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The Islamic Factor and the
OSCE Stabilization Strategy
in Its Euro-Asian Region

Must and can the Islamic factor be
a part of the OSCE's co-operative
security and stabilization strategies?

Working Paper 4

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Summary

The Islamic factor[1] is and remains of permanent strategic importance in the Euro-Asian region. Thus, for the OSCE, a series of questions have emerged: Must the Islamic factor be an element of the OSCE's co-operative security and stabilization strategies for its Euro-Asian region? Can it be integrated to play a constructive role internally and externally? Is there a realistic alternative to the destructive role that it is partly already playing, or has played? Can civilian Islamic opposition be a "normal opposition" in the democratic sense, and what would the requirements for this be? Can the Muslim population, Islamic activists, and Western politicians reach a common political basic consensus that is founded on the idea of coexistence, intelligent adaptation of modern principles, as well as the OSCE norms and values? If so, how would one structure such a consensus?

Seven reasons to search for answers:

1. *Population potential*. Forty peoples in the OSCE's Euro-Asian region are connected to the Islamic factor, i.e. roughly 57 million people. As far as Russia is concerned, estimates assume that in some thirty years 30 to 40 million Muslims will live there.

2. *Religion.* In Central Asia, the Caspian Basin and in the Caucasus, Islam is the dominant religion. Sixty-three per cent of the population in Kazakhstan, 82 in Uzbekistan and 79 in Tajikistan profess, "there is no other God than God, Allah".

3. *Geostrategic interests.* Geostrategically, the region has gradually distanced itself from the conventional understanding of the former Russian-Soviet (secular) "Orient". This region is rather developing into a kind of "Euro-Asian Orient", which prospectively will not be less connected with the Islamic world, China and the Persian Gulf region than with the West. All sides will increasingly perceive the resulting geostrategic, economic, political, infrastructural and cultural scope. Against the background of the not yet completed transformation and state-forming processes, the former and new elites' interests, and hence the geostrategic situation, can further change.

4. *Transformation and state-forming*. Under the specific social and religious conditions, transformation, as well as state- and nation-building processes, are influenced by the Islamic factor. Thus, the Islamic factor is not an option that politicians and policy-makers can choose to consider or not. The Islamic factor definitely has a future in the region. The question only is, what quality and shape will it take on.

5. *Politicization of Islam*. Under the given social parameters and in view of a Muslim majority, system transformation and state-forming unavoidably lead to the politicization of Islam. Therefore, the question is not whether a politicization of Islam can be avoided, but rather, whether this politicization is proceeding in a constructive or destructive way, and how and by whom it can be instrumentalized.

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[1]   In this study, the concept of "the Islamic factor" will be used as a *terminus technicus.* The concept refers to Islam, political Islam, the Muslim population, as well as Islamic organizations, parties, movements, etc.

6. *The relationship between secularism and Islam.* The relationship between secularism and Islam is part of the transformation and state-forming processes and, therefore, the formation of the political systems. The conflict between politics and religion takes place predominantly between secular governing bodies and representatives of political Islam. Both compete with each other with regard to the socio-political path of development of their still unfinished nation-states. This competition can become a starting point for democratization, as well as for conflicts.

7. *The necessity for a concept.* Although it has already been confronted with the militant variant of political Islamism, in conflicts and conciliation processes in its Euro-Asian region, the OSCE only hesitatingly takes the Islamic factor into account. With the approach "fight against terrorism", its conceptualization is too narrow; with its present "partner work" approach, it falls between two stools: While the OSCE's relationship with the secular regimes is ambivalent to fragile, a strategy for dealing with political Islam and the Islamists is missing. The development of a moderate, reform-oriented Islamist trend in Tajikistan offers encouragement for new possibilities.

It can be regarded as a central finding that the Islamic factor as such is *not yet a causal factor of conflict* in the region. This could change if Islam and its dignitaries were to be confronted with oppressive strategies, and if against such a backdrop, this were to lead to religious wars. The Islamic factor itself would then turn into a cause for conflict. So far, such a state has not been reached. Regional and local groups of elite have so far seized upon the Islamic factor "only" as a political resource to assert their interests and/or to react to actually existing conflict material. From this causality/resource constellation, the main "constructive reserves" are also currently being derived to counteract its destructive use. Preventive diplomacy, with regard to the Islamic factor, has to deal with, on the one hand, the actually existing conflict material and, on the other hand, with those elites that seize upon Islam as a resource. The latter is unequivocally a task for the OSCE democratization strategy – thus it is directly involved with political Islam. The more the OSCE contributes to the democratization of the states of the region, the more it also broadens the political scope of Islamists. Political Islam is catching up, so to speak, with the OSCE in its own political space. The OSCE must begin to use this contradiction productively.

This paper recommends that a change be made in the OSCE's traditional way of perceiving political Islam, and that strategic consequences therefrom be drawn. The aim here is to take the Islamic factor out of its current negative fixation as a "problematic carrier of conflict" (terrorism stigma). Such a change requires reaching out and being responsive to Muslim dignitaries and Islamic politicians in order to win them over, as well as winning over the respective social strata as partners for co-operative stability and security in the OSCE region. This change in strategy calls for thorough preparation, patience and optimism.

The present study draws its assumptions from some quantitative and qualitative factors, which in dealing with the Islamic factor are of particular importance. It discusses, in the following, some political consequences that are already of importance today. After a brief recourse to the experiences made in the political practice of finding a secular-Islamist compromise in the region, conclusions and recommendations are formulated in the study.

1. Questions and Problems

It is still not inevitable that the already nearly traditional negative fixation, Islam versus secularism, secularism versus Islam, Islam versus the West and the West versus Islam, now almost "fatefully" recurs in OSCE common political space. Also, it is not yet inevitable that the Western-Muslim dialogue in the OSCE region too has no other perspective than the fatal state of intellectual exhaustion and running into a dead end,[2] as is the case in the "rest of the world". Can Europe, under the conditions of globalization, afford such a fatal state in the strategic triangle between Caucasus, the Caspian Sea and Central Asia[3]?

In the following paper, the relationship to and the manner in which the Islamic factor, political Islam,[4] and those forces that make use of it and/or the social elites and social strata that are deeply rooted in it are dealt with, will be put up for discussion in the context of the OSCE stabilization and democratization strategy. The point is not to clarify whether and where Islamic fundamentalists will come into power or not. Rather, the case in point will be to clarify whether the Islamic factor in the Euro-Asian OSCE region *also* has a stabilizing and security-promoting potential, whether its involvement in a system of co-operative stabilizing strategies makes sense and is possible and, furthermore, how politics and politicians from both sides can be enabled to achieve this.

In comparison to states such as Iran and Afghanistan, to Arab countries, and even Turkey, the "Islamic factor" and political Islam in the political systems of the OSCE's post-Soviet Euro-Asian region still are of only relative importance. There, they have differing degrees of representation, organization and effectiveness; in Kazakhstan less, in Tajikistan more, in Uzbekistan and in the place where Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan meet, in the Fergana Valley, they are in the midst of the formation phase. Forces that refer to "the cause of Islam", among others, have, however, already triggered some serious and violent conflicts, the wars in Chechnya and Tajikistan as well as the conflicts in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Most painfully, the war in Chechnya illustrates the political helplessness that characterizes all parties directly and indirectly involved in the conflict. It is true that the West and the OSCE have rightly criticized Russia for its disproportionate use of force. Nevertheless, it cannot be overlooked that the OSCE and its Western participating States are also still far from realizing a concept for dealing with the Islam factor and radical Islamist forces.

