

ISLAMIC REVIVALISM AND STATE FAILURE IN KYRGYZSTAN

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TITLE VIII PROGRAM

Project Information*

Principal Investigator: Eric McGlinchey
NCEEER Contract Number: 822-09g
Date: February 3, 2009

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* The work leading to this report was supported in part by contract or grant funds provided by the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, funds which were made available by the U.S. Department of State under Title VIII (The Soviet-East European Research and Training Act of 1983, as amended). The analysis and interpretations contained herein are those of the author.

Executive Summary

This study investigates the causes and diversity of Islamic revivalism in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan. The Soviet collapse in 1991 allowed Kyrgyz, for the first time in seven decades, to explore differing religious identities, including differing Muslim identities. Islam, as both survey data and field interviews confirm, is now central to Kyrgyz identity. Notably though, the degree to which Kyrgyz gravitate to Muslim institutions in their daily lives varies. The source of this variation, I find, lies at the local level, in communities' differing degrees of coherence in coping with an increasingly ineffective central state. This finding departs from other studies that attribute Islamic revivalism to anti-secular, anti-colonial, or anti-Western orientations thought to typify Muslim societies.

Introduction

This article examines the growth and proliferation of Islamic identities in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan. The study's objectives are threefold. First and foremost, the article's orientation is broadly comparative in that I seek to test prevailing hypotheses of Islamic identity formation. The Kyrgyz case is uniquely conducive to hypothesis testing given that the process of Islamic revivalism is a decidedly recent phenomenon. It was only after Mikhail Gorbachev's December 1, 1989 declaration while on a state visit to the Vatican guaranteeing all Soviet citizens the "right to satisfy their spiritual needs" that Kyrgyz Muslims began to have access to Islamic scholars, literature and communities beyond the USSR.¹ Moreover, it was only after the Soviet collapse in December 1991 that Kyrgyz were exposed to international discourses thought to be central to Islamic revivalism: anti-secularism, anti-Westernism and anti-colonialism.

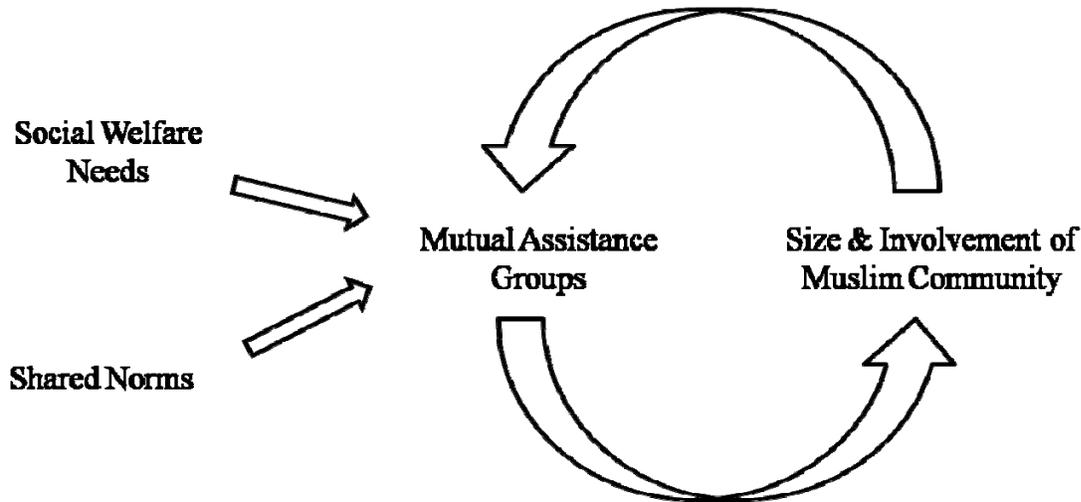
In short, the sudden collapse of the Soviet media and societal restrictions and the rapid development of international communications and networks, offers us a rare opportunity to assess which, if any, transnational causalities are shaping Kyrgyzstan's Islamic revival. Ultimately, I find that several leading theories—Islam as a response to encroaching Western culture, Islam as a response encroaching secularism and Islam as a manifestation of nationalism—fail to explain Kyrgyzstan's Islamic revival.

Rather, survey research and field interviews suggest a local rather than transnational causality: Islamic revivalism is, to a large degree, the product of the failing Kyrgyz state. Among Kyrgyz Muslims, as is the case with many religions, shared religious norms facilitate community activism and, notably, the growth of Islamic charities. The importance of these

¹ Clyde Haberman, "The Kremlin and the Vatican; Gorbachev Visits Pope at Vatican; Ties Are Forged," *The New York Times*, December 2, 1989, sec. 1, page 1.

charities is heightened by unmet welfare needs at the local level. Lastly, the heightened importance of these mutual assistance groups raises the profile of Islam, thereby attracting more believers and greater involvement and dedication on the part of community members. I illustrate this iterative causal relationship below:

Diagram 1 Islamic Revival in Kyrgyzstan



Complementing this focus on causality, this article challenges the reified conceptualization of Islam that characterizes many recent social science analyses of social mobilization in Muslim societies. Although I identify three emerging trends in Kyrgyz Islam—(1) the muftiate or traditional Islam, (2) conservative or reformist Islam, and (3) *Hizb ut-Tahrir* or political Islam—I equally illustrate how these groups and their memberships overlap and how the identity of one organization is, to a real degree, defined relative to the identities of the others.

Investigating the blurred and mutually formative borders among these groups does complicate my causal story. At the same time, recognizing the complexity of religious identity safeguards against missing the forest for the trees. Much of the recent literature on Islam in

Central Asia has focused on radical Islam.² Although this focus is understandable given current geopolitical concerns, it nevertheless generates analysis that, but for a small portion of the population, offers little insight into Islamic revivalism. In contrast, to the degree that we can abstain from selecting on our dependent variable and, instead, investigate Islam broadly, our causal explanations will better reflect processes of religious revivalism.

Lastly, this article by necessity intersects with questions of social science methodology and, specifically, the challenges comparative political scientists face when studying autocratic polities. While this article employs familiar social science methods, it also illustrates that diverse methodological approaches are necessary if accurate measures are to be obtained when researching state and society variation in authoritarian states. That is, while this study draws in part on public perceptions of Islam gleaned from survey data, it equally draws from in-depth interviews and focus groups with social activists, state bureaucrats and the intellectual and clerical leaders of Islam in Kyrgyzstan. These techniques are mutually informative and, I hope, add further weight to the “new consensus” in comparative politics that sees “microlevel anthropological” field research as not only consistent with but critical to sound statistical analysis and theory building.³

I organize my analysis in three parts. In Section One I detail variations in Kyrgyz Islamic identity. In Section Two I explore causal hypotheses that both the broad comparative politics and the region-specific Central Asia literatures forward as explanations of identity formation and Islamic revivalism. Lastly, in Section Three, I combine survey analysis of 1,000 Kyrgyz

² See, for example: Kathleen Collins, “Ideas, Networks, And Islamist Movements: Evidence from Central Asia and the Caucasus,” *World Politics* 60, no. 1 (2008): 64-96; Martha Brill Olcott, “The Roots of Radical Islam in Central Asia,” *Carnegie Paper No. 77* (January 2007); Vitalii Viacheslavovich Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia: Between Pen and Rifle, The Soviet Bloc and After*; (Lanham: Rowman, & Littlefield, 2005); Zeyno Baran, “Radical Islamists in Central Asia,” in *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Hudson Institute, 2005)

³ Charles King, “The Micropolitics of Social Violence,” *World Politics* 56, no. 3 (2004): 447.

respondents with directed interviews and focus groups of religious and political elites to assess the degree to which these hypotheses aid our understanding of Kyrgyzstan's Islamic revival.⁴ I conclude with the observation that if, as the data presented here suggests, Kyrgyzstan's Islamic revivalism has its roots in local communities rather than in Islam's perceived anti-colonial, anti-Western, or anti-secular orientation, then this revivalism, far from posing a threat, may well present a partial solution to Central Asia's increasingly ineffective autocratic governments.

