

Did Leninism's Fall Pave the Way for Islamism's Rise?

David D. Laitin

Amanda L. Robinson

Stanford University

Paper prepared for the 1989 Anniversary Conference Communism's Fall held at the University of California, Irvine, November 5-8, 2009.

Ken Jowitt in his provocative essay "The Leninist Extinction" (in his equally provocative book *The New World Disorder*) argues that the fall of Leninism in 1989 can be characterized as a mass extinction. One implication of this image was to counter the then-fashionable perspective of Francis Fukuyama (1989) that the end of communism would end history with the triumph of liberal democracy. In contrast, Jowitt's evolutionary metaphor presaged the replacement of Leninism by a new species, presenting a new threat to the hegemonic West. The rise of militant Islamism and the terrorist network spearheaded by al-Qaeda, although not on Jowitt's fear list of possible Leninist replacements, makes his analysis eerily prescient.¹

The goal of this paper is to analyze whether the historic events of 1989 opened the way for militant Islamism, as the extinction of dinosaurs opened the way for the hegemony of mammals, or whether the two epochal events are coincidental. Although evolutionary theory resolutely abjures either retro- or pre-diction, we claim that militant Islamism replaced Leninism mostly in those environments where Leninism was weakest and where Islamism already had a foothold. However, the resistance to the spread of radical Islam in the core of Leninism (in the former Soviet Union) suggests that its rise was parallel to the Leninist extinction, but not a result of it.

¹ . His predictions in the essays included in *New World Disorder* (1992), published in the wake of the Soviet collapse, were often off target. He foresaw "authoritarian oligarchy" (p. 300) as the likely mode in Eastern European governance, a revival of traditional culture (reviving the "ghost of Tamerlane") in Central Asia (p. 312), and Ukraine quickly emerging as a "major regional actor" in conflict with Hungary Czechoslovakia, Romania and Poland (p. 313). But the projection of a new species of threat to Western interests and values that would emerge in a space yielded by Leninism was, to say the least, close to the mark.

To reach this conclusion, we first summarize Jowitt’s line of argument and his prognosis for the disorder on the historical horizon. Second, we outline the state of the art in current evolutionary theory, with an eye as to what changes can be expected in the wake of evolutionary shocks. Third, we analyze the dataset that we constructed, which enables us to infer whether the rise of military Islamism occurred in places that were most propitious for a new species in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Fourth, we take one case from the dataset, at the heart of Leninist imposition, to illustrate the resistance in former Leninist states to militant Islamism. Putting this altogether, in the fifth section we summarize our findings and conclude.

I. Jowitt’s Analysis of the Leninist Extinction and its Implications

Jowitt first analyzes the causes of the Leninist extinction. In keeping with evolutionary theory, Jowitt provides both “biological”/endogenous causes (characterized by the gradual decline of a species over time) and “physical”/exogenous causes (which are sudden and catastrophic) for the Leninist extinction.²

The four biological/endogenous factors that led to the general weakening of the Leninist regime were:

1. Khrushchev’s disarming of the Leninist party, and thus the end of class war.
2. Brezhnev’s failure to politically integrate the masses, and his ritualization of the once charismatic Party.
3. The rise of the Solidarity movement in Poland, which centered around a new national citizen class that rejected the hierarchical, corporate Party polity.
4. Gorbachev’s perestroika, and with it the relativization of the absolutist party.

Together, these factors in Jowitt’s eyes de-fanged Leninism, which by the 1980s was no longer a threat to any competing regime type, not even to its own citizens. The Soviet Union had become, to use a metaphor in a different Jowitt essay, “The Ottoman Empire with nukes”.

² . In reality, Jowitt explains, mass extinctions in the biological world are often a combination of physical and biological causes, as Gould (1989) has argued in reference to the demise of the dinosaurs – a “dramatic end superimposed upon a general deterioration.”

The three exogenous reasons for the timing of the fall, according to Jowitt, were:

1. With the reconciliation of China and the Soviet Union after a twenty-year conflict, elites refocused their attention to internal problems.
2. The US Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) or “Star Wars” program that aimed to protect the US from a nuclear ballistic missile attack. Although Jowitt does not explain how this influenced the Soviets, he does suggest that “its fantastic quality, and the enormity of its policy implications for the Soviet order, undoubtedly interrupted the inertial quality of Soviet politics” (p. 256).
3. The technological and scientific developments of the West and newly industrializing countries (NICs), which highlighted the relative failure of the Soviet experiment.

