Dear CPW,

Thanks for taking time to read this draft. This is best thought of as a very rough sketch of the ideas we are hoping to explore. In addition to the ideas laid out in this piece, we have been collecting data on incidents of religious repression (legal and illegal) as well as incidents of public protest, primarily using news media as sources. Any thoughts on other data collection moving forward will be greatly appreciated. We would also appreciate feedback on the conceptualization and measurement of religious regulation as repression versus subsidy.

The way we see it, there are two related questions here. First, there is the question of why states chose to regulate religion in different ways, focusing on subsidy versus repression, and how this changes over time. Second, there is the question of how the form of regulation affects popular attitudes and behavior, particularly, protest behavior. Our working hypothesis is that a cycle of repressive regulation and popular response transforms the regulation of religion over time.
Religious Regulation and Political Mobilization in Central Asia

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Abstract

In Central Asia, Islam has historically been a quintessential element of local and national identity. During the Soviet period, the practice of Islam was heavily controlled by the state in part to deter citizens from mobilizing against the regime based on religion. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the governments of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan have imposed different degrees and forms of regulation on Islam. In order to classify these different “styles” of religious regulation, we build on Grzymala-Busse’s (2012b, 435) insight that regulation can take the form of “[state] repression [of other religions] as well as state subsidy [for a particular religion].” First, we differentiate between religious subsidies that are positive (such as the construction of mosques) and negative (such as state funded morality police within the subsidized faith). In Central Asia, regulation as subsidy provides a particularly interesting and unusual case. Here, religious subsidy is not simply an endorsement of a particular preexisting denomination, but instead involves supporting a particular interpretation of the dominant religion that is created and controlled by the state itself. Outside of this subsidized interpretation, Islam may be strictly repressed, leading to a set of cases where the state chooses to repress a majority faith. Second, we argue that states do not rely solely on repression or subsidy to regulate religion, but often combine these two strategies in various ways. In sum, this project aims to provide a theoretical framework for understanding why Central Asian states have adopted diverse forms and degrees of religious regulation as both regulation and subsidy over time, how religious adherents respond to these different “styles” of religious regulation, how regulation as subsidy serves as an attempt to fuse Islam into nationalism through the creation and support of a highly inward-looking brand of Islam, and finally how regulation as repression in Central Asia might begin to create a new political cleavage, awakening a “surrogate nationalism” among non-subsidized religious populations.
Introduction

“If there were only one religion in England there would be danger of despotism, if there were two they would cut each other’s throats, but there are thirty, and they live in peace and happiness”

-Voltaire, Letters on England

In Central Asia, Islam has historically been a quintessential element of local and national identity. Since before Russian conquest, the faith served as the centerpiece of the community; focus was not on mastery of the Qur’an or on religious doctrine. Rather, Islam served to consolidate communities “through elaborate myths of origin that assimilated elements of the Islamic ethical tradition with local norms and vice versa...for most people, there simply could not be a distinction, let alone contradiction, between Islam and local customs” (Khalid 2007, pp. 21-22). It served as a guide for day-to-day life and a key component of local and national identity, but was not inherently political. Religion and state—*din va davlat*—were considered distinct entities, with the state “not a direct expression of Islam, but a secular institution whose duty it was to uphold Islam; the real community of Muslims was the community of scholars and holy men who carried on the legacy of the Prophet in daily life” (Lapidus 1996, p. 19).

The militantly atheist Soviet regime, wary of the (predominantly Sufi) Muslim influence that permeated daily life and local hierarchies, and the fact that with roughly 50 million Muslims the USSR was the world’s fourth-largest Muslim state, engaged in a campaign to pacify and control Islam and stymie any potential pan-Islamic opposition movement in the 1920s and 30s. Although formally maintaining its commitment to liquidating religion and spreading atheism, beginning in the 1940s the Soviet regime introduced a series of reforms that institutionalized a statist approach to regulating religious life. In Central Asia, this took the form of a powerful religious bureaucracy (*muftiate*), widely known by its Russian acronym SADUM (*Sredneaziatskoe Dukhovnoe Upravlenie Musul’man*) that was nominally independent but closely monitored through another government bureaucracy (Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults, or CARC).

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian states adopted this statist model of regulation to differing degrees. Uzbekistan embraced it while Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan
initially rejected it. Moreover, these newly independent and predominantly Muslim states have developed different forms and degrees of regulation over time, often combining repression and subsidy to control their new religious marketplace. In Uzbekistan, an initial moderately controlled religious marketplace over time shifted to a tightly controlled religious marketplace. In Tajikistan, a weakly controlled religious marketplace, characterized by low state subsidy of a particular form of Islam and low levels of regulation, gave way to a tightly controlled religious marketplace. In Kyrgyzstan, the religious marketplace has remained weakly controlled since independence, with very few efforts to hinder the practice of Islam or to subsidize a particular faith.