I. Kyrgyzstan's Islamic Revivalism and Pluralism

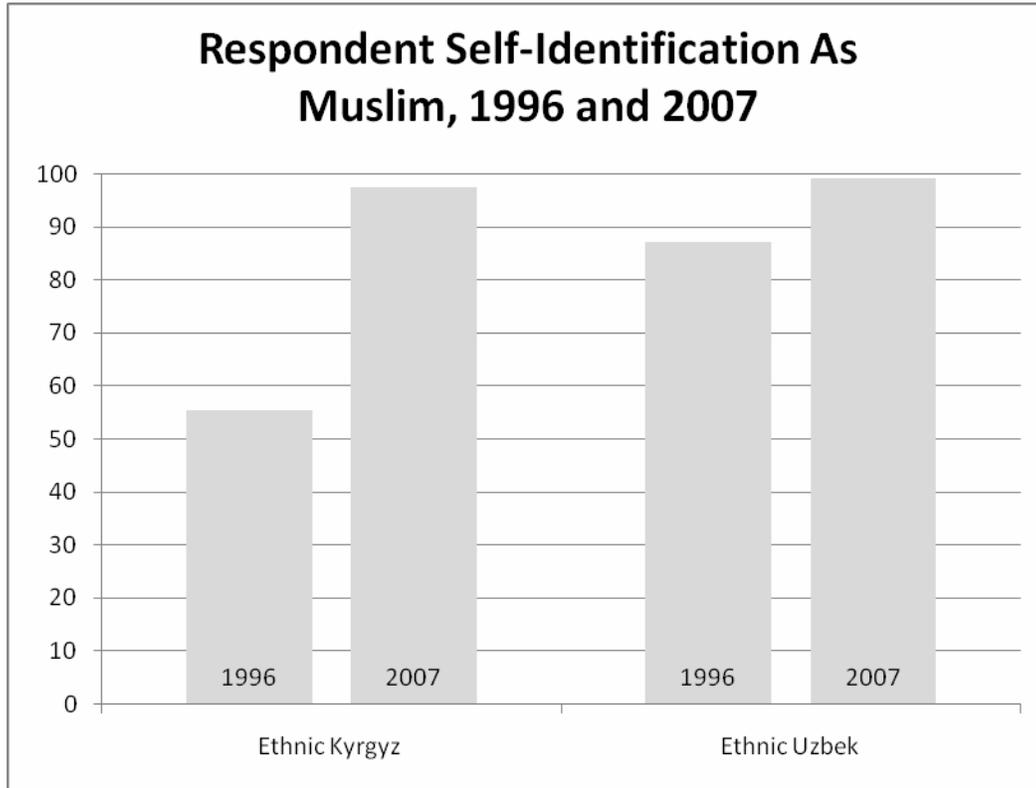
In a November 1996 poll commissioned by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), 55.3 percent of ethnic Kyrgyz and 87.1 percent of ethnic Uzbeks surveyed self-identified as Muslim.⁵ As illustrated in Graph 1 the number of Kyrgyz citizens self-identifying as Muslim dramatically increased in the decade since 1996. In a poll that colleagues and I commissioned in May 2007, 97.5 percent of ethnic Kyrgyz and 99.1 percent of ethnic Uzbeks reported they were Muslim.⁶

⁴ Country-wide survey of 1,000 Kyrgyz conducted in May and June 2007 as part of NSF-funded project, "The Effect of the Internet on Central Asian Society;" author interviews Bishkek, Osh, Dzhahalal-Abad, Kara-Kol, Ak-Terek and Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan, May-June 2007.

⁵ A total of 812 ethnic Kyrgyz and 210 ethnic Uzbeks were polled in the 1996 survey.

⁶ A total of 645 ethnic Kyrgyz and 107 ethnic Uzbeks were polled in the 2007 survey.

Graph 1 Changing Perceptions of Islamic Identity in Kyrgyzstan, 1996 and 2007



That Kyrgyzstan's two largest ethnic groups (according to the 1999 census, ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks represent 65 and 14 percent of the populations, respectively) more and more identify with Islam is clear. What is less clear is the role Islamic identity plays in everyday life and the diverse ways in which Islamic identities are perceived. I consider each of these questions in turn.

To assess the role Islam plays in daily life and, more specifically, variations in individual connectedness to Islamic institutions, we asked respondents in our 2007 survey:

1. *To what degree do you trust your local mosque?*
2. *Have you ever donated time or money to a religious charity?*

We selected these questions because they offer measures of connectedness without essentializing religiosity. That is, the survey questions do not reduce Islamic identity to ritualistic manifestations of piety, to the frequency of mosque attendance, compliance with

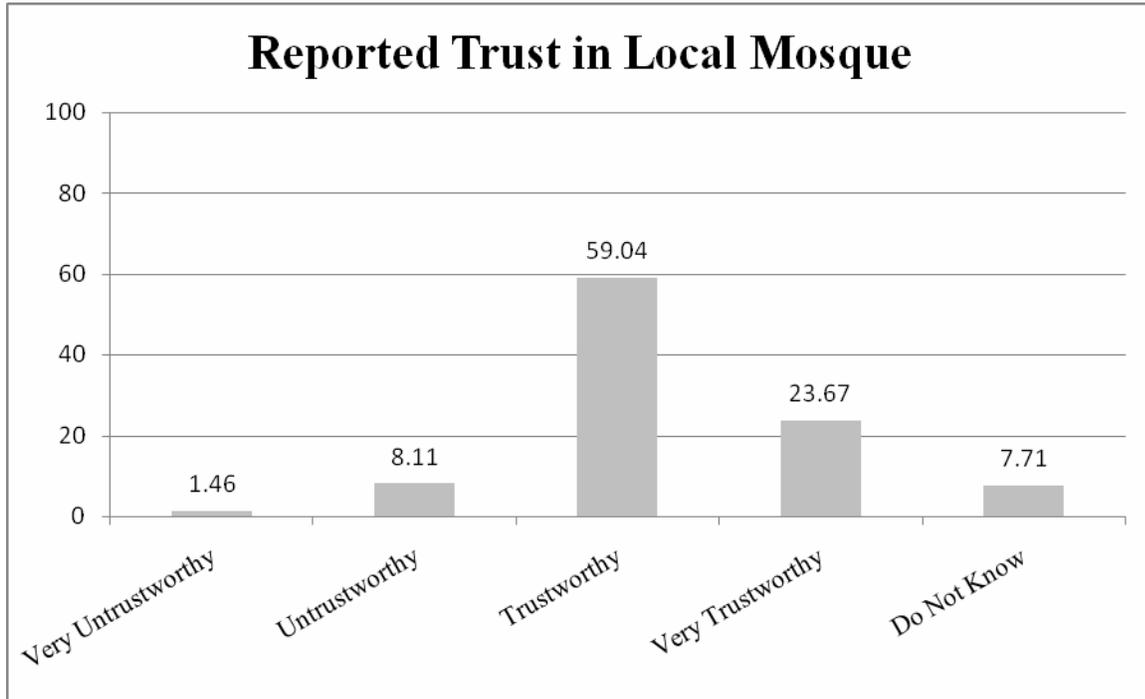
Sharia or the observance of the five daily prayers. Although other scholars do highlight mosque attendance and *Sharia* compliance, we thought these measures were inappropriate for a society that only recently has had the opportunity to reconnect with the free practice of Islam.⁷ Moreover, as Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori observe, ritualistic practices may be inappropriate in any context given that Islam, like any religion, is “subject to constant modification and change.”⁸

A second benefit our measures offer is that they capture individuals’ orientations toward both formal (mosque) and informal (charities) Islamic institutions. These related institutions serve differing though complementary roles. The neighborhood mosque provides spiritual guidance while Islamic charities advance the social welfare of local communities. Each plays a central role in Kyrgyzstan’s Islamic revivalism. As Graphs 2 and 3 illustrate, though, individuals’ perceptions of these institutions vary. Thus, while just over 80 percent of respondents do trust their local mosques, just under one quarter of those surveyed reported that they donated time or money to Islamic charities.