Internal decay and external threat combined to induce, now to use an image of Solnick (1998), the “stealing of the [Soviet] state” and a cascade by its own apparatus escaping the Party’s tentacles.

With this “clearing away” of a dominant “way of life,” Jowitt infers, much of the world would be left in a conceptual vacuum. In the West, and the US in particular, Jowitt anticipated a reexamining of self-identification in the absence of the Leninist “other” that had sustained NATO and US defense policy for a half-century. For the Third World, this conceptual vacuum would mean that realities that had been sustained by the US-Soviet conflict could now be challenged. These points are hardly controversial. But then, as an indirect effect of this extinction, Jowitt anticipated that a “new way of life” would emerge to fill the niche left open by the Leninist extinction, and would terrify the liberal capitalism that Fukuyama believed had successfully obliterated all opposition.

As examples of what he means by a “way of life”, Jowitt offers the historical cases of the advent of monotheism in Israel and the rise of liberal capitalism in the backward regions of Western Europe. With these examples in mind, he specifies seven criteria for judging a challenge to the West as a new way of life:

1. An ideology rejecting and demanding avoidance of existing institutions.
2. The ideology must call for the creation of alternative and superior institutions

3. A new political idiom/vocabulary, naming the boundaries of the new way of life
4. A new, powerful, and prestigious institution
5. The emergence of a social base, uprooted from its previous identity, from which members of the new way of life can be drawn
6. The articulation of a heroic and historic task that requires both risk and sacrifice
7. A core area that supplies and exports the resources necessary for creating the new way of life

The new way of life that emerges, Jowitt insists, will be a direct response to Western liberal capitalism. Based on the grievances expressed by past oppositions to liberal capitalism (Romantic poets, Persian ayatollahs, aristocrats, the Catholic Church, and fascism), Jowitt predicts that the new “species” of opposition will oppose liberal capitalism’s emphasis on individualism, materialism, achievement, and rationality. He highlights the last component of liberal capitalism as, perhaps, the most egregious to opponents, in its disregard for “the awe and mystery that throughout most of history was seen as separating man from the world of animals.” Thus, any new way of life should stress the value of group membership, expressive behavior, solidary security, and heroic action.

Basing his analysis on this evolutionary analogy, Jowitt then makes several predictions. First, he notes that in the famous example of dinosaur extinction, mammals did not appear *after* dinosaurs. Rather, as long as dinosaurs existed, mammals were just puny things with a restricted range of adaptive radiation. They did not grow in strength or “come to power” until the “clearing away” of the dinosaurs (p. 277). Indeed, both his examples of new ways of life - monotheism in Israel and the rise of liberal capitalism - emerged in marginalized areas of the world (the Middle East and the backward region on an island off of northwestern Europe). Jowitt consequently predicts that the “new way of life” post-Leninism will also emerge from a marginalized part of the world.³

Based on his argument that the Leninist extinction will have far reaching ramifications, Jowitt then goes on to make four concrete predictions. First, he predicts

³ . This expectation is in line with one strand of evolutionary theory, as we discuss in Section II.

that there will be increased warfare over “fictive” national boundaries, since the US-Soviet rivalry no longer exists to sustain them. Second, he predicts that democracy and liberal capitalism will not initially emerge in the newly industrializing countries (NICs), as the emergence of democracy requires “intense cultural trauma” (p. 273), and here Jowitt echoes but does not cite the classic work of Barrington Moore (1966) whose historical studies led him to the conclusion that a *sine qua non* for democratic onset is the violent elimination of the propertied classes. Third, in lieu of the export of democracy from the First to the Third World, Jowitt anticipates mass emigration of people from the Third to the First World. Finally, and most importantly, Jowitt predicts that the new way of life will likely take the form of a “movement of rage,” defined as a nihilistic and violent movement of rage against the legacy of colonialism (e.g., Sendero Luminoso in Peru, Kwilu rebellion in Congo, Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, Khalq in Afghanistan etc.). Jowitt sees these types of movements, largely marginalized and unsuccessful during the Cold War, as having potential for generating a “new way of life” that replaces Leninism as the main opponent to liberal capitalism.

