

Is the Bernard Lewis Plan On the Move in Central Asia?

by Ramtanu Maitra

By now most of the major media outlets have spelled out with a great deal of inaccuracy what “exactly” happened in the eastern Uzbek town of Andijan on May 13: How many got killed and who killed them. Led by the British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, the world media has accused the much-maligned Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov of yet another bloody and ruthless suppression of “public dissent.” But, not much has been heard about who the players really are, and what their end objective is.

Although all the tiles of this jigsaw puzzle have not been put in place, it is evident that the answers to these questions can only be found in London, Birmingham, Bradford, and Liverpool. The old British colonial establishment, with the former intelligence officer Bernard Lewis as its mentor, seems to have activated another course of action that can bring endless bloodshed in Central Asia. The objective is to keep both China and Russia under an open threat, and no one could better serve this “Bernard Lewis Doctrine” than the Muslims controlled and nurtured in Britain—the Hizb ut-Tahrir.

Our story here concentrates on the geopolitical origins of the destabilization of the Central Asian republic of Uzbekistan, but it is crucial to note that Uzbekistan is only a small slice of the process which Lyndon LaRouche identified in the Fall of 1999 as the “Storm Over Asia.” In a lengthy video documentary at that time, LaRouche described the strategy being deployed in regions stretching from the Caucasus to the Subcontinent, to the Far East, as a deliberate attempt by British-American forces to destroy Russia and China, in particular, as foci for an emerging Eurasian bloc for economic development.

(For a quick map’s-eye overview of this deployment today, see page 38.)

First, the Significance

The most significant aspect of the violent incident in Andijan is that it was located in the Fergana Valley, a confluence of three former Soviet Republics—Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Andijan is located about 25 miles west of Osh, Kyrgyzstan, where the seed crystal for the March uprising against Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev was planted. Within a span of 48 hours after the uprising began in Osh, Akayev was gone.

Andijan is also about 25 miles east of Namangan, the hotbed of the Saudi-funded Wahabi-form of Islamic extremism. Juma Namangani, now dead, was the leader of the movement that began in Namangan. In other words, Andijan is in the heart of the Fergana Valley, whose 7 million inhabitants make it the most densely populated region of Central Asia.

For years, the Uzbek government has pointed out that the valley is a hotbed of Muslim extremists aiming to set up an Islamic state in the region. The valley is largely ethnically Uzbek, but is split up between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan in a confused patchwork of Soviet-era borders, which leave enclaves of one country surrounded by the territory of another. In general, Uzbekistan holds the valley floor, Tajikistan holds its narrow mouth, and Kyrgyzstan holds the high ground around. Although the valley mouth is narrow, the valley land mass is vast, at 22,000 square kilometers (8,500 square miles). The Pamir and Tien Shan mountains that rise above the valley are only dimly visible, but supply the valley with water.

During the Soviet era, the valley was a major center of cotton and silk production. The hills above are covered by walnut forests, and there is also some oil and gas in the valley. That scene has not changed much. What has changed significantly since the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union,



Bernard Lewis (center) started his career with British intelligence. He brought Zbigniew Brzezinski (left) under his wing in the late 1970s, and made Vice President Dick Cheney (right) and the U.S. neo-cons dance to his tune in 2001, in the Middle East.

is the valley's integration with the "free world," a process that has turned Central Asia into a hot bed of transnational Islamic militants, controlled and funded by outside forces. On the ground, the new foot soldiers of colonial Britain and feudal Arabia are keen to replace the secular regimes in order to set up an Islamic Caliphate.

Recently, the Kyrgyz media reported that the country's border control services said that militants coming from Afghanistan, financed by arms and drugs trafficking, were gathering near the Kyrgyz borders, and that the illegal entry into Kyrgyzstan of foreign nationals and individuals without any citizenship, is on the rise. It is important to note that these militants were not parachuted out of airplanes, but were coming through Afghanistan and Pakistan. It could very well be a ticking time bomb for India, China, and Russia.

The Foot Soldiers of the U.S. Neo-Cons

In the Fergana Valley, in addition to various Islamic preachers, there are two major Islamic groups whose common objective is to change the regimes in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakstan. These are the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and the Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT). While the IMU thrives on violence, the HT is strongly promoted as peaceful by the United Kingdom, where it is headquartered. But records indicate that the IMU and the HT work hand-in-hand. Most of the IMU recruits are from the HT, and according to Rohan Gunaratana, an expert on world terrorist outfits, Khaled Sheikh Muhammad, the alleged mastermind of 9/11, and Abu Musaab al-Zarqawi, the Jordanian of Chechen origin who has remained active in the Iraqi insurgency against the U.S. occupying forces, were both once members of the HT.