It is this variation that we seek to identify and explain, but ultimately, we are most interested in understanding the effects of different styles of regulation on political attitudes and behavior. Several related questions emerge. When does religious repression create enemies of the state, and when does it elicit compliance and assimilation with official, state sanctioned forms of religious practice? More specifically, what is the relationship between different forms of religious coercion and control—regulation as repression versus regulation and subsidy, legislative versus extralegal repression, positive versus negative subsidy—and levels/types of mobilization and dissent? Finally, while many studies have attempted to consider how repression influences mobilization and dissent, few have considered how repression influences the identity of the repressed. How does state regulation of religion that targets a specific group—in this case, religious adherents who make up the vast majority of the population—influence that group’s structure, and their conception of their own national identity?

**Religious Regulation as Repression and Subsidy**

The idea of religious repression as both subsidy and restriction is not a new phenomenon. Alexis de Tocqueville noted that both religion and state were strongest when separated, but further that “religious fervor is harnessed in the attempt to throw off the yoke of political oppression” (Tessitore 2002, p. 1145). It follows that one manner in which the state may reduce the capacity of religion is not simply by suppressing it, but instead enveloping it into the state apparatus, fusing national sentiment with the majority religious belief while simultaneously excluding and directly repressing more marginal groups.
The literature on the relationship between religion and state has dealt with this using religious markets theory. Scholars argue that unrestricted and competitive religious markets will lead to high levels of religious participation and belief as religious pluralism encourages religious groups to innovate to meet the demands of extant and potential adherents (Finke, & Stark 1988; Chaves, & Cann 1992; Stark, & Iannaccone 1994; Stark, & Finke 2000; Gill 2001). Conversely, regulating religion will restrict the incentives and opportunities of religious leaders and thus regulated religions will be unable to operate on the same level as those supported by the state (Finke 1990).

Rather than being static, religious regulation and thereby religiously related legislation is influenced by political and economic factors over time (Finke 1990; Gill 2005), while enforcement is heavily influenced by social forces, such as local and regional beliefs supporting legal codes increasing enforcement (Grim, & Finke 2007, p. 637; Brustein 2003). Enforcement is also shown to evolve through a cyclical process of “dual radicalization”. Some groups may learn to work within the regulative institutions and engage legitimately in the political process, giving them influence over other regulated groups, such as the political participation of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan (Wiktorowicz 2001). Conversely, repressed religious groups have the potential to become cohesive units in face of repressive regulations, learning to regulate and persecute those who do not agree with their agenda on their own. This has the potential to draw the ire of the state, which then increases and alters religious regulation, creating an ongoing cycle of regulation → persecution → regulation → persecution (Grim, & Finke 2007, p. 637).

Grim and Finke push back against the Huntington’s notion that conflicts can be avoided by countries “reaffirming their commitment to a single civilization” (Grim, & Finke 2007, p. 635). Rather than creating stability through homogeneity, religious regulation leads to persecution and conflict. To parse out this relationship, Grim and Finke move away from the standard religious markets approach of using levels of religious activity as the dependent variable, instead examining how the makeup and regulation of the religious market influences religious persecution. They argue that lower religious regulation reduces religious persecution by preventing any one religious group from obtaining a monopoly and allowing all religious to compete for the allegiance of the people without state interference (Grim, & Finke 2007, p. 636). Religious regulation is divided into social and
government regulation, and a statistical model is used to suggest that not only does religious regulation cause religious persecution, but creates a cycle of social regulation → government regulation → persecution → social regulation, as so on, that increases religious persecution over time (Grim & Finke 2007, p. 652). However, beyond just regulation as repression and restriction of the religious market, regulation as religious subsidy also has the potential to influence both the religious market and related religious persecution.

Jonathan Fox helps show how religious repression is linked to state sponsorship of religion, and demonstrates that religious repression increases in the context of state-religion for both minority and majority adherents. Fox contends states that strongly endorse a particular religion will be more likely to engage in more repressive activity, and those that enact religious precepts into laws will engage in more repression generally, not only against religious minorities but also against the majority group/members of the state-supported religion itself. Fox uses the results of a large-N logistic regression to support this theory. He argues that such repression is explained by “intolerance of any dissent by those who support uncompromising religious ideologies as well as a dynamic where intolerance in one dimension of policy leaks into other aspects of policy” (Fox 2013, p. 189).

The religious markets literature does a poor job of differentiating between regulation as repression and regulation as subsidy, measuring “religious regulation” as state support for a particular faith while omitting active suppression of other religious groups (Grzymala-Busse 2012b, p. 435). Grim and Finke as well as Fox do account for this distinction, showing that, particularly in Muslim countries, when governments “support of a particular religion and regulation of others” occurs, “conservative and extremist Islamic elements” gain the ability to “exert tremendous pressure on society to conform to their interpretations of Islam’s precepts”, leading to extensive persecution in a vicious cycle where “increased conflict results in increased social pressures for controls” (Grim & Finke 2007, p. 652). Nonetheless, further theory that examines types of subsidy and their effects as distinct from regulation as repression is needed.