In hindsight, one could quibble with Jowitt on the details. First, there is no mention of radical Islam as a potential threat.⁴ Second, although there have been challenges to the boundaries hardened by the cold war (in Azerbaijan, in Moldova, in Somalia), in none of these cases did the break-away regions (in Nagorno-Karabakh, in Transnistria, in Somaliland or in Puntland) offer a new way of life. Third, the prospects for democracy post 1989 have been far better than Jowitt expected. In 1989, according to the Polity dataset, 41% of the countries were on the democratic side of the divide (greater than 0 Polity2 score), while in 1999, 63% of the countries were on the democratic side. Fourth, if radical Islamism is proof of Jowitt’s pudding, it certainly is not motivated by a rage against the legacy of colonialism, as Jowitt foresaw, but is a rather different beast.⁵

⁴ . In retrospect, Jowitt missed a golden opportunity. In the 1940s, the sociologist Jules Monnerot (1949) wrote in a similar vein as would Jowitt, suggesting that Communism, with its political religion, its radical egalitarian doctrines, and its rhetoric of resentment against the societies in which its prospective adherents were born was a natural replacement for Islam, which in Monnerot’s view, was a spent historical force. If he relied on this analysis, Jowitt might have foreseen a genetically adapted (i.e. radicalized) Islam as re-emerging in the wake of the fall of Leninism.

⁵ . The interpretation somewhat consistent with Jowitt is that of Pape (2005), who identifies American military presence in Arab countries as the motivation for radical Islamicist terrorism.

Yet radical Islamism post 1989 meets several of Jowitt's criteria for a new way of life. Bin Laden's fulminations against the secular nationalist states in the Islamic world constitute an ideology rejecting existing institutions (criterion 1). His calls for Sharia law point to an alternative and superior institution (criteria 2 & 3) – al Qaeda – that has shown itself to be nimble and powerful (criterion 4).⁶ Al Qaeda is built upon a new social base, mostly disaffected Muslims in southwest Asia and the Middle East (criterion 5), and sets itself a heroic task of doing to the West what its earlier incarnation did in Afghanistan to set the stage for the extinction of Leninism (criterion 6). Finally, it created in Afghanistan and Northwestern Pakistan a core area that supplied and exported the material and organizational resources necessary for its survival as a challenge to western liberalism (criterion 7).

The question arises: is this rise of Islamism in the wake of the Leninist extinction just a coincidence, or is it reflective of an evolutionary process such that Leninism's fall opened the gates for al-Qaeda's rise?

II. Predicting Survivorship and Niche Repopulation after Mass Extinctions

Because Jowitt takes his analogy from evolutionary science, it is worth reviewing the basics of that field, and what predictions it offers in the aftermath of mass extinctions. In the biological world, the number of species in any given unit of land is at equilibrium, and is largely determined by the heterogeneity and productivity of the land, both of which are positively related to the number of species supported. If the number of species declines at a higher rate than the rate of species origination - during mass extinctions, for example - evolutionary theory predicts an increase in the rate of species origination (through immigration or speciation). Further, if a niche becomes open (what Jowitt calls a "clearing out") due to the extinction of a species, another species will most likely fill that niche (and thus Jowitt foresees that Leninism would be replaced by a new species).

Some evolutionary models make predictions about the kinds of species that are likely to *survive* mass extinctions (Harries, Kauffman, and Hansen, 1996; Jablonski, 2005). In contrast to survivability, where some prediction may be possible, most theorists argue that evolutionary theory does very poorly in predicting which *particular* species, of

⁶ . Lawrence (2005) presents the full range of bin Laden's analyses of world events.

those remaining after a mass extinction, will fill a particular open niche. For example, if evolutionary theorists could travel back in time and witness the demise of the dinosaurs, they would not be able to predict that mammals would fill the niche left by the giant reptiles, and, if such events could be replicated, the outcomes would likely be very different (Gould, 1989). According to Jablonski (2005):

Long-term post-extinction successes are difficult to predict from the survivors of mass extinctions. Recovery intervals are famously important in opening opportunities for the diversification of once-marginal groups, the mammals and the dinosaurs being the classic example, *but not all survivors are winners*.

