

Throughout the 1980s, when the Soviets were trying to conquer Afghanistan, Pakistan was receiving huge amounts of money and arms from its anti-Soviet allies and was deeply involved in the *jihad* against the Soviet Union.

The Afghan Taliban derives much of its inspiration from the Deobandi movement in Pakistan. Virtually all of the Taliban leaders were refugees from Afghanistan for many years and studied in *madrassas* affiliated with one or another branch of the Deobandi political party of Maulvi Fazlur Rahman. Under Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's government, Maulvi Fazlur Rahman was chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the National Assembly—the Pakistani parliament.

The second important figure in recent Taliban history is Maulana Samiul Haq, who runs two important *madrassas*, the Dar ul-Uloom Haqqania in the North West Frontier Province and the Jamia Uloom-ul-Islamiya in the Binori Town section of Karachi, Pakistan.

In 1994, when Mullah Mohammad Omar seized control of Kandahar City, busloads of Taliban went to Afghanistan from Rahman's Deobandi party. Then in May 1997, following Taliban's defeat of the opposition militia led by Ahmed Shah Massoud-led in northern Afghanistan, droves of Pakistani and Afghan students joined the Taliban militia from Maulana Samiul Haq's *madrassas*. Thousands of Pakistani Taliban thus joined the Afghan Taliban and fought for them.

Behind the facade of a religious movement, there were other elements. Long before the 1997 exodus of Taliban to Afghanistan, Pakistan's ISI had formed an alliance with the controllers of the *madrassas*. So, along with the Taliban, a large number of Pakistani soldiers, wearing the trademark white flowing robe of the Taliban, moved in to help the Afghan regime.

Money has also flowed in from Afghan, Pakistani, and Arab traders—many of whom are also involved in smuggling and the drug trade—based in Balochistan, Peshawar, Karachi, and in the distant United Arab Emirates.

Another group of "religious warriors" who came to help the Taliban were a large number from the Pushtoon army who fled Afghanistan following the takeover of Kabul by the Tajik-dominated coalition government of Burhanuddin Rabbani in 1992. These army personnel had been a steady source of intelligence to the Pakistani ISI against the Rabbani government and acted entirely on behalf of the ISI.

Afghanistan has some 20,000 villages and a large number of them have *madrassas*. These *madrassas* have created many Taliban. This group, in reality, has a very superficial understanding of the teachings and principles that the Deobandi School propagates. Nonetheless, they are the most resistant to Western civilization and have provided the foot soldiers for the Taliban movement in Afghanistan, both during the Soviet invasion and during the current consolidation of power by the Taliban regime.

All Roads Lead to the Fergana Valley

by Ramtanu Maitra

In late August, Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev, whose army is now battling the Islamic rebels who have infiltrated into the tri-junction area of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, told newsmen that the "bandits" are making their way to the Fergana Valley to set up a permanent base.

During a similar rebel attack on Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan last year, one of the major rebel groups, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, told the British Broadcasting Corp. and the George Soros-owned Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, that their objective is to set up an independent Islamic state in the Fergana Valley.

In his June 25 keynote to the World Forum on Democracy in Warsaw, Soros, whose Open Society Foundation remains very active in Central Asia, called for an "international association of democracies" to be created, that should focus on backing insurrections in "Peru, Indonesia, and the Fergana Valley."

Back in 1992, when the Soviet Union ceased to exist and

FIGURE 4
Insurgents' Destination: The Fergana Valley



The tri-country junction where the rebels have challenged the government forces of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Their objective is to set up an "Islamic state" in the Fergana Valley. Major Tajik rebel camps in northern Afghanistan are shown at 1 and 2.



International mega-speculator George Soros's Open Society Institute co-sponsored the World Forum on Democracy in Warsaw on June 25-27, where he called for an "international association of democracies" to promote insurgencies in such places as "Peru, Indonesia, and the Fergana Valley." Soros's idea of an "open society" encompasses free trade, looting raw materials, and legalizing drugs. He is the leading financier for drug-legalization efforts throughout the world, including for every statewide ballot initiative to legalize drugs in the United States. Here, he is shown promoting his new book The Crisis of Global Capitalism: Open Society Endangered, on Oct. 5, 1998.

new nations emerged in Central Asia, the late Israeli gun-trafficker and businessman, Shaul Eisenberg, bought a huge parcel of land in the valley, ostensibly to introduce the Israeli method of drip irrigation for growing agricultural produce.

Last year, the United Nations Development Program held seminars and proposed launching a development program for the Fergana Valley. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees is active in the area, and UNICEF has been active in the Uzbek part of the Fergana Valley since 1994.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Central Asian Liaison Office is active in the Uzbek part of the valley, and it provides courses and training seminars for non-governmental organizations and enhances contacts with similar bodies in the valley.

Fergana Valley's Mosaic

The Fergana Valley, once a singular historical, cultural, social, and economic unit under the Soviet Union, is now divided into three countries—Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

The valley subsumes two provinces of Kyrgyzstan—Osh and Jalalabad; three provinces of Uzbekistan—Andijan, Fergana, and Namangan; and the Leninabad province of Tajikistan. From the Kyrgyz mountains and foothills flows most of the water into Syr Darya, the most important river in Central Asia, and whose main water course drains the Fergana Basin.

Tajikistan's lands are situated in the western opening to the valley, where the Syr Darya emerges from the valley onto the desert steppe. But it is the Fergana territories of Uzbekistan which occupy the central part of the valley, where the bulk of the agricultural land, most of the major cities, and more than half of region's population are located.

The Fergana Valley's population is extremely diverse. Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Kyrgyz are scattered all over the valley. During the 19th Century, when the valley was first opened up under the Russian tsars, Russians, Tatars, Ukrainians, and groups from Chechnya and Ingushetia migrated into the area. Another influx occurred during Stalin's rule, when Meshket Turks, Germans, Crimeans, and Koreans were deported in the area in significant numbers.

The indigenous people, belonging to the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam, share Islam as a common religion. This is the same form of Islam practiced in Arab countries, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

In addition, the valley, since it drains water into the Syr Darya River, is lush and has an enormous agricultural potential. According to experts, the Fergana Valley is the "agricultural heart of Central Asia." Lying at the nexus of South and Central Asia, Russia, and China, the valley is crucial in the revitalization of the legendary Silk Road—the trade and transport link between the Far East and Europe.

The area is also the most important route for transport of illegal drugs. Through it passes two-thirds of all Afghan drugs. Through Osh, Kyrgyzstan, according to local authorities, at least 100 kilograms of pure heroin pass northward into China and Europe every week. Central Asian leaders have pointed out that the Islamic groups, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the United Tajikistan Organization, and the newly formed Islamic Movement of Tajikistan, are in the fray to capture a part of the Fergana Valley in order to strengthen the drug routes.

Central Asian leaders, who are products of the Soviet system, believe that the drug mafia is being used by external forces to bring the Central Asian nations to their knees. This ongoing explosion of the drug trade, however, is posing a serious security threat to Russia, China, and India.

In addition, it is to be noted that the Fergana Valley has the potential to grow more opium than today's total world production. And on Wall Street and on the trading floors of Europe, heroin—in pure, smokable form—is becoming a drug of choice and a major form of drug abuse, posing another kind of security threat to Western nations.