The IMU consists of hardcore, well-trained militants of various ethnic origins—Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kyrgyz, Kazaks, Uighurs, and Chechens, among others. These militants iden-

tify as their ancestors those who had participated in the Basmachi rebellion against the Soviet Union during the 1918-23 period, fighting along with the White Russians and the British Army. Many of the IMU members, who settled later in Afghanistan, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, among other places, fought against the Russian invaders in the 1980s in Afghanistan, and were put under the wings of the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

Reports indicate that there are at least 2,000 of these militants, who have been protected by the Pakistani ISI, with the nod of approval by the Americans and the British. One possible reason that they were protected is that the IMU is single-mindedly seeking revenge against the Russians and those Central Asian leaders who support Russia.

The relationship between the Taliban and IMU is as old as the IMU, going back a long way, before the attacks of 9/11 that prompted the U.S.-led campaign against the Taliban. After the Taliban had captured the Afghan capital, Kabul, in September 1996, Juma Namangani and Tahir Yuldashev—long-time adversaries of Uzbek President Karimov, and considered to be the founders of the IMU—held a press conference in the city to announce the IMU's formation. Namangani, who had served as a Soviet paratrooper in Afghanistan in the 1980s, became the group's leader (or Ameer), and Yuldashev became its military commander. Their aim was to topple Karimov and turn Uzbekistan, and ultimately the whole of Central Asia, into an Islamic state. The Taliban provided them with a place to shelter and train—and to plot against Karimov. It is also said that Yuldashev developed contact with Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan, and that they became mutually supportive.

After the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in the winter of 2001, Namangani was one of those killed. But Yuldashev led a large number of Central Asian families over the border

Insurgents' Destination: The Fergana Valley



into South Waziristan, a tribal area in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province, where the central authorities of Pakistan wield little power. Available information suggests that a large number of these IMU fighters, along with some al-Qaeda and Taliban militia, have moved up to Badakhshan province in eastern Afghanistan. A few, however, are still based in the Waziristan tribal areas of Pakistan. In March 2004, during heavy fighting in the Waziristan area, Yuldashev was reportedly wounded. The Pakistani Army intercepted radio transmissions in both Uzbek and Chechen, according to the Pakistani commander of the counter-insurgency operation, Lieutenant General Safdar Hussain.

British Intelligence's Foot Soldiers

Although President Karimov is a target of the IMU, in recent months he has identified the Hizb ut-Tahrir as a greater threat. After the Andijan incident, Uzbek authorities again blamed the HT.

Unlike the IMU, which has concentrated its role in Central Asia with a focus on the Fergana Valley, the Hizb ut-Tahrir is an international Islamic movement. It is headquartered in London, but also has a strong organizational presence in Birmingham, Liverpool, and Bradford. The group was co-founded by Omar Bakri Mohammed, who came to the U.K. after being expelled from Saudi Arabia in 1986. HT's present leader is a communications IT professional from the Indian subcontinent, Jalaluddin Patel.

Hizb ut-Tahrir was established in 1953 in Palestine by a well-known religious figure, the judge of the appellate Shar'ia court in Jerusalem, Takiyeddin al-Nabahani al-Falastini (1909-1979). According to available reports, the group's first U.K.-based website was hosted by the London Imperial College, but after complaints to the College authorities, the site was closed down temporarily until a new host could be found. The

group now posts in their own name as Hizb ut-Tahrir, and as Khilafah.

Although portrayed as "non-violent" by the British authorities, Bakri's links to Osama bin Laden are widely known. Excerpts of a letter to Bakri by bin Laden, sent by fax from Afghanistan in the summer of 1998, were published in the *Los Angeles Times*. Bakri later released what he called bin Laden's four specific objectives for a jihad against the United States: "Bring down their airliners. Prevent the safe passage of their ships. Occupy their embassies. Force the closure of their companies and banks."

Many of those who follow the HT activities are intrigued as to why the group is not more discreet. For instance, on its web site in 2003 appeared "A Cry of the Imam from the Muslims of Uzbekistan." In that article, the "Imam" gave the call "to destroy Karimov. . . ." Similar calls have been issued to oust the Jordanian and Turkish authorities as well.

These are not empty threats. Backed by British Intelligence and funds from drugs, as well as from the coffers of Wahabi sheikhs, Hizb ut-Tahrir is a huge organization. Some claim it has at least 10,000 foot soldiers in Central Asia. A few more thousands are lurking in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and HT also has a strong presence in North Africa.

Reports from reliable Indian sources indicate that the recent demonstrations against the U.S. and against Karzai were organized by the Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT), and not by the Taliban or the Hizb-e-Islami or the al-Qaeda. Although one source was aware of some HT activities in the student community in Afghanistan, the extent of its penetration not only in the student community, but also in the Afghan security forces came as a surprise. In other words, the American occupying forces will soon be fighting the Britain-run Islamic foot soldiers!

As one Indian analyst pointed out, Osh and Jalalabad, the cities which spearheaded the regime change in Kyrgyzstan, happen to be HT strongholds. The HT is making huge gains in an entire belt, stretching from the Fergana provinces of Namangan, Andijan, and Kokand (which is contiguous to Osh and Jalalabad) to the adjacent Penjekent Valley (Uzbekistan) and Khojent (Tajikistan).