Also, the reaction to the armed operations of militant Islamists of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and 2000, which will very likely be continued, was

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[2] Cf. Dieter Senghaas, Zivilisierung wider Willen [Civilizing Against Will], Frankfurt/M. 1998, p. 198.

[3] Here, the author refrains from a detailed description of the strategic importance of Central Asia. For more information cf. Uwe Halbach/Friedemann Müller, Persischer Golf, Kaspisches Meer und Kaukasus – Entsteht eine Region strategischen europäischen Interesses? [The Persian Gulf, the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus – Is a region of strategic interest to Europe developing?], in: SWP-Studie, S1, Berlin 2001; Friedemann Müller, Machtpolitik am Kaspischen Meer [Power-politics in the Caspian Sea Region], SWP-AP3098, March 1999.

[4] The term "political Islam" is used here to refer to political groups "which intend to introduce and to extend Islamic law as recorded in the Koran and in the written records of the actions and communications of the prophet Mohammed to all areas of public and political action". Stefan Wild, Islam und Moderne [Islam and the Modern Age], in: Wirtschaft und Wissenschaft.4/1997, p. 16.

conceptually and politically uncertain. The same applies to the Islamist agitation of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir and its underground activities. This movement and the forces supporting it externally are by no means so naïve to assume that, with their operations, they could already overthrow the Uzbek regime. Rather, their strategy takes into account the inability and/or unwillingness of Uzbekistan's ruling secular elite to use democratic procedures in its dealing with those regional groups of elite and parts of the population who have been denied an equal share in power, and/or, as in the case of Fergana Valley, have been traditionally rooted in Islam. By provoking the internal machinery of oppression to escalate, they aim at delegitimizing the secular system as a prerequisite for the expansion of so-called Islamic alternatives to the system, in particular with a view to young people. Up until now, this strategy has succeeded: With its repressive policy, the ruling Uzbek elite is subject to exposing itself, just as the radical Islamists had hoped. However, also the secular West and the OSCE have actually fallen in the trap of the militant Islamists, in that their reaction has been restricted to the level of fighting against terrorism.

The problems that are presented here will be dealt with by proceeding from the following processes and questions:

Firstly. The transformation and state-forming processes that are currently taking place in the region will continue to be complex on a fairly long-term basis. Socio-political tensions remain unavoidable and, at present, it is already obvious that the ruling elites do not, or only to a limited extent, show that they are able to democratize and have the political flexibility required to respond to intra-state and regional conflicts in a manner adequately promoting stability. This will, on the one hand, lead to more dictatorial forms of rule and, on the other hand, to a stronger, growing opposition, which will above all, take on an Islamist form.

Secondly. Under conditions, which are to a large extent patriarchal, and in populations with a Muslim majority, system transformation and state-forming unavoidably also give rise to the politicization of Islam. Under these specific prerequisites, the question is not whether a politicization of Islam can be avoided, but rather, whether this politicization will take place and be instrumentalized in a constructive or destructive way. Thus, the prospective way of dealing with political Islam and its moving forces, its constructive instrumentalization, becomes one of the central stipulations for a peaceful continuation of system transformation and state-forming and therefore of security and stability in the OSCE Euro-Asian region.

Thirdly. As an after-effect of the long phase of Soviet-Russian nationality policies in the region, which substantially weakened the Islamic factor and helped the secular get considerable social acceptance, the Islamic parts of the elite still find themselves in an early phase of political formation and of defining their position. Islam is still in an early stage of its politicization and, therefore, also its potential for political abuse. Also, knowledge of the Koran and Sharia, as well as the involvement of youth in Islamic movements and organizations is so limited that the central question of a constructive or destructive commitment of Islam can still be influenced positively. This early phase should be used to not allow, or at least, as far as it is possible, limit, the above-described negative fixing of the relationship between Islam and secularism, Islam and the West, and its known negative inter-cultural and political repercussions. The necessary minimum consists in being open to having constructive relations with one another that

allow for a co-operative co-ordination of interests, which would prevent forceful settlements of intra- and inter-state conflicts.

Fourthly, today it is a matter of responding to basic questions, as well as reacting to the practical points at issue that are of importance to OSCE politics, missions in the field and their approach.

The basic problems include the fact that a democratization strategy, whose goal is to consolidate security, cannot, under conditions specific to Central Asia, get away from the coexistence of secularism and Islam – internally in the state-forming process and externally, in relationship to the West. The questions relevant to OSCE policies are as follow: How can one prevent differing values and socio-political orientations from coming into conflict? What has to be done in order to prevent religion from being politicized along these differences and changing into radical Islamic movements? And finally, how can such movements, once they have arisen, be transformed into peaceful, reform-oriented movements?

Practical points of contention whose long-term regulation the development of intra-state conflict transformation depends on, were already made evident in Tajikistan in the UN-led Inter-Tajik Talks (1994-97) and in the process of finding a compromise during the transition period (1997-2000). These points of contention are of general interest in as much as they could be regarded as key questions for finding a compromise in any state where violent conflicts with Islamist forces are to be expected, or have already broken out:

- character of the state - secular or not secular - and its constitutional formulation;
- position of religious (Islamic) associations and parties in the political system and the statutory fixation of their rights and duties;
- transformation of predominantly Islamist-led military-political opposition movements into civilian political parties;
- position, role and perspective of the Islamic elites in the political processes, as well as, in a broader context, in the process of forming national statehood.
- relationship (also of the OSCE) to the repressive persecution of Islamist groups (such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir). On the one hand, the OSCE and its missions exert that democratic fundamental freedoms including, *inter alia,* freedom of religion are guaranteed. On the other hand, they also thus aid, *de facto*, organizations and persons with clearly anti-secular and destabilizing intentions, whose activities, in another context of OSCE policies, would fall under the category of terrorism. An example for this is the transformation of Fergana Valley into a cross-border Islamic caliphate.

