

ISLAMIC SUPREME COUNCIL OF AMERICA
1201 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE NW SUITE 300
WASHINGTON DC 20004
TELEPHONE: (202) 661-4654
FACSIMILE: (202) 248-1580
HTTP://WWW.ISLAMICSUPREMECOUNCIL.ORG

TRADITIONAL VS. RADICAL ISLAM IN CENTRAL ASIA AND THE CAUCASUS

To thee We sent the scripture in truth, confirming that which came before it and guarding it in safety. So judge between them by that what God has revealed and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the truth that has come to you. To each among you we have prescribed a law and an open way. If God had willed, he would have made you all a single people. But his plan is to test you in what he has given you so seek goodness. All of you are returning from God and he will show you the truth of the manners in which you disputed. (5:48)

Thus have we made you a moderate nation... (2:143)

Oh people we have created you from male and female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another (not that you may despise one another). Verily the most honored of you in God's sight is the most righteous and God has full knowledge and is well acquainted with all things. (49:13)

The desert Arabs say "we believe." Say, "You have no faith but you only say "we have submitted our wills to God" for faith has not yet entered your hearts... (49:14)

From the Quran and hadith, the scholar of Al-Azhar Muhammad Abu Zahra deduced a theory of human nature, which holds that people differ in their understanding and in their thinking. From one person to another, thoughts and opinions differ about the same subject. This is especially true in religion. The heavenly message is the subtlest one and it is very difficult to fully understand all of its aspects. That is why we see that, although people agree on a certain religion, they have different opinions and ways of interpreting it.

As previously isolated races and nations converge through the process of globalization and technical advancement, there are more opportunities for differences to arise. As a result we see the birth of different philosophical, sociological, economical, political schools of thought in the same religion.

The main source of differences between people stems from their desire, and desires change from one person to another. It is our desire that determines that things are nice or good, not our vision. The thing we see might itself not be good, but our desire says it is. Our favor of certain issues and the strength of our opinion toward them develop through the power of the desire inside us - which we feel more and more. Our desire makes things good in our point of view whereas they are bad in others'.

Socrates said, "If the thing that is disputed is known, the dispute will dissolve." If you understand why you are disputing, you can solve the dispute; if the dispute is not known, you will never solve it. Therefore so long as we neglect to recognize the power of our internal desires in forming our opinions, we will never resolve disputes, even in religion. _

In politics, differences of opinion are the result of the fact that those struggling for power express opinions and judgments that are products of their own desires. As they support the things they desire, they imagine that they are very loyal in their aims and that what they aim for is the full truth. Yet it's possible that, for instance, nationalism or racism are their motivation.

The goal of those who dispute is authority - to be the sultan, king or central power. They will find supporters and groups that support them in their understanding, and then together they will fight anyone who disagrees with them. This is especially true today among people who follow religion. In Islam there is a message, given by Prophet Muhammad (saws) that is applicable to Muslims of all times. Prophet (s) delivered a dynamic religion that builds bridges with all other religions and communities that exist near it, by it, or within it. For that reason he said, "What I fear most for my community is that a hypocrite who has a knowledgeable tongue but no wisdom in his heart will change the people with his eloquence and misguide them with his ignorance."

Major religious disputes, outside the realm of pious scholars, fall in the hands of people who are narrow-minded in their understanding and extreme in their opinions. These radicals cause confusion inside the religion and lead outsiders to see the religion falsely as one that endorses violent actions.

As we consider traditional Islam versus radical Islam - in Central Asia or anywhere else - we see that the difference between them lies not in the basic beliefs of the religion, such as the Oneness of God, the message of Prophet (saws), or the obligations (five prayers, hajj, fasting, charity etc). The differences arise from an ideology sprouting from love of authority and misguidance by people who don't fully understand the religion. The dispute revolves mainly around politics and certain beliefs that have nothing to do with the essence of the religion. This is why the biggest scholar of hadith, Imam Bukhari related that, Zainab bint Jahsh said that the Prophet (saws) woke up one night with a red face and said "There is no god except God! Woe to the Arabs for the evil that is approaching." Fourteen hundred years ago the Prophet (saws) warned of the dispute that would divide the Muslim community.