A further complication arises from the fact that vacated niches are not always repopulated in the same way. For example, niches previously occupied by a single species may be re-inhabited by more than one species, and, less commonly, portions of the niche may not be repopulated at all (Jablonski, 2001). Together, these difficulties lead Jablonski (2001) to conclude that “attempts to predict evolutionary behavior after major extinction events can only operate at very broad generalities, and always with the caveat ‘expect the unexpected.’”

In contrast to this pessimistic view of predictability of extinction recoveries, Kauffman and Harris (1996) identify three types of species/taxa (of the sixteen that allow for mass extinction survival) that have consistently contributed to repopulation in the aftermath of mass extinctions: pre-adapted survivors, short-term refugia taxa, and crisis progenitors. *Pre-adapted survivors* are species that already possess adaptations (for other reasons) that are “successful, at least among small populations, during severe environmental perturbations associated with mass extinction intervals.” *Short-term refugia taxa* are those species that get pushed into the margins of their preferred habitat during stressful ecological conditions, and then repopulate their preferred habitat after mass extinctions. *Crisis progenitor taxa* are those novel species that evolve out of the mass extinction itself, and are adapted to the conditions during an extinction interval – as a consequence many crisis progenitor taxa are out-competed during subsequent recovery and repopulation. Unlike the other thirteen new taxa, these three types are able to continue to compete and contribute to future diversity. Still, the identification of these three repopulation groups does not produce specific predictions as to which species

within these types will take over particular vacated niches. In sum, predicting survivorship and success after extinction is a very inexact science.

III. Testable Implications

It would appear scientifically impossible to test a theory that makes no predictions. And if the theory has no observable implications, adopting it would gain us no leverage in using the theory to recalibrate our expectations in this case about the future of Islamism or of western liberal democracy. But from Jowitt's projections and from the three relevant categories of taxa described by Kauffman and Harris (1996), we should expect that while the source of repopulation is often in the margins of the extinct species habitat, eventually it is the core habitat that is the prize for the replacement taxa. In this section, we will analyze whether this is the case with the extinction of Leninism and the rise of radical Islamism.

To put this observable implication to test, we mined two separate datasets. First, we took from the Fearon/Laitin civil war dataset the sixty-six countries in the world that had at least ten percent Muslim population, and included variables that were conducive to civil war onset: per capita GDP, Polity scores for democracy, size of the country, and percentage of the area in the country that is mountainous. We then took from the Worldwide Incidents Tracking System⁷ of the US Central Intelligence Agency the number of attacks and number of deadly attacks by Islamic terrorists in each country in the Muslim world since 2004, when the dataset begins. The number of attacks in a country is a reasonable proxy for the susceptibility of a country to the success of a new ecological threat. Due to the time frame for the data on the dependent variable, we code the score for democracy for the year 2004; the value of per capita GDP for the year 2001; and determine (as a dummy variable) whether there was a civil war onset in the period between the end of the Cold War in 1985 and the start year for coding the dependent variable in 2004.

The descriptive data reveal on Table 1 that in only eight countries were there more than 100 attacks perpetrated by radical Muslim organizations since 2004. While

⁷ . <http://wits.nctc.gov/>

three of the eight (and the one with the greatest number of attacks, Afghanistan) were at some time Leninist, only one country (Russia) was a republic in the former USSR.

Table 1: Countries with >100 Radical Islamicist Attacks Since 2004

Country	Former Soviet Republic?	Had a Leninist Party?	Number of Islamicist Attacks	Number of Deadly Islamicist Attacks
Russia	Yes	Yes	471	164
Afghanistan	No	Yes	2754	1575
Somalia	No	Yes	535	356
Iraq	No	No	2239	1540
Israel	No	No	1557	125
Pakistan	No	No	1426	609
India	No	No	406	255
Algeria	No	No	191	114

With number of attacks and number of deadly attacks – both proxies for the sustained presence of the new Islamicist taxa – as the dependent variables, the results of the two regression models are on Table 2 below.