2. Potential, Starting Point and Social Perspectives of the Islamic Factor

2.1 The Quantitative Aspect

The societal potential that has to be considered in connection with the Islamic factor consists of 40 Islamic peoples encompassing a population of around 57 million.[5] They are most densely concentrated in Azerbaijan (Caucasus) and in the five states in Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan with a population of 42 million. Also, a considerable share of the Russian Federation's population is Muslim. The data varies tallying between eleven and 22 million people, who belong to more than 40 different ethnic groups, and who make up between eight and 15 per cent of the entire population. Estimates assume that in about 30 years, 30 to 40 million Muslims will be living in Russia.[6] Thus, quantitatively alone, the Islamic factor plays an important role in the OSCE's Eurasian region, influences domestic and foreign policy of the countries in the region and can become a component as well as a disquieting element of conflict constellations. An empirical survey carried out by the US Department of State on the social acceptance and political role of Islam in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan from July 2000[7] depicts the following image:

The question, "To what religious group, if any, do you belong?", was answered with "Islam" in Azerbaijan by 88, in Kazakhstan by 44, in Uzbekistan by 88 and in Tajikistan by 93 per cent of those surveyed. Eight, respectively 41, respectively eight, respectively five per cent answered "Christianity".[8] The subsequent question, "Do you consider yourself a religious person, a believer?", was answered with yes/no by 90/7 per cent in Azerbaijan, 80/17 in Kazakhstan, 41/51 in Uzbekistan and 88/3 in Tajikistan.[9] On the question, "What role do you think Islam should play in the political life of our country – a very large role, a rather large role, a small role, or no role at all?", 21 per cent in Azerbaijan, 45 in Kazakhstan, 46 in Uzbekistan and 27 in Tajikistan[10] wanted it to play a very large or rather large role, whereas 73 per cent of those questioned in Azerbaijan, 48 in Kazakhstan, 42 in Uzbekistan and 62 in Tajikistan spoke for a small role or no political role at all.[11] On the control question, "What role should Islamic religious leaders play in the political life of our country – a very large role, a rather large role, a small role, or no role at all?", 16 per cent in Azerbaijan, 42 in Kazakhstan, 37 in Uzbekistan and 24 per cent in Tajikistan spoke for a very large or a rather large role, whereas conversely 76 per cent in Azerbaijan, 49 in Kazakhstan, 49 in Uzbekistan and 67 per cent of the population in Tajikistan spoke for a small or no role at all for Islamic religious leaders in political life.[12]

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[5]   According to Karl Grobe-Hagel, Rußlands Dritte Welt [Russia's Third World], Frankfurt am Main 1992, p. 293.
[6]   Cf. Aleksei Malashenko, Islamskoe vozrojdenie v sovremennoi Rossii, Moscow 1998, pp. 7-8.
[7]   US Department of State, Office of Research, Central Asians Differ on Islam's Political Role, But Agree on a Secular State, Opinion Analysis, 6 July 2000, M-95-00. What the survey is based on is stated in the analysis: "All the surveys entailed personal interviews with 1,000 or more randomly selected adults (18 years and older). The margin of sampling error is +/- 5 percentage points." Ibid., p. 1.
[8]   Ibid., p. 11.
[9]   Ibid.
[10] This low degree is due to the population's discrediting of political Islam in the wake of the civil war.
[11] US Department of State, loc cit. (note 7), p. 18.
[12] Ibid.

In a further control question, "Do you think that (name of country) should be administered according to Islamic religious law (Sharia), or should it be administered according to secular (non-religious) law?", six respectively 90 per cent in Azerbaijan, 19 respectively 68 in Kazakhstan, ten respectively 80 in Uzbekistan and seven respectively 76 per cent in Tajikistan called for "religious law" respectively "secular law".[13] On the cultural-religious level, however, there is an interesting differentiation: The question, "Should our schools provide religious instruction for our children, or should religious instruction take place outside the schools?", was answered with "Schools should provide religious instruction" by 52 per cent in Azerbaijan, 42 in Kazakhstan, 41 in Uzbekistan and 17 in Tajikistan. From the categories of answers, 41 per cent of those interviewed in Azerbaijan, 53 in Kazakhstan, 47 in Uzbekistan and 61 per cent in Tajikistan chose "It should take place outside the schools".[14] Sixty-three per cent of those interviewed in Kazakhstan, 82 per cent in Uzbekistan and 79 per cent in Tajikistan professed their faith to the Islamic principle "there is no God other than God, Allah".[15]

In the early 1990s, 20 Islamic organizations were registered in Central Asia alone: seven in Uzbekistan, six in Kazakhstan, four in Kyrgyzstan, two in Tajikistan and one in Turkmenistan.[16] The Party of Islamic Rebirth (PIR) in Tajikistan, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), as well as the Hizb-ut-Tahrir Party belong to today's best-organized and politically most active organizations.

2.2 The Geopolitical Aspect

An assessment on the Islamic factor's potential resources has to take its outer geostrategic hinterland into account. It is effective in states, which, although they are members of the CIS, are again approaching the Islamic world in many respects. Having been part of it since the introduction of Islam by Arab conquerors (651-874), these countries were widely separated from the Islamic cultural environment through Russian colonial policies and, later on, their integration into the USSR. As they border on the Muslim states Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey and Pakistan, which, on their part, build a bridge to the Arab world and to the Persian Gulf, the mutual network of close connections with the Islamic hinterland is gradually replenished again. "The area, which is comprised of the Persian Gulf, Caspian Sea and the Caucasus regions, networks and grows together."[17] Both sides are increasingly recognizing the existing geostrategic, economic, political, infrastructural and cultural scope. Tajik politicians, for example, are seriously thinking about constructing a road that leads to the Pakistani coast of the Arabian Sea – well aware of the possible geostrategic consequences that could arise from the fact that, from the south-eastern corner of Central Asia it would only take five hours to get to Islamabad by car, while it takes five days to get to Moscow.

Against this backdrop, this OSCE region gradually ceases to be what it was when it joined the Organization after the collapse of the USSR, and what it was perceived to be by the West: a kind of "Soviet Orient", an Asian appendage to a communist, though a secular-oriented Soviet Union. A

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[13]   Ibid., p. 19.

[14]   Ibid., p. 20.

[15]   Ibid., p. 13.

[16]   Cf. Aleksei Malashenko, Islam i politika v gosudarstvakh Tsentralnoi Azii, in: Tsentralnaya Aziya i Kavkaz, Lulea, Sweden, 1999, No. 4 (5), p. 59.

[17]   Halbach/Müller, loc.cit. (note 3), p. 35 (own translation).

foresighted position on the Islamic factor has to consider that the geostrategic constellation can continue to change, that in the course of transformation and state-forming the elites will continue to regroup and that therefore their interests could also change. Even today, the sub-regional elites have developed a different understanding of domestic and foreign stability as well as security, including their expectations of the OSCE, in comparison to ten years ago at the beginning of their independence. When dealing with stability and security, it is not a rare occurrence that they and the West talk about very different goals and intentions.

Against this background, a certain erosion of the consensus between sub-regional elites and the West on basic aspects of the OSCE stabilization strategy, for example in the human dimension, is not irrelevant. Regardless how open the question of political orientation is and will remain for a certain period of time, in their practical state-forming policy, the ruling secular elites pursue pragmatic concepts of "national rebirth" and "consolidation of national consciousness", which are oriented towards the traditional and the national. Socially, both are directly and genuinely connected with the Islamic factor. On this basis, in their rejection of culturally heteronomous "models", conformities can already be observed today across all ideological orientations of the political and intellectual elites and these conformities could definitely bring together secularists and Islamists in an anti-Western coalition.

2.3 The Qualitative (Socio-Political) Aspect

The US Department of State's empirical survey clearly shows a discrepancy between the high degree of the population's involvement in Islam as a religion, and their low degree of readiness in accepting it as a dominating factor in the political system's decision-making processes. At the moment, the most important goal of Islamic politicians inside and outside the region is to close this gap of "political socialization" of Islam, for it stands in the way of Islam being transformed into a political movement. At the same time, both groups have absolutely not pursued congruous goals and intentions. To be able to assess the strategy's chances of success, long-term aspects that are connected with the historical initial situation and the prospects of Islam in the societies of the region, as well as "operative" resources that can, at short notice, be mobilized in favour of political Islam, have to be taken into consideration.