Someone might ask why, after the Prophet (saws), Muslims had disputes. The answer is simply that, as Islam grew to encompass a greater diversity of people, many new issues arose. We may further categorize disputes into two groups: the first kind of dispute does not separate the community. For example, one of the major Companions of the Prophet (saws) Omar ibn Abdel Aziz said, "I don't like to see the companions of Prophet (saws) agreeing on the same issue. I like to see that they disagree." If they disagree they might find ways to see a problem from different points of view, and in this way there will

be more solutions to the same problem. This kind of dispute never separated the community.

The other kind of dispute destroys the unity of the community. These fractious quarrels, which can be seen today as in the past, are based on political differences- how to have authority in a country; who will rule and who will be ruled. Political differences were the source of division between the Umayyids and Abbasids, the Fatimids and the Seljuks, the Mamluks and the Ottomans. All these disputes were for authority and political issues, not for religion. With political issues, it is understood that everyone fighting for authority is looking at the religion from his own perspective and then convincing his supporters to support him even though he might be wrong. His supporters will follow blindly and support him to the end - going so far as to commit acts of violence, as has happened many times in the past and recently. This is especially true in the 18th century when the Wahhabi movement inspired the biggest split between Muslims of the common era. We will come to this later.

At this point we must note that Prophet (saws) said, "A good believer must listen and obey as long as he is not being ordered to commit a sin." The Prophet (saws) also taught that you could not oppose a ruler who does not forbid you from praying. Therefore traditional Muslims understand that you have no right to create confusion, disrupt the peace or upset the leadership of a country, nor attempt to eliminate their authority by force, as long as they give you the freedom to carry out your religious obligations. Under such conditions, as was instructed since the time of Prophet Muhammad (saws), you have no right to oppose the democratic system. From his time, democracy has consisted of a "shura" or council. With "shura", people sit together, consult with one another and decide on one person to represent them. From the beginning, Islam has mandated democracy through a "shura". The biggest evidence of democracy in Islam is what happened when the Prophet (saws) passed away without appointing anyone to succeed him. Sultans and kings appoint their elder sons as their successors, but the Prophet (saws) didn't appoint anyone and left it for the Muslims to decide.

There were three groups with different opinions as to who should succeed the Prophet (saws): the first was the Ansar, the Prophet's (saws) helpers in Medina. They said that leadership should be with them because they supported Prophet (saws) when he immigrated. Another group, led by Abu Bakr and Umar believed that the immigrants who came with Prophet (saws) to Medina should lead because they were the first to enter Islam. The third group called on Ali to lead because he was from the Prophet's (saws) family. The disagreement didn't last long; through a "shura", the three groups quickly came to the consensus that since Abu Bakr was ordered to lead the prayer when the Prophet (saws) was ill, he should take the leadership. The majority voted for him to be the leader so, in his election, the precedent in Islam for the peaceful transition between rulers was set.

The Wahhabi Movement

Slowly, as political issues have arisen, we've seen radical groups forcing themselves into power, the biggest of which has been the Wahhabi/"Salafi"

movement. The Wahhabi movement was developed by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (d.1787). He fully studied all the books of the day and became one of the most dogmatic in his understanding of the religion. According to Imam Abu Zahra of Al-Azhar University (from p. 208 of his History of Islamic Schools of Thought), Abd al-Wahhab was far more extreme in his understanding than any Islamic scholar before him and his followers have gone to even greater extremes. They've done away with the concept of analyzing religious duties, as a matter of jurisprudence based on the Prophetic traditions and obligations, and made everything forbidden. If something doesn't suit them, for example smoking, they deem it forbidden. And, anyone who smokes they consider outside Islam. They go so far as to say that anyone who smokes is an unbeliever, which is a grave declaration in Islam. When they didn't know about coffee, they also considered it forbidden. They still considered the earth was flat and fought anyone who said it was round - even until the 1970s when Wahhabi/ "Salafi" scholar Bin Baz insisted the earth was flat.