The Bernard Lewis Doctrine

Writing for the Jamestown Foundation, Stephen Ulph, in his article "Londonistan," seemed intrigued by the fact that scores of violent Islamic movements remain anchored in London. He wrote: "It [London] is also a center for Islamist politics. You could say that London has become, for the exponents of radical Islam, the most important city in the Middle East. A framework of lenient asylum laws has allowed the development of the largest and most overt concentration of Islamist political activists since Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. Just ask the French, whose exasperation with the indulgent toleration afforded to Algerian Islamic activists led them to dub the city dismissively as *l'anté-chambre de l'Afghanistan*. They

certainly have a point. Many of bin Laden's fatwas were actually first publicized in London. In fact, the United Kingdom in general seems to differ from other European states in the degree to which it became a spiritual and communications hub for the jihad movement. . . ."

It is evident that Ulph has no clue of what the long-term British objectives are, and why it is that London remains an "Aladdin's Cave," full of Islamic dissidents.

It is to be understood that Britain is no longer a military or economic power of substance. In order to be an almost equal partner of the Atlantic Alliance, Britain has two important ingredients to offer the United States: first, its ability to undo the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia, and parts of the Indian subcontinent through the use of creatures living in London's Aladdin's cave; and second, its control of world currency movements through the City of London. Unfortunately, these are also poison offerings that have helped to vastly undermine the U.S. credibility.

The policy of the West towards the Middle East—in other words, the policy of the Anglo-Americans, because the European Union does not have a policy worth citing—has long been formulated by Bernard Lewis. Lewis started his career as an intelligence officer, and for the rest of his life has remained in bed with British Intelligence. Avowedly anti-Russia and pro-Israel, Lewis reaped a rich harvest among U.S. academia and policymakers. He brought under his wing President Carter's virulent anti-Russia National Security Council chief, Zbigniew Brzezinski, in the 1980s and made the U.S. neo-cons, led by Vice President Dick Cheney, dance to his tune on the Middle East in 2001. In between, Lewis penned dozens of books and was taken seriously by people as a historian.

In fact, Lewis is what he always was—a British Intelligence officer. And like all old Nazis, KKKers, and what-have-you, he works for an abysmal cause: revival of the British Empire. To understand Lewis, one must read this statement he made in Canada, while discussing his article, "Freedom and Justice in the Modern Middle East." He said, "During the Second World War, Nazi Germany and the Allies had all sorts of odd friends." Lewis further said: "When Churchill was asked in the House of Commons about Britain's new ally, Russia, he replied that if Hitler would invade hell, 'I would find occasion to support the devil.' In this way, there is nothing odd about an alliance between Saddam and al-Qaeda."

In essence, what Lewis is saying is that in order to deal a crippling blow to Russia, and to all powers that would oppose his objective of reviving the Empire, he has no qualms about supporting outfits like the Hizb ut-Tahrir. In 1979, when Ayatollah Khomeini took over power in Iran and the West was in a quandary, Lewis sucked in Brzezinski with his story in *Time* magazine on "The Crescent of Crisis," which ended with the following observation:

"In the long run there may even be targets of opportunity

for the West created by ferment within the crescent. Islam is undoubtedly compatible with socialism, but it is inimical to atheistic Communism. The Soviet Union is already the world's fifth largest Muslim nation. By the year 2000, the huge Islamic populations in the border republics may outnumber Russia's now dominant Slavs. From Islamic democracies on Russia's southern tier, zealous Koranic evangelism might sweep across the border into these politically repressed Soviet states, creating problems for the Kremlin. . . . Whatever the solution, there is a clear need for the U.S. to recapture what Kissinger calls the 'geopolitical momentum.' That more than anything else will help maintain order in the crescent of crisis."

It seems the same process has been unleashed once more. This time, the objective is to weaken China, Russia, and possibly, India, using the HT to unleash the dogs of war in Central Asia. It is not difficult for those on the ground to see what Lewis and his foot soldiers are up to. Indeed, the leader of the Islamic Party of Tajikistan, Deputy Prime Minister Hoji Akbar Turajonzoda, has identified the HT as a Western-sponsored bogeyman for "remaking Central Asia." Turajonzoda said: "A more detailed analysis of HT's programmatic and ideological views and concrete examples of its activities suggests that it was created by anti-Islamic forces. One proof of this is the comfortable existence this organization enjoys in a number of Western countries, where it has large centers and offices that develop its concept of an "Islamic caliphate."

It is evident that Turajonzoda has seen through Lewis's game. However, he has little capability to stop the juggernaut now unleashed.

On the other hand, it is not the lack of understanding on behalf of American neo-cons associated with the Bush Administration, but their keenness to use the Lewis Doctrine to achieve what they believe is justified, that promises an untold danger. How important a brain-trust is Lewis to the neo-cons? Read the following: "Bernard Lewis has been the single most important intellectual influence countering the conventional wisdom on managing the conflict between radical Islam and the West," says neo-con Richard Perle, who remains a close adviser to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. "The idea that a big part of the problem is failed societies on the Arab side is very important," says Perle. "That is not the point of view of the diplomatic establishment."

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