additionally, the increasing US existence in the region with the Gulf War in 1991 was the last straw for the Al-Qaeda network. The presence of American troops in the Arabian Peninsula during the 1991 Gulf War angered the Al-Qaeda network. In response, they started targeting American interests globally and forming alliances with local uprisings.[165]

Central Asia, another region known for its population being overwhelmingly Muslim, and also where Islamic radicalism is observed, had been suppressed by the atheist Soviet regime in terms of religious activities and freedoms for decades. Moreover, even when the SU dissolved in 1991, former Soviet republics such as those in Central Asia unequivocally chose to integrate into the neo-liberal democratic West.[166] These

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[163] Richard Jackson, "Constructing Enemies: 'Islamic Terrorism' in Political and Academic Discourse," *Government and Opposition* 42, no. 3 (2007): 394–426, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2007.00229.x, 398.

[164] Klaus Dodds, *Geopolitics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 72.

[165] Ibid.

[166] Raymond W. Baker, "Getting It Wrong yet Again: America and the Islamic Mainstream," in *Islam in the Eyes of the West: Images and Realities in an Age of Terror*, ed. Tareq Y. Ismael and Andrew Rippin (Hoboken: Taylor & Francis, 2010), 251–68, 255.

dynamics gave rise to a growing sense of hostility towards the West in the Middle East, Afghanistan, Central Asia, and neighboring regions.

The increasing marginalization of Islam has led to a parallel growth in the desire of the East and its representation to assert themselves, carve out living spaces, and establish their own rules. In certain instances throughout history, this marginalization has given rise to radical thoughts and behaviors within certain segments of Islam. To put it simply, the West has fostered an anti-Western Islamic faction through long-standing discourse and policies. This faction has become more radicalized since the 1970s in the Middle East and post-1991 in Central Asia, as they have been compelled to embrace Western values within their own regions.

However, as mentioned earlier, Islam has not been solely defined as the enemy of the West in the geopolitical order that emerged with the War on Terror but powerful actors such as China and Russia have also significant roles in the creation and reproduction of these hegemonic discourses. In fact, religious extremism and the eradication of terrorist networks are the only points of agreement between China, Russia, and the United States.[167] Russia's struggle, primarily with the Chechen issue and their terrorist acts, as well as China's fight against the Xinjiang-Uighur region, predates the War on Terror.[168] Therefore, they have firmly held onto everything legitimized by the War on Terror and have taken oppressive measures against separatist-Islamist terrorism to protect their own security.[169] The shared position of these regimes has given rise to a new approach in domestic and foreign policy-making, characterized by an anti-Islamic perspective and authoritarian measures towards combating Islamic terrorism.[170] Indeed, a collective effort is being made to construct and establish a hegemonic discourse stating that Islamic fanaticism is irreconcilable, illogical, and inclined towards violence.[171] This hegemonic discourse transforms into policies that advocate

[167] Klaus Dodds, *Geopolitics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 105.

[168] Ibid, 106.

[169] Ibid, 107.

[170] Davis Elizabeth Van Wie and Rouben Azizian, *Islam, Oil, and Geopolitics: Central Asia after September 11* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 4-5.

for the eradication of this threat by emphasizing the intransigence of radical Islam. However, these policies often evolve into repressive measures and the rise of authoritarian regimes under the guise of counterterrorism.[172] To be more specific, these counterterrorism discourses and policies directly contribute to the expansion and consolidation of state power by spreading fear to the people. They result in the expansion of police forces, strict control orders, limitations on media and public space, and the increase of various mechanisms of control, like censorship.[173] Such situations are called "state of exception" by Agamben. As he argues, such a narrow or indefinite definition of security leads to a multitude of exceptions, including military interventions, terrorist acts, hostage crises, imprisonment of innocent people, and disregard for human rights.[174] As analyzed by Critical Geopolitics, all these dynamics often result in the neglect of human security, particularly the safety of women and children, as well as ecological security, all in the name of the survival of authoritarian regimes and the state.[175] This approach also leads to the demonization of specific geographical regions determined by mental maps. In essence, the counterterrorism project is replicated at different scales and geographical contexts, spanning from global to local, and it plays a crucial role in legitimizing control mechanisms and power structures across society, including in policy-making processes.

In summary, Critical Geopolitics focuses on the perceptions of the West shaped by othering of the East and the consequences of this categorization.[176] As Campbell[177] suggests, the dichotomies between East and West, Islam and other religions, are highly

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[171] Richard Jackson, "Constructing Enemies: 'Islamic Terrorism' in Political and Academic Discourse," *Government and Opposition* 42, no. 3 (2007): 394–426, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2007.00229.x, 407-408.

[172] Ibid, 409.
[173] Ibid, 421-422.

[174] Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 3.

[175] John Agnew, "The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory," *Review of International Political Economy* 1, no. 1 (1994): pp. 53-80, https://doi.org/10.1080/09692299408434268, 60.

[176] Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London, The UK: Penguin Books Ltd, 2003), xii.

[177] David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis, MN, The US: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 25.

prone to divide world politics. Understanding how deeply these divisions and discourses have permeated Western societies helps us comprehend how hegemonic projects like counterterrorism are normalized and legitimized.[178] When Critical Geopolitics critically analyzes these assumptions and imaginations, the conclusion reached is as follows: Islamic terrorism has emerged not as a result of the inherent nature of Islam as Orientalist scholars claim, but as a consequence of policies of the West, making the issue highly politicized.[179] This politicization aims to establish control mechanisms and take stringent measures to ensure state and regime security and survival by spreading fear in society and the world. When such policies are implemented without considering ethical and societal consequences, they lead to highly adverse outcomes for the imagined geography's economic, social, and political life. Therefore, the goal of Critical Geopolitics, contrary to popular belief, is not to argue that Islamic terrorism is a fictional threat fabricated by political leaders or to establish peace.[180] Its aim is to deconstruct dominant and biased media representations, policies, and discourses, demonstrate their inherently political and contested nature, and eliminate the foundations that legitimize violence. By undertaking such a critical analysis, the focus of security would shift from the state, strategic dominance, and oil security to encompassing human or marginalized groups and ecological concerns.[181]

1.2. Outline and Methodology

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the aim of this thesis, in line with its theoretical framework, is to critically examine the rise of Islamic radicalization and Islamic terrorism in the Fergana Valley, as well as the policies and discourses

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[178] Richard Jackson, "Constructing Enemies: 'Islamic Terrorism' in Political and Academic Discourse," *Government and Opposition* 42, no. 3 (2007): 394–426, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2007.00229.x, 421.

[179] Alex Jeffrey, "Containers of Fate: Problematic States and Paradoxical Sovereignty," in *Spaces of Security and Insecurity*, ed. Klaus Dodds and Alan Ingram (London, The UK: Ashgate, 2009), 43–65, 46.

[180] Richard Jackson, "Constructing Enemies: 'Islamic Terrorism' in Political and Academic Discourse," *Government and Opposition* 42, no. 3 (2007): 394–426, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2007.00229.x, 425.

[181] Raymond W. Baker, "Getting It Wrong yet Again: America and the Islamic Mainstream," in *Islam in the Eyes of the West: Images and Realities in an Age of Terror*, ed. Tareq Y. Ismael and Andrew Rippin (Hoboken: Taylor & Francis, 2010), 251–68, 259.

produced by the three countries surrounding the Valley. The main focus of the thesis will be on practical geopolitics, as the discussion will be conducted within the framework of the policies and discourses developed by Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan regarding the Fergana Valley.

In the literature, numerous articles and studies have been written and examined on the global war on Islamic terrorism and the Fergana Valley. However, these studies have often been insufficient in establishing links between global and local phenomena. Studies on Islamic terrorism tend to focus on specific geographies, such as the Middle East and Afghanistan, primarily due to their alignment with the War on Terror policies. Consequently, they tend to overlook the impact of these policies on other regions with a significant presence of Islam and the resulting consequences. Another underexplored factor is the emphasis in the literature on the roles of powerful actors in hegemonic projects like War on Terrorism, while neglecting the roles of local actors in these policies. Furthermore, despite its significance, the issue of Islamic terrorism in the Fergana region has been largely overlooked in the literature. The causes and consequences of Islamic terrorism here need to be examined in conjunction with the region's geographical, political, economic, and social dynamics, as well as how these dynamics impact the neighboring countries. Lastly, based on the aforementioned points, it is important to analyze how the three Central Asian countries, referred to as marginal actors, perceive and conceptualize the Fergana Valley and Islamic terrorism. The thesis, therefore, aims to discuss how Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan perceive and conceptualize the Fergana Valley and Islamic terrorism, how they institutionalize national security measures against the threat of Islamic terrorism, and how discourse and policymaking under the guise of terrorism contribute to the legitimization of authoritarianism and control mechanisms in these countries.

As stated earlier, this thesis explicitly adopts Critical Theory and intends to employ post-positivist approaches for analysis. In social sciences, the predominant method of data collection for such studies involves analyzing texts, discourses, and political figures' performances. Thus, the study will utilize the analysis of key concepts, discourses, labels, and symbols used by the leaders of three Central Asian countries. This approach will facilitate comprehension of the narratives, social and cultural

values, as well as political and economic perception of these leaders. The second method of data collection is document analysis of the examining existing literature and sources such as academic articles and books, reports written on the region, official websites, and a couple of local newspapers on the domestic and foreign policies of the three states of the region. The goal is to present a comprehensive understanding through the analysis of the existing information and literature produced on the subject. The thesis will be composed of five main chapters. After the Introduction, Chapter 2 presents the historical background of the Fergana Valley with a specific emphasis on how and why radical Islamic formations as well as terrorist activities emerged in this region. In Chapter 3, a brief overview will be provided on how the US, Russia, and China have been challenged by radical Islamism, along with their collaboration on this issue with the three Central Asian countries. The focus will be specifically on the Fergana Valley to understand the role of these countries as marginal actors. In the fourth chapter, the policies of the three Central Asian countries developed in order to prevent such formations and activities are described. The Conclusion discusses the main findings of the thesis within the theoretical framework presented in the Introduction.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Fergana Valley region comprises the Jalal-Abad, Osh, and Batken regions of southern Kyrgyzstan, the cities of Fergana, Andijan, and Namangan in southeastern Uzbekistan, as well as the Sughd and Khujand provinces of northern Tajikistan. Since the ancient times, the Fergana Valley has served as the epicenter of intellectual, cultural, and spiritual life for the Central Asian population.[182] The appeal of the region can be ascribed to its pivotal position along the Silk Road. Furthermore, throughout its history, the valley has neighbored various civilizations, including Hindu, Slavic, Persian, and Chinese.[183] The Fergana Valley has also encapsulated a diverse array of ethnic groups resulting in various conflicts among them over the course of history.

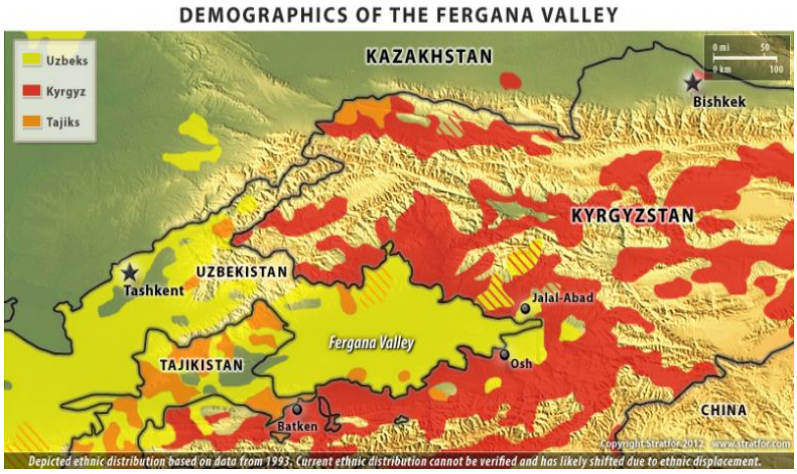

Figure 1. *Demographics of the Fergana Valley* in "*Central Asia: Tensions Grow in the Fergana Valley*." Stratfor (2013), Retrieved 16 Dec, 2023 from https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/central-asia-tensions-grow-fergana-valley

[182] Christopher J Fettweis, "The Ferghana Valley of Central Asia," in *Flashpoints in the War on Terrorism*, ed. Derek S. Reveron and Jeffrey Stevenson Murer (London, The UK: Taylor and Francis, 2006), 117–36, 121.

[183] İlker Türkmen, "19. Yy'da Fergana Vadisi'nde Ticari Faaliyetler ve Tarım," *Cappadocia Journal of History and Social Sciences* 16, no. 4 (2021): 159–71, 160.

In addition to the region's geographical position, such issues have also arisen as a product of its historical process. For instance, some areas in the Fergana Valley are known as enclaves (e.g. Figure 2).[184] These enclaves have emerged from the drawing and redrawing of borders throughout the region's history, causing issues such as limited or over-controlled borders by the leaders, especially after 1991. Since those enclaves are home to titular nations separated from their countries, they have been experiencing numerous challenges like ethnic tensions.

Figure 2. Nicholas Baker, *Fergana Valley- Enclave Locations*, in "*The Ferghana Valley: A Soviet Legacy Faced with Climate Change."* ICE Case Studies 252 (2011), Retrieved 16 Dec, 2023 from http://mandalaprojects.com/ice/ice-cases/ferghana.htm

Along with its social and political structure, the valley holds considerable economic importance. Abundant in natural resources and featuring highly fertile agricultural land, it stands as a vital economic hub.[185] Being the most densely populated region in Central Asia, a significant portion of the Valley's local population depends on these resources for their livelihood. While constituting merely 5% of Central Asia's total land area, Fergana accommodates a quarter of the region's population (e.g. Figure 3).[186]

[184] The term enclave refers to the areas that are part of a distinct country despite being located in a different country. "Central Asia: The Complexities of the Fergana Valley," Stratfor, 2013, Retrieved 16 Dec, 2023 from https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/central-asia-complexities-fergana-valley.

[185] S. Frederick Starr et al., *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), xii.

[186] Pulat Shozimov, "The Fergana Valley: A Microcosm of Problems and Potential in Central Asia. Asian Voices Seminar Series," 2008. Retrieved 18 Dec, 2023 from http://spfusa.org/program/avs/2008/

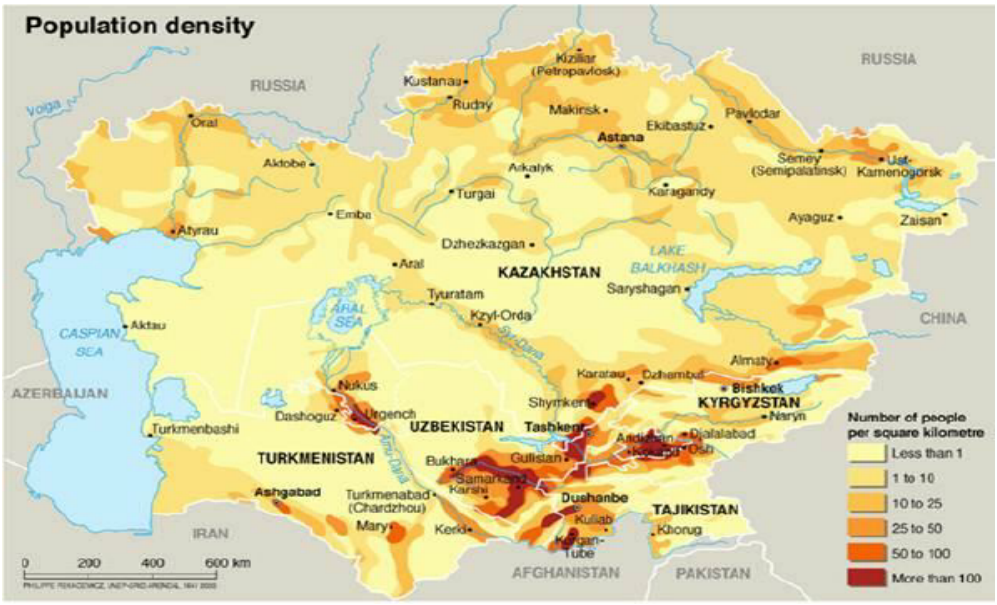

Figure 3. Alisher Mirzibaev, *Population Density in Central Asia*, in "*Climate Volatility and Change in Central Asia: Economic Impacts and Adaptation*." (2013), Retrieved 16 Dec, 2023 from https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Population-density-in-Central-Asia_fig1_246547400

Due to the aforementioned reasons, the geopolitical significance of the Fergana Valley has been a crucial concern for major powers throughout history. In the 19th century, the valley emerged as a focal point for geopolitical theories, with Mackinder's Heartland Theory being particularly notable. Mackinder argued in 1904 that Central Asia became pivotal due to the growing importance of land power and transportation technology, designating the region as a natural center of power.[187] When the region was conquered by Tsarist Russia, certain policies developed by the Russian administration led to the marginalization of local people- particularly of the Muslim community- which will be discussed in the next chapter.[188]

The marginalization persisted during both the Soviet era and the subsequent post-Soviet periods. Despite the otherization and marginalization policies of policy-makers,

[187] Halford John Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," *The Geographical Journal* 23, no. 4 (1904): 421, https://doi.org/10.2307/1775498, 436.

[188] Christopher J Fettweis, "The Ferghana Valley of Central Asia.," in *Flashpoints in the War on Terrorism*, ed. Derek S. Reveron and Jeffrey Stevenson Murer (London, The UK: Taylor and Francis, 2006), 117–36, 121.

the region has continued to be known for its highly conservative Muslim population, and the region's history has witnessed a lasting endurance of Islam.[189] This situation resulted in Islamic radicalization during the post-Soviet era.

Such developments are not sudden or caused by a single reason but rather depend on a cumulative set of factors, with periods of acceleration or deceleration at various times in history.[190] The political dynamics, geographical influences, and social conditions directly influenced Islamic radicalization in Central Asia. These factors encompass the political significance of clans and ethnicities, regionalism, geographical proximity to areas like Iran and Afghanistan, where instances of political Islam and radical Islam are evident, atheistic policies, and the historical impact of colonialism.[191] Moreover, such problems and more, including economic instability, social upheaval, and the lack of justice in governance, have continued to exist following 1991. In such a context, Islam often becomes the sole recourse for Central Asians in their ongoing struggle against oppressive rule, as all other avenues for political change are effectively obstructed and prove ineffective in the post-Soviet era.[192] As Vitaly Naumkin, a scholar who specializes in Islamic radicalization in the region, has pointed out in his analyses, although Islamic radicalization is contrary to the Sufi Islamic tradition of the Central Asian people, the fact that radical movements offer simpler solutions to the everyday problems of the people than governments, greatly increases the support base of such movements in the region.[193] For all these reasons, Islamic radical movements quickly gained strength and support after independence and became a significant threat

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[189] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 305.

[190] Oidinposha Imamkhodjaeva, "The Role of Central Asia in the "War Against Terrorism"," in *Philosophical Perspectives on the "War on Terrorism"* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Rodopi, 2007), 325–60, 356.

[191] Tolga Türker, "Radicalization of Islam in Central Asia: Theory, Trends and Prospects," *Orta Asya ve Kafkasya Araştırmaları Dergisi* 6, no. 11 (2011): 51–74, 56.

[192] Oidinposha Imamkhodjaeva, "The Role of Central Asia in the 'War Against Terrorism,'" in *Philosophical Perspectives on the War on Terrorism*, ed. Gail M. Presbey (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Rodopi, 2007), 325–60, 356-357.

[193] Vitaly V Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia: Between Pen and Rifle* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 28.

in the region, especially in the Fergana Valley. Consequently, the valley transformed into a hub for burgeoning fundamentalist movements, posing a threat to the stability of the region.[194] Inevitably, the Fergana Valley is viewed as a haven for extremist organizations by the three surrounding states, namely Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan.[195] As a result, the valley started to be seen as a center of gravity of Central Asia due to its high level of religious influence, ongoing instabilities, and the limited control exercised by the authorities.[196] As the leaders of the three countries see it, the stability of the entire region relies heavily on the stability of Fergana. In essence, the presence of radical Islamist organizations in the Fergana Valley prompts politicians to spatialize the valley, adhering to the mentality of "as goes the Fergana Valley, so goes Central Asia."[197] However, it is essential to possess a thorough understanding of the region's history and the evolution of Islam, as well as the development of Islamic movements in the area to comprehend the direct connection between Islamic extremism and the Fergana Valley and how decision-makers spatialize the Fergana Valley.

The Introduction of the thesis set forth a theoretical framework that delineates the connections between the social and political ramifications of marginalizing and othering particular communities, like Muslims. In line with the theoretical framework, Chapter Two presents a historical overview of the Fergana Valley by providing a contextual backdrop with which this marginalization and othering are analyzed. This chapter of the thesis aims to describe the initiation and transformation of the Fergana Valley population's relationship with Islam. Additionally, it seeks to elucidate the historical and social context underpinning the discourse on the "Islamic terrorist threat," which politicians emphasize regarding the Valley. Besides, the chapter endeavors to provide an understanding of the genesis, evolutionary trajectory, and

[194] Christopher J Fettweis, "The Ferghana Valley of Central Asia.," in *Flashpoints in the War on Terrorism*, ed. Derek S. Reveron and Jeffrey Stevenson Murer (London, The UK: Taylor and Francis, 2006), 117–36, 122.

[195] Ted Donnelly, "Fergana as Fata? Central Asia after 2014 – Outcomes and Strategic Options," *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 11, no. 1 (2011): 11–27, https://doi.org/10.11610/connections.11.1.02, 18-19.

[196] Ibid, 17.

[197] Ibid.

organizational structure of the radical Islamic movements. By doing so, it is aimed to provide an analytical foundation for the subsequent chapter.

2.1. The History of the Fergana Valley

The population of the Fergana Valley was first introduced to Islam during the mid-7th century as a consequence of the Arab invasions.[198] The process of Islamization, initiated in this manner, gained momentum during the 9th century and eventually culminated in Islam becoming the official religion of the Samanid Empire, which encompassed a significant portion of the Fergana Valley at that time.[199] Starting in the middle of the 10th century, the Fergana Valley came under the control of different Turkic rulers, including the Ghaznavids, the Karakhanids, and the Seljuks.[200] Islam has started to become the predominant faith among the majority of the population in the Fergana Valley. Over time, particularly under the control of Turkic rulers in the region, Islam evolved into a significant component of the cultural fabric within the region. The Valley, since it was located at the convergence point of the key transit pathways of the Silk Road, developed into a prominent hub of Islamic culture from the 9th century to the 16th century.[201]

In the 13th and 14th centuries, the Fergana Valley came under the influence of both the Turkic and Mongol empires.[202] The Muslim Timurid Empire and the initially pagan empire of Genghis Khan, which later converted to Islam, played significant roles in the Islamization of the region. Between the 16th and 19th centuries, the valley was under the rule of various Muslim emirates, the most notable ones being the Khanates of Kokand, Bukhara, and Khiva. By the 19th century, the valley had been fragmented and

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[198] Abdulkakhor Saidov and Abdulkhamid Anarbaev, "The Ferghana Valley: The Pre-Colonial Legacy," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 3–28, 11.

[199] Galina M. Yemelianova and Zumrat Salmorbekova, "Islam and Islamism in the Fergana Valley," in *Radical Islam in the Former Soviet Union* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2010), 211–43, 211.

[200] Ibid.

[201] Ibid, 213.

[202] Ibid, 214.

heavily influenced by Islam due to the presence of both khanates, making it a focal point of interest for Tsarist Russia.[203] Eventually, the two khanates, Bukhara and Khiva, became Russia's protectorates while the Kokand Khanate was the Turkestan Governorship-General of the Tsarist Russian Empire.[204]

Despite Tsarist Russia's interest in the Central Asian region since the reign of Peter the Great, the area was not conquered until the second half of the 19th century.[205] Tsarist Russia implemented an entirely novel system in its newfound colony, seeking to establish complete dependence on the Russian center.[206] Employing a "divide-and-rule" strategy, it endeavored to assimilate local areas into a coerced economic, political, and legal framework. The aim was to diminish the influence of clans and ethnicities by restructuring the region into administrative districts, disregarding ethnic and social considerations.[207] Also, through the creation of the provincial heads, colonial policies were executed locally, consolidating power under a monopoly.[208] To further ensure monopolistic power, the tsarist police were granted extensive authority, particularly in the major cities of the Fergana Valley.[209] Consequently, the local population faced fines, violence, arrests, or humiliation for even the slightest disobedience. In essence, the police and prison system served as the backbone of the Russian colony.[210] Alongside political and economic colonization, various colonial policies emerged that posed challenges to the cultural and traditional fabric of

[203] Ibid, 215.
[204] Oidinposha Imamkhodjaeva, "The Role of Central Asia in the 'War Against Terrorism,'" in *Philosophical Perspectives on the War on Terrorism*, ed. Gail M. Presbey (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Rodopi, 2007), 325–60, 333.

[205] Ibid.

[206] Ravsan Abdullaev, Namoz Khotamov, and Tashmanbet Kenensariev, "Colonial Rule and Indigenous Responses, 1860-1917," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 69–93, 72.

[207] Ibid, 73.

[208] Ibid.

[209] Ibid.

[210] Ibid, 74.

societies.[211] The education system was perceived by Tsarist Russia as the main instrument of Russification of the region, and many Russian schools were established. Colonial Russia also implemented strategies to reshape the religious and cultural landscape of the Muslim population. Their approach involved eradicating what they perceived as superstitions and ignorant expositions of the mullahs.[212] Simultaneously, they sought to promote Russian culture and language in literary, scientific, and religious domains with which they aimed to diminish the influence of Islam and Turkic national identity in the region. These policies were perceived by the locals as a strategic move to Russify the new generation of Muslim youths.[213] In this broader context of cultural intervention, the Russification policies and efforts for creating an "emancipated Muslim population" played a pivotal role in the hostility and rebellion of the locals against the "infidel colonial rule."[214]

The redefinition of the Central Asian region as a periphery of Tsarist Russia significantly undermined traditional ways of life and impeded the region's development. Russian policies towards Central Asia, particularly towards the Fergana Valley, had some other profound consequences.[215] When examining the social and cultural outcomes of the colonial era, it becomes evident that a significant number of prominent intellectuals and the majority of the Fergana Valley's population viewed the dominance of non-Muslim Russia over the Sunni Muslim population as a humiliation to their local culture and religion. The Khanate of Kokand was not an Islamic state governed by Sharia law, but the loss of the Khanate's sovereignty and the colonization of the Muslim population by an "infidel" government had already a

[211] Mohiaddin Mesbahi, "Islam and Security Narratives in Eurasia," *Caucasus Survey* 1, no. 1 (2013), 2.

[212] Ravsan Abdullaev, Namoz Khotamov, and Tashmanbet Kenensariev, "Colonial Rule and Indigenous Responses, 1860-1917," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 69–93, 86.

[213] Ibid.

[214] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 298.

[215] Ravsan Abdullaev, Namoz Khotamov, and Tashmanbet Kenensariev, "Colonial Rule and Indigenous Responses, 1860-1917," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 69–93, 72.

general discontent among the general population.[216] Tsarist Russia's imperial policies, designed to weaken traditional societal norms, particularly Islamic values, and leave the society impoverished, starved, and deprived of land, further fueled dissatisfaction.[217] Some individuals, who shared these sentiments, chose to migrate to neighboring Muslim-populated lands, while a substantial portion opted against both migration and adapting to the colonial regime. Instead, they chose to organize with national and/or religious motivations and rebelled against the colonial regime.[218] This inevitably led to the unification of the local population against colonial Russia following the second half of the 19th century, and more than 200 rebellions broke out during this period.[219] One of the largest uprisings took place in Andijan, situated in Fergana, and subsequently spread throughout the entire valley. Despite being among the most populous revolts in the Turkestan province, it was swiftly quelled by the Tsarist army, leading to widespread mass arrests and executions.[220] While earlier uprisings, until the onset of World War I, were triggered by deteriorating economic conditions and widespread famine, the early 20th century witnessed the emergence of anti-colonial movements rooted in social and cultural reasons.[221] The 1916 Revolt in the region was one of the highly significant movements. The harsh policies imposed by Tsarist Russia on the local population had reached a tipping point, prompting rebels to take to the streets, especially in the major cities of the Fergana Valley. Despite coinciding with the collapse of Tsarist Russia, the repression was severe, resulting in exiles and executions. While the 1916 Revolt lacked effective planning and

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[216] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 299.

[217] Ravsan Abdullaev, Namoz Khotamov, and Tashmanbet Kenensariev, "Colonial Rule and Indigenous Responses, 1860-1917," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 69–93, 75.

[218] Ibid, 83.

[219] Ibid.

[220] Ibid, 75-76.

[221] Ibid, 89.

organization, it holds importance as it marked the initiation of the radicalization of the region's nationalist and religious leaders.[222]

As mentioned earlier, the Muslims in the Fergana Valley are known to be more religious than the rest of the Central Asian population. Tsarist Russia was aware of the *sui generis* situation of the Fergana Valley; thus, it specifically targeted and marginalized the Islamic *urf* and *adat* values of the region.[223] The fact that a colonial power threatened all these identities led the local population to hold on to them even more, despite Tsarist Russia's policies aiming to the contrary.[224] In other words, despite the marginalizing policies of Tsarist Russia, Islam, along with *urf* and *adats*, continued to exist as a societal regulating factor.[225] So the Islamic opposition against secular trends began in the initial decade of the 20th century.[226] The Fergana Valley even experienced the onset of political Islam, marking the first signs of Islamic political ideologies and movements in the region. The first manifestation of this tendency may be the *Ush Zhuz party*, established in Bukhara in 1913, considering its Islamic orientations developed in opposition to Tsarist Russia.[227] The mindset driving this kind of responses laid the ground for radical movements that would emerge in the subsequent decades. As emphasized by Khamidov, "the Russian colonization of Central Asia and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union (SU) were indispensable for the radical movements to develop a mobilized ideological identity and to foster a collective Muslim consciousness among their members in Central Asia."[228]

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[222] Ibid, 76-77.

[223] Galina M. Yemelianova and Zumrat Salmorbekova, "Islam and Islamism in the Fergana Valley," in *Radical Islam in the Former Soviet Union* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2010), 211–43, 213.

[224] Oidinposha Imamkhodjaeva, "The Role of Central Asia in the 'War Against Terrorism,'" in *Philosophical Perspectives on the War on Terrorism*, ed. Gail M. Presbey (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Rodopi, 2007), 325–60, 333.

[225] Tolga Türker, "Radicalization of Islam in Central Asia: Theory, Trends and Prospects," *Orta Asya ve Kafkasya Araştırmaları Dergisi* 6, no. 11 (2011): 51–74, 53-54.

[226] Maria Omelicheva, "Terrorism in Central Asia: Dynamics, Dimensions, and Sources," *Education About Asia* 18, no. 3 (2013), 2.

[227] Galina M. Yemelianova and Zumrat Salmorbekova, "Islam and Islamism in the Fergana Valley," in *Radical Islam in the Former Soviet Union* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2010), 211–43, 214-215.

[228] Alisher Khamidov, "Countering Religious Extremism in Central Asia: Hizb-Ut-Tahrir and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," in *Islam, Oil, and Geopolitics: Central Asia after September 11*, ed.

Uprisings akin to those that occurred during Tsarist Russia were already underway when the Bolsheviks took power in 1917. In fact, movements driven by religious motivations against socialist governance persisted until the establishment of the SU in 1923. An illustration of this is the 1918 endeavor in the city of Kokand to create a republic with religious and cultural autonomy, rooted in Islamic principles.[229] Despite numerous comparable uprisings during the Russian Civil War, which not only expressed a yearning for independence but also a distinct aspiration to revive Islamic unity, none managed to prevail against the forces of the Red Army. After a while, the faction advocating Islamic values faced a decision between aligning with the White Army, symbolizing a return to Tsarist Russia, or the Red Army of the Bolsheviks. Those familiar with the hardships endured by the Muslim population in Tsarist Russia deemed it more rational to align with the Red Army, which pledged to grant them the right to self-determination and freedom, rather than collaborating with the White Army.[230]

The circumstances in the SU, however, underwent a significant transformation following Lenin's death. To start with, the Soviet police agency, later institutionalized as the NKVD, implemented widespread repression, which was particularly harsh in the Fergana Valley due to its concentrated conservative and traditional population.[231] They attempted to eliminate individuals with nationalist and religious inclinations, especially those who had been involved in covert resistance movements. It is crucial to recognize that the SU embraced a "Marxist-Leninist" ideology, considering it the ultimate governing principle. As a result, elements like nationalism, religion, and traditionalism, which ran counter to this ideology, were actively targeted so as to be

Davis Elizabeth Van Wie and Rouben Azizian (Lanham, MD, The UK: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 77–91, 79.

[229] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 299.

[230] Valerij Tishkov, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and after the Soviet Union: The Mind Aflame* (London, The UK: SAGE Publications, 1997), 191.

[231] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 299.

removed from the everyday lives of Soviet citizens. That is why, during the first decade of their rule, the Soviet government brought substantial changes regarding identity issues, for example, by replacing the Arabic-Persian script with first the Latin and later the Cyrillic alphabet. The replacement alienated the Muslim community from their written religious sources.[232] In the early 1920s, the Soviet government banned Sharia law and abolished all madrasas and mosques to consolidate their power by eliminating the role of religion in the public sphere.[233] The deliberate destruction of religious literature, the shutdown of religious schools, the suppression of Islam and other religions across the Soviet space through media channels, and the persistent efforts to eradicate remnants of religious influence were all directed towards a comprehensive transformation of the region.[234] This transformation was enforced hastily with the aim of shaping the "new Soviet man," leading to the destruction of religious and traditional lifestyles. A notable example is the conversion of certain mosques in the Fergana Valley into wine factories, symbolizing a stark contradiction to religious values.[235] While the effort to create a new Soviet man was in full swing, marked by cultural policies like the exiles of religious leaders, atheist measures, and a high level of Sovietization, there were also significant changes in the political borders of the Fergana Valley during the 1950s and 1960s.[236] The communist principle advocating the right of peoples to self-determination through the creation of administrative units, commonly known as new Soviet Socialist Republics (SSR), had been evident in the regional context. The Fergana Valley was divided among the new SSRs of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan without considering traditional regional, ethno-religious, and clan affiliations, overlooking previous political demarcations.[237] As a result of the delineation of the Fergana Valley, significant

[232] Ibid, 352.
[233] Martha Brill Olcott, "The Roots of Radical Islam in Central Asia," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, (2007), 8.

[234] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 352.

[235] Martha Brill Olcott, "The Roots of Radical Islam in Central Asia," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, (2007), 8.

[236] Valerij Tishkov, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and after the Soviet Union: The Mind Aflame* (London, The UK: SAGE Publications, 1997), 24.

challenges have emerged regarding the coexistence and unity of its inhabitants, leading to heightened ethnic and religious tensions among local communities. Furthermore, the severe impact of these policies on people's religious lives has driven Islam underground.[238]

The Central Asian population were compelled to practice their religious and traditional customs in private due to harsh repression until World War II.[239] In 1943, the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of Central Asia (SADUM) was established with the aim of controlling religious life in the region.[240] Despite the communist ideology rejecting any form of religion, Islam was the one that still instilled the most fear, leading to attempts to control it. The main reason for this is that Muslims are not obligated to participate in public worship, such as in mosques. As a result, it is more feasible for them to discreetly maintain their religious practices within their homes compared to followers of other religions. Stalin recognized that destructive Soviet policies were unable to eradicate the influence of religion on collective memory and daily life, as it persisted within families. Consequently, he attempted to create a separation between religious and social life by establishing SADUM. Nonetheless, the persecution of religious leaders and the destruction of religious structures continued until the Brezhnev era.[241] During the Brezhnev era, various official channels were established to facilitate the arrival of foreigners in the SU for educational purposes.[242] Additionally, initiatives were implemented to send individuals from the SU to some of the Middle Eastern countries with the purpose of learning the Arabic language, enhancing their capacity to contribute effectively to Soviet diplomatic endeavors.[243]

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[237] Galina M. Yemelianova and Zumrat Salmorbekova, "Islam and Islamism in the Fergana Valley," in *Radical Islam in the Former Soviet Union* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2010), 211–43, 214-216.

[238] Ibid.

[239] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 352.

[240] Tolga Türker, "Radicalization of Islam in Central Asia: Theory, Trends and Prospects," *Orta Asya ve Kafkasya Araştırmaları Dergisi* 6, no. 11 (2011): 51–74, 54.

[241] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 301

[242] Martha Brill Olcott, "The Roots of Radical Islam in Central Asia," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, (2007), 11.

Despite the existence of specific regulations limiting interactions between Soviet students and their foreign counterparts, students managed to find ways to communicate with each other in both cases.[244] As a result of these interactions, religious education, which had already been underground under Soviet rule, began to diversify.

Many people in the Fergana Valley encountered significant challenges in embracing the Soviet government and its ideology, primarily because of the aforementioned repression. In certain cases, this oppression evolved into feelings of anger and animosity towards the Soviet authorities. Therefore, many theologians had already emigrated or were operating underground, providing religious education and attempting to organize the Muslim community.[245] These illicit religious teachings, provided by theologians who had managed to evade the persecution of the Soviet government, were referred to as *hujra*.[246] In the 1950s, Muhammadjan Hindustani was the most prominent theologian conducting *hujra* sessions in the Fergana Valley. Hindustani and his followers emphasized their adherence to the traditional Hanafi school and labeled religious movements arriving in the region from the Middle East as "Wahhabis."[247] The Wahhabi movements, which Hindustani strongly opposed[248],

[243] Ibid.

[244] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 307.
[245] Ibid, 304.

[246] Ibid, 305.

[247] Wahhabism and Salafism share commonalities as religious movements advocating a return to the pure roots of Islam. Originating in the Gulf states, notably Saudi Arabia, these movements were subsequently introduced to Muslim-majority countries across the Middle East and Central Asia. Notably, they exhibit animosity towards the Sufi tradition, which embodies a moderate expression of Islam merged with local customs and is prevalent in Central Asia and Anatolia. Jacob Zenn and Kathleen Kuehnast, "Preventing Violent Extremism in Kyrgyzstan," *USİP Special Report 355*, (2014), 12.; Galina M. Yemelianova and Zumrat Salmorbekova, "Islam and Islamism in the Fergana Valley," in *Radical Islam in the Former Soviet Union* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2010), 211–43, 214-217-218.

[248] Hindustani wrote two treatises opposing the view laid out by Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, who established the foundations of Wahhabism. The common point in these treatises is that Wahhabism consists of intolerant, uncompromising dogmas that are fundamentally at odds with the Sufi understanding of Islam. Moreover, he was aware that such ideas advocating a return to "pure Islam" could become radicalized, and he feared the legitimacy of violence that it might bring. That was why, he stood against it. Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the

emerged in the region as a result of interactions with Arab students during the Brezhnev era. These movements served as an alternative to the traditional Islam that had been practiced until then, representing a return to "pure Islam" and a struggle for a more radical adherence to Islamic values. According to Martha Brill Olcott, even though these movements did not wield significant influence in the region until the Gorbachev era, the teaching of numerous foreign books caused intellectual and religious ferment among the youth.[249] The readings consisted of works by fundamentalist ideologues from the Muslim Brotherhood,[250]which emerged in Egypt during the 1920s and 1930s. Books authored by figures such as Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutub were secretly brought into the SU and studied in the *hujras*.[251] Additionally, fundamentalists in the Fergana Valley started monitoring events in Iran, the Middle East, and Afghanistan through radio programs.[252] Individuals swayed by such developments and extremist ideologies came together in prominent cities such as Andijan and Osh within the Fergana Valley. The most influential groups established during that era were the Islamic Renaissance of the Youth of Tajikistan[253], established in 1973, and the subsequently formed armed group called the Adolat (Justice).[254] Events such as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1978 and the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 heightened the activities of these groups.[255] The 1978 invasion had numerous repercussions for the Fergana Valley. The fact that the Afghans were fellow

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Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 305.

[249] Martha Brill Olcott, "The Roots of Radical Islam in Central Asia," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, (2007), 11-12.

[250] Ibid.

[251] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 307.

[252] Ibid, 308.

[253] It was founded by Sayid Abdollah Nori, who was a student of Hindustani. It is also accepted as the founding organization of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan in the literature. Matteo Fumagalli, "Islamic Radicalism and the Insecurity Dilemma in Central Asia: The Role of Russia," in *Russia and Islam: State, Society and Radicalism*, ed. Roland Dannreuther and Luke March (London, The UK: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 191–208, 196.

[254] Ibid, 306.

[255] Jozef Lang, "The Radical Islamic Militants in Central Asia," *Centre of Eastern Studies*, 2013, 8.