The Wahhabi movement has never considered it sufficient to promulgate the religion by tongue or pen, but have wielded a sword to fight anyone who differs from them in ideology. In their opinion they are fighting innovation. They mistook the verse of Quran that says "You are the best community of humanity. You are for goodness and preventing badness," to mean that they have a duty to kill anyone whose behavior contravenes their definition of "goodness".

Their ideology went the way of violence especially as a result of Muhammad bin Saud (a relative to Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab), accepting his school of thought and reinforced it with the power of the sword. After him, the Wahhabis began to fight anyone who came in their way. Suddenly, as the movement reached different cities and villages, they would destroy books, mosques, Muslim relics, and force everyone to follow them. They forbade photographs. They even decided that for any Muslim to say our "Master" for Prophet Muhammad (saws) was an innovation worthy of punishment unless retracted. Dr. Abu Zahra continues to say that Wahhabi scholars force their opinions on everyone even today, considering people who are different from them in ideology as wrong (p.210). As Dr. Abu Zahra mentioned elsewhere, there are more than 150 schools of thought in Islam.

In the last two decades, throughout the world, a wave of radical, often militant, movements has emerged. Today I would like to explore the origins of these movements and how they have affected Islam in general and Muslim populations around the world with a specific focus on the regions of Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Traditional Islam

Traditional Islam views religion as a pact between man and God to keep the way of moderation and tolerance. According to this belief, there can be no compulsion or force used in religion. From the time of the Prophet Muhammad (s), peace and tolerance were practiced between religious groups, and respect was granted to differences in belief. Contrary to this, the ideology of the Wahhabis and those who follow their example, "Salafis," is built on the concept of political enforcement of religious beliefs, permitting no differences in faith

whatsoever. In the Wahhabi belief, faith is not an option; it is mandated by force. Many of today's Wahhabi/ "Salafi" movements enforce religion through violence and oppose their country's rulers as seen in the Middle East.

While today's "Islamist"-led revolts and insurgencies throughout the former Soviet Union may appear to be a new phenomenon, in fact the roots of the militant were planted before the fall of the Islamic caliphate and its subsequent dissolution of Islamic political power.

Islam in Central Asian Origins

The Companions of Prophet Muhammad (s) first conveyed Islam to Central Asia and the Caucasus. In 667 CE they crossed the Oxus into Bukhara. Within 100 years of the Prophet's death, Bukhara, Samarqand, Kashgar (in today's Xianjiang) and the shores of the Caucasus were all under Islamic rule. The graves of the Companions who reached these lands so distant from Arabia are sites of veneration for traditional Muslims, and are found in Bukhara (present day Uzbekistan), at Derbent, Daghestan, on the Caspian Sea and at Khokand. What the Companions established, an Islamic milieu and way of life, flourished and grew under the direction of the Companions and their successors. As time progressed, Islam's teachings were propagated through pious scholars of moderate, mainstream Islam. As the center of Islamic scholarship moved eastward and northward over the centuries, from Baghdad, to Tus, to Merv, finally settling for a long stay in Bukhara, Samarqand, and further south in Herat, Islam continued to grow in the hearts of the people, spread primarily by the teaching and propagation efforts of those pious scholars.

In the Caucasus, the spread of Islam was arrested in large part by the Caucasus Mountains. East of the Caspian however, Islam spread northwards through both conquest and resettlement. With the conquests of the Golden Horde and their conversion to Islam en masse at the hands of pious masters of Islam from Bukhara, there was a sudden expansion of Islamic territories north and west. Kazakhstan, Tatarstan and even the approaches to Moscow fell under Muslim sway. Similarly under Babur and his successors, much of the Indian subcontinent came under Muslim rule.