Why states subsidize one religion beyond regulation of others is only beginning to be considered within the field. In some cases, the state may chose to subsidize a faith due to its existing political influence (Knox 2013). Another explanation is dependent on the “moral authority” of the church, measured as an interaction of religiosity and belief that
there is a fusion between nation and religious identity. When this authority is high, religious groups can receive directly institutional access to policy making, as “opening the door” to such influence becomes in the survival interest of the regime or government (an example of this would be the Republic of Ireland). When moral authority is low, churches are unable to obtain this long term political “subsidy”, and thus from a position of weakness seek ad hoc coalitions from individual political parties (Grzymala-Busse 2012a). However, it is possible to imagine a third scenario, in which subsidy may be both “positive” and “negative”, serving to both favor a single religion over others, but also to control members of the subsidized faith through the access to religious institutions that the state gains through subsidy.

The distinction between “positive” and “negative” subsidy remains underexplored in the literature. When one thinks of regulation as subsidy, state fiscal support, favoritism in legislation and enforcement, and institutional access to policy-making are the most immediate examples that come to mind. Positive subsidy may be defined as directing resources toward a particular religion. This may include material support, such as direct funding or aid in constructed new mosques. It may also include the allocation of institutional benefits, such as government endorsement of fatwas issued by a government-recognized Muftiate.

However, it is also possible to imagine “negative” subsidy. Here, the subsidy-based relationship built up over time between a religious group and the state is exploited so that the state may use the religious organization to control and monitor adherents of the subsidized faith and their communities, while still seemingly giving the religious organization power and favor. Negative subsidy may be defined as demanding or exerting control and influence over a religious organization in exchange for future or past fiscal or institutional favoritism. Examples of this include state funded morality police being allocated within the subsidized faith, or government creation of institutions that increase the ability of religious leaders to oversee congregations, while simultaneously giving the state a channel for influencing doctrine and practice. This is slightly different from regulation as repression, as the state is still bolstering the compliant elements of its preferred faith, though it is doing so in a way that enhances its ability to control and punish any deviance from state preferences.
Theory

Subsidy may be offered to a religious group, but rather than this subsidy being “earned” by virtue of the moral authority of the faith, it is instead given by the regime so that through institutional links the state has direct control over religious practice from the center. Returning to the Irish Catholic case (any number of similar Western European cases), the institutional linkages between church and state allow the moral authority of the pope, channeled through the clergy upward, to directly influence the state. In the Central Asian cases, the fusion between religious institutions and the state serves the opposite purpose. The linkages between the state and Islam (particularly through the Council of Ulema, Committee on Religious Affairs, and local mahalla committees) allow the moral authority of the state to be channeled downward, legitimized by being filtered through the clergy, and distributed to the population. This has three potential effects.

First, as the state aims to create a novel, national “brand” of Islam while violently repressing anything that does not conform to this hegemonic standard, religious practice outside of the legal sphere continues. Further, the continued practice of religion outside of the legal sphere signals to the state that more regulation is needed.

Second, the establishment of a state brand of Islam has the effect of labeling all deviant religious believers as “others”. This, over time, has the potential to politicize religion further by transforming religious practices and rituals into protest activity against the state.

Third, over time, positive subsidy creates a greater potential for negative subsidy. What starts as the state aiding in the construction of mosques and the creation of religious institutions with direct access to government ears creates the capacity for greater government influence within religious institutions, beyond simple regulation. As positive subsidy builds up leadership loyal to the state and institutional connections between the state and religious practice at the national and local level, control of this increasingly intertwined organization becomes less costly for the state. The lines between clergy and government workers become increasingly blurred.

Our first hypothesis is that there will be a cyclical and ongoing process of regulation, response, and regulation, initiated by the state. The majority religious group, when targeted with regulations, will react with protest. As religious groups engage in political
activity, and particularly protest in response to religious repression, the state will react with further regulation. This regulation will take not only the form of further repression, but also increasing subsidy over time as the state recognizes Islam as a powerful alternative basis of legitimacy, as well as realizing that regulation as subsidy for the majority religion is less costly than direct regulation as repression on its own. Simply put, there will be a direct causal relationship between the institution and enforcement of religious repression/subsidy and religious protest.

Further, we argue that increasing protest and disobedience from within the state-subsidized faith will lead to increased negative subsidy over time. We predict that as states attempt religious regulation in an attempt to limit religious freedom and subsequently religious practice, and still witness the protest, they will take this protest as a signal. Protest serves as a signaling device indicating that simply arresting people is not enough; instead, a “kinder, gentler” religion must be created. This can be achieved through negative subsidy, which allows the state to “cash in” on the links with the state religion created through positive subsidy and easily monitor adherents, control clergy, and influence doctrine itself from behind the veil of state-controlled clergy.