Muslims "living under occupation like themselves" sparked a significant outcry. Beyond religious sensitivities, the presence of many ethnic Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Kyrgyz in Afghanistan triggered ethnicity-related sensitivities among the population.[256] The Iranian revolution, on the other hand, instilled hope among the fundamentalists of the Fergana Valley that a revolt against an infidel rule could be possible. Considering those regional developments, the notion started to take shape among these radical groups in Fergana Valley that the only salvation lay in an Islamic state, and armed resistance was deemed necessary to establish it. Tensions, however, arose between Hindustani's disciples, who opposed Wahhabism, and fundamentalists leading to an escalation of tensions in the Fergana Valley that eventually resulted in open confrontations.[257]

During the perestroika period, the notable divergence occurred. While the Muslims of the Fergana Valley are generally conservative, they have traditionally been associated with the moderate Sufi tradition.[258] This is the reason behind the population aligning with the Hindustani faction in the Islamic bloc of the 1980s. Throughout the 1980s, these two blocs grew apart from each other. The Wahhabis, affiliated with the Adolat party, employed intimidation tactics against Hindustani followers, including the kidnapping of their children and relatives. Some of these kidnappings tragically resulted in the death of the captives.[259] In short, these movements were becoming increasingly politicized and radicalized, specifically in the Andijan region of Fergana.[260] The Gorbachev era marked a significant shift due to its glasnost (openness) policy, which introduce freedom of expression. This period signaled a

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[256] Galina M. Yemelianova and Zumrat Salmorbekova, "Islam and Islamism in the Fergana Valley," in *Radical Islam in the Former Soviet Union* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2010), 211–43, 216-217.
[257] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 308-309.

[258] Christopher J Fettweis, "The Ferghana Valley of Central Asia.," in *Flashpoints in the War on Terrorism*, ed. Derek S. Reveron and Jeffrey Stevenson Murer (London, The UK: Taylor and Francis, 2006), 117–36, 121.

[259] Ibid, 313-314.

[260] Martha Brill Olcott, "The Roots of Radical Islam in Central Asia," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, (2007), 34.

departure from the oppressive policies of the previous eras and paved the way for the resurgence of Islamic influence.[261] During this time, there was a concerted effort to rebuild and restore religious and traditional institutions that had been dismantled in the preceding years.[262] Nevertheless, the political liberalization during Gorbachev's era had its drawbacks alongside its benefits.[263] Notably, fundamentalist groups began receiving financial support from countries such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Empowered by these funds, these groups initiated efforts to address issues like poverty and declining welfare, carving out a space for themselves within the public sphere.[264] The perception that "the solution to the problems of governance and the economy could be found in Islamic governance" was gaining ground.[265] After the collapse of the SU, the Fergana Valley became more of a breeding ground for radical Islamist groups.[266] Amidst the power vacuum that emerged after the SU collapsed, the recently independent countries of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan found themselves grappling with the complexities posed by the Fergana Valley.

By the time the SSRs gained independence, re-Islamization was already in full swing across the rest of the world. In the SU, religious education and the development of a local religious ideology were not possible until the Gorbachev era. Despite its geographical proximity to various centers of Islamic transformation, the SU had minimal contact with them due to its closed borders.[267] Consequently, with the advent

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[261] Mehrdad Haghayeghi, *Islam and Politics in Central Asia* (Basingstoke, The UK: Macmillan, 1995), 85.

[262] Galina M. Yemelianova and Zumrat Salmorbekova, "Islam and Islamism in the Fergana Valley," in *Radical Islam in the Former Soviet Union* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2010), 211–43, 217.
[263] Martha Brill Olcott, "The Roots of Radical Islam in Central Asia," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, (2007), 34.

[264] Vitaly V Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia: Between Pen and Rifle* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 252.

[265] Maria Omelicheva, "Terrorism in Central Asia: Dynamics, Dimensions, and Sources," *Education About Asia* 18, no. 3 (2013), 4.

[266] Ibid.

[267] Tolga Türker, "Radicalization of Islam in Central Asia: Theory, Trends and Prospects," *Orta Asya ve Kafkasya Araştırmaları Dergisi* 6, no. 11 (2011): 51–74, 54.

of independence, radical movements realized the extent of their lag behind global Islamic developments. This lag, stemming from the inability to cultivate local Islamic traditions during the Soviet era, contributed to the rapid emergence and growth of ideologies that were alien to the region, particularly in the Fergana Valley.[268] In this timeframe, Islamists rose to prominence as the main challengers to the Soviet-era politicians in the three surrounding countries of the valley.[269] The rise of a politicized and well-organized Islamic influence in the Fergana Valley, facilitated by the creation of local councils and volunteer militias, and exacerbated by the lack of secular opposition to political figures and civil society, increased backing for Islamist and Islamist-nationalist factions.[270] The establishment of early Islamist entities, such as Islam Lashkarlari (Warriors of Islam), Baraka (Blessing), and Tawba (Repentance), along with the expansion of the Islamic Renaissance Party and Adolat, is observed in the valley.[271] These factions served as the precursors to more established and organized Islamist entities in the region, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Hizb-ut Tahrir (HT).[272] They collectively aimed to topple secular governments and institute an Islamic state, despite variations in strategy and organizational frameworks. After 1991, previously fragmented Islamic groups, due to doctrinal differences, were united around the main idea of establishing states ruled by the Sharia law.[273]

During the height of these developments, the political, social, and economic repercussions of the SU's collapse were being particularly pronounced in the Fergana

[268] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 310.
[269] Jozef Lang, "The Radical Islamic Militants in Central Asia," *Centre of Eastern Studies*, 2013, 8-9.

[270] Martha Brill Olcott, "The Roots of Radical Islam in Central Asia," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, (2007), 32.

[271] Galina M. Yemelianova and Zumrat Salmorbekova, "Islam and Islamism in the Fergana Valley," in *Radical Islam in the Former Soviet Union* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2010), 211–43, 218.

[272] Tolga Türker, "Radicalization of Islam in Central Asia: Theory, Trends and Prospects," *Orta Asya ve Kafkasya Araştırmaları Dergisi* 6, no. 11 (2011): 51–74, 60.

[273] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 314.

Valley.[274] The once-centralized economic and political structure disintegrated, and the "general secretaries" of the SSRs found themselves as the leaders of newly independent republics. In other words, after the collapse of the SU, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan had to survive alone in the global economy. They needed to build economic, social, and political infrastructure in a manner that would garner legitimacy not only in the eyes of the West but also among their regional neighbors and within their own countries. The expectation resulted in tight control over every aspect of the post-independence period, reminiscent of the Soviet era. Rapidly falling living standards were followed by skyrocketing unemployment, an ecological crisis, and the rise of radical groups.[275] Essentially, the ex-Soviet leaders grappled with overwhelming challenges and struggled to meet the needs of their people. Moreover, they recognized the need to manage public dissatisfaction and curb widespread backing for Islamist groups in order to ensure their political viability.

In the 1990s, Adolat initiated patrols in neighborhoods, enforced the requirement for women to wear headscarves, and distributed pamphlets advocating Salafi Islam.[276] The Fergana region of Uzbekistan, particularly Namangan and Andijan, came under the effective control of Islamists.[277] September 1991 witnessed active campaigns protesting against the presidency of Islam Karimov in Uzbekistan.[278] Building on these events, in 1992, anticipating the impending Tajik civil war, Karimov took the decision to ban both nationalist and Islamic parties and dismiss their members.[279] Following their independence, all former SSRs, with Uzbekistan at the forefront, declared their commitment to the Soviet principle of separating state and religion.[280] Official

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[274] Galina M. Yemelianova and Zumrat Salmorbekova, "Islam and Islamism in the Fergana Valley," in *Radical Islam in the Former Soviet Union* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2010), 211–43, 218.
[275] Ibid.

[276] Vitaly V Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia: Between Pen and Rifle* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 97.

[277] Galina M. Yemelianova and Zumrat Salmorbekova, "Islam and Islamism in the Fergana Valley," in *Radical Islam in the Former Soviet Union* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2010), 211–43, 221.

[278] Ibid, 222.

[279] Ibid.

institutions maintained their separation from religious entities and continued to view religious institutions with suspicion. Compounded by the social structure in the Fergana Valley, this led to inevitable bans and repression against Islamic dissent. Mosques were directed to extol Karimov rather than Salafi Islam in Friday sermons.[281] The Karimov government effectively criminalized unregistered religious activities, implemented state censorship on imported religious literature, and prohibited private religious education with a law passed in 1998.[282] Government policies were justified by establishing a clear division, asserting that "foreign Islam imported from outside is undesirable (bad Islam), while the state-endorsed secular Islam is preferable (good Islam)."[283] As repression intensified, Islamists became even more radicalized.[284] Indeed, the IMU, the most radical Islamist organization in Central Asia, was founded in 1996 and quickly gained prominence. The turning point of the relationship between Karimov and the Islamists occurred with the IMU's assassination attempt against Karimov in 1999.[285] However, the pivotal moment came with the Andijan Events in 2005. In 2004, Akram Yoldashev, a businessman, along with 23 others, faced arrest on charges of being members of an Islamic organization.[286] Yoldashev, a former member of HT, had established the Akromiya organization in the Fergana Valley in 1996, blending business and Islamic thought.[287] Due to his success, popularity, and

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[280] Matteo Fumagalli, "Islamic Radicalism and the Insecurity Dilemma in Central Asia: The Role of Russia," in *Russia and Islam: State, Society and Radicalism*, ed. Roland Dannreuther and Luke March (London, The UK: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 191–208, 195.

[281] Galina M. Yemelianova and Zumrat Salmorbekova, "Islam and Islamism in the Fergana Valley," in *Radical Islam in the Former Soviet Union* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2010), 211–43, 222.

[282] International Crisis Group Asia Report, "Is Radical Islam Inevitable in Central Asia? Priorities for Engagement," 2003, 5-6.

[283] Matteo Fumagalli, "Islamic Radicalism and the Insecurity Dilemma in Central Asia: The Role of Russia," in *Russia and Islam: State, Society and Radicalism*, ed. Roland Dannreuther and Luke March (London, The UK: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 191–208, 195.

[284] Alisher Khamidov, "Countering Religious Extremism in Central Asia: Hizb-Ut-Tahrir and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," in *Islam, Oil, and Geopolitics: Central Asia after September 11*, ed. Davis Elizabeth Van Wie and Rouben Azizian (Lanham, MD, The UK: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 77–91, 84.

[285] Oidinposha Imamkhodjaeva, "The Role of Central Asia in the "War Against Terrorism"," in *Philosophical Perspectives on the "War on Terrorism"* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Rodopi, 2007), 325–60, 343.

[286] Maria Omelicheva, "Terrorism in Central Asia: Dynamics, Dimensions, and Sources," *Education About Asia* 18, no. 3 (2013), 3-4.

credibility in the valley, his arrest triggered a significant public outcry. In 2005, supporters of Yoldashev stormed the prison where he was held, resulting in the release of hundreds of criminals.[288] The Karimov regime, already contending with the Islamist threat, harbored additional fears. Since the 2000s, people had risen against authorities in "Colored Revolutions"[289] across the former Soviet territories. Apprehensive that the events in Andijan could incite a similar revolution, the Uzbek government responded by opening fire on demonstrators, resulting in the deaths of many civilians.[290] Karimov went as far as shutting down the borders to thwart the influx of "terrorists" from Kyrgyzstan, which was undergoing a "Colored Revolution" concurrently.[291]

This crisis marked a turning point for Uzbekistan's domestic and foreign policies. Perhaps the most significant action for internal security was the subjugation of the National Security Service (SNB)[292] to the control of the Interior Ministry after the Andijan Events in 2005.[293] This, coupled with the appointment of individuals from his own clan to these positions, granted Karimov to bring security entirely under his control. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, who ascended to power following Karimov's death in

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[287] Micheal Mihalka, "Counterinsurgency, Counterterrorism, State-Building and Security Cooperation in Central Asia," *China and Eurasia Quarterly* 4, no. 2 (2006): 131–51, 144.

[288] Ibid, 145.

[289] In the early 2000s within the former Soviet sphere, the term "Colored Revolutions" used to characterize widespread public responses to the authoritarianism and corruption exhibited by post-independence leaders. The initial event was the "Rose Revolution" in Georgia in 2003, succeeded by the "Orange Revolution" in Ukraine in 2004, and culminating in the "Tulip Revolution" in Kyrgyzstan in 2005, causing notable concern for Karimov. Henry E. Hale, "Democracy or Autocracy on the March? The Colored Revolutions as Normal Dynamics of Patronal Presidentialism," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 39, no. 3 (2006): 305–29, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2006.06.006, 306.

[290] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 327.

[291] Christopher J Fettweis, "The Ferghana Valley of Central Asia.," in *Flashpoints in the War on Terrorism*, ed. Derek S. Reveron and Jeffrey Stevenson Murer (London, The UK: Taylor and Francis, 2006), 117–36, 128.

[292] It serves as the successor to the Committee for State Security (KGB) after gaining independence, a body originally set up by the Soviets in 1991. Facts and Details, "Police, Prisons and the National Security Service in Uzbekistan" (2016). Retrieved 21 Dec, 2023 from https://factsanddetails.com/central-asia/Uzbekistan/sub8_3f/entry-4728.html

[293] Facts and Details, "Police, Prisons and the National Security Service in Uzbekistan" (2016). Retrieved 21 Dec, 2023 from https://factsanddetails.com/central-asia/Uzbekistan/sub8_3f/entry-4728.html

2016, was anticipated to be a reformist but there has been no drastic change in this regard.[294] He merely altered the trajectory of power centralization within the related tribe.[295] In 2018, he renamed the SNB as the State Security Service (SSS); and reappointed many of his own clan members who had been previously dismissed by Karimov.[296] The Mirziyoyev government, and as an extension of the SSS, made a commitment to counterterrorism policies that is inherited from Karimov. Due to the fact that there have been no significant presences of radical Islamic organizations or acts of terrorism within Uzbekistan's borders since he took power, the state and security perceived as combined with the president's role and policies was no longer the case.[297] Apart from issues in the Fergana Valley and of Islamic extremism, as aforestated, Mirziyoyev has adopted a much more reformist stance than Karimov. However, even if not in a way comparable to Karimov, he still pursued tough policies, responding harshly to domestic unrests. The most recent example of this is the mass unrest that occurred in Karakalpakstan in the summer of 2022. This autonomous region of Uzbekistan has a constitutional right to secede. Consequently, the inhabitants in the autonomous region stirred up an uprising to secede, yet it was revoked by the government.[298] Following the government's harsh response to the riots, reports indicated that 18 people were killed and nearly 300 were injured.[299]

Tajikistan, on the other hand, had long been a country where regionalism and clans dominated politics. The challenge of sharing political power, especially between the northern and southern regions, had persisted for a considerable period. Even prior to gaining independence, the political environment was complex despite the integrated

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[294] Viktoria Akchurina, *Incomplete State-Building in Central Asia: The State as Social Practice* (Basingstoke, The UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 228.
[295] Ibid, 228-229.

[296] Ibid, 229.

[297] Bureau of Counterterrorism, "Country Reports on Terrorism 2021: Uzbekistan" (2021). Retrieved 21 Dec, 2023 from https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2021/uzbekistan/

[298] Nodirbek Soliev and Raffaello Pantucci, "Central Asia," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 15, no. 1 (2023): 82–91, 83.

[299] Ibid.

and rigid political structure of the SU. This situation got worse after 1991. Following independence, Rahmon Nabiyev, former leader of the Tajik SSR, assumed presidency. However, opposition factions objected to a leader with Soviet heritage in the administration. As the country's politics evolved into a struggle for regional dominance, exacerbated by economic crises, it became inevitable that people would take to the streets.[300] A third dynamic of the crisis, alongside regionalism and economic challenges, was the role of Islam in politics. The Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRP),[301] founded in 1990, emerged as the strongest opposition force in the country. In addition to the IRP, there were also clan-based opposition organizations. These groups, formed in the 1980s, include Rashtokhez, Lali Badakhshan (Ruby of Badakhshan), and the Democratic Party of Tajikistan. As these factions mobilized in the streets, it sparked significant unrest among the populace.[302] Nabiyev responded by firing upon civilians and opting to discipline the leaders of these groups. When his attempts proved unsuccessful, he tried to flee to Russia. However, at the airport, opposition forces captured him, compelling his resignation. In 1992, Emomali Rahmon came to power; nevertheless, he enforced more severe measures than his predecessor, such as prohibiting and apprehending opposition members.[303] The opposition, collectively known as the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), received support at one point from the Taliban, an Islamist group that seized power in Afghanistan in 1996, as well as the IMU.[304] The developments raised concerns among

[300] Jozef Lang, "The Radical Islamic Militants in Central Asia," *Centre of Eastern Studies*, 2013, 9.

[301] As one of the most important actors in the Tajik Civil War, the IRP has maintained a moderate ideology affiliated with the Hanafi School by emphasizing the danger of "foreign" ideologies such as Wahhabism and Salafism. After 1991, they expressed their commitment to the Constitution and the foundations of democracy, emphasizing the importance of democratic, multi-party state system, and a progressive civil society. Their primary support comes from the Sughd region within Tajikistan Fergana. Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 353-354.

[302] Galina M. Yemelianova and Zumrat Salmorbekova, "Islam and Islamism in the Fergana Valley," in *Radical Islam in the Former Soviet Union* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2010), 211–43, 219.

[303] Maria Omelicheva, "Combating Terrorism in Central Asia: Explaining Differences in States' Responses to Terror," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 3 (2007): 369–93, 379.

[304] Aleksei Malashenko, "Islam, Politics, and Security in Central Asia," in *Islam, Oil, and Geopolitics: Central Asia after September 11*, ed. Davis Elizabeth Van Wie and Rouben Azizian (Lanham, MD, The UK: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 93–104, 97.

all regional countries, notably Russia, Uzbekistan, and Iran.[305] Both these states and the Western bloc, aiming to avoid exacerbating the situation, engaged in intervention. In 1997, under United Nations mediation, the involved parties convened in Moscow, reaching a consensus and signing a peace agreement, called Moscow Protocol.[306] This agreement resulted in the Rahmon government yielding control of specific ministries to the opposition and recognizing their legitimacy. At the same time, Tajikistan achieved the distinction of being the first and only state in the former Soviet sphere to integrate an Islamist party into its political landscape.[307] Nevertheless, it is crucial to comprehend that while Islam holds a significant place in Tajik culture, it was not the primary catalyst in the Tajik War. Tajikistan, as a geographically divided country, exhibits uneven distribution of economic and political influence across its regions.

The southern part, for instance, lacks the prosperity and industrial development seen in the north. The northern region, encompassing the Fergana Valley and hosting a prominent clan, commands greater political, military, and economic sway, reinforced by Moscow's support. This concentration of power within a clan-based structure and regionalism played a pivotal role in triggering the war, contributing to the ascendancy of leaders like Nabiyev- who is from the northern part, from Khujand- and Rahmon over the opposition. Interestingly, according to a 2015 survey, most of those who held important positions during that period were from the southern region, especially Khatlon, where President Rahmon is from.[308] This illustrates how deeply rooted nepotism and regionalism are in the country. Similar to other Central Asian countries, the president's relatives are dispersed across all strategic positions in the state apparatus.[309] The legislation, known as the "Law on the Founder of Peace and National Unity - Leader of the Nation" was approved by the Parliament in 2015, allowing

[305] Maria Omelicheva, "Combating Terrorism in Central Asia: Explaining Differences in States' Responses to Terror," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 3 (2007): 369–93, 385.
[306] Ibid, 372.

[307] S. Nunn, N. Lubin, and B. R. Rubin, *Calming the Ferghana Valley: Development and Dialogue in the Heart of Central Asia* (New York (NY), The US: The Century Foundation Press, 1999), 101.

[308] Hélène Thibault, *Transforming Tajikistan: State-Building and Islam in Post-Soviet Central Asia* (London, The UK: I.B. Tauris, 2019), 74.

[309] Ibid, 75.

Emomali Rahmon a lifelong political status. [310] This status authorizes him to supervise government activities even following his retirement. Moreover, the legislation grants him and his family "permanent immunity from legal and criminal proceedings."[311] Under these circumstances, Islamists, who had initially been appointed to very senior positions and had tried not to openly contradict Rahmon's government too much in their opposition to keep this situation unchanged, had to cede their positions to government nepotism.[312] Indeed, the monopoly of Rahmon's government has brought about changes in Tajikistan's political landscape. President Emomali Rahmon leveled allegations against Abdukhalim Nazarzod, who was a minister at that time, accusing him of plotting a coup d'état.[313] Additionally, the President implicated the IRPT, alleging their involvement in supporting Nazarzod's alleged coup attempt.[314] Eventually, Rahmon's administration discredited the ministries assigned to the Islamist opposition party and barred them from participating in politics in 2015.[315]

In the week following the Ministry of Justice's ban on the IRP, a terrorist attack in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, resulted in the death of 22 people.[316] These assaults targeted the police headquarters on the first day and the Interior Ministry on the second.[317] The Rahmon government targeted Abdukhalim Nazarzoda, the deputy defense minister, as the leader of the terrorist group responsible for the attacks.[318] The

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[310] Ibid, 74.
[311] Ibid.

[312] Ibid, 79.

[313] Nartsiss Shukuralieva and Artur Lipiński, "Islamic Extremism and Terrorism in Central Asia: A Critical Analysis," *Central Asia and The Caucasus* 22, no. 1 (2021): 106–17, https://doi.org/10.37178/ca-c.21.1.10, 112.

[314] Ibid.

[315] Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, "Tajikistan: Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2004," (2005). https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41712.htm

[316] BBC, "Tajikistan Clashes Leave 22 Dead," *BBC* (September 5, 2015). Retrieved 23 Dec, 2023 from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-34157441

[317] Ibid.

[318] Andrew Osborn and Dmitry Solovyov, "Tajikistan Hunts Renegade Minister after Clashes Stir Instability," *Reuters* (September 7, 2015). Retrieved 23 Dec, 2023 from https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-tajikistan-violence-idUKKCN0R71TC20150907/

government alleged that Nazarzoda was a member of the IRP and subsequently dismissed him from his position.[319] Besides, following these accusations, the Supreme Court of Tajikistan declared the IRPT a terrorist group by also banning its activities.[320] As seen, in addition to political Islam, issues related to radical Islam have also been prominent in Tajikistan. However, the government of Tajikistan has equated radical Islam prone to violence with social conservatism, and also with political Islam, which has been active in the political sphere as IRTP for almost two decades, to legitimize its harsh policies against Islamic extremism.[321] Throughout the 2010s, numerous operations were conducted against Islamic extremism. An example in the Fergana Valley was the military operation following the terrorist attack on the Khujand police station in 2010, which resulted in 50 people being imprisoned.[322] Outside the Fergana Valley, such operations against extremism were most common in Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshan region. A notable recent event occurred following the capture of the city of Khorog by protesters in 2022, after mass-protests in the region.[323] Although the protest aimed at criticizing Rahmon administration, the government responded harshly, labeling it an "anti-terrorist operation."[324] The response of Rahmon government, along with widespread dissatisfaction on numerous issues, led to discussions in academic and policy circles about Tajikistan being a "fragile" or "failed

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[319] Ibid.

[320] Nartsiss Shukuralieva and Artur Lipiński, "Islamic Extremism and Terrorism in Central Asia: A Critical Analysis," *Central Asia and The Caucasus* 22, no. 1 (2021): 106–17, https://doi.org/10.37178/ca-c.21.1.10, 113.

[321] Edward Lemon and Hélène Thibault, "Counter-Extremism, Power and Authoritarian Governance in Tajikistan," *Central Asian Survey* 37, no. 1 (2017): 137–59, https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2017.1336155, 138.

[322] Roman Kozhevnikov, "Car Bomber Kills 2, Wounds 25 Police in Tajikistan," *Reuters* (September 3, 2010). Retrieved 22 Dec, 2023 from https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-tajikistan-blast-idUKTRE6821CD20100903/

[323] Viktoria Akchurina, *Incomplete State-Building in Central Asia: The State as Social Practice* (Basingstoke, The UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 2.

[324] RFE/RL's Tajik Service, "Hollow Visit: Gorno-Badakhshan Not In Welcoming Mood For Tajik President On First Visit Since Bloody Clampdown," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty* (August 23, 2023). Retrieved 22 Dec, 2023 from https://www.rferl.org/a/tajikistan-gorno-badakhshan-rahmon-visit-violence-security/32561814.html

state,"[325] especially following this event.[326] In its security policy, following the 2021 withdrawal of NATO troops from neighboring Afghanistan, the Rahmon government has hosted exercises- in cooperation with the US, China, and Russia- within its territory to develop counterterrorism strategies.[327] Additionally, the government has strengthened its security system by allocating a significant budget to fortify its border with Afghanistan. This measure addresses not only Islamic extremism but also drug trafficking. Tajikistan is a producer of cannabis and a transit country for Afghan heroin trafficking.[328] According to the recent data of 2023, a quarter of the drug trafficking from Afghanistan occurs across the Tajik border.[329] The actors involved in this trafficking include radical Islamic groups, particularly the IMU and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), as well as mafia groups that have direct ties to the ruling elite.[330]

In addition to all these, there is an ongoing border dispute between the neighboring countries of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, which has escalated into conflict on numerous occasions since their independence. The primary cause of this dispute is the artificial borders established during the Soviet era, and by extension, the existence of enclaves in the Fergana Valley.[331] Although the borders established during the Soviet era remained unproblematic until the collapse of the highly interdependent political and economic model, they subsequently caused numerous problems, particularly as the

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[325] In general terms, a state is considered failed when it lacks the ability to exert control over its territory and population, and is unable to defend its national borders. Naazneen H. Barma, "Failed State," Encyclopedia Britannica (November 3, 2023). Retrieved 22 Dec, 2023 from https://www.britannica.com/topic/failed-state.

[326] Viktoria Akchurina, *Incomplete State-Building in Central Asia: The State as Social Practice* (Basingstoke, The UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 2.
[327] Bureau of Counterterrorism, "Country Reports on Terrorism 2021: Tajikistan" (2021). Retrieved 22 Dec, 2023 from https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2021/tajikistan/

[328] Global Organized Crime Index, "Criminality in Tajikistan," The Organized Crime Index | ENACT (2023). Retrieved 23 Dec, 2023 from https://ocindex.net/country/tajikistan#.

[329] Ibid.

[330] Ibid.

[331] Euronews, "Kırgızistan İle Tacikistan Neden Çatışıyor?," (September 16, 2022). Retrieved Jan 1, 2024 from https://tr.euronews.com/2022/09/16/kirgizistan-ile-tacikistan-neden-catisiyor

tension caused by enclaves escalated into ethnic conflicts.[332] All the three countries bordering the Fergana Valley have been dealing with border issues. The Uzbekistan-Tajikistan border was demarcated much earlier as compared to the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border. In 2002, during the Karimov era, a portion of the Uzbekistan-Tajikistan border was demarcated, and the remaining part was bilaterally agreed upon under the Mirziyoyev regime in 2016.[333] The Tajik-Kyrgyz border issue, however, continues to be a matter of concern. One of the most recent border clashes occurred in September 2022, resulting in dozens of deaths.[334] Negotiations initiated in the aftermath are still in progress. Although some progress was made during the negotiations held in Batken from December 8 to 14 in 2023, the disputed border, approximately about 300 km, remains unresolved.[335] This, of course, has many geopolitical implications for the security agenda. In terms of border security, particularly since Tajikistan borders Afghanistan and is a haven for numerous radical organizations, Kyrgyz authorities have raised frequent concerns about the infiltration of Islamic extremism from Tajikistan. For instance, following the latest clashes, Kyrgyz security forces claimed to have evidence that "terrorist mercenaries, taking advantage of the border clashes, are attempting to cross into Kyrgyzstan," although this has been denied by the Tajik government.[336] Given the similar situation that arose during the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan border dispute[337] following the 1999 Batken

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[332] Ulugbek Babakulov, "Kyrgyz-Uzbek Border Tensions," *Institute for War and Peace Reporting* (2002). Retrieved Jan 1, 2024 from https://iwpr.net/global-voices/kyrgyz-uzbek-border-tensions.
[333] Euronews, "Kırgızistan İle Tacikistan Neden Çatışıyor?," (September 16, 2022). Retrieved Jan 1, 2024 from https://tr.euronews.com/2022/09/16/kirgizistan-ile-tacikistan-neden-catisiyor

[334] Anadolu Ajansı, "Kırgız-Tacik sınırının tartışmalı kısmının 47 kilometresi daha belirlendi," TRT Haber (Dec 14, 2023). Retireved Jan 1, 2014 from https://www.trthaber.com/haber/dunya/kirgiz-tacik-sinirinin-tartismali-kisminin-47-kilometresi-daha-belirlendi-820589.html

[335] Ibid.

[336] Nodirbek Soliev and Raffaello Pantucci, "Central Asia," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 15, no. 1 (2023): 82–91, 83-84.

[337] Like other border disputes, the majority of the Uzbek-Kyrgyz border dispute over enclaves was resolved in 2017, after Mirziyoyev came to power. The complete settlement of the border dispute followed the election of Kyrgyz President Japarov, when a delegation dealing with border issues convened in Tashkent in March 2021. A legal border agreement subsequently came into force in 2022. Although this border dispute, like others, led to many conflicts, it was particularly highlighted in the earlier-mentioned Batken Events, where it escalated into an international problem with direct clashes between the Kyrgyz army and radical Islamist militants, mainly from the IMU. Burak Çalışkan, "Özbekistan ve Kırgızistan Arasındaki Sınır Anlaşmasının Getirdikleri." *INSAMER*, (2023), 2.

Events, it is evident that such border disputes have historically triggered regional leaders' concerns about Islamic extremism and influenced their geopolitical visions.[338] Kyrgyzstan stands out from the other two states in Central Asia due to its distinctive political culture and is acknowledged as the most democratic country in the region, characterized by a relatively more engaged civil society.[339] Askar Akayev, originally a physicist, secured victory in the election right before the country gained independence from the Soviets and maintained his position until the popular unrest of 2005, resulting in the "Tulip Revolution" which compelled his resignation. The roots of the Revolution were planted long before it actually occurred. Akayev and his family wielded significant influence over key sectors of the country's economy, leading to issues of corruption and the consolidation of political and economic authority within a specific clan. In addition to this, Kyrgyzstan, like other Central Asian countries, grapples with issues of regionalism, tribalism, and ethnic tensions.[340] Similar to the situation in Tajikistan, southern Kyrgyzstan is characterized by greater poverty and a more traditional way of life compared to the northern part of the country.[341] This southern region encompasses oblasts within the Fergana Valley, including Osh, Batken, and Jalal-Abad. The country was also witnessing a power struggle between political clans and regions, in addition to the political corruption of the Akayev regime. In 2002, the Aksy events, occurred, triggering many consequent problems. When Azimbek Beknazarov, a deputy from the Jalal-Abad region, was arrested for criticizing President Akayev, riots broke out in the southern region.[342] The demonstrators were

Retrieved Jan 1, 2024 from https://www.insamer.com/tr/uploads/pdf/o-zbekistan-ve-kirgizistan-arasindaki-sinir-anlas-masinin-getirdikleri-burak-c-alis-kan.pdf

[338] Nick Megoran, "The Critical Geopolitics of the Uzbekistan– Kyrgyzstan Ferghana Valley Boundary Dispute, 1999–2000," *Political Geography* 23 (2004): 731–64, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2004.03.004, 735.

[339] Erkinbek Kasybekov, "Government and Nonprofit Sector Relations in the Kyrgyz Republic," in *Civil Society in Central Asia*, ed. Holt Ruffin and Daniel Waugh (Seattle, The US: University of Washington Press, 2011), 71–85, 71.

[340] S. Nunn, N. Lubin, and B. R. Rubin, *Calming the Ferghana Valley: Development and Dialogue in the Heart of Central Asia* (New York (NY), The US: The Century Foundation Press, 1999), 100.

[341] Jozef Lang, "The Radical Islamic Militants in Central Asia," *Centre of Eastern Studies*, 2013, 44.

[342] Alisher Khamidov, "Countering Religious Extremism in Central Asia: Hizb-Ut-Tahrir and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," in *Islam, Oil, and Geopolitics: Central Asia after September 11*, ed. Davis Elizabeth Van Wie and Rouben Azizian (Lanham, MD, The UK: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 77–91, 85.

fired upon by the police, leading to the death of a couple of participants.[343] Following the release of Beknazarov, Akayev fled to Russia. Although he declared his resignation at the embassy in Moscow, the turmoil persisted. In the elections that followed Akayev's resignation, Kurmanbek Bakiyev from the Jalal-Abad region emerged victorious and assumed the presidency. However, his authoritarian stance towards the opposition and alleged connections with the mafia and other underground organizations left the public dissatisfied.[344] In 2010, protests erupted in the capital city of Bishkek. Initially resistant to resignation, Bakiyev eventually had no choice but to flee the country and step down. Subsequently Rosa Otunbayeva, assumed leadership. However, the heat of the 2010 protests had not yet subsided.[345] Upon taking office, she immediately declared a state of emergency due to ethnic clashed between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in the Fergana region of Kyrgyzstan. While many held Bakiyev responsible for the situation, there was also a minority who believed that Islamic extremists were involved.[346] Regardless of the reasons, hundreds of people lost their lives, thousands were forced to seek refuge during these clashes. After Otunbayeva's interim presidency, Almazbek Atambayev won the 2011 elections.[347] Having become a symbol of the Tulip Revolution, he was a politician who advocated for democracy and freedom. However, like his predecessors, he resorted to repression and arrests in response to public protests after taking office. This approach was evident during the 2013 protests in the city of Jalal-Abad in the Fergana Valley, in which demonstrators demanded the revenues from the country's mines be used for the social benefit of the people, not for the ruling elite.[348] In 2017, Atambayev was succeeded by Sooronbay

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[343] Aleksei Malashenko, "Islam, Politics, and Security in Central Asia," in *Islam, Oil, and Geopolitics: Central Asia after September 11*, ed. Davis Elizabeth Van Wie and Rouben Azizian (Lanham, MD, The UK: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 93–104, 98.
[344] Jacob Zenn and Kathleen Kuehnast, "Preventing Violent Extremism in Kyrgyzstan," *USİP Special Report 355*, (2014), 4.

[345] Ibid, 3.

[346] David Lewis, "Crime, Terror and the State in Central Asia," *Global Crime* 15, no. 3–4 (2014): 337–56, https://doi.org/10.1080/17440572.2014.927764, 348.

[347] Viktoria Akchurina, *Incomplete State-Building in Central Asia: The State as Social Practice* (Basingstoke, The UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 245.

[348] Gökhan Tekir, "Evolution of Ochlocracy in Kyrgyzstan," *International Journal of Social and Humanities Sciences* 7, no. 1 (2023): 49–68, 60.

Jeenbekov. In 2019, Atambayev was sentenced to 11 years in prison with the charges of corruption. During the 2020 parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan, another "habitual protest" also known as the Third Revolution, took place.[349] After opposition parties declared their refusal to accept the election results, protesters took to the streets and freed former members of the ruling elite from prison, including Atambayev.[350] Following these events, Jeenbekov resigned, leading to Sadyr Japarov's rise to power after the presidential elections in 2021. While these revolutions are often characterized as democratic movements, scholarly literature suggests they were influenced more by regionalism, tribal ties, and interest-based power relations.[351]

As can be seen from this background information, Kyrgyzstan had three presidents in a decade, making it a unique Central Asian country with the most regular elections and the most frequent turnover of leadership. The central focus of this thesis, however, revolves around the Kyrgyz part of the Fergana Valley and its relationship with radical Islam. As is known, Islam is a religion that fits better within the context of a sedentary life since the construction of mosques is necessary for communities to come together, requiring such a lifestyle.[352] However, the Kyrgyz society consists of nomadic tribes, and while they have embraced Islam, religious rituals among them are not as deeply ingrained as in Tajik and Uzbek societies.[353] In short, due to the less deeply rooted role of Islam in nomadic societies like Kyrgyzstan, it is unlikely for opposition structures to be Islamist. Nevertheless, this has not deterred the active presence of radical Islamist groups in Kyrgyzstan.[354] In addition, Kyrgyzstan's Fergana region is the most

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[349] Viktoria Akchurina, *Incomplete State-Building in Central Asia: The State as Social Practice* (Basingstoke, The UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 1-2.
[350] Gökhan Tekir, "Evolution of Ochlocracy in Kyrgyzstan," *International Journal of Social and Humanities Sciences* 7, no. 1 (2023): 49–68, 61.

[351] Ibid, 63; Ludwika Wlodek, "Clan War Instead of Fighting Coronavirus and Corruption," *Opinion and Analysis*, 2020, 109–14, 112.

[352] Kathleen Collins, "The Political Role of Clans in Central Asia," *Comparative Politics* 35, no. 2 (2003): 171–90, https://doi.org/10.2307/4150150, 183.

[353] Graham Fuller, *Central Asia: The New Geopolitics* (Santa Monica, The US: Rand, 1992), 33.

[354] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 344.

mountainous area of the valley, creating problems such as drug trafficking, as well as terrorist acts of underground mafia groups and radical Islamist organizations. The best known among these acts is the Batken Events of 1999-2000. During the summer of 1999, the Batken region witnessed an invasion by the IMU, leading to the capture of several individuals, including a Japanese scientist and the region's mayor.[355] The purpose behind this incursion was to communicate their demands -consolidating their forces in the area and securing unhindered passage across the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border- to Kyrgyz authorities.[356] Kyrgyz troops, supported by Uzbekistan and Russia, engaged in clashes with IMU guerrillas. Although the operations resulted in the migration of numerous Islamist militants into Tajikistan, the efforts of the Uzbek and Kyrgyz governments fell short of completely eradicating radical groups from the region. While Kyrgyzstan initially adopted a liberal stance of reconciliation with Islamists, there was a shift in the Akayev regime's policies towards Islamist groups especially after the Batken Events.[357] Counterterrorism became a prioritized agenda item following this period,[358] so much so that even ethnic tensions were responded to by the government with counter-terrorist policies. An example of this is the ethnic tension that occurred in 2008 in the Nookat district of Fergana, Kyrgyzstan. Although the event was rooted in long-standing ethnic tensions between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks, the government arrested a number of imams, claiming that the event was instigated by Islamist radicals.[359] After these arrests, the Bakiyev regime, like Akayev before him, faced accusations of being anti-Islamic.[360]

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[355] Oidinposha Imamkhodjaeva, "The Role of Central Asia in the "War Against Terrorism"," in *Philosophical Perspectives on the "War on Terrorism"* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Rodopi, 2007), 325–60, 340.

[356] Maria Omelicheva, "Terrorism in Central Asia: Dynamics, Dimensions, and Sources," *Education About Asia* 18, no. 3 (2013), 2.

[357] Ibid, 4-5.

[358] Maria Omelicheva, "Combating Terrorism in Central Asia: Explaining Differences in States' Responses to Terror," Terrorism and Political Violence 19, no. 3 (2007): 369–93, 374.

[359] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 348.

[360] Ibid.

In short, the history of the Fergana Valley since to Tsarist Russian era can be described as a history marked by several problems, tensions, and clashes between the Muslim population and the policies of the ruling elites. This situation persisted after 1991, through the strict policies of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.[361] Consequently, numerous underground radical organizations that had developed during the Soviet era continued to exist after independence. Some among them, such as the IMU, embrace radicalism and resort to violence, while others, like HT, adhere to radical ideologies without engaging in violent actions.[362] To assess the policies and narratives of the three states concerning radical organizations rooted in the Fergana Valley, it is crucial to comprehend the historical and structural distinctions among them. In the subsequent part of the chapter, therefore, the origins, transformations, and organizational structures of these radical groups originating from the valley will be investigated.

2.2. Radical Islamist Organizations in the Fergana Valley

The first of these groups is the Adolat organization which was founded in 1989 by Hakimjon Sattimov.[363] Initially presented as a legitimate entity to safeguard his silk production enterprise, it operated secretly as a party with Islamist leanings, specializing in underground armed guerrilla warfare.[364] This organization also provided training to Tahir Yoldashev and Juma Namangani, who later would be the founders of the more extreme organization, the IMU.[365] The Adolat group expanded its influence across Uzbekistan Fergana, with the objective of instating Islamic justice in the region.[366] As mentioned earlier, it intimidated the Karimov regime by seizing

[361] Maria Omelicheva, "Combating Terrorism in Central Asia: Explaining Differences in States' Responses to Terror," Terrorism and Political Violence 19, no. 3 (2007): 369–93, 386.

[362] Tolga Türker, "Radicalization of Islam in Central Asia: Theory, Trends and Prospects," *Orta Asya ve Kafkasya Araştırmaları Dergisi* 6, no. 11 (2011): 51–74, 61.

[363] Maria Omelicheva, "Terrorism in Central Asia: Dynamics, Dimensions, and Sources," *Education About Asia* 18, no. 3 (2013), 2.

[364] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 317.

[365] Ibid, 318.

[366] David Lewis, "Crime, Terror and the State in Central Asia," *Global Crime* 15, no. 3–4 (2014): 337–56, https://doi.org/10.1080/17440572.2014.927764, 342-343.

control of cities such as Namangan and Andijan[367] and transformed into the region's "Islamic police force."[368] Their most notable action occurred when they took control of City Hall in Namangan in 1991. From this location, they communicated their demands to Islam Karimov, attracting a supportive crowd. Yoldashev, the spokesperson, listed many of the party's requests, including the declaration of Uzbekistan as an Islamic state and the installation of a Muslim president.[369] However, the desires of the supporters differed significantly. They sought a transformation in the economic and social structure, as well as an end to political corruption. When Yoldashev declined to convey the people's wishes, the supporters dispersed.[370] This incident demonstrated to Karimov that the population was not driven by religious demands. Consequently, he adopted moderate measures from this point until the 1992 elections; however, afterwards he asserted his authority by arresting the party members.[371] After fleeing to Tajikistan, Yoldashev and Namangani later returned to re-establish the Adolat party, renaming it the IMU with an even more radical agenda.[372]

After fleeing Uzbekistan, Yoldashev went to Tajikistan and participated in the Civil War as an ally of the IRP. From there, he crossed over to Afghanistan, where he studied in Taliban madrassas.[373] Upon his return to Uzbekistan Fergana in 1996, he founded the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) with extremist theological claims.[374] Yoldashev perceived the IRP's ideology as insufficient and moderate during the Civil

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[367] Vitaly V Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia: Between Pen and Rifle* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 60, 97.