With the conquest of these vast areas of territory by Muslim rulers, the real work of propagating Islam among peoples holding a wide range of beliefs began in earnest. This task fell to these pious masters and their students, who sought out the most difficult living conditions and locations to settle, and thus provided inspirational examples to the indigenous peoples. Building forts or khaniqahs in remote areas, the great masters, beginning with Yusuf Hamadani and Sa`ad al-Din Kashgari, dispatched delegations to present the perfection of Islam (the state of Ihsan).

We find some of these teachers had their origins in Central Asia. Samarqand, Bukhara, Merv, Tus, Heart - all these were names of cities whose religious life was enhanced by the influence of these great scholars. Their names were more renowned than the kings of the lands where they lived, and their word had more force.

Shah Bahauddin and the Naqshbandi school came to dominate much of the Central Asian area, along with its branches, the Yasaviyya, the Samaniyya and

the Uwaisiyya, accompanied to a lesser degree by the Qadiriyya and the Suhrawardi.

This situation persisted until the end of the 18th century. While the locus of Islamic learning migrated from Central Asia eastward to India, and westward, back to Damascus and southwards to the Hijaz and Yemen, and the political center moved to Anatolia under the Ottomans, the spiritual heart of Islam remained to a large degree fixed, right in the heart of Central Asia.

When medieval times saw Islamic lands devastated by the onslaught of the Mongols, in wave after wave over several centuries, it was the pious masters and their students who proved the mainstays of Islam's survival, often standing untouched and implacable as the terror swirled around them. Thus it was that, at the behest of a moderate scholar of internal and external knowledge, Ghazan Khan forsook the primordial religion of the steppes and entered the fold of the believers, followed as if in one step by the entire nation of Mongols. So while Genghiz Khan slaughtered 'as a punishment on the followers of the Prophet for having forsaken their religion,' Timurlane conquered with the flag of Islam flying in the fore. Of this wondrous transformation, Hafez wrote:

"From the poisonous winds that blew over the rose-garden, it is strange and a wonder that the color of the rose and the scent of the jasmine still remain."

In the late 18th century, Naqshbandi preachers began to have success in penetrating the massive ramparts of the Caucasus range, an area which until then had proven impregnable to the advance of armies or the spread of Islam. And just as the Czar's attentions turned to the conquest of this area, it became lush with Islam; the seeds of Islam, planted by pious scholars, gave flowers suddenly as if under a sudden rain. Simultaneously, imperial designs by Russia resulted in a series of brutal wars and resistance movements in which mujahid saints played the leading role. Imam Mansour, Ghazi Mohamed, Sayyid Jamaluddin al-Ghumuqi al-Husayni, Mollah Muhammad Al-Yaraghi, Imam ShamyI, Hajji Murad, Uzun Hadji and others, mostly from the Naqshbandi and Qadiri schools.

Defeat and Communism

With the conquest of much of Central Asia in the mid 19th century, the Islamic centers of learning known as "khaniqahs", "waqfs" and "madrasas" came under the rule of the Czar. Efforts to intimidate by the Czarist governors ensued. While not resulting in open conflict, as it did in the Caucasus, their efforts did create a tremendous feeling of oppression. The Czar, distrusting the power wielded by the spiritual leaders, sought to curtail their economic holdings as a way of limiting their economic base among the people.

With the advent of communism, Islam was banned, forced to go underground, and, throughout most of Central Asia, actually disappeared. Traditions were kept alive orally, as most books were inaccessible to the common citizen, particularly with the imposition of the Cyrillic alphabet. The learned men were exiled, imprisoned or killed. Atheist communism had no esteem for scholars, mullahs or spiritual guides for it rejected outright belief in God. The measure of any society, in Marx's view, was its means of production, which in agrarian societies like Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan consisted of its farms and workers.