2.3.1 Long-Term Aspects: Islam and National Identity

Despite Russian colonialism, and later Russian-Soviet cultural imperialism in the region, Islam never ceased to be the basis and lively component of social relations and of the population's consciousness. This occurred although the Soviet Cultural Revolution had affected it most severely. In its endeavour to force back religious influence in Muslim societies, in order to Sovietize them, within 70 years "cultural imperialism"[18] suppressed classical Islamic literature through alphabet and educational reforms, disbanded the Islamic educational and legal systems, and liquidated the religious elite. However, what was maintained were the traditions and norms stemming from Islam that regulated and determined the way of life. In the societies in the Caucasus and in Central Asia, which have remained essentially patriarchal, these traditions and norms were adjusted to the imposed foreign system along with a

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[18]   "Cultural imperialism" is understood here as "the efforts of a (foreign European, i.e. Russian-Soviet – A.S.) culture to rule, or to expand, in order to create a political unit". Ernest Gellner, Nationalismus und Moderne [Nationalism and Modern Age], Hamburg 1995, p. 24.

traditional "people's Islam", which the Soviet power tolerated for tactical purposes. Against this background, the basic elements of Islam were capable of being maintained in a kind of "parallel existence" with the ruling political system. That this was achieved is to the credit of Muslim movements, orders and brotherhoods such as the Sufi, for example, who played an "important role" in the "untiring fight against Russification".[19]

With the independence of the Central Asian states, the transformation of the political system, the state-forming, as well as the indecisiveness in the political orientation emerging from these processes, the position of Islam changed fundamentally in two respects:

First, in view of its future prospects: If state-forming takes place in societies where the principles of the collective consciousness, social relationships and the system of norms are influenced by Islam, through the subjects and moving forces of state-forming (i.e. the Muslim majority), Islam, itself, will also become one of the constituting factors of state-forming. The more this process takes a democratic and representative form, the more it will assume this role. Hence, Islam has the potential to become, sooner or later, a strategic factor, which could end up having relevant repercussions on essential aspects related to state-forming and the formation of the political system. Examples include the orientation towards the political order, the formation of political and party systems, societal and political consensus mechanisms, culture, education, the law and much more. In other words, under the specific social conditions in the Euro-Asian region, neither statehood nor the formation of its social mechanisms and thus the entire transformation of the system can be managed without this factor being taken into consideration. Thus, the Islamic factor is not an optional variable that politicians and policy-makers can choose to consider or not. The upshot is that the Islamic factor not only has a perspective, but that this perspective is most closely tied to its constructive or destructive instrumentalization in state-forming processes. The consequence that arises from this is that every external actor that intervenes in these processes will have to deal, directly or indirectly, with Islam and the part of the political elite who is anchored in it.

Second with regard to its politicization: As mentioned above, system transformation and state-forming have politicizing repercussions on politicians that refer to Islam and the Islamic societal model. The area of tension lies in the different understanding of national cultural identity, which secular and Islamic politicians want to use as a basis for state-forming and its political orientation. This dissent determines practical policy-making. Akhbar Turajonzoda, one of the most prominent Islamist politicians in Central Asia and, up until recently, a militant Islamist in the Tajik civil war, expressed to the author that he is full of deep admiration for democracy in Western Europe and also Russia. This democracy and the peoples who support it drew their strength from each of their own historically matured forms of "Christianity as a matter of course for the people and their culture". This contains the following rational core: State- and nation-building, from this perspective, are to be carried out in such a way that they correspond to the socio-cultural identity, that the Muslim identity of the majority of the population is to be regarded as a matter of course in state and society, and that both are reflected in the political culture of the leadership of the country. Given that their cultural identity had been pushed to the limits of its existence through an

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[19]   Annemarie Schimmel, in: Sufismus. Eine Einführung in die islamische Mystik [Sufism. An Introduction to Islamic Mysticism], Munich 2000, pp. 84-85 (own translation). The study includes a detailed description of the role of the Sufi Orders Naqshbandiyya and Qadiriya in the Caucasus and Central Asia, which opposed the increasing influence of Western colonization, in this case Russian.

imposed foreign societal model during the past decades, this is a comprehensible desire. This sensitivity with regard to cultural identity is, however, constantly being provoked anew by the ruling secular elites: When these secular elites seized power after the independence of the Central Asian states, they anchored secularism in the constitutions of "their states". Step by step, they even deviated from the liberalization tendencies in the state's relationship to religion, which had emerged during Perestroika and had given the Muslim activists hopes for a "better future" – for example, in Uzbekistan, where the Islamic fundamentalists in 1991 expected that their country would be declared an Islamic state in the new constitution.[20] It was not only there that they saw themselves instead confronted with a politic that, with respect to Islam, rather resembled that of the former "red colonizers"[21] and led to its containment, control, marginalization or outvoting. Efforts to force back the influence of Islam on social policy, which had particularly increased in the early years of emerging national curiosity, were visible everywhere.

Disappointment combined with the determination not to let the "zero hour" expire in the beginning of independent statehood gave rise to Islamist groups in Uzbekistan, "which were marked by excessive intolerance and extremism towards the existing order".[22] In the "new-old" elites' conduct towards Islam and its political representatives, they recognized the same combination of secularism and communism that had always been their major enemy. This led them to a new understanding of their dispute[23] – which until then had been primarily a dispute on the purity of their religion – on the question of whether Uzbekistan should be a "house of Islam" ("Dar al-Islam") and thus of peace, or a "house of war" ("Dar al-harb"[24]): the understanding of a dispute between an unbelieving minority (in the sense of the ruling secular elites) and a Muslim majority. The Islamists in Chechnya, where Islam is connected with a national struggle for liberation, followed a similar logic when they used the attempted coup d'état in the summer of 1991 in Moscow as an opportunity to overthrow the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in their Autonomous Republic. In 1992, in Tajikistan, the Islamists reached for power in a coalition with national, but secular-oriented democrats. Even after the civil war, the cancellation of the constitution's provision that Tajikistan was a secular state was a central issue in the political dispute between the Rakhmonov government and the PIR.

The disputes occurring in the course of the state-forming processes in the Central Asian OSCE participating States, and also in Chechnya, which were fought out as to the direction the political order should take, confirm, by and large, Bassam Tibis' statement that, "the politicization of religion by the fundamentalists is directed against the secular nation-state and is an expression of an ideological conflict on concepts of order".[25]

2.3.2 Short-Term Aspects

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[20] Cf. Bakhtijar Babajanov, Ferganskaya dolina: Istochnik ili jertva islamskogo fundamentalizma?, in: Tsentralnaya Aziya i Kavkaz 5/1999, p. 130.

[21] The author has definitely not invented this term. It originates inform the Islamist terminology of the region.

[22] Babajanov, loc. cit. (note 20) p. 128 (own translation).

[23] This dispute shows that Islamic fundamentalism has historically also been known in the Eurasian sphere, and that it is, by no means, a new phenomenon.

[24] "Dar al-harb" means "house of discord" in the sense of orthodox Muslims disputing with non-orthodox Muslims or with other religious minorities.

[25] Bassam Tibi, Religionen und Werte [Religions and Values], in: Internationale Politik 2/2000, p. 29.