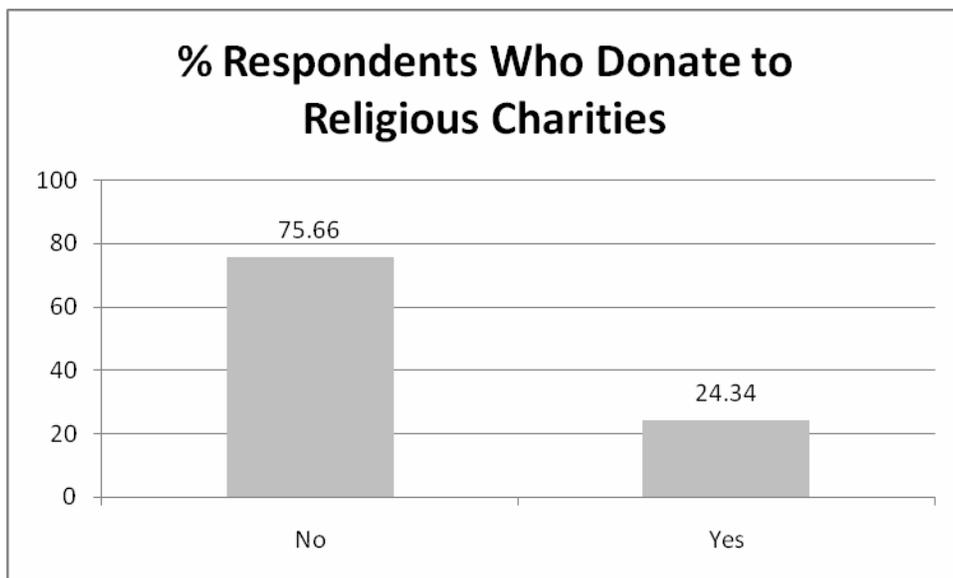
⁷ For examples and explanations of the mosque attendance approach to religiosity, see: Mohammed Shadid and Rick Seltzer, “Growth in Islamic Fundamentalism: The Case of Palestine,” *Sociological Analysis* 50, no. 3 (Autumn 1989): 291-298; Mark Tessler, “Islam and Democracy in the Middle East: The Impact of Religious Orientations on Attitudes toward Democracy in Four Arab Countries,” *Comparative Politics* 34, no. 3 (April 2002): 337-354

⁸ Dale F. Eickelman and James P. Piscatori, *Muslim Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), Robert W Hefner, “Public Islam and the Problem of Democratization,” *Sociology of Religion* 62, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 493

Graph 2 Perceptions of Local Mosques in Kyrgyzstan



Graph 3 Patterns of Time and Money Donation to Religious Charities in Kyrgyzstan



In sections two and three, I explore causal explanations for this variation and ultimately find that Kyrgyzstan's Islamic revivalism has its roots in local communities' responses to ineffective state rule rather than in Islam's perceived anti-colonial, anti-Western or anti-secular

orientation. Prior to moving to this analysis, though, I provide an overview of the three most prominent tendencies within Kyrgyz Islam: the muftiate, reformists, and *Hizb ut-Tahrir*. “Tendencies,” admittedly, is an imprecise term. The boundaries between the muftiate, reformists and HT, however, are equally imprecise.

a. The Muftiate

The Kyrgyz Islamic organization that currently enjoys the longest enduring and uninterrupted history is the muftiate. The Kyrgyz president, Kurmanbek Bakiev, describes the muftiate as representing the “true essence of Islam, its tolerance and peaceableness,” and sees the muftiate’s role as critical in informing Kyrgyz Muslims that “true Islam has nothing to do with religious extremist movements.”⁹ The true essence Bakiev is referring to is Hanafi Islam, one of the four schools of Sunni Islam and a school that notable for its tolerance of diverse “theological, philosophical, and mystical positions.”¹⁰

Also central to the muftiate’s perceived moderate nature is its long history as the official, Soviet institution representing Islam. The muftiate comfortably coexisted with Soviet secular elites, and, as such, it is not unreasonable for the region’s current political leaders to expect if not demand the muftiate maintain amicable relations with the central state. Though *de jure* autonomous from the secular leadership, the muftiate operates both in name and in function much as did its Soviet predecessor. Together with the Kyrgyz Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the muftiate continues to dispense much sought-after hajj visas. And the muftiate continues to educate the clerical elite and draft weekly sermons with an eye to state interests.

⁹ “Kyrgyz Leader Urges More Explanatory Work on Islam,” *Kabar*, July 6, 2006.

¹⁰ Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism* (Oxford University Press, 1996), 113. See also: T. Jeremy Gunn, “Shaping an Islamic Identity: Religion, Islamism, and the State in Central Asia,” *Sociology of Religion* 64, no. 3 (Autumn 2003): 389-410.

Some things have changed, however. Although the muftiate claims oversight over all clergy in Kyrgyzstan, imams routinely ignore the muftiate's directives. In May 2008, for example, the muftiate attempted to test Kyrgyzstan's approximately 2,000 imams' knowledge of the Koran and Islamic law. Revealingly, only half of this group agreed to take the muftiate's "attestation" exam.¹¹

Publicly eschewing the muftiate's seal of approval is perhaps understandable given that an increasing number of Kyrgyzstan's Muslims find fault with the muftiate. Kyrgyzstan's leading religious family in the Fergana Valley, the Kamalovs, freely dismisses the muftiate in interviews and sermons.¹² Abdyshukur Narmatov, the popular rector of the Bishkek Islamic University, openly feuds with the muftiate and with Murataly Dzhumanov, the country's head mufti. Dzhumanov has repeatedly dismissed Narmatov from his post, only to rehire the rector to appease student protestors.¹³

And Islamic University students are not the only ones who question Dzhumanov's oversight. In December 2006 hundreds gathered outside the mufti's office to protest Dzhumanov's controversial decision to follow the Russian muftiate's lead as to when to celebrate the Muslim holiday, Kurban Ait (Id al-Adha), rather than, as Kyrgyzstan's former mufti, Sadykzhan Kamalov urged, celebrate at the same time as the rest of the Muslim world.¹⁴

b. The Kamalovs and Reformist Islam

In December 2006, twenty-two of Kyrgyzstan's most prominent Muslim elites issued a

¹¹ "Koran Test Reveals Kyrgyz Imams with "Extremist" Links," *Kyrgyz Television 1*, May 21, 2008, <http://www.lexisnexis.com/>. Of those who did take the exam, 982 ultimately passed.

¹² Author interview with Ravshan and Sadykzhan Kamalov, Kara Suu (May 25) and Osh (May 26) 2007.