Table 2: The Leninist Extinction and the Rise of Islamic Terrorism

VARIABLES	DV = # of attacks	DV = # of deadly attacks
Leninist ⁸	222.71 (186.39)	173.97** (98.03)
Former Union Republics of the USSR	-567.01** (247.06)	-374.41*** (129.94)
Percent Muslim	2.23 (2.35)	1.87 (1.24)
GDP/cap in year 1991	-4.93 (17.08)	-6.34 (8.98)
Was there a civil war onset from 1985-2003?	142.48 (153.31)	122.41 (80.63)
Ethnic Fractionalization	243.48 (301.41)	198.88 (158.53)
Polity score for year 2004	-14.76 (11.62)	-12.79** (6.11)
Polity score for year 2004 squared	6.42*** (2.13)	3.75*** (1.12)
Area	3.41 (3.07)	1.77 (1.61)

⁸ . Defined as having had a Leninist government at any time, relying on public information.

Mountainous Terrain	43.95 (49.54)	16.73 (26.05)
Constant	-492.73 (339.58)	-352.32 (178.61)
Observations	66	66
R-squared	0.24	0.33
Standard errors in parentheses: ***p<.01; **p<.05; *p<.1		

In viewing Table 2, note well that there is no relationship at all between the relative proportion of the Muslim population in a country and the susceptibility to Islamic terrorist attacks. Our dataset only includes countries where at least ten percent of the population is Muslim, so there may be a minimal threshold that we are not capturing. Note as well that countries that are on the borderline between autocracy and democracy, which Weart (1998) calls “anocracy”, experienced fewer Islamic terrorist attacks. This at first seems surprising, given that Fearon and Laitin (2003) associate anocracy with a *higher* likelihood of civil war onsets. However, Berman and Laitin (2008) demonstrate that (suicide) terrorism thrives under conditions that cannot support insurgency, meaning that terrorism and insurgency are different strategies of rebellion suited to different ecological circumstances. Thus, under anocratic rule, standard insurgency is feasible, making the high costs (to valuable cadres, who would certainly die as suicide terrorists) of terrorism unnecessary to pay.

Jowitt’s metaphor, returning to the evolutionary perspective, demands that we examine the first two rows of the table. Here we see a positive relationship between terrorism and Leninism (but significant only for the deadly attacks); however the countries of the former Soviet Union (once Leninism is controlled for) have a strongly negative relationship to the production of terrorists. *The very heart of the habitation of the extinct species therefore seems most resistant to the expansion of the new species’ supposed replacement.* This result reduces our confidence in the evolutionary perspective.

But why should the Leninist core be so successfully resistant to the species that expanded as it disappeared? To help answer this question, we look in the next section at Soviet Central Asia in general, but Tajikistan in particular. Tajikistan is a predominantly Muslim country, on the border with Afghanistan which has had the most terrorist attacks

of any country in the world. Tajikistan in the WITS dataset is in the second quartile of number of attacks (four of them), and in the third quartile in deadly attacks (only one of them). All the Islamic attacks in Tajikistan were perpetrated by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), with branches in Tajikistan allowing militants to hide from the repressive apparatus of President Karimov of Uzbekistan. But four attacks over five years with a single death do not constitute a zone of openness for a new destructive species. The figures for Tajikistan are nowhere near the figures for Afghanistan (2754 attacks; 1575 of them deadly) in the same period. From an evolutionary perspective, Tajikistan's relative immunity to the incursion of a new species of radical politics appears to be an anomaly. Let us look at this case in greater detail.

IV. Soviet Central Asia, Tajikistan and the Leninist Extinction

In many respects, the extinction of Leninism should have opened up space in Soviet Central Asia in general and Tajikistan in particular for radical Islam to fill in. As far back as 1983, leading experts in Soviet politics warned of *The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State* (Bennigsen and Broxup 1983). And eleven years later another team of Sovietologists, Dawisha and Parrott (1994, 112) wrote that “The demise of Soviet-sponsored atheism has cleared the way for a new Islamic groundswell embodied in the growth of religious observances, the expansion of religious education, and the construction of new mosques [and] created large opportunities for foreign religious authorities and teachers to make a firm imprint on Islamic thought and practice in Central Asia.” As Dawisha and Parrott add (1994, 114), with a great deficit in trained clerics within the former Soviet Union, foreign trained clerics, with radical leanings, would be obvious recruits for re-established mosques. Foreign trained radical clerics could become models for young Central Asians, especially those facing economic crisis. There were other paths to radicalization in this period of late Leninism. In the 1980s, the Soviets recruited Tajiks (due to linguistic and cultural similarity with the people in northeastern Afghanistan) to spearhead the Sovietization of Afghanistan; this led to a backlash as the Soviet Union crumbled, with leading Tajik intellectuals decrying the role Tajiks played in fighting against the *mujahidin* (Atkin 1993, 378). The war in Afghanistan would have been seen as the fuel that fired an Islamic rebellion in Tajikistan if such a rebellion actually occurred. Indeed, in February 1990, amid anti-Soviet riots in Tajikistan's capital