As political Islam, its parties and movements have not yet reached that degree of effectiveness within the population, so that its symbolism alone could have a mobilizing effect, as for example the Hamas has among the Palestinians, they, as a rule, only have an effect on the masses in concrete conflict constellations. In addition to the existence of such constellations, there must be leaders with charismatic personalities, such as clan leaders, high-ranking military officers or religious dignitaries in order to gain influence over the population. Practice has shown that acting in the name of the "cause of Islam" first gained strength when the actors seized such constellations, were authorities themselves, or set themselves up as authorities: In Chechnya, radical Islamist forces were capable of instrumentalizing Islam for a movement for national (ethnic) and cultural self-determination. In Tajikistan, political Islam became and becomes strong only when (and where) its leaders brought it in connection with regionalism and localism and succeeded in making it a medium in their struggle for power over other regional groups of elite. A similar situation is taking place in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. A current example can be observed in the northern province in Tajikistan where the externally steered Hizb-ut-Tahrir is presently profiting from the discord among the population that was brought about through the marginalization of their region by the Kulyab clan oligarchy. Well informed witnesses are of the following opinion: "If today the north would rebel against the central power, it would take place under the green flag."

Based on political Islam's ever yet low symbolic power and the fact that it is, on the one hand, dependent on concrete conflict constellations and, on the other, on support from socially accepted authorities, it can be concluded that the Islamic factor as such has *not yet* become a causal factor of conflict in the region. It could become a causal factor of conflict if its radicalization were to take place on an ideological level – which could be provoked by religious oppression or physical repression, or the liquidation of elites who are connected with it – and, if against such a background, this were to lead to religious wars. In such a case, Islam itself would become a cause for conflict. So far, such a situation has not been reached. Up until now, regional and local groups of elite have seized upon it "only" as a political resource to assert their interests and/or respond to actually existing conflict material. From this causality/resource constellation, in which the Islamic factor still finds itself at present, also the still existing "constructive reserves" are being derived in order to counteract the destructive instrumentalization of Islam: Preventive diplomacy, with regard to the Islamic factor, has to deal with the actually existing conflict material, on the one hand, and those elites who seize upon Islam as a resource, on the other. The latter is clearly a task for the OSCE democratization strategy, which is thus directly involved with political Islam and is even bound to it. Because, the more the OSCE democratizes the political conditions within the states of the region, the more it also broadens the political scope of the Islamists. The current reduction to the "fight against terrorism" clearly falls short of coping with this "contradiction".

In this context, it should not be overlooked that discussing real, existing conflict constellations can also be productive. In this sense, political Islam and its representatives could be understood and accepted as part of civil society opposition. For the "constructive reserves", the structure of prerequisites described above means giving leeway by removing causes of conflict in a targeted manner, as well as by turning to the bearers of authority and their differentiated interests.[26] "Destructive reserves", from which radical-

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[26] In Tajikistan for instance, quite a few former Islamist field commanders even left the PIR after having been offered "posts".

Islamist forces can profit, are found primarily in the following strategic socio-political spheres: *Firstly*, negative developments in the socio-economic sphere, which increase social disparities and intensify distributional conflicts, can lead to the politicization of ethnicity, religion etc. "The conflicts in Central Asia will be about daily bread"[27], states the International Crisis Group (ICG). With reference to the states in Central Asia, where at present the most active Islamic movements exist, i.e. Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, the economic situation is described as an "economic catastrophe": "The political order of these countries might not be so parlous if the economic welfare of many of their people had not deteriorated so consistently for the last fifteen years."[28] A *second* important factor is the collapse of the educational system. This is related to Islam in two ways: Firstly, it causes an educational step back, which in turn enhances a "dark Islam", an Islam that lies far from any developed education and modernity based on it. The Mullahs from the countryside have again taken over education, formerly assumed by the now collapsing educational systems. Secondly, the youth are not taught values that allow them to find personal stability based on symbols of national identity. Reverting back to almost "antique" national symbol- and integration-figures, such as Tamerlan in Uzbekistan or Somoni in Tajikistan, as the secular regimes do in order to legitimize themselves, ignores the social norms that are rooted in Islam, which play a role particularly in the daily lives of the rural majority of the population. A *third* factor is the vacuum of political order, which primarily two external "cultural forces" try to fill: the West with its societal model, and radical Islamists demanding the Islamization of Central Asian states and the Caucasus. The latter rely on fears that are also shared by secular forces, that they might become pressured by the West, including Russia, to adopt or preserve a (restored) heteronomous system of values. Political Islam benefits from this defensive reaction against a feared heteronomy. Here, it should not be overlooked that the political and intellectual elites of all ideological orientations treat post-national approaches to policy-making (the relativization of the nation-state, "de-nationalization" as a result of globalization, primacy of human rights, intervention becoming the norm) with an attitude ranging from scepticism to firm rejection.

3. On Some Political Consequences

If concrete conflict constellations and the societal authorities are the two most important prerequisites for mobilizing political Islam, then avoiding such conflict situations and dealing with the relevant societal authorities are the prerequisites for avoiding the destructive instrumentalization of the Islamic factor. This thus leads to a variety of consequences.

3.1 Dealing with the Islamic Factor and the Fight against Terrorism

Even though the OSCE has already been confronted several times with the militant variant of political Islam in civil wars, conflicts and conciliation processes in its Euro-Asian region, it only hesitantly takes into account the Islamic factor. Only in the last months did the OSCE, with its conference in Tashkent (October 2000), begin to react to "Islam" in an "organized" manner, namely, in the context of a reaction to terrorism "caused by groups which are ready to use means of terrorism to achieve their political

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[27] International Crisis Group (ICG), Central Asia: Crisis Conditions in Three States, 7 August 2000, ICG ASIA Report No. 7, Central Asia/Brussels, p. 24.
[28] Ibid., p. 7.

goals".[29] Justification of anti-terrorist action can and should not be denied. However, even today, several serious assessments, e.g. those of the International Crisis Group, indicate the inadequacy of a political approach that reduces the relationship to political Islam and how it is dealt with to the level of violently fighting against single Islamist groups. The ICG states: "The international experience of Islamic fundamentalism allows politicians and observers in Central Asia to exaggerate the danger of political groups associated in any way with a programmatic emphasis on Islam. The best specialists' research indicates that the role of Islam in politics in Central Asia is much less threatening than the more extreme images suggest."[30] At the same time, the ICG points out that the weight of Islam in the political processes will increase: "In the next five to ten years, Islam will acquire greater influence in politics in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan."[31]

From the prospective point of view of ensuring stability, it should not be overlooked that the action level of fighting against terrorism is limited in its socio-political stabilizing scope. As a result, it can only achieve to a limited degree what preventive diplomacy with regard to intra-state conflicts has to achieve: to preventively work towards ensuring that the social causes of conflict do not erupt in militant forms with their destructive effects. Regarding how to deal with political Islam, the fight against terrorism will only reach its goal when it is embedded in a broader network of activities, together with political, democracy-oriented, socio-political and politico-economic strategies (see, e.g. "destructive reserves" in the previous section). In such a context of activities, the latter strategies even take precedence, because with their help, those long-term factors can be influenced, which the socio-political control of the dangers associated with the Islamic factor and political Islam is dependent on. The OSCE does not have such a concept. In the context of fighting against terrorism, co-operation should be sought after, from the start, with the representatives of Islam in the region. The points of view of influential, regional Islamic politicians should be taken seriously, including those who until quite recently belonged to the leading figures of radical groupings. Khoja Akhbar Turajonzoda argues that "rather than posing the question 'how to destroy extremism' the discussion should center on 'how to avert the emergence of extremist views'".[32]

3.2 Partner Dilemma

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[29] The OSCE and Security Aspects in Central Asia, International Conference on Enhancing Security and Stability in Central Asia: An Integrated Approach to Counter Drugs, Organized Crime and Terrorism, Tashkent, 19-20 October 2000, p. 18.