[368] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 318.

[369] Ibid, 319.

[370] Ibid, 320.

[371] Ibid, 321.

[372] David Lewis, "Crime, Terror and the State in Central Asia," *Global Crime* 15, no. 3–4 (2014): 337–56, https://doi.org/10.1080/17440572.2014.927764, 342.

[373] Vitaly V Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia: Between Pen and Rifle* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 88.

[374] Jozef Lang, "The Radical Islamic Militants in Central Asia," *Centre of Eastern Studies*, 2013, 10.

War.[375] However, it was Karimov's oppressive regime that served as the main catalyst for his aspiration to create a more radical group.[376] In response, he sought to challenge Karimov's regime in a more organized and institutionalized manner by uniting various Islamist groups in the Uzbekistan part of the valley, giving rise to the IMU. At this point, Yoldashev, a mullah himself, actively worked to strengthen the organization's military wing alongside Juma Namangani, a commando with whom he trained and fought during the Tajik Civil War.[377] While the organization asserted its theological influence alongside its military strengths by translating jihad literature into the titular languages and training clerics,[378] Olcott contends that this assertion was considerably feeble, implying that the primary identity of the IMU lied in being a group of fighters.[379] Likewise, the IMU's lack of interest in addressing social issues as a means of securing public support, and its guerrilla methods are also emphasized.[380] As mentioned earlier, the IMU used its guerrilla tactics through its bomb attack in Tashkent in 1999.[381] Subsequent to the bombings on the capital, the Uzbek government validated its existing repressive policies by exploiting the fear instilled in the population, thereby intensifying their control.[382] Despite these measures, the IMU's activities remained unabated. The years 1999-2000 witnessed the aforesaid

[375] Richard Weitz, "Storm Clouds over Central Asia: Revival of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)?," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 27, no. 6 (2004): 505–30, https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100490513558, 506.

[376] Oidinposha Imamkhodjaeva, "The Role of Central Asia in the "War Against Terrorism"," in *Philosophical Perspectives on the "War on Terrorism"* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Rodopi, 2007), 325–60, 347.

[377] Tolga Türker, "Radicalization of Islam in Central Asia: Theory, Trends and Prospects," *Orta Asya ve Kafkasya Araştırmaları Dergisi* 6, no. 11 (2011): 51–74, 65.

[378] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 324.

[379] Martha Brill Olcott, "The Roots of Radical Islam in Central Asia," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, (2007), 52-53.

[380] Galina M. Yemelianova and Zumrat Salmorbekova, "Islam and Islamism in the Fergana Valley," in *Radical Islam in the Former Soviet Union* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2010), 211–43, 222.

[381] Tolga Türker, "Radicalization of Islam in Central Asia: Theory, Trends and Prospects," *Orta Asya ve Kafkasya Araştırmaları Dergisi* 6, no. 11 (2011): 51–74, 66.

[382] Matteo Fumagalli, "Islamic Radicalism and the Insecurity Dilemma in Central Asia: The Role of Russia," in *Russia and Islam: State, Society and Radicalism*, ed. Roland Dannreuther and Luke March (London, The UK: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 191–208, 197.

Batken Events in the Kyrgyzstan part of the Fergana Valley.[383] These bombings, unfolding in the Fergana Valley, not only prompted the neighboring countries but also drew the attention of countries such as Russia and China into mobilization.[384] Following the Batken Events, the IMU found itself unable to withstand the pressure from these actors and consequently retreated to Afghanistan and Pakistan.[385] Nevertheless, its vulnerability even more increased, particularly after the forces of the US, NATO invaded Afghanistan and killed Namangani in 2001.[386] This led the IMU to expand its targets beyond the Karimov regime. It underwent a transformation, changing its name to the Islamic Movement of Turkestan (IMT) and shifting its focus from solely Uzbekistan to the broader goal of establishing a caliphate in the region.[387] The IMT not only concentrated on the corruption within the Karimov regime but also extended its critique to Western civilization, and its betrayal of Islam.[388] Additionally, the IMT formed alliances with and being provided funding from both the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, while also engaging in the drug trade as an additional source of income to grow its capacity.[389]

The growth of the IMT, however, was interrupted in 2009 when Yoldashev was killed by the US, like Namangani, in Pakistan[390]. Even so, following their victory in the civil

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[383] Galina M. Yemelianova and Zumrat Salmorbekova, "Islam and Islamism in the Fergana Valley," in *Radical Islam in the Former Soviet Union* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2010), 211–43, 223.
[384] David Lewis, "Crime, Terror and the State in Central Asia," *Global Crime* 15, no. 3–4 (2014): 337–56, https://doi.org/10.1080/17440572.2014.927764, 341.

[385] Jozef Lang, "The Radical Islamic Militants in Central Asia," *Centre of Eastern Studies*, 2013, 11.

[386] Jacob Zenn and Kathleen Kuehnast, "Preventing Violent Extremism in Kyrgyzstan," *USİP Special Report 355*, (2014), 6.

[387] Oidinposha Imamkhodjaeva, "The Role of Central Asia in the "War Against Terrorism"," in *Philosophical Perspectives on the "War on Terrorism"* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Rodopi, 2007), 325–60, 347.

[388] Jozef Lang, "The Radical Islamic Militants in Central Asia," *Centre of Eastern Studies*, 2013, 29.

[389] Jacob Zenn and Kathleen Kuehnast, "Preventing Violent Extremism in Kyrgyzstan," *USİP Special Report 355*, (2014), 7.

[390] Bill Roggio, "Al Qaeda Religious Leader Thought Killed in US Drone Strike," *Foundation for Defense of Democracy: Long War Journal* (2012). Retrieved 19 Dec, 20223 from https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2012/12/10/al-qaeda-religious-leader-thought-killed-in-us-drone-strike/

war, the Taliban, and consequently the IMU, experienced a resurgence in Afghanistan.[391] Despite of facing pressures from both the US and Pakistan, Falkenburg highlights that the IMT regained influence not only in Northern Afghanistan but also in Central Asia after 2010s.[392]

The resurgence of radical Islamist groups in the region following the withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan in 2014 has been a matter of concern.[393] The literature suggests that after the withdrawal, various radical Islamist factions became more active.[394] For instance, the purported merger between the IMT and the Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP) is frequently discussed in both political and academic circles, even though concrete evidence for this remains elusive.[395] The Turkestan Islamic Party, established in the late 1990s, aimed at creating an Islamic state encompassing Central Asia and the Xinjiang-Uygur region of China. Its roots can be traced back to the Islamist movement founded by Abdul Hameed in 1940, initially known as the Islamic Party of Turkestan.[396] It was later transformed into a more organized entity in Pakistan by Hasan Mahsum and began receiving funding from the Afghan mujahideen.[397] Subsequently, its headquarters was moved to Kabul.[398] It is important to note, though, that the organization's activities are primarily China-centric.[399] The Chinese

[391] Ted Donnelly, "Fergana as Fata? Central Asia after 2014 – Outcomes and Strategic Options," *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 11, no. 1 (2011): 11–27, https://doi.org/10.11610/connections.11.1.02, 16.

[392] Luke Falkenburg, "On the Brink: The Resurgence of Militant Islam in Central Asia," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 24, no. 3 (2013): 375–93, https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2013.802603, 375.

[393] David G. Lewis, ed. Aniseh Bassiri Tabrizi, *Regional Powers and Post-NATO Afghanistan: Key Dynamics and Faultlines*, NATO (2021). Retrieved Jan 2, 2024 from https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep33620.9.pdf?refreqid=fastly-default%3Aa6e800b0a6fae41a42c6d1da7b84af97&ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv2%2Fcontrol&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1, 11.

[394] Ibid, 7.

[395] Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, *Central Asia Facing ISAF Withdrawal from Afghanistan*, 2013, 45–68, 57-58.

[396] Phillip B.K. Potter, "Terrorism in China: Growing Threats with Global Implications," *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 7, no. 4 (2013): 70–92, 72.

[397] Ibid.

[398] Ibid, 74.

[399] UNSC, "Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement," United Nations Security Council Report (2008). Retrieved Jan 2, 2024 from

government has designated this party as a separatist-terrorist organization, referring to it as the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM).[400] As mentioned, although it is not known whether it merged directly with the IMT, it is known to cooperate with many organizations in the Fergana Valley due to its pan-Turkic Islamist ideology.[401]

As the IMT shifted its focus from local dynamics to global jihad, two Uzbek members from the Fergana Valley, Nazhmeddin Dzhalalov and Sukhail Buranov, left the IMT.[402] In 2002, they founded a new organization in Pakistan's North Waziristan region, bordering Afghanistan, called the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU).[403] The organization, closely linked with the Taliban, has targeted the Karimov regime in Uzbekistan.[404] It was responsible for the terrorist bombings at the US Embassy in Tashkent in 2004 and another terrorist attack in Andijan in 2009.[405] Although the IJU had been active in Uzbekistan, fueled by local dynamics, the most recent data that is known suggest that number of its members is not estimated to exceed 100-200. Additionally, the organization is partly integrated into the other organizations such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Al-Qaeda and the Taliban.[406]

The IMT, TIP, and IJU, can be considered local pillars of more well-equipped and global organizations such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda. Especially after 2014, when the IJU and the IMT pledged allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, a significant

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https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/1267/aq_sanctions_list/summaries/entity/eastern-turkistan-islamic-movement.

[400] Ibid.

[401] Colin P Clarke and Paul Rexton Kan, "Uighur Foreign Fighters: An Underexamined Jihadist Challenge," *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism*, 2017, https://doi.org/ 10.19165/2017.2.05, 5; Elizabeth Van Wie Davis, "Uyghur Muslim Ethnic Separatism in Xinjiang, China," *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 35, no. 1 (2008): 15–29, 17.

[402] Galina M. Yemelianova, *Muslims of Central Asia: An Introduction* (Edinburgh, The UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 86.

[403] Ibid.

[404] Ibid.

[405] The US State Department Director of National Intelligence, "Central Eurasia and Central Asia Terrorism," National Counterterrorism Center | Terrorist Groups (?). Retrieved December 23, 2023 from https://www.dni.gov/nctc/groups/central_eurasia.html.

[406] United States Department of State, "Country Reports on Terrorism 2017 - Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Islamic Jihad Union," REFWORLD/ UNHCR (2018). Retrieved 23 Dec, 2023 from https://www.refworld.org/docid/5bcf1f434.html.

number of militants from Central Asia joined these organizations. This led to an expansion of Al-Qaeda and ISIS activities in the Central Asian region.[407] One of the main reasons for this was the weakening of these local organizations by NATO, coupled with their losses of both economic resources and manpower as a result of the Zarb-e-Azb[408] operation in 2014.[409] Recently, a significant number of Central Asian militants have participated in the conflicts in Syria and Iraq as mentioned. Estimates suggest that over 5,000 Central Asian Islamist militants have joined the fight alongside ISIS, recruited through local Islamist organizations.[410] However, the concern arises as these fighters start returning to their native regions, most of them from the Fergana Valley, creating a possible risk of terrorism.[411] Therefore, looking at the relationships between the two most important global organizations, ISIS and al-Qaeda, with the Central Asian region is crucial for understanding the dynamics of radical Islamist organizations in the Fergana Valley.

ISIS, an organization based on Salafi Islamic ideology, emerged during the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.[412] Also known as the "Iraqi Al-Qaeda," it has openly expressed allegiance to the Al-Qaeda network.[413] Al-Qaeda, on the other hand, was established much earlier than ISIS; it originated from the Afghan Mujahideen during their resistance against the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. The organization was

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[407] Nodirbek Soliev, "Central Asia's New Threat Landscape: An Assessment," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 7, no. 6 (2015): 36–45, 37.

[408] The operation, named after the sword of Prophet Mohammed, was carried out by the Pakistani army in North Waziristan (NW), a stronghold of radical Islamist groups. During the operation, NW was targeted to weaken these organizations following the terrorist attack by the Pakistani Taliban at Karachi Airport in June 2014, an attack which received support from other local radical Islamist organizations. Nasir Naveed, "Operation Zarb-e-Azb: Retrospective View in the Context of US Response," *National Defense University INDUS Margella Papers*, no. 2 (2019): 139–47, 140; 142-143.

[409] Nodirbek Soliev, "Central Asia's New Threat Landscape: An Assessment," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 7, no. 6 (2015): 36–45, 37.

[410] Nodirbek Soliev and Raffaello Pantucci, "Central Asia," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 15, no. 1 (2023): 82–91, 84.

[411] Dauren Aben, "Regional Security in Central Asia: Addressing Existing and Potential Threats and Challenges," *Eurasian Research Journal* 1, no. 1 (2019): 51–65, 53.

[412] Zülfü Dağdeviren, "IŞİD'in Ortaya Çıkmasında Etkili Olan Küresel, Yerel Gelişmeler ve IŞİD'le Mücadele Stratejisi," *The Journal Od International Social Sciences* 31, no. 1 (2021): 301–16, 302.

[413] Ibid, 304

principally founded by Osama Bin Laden and Abdullah Azzam, a theologian.[414] The two founders of Al-Qaeda were influenced by the teachings of Ibn Taymiyya, a figure often linked to the roots of Salafist and Wahhabi ideologies. Their interpretation of jihad was based on punishing all non-believers who do not follow the commandments of God and the Prophet until Islam, "the religion of Allah", is accepted by all.[415] Although these organizations have distinct and separate organizational structures, there is interdependence and cooperation among them regarding economic, military, and manpower exchanges.[416] For example, the branch of ISIS, which is active in Central Asia is known as the Islamic State of Khorasan (ISK).[417] ISIS intensified its activities in the region, particularly by using ethnic-based groups in Central Asia that are affiliated with the ISK after 2022.[418] Based in Afghanistan and led by Hafiz Saeed since its establishment in 2015,[419] this branch is further divided into smaller ethnic-based organizations in recent years.[420]

One of these is Jamaat Ansarullah, which was established in 2015 and is composed of ethnic Tajiks. It is affiliated with ISK and also connected to Al-Qaeda and the Taliban.[421] Jamaat Ansarullah is led by Sajod whose father was commander for UTO during the Tajik Civil War, Mollah Amriddin Tabarov.[422] Al-Qaeda includes groups

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[414] Tamer Kaşıkçı and Gözde Deniz Bülbül, "Selefi-Cihadi Örgütlerin Karşılaştırmalı Analizi: El-Kaide ve IŞİD Örneği," *Türkiye Ortadoğu Çalışmaları Dergisi* 9, no. 2 (2022): 89–134, https://doi.org/10.26513/tocd.1148920, 98.
[415] Ibid, 99.

[416] Gavin Helf, "Looking for Trouble: Sources of Violent Conflict in Central Asia," *US Institute of Peace* 489 (November 2020), 8

[417] Arne C. Seifert, "Preventing the 'Islamic State' in Central Asia: Conditions, Risks, and Peace Policy Requirements," *Federal Academy for Security Policy* 7 (2016): 1–5, https://doi.org/10.22381/ghir9120175, 1.

[418] Nodirbek Soliev and Raffaello Pantucci, "Central Asia," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 15, no. 1 (2023): 82–91, 86.

[419] Dauren Aben, "Regional Security in Central Asia: Addressing Existing and Potential Threats and Challenges," *Eurasian Research Journal* 1, no. 1 (2019): 51–65, 53.

[420] Gavin Helf, "Looking for Trouble: Sources of Violent Conflict in Central Asia," *US Institute of Peace* 489 (November 2020), 8.

[421] Nodirbek Soliev, "Central Asia's New Threat Landscape: An Assessment," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 7, no. 6 (2015): 36–45, 38.

of various ethnic origins, such as the Al-Nusra Front. This group, composed of Islamist militants of Syrian Arabic ethnic origin, changed its name to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in 2016.[423] As such, Al-Qaeda has two Central Asia-based formations, one of which predominantly consists of ethnic Uzbeks: Kateebat at Tawhid wal Jihad (KTJ) – which is responsible for the 2016 explosion at the Chinese embassy in Bishkek - and the other being Tajik-populated Kateebat Imam Al-Bukhari (KIB).[424] The leader of KTJ, Abu Saloh, is an ethnic Uzbek from Osh[425] while KIB is under the leadership of Tajik national militan Ramazan Nurmanov.[426]

Hizb-ut Tahrir (HT), a group brought to Central Asia from abroad, originated in the Middle East under the leadership of Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood.[427] This organization is characterized by its radical ideology, rejecting the separation of state, and religion, and promoting a vision of "pure Islam".[428] In the aftermath of its establishment in the Uzbekistan part of the Fergana Valley during the 1990s, it has also garnered popular support in the Kyrgyz and Tajik regions of the valley by the end of the decade.[429] HT aligns its objectives with those of the IMU; however, it employs distinct strategies to pursue these common goals.[430] As a matter

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[422] Nodirbek Soliev and Raffaello Pantucci, "Central Asia," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 15, no. 1 (2023): 82–91, 85.

[423] Nodirbek Soliev, "Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses," *International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research* 11, no. 1 (2019): 65–70, 65.

[424] Ibid, 65-66.

[425] Nodirbek Soliev, "Central Asia's New Threat Landscape: An Assessment," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 7, no. 6 (2015): 36–45, 41.

[426]Nodirbek Soliev and Raffaello Pantucci, "Central Asia," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 15, no. 1 (2023): 82–91, 86.

[427] Galina M. Yemelianova and Zumrat Salmorbekova, "Islam and Islamism in the Fergana Valley," in *Radical Islam in the Former Soviet Union* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2010), 211–43, 223.

[428] ICG Asia Report, "Radical Islam in Central Asia: Responding to Hizb Ut-Tahrir," 2003, https://icg-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/58-radical-islam-in-central-asia-responding-to-hizb-ut-tahrir.pdf, 8.

[429] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 356.

[430] Matteo Fumagalli, "Islamic Radicalism and the Insecurity Dilemma in Central Asia: The Role of Russia," in *Russia and Islam: State, Society and Radicalism*, ed. Roland Dannreuther and Luke March (London, The UK: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 191–208, 198.

of fact, the backing and expansion garnered by the group are credited to those strategies that diverge from those utilized by the IMU.[431] Rather than engaging in guerrilla warfare and attempting to eliminate local traditions for the sake of pure Islamic propaganda, the group respects Sufi Islamic traditions.[432] It has a party program that is reconciled with clan politics,[433] adheres to non-violent methods.[434] They fill the power vacuum created by the governments,[435] which are indifferent to public problems, and address socio-economic issues in the region by proposing solutions such as the equal distribution of public goods[436] and the reduction of ethnic tensions through the unification of diverse groups under an Islamic identity.[437] In addition to these factors, HT's consistent emphasis on fighting against the West and its symbols, positioning himself as the voice of Muslims, significantly bolstered their support base.[438] These activities and rhetoric markedly diminished the government's legitimacy in the eyes of the people, contributing to HT's success in mobilization.[439] Recognizing this tendency, Central Asian governments designated the organization as a terrorist group in 2001, forcing it underground.[440]

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[431] Jacob Zenn and Kathleen Kuehnast, "Preventing Violent Extremism in Kyrgyzstan," *USİP Special Report 355*, (2014), 5.

[432] Galina M. Yemelianova and Zumrat Salmorbekova, "Islam and Islamism in the Fergana Valley," in *Radical Islam in the Former Soviet Union* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2010), 211–43, 224.

[433] Tolga Türker, "Radicalization of Islam in Central Asia: Theory, Trends and Prospects," *Orta Asya ve Kafkasya Araştırmaları Dergisi* 6, no. 11 (2011): 51–74, 64.

[434] Maria Omelicheva, "Terrorism in Central Asia: Dynamics, Dimensions, and Sources," *Education About Asia* 18, no. 3 (2013), 3.

[435] Alisher Khamidov, "Countering Religious Extremism in Central Asia: Hizb-Ut-Tahrir and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," in *Islam, Oil, and Geopolitics: Central Asia after September 11*, ed. Davis Elizabeth Van Wie and Rouben Azizian (Lanham, MD, The UK: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 77–91, 82.

[436] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 332.

[437] Jacob Zenn and Kathleen Kuehnast, "Preventing Violent Extremism in Kyrgyzstan," *USİP Special Report 355*, (2014), 5.

[438] Alisher Khamidov, "Countering Religious Extremism in Central Asia: Hizb-Ut-Tahrir and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," in *Islam, Oil, and Geopolitics: Central Asia after September 11*, ed. Davis Elizabeth Van Wie and Rouben Azizian (Lanham, MD, The UK: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 77–91, 78-79.

[439] Ibid, 83.

[440] Tolga Türker, "Radicalization of Islam in Central Asia: Theory, Trends and Prospects," *Orta Asya ve Kafkasya Araştırmaları Dergisi* 6, no. 11 (2011): 51–74, 62-63.

Akram Yoldashev left HT in 1996, believing that the Uzbek identity did not stand out in the organization; then he founded Akromiya upon his ideology mixing the Uzbek and Islamic identities.[441] While the structure of this organization focused on local dynamics rather than global Islam and Salafism like HT, many still consider Akromiya as a sub-branch of HT.[442] Yoldashev, a reliable businessman in the region, engaged in cross-border trade in addition to Islamist ideology within his organization.[443]As mentioned earlier, in 2004, Yoldashev and the businessmen he collaborated with were arrested on charges of being members of a radical Islamist organization. This led to protests in the Andijan city of the Fergana Valley in Uzbekistan, and the events concluded with suppression by Karimov's regime. Apart from its connection to these events, Akromiya is not considered a significant radical Islamist organization in the region.

The Tablighi Jamaat, on the other hand, emerged in the late 1920s from the Deobandi madrasas in India. Its founder, Ilyas Kandhlawi, was an Indian ulama educated in a Deobandi madrasa.[444] The Deobandi movement, which arose in opposition to British rule in India, was initially based on the thoughts of Hanafi sect of Islam; however, it has become radicalized over time.[445] For instance, the Taliban, established in 1996, were led by individuals trained in Deobandi madrasas.[446] Similarly, many other radical groups have origins in these madrasas, including the Tablighi Jamaat. This group

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[441] Galina M. Yemelianova and Zumrat Salmorbekova, "Islam and Islamism in the Fergana Valley," in *Radical Islam in the Former Soviet Union* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2010), 211–43, 224.

[442] Maria Omelicheva, "Terrorism in Central Asia: Dynamics, Dimensions, and Sources," *Education About Asia* 18, no. 3 (2013), 3-4.

[443] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 333.

[444] Muhammad Khalid Masud, "The Growth and Development of the Tablighijama'at in India," in *Travellers in Faith: Studies of the Tablighi Jama'at as a Transnational Islamic Movement for Faith Renewal*, ed. Muhammad Khalid Masud (Boston, The US: Brill, 2000), 3–44, 4.

[445] Brannon D. Ingram, "'Modern' Madrasa," *Historical Social Research* 44, no. 3 (2019): 206–25, 207.

[446] Devin Lurie, "The Haqqani Network the Shadow Group Supporting the Taliban's Operations," *American Security Project* (2020), 2. Retrieved Jan 6, 2024 from https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep26605.pdf?refreqid=fastly-default%3A84b1d3c5f814fc06e8ab182ee70e5013&ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv2%2Fcontrol&origin=&initiator=&acceptTC=1

shares ideological similarities with HT.[447] Although it was founded in the late 1920s, the Tablighi Jamaat began its activities after 1946, following the establishment of close ties with Abd-al Wahhab, the founder of the Wahhabi movement.[448] While the Tablighi Jamaat does not engage in terrorist activities and advocates non-violent propagation, it is Salafi in its outlook, advocating for a return to "pure" Islam and the establishment of an Islamic state. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, it swiftly gained traction in Central Asia, particularly around the Fergana Valley's Kyrgyzstan part to be further particular.[449]

Ba'yat, assumed to have been established in the early 1990s, stands as another extremist organization within the Fergana Valley.[450] While the precise nature of its relationship remains elusive, it is believed to function as a branch of the globally active radical Islamist group Ba'yat al-Imam.[451] The organization, active in the part of the valley within Tajikistan, is known to receive its main support from Sughd, and additionally from the Isfara and Rasht regions close to the valley.[452] This group, having established close affiliations with the IMU, the IRP, and the Taliban, played a role in the Tajikistan Civil War and aligned itself with the Taliban mujahideen in Afghanistan.[453]

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[447] Maria Omelicheva, "Terrorism in Central Asia: Dynamics, Dimensions, and Sources," *Education About Asia* 18, no. 3 (2013), 3.
[448] Muhammad Khalid Masud, "The Growth and Development of the Tablighijama'at in India," in *Travellers in Faith: Studies of the Tablighi Jama'at as a Transnational Islamic Movement for Faith Renewal*, ed. Muhammad Khalid Masud (Boston, The US: Brill, 2000), 3–44, 15.

[449] Maria Omelicheva, "Terrorism in Central Asia: Dynamics, Dimensions, and Sources," *Education About Asia* 18, no. 3 (2013), 3.

[450] Joas Wagemakers, "A Terrorist Organization That Never Was: The Jordanian 'Bay'at al-Imam' Group," *The Middle East Journal* 68, no. 1 (2014): 59–75, https://doi.org/10.3751/68.1.13, 61.

[451] Ibid, 359-360.

[452] David Lewis, "Crime, Terror and the State in Central Asia," *Global Crime* 15, no. 3–4 (2014): 337–56, https://doi.org/10.1080/17440572.2014.927764, 344.

[453] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 358-359.

In summary, these radical organizations, which have direct or indirect links to the Fergana Valley, exhibit different dynamics but are united by the ideology of Salafi Islam, posing a significant concern for policymakers. The next chapters will build upon this historical foundation by analyzing the contemporary significance of the Fergana Valley for Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan and examining how the internal and external dynamics have influenced these countries' policies towards this strategically and geopolitically important region of Central Asia.

CHAPTER 3

THE INVOLVEMENT AND INFLUENCE OF THE US, RUSSIA AND CHINA

The preceding chapter discussed how the Central Asian Republics (CARs), formerly under the rule of Tsarist Russia and later the Soviet Union, gained independence for the first time in centuries following the dissolution. Being inexperienced in statehood, the CARs, faced with numerous challenges, were compelled to integrate into the global system in 1991. However, unlike countries in the West that had long been part of a functioning system, the CARs grappled with issues such as ethnic conflicts, the breakdown of the highly integrated Soviet economic and political sphere, border disputes, and the rise of radicalism. In response, they undertook an intensive process of policymaking and state-building. These processes were inevitably influenced by the international context within which these newly independent states now operate. Without exception, when it comes to the main foci of this thesis, which are the threat of radical Islamism and the subsequent development of counterterrorism policies in the region, were also affected by the international context created following the 9/11 events.

As discussed in the Introduction, Critical Geopolitics problematizes two concepts: "international norms" and "global order." What is called norms and order entails determining what is "normal" and, accordingly, legitimizing the attitude and response to be taken against what is "abnormal." For example, scholar Mariya Omelicheva,[454] who specializes in Central Asia, defines policymaking as "an extraordinary imitative

[454] Mariya Omelicheva, "Convergence of Counterterrorism Policies: A Case Study of Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 10 (2009): 893–908, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100903182518, 895.

art" by which states and their policies adjust to the social environment in which they are embedded. Therefore, especially for newly

independent states, such as the CARs, which seek legitimacy both within their territory and in the international arena, the process of integration into the system is also a process that will affect the policymaking of those states. In other words, the CARs had to transform all their domestic and foreign policies in line with the requirements of this system, including their understanding of security following independence. In exploring how international norms influence the policy-making process, Omelicheva concludes that Central Asia is no exception to such an argument when it comes to the policies made regarding the Islamic radicalism threat rooted in the Fergana Valley.[455] The CARs have taken advantage of the order established with the War on Terrorism and developed counterterrorism policies accordingly.[456] As discussed in the theoretical framework, this process makes Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan marginal actors at the regional level.

Considering the importance of the international context in policymaking, as emphasized above, the chapter will analyze how the policies of the three states have been shaped by the international environment and the geopolitical significance attributed to the Fergana Valley in their policies developed against the radical Islamist threat. First of all, the global dynamics of the radical Islamist threat and the international order that has evolved against this threat will be analyzed through the experiences of powerful states such as the United States (US), Russia, and China, which are directly affected by such a threat. Then, the relations and cooperation of these powerful states with Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan regarding the issue of radical Islam will be analyzed in order to understand the foreign policies of the three CARs combating Islamic terrorism.

3.1. The United States

As discussed in the Introduction, a transformative shift, marking the end of the Cold War's bipolar world and giving rise to a new international order occurred in 1991. This

[455] Mariya Omelicheva, *Counterterrorism Policies in Central Asia* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 81.

[456] Ibid.

newly integrated order established certain norms that gained global legitimacy through institutions like the IMF, the World Bank, and the UN. Anything deviating from these norms was categorized as "the other," and "the responsibility to combat this otherness" fell on the US, now a dominant global power after the Soviet Union's demise. Within this US-led order, secularism and democracy were adopted as guiding principles for humanity's progress, positioning Islamists, once considered "freedom fighters" supported in the war against the Soviets, as opposing these norms.[457] As detailed previously, the flashpoint of this situation emerged with the 9/11 attack. However, leading up to this event, the US had already faced various terrorist incidents, prompting actions driven by the recognition that Islamists did not align with the new world order and needed to be countered.[458] Cooperation with the CARs on the threat of Islamic radicalization had commenced after their independence. Two primary factors fueled this collaboration: The CARs were contending with similar threats domestically, and their proximity to Afghanistan heightened external concerns, fostering a sense of mutual threat.[459]

Even before the end of the Cold War, in 1985 the Reagan administration used the term "outlaw states" to describe countries that used weapons of mass destruction and were involved in terrorism, characterizing them as a threat to the international order.[460] Following that date, the US has been subjected to many terrorist attacks, both large and small. The most well-known among these was the explosion at the World Trade Center on 26 February 1993, which was believed to be the work of Al-Qaeda. As a result of the explosion of explosives in a pickup truck entering the north building of the Twin Towers, six people were killed, and nearly 1,500 people were injured.[461]

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[457] David W. Montgomery and John Heathershaw, "Islam, Secularism and Danger: A Reconsideration of the Link between Religiosity, Radicalism and Rebellion in Central Asia," *Religion, State and Society* 44, no. 3 (2016): 192–218, https://doi.org/10.1080/09637494.2016.1220177, 195.

[458] Mohammed Ayoob, *The Many Faces of Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Muslim World* (The University of Michigan Press, 2007), 93.

[459] Gavin Helf, "Looking for Trouble: Sources of Violent Conflict in Central Asia," *US Institute of Peace* 489 (November 2020), 4.

[460] Engin Sune, "Defining the Different: A Critical Analysis of the Rentier, Failed and Rogue State Theories" (thesis, METU, 2012), 52.

[461] FBI, World trade center bombing 1993, May 18, 2016, Retrieved Feb 22, 2024 from https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/world-trade-center-bombing-1993.

Later, it was argued in the literature that al-Qaeda had failed to achieve what it wanted to achieve and, therefore, went on to its attack on 11 September 2001.[462] In response to the 1993 attack, the Clinton administration replaced the term "outlaw states" with "rogue states" in 1994, thereby demonstrating the anti-terrorism stance of the US.[463] The UN, in support of the US, imposed an embargo on the Taliban government following the terrorist act until the US entry into Afghanistan in 2002.[464] In 1997, *the National Security Strategy* published by the White House decided to emphasize the fight against terrorism and to help other states in this regard.[465] Following this decision, in 1998, the US asked the Taliban government to hand over Osama bin Laden to the US because of his links to al-Qaeda, which was believed to be responsible for the 1993 bombing.[466] When the Taliban failed to comply, the US Air Force bombed Taliban bases in 1998.[467] At the same time, the US began to strengthen its relations with the Central Asian states, both to support other states in their fight against terrorism, as agreed in 1997 and to contain the Taliban regime itself. Cooperation with Uzbekistan in terms of counterterrorism was a priority for the US in the pre-2001 period, as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan did not prioritize counter-terrorism efforts at the time. This was because Karimov appeared to be the most favorable candidate for the US, given his attitude towards Islamic fundamentalists in domestic politics. In 1998, American commandos began training the Uzbek army in the fight against terrorism in Uzbekistan.[468] Fearing that the Tajik civil war would bring instability to Uzbekistan, the Karimov regime's move to have the US military train its army was its second attempt to cooperate with the US on terrorism after joining the NATO Partnership for Peace program in 1994.[469] Furthermore, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU),

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[462] Ibid.

[463] Sait Sönmez, "The Effects of Security Problems on the USA-Uzbekistan Relations," *Alternative Turkish Journal of International Relations*, 2011, 27–48, 30-31.

[464] Ibid, 31.

[465] Ibid, 31-32.

[466] Ibid, 31.

[467] Ibid.

[468] Ibid, 35.

a radical Islamist organization considered to be one of the most severe threats to Central Asia, and Uzbekistan in particular, was placed on the US list of terrorist organizations following the aforestated terrorist attack in Tashkent in 1999.[470] This move was followed by the visit of the US Secretary of State to Central Asia in 2000 to support the fight against terrorism with a generous financial fund.[471] As discussed in the Introduction, all these policies were nothing compared to the comprehensive counterterrorism programs, and massive mobilization that were put in place following the 9/11 attacks, both in terms of US domestic policy measures and cooperation with other countries in the fight against terrorism.[472] Since the CARs were the closest region to Afghanistan, the geopolitical importance of Central Asia for the US and its cooperation with the region began to grow.

In the first decade after independence, US-Central Asian relations were very limited. After 9/11, however, US engagement with Central Asia became a high priority.[473] During this period, the Karimov regime in Uzbekistan received the legitimacy and US support it had sought for years in its fight against Islamic extremism. In October 2001, Uzbekistan immediately allowed the US to use the former Soviet military base at Karshi-Hanabad. Karimov believed this would be the only way to eradicate the IMU from Fergana Valley.[474] At the same time, US support for Uzbekistan would create a legitimate environment for the Karimov regime, which faced accusations of human rights abuses, corruption, and anti-democratic practices that could no longer be used

[469] Fatma Aslı Kelkitli, "Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy Under the Leadership of Mirziyoyev: Struggle to Sustain Autonomy," *MUTAD* 4, no. 1 (2022): 25–43, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.16985mtad.1087202, 29.

[470] Nermin Güler, "11 Eylül Sonrası ABD ve Rusya Arasında Özbekistan," *Avrasya Dosyası, Özbekistan Özel* 7, no. 3 (2001), 190-191.

[471] Sait Sönmez, "The Effects of Security Problems on the USA-Uzbekistan Relations," *Alternative Turkish Journal of International Relations*, 2011, 27–48, 35.

[472] Alexander Yonah, *Evolution of U.S. Counterterrorism Policy,* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2008), xxxv.

[473] Rauf Sarwat, "Changing Geopolitical Dynamics in Central Asia," *Strategic Studies* 37, no. 4 (2017): 149–65, 158.

[474] Sait Sönmez, "The Effects of Security Problems on the USA-Uzbekistan Relations," *Alternative Turkish Journal of International Relations*, 2011, 27–48, 36.

against it in the war against Islamic radicalism.[475] After 9/11, Karimov was even referred to as "Bush's man," and Uzbekistan stood as the sole Central Asian state supporting the US invasion of Iraq.[476] As mentioned earlier, Karimov was concerned that the Colored Revolutions in the former Soviet space could also impact Uzbekistan. The Andijan Events of 2005 in occurred in the Fergana Valley were directly linked to Islamic extremism, and the regime harshly suppressed the masses with the fear of these revolutions reaching Uzbekistan. Nevertheless, the response from the US to Karimov's policies did not unfold as he had anticipated. Instead of receiving support, the West, especially the US, criticized Karimov's undemocratic practices.[477] In response, the Uzbek government warned the West, particularly the US, by saying "not to interfere in our affairs under the guise of promoting democracy."[478] As a result, Uzbekistan shifted its foreign policy towards a more substantial alignment with Russia and China, emphasizing its sovereignty.[479] This trend persisted until 2012, when the US-led Northern Distribution Network (NDN) was established to facilitate trade with Afghanistan.[480]

Following the announcement of the withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan in 2014, the US launched the NDN to prevent the complete abandonment of risky areas, namely Afghanistan and Central Asia. The NDN trade route, partly surrounding the Ferghana Valley, aimed at protecting economic interests as well as addressing socio-political issues such as border problems and radicalism in the respective regions, which are pertinent to US interests. This initiative aimed at safeguarding US economic links in the regions including the Ferghana Valley, while also upholding international norms

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[475] Ibid.
[476] Ibid, 38.

[477] Helen Keller and Maya Sigron, "State Security v Freedom of Expression: Legitimate Fight against Terrorism or Suppression of Political Opposition?," *Human Rights Law Review* 10, no. 1 (2010): 151–68, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1093/hrlr/ngp041, 162.

[478] Rfe/rl, "Uzbek President Complains of Information War by West," RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, February 2, 2012. Retrieved Mar 4, 2024 from https://www.rferl.org/a/1066903.html.

[479] Fatma Aslı Kelkitli, "Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy Under the Leadership of Mirziyoyev: Struggle to Sustain Autonomy," *MUTAD* 4, no. 1 (2022): 25–43, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.16985mtad.1087202, 29.

[480] Ibid, 30.

it politically prioritizes such as democracy, peace, and stability.[481] Subsequently, Uzbekistan-US relations began to normalize, with initiatives like the C5+1[482] and the NDN implemented to maintain control over Afghanistan and its surroundings.[483]

The new comprehensive US program for combating terrorism was viewed both in Uzbekistan and in Tajikistan as an overdue endorsement of their domestic policies.[484] That is why Tajikistan swiftly integrated into this discourse. Since independence, however, Tajikistan had a foreign policy based on active cooperation with Russia. It had a multi-vector foreign policy, balancing between the West and Russia in line with its overlapping interests with the US's war on terrorism following 2001.[485] Nevertheless, the US has never been allowed to establish military bases in the country. Instead, bilateral strategic partnership agreements have been the determinant of relations between Tajikistan and the US. In Tajikistan, these agreements were not motivated solely by instability in the Fergana Valley, as was the case in Uzbekistan. The fact that Tajikistan shares a direct border with Afghanistan was the decisive factor in US-Tajik relations. Indeed, one of the deepest fears of the US in the war on terror was the erosion of secular political structures in Central Asia and the Afghanization of the region.[486] Nevertheless, as important as co-operation with Tajikistan is for the US'

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[481] Andrew Kuchins and Thomas Sanderson, "The Northern Distribution Network and Afghanistan," Center for Strategic & International Studies, January 2010. Retrieved Mar 22, 2024 from https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/091229_Kuchins_NDNandAfghan_Web.pdf, 7.

[482] C5+1 constitutes an alliance between the United States and five Central Asian countries to safeguard security and promote economic development in the region. This collaborative initiative emerged in 2015 as the U.S. sought to maintain its influence following the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan. The partnership has evolved through detailed programs, with the most recent one in 2022 addressing the heightened security concerns of Central Asian countries, particularly in the wake of the Taliban's resurgence to power in 2021. (The US Embassy in Tajikistan. "C5+1," 2022 Retrieved from Mar 1, 2024 from https://tj.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/policy-history/c51/)

[483] Fatma Aslı Kelkitli, "Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy Under the Leadership of Mirziyoyev: Struggle to Sustain Autonomy," *MUTAD* 4, no. 1 (2022): 25–43, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.16985mtad.1087202, 33.

[484] Nartsiss Shukuralieva and Artur Lipiński, "Islamic Extremism and Terrorism in Central Asia: A Critical Analysis," *Central Asia and The Caucasus* 22, no. 1 (2021): 106–17, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37178/ca-c.21.1.10, 109.

[485] Karolina Kluczewska, "Transformation of Tajikistan's Foreign Policy Towards Russia," *Crossroads Central Asia*, January 2024, 4.

[486] Rauf Sarwat, "Changing Geopolitical Dynamics in Central Asia," *Strategic Studies* 37, no. 4 (2017): 149–65, 158.

fears of desecularization of the region, Tajik politicians' engagement with the US was limited to their participation in the C5+1 initiative 2015.[487] Political Islam was actively involved in Tajikistan's political landscape until 2015, but afterward, Tajikistan shifted its focus to securitize this involvement. At this point, Russia, rather than the US, became a key supporter of Tajikistan in its efforts to counter both political and radical Islam. In late 2010s and early 2020, relations with the US were reinforced. In 2020, Ahmad Masud, an envoy for *the Afghan National Resistance Front* (NRF), which stands against the extremism of the Taliban government in Afghanistan, was welcomed at their representative office established in the Tajikistan part of the Fergana Valley. The meeting was supported by the governments of US and Tajikistan.[488] The establishment of an operational representative office by the NRF in the Fergana Valley could be viewed as a significant advancement in Tajikistan-US collaboration against radicalization. Moreover, Tajikistan signed a Joint Declaration with the US in 2023 to sustain regional democratic development.[489] Under this agreement, the US has allocated funds to Tajikistan for the purpose of conducting counter-terrorism operations, particularly in the Fergana Valley and along the Tajik-Afghan border.[490]

The relationship between Kyrgyzstan and the US began to take shape in 1994 through the NATO Partnership for Peace Program, focusing on common security challenges such as combating drug trafficking and terrorism. However, cooperation between the two countries accelerated after the post-2001 agreements. In December of that year, the Manas airport was opened as a US military base for use in the Afghanistan war.[491]

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[487] Ibid, 159.