Soviet schooling, elimination of religious teaching and the eradication of Islam resulted in a society nearly cut off from the treasures of its spiritual heritage.

In less than 70 years, most Central Asians lost the connection to their origins, except for what was passed down in oral tradition.

Independence and Revival

Despite efforts to eradicate religion, an unprecedented revival of interest in Islamic practices, especially the spiritual traditions, followed the downfall of the Soviet Union. Some of the former Soviet states are eager to satisfy their thirst for spirituality, providing full support to the resurrected Islamic establishments in order to rebuild the deconstructed Islamic institutions. Uzbekistan is foremost in this effort, having spent literally millions of dollars in reconstructing mosques, "madrasas", and holy shrines of prominent saints. At the same time, the bookstalls of Tashkent, Samarqand and Bukhara are filled with newly published books about the Naqshbandi and Yasavi Sufi Orders, religious poetry, explanations of the Quran and Prophetic traditions, as well as various modernist Islamic writings. As if to catch up on 70 years of disconnection, the Muslim intelligentsia and the common man is both devouring information on the Islamic traditions, whose remembrance thrilled generations, even in communism's darkest era.

Nonetheless, the disconnection remains, for Islam by nature cannot remain a literary tradition since it relies so heavily on the human pursuit of moral excellence. The schools of thought, without authentic teachers to transmit their teachings, are only shells of their former reality. Therefore, the revival of interest in Islam throughout Central Asia and the Caucasus, although spirited, is incomplete.

The scholastic vacuum, having left a gaping hole in tradition, is often filled by the nearest substitute, with disastrous results. Spouting verses of Quran and Prophetic traditions, well-financed Wahhabi/"Salafi"preachers exploit the spiritual yearnings of the people and harness them to adopt their teachings. While outwardly "Islamic," the main ingredients of traditional Islam are missing: love, compassion, mercy, tolerance, respect and forgiveness. These words are rarely spoken, and if so only in regard to people of the same creed. All others are rejected as "unbelievers" to be ignored, and, undoubtedly if the Wahhabis were given power, to be eliminated. The actual focus of these preachers is not so much Islam as it is politics. Arguing that Islam is a religion of action in which state and religion are not separated, they reduce Islam to political goals and power-seeking, subjugating its spiritual dimension completely.

The cleverest dimension of the Wahhabi/Salafi ideological onslaught is their ability to earn the sympathy of Western thinkers and analysts by claiming to be "reformers" of Islam. They present innocuous literature of struggling for religious freedom and practice as if to demonstrate their supposed non-violent, ideological goals. Yet, what they deceitfully conceal is those ideological goals are not a matter of choice.

Their desire for an "Islamic state" for example is not just an ideal, it is a duty they will not surrender or relinquish. Therefore, the pursuit of such an ideal will inherently lead to violence as long as there is societal or governmental opposition to its establishment. Their ideological goals do not provide for negotiation, compromise, or mediation with other societal perspectives of the nation-state.

It is imperative for the foreign observer to critically determine at what point the pursuit of religious ideals is actually an incitement to violence and civil

unrest. As nations founded on principles of democracy and freedom, we should not condone the imposition of any ideals-- social, political, or religious-- by physical force or psychological intimidation.

The concept of secularism in governments of Central Asia such as Uzbekistan should not be viewed as a rejection of the Islamic heritage and culture of its people. Rather, it serves as a barrier to religious extremists who are relentless in their pursuit of self-serving political goals, cloaked in the name of Islam for protection. It is a way to prevent vigilante groups from using the faith of Islam as a weapon or tool for power.