[30] ICG, loc. cit. (note 27), p. 19.

[31] Ibid.

[32] In posing the problem of the principles in the fight against extremism, according to Turajonzoda, the following factors, among others, require consideration: "1. Special attention must be paid to extremism at the stage of its ideological inception and direction of the main efforts to counter it at precisely this stage 2. Acknowledging extremism as a social phenomenon, it is vital to consider means of resolving socio-economic and politico-cultural problems which promote it when devising anti-extremism-programs (…) 4. (…) it is vital to abstain from attempts at artificial changes in culture and religion, as in most cases, the emergence of extremism invariably has cultural and religious roots (…) 6. (…) governments should, in their turn, demonstrate greater tolerance in internal policy, for intolerance and a deficit of culture in the political sphere and *coexistence* (italics A.S) have promoted the growth of radicalism." In: Address by the First Deputy of the Prime Minister of Tadjikistan, Khodzha Akabar Turadzhonzoda at the international conference "Enhancing the Security of States in a Multipolar World: Focus on Extremism", sponsored by George C. Marshall European Center of Security Studies, 18-22 September 2000, at: http://www.marshallcenter.org/conference%2520Center/Conference%2520Reports. htm.

The stabilization strategy of the OSCE, which as its core has the human dimension, primarily targets the domestic policy dimension of the Central Asian states. Consequently, it has to rely on partners in the region. The basic underlying norms and criteria of the human dimension are those of the Western-secular value system and are thus not free from "being ideologically charged", which inevitably has consequences. With this strategic focus, the OSCE intervenes in the still open competition on the future political order in the states of the region.

In the relationship between the OSCE and the internal participants of this competition, today the following inconsistent image has arisen: On the one hand, the OSCE criticizes the ruling secular regimes for having "very serious implementation deficits across the board of all human dimension issues".[33] These regimes therefore suspect it of being a player in Western power politics and attempted heteronomy. In effect, these regimes actually are, if considered under the OSCE standards of democracy, rule of law and human rights, only partly legitimate and viable. On the other hand, the OSCE, however, appears to have as its premise that the representative power of the secular regimes is sufficiently strong to be able to guarantee that they are in principle in agreement with the OSCE as a (at its core) Western community of values. However, the representative power appears, in many ways, to be fragile. Representatives of the Russian-Orthodox Church, for example, argue that the underlying values that are the basis of the Helsinki process (the human dimension) were agreed upon solely on the ideological basis of secular points of view, without considering the cultural and religious specifics of other large ideological orientations in the OSCE region, such as the Russian-Orthodox Church and Islam.[34] It may only be a question of time until this standpoint is shared and made the subject of discussion by political Islam in the OSCE area. This issue will then also become disputed in the competition on the future political order.

Who, then, could be a reliable co-operation partner for the OSCE in this competition and predictable in the long-term? Only the secular regimes? These elites could perhaps be the last secularists to be in power. Should one not consider that they could, in the competition on the future political order in the region, be the losers of power politics in the long run, and that forces could replace them, who would be considerably more difficult for the OSCE to deal with? Thus, while the relationship to the secular regimes is shaky, the OSCE lacks a specific concept on how to deal with political Islam and the Islamists. Not least, this gap too encourages Islamic politicians to mistrust the West, even though they are interested in having a good relationship with the OSCE.[35] In "partner work" with Islamic politicians of the fragile region in question, it appears sensible to pay attention to a number of features, which distinguish these from the "common" type of Islamist personality that we have faced in the Middle East. These distinctive features are primarily connected with the Russian-Soviet education, which moulded them differently from those in the Middle East. Central Asian Islamists are familiar with the schools and categories of European philosophy and culture, with rationalism and dialectics. This not only leads to a similar assessment of social processes, but also facilitates dialogue and communication. One can connect with these distinctive features in the subjective sphere.

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[33] Report of the Chairman-in-Office (Follow-up to the Oslo Ministerial Council "Decision on Central Asia"), Vienna, 15 July 1999, p. 5.

[34] Cf. Episkopus Kirill from the Russian-Orthodox Church in an interview by the ORT, Moscow, 18 March 2001.

[35] The author was recently told that even Western critique on the secular regimes is not convincing, because when social influence of the Islamic opposition increases, the West will "ally itself" with the secularists against Islam at the end of the day.

On the whole, it has been noticed that there is a conceptual as well as practical-political imbalance in domestic partner work, through which the OSCE runs the risk of falling in between two stools in the competition between the different political forces. A possible course of direction in the search for a stability-promoting way-out of this partner dilemma consists in the OSCE reflecting on its original philosophy of building bridges as the "common child" of the European political East and West. In the case of its Eurasian region, this would mean taking on the role of an "honest political broker" in order to help bridge those contradictions that could drive the Islamists and secularists into violent conflicts, which would then also endanger European security on the whole.

3.3 On the Relationship between State and Religion

The development of such a strategy, however, requires breaking from the traditional view described above of the OSCE Euro-Asian region as an appendage of the former USSR, and taking its specific social characteristics into account more consistently. In practice, this means that it has to be politically acknowledged that Islam, alongside secularism, is a fundamental pillar of cultural identity, and that it cannot and must not be excluded, as such, from state- and national-identity forming processes. To reduce it to the role of one religion amongst others would be a shortfall both politically and historically. However, the traditional view also proves to be so tenacious, because the secular regimes that have come to power in Central Asia have persistently continued with the old-fashioned, secular form of state. The West and the OSCE also derive their concept of state from a secular-constitutional view. This includes, as an essential principle, the separation of state and church. The fact that Central Asian regimes maintain this principle leads to the point of view that the phenomenon of an Islamist opposition will, so to speak, sort itself out if only the "correct" approach of guaranteeing freedom of religion, based on the principles of the human dimension, is used. This assumption is based, amongst others, on the misconception of equating "church" with religion, in the broad sense, as can be observed in the political practices of Central Asian governments.

This misconception, applied to the relationship between state and Islam in a secularist understanding, has proven to be a serious political mistake in at least three different ways: *Firstly,* it negates or marginalizes the basic difference between the Christian religion of today and Islam: Christianity is characterized as a more or less private matter of faith, whereas Islam is based on the assumption of the unity of the individual, community, faith (Allah) and state and thus strives to fulfil an all-encompassing society- and state-forming mission. In view of the fact that the state-forming processes have only just begun and will continue for a long time, this difference is far from being irrelevant. *Secondly,* the above-mentioned misconception, more poignantly formulated, moves the secular regimes into the proximity of being the joint heirs of a heteronomous secular system of values of a civilization, namely that of the Russian-Soviet, which the societies of the region have only just escaped, however, with serious damage to their identity. *Thirdly,* it obscures one's view of looking at the above-described role of Islam as being a central factor in transformation- and state-forming processes in an ideologically unbiased manner. If however the Islamic factor must be granted such a strategically important role, it has proven to be a mistake to approach it, as can be observed in the behaviour of the secular regimes, either from the point of view of tactical considerations or within the scope of a given, but absolutely changeable and transient balance of power.