¹³ Sultan Jumagulov, "Studentam Vernuli Rektora: Aksiskii Sindrom Porazil Religioznie Ucherezhdene Kyrgyzstana," *IWPR*, November 5, 2002, http://iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=162578&apc_state=hruirca2002.

statement publicly faulting Mufti Dzhumanov, for “losing respect among the people” and for “splitting the country's Muslims into two camps.”¹⁵ Though the clerics did not explicitly define this split, their characterization of the mufti, “many think that he adopted a different religion,” indicates a growing dissatisfaction with a religious leader perceived as having a tenuous comprehension of Islam.¹⁶

Perhaps most outspoken in leveling charges of incompetence against mufti Dzhumanov are members of the Kamalov family in Kyrgyzstan’s southern Fergana Valley region. The Kamalovs, often portrayed as followers of Saudi-based Wahhabism, see themselves as co-travelers of Salafism, that is as proponents of an Islam purified of distorting Soviet accretions. Salafis believe that, other than the Qur’an, only the *sunna* “as recorded in the authentic sayings (*hadiths*) by the *salaf*,” by the prophet’s contemporaries, provide accurate religious guidance.¹⁷

Sadykzhan Kamalov, the unofficial leader of reformist Islam in the Fergana Valley, does not expressly embrace the label Salafi. He is quick though to criticize the rituals, the “birth and death rights and the shrine worship,” that he believes distract Kyrgyz from the true meaning of Islam, from the Islam “that has existed for 1,400 years.” His nephew, and now imam of the Al-Sarakhsiy mosque in Kara Suu, Ravshod Kamalov, takes this critique one step further. Imam Kamalov believes the muftiate encourages “distorted practices” so that morally suspect clergy might collect fees in return for the administering of lifecycle rights and so that the muftiate, in turn, can extract its own cut.¹⁸ If the muftiate’s May 2008 attempt to test the clergy’s religious knowledge is any indication, Kamalov’s views are likely widely shared. Imams, particularly

¹⁴ Interview with S. Kamalov.

¹⁵ “Kyrgyz Muslims to Stage Demos to Demand Clerics' Resignation,” *Kabar*, December 12, 2006.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Quintan Wiktorowicz, “The Salafi Movement in Jordan,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 32 (2000), p. 219.

¹⁸ Author interviews with S. and R. Kamalov.

imams in southern Kyrgyzstan, widely ignored the muftiate's attestation attempts. The mufti, for his part, publicly denounced Kyrgyzstan's southern imams for their "poor exam results."¹⁹

It is tempting, in light of this public rift between the southern clergy and the northern muftiate, to conclude Kyrgyzstan's Islamic community is deeply divided. It is worth emphasizing, though, that those who freely levy criticisms of moral corruption on the one side and charges of ignorance on the other are the same religious elite who emphasize that this divide is inconsequential.

Here the unfortunate August 2006 death of Muhammadrafik Kamalov is instructive. Muhammadrafik (Ravshod Kamalov's father and Sadykzhan Kamalov's brother) died in the course of what the Kyrgyz state describes as a botched antiterrorism operation. In the days immediately following Kamalov's death, anonymous government sources informed the press that the deceased imam was a "Wahhabi" and was shot while attempting to spirit two Islamic militants across the border into Uzbekistan.

The official state press rejected this account and Sadykzhan Kamalov, when queried about these conflicting accounts of his brother's death, responded with the instructive anecdote:

A heated dispute erupted between two prominent imams at a tea house. Each imam accused the other of being a Wahhabi. A third, younger imam, who had been quiet to this point, turned to his colleagues and asked: "What is a Wahhabi?" The two elder imams looked at the third in silence, for neither could explain what the insult Wahhabi truly meant.²⁰

What is equally instructive is the fact that Mufti Dzhumanov not only attended but offered the invocation at Kamalov's funeral, suggesting to the approximately five thousand mourners in attendance that the divide between the muftiate and the reformers was, at least

¹⁹ "Koran Test Reveals Kyrgyz Imams with "Extremist" Links."

²⁰ Interview with S. Kamalov.

temporarily, forgotten.²¹

c. Hizb ut-Tahrir and Political Islam

Immediately prior to Dzhumanov's invocation, Ayub Khan Mashrabov, a prominent *Hizb ut-Tahrir* (HT) spokesman in southern Kyrgyzstan addressed the somber gathering. Mashrabov's presence poses an uncomfortable irony both for the muftiate and the muftiate's *de facto* partner, the Kyrgyz state. The Bishkek political elite often cite the presence of HT members at local mosques as proof that one or another imam has "turned Wahhabi." Here at Kamalov's funeral, though, was a prominent HT activist standing alongside Kyrgyzstan's head mufti, offering the audience a curious tableau of "official" Islam and an organization that has, as its central goal, the overthrow of officialdom.²²

HT's stated mission is to replace secular Central Asian governments with a Muslim Caliphate uniting all believers. This call to the Caliphate has won HT outlaw status in Kyrgyzstan, a status HT embraces. Repression of HT members, Mashrabov explains, exposes the moral shortcomings of the country's secular elite. The Kyrgyz state's response to HT, though, has been inconsistent. For example, a December 2006 HT relief mission to help earthquake victims in Naryn, a city in north-central Kyrgyzstan, succeeded in its humanitarian aims but failed in its publicity goals; police only temporarily detained the HT volunteers. In Uzbekistan, Mashrabov anticipates, HT activists would have been jailed and beaten.²³

HT may be more successful than Mashrabov himself estimates. HT, well known in

²¹ *Imam Kamalov Funeral* (Video: Kara Suu, Kyrgyzstan, August 7, 2006).

²² Tokon Mamytov, Deputy Director of the Kyrgyz National Security Service June 2004 statement is typical of this "guilt by association" tactic: "Hizb ut-Tahrir has been carrying out propaganda work with servicemen, policemen, members of non-government organizations and journalists to try to win them over... Most of their meetings with local residents take place in mosques." See: "Kyrgyz Prime Minister Warns of Threat of Extremism," *Interfax*, June 28, 2004

²³ Interview with Ayub Khan Mashrabov

southern Kyrgyzstan for at least a decade, is now increasingly present in the Kyrgyz north. Over the course of the past three years residents of Ak Terek, a village along the shores of Lake Issyk Kol in northeastern Kyrgyzstan, have joined HT en masse in response to the party's organization of much-welcome mutual aid associations.

Moreover, the village residents make no effort to hide their HT sympathies; the first local residents I spoke with – two teenagers at a water pump – thought nothing odd about my inquiry and directed me to a prominent HT leader's house. I spent the balance of the afternoon going house to house, drinking tea and hearing matter-of-fact accounts how the local imam and, with him, a large portion of the village turned to HT over the past few years.

What was particularly striking about these conversations was the reason why people joined HT. The attraction lay not in the anti-Western and anti-Semitic ideology often cited in western accounts of the party, but rather, in HT's ability to mobilize residents to provide the services the local Ak Terek government could not. The party helped organize the repair of the irrigation system for the village's apricot groves and, similar to HT's activities throughout southern Kyrgyzstan, partnered with other charities to help residents meet basic welfare needs.

Ak Terek is unusual in that it is a northern city with a marked HT presence. What drew Ak Terek's residents to HT, though, was not unusual; I heard similar accounts in other northern cities – in Kara Kol and Bishkek. And this seeming disconnect between HT's leaders, people like Mashrabov who are fluent in HT's anti-Semitic and anti-Western propaganda, and the everyday practice of religion and meaning of religious community, is indicative of Kyrgyzstan's Islamic revivalism more broadly. Elites, be they from the muftiate, the reformers or HT, do stake out clear positions. But these positions are not mutually exclusive and, moreover, often fall to the side at the local level, be it at an imam's funeral or fixing irrigation canals.