Dushanbe, Afghanistani *mujahidin* were reportedly (by a KGB commander) poised to invade Tajikistan to expand the internationalist *jihād*. Later on, some in the Islamicist movement of Tajikistan aimed to destroy the regime altogether. They helped form the military movement Najot-i Vatan (Salvation of the Motherland) in autumn 1991. The leaders of this group were largely responding to the calls of former communists to destroy them militarily. In response, President Nabyiev distributed weapons to his supporters in spring 1992 with militants in Najot-i Vatan as designated targets. With militants escaping state repression, a Movement for Islamic Revival in Tajikistan (MIRT) formed in Taloqan, Afghanistan, in 1993, with the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) at its core. The IRP in the course of the civil war employed pressure tactics, including bombing and hostage-taking. In 1994 it became the dominant group in the United Tajik Opposition (UTO).

But as Atkin writes (1993, 378), there was more smoke than fire in the IRP strategy. “In the aftermath of the failure of the August 1991 coup [in Moscow], when the Soviet regime was the weakest it had been since the Nazi invasion,” she points out, “there was no uprising by Islamic radicals in Tajikistan and no armed intervention by Afghanistani *mujahidin*.... There was no declaration of an Islamic republic....” The IRP formed during the post-independence civil war in Tajikistan, which was a classic insurgency pitting regional warlords and criminal Mafiosi against one another, all fighting for control of the rents that statehood would imply (Driscoll 2009). Reflecting our model’s expectations, with post-Soviet anocratic rule, Tajikistan was more susceptible to civil war insurgency than to Islamic terrorism.

To be sure, the IRP was not irrelevant in this war. It played a role in dethroning President Rakhman Nabyiev in September 1992. The deputy chairman of the IRP Davlat Usmon was then appointed vice-premier, and he announced that “Tajikistan should turn toward Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan” (Interfax, June 18, 1992, in FBIS-SOV, June 19, 1992, 69; noted in Dawisha and Parrott, fn. 133, p. 376). As allies in a secular government (mostly associated with a regional rather than religious interest in that coalition), however, they were hardly a new species carrying a message of rage.

As the secular state strengthened, the IRP continued to wane. After most opposition parties were banned by the Rakhmonov government in late 1992 (including the IRP), most Islamicist activists went into exile. The war continued. However, as the peace process gathered momentum President Rakhmonov and UTO leader Said Abdullo Nuri took charge of the negotiating teams. Essentially Nuri agreed to retreat from the UTO's strategic positions in Gharm and the Qarateghin valley. The subsequent June 1997 General Agreement relegated the IRP to the role of a non-militant political party.

Islamic militancy waned. IRP leaders recognized that Tajikistanis were not responsive to radical religious messages. Moreover, they were in alliance with other elements in the UTO that were regionally rather than religiously focused, and their brand of Islamism could not hold the opposition together. As a result of failure, young potential recruits began to migrate to other former Soviet states in search of work. Although it has expanded from its regional base and now has branches almost all over the country, the IRP is still considered a regional party rather than the icon for Muslim expression. At the legislative elections of 2005, the party won 8% of the popular vote and 2 out of 63 seats. By 2006, it boycotted the presidential elections and its force appears to be spent.⁹