The key issue for rethinking the relationship to political Islam appears to be, on the one hand, taking Islam into account in its complexity as a religion, ideology and set of rules for social behaviour and relationships as well as with respect to its state- and law-forming effects. On the other hand, the OSCE must take into account, and consciously use the social potential of Islam that lies in the groups of elite and in the population that can be mobilized by them, as strategic factors for its stabilization policy. To formulate the issue in a simple manner, the question that needs to be answered is: How should a stabilization policy be formed in view of an "island of non-Christian culture" with a Muslim majority in the OSCE region?

4. On the Politico-Diplomatic Experiences in the Previous Secular-Islamist Compromises

The societal structural conditions, in particular, the advance in the social acceptance of secularism, as well as the challenges of transformation and state-formation, set different tasks for political Islam in the Euro-Asian OSCE region than those that its supporters face in the "traditional" Islamic societies of the former Western colonies. While the primary issue in the latter was to remove from the upper echelons of government the ruling elites, who had detached themselves from Islamic principles and who were carrying out the state-forming process of the presently existing states so to speak "in the slipstream of colonialism" from above,[36] Islamic actors in Central Asia have the opportunity to declare their intentions on how to form society and state right at the beginning of the state-forming process and from below. The leading Islamists of Tajikistan were the first to take notice of this opportunity and this is at the core of their change in strategy after the civil war.

The necessity of such a change, which has, so far, neither fully matured conceptually nor been completed politically, was understood by the Tajik Islamists, after their attempt to settle the question of the future political order of Tajikistan "from above" by seizing power through a quasi coup d'état right after the break-up of the USSR in 1991/92 failed. As leading Tajik Islamists today confess, this action was strongly influenced by the tactical approach of traditional, radical-Islamist movements.[37] In view of the rapidly increasing shift in large portions of the population to Islam, the Tajik Islamists too, in that period of change, believed it to be realistic that such an approach could be realized. Disillusionment and rethinking were triggered by the (also physical) losses that occurred in the civil war that was waged until 1996/97, by the growing danger of the disintegration of the state into "principalities" of regional and local field commanders, and thus the threat to the state as such that had only recently come into existence.[38] Above all, however, the loss of reputation of political Islam, of the individuals that supported it, as well as of the movement and the party in the population, made them aware that their once high popularity amongst the population was lost, and that the Party of Islamic Rebirth was stigmatized as one of the "parties to the war". Not least, despite all the election manipulation, the low election result from February 2000 caused a profound, but instructive shock for the PIR: The population had neither

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[36]   An example is the Iranian Shah.
[37]   "The small band of Mujahidin, loyal to Islam, determined and utterly fearless".
[38]   Islamist dialogue partners say that the experience gained during their exile in Afghanistan was a lesson to them. There, they could observe that independent regional field commanders, under the conditions of a regionally fragmented country, can wage war lastingly, which eventually leads to the destruction of the nation-state.

forgotten nor forgiven it for the suffering that took place during the civil war. This situation forced a redefinition of their strategic options.

This process has led to a differentiation among the Tajik Islamists, which for the first time in Central Asia, and even for the first time in the CIS space at all, generated a moderate Islamist movement that at present is making its mark substantively and organizationally. Although there are no concrete organizational criteria for belonging to this movement, with Turajonzoda, Nuri, Davlat Usmon, Himmatzoda, and others, almost all important Islamist leaders of the former United Tajik Opposition (UTO), who also played an important role in the UN-moderated and OSCE-supported peace-process, can be classified as part of this movement. At present, in this movement a debate is taking place on redefining the understanding of political Islam under the specific social conditions and socio-political priorities of Central Asia and Tajikistan, its goals, tasks and methods that need to be adopted in order to attain this.

As research on the secular-Islamist dialogue-process during the transition period 1997-2000 so far shows, the ability and willingness to take national responsibility, as well as refraining from the further use of violence as (also purely personal) motives for changing to a civilian strategy play an important role. The cornerstones of such a civilian strategy are: tolerating the secular nature of the state, consolidating the still young state, helping society reach peace and economically and socially stabilizing it, making one's mark as a "constructive opposition" [39] to the ruling presidential system, expanding the base of the PIR, attaining its country-wide reacceptance, recruiting new supporters, and creating the organizational prerequisites for this. One leading Islamist stated that his movement should be allowed to take a longer "deep breath" after the dreadful civil war. Even if tactical calculation fathered the thought in this statement, a relevant part of Islamists, through their responsibility for civilian politics, see themselves confronted with practical constraints. The central question is that of the "modern (for many Islamists, 'Islamic') nation-state".

In this context, it is worth noting that although the Tajik Islamists have maintained their relationships with Islamist movements and organizations in the Middle East, in particular in Iran, they have taken some critical distance from them in terms of content. Two aspects can be held to be typical: *Firstly,* based on their own experiences, they have had to acknowledge that tactical recommendations from the Middle East "may apply to Africa and the Middle East, but not to the realities of Central Asia".[40] *Secondly,* they had to acknowledge that a modern Islamic state, under the given circumstances, was impossible if it did not take secularism into account. In this context, they are carefully following the reform attempts of Iranian President Khatami. Their observations have led to the realization that even in the process of creating an Islamic state as a nation-state free from the "birth marks of colonialism", as, in their view, is strived for in Iran, the secular elements are growing.

Therefore, the Islamists of Central Asia, as some of them concluded, should not repeat the difficult path of Iran to attain such a modern Islamic nation-state, but should make use of Iranian findings.

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[39] This definition of political self-understanding is surprisingly in accordance with that of the Communist Party of Tajikistan!

[40] Cited from discussions with Tajik Islamists, May 2001.

The compromise that has been reached between secularists and Islamists so far, as part of the agreed upon transition period after the civil war in Tajikistan, has generated the beginning of an - although contentious - secular-Islamic "dialogue". At the heart of this, was the search for compromises on the quality of a state and a political system which both sides could live with in the near future. Central questions such as the orientation of the political order, changes in the constitution as well as in the political and party systems were discussed. As a result, the PIR and other leading Islamists refrained from questioning the secular character of the state. This is to be evaluated as a remarkable achievement.

A preliminary analysis of the Tajik secular-Islamist dialogue-process also provided the first findings with regard to dealing with radicalized Islamists. As their detailed description would go beyond the scope of this paper, they will only be described here briefly: As a primary finding, it has become clear that a radicalization of political Islam is not taking place in an abstract form, but that it is rather preceded by the radicalization of concrete persons and parts of the elite who are connected to Islam. The reasons for such radicalization can be various. However, under the circumstances researched here, ideological, power-political and religious[41] provocations carried out by the secular elite are the most dangerous. The interaction between the ideological level and that of power politics has proven to be particularly explosive. Excluding, or continuing to exclude the Islamic part of the elite from participating in the political, administrative and economic power, will inevitably push it in the direction of an alternative political system that would allow it to assert its interests. Because the question on the quality of such a system is linked to that of its future political order, the ideological question, "secular or Islamic state?", is inevitably on the agenda.