II. Explanations of Kyrgyzstan's Islamic Variation

That these carefully articulated positions might fall to the side is not, though, what many theories of Islamic revivalism would predict. Rather, existing studies of Central Asia's Islamic suggest that either (1) this revivalism is a manifestation of increasing tensions between Western and traditional cultures, or (2) Islamic revivalism is a response to the secularization of politics or (3) Islamic revivalism represents an attempt to create a post-colonial and distinctly nationalist identity. I explore each of these hypotheses below and conclude with an alternative causality, that of Islamic revivalism as a local response to failing autocratic rule.

a. Islamic Revivalism as Response to Western Values and Culture

Culture clash hypotheses figure prominently in both the academic and popular press.²⁴ These hypotheses, despite their many detractors, are not without empirical foundation.²⁵ Islamist groups themselves invoke clash arguments in their attempts at social mobilization. Hizb ut-Tahrir, the would-be standard bearer of Islamist radicalism in Central Asia, concludes “clash of civilizations is an inevitable matter” and promises HT will “open the eyes of faithful Muslims to the destructive aspects of Yankee activities.”²⁶

HT, admittedly, represents only one tendency within Kyrgyzstan's broader Islamic revivalism. Critically though, HT is not alone in its Muslim versus non-Muslim formulation. Ravshon Kamalov's Friday prayer that I attended, for example, concluded with the injunction to

²⁴ Examples include: Samuel P Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996); Paul Johnson, “The Biggest Threat We Face,” *National Review* 58, no. 15 (August 28, 2006): 18; Bernard Lewis, “The Roots of Muslim Rage,” *The Atlantic* 266, no. 3 (September 1990): 47

²⁵ For critiques of the clash thesis, see: Clifford Geertz, “Which Way to Mecca?,” *The New York Review of Books* 50, no. 10 (June 12, 2003); Edward W. Said, “The Clash of Ignorance,” *The Nation* (2001); Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*

“keep fighting the enemies of Islam the world over.” My research colleague, Alisher Saipov, ribbed at the time that Kamalov’s imperative was for the benefit of an unanticipated Western scholar, perhaps in search of a Wahhabi mosque.

Others scholars, however, find little humor in such statements and, instead, urge we interpret injunctions to battle at face value. Ariel Cohen concluded in an October 2003 Congressional Briefing that HT’s message resonates far beyond its “5,000 – 10,000 hard-core supporters” in Central Asia and “poses a direct challenge to the Western model.”²⁷ Didier Chaudet sees in Central Asia new, “Al-Qaeda” groups that rally support by focusing on a “‘Far Enemy’ (most of the time the US, more broadly speaking the Great Powers) that needs to be fought as fiercely.”²⁸

And though less alarmist than Cohen or Cahudet, Ahmed Rashid nevertheless sees a yawning divide between Central Asia and the West: “There is a palpable cultural vacuum at the heart of Central Asia, which cannot be filled by consumerism or imitations of Western culture.”²⁹ What “Western culture” ultimately is in these clash hypotheses is not always clear. Some scholars stress gender roles as central to this clash.³⁰ Others highlight Muslim and non-Muslim cultures’ differing perceptions of family.³¹ Still others note a basket of differing views

²⁶ Hizb ut-Tahrir, *The Inevitability of the Clash of Civilisation* (London: Al-Khilafah Publications, 2002), <http://www.khilafah.com/images/images/PDF/Books/clashcivi.pdf>; “Anti-US Leaflets Distributed in Kyrgyz Capital,” *Agence France Presse*, January 31, 2002.

²⁷ Ariel Cohen, “Terrorism Extremism and Regional Stability in Central Asia,” Congressional Hearing, October 29, 2003.

²⁸ Didier Chaudet, “Islamist Terrorism in Greater Central Asia: The “Al-Qaedaization” of Uzbek Jihadism,” *Russie.Nei.Visions* 35, no. December 2008 (December 2008): 6.

²⁹ Ahmed Rashid, “The New Struggle in Central Asia,” *World Policy Journal* 17, no. 4 (Winter2000 2000): 33.

³⁰ Irshad Manji, “To Fix Islam, Start From the Inside,” *Newsweek* (December 31, 2008); Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, “The True Clash of Civilizations,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 135 (March): 62; David S. Landes and Richard A. Landes, “Girl Power,” *New Republic* 225, no. 15 (October 8, 2001): 20-22.

³¹ Quintan Wiktorowicz and Suha Taji Farouki, “Islamic NGOs and Muslim Politics: A Case from Jordan,” *Third World Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (August 2000): 685-699.

on sexual behavior, gender roles, alcohol, race and the death penalty.³² The central thesis that unites all these approaches is that, regardless the value, Islamic revivalism is a response to what Muslims perceive as Westerners' excessive moral laxity.

b. Islamic Revivalism as Response to Secular Governments

One further Western value frequently cited clash hypothesis is secularism. Thus, Samuel Huntington writes: "Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state, often have little resonance in Islamic... cultures."³³ Gilles Kepel similarly emphasizes Hamas' portrayal of the "vices of the secular [Palestinian] bourgeoisie, whose Western morals... were denounced as an effect of "Jewish depravity"" in explaining that Islamist party's spike in popularity in the late 1980s.³⁴ It is worth noting, however, particularly in the post-Soviet context, that one need not be Western nor democratic to be secular. Islam Karimov, president of infamously autocratic Uzbekistan, fumed in 1998: "Islamists must be shot in the forehead! If necessary, I'll shoot them myself."³⁵

Karimov is not the only Central Asian leader to perceive an Islamist threat. Former Kyrgyz president Askar Akaev warned radicals were trying "to extend the geographic range of Islam, and even to set up a state - an Islamic caliphate."³⁶ Former Kyrgyz Prime Minister Tanaev concluded in 2004: "A few years ago Hizb-ut-Tahrir was only a religious organization,

³² Ali A. Mazrui, "Islam and the United States: Streams of Convergence, Strands of Divergence," *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 5 (2004).

³³ Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 40.

³⁴ Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trial of Political Islam* (I.B.Tauris, 2006), 154.

³⁵ "President Karimov Says He Will Shoot Islamic Fundamentalists," *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, May 5, 1998.

³⁶ "Kyrgyz President Pledges to Fight Religious Extremism, Praises CIS," *Rossyskaya Gazeta*, May 1, 2001.

but two years ago it became extremist and has a goal of overthrowing a political regime.”³⁷ In 2006, Kyrgyz Prosecutor-General Kambaraly Kongantiyev warned Islamists: “openly advocate setting up an Islamic caliphate in the Fergana Valley and overthrowing the secular regime.”³⁸ And in January 2009 the Tajik supreme court moved to ban Salafism, concluding conservative Islam was a threat to national security.³⁹

Given this intersection of secularism and Central Asian autocracy, and given that it is secular autocracies that Central Asia’s Islamist groups are opposing, there is good reason to explore anti-secular explanations of Islamic revivalism independent of anti-Western explanations. In fact, some scholars go as far as to argue that Islamist groups, in their struggle against secular autocrats, exhibit many of the same values as do Western liberals. Bjørn Olav Utvik, for example, writes:

Many Islamist movements are involved in a bitter struggle for the establishment of democratic rules in a region dominated by authoritarian regimes, and increasingly the move towards a principled defense of popular sovereignty and political pluralism legitimated by references to the holy scriptures of Islam.⁴⁰

Though one may question Utvik’s finding that Islamist movements may be champions of political pluralism, the idea that that Islamic revivalism broadly may be a response to secular autocracies as much as it is to secular western democracies, is one worth investigating.

c. Islamic Revivalism as Nationalism

In Utvik’s formulation, Islamic revivalism is both an outcome to be explained and a

³⁷ Kadyr Toktogulov, “Kyrgyz Prime Minister Urges Stronger Fight Against Religious Extremism,” *Associated Press*, June 28, 2004.