Wahhabi penetration

In the late 80's and early 90's a flood of Muslim radicals from Arab Gulf nations, Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, North Africa began to cross the borders of Central Asian nations and the Caucasus unimpeded. With the downfall of communism, the newly emerging nations had little or no resources to fight the insurgencies. Fighters, mainly trained in Afghanistan, as it is alleged, with funding from Wahhabi sources and through the sale of opium and other narcotics, were able to penetrate borders, make quick guerilla attacks and then rapidly withdraw. Trained in the crucible of the Russo-Afghan war, these radicals were primarily fighters, with little interest in ideology. However, their backers were radical ideologues: Bin Laden, Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, Shaykh Umar Abdur Rahman and numerous other Arab "reformers," following the teachings of the strict Wahhabi/ "Salafi" ideology.

Latter-day "reformers" of Islam, the Salafis like Rashid Reda, Jamaluddin Afghani and other modernist pan-Islamic thinkers, and radicals like Syed Qutb, Hassan al-Banna, Mawlana Mawdoodi, had all drunk deeply at the fount of Wahhabi ideology, and from it came their militant approach. These groups rejected traditional religious understanding and instead focused on the politicization of religion. Though they have since renamed their movements as if to disconnect them from "Wahhabism", the essence of their teachings is the same.

Trained in their home countries in militancy, establishing core cells and building up organizational and financial prowess, these radical leaders were not content with establishing mosques, Islamic schools or social institutions - they sought to build a military movement. Initial goals-- overthrow the governments of their home countries or adopted nations and create the "Islamic" state, following their version of "pure" Islamic law-- adapted to suit their ideology.

These heavily funded operations often posed as relief organizations, but in reality they were working to spread the Wahhabi/ "Salafi" ideology adopted by various radical movements. The massive infiltration of political Islam into a society previously void of political activism laid the foundation for an organizational strategy founded on anti-government pseudo-Islamic rhetoric. Today the strategy of the Wahhabis in Central Asia is two-pronged: 1) flood the religious "market" with massive quantities of literature from radical Wahhabi/ Salafi reformists, which advocates the "Islamic revolution" or "Jihad" against the government, targeting students and intelligentsia who are now free to read and study; 2) encourage militant activism, ranging from public protests and the founding of anti-government mosques and schools, to the actual engagement in acts of terror and military insurgency operations.

Such operations are often staged from remote areas of neighboring countries, creating a "natural" barrier to governmental forces that pursue them.

According to Salafi/Wahhabi ideology, the end justifies the means. Therefore it comes as no surprise to find the "scholars" of militant Islam declaring permissible all that Islam in fact declares prohibited. This includes:

- Declaration of "Jihad", against Muslim governments and their citizens reasoning that the failure to implement Islamic law makes the government enemies of Islam and "unbelievers". This contradicts authentic Islamic law, which states that unless a government prevents Muslims from praying, revolt is not permitted. This ruling is derived from the verse in the Quran, "Obey God, obey your Prophet, and obey those in authority over you."
- Killing any member of the government stating that they are "kafir" or "unbelievers". Though seemingly just a matter of words, such a declaration amongst Muslims subjects them to immediate death since they would be considered "enemies of Islam". Such an accusation of heresy or apostasy is a grave sin in Islam and contradicts traditional Sunni belief.
- Killing citizens who do not revolt against the government, as collaborators with unbelief.
- Selling Islamically forbidden products and materials, i.e. opium, to finance any aspect of their "Jihad."
- Dealing in arms smuggling.
- Kidnapping, buying and selling human beings.

A Current Example

Chechens are moderate Muslims who want to follow the Islamic legal standards in rules of worship and civil society, but who see no reason to impose such law on anyone else. When the first war for Chechen independence took place, it was not so much religiously motivated as it was supported by religious enthusiasm.

What took place during the latter phase of the war and after the peace treaty with Russia resulted in today's disastrous situation in Chechnya. Radical foreign Islamists were attracted to participate in the Chechen war for several reasons:

- 1) It was a chance to learn the art of war from those who know it well.
- 2) It developed unbreakable ties of camaraderie with Chechnya's military leaders.
- 3) It created a safe haven to train and recruit.
- 4) It established an independent military base where no government could interfere with it.
- 5) It provided the ability to implement money-making operations at will, including kidnapping for profit, racketeering, money-laundering and drug trafficking.