In Tajikistan, it has become clear that, under certain circumstances, which still need to be further researched, the differences between the secular and Islamic parts of the elite on the ideological level concerning the question "secular or Islamic state?"[42] can still be bridged. This required a political compromise, whereby an influential part of the Islamic elite decided to tolerate the secular character of the state, because the ruling part of the secular elite forced itself to agree to a kind of "power sharing", as well as to the legalization of religious parties. Thus, in both key questions that are crucial for avoiding internal social conflict, a compromise had become possible, i.e. a compromise on the transformation of the violent form of conflict into settling the conflict in a peaceful manner, and on a "coexistence of cultures" within the common state.

The delegating of concrete responsibility to the members of the former UTO on various state levels, as well as confronting their ideological ideas with the practical constraints of real social relationships[43] and the social climate in the population, caused a (temporary?) defusing of tension on the ideological level.

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[41] For example, the continuing interference of the state in the "internal affairs" of Muslims is regarded as a religious provocation. This also includes state authorities that control Muslim communities.

[42] In Tajikistan, the question was formulated as "secular or non-secular state", and was embodied in the demand that the term "secular state" be deleted from the current constitution. The compromise consisted in the Islamists refraining from the deletion in return for the legalization of the activities of "religious parties" in the Law on Political Parties.

[43] As an example, the rules of the Sharia could not be applied to regions controlled by Islamists, because the population, in particular women, returned to their old Tajik norms.

Preventing the radicalization of Islam on the ideological level, that is, that Islam itself becomes a cause of conflict, is not only tactically, but also strategically, highly relevant. *Firstly,* because this level is directly connected to the religion of the majority of the indigenous population, and can mobilize huge masses of people. *Secondly,* because Islam as a religion will, in the long run, have at its disposal a broader national basis than a ruling secular segment of the elite, which is only partly anchored in the population. *Thirdly,* conflicts on an ideological level would have an effect back onto the regional sphere, and could be used by militant Islamist groupings there as a pretext for "Islamic solidarity" and intervention. Conversely, it becomes clear what should be avoided in order to prevent the radicalization of the Islamic factor: The Islamic-bound part of the elite should not be provoked; religious sentiments of the Islamic population should not be provoked; secular and Islamic elites should not be simultaneously provoked by the "exporting" of foreign value-systems of a "foreign Islam", on the one hand, and in the form of the imposition of Western values and norms on the other. Such "exporting" could bring together Islamists and secularists in solidarity on the basis of a dangerous, irrational, nationalistic mixture, even if only for tactical purposes, against "heteronomy".

The effects of the present "experiment", i.e. of the secularist-Islamist compromise process taking place in Tajikistan, and of how a moderate Islamist movement is making its mark, reach beyond the borders of this small country. Should the Tajik secularists and Islamists prove that a compromise between them is after all not possible or cannot be strained politically, then only one consequence will remain, "back to the weapons!". The external, and also military support exists for both sides. If, however, a compromise proved possible and could be tested, this would be of great profit to stability, and not only in Tajikistan. Collaboration between Islamists and secularists towards the peaceful formation of statehood would, even if it leads to controversy, be of exemplary importance. It would set an example for the fact that it is possible to practically structure a coexistence of cultures on an intra- as well as inter-state basis in the Euro-Asian region of the OSCE as a clash-point of civilizations.

At the same time, the result of the Tajik experiment cannot yet be considered certain. It is primarily threatened by the fact that after a transition period, the status of the *de-facto*-leadership of one regional elite over the others has been reinstated. In 1991/1992 this status had provoked the search for a new system, which eventually led to the civil war. This situation can lead to a renewed radicalization of the still existing wing of field commanders who have a militant understanding of "Jihad" and whose goals, in their view, are not sufficiently being met by the UN-brokered peace compromise with the Rakhmonov government. They also feel "betrayed" by the moderate wing of the PIR.

The consolidation of the moderate Islamists as well as the compromise process are still exposed to risks: If the secular side does not stimulate the willingness of the Islamists to reform themselves through a wise, strategic course of compromise, and should they instead try to declare themselves the "victors" of the post-war period, who are no longer dependent on making compromises with the Islamists, the moderate Islamist wing might lose its influence and decline again. Moderate Islamist dialogue partners fear that, if the peaceful path to the coexistence of cultures is again diverged from, the Tajik experiment will then fall prey to the militant approach of the radicals. Thus, the window of opportunity for the civilian variant could be small.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

1. The Islamic factor is and remains a persistently influential, and therefore strategic factor in the Euro-Asian sphere.

2. The relationship between secularism and Islam is, in the Central Asian OSCE participating States, part of the transformation and state-forming processes, and therefore part of the structuring of the political systems. The conflict between politics and religion takes place between the secular government and the supporters of political Islam. Both compete over the socio-political path of development of their still unfinished nation-states. This competition can lead to more democracy, but also to violent conflicts. If it is to promote democracy, Islam, as the prevailing religion, should be treated equally, as should be its institutional supporters, including Islamic-oriented parties.

3. If the Islamic factor is of strategic importance, then it is also of strategic importance with regard to guaranteeing security and stability in the region in question, not least because of the region's large energy-political importance, and its link to European development processes.

4. It is therefore necessary to introduce the Islamic factor, and its social and political potential, including Islamic-oriented elites, into the OSCE's stability policy. This is, not least, to counteract the expansion of extremist, destructive Islamic forces.

5. The first prerequisites for this lie in the development of a moderate, reform-oriented Islamist movement in Tajikistan. The approach is based on tolerating the secular state, as well as on the view that it is wiser to strive to change a state and its political system towards Islam with legal-democratic means instead of terrorist means. This includes the awareness that neither the politics of the Taliban, nor that of Bin Laden are applicable to Central Asia.

Final conclusions: The OSCE should leave behind its traditional way of perceiving political Islam and draw the strategic consequences arising therefrom. The aim of both should be to take the Islamic factor out of its negative fixation as a "problematic carrier of conflict" (terrorism stigma). In order to achieve this, it is necessary to move towards Muslim dignitaries and Islamic politicians, as well as try to win them over as partners for co-operative stability and security in the OSCE region. One can, in this respect, assume that international acknowledgement of political Islam and political Islamists in Central Asia by the OSCE, the UN and the international community has already been, *de facto,* achieved in the course of inter-Tajik negotiations and the Moscow agreements.

A new strategy requires thorough conceptual and political preparatory measures. The course of action has to be differentiated, since neither the general conditions nor requirements are the same everywhere, and neither the character of political Islam and its moving forces uniform nor homogenous. Measures that build trust with Islamists should and can be tackled immediately. In this way, within the framework of a "dialogue on the co-operation and co-existence of cultures and civilizations in the OSCE-space", linked with OSCE instruments and bilateral relations, measures lead to the first steps that are suited for introducing stability-producing tasks to Islamic dignitaries and politicians and the measures taken involve them in the process.