In a devastating report on the economic and political crisis in Tajikistan (International Crisis Group [ICG], 2009), a plethora of challenges to regime stability is discussed. There were in recent times a series of gunfights and violent altercations along with demonstrations in the autonomous mountain region of Badakhshan. Earlier, in February 2008 in Garm, a civil war stronghold of the opposition UTO, one of Tajikistan's most decorated officers, Colonel Oleg Zakharchenko, commander of the paramilitary Police Special Purpose Unit, was shot dead in a firefight with forces from the Directorate for the Fight against Organised Crime and led by Colonel Mirzokhudja Akhmadov, earlier a civil war commander. In May 2008, after a two-day siege, Suhrob Langariyev, a relative of a top commander in the President's party, was arrested by a Special Forces unit brought in from the capital for his supposed participation in a "transnational narcotics network". Amidst all these incidents, Mahmud Khudoyberdiyev, an ethnic Uzbek and once a senior commander under Rakhmon, and now in hiding in Uzbekistan

⁹. This discussion on the IRP relies on Olimova and Olimov (2001).

with the backing of President Karimov, who failed in his attempted insurrection in 1997, is said still to be plotting against the Tajik president (ICG, 17). These incidents are all examples of regional struggles that have re-emerged after the civil war peace agreement.

As for an Islamicist threat, the ICG warns of a potential salafist movement crossing the 1,200 km. unpoliced border with Afghanistan. Worrying about this, Western-oriented intellectuals in Dushanbe fear the consequences of Rakhmon's possible ouster. One commented: "We all want to see a Tajik state emerging from this chaos. So we support him because we cannot see anyone who would be better. The Islamists could overthrow him if they set their mind to it" (ICG, 4-5). Periodically, the president and his henchman raise the specter of salafism. State-controlled media typically carry news of brief clashes with IMU gunmen operating in Tajikistan. The ICG report agrees "There is little doubt that salafist influence is spreading. Young Muslims guess that about 20 per cent of their contemporaries who attend mosque regularly are attracted by the teachings. Some, however, including those who say they would like to see Tajikistan eventually become an Islamic state, add that aspects of salafist teaching, notably its disapproval of prayers to ancestors, also alienate many. In January 2009 the salafist movement was banned" (ICG, 16-17). "Yet," the report goes on, "Rakhmon uses his proximity to a dangerous and fragile state that is at war with Islamic extremists to reinforce his implicit argument that only he should be allowed to set the pace of change." Indeed, the ICG report acknowledges that the Taliban with its radical Islamist ideology has had virtually no cross-border impact.

Rather than imbued by the heroic imagery of salvation through a return to Islam, insurgents in Tajikistan are most interested in wresting control of criminal trade networks from warlords already co-opted by the state. These insurgents seek as well to control other state assets, including taxes from the cotton market and sales from the largest aluminum smelting plant in the world, now a government property. The greater challenge to Western liberalism in Tajikistan in the wake of Leninist extinction is that of unheroic, non-ideological criminal networks connected to regional warlords, with an interest in capturing but not governing a state (Driscoll 2009).

This Tajik story is more general. Former Soviet Central Asia has been remarkably immune to a radical Islamic infusion. Several reasons have been offered. First, in the post-Soviet period, getting control over the state apparatus, one which was in the hands of “titulars” (those people in whose label the republic was named), provided higher rewards to those proclaiming themselves as nationals rather than as pious religious figures (Atkin 1993, 373). Second, Muslim institutions had been long-ago emasculated by Soviet power. In the first quarter-century of Soviet rule, an estimated 80 percent of the mosques in the USSR were closed, and nearly all Muslim mullahs were denied permission to lead services, most of them winding up in the Soviet *gulag*. In a respite, in the aftermath of the Nazi invasion, Stalin sought support from Muslim clerics in return for loyalty, and the regime created a Central Muslim Spiritual Board that helped reestablish mosques and permitted prayer. But at war’s end, these concessions were largely reversed (Dawisha and Parrott 1994, 111). Indeed, in the late Soviet period, Muslim institutions were infiltrated by state police agents (Dawisha and Parrott 1994, 114). When the Soviet state began to crumble, leading Muslim authorities such as the chief qadi of Tajikistan (Haji Akbar Turajonzoda) had little institutional apparatus to mobilize politically. Third, there are deep cultural differences across Central Asia hindering efforts at a united Muslim mobilization. For example, even if Sunnis, Tajiks consider themselves (linguistically and culturally) closer to Iran than to the rest of Soviet Central Asia, and this may have deterred Tajik Islamists from making cross-border alliances with the Turkic societies in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kirghizia and Turkmenistan (Atkin 1993, 373). Fourth, Dawisha and Parrott (1994, 117) speculated that the lack of an upsurge in Islamic militancy could be explained by the fear of neighboring states of the consequences of instability in Central Asia and of the unyielding opposition by Russia to any external intervention into its sphere of security. But they do note that NGOs, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jamaat el-Islami, are not similarly constrained, but up till now rather ineffective in spreading *jihād* to post-Soviet spaces.