[488] Fergana News, "Tajikistan Hosts Anti-Taliban Resistance Leader Masud," Fergana News Agency, November 2, 2021. Retrieved Mar 2, 2024 from https://en.fergana.news/news/123665/.

[489] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan, "Relations between the Republic of Tajikistan and the United States of America," Relations between the Republic of Tajikistan and the United States of America | Ministry of foreign affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan, retrieved Mar 1, 2024 from https://mfa.tj/en/main/view/175/relations-between-the-republic-of-tajikistan-and-the-united-states-of-america.

[490] Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan to the United States of America, "Relations between the Republic of Tajikistan and the United States of America." Retrieved from Mar 22, 2024 from https://mfa.tj/en/washington/view/175/relations-between-the-republic-of-tajikistan-and-the-united-states-of-america

[491] Chnara Asanbaeva, "Kırgızistan'ın 1991-2014 Yılları Arasındaki Dış Politika Analizi" (thesis, Kocaeli Üniversitesi, 2016), 84.

In 2005, Uzbekistan's decision to close the Karshi-Hanabad military base heightened Kyrgyzstan's strategic and geopolitical importance in the eyes of the US. Although the Kyrgyz parliament passed a decision to close the Manas military base in 2009, the Bakiyev government failed to implement it, and the base continued to be used as a "transit route" for trade until 2014.[492] Aside from the military airbase issue, the US consistently used the rhetoric that portrays Kyrgyzstan as an "island of democracy," emphasizing that Kyrgyzstan's political tradition served as an excellent antidote to the problem of Islamic extremism.[493]

In recent years, particularly from 2014 on, the US has significantly increased its investment in promoting democracy and to counter Islamic extremism in Kyrgyzstan. This investment, amounting to 2-3 times more annually than any other development-oriented program, underscores Kyrgyzstan's role as a long-term partner in the region for combating terrorism and strengthening democracy.[494] One of the reasons for the rise in this funding was the emergence of Islamic opposition in Kyrgyzstan, albeit later than in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. During the 2010s, the Islamic Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (IDP) emerged, although the exact year of its emergence remains unknown. However, due to the legal framework, which will be discussed in the next chapter, it is not recognized as a political party. It has been claimed that this is why the IDP operates underground in the Fergana Valley.[495] A similar organization is the Noor (Light) party, which is founded by the Kyrgyz journalist Myktybek Arstanbek.[496] During a public debate in 2021, Arstanbek discussed the possibility of sharia law in Kyrgyzstan and critiqued the concept of a secular state; yet he asserted that the party's

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[492] Ibid, 86.

[493] Mariya Omelicheva, *Counterterrorism Policies in Central Asia* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 64-65.

[494] FA.gov, "U.S. Foreign Assistance By Country," FA.gov, 2023. Retrşeved Mar 23, 2024 from https://www.foreignassistance.gov/cd/kyrgyzstan/2014/obligations/1.

[495] Matthew Crosston, *Fostering Fundamentalism: Terrorism, Democracy and American Engagement in Central Asia* (London, The UK: Taylor and Francis, 2016), 66.

[496] Similar to the IDP, the exact date of when this party was established is unknown.

program contained nothing radical.[497] Despite facing similar legal obstacles as the IDP, the Noor has been garnering the most support in the Fergana Valley, particularly in Osh.[498] Following these developments, "Report on Kyrgyzstan and International Religious Freedom" published by the US Department of State in 2022 emphasized that Kyrgyzstan has maintained its long-term commitment to democracy and secularism despite the challenges.[499] The report highlighted measures taken to prevent such radical group members from undermining the government's understanding of these principles, especially in the Osh region of the Fergana Valley, while also safeguarding regional stability and upholding human rights.[500]

In summary, the foundation of US-Central Asian relations stems primarily from a shared concern over the threat of Islamic terrorism. Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and, to some extent, Kyrgyzstan have strategically positioned themselves within the US-led war on terror, leveraging international legitimacy to address a threat they were already grappling with domestically. These dynamics underscore how the three regional countries, as outlined in the theoretical framework, have assumed peripheral roles in reinforcing the global order on regional and local fronts, referred to as the marginal actors.

The mobilization after 9/11 and how Islam became the main enemy with the Bush Doctrine[501] were elaborated earlier. It must, however, also needs to be mentioned that this mobilization and targeting of the enemy were not only expressed by the US and the three aforementioned CARs but was also supported by the European states and a

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[497] Farangis Najibullah, "Kyrgyzstan's First 'Islamic' Party Sparks Controversy," RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, February 2, 2021. Retrieved Mar 23, 2024 from https://www.rferl.org/a/kyrgyzstan--first-islamic-party-arstanbek-controversy/31081978.html.
[498] Ibid.

[499] Office of Religious Freedom The US Department of States, "2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Kyrgyzstan," Kyrgyzstan - United States Department of State, 2022. Retrieved Mar 23, 2024 from https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/kyrgyzstan/.

[500] Ibid.

[501] The Bush Doctrine is the name given to his speech to Congress about a month after the terrorist attack, in which he invited the world to make a choice and emphasized the notion that in the war against terrorism, "if you are not with us, you are against us." The doctrine stated that the US had thereby identified its new enemy and would direct its domestic and foreign policy accordingly (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "Bush Doctrine." 2002. Retrieved Feb 22, 2024 from https://carnegieendowment.org/2002/10/07/bush-doctrine-pub-1088).

series of resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council.[502] On 12 September, the UNSC adopted two resolutions (*S/RES)1368 (2001)* and *S/RES/1373 (2001)*) describing terrorism as "one of the most serious threats to international and national security" and stressing "the need for urgent collective international action to address this threat."[503] Resolution 1373 is remarkably detailed, defining "terrorism" very broadly, including everything from intolerance to any material and motivation that may be associated with terrorism, and emphasizes that all necessary measures will be taken decisively.[504] Following these resolutions, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan called on all countries to stand on the side of peace, that is, on the side of the US, in the face of "the acts of terrible evil."[505] Even Russia and China, despite their divergent policies in the international arena, have joined this mobilization. Indeed, Central Asia's proximity to Afghanistan has made it a convenient place for the US' geopolitical ambitions.[506] As such, Russia and China initially gave consent for the establishment of US bases in these countries.[507] These two countries involved in this mobilization due to their encounters with what they label Islamic separatism and extremist terrorism. In fact, their problems from such threats within their territories had begun long before the US.

3.2. Russia

Given its ethnically diverse population, Russia had to cope with many struggles for independence by different ethnic minorities within its borders since the Tsarist era.[508] The best-known is the Chechen problem. The Chechens have undergone historical

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[502] Viktoria Akchurina, *Incomplete State-Building in Central Asia: The State as Social Practice* (Basingstoke, The UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 170.

[503] The United Nations Security Council. "*S/RES)1368 (2001)* and *S/RES/1373 (2001)."* 2001.

[504] Ibid.

[505] Dagmar Rychnovska, "Securitization and the Power of Threat Framing," *Perspectives* 22, no. 2 (2014): 9–31, 21.

[506] Tom Everett-Heath, "Instability and Identity in a Post-Soviet World: Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan," in *Central Asia: Aspects of Transition*, ed. Tom Everett-Heath (London, The UK: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 181–204, 181.

[507] Rauf Sarwat, "Changing Geopolitical Dynamics in Central Asia," *Strategic Studies* 37, no. 4 (2017): 149–65, 158.

[508] Muhammet Cihad Budak and İsmail Ermağan, "Tarihten Günümüze Çeçenistan-Rusya İlişkileri: Putin ve Kadirovlar Dönemi," *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları* 119, no. 235 (2018): 185–204, 186.

processes similar to those experienced by the Muslim population of Central Asia in terms of the marginalization of their religious life by political authorities. After coming under the rule of Tsarist Russia, they fought for independence at various times. Since coming under Russian rule, Chechens have been seen as Russia's most problematic minority, and scapegoats who, in the words of Otto Pohl,[509] are imagined as "criminal bandits behind every troubled situation in Russia." The Chechens are a community known for their nationalism, rebelliousness, and strict adherence to their traditions and Islam. As a result, Tsarist Russia practiced a "moral terror on the Chechens," as being Muslim had a negative connotation among Russians.[510] As is well known, Soviet Russia also exerted considerable pressure on the Muslims, including the Chechens.[511] In November 1991, Chechnya asserted its independence from the Soviet Union (SU). Nevertheless, due to its strategic significance for Russia, the Russian military launched airstrikes on the capital, Grozny, in 1994, marking the onset of the First Chechen War, which persisted until a military accord was reached in 1996.[512] Following this agreement, Russian forces withdrew, and although Russia acknowledged Chechnya's existence *de facto*, *de jure* recognition was not granted.[513] Despite the initial resolution, the Second Chechen War erupted in 1999. A series of terrorist bombings in Russia in early September 1999 triggered this war.[514] These terrorist attacks, known as the 1999 Moscow apartment bombings, killed more than 300 people and were blamed on Chechens.[515] Following these events, Russia eventually declared war on Chechnya once again.

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[509] J. Otto Pohl, *Ethnic Cleansing in the USSR, 1937-1949* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1999), 80-81.

[510] Alexander Nekrich. *The Punished Peoples: The Deportation and Fate of Soviet Minorities at the End of the Second World War* (New York: Norton, 1978), 51.
[511] Ibid, 155.

[512] Muhammet Cihad Budak and İsmail Ermağan, "Tarihten Günümüze Çeçenistan-Rusya İlişkileri: Putin ve Kadirovlar Dönemi," *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları* 119, no. 235 (2018): 185–204, 191.

[513] Ibid, 193.

[514] Margot Light, "Russia and the War on Terrorism," in *Understanding Global Terror*, ed. Christopher Ankersen (Cambridge, The UK: Polity Press, 2007), 95–110, 95.

[515] Joseph Dresen, "Foiled Attack or Failed Exercise? A Look at Ryazan 1999," *Wilson Center*, 2002. Retrieved Feb, 23 2024 from https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/foiled-attack-or-failed-exercise-look-ryazan-1999.

The transformation of the Chechen resistance into Islamic radicalism characterized the Second Chechen War. Boris Yeltsin resigned shortly after the war began, and Vladimir Putin took the office.[516] Putin viewed the Chechen problem as the primary cause of terrorism and separatism in Russia.[517] In order to minimize both international and domestic reactions, Putin stated that Arab and Afghan mujahideen of Wahhabi origin joined the Chechen resistance; therefore, he was waging war "not against the Chechen people, but against the separatist-terrorist mentality."[518] In 2000, the Putin administration claimed that the Chechens were trying to establish an Islamic state and that the Chechen fighters were being funded both militarily and financially by Osama Bin Laden.[519]

Soon after, the September 11 attacks in the US gave Putin the opportunity he was looking for to internationalize the Chechen problem.[520] Russia took every opportunity to emphasize that it was united with the US in the war against terrorism and that they were fighting the same threat.[521] Thus, Russia consented to the opening of US military bases in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan.[522] The US and Russia have thus established a rapprochement in the fight against terrorism. For example, during the Moscow theatre hostage crisis in 2002, the US supported Russia's harsh response to the crisis. In 2002, Chechen protesters took 850 hostages in a Moscow theatre to demand the withdrawal of Russian troops from Chechnya and an end to the war.[523]

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[516] Muhammet Cihad Budak and İsmail Ermağan, "Tarihten Günümüze Çeçenistan-Rusya İlişkileri: Putin ve Kadirovlar Dönemi," *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları* 119, no. 235 (2018): 185–204, 194.

[517] Margot Light, "Russia and the War on Terrorism," in *Understanding Global Terror*, ed. Christopher Ankersen (Cambridge, The UK: Polity Press, 2007), 95–110, 95.

[518] Muhammet Cihad Budak and İsmail Ermağan, "Tarihten Günümüze Çeçenistan-Rusya İlişkileri: Putin ve Kadirovlar Dönemi," *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları* 119, no. 235 (2018): 185–204, 195.

[519] Margot Light, "Russia and the War on Terrorism," in *Understanding Global Terror*, ed. Christopher Ankersen (Cambridge, The UK: Polity Press, 2007), 95–110, 99-100.

[520] Ibid, 107.

[521] Ibid, 96.

[522] Ibid, 106.

[523] "Chechnya," Encyclopædia Britannica, February 27, 2024, Retrieved Mar 10, 2024 https://www.britannica.com/place/Chechnya.

The Russian government reacted harshly, and all the protesters were killed.[524] The US condemned the terrorists and supported the Russian government.

Cooperation between the two countries regarding the fight against terrorism, however, began to deteriorate in 2003 with the US invasion of Iraq.[525] In 2004, the US criticized Russia for its inhumane response to the Beslan massacre,[526] a terrorist act committed by Chechens who were demanding the withdrawal of Russian troops from Chechnya.[527] As a result, the deterioration in relations between the two countries has had an impact on the foreign policy of the Central Asian states since then. As noted, after 2001, the Putin administration integrated itself into the global war on terror discourse by claiming that it was fighting the same threat as the US. With this mentality, Russia has supported Central Asian countries' domestic and foreign policies against Islamic terrorism. After 1999, a number of cooperation agreements were signed between Russia and the CARs, aimed at countering Islamic radicalization, which was considered a severe threat in the region.[528] In 2002, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) was established to combat international terrorism. Within the framework of this organization, regular exercises are carried out for preventing the establishment of an Islamic state on the territory of member states.[529] Over time, the definition of the threat gradually broadened, and cooperation was established against many different issues, such as Islamic terrorism, the fight against crime, and the

[524] Ibid.

[525] Muhammet Kolçak, "Irak Savaşı Sonrası Gelişen Dünya Düzeninde Rusya: Eklektik Bir Yaklaşım," *Avrasya Uluslararası Araştırmalar Dergisi* 10, no. 30 (2022): 149–67, 156.

[526] It is the name given to the massacre in a school located in the town of Beslan within the borders of Autonomous Republic of North Ossetia, Russia. The siege, initiated by a Chechen group demanding recognition of Chechnya's independence, continued with the taking of 1300 hostages, most of them children, in the school and resulted in the death of 334 people after three days. V Bobrovnikov, "The Beslan Massacre," *Isim Review* 15, no. 1 (2005). Retrieved Mar 10, 2024 from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/16987.

[527] Peter Forster, "Beslan: Counter-Terrorism Incident Command: Lessons Learned," *Homeland Security Affairs* 2 (2006). 5.

[528] Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, *Central Asia Facing ISAF Withdrawal from Afghanistan*, 2013, 45–68, 64.

[529] Rouben Azizian, "Countering Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia," *Connections* 5, no. 4 (2006): 93–106, 101; Member states of the CSTO: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan; and formerly Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Uzbekistan.

comprehensive war against other forms of extremism.[530] In addition to their involvement in regional organizations led by Russia, the internal and external measures taken by the three Central Asian countries to counter terrorism receive backing through bilateral relationships with Russia.

In this framework, the main motive influencing Uzbekistan's relations with Russia, as in its relations with the US, is the fear of empowerment of the Islamic extremist opposition within the country.[531] After independence, Uzbekistan distanced itself from Russia and tried to develop a more Western-oriented foreign policy. In fact, after independence, it was the only regional country that did not allow Russian troops to remain in the country.[532] Uzbekistan's engagement with Russia was primarily confined to its membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which it acquired as one of its founding members in 1992.[533] This decision was driven by the apprehension that the turmoil in the Tajik civil war might have adverse spill-over effects on Uzbekistan.[534] In 1998, Uzbekistan's President Karimov visited Moscow to urge Boris Yeltsin to collaborate against the growing Islamic threat.[535] This marked a turning point as Uzbekistan, along with Tajikistan, joined hands with Russia in regional alliances aimed at combating Islamic terrorism.[536] This strategic alignment preceded the US' initiation of the war on terror in 2001. In 1999, Uzbekistan withdrew

[530] Mariya Omelicheva, "Convergence of Counterterrorism Policies: A Case Study of Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 10 (2009): 893–908, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100903182518, 901.

[531] Sait Sönmez, "The Effects of Security Problems on the USA-Uzbekistan Relations," *Alternative Turkish Journal of International Relations*, 2011, 27–48, 28.

[532] Tom Everett-Heath, "Instability and Identity in a Post-Soviet World: Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan," in *Central Asia: Aspects of Transition*, ed. Tom Everett-Heath (London, The UK: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 181–204, 194.

[533] Fatma Aslı Kelkitli, "Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy Under the Leadership of Mirziyoyev: Struggle to Sustain Autonomy," *MUTAD* 4, no. 1 (2022): 25–43, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.16985mtad.1087202, 28-29.

[534] Ibid.

[535] Sait Sönmez, "The Effects of Security Problems on the USA-Uzbekistan Relations," *Alternative Turkish Journal of International Relations*, 2011, 27–48, 38-39

[536] Tom Everett-Heath, "Instability and Identity in a Post-Soviet World: Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan," in *Central Asia: Aspects of Transition*, ed. Tom Everett-Heath (London, The UK: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 181–204, 195.

from the CSTO and began closer integration with the West.[537] This shift in the country's foreign policy continued until 2005, when relations between Uzbekistan and the US soured following the events in Andijan.[538] Subsequently, in 2006, Uzbekistan rejoined the CSTO and developed strong ties with Russia and China based on the principle of non-interference in internal affairs. By 2012, disagreements with Russia and the CSTO, particularly over security and economic relations with Afghanistan, led Uzbekistan to move towards closer cooperation with the US, notably through the NDN initiative, which led to its withdrawal from the CSTO.[539] Until his passing in 2016, President Karimov played a pivotal role in shaping Uzbekistan's foreign relations, emphasizing the perceived Islamic threat and orchestrating a delicate balance between major global powers.[540] President Mirziyoyev has mirrored Karimov's foreign policy approach, albeit with a notable emphasis on enhancing cooperation with Central Asian states.[541] This shift gained prominence, particularly following the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, as regional collaboration and ties with Russia became crucial in light of the potential threat posed by the Taliban government.[542] Russian-led military exercises have been actively conducted along Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan and within Uzbekistan's Fergana Valley. In a recent development in the winter of 2021, Uzbekistan hosted Russian military units along its Fergana borders for joint military exercises.[543]

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[537] Fatma Aslı Kelkitli, "Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy Under the Leadership of Mirziyoyev: Struggle to Sustain Autonomy," *MUTAD* 4, no. 1 (2022): 25–43, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.16985mtad.1087202, 28-29.

[538] Sait Sönmez, "The Effects of Security Problems on the USA-Uzbekistan Relations," *Alternative Turkish Journal of International Relations*, 2011, 27–48, 40.

[539] Fatma Aslı Kelkitli, "Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy Under the Leadership of Mirziyoyev: Struggle to Sustain Autonomy," *MUTAD* 4, no. 1 (2022): 25–43, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.16985mtad.1087202, 28-29.

[540] Sait Sönmez, "The Effects of Security Problems on the USA-Uzbekistan Relations," *Alternative Turkish Journal of International Relations*, 2011, 27–48, 28.

[541] Dauren Aben, "Regional Security in Central Asia: Addressing Existing and Potential Threats and Challenges," *Eurasian Research Journal* 1, no. 1 (2019): 51–65, 60.

[542] Nodirbek Soliev and Rafaello Pantucci, "Central Asia," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 15, no. 1 (2023): 82–91, 87.

[543] Fatma Aslı Kelkitli, "Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy Under the Leadership of Mirziyoyev: Struggle to Sustain Autonomy," *MUTAD* 4, no. 1 (2022): 25–43, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.16985mtad.1087202, 35.

Upon gaining independence, Tajikistan experienced a civil war and remained mostly a periphery of Russia. Throughout the civil war, Tajikistan relied on Russia for assistance against Islamist adversaries, receiving both financial and military support from its northern neighbor. Russia agreed to sign "a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance" with Tajikistan in 1993.[544] After the end of the civil war, it shifted its focus from Russia to an "open door" policy. As discussed before, after 2001 its growing geopolitical importance in the eyes of the US motivated this foreign policy orientation. Its relations with the West and Russia have developed based on its borders with Afghanistan and its economic dependence on the outside world. In both cases, Russia maintained a de facto privileged partnership with Tajikistan.[545] Since 1991, Russia also played a pivotal role in resolving the Tajik-Kyrgyz border issue, which has resurfaced recently as previously discussed. Viewing Central Asia as its sphere of influence, Russia actively engaged in resolving border disputes within the region, including the conflicts in the Fergana Valley between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. It is argued that President Putin actively involved in settling the Fergana Valley border tensions in favor of the Rahmon government throughout the 2000s.[546] Another reason behind Russia's active involvement was the presence of extremist Islam in the region. For a significant period, the Putin administration believed that Islamists in the area primarily targeted Russian troops and collaborated with Chechen terrorists.[547] Given Kyrgyzstan's comparatively moderate stance on this issue, it was claimed that Putin was inclined to resolve the border problem, favoring Tajikistan to enhance border security significantly. During the period between 1999 and 2009, Russia was preoccupied with the Second Chechen War domestically, yet it maintained relations with Central Asian countries, including Tajikistan focusing primarily on bilateral agreements concerning terrorism.[548] These were counter-terrorism agreements with border and internal security themes, including the Chechen presence in Central Asia,

[544] Karolina Kluczewska, "Transformation of Tajikistan's Foreign Policy Towards Russia," *Crossroads Central Asia*, January 2024, 2.

[545] Ibid, 6.

[546] Ibid, 4.

[547] Matthew Crosston, *Fostering Fundamentalism: Terrorism, Democracy and American Engagement in Central Asia* (London, The UK: Taylor and Francis, 2016), 48.

[548] Karolina Kluczewska, "Transformation of Tajikistan's Foreign Policy Towards Russia," *Crossroads Central Asia*, January 2024, 5.

the extradition of the Chechen terrorists, and the threat of drugs and terrorism in the borders of the Fergana Valley.[549] However, when it came to the 2010s, Russia began to distance itself from this strategic alliance due to Tajikistan's burgeoning ties with the West and its excessive economic dependence on Russia. Approximately 10% of Tajikistan's population migrated to Russia for employment, in addition to Afghans who utilized Tajikistan as a transit route and Tajiks residing in Afghanistan.[550] Fearing potential connections with the Chechen resistance, Russia deported a significant number of these migrants. Nevertheless, in 2023, it was revealed that Russia had sent nearly 100 Tajik prisoners arrested for Islamic extremism to fight in the Russian-Ukrainian war.[551] Following Russia's actions, Tajikistan's foreign policy choices expressed a reluctance to rely on Russia economically and particularly in terms of security.[552] The security concern became more critical for Tajikistan after the Taliban assumed power in 2021.[553] In response, Tajikistan shifted its foreign policy focus towards seeking new strategic alliances to avoid isolation in the international arena.[554] Tajikistan remains the only state with a direct border with Afghanistan that has not established any relations with the Taliban.[555] On September 16, 2023, at the Summit of Central Asian States in Dushanbe, Emomali Rahmon stated that Russia's joint exercises, especially in the Fergana Valley and Badakhshan regions, where the

[549] CIS.LEGISLATION, "Data of Tajikistan'a Bilateral Agreements Regarding Terrorism 2001-2010," CIS legislation - search in database. Retrieved Mar 25, 2024 from https://cis-legislation.com/search.fwx.

[550] Ibid, 7.

[551] Mazhab Juma, "The Head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Tajikistan Announced the Approximate Number of Tajik Prisoners Sent from Russian Prisons to the War," Plus, August 23, 2023. Retrieved Mar 4, 2024 from https://asiaplustj.info/en/news/tajikistan/security/20230811/the-head-of-the-ministry-of-internal-affairs-of-tajikistan-announced-the-approximate-number-of-tajik-prisoners-sent-from-russian-prisons-to-the-war.

[552] Nodirbek Soliev and Rafaello Pantucci, "Central Asia," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 15, no. 1 (2023): 82–91, 87.

[553] Ibid.

[554] Karolina Kluczewska, "Transformation of Tajikistan's Foreign Policy Towards Russia," *Crossroads Central Asia*, January 2024, 8.

[555] Adam Rouselle, "Tajikistan Seeks Regional Partners to Counter Threats from Afghanistan," *Terrorism Monitor* 21, no. 21 (October 31, 2023). Retrieved Mar 23, 2024 from https://jamestown.org/program/tajikistan-seeks-regional-partners-to-counter-threats-from-afghanistan/.

Taliban-backed Jamaat Ansarullah, also known as the Tajik Taliban, is based, are not enough.[556] He emphasized that Tajikistan is open to more cooperation regarding the threats of Islamic extremism and drug trafficking.[557] Most recently, the terrorist attack that took place on March 22, 2024 at Crocus City Hall in Russia was claimed by the Islamic State of Khorasan, known as Tajik ISIS, which is also active in the Fergana Valley.[558] Although Russia announced that three Tajik citizens were responsible for the attack, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Tajikistan denied this claim.[559]

Just as it did with Tajikistan, Russia also signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Kyrgyzstan in 1993.[560] Since Kyrgyzstan, much like Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan relies on foreign countries for its economy and security, it has chosen to shape its foreign policy accordingly. Unlike Tajikistan, however, Kyrgyzstan right from the beginning, has endeavored to balance its relations with the East and the West. The country faced less threat coming from Islamic radicalism. That was why, until 1999, its foreign policy was not actively oriented toward the threats of terrorism and the provision of security financing. With the Batken Events in1999 and Putin's rise to power in Russia, Kyrgyzstan became more integrated into the regional security order shaped by the threat of terrorism. This integration, in turn, addressed the Islamic terrorist threat in Russia-Kyrgyzstan relations. The CIS, of which Kyrgyzstan was a founding member in 1992, became actively involved in the country after 1999 due to Kyrgyzstan's escalating security concerns. After this period, the Anti-Terrorism Center was established in Bishkek.[561] After Kyrgyzstan acceded to the CSTO in 2002,

[556] Ibid.

[557] Ibid.

[558] Reuters, "Explainer: What Is ISIS-K, the Group That Attacked a Moscow Concert ...," Reuters, March 23, 2024. Retrieved Mar 23, 2024 from https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/why-did-isis-k-attack-moscow-theater-2024-03-23/.

[559] AKIPress, "Tajik Interior Ministry Denies Involvement of Its 3 Citizens into Terrorist Attack in Moscow Region," AKIPress, March 23, 2024. Retrieved Mar 23, 2024 from https://akipress.com/news:765393:Tajik_Interior_Ministry_denies_involvement_of_its_3_citizens_into_terrorist_attack_in_Moscow_region/.

[560] Chnara Asanbaeva, "Kırgızistan'ın 1991-2014 Yılları Arasındaki Dış Politika Analizi" (thesis, Kocaeli Üniversitesi, 2016), 67.
[561] Rouben Azizian, "Countering Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia," *Connections* 5, no. 4 (2006): 93–106, 101.

Russian troops were stationed in the city of Kant, and an airbase was established through an agreement between the Putin and Akayev governments.[562] These two organizations began coordinating activities against the threat of establishing an Islamic state. After 2009, during the Bakiyev and Medvedev era, Kyrgyzstan's relations with Russia were strained.[563] This was because the Bakiyev regime failed to implement a law passed by the Kyrgyz parliament that should have closed the Manas airspace.[564] Border issues, corruption, and narcotic offenses brought the discourse of the Islamic threat back to the agenda. During Atambayev's presidency, which commenced in 2011, the closure of the US base occurred, and a shift towards pro-Russian policies was initiated. Relations with Russia, therefore, only began to improve after the closure of the US military base in Kyrgyzstan.[565] In 2019, the borders and activities of the Russian military base were expanded.[566] During the border conflicts between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan mentioned in the previous section, Russia intervened by sending military equipment and money in 2023 to counter the threat of Islamic extremism posed by permeable borders of the Fergana Valley.[567] Again, in 2023, Kyrgyzstan's Foreign Minister Jeenbek Kulubaev held discussions with Oleg Syromolotov, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia, along with his delegation.[568] The meeting focused on addressing terrorism, the border disputes between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and issues surrounding terrorism, ethnic tensions, and narcotics trafficking

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[562] Ibid.

[563] Chnara Asanbaeva, "Kırgızistan'ın 1991-2014 Yılları Arasındaki Dış Politika Analizi" (master's thesis, Kocaeli Üniversitesi, 2016), 79.

[564] Ibid, 86.

[565] Mustafa Cüneyt Özşahin, "Küçük Devlet Kuramı ve Ceenbekov Dönemi Kırgız Dış Politikasının Dinamikleri," *Anemon Muş Alparslan Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 8, no. 3 (2020): 945–51, 946.

[566] Şeyma Kızılay, "Rusya-Kırgızistan Askeri İşbirliğinde Güncel Gelişmeler," *ANKASAM*, 2023. Retrieved Mar 5, 2024 from https://www.ankasam.org/rusya-kirgizistan-askeri-isbirliginde-guncel-gelismeler/.

[567] Ibid.

[568] Doğacan BAŞARAN, "Steps to Strengthen Kyrgyzstan's Multi-Vector Foreign Policy - Ankasam: Ankara Center for Crisis and Policy Studies," ANKASAM, April 14, 2023. Retrieved Mar 26, 2024 from https://www.ankasam.org/steps-to-strengthen-kyrgyzstans-multi-vector-foreign-policy/?lang=en.

in the Fergana Valley.[569] More recently, the deaths of two Kyrgyz citizens in the recent terrorist attack on March 22 in Crocus City Hall, Russia, prompted cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and Russia regarding the threat of Islamic terrorism as Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov pledged to provide all necessary assistance.[570]

3.3. China

Another vital actor is China, which supported the US' War on Terrorism in 2001 and then welcomed Russia's regional efforts against international terrorism and separatism in neighboring Central Asia. China, like Russia, has faced challenges in dealing with a Muslim region within its borders, specifically the Xinjiang Uyghur region, where demands for independence persist.[571] In response to the threat of separatist Islamic extremism, China has aligned itself with both Russia and the US. The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, the largest administrative unit in China, is predominantly inhabited by the Uyghurs, a Muslim ethnic group.[572] The Uyghur community knows this region historically as East Turkestan; additionally, they claim that they have been living under Chinese annexation since 1949 and demand independence.[573] Since then, there have been many uprisings on account of their minority status. China, uneasy about traditional Uyghur gatherings known as *meshrep*, where people enjoyed communal activities, intensified its suppression of Uyghur traditions, particularly after 1980.[574] This was how, Islamic radicalization within the community started to emerge in the late 1990s. In 1996, a *meshrep* leader, Abduhelil Abdurahman, was arrested and

[569] Ibid.

[570] AKIPress, "Terrorist Attack in Moscow. Kyrgyzstan Ready to Provide All Necessary Assistance - Cabinet Chairman," AKIPress, March 23, 2024. Retrieved Mar 23, 2024 from https://akipress.com/news:765349:Terrorist_attack_in_Moscow__Kyrgyzstan_ready_to_provide_all_necessary_assistance_-_Cabinet_Chairman/.

[571] Mariya Omelicheva, *Counterterrorism Policies in Central Asia* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 67-68.

[572] Fatih Şen, "Çin'in Sincan-Doğu Türkistan Sorunu: Dünü, Bugünü, Geleceği," *Ortadoğu Analiz* 1, no. 7–8 (2009): 124–34, 125-126.

[573] Ibid, 125.

[574] Rachel Harris, "'A Weekly Mäshräp to Tackle Extremism': Music-Making in Uyghur Communities and Intangible Cultural Heritage in China," *Ethnomusicology* 64, no. 1 (2020): 23–55, 40.

fatally beaten.[575] Tensions escalated in February 1997 in Ghulja when Uyghurs protested after a woman who had participated in *meshrep* gatherings faced a similar fate.[576] On February 3, the longstanding oppression reached a tipping point when Chinese Communist Party (CCP) police arrested women who had gathered to pray at home and also to prepare for *meshrep* in Ghulja.[577] This action sparked a rebellion, as Uyghurs took to the streets demanding the release of the detainees. However, the Chinese government responded with severe repression, escalating the situation even further. China's crackdown left hundreds of Uyghurs dead, thousands arrested and 200 executed.[578] For this reason, the event is referred to as the "Ghulja Massacre." The CCP faced criticism for its harsh reaction from both domestic and foreign arenas. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, as well as Muslim countries, accused the CCP of committing genocide against the Uyghurs.[579] The Ghulja Events stand as a symbol in the collective memory of Uyghurs, representing difficult life under the Chinese regime. Following the Ghulja events in 1997, ethnic Uyghurs, led by Hasan Mahsum, started gathering to declare their goal of establishing an Islamic state in the region.[580] In other words, this event contributed to the emergence of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) mentioned in the previous chapter. The Chinese government wasted no time in labeling ETIM as a terrorist organization and calling for it to be recognized as such in the international arena, pointing out that ETIM also cooperates

[575] Peter Irwin, "Remembering the Ghulja Incident: 20th Anniversary of 'Uyghur Tiananmen' Passes with Little Notice," – The Diplomat, March 2, 2017. Retrieved Mar 26, 2024 from https://thediplomat.com/2017/03/remembering-the-ghulja-incident-20th-anniversary-of-uyghur-tiananmen-passes-with-little-notice/.

[576] Martin I. Wayne, *China's War on Terrorism Counter- Insurgency, Politics, and Internal Security* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2008), 42.

[577] Peter Irwin, "Remembering the Ghulja Incident: 20th Anniversary of 'Uyghur Tiananmen' Passes with Little Notice," – The Diplomat, March 2, 2017. Retrieved Mar 26, 2024 from https://thediplomat.com/2017/03/remembering-the-ghulja-incident-20th-anniversary-of-uyghur-tiananmen-passes-with-little-notice/.

[578] Ibid.

[579] Muyesser, "CFU Marks 27th Anniversary of Ghulja Massacre," Campaign For Uyghurs, February 5, 2024. Retrieved Mar 26, 2024 from https://campaignforuyghurs.org/cfu-marks-27th-anniversary-of-ghulja-massacre/.

[580] Martin I. Wayne, *China's War on Terrorism Counter- Insurgency, Politics, and Internal Security* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2008), 44.

with terrorist groups abroad.[581] This call was not heeded internationally until after China declared its support to the US following the events of 9/11. In 2002, both the US and the UN declared ETIM to be an Islamic extremist threat and added it to the list of terrorist organizations.[582] After gaining such legitimacy in the international arena, China has intensified its oppression of Uyghurs. Examples of this repression include forcibly marrying Uyghur women to Chinese men and preventing Uyghurs from attending *meshrep* gatherings, as well as other Islamic or cultural traditions. The geographical proximity of the Xinjiang-Uyghur region to the Fergana Valley and the joint activities of the ETIM with other radical organizations in the Valley have further escalated this repression. In 2015, the CCP adopted the Anti-Terrorism Law, which explicitly aims at protecting border and internal security.[583] The heightened sense of security with the law passed has evolved into policies such as the labor camps for Uyghurs, which have recently come under intense international criticism.

The global counterterrorism campaign has led China to cooperate with Central Asia, with a result similar to that of the US and Russia. The primary motivation behind this cooperation is the Xinjiang-Uyghur problem described above. There are significant Uyghur minorities in the Central Asian countries, particularly in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.[584] Apart from the Uyghurs who settled in these countries during the Soviet era, there are also Uyghurs who came to work in Muslim-majority Central Asian countries to escape Chinese oppression as a result of economic cooperation after independence.[585] Chinese authorities argued that Uyghurs residing in Central Asia are trying to establish an Islamic state centered in the Fergana Valley that will include the Xinjiang Uyghur region by joining the IMU and demanding the extradition of Uyghurs

[581] Mariya Omelicheva, *Counterterrorism Policies in Central Asia* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 61-62

[582] Rouben Azizian, "Countering Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia," *Connections* 5, no. 4 (2006): 93–106, 103-104.

[583] Peter Irwin, "Remembering the Ghulja Incident: 20th Anniversary of 'Uyghur Tiananmen' Passes with Little Notice," – The Diplomat, March 2, 2017. Retrieved Mar 26, 2024 from https://thediplomat.com/2017/03/remembering-the-ghulja-incident-20th-anniversary-of-uyghur-tiananmen-passes-with-little-notice/.

[584] Mariya Omelicheva, *Counterterrorism Policies in Central Asia* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 61.

[585] Ibid, 61-62.

to China.[586] China was aware of the struggle of Central Asian countries against Islamic extremism and has called on Central Asian countries to unite against such a threat in order to take advantage of this situation. In this respect, the Shanghai Five, established in 1996, was transformed into a more robust intergovernmental organization as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2001 with the participation of Uzbekistan, emphasizing the security agenda against the threat of terrorism.[587] As of 2001, the three Central Asian nations surrounding the Fergana Valley joined the SCO and initiated collaboration to counteract separatist movements, extremism, and terrorism. The organization officially identified these challenges as "the three evils."[588] Although the SCO is militarily inferior compared to Russia and the US, it has managed to develop deep-rooted cooperation with countries in the fight against terrorism.

In 2004, upon Karimov's approval, the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure and Counter Terrorism Center were established in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan.[589] Thus, the Karimov regime, which most actively used and securitized the terrorist threat discourse in Central Asia, aimed to receive external support against the slightest instability in Ferghana; in other words, the threat in Ferghana determined its foreign policy choices.[590] Under Mirziyoyev's leadership, Uzbekistan maintained its relations with China and the SCO in the context of the war on terrorism, much like during Karimov's era. Following the Andijan Events in 2005, Karimov distanced himself from the US and aligned more closely with Russia and China, prioritizing state sovereignty in matters deemed as domestic concerns. Although there was an attempt to pursue a balanced foreign policy by re-engaging with the US later on, no

[586] Mariya Omelicheva, "Convergence of Counterterrorism Policies: A Case Study of Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 10 (2009): 893–908, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100903182518, 899.

[587] Dauren Aben, "Regional Security in Central Asia: Addressing Existing and Potential Threats and Challenges," *Eurasian Research Journal* 1, no. 1 (2019): 51–65, 57.

[588] Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, *Central Asia Facing ISAF Withdrawal from Afghanistan*, 2013, 45–68, 66-67.

[589] Ibid, 64.

[590] Fatma Aslı Kelkitli, "Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy Under the Leadership of Mirziyoyev: Struggle to Sustain Autonomy," *MUTAD* 4, no. 1 (2022): 25–43, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.16985mtad.1087202, 27.

compromises were made regarding the potential instability in the Fergana Valley and the threat of Islamic terrorism. In 2019, Mirziyoyev affirmed that the Xinjiang-Uyghur issue is an internal matter for China, and he entered into agreements that underscored national sovereignty in addressing domestic terrorism concerns.[591] In the case of Tajikistan, on the other hand, its active cooperation with Russia has limited its cooperation with the US and China.[592] Since Tajikistan is characterized by its direct border with Afghanistan in the post-2001, its strategic importance for the three major powers, the US, Russia, and China, in the fight against terrorism has increased by then.[593] As a result, China has sought to establish bilateral relations and agreements with Tajikistan in addition to its SCO membership. In 2006, the SCO held its first exercise against the threat of terrorism on Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan.[594] After this exercise, bilateral relations between the two countries were further developed to combat terrorism and drugs actively.[595] Following the US announcement of the planned withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan and the surrounding areas by 2014, China intensified its efforts to fill the void left by the US in the region. Notably, 2016 marked significant progress in Sino-Tajik relations. That year, China established a counter-terrorism headquarters in the capital of Tajikistan, Dushanbe.[596] Concurrently, a corresponding center was established in Urumqi, the capital of the Xinjiang-Uygur region. As part of bilateral agreements addressing the fight against drugs and terrorism, Tajik experts were brought in to collaborate at these centers.[597]

Kyrgyzstan has witnessed notable global and regional influences shaping its domestic policies, and its relations with China have not been an exception of it. Kyrgyzstan, home to the most substantial Uyghur minority in Central Asia after Kazakhstan, has

[591] Ibid, 32.

[592] Karolina Kluczewska, "Transformation of Tajikistan's Foreign Policy Towards Russia," *Crossroads Central Asia*, January 2024, 6.

[593] Ibid, 4-5.

[594] Mariya Omelicheva, *Counterterrorism Policies in Central Asia* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 61.

[595] Ibid, 62.

[596] Iskander Akylbayev and Zhang Weiping, "Creating Frameworks to Confront Terrorism in Central Asia," *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, 2017, 67–74, 68-69.