³⁸ “Kyrgyz Prosecutor Warns Of Links between Terrorism, Crime,” *ITAR-TASS*, November 21, 2005.

³⁹ Farangis Najibullah, “Salafi Ban Reflects Tajik Officials' Growing Fear,” *Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty*, January 9, 2009.

⁴⁰ Bjørn Olav Utvik, “The Modernizing Force of Islamism,” in *Modernizing Islam: Religion in the Public Sphere in the Middle East and Europe* (Rutgers University Press, 2003), 65.

variable that itself gives rise to new democracy-oriented identities. Adeeb Khalid similarly sees Islamic revivalism as occupying a middle point in a three stage causal chain, only in Khalid's analysis, Islamic revivalism ultimately assists in producing nationalist rather than democratic identities. Moreover, whereas Utvik emphasizes the central role of the "holy scriptures of Islam," Khalid sees religion, paradoxically, as assisting new and expressly secular identities. Writing of the post-Soviet Uzbek case, he explains:

Islam today is widely understood in Uzbekistan in ways that are profoundly secular.... Islam, nation, and tradition coexist happily in Uzbekistan. A 'return' to Islam today is widely seen as a way of reclaiming the national cultural patrimony and of decolonization, but little more.⁴¹

Religion in Khalid's analysis is instrumental; Islamic revival is prompted by a desire to part with a colonial past and forge, in its place, a new nationalist and secular identity. The "mandatory homage to the Great Russian people" is replaced with new histories that document the horrors of the purges and collectivization and symbols of Russian rule are replaced with "religious commodities."⁴² Khalid's depiction of Uzbek Islamic revivalism is jarring; he writes, for example, of a new, post-Soviet Uzbek dining on pork and admiring recently acquired Islamic trinkets that "share shelf space with foreign liquor and tobacco."⁴³ But it is this dissonance that, for Khalid, proves the point. Khalid's pork-eating, whisky-drinking, Marlboro-smoking Uzbek surely exists. How representative, though, is this Uzbek of Islamic revivalism broadly? Our surveys suggest that Khalid's interlocutor may be more the exception than the rule.

⁴¹ Adeeb Khalid, "A Secular Islam: Nation, State, and Religion in Uzbekistan," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35, no. 04 (2003): 586.

⁴² Adeeb Khalid, "A Secular Islam: Nation, State, and Religion in Uzbekistan," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35, no. 04 (2003): 584, 587 Sébastien Peyrouse similarly sees an "instrumental use of Islam" in Central Asian elites' attempts at post-Soviet nation building. See: Sébastien Peyrouse, "Islam in Central Asia: National Specificities and Postsoviet Globalization.," *Religion, State & Society* 35, no. 3 (2007): 245

⁴³ Khalid, "A Secular Islam," 584, 586.

d. Islam as Local Response to Ineffective Autocratic Rule

A fourth causality of Islamic revivalism, and a causality I briefly outlined in the introduction, sees the proliferation of new religious groupings neither as a vehicle for nationalism nor anti-secularism nor anti-Westernism, but rather, as a response to autocratic rule that is ineffective in its efforts (1) to control religion and its attempts (2) to provide basic public goods such as healthcare, education and pensions. The Kyrgyz muftiate, the institution tasked with furthering the government's vision of Islam, is internally divided and externally faulted for its multiple missteps. As for the Kyrgyz state's provision of basic public goods, the Kyrgyz government at the beginning of the 21st century cannot provide what Lenin delivered in the beginning of the 20th century: electricity on a regular and predictable basis.⁴⁴

To compensate for the state's failure, a diverse group of Islamic organizations and institutions—the local mosque, Hizb ut-Tahrir, the Kamalov's various religious and business groupings in Osh and Kara Suu, and even the Turkish *Diyanat*, the Turkish government's spiritual board—are stepping in and providing the food, shelter and education that the central government cannot.

Others have identified a similar causal link between state weakness and Islamic revivalism. Kathleen Collins, for example, finds:

Islamism is likely to emerge as a major source of opposition when two conditions are present: when a state is characterized by significant political and economic uncertainty and when Islamist ideologues offer a counterideology to failed democracy and nationalism.⁴⁵

Collins's analysis of political Islam in Central Asia and the Caucasus, though innovative in that it moves beyond theories of Islam's incompatibility with the West or with secularism, nevertheless

⁴⁴ "Electricity Blackouts are Back in City," *The Times of Central Asia*, December 24, 2008.

⁴⁵ Collins, "IDEAS, NETWORKS, AND ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS," 72.

does raise questions of conceptualization and interpretation. Collins finds a “vast array of Islamist movements” emergent in the region whereas I have urged care in distinguishing between the rhetoric of Islamist elites and the beliefs of those who constitute the movement of Islamic revivalism broadly.⁴⁶

Ultimately, I build on Collins’s valuable insight that local variables may shape variations in Islamic identity but find, rather than Islamism, community-oriented Islamic activism. More specifically, I find an iterative cycle of *Islamic* revivalism where: (1) Muslim values leads to deepening interpersonal trust, (2) deepening trust encourages capital (both social and literal) aggregation, (3) capital aggregation yields effective Islamic charities and businesses, and (4) these effective charities and businesses win local admiration and thereby encourage the further spread of Islamic identities. In short, shared norms yield social and economic capital and this growing capital, in turn, helps the further expansion of Islamic norms.

This causality is by no means unique to the Kyrgyz case or to Islam. Robert Putnam, for example, writes of religion in America:

The social ties embodied in religious communities are at least as important as religious beliefs per se in accounting for volunteerism and philanthropy. Connectedness, not merely faith, is responsible for the beneficence of church people.⁴⁷

Critically, though the social capital argument may be familiar in the American context, this causality has been largely overlooked in studies of Islamic revivalism. To the extent empirics support this causality, however, Central Asians—and Central Asia’s partners—have considerable grounds for optimism. The institutions and organizations of Islamic revivalism, rather than posing a threat to western or secular values, may prove capable partners in mobilizing

⁴⁶ Ibid., 64.

local populations to provide what central governments cannot.

III. Investigating Hypotheses of Islamic Variation

The preceding discussion generates the following propositions:

1. If, as scholars like Rashid, Cohen and Chaudet argue, Islamic revivalism is a response to Western values, we would expect that respondents who identify more closely with Islamic institutions will express greater animosity toward Western institutions
2. If, as Huntington and Kepel find, Islamic revivalism is motivated by an opposition to secularism, we would expect respondents who identify more closely with Islamic institutions to express greater animosity toward secular governments
3. If, as Khalid finds, Islamic revivalism represents “a way of reclaiming the national cultural patrimony and of decolonization” we would expect those who most closely identify with Islam to express greater animosity to institutional legacies of the colonial heritage—for example, the Russian media
4. Lastly, if Islamic revivalism is part of an iterative cycle where shared religious norms assists the formation of charitable organizations which, in turn, assist local populations when central states cannot, we would expect respondents most engaged with these charitable organizations to be those who are most disillusioned with their national leaders

I use data from a May-June 2007 nationwide survey of 1,000 Kyrgyz respondents to investigate these propositions. The survey was conducted by the BRiF, a Kazakhstan-based polling agency that Dr. Beth Kolko (University of Washington) and I have commissioned to conduct surveys as part of a multiyear study of new information communication technologies in Central Asia.⁴⁷ Respondents were selected according to the random route method. In addition to the two questions measuring variations in Islamic institution connectedness, respondents were

⁴⁷ Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 67.

