

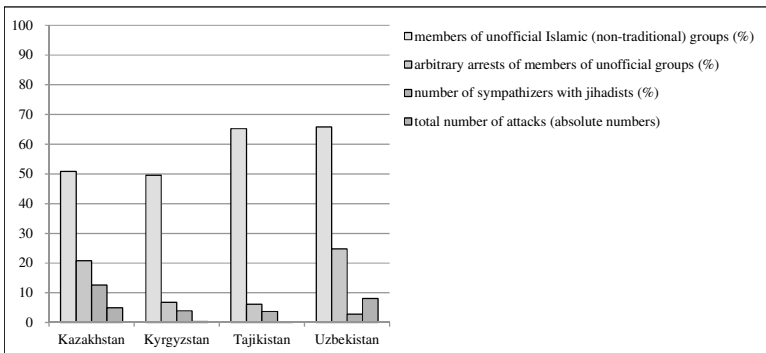
13. Conclusions

13.1. CONCLUSIONS FROM COMPUTER SIMULATION

A simulation is a simplified picture of the world. The results presented above show that my simulation cannot explain the whole ongoing conflict between Central Asian governments and non-traditional Muslims. However, it does show that some mutual reinforcement – as assumed by securitization theory – occurs and drives the opponents into a vicious circle of repression and radicalization.

In concluding that securitization is an important catalyst for the conflict, it is important to observe that contrary to government fears that unofficial Islam would give rise to political Islam, extremism and terrorism, this has not so far been the case: the total number of sympathizers of unofficial groups does not necessarily correspond to the number of attacks that occur – instead, the number of arbitrary arrests of sympathizers of peaceful unofficial Islamic groups seems to be the crucial factor in determining how many terrorist attacks will be carried out.

Figure 22: Simulation Results



Securitization theory explains how repressive governmental measures lead to the radicalization of Islamists and vice versa: thus a mutually antagonistic vicious circle develops. As we can see from the graph above, in those cases where repression is higher, more terrorist attacks occur. Therefore, the vicious-circle hypothesis cannot be falsified with my simulation model.

I therefore conclude:

A vicious circle between repressive counter-terrorism measures and the radicalization of Muslims persists in Central Asia.

More concretely, the simulation results show:

- The more sympathizers of unofficial groups there are the more the state feels threatened by them and the more of them are arrested by security forces.
- There is no correlation between the number of sympathizers of unofficial groups and the number of terrorist attacks.
- The higher the number of arbitrary arrests of sympathizers of unofficial groups the more terrorist attacks are carried out.

It is important to note, however, that the fears of both parties in the conflict are not imaginary but rather tend to provoke disproportionate responses from the opposing side. This leads to an escalation. My model does not include possible deterrence through extremely disproportionate repression. Although this would be interesting to elaborate on, since this too is certainly a reality, to stress the radicalizing effect of repression too much might be short-sighted.

13.2. GENERAL CONCLUDING REMARKS

Both Central Asian governments and radical Islamic groups depend on being perceived as legitimate by the broader public. My hypothesis states that – contrary to the intended effect – legitimacy shifts from the state to the (Islamic) opposition forces if citizens suffer undifferentiated repression at the

hands of government bodies. As my hypothesis cannot be falsified, I assume that in this way a vicious circle between radical Islam and Central Asian states developed. Initiated by the general revival of Islam, the Central Asian governments came to fear non-traditional Islam as a social and political opposition challenge to their power, which in turn led to the introduction of repressive religious policies. This led to governmental repression, not only of members of political and extremist movements but also of ordinary people practising Islam in a strict way – or dressing accordingly. This is particularly the case in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan but more recently also to an increasing degree in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

I have evidence that restrictive religious policies which outlaw moderate fundamentalists successfully diminish the influence of these groups. However, the price for this is high if at the same time the few Salafis who are not directly affected are radicalized to such an extent that they see all means of opposing such repression as justified. I would like to exemplify this again with the two extreme examples used in the introduction to this study: Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. As I have shown in chapter 9, the religious policies of the Central Asian states have had a huge impact on the practice of religion and on the attendance of religious services. In Kyrgyzstan, where only political Salafism is prohibited and apolitical forms of Islam are legal, scripturalist interpretations of Islam and religious worship are on the increase. Nevertheless, this country, which has a high percentage of people who sympathize with Islamist terrorism, has experienced no terrorist attacks up to this day. Conversely, in Uzbekistan, a country where devout religious practices are decreasing, all Salafi groups without exception are strongly persecuted and yet the country has sustained the highest number of terrorist acts of all Central Asian countries and the highest loss of life – both through state repression and Islamist attacks.

Even if I recommend being tolerant towards non-violent Islamists, concerns of secular Central Asians who fear that political Salafis want to introduce conservative sharia laws have to be taken very seriously. From my point of view, however, only the rule of law can prevent possibly inhuman political demands of such groups. Despite this, it is important to note that the legalization of political Islam does entail that it may gain more members.

To conclude, I would like to challenge the efficacy of state repression against unofficial Islam with the following normative question: is the re-

striction of an individual's human rights legitimate in order to protect the abstract concept of an authoritarian regime's national security? It is possible that the answer to this question is a very simple one. Or, in the words of Fetullah Gülen, a leader who is regarded either as an initiator of religious dialogue or a possible terrorist, depending on which side of the conflict you are on:

“The Quran says that the killing of a human being is equal to the killing of all humankind” (Gülen 2012, translated by the author).

If we take a narrow view of a specific situation, limited through situative perceptions, arguments and interests, the instrumentalization of the individual in order to achieve a 'higher' goal might seem legitimate. From a more global perspective, however, the life or integrity of an individual cannot be sacrificed to ensure the security of a whole population since the only means of measuring that very security is the violation or integrity of the individual.

My study shows that the militarily relatively strong countries, if measured against the number of attacks which actually occurred, do not provide better national security than the weaker countries. Instead, they fare worse not only with regards to national security but also with regards to human security and the protection of human rights. A possible explanation for this is that the countries with higher capacities are more capable of implementing their securitizing policies and therefore have to suffer more under its effects. This is an important finding that adds a clearly elucidated argument to the theoretical security discourse on how to define security.