[597] Ibid.

regulated its relationship with China by entering into agreements for the repatriation of Uyghurs residing within its borders back to China.[598] Kyrgyzstan, known for its moderate policies against Islamic terrorism and extremism compared to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, intensified these policies following the Batken Events, as discussed previously. The Akayev and then the Bakiyev governments shaped their counterterrorism policies with external support and tried to establish close relations with China in this regard. In 2002, a counterterrorism center was opened in the SCO capital, Bishkek, as in the other two countries; additionally, regular military exercises were held annually to counter the threat of Islamic state formation.[599] Simultaneously, more than 20 bilateral anti-terrorism and anti-narcotics agreements were signed.[600] Many of these agreements focused on returning Uyghurs, whom China had identified as wanted individuals or prosecuting those who had affiliated with Islamic extremist groups in Kyrgyzstan, especially in the Fergana Valley.[601] Upon taking office, Bakiyev's first action was enacting a counter-extremism law, a policy strongly urged by China.[602] This law led to Uyghurs, including some whose only sign of extremism was wearing beards but were not members of any radical groups, being labeled as members of Hizb-ut Tahrir.[603] As a result, they were either extradited to China or detained. In summary, despite adopting a relatively moderate stance, Kyrgyzstan has undergone the most significant alterations in its counterterrorism policies, primarily driven by external pressures. It has also shown one of the highest degrees of alignment with China's discourse on the "three evils."[604] These developments underscore the significant influence of external factors on Kyrgyzstan's domestic politics, particularly

[598] Mariya Omelicheva, "Convergence of Counterterrorism Policies: A Case Study of Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 10 (2009): 893–908, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100903182518, 899.

[599] Iskander Akylbayev and Zhang Weiping, "Creating Frameworks to Confront Terrorism in Central Asia," *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, 2017, 67–74, 71.

[600] Ibid.

[601] Mariya Omelicheva, *Counterterrorism Policies in Central Asia* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 81.

[602] Ibid.

[603] Ibid.

[604] Ibid.

in shaping its security approach. Moreover, they highlight the evolving sense of security in the country, particularly Kyrgyzstan's response to security threats, which has influenced by the security understanding of China, emanating from the Fergana Valley and radical organizations. After Bakiyev's presidency, the focus of foreign policy shifted from the US to Russia and China.[605] The successive presidents Atambayev, Jeenbekov, and Japarov, all signed numerous bilateral agreements with China, addressing issues closely related to the Fergana Valley, such as counterterrorism, drug trafficking, and border problems. The pinnacle of China-Kyrgyzstan cooperation on security and counterterrorism occurred in 2017 when President Atambayev and President Xi Jinping signed a significant security and strategic partnership agreement in Beijing, commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of their bilateral relations.[606] This agreement emphasized collaboration on addressing pressing issues within the Fergana Valley, including the threat posed by radical Islamist groups like ETIM and IMT, who aimed at establishing an Islamic state centered in the Valley, as well as tackling terrorism and bolstering border security.[607] In 2019, under President Jeenbekov's leadership, a similar agreement was reached during a meeting between Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Chyngyz Aidarbekov and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi.[608] The agreement focused on outlining measures to combat terrorism, tackle border concerns, counter the influence of radical Islamist groups, address the situation of the Uyghur minority in the Fergana Valley, and deal with the issue of drug trafficking.[609] During Japarov's presidency, bilateral cooperation between China and Kyrgyzstan shifted its focus towards development and

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[605] Mustafa Cüneyt Özşahin, "Küçük Devlet Kuramı ve Ceenbekov Dönemi Kırgız Dış Politikasının Dinamikleri," *Anemon Muş Alparslan Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 8, no. 3 (2020): 945–51, 446; 1. Bektour Iskender, "Kyrgyzstan's Shifting Politics: Foreign Agents, Civil Society, and Russian Influence," – The Diplomat, March 14, 2024. Retrieved Mar 26, 2024 from https://thediplomat.com/2024/03/kyrgyzstans-shifting-politics-foreign-agents-civil-society-and-russian-influence/.

[606] XinhuaNet, "China, Kyrgyzstan Vow to Deepen Security Cooperation," Xinhua, January 6, 2017. Retrieved April 16, 2024 from http://www.xinhuanet.com//english/2017-01/06/c_135961714.htm.

[607] Ibid.

[608] Hu Yongqi and Wang Qingyun, "Premier Emphasizes Fight against Terror," The State Council The People's Republic of China, 2019. Retrieved April 16, 2024 from http://english.www.gov.cn/premier/news/2016/11/03/content_281475481709508.htm

[609] Ibid.

counterterrorism. An agreement signed in Bishkek on October 25, 2023 highlighted China's initiatives in Central Asia, with a specific emphasis on Kyrgyzstan.[610] This agreement addressed issues such as border security and the prevention of human and drug trafficking along new transportation routes, including those passing through the Fergana Valley.[611]

3.4. Regional Cooperation

Besides the great powers, the countries in the region have significantly influenced each other's domestic and foreign policies. The three Central Asian countries within the scope of this thesis share a common border and face instability in the Fergana Valley. Additionally, they harbor minorities with ethnic origins from each other to a great extent due to the aforementioned enclave problem in the Valley. Therefore, partnerships between the CARs and consistent and coherent policies regarding such a geography and territory were needed. Due to varying security perceptions and divergent imaginations of the Fergana Valley among countries and policymakers, the policies and partnerships in the region have been shaped by those political figures who are more inclined toward securitization.[612] For example, during the presidency of Karimov, Uzbekistan used its economic power and natural resources to exert pressure on Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to change their security policies in domestic and foreign policy-making.[613] The Karimov regime had yet to welcome Kyrgyzstan's moderate policies against Islamic radicalization. After the Andijan events, Uzbekistan suspected that people wanted by the Uzbek government for links to Islamic organizations had fled to Kyrgyzstan. When the Kyrgyz government did not respond to the demand for

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[610] XinhuaNet, "China to Enhance Political Mutual Trust with Kyrgyzstan: Premier," The State Council The People's Republic of China, October 25, 2023. Retrieved April 16, 2024 from https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202310/25/content_WS653901e6c6d0868f4e8e0a59.html.

[611] Ibid.

[612] Nartsiss Shukuralieva and Artur Lipiński, "Islamic Extremism and Terrorism in Central Asia: A Critical Analysis," *Central Asia and The Caucasus* 22, no. 1 (2021): 106–17, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37178/ca-c.21.1.10, 107.

[613] Ibid.

their return, Uzbekistan suspended gas supplies to Kyrgyzstan.[614] The SCO stepped in amidst the tension, declaring that its member states must refuse asylum to individuals accused of extremism and sought by another member state. Following this, the Kyrgyz government and law enforcement in the Fergana Valley announced that Uyghurs, Uzbeks, and Tajiks who have resided there since the 1990s would be subject to intensive surveillance and extradition.[615]

Besides highlighting the role of external influences on internal politics regarding the issues related to terrorism, this case has been a catalyst for greater cooperation between the three Central Asian governments in the fight against Islamic radicalism. As a result of the global as well as regional pressure of states on each other, such radicalism started to be perceived as posing an existential threat that necessitates the implementation of exceptional countermeasures not only for Uzbekistan and Tajikistan but also even for Kyrgyzstan.[616] Uzbekistan has continued to play a leading role in regional collaboration following the Karimov era. The mines deployed on Uzbekistan's border with Tajikistan under Karimov, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, began to be cleared in 2020.[617] However, counter-terrorism exercises have been taking place on the border since 2018. With the arrival of the Taliban government in 2021, the seriousness of these exercises increased.[618] Due to fears of Islamic extremism and terrorism, the Uzbek government has been signing border agreements since 2017, continuing the rhetoric of security threats.[619] In addition to its policy of protecting its

[614] Mariya Omelicheva, *Counterterrorism Policies in Central Asia* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 79-80.

[615] Ibid.

[616] Nartsiss Shukuralieva and Artur Lipiński, "Islamic Extremism and Terrorism in Central Asia: A Critical Analysis," *Central Asia and The Caucasus* 22, no. 1 (2021): 106–17, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37178/ca-c.21.1.10.107.

[617] Fatma Aslı Kelkitli, "Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy Under the Leadership of Mirziyoyev: Struggle to Sustain Autonomy," *MUTAD* 4, no. 1 (2022): 25–43, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.16985mtad.1087202, 36.

[618] Nodirbek Soliev and Rafaello Pantucci, "Central Asia," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 15, no. 1 (2023): 82–91, 84.

[619] Fatma Aslı Kelkitli, "Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy Under the Leadership of Mirziyoyev: Struggle to Sustain Autonomy," *MUTAD* 4, no. 1 (2022): 25–43, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.16985mtad.1087202, 36.

own borders, Uzbekistan is particularly interested in addressing other border issues in the region to protect the expansion of Taliban influence into the region and to hamper other regional radical organizations from exploiting porous borders. The Covid-19 pandemic initially hampered regional cooperation for a while; however, since 2021, the Mirziyoyev regime has been actively supporting regional efforts for border delimitation and exploring cooperation opportunities, notably regarding the Tajik-Kyrgyz border issue in the Fergana Valley.[620]

Under Mirziyoyev's leadership, the focus has also been enhancing cooperation among local governments, particularly in the Fergana Valley. In 2021, Mirziyoyev initiated a meeting aimed at stabilizing the region involving local authorities from Sughd in Tajikistan, Fergana in Uzbekistan, and Batken in Kyrgyzstan.[621] This move underscored the critical role of the Fergana Valley in shaping the country's foreign policy. Starting in 2022, the United Nations initiated efforts to enhance collaboration among Central Asian nations regarding counterterrorism, prompted by the Taliban assuming power in neighboring Afghanistan. Among these efforts was the convening of the international conference titled "Regional Cooperation of Central Asian countries within the Framework of the Joint Action Plan for the Implementation of the UN Global Counterterrorism Strategy" in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.[622] The conference underscored the necessity for regional cooperation in addressing terrorism, the strategic significance of the region's border with Afghanistan, challenges in the Fergana Valley, border issues, and drug trafficking.[623] It emphasized that these

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[620] Tanbaev Ozod, "How Uzbekistan Promotes Regional Integration in Central Asia," – The Diplomat, September 14, 2023. Retrieved Mar 26, 2024 from https://thediplomat.com/2023/09/how-uzbekistan-promotes-regional-integration-in-central-asia/.

[621] Fatma Aslı Kelkitli, "Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy Under the Leadership of Mirziyoyev: Struggle to Sustain Autonomy," *MUTAD* 4, no. 1 (2022): 25–43, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.16985mtad.1087202, 35.

[622] UN Office of Counterterrorism, "Regional Cooperation of Central Asian Countries within the Framework of the Joint Action Plan for the Implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy | Office of Counter-Terrorism," United Nations, March 22, 2022. Retrieved Mar 26, 2024 from https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/events/JPOA-UN-Global-CT-Strategy-in-Central-Asia-implementation.

[623] Ibid.

complex issues cannot be effectively tackled without collective action among the Central Asian countries.[624]

In brief, regional cooperation efforts among these three nations have centered on addressing challenges such as radical organizations, terrorism, drug trafficking, and border disputes, particularly in the Fergana Valley, where their borders converge. These initiatives have predominantly been driven by the Uzbekistan government, which perceives itself as the most vulnerable to terrorism and has prioritized security concerns over its counterparts. During the post-independence era, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan have struggled and shown limited effectiveness in actively combating their shared threat of terrorism. Consequently, they have resorted to measures like trade disruptions to compel one another to comply with their respective agendas, as highlighted earlier. In fact, regional cooperation has frequently been bolstered and facilitated by external states or institutions. This is evident in instances such as the SCO's involvement in easing tensions between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, as well as in recent initiatives by the UN.

To summarize, the radical Islam that thrived in Central Asia, specifically in the Fergana Valley, as described in the previous chapter, has become a source of discomfort for the regimes in these newly independent countries. The shared experiences among the three powerful states in the international arena, namely the US, Russia, and China, have given rise to a global security perception, leading to various measures against terrorism, especially Islamic terrorism. The governments of Central Asia developed counter-terrorism policies with the support of China and Russia in the late 1990s and with the West, particularly the US, after 2001. Thus far, it is explored that how the fear of terrorism has transformed and legitimized the foreign policies of Central Asian states. It is crucial to highlight that within the context of the international anti-terrorism framework established in the post-2001 era, the CARs have adapted their domestic policies, enacted new laws, and generated fresh implications and discourses. The primary driver behind these policies was the perception among Central Asian politicians that the Fergana Valley served as a nexus for radical organizations

[624] Ibid.

and a source of instability. Nevertheless, Central Asian states have not only utilized counter-terrorism measures for security reasons but have also wielded them as a means of exerting political influence on their domestic fronts.[625] The Fergana Valley, in particular, stands out as a region prone to instability in the eyes of politicians, attributed to its conservative society and the presence of well-established radical organizations. Consequently, political scrutiny has consistently focused on the Valley, intertwining security and political considerations and framing it within the concepts of *spatialization* and *securitization* with the terms of Critical Geopolitics. Essentially, these states have manipulated the context shaped by the global war on terror.[626] The upcoming chapter will delve into how the three Central Asian countries, which are under the scope of this thesis, have translated their concerns about Islamic extremism into domestic political strategies, exploring the intricate connections with the Fergana Valley.

[625] Bakyt Borkoev, "The Problem of Terrorism in Central Asia and Countering Terrorist Activities in Kygryzstan," in *Afghanistan and Central Asia: NATO's Role in Regional Security since 9/11*, ed. Oktay Tanrısever (Washington DC, The USA: IOS Press, 2013), 72–79, 72.

[626] Mariya Omelicheva, "Convergence of Counterterrorism Policies: A Case Study of Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 10 (2009): 893–908, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100903182518, 903.

CHAPTER 4

DOMESTIC POLICIES OF UZBEKISTAN, TAJIKISTAN AND KYRGYZSTAN

The previous chapter focused on the external dynamics that have shaped the three surrounding countries of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. It briefly introduced the experiences of the United States, Russia, and China with radical Islamism to understand how the international context provided a legitimate environment for the three Central Asian countries to act domestically, particularly in the Fergana Valley, within this context. In short, it discussed the role of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan as marginal actors in the international war on terrorism. Since the external dynamics are given and contextualized, this chapter will analyze how domestic politics of these three countries have changed simultaneously, particularly in addressing the threat of Islamic radicalization in the Fergana Valley. For that purpose, the chapter will focus on legal frameworks, political measures, and military policies, as well as border issues and conflicts among these three countries surrounding the Valley. All of these four aspects seem to be critical in understanding how the dynamics of practical geopolitics are at work in this part of the world.

Following the dissolution of the SU, Islamist groups in Central Asia started establishing connections with external entities such as the Afghan mujahedeen, Arab theologians, Uyghurs in China, and concentrated their efforts in the Fergana Valley. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, they aimed to create an Islamic state with Fergana as its focal point. In response to this situation, the three Central Asian states formulated domestic policies to address this threat. The policies aimed at tackling radicalism and terrorism in the three neighboring states of the Valley exhibit notable similarities. These similarities stem from comparable governmental approaches and the influence of a ruling elite molded by Soviet mentality. As such, political measures aimed at curbing alternative interpretations of Islam and regulating religion

were adopted within a state-endorsed framework, reminiscent of Soviet-era practices.[627] Another similarity lies in treating radicalization as a direct security threat to regime survival and state cohesion.[628] In short, these countries have a shared outlook and develop similar strategies regarding the challenge of radical Islam. Nevertheless, certain variations also exist mostly due to each state's distinct historical background, societal composition, and external relations. To understand the domestic strategies against radical Islam in the Fergana Valley and the ways in which this region has been delineated and managed by the three Central Asian states, it is crucial first to give a couple of quotations reflecting the approaches of these countries' presidents regarding the connection between Islam and terrorism, as well as their perceptions of the threat it represents. This analysis will shed light on the reasons behind the varying levels of spatialization and the adoption of either stringent security measures or more open policies in the Fergana Valley at different times.

Uzbekistan, recognizing the threat of Islamic terrorism since gaining independence, formulated strict policies and discourses. Especially the former president of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, had been widely recognized for his rigorous approach to addressing Islamic terrorism in the region, implementing some of the most stringent measures to combat it. Karimov's stance on countering Islamic extremism and terrorism is evident in the two sentences he uttered following the 1999 Tashkent bombings: "Such people must be shot in the forehead! If necessary, I'll shoot them myself…!" and "I'm prepared to rip off the heads of 200 people, to sacrifice their lives, in order to save peace and calm in the republic…If my child chose such a path, I myself would rip off his head."[629]

[627] Galym Zhussipbek, Dishod Achilov, and Zhanar Nagayeva, "Some Common Patterns of Islamic Revival in Post-Soviet Central Asia and Challenges to Develop Human Rights and Inclusive Society," *Religions* 11, no. 548 (2020), 2.

[628] Petra Steinberger, "Fundamentalism in Central Asia: Reasons, Reality and Prospects," in *Central Asia: Aspects of Transition*, ed. Tom Everett-Heath (London, The UK: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 219–43, 234.

[629] Human Rights Watch, "Profile of President Islam Karimov," Human Rights Watch, August 3, 2021. Retrieved Mar 28, 2024 from https://www.hrw.org/news/2002/03/07/profile-president-islam-karimov.

Shovkat Mirziyoyev, who assumed the presidency upon Karimov's death in 2016, has approached the challenge of Islamic extremism in the Fergana Valley with a stance akin to his predecessor.[630] However, given the absence of direct encounters with the threat of terrorism related to Islamic extremism in Uzbekistan during his presidency, Mirziyoyev has not faced the need to directly address any terrorist acts or imminent threats associated with Islamic extremism.[631] Consequently, employing harsh counter-terrorism strategies that characterized Karimov's tenure has not been an utmost priority for him. Alternatively, rather than construing the combat against terrorism as an imminent peril to the regime, his perspective inclined towards framing it as a circumstance necessitating resolution through regional and international collaboration alongside comprehensive reforms. With such an approach, he underscored the futility of employing violence and stringent policies as viable solutions to the issue at hand at the UN General Assembly Session in 2017 as follows:

> "The fact that the threat of terrorism has been increasing in the world, especially in recent years, shows that the method of fighting against them mainly by using force does not justify itself. In this regard, in most cases, it is limited to combating the consequences of threats and not the main causes that cause them. I believe that the roots of international terrorism and extremism, along with other factors, are ignorance and intolerance."[632]

Therefore, Mirziyoyev's main approach focused on certain strategies that would prevent ignorance regarding Islam in the country, and thus would be more effective in the long-run to combat religious fundamentalism.[633] Similarly, during the Non-Aligned Movement Summit held on March 2, 2023, he would reiterate his position with the following statement:

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[630] Viktoria Akchurina, *Incomplete State-Building in Central Asia: The State as Social Practice* (Basingstoke, The UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 228.

[631] Bureau of Counterterrorism, "Country Reports on Terrorism 2021: Uzbekistan" (2021). Retrieved 21 Dec, 2023 from https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2021/uzbekistan/

[632] Abilov Orol Murodovich, "Objectives and Objectives of Destructive Ideas and Terrorism," *Academicia Globe: Inderscience Reserch* 4, no. 11 (November 2023): 61–65, http://academiarepo.org/index.php/1/article/view/250/245, 64

[633] Andrea Shmitz, "Religious Policy in Uzbekistan: Between Liberalisation, State Ideology and Islamisation," *SWP Research Paper* 8 (August 2023), 17.

> "I would like to emphasize that it is becoming more and more urgent to strengthen practical relations within the frame work of the Organization against dangers of terrorism and extremism, which have been growing in all countries."[634]

Recently, on July 19, 2023, during the Summit of the Gulf Cooperation and Central Asian countries, Mirziyoyev articulated his stance regarding terrorism and the grave challenges it presents. He highlighted its impact on the youth and emphasized the pressing necessity for cooperation in addressing this issue in the following manner:

> "Combating terrorism, extremism, radicalism, and drug trafficking, and strengthening our ties to protect our youth against these threats and prevent their spread through the Internet and other tools is the requirement of time."[635]

As for Tajikistan, this country's experience with a civil war and political Islam prior to confronting radical Islam has shaped its counter-terrorism strategies differently from those of Uzbekistan. As such, political initiatives concerning radicalism and terrorism were notably different during the civil war which happened between the United Islamic Opposition (UTO) and Tajik government in the years between 1992 and 1997.

When the war was over, the government of Tajikistan had to acknowledge the presence of Islamists in the country's politics due to the Moscow Protocol. Up until 2015, the secular government led by Emomali Rahmon and the Islamist opposition had a tumultuous relationship but there was a clear distinction between Islamist opposition (political Islam) and terrorism (radical Islam). The threat of Islamic terrorism was primarily associated with Uzbek citizens residing in the Fergana Valley and Islamists originating from neighboring Afghanistan, prompting Tajikistan to seek assistance from the international community. In 2015, during his speech, in the

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[634] Daryo.uz. "Shavkat Mirziyoyev Draws Attention to Fight against Terror at the Summit of Non-Aligned Movement." Daryo.uz, March 3, 2023. Retrieved Mar 29, 2024 from https://daryo.uz/en/2023/03/03/shavkat-mirziyoyev-draws-attention-to-fight-against-terror-at-the-summit-of-non-aligned-movement.

[635] President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, "Address by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the First Summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council and Central Asian Countries," Шавкат Мирзиёев - Ўзбекистон Республикаси Президенти, July 19, 2023. Retrieved April 22, 2024 from https://president.uz/en/lists/view/6494.

Khulob, district in Fergana, Rahmon emphasized the importance of "acknowledging the threat of radicalism posed to our nation by foreigners residing in the region and fulfilling the patriotic obligation of safeguarding Tajik citizens from this threat."[636] Following the legal prohibition of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT), formerly a legitimate political party, its members came under scrutiny from the Rahmon administration. They were accused of involvement in terrorist activities and financing terrorists through drug trafficking.[637] Consequently, the Rahmon government started to link Islam, terrorism, and the Fergana Valley, mirroring the approach of the Karimov government in Uzbekistan. Rahmon's statements in a meeting with regional political leaders, activists, and religious figures on March 9, 2024, suggest a shift in his stance, blurring the distinction between political Islam and radical Islam by also focusing on the presence of domestic terrorism:

> "We have lately witnessed ... disruption of the security situation of states through the political Islam influence...That is, the time has come for us to fight all kinds of undesirable and dangerous phenomena, including extremism and terrorism, and to ensure the supremacy of the law in the country... After gaining Tajikistan's independence, extremist religious figures, at the same time xenophiles, tried to destroy and remove the young Tajik state under the cover of Islamic slogans to seize power, and once again, by imposing alien culture, drag the Tajik people to subordination by others...Our compatriots well remember how the terrorist and extremist organization 'Islamic Renaissance Party,' whose activities were banned in the country, appeared on the political arena with the help of geopolitical players and was the major cause of the civil war outbreak..; as a result, cases of joining terrorist and extremist movements in some cities and areas by some of our citizens have been observed...This was done with the aim of creating an Islamic state and imposing an alien culture on our people...; the issue shows that for the future fate of the Tajik nation, the factor of society radicalization and citizens' linking up with terrorist organizations of a religious nature in the current conditions also remain a serious threat, and will have undesirable consequences in case of being not prevented."[638]

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[636] Edward Lemon and Helene Thibault, "Counter-Extremism, Power and Authoritarian Governance in Tajikistan," *Central Asian Survey* 37, no. 1 (2017): 137–59, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2017.1336155, 143.

[637] David W. Montgomery and John Heathershaw, "Islam, Secularism and Danger: A Reconsideration of the Link between Religiosity, Radicalism and Rebellion in Central Asia," *Religion, State and Society* 44, no. 3 (2016): 192–218, https://doi.org/10.1080/09637494.2016.1220177, 204.

[638] Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan to Ukraine, "Speech by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Leader of the Nation, His Excellency Emomali Rahmon at a Meeting with Activists of Society and Religious Workers of the Country," Speech by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Leader of the Nation, His Excellency Emomali Rahmon at a meeting with activists of society and

Finally, when we look at Kyrgyzstan, it is possible to suggest that this country did not acknowledge the threat of Islamic terrorism until 1999, resulting in the adoption of a more lenient policy framework. At one time, President Askar Akayev would briefly respond to inquiries about Islamic extremism as such: "If I do not have a real problem of religious extremism, why would I create an artificial one?"[639] The Batken Events of 1990, however, marked Kyrgyzstan's first direct encounter with radical Islam, resulting in increased measures. Additionally, external pressure on Kyrgyzstan to intensify these measures further contributed to the hardening of policies. Since he had a liberal stance on terrorism, accusations of harboring terrorists were leveled against Akayev's regime by countries like China, Russia, and, notably, Uzbekistan. As a country dependent on external support, Kyrgyzstan could not resist economic and political pressures, leading to a revision of its attitude towards Islamic terrorism.[640]

Under Kurmanbek Bakiyev, who ascended to power after the Tulip Revolution, the issue of Islamic extremism was treated with utmost seriousness, prompting endeavors to establish a full-fledged army. Among all the presidents of Kyrgyzstan, Bakiyev stood out as the most closely aligned with the West in addressing Islamic extremism and was deeply involved in the discourse surrounding the war on terror. In one of his speeches upon assuming office, Bakiyev articulated a stark departure from the previous liberal stance of the Akayev regime, which did not make a distinction between "good" and "bad" Islamists. He stated, "…from now on, we will also have to make it clear that true Islam has nothing to do with propaganda or terror attacks staged by religious extremists."[641] In another speech in July 2006 delivered in Kara-Suu, located in the Fergana region, Bakiyev declared that Kyrgyzstan, which had not

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religious workers of the country | EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN TO UKRAINE, March 11, 2024. Retrieved Mar 29, 2024 from https://mfa.tj/en/kiev/view/14724/speech-by-the-president-of-the-republic-of-tajikistan-leader-of-the-nation-his-excellency-emomali-rahmon-at-a-meeting-with-activists-of-society-and-religious-workers-of-the-country.

[639] Mariya Omelicheva, "Convergence of Counterterrorism Policies: A Case Study of Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 10 (2009): 893–908, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100903182518, 898.

[640] Mariya Omelicheva, *Counterterrorism Policies in Central Asia* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 29-30.

[641] Alisher Khamidov and Alisher Saipov, "Anti-Terrorism Crackdown Fuels Discontent in Southern Kyrgyzstan," Eurasianet, August 8, 2006. Retrieved April 23, 2024 from https://eurasianet.org/anti-terrorism-crackdown-fuels-discontent-in-southern-kyrgyzstan.

previously prioritized regional cooperation against the threat of radical Islam, had shifted its policy on this matter and stated that "Our republics must unite their efforts in the fight against international terrorism and religious extremism."[642]

Rosa Otunbayeva, who assumed leadership of the interim government established after Bakiyev was removed from office following the 2010 Osh Events, was well-regarded by the West for both her mindset and policies. However, since the interim government had been in power for less than a year, she had not been extensively involved in policy-making beyond declaring a state of emergency and managing the ethnic conflict in the Fergana Valley, purportedly incited by radicals in the region. Nevertheless, during a speech at the 2016 OSCE conference, the former president of Kyrgyzstan characterized the conflict between radical Islamists and the secular state with the following words: "Islamists are struggling with us. We have a literal war. They are fighting for each meter of our lives."[643]

Almazbek Atambayev, who assumed power in the 2011 elections after the interim government, has taken a more liberal stance compared to his predecessors. He often emphasized that such ideas were foreign to Kyrgyz culture rather than directly confronting radicalism. During a Defense Council meeting on February 3, 2014, Atambayev voiced concerns over the proliferation of "Arab culture" overshadowing "native ethnic culture," remarking that "There are many people with long beards on our streets now. They force our girls to dress in black instead of light and colorful clothing. This is what widows usually wear here."[644] At that time, similar rhetoric was frequently heard from Uzbek and Tajik politicians. However, hearing this from a Kyrgyz president sparked interest that approach towards Islamic extremism might become more severe in the future.[645] However, Atambayev's approach during the final term of his presidency remained relatively flexible. Rather than highlighting radical

[642] Ibid.

[643] George Gavrillis, "Central Asia's Uncertain Radicalization and the Opportunities for the Russia-US Cooperation," *IMEMO*, 2016, 251–60, https://doi.org/10.20542/2307-1494-2017-1-251-260, 252.

[644] News Agency, "President of Kyrgyzstan Speaks out against Islamization," 24.kg, February 19, 2014. Retrieved Mar 30, 2024 from https://24.kg/archive/en/bigtiraj/169101-news24.html/.

[645] Ibid.

Islam and its external origins, which were perceived as contradictory to Kyrgyz culture, he redirected his attention towards the underlying factors of radicalism and openly criticized the strategies of the global war on terror.

Describing his change to more reformist policy during an interview with the Times magazine in 2017, he articulated it as such:

> "There's a big spike of terrorism in the world. What's the cause of this terrorism? And why only in Muslim countries? Because it's in Muslim countries that the inequality and social injustice is most visible among the people; because some regimes call themselves republics but in fact are authoritarian and dictatorial where there's no justice and there's a wide social gap between the rich and poor. In such situations, when ordinary people don't have the opportunity to change power in a democratic way, where there's a lack of social mobility, then radical ideas start ruling... And as long as there's no democracy or social justice in these countries, this fight against terror won't lead to victory. As long as Muslims don't see a third way—that there can be a Muslim country with democracy and one that prospers under it—then we can't stop the radicalization of Islam...The U.S. bombing of the Islamic State will only lead to its creation somewhere else. Then it'll appear somewhere else after another bombing...We need to show them that a third way exists, one where we can build a democracy and social justice in a secular Muslim country, like the one in Kyrgyzstan...I believe that this experience is unique only to Kyrgyzstan. Many Islamic organizations that are banned in our region are still allowed in Kyrgyzstan, but at the same time, we're not seeing the rise of radicalism. Quite the opposite...We are not cutting beards like in neighboring countries, we are not banning particular clothing. It's impossible to achieve anything without particular reforms in Islamic societies. This is where we want to be the first ones, we want to be the example..."[646]

Sooronbay Jeenbekov, who assumed office in 2017 with claims of being more moderate and liberal than even his predecessor Atambayev, has not explicitly addressed the threat of Islamic extremism through his term. Rather than viewing Islamic extremism as a strictly domestic issue and directly securitizing it, Jeenbekov has advocated for regional cooperation to tackle any potential destabilizing factors, including Islamic extremism and issues related to the Uzbek minority in the Fergana

[646] Ian Bremmer, "Kyrgyzstan President Almazbek Atambayev on Democracy & Putin," Time, October 9, 2017. Retrieved April 24, 2024 from https://time.com/4972381/kyrgyzstan-almazbek-atambayev-muslim-russia/.

Valley, which have been associated with terrorism.[647] On December 16, 2018, during his speech on the 70th anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, he clearly emphasized the importance of collective efforts to combat the threat of terrorism, stating, "We strongly condemn the violence and support the joint actions of the world community against extremism and terrorism."[648] It seems as if with his stance, Jeenbekov has distinguished himself from all previous Kyrgyz presidents by abstaining from direct confrontation with radicalism and instead opting for exclusive reliance on international cooperation for addressing the issue.

In 2020, Sadyr Japarov, who came to power in yet another popular uprising, pursued a policy against the peril of diminishing local culture while the threat of Islamic extremism. At this juncture, he diverged from his predecessor Jeenbekov and aligned his stance more closely with Atambayev's policies applied in his early years of presidency. In his *Eid al-Fitr* celebration speech in 2022, he stated: "There are provocateurs who are trying to confront Islamic culture with the centuries-old Kyrgyz culture, and I would like to emphasize that our people should be careful against their misguidance."[649] In an earlier speech he delivered in Bishkek in 2021, Japarov, who also emphasized that radicalism is often a result of inadequate education, outlined his views on combating radicalism as follows:

> "Various movements preaching religious extremism, hiding behind the ideas of Islam, have undermined its values and today pose a threat to many countries of the world. Improvement of the quality of religious education and training at the academic level will help prevent this threat."[650]

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[647] Johan Envgvall, *Religion and the Secular State in Kyrgyzstan* (Washington D.C., The USA: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, 2020), 8.

[648] The UN Kyrgyz Republic, "President Sooronbay Jeenbekov's Speech on the Occasion of the 70th ...," The UHDR, December 16, 2018. Retrieved Mar 30, 2024 from https://kyrgyzstan.un.org/en/13686-president-sooronbay-jeenbekovs-speech-occasion-70th-anniversary-udhr.

[649] Altynbek Joldoshov, "Kırgızistan'da Din-Devlet İlişkileri ve Laiklik Tartışmaları," *Türk Dünyası İncelemeleri Dergisi* 22, no. 2 (2022): 487–514, https://doi.org/10.32449/egetdid.1171626, 489.

[650] Tatyana Kudryavtseva, "Sadyr Japarov: Various Extremist Movements Undermined Value of Islam," 24.kg, March 10, 2021. Retrieved April 24, 2024 from https://24.kg/english/186011_Sadyr_Japarov_Various_extremist_movements_undermined_value_of_Islam/.

The perspectives of the presidents of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kygryzstan have inevitably shaped the formulation of policies toward the Fergana Valley, regarded as the primary locus of radical Islam and terrorist threats. In the subsequent section, as mentioned above, the domestic policies of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan will be analyzed, focusing on their legal frameworks, political measures, and military policies, as well as border issues and conflicts among these three countries surrounding the Fergana Valley.

4.1. Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan has grappled with Islamic extremism and terrorism since its early years of independence, rendering it one of the most susceptible countries to this threat. Consequently, Karimov regime took the most stringent measures to address this issue and spatially concentrated on the Fergana Valley, where extremism thrived. Apart from implementing legal, political, and military strategies to tackle the issue promptly, his regime also wielded influence over "official Islam" through a cultural and religious discourse. Although Mirziyoyev did not adopt as severe a stance, he underscored cooperation and control over local authorities in the Fergana Valley during his tenure. This suggests that the Fergana Valley continued to be perceived as a region of potential threat and instability throughout the Mirziyoyev era, although to a lesser extent.

4.1.1. Legal Framework

The most important legal document that needs to be looked at is the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, ratified in 1992. During the early years of independence, extremist organizations gained significant influence in major cities of the Fergana Valley, notably Namangan. Among these groups, Adolat enjoyed widespread popularity. That is why, within the purview of the 1992 Constitution, both the Criminal Code and the Anti-Terrorism Law have been incorporated as integral components.[651] With an expanded version of the Criminal Code and the adoption of Freedom of Religion and Conscience laws in 1998, however, Karimov began to take strict

[651] Vitaly V Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia: Between Pen and Rifle* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 97.

measures against Islamic extremism. This new law which was adopted following a rise in extremism and terrorism in the Fergana Valley, imposed constraints on the expression of one's religious beliefs, curtailed the dissemination of religious ideas, and restricted gatherings for religious purposes, contrary to the guaranteed freedoms.[652] Yet, its most important aspect for the purposes of this thesis was its treatment of religious activities within the framework of national security. By equating religious radicalism with Islam, the law effectively criminalized religious practices. Rather than addressing violence directly, the law targeted religion itself, thereby criminalizing it in an attempt to mitigate potential violence.[653] As a result, regions characterized by conservatism or radicalism inherently influenced policy decisions, prompting political elites to spatially redefine these areas under the pretext of safeguarding national and regime security.

In the aftermath of the 1999 Batken Events and the Tashkent bombings, the Karimov regime initiated further alterations to legal definitions. For example, in Uzbekistan's Bill on Terrorism adopted in 2000, terrorism is blurredly defined as "socially dangerous wrongdoing."[654] In addition, Article 244 of the Criminal Code expands its prohibition to encompass "the actions of religious movements, sects, and other groups that endorse terrorism, drug trafficking, and organized criminal activities" and "resistance to a representative authority and active participation to riots."[655]

Under Mirziyoyev, several national and regional legal initiatives have been adopted against extremist organizations, which persist in the Fergana Valley, albeit with notably diminished influence. Among the most significant actions taken were revising the law on countering extremism and adopting national strategies and roadmaps for

[652] Helen Keller and Maya Sigron, "State Security v Freedom of Expression: Legitimate Fight against Terrorism or Suppression of Political Opposition?," *Human Rights Law Review* 10, no. 1 (2010): 151–68, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1093/hrlr/ngp041, 166.

[653] Ibid.

[654] OSCE. "Comments on the Law on Combatting Terrorism of the Republic of Uzbekistan." 2019. Retrieved Mar 7, 2024 from https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/3/445648_0.pdf. 5.

[655] Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan.1994. Retrieved Mar 7, 2024 from https://www.vertic.org/media/National%20Legislation/Uzbekistan/UZ_Criminal_Code.pdf, 70.

combating both issues, which were enacted in 2018.[656] This law envisaged the rehabilitation of Uzbek citizens who previously participated in terrorist activities, particularly in the Fergana Valley, Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq.[657] In addition, a broader and more vague definition of extremism was introduced, which further blurred the distinction between violent and non-violent extremism.[658] The aforementioned 1998 law was revised in June 2021, under the title of "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations," to include youth protection and patriotic education as important complements to countering radicalization.[659] With this law, pre-school religious education, which had been permitted under Karimov, was completely banned; the decision was also made to establish secular schools, particularly in regions where radicalism was prevalent, with the Fergana Valley serving as a prime illustration.[660] In 2022, Uzbekistan held a high-level conference where Central Asian states deliberated on a collective approach to counter-terrorism. During this conference, they endorsed the "Tashkent Declaration," making Central Asia the first region globally to unify its efforts in implementing the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.[661]

4.1.2. Political Measures

Following the establishment of the legal framework, the Karimov regime prioritized to implement policies in order to tighten control over regions with loose administration like the Fergana Valley. Subsequently, he pursued authoritarian measures by repressing all forms of dissent, notably the Islamist opposition in the Fergana Valley.

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[656] Max Planck Foundation, "Home," Max Planck Foundation for International Peace and the Rule of Law. Retrieved April 1, 2024 from https://www.mpfpr.de/projects/uzbekistan/.

[657] The US Embassy in Uzbekistan, "Country Reports on Terrorism 2018: Uzbekistan," Department of State, 2018. Retrieved May 28, 2024 from https://uz.usembassy.gov/country-reports-on-terrorism-2018-uzbekistan/.

[658] Ibid.

[659] Bagila Bukharbayeva, *The Vanishing Generation: Faith and Uprising in Modern Uzbekistan* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2019), 13-14.

[660] Ibid, 15.

[661] Max Planck Foundation, "Home," Max Planck Foundation for International Peace and the Rule of Law. Retrieved April 1, 2024 from https://www.mpfpr.de/projects/uzbekistan/.

Karimov held the conviction that strengthening political repression through centralization and authoritarianism was imperative to combat his foremost concern, radical Islamism. Although Islam was embraced as a fundamental part of Uzbek culture, there emerged an official delineation and regulation of religion. As such, different understandings of Islam beyond this framework were stigmatized by taking political measures, like the institutionalization of the Muftiate, to control "other interpretations of Islam," such as the ones seen in the Fergana Valley.

When Karimov came to power in 1991, he had already "made a mental note" to "deal with the Fergana Valley, which he believed would be a major challenge for him in the future."[662] Consequently, he directed his efforts towards consolidating these repressive mechanisms, mainly focusing on the Fergana Valley, the epicenter of his apprehensions regarding radical Islamism.

At this point, it must also be mentioned that Uzbekistan has a unique political structure known as the *mahalla* which was used to exert control over ordinary people and social life.[663] Karimov defined *mahalla* as "units serving the local implementation of economic and democratic reforms."[664] The Karimov regime fully utilized this structure for its own ambitions and political power, particularly by exercising constant surveillance over the residents of problematic areas like the Fergana Valley.[665] Since 1995, particularly in the Fergana Valley, the reconstruction of *mahalla* buildings and programs ensures the implementation of ideologically charged policies at the local

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[662] Bagila Bukharbayeva, *The Vanishing Generation: Faith and Uprising in Modern Uzbekistan* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2019), 19.

[663] Traditionally, the *mahalla* served as a self-governing local community for Uzbeks. After independence, it gained official recognition, with a 1993 law linking its administration directly to the state, strengthening its hierarchical structure. *The Oqsoqols*, mahalla heads, oversee traditional community affairs, from ceremonies to bureaucratic and security matters like school management and local police coordination. In essence, this implies that all decisions made at the national level are executed at the local level without any loss of efficiency. Elise Massicard and Tommaso Trevisani, "The Uzbek Mahalla: Between State and Society," in *Central Asia: Aspects of Transition*, ed. Tom Everetth-Heath (London, The UK: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 205–18, 210.

[664] Islam Karimov, *Uzbekistan on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century: Threats to Security, Conditions of Stability and Guarantees for Progress* (Cambridge, 1998), 100.

[665] Erica Marat, *The State-Crime Nexus in Central Asia: State Weakness, Organized Crime, and Corruption in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan* (Washington DC, The USA: Silk Road Paper, 2006), 73.

level through the "*mahallization* policy."[666] For example, the *mahalla* office in Namangan functioned similarly to the local police, requiring residents to pledge abstention from wearing a beard or headscarf and refrain from joining radical organizations; those who deviated from these norms faced severe punishment or public humiliation administered by *the mahalla oqsoqol*.[667] Furthermore, the administration of an *Uzbek mahalla* in Osh published a list of radical Islamist organizations and their members in 1999.[668] The list included well-known organizations, such as the IMU and HT, alongside organizations whose existence is questionable. More peculiarly, it also listed organizations such as Islam Lashkarlari and Adolat, claiming to have thousands of members, that had been shut down four years prior to the list's publication.[669] These instances underscore Uzbekistan's tendency to view threats primarily through a security lens, exemplifying the local enforcement of repressive and securitized policies in response to this perceived threat, notably evident in the Fergana Valley.[670]

In addition to the institutionalization of the *mahalla*, the most important example of the policy on religion was the institution of the Muftiate which operates as a monopolistic surveillance system to spread official Islam and control radical Islam.[671] Similar to other Central Asian republics, in Uzbekistan too, Islam was incorporated into national identity in this process, Mufti Offices established during the Soviet times were used as a means of controlling Islam.[672] Therefore, the Uzbek Muftiate has been responsible for promoting Islam within the framework of "official Islam." As such,

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[666] Ibid, 206-207.