Our final hypothesis is that over time and as regulation as subsidy increases, there will be more appeals by protestors to Islam as a “surrogate nationalism” separate from state-based Islam. Repressive activities that are targeted at an identity as salient as religion have the potential to “cleave” the historical link between nationalism and faith. In its place, appeals to an Islamic nation, separate from Kyrgyz, Tajik, and Uzbek identity, will be used by religious leaders and organizers to politicize and mobilize adherents. These appeals will be used to increase the “exclusive” element of religion specifically in regard to the state itself. In short, by restricting all dissent through a group identity as salient and widespread as Islam, the state begins to create “surrogate” nationalism. This group is made up of alienated individuals who were not militant, but nonetheless casualties of the widespread religious repression.

The mechanism that allows this to occur is the creation and definition of a state-sanctioned Islam, with its own symbols, mores, and values. Suddenly, practices like wearing a headscarf to school, going to a particular (non-state) mosque, praying five times a day, or even growing a beard are no longer generic marks of Islamic identity, that are
historically interwoven with national identity. Instead, these symbols and practices become explicitly anti-state, and anti-“nation”. The creation of a state Islam thus bolsters the identification aspect of religion, and explicitly demarcates those who ascribe to their local traditional forms of Islam (so-called independent Muslims) as “the other”, no longer accepted as part of the nation.

**Regulation and Subsidy in Central Asia**

For the purposes of this article, religious regulation is defined as “the legal and social restrictions that inhibit the practice, profession, or selection of religion” (Grim, & Finke 2007, p. 637). As discussed above, this takes two forms. Further, these two forms (regulation as repression and regulation as subsidy) are not mutually exclusive, but instead mix and overlap as the state adjusts its strategy to account for religious activity in the public sphere. It is important to make the distinction between subsidy and repression, as this distinction allows us to see how the two may occur in isolation or in conjunction with each other, and each may have variable effects on the responses of those being regulated. In each case, there is simultaneously a repression and subsidy axis, with movement across each over time potentially independent.

Below, we briefly outline the variation in state regulation of the religious marketplace in our three cases over time: Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. We categorize subsidy and repression as low, medium, and high. Low subsidy is characterized by little or no favoritism in terms of allocation of resources. Moderate subsidy is characterized by one religion being favored fiscally, legislatively, and/or institutionally over others. High subsidy is defined as one particular interpretation of a religion (here: Islam) being privileged institutionally, legally/legislatively, and financially over others. Negative subsidy is also characteristic of high-level subsidy.

Repression is considered low when the private practice of religion can occur unimpeded. Some restrictions in the public sphere, such as on religious education, may occur, and state registration of religious institutions may be required, but regulations are enforced consistently across groups as stated by law. Violations are punishable by fines, but jail-time for violating religious regulations is either non-existent or rare. Moderate repression includes regulation and enforcement that interferes with both the public and
private practice of religion. Punishments include both fines and jail time. Typically, while regulation may be harsh, restrictions are clear and the state represses within the legal framework. High levels of repression include regulation of private and public religious activity, as well as active efforts of the state to discourage religious activity, such as propaganda campaigns. High-level repression includes extra-legal enforcement (citizens may be punished for practicing religion even if they are not in violation of a specific law) as well as violence. This includes torture, kidnappings, assassinations, police brutality, and mass arrests. High-level repressive legislation will include censorship laws, programs to raid and inspect places of worship, mandatory attestations for clergy, and outright bans rather than restrictions on proselytism and missionary activity.

A religious marketplace is said to be weakly controlled if there is both low levels of subsidy and low levels of repression. In the context of Central Asia, this means weak or minimal state support for any one interpretation of Islam and weak or minimal repression of others. Moderate control of the religious marketplace is defined as low subsidy and high repression, high subsidy and low repression, or moderate subsidy and moderate repression. A religious marketplace is tightly controlled if both subsidy and repression are high. In Central Asia, this means there is subsidy of one interpretation of Islam and repression of all other forms.

Our preliminary research suggests that over time, Uzbekistan has shifted from a moderately controlled to tightly controlled religious marketplace, Tajikistan has shifted from a weakly controlled to tightly controlled religious marketplace, and in Kyrgyzstan there has been little shift. Explaining these shifts—both in terms of religious regulation as repression as well as regulation as subsidy—is one of the aims of this project.

As stated above, we hope to demonstrate that in the face of religious protest, the state will be given a signal that current control is not enough, and shifts towards a more regulated marketplace are directly related to the politicization of religious organizations, as opposed to solely being determined by the security environment, as the governments themselves often argue. We believe this will be the case because politicized religious groups outside of the state narrative opens the door to questioning and reinterpreting religion, which threatens state legitimacy. It follows that any kind of religious freedom is threatening, which explains why in many cases Baptist ministers or Jehovah’s Witnesses
are targeted as intensely as Muslims. In particular, any religious group that engages in proselytism will be viewed as a threat to the creation of a fused nationalism and religion, and thus be targeted. The security environment may be better able to explain violent repression, which seems to be targeted primarily against Muslims.

