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Abstract

Like other Central Asian republics in the post-Soviet period, Tajikistan's political authorities have sought to curb Islamist trends by promoting a vision of Islam, intimately connected to Sufism, that is concerned with the preservation of national traditions and combating extremism. Similar to neighboring Uzbekistan, Tajikistan's government has allowed Sufi practices, such as the veneration of local saints and local shrine visitation, to flourish, and they have successfully contained any potential criticism of these practices by those who subscribe to more fundamental forms of ideology. Tajikistan's government and religious authorities contend that the best remedy against "extremism" is the promotion of Hanafi jurisprudence, considered by some to be the most liberal of the four schools of Sunni Islam (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali), coupled with Naqshbandi Sufism which, in their opinion, best reflects the so-called traditions and Islamic history of Central Asia. In this embrace of Hanafi jurisprudence and Sufi philosophy and practices, Tajikistan's government has sought to keep Tajikistan's "national" brand of Islam pure from outside influences, which are viewed as both a potential threat to the state as well as national and traditional religious customs.