The above goals were realized in Chechnya in a very short time. Using Shamil Basayev as their "kingpin," the Wahhabis were able to establish an independent militant movement operating outside all laws and restrictions. The Wahhabis poured finances and arms into Basayev's militia, creating a full-scale army in Chechnya. Their intent on expansion was clearly demonstrated by the insurgency into Dagestan in August 1999. The primary objective is to create an "Islamic" state, with the expectation that eventually it would stretch

from Afghanistan to North Africa, and from Turkey south to Yemen and the Sudan.

It is alleged that Basayev seeks nothing but self-glory - no matter the cost. Like the other Islamist movements throughout the world, inspiration comes from Wahhabi/ "Salafi" teachers.

Because of the indulgence of the ego's natural desire for power, their ideology rejected all forms of inner self-control and favors instead the physical and organizational pursuit of outward discipline. Thus the emphasis is purely external, relegating purification of the self, and leaving just a shallow set of rules and restrictions. There is no balance between body and spirit that is so essential in true religion. The dogma ends up in a dry set of dos and don'ts, should's and should not's - something which most Westerners find abhorrent. Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov unfortunately has had to compromise with Basayev and the Wahhabi factions he controls, to avoid internal conflict, but that does not mean Maskhadov accepts or supports their beliefs. This kind of malignant infiltration is just what the Wahhabis have sought, imposing themselves in the midst of political matters where they normally would not be able to go. Having forced Chechnya's president to accept their presence on Chechen soil gives them implicit credibility by which to manipulate worldwide Muslim political opinion.

Maskhadov consistently opposed the Wahhabis, for which they tried to assassinate him three times before the current war, and once in the past three months. Maskhadov said that Chechnya may build its own version of a state founded on Islamic civil laws, but expressed confidence that the Chechens would never adopt Wahhabism, or any other extremist beliefs, pointing out that for the Chechens "democracy is more attractive." [RIA Novosti 8/10/98] Since such militants historically have preferred stirring up bedlam and trouble rather than allowing a nation to develop and mature, it is likely that any military victory in the current war will quickly be replaced by internal fighting, much as what has taken place and continues presently in Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

Counter-strategies

Nations and societies that have succeeded best at preventing "Wahhabi" infiltration and insurgency are those which provide basic freedoms to their populace and which establish a strong economic base, thereby eliminating the causes of dissent and conflict. Unfortunately, this is easier said than done in the example of Central Asia and the Caucasus since economic development and the transition from communism to capitalism has been so difficult.

Another important defense is to provide adequate spiritual provision and guidance for the populace, which cannot be tampered with by external forces. This can only be accomplished by training a large cadre of professional Imams and scholars in traditional mainstream Islamic beliefs and practices, and arming them with adequate information to fight the false propaganda spread by "Wahhabis" in vast quantities. Important to such a strategy is heavily funding religious programming for television and radio and the publication of mainstream Islamic literature. At the same time, religious publications and propaganda materials from outside sources must be restricted, preferably by the strength of religious upbringing and education than by actual censorship.

Jihadist/Islamist insurgencies are also preventable. Close cooperation among neighboring countries can ensure that perpetrators of violence do not escape across the borders between them. Strong security agreements between neighbors will ensure that cooperation occurs on the pursuit and apprehension of militants in remote areas. If there is not cooperation of security and military forces when pursuing insurgent groups, they are free to attack and then withdraw over the nearest border with impunity. Finally, as in any war, the best defense is a strong offense. The best counter to Wahhabi/ "Salafi" militancy is mainstream moderate teachings, spread as quickly and effectively as possible. The antidote to the Wahhabi / "Salafi" ideology, while providing an outlet for the expression of piety and Godliness, is the traditionally moderate path, by which Islam, tradition, and culture had previously flourished in this region. It is hoped that with foresight and careful planning, a second Golden Age will be witnessed in Central Asia.