Case Studies: Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan

Central Asia has always been home to a moderate form of Islam. The *hanafi* madhab, or *hanafi* “school of law”, was historically predominant. This form of Islam, known for its flexibility in incorporating local pre-Islamic rituals and rites into its practice, naturally led to Sufi mystics, and in particular the Naqshbandi brotherhood becoming an organic part of religious life (Olimova 2000, p. 59). During the Soviet Period, Sufism was vehemently attacked by the Bolsheviks through “a slash-and-burn campaign that was combined with cooperation” (Olimova 2000, p. 60). Mountain communities, where religious identification was particularly important and Sufi religious orders merged with secular power in a manner that influenced everyday life, were specifically targeted. Clergy were uprooted and replaced by state endorsement of first atheism, and allowance of general “popular” Islam, run by clergy friendly to the state through the spiritual directorates. This drove local forms of Islam underground, in a way helping to “preserve the most archaic layers of Muslim culture, including Sufism, especially in regions where it had been traditionally dominant”, while “popular” Islam gained influence in day-to-day life as an acceptable outlet for adapting to the atheistic regime (Olimova 2000, p. 61).

Uzbekistan

Just before the official fall of the Soviet Union, Uzbek President Islam Karimov, facing protests in the Namangan region, agreed to meet with Islamist leaders. At this meeting, Karimov agreed that the idea of an Islamic state should be discussed in parliament. Despite this, shortly after independence, the Uzbek government cracked down on Islamist movements, forcing many militants across the border into Tajikistan, which was already embroiled in its civil war. Many of these Uzbek Islamist militants, after fighting in the civil war, together with the Tajik opposition would later flee to Afghanistan (Hunter
2001, p. 76). This would serve as the core of what would later become the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, an ally of the Taliban (ICG 2003).

Despite this immediate crackdown, at least at first the Karimov regime seemed to seek legitimacy by tying itself to Islam. In 1991, government authorities reopened Naqshbandi’s mausoleum and build a memorial on the site (Rotar 2004). Karimov, when reelected in 1992, took the oath of office on the Quran, and shortly afterwards made a pilgrimage to Mecca (Khazanov 1995, p. 145).

As time went on in Uzbekistan, religious regulation increased from moderate to extremely high levels, while religious subsidy of a state form of Sufism has remained consistently high. A centralized Muslim Spiritual Board has served as the primary means of regulating official Islam in the state since independence, with the Committee on Religious Affairs, a department of the Cabinet of Ministers, also providing oversight. In the mid-1990’s, acts of religious repression were justified as necessary for preserving secularism. Early targets of repression included spiritual leaders who did not limit sermons to state-dictated text, groups who ignored the ban on loudspeakers for calls to prayer, congregations who failed to praise President Karimov during services, and leaders who refused to serve as government informants. The government began labeling anyone who practiced religion outside of the state subsidized faith “Wahabbi” (Shields 2004, p. 5). They switched their justification to the need to prevent terrorism in 1998, and have continued to justify their efforts in terms of the security environment since (Shields 2004, p. 1). The most major shift in this period was the 1998 Religion Law, which created stringent registration restrictions, banned missionary activity, placed extreme pressure on unregistered groups, and resulted in thousands of mosques being closed in the following year. In 1999, the government began arresting anyone with any affiliation to Hiz ut-Tahrir, and violent enforcement of religious regulation became increasingly commonplace.

During this period, religious subsidy remained consistently high, but negative subsidy increased drastically. President Karimov began calling on local mahalla committees to act as the eyes and ears of the state in curbing terrorism. The “posbon” law was passed in April 1999, creating state-funded positions on all mahalla committees for a “neighborhood guardian”, who essentially serves as morality police, paid to inform the police on resident behavior and ensure that religious activity remains within the state-
approved guidelines. In May 1999, all private religious education and education in mosques was outlawed with the exception of special permission from the Muftiate. These religious education restrictions would continue to expand over the coming decade, essentially outlawing all religious education not directly in control of the state. Practice of religious holidays is legally regulated by the Muftiate, censorship of religious material has become absolute, a fatwa was issued in 1999 denying burial to Muslims who did not recant oaths to unregistered Islamic groups, and prayer in the workplace is banned regionally. By 2010, Uzbek control of the religious market had become comprehensive and absolute. Enforcement is violent, and torture (such as electric shock, placing prisoners in small iron boxes in the summer heat, nails being placed under fingernails) (Najibullah 2012), disappearances, and mass arrests are commonplace, with victims numbering in the thousands.