Fifth, there is strong evidence that while Leninism may have become extinct, its networks of power remain vibrant. In the early post-Soviet period four of the five heads of state in the former Union Republics of Central Asia were once high Soviet officials who relied on Soviet police networks to retain power and preserve order (Dawisha and

Parrott, 112-13). As Vladimir Putin demonstrated to the world that thought Soviet institutions had crumbled, the old networks of power and control remained to be reactivated. It is those networks that have allowed President Karimov of Uzbekistan to fight successfully against a rather formidable IMU, and President Rakhmanov to marginalize the IRP.

V. Conclusion

The resistance at the Soviet core to radical Islam and the low susceptibility of the Muslim-dominated countries of the former Soviet Union to attacks by radical Islamic missionaries suggests that the fall of Leninism and the rise of Jihadist terrorism are coincidental and not part of an evolutionary process that followed from a mass extinction. Moreover, while Leninist ideology is defunct, its networks of power (remnants of the “vanguard party”) have phoenix-like reemerged from the ashes, and reports of its extinction are largely exaggerated. Ken Jowitt’s analogy was both fascinating and provocative; but the rise of a “new way of life” in the Leninist periphery, having almost no penetration in its core, suggests that extinction was not the mechanism that has given rise to radical Islamism as a major player in international conflict.

References

- Atkin, Muriel. 1993. “Tajikistan: ancient heritage, new politics.” In Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras. *Nations & Politics in the Soviet Successor States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bennigsen, Alexandre and Marie Broxup. 1983. *The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State*. New York: St. Martin’s.
- Dawisha, Karen and Bruce Parrott. 1994. *Russia and the New States of Eurasia: The Politics of Upheaval*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Driscoll, Jesse 2009. *Exiting Anarchy*. Ph.D. Thesis, Political Science Department, Stanford University
- Fearon, James D. and David D. Laitin. 2003. “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War.” *American Political Science Review* 97, 1 (February): 75-90
- Fukuyama, Francis. 1989. “The End of History?” *The National Interest* no. 16: 3.
- Gould, Stephen J. 1989. *Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History*. Norton: New York.

- Harries, Peter, Erle Kauffman, and Thor Hansen. 1996. "Models for biotic survival following mass extinctions." In Hart, MB (ed.) *Biotic Recovery from Mass Extinction Events*. Geological Society Special Publication: 41-60.
- International Crisis Group. 2009. "Tajikistan: On the Road to Failure." *Asia Report* N°162, 12 February.
- Jablonski, David. 2001. "Lessons from the past: evolutionary impacts of mass extinctions." *PNAS*, 98 (10): 5393-5398.
- Jablonski, David. 2005. "Mass extinctions and macroevolution." *Paleobiology*, 31(2): 192-210.
- Jowitt, Ken. 1992. *New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction*. Berkeley: University of California.
- Kauffman, Erle and Peter J. Harries. 1996. "The importance of crisis progenitors in recovery from mass extinction." *Geological Society*, 102: 15-39.
- Laurence, Bruce (2005). *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden*. London: Verso.
- Monnerot, Jules. 1949. *Sociologie du Communisme*. Paris: Gallimard
- Moore, Barrington Jr. 1966. *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Boston: Beacon.
- Olimova, Saodat and Muzaffar Olimov. March 2001. "The Islamic Renaissance Party." *Conciliation Resources*, <http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/tajikistan/islamic-renaissance-party.php>
- Pape, Robert. 2005. *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*. New York: Random House
- Solnick, Steven. 1998. *Stealing the State: Control and Collapse in Soviet Institutions*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press
- Weart, Spencer R. 1998. *Never at War: Why Democracies Will Not Fight One Another*. New Haven: Yale University Press