⁴⁸ “The Effect of the Internet on Society: Incorporating Central Asia into the Global Perspective” (National Science Foundation Award #0326101, Sept. 2003 - Aug. 2008). BRiF’s website is: www.brif.kz.

asked to report the degree to which they (1) trust the English-language media; (2) are satisfied with national government officials; (3) trust the Russian-language media; and (4) trust their neighbors. Responses were recorded on a five-point scale: (1) very untrustworthy / very unsatisfied, (2) untrustworthy / unsatisfied, (3) trustworthy / satisfied, (4) very trustworthy / very satisfied. Tables 1 and 2 below summarize variations in perceptions along these measures.

Table 1 Ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbek Perceptions of Local Mosques and Donations to Religious Charities (Percents)

	<u>Local Mosque</u>	<u>Donate to Religious Charity</u>
Yes		75.66
No		24.34
Very Untrustworthy	1.46	
Untrustworthy	8.11	
Trustworthy	59.04	
Very Trustworthy	23.67	
Do Not Know	7.71	

Table 2 Ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbek Perceptions of the English Language Media, Russian Papers, National Office-Holders and Neighbors (Percents)

	<u>English Language Media</u>	<u>Russian Papers</u>	<u>National Office Holders^a</u>	<u>Neighbors</u>
Very Untrustworthy	4.39	3.06	14.49	0.80
Untrustworthy	15.43	13.56	36.84	11.97
Trustworthy	20.74	41.22	40.96	65.43
Very Trustworthy	4.65	9.57	4.12	19.02
Do Not Know	54.79	32.58	3.59	2.79

^a Perceptions of national office holders were measured by degrees of satisfaction rather than trust.

I used regression analysis to assess if perceptions of the English-language media, Russian papers, national office-holders or neighbors help account for the variance in reported trust in local mosques or donations to religious charities. Given the high percentage of “do not know”

responses to the English language media and Russian paper questions and the possibility that these responses are substantively significant, English media and Russian paper were recoded as a series of dummy variables with the pattern: Eng/Rus Dummy1—“very untrustworthy,” Dummy2 “untrustworthy,” Dummy3—“trustworthy,” Dummy4—“very trustworthy,” Dummy5—“do not know.” The reference category for both the English media and Russian paper dummy variables is Dummy1—“very untrustworthy.”⁴⁹ I performed an ordinal logistic regression in analyzing predictors of “trust in mosque” and a logistic regression in analyzing the binary variable, “donate time or money to religious charities.”

Lastly, I performed regressions using the full population of ethnic Kyrgyz and ethnic Uzbeks (655 respondents) and regressions that included only ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks who self identified as Muslim (641 respondents). Limiting the population to only Muslims had no effect on the pattern of statistically significant results. The findings summarized in Table 3 were obtained using the full sample of Muslim and non-Muslim ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. Table 4 summarizes predicted probability changes for statistically significant variables.

⁴⁹ I have not included the comparatively few do not know responses to the other questions. In regressions where these responses are included, the same pattern of statistically significant results.

Table 3 Regression Illustrating Relationships between (A) Trust in the Local Mosque and Donations to Religious Charities and (B) Perceptions of the West, Colonial Legacies, Secular Political Elites, and One’s Neighbors

	(1) Trust in Local Mosque		(2) Donate to Religious Charity	
Eng Dummy2	-0.586	(0.448)	0.578	(0.604)
Eng Dummy3	-0.681	(0.436)	0.434	(0.595)
Eng Dummy4	0.923	(0.563)	1.969**	(0.663)
Eng Dummy5	-0.388	(0.416)	0.795	(0.570)
Rus Dummy2	-0.719	(0.568)	-0.184	(0.650)
Rus Dummy3	-0.646	(0.536)	0.0697	(0.611)
Rus Dummy4	0.0173	(0.582)	0.534	(0.658)
Rus Dummy5	-0.784	(0.544)	-0.0595	(0.622)
Sat Nat Office	0.170	(0.101)	-0.411***	(0.116)
Neighbors	0.800***	(0.156)	-0.181	(0.169)
_cons			-0.393	(0.930)
cut1				
_cons	-2.451**	(0.842)		
cut2				
_cons	-0.466	(0.801)		
cut3				
_cons	2.958***	(0.811)		
N	655		655	

Standard errors in parentheses
 * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4 Discrete Change in the Probability of Degrees of Trust in Mosque and the Donations to Religious Charities

	Change	Trust in Local Mosque				Donate to Religious Charity
		VU	U	T	VT	Yes
Tr Neighbors	1→4	-0.03	-0.23	-0.06	0.35	
Sat Nat Office	1→4					-0.25
Eng Dummy 4	0→1					0.45

Note: 1→4 is a change from “1—very untrustworthy / very unsatisfied” to “4—very trustworthy / very satisfied. The 0→1 change from the dummy variable, Eng Dummy4 represents a chance from the reference category, Eng Dummy1, “English language media is very untrustworthy” to Eng Dummy4, “English language media is very trustworthy.” VU, U, T and VT stand for very untrustworthy, untrustworthy, trustworthy, and very trustworthy.

a. Discussion of Results

The regressions provide further insight into why ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks gravitate to their local mosques and religious charities. Specifically, three of the four predictor variables analyzed do yield statistically significant results while one variable, trust in Russian newspapers, exhibits no significant causal relationship with either trust in the mosque or donations to religious charities. I consider these results and their implications for broader theories of Islamic revivalism in the discussion below.

b. English-Language Media and Anti-Western Value Theories of Islamic Revivalism

The English language variable is statistically significant, though in a direction opposite to that anticipated by clash of civilizations theories. The probability of donating to religious charities increases by .45 percent for respondents who viewed the English language media as very trustworthy compared to respondents who reported the English language media was very untrustworthy, holding all other variables at their means.⁵⁰ Granted, one might reasonably question if the English language is an adequate proxy for the West. Alastair Pennycook answers in the affirmative: “if we want to consider seriously the notion of a ‘clash of civilizations’ ... we might consider these as “Islam” and “English,” (rather than Christianity).”⁵¹

Similarly, Ratnawati Mohd-Asraf writes: “English is also seen by many as being the embodiment and carrier of Judeo-Christian cultural values, and that of Western civilization, and conjures various images—positive as well as negative—to the myriad people that use it.”⁵²

⁵⁰ “Very untrustworthy” is the reference category for the English language media dummies.

⁵¹ Sohail Karmani and Alastair Pennycook, “Islam, English, and 9/11,” *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education* 4, no. 2 (2005): 158.

⁵² Ratnawati Mohd-Asraf, “English and Islam: A Clash of Civilizations?,” *Journal of Language, Identity & Education* 4, no. 2 (April 2005): 104.

Critically, these findings are predicated on an assumption that discernable civilizations exist, an assumption that scholars like Edward Said and Clifford Geertz challenge and an assumption that finds little support in our survey of Kyrgyz public opinion.⁵³

c. Russian-Language Newspapers and Nationalist Theories of Islamic Revivalism

Islam as nationalism causalities would similarly predict a negative relationship between perceptions of Russian-language newspapers and respondent identification with Islamic institutions. Here too, as with the English media proxy, one might question whether language, in this case Russian language, is an appropriate measure of identity. Those who formulate the Islam as nationalism thesis, though, do draw this connection. Khalid, for example, writes:

New sects and religious groups (such as Ahli hadis, Ahli Qur'on, and a host of local offshoots), many of them with no previous record in Central Asia, have appeared. *This was accompanied by great interest in the Arabic script and attempts to replace Russian loan words with Arabic or Persian terms. Many texts, hitherto taboo, appeared in print again, and the Qur'an was translated into Uzbek for the first time in 1992.*⁵⁴

Despite this proposed relationship between language and national identity, survey analysis in the Kyrgyz case does not find any significant causal relationship between Russian language and Islam. This negative finding is not what we would anticipate if, as Khalid argues, “a ‘return’ to Islam today is widely seen as a way of reclaiming the national cultural patrimony and of decolonization, but little more.”⁵⁵

⁵³ Said, “The Clash of Ignorance”; Geertz, “Which Way to Mecca?”