Uzbekistan may currently be categorized as a tightly controlled religious market. Repression is high (violence and extra-legal tactics are utilized, regulation includes aspects of private and public religious life), while subsidy is also high. The state supports and consults with the Muftiate, as well as local mahalla committees, to ensure that a particular nationalistic, Sufi, inward-looking version of Islam is promoted, while all others faiths (including other interpretations of Islam) are repressed. Mosques not controlled by the Muslim Directorate are deemed illegal and closed. The hajj is officially sponsored (and simultaneously carefully regulated), mosques are celebrated as “architectural monuments”, the government opened Tashkent Islamic University, and the regime has worked hard to create an “official Islam”. Through the Muslim Directorate, the state controls all legal mosques and their personnel, madrasas, and even the organization of religious contacts with the rest of the Muslim world (Khalid 2003, p. 587). In particular, in March 2000 the Muslim Directorate established a new program that recognized Hanafi dogma as officially binding. Further, it requires all imams to speak out against non-Hanafi tendencies (Khalid 2003, p. 590). Anyone who deviates from the state interpretation of Islam is labeled as “Wahhabi”. This is in and of itself significant for understanding the state’s desire to create an official Islam as such a designation is a nativist gesture (it insinuates belief beyond the scope of national tradition and an “unhealthy Saudi influence”), as well as an attempt of the
regime to position itself on the side of “Reason, Enlightenment, and Secularism, and against fanaticism, obscurantism, and reaction” (Khalid 2003, p. 591).

While subsidy has remained high in Uzbekistan, repression has increased from the moderate level to the high level since 1998. Prior to 1998, unregistered groups had some ability to practice privately without severe threat of repression, and they did not face many of the harsh restrictions that would be instituted in the 1998 religion law. Further, torture and violent extra-legal enforcement was rare prior to 1998, after which violent enforcement and extra-legal tactics such as unwarranted search and arrest, planting of evidence, torture, and incommunicado detention became increasingly commonplace (Shields 2004).

**Tajikistan**

Religion as an identity primed for political action became immediately salient in the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union in Tajikistan. During the perestroika years, the Islamic Revival Party (IRP) emerged as a political party with trans-regional and trans-ethnic aspirations. Due to a number of tensions, in particular tensions between Tajiks and the Uzbeks, a regional organization never developed, but the IRP did develop at the national level and proved strongest in Tajikistan. When the IRP first applied for registration, it was denied on the grounds that religiously-based political parties were banned. However, pressure from liberal factions in Moscow, hoping to utilize local movements in the USSR to weaken the Communist Party, ensured that the Tajik IRP was able to officially hold its founding congress in Dushanbe on October 26, 1991 (Hunter 2001, p. 21).

The Civil War period, from 1992-1997, fundamentally shaped how the Tajik state interacts with religion. State control of religion began swiftly. When opposition fighters were forced out of Dushanbe in 1992, the new authorities abolished the pro-opposition Spiritual Administration of Muslims. The Muslim Board’s chief official in Dushanbe, Hajji Akbar Turajonzoda, had become an independent and well-known figure who, in the aftermath of independence, was critical of the communist hard-liners, supporting political reform, and pushed for official recognition of the importance of Islam in Tajik society. The pro-government forces, who had accused Turajonzoda of seeking to establish an Islamic
government in Tajikistan\(^1\), won a series of victories at the end on 1992, forcing opposition fighters out of Dushanbe. Turajonzoda fled and was charged of treason (1997). The Spiritual Administration of Muslims was abolished and replaced by the Council of Ulema, which though given de facto authority that the Spiritual Administration had once had, would clearly be subservient to the secular authorities. In February 1993, Fatkhullo Sharifzoda, who received the title of mufti, replaced Turajonzoda as spiritual leader of Tajikistan’s Muslims (2002, p. 425).

Islam also played a role in the civil war itself. Parts of the east of the country, captured by Mujahideen, were governed by sharia law. During the war, the democrats and Islamists were brought together by “a shared belief in egalitarianism and communal democracy” (Olimova 2000, p. 62). Though the two groups would see a split in the aftermath of the war, the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan remained politically relevant despite being banned, and in 1998 became the only legal Islamist party in Central Asia.

From the outset of independence, religious repression was low, and subsidy was moderate. The Council of Ulema, which quickly replaced the Muftiate, served as a consultative body and is influenced by government control. The chairs of *sar-hatibs* (heads of provincial and district mosques) were also quickly dissolved, making the *imam-hatibs* (senior priests of the mosques) dependent on local authorities, as they can only be elected with approval from local governments (Olimova 2000, p. 69). Over time, as the government realized the Council would not oppose the government, they were given many of the de facto powers of regulation that the Spiritual Board had held. Though there was some regulation, the religious market in the mid 1990s was relatively unregulated, and the religion law passed in 1994 was considered liberal.

However, regulation as repression and subsidy have both increased in Tajikistan over time. Crackdowns on mosques and attestations for imams began in 2002, and the government began targeting Christian groups, whose successful missionary activity was beginning to be seen as an ideological threat. In 2004, a Council of Ulema fatwa banned women from attending mosques, and intrusive laws such as the “Law on Traditions and

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\(^1\) Prior to the outbreak of the civil war, Turajonzoda had repeatedly stated that years of secularization under Soviet rule made an Islamic state impossible. Instead, alongside the IRP, he advocated for a non-confessional state that still allowed Islam the freedom to naturally reassert its influence (2002, p. 425).
Rituals”, which private religious celebrations. In October 2007, the Jehovah’s witnesses were banned nationwide, and in June 2008, the only synagogue in Dushanbe was destroyed by the government. Salafism was banned by the Supreme Court in January 2009, backed by the Council of Ulema.