[667] Nartsiss Shukuralieva and Artur Lipiński, "Islamic Extremism and Terrorism in Central Asia: A Critical Analysis," *Central Asia and The Caucasus* 22, no. 1 (2021): 106–17, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37178/ca-c.21.1.10, 115.

[668] Stuart Horsman, "Themes in Official Discourses on Terrorism in Central Asia," *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (2005): 199–213, 203.

[669] Ibid, 205.

[670] Tom Everett-Heath, "Instability and Identity in a Post-Soviet World: Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan," in *Central Asia: Aspects of Transition*, ed. Tom Everett-Heath (London, The UK: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 181–204, 196-197.

[671] Viktoria Akchurina, *Incomplete State-Building in Central Asia: The State as Social Practice* (Basingstoke, The UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 182.

[672] Petra Steinberger, "Fundamentalism in Central Asia: Reasons, Reality and Prospects," in *Central Asia: Aspects of Transition*, ed. Tom Everett-Heath (London, The UK: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 219–43, 221-222.

the Uzbek Muftiate enforced the headscarves ban and initiated a campaign to encourage children to attend school rather than the mosque.[673] Interestingly, Uzbek muftis were typically selected from among individuals born and educated in the Fergana Valley and therefore familiar with the local population.[674] This strategy can be interpreted as an effort to exert control over the region's people by leveraging the influence of muftis, especially considering the conservative nature of the society in the region and its high participation rate in radical organizations.

The Central Asian Muftiates have the task, in Karimov's words, of "ruthlessly controlling the wrong kind of Islam."[675] The term most commonly used by Central Asian governments for alternative interpretations of Islam has been "foreign" or "imported."

Karimov has repeatedly stated that the origins of religious extremism and intolerance are alien, arguing that such ideas distort the collective identity.[676] He also claimed that while Islam in Uzbek culture is something that people live in private, the fact that Islamic ideology portrays its extremist activities as the actions of the Uzbek people is the underlying source of instability in the country.[677] Furthermore, he employed the rhetoric that by adhering to such individuals, Uzbekistan would regress to the era of the 1930s.[678] Every precaution is taken to ensure that the lifestyle of ordinary people is not alien. In 1998, Uzbekistan banned the wearing of religious uniforms in public

[673] Mariya Omelicheva, "Islam and Power Legitimation: Instrumentalisation of Religion in Central Asian States," *Contemporary Politics* 22, no. 2 (2016): 144–63, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2016.1153287, 153.

[674] Diyanet Haber, "Özbekistan Uleması, Yeni Başmüftüsünü Seçti," Diyanet Haber, 2021. Retrieved Mar 11, 2024 from https://www.diyanethaber.com.tr/ozbekistan-ulemasi-yeni-basmuftusunu-secti.

[675] Mariya Omelicheva, "Instrumentalization of Islam in Central Asia: Using Religion for Legitimizng the Governing Regimes," *Euxeinos* 23 (2017): 6–10, 9.

[676] Islam Karimov, *Uzbekistan on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century: Threats to Security, Conditions of Stability and Guarantees for Progress* (Cambridge, 1998), 88.

[677] Ibid, 21.

[678] Stuart Horsman, "Themes in Official Discourses on Terrorism in Central Asia," *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (2005): 199–213, 209.

places, and in 2012, beards, veils, and headscarves were prohibited as citing that they were considered to be against Uzbek culture.[679]

The fear of Islamist extremism was also used to justify a more centralized rule as it was portrayed as an inevitable effort to protect the state's security, territorial integrity, and sovereignty of the country.[680] Consequently, centralization and the war on terrorism were amalgamated to exert control over all social, economic and private spheres and also over the political opposition. In other words, the perceived fear of Islamic extremism and terrorism is being used by the authoritarian state apparatus to increase pressure on the population and the opposition.[681]

In this framework, the Karimov regime pursued a policy of controlling all opposition, with an impact on the Fergana Valley. The first step came in 1992 with the increased pressure on the Birlik (Unity) Movement and the Erk (Freedom) Party,[682] as well as the ban on radical organizations.[683] By equating the nationalist-democratic opposition with the radical Islamist opposition and the various factions within those radical groups, Karimov tried to eliminate all opposition forces.[684] The 1999 Tashkent bombings, on the other hand, were deemed "the work of terrorists," allowing Islam

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[679] Mariya Omelicheva, "Islam and Power Legitimation: Instrumentalisation of Religion in Central Asian States," *Contemporary Politics* 22, no. 2 (2016): 144–63, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/13569775.2016.1153287, 153.

[680] Nartsiss Shukuralieva and Artur Lipiński, "Islamic Extremism and Terrorism in Central Asia: A Critical Analysis," *Central Asia and The Caucasus* 22, no. 1 (2021): 106–17, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37178/ca-c.21.1.10, 116-117.

[681] Petra Steinberger, "Fundamentalism in Central Asia: Reasons, Reality and Prospects," in *Central Asia: Aspects of Transition*, ed. Tom Everett-Heath (London, The UK: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 219–43, 239.

[682] *The Unity Movement* and *Erk Party* is a pro-democracy party that seeks to mobilize national revival and cultivate a sense of national sentiment in Uzbekistan. Despite the party's opposition to the Karimov regime, it has no legal connections to radical Islam. However, Karimov accused them of being involved in the 1999 Tashkent bombing and collaborating with radical Islamists. Demian Vaisman, "Birlik and Erk Democratic Party," in *Political Organizaiton in Central Asia and Azerbaijan*, ed. Vladimir Babak, Demian Vaisman, and Aryeh Wasserman (London, The UK: Frank Cass, 2004), 352–66, 352.

[683] Viktoria Akchurina, *Incomplete State-Building in Central Asia: The State as Social Practice* (Basingstoke, The UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 234.

[684] Matteo Fumagalli, "Islamic Radicalism and the Insecurity Dilemma in Central Asia: The Role of Russia," in *Russia and Islam: State, Society and Radicalism*, ed. Roland Dannreuther and Luke March (London, The UK: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 191–208, 197.

Karimov to exploit the fear that permeated the population.[685] He labeled all opposition as "terrorists," justifying his crackdown. However, the opposition also included non-violent radical Islamist organizations extending beyond armed radicals like the IMU in the Fergana Valley. The Karimov regime considered the Fergana Valley a danger to the Islamic opposition and raided the homes of not only radical Islamists but also several ordinary people living in the Valley, labeling them "Wahabis" and sending them into exile or prison.[686] In addition, independent clerics in the Fergana Valley who opposed the Karimov regime, even though they did not contradict the "state-sponsored Islam," were also targeted. There emerged disappearances starting with the late 1990s and they continued until the end of the Karimov regime. One of the most well-known cases was the sudden disappearance of Abduvoli Qori Mirzoev, an anti-Wahhabi theologian from Andijan.[687] Mirzoev's son and assistants also disappeared subsequently.[688] Furthermore, the mosques where Mirzoev delivered sermons in the Fergana Valley were closed and repurposed for secular use, echoing practices from the Soviet era.[689]

The issue of opposition and radicalism regained prominence following the Andijan Events of 2005. The events in Andijan in 2005 were triggered by accusations of Islamic extremism and terrorism against members of Hizb-ut Tahrir and its affiliate, Akromiyya. Despite no evidence of involvement in violence or terrorism, the Karimov government painted all Islamic opposition with the same brush, labeling them as "terrorists" regardless of their non-violent stance within the spectrum of Islamism.[690]

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[685] Mariya Omelicheva, "Convergence of Counterterrorism Policies: A Case Study of Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 10 (2009): 893–908, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100903182518, 898.

[686] Oidinposha Imamkhodjaeva, "The Role of Central Asia in the "War Against Terrorism"," in *Philosophical Perspectives on the "War on Terrorism"* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Rodopi, 2007), 325–60, 345.

[687] Nancy Lubin and Barnett R. Rubin, *Calming the Ferghana Valley: Development and Dialogue in the Heart of Central Asia* (New York, The USA: Century Foundation Press, 1999), 102.

[688] Ibid.

[689] Ibid, 103.

[690] Helen Keller and Maya Sigron, "State Security v Freedom of Expression: Legitimate Fight against Terrorism or Suppression of Political Opposition?," *Human Rights Law Review* 10, no. 1 (2010): 151–68, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1093/hrlr/ngp041, 159-160.

In essence, the Fergana Valley had served as a focal point where political repression of the opposition was most pronounced until the death of Karimov in 2016.

The Mirziyoyev government, unlike the Karimov regime, has pursued reformist rather than repressive methods to address the threat in the Fergana Valley. Interestingly, 32 years after the establishment of an independent republic, Mirziyoyev has initiated a comparable process of state-building reminiscent of the Karimov regime. In 2023, through the "New Uzbekistan" project, the Mirziyoyev administration sought to strengthen its credibility among the Uzbek populace. Additionally, it aimed to counteract the potential instability in Fergana arising from the threats from surrounding areas by using soft power.[691] This endeavor, referred to as the "Third Renaissance," highlighted the significance of the ancient Islamic civilizations in the region and their role in Uzbek culture.[692] Under this project, Mirziyoyev also aimed at establishing an environment wherein young individuals with a "secular and Western education" could be used to contribute to the development of the "New Uzbekistan." By inaugurating a school of this nature initially in Namangan, where radical Islamist organizations are most active, the plan is to provide the new generation with a secular, pro-Western education instead of their potentially gravitating towards radical organizations.[693] The education model entails teaching students at least two Western languages and conducting scientific research.[694] As inferred from this example, Mirziyoyev, while adopting softer policies compared to Karimov, recognized the threat of terrorism and extremism emanating from the Fergana Valley and diligently implemented appropriate cultural policies.

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[691] Ahmet Akalın. "Yeni Özbekistan'ın Yumuşak Gücü." Dec 20, 2023. Retrieved Mar 6 from https://analizgazetesi.com.tr/haber/yeni-ozbekistanin-yumusak-gucu-5597/).

[692] Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, "'yeni Özbekistan' İnşa Sürecinde Cumhurbaşkanı Mirziyoyev'in Güçlü Reform Adımları - Ankasam: Ankara Kriz ve Siyaset Araştırmaları Merkezi," ANKASAM, January 7, 2023. Retrieved Mar 6, 2024 from https://www.ankasam.org/yeni-ozbekistan-insa-surecinde-cumhurbaskani-mirziyoyevin-guclu-reform-adimlari/.

[693] Kun.uz, "Shavkat Mirziyoyev Concludes His 3-Day Visit to Fergana Valley," Kun.uz, February 3, 2024. Retrieved April 3, 2024 from https://kun.uz/en/news/2023/02/04/shavkat-mirziyoyev-concludes-his-3-day-visit-to-fergana-valley.

[694] Ibid.

Additionally, since taking office, President Mirziyoyev has prioritized direct talks with the local governments of Namangan, Andijan, and Fergana districts within the Fergana Valley, areas where radicalism is most prevalent in Uzbekistan.[695] As part of the modernization program introduced in 2023, billions of dollars were invested in the referent districts of the Fergana Valley and Karakalpakstan, where the central administration, even *mahalla* control, was weak.[696] Since poor living conditions in the Valley have been linked to a high level of radicalism,[697] it is unsurprising that initiatives such as cooperation between local and central government, fully funded education to deter young people from radical paths, and increased job opportunities are concentrated in these regions. In February 2024, Mirziyoyev embarked on a three-day excursion to the Fergana Valley, engaging in dialogues with regional authorities.[698] During these meetings, he advocated for formulating strategies to enhance the quality of the local populace with educational programs, in addition to addressing economic and political matters.[699] In summary, the Mirziyoyev government has adopted a softer policy than the Karimov's; however, it is evident that the Fergana Valley has been prioritized and spatialized in policymaking.

4.1.3. Military Policies

In addition to a legal basis for counter-terrorism and political steps, a militaristic framework had also been formed to respond to the threat of radical Islam. According to Karimov, preventing potential threats inside and outside the country - by which he means ethnic and religious conflicts in Uzbekistan's border regions, especially on the

[695] Fatma Aslı Kelkitli, "Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy Under the Leadership of Mirziyoyev: Struggle to Sustain Autonomy," *MUTAD* 4, no. 1 (2022): 25–43, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.16985mtad.1087202, 35.

[696] Gazeta.uz, "Uzbek President Approves Heating System Modernization Program in Social Facilities," Газета.uz, April 12, 2023. Retrieved April 1, 2024 from https://www.gazeta.uz/en/2023/04/12/heating/.

[697] Mariya Omelicheva. "Terrorism in Central Asia: Dynamics, Dimensions, and Sources." *Education About Asia* 18, no.3 (2013). 4.

[698] Kun.uz, "Shavkat Mirziyoev Holds a Meeting with Governors of Namangan, Andijan and Fergana Regions," Kun.uz, February 1, 2024. Retrieved April 1, 2024 from https://kun.uz/en/news/2024/03/26/shavkat-mirziyoev-holds-a-meeting-with-governors-of-namangan-andijan-and-fergana-regions.

[699] Ibid.

southern border (including the Fergana Valley)- was crucial for national security, territorial integrity and democracy, which could only be achieved by increasing defense capability.[700] He explained this idea in his book as follows:

> "Given the geostrategic situation of our country and the geographical particularities of its territory, we need armed forces small in number but mobile and well-equipped with modern weapons, possessing a balanced fighting potential and able to respond effectively on the ground and in the air to any aggressor... The ability to restructure such an industry rapidly to meet the requirements of mobilization planning and combat if large-scale aggression should occur."[701]

Therefore, the Armed Forces of Uzbekistan was established to consolidate its power over any opposition or threat.[702] Indeed, Karimov used this defense system to the fullest when the so-called "large-scale aggression" broke out in Andijan in the Fergana Valley in 2005. During the Andijan protests, the Uzbek army opened fire on the civilian population under Karimov's orders.[703] The Karimov regime believed that the protests had been instigated by religious extremists and armed individuals.[704] It resulted in nearly 200 deaths, according to official estimates and more than 1500 deaths, according to human rights organizations.[705] President Karimov tried to legitimize this appalling episode in the city of Andijan in the Fergana Valley with the following words:

> "Servicemen were shot in the most insolent manner, an unprecedented attack on a military unit was organized, dozens of machine guns were seized, the

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[700] Islam Karimov, *Uzbekistan on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century: Threats to Security, Conditions of Stability and Guarantees for Progress* (Cambridge, 1998), 102.

[701] Ibid, 103-104.

[702] Mariya Omelicheva and Lawrance Markowitz, "Covid-19 in Central Asia: (De-Securitization of a Health Crisis?," *Problems of Post-Communism* 69, no. 1 (2021): 92–102, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2021.2009349, 422.

[703] Erica Marat, *The State-Crime Nexus in Central Asia: State Weakness, Organized Crime, and Corruption in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan* (Washington DC, The USA: Silk Road Paper, 2006), 26-27.

[704] Rouben Azizian, "Countering Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia," *Connections* 5, no. 4 (2006): 93–106, 95.

[705] Mariya Omelicheva and Lawrance Markowitz, "Covid-19 in Central Asia: (De-Securitization of a Health Crisis?," *Problems of Post-Communism* 69, no. 1 (2021): 92–102, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2021.2009349, 423.

> building of the regional khokimiyat was seized… [it was] an attempt to overthrow the constitutional power."[706]

The Mirziyoyev administration, while emphasizing soft power in political endeavors, also prioritized hard power in the militaristic aspect by bolstering well-trained armed forces since 2016.[707] The regime endeavored to foster a sense of national pride and prepare individuals for state service through a rhetoric that aligns military service with patriotism.[708] This effort includes the establishment of *Jasorat Maktablari* (Courage Schools) in Fergana Valley *mahallas* to train youth, further emphasizing the importance of defense and national duty.[709] In February 2024, Mirziyoyev went to the Fergana Valley, where he visited the military units located in the Eastern Military District, along with the *Jasorat Maktablari*.[710] He conveyed the following message for the students: "To love the Motherland is the best of qualities. We must educate the youth in this spirit... to contribute to upbringing them in the spirit of national pride, devotion to the Motherland."[711]

In short, as is clearly seen in two different presidential terms in Uzbekistan military decisions and policies were also influenced by the Fergana Valley and its geopolitics of terrorism, having a direct impact on border issues.

4.1.4. Border Problems

[706] Nartsiss Shukuralieva and Artur Lipiński, "Islamic Extremism and Terrorism in Central Asia: A Critical Analysis," *Central Asia and The Caucasus* 22, no. 1 (2021): 106–17, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37178/ca-c.21.1.10, 111.

[707] Daryo.uz, "Shavkat Mirziyoyev Leads Transformation of Uzbekistan's Armed Forces," Daryo.uz, January 3, 2024. Retrieved April 1, 2024 from https://daryo.uz/en/2024/01/03/shavkat-mirziyoyev-leads-transformation-of-uzbekistans-armed-forces.

[708] Ibid.

[709] Ibid.

[710] President.uz, "Shavkat Mirziyoyev: Military Personnel Should Be Example for All," Шавкат Мирзиёев - Ўзбекистон Республикаси Президенти. Retrieved April 1, 2024 from https://president.uz/en/1791.

[711] Ibid.

Beyond the aspects previously discussed, another unique feature of the Fergana Valley is its location at the border regions of three Central Asian countries. As elaborated in the Chapter Two, throughout history, particularly during the Soviet era, the borders of the Fergana Valley underwent constant delimitation. This has resulted in issues such as the presence of ethnic minorities residing outside the current borders, border disputes, excessively or loosely controlled border crossings, and networks facilitating drug trafficking. In the context of Fergana and terrorism, the main focus of this thesis, these problems have raised specific concerns. They have facilitated the crossing of terrorists across the borders and led to the stigmatization of ethnic minorities living on the border as terrorists. In simpler terms, being situated at the border has made the Fergana Valley a focal point of geopolitical concerns; consequently, securitized policies in the region have escalated in response to these concerns.

In this context, the people in the border regions have suffered the most from all the securitized policies and practices targeting the Fergana Valley. In the 1990s, Uzbekistan blamed Tajikistan for triggering Islamic extremism due to the Tajik Civil War and Kyrgyzstan for enabling radical organizations to gain a foothold in the Fergana region by implementing a moderate policy, resulting in the adaptation of several measures regarding the borders of the Fergana region.[712] As mentioned earlier, one such measure was Karimov's attempt to build a wall and dig ditches on the borders in 2009.[713] Before that, for the purpose of border security, the government laid mines on the borders of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in the Fergana Valley after the 1999 Batken Events.[714] Dozens of Kyrgyz and Tajik citizens lost their lives by stepping on these mines.[715] Later, the mines started to be cleared by the Mirziyoyev administration.[716]

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[712] Rouben Azizian, "Countering Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia," *Connections* 5, no. 4 (2006): 93–106, 93.

[713] Tom Everett-Heath, "Instability and Identity in a Post-Soviet World: Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan," in *Central Asia: Aspects of Transition*, ed. Tom Everett-Heath (London, The UK: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 181–204, 191-192.

[714] Erica Marat, *The State-Crime Nexus in Central Asia: State Weakness, Organized Crime, and Corruption in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan* (Washington DC, The USA: Silk Road Paper, 2006), 49.

[715] Ibid.

Moreover, ethnic minorities living on the border have been subjected to many accusations of radicalism and marginalization by the Uzbek leadership. The Tashkent administration attributes radicalism in the country to the Tajik minority in Fergana. In 2000, during a military operation aimed at removing IMU forces from the Fergana region, numerous Tajik families were forcibly displaced to other regions, with their homes being demolished by the Uzbek air force.[717] Karimov displayed a similar discriminatory attitude towards the Uzbek diaspora residing in the Fergana enclaves. For instance, following the Osh events of 2010, as detailed in Chapter Two, Karimov neither permitted the return of Uzbeks living in Kyrgyzstan nor advocated for the rights of the diaspora.[718] Furthermore, by branding these Uzbeks as radical Islamists, he unilaterally sealed the Kyrgyz borders in the Fergana Valley and isolated the diaspora,[719] asserting that they were not his citizens and should seek assistance from Bishkek rather than Tashkent.[720] More interestingly, Uzbekistan criticized the leadership of Kyrgyzstan, which had attempted to prevent the conflict and aid the Uzbek minority during the 2010 Osh Events, accusing them of nurturing radicals along the Uzbek border, particularly in Jalal-Abad and Osh.[721] However, during the Mirziyoyev period, there was no such ethnicity-religion association or policy towards the Fergana Valley with such a mentality; instead, he pursued a reformist policy, exemplified by the initiative of clearing mines along the border.

4.2. Tajikistan

[716] Fatma Aslı Kelkitli, "Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy Under the Leadership of Mirziyoyev: Struggle to Sustain Autonomy," *MUTAD* 4, no. 1 (2022): 25–43, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.16985mtad.1087202, 36.

[717] Mariya Y. Omelicheva, "The Ethnic Dimension of Religious Extremism and Terrorism in Central Asia," *International Political Science Review* 31, no. 2 (March 2010): 167–86, https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512110364738, 178.

[718] Jacob Zenn and Kathleen Kuehnast, "Preventing Violent Extremism in Kyrgyzstan," *USİP Special Report 355*, (2014), 10.

[719] Ibid.

[720] Nancy Lubin and Barnett R. Rubin, *Calming the Ferghana Valley: Development and Dialogue in the Heart of Central Asia* (New York, The USA: Century Foundation Press, 1999), 105.

[721] Ibid, 101.

After the Karimov regime of Uzbekistan, Tajik President Emomali Rahmon has been the leader who considers radical Islam and the Fergana Valley axis as the most significant threats, taking most robust measures against them. These measures include legal, political, military, and border problem strategies aimed at combating radical Islam and terrorism targeting the Fergana Valley either directly or indirectly.

4.2.1. Legal Framework

One measure that indirectly impacted the Fergana Valley was the adoption of a secular constitution, akin to Uzbekistan's, alongside the implementation of anti-terrorism and anti-extremism laws. While threats in Tajikistan were not solely confined to the Fergana Valley, with Tajikistan having the longest border with Afghanistan, it is evident that the legal measures enacted had a significant influence on the region. Tajikistan, amidst a civil war between Islamists and the secular state, adopted its first constitution in 1994. Subsequently, the constitution was amended twice, in 1999 and 2003, following the civil war and the 9/11 attacks, respectively.[722] These amendments have progressively expanded the legal framework for combating extremism.[723]

Especially following 9/11, Tajikistan declared itself one of the staunchest supporters of the international war on terrorism. However, due to its lack of capacity to promulgate and enforce comprehensive anti-extremism and anti-terrorism legislation, it opted to legitimize several harsh policies with broad definitions in its constitution.[724] For instance, similarly to Uzbekistan's, Tajikistan's Criminal Code, Article 179, defines terrorism in a vague manner:

> "Terrorism, that is committing an explosion, arson, firing with firearms or other actions, which create the danger of destroy people, causing a substantial financial damage or coming other socially dangerous consequences, if these actions committed with the goal of violating public security, frightening the population or influencing the decision-making of the power organs, as well as

[722] WIPO.Lex, "Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan, Tajikistan," Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan, Tajikistan, WIPO Lex. Retrieved April 4, 2024 from https://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/legislation/details/10268#.

[723] Ibid.

[724] Mariya Omelicheva, *Counterterrorism Policies in Central Asia* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 58.

threat of committing the mentioned actions with the same goals are punishable by imprisonment for a period of 5 to 10 years."[725]

This definition may lead to the characterization of any event as an act of terrorism in region where the threat of terrorism, like the Fergana Valley, is prevalent, and may legitimize the adoption of broad measures against it.[726] Consequently, such regions could be susceptible to geopolitical spatialization and the implementation of such laws.

Acting upon this article, in 2006, the Supreme Court of Tajikistan legally banned ten organizations, more than half of which were based in the Fergana Valley, on charges of Islamic extremism and terrorism while also restricting their activities in the region.[727] Moreover, the anti-terrorism legislation has consistently evolved to align with shifting security concerns and threat assessments.[728] The foundational "Anti-terrorism Law" within the Constitution has undergone five revisions- in 2005, 2007, 2008, 2012, and 2015- while recent updates have also been made to other laws addressing extremism.[729] In 2016, the National Counter-terrorism Strategy for the period 2016-2020 was adopted, followed by the adoption of the National Counter-terrorism Strategy for the period 2021-2025 in 2020.[730] In 2018, when the Tajik Prosecutor-General released the updated list of prohibited organizations, it became evident that several foreign-based entities, like ETIM, which had direct or indirect ties to Fergana, were also included the list released before.[731] Additionally, in 2019, the 2003 "Law on Countering Extremism" expanded to encompass measures targeting potential threats in specific border regions, notably the Fergana-Uzbekistan border and the border with Afghanistan, rather than focusing solely on concrete threats.[732] This

[725] Criminal Code of Republic of Tajikistan, 1998. Retrieved Mar 7, 2024 from https://www.warnathgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Tajikistan-Criminal-Code.pdf, 35

[726] Stuart Horsman, "Themes in Official Discourses on Terrorism in Central Asia," *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (2005): 199–213, 201.

[727] Tribedi Chituia, "Tajikistan: An Evaluation of Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism Policies Since Independence," *Conflict Studies Quarterly Issue*, no. 39 (April 2022): 37–51, https://doi.org/10.24193/csq.39.3, 42.

[728] Ibid, 44.

[729] Ibid

[730] Ibid, 47.

[731] Ibid, 43.

expansion also aimed to restrict institutions and activities that provide financial support to radical organizations and restrain the activities of radical organizations.[733]

It can be suggested that these laws indirectly contribute to further marginalization and spatial segregation of regions like the Fergana Valley.

4.2.2. Political Measures

Politically, Tajikistan possesses a *sui generis* characteristic within Central Asia. Until 2015, it stood as the first and only country in the post-Soviet space to incorporate an Islamist party into its political structure. The IRPT was integrated into Tajikistan's political landscape when the UTO, which had previously opposed the state during the civil war, was recognized as a legal entity in a meeting convened under the mediation of the UN. Despite containing Islamic elements, the party has consistently maintained a secular program. However, both the party's founders and its supporters were primarily from the Fergana Valley. Despite its secular program, it was often equated with extremism.[734] This perception intensified, particularly after 2010, as Rahmon's government intensified efforts to suppress and discredit the Islamist opposition. Consequently, the party was associated with terrorism and eventually legally banned. After 2015, the label of "terrorist" was directly wielded as a tool of repression against the opposition.[735] Furthermore, he uttered his famous phrase "we came in blood, we will leave in blood" to intimidate the Islamic opposition.[736]

Numerous Fergana-based non-violent radical groups like Hizb-ut Tahrir, civil society organizations, and local residents faced persecution, labeled as terrorists, alongside the

[732] Ibid.
[733] Ibid.

[734] Sébastien Peyrouse, "Islam in Central Asia: National Specificities and Postsoviet Globalisation," *Religion, State and Society* 35, no. 3 (September 2007): 245–60, https://doi.org/10.1080/09637490701458676, 256.

[735] Ibid.

[736] Erica Marat, *The State-Crime Nexus in Central Asia: State Weakness, Organized Crime, and Corruption in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan* (Washington DC, The USA: Silk Road Paper, 2006), 111.

IRTP. As mentioned in Chapter Two, organizations such as Hizb-ut Tahrir, and Ba'yat have been perceived as a threat in Central Asia, particularly in the Fergana Valley of Tajikistan, where they are active. However, they do not espouse perspectives or programs that can be interpreted as terrorist actions.[737] Despite the absence of any proven terrorist acts directly attributed to them, Hizb-ut Tahrir, as an essential component of Islamic opposition in the region, has been banned.[738] The legal grounds for doing so are the unclear definition of terrorism in the aforestated criminal codes of the countries.[739] In other words, like Uzbekistan, Tajikistan exhibits a political system and legal structure in which politics is built upon and is characterized by the marginalization of Islamic opposition. Consequently, the opposition, particularly the Islamist faction, is targeted for discreditation and elimination.

Moreover, in its post-Soviet process of nation-state building, Tajikistan, like Uzbekistan, has institutionalized "traditional state-sponsored religion" by establishing the Muftiate, thereby defining religious boundaries. In other words, mufti offices in Tajikistan have become integral to socio-political engineering.[740] In this country, where both political and radical Islam are perceived as threats, the Muftiate, in an effort to establish a secular society, addresses issues such as the ideal clothing form of modern Tajik men and women and the practice of Islam in alignment with Tajik culture.[741] Furthermore, Tajik mufti offices often emphasize that adhering to moderate Islam and avoiding Salafi Islam is the most significant act of patriotism.[742] Thus, they aimed at diminishing the influence of "foreign" radical movements from the Fergana Valley. Similar to Uzbekistan, Tajikistan has emphasized that these radical

[737] Helen Keller and Maya Sigron, "State Security v Freedom of Expression: Legitimate Fight against Terrorism or Suppression of Political Opposition?," *Human Rights Law Review* 10, no. 1 (2010): 151–68, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1093/hrlr/ngp041, 159.

[738] Ibid, 160.

[739] Stuart Horsman, "Themes in Official Discourses on Terrorism in Central Asia," *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (2005): 199–213, 202.

[740] Edward Lemon and Helene Thibault, "Counter-Extremism, Power and Authoritarian Governance in Tajikistan," *Central Asian Survey* 37, no. 1 (2017): 137–59, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2017.1336155, 141.

[741] Ibid, 142.

[742] Ibid.

organizations (Hizb-ut Tahrir, Islamic State of Khorasan and Ba'yat to be particular) in the Valley are foreign to the local culture. Tajik President Emomali Rahmon warned women to resist alienation and to avoid clothing that is "dangerous and alien to our traditions," such as turban and burqa.[743] In 2010, Rahmon derogatorily likened women wearing headscarves to monkeys; subsequently, in 2015, he designated the Khujand city of the Fergana Valley as a testing ground and implemented measures targeting the perceived "threat of headscarves and beards."[744] The local government of Khujand and Osh in the Fergana Valley organized specific courses for women on how to dress.[745]

In the specific case of Tajikistan, perceiving radicalism and terrorism as threats emanating from the Fergana Valley were firstly acknowledged in 2006 by Husniddin Sharipov, the former interior minister: "...Proponents of these movements have already been recorded in the north of the country [in] Ferghana..."[746] Additionally, in Rahmon's speech in February 2024, it is understood that the threat of foreign ideology coming from Fergana still holds a significant place in political discourse:

> "…The religion of Islam has recognized multilingualism, diversity of thought and the existence of different cultures of peoples and nations. For example, in the Holy Quran this topic is clearly stated in the 13th verse of Surah Hujurat: '*O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may get to know one another....*' In other words, it is the will of the Lord that people should be in the form of nations and tribes and differ from each other by nationality, customs, language and culture, their own clothing and other elements. Otherwise, it will remain unknown to which people, tribe and nationality people belong. Alienism in clothing, that is, wearing foreign clothes with false names and hijab, is another important problem in our society; especially in the southern, and Fergana regions in our country…"[747]

[743]Ibid, 142.

[744] Ibid, 143.

[745] Ibid, 144.

[746] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 355.

[747] Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan to Ukraine, "Speech by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Leader of the Nation, His Excellency Emomali Rahmon at a Meeting with Activists of Society and Religious Workers of the Country," Speech by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Leader of the Nation, His Excellency Emomali Rahmon at a meeting with activists of society and

Rahmon utilized performative discourse by citing the Qur'an, portraying the threat posed by specific territories and foreign ideologies as interlinked phenomena. Nonetheless, cultural policies and discourses concerning the Fergana Valley extend beyond these aspects. In 2010, within the Tajik region of the Fergana Valley, specifically at the Panjshanbe market in Khujand, local law enforcement shut down several bookstores that were accused of distributing works by foreign Islamic writers.[748] Additionally, prior to 2011, more than 5,000 individuals were detained in the Sughd region under suspicion of affiliation with Hizb-ut Tahrir; however, it is questionable whether this group actually has such a large membership in Tajikistan.[749] Civilians were apprehended due to their attire and attendance at mosques.[750] In 2011, Tajikistan banned education in religious institutions not approved by the state and prohibited anyone under the age of 18 from participating in religious activities.[751] The Fergana Valley's population experienced the most significant impact from this legislation as related arrests and social pressure have increased.[752]

As a result, it can be inferred that the perception of extremism and terrorism within the country is directly associated with the Islamist opposition. This perception is securitized and employed as a tool of political pressure especially in the Fergana Valley. In essence, the political measures enacted in Tajikistan are fueled by the

religious workers of the country | EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN TO UKRAINE, March 11, 2024. Retrieved Mar 29, 2024 from https://mfa.tj/en/kiev/view/14724/speech-by-the-president-of-the-republic-of-tajikistan-leader-of-the-nation-his-excellency-emomali-rahmon-at-a-meeting-with-activists-of-society-and-religious-workers-of-the-country

[748] Edward Lemon and Helene Thibault, "Counter-Extremism, Power and Authoritarian Governance in Tajikistan," *Central Asian Survey* 37, no. 1 (2017): 137–59, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2017.1336155, 146.

[749] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 358.

[750] Ibid, 359.

[751] Rebekah Tromble, "From Nomadic Traditionalists to Sedentary Scripturalists?," *Problems of Post-Communism* 64, no. 6 (October 19, 2016): 356–69, https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2016.1236666, 365.

[752] Ibid.

perceived threat emanating from the Fergana Valley. Consequently, like a vicious circle, they influence this region and contribute to its spatialization.

4.2.3. Military Policies

Tajikistan also established its own Armed Forces in 1993, but due to the civil war, they have been managed with Russian funds and equipment.[753] Although not as institutionalized and well-equipped as Uzbekistan, it has been invested in and prioritized by Rahmon, himself a commander of the armed forces during the Soviet era. The prioritization of the military policies enabled the Tajik state to engage in a more institutionalized fight against the UTO forces during the civil war. To dismantle the Islamic opposition, the Tajik government orchestrated armed forces to raid the Sughd and Khujand regions of the Fergana Valley in May 1996.[754] In April 1997, armed forces were deployed to suppress a civilian uprising against Emomali Rahmon in Khujand Prison by labeling the civilians as "Islamists."[755] Following the entry of Islamists into politics in 1997, the significance attributed to military policies relatively diminished until 2001, when Tajikistan shifted its focus towards the country's recovery after the civil war. After 2001, the Tajik military underwent reorganization, receiving increased funding, particularly from the US and Russia. More recently, in response to the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the system has evolved to conduct exercises directly from border regions and recruit young individuals in critical areas like the Fergana-Rasht valleys by aiming to prevent them from joining radical organizations.[756]

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[753] Roger McDermot. "The Army of Tajikistan: Ten Years of Independence." 2003. Retrieved Mar 8, 2024 from https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/7189-analytical-articles-caci-analyst-2003-3-12-art-7189.html?tmpl=component&print=1

[754] Nancy Lubin and Barnett R. Rubin, *Calming the Ferghana Valley: Development and Dialogue in the Heart of Central Asia* (New York, The USA: Century Foundation Press, 1999), 114.

[755] The Khujand Prison Riots in 1996, which were sparked by the murder of a prominent tribal leader and businessman, Akhmajon Ashurov, in the Khujand region of Fergana by the Rahmon government, resulted in prison sentences for tribal members who participated in the riots. The rebellion, rooted in tribal grievances, was labeled as Islamist by the authorities to legitimize their harsh policies during the civil war. Ibid.

[756] Emma Collet. "Recruitment in the Tajik army: a headache for the authorities and hell for the recruits." 2023. Retrieved Mar 8, 2024 from https://novastan.org/en/tajikistan/recruitment-in-the-tajik-army-a-headache-for-the-authorities-and-hell-for-the-recruits/

4.2.4. Border Problems

The Fergana Valley's location at the borders of three surrounding countries has significantly influenced the spatial dynamics of the region. Much like in Uzbekistan, in Tajikistan, policy-making has prioritized the border regions of the Fergana Valley. This is attributed to factors such as permeable borders, drug trafficking, the presence of ethnic minorities along the border, and unresolved border disputes.

Firstly, ethnic minorities residing in enclaves within the Valley were marginalized and often linked with radical Islam. In other words, Tajikistan targeted ethnic minorities by invoking the fear of Islamic extremism. For instance, by labeling Hizb-ut Tahrir as an "Uzbek movement," authorities in Dushanbe justified their mistreatment of Uzbek minorities residing in the Fergana Valley.[757] Rahmon's speech to the clergy in February 2024 emphasized a similar ethnicity-extremism axis and expressed concern about radical Uzbeks living in various districts of Fergana:

> "...The imam of the mosque in Shodi village of Dzhabbor Rasulov district regularly advocated and agitated the ideas of the 'Islamic State' terrorist organization among praying people...Moreover, the chief khatibs of the mosques of Bobojon Gafurov and Guliston (one person each) districts, Khujand (two persons) and Kanibadam (six persons) cities joined the 'Muslim Brotherhood' extremist and terrorist organization while studying in foreign religious educational establishments and after returning to our country, regularly spread their extremist views to the public...Even one of the imam-khatibs of Kanibadam mosque, while serving his sentence in prison in Khujand city, mercilessly, brutally beheaded the head of the correctional institution and tried to escape from the prison. We are aware of the selfish goals of the Tajik nation enemies and are taking all necessary measures to prevent them. These actions are being implemented with the aim to demolish the Tajik people and the Tajik state..."[758]

[757] Edward Lemon and Helene Thibault, "Counter-Extremism, Power and Authoritarian Governance in Tajikistan," *Central Asian Survey* 37, no. 1 (2017): 137–59, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/02634937.2017.1336155, 146.

[758] Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan to Ukraine, "Speech by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Leader of the Nation, His Excellency Emomali Rahmon at a Meeting with Activists of Society and Religious Workers of the Country," Speech by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, Leader of the Nation, His Excellency Emomali Rahmon at a meeting with activists of society and religious workers of the country | EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN TO UKRAINE, March 11, 2024. Retrieved Mar 29, 2024 from https://mfa.tj/en/kiev/view/14724/speech-by-the-

This official statement characterizes the Uzbeks living in the Fergana Valley as enemies of the Tajik nation, explaining the treatment of the region and its resident ethnicities.

Apart from the axis of ethnic origins and radicalism, there have been persistent border problems since independence, as detailed in the Chapter Two. These issues lead to regular ethnic conflicts, excessive or loose border controls and drug trafficking, all of which facilitate the crossing of terrorists. A similar situation arose during the Batken Events, where IMU members exploited unresolved border problems to cross into Kyrgyzstan, triggering a large-scale political crisis.

In essence, unresolved border problems consistently exacerbate politicians' concerns in the region regarding terrorism and Islamic extremism. A recent instance illustrating this dynamic is the ongoing political negotiation concerning the Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan border in the Fergana Valley, which has witnessed a significant amount of conflict in last years. Specifically, Kyrgyzstan has recently expressed concerns regarding the infiltration of terrorists from Tajikistan into its borders, a claim that the Tajik government has refuted.[759] Nonetheless, it can be argued that this situation is currently contributing to the spatialization of the Fergana Valley and its borders within the context of radical Islam.

Curiously, politicians expressing concerns about border security, sovereignty, and the potential for the spread of Islamic extremism across these borders seem hesitant to pursue effective measures beyond relying solely on securitized policies. The Central Asian region, particularly the Fergana Valley areas of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, is frequently examined through the lens of the state-crime nexus.[760] Specifically, the Khujand, Sughd, Osh, and Batken regions within the Fergana Valley are heavily

president-of-the-republic-of-tajikistan-leader-of-the-nation-his-excellency-emomali-rahmon-at-a-meeting-with-activists-of-society-and-religious-workers-of-the-country

[759] Nodirbek Soliev and Raffaello Pantucci, "Central Asia," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 15, no. 1 (2023): 82–91, 83-84.

[760] Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, *Central Asia Facing ISAF Withdrawal from Afghanistan*, 2013, 45–68, 55.

utilized for the illegal trafficking of drugs.[761] These regions serve as critical passages for the trade route of drug trafficking originating from Afghanistan and destined for Russia and Europe.[762]

The significance of the border regions of Tajik Fergana lies in the fact that drugs constitute a significant source of income for radical Islamist organizations, as well as for certain political elites and clans in both countries. Until the end of the Cold War, radical Islamist organizations received funding from the US to combat the Soviets. Following the SU's dissolution, these groups turned to illicit revenue sources for financial support.[763] After 1991, radical fractions in the Fergana Valley also began to engage in drug trafficking as a primary activity.[764] Notably, the IMU has taken control of a significant portion of the narcotics trade along the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border and the Kyrgyzstan border of the Fergana Valley.[765] The primary reason for the Batken Events in 1999 was undoubtedly the IMU's desire to smoothly smuggle drugs across these borders.[766] Consequently, drug trafficking raised concerns about border security and its potential association with the Islamic extremist threat in the regional states.[767] However, a critical issue arose as political elites and influential clans also held sway over a substantial portion of the same economic activity within the region. For

[761] Erica Marat, *The State-Crime Nexus in Central Asia: State Weakness, Organized Crime, and Corruption in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan* (Washington DC, The USA: Silk Road Paper, 2006), 42.