⁵⁴ Khalid, “A Secular Islam,” 584 Emphasis added.

d. Secular National Office Holders

In contrast to perceptions of the Russian media, respondents' views of national office holders do prove to be a statistically significant predictor of citizens' donations to religious charities. The predicted probability of donating time or money to religious organizations is .25 lower for respondents who are very satisfied with national office holders compared to respondents who report they are very unsatisfied, holding all other variables at their means. Does this mean, however, that Islam and secularism is incompatible?

It is worth noting that, of the two measures used to assess variations in citizens' connectedness to Islamic institutions, it is Islamic charities and not mosques that exhibit a causal relationship with secular elites. Stated differently, local mosques are not focal points for those most untrusting of national government rule. Muslim clergy, just like the clergy of any religion, could provide a language and ideology of political opposition. Islamist opposition, however, is not what Kyrgyz are seeking in their imams. Rather, the link between the failing autocratic state and Islam runs through religious charities, through the organizations that meet citizens' social welfare needs. In contrast to what Collins finds, Kyrgyz public opinion suggests that it is not "Islamism" that "is likely to emerge as a major source of opposition when... a state is characterized by significant political and economic uncertainty," but rather, it is Islamic charity that is likely to emerge.

These charities are both formal and informal. At the formal, institutionalized level, Muslim parochial schools figure prominently in ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbek daily lives. The Imam Bakyt school in the southern Kyrgyz city, Osh, for example, educates young women who cannot afford to pay tuition at Osh State University. And while theology and Arabic language is a

⁵⁵ Ibid., 586.

central part of the Imam Bakyt curriculum, the school also emphasizes secular subjects. The school director has requested an English-language ESL teacher from Peace Corps Kyrgyzstan for the past three years, though laments that his requests have yet to be approved.⁵⁶

In Nookat, a town 46 kilometers southwest of Osh, the Imam ut-Termizii boys' madrassa functions in much the same way as the Osh school. Here too religious education is central, but secular subjects also figure prominently. The day I attended students were conducting a "street law" simulation as part of an American Bar Association program to teach Kyrgyz youth legal rights and how to safely and civilly defend these rights when interacting with the police.⁵⁷ These two schools are illustrative of a broader trend across Kyrgyzstan—the state-run education system is collapsing and, in its place, local Islamic societies and schools are assuming increasingly central roles. Kyrgyzstan now has fifty madrassas registered with the muftiate.⁵⁸ The actual number of these neighborhood madrassas, though, is likely considerably higher given that many parochial schools do not register with the muftiate.⁵⁹ The attraction of these schools, though, is not only the educational opportunities they offer, but also the broader social welfare services they provide. Students in a focus group at the Osh Theological College, confided—after their Dean left the room—that the college's provision of three daily meals and, if needed, a dorm room, figured prominently in their higher education choices. Room and board at the college allowed parents' scarce resources to be focused on younger siblings.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Imam Bakyt School, Osh, Kyrgyzstan, May 27, 2007.

⁵⁷ Imam at-Termizii, Nookat, May 25, 2007.

⁵⁸ "Islam Faces Hurdles in Bishkek," *The Times of Central Asia*, January 29, 2008.

⁵⁹ Interview with Toigonbek Zakirovich Kalimatov, Director Kyrgyz State Agency for Religious Affairs, May 22, 2007, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

⁶⁰ Osh State Theological Faculty, Osh, May 27, 2007. The college is affiliated with Osh State University. It is financed, though, by Turkey's Diyanat (the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religion) and by local donations.

These formal institutions are complemented by a web of informal, neighborhood-level Islamic *jamiyats* or organizations. Funding for these *jamiyats* in part comes from prominent local elites. Sadikzhan Kamalov and his associates at the International Center for Islamic Cooperation, for example, act as a financial and organizational clearing house for Islamic charities throughout Osh. Equally if not more important, though, are the financial and time contributions ordinary citizens make to the *jamiyats*.

These organizations and the critical role they play have thus far received little attention in the scholarly literature on Islam in Central Asia. They proved critical, though, in caring for the Andijan refugees, Uzbek citizens who crossed to the Kyrgyz side of the Fergana Valley following the Karimov government's forceful repression of May 2005 protests. With the Kyrgyz government either unable or, weary of further souring already tense relations with their Uzbek neighbor, unwilling to assist the refugees, it was the Kyrgyz *jamiyats* that assisted the refugees find shelter, food and work.⁶¹

c. Islamic Revivalism and Trust in One's Neighbors

Lastly, the extent to which respondents expressed trust in their neighbors also proved statistically significant, though in this case the relationship runs toward local mosques rather than charities. This result suggests that, much like Putnam's finding of a causal relationship between religion and community interpersonal "connectedness" in the American case, so too in Kyrgyzstan are religion and interpersonal trust positively linked. It might appear odd that a similar statistically significant relationship does not exist between trust and donations to Islamic charities. As the preceding discussion, illustrates, though, charitable donations are prompted first

⁶¹ Meetings with Uzbek refugees and Kyrgyz *jamiyat* members in Osh and Kara Suu, May-June 2007. Names withheld for safety considerations.

and foremost by government failure—failure to provide for the Andijan refugees, to provide education, to provide basic welfare. Where this failure is most acute, donations are most forthcoming. Shared Islamic norms provide the social capital for charitable organizations to emerge but it is perceptions of state failure that most immediately prompt people to give.

IV. Conclusion

My primary goal in this essay has been to assess competing theories of Islamic revivalism. The Kyrgyz case offers a clear lens with which to study these theories. Seven decades of Soviet control led to the near complete isolation of Kyrgyz citizens from the broader Muslim community. With the collapse of Soviet rule in 1991, though, Kyrgyz began to travel abroad, receive outside scholars, and explored the diverse debates that shaped Islamic discourse in the twentieth century. And just as Kyrgyz were exploring religious identities anew, so were social scientists reconsidering potential interrelationships between Islam and politics.

Some scholars found in the Soviet demise proof of democracy's sure ascent. Others, however, warned of new threats, of a rising China and an anti-Western Islam. China indeed is rising, but it has proven more a partner than a problem for leading powers. In contrast, Islam continues to capture the imagination. Islamist ideologues press for the destruction of Israel, achieved destruction in Afghanistan, and carried out devastating bombings in New York, London, Madrid, and Bali. In short, Islamist groups are a threat.

Equally threatening, though, is anticipating an Islamist threat where no such threat exists. To a real degree, this is what scholars of Central Asian Islamic revivalism have done, focusing on the rhetoric of a small, anti-Western, anti-Russian, and anti-secular Islamist elite while overlooking the role Islam plays in Central Asian society broadly. This essay demonstrates that

when scholars expand their field of view to the broader polity, the image of Islam that emerges is a constructive and familiar one. Central Asians are drawn to Islam for the same reasons people the world over are drawn to religion; Islam provides spiritual insight and a sense of community connectedness. This latter quality of Islam, its ability to connect Central Asians at the local level, is cause for hope.

Four of the five Central Asian states—Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—struggle to meet the basic needs of their populations. Prompted by this state failure, Islamic charities have increasingly stepped in to deliver what central governments cannot. Religion provides the shared norms, the social capital, critical for the functioning and growth of these local charities. As such, when manifest in this form, Islamic revivalism in countries like Kyrgyzstan should be embraced rather than feared.

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