In March 2009, and extensive religion law was published that vastly complicates the registration process, criminalizes unregistered religious activity and proselytism, sets limits on the number and size of mosques, allows for government interference in the appointment of imams, requires official permission for religious organizations to communicate with foreign co-religionists, imposes state oversight of religious literature, requires anyone who hopes to receive religious education obtain state permission, forbids political religious activity, recognizes the Council of Ulema as the only “national center” allowed for Muslims, and recognizes the “special role of the [Sunni] Hanafi school of Islam” in Tajik culture. This was followed by increasing education and censorship regulation in the following two years, including “Operation Madrassa”, which saw authorities enter eight Madrassas, 93 Cathedral mosques and 955 Five-fold mosques to bring charges against religious teachers. In 2010, the Religious Affairs Committee was established.

In 2011, the “Parental Responsibility Law” bans minors from all organized religious activity except in official religious institutions (this includes mosque attendance and funerals), restricts religious dress for children, limits legal names for children, bans women from wearing headscarves in educational institutions and men from wearing beards in public buildings. Following this, a series of amendments to the criminal and administrative codes created harsh punishments for violations of religious regulations. The following years saw mosques and churches raided, clergy and worshipers detained without trial, sermons banned, and imams removed and fired, as well as the IRP being targeted for practicing Islam.

Along with the increase in regulation has come the increase in subsidy of the state-sanctioned Islam. There have recently been two prominent examples. In January, 2013 the Council of Ulema claimed that they have a monopoly on the right to issue fatwas, requesting that the media refrain from publishing any external fatwas. The government Council of Religious Affairs came out publically supporting this appeal. Also recently, the state has begun building the Dushanbe Grand Mosque, which when completed, will be the
largest mosque in Central Asia, holding 150,000 simultaneous worshipers. Though the government claims that $70 million of the $100 million dollar cost will be paid by Qatar, the government has fully embraced the construction, with President Emomali Rakhmon breaking soil to celebrate starting construction in 2011.

Tajikistan may be classified as a tightly controlled religious market. Repression is high, evinced by regulations limiting both public and private practice of religion, clergy and worshipers endure raids and detainment without trial, strict religious censorship is exercised by the state, among other factors mentioned above. Subsidy is also high, with the state investing institutional and monetary resources into state-sanctioned Islam while cracking down on non-state interpretations, such as the Supreme Court ban on Salafism. Recent enforcement demonstrates this close relationship between favoring the state-interpretation of Islam while simultaneously repression all other forms. On December 6, 2011, the Council of Ulema issued a fatwa against the Muhamadiyya Mosque in Dushanbeand its leaders, condemning them for practicing the Shia rite of Ashura. They claimed that such practices could undermine the Hanafi movement, causing a schism between Muslims, and called on the authorities to investigate the mosque. Three days later, over fifty officials from the police, NSC secret police, prosecutor’s office, and the state religious affairs committee raided the mosque during Friday prayers, accused the mosque leaders of making a Shia commemoration, and informed them that they could only observe Hanafi rituals. The two brothers who ran the mosque were fined, ten mosque members were held for ten days with no hearing, the mosque’s imams were removed by the Religious Affairs Committee, which also downgraded its status (Bayram 2012).

The religious market in Tajikistan has also become more tightly controlled over time. After independence, the state could be characterized as having a weakly controlled religious market. While the Council of Ulema did exist since independence, unregistered religious groups were only weakly repressed, and the private practice of religion went on essentially unhindered. The initial law on religion, while restricting political activity, regulating education, and regulating religious literature, was on the whole liberal and unrestrictive regarding specific religious practice. In 2002, in the aftermath of three Tajik citizens being sent to Guantanamo Bay, President Rakhmonov made a speech in the northern town of Isfara that marked a shift in government policy towards Islam.
Rakhmonov criticized the IRP as “engaged in indoctrinating people in a spirit of extremism, which may lead to a split in society”, argued that IRP members in mosques were propagating extremism, and contending that there were far more mosques than were needed. Shortly after this, there was a crackdown on unregistered mosques, with many being shut down and imams being removed for “political activities”. Though these actions were justified in terms of preventing religious extremism, targets seem focused more on rooting out political opposition (ICG 2003, p. 14). In the following years, both subsidy of the state interpretation of Islam and repression would increase, quickly bringing Tajikistan to the point of a tightly controlled religious market.