[762] Dauren Aben, "Regional Security in Central Asia: Addressing Existing and Potential Threats and Challenges," *Eurasian Research Journal* 1, no. 1 (2019): 51–65, 54-55.

[763] Steven Hutchinson and Pat O'malley, "A Crime–Terror Nexus? Thinking on Some of the Links between Terrorism and Criminality1," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no. 12 (November 20, 2007): 1095–1107, https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100701670870, 1095.

[764] Mariya Y Omelicheva and Lawrence P Markowitz, "Rethinking Intersections of Crime and Terrorism: Insights from Political Economies of Violence," *International Studies Review* 23, no. 4 (June 10, 2021): 1541–65, https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viab025, 1542.

[765] Svante E. Cornell, "Narcotics, Radicalism, and Armed Conflict in Central Asia: The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 17, no. 4 (December 2005): 577–97, https://doi.org/10.1080/095465591009395, 587.

[766] Lawrance Markowitz and Mariya Omelicheva, "İllicit Economies and Political Violence in Central Asia," in *The Oxford Handbook of Politics in Muslim Societies*, ed. Melani Cammett and Pauline Jones (NYC, The USA: Oxford University Press, 2022), 411–28, 425.

[767] Svante E. Cornell, "Narcotics, Radicalism, and Armed Conflict in Central Asia: The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 17, no. 4 (December 2005): 577–97, https://doi.org/10.1080/095465591009395, 587.

instance, in Tajikistan, following the civil war, pivotal governmental positions were allocated to commanders who had overseen drug trafficking during the conflict, thereby centralizing complicity within political institutions.[768] Essentially, drug trafficking became ingrained within state structures themselves. President Emomali Rahmon further exacerbated this nexus between crime and the state by appointing these commanders to their positions.[769]

In summary, the Tajikistan government has prioritized the Fergana Valley, particularly its border regions, in its policymaking due to concerns regarding radical Islam. This has resulted in processes such as the marginalization of ethnic minorities in the region, especially those living in border areas. Interestingly, measures to combat drug trafficking, which serves as a financial lifeline for radical organizations, have been sidelined as they do not align with certain interests of the ruling elite.

4.3. Kyrgyzstan

One notices a distinct socio-cultural and political structure when comparing Kyrgyzstan to its neighboring countries of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Unlike Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan has not faced significant issues with radicalization and terrorism, aside from the Batken Events of 1999. Instead, Kyrgyzstan's primary political challenge stems from tribalism, which has led to three revolutions and frequent changes in presidential leadership since gaining independence. This focus on tribal dynamics has influenced Kyrgyzstan's relatively liberal approach to radical Islam compared to its neighbors. However, pressures from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, particularly due to their concerns about Islamic extremism in the Fergana Valley, have pushed Kyrgyzstan to reconsider its stance.

[768] Lawrance Markowitz and Mariya Omelicheva, "İllicit Economies and Political Violence in Central Asia," in *The Oxford Handbook of Politics in Muslim Societies*, ed. Melani Cammett and Pauline Jones (NYC, The USA: Oxford University Press, 2022), 411–28, 419.

[769] Ibid.

Another hurdle for Kyrgyzstan involves ethnic tensions, particularly evident in the Fergana Valley. Some politicians assert that ethnic conflicts, such as the events in Osh in 2010, are linked to radicalism. Moreover, Kyrgyzstan faces external pressure from China and its Central Asian neighbors regarding its handling of the Uyghur minorities in the Fergana Valley and its proximity to China's Xinjiang-Uyghur region. These political and cultural dynamics, along with external pressures, have shaped Kyrgyzstan's perspective on the Fergana Valley and the issue of terrorism in a unique manner.

4.3.1. Legal Framework

Kyrgyzstan's prioritization of religious extremism and terrorism is notably less pronounced compared to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, a distinction that is also evident in its legal framework. Under the Akayev regime, which initially failed to acknowledge the existence of such threats until the Batken Events of 1999, there was a deliberate policy of refraining from expanding the legal framework or increasing repression and punishments thereafter.[770] This stance was exemplified by Akayev himself when he clearly stated, "Only ideas should be use to defeat ideas, not repression."[771] Therefore, Article 226 of the Criminal Code, established under the 1993 Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, seems to give a clear and explicit definition of terrorism within the region:

> "Terrorism, that is, the perpetration of an explosion, arson, or any other action endangering the lives of people, causing sizable property damage, or entailing other socially dangerous consequences, if these actions have been committed for the purpose of violating public security, frightening the population..."[772]

However, the succeeding Bakiyev administration opted for harsher penalties, including longer prison terms and increased interrogations, replacing the previous

[770] Maria Omelicheva, "Combating Terrorism in Central Asia: Explaining Differences in States' Responses to Terror," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 3 (2007): 369–93, 383.

[771] Ibid.

[772] See The Criminal Code of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, "Article 226." 2015 https://antislaverylaw.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Kyrgyzstan-Criminal-Code.pdf, 69.

leniency in the legal system.[773] Moreover, it enacted more restrictive laws aimed at combating Islamic extremism. One key impetus for these changes was Bakiyev's desire to align Kyrgyzstan more closely with the discourse on the war on terror. Another crucial factor, perhaps the most significant, was China's insistence on implementing a stricter anti-terrorism policy and legal framework, particularly concerning the Uyghur minority in Fergana.[774] As a result, starting from 2005, there was a gradual tightening of these laws up until the policy of transition to softer approaches by Atambayev and the subsequent presidents.

During the Atamabayev period, the legal infrastructure implemented against radicalism primarily targeted the educational domain. Since then, a series of educational policy decisions have been undertaken to counter radical tendencies. This trajectory commenced with the introduction of "secular history of religions" courses into the curriculum between 2014 and 2020, a trend which persisted through Jeenbekov's tenure.[775] Under Japarov, akin to the approach seen in the Mirziyoyev regime in Uzbekistan, there remained a steadfast belief in the efficacy of education as a pivotal measure against radicalism. Remarkably, under Japarov's administration, concrete initiatives were implemented by leveraging the belief in education's capacity to combat radicalism. Bishkek, the capital city of Kyrgyzstan and schools situated in Osh within the Fergana region, were designated as pilot institutions for the implementation of several legal directives aimed at secularizing education.[776]

4.3.2. Political Measures

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[773] Stuart Horsman, "Themes in Official Discourses on Terrorism in Central Asia," *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (2005): 199–213, 201.
[774] Maria Omelicheva, "Combating Terrorism in Central Asia: Explaining Differences in States' Responses to Terror," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 3 (2007): 369–93, 383.

[775] Nurbek Bekmurzaev, "Kyrgyzstan: Religious History Course Hampered by Lackluster Materials and Teachers," Eurasianet, October 17, 2022. Retrieved April 27, 2024 from https://eurasianet.org/kyrgyzstan-religious-history-course-hampered-by-lackluster-materials-and-teachers.

[776] Ibid.

The political culture of Kyrgyzstan was notably distinct from that of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. While tribalism is a phenomenon in Central Asia, it was particularly prominent in Kyrgyzstan's political structure and the successive leadership changes it experienced. The prioritization of this phenomenon by the political elite resulted in other issues being perceived as minor threats that could be dealt with, consequently in the background of policy-making.[777] During the Akayev regime, a policy on extremism and terrorism, particularly in the Fergana Valley, was not frequently encountered. Apart from the military and legal measures taken following the Batken Events, there was not much emphasis on the securitization of radical Islam or spatialization towards the areas where such a threat existed during this period. Instead, tribalism was prioritized in the political framework of the regime.

However, these clan dynamics have, at times, intersected with radical Islam. This was particularly noticeable during the Bakiyev regime. For instance, the ethnic tensions between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks that erupted in the Fergana Valley cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad in 2010 mobilized specific clan dynamics. The power struggle between the government of Bakiyev's clan and opposing clans was fueled by ethnic conflict. Politically influential members of opposing clans labeled the Bakiyev administration as an enemy of Islam and Uzbeks in this escalating power struggle.[778] Consequently, the people of Kyrgyzstan found themselves embroiled in growing political chaos from south to north. Eventually, the Bakiyev regime was overthrown as a narrative emerged in which it was claimed that innocent Muslims were being mistreated by the regime, that countered with accusations that radical organizations were involved in the ethnic conflict.[779] While it is conceivable that radical organizations contributed to the conflict and subsequent political change in the country, conclusive evidence remains elusive. However, it is undeniable that the Bakiyev regime spatialized the Fergana Valley and

[777] Maria Omelicheva, "Combating Terrorism in Central Asia: Explaining Differences in States' Responses to Terror," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 3 (2007): 369–93, 382.

[778] Jacob Zenn and Kathleen Kuehnast, "Preventing Violent Extremism in Kyrgyzstan," *USİP Special Report 355*, (2014), 3.

[779] Ibid, 4.

implemented harsh measures under the guise of combating radical Islam, disproportionately affecting Uzbeks who were labeled as "terrorists."

The subsequent presidents did not implement the policy of adopting a strong position against radicalism, a strategy directly linked to the Bakiyev regime and the events of that period, for evident reasons. The absence of a long-term presidency, therefore a lack of a decisive counter-terrorism policy, and the less-politicized structure of radical organizations were the reasons affecting Kyrgyzstan's political stance regarding terrorism especially during Atambayev, Jeenbekov, and Japarov's terms.

Up until 2010s, in Kyrgyzstan, there was no impetus to create a strictly secular state and integrate Islam within this framework, as observed in the cases of Uzbekistan or Tajikistan.[780] However, after Bakiyev, the political landscape underwent a shift with the establishment of the Islamic Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (IDP) and, more recently in the 2020s, the Noor party, which were discussed in the preceding chapter. While these two religious-based organizations were unable to attain official political party status due to the principle of secularism, they garnered significant support, particularly in the city of Osh in the Fergana Valley.[781]

As elaborated earlier, Atambayev and Japarov, the two presidents in office when these two religiously motivated organizations were established have maintained a liberal stance in domestic politics; however, in foreign policy, they have sought assistance from the international community to counter the political opposition they pose.[782] Jeenbekov, as mentioned earlier, has prioritized international cooperation directly related to this threat. Instead of taking a new step in domestic policy, he has merely continued the anti-extremism and anti-terrorism policies of the Atambayev era.

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[780] Erica Marat, *National Ideology and State- Building in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan* (Washington DC, The USA: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program , 2008), 85.

[781] Farangis Najibullah, "Kyrgyzstan's First 'Islamic' Party Sparks Controversy," RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, February 2, 2021. Retrieved Mar 23, 2024 from https://www.rferl.org/a/kyrgyzstan--first-islamic-party-arstanbek-controversy/31081978.html.

[782] Office of Religious Freedom The US Department of States, "2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Kyrgyzstan," Kyrgyzstan - United States Department of State, 2022. Retrieved Mar 23, 2024 from https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/kyrgyzstan/.

Jeenbekov emphasized, during his discussion with attendees of the session of the Committee of Secretaries of Security Councils of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) member states, the need for a comprehensive approach to counter-terrorism, by stating:

> "Effective counter-terrorism results can be achieved only collectively. This requires long-term cooperation in the political, military, financial, and ideological fields only in the international arena."[783]

While there were no significant domestic policy developments during this period, Jeenbekov, as previously mentioned, believed that the issue could only be resolved through international collective action. While there were no significant domestic policy developments during this period, Jeenbekov, as previously mentioned, believed that the issue could only be resolved through international collective action. In contrast to Jeenbekov's stance, Atambayev, Japarov, and Bakiyev developed domestic policies to tackle the threat of radicalism originating in the Fergana Valley.

Regarding terrorism, almost all Kyrgyz presidents have viewed terrorism as antithetical to Kyrgyz culture and have been cautious about politicizing it unless under external pressure. This caution stemmed from the belief held by many that terrorism would eventually lose momentum, disappear and no longer become a threat.[784] In fact, back in the day, the spokesperson of the Ministry of Interior, Joldoshbek Busurmankulov, responded to those advocating for the arrest and political pressure on radical Islamists as follows:

> "I do not think that we will live 20 years without any Hizb-ut Tahrir if we give them [members of Hizb-ut Tahrir] 30 or 40 years of imprisonment or arrest all of them. It will not happen. I think we may fight by alternative ways, different

[783] Kyrgyz National News Agency, "Jeenbekov: Effective Counter-Terrorism Results Can Be Achieved Only Collectively," Информационное Агентство Кабар, June 2019. Retrieved April 27, 2024 from https://en.kabar.kg/news/jeenbekov-effective-counter-terrorism-results-can-be-achieved-only-collectively/.

[784] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 327.

> methods. We should prove their destructiveness. We should fight for the hearts and minds of the people."[785]

One method employed has been to establish political control over religion and to increase the active functioning of the Muftiate institution as an extension of this policy, mirroring the approach in the other two countries. Kyrgyzstan government used the Muftiate as a force to counter the ideas spread by radical Islamists especially after the Batken Events in 1999. As it now encountered a direct threat, the Kyrgyz government started leveraging the Muftiate to foster a stronger cultural Kyrgyz identity, diverging from the moderate stance observed during the initial stages of independence. The Muftiate has dismissed many imams on the grounds that they were politically motivated.[786] The founder of the IDP, cited within the political framework, is purportedly an imam originating from the Fergana Valley.[787] Consequently, following the emergence of the IDP in the 2010s, the Atambayev regime categorized the founders and backers of radical Islamist groups, including the IDP, from the Fergana Valley, under the label of "foreign ideology."[788] With the growing influence of Islamic opposition, the Muftiate assumed greater significance. As a result, in 2014, Kyrgyzstan required the members of the clergy to take a qualification exam for fear that illiterate imams might spread radical ideas.[789] President Atambayev emphasized the danger of imported Islam as follows:

> "In a situation where, following a religion, we gradually lose our spiritual wealth, we will gradually cease to be a nation. ...If we, the Kyrgyz, are going to Arabize, Pakistanize [our traditions] or borrow any other alien traditions, speak their language, wear their clothes, then we will lose our roots and cease to exist as an ethnos."[790]

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[785] Maria Omelicheva, "Combating Terrorism in Central Asia: Explaining Differences in States' Responses to Terror," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 3 (2007): 369–93, 373-374.
[786] Eurasianet, "Kyrgyzstan Testing Clerics' Knowledge of Islam," Eurasianet, 2015. Retrieved Mar 11, 2024 from https://eurasianet.org/kyrgyzstan-testing-clerics-knowledge-of-islam

[787] Matthew Crosston, *Fostering Fundamentalism: Terrorism, Democracy and American Engagement in Central Asia* (London, The UK: Taylor and Francis, 2016), 66.

[788] Ibid.

[789] Eurasianet, "Kyrgyzstan Testing Clerics' Knowledge of Islam," Eurasianet, 2015. Retrieved Mar 11, 2024 from https://eurasianet.org/kyrgyzstan-testing-clerics-knowledge-of-islam

It has also been observed that during periods of heightened instability, the mufti's office, and other local authorities in the Fergana Valley issued repeated public warnings regarding the importance of exercising caution towards radical and foreign ideas.[791] The surge in securitized strategies post-2010s, highlighting the foreign origins of radical Islamic ideology, was not solely enacted by the Muftiate and Kyrgyz presidents. Even Kyrgyzstan's religious figure, the "Qazi" (Islamic judges appointed by the Muftiate), has participated in these discussions, cautioning Kyrgyz society about the risks of alienation and radicalization.[792] In his address to the people of the region, the Qazi of Osh *qaziyat* (district), in the Fergana Valley, emphasized the importance of not politicizing religion, stating that "there is no need for such factions; Islam itself is a faction that does not require a counterpart" for any Islamic or foreign-based organized group, particularly radical Islamist organizations originating from Fergana like IDP, Tablighi Jamaat, and Hizb-ut Tahrir.[793]

Additionally, in Kyrgyzstan, securitized policies have been also applied to the civil society under the label of combating terrorism. Human rights activists and ordinary Muslims who wore modest attire were accused of being members of Hizb-ut Tahrir, and Tablighi Jamaat and subjected to trials.[794] They were all prosecuted under the name of "evil-doers."[795] Those who were put on trial were also subjected to harassment, torture, and other forms of ill-treatment.[796] For instance, Ravshan

[790] Nartsiss Shukuralieva and Artur Lipiński, "Islamic Extremism and Terrorism in Central Asia: A Critical Analysis," *Central Asia and The Caucasus* 22, no. 1 (2021): 106–17, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37178/ca-c.21.1.10, 116.

[791] Petra Steinberger, "Fundamentalism in Central Asia: Reasons, Reality and Prospects," in *Central Asia: Aspects of Transition*, ed. Tom Everett-Heath (London, The UK: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 219–43, 226.

[792] The Bulan Institute, *Education of Citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic in Foreign Islamic Educational Institutions Abroad: A Situational Anaylsis. Report by the Bulan Institute for Peace Innovations in Cooperation with the State Commission for Religious Affairs under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic*, December 2018. Retrieved April 12, 2024 from https://bulaninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Report_Religious-Education-Abroad.pdf, 6.

[793] Graham Fuller, *Central Asia: The New Geopolitics* (Santa Monica, The US: Rand, 1992), 33-34.

[794] Mariya Omelicheva, *Counterterrorism Policies in Central Asia* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 79.

[795] Ibid, 56.

Gapirov, the director of the Justice and Truth Human Rights Advocacy Center in the southern town of Osh, was imprisoned and tortured by the Bakiyev government.[797] Although he was simply a human rights activist contending that the individuals labeled as "radicals" were innocent, ordinary Muslims from Osh, he was targeted for acting as a lawyer for alleged radicals in the region and for supporting Hizb-ut Tahrir.[798] According to the Freedom of Democracy and Human Rights Index, Kyrgyzstan, although known for its relatively moderate and liberal policies, was found to enjoy all kinds of freedoms for relatives of the political elite; while the people and civil society organizations suffered repression, and the country was ranked in the semi-free category.[799] In Kyrgyzstan, as also seen in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, many non-governmental organizations in the Fergana Valley were accused of "spreading extremist ideas" and shut down.[800] Besides, it is estimated that many people have been abducted from the Valley by secret security forces; the unexplained disappearances of many mullahs, clerics, and imams, as well as academics, journalists, human rights activists, and local officials are notable.[801]

To summarize, in Kyrgyzstan, reasons such as tribalism and the liberal stance of the presidents have contributed to the absence of a widespread terrorism discourse.[802] Nonetheless, one could argue that there has been a consistent spatial mindset regarding the Fergana Valley in Kyrgyzstan too. Policymakers have repeatedly acknowledged

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[796] Nartsiss Shukuralieva and Artur Lipiński, "Islamic Extremism and Terrorism in Central Asia: A Critical Analysis," *Central Asia and The Caucasus* 22, no. 1 (2021): 106–17, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37178/ca-c.21.1.10, 110.

[797] David Trilling, "Kyrgyzstan's Islamist Blowback," The Nation, April 22, 2010. Retrieved April 27, 2024 from https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/kyrgyzstans-islamist-blowback/.
[798] Ibid.

[799] Saima Kayani, "Human Security and Central Asian States," *Policy Perspectives* 15, no. 1 (2018): 95–112, 101.

[800] Nodirbek Soliev, "Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses," *International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research* 11, no. 1 (2019): 65–70, 69.

[801] Nartsiss Shukuralieva and Artur Lipiński, "Islamic Extremism and Terrorism in Central Asia: A Critical Analysis," *Central Asia and The Caucasus* 22, no. 1 (2021): 106–17, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37178/ca-c.21.1.10, 110.

[802] Maria Omelicheva, "Combating Terrorism in Central Asia: Explaining Differences in States' Responses to Terror," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 3 (2007): 369–93, 382.

the perceived threat emanating from that region in policy formulation, although to a lesser degree compared to the other two countries.

4.3.3. Military Policies

As mentioned, Kyrgyzstan has the most moderate approach to the "threat of Islamic terrorism" among the three countries surrounding the Fergana Valley. Kyrgyzstan lacks a united and robust army. Since gaining independence, the focus of reforms has predominantly been on political and economic aspects, with military considerations taking a backseat. It was only after the Batken Events that President Akayev recognized this deficiency and initiated efforts to strengthen the armed forces and local police.[803] However, following the ouster of Bakiyev, the military structure became fragmented.[804] Even after the ethnic unrest in Osh in 2010, it became evident that Kyrgyzstan struggled to respond to domestic crises with the same strategic planning as Uzbekistan. Kyrgyzstan, known for its modest political culture and limited motivation for military intervention, sought assistance from Russia under Otunbayeva when it found itself unable to manage the crisis in Osh.[805] The frequent changes in political leadership in Kyrgyzstan have resulted in the constant appointment of acquaintances to critical positions, contributing to the absence of a consistent military strategy. Especially after the Osh crisis, there was a realization that ethnic tensions could trigger religiously motivated chaos. Control in border regions was lacking, leading to attempts to strengthen local police rather than the military.[806]

During and after the Atambayev period, the budget allocated to the military force began to gradually decrease.[807] As a weak state, it was never able to deploy full-fledged

[803] Erica Marat, "Kyrgyzstan's Fragmented Police and Armed Forces," *The Journal of Power Institutions in Post-Soviet Societies*, no. Issue 11 (December 10, 2010), https://doi.org/10.4000/pipss.3803.

[804] Ibid.

[805] Ibid.

[806] Ibid.

[807] Francisco Olmos, "Kyrgyzstan's Path to Rearmament," – The Diplomat, August 12, 2023. Retrieved April 12, 2024 from https://thediplomat.com/2023/08/kyrgyzstans-path-to-rearmament/.

military units against religious movements and on the borders of the Fergana Valley.[808] Uzbekistan has generally borne this burden by heavily guarding its borders, while Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have relied on local police and Russian troops regarding the Fergana-terrorism nexus.[809] This situation persisted until the Japarov period in Kyrgyzstan.[810] However, in 2021, the border issues between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, along with conflicts in the border regions of Fergana and terrorist activities crossing the borders, prompted a policy of rearmament.[811] Put differently, policy-making within the military sphere has been influenced by developments in the Fergana Valley and the perceived threat of radical Islam.

4.3.4. Border Problems

Much like Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, the border regions of the Fergana Valley have emerged as hazardous areas in Kyrgyzstan. However, unlike the other two states, Kyrgyzstan is weaker, lacking the centralization seen in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and struggling to maintain its border security. This weakness stems from ongoing power struggles between clans, financial and military vulnerabilities, unresolved border disputes, and various other factors. These factors collectively contribute to the high permeability and challenges faced along Kyrgyzstan's borders. Ethnic conflicts, the presence of radical organizations, and drug trafficking have become intertwined issues in the border regions, exacerbating the threat of extremism. Consequently, the situation has necessitated spatialization and heightened security measures along the Fergana Valley borders.

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[808] Maria Omelicheva, "Combating Terrorism in Central Asia: Explaining Differences in States' Responses to Terror," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 3 (2007): 369–93, 382.

[809] Ibid.

[810] Francisco Olmos, "Kyrgyzstan's Path to Rearmament," – The Diplomat, August 12, 2023. Retrieved April 12, 2024 from https://thediplomat.com/2023/08/kyrgyzstans-path-to-rearmament/.

[811] Ibid.

Although Kyrgyz President Akayev stated, "If I don't have a real problem of religious extremism, why would I create an artificial one?"[812] after 1999, he described radical organizations as threats that must be eradicated and urgently dealt with.[813] Following the Batken Events, Kyrgyzstan adopted a more stringent approach and initiated air strikes on villages in the Fergana Valley, where the borders intersect, and radical organizations have established a presence.[814] While no additional occurrences resembling those in 1999 occurred, the Kyrgyz government remained watchful in response to the persistent risk of Islamic extremism in the Fergana Valley.[815] Since 1999, the Kyrgyz regime has authorized ID checks, screening of all types of communications, restrictions on movement, unhindered access to private homes and organizational premises, various checks and searches, and other measures aimed at combating terrorism in the border areas of the Fergana Valley.[816]

The measures to combat Islamic extremism, which have intensified under Bakiyev's leadership, have resulted in tightened border security in the Fergana Valley and increased cooperation with Uzbekistan. Uzbek secret services, with government authorization, began smuggling radical Islamists from the Kyrgyz part of Fergana across the borders of the valley.[817] On August 6, 2006, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan jointly conducted raids in cities within the Fergana Valley on both sides of the border, targeting radical Islamists who were then subjected to severe punishment.[818] Kyrgyzstan was particularly concerned about removing "radical Uzbeks," and during

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[812] Mariya Omelicheva, "Convergence of Counterterrorism Policies: A Case Study of Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 10 (2009): 893–908, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100903182518, 898.

[813] Akmalijon Abdullayev, "Securitizaiton Prospects of Illicit Drug Trafficking in Central Asia," in *Afganistan and Central Asia: NATO's Role in Regional Security since 9/11*, ed. Oktay Tanrısever (Washington DC, The USA: IOS Press, 2013), 59–71, 64.

[814] Mariya Omelicheva, *Counterterrorism Policies in Central Asia* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 56-57.

[815] Ibid, 70.

[816] Ibid, 52.

[817] Maria Omelicheva, "Combating Terrorism in Central Asia: Explaining Differences in States' Responses to Terror," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 3 (2007): 369–93, 382.

[818] Ibid.

the joint raid, deported Uzbek religious leaders, regardless of whether they were radicals or not.[819] The heightened policy focus on the Fergana Valley and the enhanced collaboration with Uzbekistan during Bakiyev's administration significantly impacted the Uzbek minority residing in Kyrgyzstan. An example of this occurred during the ethnic conflict between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in Nookat in the Fergana Valley in 2008, when Uzbeks were arrested by the Kyrgyz government under the pretext of radicalization and requested repatriation.[820] Followingly, in 2009, the Uzbek government took measures such as digging trenches and erecting walls along the borders of Fergana with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to prevent the infiltration of terrorists; however, this strategy not only restricted terrorists but also affected Uzbeks residing in enclaves within the other two countries, encompassing the elderly, women, and children, who were unable to cross the border.[821]

Kyrgyzstan is known to be both politically moderate and more moderately religious in its social structure, due to its nomadic culture, compared to Uzbeks and Tajiks.[822] However, such a perspective assigned to these ethnicities has led to minorities living in the enclave areas of the Fergana Valley being marginalized and seen as potential terrorists.[823] The rhetoric used by politicians acting out of fear of Islamic extremism, without considering the ethical implications, has gained a foothold among the population, and in enclave regions where ethnic conflicts are already ripe for eruption, the threat of Islamic extremism has become a trigger for each other. In a field study conducted in Osh, Kyrgyz accused bearded Kyrgyz of being "like Uzbeks" and complained to local authorities on the grounds that they might be terrorists.[824]

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[819] Ibid, 383.

[820] Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, Kamil Malikov, and Aloviddin Nazarov, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in *Ferghana Valley the Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr et al. (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 296–372, 348.

[821] Mariya Omelicheva, *Counterterrorism Policies in Central Asia* (London, The UK: Routledge, 2011), 52.

[822] Mariya Y. Omelicheva, "The Ethnic Dimension of Religious Extremism and Terrorism in Central Asia," *International Political Science Review* 31, no. 2 (March 2010): 167–86, https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512110364738, 175.

[823] Ibid.

Accordingly, for many years, people living on the Kyrgyz borders, especially those of Uzbek descent, have been under strict control and pressure by the authorities, have been treated with suspicion by the population, and have sometimes been arbitrarily arrested.[825] Kyrgyzstan expressed the desire to repatriate Uzbek refugees and the Uzbeks suspected to be radicals back to Uzbekistan.[826] However, the Uzbek government has refused to allow those people into Uzbekistan due to border security and fear of Islamic extremism, which has led to further marginalization of the population.[827] The Kyrgyz government asserted that extremist Uzbeks incited the 2010 ethnic conflict despite a lack of verifiable evidence; consequently, Uzbek minorities were subsequently perceived as adversaries by the government.[828] Kyrgyz officials expelled numerous Uzbeks to the Andijan border, accusing them of being Wahhabis.[829]

In addition to Uzbek minorities, Kyrgyzstan also views the Tajik border and Tajik people as security concerns, primarily because Kyrgyzstan lacks a direct border with Afghanistan; thus, the Tajik-Kyrgyz border is perceived as the only fertile ground for the propagation of Islamic radicalism threat coming from Afghanistan.[830] For this reason, Tajiks under Kyrgyz rule have long suffered serious social, political and

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[824] Rebekah Tromble, "From Nomadic Traditionalists to Sedentary Scripturalists?," *Problems of Post-Communism* 64, no. 6 (October 19, 2016): 356–69, https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2016.1236666, 357.

[825] Ibid, 365.

[826] Mariya Omelicheva, "Convergence of Counterterrorism Policies: A Case Study of Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 10 (2009): 893–908, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100903182518, 902.

[827] Rebekah Tromble, "From Nomadic Traditionalists to Sedentary Scripturalists?," *Problems of Post-Communism* 64, no. 6 (October 19, 2016): 356–69, https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2016.1236666, 366.

[828] Zhamgyrbek Bokoshov, "Impact of Afghanistan on the Security of Kyrgyzstan," in *Afghanistan and Central Asia: NATO's Role in Regional Security since 9/11* (Washington DC, The USA: IOS Press, 2013), 80–87, 84.

[829] Tom Everett-Heath, "Instability and Identity in a Post-Soviet World: Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan," in *Central Asia: Aspects of Transition*, ed. Tom Everett-Heath (London, The UK: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 181–204, 195.

[830] Zhamgyrbek Bokoshov, "Impact of Afghanistan on the Security of Kyrgyzstan," in *Afghanistan and Central Asia: NATO's Role in Regional Security since 9/11* (Washington DC, The USA: IOS Press, 2013), 80–87, 81.

economic victimization.[831] Recently, a crisis has arisen due to border conflicts between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, as mentioned in the second chapter. In such instances, the capacity to control national borders is compromised, and the involved parties accuse each other of permitting "terrorist mercenaries" to cross the border.[832] Today, the marginalization of ethnic groups and allegations of radicalism towards the minorities continue to endure, particularly during times of heightened anxiety triggered by adverse developments in border regions.

The phenomenon where Islamic radicalism gives rise to ethnic strife and exclusion has been called as *the Fergana Conundrum*.[833] The governments have utilized the threats of terrorism and extremism to spatialize the Fergana Valley, resulting in the perception of minorities residing in the region as a threat to the socio-political order.[834] This has inevitably led to political and ethical ramifications, fostering a sense of marginalization and division among the Valley's population.[835] For instance, Kyrgyz residents in Osh express reluctance to work alongside Uzbeks or live as neighbors due to perceiving them as dangerous.[836] These outcomes stem from the governmental spatialization of the region, exacerbating ethnic conflicts. However, the portrayal often attributes the trigger of these conflicts to radical Islamists rather than politically motivated policies, such as the preservation of authority and regime.

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[831] Mariya Y. Omelicheva, "The Ethnic Dimension of Religious Extremism and Terrorism in Central Asia," *International Political Science Review* 31, no. 2 (March 2010): 167–86, https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512110364738, 172.

[832] Nodirbek Soliev and Rafaello Pantucci, "Central Asia," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 15, no. 1 (2023): 82–91, 83-84.

[833] Muhammad Manzoor Elahi et al., "Soviet Practices Of (B)Ordering: Mapping Blur Borders And Identity Crisis In Post-Soviet Fergana Valley," *Journal of Positive School Psychology* 7, no. 3 (2023): 954–70, 955.

[834] Hélène Thibault, "Where Did All the Wahhabis Go? The Evolution of Threat in Central Asian Scholarship," *Europe-Asia Studies* 74, no. 2 (December 9, 2021): 288–309, https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2021.1999908, 300.

[835] Ibid, 303.

[836] Muhammad Manzoor Elahi et al., "Soviet Practices Of (B)Ordering: Mapping Blur Borders And Identity Crisis In Post-Soviet Fergana Valley," *Journal of Positive School Psychology* 7, no. 3 (2023): 954–70, 963-964.

Besides the problem of ethnic exclusion in the borders of Fergana, there is also a problem of drug-trafficking in the Fergana borders of Kyrgyzstan. While the connection between political elites and crime is not as prominent as in Tajikistan, the instability caused by frequent clan-driven revolutions has impacted state institutions and exacerbated drug trafficking problems in border regions.[837] Especially in the periods immediately before and after the revolutions, there were instances where elite factions within the highest levels of the state were directly implicated in drug trafficking activities.[838] Consequently, local authorities were unable to effectively address the drug trade, which served as a source of income for radical Islamists, primarily because political elites were involved in criminal activities.[839] Border guards, police, and local government officials became corrupted due to bribery.[840] The active involvement of state authorities in illegal economic activities has had a negative impact on border control, making border regions more vulnerable to potential terrorist threats.[841] This is the main reason for the oppression of people living in the border regions and the marginalization of certain ethnicities.[842] In other words, governments that disregarded the lack of active control at the borders in pursuit of their own interests -both economic and political- have implemented securitized policies, exploiting the "permeable borders" of the Fergana Valley and the "threat of Islamic extremism."

In summary, the three Central Asian governments have implemented heightened measures to counter the perceived threat of Islamic extremism originating from the Fergana Valley. They have securitized Islam, suppressed the local population and civil

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[837] Ibid, 420.

[838] Ibid, 421.

[839] Lawrence Markowitz and Mariya Omelicheva, "Understanding Organized Crime and Violence in Central Asia," *United States Institute of Peace (USİP) Special Report* 495 (2021), 18.

[840] Saima Kayani, "Human Security and Central Asian States," *Policy Perspectives* 15, no. 1 (2018): 95–112, 115.

[841] Lawrance Markowitz and Mariya Omelicheva, "İllicit Economies and Political Violence in Central Asia," in *The Oxford Handbook of Politics in Muslim Societies*, ed. Melani Cammett and Pauline Jones (NYC, The USA: Oxford University Press, 2022), 411–28, 417.

[842] Mariya Omelicheva, "Terrorism/Crime Nexus in Central Asia: Implications for Countering Violent Extremism & Terrorism," in *Countering Violent Extremism: Developing an Evidence-Base for Policy and Practice*, ed. Sara Zeiger and Anne Aly (Perth, Western Australia: Curtin University, 2015), 47–55, 47-48.

society in the Valley, and formulated domestic policies preemptively addressing the potential of Fergana's instability.[843] States have justified nearly every action taken and policy implemented in both domestic and foreign affairs as part of an ideological battle between secular, pro-stability governments and Islamists.[844] This has effectively spatialized the Fergana Valley as the epicenter of this threat in the region.[845]

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[843] Rouben Azizian, "Countering Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia," *Connections* 5, no. 4 (2006): 93–106, 95.

[844] Stuart Horsman, "Themes in Official Discourses on Terrorism in Central Asia," *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (2005): 199–213, 200.

[845] Petra Steinberger, "Fundamentalism in Central Asia: Reasons, Reality and Prospects," in *Central Asia: Aspects of Transition*, ed. Tom Everett-Heath (London, The UK: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 219–43, 237.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

After 9/11, the main enemy became the threat of Islamic extremism, and the phenomenon of terrorism started to be directly associated with this threat. Therefore, the geographies where Islam is practiced are perceived as prone to be anti-democratic, threatening Western values with such a perception of radical Islam. The geopolitics of the Fergana Valley, where radicalism is most active in Central Asia, has simultaneously changed. In another saying, as an extension of the "War on Terror," a geopolitical order also emerged and contributed to the spatialization of certain regions where radical Islam has taken root. The Fergana Valley has inevitably gained a prominent place in this geopolitical order due to its geographical proximity to Afghanistan (the main enemy of this order) as a safe haven for radical Islamist organizations and terrorism. This perception resulted in the spatialization of Fergana by policymakers from both the three Central Asian countries, namely Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, and the powerful states of the US, Russia, and China.

Within this scope, the thesis initially presented Critical Geopolitics as its theoretical framework in order to analyze the situation of the Fergana Valley. As detailed in the Introduction, Critical Geopolitics is an eclectic approach that critiques concepts and processes like geography, security, order, policy-making, and marginalization to uncover their inherently political meanings. Early in the thesis, these concepts were thoroughly explained. Subsequently, the thesis highlighted how these concepts operate within the specific context of the Fergana Valley and the issue of radical Islam.

The historical background of the Fergana Valley was provided to clarify the region's dynamics and to explain the conditions in which the Muslim population lived during the Tsarist and Soviet periods, highlighting the factors that led to the emergence of

radical Islam. Subsequently, the development of radical Islam in three Central Asian countries after their independence and the terrorist activities occurring in the Valley were explained. Additionally, the radical Islamist organizations active in the Fergana Valley and the ideological differences between them were identified. The region's history illuminated the conditions of marginalization experienced by the population and the unique characteristics of radical Islam in the area, clarifying why policymakers view this region as a threat and a source of instability.

The issue of radical Islam-induced instability in the Fergana Valley has attracted the attention of not only the three countries bordering the Valley but also three major global powers: the US, Russia, and China, all of whom have vested interests in the region. The connection between radical organizations in the Fergana Valley plays a crucial role in Russia's struggle with the Chechen separatist extremist movement and China's efforts to control the situation in the Xinjiang-Uyghur region, including dealing with ETIM. Furthermore, the Fergana Valley has become increasingly crucial for the US after 9/11 due to its proximity to Afghanistan and the presence of extremism, impacting regional stability. Given the Valley's significance in domestic and foreign policy-making for these three global powers and the Central Asian countries, the relations of the US, Russia, and China with the three Central Asian countries regarding the issue of radical Islam in the Fergana Valley were also explored in the thesis.

After discussing how the experiences of the US, Russia, and China with radical Islam and their cooperation with the countries surrounding Fergana provide a comprehensive understanding of the dominant ideological framework, it was necessary to examine how Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan address the issue of extremism within this framework. Thus, the thesis explained how these three Central Asian countries bordering the Fergana Valley have maintained the War on Terror order in the region. This involved looking at the legal justification of their repressive policies and framing extremism as a vital threat to state sovereignty and regime survival; the political measures taken based on the governments' mental maps positioning the Valley's geography as a threat, shaping their strategies and responses against terrorism; and the

militaristic framework established for the immediate eradication of radical Islam from Fergana, as well as the securitization of border controls.

After this brief summary of the thesis, building a bridge between the theoretical framework and the data presented throughout the thesis is essential. This will allow us to see how the policies made and the discourse used are interpreted through the lens of Critical Geopolitics. While the theoretical framework is integrated into the data provided by the thesis, a broad critical perspective is aimed to be presented. First, the role of external dynamics within this framework will be explained using concepts of Critical Geopolitics. Then, the domestic policies developed by the three Central Asian countries will be subjected to a concept-by-concept critical analysis in the same way.

Firstly, by subjecting the concepts of hegemony and order to critique, Critical Geopolitics helps us understand the background of the War on Terror order, which, as discussed in this thesis, was established by the West and subsequently integrated and reproduced worldwide. The hegemonic ideology, which defines the norms of a period and determines its policies, also shapes the geopolitical order of the time. In the context of the War on Terror, this ideology declared radical Islam as an enemy, leading to the redefinition of relevant regions as threats. Understanding the rising geopolitical importance of Central Asia after 2001 makes Critical Geopolitics an appropriate theoretical framework in this respect. The geopolitical significance of Central Asia in general, and the Fergana Valley in particular, with its proximity to Afghanistan and its ongoing threat of extremism since independence, has developed accordingly. This geopolitical significance is crucial for the US and its interests as well as for Russia and China in their efforts to combat the extremism as they are also integrated into such order.

Once the Fergana Valley's geopolitical importance in combating terrorism and extremism was established collectively, the region, already seen as a vital threat to stability for the three Central Asian countries bordering the valley, gained greater significance also in domestic politics after 2001. Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan seized the opportunity to legitimize their own policies and positioned themselves as protectors of democracy against the threat of radical Islam in the region

by reproducing the international order at the local level. Thus, by adopting the role of marginal actors, a concept introduced by Critical Geopolitics, these three Central Asian countries were integrated into the broader order within the context of the fight against radical Islam.

With the theoretical framework and the concept of the marginal actor provided by Critical Geopolitics, this study distinguishes itself from other contemporary studies. This distinction arises because the theoretical framework and the marginal actor concept directly describe the interaction between external and internal dynamics. While the War on Terror and the issue of radical Islam in Central Asia have been widely discussed in the literature, the explanation of how the international sphere influences and shapes regional dynamics and domestic politics, and the interaction between these levels, are most effectively explained by adapting Critical Geopolitics to the Fergana Valley in the context of radical Islam. In other words, the role of the US, Russia, and China in changing the post-2001 policies of the three Central Asian countries toward the Fergana Valley explains the spatialization of the Valley in the context of the War on Terror, with Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan assuming the role of marginal actors. In fact, post-2001 domestic policies securitized the situation of extremist organizations based in the Fergana Valley and transformed into policies targeting both the Valley and its population.