*Kyrgyzstan*

Kyrgyzstan, by contrast, has seen little regulation and subsidy. Though laws have passed that require registration for religious activity, these have not always been strictly enforced. Where regulation is aimed explicitly at security threats, it is often done in collaboration with religious communities, such as through the establishment of the “Coordinating Council on the Struggle Against Religious Extremism”, which includes Muslim Board and Russian Orthodox Church members. There is skepticism of missionary activity and outside religious influence, reflected in government oversight of students who wish to study religion abroad and those who hope to travel to Saudi Arabia for the Hajj. Thirty-two religious protestors were arrested in October 2008 in Nookat, though all were later granted amnesty.

A 2008 Religion Law did introduce some regulation into the religious market, though it is still free relative to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Though the law recognizes all religions as equal, it makes registration more difficult (requiring 200 members), bans minors from joining religious groups, requires state approval of religious literature, and outlawing proselytism and missionary activity. Nonetheless, the religious market remains relatively deregulated, and the state does little to promote or demote alternative perspectives.

Kyrgyzstan is a weakly controlled religious market. Though the state recognizes Islam and the Russian Orthodox Church as traditional religious groups, the government does not formally support any particular faith, or particular interpretation of a faith, over
others. Public and private religious practice occurs relatively unhindered. Though there have been some recent attempts to ban the Ahmadi Muslim community, they have all been done through proper legal channels and have thus far failed.

Summary

Relative to each other, Uzbekistan may be thought of as the most controlled religious market, moving from moderate to high levels of repression and enforcement and maintaining high levels of religious subsidy throughout. Tajikistan saw a shift over time from weak control to tight control, having simultaneously increasing levels of subsidy of the state religion and repression. Kyrgyzstan sees little change over the period, remaining low in both regulation and subsidy.

Methods

To test our hypothesis concerning the mobilization potential created by religious regulation, we are currently collecting data on religious regulation in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan for the duration of the post-Soviet period. This includes collecting a complete list of legislation and decrees relevant to religion, instances of enforcement of religious regulation, government subsidy of religion (government built mosques, the establishment of government controlled religious councils, instructions given by the government to leaders within the state recognized faiths, etc.) and more explicitly violent repression such as torture, kidnapping, and destruction of churches, temples, and mosques. Repression emanating from the state-subsidized religious groups, such as fatwas or policing by posbon committees, will also be recorded. Our sources also include publications and data from human rights organizations and other more general datasets on religious freedom, as well as interviews with local activists and religious leaders.

To attempt to examine local effects, the data will be disaggregated and coded by region. It should be noted that there is some evidence that repression is geographically targeted. Again taking Uzbekistan as an example, while the anti-Islamist campaigns have been carried out by enforcement agents nationwide, the majority of arrests occurred in the capital city of Tashkent and particular cities in the Fergana Valley, around the Andijan and
Namangan regions (Shields 2004, p. 5). The Minister of Internal Affairs has publically acknowledged that the state selectively targets these areas, arguing that "investigations have shown that those who have committed crimes [under the influence of extremist religious groups] are mainly citizens who live in Tashkent, Andijan, and Namangan regions." (Uzbek Radio first programme 2000). Geographic patterns of targeting will be considered when analyzing the data. This will be supplemented by interviews with local activists and religious leaders.

To measure response to religious regulation, we are collecting data on all public protest since the 1990s using newspaper sources, and coding by the grievances/demands (or main reason(s) given for the protest), size, location, and duration. Data collection began with content analysis of Russian newspapers and has been completed for years 2001-2012. Russian sources were utilized to avoid systematic bias that may be present in local and national publications. Further, the Russian press has an interest in civil conflict within the region and reports extensively on issues of public protest and civil unrest. Thus, we expected that using the Russian press would yield a large sample size that mirrors the universe of cases as closely as possible without introducing bias. To supplement this data and ensure that we are not missing incidents of protest by focusing on the Russian press, we are also expanding our search via other databases, including Lexis/Nexus and BBC monitoring and have only completed a few years for one country. Ideally, we would supplement this with local newspapers, which would enable more fine-grained analysis, but these are scant in the region and woefully unreliable.

Our very preliminary findings (from the Russian newspapers) suggest that there is some merit to our hypothesis that the evolution of regulation in the three Central Asian countries can be understood as part of an on-going cycle whereby regulation fosters a certain type of protest, which in turn encourages the state to revisit its regulatory strategy. Across the five Central Asian states, the number of protests (over the 10-year period) is greatest in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan but the main reason or motivating grievance for the protests (as reported in newspapers) for protests in Kyrgyzstan is economic whereas in Uzbekistan, it is human rights associated with religious repression and imprisonment. The majority of protests in Uzbekistan over this decade moreover, occur between 2003-2005 – that is, just after the largest crackdown on an alleged radical Islamist movement in the city.
of Andijon and before the reformulation of state policy toward religions to include the imposition of a singular interpretation of Islam. In Kyrgyzstan, by contrast, the level of protest is fairly constant over time.

The newspaper data, of course will only allow us to examine one type of popular response to religious regulation. We also plan to conduct a mass survey, which will allow us to get at questions of how various forms of religious regulation influence political mobilization and national identity at the individual level.

**Works Cited**


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