As marginal actors, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan all have spatialized the Fergana Valley, albeit to varying degrees. As emphasized by Critical Geopolitics, analyzing the situation in the Fergana Valley through the concept of spatialization helps us understand the policies and discourses applied to the region and their underlying purposes since it reveals how placing a space at the center of policy-making processes, by examining its characteristics through the lens of regime and state interests or political purposes, shapes these policies and discourses. To put it differently, in addition to addressing external factors and the interaction between external and internal factors, the theoretical framework also provides the critical basis and concepts needed to explain domestic policies targeted on the Fergana Valley.
The spatialization of the Fergana Valley in domestic politics actually started before 2001. Throughout its history, the region has been seen as a place to be controlled and

centralized by different administrations. Especially during the Tsarist and Soviet periods, the Muslim population of Central Asia was subjected to constant surveillance and marginalization as a result of such mentality. As Critical Geopolitics argues, radical movements began to gain ground in the region as a necessary consequence of marginalization. Since these radical movements were seen as a direct threat to the state's integrity and the regime's survival in the post-independence period, the Fergana Valley was placed at the center of policy-making; in other words, it was spatialized. As Critical Geopolitics puts it, security concerns drew mental maps, and the Fergana Valley became the red dot on this map. The spatialization of the Fergana Valley in domestic politics transformed into securitization by being placed on legitimate grounds after 2001.

All three Central Asian countries have created a state of exception, as conceptualized by Agamben, by exploiting the fear of radical Islam and terrorist activities and therefore by applying securitized domestic politics. By defining security in terms of the absence of extremism, this state of exception has paved the way for the notion that all means are legitimate and necessary in the fight against extremism. Consequently, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan have developed numerous discourses and policies targeting the Fergana Valley, which they view as the origin of such threats, without considering the ethical limits and consequences. This has led to authoritarianism, restrictions on freedoms, suppression of political opposition and the press, and the targeting of innocent people.

If we analyze these securitized policies in specific aspects, from a legal point of view, all three Central Asian countries have broadened the definition of terrorism and labeled all kinds of anti-regime and anti-state initiatives as terrorist. At times, this terrorist label has been attached to every aspects of ordinary people, even their way of worshiping and clothing, leading to the repression, imprisonment, closure of businesses, and restriction of religious freedoms of innocent people. This was also reflected in political measures, where any political opposition, civil society organizations, and the press that stood against and criticized state policies were shut down, penalized, and generally denied visibility. Non-violent Islamist organizations and other entities with completely different ideologies were indiscriminately banned,

equating all the opposition with radical Islamists engaged in terrorist activities. With the exception of Kyrgyzstan, the Uzbek and Tajik rulers in particular have seen themselves as the sole guarantors of the state and the people against the threat of radical Islam. As a result, their policies have led to authoritarianism and centralization. In addition, the threat of radical Islam was reflected in the constant discourse of these politicians, who accused all kinds of ethnic, economic, and political uprisings and conflicts of being "terrorists" or "Islamists." They prioritized the development and activities of institutions such as the Muftiate and local governments to control the threat, especially in the Fergana Valley to contain some ideas and acts that were incompatible with state policy. In certain cases, controlling the population was intentionally achieved by appointing trustworthy individuals, particularly those from the region, to these institutions, as discussed earlier.

To put it differently, instead of seeing security as the welfare of the people, state authorities have seen security as the state's monopoly of control and have developed many discourses, policies, and institutions to ensure such understanding of security at all costs. When they could not prevent the threat of extremism with these institutions and policies, they tried to put the military into action. The military measures, especially in the Fergana Valley, seen as the most rooted place of this threat, have set important examples in the post-independence period of all three countries. Perhaps the most important of these are the Andijan and Batken events, in which quite harsh military measures were taken. The minorities, who were disadvantaged in many respects after the Batken Events, and the firing on the people in the Andijan Event constitute evidence of the extent to which these regions were spatialized.

The legal, political, and military measures taken to combat radical Islam and the securitization measures implemented have directly and significantly affected the Fergana Valley, which is seen as the origin of this threat. The valley, therefore, has become a focal point for policy-making. All three Central Asian countries, along with the international community, have recognized extremism as a phenomenon that cannot coexist with direct democracy and as the greatest threat to state integrity that must be eradicated. Much of the rhetoric is based on the belief that only one side can survive and that one of the two must perish. Critical Geopolitics reveals that such a mentality

has resulted in the implementation of extreme policies that are inevitable when addressing the fight against extremism. Although these policies and discourses have led to the spatialization of the Fergana Valley, their exaggerated nature has been most acutely felt in the border regions of the Valley for various reasons.

Critical Geopolitics states that in traditional thought, the state's security is paramount, and border regions are where the instinct to protect the state is most strongly felt. Due to various factors -such as the Fergana Valley's location at the borders of three countries, the unresolved border issues dating back to Soviet times, and the presence of ethnic groups living in border areas and enclaves- the criticism brought by Critical Geopolitics is particularly applicable to this case, especially when considering the subject of this thesis. The Uzbek, Tajik, and Kyrgyz authorities have prioritized more active policy-making and harsh measures along the Fergana Valley borders due to aforestated situation of the region. Radical Islamist groups exploit the turmoil caused by unresolved border issues, using the crossings to carry out terrorist acts due to corrupt border security. The drug-trafficking, which sustains these organizations, is conducted without much difficulty through these borders. Additionally, ethnic groups in these regions can be easily provoked by extremists, leading to conflicts in the Valley.

Exaggerated and securitized measures have led all three Central Asian states to regard ethnic groups living in the border areas as potential domestic terrorists and subject them to constant surveillance. Neither the states to which these groups are ethnically affiliated nor the countries in which they reside as minorities, have supported them. They have been restricted from crossing borders and accessing certain rights and subjected to exclusion. For example, the Rahmon administration in Tajikistan has directly associated certain radical groups with the Uzbek minority, characterizing them as enemies of the Tajik nation. Similarly, the government of Uzbekistan has displaced many Tajik families from their homes on the grounds of membership in radical organizations without providing evidence. The Kyrgyz government has accused Uzbeks of being extremists and has attributed the Osh Events of 2010 to an ethnic conflict triggered by radicalized Uzbek groups, while also accusing Tajiks of being terrorists crossing the borders. Particularly, since the Kyrgyz consider themselves

religiously moderate, they have long refused to acknowledge that radicals could emerge from within their ranks. Instead, they have constantly accused Tajik, Uyghur, and Uzbek minorities, often imprisoning them on these grounds. These accusations have been leveled at entire ethnic groups rather than individuals directly linked to terrorist activities, leaving these communities under suspicion and their lives under strict surveillance. Similar policies were also applied to ethnic citizens living outside the borders of their respective governments. For example, after the Osh Events, Uzbekistan refused to allow Uzbeks, including the elderly and children who were subjected to discrimination and violence in Kyrgyzstan, to cross the border, citing concerns that they were terrorists. Uzbekistan even built mines and a wall along the border. Similarly, Tajikistan refused to allow Tajiks from Uzbekistan to enter, also because they were terrorists.

In this way, governments have prioritized border security by seeing themselves as solely responsible for maintaining the regime and the state's survival. As Agnew, one of the founders of Critical Geopolitics, has pointed out, they have fallen into "the territorial trap" by attributing state sovereignty to a specific region, spatializing that region, and assigning a particular political identity to the people living within it. Consequently, those outside this political identity or border have been subjected to marginalization, as in the case of the Fergana Valley and its population living within its borders. In other words, the Fergana Valley, its border regions, and its inhabitants have been subjected to marginalization and spatialization by attributing a political meaning due to the fear of the threat of radical Islam. As a result, they have become the target of specific policies.

In summary, all three governments have prioritized policies focused on border security and maintaining state integrity, as analyzed by Critical Geopolitics. They have utilized the pretext of countering radical Islam to justify repression, curtailment of freedoms, and even violations of fundamental human rights. The Fergana Valley has emerged as a focal point of counter-terrorism efforts by policymakers aiming to safeguard national security, given its presence of radical Islamists, ethnic diversity, and border location. Ordinary residents in the region have borne the brunt of policies formulated in response to the exaggerated threat of terrorism, experiencing significant deprivation

of their fundamental rights. The security of the people, often subjected to marginalization policies, has been prioritized over the security of the state without due consideration.

It should be pointed out that neither Critical Geopolitics nor this thesis aims to argue that the threats of radical Islam and terrorism in the Fergana Valley are solely imagined by policymakers or that the policies developed to address them emerge out of the blue. Using the theoretical framework of Critical Geopolitics, the thesis analyzes the emergence and development of the real threat in the region, along with the policies and discourses developed to address it. Therefore, it instead aims to elucidate that all of these elements are inherently subject to criticism and warrant questioning since the mental maps created by policymakers with their security perceptions lead to the spatialization of the regions where the security threat is concentrated, that is, to take securitized measures in these regions without considering the ethical consequences.

To conclude, this thesis argues that the interplay between geography, security, and order has been central to the policymaking process in these countries since their independence, as discussed by Critical Geopolitics. Furthermore, the thesis contends that the Fergana Valley, perceived as a haven for extremists and a source of regional instability, has been spatialized by the governments of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan due to security concerns. Ultimately, it concludes that the governments of the three Central Asian countries serve to reproduce the international anti-terrorism and anti-Islamism order at the regional level by being marginal actors, and they achieve their aim of putting their actions within the legitimate base collectively established by the powerful actors such as the US, Russia, and China.

This thesis may provide a foundation for some future research projects, both in terms of the theoretical framework employed and in uncovering the distinct Islamic characteristics of the region. As a future Ph.D. student, my thesis lays the groundwork for my prospective doctoral studies and broader research objectives. Significantly, regarding the emergence and evolution of radical Islam in the region and Central Asian Islamic thought, with its unique dynamics and intellectual framework, offers a rich ground of study for a non-Western International Relations theory. This viewpoint

needs to be thoroughly examined in the existing literature on the international system. Furthermore, when integrated with the theoretical framework, comprehending the international system in Central Asian Islamic thought presents a promising area for analysis through the lens of Critical Geopolitics due to its inherent geopolitical imagination, which includes both the Islamic regions and the "other." Composing this thesis has afforded me valuable insights for future research endeavors.

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Bu tez, Fergana Vadisi'ndeki radikal İslamcı örgütleri, hareketleri ve terör eylemlerini, Vadi'yi çevreleyen üç Orta Asya ülkesinin politika ve söylemlerine bakarak Eleştirel Jeopolitika'nın genel perspektifinden analiz etmeyi amaçlamıştır. Fergana Vadisi, Özbekistan, Tacikistan ve Kırgızistan sınırları içerisinde yer almaktadır. Bu nedenle çalışmanın temel araştırma sorusu şu şekilde formüle edilmiştir: Özbekistan, Tacikistan ve Kırgızistan'ın Fergana Vadisi'ndeki radikal İslamcı örgütler, hareketler ve terör eylemleri karşısında geliştirdikleri politika ve söylemler nelerdir ve bu politika ve söylemler ilgili bazı bölgesel ve küresel gelişmeler tarafından ne ölçüde şekillendirilmektedir. Bu soruları cevaplayabilmek adına tez dört ana bölüm ve bulguların tartışıldığı bir sonuç bölümüne bölünmüştür.

İlk bölüm tezin teorik çerçevesini oluşturan Eleştirel Jeopolitika'nın ayrıntılı tanıtılmasını ve tezin konusu ile ilgili olarak İslami radikalizm ve Teröre Karşı Savaş olgularının ana hatlarıyla incelenmesini içermektedir. Buna ek olarak tezin metodolojisi de ilk bölüm olan Giriş bölümünde açıklanmıştır. İkinci bölüm, Giriş bölümünde tanıtılan teorik ve siyasi ana hatların Fergana Vadisi bağlamına oturtulabilmesini kolaylaştırmak adına bölgenin kısa bir sosyal ve siyasi tarihini, bununla birlikte bölgedeki radikal İslamcı hareketlerin isimleri, tarihsel gelişimleri, ideolojik arka planları ve birbirlerinden ayrıldıkları noktaları ele almıştır. Tezin üçüncü bölümü, tez sorusunda da- Fergana Vadisi'ne yönelik geliştirilen politika ve söylemlerin ne ölçüde küresel ve bölgesel dinamiklerden ne ölçüde etkilendiği-belirtildiği gibi Teröre Karşı Savaş düzenini ve bu düzeni kuran Amerika Birleşik Devletleri (ABD) başta olmak üzere bu düzeni yeniden üreten Rusya ve Çin gibi önemli küresel güçlerin de Özbekistan, Tacikistan ve Kırgızistan'ın Fergana Vadisi'ne yönelik terörle mücadele politikalarını ne şekilde etkilediği ve

değiştirdiğini görmek, bu bölgedeki teröre karşıtı geliştirilen işbirliklerini anlamak için ayrıntılı bilgi aktarmayı amaçlamıştır. ABD, Rusya ve Çin'in kendi ülkelerindeki terörle, özellikle İslami formu ile, mücadele tarihlerini ve Fergana Vadisi özelinde söz konusu olan üç Orta Asya ülkesi ile iş birliklerini anlatmıştır. Bu şekilde de 2001 sonrası Özbekistan, Tacikistan ve Kırgızistan'ın terörle mücadele yönelimlerindeki değişimlerin açıklığa kavuşturulması hedeflenmiştir. Dördüncü bölümde ise öncelikle Özbekistan, Tacikistan ve Kırgızistan'ın siyasi figürlerinin İslami aşırıcılık ve terörizm ile ilgili bakış açıları açıklanmış, sonrasında ayrı ayrı bu üç ülkenin Fergana Vadisi'ne yönelik geliştirdiği söylem ve politikalar incelenmiştir. Bu inceleme, üç ülkenin hukuki, siyasi ve askeri alanda yaptıkları söylem ve politikalarla birlikte Fergana Vadisi'ni bir sınır bölgesi olması nedeniyle bölgedeki sınır problemlerinin özellikle terörizm ve İslami aşırıcılık hususuna yönelik geliştirdiği politikaları kapsamıştır. Son olarak ise sonuç bölümü, tez boyunca tespit edilmiş bütün bulguları ve teorik çerçeveyi bir araya getirerek analiz yapmayı amaçlamıştır. Bu bölümde, üç Orta Asya ülkesinin Fergana Vadisi'ndeki terör ve radikal İslam problemini abartarak bölgeyi ve bölge halkını politika yapımının merkezine ne şekilde koyduğu, problemi küresel gelişmelerinde etkisinde ne ölçüde güvenlikleştirdiği ve Vadi'yi bu bağlamda nasıl mekansallaştırdığı gözler önüne serilerek Özbekistan, Tacikistan ve Kırgızistan'ın küresel gelişmeleri yerelde üreten- Eleştirel Jeopolitika'nın sağladığı teorik çerçevenin savunduğu üzere- marjinal aktörler olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

Yukarıda, tez ve bölümlerinin kısa bir özeti tanıtılmıştır. Bunu takiben bu Türkçe özet, tezin teorik çerçevesi ve sağlanan tarihsel ve siyasi gelişmelerle ilgili bilgileri bir özet haline getirip bütün bu olgular arasında bağlantı sunarak tezin ana konusunu, argümanını ve bulgularını tartışacaktır.

Tezin teorik çerçevesini oluşturan Eleştirel Jeopolitika'yı ayrıntılandırmak ile başlamak gerekirse, bu teorik yaklaşım siyaset ile coğrafya arasındaki ilişkiyi inceleyerek belirli coğrafyaların temsil ettikleri etiketlere içkin olan siyasi emelleri ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Eleştirel Jeopolitika'nın bir öncülüğünü eleştirel güvenlik çalışmaları oluşturmaktadır. Devlet merkezli güvenlik ve çıkar algısının eleştirilmesini takiben Eleştirel Jeopolitika devlet güvenliği, sınır güvenliği, devlet çıkarı, devlet egemenliği gibi terimlerin zorunlu olarak coğrafi varsayımlar

oluşturduğunu ve bu şekilde devlet gibi belirli bir coğrafi alan üzerine kurulu siyasi kurumun ve onun sınırları dışında kalan diğer coğrafyaların "biz-öteki" ayrımını oluşturduğunu; yani diğer bir deyişle, "güvenli alan ve tehdit" gibi bir ikileme neden olduğunu ve bu durumun bazı coğrafyaların politika yapımı sürecinde hedef alındığı argümanını geliştirmiştir. Eleştirel Jeopolitika'nın bir diğer öncüsü ise Edward Said'nin Oryantalizm çalışmasıdır. Bu çalışma Batı'nın Doğu'yu nasıl gördüğünü ve anlamlandırdığını incelemiştir. Bu çalışma da aslında belirli coğrafi etiketlerin nasıl sosyal tabakalaşma ve uluslararası hiyerarşiden etkilenerek belirlendiğini göstermiştir. Eleştirel Jeopolitika bu çalışmadan yola çıkarak coğrafi temsillerinin hangi koşullar altında oluştuğunu ve bu temsillerin altında yatan siyasi emelleri araştırmayı amaç edinmiştir. Bu analizleri yaparken ise birçok terime açıklık getirmiş ve uluslararası sistem, devlet, güvenlik anlayışı ve coğrafi mekanlar arasında ilişki kurarak politika yapımında nasıl coğrafi temsillerden faydalanıldığını ortaya çıkarmıştır.

Eleştirel Jeopolitika'ya göre, bu coğrafi temsillerin ve mekanlara yönelik söylemlerin çıkış noktası tarihsel önyargılar ve kabul görmüş normlardan kaynaklanmaktadır. Bu şu demektir: tarih boyunca daha önce bahsedildiği üzere ataerkillik, etnisite, sınıf, ideoloji gibi belli tabakalaşma ve hiyerarşinin getirisi olarak Batı merkezli şekilde belirli normlar inşa edilmiştir. Bu normlar "normal" kabul edilirken, normlara uymayanlar "tehdit," "barbar," "anormal" gibi etiketlemelere maruz kalmış coğrafi mekanlar da bu duruma bir istisna oluşturmamıştır. Diğer bir deyişle, coğrafi mekanlara coğrafya dışı, yani coğrafyayı doğrudan kelime anlamı ve özellikleri ile tanımlamayan, metaforik anlamlar ve temsiller yüklenmiştir. Bu temsiller, insanlık tarihi boyunca "normal" olanın sürekliliğini sağlamak ve geniş çapta kabul edilirliğini arttırmak amaçlarıyla kullanılmış olup siyasi emellere hizmet etmiştir. Normal olanın sürekliliğini sağlamanın amacı ise devletlerin domestik ve uluslararası arenalarda uyguladığı politikalarına olabildiğince meşruiyet sağlayarak ve diğer devlet ve aktörlerin desteğini alarak hareket etme isteğidir. Gramsci'ye göre zor ya da rıza kullanılarak sağlanan meşruiyet, devletlere hegemonya sağlayarak çıkarları doğrultusunda çok daha rahat hareket edip politika yapmalarını sağlar. Yani, "normallik" kurularak "anormal" olan belirlenir ve aktörler bu normale uyum sağlayarak uluslararası düzene entegre olur. Böylece hegemonik olan farklı aktörler tarafından çeşitli kurum, kural, kuruluş, norm ve politikalarla yeniden üretilir. Sonuç

olarakta aktörler bu düzeni devam ettirerek kendi çıkarlarını korumuş olur. Bu normalliğin sürdürülmesi için kurulan düzen ve "ötekinin" ve "tehdit olanın" belirlenmesi, aynı zamanda belirli coğrafyaların, kültürlerin, inançların da ötekileşmesi anlamına gelmektedir. Bu şekilde jeopolitik düzen de oluşturulmaktadır. Buna bağlı olarak, bu düzenin uyumunu bozan her türlü düşünce sistemi ve bu sistemi temsil eden her şey ötekileştirilir. Bu jeopolitik düzende, coğrafi temsillerin bütün aktörler tarafından yeniden üretilmesi demektir. Yani dönemin belirlenen normali ve düzeni hangi coğrafyaların neyi temsil ettiğini ve hangi coğrafyaların tehdit olarak görüldüğünü belirleyerek düşman coğrafyaların belirlenmesine neden olur. Kısaca Eleştirel Jeopolitika'da bu düşmanlığın arkasındaki siyasi motivasyonları ve bu motivasyonların sonucu uygulanan politikaları inceleyerek analize tabi tutar.

Tehdit ve düşman ilan edilen normlar ve bu normları temsil eden coğrafyalar, insanlar ve devletler arasında- yani hem domestik hem uluslararası arenada- güvensizlik ve korku ortamına neden olur. "Normal" görülenin dışındaki her türlü sistem korkutucu; uyumu ve barış ortamını bozma potansiyeline sahip olarak görüldüğünden insanlar arasında bu durum- Agamben'in de deyimiyle- bir istisna haline dönüşür. Korkunun yarattığı meşru ortamdan faydalanmak isteyen devletler bu korkuyu sömürerek etik açıdan sorgulanması gereken belirli politikalar uygulamaya ve söylemler geliştirmeye başlar. Hatta bu durum bazen korkulduğu kadar da tehdit oluşturmayan birçok durumun çok önemli güvenlik problemleri olarak gösterilmesine neden olur. Bu şekilde, bu tarz tehditlere yönelik politikalar ve söylemler abartılarak toplumdaki korku durumunu daha çok tetikler ve devletlerin normalde meşru zemine oturtamayacağı politikalarını korumacılık kisvesi altında yapabilmesini sağlar. Bu tehdidi barındıran belirli coğrafyalar ve bu coğrafyalarda yaşayan halkın ötekileşmesi, savunmasız bırakılmasına neden olan mekansallaştırmaya maruz bırakılır; yani güvenlilk politikaların hedefi olarak belirlenir. Ancak teorik çerçevenin ana argümanlarından biri, bu tarz politikalar toplumu tehditten koruma amacından daha çok devletin istikrarını ve varlığını, rejimin sürekliliğini koruma endişesi ile yapıldığından politikaların hedef aldığı coğrafyalarda genelde marjinalleşme, ötekileşme ve radikalleşme gibi daha büyük sorunlara neden olmaktadır.

Bu güvenlik endişeleri, tehdit algısı uluslararası alanda kurulan düzen tarafından belirlendiğinden, küreselleşme döneminde önem kazanan küresel güç olarak görülmeyen küçük devletler, bu uluslararası düzenin kurallarını, güvenlik endişelerini ve tehdit algısını yerel düzeyde üreterek aktif marjinal aktör rolü oynarlar. Tezin kapsamında düşünecek olursak, Özbekistan, Tacikistan ve Kırgızistan küresel sistemde büyük güçler olmasalar da 11 Eylül olaylarını takiben ABD tarafından kurulan Rusya ve Çin tarafından tedavül edilen Teröre Karşı Savaş düzenini Orta Asya özelinde yeniden üreten üç marjinal aktördür. Ve bu düzene entegre olmak içi gerekli olan norm, politika ve söylemleri- örneğin radikal İslam ve terör karşıtlığı gibi- 2001 sonrasında oldukça güçlü bir şekilde savunarak bölgede bu tarz problemlerin görüldüğü Fergana Vadisi'ni mekansallaştırmışlardır. Fergana Vadisi ve halkı belirli söylem ve politikaların merkezi haline gelerek politika yapıcılar tarafından ötekileştirilmiş ve marjinalleştirilmiştir. Bunu temel argüman alarak ve Eleştirel Jeopolitika çerçevesi içinde bu argümanı destekleyen bu tezde, söz konusu durumu daha güçlü bir zemine oturtmak adına Fergana Vadisi tarihi, Teröre Karşı Savaş düzeninin kurulması ve diğer aktörlerin entegrasyonları ve en son olarak Vadi'yi çevreleyen üç Orta Asya ülkesinin bu düzeni hangi politika ve söylemleri kullanarak yerelde yeniden ürettiği tartışılmıştır. Tezin teorik çerçevesi yukarıdaki gibi özetlenmiş olup takiben bu konu hakkında tezde kullanılan data açıklanacaktır.

Fergana Vadisi Özbekistan, Tacikistan ve Kırgızistan'ın sınırları içinde yer alan Orta Asya bölgesinin nüfusu en yoğun bölgesidir. Vadi, ekonomik, siyasi, kültürel bir merkez görevini görmektedir. Bu nedenle de nüfusun büyük bir bölümü burada yaşamaktadır. Tarih boyunca hem farklı medeniyetlere ev sahipliği yapmış olması hem de İpek Yolu'nun üzerinde bulunması nedeniyle jeopolitik öneme sahip olmuş bir bölgedir. Fergana Vadisi tarihini İslam ve radikalizm bağlamında inceleyecek olursak, bölgenin İslam ile ilk tanışması 7. Yüzyılda Arap istilası ile başlamış 10. Yüzyılda Türki istilaları ile bölge halkı tarafından kabul edilmesi hız kazanmıştır. 16. Yüzyıla gelindiğinde ise bölge Müslüman yöneticiler tarafından yönetilmeye başlamış ve bu durum 19. Yüzyılda bölgenin Çarlık Rusya tarafından kontrol altına alınmasına dek devam etmiştir. Çarlık Rusyası bölge kontrolünü ele geçirdiği dönemde bölge halkı zaten oldukça tutucu ve dindar olmasıyla biliniyordu. Müslüman halkın Hristiyan bir yönetimi altına girmesi, dönemin koşulları altında bu halkın Ruslaştırılması ve

bölgede İslam'ın etkisinin azaltılması anlamına geliyordu. Diğer bir deyişle, Çarlık Rusya'sı bölgede gitgide daha fazla kontrol uygulayarak bölgenin göçebe Müslüman halkını "aydınlık, yerleşik Ruslar" haline getirmeye çalıştı. "Böl ve kontrol et" stratejisini kullanarak bölgedeki etnisite, din, göçebelik ve aşiret bağları ve geleneklerinin etkisini azaltmaya ve bölgeyi kendi çıkarları doğrultusunda kontrol etmeye çalıştı. Çarlık Rusyası'nın bölgedeki tekeli Müslüman halkın özellikle sosyal, kültürel ve dini açıdan marjinalleşmesine ve Çarlık yönetiminden memnuniyetsizlik duymasına neden olmaya başladı. Bu Ruslaştırma politikasına şiddetle karşı çıkan gruplar, özellikle tutucu Fergana Vadisi'ndekiler, birçok ayaklanma başlattı. Bu ayaklanmalar, 1. Dünya Savaşı koşulları Rusya'da iç savaşa neden oldu. Dindar birçok grup kendini Çarlık Rusyası'nın Beyaz Ordusu'na karşı Bolşeviklerin Kırmızı Ordu'yu desteklerken buldu. Bolşeviklerin iç savaşı kazanmasını takiben en üst düzeyde yönetim prensibi kabul edilen Marksist-Leninist ideoloji Müslüman nüfusu ve diğer dini öğeleri marjinalleştirmeye devam etti. Bu baskı ortamı ve marjinalleştirme Müslüman bazı grupları merdiven altında ibadet etmeye ve bunun sonucu olarak gizlice örgütlenmeye itti.

Fergana Vadisi'nde yaşanan durum küresel düzeyde de eş zamanlı yaşanıyordu. Soğuk Savaş bağlamında, ABD ya da Sovyetleri desteklemeyen bir grup Müslüman figür- Hasan el-Banna ve Seyit Kutub gibi- Müslüman Kardeşler adında bir grup kurmuş ve sistemi eleştirmeye başlamıştı. 16. Yüzyılda Coğrafi Keşif ve Reform dönemi ile başlayan Batı üstünlüğünü ve bu koşullar altında Müslümanların ezilmesini eleştiriyordu. Kısa süre sonra bu tür düşünceler Orta Doğu ve Orta Asya'da da kabul görmeye başladı. Mısır'ı takiben özellikle İran, Afganistan, Özbekistan ve Tacikistan'da bu görüşler yaygınlaşmaya başladı. Bu düşünceler zaman geçtikçe küresel siyaset sahnesini ve kültürünü değiştirecek olayları tetiklemeye başladı. 1979'da İran Devrimi, sonrasında Afganistan'da Taliban'ın ortaya çıkışı, Sovyetler Orta Asya'sında radikalleşen birçok İslamcı yeraltı organizasyonları artmaya başladı. Bu radikal gruplar farklı fraksiyonlara ve ideolojik altyapılara sahip olsalar da hepsinin ortak noktası güncel yönetimlerin ihtiyaçları karşılamadığı ve ancak bir İslam devletinin sorunlara çözüm olabileceği inancıydı. Şiddet içeren ve içermeyen farklı gruplar İslami devlet kurmak amacıyla örgütlenerek mücadele başlattı. İslamcılar

yalnızca Orta Asya'da ve Ortadoğu'da değil birçok bölgede bağımsız olarak İslami devlet kurmak istiyorlardı.

Soğuk Savaş bağlamında özellikle Sovyet güç alanı içinde yükselen bu İslamcılar, ABD tarafından Sovyetler Birliği'ne karşı fonlanarak güçlendirildi. Ancak 1991'de Sovyetler Birliği çöküp eski Sosyalist Sovyetler Birliği Cumhuriyetleri bağımsızlığını ilan ettiğinde ABD için artık Sovyet tehdidi değil bizzat kendisi tarafından güçlendirilmiş bir İslamcılık tehdidi ortaya çıkmıştı. Diğer bir deyişle, Soğuk Savaş'ın ikili kutuplu dünyası ve jeopolitik düzeni yön değiştirmiş ABD ve İslamcılar arasında başka bir jeopolitik düzene dönüşmüştü. 11 Eylül 2001'de gerçekleşen saldırıdan sonra bu jeopolitik düzen son halini almış, düzenin yeni "normali" ve "tehdidi" resmi olarak belirlenmişti. Birçok bölgede yükselişte olan ve özellikle Orta Asya'da yeni bağımsızlığını elde etmiş ülkelerde büyük sorun yaratan radikal İslamcı organizasyonların "yeni jeopolitik düzenin yeni hedefleri" olduğu bu şekilde kanıksanmış ve uluslararası siyasi arenada bu tehdide yönelik tedbir alarak demokrasiyi korumak için seferberlik ilan edilmiştir.

Bu seferberlik başlıca ABD'nin iç ve dış politikada- özellikle 2001'den itibaren İslamiyet ile özdeşleştirilmeye başlanan- terörle mücadeleyi siyasi ajandanın ön plana almasıyla başlamış daha sonra bütün dünya tarafından da 11 Eylül olaylarının yarattığı korku ortamında meşrulaştırılarak desteklenmiştir. Eleştirel Jeopolitika'nın bahsettiği gibi kurulan düzen meşru bir temel sağladığından aktörler tarafından desteklenmiş bunun sonucunda tehditle ilgilendirilebilecek, İslam'ı ve tutuculuğu temsil eden, herhangi bir bölge bu düzenin jeopolitik hedefini oluşturmuştur. Jeopolitik düzen ABD başkanı Bush'un meşhur "*ya bizimlesiniz ya da teröristlerle*" söylemi ile resmiyet kazanmıştır ve terörizmle ilişkilendirilen bölgeler zihinsel haritalarda tabiri caizse kırmızı ile boyanmıştır. Politika yapıcılar bu jeopolitik düzeni kendi zihinsel haritaları ile belirlemiş ve tehditle- İslami radikalizm- ilişkilendirilebilecek herhangi bir normu temsil eden coğrafyalara yönelik söylem ve politikalar geliştirmeye başlamıştır. Bunun en bariz örneği, ABD'nin Afganistan'a yaptığı NATO müdahalesidir.

Ancak bu düzen sadece ABD tarafından değil, çok daha önceden İslami radikalizm tehdidi ile mücadele etmeye başlayan Rusya ve Çin tarafından da kendi çıkarlarını

koruyabilecekleri meşru bir sistem oluşturduğundan desteklenmiştir. Rusya çok daha uzun süredir Çeçen sorunu ile uğraşıyor olsa da özellikle 1990'lardan sonra Çeçenler'in bağımsızlık isteği ve İslami örgütlerle birlikte bağımsızlık mücadelesi vermesi nedeniyle Rusya, Çeçen sorunu ayrılıkçı terörizm olarak adlandırmıştır. Bu problem içinde uluslararası arenadan sürekli destek beklemiştir. Çin de aynı şekilde, Sincan-Uygur bölgesinde yaşayan Müslüman Uygur azınlığın 1949'dan bu yana Çin ilhakı altında yaşadıklarını söyleyerek bağımsızlık istemesinden beri Rusya ile benzer bir sorunla karşı karşıyadır. Uygurlar'da bağımsızlık mücadelesini Çeçenler'e benzer şekilde İslami radikal örgütlerle birlikte vermektedir. Bu soruna karşı her iki ülkede uzun zamandır Batı'dan destek beklediyse de aradığı desteği bulamamıştır. Ancak 2001 sonrası kurulan düzende İslami aşırıcılığın yeni tehdit olması Rusya ve Çin'in bu sorunlara yönelik geliştirdiği politikalara meşru zemin hazırladığından Teröre Karşı Savaş düzenine hızlıca entegre olmuşlardır.

ABD, Rusya, Çin gibi küresel güçler bu normları oluşturma ve değiştirme güçlerine sahipken bu denli güçlü olmayan devletler ise daha önce bahsedildiği üzere küresel düzeyde olanları yerel ve bölgesel düzeylerde yeniden üreterek sistemin ve düzenin sürdürülebilirliğini sağlama rolüne sahiplerdir. Bu tezin kapsamında bu role sahip olan Özbekistan, Tacikistan ve Kırgızistan marjinal aktörler olarak 2001 sonrası dönemde terör ile mücadele yöntemlerini değiştirip sertleştirerek bu düzene entegre olmuşlar ve İslami aşırıcılık tehdidinin bölgede en yaygın görüldüğü yer olan Fergana Vadisi'ni bu mücadelenin merkezi haline getirmişlerdir.

Orta Asya'da İslami oluşumlar ve bunların radikalleşmesi 1950'lerde başlamışsa da bu grupların tehdit oluşturmaları asıl 1991'de bölge ülkelerinin Sovyetler'in çöküşüyle birlikte bağımsız olmalarını takiben olmuştur. Çarlık ve Sovyet Rusyası yönetimleri altında uzun süredir var olan bölge ülkelerinin hiç modern devlet yönetimi deneyimleri olmamıştır. 1991'de aniden kendilerini bağımsız bir şekilde bulduklarında özellikle Fergana Vadisi'nde ciddi bir şekilde örgütlenmiş İslamcıların direnişi ile karşı karşıya kalmış ve onlara karşı tam teşekkürlü bir mücadele vermek zorunda kalmışlardır. Bağımsız olma deneyiminin ilk on senesi Vadi'yi çevreleyen Özbekistan, Tacikistan ve Kırgızistan için bu nedenle oldukça zor geçmiştir. Kırgızistan İslami radikalizm tehdidinden 1999'a dek doğrudan etkilenmese de Özbekistan'da Kerimov rejimi

radikal İslamcı mücadeleden oldukça çekmiş, Tacikistan'da ise eski Sovyet yöneticileri ile İslamcı muhalefet arasında iç savaş patlak vermiştir. Kırgızistan ise 1999'da Vadi'deki Batken bölgesindeki terör olaylarını takiben İslami radikalizm ve terörle mücadele politikaları geliştirmeye başlamıştır. 2001 öncesindeki on sene söz konusu üç Orta Asya ülkesi için halihazırda İslami aşırıcılık ve terör tehdidi ile mücadele ile geçse de 2001 sonrasında kurulan Teröre Karşı Savaş düzeni bu üç ülkenin terörle mücadele yöntemlerini çok daha meşru bir zemine oturtmuş ve durumun daha da güvenlikleştirilmesine katkı sağlamıştır. Üç Orta Asya ülkesi bu düzene entegre olmak için Fergana Vadisi'ndeki İslami terör tehdidine yönelik kendi deneyimlerden kaynaklı bir istek duyarken aynı zamanda küresel üç büyük güç olan ABD, Rusya ve Çin de belirli jeopolitik emellerle Fergana Vadisi'ndeki durumun kontrol altına alınmasını istediğinden Özbekistan, Tacikistan ve Kırgızistan ile teröre karşı iş birliği sürecine başlamışlardır. ABD bölgenin Afganistan'a yakınlığında, Rusya Orta Asya'yı güç alanı olarak gördüğünden, Çin ise bölgenin Sincan-Uygur bölgesine yakınlığından ve bölgede yaşayan Uygurlar olduğundan Fergana Vadisi'ndeki radikal organizasyonlara yönelik politika yapımı için üç Orta Asya ülkesine maddi ve askeri birçok yardım yapmıştır. Bu yardımlar, Özbek, Tacik ve Kırgız yetkililerin çok daha kapsamlı terörle mücadele yöntemleri kullanmasını sağlamış ve Fergana Vadisi'ni doğrudan terörle mücadele düzeninin Orta Asya'daki ana noktası haline getirmiştir.

Tezin dördüncü bölümünde Özbekistan, Tacikistan ve Kırgızistan'ın terörle mücadele bağlamında özellikle Fergana Vadisi'ne yönelik söylemleri ve politikaları ayrıntılı incelenmiştir. Üç Orta Asya ülkesi de öncelikle hukuki çerçevelerini oluşturmuşlar ve terörün tanımını ve kapsamını genişletip terör suçuna oldukça ağır cezalar vermişlerdir. Bu cezaların en çok uygulandığı bölge elbette Fergana vadisi olmuştur. Daha sonra siyasi arena da siyasi İslam'ı ve her türlü muhalefet varlığını terörizm adı altında yasaklamışlardır. Buna ek olarak İslam'ın halk tarafından yaşanış biçimini kontrol altına almak adına kurumlar ve kontrol mekanizmaları kurulmuştur. Müftülük, yerel yönetimler, polis ve jandarma gibi birçok kontrol mekanizması tarafından insanların giyinme ve kapanma biçimlerinden, ibadet biçimlerine ve camilerde verilen zaaflara kadar kişisel birçok alan kontrole tabi tutulmuş ve halk dışlanmaya maruz kalmıştır. Dini kitapların ve kıyafetlerin satılması, kullanılmasının yanısıra dini eğitim

kısıtlanmıştır. Özellikle Fergana Vadisi'nin muhafazakâr olması ile bilinen halkının attığı her adım kontrol edilmeye çalışılmıştır. Bütün bunlara ek olarak dini oluşumlarla mücadele edebilmek adına askeri alana yatırım arttırılmış Fergana Vadisi'nin sınır bölgelerine askerler konuşlandırılmış, ordu güçlendirilmiş; hatta gerektiğinde bu asker ve ordular 2005'te yaşanan Andican'da örneğinde görüldüğü üzere siyasi ayaklanmaları İslami aşırıcılık adı altında bastırmak için kullanılmıştır. Bütün bu önlemler ve kullanılan belirli söylemlere ek olarak Fergana Vadisi'nin coğrafi konumu ve Sovyet geçmişi nedeniyle sahip olduğu sınır bölgesi olma özelliği de politika yapıcıların bölgeyi daha çok mekansallaştırmasına neden olmuştur. Bölge üç ülkeyi birbirine bağlaması, enklavlar bulundurması nedeniyle etnik çatışma ve sınır sorunları yaşamaktadır. Bunu getirisi olarak sınırlarda ya aşırı kontrol ya da kontrolsüzlük sorunu mevcuttur. Bu durum sınırlardan terörist geçmesi gibi endişelere ve radikal organizasyonların finansal olarak hayatta kalmasını sağlayan uyuşturucu ticaretinin gerçekleşmesi endişesine neden olduğundan bölgenin sınırları ve sınırlarında yaşayan etnik azınlıklar siyasetçiler tarafından güvenlikleştirilmiştir. Fergana Vadisi halkı ve sınırları bu güvenlikleştirilmiş politikaların hedefi olmasından dolayı jeopolitik bir hedef haline gelmiş ve yapılan politikalar sonucu buradaki halk birçok mağduriyet yaşamıştır. Özetlemek gerekirse, 2001 sonrası dönemde Teröre Karşı Savaş düzenine entegre olan üç Orta Asya ülkesi Fergana Vadisi'ni terör endişesi üzerinden mekansallaştırmış ve jeopolitik bir önem atfetmiştir. Eleştirel Jeopolitika'nın sağladığı teorik çerçeve kullanılarak bu tez, mekansallaştırılan bu bölgeye atfedilen jeopolitik önemin altında yatan siyasi nedenleri ortaya çıkararak farklı bir perspektif getirmeye çalışmıştır.

Sonuç olarak tezin başında sorulan sorular tez boyunca toplanan data ve Eleştirel Jeopolitika teorisi ile cevaplandırılmaya çalışarak literatürde oldukça tartışılan bir konuya eleştirel bakış açısı getirmiştir. Özbekistan, Tacikistan ve Kırgızistan Orta Asya'da radikal İslam'ın en yoğun olduğu Fergana Vadisi bölgesine sınırı olan üç ülke olarak bağımsızlıktan bu yani bu tehditle mücadele etmişlerdir. Ancak ülkeler, 2001 sonrası kurulan Teröre Karşı Savaş düzenine entegre olarak politikalarını çok daha meşru bir ortamda sertleştirmiş; terör tehdidini güvenlikleştirmenin yanısıra Fergana Vadisi'ni mekansallaştırmışlardır. Diğer bir deyişle, söz konusu üç Orta Asya ülkesi

uluslararası düzeni yerel düzeyde aktif bir şekilde yenide üreterek marjinal aktör olma rolünü benimsemişlerdir.

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